

The Future Is Calling Us to Greatness

with Michael Dowd + 56 Experts



The Future of God and Human Flourishing

with Deepak Chopra

Big ideas from this session:

- How does one write “80 books, translated in over 43 languages, including 22 NY Times bestsellers”?!
- His latest book, *The Future of God: A Practical Approach to Spirituality for Our Times*
- The birth and evolution of “Evolutionary Leaders in Service to Conscious Evolution”

Michael: Well, Deepak, thanks so much for taking the time to be part of this conversation series, *The Future is Calling Us to Greatness*.

Deepak: Thank you.

Michael: One of the things that I wanted to ask you at the start, most people that are involved in this series will know of you and your work but I’ve also been inviting all of my guests to introduce themselves by simply saying what you’re most passionate about or committed to and what you’re best known for. Not your whole bio, obviously, but just sort of the overview of how you got to be where you are and what you’re most committed to and passionate about.

Deepak: I am a physician by training. My training is in endocrinology and metabolism. Before that in internal medicine. I’m Board certified in those fields.

I am most interested in understanding healing, whether it’s physical, emotional, spiritual, environmental, ecological. I’m passionate about healing, which I define as wholeness. Healing as a term of the memory of wholeness.

Currently I’m most passionate about understanding consciousness as a fundamental reality in the universe. I have my own views on that. I’m presently talking about my new book, which is called *The Future of God*.

Michael: If you could say something about your new book, it comes out I think next week if I'm not mistaken. Actually, that will be before this airs. Share about your book *The Future of God*.

Deepak: *The Future of God* is based on the very fundamental premise that the future of God is the evolution of our own consciousness. Consciousness as defined as that which makes experience possible.

When I talk to so-called Atheists I realized that Atheism is stage one of spiritual growth, that Atheists are basically basing everything on two things, all their beliefs comes from two things. Number one is they use evolution as an argument against any form of divine intelligence or divine consciousness.

As we know, evolution describes the transformation of species, it does not describe how life began. Nor does evolution explain why there's a universe that came out of nothing with a very precise mathematical constant. Evolution is a bad argument, number one.

Number two, I think evolution as we think of it through Darwinian evolution which is very mechanistic with random mutations and natural selections, I think if you just replace the word random with the word unpredictable you'd have a whole new area to understand evolution. What appears random is unpredictable to the observer but maybe geologically driven from the inside.

As I talk to some evolutionary biologists they actually prefer the term unpredictable because it leaves room for creativity and, therefore, evolution guided by consciousness which is my whole premise of everything that I do. Everything is guided by consciousness.

Even as I talk to some physicists who speak about random quantum fluctuations giving rise to virtual particles that create the universe, I ask them, "Would you be comfortable with the word unpredictable instead of random?" They've actually never thought of it. What is a random fluctuation could be an unpredictable to the observer fluctuation which is another word for creativity.

If I watch people at Grand Central Station it seems totally random who's going where. If I watch them every day then I see that each of them has a purpose. In fact, I could plot a graph and I could create a business plan, so many trains to Boston, so many trains to Philadelphia and so on along statistical probabilities.

I think that's what consciousness is, actually. Consciousness is self-organizing. It's sentient. It expresses itself with feedback loops, recursiveness. It's also creative because for every feedback loop there's an evolutionary impulse that takes it to a new level of expression. There's complementarity.

I hear all these arguments about mind and body, mind and brain, when in fact it's the same thing as asking is it wave or particle. It's both. At the most fundamental level your brain and mind is what is the same activity.

Materialists say that the mind is what the brain does. People who are non-idealists, they say the brain is what the mind does. Actually, if you go to the most fundamental level they're both the same activity. That activity is neither mind nor brain. It's the potential for experience, which you need both mind and brain for.

For me, God is that fundamental field of possibilities that self-enrolls, self-organizes, is sentient, is creative and expresses the field as complementarities. Then people say, "How does it matter?" Well, the way I think it matters is that if that's the source of the universe and the universe is an activity then it must be my source because I'm also an activity of the universe.

Is there a way for me to have a relationship with my source? Whether you call it God or not is not important. The answer is yes. In great spiritual traditions it's self-awareness, which is awareness of your body, your breath, your mental space, your relationships, awareness with your relationship with the universe.

It's also self-reflection. Who am I if I take away all my assumed identities? What you're left with is something that's far less, that is inconceivable, that has no name. Yet without that there would be no concepts, no forms and no names. That's a reflective, contemplative inquiry, who am I, what do I want, why do I exist, what's the meaning and purpose of my existence, why do I not feel enough gratitude for the mere fact of my existence.

