

Three Ways to View the Sunset

Three men stood by the ocean, looking at the same sunset.

One man saw the immense physical beauty and enjoyed the event itself. This man was the “sensate” type who, like 80% of the world, deals with what he can see, feel, touch, move and fix. This was enough reality for him, for he had little interest in the larger ideas, intuitions, or the grand scheme of things. He saw with his first eye, which was good.

A second man saw the sunset. He enjoyed all the beauty that the first man did. Like all lovers of coherent thought, technology and science, he also enjoyed his power to make sense of the universe and explain what he discovered. He thought about the cyclical rotations of planets and stars. Through imagination, intuition and reason, he saw with his second eye, which was even better.

The third man saw the sunset, knowing and enjoying all that the first and second men did. But in his ability to progress from seeing to explaining to “tasting”, he also remained in awe before an underlying mystery, coherence and spaciousness that connected him with everything else. He used his third eye, which is the fill goal of all seeing and all knowing. This was the best.

Third-eye seeing is the way the mystics (Christian Contemplatives) see. They do not reject the first eye, the senses matter to them, but they know there is more. Nor do they reject the second eye; but they know not to confuse knowledge with depth or mere correct information with the transformation of consciousness itself. The mystical (Christian Contemplative) gaze build upon the first two eyes ... and yet goes further. It happens whenever, by some wondrous “coincidence” (or God-incidence), our heart space, our mind space, and our body awareness are all simultaneously open and non-resistant. I like to call it *presence*. It is experienced as a moment of deep inner connection, and it always pulls you, intensely satisfied, into the naked and undefended now, which can involve both profound joy and profound sadness. At that point, you either want to write poetry, pray, or be utterly silent.

The first eye is the eye of the flesh (*thought or sight*), the second is the eye of reason (*meditation or reflection*), and the third eye is the eye of true understanding (*contemplation*).

Richard Rohr
The Naked Now