Chloé Valdary of Theory of Enchantment Bret Weinstein \_ Dark...

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**SPEAKERS**

Bret, Chloe Valdary

**Bret** 00:00

Hey folks, welcome to Brett Weinstein's Dark Horse Podcast. I am sitting here today with Chloe Valerie, who is the architect behind theory of enchantment. Welcome, Chloe.

**Chloe Valdary** 00:11

Thank you for having me.

**Bret** 00:12

Can you tell me before we get into any of the other things that we want to discuss what the theory of enchantment is?

**Chloe Valdary** 00:18

So theory of enchantment is a curriculum that I designed to teach mental health and healthy identity formation. But the unique ness of the curriculum is that it uses pop culture to teach these things.

**Bret** 00:30

So when you say identity, that's obviously a charged term these days, you're talking about racial gender, are you talking about these things? Or do you mean something else? By

**Chloe Valdary** 00:41

No, I think I mean, something actually, quite deeper than that, which is sort of like the fundamental humaneness that we think of when we think of individuals. And so it's something that transcends all the categories that you just mentioned in some way.

**Bret** 00:56

So it almost sounds like an alternative to this modern view of identity.

**Chloe Valdary** 01:01

Maybe I think, I think that, you know, I don't think that race or gender or such categories can also be discussed, I think that this just provides us with a better framework or a better roadmap to point us in the right direction as we discussed those things.

**Bret** 01:17

Cool. So maybe, let's be bold, okay. And actually, maybe I have to ask you permission to do this first, okay. There's a way in which you as a person of African descent, sure, living in a world in which race is playing such a prominent role that whether you want that to be an important part of the way you're interacting, it is on so many people's minds that you're dragged into a lot of conversations about it. And there's certainly a part of me that would love to just bypass it entirely. Okay. And then there's another part of me that thinks Actually, this is an opportunity. Sure, you and I, I think it's fair to say our friends, yeah. And I feel very comfortable with you. I think you feel comfortable with me certain that means that in a sense, we're really well positioned to have a conversation about things that other people aren't sure what to do with. Okay, so can you tell me a little bit about your background? And then what you see on the modern landscape with respect to this topic that is, becomes so charged?

**Chloe Valdary** 02:25

Sure. It's it's a big question. Cosmic even. So I'm from New Orleans, Louisiana, I'm African American, both my parents are black. My grandparents on both my parents side, are black. I'm fairly certain that my parents ancestors, or at least, but I think my parents, ancestors who were slaves are probably slaves in Shreveport because Shreveport, Louisiana, because I have a lot of friends family, that still lives in Shreveport, Louisiana. But also, I think my father's side of the family goes back to Haiti. And that's the extent to which I know really, about sort of immediate regional places that my family has come from.

**Bret** 03:06

So when you say goes back to Haiti, your father's family, you believe was living in Haiti, I believe in Haiti. I think so farming sugar or something along those lines?

**Chloe Valdary** 03:17

I don't I don't know the specifics of that. But I think that that I think that that was the particular place where they were most recently before coming to America.

**Bret** 03:25

Got it. Does that make sense? Any idea? What part of Africa your family emerges from

**Chloe Valdary** 03:31

so West Africa, but that actually doesn't really tell us anything? Because West Africa was where like the slave port was, so everyone was going through West Africa. But I mean, maybe it tells us something if it says like 80% from West West Africa, maybe that means something I'm not sure. But my sense is that it's hard to tell.

**Bret** 03:49

So Louisiana, that's interesting. Yeah. You were in Louisiana, in New Orleans during Katrina.

**Chloe Valdary** 03:59

Yes, I was 11 years old, or 11 years old. Yeah. But we had to leave for a year because the city shut down. You know, there was for a host of reasons, obviously, the flooding and the shutting down at the city as well. But thankfully, my parents house was not destroyed. And so we were able to go back after a year, but I was still gone. All for all of 11.

**Bret** 04:27

And so your family was there you were in? Yeah. In Louisiana for the hurricane. Yeah. So you saw you saw in person what most of us saw on television?

**Chloe Valdary** 04:41

Um, well, yes and no. So I didn't see a lot of the more harrowing images that people saw on television just because so my grandmother was working at the VA hospital at the time and we were housed there for about a week. And then everything just became unbearable, because like, like I said, the city was shut down. So we got rescued on military trucks, and they took us to Zephyr stadium. And then from there, they took us on buses where we went to Alexandria, Louisiana, where I stayed for a year. So I saw I mean, it was kind of weird to be on a military truck, for example, and hear gunshots in the distance. But I also think that because I was 11, I don't really remember a lot of it. It's it's honestly, a blur to a certain extent. But I do. I do remember like, some things obviously being out of the ordinary, but it wasn't as harrowing as other images of like, yeah, people stranded out and people in the Superdome and sort of the troubles that they had as well.

**Bret** 05:41

People dead in their wheelchair. Exactly. Exactly. How was it? Yeah. Yeah, it was quite dramatic. On the outside. Yeah, of course, you were 11. Right. So there's also the added fact of having seen it through the eyes of a kid. Yeah, at that point. Yeah. I must tell you, I have a very clear visceral memory. As Katrina unfolded. I was watching news coverage like everybody else. And I remember there was a moment I think it was George Bush himself was announcing that the federal government was doing all it could, but that it was having trouble getting its trucks into the city to help people. And I had this visceral reaction, I was overwhelmed with anger, because there's no way even if the President had forgotten that the federal government had helicopters, right. The federal government knew that it had them right. And so the fact that it was going to pretend that it couldn't help people because the roads were in bad condition, it was clearly an excuse. Sure. So you know, that actually, in light of what you do with theory of enchantment, using pop culture, it is the first place that I became aware of Kanye West. Oh, wow. Famous. Yeah.

**Chloe Valdary** 07:01

The legendary assertion

**Bret** 07:01

that, yeah, George Bush did not care about black people. I have to say, I don't think was exactly what was going on. Right. But I did understand exactly why that was the impression because whatever it was that he did, and didn't care about somehow helicopters that absolutely needed to arrive with help immediately were not arriving. And so there was some failure of empathy on a massive scale. Definitely. But anyway, it's it's it's actually kind of a, I think it's a national trauma that we all witnessed the failure of, of our government at that moment. That's

**Chloe Valdary** 07:42

so interesting. It's interesting to be to have lived that as opposed to have been the viewer of that. And I wonder, like, the relationship that creates between the thing that is happening and the thing, the person that's happening to, because, yeah, I don't know, maybe again, because I was 11. And because I was in the middle of it, as opposed to observing it, that, that its scope at that point in time was lost on me because I was in the middle of it as opposed to observing it.

**Bret** 08:10

Yeah, it's impossible to understand the magnitude of the context if you're in it. Yeah. That's compounded by being a child. Yeah, at that point. My sense at the time trying to understand what it was that had gone wrong, and I have no idea whether I'm right about this or not. But I have the sense that there was a campaign, I mean, effectively, we know there was a campaign and it came from the right. Okay. And that campaign was effectively designed to wean us off dependence on government, that the antipathy for government on the right was so great, that it essentially took that part of government which functioned and hobbled it so that we wouldn't get the sense that government was the solution to any problem. I see. And, you know, on the left, I would say there is an over dependence on governmental solutions often that have unintended consequences. So it's not like I'm saying the only fault here is on the right. But the the hobbling of the government was in full swing at the point Katrina hit. I mean, it was almost at completion, okay. And I had the sense that there was a desire not to have helicopters fly in and save the day, because it would remind people, that government actually stands between us and chaos, and that it is necessary and useful. And

**Chloe Valdary** 09:37

you Well, that's interesting, because that brings up a contradiction of the right, as you're saying that. The last part the last piece that you just said, right, because presumably the right believes in. Yes, they believe in small government, but they also believe in the governing of the self in order to thwart chaos. But it's interesting that that doesn't extend for The individual to the collective in the right wing's conscience, sense of sense of, you know, consciousness or whatever, however you want to describe it, because consistency would suggest that if you believe that self government is necessary to, for or to keep chaos back then if you were to take that and apply it on a macro level, then governments are necessary also to thwart chaos. Right. And, and so that's an inherent sort of inconsistency. Now, when you say, although I could probably still man the response to that, but

**Bret** 10:35

yeah, well, I mean, all of these things will be Yeah, a balance and sure any of them can be taken too far. But when you say the governance of self, yeah. Are you talking about basically self restraint?

**Chloe Valdary** 10:47

Well, I just know that the right tends to talk about the importance of like, you know, self regulation, and not making sure not to be, you know, swept up by the passions. And that's, that's a that's definitely mostly right wing talk. And so by self governance, I just mean being in control of one's faculty so as to not descend into chaos, whether that chaos is decadence, whether that chaos is in excess of anything, right, basically, to always be in moderation, and but in being in moderation requires governance. Yeah. And so if you don't extend that from the micro to the macro, then you could it begs the question, at the very least,

**Bret** 11:31

yeah. And, you know, I think, wise people on the left and right, can surely agree that it is important. Essentially, to self police at some level now we we on the left might disagree with us on the right, I don't mean to include you one way or the other, you find yourself as you will, sure we on the left, meaning me and others on the left might have a different view of where the the border of that responsibility is, I think we could all agree that it is essential. And in fact, one of the things that I am most disturbed by that I see on the modern radical left is essentially a juvenile abdication of responsibility to self regulate a desire, you know, sort of recognition, I want that thing. And therefore I am entitled to it, rather than any notion that there are trade offs and balances that have to be struck, and sure, eating values and these sorts of things. But anyway, I would love for the left and right to recognize the part of this viewpoint that they actually do share,

**Chloe Valdary** 12:44

right, unfortunately, I think that would require giving up previously held positions, the other is a monster. So you cannot find something of quality in a monster, and even more so you cannot admit that you find something in a monster, which is similar to you, because now you are identified with the monster.

**Bret** 13:08

So for ever. Yeah. 15 years, I have been saying the following set of ideas. The Fox News viewer believes that the New York Times reader is insane. The New York Times reader believes Yes, the fox news viewer is crazy. They're both right. Yes. Okay. Yes. And, yes. There's something very powerful in what you said about it is impossible to find that point of agreement in the monster on the other side. What I have trouble relating to? Because frankly, I don't see a monster on the other side, gentlemen, I occasionally see them. Oh, those people exist, but they're not common. Sure. Right. It's not like there's an entire right movement. You know, it's not like half the population. Right? Awful. That's right, true. So I have no trouble sitting with people who I'm told I shouldn't be able to get along with Sure. Right? I'm told that I shouldn't be able to get along with creationists, for example. I don't find that sitting at the table with them is that way I don't find myself persuaded? Sure. But it's not hard, sure, to grant them the benefit of the doubt and to discover their humanity. I don't find this problem with people on the right. Generally, even though I'm far from the right. I don't get the sense that you have trouble seeing humanity on the other side. In fact, your whole theory of enchantment curriculum is built around the idea of really deeply understanding the humanity on the other side. Yes. So if you and I find this relatively easy to look across the aisle at people we're supposed to not be able to fathom and to actually find their humanity. Is there something a is it much easier than people think? Is there just like a simple error that they're making? Or is it harder Hmm, then you and I find it, because there's something about other people that stands in their way that just doesn't happen to be part of either of us,

**Chloe Valdary** 15:09

I actually think it is hard. In general, because of what it requires. One, two, it requires one to, like, shed preconceived notions. And if one, if one's identity is attached to preconceived ideas, then and if you have to shed it, then it's sort of like feels, it feels like a disaster. You know, if you identified with a certain set of beliefs that said, you have to bash person x, because they, they have a different set of opinions than you and you heavily identify with it. Like that wasn't just an opinion you had, it was a part of who you are, or who you conceived yourself to be. And now all of a sudden, we're saying, actually, you can find common ground and you can find, you can even find affinity for this person. That is a total rejection of the thing that you thought was fundamentally a part of your very being. And that's hard to actually overcome. Like living through that wrestling with that and accepting that.

