

**Session 5.2 – Invitation – Being a Rock**  
Metaphysics & Mystery Online Course  
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Charles Eisenstein: All right everybody, I'd like to follow up on a sentence that I said in the recording about opening up to a "you-ness" that it is like to be. When we ask the question, "what is it like to be you?" we're putting ourselves into an attunement to it being like something, putting ourselves into an attunement to the beingness of another being and therefore we are opening ourselves up to expand. To expand beyond the separate self and to expand beyond the concepts and ideas we have about the world, about our rational inferences that say, "oh it must be like such and such to be a tree or to be a rock" because we might be able to get close that way, especially if we have a lot of experience in sharing the beingness of other beings, but if that's all we have we end up living in a projection of our own ideas and not letting go of the boundaries of self that's required in order to really tap into the beingness of another and to join that other with self, to expand the self. I'll say... should I say it later? No, I'll say it now, that this expansion of the self is really what I think of as love. Love is the expansion of the self to include another. So this is just not a rational process and not a new idea either, that the identity or the communion, the experience of what it is like to be another, cannot be attained through the devices of this separate self. The famous Taoist story of *Zhuangzi and the Fish* illustrates this really well. Zhuangzi is walking with his friend Huizi by the river and the river's high. Actually I'm going to read you. I have a nice version of it by Burton Watson a famous Taoist translator:

Zhuangzi and Huizi were strolling down the bank of the Hao River when Zhuangzi said, "see how the minnows come out and dart about as they please? That's what fish really enjoy."  
Huizi said, "You're not a fish. How do you know what fish enjoy?"  
Zhuangzi said, "You're not I, so how do you know that I don't know what fish enjoy?"  
Huizi said, "I'm not you, so I certainly don't know what you know. On the other hand, you are certainly not a fish. So that still proves you don't know what fish enjoy."  
Zhuangzi said, "Let's go back to our original question please. You asked me how I know what fish enjoy so you already knew I knew it when you asked the question. I know it by standing here beside the river Hao."

So there's actually a lot there I'm not going on a whole discourse about it too, too much. Huizi is right if you take for granted the premise of a separate self. If you are truly separate from another, if there is none of you in them and none of them in you and that is fundamental to your selfness then Huizi is right, you cannot actually know what it's like to be somebody else. The more rigidly the boundaries of the separate self are maintained the less possible it is to experience anything like empathy. Letting down these boundaries, which is a result of meditation and spiritual practice and really a lot of the Taoist classics are cultivating in us that allows us to know that is unattainable through any of the devices of the separate self. In the worldview of objectivity and reductionism we tend to devalue those ways of knowing and the knowledge that comes from them because it contradicts our basic story of what the self is. Maybe we also don't even know necessarily how to use that knowledge because another error that can come from it, from the perspective of the separate self, is to treat that knowledge the same as we would knowledge that we achieved through scientific measurement, through reference to an external standard, external to Zhuangzi and Huizi, so I could say, "fish swim in the water, fish are in the water" and you say, "well how do you know that?" and I say, "well look, here's one. Here's a picture of a fish. Here's how their gills work" and that's an external referent, but I can't try to impose my knowing onto you

