

On Life and Meaning

MARK PERES

Episode 13 – Matt Olin – Creative Mornings

Evolutionary Intelligences for the Human Hive

And now a personal word,

When I listen to Matt Olin talk about bringing people together to enrich the creativity of the city, I'm reminded of a book entitled *Integral City: Evolutionary Intelligences for the Human Hive*.

Marilyn Hamilton, a self-described catalyst of city well-being, asserts that the purpose of a city is to optimize the life of the human species and add value to the life of the planet. She examines cities as whole systems. With nearly 60% of the human population now in cities, and the scale of our urban development exceeding the carrying capacity of bioregions to support them, many of our cities are in crisis. Her book proposes a new “integral” framework so that cities can adapt to change and thrive.

Her central thesis is that cities evolve through stages of intelligence. Communities must constantly solve problems. They must regularly reorganize to provide essential services and reinvent themselves to confront threats and exploit opportunities. People and communities with greater integral development (or levels of intelligence and complexity) have more resilience to survive. They literally have more assets and capacities to manage conditions of stress.

Intelligence comes in many forms, across multiple domains. It includes the intelligence of mechanics, athletes, accountants, cooks, counselors and plumbers. Intelligence progresses from self-awareness to other-awareness to context-awareness to system-awareness. The broader and deeper these intelligences are in community, the greater the capacity for regeneration.

Regeneration in community occurs through shared learning of competencies and capacities. Here is where Matt Olin comes in: he is enriching the spirit of his city.

The arts play a vital role in helping communities regenerate. The arts develop competencies and capacities. The spoken word, music, dance, and drama pass along accumulated wisdom and provides vocabulary and tools for the invention of new visions. The arts help us become increasingly attentive and intentional. If we understand a city, as Marilyn Hamilton does, as ‘a living system that emerges from the

intentions and interactions of individuals and groups to produce both a conscious presence and a habitat,' it is through creative activity and the arts that the city evolves.

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