

The Spiritual Significance of Silence: Two Writings

Roberto Assagioli and Vincent Beltran Anglada

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The significance of silence has been highlighted in practically all spiritual and esoteric traditions around the world since the very beginnings of time. In the impossibility of doing justice to all of these traditions, let us be content with just a few. In many of the different forms of Christianity, the ritual of transmuting bread and wine into the sacrament of the Eucharist during the Holy Mass is preceded by a period of expectant and silent prayer. The Sepher HaSh'tikah or *The Book of Silence* is a sacred Kabbalistic text whose teachings begin by exhorting the reader to “learn the fine art of silence” as the first step in the acquisition of wisdom. Vipassana meditation, which comes from the tradition of Theravada Buddhism, combines breathing techniques and silence to help the practitioner reach a state of awareness of the impermanence of existence. Inner silence, Castaneda tells us, is what indigenous sorcerers are after in most dramatic shamanic rites, reaching the threshold of silence, a moment when the world “stops” and everything ceases to be what it has always been. H. P. Blavatsky’s *The Voice of Silence* opens with a reference to the Soundless Sound, the voice of *Nada*:

These tears, O thou of heart most merciful, these are the streams that irrigate the fields of charity immortal. Tis on such soil that grows the midnight blossom of Buddha more difficult to find, more rare to view than is the flower of the Vogay tree. It is the seed of freedom from rebirth. It isolates the Arhat both from strife and lust; it leads him through the fields of Being unto peace and bliss known only in the land of Silence and Non-Being.¹

Silence is abundantly elaborated on in the works of the Tibetan as well. In a *Treatise on White Magic*, for instance, a passage of the Old Commentary expresses:

When communion is established, words are forthwith used, and mantric law assumes its rightful place, provided that the One communicates the words and the three remain in silence. When response is recognized as emanating from the three, the One, in silence, listens.²

Historically, however, we live in a time that seems to undervalue, if not fear, silence. Ours is a time characterized by communication strains. We suffer the risks of mental congestion from an excess of information technology, industrial noise and the many other forms of noise pollution. It seems difficult to reconcile the perennial wisdom with our current emphasis and passion for noise. Yet, it might be a time of transition only. Fourth Ray Humanity, still in its adolescence, probably needs to experience an excess of noise before reaching a stage of equilibrium when it will sound its note harmonically.

The two texts that follow provide us with important clues about the lost art of silence. The first one, written by Roberto Assagioli, is an English language translation of an unpublished manuscript by the Italian genius who developed psychosynthesis. The article is based, in part, on his own direct experience with Ageless Wisdom teachings and the Tibetan’s work in particular. Assagioli needs little introduction to the English-speaking readership, and we are certain much will be learned from his usual didactic exposition and practical approach to the topic. The article reproduced here appeared in the October 2012 issue of the *Journal of Psychosynthesis*. We thank the Institute of Psychosynthesis in Florence for granting permission to reprint, and we encourage our readers to visit the journal website: <http://www.psicosintesi.it/>, which publishes all its articles in Italian and English.

The second article is by Vicente Beltran Anglada. The English-speaking audience is probably less familiar with the work of this Spanish writer. Anglada was a loving, extraordinary human being and a person of advanced spiritual stature. He was a devoted teacher, an articulate public speaker, a secretary for the Arcane School in Geneva, a prolific writer and dedicated server who touched the heart of countless people in Europe and Latin America. While his work touches on several topics, he is most commonly identified with the development of Agni Yoga and books on the Deva kingdom. Anglada had a special sensibility to interpret the mysteries of the Angelic kingdom and was given the task of writing a series of books that would help bring together the Human and Deva Hierarchies—a task he accepted humbly and to which he devoted his entire incarnated life until his passing in 1988. We translate this work from a conference with the kind permission of the Asociacion Vicente Beltran

Anglada:

<http://www.asocacionvicentebeltran-anglada.org/>.

