

Session 1.2 - Follow-Up
Metaphysics & Mystery online course
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Charles Eisenstein: Hi everybody, Charles here again half a year after the initial recording, hopefully half a year wiser as well. In this second stage of the course production I looked at session one and I was like wow, this is really abstract, I'm speaking really slow, it's super heady, this isn't good enough and maybe we should even rerecord it, take it out and Lauren was like, "but this is my favorite part!" Thinking about that I decided yeah, there's a lot of great material there and it would really benefit by being made more concrete and more applicable to life, to give you something to talk about also.

I want to address maybe three or four of the topics that I touched on in the first session. The first of them kind of came across as an answer to the question why am I here or what is the purpose of life, the idea that the purpose of life is to create more life or, in other words, the purpose of life is life. I described this movement of the universe toward being more and more alive. I don't mean this as the answer, I mean it as an alternative to the story of the world than Lauren was talking about that I grew up in that explicitly or not said the purpose of life it's either nothing, there is no purpose, purpose is just our projection onto the world, it's our imagination, it's our desperate attempt to make meaning where there is no meaning or it said the purpose of life is to maximize reproductive self interest encoded by our genes and what I'm saying is that is a story. Another story is that the purpose of life is to be alive, to become more and more alive, and the purpose of a life, your life, is to contribute to this unfolding of aliveness in the universe the same as is true of any living being in an ecosystem. They don't just survive and reproduce, but they contribute to the livingness of something bigger than themselves. The human being is rather new on this planet and so our particular contribution to the unfolding of life is different than other organisms on this planet or to the unfolding of complexity so not restricting life simply to what we call biological organisms, I'm not saying that who you are, I mean we're talking about why you're here, another question is who are you and that is a related topic, but is another topic that maybe we'll touch on later.

Only two answers make sense ultimately to who are you, nothing or everything, but we'll visit that another time. Right now we are talking about why are you here? To contribute to life, not just biological life as I was saying, but also to something like the organism of a society, the organism of a civilization, or what the planet is becoming when you add the levels of human interaction and complexity onto the biological levels and this does not... I'm not saying ok, all you are is this biological organism, what we define as life, what you learned life is in science class. Later in the course we talk about questions like is a rock conscious? So we're really expanding what we mean by life here. I'm not saying that all you are is just what science class told you reducible to protons neutrons and electrons, to 92 elements, to biochemistry, to electrical impulses in the meat machine of your brain, I'm not saying that.

The unfolding of complexity extends to realms that are pretty much off the map in terms of conventional science, in terms of what we know how to measure today. So they might include subtle energies or patterns of patterns, meta-patterns that have an aliveness that is not completely independent of the substrate on which they operate, but that are a separate or an additional living thing so I'm not trying to reduce, provide a reductionist answer here. So anything else about that, yeah, I'll say that what a contribution to life is for a person depends

on the context that that you're in, that the context that we are in in this time is rapidly changing.

I speak a lot about the story that we live in, the story of separation, the discreet and separate self in a universe of other and that story actually was a driver of what I call the accent of humanity, the unfolding of complex societies, division of labor, specialization technology, all the things that we associate good and bad with civilization were in some sense driven by or co-evolved with the idea of separation and with the identity of separation so that served the unfolding of life for a while, but today it does not, today that story serves death on this planet, the reduction of complexity, the killing of ecosystems, the conversion of force into tree plantations, fishing out of the oceans, that story is no longer in service to the unfolding of life and when our life energy, and this kind of goes to helps me at least understand my resistance, my life long resistance to full participation of the program that I was offered.

My life, my deep innate impulse and intuition about here's what I'm here for and here's what I'm not and this doesn't feel right, it comes down to what I've been offered not really being in service to life so this might be a practical, might be even an orienting question that you could use in informing your choices, is this in service to life and if something is repellant to you is that because its not serving life? I'm also not saying that this choice is always obviously altruistic. Serving your own healing might be a really important step right now in this phase of your development in serving life, serving you psychological healing, your physical healing, your recovery from trauma there might be a phase of that that looks very inward, but that actually is preparing you to move beyond the patterning and the roles that correspond to that wounded state of being. So yeah, please allow the service to life, this concept of I am life therefore I like all life am here to make the whole world more alive. Try that on and let that color your perceptions for a while and see how that idea works on you.

