

Ordinary Consciousness is the Way - Part 3: Mindful Awareness & Varieties of Flow ~ Shinzen Young

00:00:00 There was a Zen master, Soryu, maybe you know who this was.

00:00:19 I can't remember the origin of the expression.

00:00:34 Ping chang shin shi dao.

00:00:46 Well you might know dao, the cosmic way.

00:00:50 Shi means is.

00:00:51 Shun, you might know.

00:00:53 It means mind or consciousness or heart.

00:00:57 The ordinary consciousness is the way, the cosmic way.

00:01:03 Well what's the ordinary consciousness.

00:01:05 The ordinary consciousness is scattered in all directions and obsessing on one thing,

00:01:11 then scattered in all directions and obsessing on one thing, and scattered in all directions

00:01:15 Or maybe scattered and obsessing at the same time, same instant.

00:01:20 Is that the cosmic way? Absolutely.

00:01:23 That scattering, that's just nature expanding, that's expansive flow.

00:01:29 That thing that you call fixation, that you make a problem,

00:01:33 that's just nature contracting, contractive flow.

00:01:37 If you look at it that way, you don't have a problem.

00:01:41 It's just space dancing.

00:01:44 So in the mind, in the body,

00:01:48 both in pleasant guises and in unpleasant guises,

00:01:52 and if it presents itself saliently,

00:01:55 you might want to make it a theme in your practice.

00:01:58 In fact, it could present itself so intensely

00:02:02 that you sort of have no choice but to make it a theme in your practice

00:02:05 because there's hardly anything else that you can detect.

00:02:10 That's in the most extreme cases

00:02:13 an experience that's technically called bhanga.

00:02:16 You can look it up on the internet, B-H-A-N-G-A,

00:02:19 when the flow and the vanishing become so intense

00:02:25 that they just dominate your experience.

00:02:28 Once again, plenty of people have become enlightened

00:02:32 without ever having that experience.

00:02:34 Just something to know can happen.

00:02:37 How about external experience?

00:02:40 How about sounds?

00:02:43 Well, do they sort of vibrate? Do they sort of boom?

00:02:47 Is it easy to detect the vanishing of certain kinds of sounds?
00:02:52 If you choose the right kind of music
00:02:55 with well-defined phrase structures,
00:02:58 you can listen to the gongs, to the unborn absolute silence
00:03:03 whence the music comes and whither it returns moment by moment
00:03:08 just by choosing the right kind of music to do a music meditation with.
00:03:13 As well-defined phrase structures,
00:03:15 da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da, gone.
00:03:18 Da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da, gone.
00:03:20 Da-da-da, gone.
00:03:22 Da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da, gone.
00:03:26 You can hear those endings very clearly defined.
00:03:31 So, sound space could be an exploration of impermanence.
00:03:37 Sight is much more tricky to work with.
00:03:40 But if you defocus your eyes, things get sort of swirly,
00:03:45 and then you might say, well, that's just an illusion.
00:03:48 But then you're using that to develop a kind of equanimity with sight,
00:03:53 and then when you start looking in the ordinary way,
00:03:56 they're still sort of more fluid.
00:03:59 One of the payoffs that comes from late-night sitting and all-night sitting,
00:04:04 we'll have another yaza, late-night sit, on Thursday, is that correct?
00:04:09 Is that right?
00:04:11 So you'll have an opportunity, about three in the morning,
00:04:14 your eyes will start to swim, okay?
00:04:17 And so will the external world.
00:04:20 And that can be an interesting venue to penetrate the somethingness
00:04:26 of the so-called material world in front of you in sight space.
00:04:31 So although it's a bit more challenging, we can have the experiences of impermanence,
00:04:37 flow and vanishing in sight space.
00:04:40 In fact, if you look carefully, each time your eye shifts,
00:04:43 when it goes from one side to another, the world that was just falls away.
00:04:50 It's a little tricky.
00:04:51 You have to sort of look out of the corner of your eye as you shift,
00:04:54 but it definitely goes ka-chunk.
00:04:57 That's vanishing in sight space.
00:04:59 All of our senses have, both in their ordinary active guise of touch, sight, sound,
00:05:07 feel, image, talk, or in the special, tranquil, restful,
00:05:12 sort of meditative experiences of relaxation, light, silence, peace, blank, quiet.
00:05:20 In all of these experiences, there is the possibility for some hint
00:05:26 of either flowing kind of change or abrupt vanishing.
00:05:33 If one wanted to pursue this as a theme, one could.
00:05:38 Why would one perhaps want to do that?

00:05:41 Well, it can be very—although sometimes it can be harsh,
00:05:45 sometimes often, and in the end, it's very soothing.
00:05:52 You get the sense that the substance of your being is being worked on,
00:05:56 energia, a working within that is working out the poison and pain.
00:06:04 It's a kind of purificatory experience.
00:06:11 It's also a unifying experience because flow tends to flow,
00:06:16 and it cuts across the distinctions.
00:06:20 In this path, there's a place for making empowering distinctions,
00:06:24 distinguishing touch, sight, sound, feel, image, talk,
00:06:28 these different dimensions of sensory experience.
00:06:33 There's also a place for those distinctions disappearing,
00:06:37 and one of the ways that those distinctions disappear in an empowering way
00:06:44 is that the flow and vanishing unifies them,
00:06:51 and larger and larger pieces of sensory experience turn into a flow field.
00:07:01 When external sight and internal image, external sound and internal talk
00:07:08 flow together, then the boundary between inside and outside disappears,
00:07:15 and that's a very natural way to come to an integration, a unification.
00:07:23 Since the fundamental separation of inside and outside
00:07:29 is more or less synonymous with fear,
00:07:35 clearly you understand why I choose the word empowering
00:07:42 in speaking about the theme of impermanence.
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