

Humility and Allowing Ourselves to Not Know

Transcript of Charles Eisenstein's Talk at SAND (Science & Non-Duality) Conference
<https://charleseisenstein.org/video/humility-and-allowing-ourselves-to-not-know/>

I ask indigenous people sometimes, "What do you think about climate change?" and they say things like, "It's because we stopped doing the ceremonies around the world." Or they say, "It's because you've taken too many metals from the tropics and exported them to the northern hemisphere and that interferes with the earth's energetics." Or they say, "It's because you stole the gold from the mountains and the gold is the soul of the mountains. And without their soul, how could they effectively administer the land?" Or they say, "It's because you're sucking out too much water and the river no longer reaches the sea. So how does the ocean know what the land needs?"

And these seem like quaint unscientific superstitions and we know better than that, don't we? But our confidence that we know better than that is crumbling. Because if we really knew better, we probably wouldn't be in a crisis that is bewildering to us. So I would like to see a little bit of humility in our culture, which comes from humiliation, which comes from failure, and that moment of "I don't know". Underneath the "I don't know" is knowledge, that can only grow when we allow ourselves not to know. And then things become possible, that are not possible from the worldview and the technologies that come from the cult of quantity and the story of separation, the story that we are separate beings in a world of other. What can come from those is very limited. Powerful in its realm, appropriate in its realm, but insufficient to the task before us.

I have a friend from Brazil who runs a retreat center there and he was telling me that they needed to accommodate forty more guests for their retreats and stuff, and so he hired some indigenous builders. He said, "I'm not hiring them because they are indigenous, I'm hiring them because they are really good architects." So they came and in three weeks they built a building using only materials they found on the land. Using no metal fasteners or anything that they brought in, using no power equipment, using no measuring tapes. And they built this structure that is a perfect marriage of form and function, that keeps out the rain, yet it leads the smoke through the roof that sleeps forty people, that is warm in the winter and cool in the summer.

When he measured it, he found that it was like to in the millimeter perfect golden mean proportions. A building that architects come to see, professional architects and they begin to weep. Because there is no way that they could build this thing, especially not in three weeks. It's so far beyond what they know how to do. And it has a living presence that is almost absent in any architecture you see today, as if civilization were in steep decline. Like why is the built environment so ugly now?

Or maybe you've had personal experience of healing from a condition that medical science says was impossible to heal from, that was incurable. Miracles. Miracles being something that's impossible from an old story, and possible in a new story. That point to the existence of a new story. And when I hear those stories, I'm like, if that is possible for a body, what is possible for the body politic? What is possible for the ecological body? What are we accepting as limits? That is just the shadow of our own views.