

Charles Eisenstein

Living In the Gift

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Patsy 01:13

Yay! Recording in progress!

Hello everybody. This is Patsy and I'm your co-host today. We have Charles here with us and two live Zoom supporters. Todd and Paul. And we have six guests to speak with us.

Charles, where are you? Let's see. Here!

Hi, Charles.

Charles 01:49

Hi Patsy, I'm here.

Patsy 01:53

I haven't finished the introduction yet.

Charles

Oh, sorry for interrupting. (laughing)

Patsy

I just also want to mention our live chat - we have Connie, Norie from Japan. Yay! And then Harriet from France. Okay. Sherry. I think she's probably in Asheville right now. And then Richard from UK, I think that that's about it, and Vie Davis, she might hop on to the live chat to say 'hello,' and help you with your questions regarding Charles's website and the content of this course, where to find it, and how to register, and our community, etc. And so that's it.

And thank you very much for all of you helping us make this event possible. And especially these upcoming guests are gonna provide us with a lot of juicy questions, and Charles your insight. So I think that's all I have to say. And I think the questions our participants bring up speak for themselves. So this event is to support the Living in the Gift course. So thank you.

So would you like to say something to...

Charles Eisenstein: 03:14

Oh, yeah, thank you. Like, this whole thing, with all these volunteers here, and all of this happening, is kind of a gift for me because I did very little of this work. <Oh boy, someone is trying to call me now. Strange, no one ever calls me except like...okay...> Yeah, it's kind of happening as a gift because, like, I didn't do anything, basically. It's just happening.

Now, obviously, a lot of hard work happened to make this happen. But I just feel really grateful that, as my wife, Stella, says, the universe is so generous. And, yeah, so thank you, everybody for volunteering and for just making all this work.

And so we're gonna have people pose questions or situations maybe even that came up as they did the work in the course—in the first part of the course. And I'll do my best to respond from kind of, like a lot of the questions you know, even though maybe it's just one person's question, many of the questions will spark recognition in a lot of you, because we're all human here. And we face many different variations of the same question in our lives.

So the people who are asking will be speaking on behalf of many, and I'm going to try to respond on behalf of many as I pull from experiences and stories and conversations that I've had. So you'll be channeling a question, I'll be channeling a response. And we will be in it together.

So, I'm ready to begin.

Patsy 05:08

Great. So, our first guest is Elliot. So while Elliot is getting his video on... Okay, great.

Here you are Elliot!

Charles 05:26

Hey, Elliot.

Elliot

Hello.

Charles

Hey, we can see you.

Elliot

Hey, okay. So am I on? Is everything like working okay?

Patsy

Yes, it is. You are.

Elliot 05:41

Yeah, this is all very confusing. But yeah, thank you for having me on.

The situation that came up for me was about the 1.2 (Session) 'Gratitude is My Native State.' And, actually while I was thinking about this, I realized I had kind of a similar reaction to 'we're all in this together', where I went to Catholic school for a while. And in Catholic school, there was just this constant drumbeat of the adults expecting us to, like, show gratitude. And I have almost this, not quite a trigger, but like almost a trigger, where when I hear the word 'gratitude,' I'm like *cringing motion* because it was just this constant 'you need to feel grateful to us, you need to feel grateful to the church, you need to feel grateful for Jesus' and all of this. And it felt very, like...

So it's hard for me to access expressing gratitude and also just discussion of the word and of the feeling because I start to get this like, it feels like... Even if it's not being forced, it just brings up that memory of all of that kind of, like, adults demanding me express a certain thing. And then with, 'we're all in this together,' it brings up like... It's like, here's this profound, spiritual truth, but then I don't feel like I can access it because I've heard so many people express this, like profound spiritual truth in a way where they're trying to put something over on me or get some agenda by me that's not actually a we're-in-this-together agenda. But they're just saying, 'we're in this together.' So it becomes harder to challenge and then I just, I can't get past that, if that makes sense.

Charles 07:39

Yeah, that totally makes sense. The programming is strong. Even like, when you were speaking, I was imagining, you know, a nun in a Catholic school telling you, 'Elliot, you *need* to...' or telling the class, 'You *need* to be grateful. You need to do this. You need to...'

How arrogant is it, actually, to tell somebody else what they need? Like, that already is something that I would bristle at. Like I would get defensive and oppositional if somebody thinks that they know what I need. If they're not somebody who knows me really well, and who really loves me, and who I've developed trust for. Maybe then I would love for somebody to tell me what I need.

And especially when it's coming from—'what you need is to be different from what you are.' Then it's an attack on your being, like, on your soul, almost. And if I were making this point to a nun, I would also say it's kind of blasphemous, questioning God's handiwork.

