

How Change Happens in the Story of Separation

Transcript of Charles Eisenstein's Talk

<https://charleseisenstein.org/video/how-change-happens-in-the-story-of-separation/>

Charles Eisenstein: Our current cosmology has despair built into it. Part of our cosmology is what you could call a theory of change. It's essentially Newtonian in origin or actually Galilean if you want to be a stickler for details, but it says change happens when you exert a force upon a mass. Things don't just happen; the universe is this big clockwork. Things don't happen spontaneously. There's no direction or purpose or intelligence in the world. Things have to be made to happen such as when the cue ball hits the eight ball and it changes direction, such as when gravity, a force, pulls on a mass then something happens, but by themselves things kind of run along forever changelessly. If you want to create change in the world then you have to be able to exert a force and this can't be just haphazard, you have a plan, you have to understand these details of cause and effect and if you do that then you'll be able to change the world. Translate this, and this by the way, as all of you by now are abundantly aware, this is an obsolete cosmology and an obsolete theory of change at the very most basic level, the quantum level.

Actually stuff just happens without a force being exerted. Two uranium atoms can be just sitting there and one of them decays and one of them doesn't and it's not because a different force was pushing on one of them and not the other one. This is tremendously puzzling to the mind that is steeped in force based causality and the mind that doesn't grasp the animated quality of the universe, to the mind that thinks that all intelligence and wakefulness and design can only be imposed from the outside. It's very puzzling so we say well it's random, it happens by random. An aboriginal person would probably have no problem whatsoever explaining this. They would say, "well, this atom decided to decay and that one didn't. They're alive just like we are." Basically we call it acausal, acausal and that's perhaps closer to the truth, there's no force pushing it to happen.

Ok, so anyway, obsolete cosmology we're talking about, this theory of change, but it's still infuses our way of thinking about the world, it infuses our spirituality. How can we change ourselves? How can we somehow standing outside of ourselves exert a force just like the technologist, the engineer or the conqueror of nature exerting a force and changing the world and as activists too? We think ok, to change the world in a big way I have to be able to marshal lots of force, harness lots of force. I have to have a big platform, I have to raise lots of money, I have to have my video go viral, it has to be scaleable, I have to do a big thing because look at the size of the problem and look at the power of forces arrayed against us. The military industrial pharmaceutical agricultural prison media educational industrial complex, they have... I don't want to be rude and leave anybody out, did I leave anyone out? They have the force, they have the money, they have the guns, they have the surveillance state, they have the media, they have the force so here's one little bit of the despair that I see in so many activists, sometimes it's a mute despair and then sometimes it flairs up into overwhelm and burn out, but it's the recognition that we don't have this much force at our disposal as they do so if the matter is a contest of force we lose. Yet the template for change that says that it's a contest of force, that's ubiquitous, we're immersed in that, hence we look at everything as a battle or a struggle or a fight.

The fight against climate change, guess what, if it's a fight against climate change we lose. Isn't there another way to solve problems, to resolve crisis other than a fight? Most action movies tell us no. In an action movie the resolution comes when the good guy defeats, utterly

destroys, humiliates, usually kills the bad guy. It's in adult movie, children's movies, almost every movie except for the Lego movie, which I thought was going to be a two hour toy commercial ordeal but then in the end, spoiler alert, cover your ears, but in the end the bad guy wins. He has the good guys totally under his power, but then he has a change of heart and it's not resolved through force after all. That spoke to me. If we see the perpetrator of the system as irredeemable others who can only be conquered by force we loose, but also notice that that way of seeing is actually at the root of the problem. Overcoming the other, that's the template for civilization's relationship to nature and it's also the template for racism and other kinds of oppression which are excused by casting the victim into a less than human or less than being fully self category.

Do we really think that this solution to the crisis of civilization that's generated by the story of separation will itself come from the story of separation or are we just recreating more of the same? Many activists asked themselves that question when they look at their own organization and they see the same violence, the same horizontal violence and the same power dynamics in their organization as they see in the larger society and the government and this is an awakening awareness now. People are speaking of prefigurative activism. How can we prefigure the future in our own organizations? Philip K. Dick, I have a favorite quote, it changes every few months, but now my favorite quote is, "to fight the empire is to be infected with its derangement. This is a paradox. Whoever defeats a segment of the empire becomes the empire. It proliferates like a virus imposing its form on its enemies; thereby it becomes its enemies.