**Bret** 16:12

So I want to know, are you saying you find it hard? Are you saying that your experience with other people tells you that it's hard?

**Chloe Valdary** 16:21

I'm saying I don't find it hard anymore, but I used to find it hard. And so I can understand how on a psychological level, it could be hard.

**Bret** 16:28

Okay. And do you know what experience you had or what you realize that caused it to become easier?

**Chloe Valdary** 16:35

Oh, to become easier? That's interesting question. I don't know if it was a I don't know if I could pinpoint it to a very specific thing. Or moment, I think it was a gradual, oh, well, actually, it entailed reading a couple of books, honestly. So East of Eden was probably one of the most important books I read, in my 20s, actually, that MIT like, enabled me to do that. And to think in this way, so to speak. But other than that, I think it was just an organic process of wrestling with these ideas, which doesn't sound very satisfying. But

**Bret** 17:10

no, first of all, I don't I don't, it'd be wonderful. If there was a simple answer. Yeah, there was a simple answer, it would probably be more widely discussed. Okay. So who knows? But

**Chloe Valdary** 17:20

actually, yeah. So I think, I think the answer might be that I discovered that what we're talking about the ability to sit across from someone who you don't like, or whose ideas you don't like and still find affinity for them. That idea is actually found, I would argue, we actually do believe in that. And, and the proof that we believe in that is its present in pop culture. So like, the movies that we love, the Disney movies that we love, for example, is are often all about that, right? And they repeat themselves in Disney movies. A lot of the artists songs that we listen to, I'm saying like a big cross section of society, right? The types of artists that we gravitate toward, oftentimes do talk about empathy in their music, or do not even talk about it. But But implicitly, it's there, essentially. And so I think it was the realization that it is deeply embedded in what we desire to want to do, at the very least, because it's found in the pop culture that we create. And so this idea that I initially thought was like a foreign idea, because it became common in my eyes. And I think that that realization, and that organic, sort of unfolding of the discovery of the meaning at the bottom of pop culture helps me to be able to more easily do that, because then that that means that what we're describing is the fabric of stories found throughout art. And so then it becomes, then I have an entirely new relationship with that entire concept. And that entire process,

**Bret** 18:57

I really like that. And I realized in hearing you describe it, that there are two things, in my experience that dovetail with what you're saying. One is, I have a memory. When I was I don't know how young I would have been maybe eight or nine. And I think I was, you know, ranting about the injustice of what was happening to nature. I I've always had a very strong affinity for nature and a fascination with it. And I've always had a desire to I like animals a lot. And I like thinking about them and watching them. And anyway, I was ranting about. Maybe I was ranting about hunting. Okay. And Eric, you know, three and a half years older than me, said, you know, you really need to read field and stream. Okay, right. And I said, What are you talking And he said, you really need to understand what it is. On the other side, you need to understand how they see the world. And, you know, it's a little hard to admit how profound an impact that had on my life because at some level, I now recognize myself as a 50 year old adult who delights in being able to cross unbridgeable gaps, right? It's like, you know, there's a way I think it's very honorable work. And I don't, in any way, feel cynical about it. But there's a way in which it does strike me as a challenge, when I hear there's a gap, I'm not supposed to be able to cross, I always want to figure out whether I can convey something to the person on the other side, about my humanity that will cause them to suddenly wake up and vice versa. Right. The other thing, though, is I'm watching a world develop online that obviously didn't exist, when I was a young person. You know, you're you're young enough that it has existed for most of your adult life, or maybe all of your adult life, but I'm watching something happen with, for example, the videos that people post of their pets, okay. And so there's sort of a culture of people posting things about, you know, surprising things that cats do, or dogs do. And there's a kind of a language that develops around the recognition of, you know, there's the cert, I'm gonna botch it. But you know, there's good boy kind of thing for when a dog does something really impressive. And I'm watching and I'm noticing that, you know, people are talking about these things on Reddit or wherever. And they don't know whether they are on the same side of the political aisle. Right, right. They don't know anything about each. Yeah, but the fact that, you know, yeah, it might be that I have a hard time seeing you, right. But if you and I are looking at that dog, the fact is, our human relationship with dogs is universal enough, right, that we can actually come together around it. And so

**Chloe Valdary** 22:14

yeah, I had that same exact similar experience with DJing. Because when I first moved to New York, I discovered new york and discovered when was this, this is in 2015, I discovered Brooklyn. And, you know, some of my friends took me out to these crazy parties in Brooklyn to see these awesome DJs who are super talented. And I've always been fascinated with this. This thing that happens at concerts where people are willing to stand as close as possible to the other person that they don't know, in order to get as close as possible to the stage. And so like, what is it about that particular landscape, that that allows people to let themselves be vulnerable, essentially. but to also it's a different style, or a different kind of connection that occurs in that type of landscape? And the same is true for the dance floor. And when you have a good DJ, so what is it? Because Because, you know, two people dancing together, who have just met each other on the dance floor could have two totally different political viewpoints. Right? Or you could see not even just politics, because see the world fundamentally, and atoll in totally different ways. And yet, what is going on that dance floor? Is it powerful enough to have the people they're not care? Or that's not even the they understand that that is not the meaning of life? Or that's not the essence of life in that moment? And even if it's just for a moment, they understand that whether or not they share the same political opinions is not really what is meaningful in that moment, right? So that would never really be a thing to come up? Or it wouldn't, it certainly wouldn't be the first thing to come up, it would be this, this attempt at connection period. And so what is it about the generation of the music happening with the DJ that conjures that? And how can you take that bottle that and then put it into a landscape like Twitter, for example? Or is it even possible to do that?

**Bret** 24:08

Alright, that's quite amazing. So I think you're being even a little cautious in what you're proposing about two people on a dance floor. Okay. Because if I, if I modeled this, based on my experience of people, if two people met in the circumstance you're talking about, yeah, and they found themselves on a dance floor together. Yeah. And they danced well together. Yeah. Which has a whole meaning to it, whatever that meaning is, right? I'm convinced we haven't unpacked it enough. Okay. Let's say two people experience they groove well together. Sure. Right. And then they discovered that they do have some differences difference. Yeah, opinion that is supposed to be unreachable,

**Chloe Valdary** 24:46

right. It totally changes the nature that view that difference and a view that different heavily.

**Bret** 24:51

Not only does it predispose them to find, you know, because they have connected in the sort of mysterious mystical way that dancing involves But they then a know that there is something right that person is not the monster connected to them. You're already connected some deep way. Yeah, you can find your way back there. Yeah. And you have an incentive to figure out well, surely that thing that we differ over the sum total of it because it negates whatever it was implied by the dance. Right?

**Chloe Valdary** 25:19

And it also it has to be because otherwise it would indict you.

**Bret** 25:23

Right? It would mean that Oh, you would, it would mean that you had danced with the enemy, right?

**Chloe Valdary** 25:27

I mean, that's something that the enemy shared some aspects of you had some aspect of you in them, and vice versa.

**Bret** 25:34

Oh, I love that. So I think this is

**Chloe Valdary** 25:36

the stuff that right.

**Bret** 25:37

It's very, very deep. Yeah. Yeah. That's marvelous.

**Chloe Valdary** 25:42

Yeah. So how do we get it to Twitter? Well,

**Bret** 25:45

so I'm, this is a weird week for us to be talking about this. Because by life on Twitter, which is four years been completely been a terrible match for what people say about the bitterness and rancor and inability to discuss things over the years. Heather and I have both had the experience of finding most of Twitter pretty respectful of us pretty ready to listen, ready to, you know, admit error when they say something in temperate and then, you know, this week that's turned on me. Okay. As a result, I think, mostly or entirely of my going too far in challenging what I called New atheists, not realizing that that was a heavily charged term. But in any case, this is a rough week for me on Twitter, but But in general, yeah, I do think we all see a different Twitter and we don't necessarily know it, because there's only one name for it. Right, right. And so yeah, when people talk about, you know, how terrible Twitter is for discussion, I know they're not having my experience. Right. Right. Right. So how do we get it there? In Part, we've got a an antagonist, we don't know, because we don't know what role the algorithms are playing. You search twitter, we see. Okay. But I think there's something about my experience has been that figuring out how to bridge gaps you're not supposed to be able to bridge is actually kind of addictive. And I regard it as a positive addiction. Right? It's like being addicted to making music or writing like, okay, yeah. And so in some sense, I think the answer to your question must be that if you can just simply get people where they have the experience of making a connection with somebody they're not supposed to like and that connection being rewarding, then it's almost self catalyzed.

**Chloe Valdary** 27:44

I see. Do you think that has to happen in real life, though, and not on online? Because, like I would I it's actually, I would argue it would have to happen in real life, otherwise, it doesn't work.

**Bret** 27:56

And then you'd have to psychologically translate to real as a translator life. Okay, but it could happen on Twitter first,

**Chloe Valdary** 28:02

okay.

**Bret** 28:06

Yeah.

**Chloe Valdary** 28:07

So maybe like seeing a video where that happened? And then it triggered some emotion in them that was very pleasing.

**Bret** 28:14

Well, I mean, I think you know, there are these videos, I forgotten the gentleman's name, but this black guy who decided to go and talk to Klan members,

**Chloe Valdary** 28:23

oh, dal Davis, are they? Yeah, yeah. I mean, we teach him a theory, the German curriculum.

**Bret** 28:28

perfect sense. So I must say, on the one hand, I totally relate to what he's up to. It's like, you know, that thing I was talking about where? Yeah, I feel the challenge. Yeah, I can imagine that he feels that he feels that challenge. You know, he's obviously extremely bold to do it in the way that he does. But I think there's a way in which for almost all of us, yeah, you got to be really cold. Yeah, not to look at what he's done, and feel like a warm sense of shared humanity. So over what he's able to do, and in fact, even just seeing him on screen with former Klan members, yeah, who he's brought to their senses, is, you know, it's it's a feel good story for the ages. Definitely. So it's got to be modeled, okay. Little experiences have to be available to people. You know, and it's got to be small enough steps that they can get there. But the key message, I think, for all of us who are good at crossing gaps is that in the end, it's a it's a richer experience of life.

**Chloe Valdary** 29:34

So yeah, I think that that is true. I think that that that last bit is definitely it has to be the objective. And it has to be the goal that we measure, like this process that we're talking about creating, whether it's successful or not. But it turns out that like, I don't know if it's possible to have deep enriching moments be translated on social media. Because the nature of deep enriching moments, or deep, deep enriching feeling is such that I don't think it could happen on in the landscape looks like it requires real life real world experiencial that type of process in order for that to happen?

