

Part 3:2

Scarcity of Being, Scarcity of Money

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In the last session I left out perhaps the most profound kind of artificial scarcity. That is the scarcity of being. I'd like to explain what I mean by that, and how it generates habits of scarcity in our thinking, seeing, and the way we act in the world.

And I'll start with a question, who are you? What is it to exist? What is it to be self? The modern mind conceives the self as a discrete, separate individual, lodged in a world that is other. The sky, the ground, the trees, the water, and the sun are not part of me. They are separate. You are separate from me too. What happens to the soil, to the whales, to the water, to the other people that's happening to them, not me. So in that world view of separation, contrary to our earlier seed mantra that we worked with, we are not all in this together. To be immersed in a world of others who are not part of you, whose welfare has no bearing on your own, that kind of independence, you might be able to feel that it comes with a profound loneliness, a profound disconnection, that's built in to the modern story of self.

Another view is emerging today that draws on ancient roots. You might call it the story of interbeing, that says we are relational beings. It says that each is part of all of us, and all is part of each. It affirms that my being extends through tendrils of relationship to encompass those which are "other" in the story of separation. Understanding an intimate connection between us, gift comes naturally. Because your wellbeing is connected to mine. What I give to you, in some sense I give to myself.

The ideology of the separate self establishes a scarcity of being by cutting us off from most of what we are. Adding to that cutoff is living in a society that distances us from the effects of our choices, making it seem that we are indeed separate. So we participate in an exploitative economy, but we don't see the suffering embedded in our cell phone. We don't see the lithium mines and sweatshop factories. In general, it's not just cell phones, right? Standardized commodities are divorced from their origins, because it is in the nature of standardization itself it shears away uniqueness and relatedness of our things and it renders nature into thing. So unless you live off the land, and gather food and herbs and so on and at least get some of your food from a garden so on, then nature becomes nothing but a pleasant sight or perhaps a recreational venue. It doesn't become an intimate companion. It doesn't become a partner in giving and receiving. The same reduction that we make of nature also applies to the people we interact with in the money economy. If the checkout lady at the supermarket can't feed her children on her salary, or if the worker at the naptha cracker suffers dangerous working conditions, then how does that affect you? In the current system that is the consequence of all our purchases is invisible. All we notice is the prices.

So that is just one of the ways that we are insulated and cut off from our connection to the world. The cut off is ideological, it is embedded in our story of the separate self and it is also systemic in our industrial and economic system. The price we pay for that is the reduction of our beingness. It is that we are shrunk to a tiny separate self. We long to recover a larger beingness. This longing is a fundamental driver of consumerism, and addiction, and greed.

When we are cut off from community, when we are cut off from place, and when we are cut off from the beings of nature, when we don't know who grew our food or who made our clothes, when we are surrounded by strange faces, when the hills and streams around us have no stories, then we feel alone. In the Story of Interbeing, existence is a function of relationship. A separate self cannot fully *exist*. One reason we crave more and more stuff, and more and more money, and more and more of everything, is to compensate for the lost beingness. Bereft of a full complement of relationships, we suffer a void of identity, of meaning, and of belonging. That is the scarcity that immerses us. Born in this society, we are basically cast into a void. Let me read a passage from Ascent of Humanity exploring the consequences of this:

I said : To introduce consumerism to a previously isolated culture it is first necessary to destroy its sense of identity. Here's how: Disrupt its networks of reciprocity by introducing consumer items from the outside. Erode its self-esteem with glamorous images of the West. Demean its mythologies through missionary work and scientific education. Dismantle its traditional ways of transmitting local knowledge by introducing schooling with outside curricula. Destroy its language by providing that schooling in English or another national or world language. Truncate its ties to the land by importing cheap food to make local agriculture uneconomic. Then you will have created a people hungry for the right sneaker.

So living in conditions of scarcity, we develop addictions driven by the false answers to unmet needs. We also develop coping strategies, habits that are borne of scarcity and ultimately generate more scarcity still. Here are a few common habits of scarcity. And I am just going to list a few and you can see which speak to you. Maybe some of them have served their time and are ready to leave you. So you might notice a feeling of yeah, I'm done with that one.

Hurrying – a habit of scarcity of time.

Envy : which says that more for that person is less for me. I want them to have less so I can have more.

Stinginess – a habit of the scarcity of money

Jealousy – habit of the scarcity of love

Attention seeking – habit of the scarcity of attention

Acquisitiveness – you could say that that is the habit of the scarcity of connection

Judgementality – a habit from lack, a scarcity of belonging and acceptance. The full acceptance of yourself.

In various ways, narcissism, aggression, violence, racism, fascism, bigotry, misogyny, and of course all kinds of addictions all arise from conditions of scarcity. I will leave it to you to ponder and tease out the causal threads here,. How does scarcity engender violence? How does it engender racism? But whether or not you it is something you can figure out intellectually it is something that sometimes you can sometimes feel. When you are being controlling or being manipulative or mean or demanding, or petty or unfair, in that moment you might feel a missing thing, a hurting place underneath. And if that thing were not missing, if that place was not hurting then you wouldn't be in that place of controlling and demanding and regressing.

