

Journey to True Spirituality ~ SHINZEN YOUNG

00:00:00 So I just had a session with Diane.

00:00:10 If I'm incoherent, you can blame her.

00:00:14 Because I may be a little too much into my body, so we'll see how much of the upper chakras

00:00:25 are functioning at this point.

00:00:28 Okay, so we've been talking about the possibility of mindfulness revolution.

00:00:41 And I've made a few points, let's just review.

00:00:47 We have some guests tonight coming in in many arrests, so to speak.

00:00:54 So I like to think about mindfulness from what might be described as a unified point

00:01:05 of view, a very widely encompassing point of view.

00:01:13 I think it is possible to have, through careful analysis of the dimensions involved, it's

00:01:23 possible to understand certain underlying commonalities, not just for the Southeast

00:01:35 Asian Buddhist practice, which is where current mindfulness historically came from, but more

00:01:43 broadly all of Buddhist practice, and more broadly still all of contemplative practice

00:01:50 all around the world.

00:01:55 Any contemplative practice, East or West, could be nicely analyzed in terms of the degree

00:02:05 to which, the way in which, three core skills are talked about, cultivated, and applied.

00:02:19 So the three core skills are concentration, sensory clarity, and equanimity.

00:02:24 You can think about concentration as the ability to focus on what you deem relevant at a given

00:02:33 time.

00:02:34 What's important about that way of describing concentration is not so much what I said,

00:02:39 but what I didn't say.

00:02:41 I did not imply that concentration is necessarily limiting the spatial scope of your focus.

00:02:48 I did not imply that concentration necessarily was holding just one thing for a long duration.

00:03:01 Concentration could be expansive, it can cover a large domain.

00:03:05 Yes, it could be spatially contractive also, and those are actually sub-dimensions of the

00:03:11 concentration skill, how broad or narrow you focus.

00:03:15 Concentration could be momentary, you can make break, make break, make break, make break,

00:03:21 taste momentary high concentration on a variety of objects.

00:03:26 But you can also have sort of what people often think about when they hear the word

00:03:31 concentration, which is holding just one thing in attention for an arbitrary duration of

00:03:39 time.

00:03:40 It's like you can hold the sensation at the tip of your nostril for four hours without

00:03:45 any wavering whatsoever.

00:03:48 Now that ability to hold just one thing for an extended duration of time, that certainly

00:03:54 is a sub-dimension of the concentration skill.

00:03:57 However, the ability to make break, make break, make break, and have what is called khanika

00:04:02 samadhi or momentary high concentration, that's also very important, especially if you want

00:04:09 to maintain mindfulness, a deep state of mindfulness while you're engaging in daily life, you're

00:04:18 driving a car, you're having a conversation.

00:04:22 Eventually we want you to experience being very, very deep while you're moving around

00:04:29 and to get the MMM, maximum meditation mileage, out of each moment of daily life to monasticize

00:04:38 your life as we were talking about in the group process.

00:04:41 For that, understanding that the dimension of concentration skill, which is momentary

00:04:47 high concentration but consciously tasted, as I say it's technically called khanika samadhi

00:04:53 in the Pali language.

00:04:55 So speaking of concentration as the ability to attend to what you deem relevant, not saying

00:05:07 it has to be this thing or that thing, it has to be your breath or your body, not limiting

00:05:15 it by its range and not limiting by saying, well, it has to be something small, it could

00:05:21 be something large.

00:05:24 Not limiting the concept of concentration to, well, it has to be a long

duration on

00:05:29 just one thing.

00:05:31 It could be momentary on a variety of sensory targets as they present themselves.

00:05:37 So as I say, the way I like to talk about concentration, what's important is not just

00:05:45 what I say, but what I don't say, because there is a tendency to assume that concentration

00:05:54 means hold a small thing for a long period of time.

00:06:00 And yes, indeed, that represents two dimensions of the skill, but there are other facets to

00:06:06 it.

00:06:09 Concentration is to focus on what you deem relevant.

00:06:12 Sometimes you'll hear people say, well, I don't want to learn to concentrate because

00:06:17 I need to let my attention freely float in order to be creative and make associations.

00:06:23 Well, if that's what's relevant to the moment, then your ability to do that will be enhanced

00:06:30 by concentration.

00:06:32 Concentration will not get in the way of that intuitive flux.

00:06:37 In fact, it will enhance it.

00:06:39 You'll focus just on the place in consciousness that makes those connections for you because

00:06:45 that's what's relevant to that moment.

00:06:48 So concentration power, sensory clarity has the second aspect.

00:06:53 It has two sub-dimensions, basically.

00:06:56 You know, I've talked about it in the group process.

00:07:00 Resolution, the ability to upgrade the discrimination or bandwidth within the sensory circuits themselves.

00:07:15 That's the resolution.

00:07:16 And then detection.

00:07:17 Subtle is significant.

00:07:19 The ability to detect subtle sensory events that are normally subliminal is hugely important

00:07:26 on this path.

