



Horizonless Intimacy

Dear Friends,

I captured this image as I took an early morning walk along the beach in Bray, Ireland (County Wicklow) this past Monday morning (7/28/08). I was looking across the Irish Sea as the sun made its way up through the clouds. If I would have been able to see beyond the horizon where the sea and the sky appear to meet, I would have found northern Wales on the other shore. In fact, on the previous afternoon while walking along another stretch of beach just south of Bray near Newcastle I ran upon a granite marker tucked among the boulders of the seawall protecting the railroad that passed nearby. On the opposite side of the the railway from the nearly hidden marker was an abandoned and decaying building. The marker indicated that it was from this site and this tiny station that underwater telegraph cables were first laid beginning in the late 1880's, connecting Ireland and Wales. These connections were in use through the early 1930's. What happened then? I suppose technology changed what was possible. Horizons for communication were extended and expanded.

If my view across the Irish Sea could have extend even further that morning, beyond the Welch border, I would have encountered the midlands of England where I had just spent the previous two weeks teaching and walking on the moors of Derbyshire. Further still and the English Channel would have come into view and then the Netherlands, France, and the whole European continent. Where would it have ended? With a higher or more complete view, when obstructions or limitations are released, when horizons vanish, what can be seen? Apparently there is no end to the great view of a liberated mind, which I am only imagining, even while my particular human senses are, of course, quite limited.

These past three weeks have been very concentrated for me - many days of teaching and very deep encounters. I worked with a number of wonderful people who were wholeheartedly offering themselves to a process of assisted self-discovery in mindfulness. They were curious about what they could see and what horizons they might explore as their self-identifications relaxed into the more diffuse awareness and warmth of intimacy. In my reading this morning, I ran across this brilliant statement by the late Irish poet John O'Donohue: "In the human face infinity becomes personal."

As I turned my attention to the vastness of the morning sky, into the cold wind, and toward the glistening sea last Monday, my awareness expanded and opened, inviting the unbound possibilities of my heart and

mind to know themselves more fully. In the very next moment, in the reflected light of that same morning sun as I turned and looked into the eye of my friend Donna with whom I was walking, that vastness became personal, close, and alive. This is also what I saw in the faces of the participants in the retreats over these past three weeks. In the reflected presence they offered to each other, they began to see their own brilliance and fullness, flaws and limitations, all perfect because they were whole. This is the same infinitely transformative potential I see in the faces of each person who brings themselves forward in our Inquiry Groups, who come to practice discussion, and who sit in the zendo every day. We offer ourselves to each other so we can remember our vulnerable humanness and, in the bargain, get a glimpse of the divine. "In the human face infinity becomes personal." What are the limits of this liberating intimacy? Our spiritual ancestors suggest that it is boundless. Let's turn to face each other again and again, and in that reflected presence, discover this truth to be our own.

Flint