It should be noted here, that there are a number of points of similarity between these writers. Both Assagioli and Anglada lived in post-war Europe, both were very close to the Tibetan's foundational group, both wrote and spoke publicly on the same Teaching, both had students and both developed—in their own ways—methods for spiritual unfoldment. And both were silent about their occult mission: Assagioli insisted throughout his life in keeping his psychological approach separate from his link with the Tibetan; Anglada kept a secret diary about discipleship that only recently became a book. Most importantly, both Assagioli and Anglada are remembered by their students as being *true to themselves*; apparently, they were ordinary individuals who quietly helped transform our noisy world.

The Art and Technique of Silence

Roberto Assagioli

It might seem a contradiction in terms, or at least a paradox, to talk about silence, but actually, it isn't. As with many other pairs of

opposites, the two poles of speech and silence aren't antagonistic; they don't exclude each other, and both are necessary. The problem lies not in suppressing one of them, but rather in the wise regulation of both of them; this is one aspect, one important application of the Law of Right Relations.

Let's begin, then, by examining this topic from the point of view of the relationship between silence, on the one hand, and speech and sound on the other. What I'm about to say is not meant to disturb the silence, but merely to serve as a guide to the "Temple of Silence."

Silence follows sound, and each sound or creative word should come from silence. Thus, the first type of right relationship between silence and speech is that of using them in right proportion. I don't need to talk at length here about the enormous disparity that exists nowadays between silence and sound ... or noise. Our civilization has been called the culture of noise; all kinds of noises bombard us in what has been called "the jungles of the West." Continuous noise is actually harmful for physical health, and the worst thing is that present-day humanity, especially young people, not only become used to noise; they actually desire it, so much so that they produce it when there is none, for example, by turning up the radio when they become unable to bear the silence.

This last point refers to noise and sounds from outside, but the situation isn't any better regarding sounds that come from within us, especially idle talk or nonsense. If there were instruments to measure the amount of energy wasted in vain and harmful words, we would be really shocked, but of course, we don't need much imagination or a special word counter to understand this. The habit of speaking too much and too negatively has been encouraged by what may be called the modern cult of expression, the right to self-expression. This has been a reaction to the excessive repression of the nineteenth century, but, like all reactions, it went to the opposite extreme, and now there is an urgent need to reduce the current excessive, unregulated "expressionism."

Here too the solution lies in proper regulation, which simply means to *think before we speak*,

to consider whether what we are about to say has any value or serves any good. It has been said that “Humanity as a whole needs silence now as never before; it needs to reflect on and perceive the Universal Rhythm.”

This need is particularly great and urgent for those who are spiritually oriented, and this leads us to consider another type of silence, more subtle but no less vital and necessary, and that is, *inner silence*.

“Silence” is not just refraining from talking. There is no real silence when emotional storms are raging within us, when we find our mind constantly chattering to itself. Silence is not just refraining from speaking, but also abstaining from certain lines of thought and eliminating reveries and the unhealthy use of the imagination.

There are different types of inner silence, and it could be said that every sphere of life has its own silence. We all know the wonderful silence of nature on a summer afternoon, or especially during the night: the silence of a starry sky. Then there is the silence of the emotions—of desire, fear and imagination—which is a positive step toward peace and serenity. Silence at the mental level consists of slowing down the mind and curbing its activity.

There is also a “silence of the will,” i.e. the personal will, which means the dedication of one’s will and its unification with Spiritual Will. The highest form of silence is that achieved and maintained through contemplation. On the religious and mystic path, this is called “the prayer of quietude,” and in all respects, contemplation is the highest form of silence because it encourages and includes all other forms.

Joy is an aspect of silence that is generally not taken into full consideration. Joy has been given an interesting definition; it is the “silence

that sounds,” and it has been said that it is a characteristic of someone who knows and appreciates the values of the Spirit.

Another fact even less recognized is that silence is an Entity; there is a Spirit of Silence in the same way that there is a Spirit of Love, a Spirit of Light, a Spirit of Beauty. To our materialistic mind, this seems strange and difficult to conceive. Yet all the attributes and qualities of God are Beings; they are His Angels, His Messengers; they are living and conscious Forces. Everything in the Universe is alive, and in all religions, the faithful turn to the Angels, Spirits, or Higher Beings. Our Souls, which have been called “Solar Angels,” are Living Beings that work on the higher planes where the qualities or keynotes of the Spirit exist as Living Beings. Recognizing this

gives us a wonderful sense of the Universal Life that is the One and the Many manifested in myriads of entities hierarchically ordered.

