

New Zealand's Leadership in a Living Planet View: New Frontiers (2018) Transcript of Charles Eisenstein's Talk

<https://charleseisenstein.org/video/new-zealands-leadership-in-a-living-planet-view/>

Humanity right now is entering into what I see as kind of an initiation, an ordeal that will bring us to another level of our collective evolution. And that it's not about being a bit more clever in doing what we've always been doing; perhaps to come up with better ways to manipulate the resources of this planet and better ways of disposing of the wastes that we create through manipulating the resources. What is being offered to us is a completely different relationship to the rest of life on earth. 'Completely new' I mean from the perspective of what we call civilization but definitely not new on Earth. In fact not new for most of the cultures that have been on Earth, which already were in a different relationship than what is familiar to us.

So I want to make a link here between two areas in which New Zealand is exercising some leadership in the world. One of them we've maybe been hearing about is the Zero Carbon legislation that's being prepared to make New Zealand a leader in meeting and exceeding the requirements of the Paris Agreement. The other seems kind of unrelated but I'm going to explain why it's actually essential, which is New Zealand's leadership in granting Nature -

That's not actually what I want to say. I was going to say, "granting Nature rights or legal personhood," but that's actually not ours to grant. It's really more about recognizing something that is already true. New Zealand is a leader in this. Not the first. That would probably have to go to Bolivia or Ecuador. But among so called developed nations, definitely a leader in moving this direction. Toward understanding really it comes down to, 'we're not alone here.' We're not the only beings worthy of reverence. We're not the only beings who are full beings. And therefore that the world is not just a bunch of instrumental stuff, a pile of resources devoid of the qualities of a Self. Devoid of the qualities of a Being. Devoid of intelligence, devoid of purpose, devoid of consciousness. But it *is* a being worthy of respect and so we can't just exploit it in ignorance. In ignorance of its Beingness. Otherwise - and again this would be the Old Thinking - to say 'otherwise bad things will happen to us.'

But what if, what if I said to you, "You know, I've got a five year old son. He's my fourth son. I'm getting kind of sick of this. What if I stop feeding him and push him out onto the street? Why not?"

And you say to me, "But Charles! If you did that then you would get prosecuted for child neglect and he wouldn't take care of you in your old age. And what would the neighbors think?"

I'd say, "Yeah, you're right. I better take care of him."

Can you see how that echoes a lot of the environmental narrative today? Especially the climate narrative which says the reason that we've got to take better care of this pile of resources is that if we don't, if we're not a little more clever, if we're not a little more foresightful, then bad things are going to happen to us.

Can you see that there's a problem here? And that even if I agree with you and say, "Yes, you're right, I better take better care of my son," I'm not going to take good care of him. He's not going to thrive. Because really what you need, what I need, is to be connected with my love of this being. Then I am going to know how to take care of him beyond what anything can be prescribed or enforced or regulated, because it's going to be coming from a relationship.

I think that the planetary crisis that we call climate change is almost, you could almost say, 'meant' to bring us to that realization; to bring us to that relationship of love. Because the losses we are seeing are connecting us with the reality of this living Being here.

So to recognize what might be called 'legal personhood' for beings of nature - for rivers, for mountains, for land - that is a step toward this new and ancient relationship to the rest of life. And it's not just a philosophy.

Because sometimes it seems like, "OK yes, we should do that and thereby demonstrate our respect for indigenous people and we get to be kind of politically correct by doing that along with learning Maori language and things like that. But then let's get to the nuts and bolts! I mean here is the carbon budget, here are the planetary boundaries. Let's formulate some policies to get those numbers down."

They seem to be in two separate realms. What I have learned in my research that I've been doing for the book that Matthew mentioned is that there are not two separate realms. That in fact the things that people do to protect and restore and heal land are exactly the same things that we need to do to maintain a healthy biosphere and healthy climate, more than science has realized.

Science is beginning to appreciate how, for example, regenerative agriculture can increase carbon sequestration and reduce levels of greenhouse gases. That's a hint of this connection between the local and global. Too often the climate narrative directs us towards global solutions at the expense of the local solutions that come from our love and connection to actual pieces of land. And it makes it seem like, "Well yeah, we could cut down this forest here because we can plant another one there. We can offset things." So the result is that it's somebody else who can do the work. That's not true when we're connected to the welfare, to the wellbeing of a particular river or a particular farm. We can't say, "Well, I'll destroy this one because I can love something somewhere else instead." We're connected to be in deep service to what's in front of our faces.