00:07:28 So concentration power, resolution, and detection skills, particularly the ability to detect

00:07:38 the very instant when a new sensory event arises and the very instant when an old sensory

00:07:46 event passes.

00:07:48 Because where things come from and where they go to are the same place.

00:07:55 And we've talked a little bit about the primordial great perfection.

00:08:00 Well, that's what proceeds and follows each ordinary inner and outer sensory experience.

00:08:11 So the ability to detect what happens at the very instant of the arising of any sensory

00:08:18 experience and the ability to detect what happens as it's passing is the ability to

00:08:26 briefly be vectorially directed towards something that is beyond sensory experience.

00:08:36 Something that is beyond the embedding of time and space.

00:08:44 Okay, so sensory clarity.

00:08:48 Equanimity.

00:08:49 Originally, equanimity as a term from the Latin, equa anima, literally means a balanced

00:08:59 state.

00:09:00 And originally it meant sort of being unmoved and unexpressive.

00:09:08 But that's not at all what it means as a technical term to describe the dimensions of mindful

00:09:16 awareness, not at all.

00:09:19 It's balanced in a different sense, balanced in the sense of not pushing on experience

00:09:31 that's trying to arise, so not suppressing the arisings, and not inappropriately holding

00:09:41 sensory experience that's about to pass.

00:09:44 So it's basically training the sensory circuits into a, training away their subtle tendencies

00:10:00 to interfere with themselves.

00:10:05 It's analogous to reducing friction in a mechanical system.

00:10:12 That's at least the way I think about it.

00:10:15 So we cultivate these, so I said that I like to think of mindfulness, so the modern mindful

00:10:30 movement in my own mind, the phrase that I like to use is that it's contemplative-based

00:10:43 psycho-spiritual growth working in concert with science.

00:10:51 So a two-way street.

00:10:53 Science will help us understand it in a way that we could never have understood it before,

00:10:59 even the great masters of the past didn't know even basic neuroscience.

00:11:05 So they could only give a first-person report, and they did so brilliantly, but with the

00:11:12 current ways to objectively think about the biophysical basis of our experience and so

00:11:22 forth, that's going to give us now an incredible advantage to innovate, to understand at deeper

00:11:30 levels what's involved in these psychologically and spiritually significant growth that humans

00:11:44 go through when they do this practice.

00:11:47 So working in concert, meaning we look to science to improve and deepen our understanding

00:11:56 of what's going on, but also the mindfulness practice will improve the scientists as humans

00:12:02 and as professionals, and so you get a positive feedback loop going that could be very impactful

00:12:12 in the next century or so.

00:12:14 I'm a big picture guy, so I look to the Zeitgeist, the spirit of the times.

00:12:25 Toynbee, who is a very famous historian, made an extraordinary statement.

00:12:34 He said that when all is said and done, it is possible, he didn't say this would happen,

00:12:39 but he said it is possible that big picture-wise, in retrospect, three or four centuries from

00:12:48 now, the single most important event of the 20th century will be the discovery on the

00:12:56 part of the West of Buddhism.

00:13:02 That is a direct quote from Toynbee.

00:13:06 So not that I think the Western world is going to adopt the Buddhist religion, but there

00:13:17 are certain discoveries that the Buddha made that I think will absolutely pass the test

00:13:26 of time and turn out to be very important for the whole human race.

00:13:34 So that's sort of the basic paradigm that I presented to you.

00:13:41 And then I said, so okay, that's the modern mindfulness movement, but how about mindfulness

00:13:47 itself?

00:13:48 How do we think about that?

00:13:50 So I think about it as the systematic cultivation and broad application of those core skills.

00:14:02 Mental awareness being defined as concentration power, sensory clarity, and equanimity working

00:14:08 together.

00:14:11 So broad application, reducing suffering, elevate fulfillment, understanding oneself

00:14:19 at all levels, increasing skillful actions, and ultimately, the ultimate application is

00:14:33 in discovering a spirit where you want to serve from love, that in Buddhism

we call

00:14:42 the bodhicitta.

00:14:44 So we talked yesterday about the dimension of application, which is understanding yourself

00:14:55 at all levels.

00:14:57 And just to make things sort of give some organization to things, I said we might consider

00:15:10 four aspects of that.

00:15:17 So one aspect would be more surface, which is to understand your own personality.

00:15:28 How do these skills relate to understanding your own personality?

00:15:34 Now, as you're sitting and practicing, you've all noticed this, sometimes insights will

00:15:41 arise spontaneously that are personal insights.

00:15:44 You sort of understand yourself.

00:15:47 And that's nice.

00:15:48 And that's the result of observing yourself in a mindful state.

00:15:55 However, there may be aspects of understanding your own personality that don't just percolate

00:16:03 up spontaneously in your practice.

00:16:08 You may have to go to a professional, a counselor, a psychologist, a psychiatrist, to address

00:16:20 certain aspects of personality if they don't get taken care of automatically by the practice.

