

## **The enigma of sight**

A few centuries ago the human lifetime average counted less years than today. Instead of surviving he wants to enjoy life. This contributes to the fact that nowadays man wants to celebrate life. And to do so he searches for great experiences. We look for peak experiences and want to let others know how great our life is. Everything has to be right.

Man strives to surpass peak experiences increasingly. Peak experiences disappear as quickly as they come. They are addictive and cost us more and more.

I want to mention the contrast between "everything has to be right," and the knowledge that peak experiences are momentary. I'll provide a philosophical view upon this.

I conclude that our life has essentially an idealistic basis. So man acts deeply on the basis of a spiritual principle. This is an enigma, a mystery with a spiritual origin. The mystery is related to a divine part of our spirit that ables us to see and understand the world in a glance, without the possibility of managing its existence. If we look for ourselves, we see nothing nor find anything. The self is more like a compass, like a light on our path, a gift of sight. it is a way of seeing in the context of spiritual force, an inner and outer world. We mix and relate phenomena with mental processes in the outer world. We refer in practice to a moral or religious identity based upon an inner path. Nowadays, we seem to forget more and more all major philosophical and religious movements describe an inner path to meaning and happiness. The definitions of meaning and happiness should be interpreted broadly because various movements have different considerations. I will not discuss these differences.

I'll argue the gift of sight is a particular characteristic of man. Different philosophical and religious movements will be swiftly explored and matched with this concept.

What is "new" in this survey? I will link the ability of sight, the peaceful intentions of religions and the universal window upon which we base our lives.

I will avoid some complex themes of philosophical and religious movements, for example the salvation of the soul. To do so the article will remain plain simple. And we are able to focus on the subject, the ability of sight, instead of the chain of suffering and life and death. Our life is sometimes or even more often superficial. We are very busy to control our emotions, and develop rational and intelligent concepts. But we thereby pass a very interesting and important characteristic that we should cherish. We are able to look at a special way: with sight. I wrote this article to share my view. A briefly treatise for a swift momentary reader.

I'll take you into the world of philosophical sight and religious consideration. Into a world that is not based on an outer view only. Sight itself gives access to majestic areas. The outer view causes all sorts of misunderstandings and mental errors because phenomena cannot be known in essence. I suggest to look for the ability of sight which partly is based upon an inner world, in accordance to ancient traditions (which we maybe have almost forgotten).

I will mention the philosophical views of Plato, Buddhism and Hinduism and Christian tradition. I will not address differences, but will give priority to the connection of the philosophical and religious movements: the gift of sight.

## 1. In sight we remember

### *Introduction*

We find our moments of happiness in peak experiences. These experiences are based on mental impressions which are embedded in our soul. Peak experiences give us the idea to go beyond all phenomena and give us an experience of a supernatural unity. That's because, although our soul submerges in phenomena, in the whirl it is difficult to distinguish an archetypal religious experience from an phenomenal experience. We are chained by experiences in a world of phenomena. Matter is not spiritual, not ideal, not static. The sigh of the universe withstands a harmonic cosmic condition.

Ideal images do not spring from the twilight world of passing phenomena, but transcends from a world which precedes the world of things; the authentic reality is static. Because of the mental imprint we approach the world in a context of coherence and related consistency. These characteristics should be reflected in the timelessness and static condition of reality before the sighing of the cosmos.

### *The view of Plato*

Long ago Plato, the philosopher of antiquity, taught us the existence of a spiritual world. He said we focus on the visible world which we call reality. But that is a pale reflection of the authentic reality he called the world of ideas. The perceived reality is believed to be the genuine reality. The consequence is human ignorance. It looks like man wants to live in darkness. Likewise we behave the way we talk, think and act.

Plato argued man tends to choose for appearances in the meaning of pretences and shadows. Faking is not difficult, because (almost) no one transcends the world of appearances and will embrace the authentic reality of ideas. After all, we're all blind in a world of shadows. On the other hand, living this way we reject the happiness of true light. Because of ignorance we are dragged in changes and die in a changing world.

But there is a possibility to erect from the world of darkness, he said. Therefore we should not focus on the world of shadows, but turn around and focus on the reality of the Idea. The Idea is a divine, non-temporary, perfect shape which is withdrawn from our daily view. What can we do to reach for this true reality? Most of us will continue to focus on the shadows, according to Plato. Because they lack the intelligence and perseverance or education to turn around and climb with mental effort to the true reality. Fortunately some man persist in the search and erect their mind on original and reason wise memory of spiritual forms. It is possible to reach for true wisdom because we have a sort of imprint which helps us to find the base of the spiritual world.

The quest is heavy and Plato said it is much heavier than severe physical labour, because in the latter case mental and physical powers can be divided. The erection of the psyche to true reality depends on severe mental effort.