Thinking of Silence as an Entity can be particularly beneficial. It helps us understand His positive and active nature, and it allows us to understand that Silence is not mere the absence of sound or speech, which is what most people usually think. Silence is a positive and spiritual energy, and if we want to practice silence this can be facilitated by invoking the Spirit of Silence, by entering into communion with Him, and hence by becoming receptive to the impressions that come to us when we are, metaphorically speaking, “enfolded in His wings.” There is a close relationship between silence and higher telepathic reception; it has been said that the Science of Receptivity is based on various kinds of silence.

Now I will say something about the practice, or technique, of this art of silence. As with the development of any spiritual quality, an easy and useful preparation is to first “set the

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mood” by reading something on the subject. Among the writings suitable for this purpose I would point to the fine essay on silence by M. Maeterlinck in the book *Le Trésor des Humbles* and the celebration of silence in T. Carlyle’s book *On Heroes*. Also, the Quakers have written extensively on silence because they base their religious practice on silent meetings for worshiping.³

We can also find encouragement in the exemplary lives of those who have practiced silence. A modern example would be Aurobindo, who used to remain silent for 360 days a year for many years. During that time, he would write a lot while keeping absolutely quiet. Another less extreme example is that of Gandhi. Once a week, on Monday, he used to observe 24 hours of silence.

After this preparation, we then have to “maintain quietness” internally, and this can be achieved through the various stages of meditation. First of all, *direct* the attention from “the periphery to the center,” then raise the center of consciousness by moving from feeling to aspiration, and direct the attention of the mind toward the Soul or, generally, toward the world of Spirit and Reality. It’s important to move through the emotional-imaginative level *quickly* so as not to get distracted by any psychic impressions that might come through if we linger too long on this plane.

Consciousness must be kept at a high point of inner tension. This tension—which is a vigilant form of awareness, a spiritual attitude of “being present” to ourselves—is the essential prerequisite for any spiritual conquest. It can be seen as a combination of *Intention* and *Attention*. Intention urges us to penetrate into higher levels of consciousness; Attention is the concentration or “centeredness” of consciousness and the act of keeping it fixed at the level reached.

Notice that *spiritual tension* is different from personal tension. They are, in fact, two opposite conditions. The second is an obstacle to the first, as spiritual tension can best be achieved in a state of physical relaxation and mental and emotional calm. This tension is followed by silence, a living silence that cre-

ates the necessary conditions for any revelation.

Everything that has been said so far refers to individual silence, but it can and actually should be applied as well to silence in groups and to the silence of the group. Group gatherings should utilize the practice of silence, not just because it provides an opportunity and satisfies a need to be in silence, but also because it creates an imperceptible but indeed real communion among a group of people, as well as between two people who sit together in silence. In *The Little Flowers of St. Francis*, there is an anecdote that shows how well the Franciscans knew the value of silence.

Soon after the death of Saint Francis, Saint Louis King of France set off to Perugia to see Brother Giles in person. He arrived at the convent gate as if he were a poor unknown pilgrim, but having been revealed to Brother Giles that the pilgrim was the King of France, he left his cell in haste and ran to the gate without asking any questions. They both knelt down and embraced each other with great reverence and many outward signs of love and charity, as if a long friendship had existed between them, though they had never met before in their lives. Neither of them spoke a word, and after remaining clasped in each other’s arms for some time, they separated in silence. Then, when the other brothers found out who the pilgrim was, they bitterly complained to Brother Giles. He answered: “Beloved brothers, be not surprised at this, that neither could I say a word to him, nor he to me; for no sooner had we embraced each other than we saw into each other’s hearts, and knew far better what we had to say than if we had explained in words that which we felt in our hearts. For so imperfectly the tongue of man reveals the secret mysteries of God, that words would have been to us rather a hindrance than a consolation.” (Chapter 1, XXXIV).⁴

