

Expansion and Contraction – Part 2: Zen Metaphors and Three Tastes ~ Shinzen Young

00:00:00 He runs through this list of things that some of them seem related and some of them seem
00:00:20 like completely unrelated to each other or to anything.
00:00:26 He'll say, there is zero, but zero is intrinsically unstable because zero consists of all positive
00:00:41 and all negative taken together.
00:00:45 And therefore, inevitably, zero breaks apart and the positive only knows how to expand
00:00:57 and the negative only knows how to contract.
00:01:01 Now by positive I mean life, by negative I mean death, by positive I mean being, by negative
00:01:09 I mean non-being, by positive I mean future, by negative I mean past, by positive I mean
00:01:17 thus going, by negative I mean thus coming, by positive I mean father, by negative I mean
00:01:24 mother, by positive I mean heaven, by negative I mean earth, by positive I mean objective,
00:01:34 By negative, I mean subjective.
00:01:36 By positive, I mean guest.
00:01:39 By negative, I mean host.
00:01:42 By positive, I mean outside.
00:01:43 By negative, I mean inside.
00:01:46 By positive, I mean God.
00:01:50 By negative, I mean the devil.
00:01:56 What?
00:01:58 Positive is God.
00:01:59 Negative is the devil.
00:02:01 Positive is father.
00:02:03 Negative is mother.
00:02:03 Mother is the devil?
00:02:05 Is he saying that?
00:02:09 If you get caught up, see, if you're weak in abstraction,
00:02:15 then you'll be completely wiggled out.
00:02:21 What he's saying is that, oh, and then he
00:02:26 says success, failure, affirmation, negation, praise,
00:02:31 blame, OK.

00:02:34 Can you see what the teaching is,
00:02:37 what he's trying to point out to people?
00:02:39 Maybe not.
00:02:40 You're weak in abstraction.
00:02:43 You're too caught up in the literal meanings of these words
00:02:48 rather than the poetry.
00:02:51 Zen is a powerful poem.
00:02:54 Vipassana, on the other hand, should
00:02:56 be a carefully crafted essay.
00:02:58 Zen people don't say enough.
00:03:01 We Vipassana teachers say too much.
00:03:04 But hopefully, there'll be somewhere
00:03:07 in between all these faulty teachings,
00:03:11 someone will get something of benefit.
00:03:15 In between, born in between, boy,
00:03:18 is that an interesting theme.
00:03:24 All of mathematics could in some way, or much of mathematics
00:03:28 could be described as the study of what is born in between.
00:03:36 We're born in between.
00:03:38 Our remote ancestors thought of us
00:03:42 as born in between Father Sky and Mother Earth.
00:03:48 East Asian flower arranging, Japanese flower arranging,
00:03:51 is based on there's a sky principle, an earth principle,
00:03:55 and in between is the human principle.
00:03:58 There's always those three levels
00:04:00 represented in the flowers.
00:04:03 So we're born in between, moment by moment,
00:04:07 in between what might be called fundamental flow.
00:04:12 If you want to get to the stillness,
00:04:15 the absolute stillness, the still point of the turning
00:04:19 world, neither movement from nor towards, paradoxically,
00:04:24 one way to get there, there must be many, many ways
00:04:26 to get there.
00:04:28 I would never say there's only one way to get there,
00:04:31 but one way to get there, the way I'm familiar with,
00:04:34 is the paradoxical way.
00:04:37 By utterly surrendering to movement from and movement
00:04:42 towards, or any antipodal pair of activities of nature,
00:04:50 by utterly surrendering to either one, the other,
00:04:55 or preferably both at the same time, if you can,
00:04:59 the somethingness within is literally torn apart.
00:05:03 Sasaki Roshi is very politically incorrect as a teacher.

00:05:08 He says things that, and I have to translate them,
00:05:11 that offend people, I mean really offend people.
00:05:19 And he's completely unapologetic.
00:05:23 He says, I know this might sound horrific,
00:05:27 but father and mother tear their baby apart, et cetera,
00:05:33 et cetera, et cetera.
00:05:36 In fact, he will also put it in the same thing
00:05:42 in a more soothing metaphor.
00:05:50 He says that when the child is born,
00:05:55 so you have to understand what child is.
00:05:58 What's the child in this case?
00:06:00 Was it the physical baby?
00:06:01 Well, yeah, he's talking about that level.
00:06:05 But the child is this moment of consciousness,
00:06:12 the self of the moment.
00:06:14 We talked about all the different scales of self.
00:06:17 Any of those cells can be the child.
00:06:23 It's born in between.
00:06:24 We don't notice that typically.
00:06:29 But if we did, if we realized, if we
00:06:34 saw how zero has just come apart and vibrated back and forth
00:06:40 to mold the feel-image-talk-self and the touch-sight-sound
00:06:44 surrounding scene in this moment, then we would know,
00:06:48 we would arise, the baby, the child,
00:06:50 would arise as an enlightened self.
00:06:53 And it would know exactly what its job is.
00:06:56 The more gentle metaphor is that the child, the baby,
00:07:02 graciously gives back to father what it got from father
00:07:08 and graciously gives back to mother what it got from mother.
00:07:12 And therefore, the child as a thing disappears.
00:07:17 In other words, in this present, see,
00:07:19 now I'll put on the vipassana hat
00:07:21 and explain the poetry, which maybe is bad.
00:07:26 But it's what I'm going to do.
00:07:30 So all of the affirmations and negations,
00:07:35 the vibrations of our senses involved
00:07:43 in this present moment of perception
00:07:47 can be analyzed into a part that affirms
00:07:55 and a part that negates.
00:07:57 They're tangled together utterly.
00:08:00 And if you allow everything that wants
00:08:02 to push out in your sensory experience

00:08:06 to simultaneously push out and everything that
00:08:10 wants to pull in in your sensory experience
00:08:12 to simultaneously pull in, all the pushes
00:08:16 become one giant, effortless expansion of pure space.
00:08:23 And all the pulls become one infinitesimal, effortless
00:08:28 contraction of pure space.
00:08:31 It's sort of like electrolysis.
00:08:34 Imagine several hundred different tasting salts,
00:08:40 but they all have positive and negative ions.
00:08:43 You connect them across a potential
00:08:47 by hooking up a battery.
00:08:49 So all those tastes will completely disappear.
00:08:54 But there will be three tastes left.
00:09:00 The taste of positive, the taste of negative,
00:09:04 and the taste of zero.
00:09:07 The taste of zero pervades the positive microscopically
00:09:14 and pervades the negative and surrounds the whole thing.
00:09:20 We started early on talking about manifesting
00:09:23 a complete self.
00:09:26 This is the graduate level version of that concept.