When I start asking those questions it takes me to a deeper level of awareness. Self-awareness, self-reflection, contemplative meditation. The third is transcendence. There are so many techniques of transcendence that people don't even touch upon them. They have had glimpses in peak experiences of those little moments of self-actualization.

Then I talk about conscious choice making. Actually, forget the argument between free will and determinism. Just exercise conscious choice making and you realize you do have free run.

The final is don't mistake your perceptual experiences with fundamental reality. Science is based on what I call naïve realism. Science, first of all, is based on a subject object split. Me and the universe when me is also an activity of the universe. This is artificial. Science is also based on naïve realism. The most important thing scientists ask is what's the empirical evidence without asking who's asking the question.

What we call empirical evidence is a species-specific mode of observation in a human being. When we look at the universe through a scientific lens it's actually a human experience. It's not the experience of a dolphin or an insect with 100 eyes. You can have multiple modes of

perception but they all happen in a single field of awareness. That single field of awareness gives rise to multiple modes of observation, multiple modalities of observation, multiple ways of thinking, multiple ways of cognition.

There's no fixed thing out there. It's all a species and culture specific mode of observing the world. When you go deep in the observer you get in touch with the observer of the universe, God.

Michael: Yes, Amen. I'm curious, how does this world view both inspire you in terms of living in what I call right relationship to reality, right relationship to nature, right relationship to time as well as right relationship to the eternal or the transcendent. Especially in terms of the future. The premise of this particular conversation series is the mythic idea that the future is calling us to greatness, that we are equal beings.

Deepak: If I look at religious experience, not as religious ideology or religious dogma or religion as a system of thought, I don't think that truth can be accessed through a system of thought whether it's theological or religious, scientific or whatever. We don't even know how far it goes, that's the hard problem of consciousness.

When I look at religious experience three things stand out more than anything else. One is transcendence. The second is the emergence of what is called platonic values. Truth, goodness, beauty, harmony, evolution, love, compassion, joy, equanimity. Number three is the loss of the fear of death.

Also, when I look at the limitations of science I'm forced to confront specific humility, reverence for existence, reverence in general for existence and a deep sense of gratitude for the fact of existence. There are only two things I can talk about. One is something exists, we'll call it the universe. Then I'm part of that existence.

We can argue forever what is the nature of existence. Science actually says we don't have an answer because the universe is made of nothing. Only 4% is atomic and most of it is interstellar dust, the rest is invisible dark energy and dark matter. Of the 4% that's atomic, only 0.01% is actually the visible universe. That turns out to be atoms and particles which end up with a single wave in mathematical space.

In fact, I asked the best physicist I know, a professor of physics at MIT, Max Tegmark, I said, "Is the universe a single wave in mathematical space?" I didn't ask him about God or anything because I don't want to be in that position. He said yes.

What's a single wave function in mathematical space? Where is the wave function? Where is the mathematical space? He said it's Hilbert space. What is Hilbert space? He said, "A multi-dimensional, infinite space from where everything emerges." I said, "That sounds

like a cosmic mine to me.” Therefore the rephrasing of the single wave in mathematical space would be a single God and God’s mind is the whole universe. If there are other universes then there are other single Gods manifesting these other universes.

How does that relate to what you’re calling the future, that greatness has a future? What are you calling it?

Michael: The Future is Calling Us to Greatness.

Deepak: Okay, so greatness is to find the divine spark within me that connects me to the infinite divine, that is the immeasurable potential of all that was, all that is, all that will ever be. That will lead me to a behavior that comes out of unity consciousness, that doesn’t come out of my skin-encapsulated ego which is a socially programmed hallucination to begin with.

In the map that I explore there are states of consciousness that are experienced as different realities. There’s sleeping state of consciousness, there’s dreaming state of consciousness, there’s waking state of consciousness, there’s transcendental consciousness, there’s cosmic consciousness, there’s divine consciousness, there’s enlightened unity consciousness. Each of these states creates its own perceptual reality, it’s only cognitive reality and its own biology.

Your biology transforms as you expand your awareness. We are doing studies on that right now. People are not jumping on the wagon of epigenetics and neuroplasticity. I’ve said it for 30 years, not because I’ve said it, it’s part of the wisdom tradition I come from, that knowledge is different in different states of consciousness. Biology is different in different states of consciousness. Reality is different in different states of consciousness. Cognition and perception and emotions are different in different states of consciousness.

The universe that you experience is representing your state of consciousness at this moment in what I call the evolutionary spiral of consciousness.