00:16:29 And the way you'll know that the practice hasn't taken care of it is you've been practicing

00:16:34 for 20 or 30 years and people tell you you're still an asshole.

00:16:40 So clearly something's, you know, you know through feedback, okay?

00:16:50 You know through, you know, things not working out.

00:16:56 It's like, well, I've learned to transcend and it doesn't bother me that, you know, stuff

00:17:03 is not working out because of my behavior.

00:17:10 But actually it should sort of bother you.

00:17:14 And if the practice can't address it, then, well, there are specialists who work at the

00:17:21 personal level.

00:17:22 That's what they're trained to do.

00:17:24 So the practice may address understanding yourself at the personal level.

00:17:30 Maybe it's all you need or maybe you need something else.

00:17:36 So then there's what might be called the depths or the subconscious.

00:17:45 So certain forms of therapy claim to address that.

00:17:50 In fact, your classical therapies, they don't call it depth psychology for

nothing, Freudian,

00:17:57 Jungian, and so forth, claim that they get down to that level, whereas other forms of

00:18:03 therapy might not.

00:18:04 I'm not going to get involved in whose claims are valid, but it's just something to know

00:18:13 about, okay?

00:18:15 There are the depths.

00:18:19 Part of the depths are personal, but some of them, Jungians would claim, that there's

00:18:25 a collective unconscious, that there's things deep down there that are sort of universal.

00:18:32 So you may come in direct contact with those depths as the result of mindfulness practice.

00:18:49 You will definitely come indirectly in contact with them.

00:18:59 But once again, there are practices that are not strictly part of mindfulness that are

00:19:09 designed to sort of touch those levels.

00:19:13 First of all, depth psychology.

00:19:16 But secondly, shamanism, our ancient ancestors all over the world in the tribal forms of

00:19:29 culture would contact the spirit world.

00:19:37 One nice way to get in contact with that, if you're interested, is to do, say, Native

00:19:44 American ceremonies and things like that.

00:19:46 Now there's more to the Native American path than that, because of the nature, in order

00:19:55 to find the spirit world, typically you do shamanic ordeals.

00:20:02 You expose yourself to hot here, like sweat lodge or sun dance.

00:20:09 In Japan, you expose yourself to cold.

00:20:12 You have to chant mantras squatting under a waterfall in winter for hours on end.

00:20:22 So all around the world, shamanism entails physical sacrifices.

00:20:33 And those sacrifices are done within a ritual context, which of course encourages a concentrated

00:20:40 state and encourages a state of equanimity.

00:20:47 So although they may not systematically deconstruct their personhood, just doing those ceremonies

00:20:56 in order to contact the spirit world would tend to have the effect of taking people into

00:21:07 the deepest level, which is the source, which is that formless doing that I talked about

00:21:18 a few minutes ago.

00:21:19 What precedes each sensory and motor arising and what follows each sensory and motor arising

00:21:28 is something beyond form.

00:21:33 And so there's the world of spirits, which is the subconscious, and then there is the

00:21:41 great spirit or the dharmakaya, we would call it in Buddhism, the formless absolute rest

00:21:48 and absolute activity that is at the source of each moment of perception and expression

00:22:01 for us.

00:22:02 So the result of attempts to contact the spirit world through what was apparently natural

00:22:13 to all of our ancestors all over the world, which is you fast, you expose yourself to

00:22:20 heat, expose yourself to cold, you go without water, you allow yourself to be pierced or

00:22:28 scarified or other such things that forces you into the spirit realm, that's true, but

00:22:40 it also forces you into a state of high concentration and equanimity, which would then likely lead

00:22:47 you to a no self or an experience of touching something that is beyond the spirits, which

00:23:03 could be called the great spirit.

00:23:05 But as I say in Buddhism, we call it the dharmakaya, means the body of the absolute.

00:23:11 And then the realm of spirits is called the sambhogakaya, which is the realm of glorious

00:23:19 forms.

00:23:20 And then the surface is called the nirmanakaya, the conventional experience.

00:23:26 So Native American specifically and shamanic broadly can make a nice complement to the

00:23:38 mindfulness practice because it can take you to the experience of the very deepest level

00:23:46 that we'll talk about a little more in a minute.

00:23:50 But it also, if you're interested in contacting the quote spirit world, the archetypes, the

00:23:57 realm of archetypes, well, that's another specialist that can supplement the mindfulness

00:24:06 practice.

00:24:07 So okay, understand the surface individual personality, either through the practice,

00:24:14 just intrinsically, or maybe go to a specialist.

00:24:19 Understand the subconscious, either just through the practice or maybe go to a specialist.

00:24:32 Another aspect is what I started to talk about yesterday, which is to understand yourself

00:24:38 as a sensory system.

00:24:42 So the way that I like to do that, it can be done in various ways, but my favorite way

00:24:53 is to work with mental image, mental talk, and body emotion.

00:24:59 The reason I like to work with those three sensory elements is that they, as far as I

00:25:05 can tell from introspection, they form a natural system.

00:25:12 And I believe that we'll be able to use neuroscience to ferret out those connections.