What is the path we could take to reach reality? It starts with the intuition to understand the world we experience is circumstantial. Primarily it is a way of understanding according to Plato. But not by rational activities applied to the physical world, but a matter of the remembrance of the origin of ideas by our mind. So we should not stick to sophistic battles and subjective thoughts, based and focused on the world that we can see. Intuition must ensure we wonder man can have opposing opinions on matters and that yet seem both to be right. Actually Plato meant that these views are two sides of a coin. For example, two men discuss a line on paper. One says it's tall because he works with small things, for example small computer chips. Another says it is small, because he is a pilot and is used to large trips around the world. Who is right? Plato said that these are subjective opinions.

The mind focused on the original idea, investigates this line and can also start a dialogue to conclude the concept 'line' precedes a subjective way of looking. Let us look at the term 'flower'. The concept precedes the question of whether a particular flower smells nice or less nice (tastes differ). The concept is based on an image. Understanding this conceptual meaning is a first stage in ascending the real world of ideas.

To understand the process of the discovery of heaven, Plato described the allegory of the cave. It tells the story of the climb from the world of shadows to the world's highest unchanging reality. Once the world of the highest idea is discovered by us, the world of darkness appears to be a faint reflection of the higher reality. You should make a serious commitment to walk this inner path, but the glance is supernatural and fantastic, according to Plato. But if we see the supernatural metaphysical sun of ideas, first we have to learn to see the higher reality, because in the beginning this world is painful to our spiritual sight and dazzles us.

After our intellect is used to the higher reality of ideas, and we descend to the world of shadows, the common world, we mention its darkness. That is not surprising because our view was accustomed to the enlightened world of ideas. Enlightened man realize how shady the world is and how impermanence drives man. If more men were able and put effort in the remembrance of the enlightened path of the true reality, the world could be better understood.

*Conclusion:* sight is an intuitive, intellectual and spiritual process to erect to the metaphysical cosmic truth.

## 2. Introspective sight of fragmented moments

### *Introduction*

Phenomena, the things we observe, include changes. It is no use to interpret these phenomena or to explain these logically. And man is not really focussed on doing this, because they live in fragments. For example, if you put your keys somewhere, a few seconds later you do not remember where you left them. If you have a good practical idea, you have to wait and see whether you find your pen in time to write it down on paper. So we remember our experiences in fragments. Even after physical painful experiences we look back at this moment like a spectator. If the pain is softened we remember this as a fragmented experience, as a phenomenon which is associated with a particular event.

### *Buddhist sight*

Buddhists regard the phenomena that occur in our existence of living beings as volatile and subject to constant change. It is an important basic principle that everything that arises and perishes depends on causes and conditions.

Buddhists distinguish two areas: an outer and an inner area of experience. The outer experience is a process that manifests itself physically. This process starts at an initial state of the universe through an evolution to the present. Material parts could be traced to the origin of the universe.

Our inner experience (perceptions, intentions, thoughts, emotions) consists of mental phenomena. Its development results from mental stages that have been passed. Again, like the physical area of life, the mental development is a process of cause and effect. However, the path of the inner potential is mainly affected by mental processes and must therefore as main process be separated from physical development. That does not mean there is no interaction between mental and physical processes. After all, our thoughts are also determined by physical conditions. Physical sensations influence our mental conditions. But Buddhists say that the condition is in relation to our consciousness superficial.

This interaction, mixture between the physical and mental, is a main cause of problems. We mix mental processes with physical processes in space and time. This creates mental afflictions (misunderstanding) and emotional afflictions (anger, lust and jealousy). Man attaches himself mentally to the physical and this development is precisely, in essence, which directs the mind to a different path of cause and effect. Therefore we suffer.

That is the reason we must get rid of compromised mental processes by physical sensations. We must be aware of the emptiness of our self, to break the chain in which we have captured ourselves. The self is essentially an adjusted and trapped reality. We have to detach mental processes from physical sensations and phenomena to achieve true insight. Everything that exists is an instantaneous phenomenon that flashes momentarily and disappears. The moment is real, the universe is nothing but a constant stream of individual moments in a continuum of impermanence. Therefore time is not a coherent flow, but merely a sequence of separate moments.

Zen Buddhists aim at this type of consciousness specifically. Zen Buddhists believe that if we cling to words, concepts, rigid doctrines or conducts, this prevent us to penetrate to the true consciousness. Truth is a silent understanding from mind to mind. Truth is beyond reason and only attainable through immediate experience, accessible by intuition. 'Zen experience' is an example of this Buddhist consciousness. It is not comparable with a bodily sensation or peak experience, but precisely reversed an introspection in which the mind is made free of such incentives.

*Conclusion:* sight is intuitive reduction to immediate experience.

