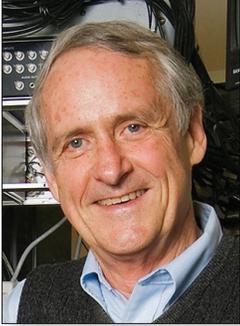


Now this

by Eberhard Konin Fetz



At the end of our ZCLA pilgrimage to India in 2006 our guide, Shantum Seth, suggested that we each compose a verse around some impression of the trip. Mine was entitled “Bus Practice”:

*Reality speeds quickly past my window.
Intricate worlds in rapid succession.
Too fast for thought.
But just right for awakening.*

Just witnessing the tachistoscopic succession of worlds outside the bus window created a state of blissful awareness and suspension of thought. The arts have provided examples of collaged material that evokes this experience. Nam Jun Paik created complex video collages to be displayed on his variously assembled monitors. In these movies, brief snippets of video last just long enough to stimulate a percept but are quickly succeeded by the next snippet, which aborts any mental response to the previous. An endless tsunami of totally different video images: flying birds, politicians, movie clips, war footage, abstract forms, drawn outlines; presented in collapsing frames, contorted, superimposed, colors altered, etc.: vast, endless, and relentless (see at <https://njpvideo.ggcf.kr>). The cumulative result is a visual massage not only of the visual system, but also of the conceptual corridors of the mind.

Similarly, John Cage created a collage of auditory snippets called “Fontana Mix” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=05wBPhWD44U>). Rapidly succeeding sound bites of instruments, voices, noise, radio snippets, tones, explosions, etc., each evoking a distinct experience and changing from one moment to the next. Again, the mind just becomes aware of the newly arisen sound image before it is replaced by the next. Numerous works of “musique concrète” provide further examples of sounds collaged over successive moments.

Paik’s videos and Cage’s music concrète have the same effect as the kaleidoscopic flow of scenes outside a bus or train window. They create a state of awareness liberated from normal mental activity, particularly trains of thought. Psychedelic experiences have similar effects, scrambling all dimensions of mental experience in a tsunami of conscious forms.

In fact, these video and audio collages emulate the succession of instantaneous conscious experiences in everyday life. Usually, the mind glosses over these intricate instants and organizes conscious awareness into trains of thought and mental associations. However, the granularity of what is actually happening can be appreciated by deliberately refreshing these experiences immediately.

By promptly aborting nascent thought forms before they capture consciousness one can stay aware of the next immediate event. What is witnessed then is a succession of quite different and complex experiences, each one flashing into consciousness and totally impermanent. Now this, now this, now this... Too fast for thought.

But just right for awakening to the only constant in the ever-changing contents of consciousness: awareness

itself. The ever-present spark of awareness continues to energize endless forms. In the razor edge of now, separating past and future, which don’t exist, there arises infinitely rich reality. As Huang Po put it, “What you see before you is it. Think about it and you at once fall into error.” Without thought the succession of immediate experiences transforms into awareness of being.

Now THIS.



Collage by Konin.

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