So yeah, I just want to make the point that—it's come up a bit in actually in the chat a little bit, too—**that this is not about being a better person, or cultivating a virtue called 'gratitude.' It's not saying gratitude is your native state, which means that you *should* be in gratitude, and if you're not—what's wrong with you?? But it's actually saying...it's almost the opposite. It's saying that you don't actually have to aspire toward gratitude. It's not an ideal different from where you naturally are. But it's your native state.**

So therefore, if you're not feeling—and why isn't it your native state? Because you are in fact magnificently gifted—with breath, with life, with sunlight, with water, with food, with love, with this life, you know, being alive. So gratitude is the natural response to that. So then, if you're *not* feeling grateful, the first response is, 'Wow. What happened to dispossess you of your birthright and to oust you from your native territory of gratitude?'

So then basically if that's the case, then the purpose of the mantra is to spark some compassion for oneself. And then an inquiry, like, 'What is keeping me from my native state?'

And another thing that I can do is just maybe bring you in touch with the truth of it, where like, even if for a moment you experience your native state of gratitude, then that's a moment of knowing yourself. And that **the power of a truth made visible is maybe the greatest power in the world. And then the truth operates on you.**

So yeah, like Elliot and anyone else who's laboring under the "shoulds" of modern moral education, please don't take it that way. It's not something like... And none of this gift stuff, it's not like, live in the gift, so then you'll be an admirable person...then you'll be a good person...then you can excuse yourself from blame, or for complicity in the, you know, patriarchal, white supremacists, world-destroying machine, because you're in the gift now. So you're no longer, you know, culpable as a member of the oppressor class.

None of that stuff is what we're doing here. **It's not part of the quest to be a good person. It is more of a return home to who we are.** And then recognizing that the conditions are not... Like, why aren't you in the gift? it's not because of your failing. It's because of the circumstances that we are placed in—some of this material comes up later in the course—but the circumstances of being in a market economy, of receiving that kind of education, of not being in community, of being in a situation where it sure doesn't look like the gift is safe, or even sane. Like we have a lot of hostile conditions.

And really what we're doing in this course—and even more that's going to be in the next course that we're putting together now on the Sanity Project—we're returning home to some lost truths that are lost in modernity. And in a collective—and this is why the forum is so important...we're in a collective—to anchor each other into these truths.

Is that helpful at all, Elliot?

Elliot 13:07

Yeah, that really helps a lot to not like... How would I put this? It kind of feels like it slips in underneath all of the conditioning. I don't know how to put it. Yeah, I definitely had a shift listening to your talk, but I don't think that I can verbalize it as of right now.

Charles 13:35

Okay, yeah. Good. Well, thank you for bringing that up. I know for a fact that many, many people are having similar thoughts. So yeah, thanks for coming on the stage.

Patsy 13:52

Elliot, would you tell our guests where you are located? Because I forgot to introduce you in that way.

Elliot

Well, I'm in Ypsilanti, Michigan.

Patsy

Oh, yeah. Yeah, thank you, Elliot. I really like the fact how we formed this community, because without this platform, I would never have met you. Oh, my goodness. Yeah. That itself is really magical. And that itself is such a gift, you know. It's brought us so many good friendships and even a space for us to be vulnerable. You know, I thought your posting was really vulnerable, you know, and speaks for a lot of us. Thank you. So see you at NAAS. I love your contributions. Thank you.

And I think our next guest is Emma. Hi, Emma.

Emma

Hey.

Patsy

Hey! So would you let us know what part of the world you're calling from?

Emma 15:01

Yes, sure. I'm calling from Vancouver Island in Canada—Victoria to be more specific, and I really appreciate this opportunity to ask you a question, Charles.

I'm a mother of three very energetic boys and I'm curious to hear you maybe share and speak to your experience of parenting children while living in the gift. And my question is kind of twofold, I suppose. One is to maybe gain some inspiration. And another part of it is to sort of deepen a community of people who are dedicated to living in the gift while navigating the inherent challenges and joys of parenthood.

Because there are moments when my kids can seem so unkind, despite all my efforts to really fill their cup and love them unconditionally, and nurture reverence for the natural world. So that can feel discouraging. And through this course, I'm starting to really understand that a lot of the challenging moments in parenting sort of stem from this idea that we're still living a life of artificial scarcity—scarcity of time and energy really come to mind when I think about parenting. So I'm dedicated to shifting us into abundance and to exiting the matrix, as you call it, and doing those radical acts of kindness that make the world better for everyone.

I feel like I just really need my community to keep me spirited when things get tough and difficult as a parent. So yeah, we're in this together, and thank you.

Charles 16:34

Yeah, thanks.

This is really related to, I'll say, good follow-up from Elliot's question. Because here is a situation, I mean, childhood is where the programming begins. And as you're saying, there is so much artificial scarcity built into the routines, the rhythms of modern life. And the pressures that are on parents.

