

## **System explained by Humberto Maturana**

*What is it to experience?*

### **Speaker 1, Humberto Maturana:**

SPEAKER 1: But you've referred to experience many times. I think you use experience in quite a specific way. How do you use experience?

HUMBERTO MATURANA: Yes, I use experience in a specific way only in relation to the usual use of experience of something. In daily parlance, when one speaks of experience, one usually is meaning experience of something. I experienced the board of writing or I experience that. Now, I used the word experience since we cannot distinguish between perception and illusion when we are living whatever we are living to refer to what we distinguish as happening to us.

If I happen to be here talking in this interview, this is my experience because I distinguish it. Now, if I don't distinguish it, there is no experience. Now I can now distinguish something that I lived yesterday. So now I had yesterday the experience of whatever it is. This, I think, is a very basic notion because it does not presume an external entity.

It does not presume something external to the organism or something external to the observer in the act of knowing because one of the things that happens is that as soon as you take into consideration this situation, which we commit mistakes and we cannot distinguish between perception and illusion, then we realize that we can say nothing about something independent from us, that whatever we distinguish arises in what we do.

So, one has to handle the situation as the starting condition. I leave this as something that I distinguish that happens to me or in me, but not as something that I see there outside of me or independent from me. Yet at the same time-- and this is an interesting question-- in daily life, we speak as if things were there independent from us.