

The True Beauty of Your 'Soul' ~ Shinzen Young

00:00:00 What is the meaning of the word soul?
00:00:07 I will sometimes use the word soul.
00:00:12 When I do, I am referring to essentially one's subjective world,
00:00:23 the world of feel, image and talk,
00:00:27 considered in terms of its deepest layers.
00:00:34 In other words, when you work with your subjective experience,
00:00:40 a practice that I call focus in,
00:00:44 you can track the surface of your subjective experience
00:00:49 in terms of explicit mental pictures
00:00:53 which tend to center in front of or behind your eyes,
00:00:57 internal talk which tends to center in your ears
00:01:01 or in your head somewhere, maybe symmetrical, maybe asymmetrical,
00:01:06 and then emotional type body sensations.
00:01:09 So the emotional type body sensations, if they're present,
00:01:13 I say that feel is active, so you have feel, image, talk.
00:01:18 So you can track your subjective world of thought, emotion, reaction, desire,
and so forth,
00:01:27 will, in terms of on the surface feel, image, talk.
00:01:33 As the surface feel, image, talk sort of plays itself out,
00:01:39 you become aware that underneath that explicit feel, image, talk
00:01:45 are subtler and subtler and subtler levels of similar stuff,
00:01:53 but it's finer and more widespread.
00:01:58 So there's layers of subtle image activity
00:02:03 underneath the surface image activity,
00:02:06 likewise with talk, likewise with feel.
00:02:10 In fact, even when there doesn't seem to be any explicit talk going on,
00:02:15 you can sort of hear a rumbling of subtle activity in talk space.
00:02:22 Same with sort of like snow on your mental screen,
00:02:27 a rumbling deep down in image space.
00:02:30 And in your emotional centers in your body,
00:02:34 it's like the circuits there are idling,
00:02:38 like the wheels are turning but the clutch is not engaged,
00:02:45 so you're not emotionally going anywhere.
00:02:48 So there are these subtle levels of association and processing
00:02:53 that are fine but broad.
00:02:57 I will sometimes loosely, in a sort of colloquial way,

00:03:02 refer to those more subtle, deep levels of feel, image, talk activity as soul.

00:03:10 For example, when you get a sense that material is being released,
00:03:15 that the blockages within the depths of fit space are working their way out,
00:03:23 I'll sometimes poetically say that the thorns are being sort of plucked out of your soul
00:03:30 or the lumps in your soul are being worked through.

00:03:34 Here I'm just using soul poetically,
00:03:37 not in any theological or well-defined psychological sense,
00:03:44 to refer to the deeper, more subliminal levels of feel, image, talk activity.

00:03:51 One of the reasons that it's so challenging to untangle the feel, image, talk
00:03:57 is that it's not a one-scale system.

00:04:03 On the other hand, it is definitely not an infinite mathematical fractal
00:04:08 where you can drill down endlessly into subtlety.

00:04:14 How many layers down are there? I have no idea.

00:04:20 Some have postulated up to four layers in terms of the Yogacara school.

00:04:26 For example, in India, but who knows, maybe there's more.

00:04:32 This awaits a true neuron-based, neuroanatomy-based science model for these systems.

00:04:42 I don't know how many layers there are down there, but it's maybe a half dozen, this is a guess.

00:04:49 Certainly not infinite, literally, although it seems to us infinite,
00:04:56 because each one is exponentially both bigger and finer than its predecessors.

00:05:05 So it seems to point to infinity, but that's just an optical illusion.

00:05:11 It's finite as far as I can tell, and when you get to the base of the iceberg, so to speak,
00:05:21 you'll find that it is floating in the ocean of pure spirit.

00:05:27 So don't have to worry.

00:05:29 One of the things that makes it so challenging to untangle the fit system
00:05:35 is that the tangling is at all those levels.

00:05:38 But eventually it all sort of unwinds, the skein unwinds, and things become very, very simple.

00:05:47 And when that happens, we could say that the true beauty of your soul has been manifested.