00:25:20 In fact, that's sort of the main goal of my projects at Harvard Medical School, are to

00:25:30 tease out that inner system and see if we can find the neural correlates of it as a

00:25:37 system.

00:25:39 So in any event, the mental image, mental talk, and body emotion, see in, hear in, inner

00:25:49 seeing, inner hearing, and the innermost part of our body experience, which is the emotional

00:25:57 body, the limbic system.

00:26:02 They work together.

00:26:06 There's four basic things that happen.

00:26:12 They all involve the word action.

00:26:15 So first of all, there is interaction.

00:26:19 Mental image can trigger mental talk.

00:26:21 Mental talk can trigger mental image.

00:26:24 Mental image can trigger body emotion.

00:26:26 Body emotion can build until it turns into an image.

00:26:29 Or body emotion can trigger mental talk.

00:26:33 Or the whole thing can activate simultaneously, and they're all sort of triggering each other.

00:26:40 So you can actually watch how the flow of interaction occurs within that system.

00:26:51 And you can unblock that flow.

00:26:55 So that's the interactivity of those elements.

00:27:02 And then there's the reactivity of those elements.

00:27:06 External sights, external sounds, physical touches arise, and then the inner system reacts

00:27:13 to those sometimes.

00:27:17 And when you have an arising of touch, sight, sound, and an arising of image, talk, and

00:27:24 body emotion at the same time, that creates the sense of the world over here and me over

00:27:35 here as perceiver.

00:27:41 So what would happen if there was just touch, sight, sound, and no inner reactivity at all?

00:27:48 Well, you can actually see what would happen by observing the system.

00:27:55 You observe the system, and sometimes it doesn't react.

00:28:02 It simply is inactive.

00:28:06 And there's no sense of observer, no sense of an eye that's hearing or seeing.

00:28:13 There's just seeing, just hearing.

00:28:15 And you are that.

00:28:19 And the barrier between inside and outside disappears.

00:28:27 Which makes it rather easy, rather natural to have that sense of wanting to serve from

00:28:34 love.

00:28:36 Because it seems like not just every person, but every thing that you look at, you inhabit.

00:28:46 So you are it.

00:28:50 So sometimes that system reacts, and sometimes that system is inactive.

00:28:59 The other thing that that inner system does is it goes proactive.

00:29:04 That's my own private language.

00:29:06 Proactive means it disengages from the touch, sight, sound world, and it goes off and begins

00:29:13 to spin memory, plan, fantasy.

00:29:19 In neuroscience that's called the default network.

00:29:26 It has a distinctive signature.

00:29:30 So it's off and it's problem solving, or it's worrying, or it's fantasizing out of fear,

00:29:40 or fantasizing out of desire to entertain, etc., etc.

00:29:46 It's like a home entertainment system.

00:29:47 It just goes off on its own.

00:29:50 So you can monitor, you can understand yourself as a sensory system by observing this.

00:30:00 So why is that useful?

00:30:03 Well first of all, it can hugely reduce suffering without necessarily changing the content of

00:30:10 your sensory experience.

00:30:14 Because when those elements tangle in unconsciousness and coagulate due to

lack of equanimity, that

00:30:26 vastly increases the suffering associated with unpleasant content.

00:30:33 And that vastly reduces the fulfillment that is potentially there when it's a pleasant

00:30:39 content.

00:30:40 So just by bringing untangling, which is your clarity piece, and unblocking, which is your

00:30:46 equanimity piece, by bringing those qualities to that inner system, you achieve two of the

00:30:54 dimensions of happiness that I talk about, reduction of suffering, elevation of fulfillment.

00:31:00 But it's much more than that.

00:31:03 Working with that system is related to understanding yourself, because you see, oh yeah, this is

00:31:11 how it actually arises, this I am-ness.

00:31:16 It's also related to improving behavior, because behaviors are preceded by will.

00:31:29 If I have an anger issue, or if I have a substance abuse issue, or a procrastination issue, that

00:31:45 experience of anger, or the will to abuse a substance, or a will that says I don't want

00:31:54 to do such and such even though I know I should, that arises within that inner system.

00:32:00 And so your ability to have equanimity with that will break the identification with the

00:32:10 negative urges.

00:32:12 And that is not all that's involved in behavior change, but that certainly is an important

00:32:20 component.

00:32:22 If you can stay, if you're in recovery and you're jonesing for whatever it is, a cigarette

00:32:29 or a drink or whatever, well, that's going to come up in that system.

00:32:38 And if you can track it, unblock it, not suppress the experience of the desire, but also not

00:32:46 lock on to it, if you can stay with it and just watch it expand and contract, expand and contract,

00:32:52 for however long it takes, well, it will break up.

00:32:55 The urge will break up, and that will help you make the behavior change.

00:33:01 Gives you a very systematic way to go about that aspect of behavior change.

00:33:07 Now in the morning group process, we talked about the fact that there's more to behavior

00:33:14 change than just deconstructing undesirable desires, but that is part of it.