I noticed, when Jimmy and Matthew were little, my two oldest—and I was a young parent at that point—that most of the time when a conflict arose between me and my kids, it was because we had to be somewhere on time. Or because I was in a hurry. And then like, if it weren't for that, it would be no problem that Matthew took half an hour to put his socks on. Or that he got diverted into something else while I'm waiting around there, you know, waiting to get them to his thing and get back to my computer or do whatever I needed to do. If we were in village life, then it just, this whole conflict wouldn't arise. So the scarcity of time, which is artificial, introduced a lot of conflict.

Another example would be the scarcity of play. This was another thing that came up. It was so hard for me to find other parents who valued child's play as much as Patsy and I did. It was like, I mean, we had tons of other kids in the neighborhood. But like, to get them together to play, that came last in priority, after school and after homework—and we're talking about kindergarteners, you know, or first graders—homework and your scheduled activities. And she has this lesson and that lesson, and like, it just wasn't a priority.

So if your situation is alone in a box without the kind of community you're talking about, like you can do your best, and we did our best, but **we just cannot provide as individuals what a community offers.**

Another thing, there's another thing that's coming up for me now is the mindset of instruction. And, like, what I said before about—the purpose of this course isn't to become a better person. Well, in that culture, where we degrade the natural self, and set up an ideal toward which we must improve, like we do that to ourselves, right? But we also do it to the kids. I'm not saying you're doing this but this is just like the tide of the culture. For me, like my resistance to that is to the point where I don't even tell my kids to say 'please', or 'thank you' or that they're 'sorry.' Because **it's kind of actually like a gaslighting to say, 'say "thank you"; when they're not actually thankful.**

So what I like to do instead is kind of what this mantra is—point their attention to their gratitude in whatever way I can do it. Like, 'Wow, Grandma was thinking about you. And she knows you like Legos. And so she gave you this gift. And here it is, even after she died, the present is still waiting for you at Christmas.' So, to point their attention to gratitude so that they *feel* thankful. And then when they witness me, saying 'thank you' to somebody out of gratitude, they get the idea, 'Oh, here's a way to express this feeling that I have.' And...I don't know if I've done this perfectly...And same thing with 'sorry,' same thing with 'please,' you know.

And our kids are actually really polite, even though I have never once told them to say any of those words. And, you know, sometimes, yeah, they're polite, and sometimes maybe they don't say, 'please', 'thank you', or 'sorry', in a situation where it's socially expected.

And so what I'm saying about that might extend to what you're talking about—about kindness, like how do you foster kindness when kids learn by example, you know, and also, they're looking to you to learn how to be human. So if you hold the knowledge, or you hold a model, even in your mind of what a human being actually is, then they're going to gravitate toward that.

So if you have in your unconscious—you have maybe some ideas that human being is unworthy, is greedy, is selfish, if you hold in your mind that a human being is, you know, like the nuns in Elliot's school hold a human being—then you're actually working across purposes to yourself; like trying to push them away from that, but also attracting them toward that, simply by your belief that that's what a human being is, because you're holding the model for them.

So then, if there is anything of that in your unconscious—and I don't know that there is, but there certainly is in mine—then it comes down to some of my healing work and paying attention. Like, **how is it in the way I speak that I telegraph judgementality toward anybody? Because even if it's toward a third person, there's the implication of 'my value for you is conditional on you not being like this person'.**

So, unkindness can be a reflection of something in the parent, and maybe in a distorted or extreme form. But children are, you know, very much our mirrors. And that doesn't mean like, 'Oh, I'm gonna blame myself for my child being unkind,' but it is simply like a line of inquiry. You know, 'what am I modeling?' 'What am I holding?' 'What am I not seeing about myself?' Like, could this be a mirror? And maybe it isn't. But it's an avenue of inquiry. It could be from something else completely. But it's an avenue of inquiry. And I don't know if this is practical at all, for you, or useful, but if you want to follow up or comment on it.

Emma 24:04

I think that's great. And I will do some inquiry there to see if there's something at the unconscious level that I haven't really tapped into that might be kind of perpetuating some of those behaviors in my kids. My kids are also very different. So I have one child who is extremely nurturing and kind and thinks of others constantly. And then the older sibling is the opposite. And he is always competitive, wants the bigger the faster, the better. And I can't figure out where it comes from. So I'm just working through that.

Charles 24:36

There's a lot of it in society, you know, the bigger the faster, the better. I mean, that message is coming from other kids in school, if he's going to school. It's coming from all over the place. From you know, superhero movies, you know. How is the problem solved? Who wins? It's the bigger, the faster.

Emma 24:54

And it's interesting because we shelter them from that stuff as much as we're able to, right? Where we don't do technology. We don't expose them to the fighting and those sorts of things. So it's fascinating. Kids are fascinating. And they're always, you know, presenting challenges for

their parents. And usually it's an opportunity, I think, for growth on both sides. But I really appreciate your thoughts on that. And yeah, I will give an inquiry to that idea of what's happening.

