

MEDITATIVE INSIGHT

An abstract painting of a face, rendered in a style reminiscent of Henri Matisse. The face is composed of various overlapping shapes and colors, including shades of red, orange, yellow, green, and brown. The eyes are large and expressive, with a mix of colors. The overall composition is dynamic and expressive, with a strong sense of movement and color.

HENRI VAN ZEYST

Meditative Insight

Henry van Zeyst

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Meditation which is culture

There is Meditation
which is culture of the mind
(*bhāvanā*).

There is Concentration
which aims at mind control
(*samatha*).

There is Contemplation
when the mind is still
and that is insight
(*vipassanā*).

A Meditative Mind

A meditative mind
 which does not select,
which does not exclude,
 which does not search
for a solution,
 for satisfaction,
for achievement,—

Such a meditative mind
 need not concentrate,
need not focus its thought
 on an ideal,
on a concept,
 on a goal.

For,
there is contemplation
 in seeing what is as it is:
the false as false,
 action as reaction, the “self” as void.

And that is truth.

Can the Self be Destroyed?

Can the “self” be destroyed
when there is no “self”?

Meditation which is contemplation
of this “self” in action
makes all reaction cease.

Then, action is free and pure,
without motive or purpose,
without projection of the “self”.

Such action comes from seeing
and understanding what is:
the goalless search,
the delusion of conflict,
the void of “self”.

Concentration Aims

Concentration aims
at fulfilment
in satisfaction.

Contemplation has no aim;
it is fulfilment
without desire.

Concentration wants
to see the “self” as God.

Contemplation sees God
as the thought of self.

Concentration on an object
creates the arising of a subject.

Contemplation of action
is the cessation of reaction.

Concentration is Exclusive

Concentration is an exclusion
of the unwanted.

Thus, it is a resistance
which is conflict.

A concentrated mind
cannot contemplate,
cannot see what is.

Only contemplation is meditation,
when the mind is still.

Concentration is Effort

Concentration is effort
in compelling the mind
to think in patterns.

Contemplation is
the effortless freedom
to see,
to live,
to experience.

Contemplation is
seeing without reflection,
living without projection,
being without becoming.

Concentration is Keeping

Concentration is
 keeping the known alive,
as thought cannot live
 to see the unknown.

A search for the unknown
is a search for self,
 for an ideal,
for an image.

Contemplation does not pursue
 an image or a concept.
It sees the image and the ideal for what they are:
 projections of desire.

And in thus seeing
 it is free from all.

Meditation is the dying to the known,
 is the silence of thought.

Concentration is Will-to-Become

Concentration is the will-to-become,
the desire to continue,
the fear of the void.

Concentration is craving,
is clinging,
is escaping.

In making thought,
the mind is not still.
In pursuing ideals,
the mind knows no rest.
In striving for attainment,
the goal is but a thought.

Thought reflects the past as memory.
Thought deflects the present to continue.
Thought escapes the present in delusion.

For the mind to be at rest,
thought must be silent
without reflection
without deflection
without projection
without inspection.

Contemplation is Meditation

Contemplation is
meditation without concentration.

Any attempt at contemplation
is not meditation,
but an effort at concentration,
an effort to achieve,
to become, to be the "I".

Contemplation is effortless,
seeing the "I" in action,
seeing the actor in wanting,
seeing the delusion of the "I",
seeing what is.

When the "I" is seen in action,
it is seen as delusion,
and there is no conflict.

Fear is Always in Conflict

Fear is always
in the conflict of “self”.

There is no conflict
when one is alone.

There is no “self”
when one is alone.

The ecstasy of being alone,
of being no one,
comes when there is no fear.

In fear, one is never alone,
when there is thought
of the past,
when there is thought
for the future.

To be truly alone,
there should be no “self”.

If the Mind is not Silent

If the mind is not silent,
it cannot become silent.

If the mind does not know silence,
it cannot search for silence,
it cannot become silent.

But, if I know conflict
and know that "I" an conflict,
there is no more search,
for the search is conflict.

And if there is no more conflict,
because there is no more search,
because there is no more "I",
then there is silence
in seeing what is,
in seeing what is not.

In the Fulness of Self

In the fulness of “self”
 there is desire,
there is opposition,
 there is conflict.

In the void of “self”
there is love,
 which is non-selective,
which is universal,
 which is without conflict.

Love Which is Selective

Love which is selective
is but self-love;
For, in selection
there is only "self"
and the reaction to "self".

Meditation which is contemplation,
which is not concentration
and hence not selective,
is a silent attention
to all that acts
and which reacts.

To see the "self" as a reaction
gives freedom without selection,
which is universal love
without a lover.

Meditation without an Actor

Meditation is
action without an actor,
action without a purpose.