**Bret** 30:19

Well, I hate to go all fractal on Yeah. Oh,

**Chloe Valdary** 30:22

I lost the argument.

**Bret** 30:25

No, you haven't. Here's the thing. Yeah, we are engaged in a conversation. Sure. And you know, there's some people who aren't going to like it. But yeah, most people, most people who are we

**Chloe Valdary** 30:37

should give them a shout out though just to tell them that we still have empathy for them. And we care about them. Yes.

**Bret** 30:43

I'll come back anytime they come to their senses. Yes. But the thing is, we're doing this Sure. And it wouldn't you know, there's a reason that we're doing this long form rather than short form, but this will go on social media, right? You're right. Yeah. My guess is that some number of people will, even if they can't put their finger on what it is that they've experienced, they will hear you and me talking. And they will understand I mean, sure, you know, my experience at evergreen was that a lot of people needed to hear somebody say, what they couldn't write, and having heard

**Chloe Valdary** 31:19

it, is fractal a synonym for meta?

**Bret** 31:23

No. Let's put it this way, in a very loose sense, you could use it that way. Okay. fractal means that some process is scale independent. So the point is, you see the CDC the same process that surely different scales, okay. So for example, the example I've heard people use that simplest is, if you were descending on the lunar lander onto the surface of the moon, and you saw a crater, you couldn't tell how far away from the moon you were, because there are craters at Every Size and so Right, right, you know, the distribution of the craters is okay. fractus. So all I'm saying is that the, the process that happens inside of, you know, a particularly delightful exchange of one sentence also happens at the level of an hour or two hours conversation. Okay? The level of a, that's fair, a college class, actually,

**Chloe Valdary** 32:15

yes, that makes sense. My entire startup is premised upon this working because it argues that you can, sort of, you can gain those deep, Enriching moments by consuming pop culture, which usually happens through a medium, and not necessarily in in person, meaning you go to the movie theater to watch a movie, you experience this, you read a book, you experienced this, you listen to a song, and you experienced this. So there is some medium that people are consuming, and they're still feeling that larger experience. So I guess that makes sense.

**Bret** 32:52

Yeah. So I think we're caught in a funny place, okay. Pop Culture, okay. And I realize, you know, you're using pop culture to great effect. And even if most of pop culture were worthless, it wouldn't mean that there wasn't enough of value to be mined there to spend a lifetime doing what you're doing. So there's no indictment here from me of what you're up to. But I do have the sense that pop culture works for what you're doing, because we are wired for certain truths. And therefore when those truths are uttered by somebody appealing in the public sphere, lots of people gravitate to it. So it generates wealth. Yeah. And that causes it to be broadcast, right? So there's a way in which the resonant messages, you know, the record companies are a parasite on the exchange of relevant messages, right? Between right people who feel them and those who are listening, right. On the other hand, the market obviously distorts that relationship to it'll tell you what you want to hear, rather than what you need to know. Sure. And that's very dangerous. So for the moment, I don't know where we are. But you know, it's it's so far, it is impossible to get a computer to generate really compelling. It can probably generate music that mirrors something that's already been produced, but it's hard for it to produce something creative, novel and compelling, at least at the level of lyric. So

**Chloe Valdary** 34:22

it would generate what's on the top 100. Today, right?

**Bret** 34:25

You can generate some slightly novel sounds

**Chloe Valdary** 34:27

exactly like because of the state of the top 100. Today, yeah,

**Bret** 34:31

rather than somebody telling you something deep, right. But, you know, let's, let's take the favorite example for people of my generation.

**Chloe Valdary** 34:41

Okay. The Matrix, okay. Perfect for this conversation. Perfect for

**Bret** 34:45

this. The Matrix is in effect, Plato's cave. Yes, right. It's a very ancient Yeah, right. You know, it's Plato's cave, Plato's cave, and it was wildly successful because the production values were super high, and the story was compelling and the modern twist wasn't superficial. So in the sense, you know, a lot of people who had no relationship to Plato's cave wouldn't know what Plato's cave was, right? People who did know what it was, but didn't have a particularly deep relationship with the stories suddenly had that story react, sir, experienced by this very vivid, you know, presentation of answer. And that's really important. I mean, I personally feel like Plato's cave, is a very deep story, because this is a very deep vulnerability for human beings. The fact that, you know, the, the person who escapes Plato's cave gets killed upon re entering and trying to know the truth. Wow, does that one hit home?

**Chloe Valdary** 35:42

Yeah. What are the implications of that, in your opinion?

**Bret** 35:45

Well, the implications of that are a, the idea that you can simply speak truth to power or the truth will out or any of these things, is, it's a naive fiction. Those who wish to unearth deep truths should understand what business they've gotten involved in.

**Chloe Valdary** 36:06

Okay. Interesting.

**Bret** 36:09

But anyway, I've sidetracked us here. That's okay. This is

**Chloe Valdary** 36:13

all sidetracking it's great, though we can find out where that way. Oh, no, that's interest. I'm trying to see if I can see what you're saying. I could also see the opposite, though. Being the case.

**Bret** 36:27

I'm sure it is sometimes, but yeah,

**Chloe Valdary** 36:28

anyway, meaning? Well, when I think about what you said, I think about, you know, the challenge to Dr. King, quoting William Cullen Bryant, like, the dark, what's, what's the quote the

**Bret** 36:42

about the universe? Oh, the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice. Yes. So

**Chloe Valdary** 36:46

so what you just said is a great challenge to that quote, right. And so that might be fair, it might not be No,

**Bret** 36:55

no, I really like this. It is a challenge. Yeah. And I think the sophisticated version, ultimately is that these are competing forces. Sure. What,

**Chloe Valdary** 37:04

what Star Wars II?

**Bret** 37:07

Yep. Well, very Star Wars. biblical. Yeah. Yeah. But the I think the the point about the devastating thing about Martin Luther King Junior's invocation of the arc of the moral universe. Yes. Is the first part that is Lark of the moral laws is long. And what he's telling you is, you might have to wait a very long time to see it bend towards just yeah, that's a that's a devastating revelation.

**Chloe Valdary** 37:37

Yes. Well, I don't know if it's devastating. I'd say it's daunting. I wouldn't necessarily war devastating.

**Bret** 37:43

I think it's devastating to an individual. Because the point is, you're live in an era that's just brutal. And that doesn't, there's no comfort as an individual to the idea that eventually what was

**Chloe Valdary** 37:54

things will get fixed, right?

**Bret** 37:58

On the other hand, at the lineage level of that's vitally important. And it is reassuring to know that even if you never escape a particular injustice that your kids or your grandkids might see it reversed.

**Chloe Valdary** 38:08

Right, but they might not according to your interpretation of the implication of Plato's cave. So

**Bret** 38:13

well, let's put it this way. I know Plato's cave is right, I've seen I hope, Dr. King was right. Yes. And that in the end, Plato's cave doesn't win. Okay, right. Sure. In the end, the revelation of what's outside the cave, right? can't be stopped, because it is, in fact, true.

**Chloe Valdary** 38:34

But But to be fair, play the play Plato's cave ins at a certain point, meaning we don't see what happens afterwards, it could very well have been that this person could have affected Let's be hypothetical for a moment, some people outside of that cave, who saw his great courage and valor and decided to follow suit. Absolutely. Right. So it's interesting like to to note where the book ends, and what the implication of that is on society. I would say that I do think that I do think that Dr. King's vision would ultimately went out, though, just because the very fact that Plato wrote that book would suggest a toying with the notion of these concepts of freedom and liberty and equality and speaking truth to power, like in writing that he is writing a book about speaking truth to power, even if the person fails in the end. So very idea of speaking truth to power that becomes invented in that moment, and that in and of itself, is bending toward justice.

**Bret** 39:30

Well, I agree. I not only hope that Dr. King was right. Yeah. But at some level, if he's not right, I don't know what there is. I just don't know what the point of right sizes any Right, right. Yeah, he is right. Then the point is, well, all right. We all get dealt a hand and we have to play it. Sure. And some of them are better than others, but but at least we're headed in a direction of improvement. Yes. So actually, if I might, I might, my grandfather was quite old in his, in his 80s, we started keeping accounts current, okay, that he was very clear on the fact that he wasn't going to live forever. And that that meant that we should probably say what needed to be said before it was too late. Sure, which was very uncomfortable at first, and then it became very normal. And I recommend it to everyone. Okay, there's somebody you care about, yeah. Because they won't be around forever. But at some point, I asked him, he had, in my whole experience of him, he had railed against the injustices of the system, and the brokenness, all of the things that we did wrong, that were relatively transparent. And I asked him if there was a period in time that he would like to go back to in his life rather than live in the present, given how much he saw was wrong with it. And he surprised me. Absolutely not. Yeah. And I said, I'm shocked, you know much about the way things are, yeah. And he says, You have no idea about the profound ignorance of the past. Right. And I was just, you know, I stopped in my tracks, because I hadn't really understood, he was impatient for things to get better, right. That's what the complaining was. But he had no illusions about where we had come from, right. And that enlightenment was frustratingly slow, and it moves in fits and starts, it can even go backwards. But in general, we are much clearer headed than we were,

**Chloe Valdary** 41:36

reminds me of Dr. King's last speech where he says, sort of in a very, like, gospel a way he basically paints this picture of his creator asking him, if he could choose to be in any era, where would it be, and then he goes through sort of like this, these biblical narratives of, of like the children in Israel, and he would not stop there. And I think he actually mentioned Plato and Socrates. And he said, I will not stop there. And he goes through Athens, and he goes through Greece. And he goes to, I think certain times in America's early history, and then he finally says that he would pick the here and now to be in, and it's like, actually a very beautiful speech. And if your viewers haven't seen it, I highly recommend they do. But yeah, it's like, and if you know, if you don't have any ignorance of the past, then you're more likely to be able to recognize that you've actually have made progress, like relatively speaking, right? And so, so yeah, you'll be impatient. But you'll probably be more imbued with that same spirit of it's long, but it's obviously bending, because look where we were before. Yeah,

**Bret** 42:40

I think that's absolutely right. And I almost wonder in your retelling that if my grandfather was not in some way reference, consciously or not, yeah, you're right. It's Yeah, it's the same point. That's cool. Yeah. So I must say, I personally fear that although I think Dr. King was right. And it gives me hope. I fear that there's a pattern in human behavior. I've written about it actually, scientifically, many years ago. But I fear that there's a, basically a flip flop between how human beings behave in times of growth, times of plenty, and how human beings behave in times of contraction, economic contraction, or its equivalent, and that, in fact, the arc of history, or the arc of the moral universe may be long and bend towards justice, that it actually flips back and forth rather violently. And this actually raises another interest of yours, which will surprise my viewers who don't know you not surprised those who have heard you speak elsewhere. But you have a very deep relationship with Judaism. Yes. And anti semitism. Yes. And writing it, folks. Yes, absolutely. Oh, right. Was I unclear about that? Oh, man, that's terrible. So why don't you just tell us where that relationship comes from and what it means to you and then we can go for there and Okay, draw the connection I was headed for

**Chloe Valdary** 44:15

sure. So I was born and raised in a very atypical Christian family grew up in a Christian family that observe things like Shabbat and kosher style, and all the holy days from oshana to Yom Kippur War. There's so much 17 minutes, but that naturally allowed the development or created the development of an affinity for Judaism because that was the closest community that did the same thing as me, basically. And so, you know, in high school, I joined the Hebrew Culture Club, I read books by Leon juris, which were all about the establishment of the State of Israel. Initially majored in film in college but then switched to international studies because anti semitism was resurfacing in Europe at the time. This was in like 2012 And then after that, I started a student pro Israel club at the University of New Orleans and did Israel advocacy for three and a half years. And then after that worked for two years in the Israel space and the Israel nonprofit space,

**Bret** 45:16

interesting, so,

**Chloe Valdary** 45:18

so many things.