The effects of silence on the personality include the replenishment of energy, a sense of reinvigoration, and a true process of regeneration of all personal aspects. Another effect of

group silence is that of harmonization. When there are conflicts or disagreements within a group, or simply differences of opinion about some decision to make, or about which activities to undertake, the best thing is to maintain silence, to spend some quiet time together (this of course implies that all group participants know and appreciate the art of silence). After a period of silence spent together, it's easier to understand each other because we will have considered the problem from a higher impersonal perspective. The separative personalities will have been silenced, and the participants will have symbolically gathered in the Temple of Silence. There, after having aligned more closely with the Soul and uniting with the Souls of everyone else, they will see the points of agreement, of contact, and of understanding with each other.

But the beneficial effects of silence are not limited to this. Along with the practice of silence, what gradually develops has been called "the double life of the disciple," meaning the ability to maintain a "zone of silence" during daily life amid noise and turmoil: "The silence of the center preserved within the worldly noise." Here too there is an encouraging example, that of Brother Laurence of the Resurrection, who was able to keep a sense of the presence of God while he was busy in a noisy kitchen.

Another positive effect of the practice of silence is learning to *act quietly*, without fuss and noise.

In Maria Montessori's educational approach, there is an exercise that is used to train children to move carefully in attentive silence. They do this willingly, and in so doing, they learn self-control.

A similar exercise, but with a very different purpose, is performed by hotel thieves, who are able to steal silently into a hotel room without waking up the guests! In doing so, they are actually practicing a form of yoga. In fact, up to a certain point, certain skills developed in yoga can be used both selfishly or unselfishly and beneficially.

The difference lies in the *motive*, not in the technical skill. Hence, we can learn much from

those who behave wrongly. Too often they do very bad things very well, while we often do good things not well enough! Remember, in the Gospel it is said that Christ will come "like a thief in the night."

Another benefit of maintaining a zone of silence—a state of dis-identification or meditation that can be maintained as we perform daily activities, investing in them the needed energy and attention level (but not more)—is to be able to listen carefully and recognize those insights, messages and inner forces that can often be more easily accessible when we are externally active and thinking of other things, rather than in moments of deep reflection.

I think these quick notes might be enough to encourage us to put into practice or intensify the practice of silence. Let us consider ourselves, individually and in our groups, as "Friends of Silence," serviceable followers of the Spirit of Silence.

On Silence

Vicente Beltran Anglada

There is an esoteric axiom that every student has to bring about in his or her life: "To know, to dare, to keep silent." An exegesis of this ancient esoteric saying would require volumes in order to analyze in depth each of these three verbs that, through the ages, have been presented to the consideration of every aspirant on the Path. Therefore, we will only consider herein the third one: TO KEEP SILENT.

The first thing we notice is that *keeping silent* has two possible meanings: to keep a secret, or to simply remain silent. This last meaning is the one we will be commenting on.

Apparently, in the eyes of ordinary people—and we mean this with no disrespect—silence is not valued and is discredited in society to such an extent that people strive not to be alone. They continuously seek the company of others and prefer to live among noise and sound, including the background din of radio and television, which, often unheeded, "keeps them company."

When it is time to go through the door that leads to the Inner Planes, every disciple is stunned to experience the profound Silence that reigns in these places, an absolute cosmic silence in which are immersed the most August Logos as well as the disciple or initiate who has decided to enter the Way of Salvation. The Law of Silence is a Cosmic Law, and is an aspect of that state of perpetual meditation in which everything that exists is submerged as beings within the continuously flowing Life stream. It is only in our lower spheres of manifestation that we have noise and dissonance. Silence doesn't mean the absence of sound, but it is never noisy and dissonant. We have heard more than once about *the music of the spheres* — the great chord emitted by the planes, each with its characteristic note in honor of the Creator. The whole of existence—the human, subhuman, deva kingdom, etc.—issues its own specific note within the whole of Creation. These notes together comprise only one octave out of the many octaves contained within the Logos. Extending this analogy further, we might intuit the great Cosmic Symphony that plays continuously within the Universal Great Silence.

