

Sensory Clarity: Untangle and Be Free ~ Shinzen Young

00:00:00 This notion of sensory clarity as a vehicle for insight and liberation.

00:00:18 We don't have any historical record of this before the Buddha.

00:00:26 Although he said there were Buddhas in the past, etc. etc.

00:00:30 Basically the idea is you take the sense of self and you break it down into components.

00:00:42 Now there's a lot of ways you can go about this.

00:00:44 The four great elements, the four foundations of mindfulness, the five aggregates.

00:00:50 There's a lot of possibilities, a lot of ways that the pie can be chopped up.

00:00:55 If you're more on the, I don't know, scripturally oriented side, you're very concerned with

00:01:02 the particular sets of categories that are used to untangle the web of limited identity.

00:01:15 But for me I'm not so concerned with the categories themselves as the general idea.

00:01:22 I think it's one of the most significant discoveries of our human species.

00:01:29 A parallel discovery took place in the West and in fact is one of the things responsible

00:01:37 for the domination of Western culture.

00:01:42 But in the West the principle, the principle of separate the strands and you can understand

00:01:48 how the thing works and gain a handle on it.

00:01:51 That principle was never applied internally but it was applied externally to the external

00:01:58 natural world in many, many domains starting with the Greeks.

00:02:04 And the Greeks gave us a word for that process.

00:02:07 It is a Greek word that means to break something up in order to understand it and be empowered.

00:02:18 Analysis.

00:02:19 Analysis now implies some sort of intellectual formulation.

00:02:25 I'm going to analyze the situation.

00:02:32 But originally the word analysis meant exactly what those morphemes mean.

00:02:39 It meant take the complicated thing, break it down into its pieces, see how the pieces

00:02:44 interact with each other and you'll understand how the complicated thing

works.

00:02:49 It's divide and conquer.

00:02:51 Strategema de divide et impera.

00:02:55 The strategy of if you can untangle, if you can find out what the fundamental dimensions

00:03:00 of the system, what are the primes, what are the atoms, what are the components that are

00:03:08 involved in this system, then you're going to get a handle on it.

00:03:12 The West eventually discovered that the whole natural world could be analyzed in terms of

00:03:24 mass, length, time, thermodynamic temperature, and electrical current.

00:03:34 Their interactions will give a complete understanding of the natural world, at least as known to

00:03:46 modern physics.

00:03:48 But it took centuries and centuries and centuries of contention, argument, confusion to finally

00:03:58 be able to define these components of the natural world.

00:04:01 But it allowed for the arising of physics, and physics allowed for better ships and better

00:04:08 cannons and better machines, and that allowed for the domination of Europe over the rest

00:04:16 of the world.

00:04:20 The West used divide and conquer in order to conquer the material world.

00:04:29 But in the East, the Buddha discovered divide and conquer in order to conquer our limited

00:04:35 identity, in order to conquer our suffering, and the screwed up behaviors that come from

00:04:44 our suffering.

00:04:45 He was called a conqueror.

00:04:47 Some people don't like the divide and conquer.

00:04:49 They think the conqueror is bad.

00:04:51 But actually, one of the words that was used to describe the Buddha was Jina, J-I-N-A,

00:04:59 and that means the conqueror.

00:05:02 Because when he was born, the court astrologer was called in by his father, King Suddhodana.

00:05:11 The Buddha was born in the Kshatriya caste, which is the warrior caste of India.

00:05:19 And the king asked the court astrologer, what do you foresee for my son Siddhartha?

00:05:28 The astrologer said, your majesty, you've given birth to an extraordinary child.

00:05:33 He will either stay in the palace and conquer India, which for them meant conquer the world,
00:05:40 Jambudvipa, meaning expand your empire from being a little clan up in northeast India
00:05:48 to like you're running the show now, or he will leave this palace and conquer himself,
00:05:56 conquer his limited identity, and make his mark in history that way.
00:06:02 His father wanted him to conquer the world, and so tried to keep him inside the palace.
00:06:08 So this notion of if you want the more gentle formulation, untangle and be free, if you
00:06:17 want the more sharp formulation, divide and conquer.
00:06:24 This is sensory clarity, the third component of mindfulness.
00:06:28 And as far as I can, as I mentioned, as far as I can tell, this was like a unique discovery
00:06:34 and was central to the development of a whole new direction in human spirituality.
00:06:44 These are skills, concentration, sensory clarity, equanimity, are skills that can be developed
00:06:50 with time.