**Bret** 45:21

Far be it for me to define you in any way. But I just try to understand, okay, you're not Jewish now. But you have a deep cultural affinity for is what is it? Is it? Is it the Jewish religion? Is it people are

**Chloe Valdary** 45:38

kind of all of it? You know, I don't know if a catch all term, but I guess it's culture, I guess, culture is a word that would carry all of that could hold all of those terms. So that's a culture. Okay, very broadly. Speaking,

**Bret** 45:51

very broadly speaking, yeah. Okay. Well, I find this fascinating. I, I'm obviously Jewish. I don't have a particularly deep relationship with the religion. I have. I what I think is a very deep relationship with the culture of the diaspora. But anyway, you know, I'm not, I'm not observant. Sure. And so anyway, I have I have a kind of distance from Judaism that happened, I didn't choose it, it sort of is where I ended up. But it's very interesting to hear somebody from the outside of the population, who finds an affinity for the style of thinking or something about it. And it raises all kinds of questions for me about well, the connection I was going to draw that sent us down this road was Jews are a kind of an odd phenomenon. Okay, we tend to exist at low density. Okay, you know, in a diaspora. Sure. If you asked me as an evolutionary biologist, how likely is that to work as a long term strategy for persisting on earth? I would say the chances are almost zero. Okay, right. It's too dangerous. Sure. Right. The fact is having a majority population that can always turn on you sure, is, it's a tremendous hazard that looms always and the boom and bust cycle issue that I was talking about, basically, I think,

**Chloe Valdary** 47:23

like in plenty and in scarcity, right? Beside, you know,

**Bret** 47:26

plenty, it may be that Jews are tolerated, but as things turn towards austerity, anti semitism rises again. And the amazing thing is that Jews have persisted for the long period of time that they have. And I think these, that fact, and the high level of success that Jews have experienced and things like advancing science, etc, I suspect they are coupled. Okay, that in effect, Jews, I hate the idea of a chosen people. Okay, I think it's time that humans got over that idea. But

**Chloe Valdary** 48:07

just for your stessa your viewers No, no, no, that won't happen, but the arc of the moral

**Bret** 48:11

universe. But I don't like the idea of chosen people. Because I find it there's something wrong with the idea that if there was a creator, created, some people he didn't choose?

**Chloe Valdary** 48:25

Well, I understand your objection to it in a little from the literal sense. Yeah. But if you were looking at him, perhaps on a deeper psychological level, it could be the case that it's important to have chosen people because then other people will think that it is possible that they too could be chosen.

**Bret** 48:40

Well, first of all, I should just say, I'm not a I'm not a believer in the supernatural. So in a sense, even thinking about it as a literal matter. I don't even know what to do with it. But my my sense is that we are better off considering. This is probably also uncomfortable because declaring any thing about any racial group special. Sure. Especially if it's one you belong to Sure. I can have some problems, smacks of arrogance or hubris or something. But anyway, my point would be, maybe not the chosen people, but maybe the anti fragile people. And that means that basically, the amount of hazard per se era that Jews have faced has created a kind of ability to survive in all kinds of extreme circumstances, what else not killed us has made us stronger in a way now. Personally, yes, I suspect that what is special is transmitted culturally, sure. And therefore, to the extent it is valuable, it can be democratized. Sure. I don't know if that's right, but okay.

**Chloe Valdary** 50:04

Okay. Yeah,

**Bret** 50:05

I don't know. Okay. As far as I know, it's Wait,

**Chloe Valdary** 50:08

what's the lesson? Is that to the extent that it is? culture, it can be democratized?

**Bret** 50:13

Yeah, right. I have it this way, if it was genetic, right, right, if the fact of many trials and tribulations had created special genes, sure, there'd be nothing you could do about it other than I see, breed them out. I see me breed them out into the other population.

**Chloe Valdary** 50:31

But that doesn't necessarily mean that culture can be democratized.

**Bret** 50:34

Well, culture can be democritus. Because, and in fact, you're the proof.

**Chloe Valdary** 50:41

No, but I'm an anomaly. Well,

**Bret** 50:43

you're an anomaly. And you were This is a totally uncontrolled experiment, a sense that, you know, there's nothing there's nothing about this that is controlled. I'm sure everybody is idiosyncratic. Sure, including you. But the point is you. Judaism is not a recruiting religion, right? It does not seek converts, right? In fact, it sort of looks askance at people who wish to join. Sure. But it allows it. Yes. And you have taken an interest in the culture, yes. And have absorbed the meaning of that culture. very deeply. Sure. Right. So that's, that's the meaning of democratizing of coke, I

**Chloe Valdary** 51:32

guess, I don't know if the process by which that happened is really scalable?

**Bret** 51:36

Well, I'm not really,

**Chloe Valdary** 51:40

because I have with medical.

**Bret** 51:41

So as a college professor, when I was a college professor, I took the stuff that I had learned at the dinner table, about how to argue a point how to hold other people's feet to the fire, how to back off, when you've discovered that you something about your thinking is incorrect. How to gracefully, sure, you know, Grant, that fact. And I taught students to do it, irrespective of their backgrounds. Sure. Some part of me felt like I was taking things that were very common at a Jewish dinner table, okay, and introducing them into the classroom. And my point, I guess, would be the new unusual level of success that Jews have experienced in certain quadrants. To the extent that it is culturally transmitted, which may be all of it, okay. I find it hard to imagine any of it is not readily

**Chloe Valdary** 52:44

learning. That's interesting. I don't know, I wonder what that would look like, what that process would look like, Well, on a mass scale.

**Bret** 52:54

I've said this elsewhere, at least once, I don't remember where exactly, but the, I think the other proof of this is the Enlightenment, okay, which was not a Jewish project. Sure. But Jews, myself included, have taken those tools and wielded them very effectively. And at some level, I feel like the Enlightenment was an achievement. It was a human achievement. It belongs to everybody. Sure, right. And this is one of the things that breaks my heart about the intersectional movement in the present is the rejection of the Enlightenment, which they will flat flatly tell you, they want to see that enlightenment is somehow biased and white and red needs to be tossed out, right? Or my feeling is no, actually what it needs to be done. What needs to be done with it is it needs to be taught, so everybody has access to those tools. You know, you're not you're not going to beat the scientific method, which is, right, directly. Yeah, the Enlightenment is a product of the enlightenment. Sure. So in any case, the democratizing of those tools that are acquired through some sort of history seems to me the right answer.

**Chloe Valdary** 54:10

Okay. I think that perhaps the intersectional left's objection to the Enlightenment is proof that at the very least such a democratization process could be hindered, later on. Because, well, you know, because if they're rejecting the Enlightenment, which was democratized to certain extent, then, you know, I don't know maybe it's just a back and forth a cyclical tension that always keeps happening for some reason.

**Bret** 54:39

Well, if we were to steal, man, their point, oh, yes, please do. I do think that there's a way in which the attempt or the attempts to democratize the benefits of, for example, the Enlightenment have stalled, okay. And so You know, look, I think a lot of the people who are leading the intersectional movement are actually cynical actors serving themselves. But I don't think the average person in the movement is cynical, okay, the average person in the movement is has been misled. But the the idea that something has not worked about democratization of these concepts and tools, I'm all yours. The extent to which these tools are themselves Sure. problematic, problematic, I find impossible to imagine, given how well they work. And given that their central value. I mean, the, the central value of the scientific method is that it corrects for bias.

**Chloe Valdary** 55:45

Right? Sure. I think that's I think that's all true. Well, are you planning on conducting an experiment to see if Judaism can be democratized? as it were,

**Bret** 55:59

I mean, literally, I don't know how to say this without seeming like a weirdo. But I sort of think that we're engaged in that right here.

**Chloe Valdary** 56:08

And that's what we're figuring out. Right? And I don't think it's just me at this moment.

**Bret** 56:12

It's you and me.

**Chloe Valdary** 56:13

Okay. I was in it's like, it's like the matrix when you wake up, and you realize what's going on? Right?

**Bret** 56:21

Well, but I mean, I, you know,

**Chloe Valdary** 56:24

but I don't know if it's a conscious thing it's like,

**Bret** 56:28

might not be and it might be, it might be a foolish thing to even say out loud.

**Chloe Valdary** 56:31

Yeah. I mean, I don't know. But I wouldn't go that far. But But yeah, I don't I don't know the implications. I don't know if I need to know the implications of what that would mean. But it's a cool thing to think about, I guess.

**Bret** 56:45

Well, is the maybe let me rephrase the point this way and try it out on

**Bret** 56:52

you. Okay. The Greeks Yeah, discovered a very power, powerful toolkit for thought, okay, for mathematical proof, etc. It was a discovery of the Greeks, but it doesn't belong to the Greeks. Sure, right. Everybody gets to use trick. Sure. The Galileo obviously innovated a perspective that allowed us to understand things about our physical universe and our place in it that are not his property, not the property of shirts, people, but they are human achievements. Okay. When Americans landed on the moon in 1969, Americans may have viewed it as an American achievement, and it was sure, but there's also a way in which people all over the world viewed it as a human achievement. And it

**Chloe Valdary** 58:03

was, right. I feel like I know where this is going, right? Well,

**Bret** 58:07

it is going and it is it is it is inherently there. But the basic point is, look, stuff is gonna get discovered by some population. First, it's just inevitable that it will and some stuff is going to get discovered many places that aren't in contact with each other. I mean, farming was discovered five different places released right? across the planet. Does that mean that people who don't come from a population that discovered how to farm are not entitled to do it? Of course not. Right? So anyway, the question is, is not the most noble viewpoint on how we are to move forward as a species, that wherever valuable stuff is discovered. The insights belong to all of us, you don't discover on behalf of your population, you discover on behalf of enlightened.

**Chloe Valdary** 59:03

So I think it's a great question, by the way, well done. Really good question. So I think that it's the answer is both. And this is a paradox. So I think the answer can be that both in one sense, when you discover something, it's on behalf of humanity, but also, and yes, they are the How did you put it, they are the they belong to everyone. And like anyone can practice trigonometry, right? So I think that's true. But I think it's also true that human beings need and are wired for story. And so from that perspective, the idea of having a story which sort of maps out a direction that gives meaning to your life is also itself necessary for human development. So it's necessary for human development to be able to say we can all use trigonometry, but it's also necessary for human development of the particular story what whether we're talking Well, in the form of Judaism, or interesting story, in general is necessary for human psyche, I think, because that's what we're wired for. So we're measuring two different values, essentially, in this conversation, one value is the value of like, the value of the collective. And this is actually a very Jewish thing to say, but one value is the value of the collective and one value is the value of the individual. And so the question is, how do you balance those two things, because both of them are necessary. In terms of how we shape the stories that we tell our lives, it is incredibly moving to think about, you know, the landing on the moon being an achievement for all of humanity, and sort of like a feeling of oneness with all of with all human beings. On the other hand, we do know that is very hard to conceptualize a statistic of multiple people dying, as opposed to one individual die, right. And so we are wired as such that we need, we need the cosmic, but we also need the particular we need the universal but we also need that particular. And the challenge is how to balance both of those things, in a healthy way.

