

Total Happiness – 3 of 5 – Don't Know Mind ~ Shinzen Young

00:00:00 How can we avoid the mind's confusion?
00:00:05 Now, you remember in the realm of ordinary happiness,
00:00:09 the mind also needed to avoid something.
00:00:12 It needed to avoid not knowing.
00:00:15 It needed to avoid confused, muddled states in order to be happy.
00:00:21 But in the dimension of extraordinary happiness,
00:00:25 the mind can be completely confused
00:00:29 and that not be a problem.
00:00:32 Now, when I say that the body can be in pain
00:00:35 and that not be a problem,
00:00:37 maybe you think, I'm cracked.
00:00:40 But maybe you think, well,
00:00:42 that could happen because I've had some experience
00:00:45 where I was once in pain and I stopped fighting it
00:00:48 and it didn't bother me so much.
00:00:50 A lot of people have had that kind of experience
00:00:53 once or twice in their life.
00:00:55 But if I say the statement the body can be in pain
00:00:59 and that not be a problem,
00:01:01 maybe I just sound a little cracked.
00:01:05 I don't sound cracked to everybody.
00:01:08 But if I say that the mind can be in confusion,
00:01:14 even senility, even Alzheimer's,
00:01:17 and that not be a problem,
00:01:19 then people think maybe he's already seen a happening.
00:01:24 To be saying something like that.
00:01:29 However, equanimity with don't know
00:01:35 is the basis of an extraordinary new kind of knowing.
00:01:43 This fact has been discovered independently
00:01:47 by three cultures.
00:01:49 And that indicates to me that it's universal.
00:01:52 Totally independent without any contact with each other.
00:01:56 Well, there might have been some minimal historical contact.
00:02:00 It was discovered by the ancient Greeks.
00:02:02 The it meaning that you could suspend the need to know,
00:02:05 that you could train the mind

00:02:08 away from its desperate need to have answers.
00:02:12 And when you did,
00:02:14 that it would start to have answers in new ways.
00:02:18 That was discovered in ancient Greece
00:02:21 by skeptical philosophers who were called skeptics
00:02:24 because instead of trying to find answers,
00:02:26 they just observed.
00:02:28 Skeptikos.
00:02:29 They watched.
00:02:31 Sort of like what we do.
00:02:33 They didn't ask questions like the other philosophers.
00:02:36 They didn't debate.
00:02:38 They let go of the need to have answers.
00:02:41 And they discovered that if you do this
00:02:44 in a consistent way as a discipline,
00:02:48 a disciplined suspension of the need to know,
00:02:53 a disciplined confusion,
00:02:55 a sustained confusion for a goal,
00:02:59 leads to a revolution in consciousness.
00:03:03 They called it epiche, E-P-O-C-H-E,
00:03:05 which means to suspend,
00:03:07 in this case specifically suspend the need to know.
00:03:11 It was rediscovered in the Middle Ages
00:03:14 by Christian monks and nuns who called it
00:03:18 docta ignorantia.
00:03:20 Now we're going from Greek to Latin.
00:03:23 And it means cultivated don't know,
00:03:28 docta, learned literally, cultivated don't know.
00:03:32 We're in a Catholic center here,
00:03:33 Carmelite retreat center.
00:03:35 Venerable tradition.
00:03:39 So who is the highest authority
00:03:41 in the area of philosophy in the Roman Catholic Church?
00:03:46 Was it Aquinas?
00:03:47 Yes, Thomas Aquinas.
00:03:51 Who said,
00:03:53 Deum tamquam per ignorantiam cognis limos,
00:03:59 in the language of the time, Latin.
00:04:02 If I were to paraphrase into fully modern English,
00:04:05 would be if you want to know God directly,
00:04:07 you have to know through a special kind of not knowing.
00:04:12 And then it was discovered in Tang Dynasty China,

00:04:15 where it was called don't know mind,
00:04:18 and other things.
00:04:21 Bodhidharma, when he visited
00:04:25 Emperor Liang, Liang Wu Di,
00:04:31 Emperor Wu Di of the Liang Dynasty,
00:04:34 this master here visited the emperor.
00:04:38 And they had a dialogue.
00:04:40 The emperor was a great patron of Buddhism.
00:04:44 And the emperor asked Bodhidharma,
00:04:49 I fed many monks and nuns, built many temples,
00:04:52 how much merit have I made?
00:04:54 To which Bodhidharma said, none whatsoever.
00:04:58 Which sort of surprised the emperor.
00:05:02 And the emperor asked him,
00:05:05 well, what's the highest principle of holiness?
00:05:10 To which he said, wide open and nothing holy.
00:05:15 Which also surprised him very much.
00:05:19 And finally he said, who are you?
00:05:21 To which Bodhidharma said, I don't know.
00:05:25 So that's the Zen don't know mind.
00:05:28 Three independent cultures have discovered
00:05:30 that you can have equanimity with muddle and confusion.
00:05:34 Now you might say, well, okay,
00:05:36 I can see that as a practice, but come on,
00:05:38 senility and Alzheimer.
00:05:41 However, I have had the privilege
00:05:44 of being with senile masters.
00:05:47 I've had the privilege of being with masters
00:05:50 who had advanced Alzheimer's.
00:05:53 So I can report to you what it's like.
00:05:57 It's not like what it's usually like.
00:06:00 It manifests in a very different way
00:06:03 because of the practice.
00:06:07 In the realm of unconditional happiness,
00:06:11 the issue is not getting answers to this or that
00:06:14 for the mind, the mind's experience.
00:06:17 And the issue is not actually avoiding confusion
00:06:20 for the mind.
00:06:22 The issue is in getting the answer
00:06:26 and the issue is avoiding confusion as a problem.
00:06:32 To have a meaningful experience of the meaningless.
00:06:37 So in the realm of extraordinary happiness,

00:06:40 even if you were confused,
00:06:42 there would be a positive to that.
00:06:46 And even if you were clinically confused
00:06:51 due to a medical condition,
00:06:54 there would still be an okayness in that.
00:06:57 That's why we say that the realm of extraordinary happiness
00:07:02 is independent of conditions.
00:07:04 It's even independent of having a functioning brain.
00:07:09 That's an extraordinary claim,
00:07:12 independent of what condition the body and mind are in.
00:07:16 If you are able to have a complete experience,
00:07:19 sensory experience of that touch, feel, image, talk state,
00:07:23 then you will be happy in this realm,
00:07:28 this dimension of extraordinary happiness.