

**Conversations with Orland Bishop**  
**Part One: The Potential of the Earth**  
**Study Notes & Discussion/Practice Suggestions**  
[charleseisenstein.org/orland](http://charleseisenstein.org/orland)

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## **Unit 1: A Hope Space in Consciousness**

In this first series, Orland identifies key factors in the evolution of human consciousness. One crucial takeaway is that this evolution is not something accomplished by human consciousness alone. It comes through the learnings of those who have come before us, transmitted to us through mundane and mysterious means. It comes through earth forces that operate through the blood. It comes through our influence on each other, mediated by the organ of the heart that transmutes these ancestral and elemental energies and spreads them to others.

At the present moment, many indications point to civil war in the United States, or at least to serious civil conflict. Could it be that, as Orland says, the soul forces of those who died in such conflicts, or whose lives were scarred by them, will contribute to peace? How can we expand our openness to those influences? That is how we can avoid repeating our inheritance so that we can participate in creation as a conscious act.

That question, “How can we expand our openness to those influences?” does not have the kind of answer the rational mind expects. The question itself opens, because to ask it feeds the part of oneself that is willing to grow in this way. Knowing these forces are operating helps them to operate. There is a paradox here. The work of consciousness evolution is to recognize that one is receiving the work, not performing it. And, given our present state, that is a lot of work! The application of will is toward remembering to feel the miracle of what is being given to us from beyond our contrivance. The resulting gratitude opens the receptive channel.

Much follows from that opening: thoughts, words, and actions. Courage does not come from will. It comes from what we have received.

Discussion suggestion: Listen to Orland’s clips in segments 3 and 4 multiple times, with attention to your willingness to receive and your gratitude for the gift. What arises in you? What follows from it?

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**Unit 2: The Conditions of a Dilemma**

The three segments in this session are highly esoteric, and at the same time eminently practical. Orland is offering principles and instructions that can vastly expand our capacity to truly participate in creation – creation as an ongoing process, not as a finished product we merely occupy. This is actually the originating impulse of science: “The human need to participate in a reality that is the source of everything that comes into form.”

His instructions might seem metaphysical but they can apply to anything you want to bring into the world. And what could we want to bring in more, than sacredness? “Nothing,” he says, “is made sacred. It becomes sacred when we give our attention to it at a level that reveals what it holds as energy and information.” He describes attentiveness as a creative act, not just attending to what is, but giving something to what becomes.

Where do we place our attention to access the information and energy to channel into sacred creation? Other cultures had and have ceremonies to direct and refine the attention so that it accesses divine forces beyond what he calls “the elemental world” – the material forces that technology manipulates. Our society has pretty much mastered the peculiar ceremonies embedded in science, but we are approaching a limit. They will not rescue us from our current social, medical, and ecological impasse. We need to draw from the spiritual world. Fortunately, the most basic type of ceremony is always available to do that – contemplation. It is a source of renewal, an anchor to stillness in the midst of chaos. Is it not obvious how necessary that is during these times?

Stillness is not an end in itself. It is a portal through which higher soul forces (to use Orland’s terminology) can enter. These include the soul forces of the earth and beyond. The energies accessed can contribute to personal goals or to the endeavors of others. Anything you bring in becomes part of the collective inheritance.

Orland says, “What makes a ceremony more revealing is the use of something beyond ourselves. Something beyond our own knowing, and we surrender to that.” Our creative capacities are limited when we only build on what we already know (or think we know). The reach of our thoughts cannot expand when we traverse well-established pathways. Thus, today, the solutions offered by the technocratic class are so often part of the problem. The growing

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realization of our crisis and our helplessness constitutes an initiatory dilemma. It leads to humility, which is the surrender that allows higher forces in.

“This planet needs meditation,” says Orland. Not only does meditation feed the planet, but it is necessary if human beings are to assume their proper role as creative partners with Earth. He clarifies that meditation is not just quieting the mind. It is “to really engage with intelligences that can utilize these higher octaves of thinking” so that they, in turn, can engage human life.

