

'Bouncy' Zen vs. 'Paint-by-Numbers' Vipassana ~ Shinzen Young

00:00:00 I will say in appreciation of the Zen tradition that there is a certain kind of dynamic vitality

00:00:16 in the Zen style of enlightenment.

00:00:19 It's just a style, okay?

00:00:21 It's not like, you know, oh, well, Zen starts where all this other stuff ends.

00:00:27 It's not that way at all.

00:00:28 I think that's just BS to claim that, okay?

00:00:32 But the way that the Zen people express enlightenment in their actions has a kind of bouncy vitality

00:00:41 to it and spontaneity that is the result of a certain style of cultivation.

00:00:50 That's where I see the strongest impact of style.

00:00:54 People can get enlightenment doing vipassana practice and sometimes it's a sort of inert

00:01:01 enlightenment.

00:01:02 I mean, it's great, okay, compared to non-enlightenment.

00:01:05 I mean, there's just no comparison.

00:01:07 But there can sometimes be a kind of flatness to it.

00:01:12 Not inevitably, I'm just saying sometimes.

00:01:15 Whereas the Zen people have this sort of bouncy experience of nothingness that they're able

00:01:25 to convey.

00:01:26 What part of the practice of the Zen?

00:01:29 It's the lifestyle.

00:01:30 The Zen lifestyle where, see, basically if I were to contrast vipassana and Zen in a

00:01:36 gross oversimplification, I would say that in vipassana you observe your experience first

00:01:45 and you come to an experience of the flow of impermanence and then maybe somewhere down

00:01:51 the line, maybe you begin to ride on that flow of impermanence in how you speak and

00:01:58 move in the world.

00:02:00 In Zen, before you realize the impermanent nature of experience, the lifestyle is forcing

00:02:07 you to ride on impermanence because you have to run around and stop on a dime.

00:02:12 Run around like crazy, stop on a dime.

00:02:14 Sounds like my life.

00:02:15 Am I doing that?

00:02:18 No, because in daily life that just leads to freneticness and confusion.

00:02:26 But within the context of Zen training, if it works out well, it leads to an ability

00:02:32 to manifest and disappear.

00:02:34 Manifest and disappear in your actions and then with time you come to experience that

00:02:41 as being the nature of experience.

00:02:43 So you sort of act it out first and then realize it.

00:02:48 So whereas in vipassana you realize it and then maybe ride on it or maybe not.

00:02:56 So the advantage to the Zen training when it really works is that it guarantees this
00:03:01 dynamic expression of enlightenment.
00:03:04 The possible disadvantage is because it is in some ways sort of like daily life, maybe
00:03:10 if it doesn't work, all it's going to end up doing is making you frenetic and confused.
00:03:16 So there's advantages and disadvantages.
00:03:20 The vipassana way of working may not lead to the vitality, but it's like a paint by
00:03:25 numbers kit.
00:03:26 It's likely to at least lead to something like a work of art.
00:03:33 Zen is sort of like, here's the canvas, there's the paints.
00:03:40 Now do it.
00:03:41 But when it works, it has a stunning vitality to it that you may not find in the paint by
00:03:47 numbers kit.