Each Logos seeks to harmonize the infinite number of lives inhabiting their bodies and forming their body of expression. Evolution is the sum total of efforts that each life makes in order to emit its own corresponding note within the chord of Logoic Life. Evolution is merely the realization and fulfillment of the incommensurable Cosmic Destiny of the Logos, and in the process all that exists within the Logos is simultaneously transformed.

It may seem that the above considerations stray from the initial idea and purpose that we had in mind to write about here. Yet this is far from the case. The Law of Analogy will bring us

[An] attentive state not only facilitates control over the elementals, but it also produces a quiet expectation, which makes them aware of the calm they lack. This will slowly result in the bodies becoming more luminous. They will emit a soft and subtle sound that will, paradoxically, allow us to hear the Voice of Silence.

back to the heart of our consideration of *silence*. Each one of us is, within the limitations of our own small scale, an analogy of a Creator Logos. Countless small lives (devas) make up our dense, emotional and mental bodies, and the note they emit together is our own note—

the note that we contribute to the Logos. These small lives, each with their own unique notes, are constantly “talking,” trying to tread their own path with no consideration of the larger whole, without respecting the pauses, rhythms or silences that the Consciousness (Soul) or Life (Monad) aspects try to impose upon them during their karmic evolution.

Esoterically, we know that all the devas forming a body of manifestation build up a strong elemental. Our major elementals—our physical, emotional and mental elementals—have become very powerful due to the great length of time in which they have been exerting their own will. So logically it is very difficult to force them to work in a way that differs from the one they are used to. These elementals follow their own evolutionary path, which is on a lower or involutory arc. This is why it has been—and continues to be—so difficult for many people to subjugate themselves to the discipline of the Soul.

It is generally believed, when speaking of silence, that it is a physical discipline requiring that one remain quiet and not speak or make audible sounds. And while this is indeed silence, it is not everything silence is. We may suppress our desire to talk, but our mind keeps manifesting endless thoughts. We may be able to limit the dissonance of our physical elemental by imposing external silence, but our emotions continue to bounce around unchecked. Additionally, our mind may send forth a note quite different from the one the Thinker is trying to produce, causing the personality to be at odds with the Consciousness and Life aspects.

To a great extent, the disciple's work involves silencing the three elementals that make up the personality and getting the lunar pitris to become *radiant points of light* that emit their own corresponding note. Personal evolution is the alchemical process of transmuting Light and Sound. But personal evolution is meaningless if it isn't taking place within a larger group, which in turn is part of other Larger Groups, and the whole process disappears in the vastness of Space. Only through the Synthesis achieved at the Third Initiation does each of the three bodies become radiant and emit the exact note needed to produce the perfect triadic chord composed of the personality, Soul and Monadic notes.

We often refer to Agni Yoga and its characteristics—quiet expectation and attention—but we may not have noticed that they are the consequence of Silence. It would be impossible to reach a state of *quiet expectation* if the desires of our lower quaternary are in constant discord and generating tremendous noise. We will not be able to maintain constant attention if we are incessantly assailed by our elementals.

Therefore, we have to keep the elementals quiet, in utter stillness, if we want to live by the rules of Agni Yoga. Yet it is also interesting to note that the best way to keep them quiet is to cultivate a state of constant attention. This attentive state not only facilitates control over the elementals, but it also produces a quiet expectation, which makes them aware of the calm they lack. This will slowly result in the bodies becoming more luminous. They will emit a soft and subtle sound that will, paradoxically, allow us to hear the Voice of Silence.

This is true esoteric silence. In the Ancient Mysteries, the aspirants and the candidates for initiation had to remain silent for years; it was one of the tests they had to pass as well as being a rite of purification. Such a measure had a rationale: it was intended that the candidate, by means of quietness, attention and observation, would reach a point of effective control over the lesser lives.

We have seen how, from a Cosmic perspective, Silence is inherent in our lives; we are in

a silent, yet sonorous, Universe; we are made up of minuscule lives that need to be kept silent so that they may be transmuted into a given sound. This work is the responsibility of the Consciousness and Life aspects of our Being. When it becomes a reality in our lives, we will be rendering an important service to the Plan that the Masters know and serve. May SILENCE pour forth as a nectar of PEACE to our HEART.