Charles Eisenstein: 25:21

Yeah. I mean, I'll just say one more thing, you know, as a general question, you know, I can say what I say, but when it comes to an individual, specific child, then, I mean, it could be all kinds of things. It could be a displacement of some way that he wants to be striving toward excellence that is frustrated, you know, that may have nothing to do with you. I mean, there's so many things that could be going on that, like, I don't even want to guess, like, maybe everything I said is not even relevant.

Emma: 26:00

I think it's relevant. I think it's relevant. He is just a particularly complex character. And I may never figure it out. But I'm willing to try and support him in his journey, whatever that ends up being.

Thanks Charles. Appreciate it.

Charles: 26:16

Yeah, thanks for stepping up.

Patsy: 26:18

Yeah, thank you, Emma.

And I want to make a comment, you know, as a parent. We all heard that our children are gifts to us. So one of the biggest gifts is a reminder of that, how we can give back. So for me, when I heard Charles talking about the scarcity of play, and remembering a story that I encountered by selling dolls. You know, I paint dolls and I sell them on the internet. And one time I encountered a customer. He's an adult man and then we got into this conversation back and forth about toys, and he said, You know, I thought when I was a child, I noticed that adults don't play, right? So I vowed as a child that I want to always play. I want to keep my childlike quality throughout my adult life.

And that's when I remember that, oh, **so if I want my children to play then I must first play**, right? So that's just a thought, an insight, a reflection that I had about playing.

Thank you! So we'll see you in NAAS.

Our next guest is Yasmine.

Hey, welcome Yasmine. So would you tell our guests where you're calling from?

Yasmine:

Hello, Patsy, it's so good to see you. Hi everyone. I'm in Brussels, Belgium.

Patsy

Yeah, welcome. So Charles. It's all yours. You guys talk now.

Charles 28:10

Hi, Yasmine. Yasmine, am I saying it right?

Yasmine

It's Yasmine.

Charles

Yasmine. Yeah. Welcome. What's on your mind?

Yasmine 28:21

Okay, thank you so much. And first, I really want to take the opportunity to say I adore this course. Really, I love it. I don't know, it's proof that... I don't know. I feel very much taken seriously. And I really like that.

About the question. So it's a question that has to do with a latter part of the course, the part on scarcity and on synchronicity and sacrifice, which is an amazing part and my favorite. It's really great. But... so at one point, you ask us to look at what we truly serve. And that's a huge question for me. Like, I really love that question. And personally, I struggle with the fact that ever since I was a kid, I had a ton of gratitude. I felt very indebted to the world for its beauty and its richness. And my first natural answer to that was to make art, which I kept doing my whole life, despite a mind that told me that it was no point, that there was no place for it, for all kinds of reasons. And anyway, so there was a whole story about that.

But however, in the meantime, I mean, there are many ways to serve what I want to serve. Many, many ways. I find, for me, I have three different ways for that, which one is art. One is service to people, especially people who struggle with certain issues that I have some experience with. And where I can really, really be useful. And also serving in terms of nature and connection to nature, which is also really dear to my heart.

And what I find is that very practically it happens to me that I'll be working on a painting, obsessed as always by that thing, and then somebody will need help, something will show up. And my insistence on wanting to serve through art seems selfish to me. Because I don't most of the time, I mean, I work alone, I don't see what I'm helping there. And at the same time, I know my heart is telling me that I need to do that. It holds the magic for me. It just breaks my heart, it breaks my heart all the time that I have to choose, like choosing between two kids. And also, it makes me question my motives. Am I truly wanting to serve? Or am I just trying to have it my own way and to decide what's... I don't know, to be honest. I'm sorry. I'm not sure if it's clear. It's very complicated.

Charles

Yeah, I get it.

Yasmine

And there's a lot of weird motivations for everything. But that's what I got. Maybe I'll just let you say something.

Charles 31:32

I just want to say first, I think I and everybody watching and listening is feeling your heart. And just like what a beautiful heart you have. And I'm sure a lot of us are thinking, 'Don't worry about it. You're doing great,' you know? And, I feel touched even that, you know, you're having these thoughts and, and having this like heartbreak. It takes a big heart to feel the heartbreak from that. Yeah, I just wanted to say that first.

And then yeah, so here's a situation where sometimes your heart is saying one thing and your mind is saying something else. Your heart is saying 'Yes, this is important.' 'This is what I'm meant to do.' And your mind is saying, 'Well, that's not gonna help anybody.' You know, 'Get out there and help people.' And sometimes maybe your heart and mind are aligned. Like I'm sure there's times where you're doing some art. And some situation comes up and your heart says, 'Okay, I'm going to put this down now and I'm going to help this person.' Like that. Definitely. I'm sure that happens sometimes.