### 3.We look for inner unity

#### *Introduction*

Actually, sight ables man to look at the world around us in a comprehensive glance. We are not often conscious of this spiritual birth right, but claim everything in sight like we are sent by God. I think it is not amazing that man puts effort to locate this idea of unity in the world of phenomena. For example physics focus on the explanation of the universe, looking for basic consistency in the perspective of ideal unity. I suggest that in basic, this idea of unity can be found in Hinduism. However, Hindus will judge that western thinking is basic rational and therefor counterproductive, in the spiritual meaning. We look at the world and are deceived because we are ignorant and are guided by mental desires. It is according to Hindu also true that jealousy, rage, and so on do not contribute to a happier life. But it goes further. We should focus more on mental processes than basing our spiritual development on physical conditions. These keep us trapped in a web of illusions.

Moreover, the theoretical possibility to reconstruct the cosmos and to derive our existence (and genesis), is intellectual interesting. Thereby sight might originate in a physical state of the universe whereby universe does not expand or shrink. But as if the sigh of the universe is in static harmonic complete unifying embedded inner self. That timeless moment of unity and simplicity could man find in the sight essentially. So since we are able to approach things in the outer world by our ability of sight, the progression of the discovery of the universe is interesting, but stays a Pyrrhic victory. According to major Indian schools, the outer world is not the source of inspiration but moreover the sight.

#### *Indian sight*

Life is in essence spiritual unity. This unity Hindus call Brahman. The cosmos and the multitude of changes and perceptions we perceive, is integrally a reflection of this unity. Man is not able to understand this directly, because we are devoted to our senses which serve us a multiple and changing reality. Man attaches and binds himself to appearances. Actually man is misled, because he cannot really get grip on the meaning or essence of things. Hindus call this deception Mayâ. An important element of the Indian philosophy is mental detachment from desires. Rituals like fasting have deep roots in Hindu religion.

How and where should we look? Reason will only help us to realize we ascend by conceptual considerations and dialectics to a higher truth. This process is similar to the dialectical process like Plato taught. It is a path of logic. However, Hindus emphasize on intuition. By intuition man is able to find the way to his spiritual self, in basic by means of meditation or logic. That is only possible if he can see through the attachment of our experiences based on sensory manifestations. Then he is able to reveal himself by true consciousness and universal understanding (Vidya). We understand that our self is independent and different from all manifestations. Our real self is Âtman and is identical to Brahman. We then understand change and suffering, and we are guided in unity and our identity is inseparable and identical, is Brahman.

*Conclusion:* the true sight is intuitive and indivisible, identification in unity.

#### 4. On the inner path we are devoted with mercy

##### *Introduction*

We get lost because there is no asylum in the world, where the soul could be free. In addition to physical care for the body, the soul requires psychical care. For psychical needs we nowadays contact psychologists and psychiatrists. Freud and Jung have described the depths of the unconscious and especially Jung addressed the shadows of the unconscious. Jung sought healing of the soul in working with shadows and processing complexes. We could learn to face complexes in life. However, looking into the depths of the soul, does not necessarily lead to a meaningful existence, but to an existence in which we (only) accept that we have to live with it. Augustine stated that man is not able to pull himself out of the quicksand in which the soul remains, to spiritual dry grounds. He taught man roam psychically and he foresaw the need for outside help, a divine power.

Religious conscience cannot be disabled or be divided into fragments. Man as an image of paradise, an image that cannot be experienced in this life or to be represented in physical life, unregarded how hard we like to work, because we live in a world of representations. Therefor paradise cannot be a phenomenon, but only a harmonious state in the afterlife.

##### *Christian sight*

The Christian tradition is besides the theme of creation, focused on sight. Praying to saints and God is an example of this sight. Although we call our culture Christian there is little left over of the inner beauty and purity of inwardly religious images. For example, the saint Augustine told us about the path which leads to believe in God. It is a path with many mental obstacles and inner struggles before reaching faith and insight. He described the soul as an endless flood. The soul seeks out the bottomless depths of the inner self. But there are insoluble matters, like the limited storage in the memory of the soul. If we forget something, we will not look for it anymore. Therefor our mind includes more than it knows of itself. In this doubt and confusion he seeks a fixed point which exceeds the fickle soul. He finds the Archimedes point in the power of God, beyond the solely soul. Man is like a drowning soul who, by (mentally) stabbing his arms, is drawn on the banks of the holy land, by divine power.

*Conclusion:* the sight is inwardly oriented and leads to religious experience, spanning man's meaning of life.

### Note

In this article I discussed in brief major religious and philosophical traditions which show an important human talent. People are able to evolve sight. Rationality, emotion, perception, intelligence occur on the surface of our lives. Sight is elemental and has a spiritual foundation that offers us an inner path through intuition. The ability of sight is also used for a global and earthly view of the human being. The question is why we use the ability to focus on perceptions instead of an inner path. Actually I derive this question from ancient spiritual and religious traditions.

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