

Why I Believe in a Living Planet View

Transcript of Charles Eisenstein's Talk

<https://charleseisenstein.org/video/why-i-believe-in-a-living-planet-view/>

I think--my personal opinion is that climate change is an initiation for our species (or the dominant culture, civilization) into the understanding that what we do to the world we do to ourselves--that we are on a living planet. Therefore, even if we reduced carbon emissions to zero, if we continue to destroy the tissues, the organs, and the cells of Gaia, then the climate will still spin out of control. Therefore, we need to begin to value all of the things that had been excluded by our worldview of seeing nature as an inanimate machine, a complicated machine that can be reduced to a set of quantities--and even the worldview of "the important thing is the greenhouse gases that we can measure"--and into understanding every river, every forest, every mountain, every ecosystem as alive and sacred. And to orient toward that, even if we don't understand how it's going to reduce greenhouse gases. I mean, it would be relatively easy to change to a different fuel stock and continue civilization as normal.

What happens when we let go of the customary find-the-enemy approach to problem solving? Two things happen, actually. One is that we realize that the problem cannot be merely put on the shoulders of a "bad guy", or an enemy, or an other, but that the problem involves ourselves, too. That we're part of the totality of the system, that our lives, our choices, our actions, the culture that we live in, for example, are part of a system of, let's say, neoliberal capitalism that creates unlivable conditions and destroys the ways of life in other places, that breed poverty, that breed immigration, that breed terrorism, etc. etc. We're like, "Oh yeah, we're part of this whole system."

That's one thing. The second thing that happens is that we don't know what to do anymore. When we can identify a linear cause, whether it's an enemy or a germ or a hormone level that's too high or greenhouse gases, or something like that, when we can identify a cause, like, "What's killing the honeybees?" Oh, well, let's hope that it's a fungus, because then we can apply a fungicide. But what if it's everything? What if it's everything that beekeepers do today? What if it's the entire agricultural system? What if it is the spraying of vast areas of this continent for gypsy moths and Zika viruses and things like that--what if all of these things together, what if our entire way that we're embedded in the world is the problem? We don't know what to do!

This is good, if we can come to the place of "I don't know what to do." I would like to see a politician say, "Yeah, I'm running for President and I don't know what to do about health care, and I don't know what to do about immigration, and I don't know what to do about anything, actually." Because then, at least if you don't know what to do, you're not a captive of the reflexive ways of doing things, the habits that come from the worldview of separation that has generated our civilization and that is growing old, reaching its senescence and falling apart.