and say you should believe these fish are happy here because I know and if you don't accept my knowing well then you are insulting me because we can't stand in that place of dominating and convincing and the whole world of evidence. It's not a piece of evidence in the way that we are used to holding scientific evidence it's a different kind of knowing. Anyway, I hope that wasn't too abstract. Let me introduce you to my friend. (Charles holds up a rock) My friend "The Rock" here. I've done some work with rocks and what I've learned is that their primary consciousness is of silence. It's much easier to will that with a boulder. You might try this, go find some boulders, the bigger the better, and feel them blasting silence. When you tune into it it's really powerful, so a rock like this has maybe just a shard of silence. A pebble is just a grain of silence, but once you've become attuned to it through boulders and bedrock you might also become attuned to it even for little tiny pieces of silence. Now I'm speaking here, I'll just say, about the state of just basic rocks like granite, sand stone, shale. If you're talking about like rare crystals and things like that, there's definitely a different consciousness that isn't just silence. I haven't made a study of that, but some people have and you could ask how do they know that rose quartz has the quality of awakening the heart or whatever. There's whole books on the emotional and spiritual qualities of various crystals. How do people even know that anyway? It's not a scientific study; it's fundamentally the same way that Zhuangzi knows that the fish is happy or that any of us can feel the silence emanating from a rock. I don't know if you can feel what I'm talking about through digitization, time and space. You're not in the actual presence of a rock as directly as I am right now. You'll probably have to go out and try this and you can try it for other beings too. What's the consciousness of a tree, what's the c of a cloud, of an animal and to really tune into it, to give it attention and to let go of your ideas about it. With your ideas you can only get close. You won't get real knowledge that way, you'll just have imitation knowledge. So this is the invitation is to go and with that question "what is it like to be you?" applied to a rock, applied to a boulder, a cloud, any being that you find, "what is it like to be you?" and putting down your ideas of what it's like, putting down just temporarily your doubt, your feeling that this is silly, that I'm making this up, that I'm telling myself a fairy story, that there's no beingness, it's not even a live if it doesn't have a central nervous system it's not like anything to be that which is what the philosopher Daniel Dennett says, "it's not like anything to be a bat or to be another being," and that's again true in the story of separation, in the story of the separate self in which the world does not possess beingness, but that's only in human beings. So yeah, this experience, it's not intellectual reputation of that position, it's an experiential reputation of that position and therefore it is a profound medicine for those of us who have been inoculated with the story of separation, who've been immersed in the story of separation. It's a medicine in a couple of ways. Number one is that it demonstrates, it confirms that we live in a world that is thick with beings, that is bubbling with sentience that is alive in every corner. Secondly, it brings some of that beingness into ourselves. It expands the self to be more and again to be less than what it was before. It's a paradox isn't it that the more you let go of the constructs of self you don't become smaller, you become bigger, you become more expanded that way. You could even say that our ego consciousness, our small self, is an interruption in the flow of a larger self. And so anyway there's whole theories of consciousness that are built on that idea that a consciousness is universal and that ourselves are kind of like an eddy in the river. What's his name, Bernard Kastrup, is that the right first name here? I have his book in my shelf. Bernardo Kastrup, yeah he's one of the philosophers who makes this argument. So by becoming these beings they become us and when we take our attention back, back into our bodies, back into ourselves, into the original self from which we left and this, I'm getting caught up in language here, but you will find that you are no longer yourself quite anymore because through the power of attention you've taken another being into yourself and become more expanded,

more than what you were and actually more in love. Love is born from this practice. Love and therefore a feeling of belonging because the loneliness of the separate self of modernity, it cannot be assuaged merely through intellectual demonstrations or arguments that you're not alone, you need the experience of not being alone, you need the experience of companionship and that experience, some of that can indeed be met through other people, through relationships with other people, but I think for most of us that's not enough, that we recover much more of our being when we access relationships and a kind of intimacy, a kind of a sharing of beingness with non-human beings. What blocks us from doing that, one of the things that blocks us is the ideology that says these are not actual beings, This is the ideology I want to overturn and this is one of the main motivations about doing this course because that ideology that these other beings are not actually beings, that's destroying the earth That's why we are able as a collective to treat the earth as if it were just a thing. So fond of quoting one of the Quogue who says, "If he knew she could feel he would stop" referring to the earth, but you could refer to anything that you dehumanize or desacralize in that way. Would there still be abuse of women or children if we fully got that they can feel, that this is a full being here? Abuse is facilitated by dehumanization, same thing with exploitation, economic exploitation, same thing with warfare. This is a practice with broad applicability and anyway, I encourage you to go out and try with some non-human beings and its ok if some resistance comes up, if some doubts come up, I guarantee you that, especially with a boulder, if you do this you will feel this consciousness. This silence emanating from the boulder you will feel it even if you have mental argument with it, if you are in doubt of it, if you even at the same time you question whether you felt it or not, you will still feel it. That experience will start something in motion or accelerate something that's already in motion in you. So play around with it and I hope you enjoy it.