00:33:23 So it turns out that working with this inner system is germane to certain aspects of objective

00:33:30 positive behavior change.

00:33:35 And it's also related to the love and service piece because once you see where that system

00:33:59 arises from, you realize that everyone arises from that same place.

00:34:08 So that's another way that you're always looking at yourself, basically.

00:34:15 So untangling those strands is important in reducing subjective suffering, but it's also

00:34:27 important in gaining insight.

00:34:31 So this is where we left off in the talk yesterday.

00:34:39 Buddhism would say that if you carefully observe the components that create the impression

00:34:48 I am-ness, you'll see that there are only those components and there actually is no

00:34:54 thing inside you called a self.

00:34:57 Now first of all that's counterintuitive because it seems to just about everyone that there

00:35:02 is a thing inside me called a self.

00:35:04 So why are you trying to tell me there isn't?

00:35:09 And the other thing is even if it's true, who wants it?

00:35:18 What's the payoff for seeing that there's no thing inside you called a self?

00:35:22 Well let me suggest to you that the experience that in Buddhism is described as seeing that

00:35:29 there's no thing inside you called a self is one facet on the jewel of enlightenment.

00:35:40 The jewel of enlightenment has a lot of sides to it.

00:35:44 That's an important side and anyone that has had these experiences will appreciate why

00:35:52 someone would like get all excited about pointing out to you that there is no thing inside you

00:35:58 called a self.

00:35:59 However that is just one facet of the experience and there are other ways that that experience

00:36:06 can be described.

00:36:09 For example it's an experience of a connection to all things.

00:36:18 It's an experience of the boundary between inside and outside going away or more accurately

00:36:26 an experience that lets you realize that the boundary was never there to begin with.

00:36:33 So it's another way to put it, you could say no self or you could say it allows you to

00:36:45 have an elastic self, an elastic identity that it can expand and contract.
00:36:51 It can be the normal size which is the normal you or it can reach out and encompass the
00:37:06 larger world that you normally don't think of as you.
00:37:18 It can reach out and sort of encompass a person that's in front of you or the flower that's
00:37:26 in front of you so your identity gets about this big, it can shrink down and be about
00:37:32 this big but it can get a lot bigger.
00:37:35 It's elastic.
00:37:38 It can reach out to the ends of the imagined universe so any world systems that you would
00:37:50 imagine you embrace them.
00:37:55 But it can also shrink down.
00:37:58 It can shrink down to inhabit the center of every atom.
00:38:08 I'm speaking metaphorically here.
00:38:12 So it has been said that poets can see in the dark.
00:38:19 I think it was Lorca that said that.
00:38:25 So the South American writer, I could be wrong but I think he said poets can see in the dark,
00:38:32 he's the one that said it.
00:38:35 Recent poet is Rainer Maria Rilke, R-I-L-K-E, one of the most amazing poets of all time.
00:38:45 I don't know what kind of ether he is poetry from.
00:38:52 He lived like a hundred years ago, right?
00:38:56 Where did he pull that from to be able to say the things he says?
00:39:05 It's inexplicable.
00:39:10 Specifically what he had to say a hundred years ago when Europe was just starting to
00:39:22 discover Buddhism.
00:39:23 Just starting, knowledge of Buddhism was rudimentary in Europe in his time.
00:39:32 He absolutely nailed the essence of the Buddha's enlightenment as it would be interpreted in
00:39:42 the Japanese Zen tradition.
00:39:45 Without as far as I know any direct contact with the Japanese Zen tradition and with rather
00:39:51 little contact with anything about Buddhism.
00:39:58 How did he do it?
00:39:59 I don't know.
00:40:01 But I have a translation of his poem that I made myself from German on my website, Buddha
00:40:12 in der Gloria, the Buddha in Glory.

00:40:17 Mitte, alle mitten, Kern, der Kerne, Mandel, die sich einschließt und versüßt.

00:40:28 Dieses alles, bis an alle Sterne, ist dein Fruchtfleisch.

00:40:36 Sei begrüßt.

00:40:39 Center of all centers, core of cores, almond that enclosed itself to sweeten.

00:40:50 All of this to the furthest stars is your fruit flesh.

00:40:58 Hear my greeting.

00:41:00 He is congratulating the Buddha on the moment of his enlightenment, the morning after he

00:41:07 did Buddha did yaza, an all night set, was enlightened in the morning when he saw the

00:41:13 morning star Venus.

00:41:18 How did he get it?

00:41:20 How did he know about expansion and contraction?

00:41:23 And how to link that to the Buddha?

00:41:25 God, can I remember the rest of it?

00:41:29 Die du fühlst, wie nicht, mehr an der hängt, und ähnlichen ist deiner Schale, und dort

00:41:42 steht der starke Saft und Tränen.

00:41:45 Und von außen hilft ihm ein Gestalter, denn ganz oben werden deine Sonnen voll und glühend

00:41:55 umgedreht.

