

AN AVID READER CONTRARIAN & HERETICAL eNUF TO SUGGEST A COMMON THREAD
RUNNING THROUGH SUCH SEEMINGLY DIVERSE FIELDS AS ART, COSMOLOGY, THE HISTORY
OF IDEAS, LITERATURE, MYTH, PHILOSOPHY & POETRY

I'm thinking that one could do worse than open this bold undertaking with these core-curricular lines from the great female Sage, Seer & Sufi Rabi-'ah (717-801 CE) :: "I saw that the Divine Beauty in each HeArt / is the root of All Time / & Space. / So amazing is this choir of / eARTh, Sky, Suns & Moons, / Beauty is my Teacher. / Most cannot focus their Attention / in the Present. / So I'll wait. I don't mind waiting until / Your LoVe for All / makes LumiNous the Now." (As trans. by Daniel LandinSky) There are of course no lack of things -- such as LoVe, for instance -- ☼ne might choose to focus on in this multifaceted jewel of a poem, but, inspired by the by-any-standards-remarkable Rabi-'ah, in what follows we'll be training our lens on her emphasis on the centrality of Attention, which is a central concern in this age of ever-shorter attention spans, due largely to the nefarious influence of boob tubes, dumbphones, & the proVerbial plethōra of other distractions that keep us from being in what WITgenStein famously characterized as the Eternal Present.

In a kindred vein, here's what yet another Deep Thinker from a good deal further back had to say about this epicentral seeming conundrum :: "Our UniVerse is made up of All That Is, ☼ne God perVading All Things, & ☼ne Principle of Being, & ☼ne Law, Reason, is shared by All Thinking Creatures, & ☼ne Truth." (This eXtra☼rdinary InSight into the State of Things being from the Stoic Philosopher & Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius's "Meditations"). And, m☼re recently, here's W. H. Auden on the importance of paying the requisite Attention :: "To pray is to pay Attention or, shall we say, to 'listen' to someone or something other than oneself." (From WHA's "The Dyer's Hand," as quoted by Winifred Gallagher in her aptly titled "Rapt: Attention & the Focused Life;" Penguin, NYC, 2009). The major obstacle to EnLIGHTenment in both the Buddhist & Sufi traditions is our ego, which tends to fuel virtually everything in our Western consumerism-driven propensity for eXcess to our eARTh-destroying compulsion to eXhaust our planet's necessarily limited resources . . . & so it continues to go here on our greed-beleaguered sp'Here{'-n'-Now}.' The central question for the survival of this ongoing human eXperiment is clearly 'How to tUrn this Koyaanisqatsi-esque, potentially terminal, condition around before we're 'toast'? The Sufi S☼lution to this query is "The simpler your life, the m☼re meaningful." The best prayers are those offered in the S☼litude of the Night (Which suggests analogies with the great 16th-century poet St. John of the Cross). Again, according to the Sufi Abu Saeed Abul Khair (967-1049 CE), it is precisely the over-inflated ego that bars us from entering the Chamber of the Beloved, which I'm suspecting is beginning to sound familiar. Let us strive to Read more Deeply, & tRead more Lightly!

For those readers aVid &/or rabid eNUf to want to delVe Deeper, here's a wee Bibliography, every volume of which is available at L & C Library ::

- 1) Eric R. Kandel, "The Age of InSight: The Quest to Understand the Unconscious in Art, Mind, & Brain -- From Vienna 1900 to the {Ever-Elusive} Present" (Random House, NYC, 2012);
- 2) Joshua Cohen, "Attention: Dispatches from a Land of Distraction" (LikeWise Random House, NYC, 2018);
- 3) Christian Madsbjerg, "Look: How To Pay Attention in a Distracted World" (RiverHead Books, NYC, 2023).

A quote from the Vienna-born 2000 Nobel Laureate Eric R. Kandel's "In Search of Memory: The Emergence of a New Science of the Mind" (W. W. Norton & Co., NYC, 2007) :: "Conscious ATTENTI☼N allows us to shut out eXtraneous eXperiences & F☼CUS on the critical eVent that confronts us, be it pleasure or pain, the blue of the {Big} Sky, the cool blue Light of a Vermeer painting, or the BEAUTY & calm we eXperience at the seash☼re." As you can see -- to 'echo' Rabi-'ah, JJoyce, & T. S. Eliot -- 'In our {seeming} End is our {Re}Beginning . . .'