

The Spring of the Void ~ Shinzen Young

00:00:00 So, what prompted me to bring up that koan was this little fellow here, okay, because
00:00:25 I can't think of a better iconic representation of enlightenment than this.
00:00:34 Okay, there we go.
00:00:38 Yeah, it's fun, isn't it?
00:00:41 It is fun.
00:00:42 Why is it fun?
00:00:43 Why do we like watching this?
00:00:46 There is a reason, and it's called Helmholtz free energy, I'm reasonably sure.
00:00:59 I would say that we all ride on a kind of effortless just happeningness that is the
00:01:18 nature of consciousness.
00:01:20 So when I say the word emptiness within, say, the Buddhist context, what image comes to
00:01:31 your mind?
00:01:33 Well, maybe an image of vastness.
00:01:40 I would say that's not incorrect, but it's exactly half the picture.
00:01:47 I think for a lot of people, when they hear Buddhists talk about emptiness, the image
00:01:53 that comes to their mind is some sort of bleakness.
00:02:03 It's like you bust your buns for 40 years on the cushion and what do you have to show
00:02:08 for it?
00:02:09 Emptiness.
00:02:10 It's like, what?
00:02:11 Maybe that's another rabbi and Roshi joke.
00:02:27 The Roshi says we attain emptiness.
00:02:32 The rabbi says, that's garnished.
00:02:35 Okay, you have to know Yiddish.
00:02:40 Garnished means bubkus.
00:02:44 It means who wants that?
00:02:47 It's nothing.
00:02:49 Okay.
00:02:50 However, when I first encountered the word emptiness, I was a student of Buddhism academically.
00:03:01 Dongbanye in Tibetan, Shunyata in Sanskrit, Kong in Mandarin Chinese, Ku in Sino-Japanese.
00:03:13 I knew it in many Asian languages.
00:03:17 It was just this weird idea that I didn't have any image of.
00:03:22 It's like, what the heck?
00:03:26 As I say, a lot of people probably think of bleakness, some people think of vastness.
00:03:34 But the reason I so like this little tchotchke that Charlie brought is for many, many years
00:03:46 now when I use the word emptiness and when I hear the word emptiness within the Buddhist
00:03:54 context, this is exactly what my image is.

00:04:00 Bounciness, springiness.

00:04:07 In 1660, Robert Boyle wrote a foundational work on pressure.

00:04:21 And a year later, he wrote a foundational work on chemistry, which interestingly he

00:04:27 called the skeptical chemist.

00:04:31 It was a scathing critique of Aristotelian and Paracelsian alchemy, essentially, and

00:04:40 is thought of as the beginning of modern chemistry.

00:04:44 But the year before he wrote that, he wrote something that was subtitled, and I just love

00:04:53 the title of this, Touching the Spring of the Air.

00:05:01 That's how they, back in those days, talked about pressure.

00:05:06 It's like the springiness of the air, touching the spring of the air.

00:05:12 And that is what the experience of emptiness is for me as a meditative experience.

00:05:24 It's directly touching the spring of the void.

00:05:32 And so I just mention this as something to know about.