**Bret** 1:01:13

Beautiful. Now, here's the question that I suspect haunts this analysis. Okay. Which is, yep, you got the individual. Yeah, you've got the collective, but which collective? Okay. And so what I see after decades of study of history, evolution, human nature, what I see is a tragic story in which we are built, to cooperate, to compete and cooperate to compete. That's what we do while we're in order to compete, cooperate in order to compete. And in and of itself, that is not inherently bad, it results in all sorts of marvelous things. But it is the seed of our undoing, using that formula, because we have gotten more and more powerful in that process. And the ability to play that competition to a fatal end is looming. Sure. Nearby because of technology, because of technology because of the size of the population and because of the interconnectedness. Okay, which we live. Okay. And the question is, there's been a process in which the collective has been broadened historically. So if I think for example of the story of the Good Samaritan, yeah. The golden rule, which evolves in multiple traditions, there's a Hillel version and the Jesus version, but these stories creates a context for broadening the circle with Shenmue collaborate, sure, why in order to compete with something outside of it, but we are now linked together in a way that we have to collaborate. All of us collective, there is a collective, which is all of us. Okay, right. It hasn't successfully collaborated Sure, yet. Sure. If it doesn't, we've got a big problem. And my guess would be it's a fatal problem in the near term. But we are not wired for it, because cooperate to compete, works up until there's no one to compete with. Ah, right. And so in some sense, we have to level ourselves up.

**Chloe Valdary** 1:03:42

And hence the need for the chosen people.

**Bret** 1:03:46

And the need for us to take all of the the important discoveries that different populations have made, and pool them. And there's one way in which you could take this as some sort of, you know, utopian, okay. All is one viewpoint. And what I'm saying is that the difficulty is that the story in which we all realize, you know, what astronauts typically realize, yeah, they look back at the earth, and they sort of have what's called the overview effect. Right? That that experience somehow has to be translated to everybody. Yeah, the discoveries that each population have made that are valuable has to be democratized. Okay. And that we are not wired for that transition, even if we require it is a daunting challenge.

**Chloe Valdary** 1:04:49

Okay, I see you're saying yes, I was gonna say I don't know if that's possible. To translate all the sort of discoveries of every community to the entire circle. Meaning that meaning meaning to say that you all we all inherit this, or this is our inheritance. All of us collectively. I don't know if that's possible.

**Bret** 1:05:13

Well, okay. At the risk of pushing this somewhere very uncomfortable.

**Chloe Valdary** 1:05:20

Oh, okay.

**Bret** 1:05:23

Yeah, sorry. But at the risk of doing that, can we talk about the predicament of the population of people who arrived in the new world? For the purpose of functioning as slaves? I mean, sure, this is a population that you derive from on both sides, you're sure that population? A was many populations? In Africa? Yeah. But that population that assembled here, yeah. For the purpose of doing the labor? Yes. of the population with power, right. It had its culture systematically destroyed. Sure. Right now, yeah. 100%. Yeah. But to a great extent, yeah. For the purpose of making enslavement function, right. That population, therefore, does not have access to the ancestral?

**Chloe Valdary** 1:06:24

Sure.

**Bret** 1:06:26

The good, Harrison's Right, right. It's language destroyed, or its languages destroyed at its coherent set of cultural traditions largely disrupted. So the point is, that population actually has to take on another sum. It doesn't have to be one populations package of discoveries, but it has to take on something to replace that which was stolen from Oh, that's interesting. Am I wrong about that? I don't, I wouldn't

**Chloe Valdary** 1:06:54

necessarily think about it in this in in these terms. Because if certain elements of culture are universal, and those can be found in every culture, then technically one could guess that the things that that the things that we're taking from other cultures were also part of our culture, at some point, even before it was destroyed.

**Bret** 1:07:20

Well, let me let me come at that biologically and my best guess, okay. People are very similar. Yes, their capacity to discover? Yes. See, you know, if you take a guns, germs and steel view of history, which I very definitely do, what you basically see is that human beings inherited very uneven pieces of turf, and that those very uneven pieces of turf caused some populations to move faster. Sure, and some populations to move slower based on for example, how many domestic bull animals are available to them? Sure, it was a concentration of domestic herbal animals above, you know, the size of a rabbit, you know, in Asia, right. And there was a deficit of them in New World, okay, example. So that is to say the ones that exist in the new world now were transported from Asia and via Europe, right, primarily, but but people are basically people will discover what there is to discover the rates at which they discover these things are heavily dependent on idiosyncrasies of the environment that they inherit just by virtue of where they are on earth. And so I don't think there's any reason to imagine that a many of these things were discovered in various places in the earth, across the earth, and that in places where they hadn't been discovered yet, they would be right. You know, we can see in Mesoamerica, for example, a highly sophisticated culture, that was a few 100 years behind Europeans in terms of metallurgy. Okay, right. Maybe it's 1000 years behind, but it hasn't. Yeah, fast distance in historical context. Yeah. And the point is, well, that created a military disadvantage. That was absolutely unbeatable when Europeans showed up, but but my point is, I agree that populations that have had their culture disrupted, either had those discoveries in their history or would have come across them soon enough. Sure. But from the point of view of where we all land now, sure. I think the point is, well, we got libraries. Sure. They're full of these discoveries. Yeah. Why don't we just make sure that a package that contains all of the most useful stuff is given to me? Oh, yeah, yeah. made available.

**Chloe Valdary** 1:09:50

I don't I think that's fine. I think that's a that's a it's a different analogy, but I think it's a good solution to Well, we've sort of meandered from this particular versus the universal to, who inherit what, or proof that there has to be this approach that says that everyone would have access to the, the gifts that all communities or all ancient peoples have created or discovered. Because if you run into a situation like peoples history being wiped out, they will need to take from other people's histories or other people's accomplishments and also be able to call it their own. But I think they're able to call it their own because they're human beings, not because of where they come from, or because of even the even the origin. So I think the fact that the human being that we are human beings, transcends all of that. And so that is why, for example, African Americans have a right to the heritage, not because not because it's useful, but because it is. And this is, I can't prove this, but because it is because it's a metaphysical statement. But it is objectively, the case, that what transcends all that is the dignity of the human person.

**Bret** 1:11:10

Yeah, I think, in fact, well, I think these are two facets of the same coin. And I agree that

**Chloe Valdary** 1:11:17

if we taught, but if we, if we acknowledge the dignity of the human person, and like what that entails, we also have to recognize that in order to thrive, I think human beings need stories, and not stories just of the collective, but also stories of the particular. And so you know, so to ask the question, which is a challenging question. It's very good question. Why can't the accomplishments for example of the Jewish people be the collective accomplishments of humanity, right, as opposed to seen as this very specific thing, but a particular thing? In a sense, because Galileo's accomplishments are not seen as the Italian people's accomplishments. Right, right. So there's this difference there. But I don't necessarily think that there's anything wrong with the difference.

**Bret** 1:12:05

I don't think there's anything wrong with the difference. And I'm not looking to sanitize or neutralize the stories at all. It's not even really the accomplishments. You know, well, I guess accomplishments is maybe too vague. It's the tools. It's the tools that I see as absolutely vital that we democratize everybody needs access to those tools. And to the extent that our cooperate to compete modality has brought us to this place, it has also caused us to wield tools and to deny them to others. sure that that's, that's the key strategy. Yes, I'm going to discover a tool, I'm going to wield it to benefit me and whatever I identify as self. Sure, right. And I'm going to deny it to those with whom I am competing.

**Chloe Valdary** 1:12:57

So interesting. In light, it's interesting notion in light of the fact that some intersectional lists reject the enlightenment. Right? Yes, because it's a reverse thing. Because you would think that many people in who who hold this political ideology, believe that they do so in the name of minority groups, but what you're saying is, if you've rejected these tools, which are the inheritance of all of humanity, then you're doing something that's actually fundamentally undemocratic. You're like reversing that democratic process?

**Bret** 1:13:30

Yes. And it's so self defeating? Yes. Because

**Chloe Valdary** 1:13:33

you're, you're only hurting yourself, essentially, because you're denying yourself access to the tool, which is actually your inheritance as a human being. It's your

**Bret** 1:13:40

inheritance. And yeah, this is exactly this is exactly my frustration is that I have the sense there is really something to the idea that some people have been shut out have access to those tools. And instead of demanding access to those tools, right, they're declaring the tools. Right, illegitimate and biased, which is not the case. Right.

**Chloe Valdary** 1:13:58

That's interesting. Yeah, that's, that's very strange. Yeah. Well, it

**Bret** 1:14:06

is very strange. It's very disheartening. Yeah. And, yeah, it's sort of, it's jarring, given what Heather and I were doing, trying to pass those tools on to people and taking great pleasure in watching them acquire the right and wield them with evermore skill. But

**Chloe Valdary** 1:14:26

surely, though, there has to be a parable that can teach us about this, like there has to be a parallel parable where, like, I don't know, the child rejected the tools that the parents tried to give them or something along those lines. Yeah. And sort of like sift through and try to predict what's gonna, what's gonna be the outcome of this new pattern of behavior that we're seeing.

**Bret** 1:14:47

I agree there should be there should be a well known story, but I can't think of what it would be. Yeah. Yeah. Why am I blanking on the author of the idea that the masters hask cannot be disassembled with the Masters tools. Oh, I don't know that one. You don't know that one. I find this a very I see it periodically.

**Chloe Valdary** 1:15:09

The Masters house cannot be disassembled with the Masters tools because the master built it. And so

**Bret** 1:15:15

I have to say, this is an idea that people wield. And I can't make sense of it. I can, it sort of sounds right until you think about the implications. And my feeling is, well, I just don't know what it means. Well, it means that, you know, it's obviously a reference to, to slavery. The master sure has tools. And if you want to dismantle slavery, you can't do it with the tools that belong to the master. But it's absurd.

**Chloe Valdary** 1:15:47

That's absurd. It's not only fundamentally, it's Baldwin would have rip that apart. It's the opposite of the absurd, right? That is like the literal. Wow, I hadn't heard of that.

**Bret** 1:15:57

Nobody's got better tools than the master. Right? Go into master shed, the master has the finest tools in town. If you were gonna use tools to dismantle the Masters house, those would be the ones

**Chloe Valdary** 1:16:08

that is absolutely ridiculous.