Other times, your heart and mind disagree on whether you should go help this other person. Your heart's like, 'No, no, I need to continue doing this artistic creation.' So, maybe I can offer something to explain to your mind, the wisdom of your heart. **Art is fundamentally an act of devotion.** It's a devotion to beauty. When you do something artistically, you're doing it better than it needs to be done for any practical reason. There's no reason, no practical, quantifiable reason to make it *that* beautiful.

Like say you're making a chair, or a window. I wrote an essay about this, visiting a place in Brazil called Source Temple where every window was beautiful. Every window was handmade. Now, like, why would you do that? You can still see out the window if you spent half the time on it. You're not going to feed more people by making beautiful windows. Like why would you do that?

But it was an act of devotion and what is the impact of that? It inspires other people to devotion and when you're surrounded by devotion, you become more devoted. When you're surrounded by beauty you become more aligned to beauty. And a lot of the things that are done in this world, that are harming the world and harming other people, are done because they're not in a spirit of beauty and devotion.

And, it's much easier to act in ignorance, in disregard, of what is sacred, when everybody around you is also acting in ignorance of what is sacred. But I find that when I'm surrounded by beautiful things made with care, then it's like, 'Wow, everybody else is acting with devotion. So am I. I want to do it too.'

And for me, it's like, that means the person I'm with, I act in devotion to them. The work that I'm doing, I'm thinking, 'How is the world going to read this?' Or 'How is the world going to hear this?' 'What am I actually putting into the world?' I mean, an artist needs to be attentive. An artist takes seriously the material and is doing it right. And with attention and devotion at every moment. Otherwise, you make a mistake and you have to do it over again, if you're not actually paying attention.

So art is an invitation into that mentality, especially when the art is integrated into life. I'm actually not a big fan of art museums and art galleries because those sequester art outside of life and say that, 'Well, devotion is something that happens only in special circumstances.' I like art that is infused into our entire environment.

And so if your heart is calling you to do this, maybe it's because your heart knows that this is something the world really needs right now. Because so much of our society is not done in devotion—most of our products, most of our houses—they're done for efficiency, they're done for profit, they're not done out of devotion to the sacred, they're not done out of beauty, they're not done out of service to somebody that you love.

Part of art is, you know, things are not beautiful in the abstract. Things are beautiful in a relationship. If you make something for somebody, you make them, you know, a shirt, say, like you make it just the right size for them, you make it to match their eye color. Like **beauty is relationship.**

So this is, in my view of the future, there's a lot, a lot, more artists. And the future comes through them. So anyway, I hope that might help your mind a little bit accept what your heart seems to know very well. Yeah, I could say more of it. But maybe that's enough for the moment. And also, I'll just say thank you. Thank you for your work in all three areas. It's important. And your heart knows that, that it's important. That's why you do it. Trust yourself. Everybody looking at you wants you to trust yourself.

Patsy 37:58

So Yasmine, just so that you know that live chat, a lot of people are acknowledging what you just reflected and expressing their appreciation to the beautiful light that you shine through and thanking you for speaking their concerns as well.

So thank you.

Yasmine

Thank you. Thank you, Charles. Thank you, Patsy.

Patsy

See you back in NAAS.

So Charles, before we bring up Mark, I just want to show this. (Patsy held up an art on screen)

Charles

Wow.

Patsy

Isn't this beautiful? So I'm going to use this as a talking piece, a show-and-tell to end our session today. Okay, so I didn't paint that, but there's a story behind it.

So now, let's welcome, Mark.

Mark. There you are. Hi Mark. Nice to see you.

Mark

Can you hear me?

Patsy

Yes, we can.

Mark 39:11

Yes, I have a question. But I'm not sure if it's a good question. I've been living in the gift for about eight years now. And I've run into a problem I just can't solve. Well, it is kind of solved. But it happened that I've been giving for years and years now. And someone wanted to give something to me. And I accepted that. But it turned out that it wasn't really a gift. And she wanted something in return. So we offered something in return but it wasn't enough. So we were lucky, because she thought it over and eventually said it was okay. But it still didn't feel right. And I wanted, well, it left me feeling I didn't want to do something with her again. I didn't want to use her services again.

And I feel it hurt our relationship. And I've been communicating a lot about the way we live, the way we give unconditionally. And she reads all this, she knows all that. And still she seems to think it's all about barter. And it's to me, it's not about barter at all. I really wanted to be unconditional from both sides. And so I was hoping you could give me an insight so that I could prevent this from happening again.

Charles 41:13

Gosh, yeah, well, I hope I can, too, but I'm not confident that I can.