Michael: Thank you. One of the things that I’m not clear on yet that I’d love for you to elaborate on because I know your heart is also one of helping us as a species come into right relationship with the air, the water, the soil and the life of this planet, if you could say a little bit about how your philosophy inspires you and inspires others to live in a more honorable relationship with nature itself.

Deepak: Well, nature is our extended body. We are made of star stuff. Every atom in your body was manufactured in a star. The carbon in your fingernail and the hydrogen in your neuron probably came from different galaxies. You are star stuff with self-awareness to begin with.

Your physical body is more than that. It's the ecosystem of the planet. The planet is your extended body and that means the Earth is recycling as your body. This atmosphere is my breath. The trees are my lungs. Even the lights of the stars are the light of awareness within myself.

Why I call it the environment is silly. It's just a subject-object split idea that I don't even understand it. I have a physical body, I have a universe body. They're both equally mine. In fact, there's no boundary between me and the universe because this particular organism is an activity of the universe. I can't step out of the universe to observe it, and yet that's what we do as science.

People have faith in science because it creates technology. It's very successful. You and I are speaking now because of science. Science is not a method for understanding truth. Science is a method for organizing and controlling experience.

We are organizing experience right now and controlling it through the technology that we have as a result of observing regularities in nature. It doesn't tell me what experience is or how I even have the experience. All that's happening is photons are going into my eyes and there's electrical currents going to my brain, some chemistry in my brain, and suddenly I'm experiencing a three-dimensional universe revolving in time.

This is the hard problem of consciousness. Nobody knows the answer to how we have any experience, whether it's mental, perceptual. We have no idea how that occurs.

We have no idea what the universe is made of. It's made of nothing. It's a single wave in mathematical space. We don't know what the universe is and we don't know how we have awareness of the universe. We don't know what existence is. We don't know what awareness of existence is but we know it exists. I can see it. It may not be the way I see it and I exist.

Maybe awareness of existence and existence are the same thing. If that doesn't lead me to utter, total, epistemic humility, reverence, gratitude, love and compassion for my fellow human beings, I don't know what will.

Michael: Amen, Amen. I'm so glad you also drew the distinction. I have often said that the environment is not our surroundings, it's our source. We are the environment become conscious of itself. This idea of seeing ourselves as separate so that we think we can put our toxins into the air, water and soil is just craziness.

Deepak: There's no such thing as an environment. This is an artificial boundary. Actually, if you ask physicists what's the one principle in physics, in quantum mechanics, forget all the equations, one principle, they'll tell you there are no boundaries. Every boundary is notional, is conceptual. It's perceptual and you can't trust your perceptions because you don't even know how they happen.

Michael: Well, okay, I love what you're saying. I want to ask a question that's sort of practical. In my experience, as you I think know, Connie and I for the last year have been traveling along the route of the Great March for Climate Action speaking across the United States. I found that there are a lot of people that tend to polarize into two opposite perspectives.

One are those who believe that you look back at the last 100 years, things just kept getting better and better and therefore there's no need to be really engaged in the issues of our time because things are just going to keep getting better and better. There are those kind of people.

Then there are also a lot of young people who are in despair, they're overwhelmed, they're looking at the challenges, they have no hope. What would you advise or coach? How would you speak to those two polar opposites?

Deepak: I think we're living in an insane asylum and I don't want to participate in the insane conversation. I picked up my visitors badge a while ago and so I'm happy to observe the conversation without getting engaged in it because then you only polarize and you get morally outraged and that's rate. I think whether it's moral outrage or rage, it's still rage.

I only believe in creative solutions. I'm involved in climate change issues. We have a proposal with the state of California to make ten cities carbon neutral. We are getting the attention of the politicians. The fact is we have the technology to reverse climate change. There are many technologies, too numerous to mention. I posted a blog about that on LinkedIn. I'm happy to send it to you.

It takes collective will. It takes collective love. It takes collective action. If that doesn't happen I'm okay with it because we're not that important as a species. Right now we're the most dangerous and the biggest predator, anyway. God or nature or cosmic consciousness may be saying to itself, "The human species was an interesting experiment that didn't work. Let's start all over again."

There have been mass extinctions in the past and they have led to the human species. Maybe the human species extinction will lead to another species, just like the extinction of dinosaurs led to the human species.

I think we have to shift our perspective from what's going to happen to the planet. Well, nothing. It will take care of itself. Nature knows how to reorganize itself and reinvent itself. What will happen to the human species is a different story.

Michael: Yes, well it's so fascinating that you should just bring that up because the very first interview that I did, this is the last interview that I'm doing in the series and the very first

one that I did was back in March with John Michael Greer. He wrote a blog post on The Next Ten Billion Years.

