

Flow ~ Shinzen Young

00:00:00 What is the difference between ordinary and restful experience?

00:00:05 Ordinary or restful experience can sometimes be perfectly stable and still,
00:00:11 which is completely natural, but other times show us a dynamic side.

00:00:16 Dynamic is the Greek adjective that means related to movement, change,
00:00:24 and the underlying forces and energies that could produce movement and change.

00:00:29 That's why I like that word dynamic, because it covers a wide range in its definition.

00:00:36 We can, within ordinary or restful experience, distinguish a static aspect and a dynamic aspect.

00:00:45 We're particularly interested in the dynamic aspect, not that that's better than the static,

00:00:50 but when it appears, it's something that we can choose to work with.

00:00:55 Its continuous side I call flow, and its more abrupt or discontinuous side I call gone or vanishing.

00:01:05 In terms of working with change, you can focus on just the flow or just the vanishing,

00:01:10 but if there happens to be vanishings within the flows,

00:01:14 the flows arise and then noticeably subside, you can combine those two.

00:01:25 Is that flow or is that just my heart beating?

00:01:31 It's flow, because anything where you can focus on the theme of changingness counts as flow.

00:01:45 Things that have vibratory or pulsatory qualities, whatever their source may be, definitely count as flow.

00:01:55 A lot of the subtle vibratory flow that people report through their body is in fact the pulse.

00:02:03 It's the circulation of the blood through the vessels that causes those vibratory sensations.

00:02:09 You can know that because if you run or something like that, you get more of that stuff.

00:02:16 It doesn't matter if the sense of flow has been produced by some gross physical,

00:02:25 something obviously material, physical in origin.

00:02:31 That doesn't count as an instance of change because it's like, oh, just my heart beating kind of thing.

00:02:39 What is the flow of change?

00:02:44 There is a wide range of flavors of flow, but basically there's various

frequencies that I call generically vibratory,
00:02:56 but people talk about, oh, what are words people use?
00:03:03 Bubbly, scintillating mist, twinkly, sparkly.
00:03:11 What are some of the other ones for the vibratory?
00:03:14 I use that generically for all the frequencies.
00:03:18 Pulsation for the slower frequencies.
00:03:22 There's generically stuff that seems like it's vibrating.
00:03:26 Then there's stuff that seems more wavy, sort of lava lamp-like,
00:03:32 seaweed in a tide pool kind of streaming protoplasm, that kind of thing.
00:03:41 Then there's spreading, collapsing, outward pressures, inward pressures,
00:03:49 sense of scattering, sense of gathering, the expansive contractive type
flavors.
00:03:56 All of the above count as flow, so it's a vast range of phenomena.
00:04:02 Certainly an awareness of the heartbeat and an awareness of the blood making
a sort of vibratory flow throughout the body
00:04:13 is definitely an instance of flow.
00:04:18 How does T.S. Eliot put it?
00:04:21 The dance along the artery, the circulation of the lymph is figured in the
drift of stars.
00:04:30 It's all part of nature's flow.
00:04:36 As a general principle within the system, flow is just something, if it's
there you observe it,
00:04:44 if it's not there, then it's not there. The static aspect is dominant.
00:04:50 That's not to say that there's some cosmic meditative rule that you're not
allowed to do practices
00:04:57 that intentionally create or manipulate flow. That's not the case at all.
00:05:03 That's integral to a lot of Qigong exercises, Kundalini yoga exercises, and
so forth.
00:05:10 It's completely valid practice.
00:05:13 If you want to do those practices and then get things going with that and
then you go to a vipassana and you just observe,
00:05:22 well, that's fine. But I wouldn't consider it part of vipassana, strictly
speaking.
00:05:29 Is there a way to make flow flow everywhere?
00:05:36 Yes, with time and practice, the resolution can be so great that there's
always flow everywhere.
00:05:45 Having said that, though, that's very dangerous.
00:05:49 It's things like that statement that are one of the reasons I'm a bad
meditation teacher,
00:05:56 because I say something like that.
00:05:59 The Buddha said, say only what is true and useful.
00:06:04 What I just said is true. It's arguable whether it's useful,

00:06:09 because it could be useful. Well, let's make the case it's useful.

00:06:16 Obviously, I must have thought it's in some sense useful. I wouldn't say it at all.

00:06:21 It's useful because it can inspire people and give people a goal to work towards.

00:06:28 It's not useful, and in fact extremely harmful, statement,

00:06:35 if it sets up in that person a need to have that kind of resolution

00:06:44 and a sense of failure and frustration when you don't.

00:06:54 That's a general theme in working with flow.

00:06:57 If you've got flow in one area, it will have a natural tendency to induce flow in other areas.

00:07:04 This is a little weird sounding, but let's say you have flow in one domain

00:07:13 and you have solidity over here.

00:07:16 What the meditator can do is play the role of the shadkhan.

00:07:22 You don't know that word, but a shadkhan is a Jewish marriage broker.

00:07:27 You get the flow part and introduce the flow part to the solid part,

00:07:32 and then you don't need to do anything more.

00:07:36 Have a party.

00:07:37 Yeah, that's right. The flow then tends to induce into the solid part,

00:07:44 which sounds like what you were doing.

00:07:46 That's a little bit of an esoteric strategy, but if you interactively guide a person,

00:07:51 they can often do that.

00:07:53 It can be a little harder to reproduce on your own.