00:41:56 Doch in dir ist schon begonnen, was die Sonnen übersteht.

00:42:01 I can't believe I remember that.

00:42:04 See you feel nothing more upon you clinging.

00:42:12 Your shell is opened wide without a bound.

00:42:19 The ripe sap endlessly streaming within you, the ripened sap, dort steht der safte und

00:42:35 tränen.

00:42:36 Und von außen, and from outside you were helped by a star.

00:42:45 That's the seeing of the Venus, the morning star, und von außen hilft ihm ein Gestalter,

00:42:52 denn ganz oben werden deine Sonnen.

00:42:57 When all around you orbited your stars, voll und glühend umgedreht, all around you orbited

00:43:22 the sun, doch in dir ist schon begonnen, was die Sonnen übersteht.

00:43:34 But that which will outlive the stars in you has now begun.

00:43:43 That's the poem that Roca wrote to describe the Buddha's enlightenment, with almost no

00:43:50 knowledge of Buddhism.

00:43:53 I repeat, what ether did he access to pull that out of?

00:44:01 So center of all center, core of cores, all of this to the farthest stars.
00:44:08 It's an elastic identity.
00:44:11 You could also call it a no-self.
00:44:17 So how does that come about?
00:44:18 Well, early Buddhism would say when you untangle the strands, then the somethingness of self
00:44:28 is seen as an illusion.
00:44:30 And where we left off in the talk last night was I gave the traditional metaphor for that,
00:44:38 the chariot metaphor from this great scripture called the questions of King Menandros, King
00:44:46 Belinda, but King Menandros, he was Greek, a Westerner, talking to a arhat way, way, way
00:44:58 back.
00:44:59 And it's the dialogue is recorded.
00:45:03 So the arhat Nagasena, quoting a Buddhist nun named Vajira, said, well, it's when you
00:45:17 dissect a chariot, there's just the parts.
00:45:21 There's no thing called a chariot.
00:45:22 So when you dissect I amness, there's just rupa, vedana, sanshya, samskara, vijnana.
00:45:30 There's just matter, feeling, thought, subliminal habit forces, and consciousness.
00:45:47 And no self.
00:45:48 There's just those elements, and there's no self.
00:45:51 In another place in Buddhist literature, it's not quite the whole picture of self, but it's
00:45:59 self in terms of identifying with the body, saying I am body.
00:46:05 There's this extraordinary passage where the Buddha says, just as a skillful butcher would
00:46:15 carve up a steer, and at some point the perception steer goes away, and the perception meat arises.
00:46:35 So in the same way, the skillful meditator deconstructs the body into earth, water, air,
00:46:45 and fire, four elements, and the perception I am a body disappears, and the perception
00:46:53 there are just these elements arises.
00:46:57 So we see in early Buddhism that the notion of untangling strands in order to eliminate
00:47:05 an emergent property was not just applied to the five aggregates.
00:47:13 It was also applied to the perception of the physicality of the body, and the deconstructive

00:47:25 strands were the primitive chemistry of that time.

00:47:31 But it sort of works, and it actually does work.

00:47:35 You can do it.

00:47:36 Maybe just for the fun of it, one of these days I'll give a guide.

00:47:40 I've actually done this with people.

00:47:42 I've done the old-fashioned four-element deconstruction of somethingness of your body.

00:47:50 You can totally do it.

00:47:52 Even though we know that as far as physics goes, that's a pretty primitive view of physics,

00:48:00 but it still works.

00:48:02 What you do is, because it's based on experience, they state it as though it's based on objective

00:48:11 science, but it's based on sensory experience.

00:48:14 So you tune into your body, and you find all the bones and the hard parts.

00:48:23 Well, it's the earth element, right?

00:48:25 So you tune into those and get a really good sense of that.

00:48:29 And then you get a sense of anything that's sort of airy, like your breath or other flatulence

00:48:36 or things like that.

00:48:37 And then you get the circulation of the watery parts, and then you can feel warmth in different

00:48:44 parts.

00:48:45 And you just tune into the putative characteristics of the four elements, and you sort of get

00:48:54 those sensory strands all separated out.

00:48:58 And sure enough, you start to experience like, well, there's just the four elements.

00:49:03 There's not a thing called a body here.

00:49:05 So the method of divide and conquer is not limited to the five aggregates.

00:49:12 And in fact, I vastly prefer the three inner elements.

00:49:16 Occam's razor, okay?

00:49:19 If three will do the trick, why not have three instead of four or five, et cetera, et cetera?

00:49:29 So I pointed out that untangling mental image, mental talk, and body emotion is, my friends

00:49:39 at Google would say it's a non-trivial issue, okay?

00:49:45 I love this jargon.

00:49:47 Instead of saying significant or hard, they say non-trivial.

00:49:53 So this is non-trivial because each of these systems is scaled.

00:50:06 If you look into image space, there's the surface images, but those trigger subtle association

00:50:13 images.

00:50:14 And each of those subtle associations triggers a whole bunch of subtler associations.

