

On Life and Meaning

MARK PERES

Episode 20 – Charles Thomas – A More Beautiful World

The Connections Are Hearts Want

And now a personal word,

This is what I know about Charles Thomas. He has a larger vision of himself based on a more beautiful and connected world. That world is informed not only by his personal history of growing up in public housing as an African American young man raised by a single mom, and his adult career choices that has taken him from lucrative work at Andersen Consulting to teaching children photography at a museum to running his own start-up social enterprise to creating and executing a strategy to build community on behalf of a national foundation, but also by a set of beliefs about how the world we know today could be fundamentally made better.

Charles once told me about the ideas of Charles Eisenstein, author of *The Ascent of Humanity*, *Sacred Economics*, and *The More Beautiful World Our Hearts Know is Possible*. In all his works, Eisenstein makes a simple but profound case: that the many political and social and environmental problems we are facing in the world are the result of an underlying worldview he calls ‘The Story of Separation.’ Humans have embraced a story that they are separate from each other and from nature. This separation results in people pursuing their self-interest in a zero-sum game of exploitation. Eisenstein talks further about how capitalism and the current monetary system has led to alienation, competition and a system predicated on continuous growth that is destroying the planet and our souls. A new story is necessary.

For Eisenstein, a new story is emerging. He calls the new narrative ‘The Story of Interbeing,’ one that offers an entirely different set of answers to the defining questions of life. Elements of the new story include:

- That my being partakes of your being and of all beings. That our very existence is relational.
- That, therefore, what we do to another, we do to ourselves.
- That each of us has a unique and necessary gift to give the world.
- That the purpose of life is to express our gifts.
- That every act is significant and has an effect on the cosmos.
- That we are fundamentally connected to each other, to all beings, and to the universe.

- That every person we encounter and every experience we have mirrors something in ourselves.
- That humanity is meant to join fully the tribe of all life on Earth, offering our uniquely human gifts toward the well-being and development of the whole.
- That purpose, consciousness, and intelligence are innate properties of matter and the universe.

Eisenstein speaks of a world in which we have fallen in love with each other as fellow and grace-filled human beings, and we have fallen in love with Earth and the climate and bio-diversity that gives us life.

When I hear Charles Thomas talk about his vision of a world of greater equity and opportunity – one in which we are connected to each other as human beings – I hear the very clear voice of Charles Eisenstein. But Charles Thomas is not simply echoing ideas. He is living those ideas in the work he is doing and the destiny he is willing to declare about himself. He expects that his service will take him to a global stage. He wants the global stage. That drive will take him far as he seeks to become a historical transformative figure, one that will help usher in the more beautiful world our hearts know is possible. Those are my words about Charles Thomas' vision, not his words, but I believe Charles sees himself in that way.

A longer conversation with Charles would reveal this: he has done the work of reflecting deeply on who is and who he wants to be. He allowed himself to become lost in order to find himself. He is leading and many will follow.

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