OK, this brings up the question what do we do about it? If greed and addiction come from various forms of scarcity, then the healing of greed and addiction does not come through withholding and denying ourselves, rather nourishing and supporting ourselves. Our salvation then lies not in making do with less, but in a way letting in more – more of what we really want and need, and less of the cheap substitutes.

So I really want you to take this in. If you are a person who is using more than his share, or if we are a society using more than our share, that is a symptom of a lack. It is not that we want too much. It is that we receive too little. Unfortunately, we are presented the false solution of acquiring more of the substitutes. It is worse than a false solution – it is counterproductive, because the more of the substitutes we acquire the less connection and less community we experience.

So I would like to say it is time to end the War on the Symptom. The War on the symptom pretty much defines our whole society which confuses symptom and cause, which goes to war against the symptom while leaving the causes untouched. The War on Crime, the War on Germs, the War on Terror, the War on Weeds and so on and so on, all of these actually make the underlying conditions worse. Pesticides damage the soil and end up creating worse pests. The prison-industrial complex rends families and neighborhoods and creates more crime. Bombing and droning people around the world generates the conditions more terror. Rampant antibiotic use damages body ecology and breeds more illness. And so it goes.

So what's the alternative? I would like to frame it in terms of gift, which is really the opposite of war. A gift includes another in the circle of self. Where war casts another into the ranks of enemy.

So to answer the question how do we address the conditions of scarcity? One way to look at it is: what would make you feel rich? What would you have to have, that wouldn't leave you wanting more? Most of our needs don't work that way. Food – if you're not having a food disorder, an eating disorder the more you eat, the less you want. You get full. Air – you hold your breath and you want air and you

breathe in, and you are less desperate to breathe again for a while and you don't need an increasing dose of air. It's not an addiction in that way. Sex as well – after a satisfying session of lovemaking, unless you are a sex addict you are ready for something else. You don't need increasing doses of it just to feel normal. That's what distinguishes an authentic appetite from an addiction because when you are in the grips of an addiction. The more you get, the more you want. And that really characterizes our society doesn't it? The more we have, the more we want. No amount is ever enough.

And maybe I will mention a little bit about money here because money is of course one of the most powerfully addictive substances in the world. And I'm not saying that if you want money you are addicted, no money allows us to meet very real needs in our society. But you may have noticed that beyond those very real needs people never seem to have enough of it. It's like heroin, each fix satiates the hunger temporarily but eventually an even higher dose is wanted. And again we will go into the artificial scarcity of money and the habits built around that in a future segment, in more than one segment.

For now, I want to say one more thing about artificial scarcity. Which is in many of the examples I gave, the scarcity is a social condition. However, you might also find that you are complicit in enforcing that scarcity internally in your own life. You might find yourself buying into values and priorities that you take for granted, that have been tantamount to reality itself, that you have always taken for granted but now you're ready to question them. For example Maybe it is scarcity of intimacy – are you really letting that in? Are you really letting in what is available or are you really shutting that from a habit of self-protection that may no longer be necessary? So again, is it really that we live in a society in which intimacy is not available? Yes that is true but it also may be a learned habit that even when it is available we may not be that open to it and that goes for many for the unmet needs that are part of the scarcity of our society.

Another example that is really personal to me is the scarcity of time. I find that I create that sometimes by trying to please too many people or do too much. And so you can ask are you saying yes to things you really don't want, leaving no time for yourself? That's what I do sometimes and even though intellectually I might believe that the soul, time, and the universe are infinite, unconsciously I'm often a slave to time – unnecessarily. Through fear of missing out, thinking I'm not doing enough, wanting to manage everyone and keep them happy, and so on these sometimes govern my choices of how to use my sacred time. And these are internal, they are in addition to the pressures and deadlines this world that maybe the IRS or DMV are imposing on me. So yes, we are subject to external time pressure, but we might cooperate with that internally more than we need to.

So that is an example of how I am complicit in the regime of scarcity. And it also suggests a healing path called meeting the need. What is it that you can give to yourself? Is it the gift of food that really nourishes your body maybe? Is it the gift of some alone time? Is it the gift of learning the piano instead of checking

Facebook? Is it the gift of time unplugged? Is it the gift of meditation? Or exercise? So we want to look what is the real need behind the greed or the addiction? Is it the gift of really listening to yourself? Trusting yourself ? Loving yourself ? Respecting yourself ? Enjoying pleasure? Is it the gift of feeling the sadness when it is present? If we can learn to identify that need we will also be able to identify it in others as well and then to know what gift to give them.

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So let's make that the seed question for this session we'll call it "**What do I need?**" I encourage to use it not just as a general inquiry, but to apply it to the present moment, as in, **what do I need right now?** Especially use it when you feel a craving, a hunger, or an unmet desire. The purpose in doing that is not to stop the addiction or to stop the behaviour. It is just to create a pause, an interruption. Just take note of the need. And maybe you can't name it, maybe it's just a nameless hunger, that's OK feel it, feel the wantingness, feel the discomfort And then... once you've felt it, maybe identified it, maybe not, then do whatever you want. Maybe even knowing what you really need, you will still choose the addictive substitute and that's OK because we are just growing awareness here. When we do that, and the changes will come as a matter of course – as a gift.