I will share with you my own practice to engage higher intelligences in meditation. Try it out and share on the course discussion group. It is very simply to enter meditation with a question and hold that question faithfully, from a place of a sincere wanting to know. A sincere question is very attractive to higher intelligences! The faithful holding of the question will need to endure challenges: for example, off-ramps into ready answers that are false answers, but that preserve the inner status quo. We must understand that a real question emanates from a desire to grow beyond what has been. To ask a question sincerely is already a kind of surrender. It admits, “I do not know.” You will be amazed at the insights that come during or following this meditation. Often, the insights do not directly answer the question, but rather speak to the wanting behind it. Some questions, I have held in this way for years or decades.

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## **Unit 3: Frameworks of Insight & Attention**

After a little warm-up in the first segment of this session, Orland drops into another whole octave of depth starting in the second segment. Much of what he says admits to multiple interpretations, and communicates at least as much on a feeling level as it does on a semantic level. As you listen, notice if your mind has a tendency to latch on to the things you already have a framework to understand, and skip over the things that seem opaque.

Orland says that we are in a critical time in which beings who want to interact with us, and who are beyond our traditions of knowing, can be engaged with. But to do that, he says, we need to come from a place of non-judgment; that is, not preemptively fitting things into the one. I'd like to make the meta-level comment here that Orland is one of those beings; likewise, our ability to understand him depends on stepping out of our personal traditions of knowing. Non-judgment, then, is the key to "giving attention to what is not yet in the world" (one's personal world, or the collective world).

The material on attention, intention, and will may be difficult to understand at first, and will reward multiple listenings. One way to interpret it is that through superconscious agreement with beings of will, which may be accessed through ceremony and meditation, will can operate in the world much more powerfully than through our own doings, just as our will to live operates through our bodies without us *doing* anything effortful. It is as if the world operates around us as automatically as the body does, in the direction of our intentions.

In a way this should be obvious, because, as I am fond of saying, we humans are not discrete, separate individuals. We are relationship. As Orland puts it, "Alone, we cannot experience reality. We experience isolation, as a kind of exile, even from our own sense perception and our capacity for communication." No wonder it seems, in this year of social distancing, lockdowns, and the isolating effect of masks, many people seem to be losing their grip on reality.

The relationship of being/reality goes both ways. Just as my being depends on others, so also does theirs depend on mine. Orland applies this, in the third segment of this session, to the relationship with earth as well as with other humans.

Ceremony, which, remember, includes meditation and even sincere conversation and authentic listening, is a means to expand these relationships and thus expand one's being. For this to happen, Orland names three requirements: (1) that the ceremony have that intention. (2) that one be observant of what new thing wants to come, and (3) "The crucial thing is the commitment to be willing to change. If I am not willing to change, a tradition will kill me." Nothing is static.

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In the fourth segment, Orland says, “Truth is more than what something is. It includes what it wants to become. The truth of a conflict is that there is peace in it.” With attention, facts become future. Attention is a creative act.

This whole session culminates in this, which I invite you to apply to some current situation. Instead of observing and merely accepting what is, we know that our observation will change it provided we are willing to change along with it. Self and world are inseparable. This goes for any situation in life. What does it want to become? Who must I become, that the situation may become what it wants to become? Who must I become, for the other person in the conversation to be free to become what they want to become? Whether it is the “ceremony” of meditation, conversation, or an endeavor, enter with an open, humble mind, being willing to drop any preexisting answer. Enter with a willingness to change. You are welcome to share the results in the discussion forum.

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#### **Unit 4: Questions...and the Beginning of Answers**

After some minutes of preparatory material and reworking of concepts from the last session, Orland reveals some incredible wisdom toward the end of the second segment of this session. He emphasizes, again, that “In the realm we call Earth and cosmos, there is no finished thing. There are only beings revealing their work.” So rather than perceiving another being as a noun, a completed object that already exists, he invites us to ask, “What are you singing?” or “Show me your future.”

He offers this not just as a metaphysical philosophy, but as an exercise, a practice. It starts with an idea that everything speaks. As we listen for it, it becomes true in our experience, unlocking inconceivable realms of knowledge.

These segments share a basic theme of how reality comes to be through human interaction. Orland and I play with it from different angles here, so I'll just highlight one thread that might be a little harder to understand. Toward the middle of the fourth segment Orland says, “The field of collective intelligence, or collective consciousness, or super consciousness, holds all of our potentialities.” However, because we are mostly unaware of the full subtlety and extent of this engagement, we as a society have the potential to vastly expand our access to truth and our ability to create a new order.