**Bret** 1:16:09

I can't I can't believe I'm blanking on it. I used to not like the back of my hand, but not that I know, the back of my hand. I've never understood that expression. But Hmm, yeah,

**Chloe Valdary** 1:16:21

I will have to think through the, I'm sure there are more implications for this statement, because that's just me, first of all, the the, the audacity to assume that See, this is the point this is the problem that I have, this is the thing that frustrates me what is what is at the essence, or what connects the master and the slave in this paradigm that we are, we are talking about because in the book as a man live, if the author says be neither a master nor a slave, and then the conversation when Nikki Giovanni and James Baldwin in the 70s, Nikki Giovanni says, There are only two people that are heated, the worse in this world, and that is the master enslave. So almost like trying to promote this rejection of that paradigm as a starting point. But anyway, even if we were to take that paradigm as a starting point, it's like what is what is at the base of these categories as a human being. And so this idea, it's like, it's so antithetical to it's so fundamentally untrue, because, because on a on a sort of, I don't know how to put this on a deeper level. Both of you are human beings. So both of you can exhibit certain qualities and certain behaviors that are either destructive or productive, or moral or immoral, right. So this idea that like that one cannot even this goes back to the beginning of our conversation, that one can't find the commonality or the common humaneness between these two categories, which would make a person realize that that statement is silly, right? is very dehumanizing, actually, because it says that the essence of what you are, are these categories, not the human being underneath, because if it's the human being underneath, then this life could take those same tools and make something else, right. The point is not the tools, it's the being that's using the tools. And so this saying is victimless because it takes the autonomy away from the human being. Which is ironic, because the categories, master and slave, but this person does not come with the cut up with the category of a free person, or person who is free. Yeah. All right, the person was free does not fall into either of those categories.

**Bret** 1:18:35

I 100% 100% agree with this. And the question. It's so hard, because I have the sense that, you know, let's take your example from the beginning of the conversation. Okay, people who find themself moving together well, on a dance floor, sure. They come to have some deep connection that isn't founded on the content of their conscious beliefs. Right. Okay. And then their conscious beliefs emerge in the conversation afterwards. Sure. Right. That experience reveals something about the very point you're making about the human being versus the status. Right, right. I have the sense that this just isn't that hard. And we're still not going to succeed that

**Chloe Valdary** 1:19:30

What do you mean, it's not that hard? That,

**Bret** 1:19:33

you know, when, when I was facing the protesters who became writers at evergreen, I kept having the sense that these people had, you know, let's put the bad actors aside. There were some bad actors. But then there were a lot of people who were saying stuff like the Masters Okay, yes, can't be disassembled with the Masters tools. And I had the sense of you know what these guys need? They need a really good college course that takes months runs you through these startup. Well, but the tragedies of a college coming apart over the fact that what the people who were tearing it apart needed was college, right? What's like, Oh my god, we've got a college here can't can we not Oh, I say use these buildings and the things that you're saying, Let's take the things that you're saying. Yeah. And let's start there. Yeah. Okay, let's just start there. We'll take them as a premise. And yeah, see how well that premise stands? Right? This is not that hard. Right. Right. But it was impossible. Okay. And so I guess, maybe that's what I'm getting at is that I'm a little bit heartbroken. Okay, something that where the parameters slightly changed, it's not that hard, it becomes impossible.

**Chloe Valdary** 1:20:53

So what's parameters needs would need to change in order for it

**Bret** 1:20:56

to? Well, you know, you mentioned something about conservatives and self government, I think with the term that you used, there's a way in which, yes, there is a problem with the structures of authority, people are sick and tired of being told that their system functions, and if they just keep their head down and do their work, they will end up in a decent place, because they can see that that's not inherently true. Sure. Right. So their frustration makes sense. But the allergic reaction to all structures, right, as if it is the fact of the structures that is oppressing. That's wrong, right. And so I guess my point is, I'm very upset at the State of the University System, I think the university system has abdicated responsibility for teaching, and it's taken up some other kinds of jobs in order to pay the rent. But its failure to teach has resulted in a lot of people who haven't learned and having not learned they aren't in a position to evaluate the quality of what they're asserting the system should look like. And so they're saying patently absurd things about, you know, what the rules of society ought to be. And you know, we can't afford to try out their experiment. Right? Right. It will be an absolute disaster. So this has to be taught in the abstract rather than trying it. Okay. So anyway, I guess my point is, look, I don't think I think a lot of college professors don't do a lot of teaching. And it isn't just college. Teachers.

**Chloe Valdary** 1:22:37

That's crazy. It's crazy. To think about to imagine.

**Bret** 1:22:41

Yeah, but what if, what if it all depends on getting people to calm down? to step back? And be systematic? Yeah. Okay, what what are you claiming? Yeah. And then let's play it through?

**Chloe Valdary** 1:22:58

Well, in order to get my feeling is that the reason why it's hard is because in order to get a student to be able to do that, that student has to identify with that process. And so, and this is where identity in a more serious context can be discussed. So like, how's What is this person's sense of self in the world? Has this person conceive of him or herself? Does this person know themselves really. And having known oneself is now now being able to navigate the outside world, and specifically in reference to the college campus for the purposes of this conversation? So it may be a person is has to be raised in such a way or nurtured in such a way that they would want to? Or that they would be more likely to respond to that? Okay. I don't know.

**Bret** 1:23:53

This is perfect. Actually, I was thinking about this. This morning. Okay. And preparing to talk to you about it. Okay. It's a question I have about whether or not by theory of enchantment, you mean something that is analogous to an idea that motivated my teaching something I use to describe my own teaching to myself, okay. You have to give me a little leeway. Okay. The word seduction as a bad connotation. It's not inherently sure bad, but it has a sexual connotation that doesn't belong in this conversation. Sure. But I, I felt when I was involved in teaching, that good teaching involves a kind of intellectual seduction, okay. And what I mean by that is, the way to get somebody to learn is not to take true things or things you think are true and put them on the board and make them read them. Stuff like that. It doesn't work. Sure. What does work. You're showing them, here is something that you could have, right? And here is why you want, right? And here is the path to get it. Sure. And it's not necessarily going to be simple. But the point is you're doing it for you. Right? You're doing it so that at the end of this process, you have a tool to wield that will serve you for the rest of your life. Yes. Right. And if done well, right, if done in a way, you know, you do have to cultivate the trust of the people that you are teaching. Right? Right. They really, because if you just walk in there, and you say that they won't believe you, right? Right. They're too jaded, right? If you allow them to see your humanity, which goes to what you were saying before you allow them to see your humanity, you show them that you are dealing with them straightforwardly. Yeah. And then you place the thing on offer. In my case, it was an evolutionary toolkit that allows you to understand what is otherwise a very confusing predicament that you've landed in as a human being okay, that you will be more in control of your life. Right? Yeah, you want to understand your love life and not be so confused by it. Yeah, just so happens that love evolved in the context of evolution. And that that's why it's so confusing. And there's a map. Yeah. Do you want it? You know that? Yeah, right. So anyway, theory of enchantment, I guess I'm wondering whether or not your use of enchantment and my use of seduction, or are these synonyms are close? Or do you mean something?

**Chloe Valdary** 1:26:33

I think that they are close, I don't think they're synonyms. I think that they are certainly related to each other. In Chairman, so I picked the word and Chairman, because at the time I was doing this research paper that ended up being the catalyst for the startup and I was reading a book by a Guy Kawasaki, former marketing director of Apple, who wrote a book called enchantment. And in Chapman, he defines it as like the process by which you delight someone with a idea, or whether it's a person or a thing, whatever, you delighting them to feel fundamentally delighted. And I think that the similar to sort of like, here is this map, do you want it that's sort of like delighting them in a way. But I think the difference between the two is that, well, I guess it's not really that one of the differences that comes to mind is that in your scenario, the light comes in the fact that the person is going out on an adventure to try to go obtain a thing, right? That's where the delight comes from. Whereas in my curriculum, the delight comes from simply recognizing yourself and certain truths about the world in things that you did not know, contained, or could resonate with you on that level.

**Bret** 1:27:49

So this is this is great. This is better than I Okay. Sounds to me, like the distinction is one between delight and entice. Yeah, so what I'm talking about is entice. Yeah, I'm talking about delay. Yeah. Yeah. And I like both of these are, these are neighboring tools? Yeah. And that's interesting. Yeah, yeah. And it goes to something that I also came to believe, I don't know, when it actually dawned on me consciously. But by the, by the end of my teaching career, I had come to believe that most of the obstacle to students acquiring a deep understanding of things was not about content. Okay? It's about motivation.

**Chloe Valdary** 1:28:30

Okay, their motivation are the teachers motivation?

**Bret** 1:28:33

Well, the teachers motivation sort of sets the course, the teachers motivation is screwed up. Sure. It's very hard, even if the students are well motivated for it to go anywhere positive. But in general, students are badly wired to acquire useful stuff. Okay, one thing, even the really good students Yeah, tend to be wired to please the authority figure at the front of the room. So they end up inadvertently, effectively gaming the system, because they get good at getting a pat on the head from the teacher. And I know from experience, somebody who gets really good at that game, right? They're getting straight A's. But what they've learned is how to please that person, one of two things happens to them when they graduate, either that person at the front of the room gets replaced by a boss, right? And now they've become a cog, because what they've got good at is pleasing somebody who has authority, right? Or they can't figure out what to do, right? Because the person at the front of the room was the source of their motivation. Right. Okay. Right. And so yeah, in some sense, you have to, if I've run into a student who's very capable, but is not internally motivated. That becomes my focus. Okay. My point is lucky. You got a hazard built into you've got everything you need to succeed for, but you've got a hazard built into you, which is that until you take over your own ability to direct your ship, you're either Gonna belong to somebody else, or you're going to be adrift. Sure. So anyway, motivation is the key. So anyway, you could do this with delight. And you can do this with entice, they both work, I say, play on the motivate, but

**Chloe Valdary** 1:30:12

let's see, I see. Does it is it affected by the fact that it's the authoritarian saying, here's the roadmap, you might want to try to follow it. That's a really interesting thing. Presumably, anyone should be able to replace the role of authoritarian and say it and if it's powerful, if it's enticing enough, then the person will do it, regardless of who the authoritarian saying it saying to do it is.

**Bret** 1:30:41

I really like that. Yeah, thank it. So we've been playing with a model, where you've got bad actors who have taken advantage of a set of stories and rules that is essentially structured to be gamed, but what you're saying goes a step beyond that, I think. And that, in effect, we have predisposed people to follow bad leaders by telling them to the key thing to do is to make somebody with power. Happy. Sure. That fits for me. Sure. I do think that that is a part of what's going on.

**Chloe Valdary** 1:31:17

But but there are competing stories, though, that we've because we also tell their stories. Culturally,

**Bret** 1:31:24

yes. But the I think the thing that I find most frightening about the intersectional story is that it offers people or you know, especially young people tend to be looking for the equivalent of a get rich quick scheme, or some rapid way that they can get to the place where they don't have to worry about money. And I'm sure many of the other difficult things to acquire in life. And so somebody who's selling a story in which, hey, guess what, you can find out where you are in a magical pecking order, right? Here's the intersectional map, right? You're on it somewhere, right? Find yourself right, right now. Well, we're gonna do the intersection. The map defines a future in which we're going to turn the tables Right, right. And so the people who were way ahead, they're going to be way behind because they don't have any intersectional points at all right, right. And so the fact is, this is not likely to be very compelling to people with marginal sure intersectional credentials. But there are a whole lot of people who have multiple axes on which they will see themselves as oppressed. And the point is, well, hmm, if I sign up for this vision, sure, maybe it's next week that I'm in a better position. So there

**Chloe Valdary** 1:32:43

has to be just an alternative story that can compete with that framework, and alternative framework rather than story. But yeah, cuz intersectionality is fundamentally a story, as you just said, so there has to be another story that can go toe to toe with that story. But I

**Bret** 1:32:57

think I think you were there earlier in this conversation. Okay. I think the point is,

**Chloe Valdary** 1:33:02

oh, what's the master the slave? That would argue that story?

