

you say something that embarrasses you. This phobia gives rise to many sorrows; to transcend this fear, we have to understand that there is no place in this world that is empty or silent or lonely. Presumably in a world of six billion people, it is very hard to find such a place. But in trying to find it, you just have to retreat back into yourself, into your thoughts.

Trying to evade the fear of silence only postpones the fear. You must face the silence head on and start being mindful and appreciative of the silence. Listen to the quiet, and grow accustomed to the silence, bit by bit. because silence is everywhere, in the spaces between the noises, before and after a piece of music. It is the canvas for the painting of life. Mindfulness (living in the present) tames the mind and makes it able to face the silence in peace and calm, without giving rise to doubt or to fearful and weird thoughts.

In 1951, a musical artist and composer, by the name of John Cage, wanted to experience complete silence. He feared for the future of music, thinking that with silence there would be an end to music. To experience complete silence, engineers created a room in which there was no sound, called an anechoic chamber (meaning without echo). An anechoic chamber is a room designed in such a way that the walls, ceiling, and floor absorb all sounds made in the room, rather than reflecting them as echoes. Such a chamber is also externally sound-proofed. So, Cage entered the chamber expecting to experience complete silence. But to his shock that was not what he experienced. He later wrote, "I heard two sounds, one high and one low. When I described them to the engineer in charge, he informed me that the high one was my nervous system in operation, the low one my blood in circulation." Cage had gone to a place where he expected total silence, and yet heard sound. Cage concluded: "Until I die there will be sounds. And they will continue following my death. One need not fear about the future of music."

Cage's experience of the impossibility of silence led to his concluding that there is no such thing as an empty space or an empty time. There is always something to see, something to hear. In fact, try as we may to make a silence, we cannot. Sounds occur whether intended or not. And so the art of combining vocal or instrumental sounds (or both) to produce beauty of form, harmony, and expression of emotion is called music. The purpose of music is to sober and quiet the mind, thus rendering it susceptible to divine influences.