The second thing is related it's the idea that this story, this whole metaphysics that we were born into, that is imbedded in science that I grew up in, that Lauren is speaking about, that her father told her about when he tried to answer her deep questions well, his go to was "here's what science says," that this isn't just intellectual edifice, but is also a stage of being and you can feel you can actually... here's the way... we'll do a little experiment here to notice the stage of being that co-resonates with that ideology of a dead material universe, a biochemical accident that's you. What is the stage of being, how does it feel to inhabit that story today? It once maybe felt different; it once might have been a very liberating story from rigid religious orthodoxy. Science, these ideas were once astonishing, they were libratory, but today they feel very different. Imagine that you have a mind blowing mystical experience and you have, I hear stories like this sometimes, in this intense telepathic relationship with somebody and everything they're thinking you're thinking it too and then you confirm it by saying, "were you just thinking of that?" and they're like, "yeah!" and it just this incredible thing. Wow! What is that open up to you and then I explain it away and I say, "actually all that was was a lot of subtle cuing and self delusion and because you so wanted to believe it afterwards you kind of filled in the gaps and made it up but it was actually all just some brain chemistry, that's all or your experience with communion with God, oh yeah there is a center in your brain that is responsible for orienting you in external reality and defining you boundaries and when that malfunctions you have a sense of universal oneness," that's all that happened.

When I reduce you're... the word reduce is very natural here, when I reduce your mystical experience to "just," that's also a natural word to use here, "just" an accident of brain

chemistry, don't you feel a kind of a deflation and that leads me to a third thing here, of what are we afraid of? And what is the comfort of staying in the world and the identity that goes along with it and the whole state of being? What is the comfort of staying there and what becomes possible when we step out of that? Courage is allowed when you no longer believe that you are a discreet separate meat machine whose consciousness gets sniffed out like a candle flame on the moment of death leaving no trace. What happens when you let go of that? For me it's almost scary. What happens when I truly believe and I really occupy the place of I am holographic map of everything in the universe or everything on this planet and that what I do to the world somehow comes back to me in some way, in some form, not necessarily as a direct consequence, but anything I put out there, any violence I cause, maybe doesn't mean that someone's going to be violent to me, but maybe any violence I do externally corresponds to an inner violence that shutdown, kills some part of my self and my experience of life becomes that much less alive. That kind of logic, what happens if I really accept that and have the faith and trust in that who do I become then? So these are questions that I'd like you to explore as I raise these topics.

I'll add one more thing to this even though I thought this is too much sciency stuff for one session, but Lauren again encouraged me to go with it so this question is what does it look like for the universe to come more and more alive? Maybe one way to see it is to take the initial transition from a unicellular life to multicellular life, like the cells are just as alive maybe no more no less than they ever were, but there's a new aliveness that comes through their coming together and then another level of aliveness is the interactions of the whole community of unicellular and multicellular organisms into an ecosystem. So to understand that the ecosystem is alive too, this is actually really new for science to even recognize that ecosystem, that forests, that soil, these are alive, these are living beings, not just conglomerates of living beings, but they in themselves are alive. Then we can take it to even another level of human culture which has all of these same kinds of feedback mechanisms and non linear relationships that a living being does. Incredible complexity the way that an economy works, the way that a society works, so that's a new level of aliveness that humans have brought to the world and you could debate whether is that really different and how is it different from the aliveness of soil, but still it's another unfolding of complexity, of livingness.

So here we are many people think that we were kind of at a critical juncture in the coming of age of the transition of humanity to a true organism rather than kind of a bunch of competing cells that are kind of still learning how to work together. This might be the transition that's in front of us, to really become an organism. In your body your cells are not selfish; none of them sequester sugar just in case. They have a three second supply, they're getting supplied all the time with glucose and in turn they completely are in service to the rest of the body. They are not in scarcity. Humans in relationship to each other in this meta-organism called a civilization or society; we haven't quite gotten to that yet. Maybe actually you could say that indigenous people, hunter gatherers, traditional people, did do that, but that was on a much smaller scale. On a vast scale of billions of people that has not happened yet so perhaps our service to life or part of it or for many of us it could be serving the coherence of all of humanity into a meta-organism that is as well functioning and as a biological organism, multicellular organism is, that's the kind of speculation I would take that in and then what's after that? It is endless, level after level after level.