Yeah, I mean, you know, we're in a society—modern society—that's quite distanced now from the world of gift. So a lot of the habits and perceptions of gift culture are almost lost, and people don't really know how to do it. So they might resort to ideas about fairness, about barter, about exchange, you know, and this is fair for that, and so forth. Because they're not in a gift culture.

In a gift culture, none of that, well, actually, even in a gift culture, those things come up. And maybe this is just part of being human. Like there are people in gift culture who are known as being stingy. And there's, you know, they're not maybe very well liked, you know, and but then

maybe sometimes they're generous too. And then some people will defend them, and then there's, you know, gossip about them in different directions, and it gets complicated.

I don't think that gift is an escape from the complications of human life. And sometimes people go into gift because they want to escape the grubby dirty world of money and kind of be above it all. And it does not actually do that. The issues come up.

And, you know, so the one you're describing, what I do in situations like that, sometimes I'll just return the gift, you know. Or another thing is, I'm like, 'What part of me is afraid to displease this person?' And 'Am I using gift to manage people's perceptions?' And if I am, that's okay. But it's something to know about myself. Like, how much am I actually in gift? And how much am I using gift to actually get something in return, intangible? Maybe it's people's approval. Maybe it's that I get off the hook for certain things. Maybe I escape judgments.

And if those things are present, that might explain why I'm upset when it doesn't work. And then there's also part of it like... So then, part of the ideology of the separate self is that we are selfish, like the self is bad. And this goes back to what the nuns were telling Eliot, you know, like, you are bad, but you can become good if you deny yourself. And so, if that's one of the motivations for going into gift, and this comes up in some of the later sessions, actually, the results are not going to be very pleasant.

So one question that I would ask in a situation like this, and I'm not sure if it's helpful or relevant, but one question I would ask is, 'Are you comfortable with accepting a gift, not giving anything in return, and having that person be mad at you?' Or giving less than they expected and having them be mad at you? Like, are you willing to trust your generosity and your desire to give or not give?

You have an orienting organ called the heart, which knows when to give and when not to give. Sometimes you might be walking down the street and a homeless person asks for money and you give them 20—I don't know where you are—20 euro? And another time a homeless person might ask you and you just walk on by. You don't even like that person... 'No, I don't want to be generous to you.' Like, are you willing to trust that?

So it can get, like, when you get into the issues of gift, it often brings up issues of deservingness, issues of boundaries. Like a gift relationship, it pierces a boundary, it loosens a boundary. Bringing somebody into your home, sharing a meal with them, hosting them in your house, like giving something of yourself to that person, it creates a bond, right? It creates a tie. And the question might come up, 'Do you actually want ties with a person in that way?'

For me, I'm just saying this because for me, it's like, these are some of the issues that I'm familiar with that I've encountered, especially like, maybe childhood habits of creating safety by making sure everybody likes me. And feeling uncomfortable if I offend somebody. Even if, like maybe you actually did give a gift that is commensurate with what you received. Or maybe, you know, maybe

you feel like actually some anger. Like, 'Oh, that person was manipulating me.' **Anger is the soul's voice of saying, 'protect a boundary.'**

So, you know, that might be something is like, you know, I'm not meaning to psychoanalyze you or anything, but this is just some of the stuff that that, you know, I've encountered in myself. Of, like, being uncomfortable with my anger, you know, and trying to avoid setting a boundary. Let me just smooth this person over, you know, let me just, 'Yeah, I'll just do what they want, make them happy and they'll go away.' Am I actually respecting myself when I do that?

So maybe I'll just say more generally to everybody: **living in a gift is not about being a nice guy. It's not about being a good person. It's just simply a recognition—coming from a recognition of what's true in the world.** And the work that comes from that, you know, may not look like, 'I'm going to give more stuff away.' It may look like, 'I'm going to protect some boundaries here. I'm going to receive gifts and be okay with that.' And am I really okay with that? Because if I'm not, then when somebody else isn't okay with it, that's going to really upset me. If someone else is not okay with, you know, the beauty of my house or the amount of money I made, or the whatever blessings I have in my life, if somebody else is not okay with that, then if I'm not okay with it, it's gonna upset me. So am I okay with that? And if not, why? Why am I not okay with that?

And that inquiry might lead to, you know, not feeling like a valid and worthy person, it might be a symptom of misdirection of the flow. Like if a lot is coming in and I'm not using it in a way that is inspiring and beautiful to me and meaningful, then maybe I'll start to feel guilty about it. But the guilt is about the direction of the flow fundamentally. It's not about 'I'm not worthy of having so much.'

So anyway, there's a lot there to think about. I don't know if it was useful or not. Do you want to follow up in any way?

Mark 50:00

It is, but it's given me new insights. It's given me something to ponder about. Do some introspection. So I have to listen to it again to really understand everything. But I think that's true for everything in the course that I've heard so far. You've given me a lot of new insights. But I have to hear it over and over again to really make it mine. That's a good thing, of course.

