

Reality & Sensory Experience ~ Shinzen Young

00:00:00 I usually don't talk about reality. I prefer to talk about sensory experience. Sensory
00:00:11 experience is something I have a lot of confidence with. When I make statements about sensory
00:00:18 experience, it's based on years and years of my own investigations, working with my
00:00:25 own sensory experience, other people's sensory experience. So, as I say, I have a lot of
00:00:32 confidence in that. I don't speak about the underlying reality that's behind sensory experience,
00:00:41 or even if there is a reality behind sensory experience, or what is it? People will often
00:00:47 ask, well, what do we really see? What do we really hear? The reason I don't talk about
00:00:54 it is that I don't have confidence that I have good answers about it. I have my own
00:01:02 conjectures, but they're just that. When it comes to sensory experience, I know I can
00:01:09 teach people things that are true, deep, useful, and broad. Now, in general, things that are
00:01:16 true, deep, useful, and broad are considered good science. So I think I can give good science
00:01:24 for sensory experience. In terms of what's behind sensory experience, or what's really
00:01:32 out there, I notice that very intelligent people seem to be arguing about this for a
00:01:39 very, very long time. Intelligent people that have given a lot of thought and research to
00:01:47 the question of what is objective external reality, that is to say, scientists and philosophers,
00:01:55 people who specialize in this field, do not seem to be able to agree and have not been
00:02:02 able to agree for a very, very long time. That indicates to me that although someday
00:02:10 the question probably will be answered in a satisfactory way for humanity, at this point
00:02:17 in human history, it's still contentious and conjectural, and therefore not something that
00:02:24 I, as an amateur, would want to make any statements about. So I limit myself to what I know for
00:02:32 sure. I know for sure that our sense of perceiving self arises through feel-image-talk reactions
00:02:43 to touch-sight sound. I know for sure that sensory experience is a very, very important
00:02:50 process to touch-sight sound. I know for sure that suffering equals pain multiplied by resistance,
00:02:58 et cetera, et cetera. For me, these awarenesses of sensory experience are enormously liberating.
00:03:12 I know for sure that when you bring enough concentration, clarity, and equanimity to
00:03:17 any ordinary sensory experience, that ordinary sensory experience becomes so utterly extraordinary
00:03:24 that it could be named spiritual. To me, this is important stuff, and I have absolute confidence
00:03:32 in it.
00:03:35 If you ask me, well, what's the object of reality reflected in touch-sight sound, feel-image-talk,
00:03:42 the sensory experiences we have? I say, I don't know. Could I make a wild conjecture?
00:03:51 Sure, but it would be a wild conjecture, not something that I would speak with a lot of
00:03:57 confidence and certainly not something that I would try to convince any other human being
00:04:02 of. If I were to make a wild conjecture as to what's really out there, I would guess
00:04:09 that every touch-sight, sound, feel-image-talk experience that we have is actually an experience
00:04:18 of everything, everything altogether in a way that the human brain is not conditioned,
00:04:25 evolved to perceive. We can't imagine what everything at once is, the whole causal nexus,

00:04:43 the suchness. Our brains aren't designed to process that. That would be my guess, for
00:04:50 what it's worth.