00:50:20 The bulk of all of this is below the threshold of ordinary awareness, but with your detection

00:50:26 skills and your concentration skills, you can actually detect it.

00:50:31 Not in terms of the content, the content is too fugacious and parallel.

00:50:39 Fugacious means it just passes too quickly and it's massively parallel.

00:50:44 But you can detect the aggregate, the state, like the state variable.

00:50:52 You can sort of take the temperature, you can be aware of average kinetic energy as

00:50:57 it changes.

00:50:58 I'm making a metaphor here, okay, but it's sort of analogous to taking pressure or temperature.

00:51:04 You can see the overall waveform of the subconscious mind in real time.

00:51:13 Underneath surface mental talk is subtler talk, underneath that is subtler talk.

00:51:18 Same deal, but you can watch the sort of changing contour of the system.

00:51:26 As with the body motion.

00:51:28 So, untangling is not just untangling the surface strands, it's untangling all the different

00:51:35 strands until all the levels of visual process, inner visual processing are all sort of nicely

00:51:42 over here and all the levels of auditory thinking are over here, the emotional body is over

00:51:50 here.

00:51:51 At all levels, they're completely separated out.

00:51:54 What happens at that point is that the emergent property of somethingness disappears.

00:52:05 So as I say, the traditional metaphor is the chariot thing.

00:52:13 Where we left off last night is I said I find that metaphor unconvincing.

00:52:21 I know it refers to an experience that is absolutely true and very important, but to

00:52:29 explain it in terms of sort of taking apart a chariot doesn't seem quite convincing.

00:52:39 So let me give you something that I think is closer to what's going on, a closer metaphor.

00:52:48 Now, you've got to hear loud and clear, this is just a metaphor.

00:52:52 I'm not saying this is the mechanism, but I think it's closer to the mechanism.

00:52:58 We don't know the mechanism yet scientifically.

00:53:02 Be very interesting when we do though.

00:53:05 So here's something that's a little closer.

00:53:07 Most of you have heard me say this a million times, but I'll say it again.

00:53:12 So you have an old-fashioned TV set with a CRT, cathode ray tube, not the flat screen

00:53:20 kind, but the old-fashioned kind.

00:53:27 There's like a test pattern and there's a big white area.

00:53:35 I say there is no white on that screen and you say, are you crazy?

00:53:43 Just look, it's mostly white.

00:53:46 And I say, are you sure?

00:53:50 Let's take this magnifying glass.

00:53:53 We agree that this magnifying glass does two things.

00:53:56 It enlarges, but that's not what's important.

00:54:01 It resolves.

00:54:04 It takes things that for the naked eye fall together, but that are truly separate.

00:54:12 And it allows you to actually see that separation.

00:54:14 That's called the resolution power of the lens.

00:54:18 So we know that it doesn't do anything else.

00:54:21 It doesn't add or subtract to what's there.

00:54:25 And it's really not the magnification we're interested in, it's the resolution, the clarity.

00:54:32 And now I want you to look at that white with this magnifying glass.

00:54:37 And as you get closer and closer and closer, what's going to happen?

00:54:42 The impression white disappears as the reality, little red, green, blue dots arises.

00:54:54 So what happened to the white?

00:54:59 Well it was sort of never there to begin with.

00:55:03 But it was actually, because if you don't look carefully, it's there.

00:55:09 But if you look very, very carefully without changing anything at all, now it's not there.

00:55:15 It's just red, green, and blue.

00:55:18 Something like that occurs with inner see, hear, feel.

00:55:27 When you're not looking carefully, it seems like there's a thing inside you called a self

00:55:33 that you're imprisoned in these thoughts and emotions.

00:55:38 It's not just that it's a thing, it's actually a prison that constrains your identity.

00:55:47 But when you finally see it clearly enough, the somethingness goes away and the incarceration

00:55:58 potential goes away.

00:56:01 Or another way to put it is it was never there to begin with.

00:56:06 You just now can see that.

00:56:09 An undesirable emergent property that's quite compelling vanishes simply through clarity.

00:56:23 That's the core insight of early Buddhism.

00:56:27 That's knowing yourself as a sensory system.

00:56:32 So it may sound rather cold and not very relevant to things.

00:56:37 So, oh, I know myself as a sensory system.

00:56:40 But actually it's really, really big.

00:56:44 Now is that to know yourself at the deepest level?

00:56:51 Well no, I would say that there's a deeper level of knowing yourself.

00:56:57 And we can actually extend the metaphor.

00:57:00 Okay, red, green, and blue pixels.

00:57:03 Once again, do understand, just a metaphor, just a way of thinking about things.

00:57:07 Red, green, and blue pixels.

00:57:10 What are they?

00:57:12 Well, actually they're radiant electromagnetic energy in the visual spectrum.

00:57:20 That's how I perceive them.

00:57:22 So if we think of, it's light.

00:57:26 So from that perspective, it's just they're different frequencies of the same thing.

00:57:34 What's light?

00:57:35 Well, that's a very interesting question from a physics point of view.

