

Working with Images and Image Space ~ Shinzen Young

00:00:00 The perception of sort of I am body doesn't just come about through body sensation, although body sensation is primary.

00:00:26 You often hear me say subtle is significant.

00:00:31 There is typically a subtle mental picture of the outline of the body, and I think that's what you're alluding to.

00:00:40 There's a subtle mental picture of the outline of the body.

00:00:46 And then there is the body's sensations that sort of fill that picture.

00:00:52 You could think of the sensations, the touch, feel, you could think of them as being the honey, and then the body outline is the bear, the container.

00:01:06 And the honey more or less conforms to the bear.

00:01:10 But of course, sometimes honey is not inside that, but it can be a rounder pot, etc.

00:01:17 So the bear can sometimes become larger and spherical.

00:01:22 So I think of the image of self, the visual image of the body, and also it's often your facial expression, the clothes you're wearing, all of that is part of it.

00:01:37 That could be called image of body or image of self as opposed to sensations from the body.

00:01:44 Now the perception of the body as a thing comes about through nebulosity and viscosity in the body sensations and in the image of the body.

00:02:02 So as you sort of love, if you hate the presence of that image thinking, oh, this is getting in the way of a no-self experience, then you're going to be in big trouble.

00:02:15 But if you start to love that image to death, now you're bringing clarity and equanimity and perhaps even intentionally focusing on just that image for a while.

00:02:26 Well, guess what? That's going to break up into flow, the image.

00:02:30 And the sensations are going to break up into flow, and the image and the sensations will become one integrated flow.

00:02:38 And that will break down that subtle sense that I am the body.

00:02:42 If at some point the image is not dealt with, let's put it that way, either dealt with consciously by being focused on or dealt with because it's just equanimized into fluidity,

00:02:57 even though you didn't focus on it. I prefer to focus on it.

00:03:00 So I like people to learn how to work with that image, have a complete experience of it, work with the sensations, have a complete experience of them,

00:03:08 work with the two at the same time, and that tends to break down that subtle sense of self.

00:03:17 Often there's a subtle picture of where we are, the ambience.

00:03:23 That can be worked with individually, concentrated on, clarified, equanimized until it flows.

00:03:32 If your eyes are closed, how do you know where you are?

00:03:39 Sound and the image of the source of the sound and the memory images of where you are.

00:03:48 If all incoming sound and the image of the ambience are a single flow field, then you will not be limited to a certain time and place.

00:04:02 Your location in the universe will become unfixated.

00:04:09 The first challenge is to do what you just reported, which is to detect that this is indeed the case.

00:04:20 The second challenge is not to hate the presence of those subtle images because what you resist persists, as Werner Erhard said.

00:04:29 You work with them and you affirm them into oblivion.

00:04:39 Counterintuitive, though, that phraseology is.

00:04:43 When you get all three, basically, you've got the self image related to the body.

00:04:52 You've got ambient imagery related to your memory or your idea about where you are and typically triggered by sounds or enhanced by sounds.

00:05:02 Then you've got the memory plan fantasy imagery that tends to be in the center of image space,

00:05:07 which is the portal into the imago mundi or the stored images of the world.

00:05:17 It's the surface of this giant storehouse of visual information that at its deeper levels shades into the world of myth.

00:05:39 But its surface is whatever comes up, quote on the mental screen, as memory, plan, fantasy, that kind of thing.

00:05:48 If you penetrate all three image locations, you take care of...

00:05:59 You might say that... Does it work? Let me think. I'm not sure what I'm going to say.

00:06:07 In terms of image, I would say that the present is arising in those ambient images and the image of your body.

00:06:18 Then particularly the past is in the center of image space.

00:06:27 At least that's the portal into the stored images.

00:06:30 But as I say, future can also be there because you can fantasize about what could happen in the future.

00:06:41 And myth is there. The archetypes are there at a deep level.

00:06:46 It goes out from our world to mythological worlds, potentially.

00:06:53 So each one of those locations in image space is associated with very powerful work.

00:07:03 When you do Vajrayana practice, the so-called visualizations, which are really touch, feel, image, talk exercises,

00:07:19 you visualize yourself as the deity.

00:07:26 So you replace the self image with an archetype.

00:07:30 You visualize the deity in front of you facing you in the memory, plan, fantasy center of image space.

00:07:37 And then you replace the ambient images with celestial palace or a mandala or a yantra or something.

00:07:46 So you deal with that and sure enough, they hit each one of those three.

00:07:51 And replace the ordinary with the mythological.

00:07:55 Not in order to be insane or possessed, but in order to gain insight into how consciousness works,

00:08:04 how our perception of where we are and who we are arises.

00:08:09 So it's an insight practice.

00:08:11 Now, having said that, I made it sound like Vajrayana discovered my categories,

00:08:22 but of course, it's the other way around.

00:08:25 I didn't figure this out.

00:08:27 My original training was in Vajrayana and they had us do this.

00:08:33 And then later on I realized, well, of course they have us do this because this is the way ordinary perception occurs.

00:08:41 So obviously, if you're playing with consciousness like Tinker Toys,

00:08:47 taking things apart and putting them back together, this would be the way to do it.

00:08:51 So I got the hint on it from my Vajrayana training.

00:08:55 Apropos of trauma, when I have people that have traumatic memories come up,

00:09:08 where it's a, what do they call that, a flashback?

00:09:13 Where they think they actually, it's like happening now.

00:09:17 Why that's happening is that the ambient imagery, which should reflect present reality, physical reality,

00:09:26 that ambient imagery has disappeared and been replaced by the memory imagery.

00:09:31 So once you train people to detect the ambient imagery,

00:09:36 and they can see the interplay of how the present imagery starts to go away

00:09:44 and the memory imagery occupies that location, that's hugely insightful and liberating for people.