Orland and I go on to apply this as well to capacities of the individual person. Orland delineates what is actually a quite mundane process for growing into knowledge: attentive perception of what is given, followed by investigation, followed by new understanding as more context is incorporated. And this new understanding may come with new demands, as one grapples with its implications. Thus, to sincerely ask another being, “What are you singing?” (a song in which the momentary perception is but a single chord or movement) may change the asker as much as the asked. The “you” in the question is the singer of the song that manifests as a form in time. It is not the form itself.

As I write these words, my country and probably most of the world are facing tumultuous times. What are you singing? I address this question first to That Which Sings the World. And then to that which sings myself. To work with this, let's follow up from Orland's earlier observation about the peace in conflict and contemplate the following question: What wants to be sung into existence through uncertainty and turmoil? And when you perceive it, who does it call you to be

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## **Unit 5: Taking Away the Veil**

Speaking of the south and west African gnostic traditions in which he was trained, Orland says, “For them, there are no fixed laws.”

The assumption of fixed laws is foundational to the modern, Western approach to knowledge. Science assumes it implicitly by the principle of the repeatability of experiments, through which these laws may be discovered. The next step of science is to build reliable technologies based on these fixed laws. It seems to be working well, as the miracles that technology has enabled testify. But what if the apparent fixity of physical laws is an illusion born of our relationship to materiality? What if, as Orland says, “Everything that can be spoken to responds to speech”? Scientific experiments are themselves a kind of speech, a ritual performance.

Orland has trained for 20 years in the ways of communicating with that which responds to the “speech” of ceremony, which allows its practitioners to hold far more complex systems of belief than any that rests on fixed physical laws. More than that, it allows new (actually ancient) kinds of technologies – ways to interact with matter – that are desperately needed today; hence, his expressed desire to work with “scientists.”

When I was in Egypt last January I saw relics of many impossible engineering feats, such as precisely carved 100-ton blocks of granite (which is harder than steel) moved hundreds of kilometers from their quarries by a society that had not even invented bronze, the pulley, or the wheel.

Orland explains that these ancient technologies are never lost; no accomplishment is ever lost. The field of these accomplishments is still present, allowing us to create our own miracles (technology) that recapitulate ancient ones. He names artificial intelligence as an example. We have barely scratched the surface of this inheritance, but already we are at risk. Computers recapitulate the ancient technology of ritual and speech (after all, they do nothing but manipulate symbols, which is the same thing as ritual and speech). In a sense, we are doing nothing different than we always have. The difference, as Orland describes it, is that we have not done the inner work, the work on consciousness, to use these powers safely. Even the ancients, who were highly developed in that way, misused their powers and brought about catastrophe. All the more at risk are we.

In the last segment, we speak about the powers of the material world and what they can give to humanity. Gold is one of them. It has powers that are invisible to the eye of conventional physics, but were and are widely recognized outside of it. This is true of every substance in the world. When we treat it as a mere resource and subjugate it to economic ends – the mentality of extraction rather than interaction – few of these powers are available to us.

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To see them requires letting go of what we think we know, including the conception of fixed physical laws operating on inert, unconscious materials. Obtaining new knowledge is not about speculation, as Orland says, it is about empirical experience. But we have to be willing to have those experiences, willing to explore what Bayo Akomolafe calls “the wilds beyond our fences.”

Finally, beyond what we recognize as physical substances there are also more subtle – and even more abundant – substances of which Orland names as examples love, grace, and mercy. We have endless help to find our way back, if we only accept that help.

For practice and discussion I will offer the following:

First, notice if you have any resistance to what Orland has shared. For example, if his mention of Atlantis triggered contempt, take note of that. Or if you have a deadweight of doubt, or of unworthiness, take note of that.

Second, touch for a few minutes your inner knowledge that love, grace, and mercy are available to you, so that you may discover what would otherwise be beyond your contrivance to find.

Third, keeping tethered to the knowledge of the availability of love, grace, and mercy, explore with naivete a substance that you feel curious about. It could be a stone, a crystal, a metal, a plant, or a liquid. Experiment with touching it, sitting on it, contemplating it, putting it in your room or on your body. Notice how you feel, what thoughts you have, how you communicate, how you dream.

You can also do research on the internet to see what others (modern and ancient) have discovered about this substance. If you like, share your experience in the discussion group.