**Bret** 1:33:05

No, that's a good one. And it's relevant. Yeah. But with the individual and collective Oh, because the point is that story that intersectional story, yeah, is entirely collective spread. Right. Right. And that this is, you know, lots of people who have looked at this movement and been frightened by it having recognized it involves almost total de individuation. Right? Right. Even the language, which I understand its origin, but black and brown bodies. Sure. That's, yeah, not a like,

**Chloe Valdary** 1:33:39

it's very new. It's very new, relatively recent. And like, I wasn't hearing that in the 90s. Personally.

**Bret** 1:33:45

Yeah, I wasn't. I mean, it comes from Tallahassee coats, right?

**Chloe Valdary** 1:33:49

That would make sense. I don't know. It makes sense. Okay. And I understand

**Bret** 1:33:52

it. I mean, in fact, I even think his point. Yeah, I understand it is right. Yeah, right. His point, if I understand his point correctly, his point is in order to oppress ultimately, it comes down to control over somebody's body. Sure, right. Sure. That's how you oppress somebody. Well,

**Chloe Valdary** 1:34:11

Baldwin, might be a little bit meta. And a couple of quotes from this. I carry on doing this but a couple of quotes from that movie, The Great debaters Wow, okay, so the great debaters is based on what's your story, Denzel Washington places coach who coaches debaters. It's during racial segregation to the south. The team ends up competing at Harvard and winning the entire like you. That's what this movie is about. But this is incredible scene, where this is one guy who's really smart, really talented, but also has problems with authoritarian figures and just lashing out because everything that was done to him and so Denzel Washington says to him in this monologue he explains to him how during slavery, there was the development of Willie Lynch ism, which led to what we now know as lynchings where the purpose was to brutally brutally destroy the black and brown by right physically destroy, right, so. So Thomas, he got this point that was the goal. And he says that the goal was to keep them in line, right? So that they would work without questioning without processing. And so in that sense, gave the body back. And but they took the mind, right? So Denzel Washington says, that was the goal to keep the body take the mind, and he says, I am an every professor on this campus are here to help you take back, keep, or get back and keep your righteous mind because obviously you have lost it. Now I tell that story. Because not because what Coach is saying isn't right, I understand the essence of what he's saying. But there has been this deeper thread, I think, within a lot of the ideas that have pulsated through the civil rights movement, and the Harlem Renaissance movement, which is that oppression is fundamentally about the spirit about the mind and is not. Yes, it's about the body, but it's not simply about the body. And so coach's mistake is in reducing the human being to the body, when in fact, there was this belief in a transcendent that the ultimate value lay in the mind and human consciousness. Now that's a bit of a side note, but I think it's relevant, because it perfect challenges. That framework it doesn't it's not to say that the framework isn't correct. But it isn't the deepest truth.

**Bret** 1:36:46

Yes, the framework has a piece of the truth, right? Isn't the truth. It's synonymous with it? Yes. Okay. So this is great. So the body ends up being oppressed. Yes, it's not the entire point, the intersectional movement, de individuated, it's the

**Chloe Valdary** 1:37:02

allow the mind to be taken. They did the irony. They, they give away the Enlightenment, and they give away the mind, right, which is give away the mind,

**Bret** 1:37:11

which is to give away the mind. And the stories that they tell, are these mind numbing stories where achievements of an individual don't even exist? They're a myth of white supremacy or something. Right, right. Okay, so your question then is, they've got a story, which is there's a map, you can find yourself on it. And it's going to involve a reversal of oppression. Sure. And so how are you going to be in a world where we've reversed depression? How are you going to be you're probably going to be better off than you are. So this is a good story. Follow us. Sure. Right. Your question is, what's the alternative story? Right? The alternative story, I believe, is, actually, and I have to say, this is a story I've heard from. I've heard it from black conservatives. Okay, very regularly. Okay. All right. And it has caught my attention. Because as I got in trouble for saying a little bit on Joe Rogan's program, I didn't initially understand why there were black conservatives, okay. It seemed to me, hard to imagine. And as I've encountered more and more of them, I've come to understand what the phenomenon is. And it's deep meaning which I respect greatly. But the, the point is, the empowerment of the individual. Right? Is the alternative story. Sure, you can entice, right? Right, you can enchant right, these are both mechanisms. But the point is, you want a tool that will make you more powerful. Let me tell you about the Enlightenment, right? The enlightenment is that it's not the only tool, but it's a major tool in that toolkit of becoming more powerful and having more control over your life. Now, here is the thing that I think when I talk to black conservatives, and I hear them talking about personal responsibility, right. I think I know why this has become such a focus. And it is because the ability to change the fate of the collective. It's not great, right? Right. It's very hard to change the fate of a population. On the other hand, a person who decides to take charge of their future can have a tremendous impact on how far they get and how powerful they end up. Sure. So the point is preaching personal responsibility to people actually works, but it doesn't necessarily change the net outcome. Right? Right. Right. It may be that you make yourself more powerful and somebody else loses, you know, right, his name you don't know. Right, right. So the question then is, as always, how do you find the correct fraction, right, the intersectional story isn't totally wrong. There is you know, There are patterns of self reinforcement where the distribution of power and well being and wealth, self reinforce sure such a pattern doesn't even need to think about race. Sure, the extent that things weren't equally distributed to begin with, all you need is a pattern that reinforces right, the existing distribution, right, that will continue indefinitely. Right? So the question is, how do you take the part of the story? That is legitimate? Which is, yeah, we do have a chronic problem. Right. And it does require that it be addressed. On the other hand, you as an individual would be a fool to surrender your mind, as you say, right to this process. Right. Right. That's the place where you have the greatest chance. Right, you know, beating the odds, right. And, you know, the mixture of those two messages is right. What I think the universal message would be the recognition of the collective problem. Sure. And the individual problem,

**Chloe Valdary** 1:41:00

okay, do you find that is present in anything? In a story,

**Bret** 1:41:06

I find that it is present in individuals and tiny groups.

**Chloe Valdary** 1:41:12

Okay, tiny groups. Which brings us back to Judaism. Okay. It could be argued that Judaism is the story. And I don't mean like the religion holistically. I mean, the basic story of, of people enslaved in Egypt, gone to the promised land, that basic story has been, it's no coincidence. I think that that basic story has been sort of repurposed in different mediums and contemporary forms, because it has both the individual and the collective element in it built within it, and perhaps that's why people gravitate toward it, or one of the reasons why people gravitate toward it is because it has that sort of balance to a certain extent.

**Bret** 1:41:54

Yeah, I like it. And I, you know, there's a there's a deep connection that I'm not sure how far to go with, okay, here, but there's a way in which, if you put aside Richard Dawkins view of the way, mimetic cultural transmission works and evolves, and you accept what some of us see, which is that these belief structures, religions, are in fact meme complexes that have served populations very quickly. Of course, they right, almost doesn't see it as Richard Dawkins, I think at this point, but

**Chloe Valdary** 1:42:38

that's a very specific. I don't want to you know, we don't have of course, they are mean complexes. If by meme you mean when I think you mean that mean, which are repeatable, sort of, like,

**Bret** 1:42:48

yeah, transmittable? Yes. They're there. It's heredity outside of the genome. And you know, I don't know if you know this, but the concept of meme is Richard Dawkins concept. Yes, I meant, right that, but when I met with him in October, it was clear that he views mimetic evolution as a kind of sidelight. Was that mean? It's a minor. Fact. Oh, rather than a thing. The central story? Yeah, we're human beings. And

**Chloe Valdary** 1:43:17

what does he think is essential story?

**Bret** 1:43:20

I think it's the things genes and, you know, there's a way in which we can steal man, Dawkins point. I do think, right, you know, I can explore this in greater depth. I think the genes are in control. Sure.

**Chloe Valdary** 1:43:36

Right. They are though. I don't know what that means. But it means that the genes

**Bret** 1:43:38

create a mind Okay, short names can be transmitted. They are in charge. Sorry, that is most unfortunate. Sure, but sure, but the point is, yes. The magic of humans. Yeah. Is the the mean,

**Chloe Valdary** 1:43:52

right? So complex, right? So if you take the mean complex of this digital story, for example, you can find it in, it just repeats itself in let's take something contemporary, oh, The Lion King, for example. Right? Or, you know, you know, there's a reason why Bob Marley gravitated toward the thinking that story as a backdrop for music and sort of recreating it. Oh, absolutely. Right. And of course, even in the black experience, how that sort of overlays on to as a meta narrative, right, and which is a way to understand oneself, if you can point back to a particular This is the argument, by the way for the particular of that story. The particular particular pneus of the Jewish story makes it such that the, the black collective in America, I don't know 1000s of years later can look back at that story and take that story and derive meaning from it. And that is their particular story. Right? Without that particular story. It could have there could have been another future. I don't know. But but that is very particular as opposed to Universal, right? It is not the, that story is not the collective story of everyone. It's a very particular story, but that because of its particular illness, it was able to be taken and overlaid by people who also went through slavery. Right? So now they understand, now they can, they can relate to that, and a deeper love on a deeper level and create, you know, different forms of meaning. And of course, if you look at what lack I would say, black people do a gospel, and music in general, but gospel in particular, especially songs that were that precede the gospel that were sung during slavery, that took the language and the Liturgy of the Jewish story and sort of incorporated and it into what slaves at that time were going through as a means to overcome, you know, the situation. I think that's an example of how something can still be particular but still affect in a positive way, the whole of humanity.

**Bret** 1:45:56

Oh, it's absolutely beautiful. And I love the Bob Marley exam. Yeah. Now, I hope I'm not going to get out of my depth here. But there's a way Yeah, Bob Marley plays very much on some of the Jewish part of the story very much on some of the Christian part of the story. Sure. And there is a way in which Bob Marley correct a piece of the Christian story than I actually that's interesting regard as malware. malware to keep oppressed people oppressed right. The song get up stand Sure, right. Yeah, most people think great. God will come from the sky, right away everything and make everybody feel high. Right. But if you know what life is worth, you will look for yours on Earth, right? You've seen the light stand up for your rights, right? This

**Chloe Valdary** 1:46:50

that is a that is a that does challenge certain aspects of percent.

**Bret** 1:46:54

Absolutely challenges a certain aspect of Christianity and it to me, it leans towards the Jewish version.

