

# Zero and One - Part 1 of 4: Complete Experiences ~ Shinzen Young

00:00:00 What is interesting about zero and one is that they are two of the main paradigms that  
00:00:27 have been used historically to describe the mystical path, the contemplative path, the  
00:00:35 path to enlightenment.  
00:00:36 In some traditions it's described in terms of a oneness experience, that's very common  
00:00:43 around the planet.  
00:00:45 And in some traditions it's described in terms of a kind of zero or emptiness.  
00:00:54 The word in Sanskrit for the number zero is shunyata, which is also the word in Buddhism  
00:01:10 for the emptiness, emptiness as the source, emptiness as the nature of sensory experience.  
00:01:18 So the same words are used, the very same Sanskrit word.  
00:01:21 The bigger an experience is for us, the more overwhelming an experience is for us, is just  
00:01:30 a measure of how large the polarization, the splitting of the zero of the source, how far  
00:01:37 it has split, how much time-space volume and how much sensory intensity has been born in  
00:01:45 between that polarization.  
00:01:48 And if we can have a complete experience of such a large polarization, the zero that comes  
00:01:57 when there is a reuniting, which inevitably happens, for us will be a deeper purification,  
00:02:03 a deeper enlightenment than for a small challenge, you might say.  
00:02:11 The one could be looked upon as one is any size you want, is one.  
00:02:20 Alternatively, you could say that one is the combined effect of all canceling stretches  
00:02:33 and squeezes.  
00:02:35 Multiply by three and divide by three, that's one kind of polarization.  
00:02:42 If you multiply by a thousand and divide by a thousand, that's another kind of expansive,  
00:02:47 contractive, stretch-squeeze polarization.  
00:02:50 So they play analogous roles.  
00:02:54 If we think of nature as being capable of creating distinction and wiping away distinction,  
00:03:05 if that's in some way a fundamental activity of nature, then that would be reflected in  
00:03:15 our consciousness, certainly.  
00:03:18 If we are able to fully give ourselves to the forces of division, the forces that pull  
00:03:26 to the right, pull to the left, that stretch this way, that squeeze this way, if we fully  
00:03:31 give ourselves to those forces, then there's nothing to get in the way of the neutralization,  
00:03:41 the coming back.  
00:03:43 And if you want to think of it as coming back to a oneness, you can, or if you want to think  
00:03:48 about it as coming back to a zeroness, you can also do it that way.  
00:03:55 So let's talk about the experience of oneness in the sense, in some of its guises.  
00:04:04 We might speak of the alienation of thought and feeling, and we could then speak of the  
00:04:19 healing of that alienation and a unification of thought and feeling.  
00:04:27 Thought arises through either visual thinking, auditory thinking, or both at the same time.

00:04:36 And emotionality arises through the limbic system in the brain, which causes affective  
00:04:42 somesthesia, a nice fancy way of saying body sensations that seem emotional.  
00:04:50 If you pay attention to what happens when you experience anger, fear, sadness, embarrassment,  
00:04:58 impatience, disgust, interest, joy, love, gratitude, humor, smile, etc., etc., these  
00:05:06 have flavors in the body.  
00:05:08 They're initially maybe nebulous, but eventually they're just as distinct as hot or cold.  
00:05:17 The soma, the body, can be trained into emotional high-resolution screen.  
00:05:26 There's no official word for body sensations that seem emotional in nature, so I call it  
00:05:31 what?  
00:05:32 Feel.  
00:05:33 Feel, just to have a word.  
00:05:34 And notice I say feel, not feeling, because feeling has a gazillion connotations, so I  
00:05:39 sort of made an unusual noun by using feel as a noun to point out that it's a technical  
00:05:48 term within this system.  
00:05:50 So we have the body sensations that are emotional in nature to us.  
00:05:55 We have mental images and internal talk.  
00:05:58 Now when you have a complete experience of feel, image, talk, you are too busy experiencing  
00:06:11 it to fixate it.  
00:06:13 A complete experience is an experience where there is an extraordinary degree of concentration,  
00:06:22 clarity, and equanimity, sort of all coming together.  
00:06:28 We can't always have all three of these.  
00:06:30 In fact, sometimes we can't have any of these.  
00:06:33 You may have noticed.  
00:06:35 We can't always have all three.  
00:06:38 When all three do come together at a certain critical mass, then ordinary experience becomes  
00:06:44 utterly extraordinary.  
00:06:46 And my word for ordinary experience that has become utterly extraordinary is a complete  
00:06:55 experience.  
00:06:56 Now, it's a technical term, though.  
00:06:57 I don't mean complete in the sense it was intense.  
00:07:00 I don't mean complete in the sense that, I don't know, you stayed with it to the end.  
00:07:06 That's part of it.  
00:07:09 By complete, I mean that there was a certain critical mass of concentration, clarity, and  
00:07:14 equanimity present from beginning to end in that experience.  
00:07:18 That constitutes what I technically call a complete or full experience.  
00:07:25 We can't always have complete experiences, but sometimes we can.  
00:07:29 With practice, we can have it more and more and more.  
00:07:33 When we have a complete experience of something that's ordinary, it's utterly extraordinary  
00:07:39 because it's utterly paradoxical.  
00:07:42 I read the St. John of the Cross poem to you, La Noche, to give you a flavor of how something  
00:07:48 could be sensorially rich and yet also utterly transparent and vacuous at the same time as  
00:08:02 a single experience.

00:08:06 Ordinary experience becomes extraordinary in that it becomes both deeply fulfilling  
00:08:14 and no longer there.  
00:08:18 Therefore ordinary experience becomes extraordinary because it's paradoxical.  
00:08:23 I just said something that really doesn't make a whole lot of sense.  
00:08:28 I'm afraid many people would probably think it's irrelevant to anything.  
00:08:34 Maybe they just think this is philosophical speculation or wordsmithery.  
00:08:39 I'm sorry, I have no choice.  
00:08:44 That's how you'll know when you start to have complete experiences.  
00:08:49 You end up having to say this stuff whether you want to or not.  
00:08:54 One could also say that when you bring a certain critical mass of concentration, clarity, and  
00:09:00 equanimity to an ordinary experience, it becomes utterly extraordinary.  
00:09:05 You could also say when you bring an extraordinary degree of concentration, clarity, and equanimity  
00:09:12 to an extraordinary experience like a god manifesting fully in front of you, that experience  
00:09:20 becomes utterly ordinary.  
00:09:24 That's the path of liberation as opposed to the path of powers.