It is action which does not project.
It is action which acts
through understanding
the need to act.

Such meditation
does not concentrate on a goal,
does not provide for a future.

Such meditation
can only contemplate,
in seeing what is,
in understanding what acts,
free from the reaction
which is the projection of "self".

Meditation is Listening

Meditation is the art of listening,
the art of listening to silence.

And out of that silence
there comes a crisis
in which one either acts
or tries to escape.

Concentration which is selection,
which is focusing,
which is searching,
is an escape in cultured living,
an escape from living free,
from seeing straight,
which alone is insight.

In the silence of meditation
which is contemplation,
there is just silence.

And in the listening to that silence
there is no escape.

From what? Where to?

When there is no escape,
there is pure action—
and no actor.

Our Problem is that We Know

Our problem is that we know.

But, I know only

 what I think I know.

And, I know only my thought,

 which is but a reflection

in my mind

 of my memories, of my desires,

of my clinging.

To know my mind

 as a reflection of "self"

brings silence to that mind,

 when thought does not project.

Such is the silence of the mind

 which does not concentrate.

That is meditation,

 that is contemplation,

that is insight.

Silence is not to be Found

Silence is not to be found
 in the suppression of sound,
in the renunciation of contact,
 in the escape from relationship.

There is silence in understanding
which does not depend on faith,
 which does not search for truth,
which does not live in the future.

There is a silence,
 when there is no striving to achieve,
no will to become,
 no opposition,
no "I" in conflict.

The Desire for Peace

The desire for peace of mind
is an ideal
pursued by thought.

The desire for an ideal
in the pursuit of thought
is not a mind at rest.

The mind seeks rest and peace
in concentration on its ideal.

Thus, concentration leads
to further search.

To see this action of the mind
is a release from search
for an ideal concept.

To see this, is contemplation
without effort or desire,
when thought is still,
when will is not,
and mind is free.

The Ecstasy of Truth

The ecstasy of truth
 lies in the freedom from thought,
in the stillness of volition.

Any striving for truth
 is striving for an ideal,
striving for continuity,
 striving for an escape.

In striving, there is no truth,
no ecstasy, no freedom.

The Enquiry about the Absolute

The enquiry about God,
 the absolute,
the soul,
 is the work of the mind in thought,
striving for an ideal,
 escaping from the actual,
wanting to be
 and to become.

The search is the birth of "self"
the birth of conflict.

When the search ceases,
 there is fulfilment in silence,
which is truth.

The Wanting of Security

The wanting of security
is the disturbance
which is conflict.

Conflict ceases
in the cessation of desire
for security.

The need for security arises
with the wish for continuance.

Continuance is the ideal concept,
a living death,
in which alone can live
the delusion of the "I".

To be Awake is to be Free

To be awake is to be free,
to be without imaginings,
without faith or dogma,
without hope or fear,
without love of self.

To be awake is to see
that all action is reaction,
that all effort is desire,
that all thought is memory,
that all will-to-become
is an escape from what is.

To be awake is to see oneself
with all one's reactions
as "no-self".

Truth Ceases to Be

Truth ceases to be an abstraction
when the mind is silent
in space and in time.

As long as space and time are used
to continue and to project
an image of an ideal "self"
so long will that image obscure
the truth which is.

What is the Need for Silence?

“What is the need for silence?” ...

Now, silence is the goal
and the goal is a thought,
and thought is not silence.

When silence, just as peace, becomes an end in itself,

there is no silence,
only striving for silence.

Then, silence, just as peace,
becomes an ideal and a thought,
thought moving to the ideal.

And that is not silence.
Silence is when the goal,
when there is no thought,
when there is no “self”.

Only in silence there is meditation,
which is insight
to be seen
by each one for himself,
if one would only see.
(*paccattam veditabbo viññūhi*)

About the Author

Henri van Zeyst was born in Utrecht, the Netherlands, in 1905. Educated throughout in Catholic schools and colleges, he spent his final years of studies in philosophy and theology and the first year of his priestly ordination in an Italian monastery near Florence. At the age of 31 he was sent to London to be in charge of a new foundation of his Order, where he was also teaching Dogmatic Theology to the scholastics of Christus Rex Priory in North London. An intensive course of comparative religion brought him in contact with Buddhism. Within a year of his coming to Sri Lanka he was ordained a Buddhist monk there in 1938 under the name of Bhikkhu Dhammapāla. From 1956 to 1968 he worked at the Encyclopaedia of Buddhism at the University of Ceylon in Peradeniya of which he was in the final years of that period the Senior Assistant Editor and Administrative Officer. During the last stages of his life he was residing in a meditation centre at Nilambe, Kandy, giving instructions to those who came to him for guidance on meditation.

He died on September 15th in 1988.