The Angels of Silence

There is a kind of devic sensitivity that comes from the highest subplanes of the astral plane, and its impact on the mystical life of humanity can be measured in terms of peace, quietness and self-communion. Hence, the angels who live and move and have their purpose on such levels are esoterically called “Angels of Silence.” This reality is difficult for our concrete mind to accept because it is constantly subject to the pressure of objective and tangible objects. But when the psychological life of a human being has deeply developed “divine love,” which is very different indeed from what we call “human love,” the idea discussed above begins to have a full and absolute meaning. This leads to a clear and conclusive understanding that meditation and the usual techniques to achieve mental silence will only have true value and effectiveness if the heart is free and detached from the things of the world, and also from spiritual ambition.

The Angels of Silence are invoked by the silence of the heart, and this requires “dispassion.” This dispassion can only be achieved when, as a result of our spiritual search, we leave behind “bits and pieces of our conquered self” in every fold of the mind and at every turn of the path. This is the “residue” of the things we have outgrown.

Nevertheless, the silence of the heart is not the result of a struggle or resistance to life, but rather an impulse of sacred understanding that allows us to triumph over all the obstacles in our path. Humans usually understand struggle

as a reaction against something or someone, but that concept will never bring us to the

Abode of the Angels of Silence. What we really need is to recognize—without struggle or resistance—that certain thoughtforms, emotions and other things no longer have a place in our lives. The aim shouldn't be to stifle or destroy them, but just to observe them so that their underlying meanings and causes can be revealed.

Once the true meaning of something is discovered, it disappears from our conceptual field of consciousness without any struggle or conflict, and leaves us free from the karmic wheel of the capricious whims and futility of human reasons. Then a wonderful devic action takes place within the ether that helps dissolve the residue left in our magnetic aura. Natural Silence implies “auric sharpness,” and no one will be able to really enjoy its extraordinary and impersonal benefits if the etheric aura is full of karmic residue. The root of this karmic residue can be found in our crystallized possessive desires that condition and impoverish our behavior.

Future esoteric psychology will be based on the deep and sustained individual observation of one's personal reactions to life and events and not, as now, by continuing to follow the Piscean method of dredging up the countless memories we have accumulated over time that constitute what is called the “subconscious,” the basis on which all psychological complexes and human traumas are created.

True psychological healing is brought about precisely by “disassociating” from these memories, and not by bringing them back and reliving them in order to find the causes for our psychic disturbance.

Esoterically speaking, true psychological salvation comes about when we begin to grasp

the meaning of life, by facing the immediate present calmly and with indomitable energy. Obviously, this will require a great deal of attention and observation. But thanks to the intensity that this approach generates the accumulative self, who creates all our problems, gradually stops interfering and finally disappears altogether from our field of consciousness.

It is when we arrive at this point that the previously described removal of psychic residue to the periphery of our magnetic or etheric aura takes place. And the subsequent activity of the Angels of Silence, whose main task is to clean our magnetic field, is to facilitate in this way the outpouring of resplendent energies over the planet Earth. These energies, still unknown to the vast majority of people, will produce an “etheric redemption” and will introduce a new social order in the life of humanity, more in harmony with the sacred laws of the Hierarchy and with the holy purpose of Shambhalla.

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- ¹ Helena. P. Blavatsky, *The Voice of Silence* (Theosophy Trust, 2006), 18.
 - ² Alice A. Bailey, *Treatise on White Magic* (New York, NY: Lucis Trust, 1951), 75.
 - ³ See, among others, Nico Varo, *L'Arte del Silenzio e l'uso della Parola* (The art and use of speech) (Rotondi Ed., Rome, 1969); C.H. Herper *The Fellowship of Silence* (London, Mac Millan, 1915); L.V. Hodkin, *Silent Workshop* (London, Swarthmore, 1919); G. Hoyland, *The Use of Silence* (Wallingford, Pondle Hill, 1961).
 - ⁴ NT: Assagioli's account of the vignette is slightly shorter than the actual passage. For the whole vignette, see: <https://www.ewtn.com/library-MARY-/flowers.htm>