00:57:41 But the metaphor is actually quite nice.

00:57:48 Because if you think of red, green, and blue as just different frequencies of the same

00:57:55 thing, they're just part of this spectrum of radiant electromagnetic energy.

00:58:04 Well then, there's a kind of unification there.

00:58:10 So if you look more carefully at the actual substance of inner see, hear, feel, sure enough,

00:58:25 it's sort of like vibrating space.

00:58:32 And in fact, outer sight, sound, touch has the same quality.

00:58:40 So it all becomes an integrated arabesque of energy.

00:58:46 Vibrant, but sort of transparent.

00:58:54 And then you come to realize that what's churning those vibrations, fermenting them, fomenting

00:59:05 them, is that with each sensory and motor arising, there's a kind of effortless efflux

00:59:17 and a simultaneous effortless influx that churns those vibrations into existence the

00:59:25 way foam is born in the cleft of a hokusai wave.

00:59:29 You know, there's that famous picture of Mount Fuji seen in the cleft of a

wave, right, by

00:59:37 the Japanese ukiyo-e artist, Hokusai.

00:59:43 So the expanding wave and a simultaneous contracting wave, there's a shear, and in that shear is

00:59:56 born vibration.

00:59:59 And that vibration, if it coagulates, creates the inner, the sense that there's a material

01:00:11 world on the outside and a thing called self on the inside.

01:00:17 But if you see it just as it is, there is just this effortless efflux and reflux.

01:00:30 Like a fountain, a formless fountain of youth that's constantly gushing and gathering, its

01:00:39 center is wherever your attention goes, and its perimeter encompasses the whole self and

01:00:48 scene.

01:00:53 That is the dynamic side of the source.

01:00:58 That is the deepest experience of the Dharmakaya in terms of its activity.

01:01:06 However, that activity comes from and returns to an absolute rest that always pervades it.

01:01:22 So it's eternally, it's a kind of eternal fountain of youth, a formless womb that moment

01:01:31 by moment gives rise to self and world as it activates.

01:01:40 But it arises from and returns to and is peppered by Shalom Bimromav, the peace of God's own

01:01:53 heaven.

01:01:54 There's this prayer, I remember it vividly from being a little boy.

01:02:03 We in synagogue, Oseh Shalom Bimromav, hu ya'aseh shalom, aleinu ve'al kol Yisrael,

01:02:12 ve'ibru, amen.

01:02:15 May the one that creates Asiyah, it's a creation, may the one that creates the peace of his

01:02:23 own heaven give peace to you and all of Israel.

01:02:27 Of course, for me, Yisrael doesn't mean a country, it's anybody who struggles for the

01:02:35 Lord, Yisrael, it has a meaning in Hebrew, struggle to experience El, the source.

01:02:47 That's my interpretation of Israel anyway.

01:02:50 Other people have other interpretations, I'm sure.

01:02:54 But I've chosen that, it means sanga, okay?

01:02:58 Not a race, not a country.

01:03:01 So sometimes I'll sing that, that's what I mean.

01:03:09 The shalom, the peace that comes with completeness, shalem, shlemut, that's

what the Christian

01:03:24 poet T.S.

01:03:25 Eliot called the still point of the turning world that I quoted from last night, at the

01:03:30 still point of the turning world.

01:03:34 Their movement from nor towards the restful part is when the movement in and out ceases.

01:03:43 When the movement in and out starts, well, that's when the creative activity occurs.

01:03:53 In the Jewish mystical tradition, that pulling apart of hesed and gvura, of contraction and

01:04:03 expansion, they even have terms for it, it's just amazing.

01:04:07 It's amazing.

01:04:09 It's called tzimtzum, it creates a space.

01:04:14 And then that space vibrates.

01:04:19 So that's what happens for everyone in each moment of inner and outer seer feel.

01:04:33 And in each act of speech or body movement or thought.

01:04:38 That's the primordial great perfection.

01:04:44 To touch it is to know true love.

01:04:51 So that's to understand yourself at the deepest possible level.

01:05:02 And it's if that becomes a moment by moment reality, then it's quite easy to have this

01:05:17 sense of wanting to, of kinship with everyone, including people you don't like.

01:05:33 You relate to flowers, but you can also relate to garbage cans.

01:05:38 You can relate to your personal heroes, but you can also relate to people you fear or

01:05:52 dislike or embarrass you.

01:06:00 The trick is to realize that that's always first, before the reactivity can arise.

01:06:11 There's nothing wrong with judgments.

01:06:13 I have nothing wrong with judgment, okay?

01:06:15 I definitely have opinions.

01:06:19 I like certain politicians, I don't like other politicians, okay?

01:06:25 I have my opinions.

01:06:28 But I know for sure, before my opinion arises, when I first look or hear that person, the

01:06:45 first thing that I experience is the source loving them into existence.

01:06:54 That does not preclude me having opinions and judgments.

01:06:59 It's just, it makes a very different context to things.

01:07:07 Amor primero.