Yeah. Thank you.

Charles 50:48

And I just want to make—can I say, add one more little thing?

Mark

Yeah.

Charles

Kinda like Yasmine, you know, I'm seeing such a kind and gentle person here when I look at you. So please don't take any of what I said as, 'Ookay, I've got a look at what's wrong with me.' I think it's just maybe a wish that you turn your kindness and gentleness even more towards yourself.

Mark

Thank you.

Yeah. I didn't take it personally. I see what you're saying but I'm not upset.

So now just think about it some more. Thank you for your answer. Maybe 'til next time.

Charles

Yeah. Thank you, Mark.

Patsy 52:01

Yeah. And Charles, your observation is so right. Mark is kind and generous. And he's been such a helpful, welcoming regional group host in the community. Oftentimes, when people approached me about how to do the hosting, have regional group, I would send them to Mark or—

Charles 52:28

Is he in the Netherlands? Did he introduce himself?

Patsy

Pardon me?

Charles

Where's Mark?

Mark:

Netherlands

Charles

Okay, so I thought, yeah.

Patsy 52:42

Yeah. And also, I want to comment that, Mark, your experience, I too, had that decades ago, I was trying to be generous, and I went through this process of being 'that woman,' and then eventually I went to the process of being 'you,' and everything in between. So I constantly find myself observing how to act in the wholeness of various perspectives in life.

So if I have to comment on this, I will say that, you know, but living in the gift is a process. And we are here to hold hands in supporting each other, to find just the perfect way of responding to the situation that we feel complete and whole in ourselves. Yeah. Thank you, Mark.

Mark 53:41

Thank you.

Patsy

See you!

Charles 53:46

Hey Patsy, do we have more guests, because I have some other things I could say.

Patsy 53:50

We have two more. One is a proxy and I'll read the question to you. I have this planned for an hour and 15 minutes. Is that okay? So should I, would you like to say something? Or...

Charles 54:08

Well, it won't be too long. There was one question on the chat that someone asked, like, someone said, 'the most moving part are the stories that we're hearing.' And, you know, 'Charles, do you have a story that was key to your realizations about gifts?' and stuff. And you know what it brought to mind, it's not like some huge transforming event, but it's like people who have crossed my path and come into my life who were so generous that it just broke my heart.

Lewis Hyde says something about this, like the truly generous man, the naivete of the truly generous person, is heartbreaking because it calls to something that's been lost, reminds us of something that's been lost, you know, the simplicity of it like the naivety, you kind of want to protect that person, you know.

And two people come up in that, both of whom you know, better than I do actually. One was Douglas. Douglas was Patsy's boyfriend several years before she met me. And then I met him. And he was just like one of these people who's like, when everyone one goes out to dinner, and then it comes time to pay the tab, and people chip in some, but people forget the tip, they forget the tax, etc, etc. and he's left with the bill and always ends up paying more. Like, he's that guy, who does it without a word, without a protest.

And when I met him, he was in a pretty bad state, alcoholic and stuff. But what did he spend whatever he had leftover? He spent it being like, in the Big Brother program for, like, kids, you know. Just such a beautiful guy. Like, it was almost like, yeah. I understand why you're an alcoholic, because you're too beautiful for this earth. You know, and just like, I mean, even 15 years later, I kind of want to cry when I think of his face, you know?

And, and yeah, the other one is your brother, who also had a very hard life. And, you know, didn't know his nephews very well, our children. But when he had the chance, you know, he would take the day off, take them fishing, be with them, just like pure generosity, this guy. Pure Love, and where did it come from? You know, it's not like he received a lot of love when he was growing up. But he received enough to connect him with that.

And it's people like this, you know, that, that are my heroes. And they're the ones who keep me sane, you know, keep me from getting lost in the values of capitalist society, you know, and the money chase and like, all that stuff. Like, they remind me of what's real. Through their example. Like, **the heart recognizes something important in these people. So that's, like, honestly, more than anything I've ever read, or more than any big spiritual leader or anything like that. It's people like those that kind of put me to shame, you know, in a good way. It's like, 'Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. That's right. That's right. I remember.'**

Patsy 58:01

Yeah, thank you, Charles.

And I want to also respond that these two characters that you mentioned, one of the greatest beauty that I see them is they're not psychoanalyzing themselves. To me, the most precious character of these people, they're just living the flow. So you know, from the lens looking towards them we may see that, 'Oh, they went through this, and they went through that, and they were this and they were that.'

But when you know them, they are so not about these certain diagnosis. I mean, eventually, this dear ex-boyfriend of mine, he died young because of his choice of using substances but that didn't change a thing about his kindness, his successful life. He's such an inspiring person. It is so true. So yeah.

And about my brother. Well, I can say a lot, but I will save it for another time. Thank you, Charles, for mentioning that.

