

How Our Money System Creates Scarcity

Transcript of Charles Eisenstein's talk

<https://charleseisenstein.org/video/how-our-money-system-creates-scarcity/>

The money system embodies two key planks of the story of separation. On the one hand, it casts us into competition with each other, because it's created scarce through the lending system, through the system of interest-bearing debt: there's always more debt than there is money. So it's not that competition is absent in nature, it's not that human beings don't have a competitive aspect to their human nature. But the system generates additional competition on top of what might be organic and natural to human beings. We're put in a situation in which we have to compete to survive, in which things that are actually abundant are made artificially scarce. Money is artificially scarce, and it induces artificial scarcity in everything that it touches. So we have a world now where things that were once abundant have become scarce. Time. I was in a conversation recently and someone said, "Yeah, but who has the time for that anymore?" Well, why do we not have time anymore? After four centuries of inventions, each one of which was a labor-saving device, why do we have less time than a peasant in China or India? The ideology says that they are struggling to survive, and working their fingers to the bone, but when you actually go to these places, people are much less anxious, much less in a hurry.

Yeah, so money creates scarcity in everything it touches: scarcity of time, scarcity of beauty - the modern built environment is almost unremittingly ugly. I drive down the four lane roads with the big box stores and the franchise restaurants and the strip malls - maybe you don't have that so much in New Zealand. But I'm like, after five thousand years of architecture, is this the best we can do? Scarcity of love, scarcity of food, scarcity of water. Water is the most abundant substance on earth, and now we face water shortages. It's not because there's less water. People are hungry all over the world, but enough food is wasted to feed all of them. It's not because there's not enough of it, it's because of the way it's distributed. It's because of the profit centers, because of the incentives to operate in a way that pollutes the water. So we have artificial scarcity. So that's one way that money embodies and perpetuates the story of separation. It puts us into competition with each other for never enough.

The second way is that the money system demands endless growth. It compels endless growth. It encourages endless growth. So in other words it encourages the conversion of nature into property, into products. Therefore it's aligned with that premise of the old story that says human beings are here to dominate and control the world, to become its lords and masters, to transcend nature, to harness all natural forces, to make nature ours. That's part of the old story and money goes right along with that. When we stop growing, when we stop converting nature into property, then it creates an economic crisis, because the system only works if there's growth.