**Chloe Valdary** 1:47:00

It does, it does because Judaism isn't so overly fixated with the afterlife, exactly. fixated on the present. Perfect doing mitzvahs now to bring in the Yes, right at the same time, however, Yes, I will. I will put a vote for this aspect of Christianity, the fact of the idea of the afterlife. Yep. within Christianity made it possible for black people to think to themselves while they were undergoing oppression, that there is a there is there is a place outside of here. Right? There is a place beyond this realm that I am seeing and experiencing with my physical body. Right? It the belief in the afterlife equips the mind or is a tool for the mind because it makes it it makes you able to sort of, like, withstand some of the blows that are happening in the present because what's important is not the present. What's important is the future. Well,

**Bret** 1:48:04

in that way. Yeah. Does it not mirror Dr. King's invocation of the arc of the moral universe being? Yeah, right. Yeah, that same sort of

**Chloe Valdary** 1:48:12

right. And it's inevitably going to come right. It's inevitably

**Bret** 1:48:15

going to come but it is long. So anyway, to go back to the mean, complex. Yeah. idea. The thing that I thing about memes and meme complex is that they enjoy the ability to recombine it's very much analogous to what happens with genes, okay, right. With two people, mate, they bring surance together, you get some new combination. There's a way in which Christians, if we take a phylogenetic view of these populations, the Christians are in effect a species of Jews, Jews, effectively the ancestral, okay. a much larger population has emerged from it, yes, right. It dwarfs the Jewish population. But, so what I would say is, Christians are they are phylogenetically, Jewish, okay, modern Jews are, in part culturally, Christian. Okay, they have actually adopted things from the New Testament that aren't in the Old Testament, okay, included them in their meme complex. So for example, monogamy, right? So what you get and you know, you can, you can sort of say, well, Bob Marley is playing with the mixture of the chiefs. Yeah, right. Yeah. Playing with the mixture of beliefs and to a particular population, particularly oppressed population, right? That needed music, right? Just sort of rescript right. They were and get them to look past the Christian obligation, right? Just simply endure, right? Right. But So, Bob Marley is like somebody He's like, a meme mixer. Okay, in order to generate a more powerful story, yeah, and your sense of it. This is a natural process, right? It has to happen. You know, it happens when people combine ideas, and they jettison these serve up those and they mix them and bring them in and serve. So anyway, there is a very powerful story to be understood if we figure out how these massive meme complexes do evolve, in what way it's similar to genes in which ways it is dissimilar in one way, it is subservient to genes, it's going to be a very important part of the story. But in any case, if we were to start looking at the world through that lens, I believe we would have a great deal of power to understand patterns of history that are otherwise just simply anomalous,

**Chloe Valdary** 1:50:51

okay? Because Because you will find common story, or which would be effectively a meme.

**Bret** 1:50:58

Right? Because it will, it will stop being difficult. You know, if the idea is well, are you Christian, or are you? Right, right. That's not a really good quote. Right? Exactly. It's like saying, Yeah, you know, is that a monkey? Or is it a primate? Yeah, it's both Right, right. Yeah. You know, not every primate is a monkey, but every monkey is a primate. So to the extent that Christianity is a very successful and successful version of Judaism, that's an important fact. Sure, says something about the way these two things will interrelate. And to the extent that an ancestral population can embrace discoveries of a descendant population, sure that work sure that working here and didn't work where the ancestors came from. That's, that's a feature not a bug.

**Chloe Valdary** 1:51:46

Okay, begs the question. How about Marlon? Or why Bob Marley became so popular, given what we've just given how you just describe what it was he was actually doing?

**Bret** 1:51:56

I think you answered it earlier. Okay. And I think your point about the way pop culture interfaces with these ancient resonant threads that this is based, right? Yes, you've got lots of people playing with, they say things, they get a positive reaction. Sure they explore those things further. Sure. Bob Marley was a particularly he was a genius, who explored a particular quadrant that was very rich, you know, it didn't abandon the traditions of the past. But it looked skeptically, a part of it, it embraced other parts. It's musically so compelling, for reasons that you would know far more as a musician. Sure, than I could tell you. But there's a way in which reggae is I don't know what to say. It's very, it's very basic. It is very, very

**Chloe Valdary** 1:52:53

tribal. Yeah, very, in the sense that it's, I mean, I think a lot of music that's like African, or like the Caribbean, like from the African diaspora is like that. It has that effect. It tends to have that effect on many people. But there are, it's not just African because there, I found that there are elements of African music that can be found in like Irish and Scottish music as well. And you sort of saw the mixture of those musical origins in America to create American music anyway. But yeah, they're so all of these this type of music that I'm thinking about whether it's from Ireland, or whether it's from Ghana, it's like very much reminds you of like rootedness. Right. And so I think that's why ultimately, Marley was as popular because as he was because he was speaking to something that was fundamentally true. And whether it doesn't have to mean true in the, in the sense that Sam Harris means when he says true, right? Yep. But it's a different kind of meaning but something for for whatever reason or another, fundamentally human beings are wired to resonate with, right and are wired to respond to and perhaps we don't know the why of that story of, you know why that is? what it is and why that is how we are wired, but it is in fact, how we are wired. So interesting to say the least.

**Bret** 1:54:17

It is interesting to say the least. Alright, I have one final question. I don't know how to phrase it. Okay, but it's an idea that's been

**Chloe Valdary** 1:54:27

bracing myself. Okay. Well, 30 minutes?

**Bret** 1:54:30

I don't know. Maybe not. I'm hoping so. You're a musician. You play guitar.

**Chloe Valdary** 1:54:34

A little guitar? Yeah. A little piano or keyboard but yeah, keyboards, and string, keyboards and string and I sing as well. Okay.

**Bret** 1:54:42

And it's worth noting that the guitar is originally an African instrument. Yes. Yeah. Worth outing. Okay, so here's the the rough idea, okay. Something absolutely magical happened when European melodic sense abilities met African rhythmic sensibilities that's overly simplified Sure, let's just say in the new world Sure, jazz and all of its derivatives. It was like a magic combination sure of things. Yeah. And it unleashed on my favorite of these traditions might be Cuban salsa, okay. Which is in its own way kind of remained pure because of the economic isolation of Cuba out of the the embargo. But anyway, something magic happened in the new world as a result of what the slave population brought and inevitably combined with the slaveholding population those two musical traditions was lightning in a bottle when they when they met but here's the really interesting thing. Those same two traditions have met more than once. Okay, right. They met in the new world and you know, I don't know if I call it once but basically there was some influx of slaves they brought musical traditions Sure. It happened but it's also now happened again in Africa right? Now what I'm interested in if I've started listening to some of those African versions of this so you know if these were languages we would call it a creole. Okay, right. So Creole is two languages they meet people who speak these two languages speak what's called a Pidgin which is not a full language but their children speak Creole which is a full language that that is composed of the two or more languages, but it is neither of them Sure. A musical Creole same thing. But you know, these artists like Habib Cote de or Jane I encountered recently, it's interesting, it reaches me, even though it's not, you know, my tradition is a hybrid of the African. Sure. And the European right, I see sounds from rock and roll, right? That's, that's where I, that's where my ear was schooled. But But those, I guess my point is, every time you take two languages, you make Creole. But if you take English and French and you realize it 10 times, you'll get 10 different Creole should be, you know, this will be certain things that will be analogous, but there will be other things that are just idiosyncratic based on the particulars of the the hybridization event. But I think this has happened musically. And what, what I'm getting at is that there's a way in which the African krile, between European music and African music is a second instance of what happened in the new world. Okay. And it's very interesting to listen with a year that arose in listening to the American, the New World version of it. It is very interesting to listen to the African version of it, because basically, it's another combination of the same two traditions, right? It isn't the same combination. Right? And so it has some elements that are very familiar and some that are foreign, right. And I'm wondering, I've seen this pattern, or

**Chloe Valdary** 1:58:18

that's interesting. Well, I mean, there's one album called fa, that everyone should listen to, I just interviewed their band leader for my podcast. Um, anyway, podcast. Yes. The theory of enchantment,

**Bret** 1:58:32

the theory of enchantment, podcast, Yes, excellent.

**Chloe Valdary** 1:58:34

But this ban, FAA basically, is based in San Juan, Puerto Rico, and it combines ancient, like your Reuben prayers with electronic drums, almost. So it's a, it's, it reminds me of what you're talking about. And it's definitely contained elements contains elements of the old, but the combination is what makes it new. The type of combination that it is, is what makes it new, right? Because it's the same things. But it's not combined in the same way. Because things have changed, obviously. So and that has created a specific, like, new type of music that I've never heard before. But I don't know if I've noticed that it's common. It could it could be that I'm not exposed to a lot of that type of music specifically, or it could just be that I listened to a lot of old music. So I'm just listening to a lot of the older stuff that still like speaks to me, but I don't know. I haven't I haven't seen it, but that doesn't mean it doesn't exist.

**Bret** 1:59:36

Okay. Cool. What's the name of the album? Fa, f, e. f, g. All right, cool.

**Chloe Valdary** 1:59:42

They're the best band I've heard in the past. Probably 10 years.

**Bret** 1:59:47

Wow. Yeah, that sounds pretty good. I'm definitely going to YouTube that check it out. Yeah. Cool. All right. All right. Final question. Are you Are you hopeful?

**Chloe Valdary** 1:59:58

Am I hopeful? Yeah. I mean, I am hopeful because I do believe that certain things are inevitable. And I know for it's not just like the sort of, of course it's long, it's arduous, you know this, this arc that we've been talking about. But you know, what is also consistent is the hero's arc and the hero's journey, which is a certain type of archetypal story pattern that is found in a lot of stories that we tell ourselves. And because it's found in so many stories, I am convinced that like, more or less, that's the story that's going to be able to empower individuals with a healthy balance for the collective, it's a story we've been telling ourselves all along, it may, it may be that we have to present it in a new way similar to this new Creole that's created in Africa, right? But it will contain the same elements. And we will recognize the elements, those elements, which is precisely why we will buy the story. And it's true that the story of like, do this selfishly, so you can gain power is also a very compelling story. But it doesn't have a it doesn't have redemption, and there's no redemption in that story. And I think that's that's the difference. That's like the thing that separates the boys from the men does not have redemption in it.

**Bret** 2:01:12

I really like this idea. And I do think that there. It's too simple to say that the the hero archetype story keeps being retold, which I sometimes hear people say I just don't hear you say that. Okay? I think there is a manner in which the hero archetype story has to be reinvented for each generation. You know, that? The Lord of the Rings? Yeah, it's great story, but it's not. It's not modern. Sure. It's not up to date enough. Sure. It needed to be redone. And I hope we do find that story. For our cohort. We're not of the same generation, but you and I are sure seeing the same piece of history at the moment. Yeah, I hope that we figure out the version of that story that causes people to realize I don't know that we can dance together. Yeah, right. That we're really one people and yeah, that the future in fact, depends on us. getting past the the dangerous tribal isms that have led us here.

**Chloe Valdary** 2:02:23

Yes. Well, I hate to use a four letter word, but the future depends on love.

**Bret** 2:02:29

That's fine for later. All right. Well, Chloe, Valerie, this has been a extremely long one. It's been a long one. But anyway, we would have been ashamed to cut it short. I agree. It's all very worthwhile. From my perspective. Thank you for coming on the Dark Horse podcast. Thank you for having me. And people can find you at theory of enchantment.

**Chloe Valdary** 2:02:53

Yes, my website is theory of and shaman comm check it out. shoot me an email. I'm also on Twitter. So see Valerie see Valerie and you can also follow theory of enchantment.

**Bret** 2:03:02

Valerie spelled not how you might expect it.

**Chloe Valdary** 2:03:06

It's spelled VALDA ROI Val

**Bret** 2:03:09

dari? Yes. Okay, excellent. Well, this has been great. Thank you all for joining us. If you wish to support my work, you can do so on Patreon and stay tuned. A lot more coming in the weeks to follow