Charles 59:15

I'm sure other people listening to that have brought to mind somebody that they know is like that. And I just invite everybody to take half a minute right now. And just to feel the gratitude for those people, these angels, that are among us and are here to teach us. Thank you.

Patsy 1:00:12

So may we all live more in the flow of who we are with ease and grace. Okay.

So I'm gonna read the questions for Azul Thomé, this is the French name, and she's from France. She said, 'Someone I appreciate deeply says that our questions have also been colonized, extracted, exhausted, consumed, and used up. He said that we first need to restore our questions, then we must welcome them and make them a home. Then we ask ourselves, "Are the questions feeding the gods?"

So, dear Charles, rather than bringing my tired questions to you, to your fire, I'm truly interested in the questions that are being restored within you. What are the questions you hold dear that could feed the gods?'

Many thanks, Azul.

Charles 1:01:41

Beautiful. So I think she's quoting, I asked in the chat, and she's quoting Martin Prechtel. First, I thought I might have been Bayo Akomolafe, but it's Martin Prechtel. And I've noticed actually what he's speaking about, that some questions get tired. In me, the questions that have gotten tired are the 'how' questions: 'How do I do this?' 'How do I do that?' Underneath them, there's another question. How questions kind of hijack the other question. I don't want to be too hasty to put it into words. I think that that's actually also part of the reason why the questions get exploited and used up.

Because the question is an expression of a dissatisfaction—or a desire to transition, desire to transform, a desire to change. It comes from a recognition that there's something that wants to change. What is that thing? Otherwise, why would I be curious about what is outside of what I already know?

And so I'm right now, you know, kind of doing this real time, but it's something that I would like to spend more time on—to take the time for the real question to be asked, because otherwise, I get into a cliché thing, you know, like, 'How do I be of better service to Gaia?' Or, you know, 'What is missing for me to experience more joy in my life?' And things like that, like I can come up with questions like that. But are they really an offering to the gods right now in this moment?

Those have, you know something. But yeah, I'm sorry, this is something that I am not actually wanting to do in real time in front of a screen. But I do appreciate the invitation. And I will think about that.

Patsy 1:05:28

Well, in fact, that's a perfect gift, because now we can all go back to the thread and we all reflect on it and see our reflection and insight. So, and talking about the gift of time, one of our guests, the last person, he left. So we are moving into the closing.

So I wanted to share this. I didn't really plan this, but I decided to show this and share this piece.

So the inspiration came from hearing you say that creating art is an act of devotion. So Kate Baxter from NAAS, she made lots of these beautiful, beautiful paintings. During this time, she's diagnosed with chronic disease and disabled, so she couldn't work and do anything but stay at home. And when she stays at home working with her own situation, with her soul, she studies and she meditates. And she makes art.

And then recently, she found some functional therapy. She started to return vital health. Then she started to share this art that she made during the time that she wasn't able to see, you know, function in the world in the normal way. And they were just so brilliantly beautiful. You know, that's like being initiated. And, apparently right now, she's moving forward in life, with her health back. And finding her path. You know, like she has clarity now. That's what she needs to do in life. And making art is one of them. And being a healer is one of them. And I feel such honor and grace to

be holding her. It's like a manifestation of her soul in my hand and I'm able to share this here with you. So that's the inspiration and that's the gift that comes from this whole process.

Charles 1:08:10

Can you show us again, Patsy?

Patsy

Yeah.

Charles

Just hold it a little longer.

Patsy

Is it in frame?

Charles

A little farther away.

Patsy

A little further away? Whoops.

Charles

Yeah, there we are. That's good.

Patsy

I'm covering myself. I don't really see...(Patsy behind the picture) It even reflects a light so brilliant. And when I meditate with it, you know, like with the open-eye meditation, it evokes a very indescribable state. And I know, I remind myself, that that's the healing that she's going through. Healing is such a functional art... I say functional art meaning that is our function as part of healing someone. I hope you don't mind sharing this with you?

Charles

It's good.

Patsy

I'm talking to Kate right now. (Kate is viewing from YouTube Liv) I just love her so much. Okay, so I'm done. So Charles, do you want to say something to close?

Charles 1:09:35

No, I mean, you know, that little 30-second invocation of the people whose generosity breaks our hearts is what I would like people to take with them. And so maybe just touch that energy once more, and feel its presence, and know that it will travel with you.

And thank you for being here with us. And yeah, we'll be back again in a few weeks for another live call and enjoy the course everybody.

Patsy 1:10:34

Yeah, and just also want to mention that in 15 minutes, so we're ending five minutes earlier than maybe we'll keep it at six o'clock, the Eastern Standard Time for some resting from the screen so we can click back to another zoom link for member gathering and reflections. Thank you.

Charles 1:11:01

Thank you, everybody.

End 1:11:11