

# Non-Dual Awareness ~ Shinzen Young

00:00:00 I mentioned in a previous segment that the terms witness, consciousness, and non-dual

00:00:11 awareness are used in different ways by different people.

00:00:16 So this can lead to confusion and even unnecessary contention.

00:00:22 And I talked a little bit about how the term witness or witness consciousness is used.

00:00:31 Now I'd like to say a little bit about non-dual.

00:00:35 This is once again possibly an ambiguous phrase.

00:00:41 One might say that a non-dual awareness is an experience of the oneness of subject and

00:00:47 object.

00:00:48 From that perspective, actually there are a number of ways that non-dual awareness can

00:00:55 occur.

00:00:57 One of them is that there's a touch or a sight or a sound that arises and there's no feel

00:01:04 or image or talk reaction to it.

00:01:07 So there's just that touch or that sight or that sound without a sense of an observer

00:01:13 separate from it.

00:01:16 And so there's an experience of being that touch or that sight or that sound.

00:01:22 In the Yoga Sutras, that's referred to as sabija samadhi.

00:01:33 Samadhi in the sense of merging, but there's a seed there, sabija.

00:01:37 The seed is that there's a thing merged with.

00:01:42 A deeper experience of oneness, which some people might call non-dual awareness, occurs

00:01:52 when not only does the feel, image, talk reaction not arise, but the touch, sight, sound itself

00:02:05 arises but it never fixates.

00:02:09 It just becomes a flow.

00:02:13 And if any feel, image, talk arises, it also is just a flow.

00:02:21 And the two flows merge and become a single wave.

00:02:27 And then that wave dies down into nothing, into zero.

00:02:33 The touch, sight, sound world and the feel, image, talk self arise as an interacting wave

00:02:40 unfixated in between expansion and contraction.

00:02:44 They just sort of vibrate and interpenetrate.  
00:02:47 And then when they die away in that nothingness is the oneness of subject and object or the  
00:02:55 true observer from a certain perspective.  
00:02:59 So some people might call that non-dual awareness because in an absolute sense subject and object  
00:03:08 have been transcended.  
00:03:10 Patanjali calls that nirbija samadhi or merging without an object that is merged with, in  
00:03:16 other words a formless merging.  
00:03:19 In some Zen lineages it's called ryo-mo.  
00:03:24 Ryo means both and mo means disappeared.  
00:03:28 So subject and object have disappeared into the one nothing.  
00:03:35 However personally I would prefer to use the phrase non-dual awareness to refer to something  
00:03:43 else.  
00:03:45 Something more ambitious than the things I've just described which are already very ambitious.  
00:03:59 Just to have the experience of just hearing or just seeing, it takes quite a bit of training  
00:04:06 typically.  
00:04:07 To have the experience of formless merging, nirbija samadhi, a lot of training.  
00:04:13 What's more ambitious than that?  
00:04:16 Well what's more ambitious than that and what I would personally like to use the word non-dual  
00:04:25 awareness for is the habitual abiding in the cycle of zero polarization, zero polarization  
00:04:53 over and over and over again.  
00:04:55 So that sounds very abstract.  
00:04:59 What do I mean by that?  
00:05:02 So let's say that you have that experience or it's not exactly you have that experience,  
00:05:08 there is the experience of both disappearing into zero.  
00:05:15 Of the objective world and the reactive world of thought and feeling.  
00:05:24 They've become a wave and those two waves have merged and they've flattened into a oneness  
00:05:30 that is a nothingness.  
00:05:33 And you are that nothingness.  
00:05:35 That is the true self, aka the no-self.  
00:05:40 What's next?  
00:05:41 So that nothingness is going to break apart and once again polarize and in

the cleft self

00:05:49 and world will regenerate.

00:05:52 When the self and world reappear, if you realize where they've just come from, then the self

00:05:59 and world are not fundamentally separate from that zero.

00:06:06 They're arising in a sense inside zero and there is very quickly a return to zero.

00:06:15 And then the next arising arises sort of inside zero and there's a return to zero.

00:06:23 So that you go through your day hundreds and hundreds of times a day having an experience

00:06:29 of touching the timeless, the zero, and then time being born but not really the fundamentally

00:06:42 separate, the umbilical cord that connects to the zero is not completely severed.

00:06:50 So you're born but not really born and your world comes into existence but not really

00:06:57 because it's still enfolded in the two sides of zero.

00:07:02 And so you come, in the words of the neo-Platonist philosophers of Western antiquity, you come

00:07:12 from the good, return to the good, without ever really leaving the good in any fundamental

00:07:20 sense.

00:07:22 Then this is non-dual in the sense that there's not a separation between source and the daily

00:07:33 life that's born from source.

00:07:37 So you're just bopping around in the world doing what anybody does, but you and your

00:07:44 world are born but not really born.

00:07:47 So there's not a fundamental cleft from a practical point of view between the transcendent

00:07:57 and the ordinary.

00:07:59 And so there is not, that's the real non-duality as I would have it.

00:08:06 Creator and creation, that duality has been seen through.

00:08:13 So a person that, in terms of the Zen ox-herding pictures, that's somebody that is firmly mounted

00:08:20 on the ox, okay, can never be bucked off the ox, no matter what life throws at them.

00:08:27 So you're riding this powerful ox called consciousness or emptiness or source or God or nature, and

00:08:35 you can't be bucked off by whatever wells up from the inside or hits you from the outside.

00:08:42 You're still never fundamentally separate from nothing.

00:08:47 I would use the term non-dual awareness for that.