It was just sort of an interesting, imaginative picture. He thinks most humans will last a few million years and then he thinks that, as Connie does, that raccoons will probably be the next self-reflective intelligence, the ancestors of raccoons.

Deepak: Well, if insects disappeared from our planet all life would cease in five years. If humans disappeared from our planet all life would flourish in five years. We are the predator.

Michael: The third species he thinks will become self-reflective are the crows. He imagined that the great existential crisis of the corvids, the crows, would be that when they reach the moon they will have discovered that some species beat them there.

Well, Deepak, one of the questions that Connie's asked me to ask all my guests and it's really brought up some interesting responses and I purposely don't let anybody know about it ahead of time is if you had the opportunity to meet with any three people in human history either over a dinner where it was all four of you together or in a one-on-one situation over a drink or a meal, who would those three people be and why would you choose them?

Deepak: I would choose the great Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore, who articulated in his poems the fundamental nature of the universe and the fundamental nature of consciousness. I have read his poetry and recited it to myself since I was able to read.

The other person I would love to meet is Shakespeare. That is because he also addressed every human existential dilemma that one can have. I don't think anyone addressed as much of a diversity of human conundrums as he did.

The third would be Einstein, to tell him that he was wrong, that what he described was not the universe but a human experience of the universe. Einstein and his colleagues all were basically what they call realists, but they were not. What we call realism is naïve realism. It confuses perceptual experience with fundamental reality.

Fundamental reality is that which makes experience possible. Experience itself in the human nervous system is very different from that of a crow or honeybee with 100 eyes. There is no such thing as a consciousness-independent reality. If there was we'd never know what it is because you need consciousness to experience it.

I would like to suggest to Einstein that, sir, you and Tagore, there was a conversation that the two had in the year 1930. It's reported in the New York Times. I actually summarized it in a chapter in my book *God*, which was my last book, a story of revelation. I

actually suggest that Einstein was wrong. He called himself a realist but actually in a sense he confused reality with perceptual experience.

Tagore was telling him that, that the universe that we experience is a human universe. Einstein actually said, no, it's a scientific universe. Tagore responded that it's the universe of the scientific human being. There is no universe outside of consciousness. Those would be the three people.

I would bring in other people like Niels Bohr and Schrodinger and Max Planck into the conversation because I think in a way Niels Bohr and Einstein were quantum entangled. I like to crack a joke, if you don't understand non-local correlation then just here's the example. Einstein turns in his grave and then Niels Bohr turns simultaneously in the other direction. That's the Einstein Podolsky Rosen equation.

Michael: Well, I've got a practical question. Your website mentions that you've written 80 books translated -

Deepak: Eighty-one.

Michael: Eighty-one books, okay, in 43 languages with 22 New York Times bestsellers. Now, the 43 languages and 22 New York Times bestsellers, that points to you being a great author. How do you possibly write three or four books a year? What is your discipline? Do you wake up every morning and spend the entire morning writing? I'm just curious, what's your discipline?

Deepak: No, I spend two hours in contemplative self-inquiry every morning from four to six. From six to seven I do the practice of yoga every day. Then from seven to nine I write. The rest of the day I just go with the flow. Carolyn books my schedule and I go with it. I don't know what my schedule is as soon as you and I finish this conversation. That's, for me, very lucky because I don't have to think about it.

I write three or four books. These days, though, I'm writing these books in collaboration with others which I never did before. My next book is *Super Genes* with Rudy Tanzi with whom I wrote *Super Brain*. He's a Harvard neuroscientist. Then I'm doing a book with a physicist Menas Kafatos. He's an astrophysicist and quantum physics. It's called *Who Made God and Other Cosmic Riddles*. Then I have a bunch of others.

Michael: You're having too much fun, that's the problem.

Deepak: Yes.

Michael: Last question is share a little bit about the Evolutionary Leader's body, just in case people aren't -

Deepak: Say that again?

Michael: Share a little bit about how the group of Evolutionary Leaders came into being and just a little bit about that body.

Deepak: The group of Evolutionary Leaders came after a conversation that I had with a few leaders in New York, where I have a studio. It's called Deepak HomeBase. Then the thought came to the people who were there maybe we should create a group that meets regularly. We did at The Chopra Center the following year.

Then it took a life of its own. Right now I'm involved, of course. I can't make every meeting but I'm fully aware of what's happening and I think it's a great group of people with diverse thinking, diverse interests. They're all great thinkers. They are thought leaders, most of them.

I think when you look at leadership there's thought leadership, there's market leadership and then there is team leadership. I think the Evolutionary Leaders are mainly thought leaders. They're not, most of them, interested or at least until now I haven't seen them wanting to reach critical mass with their thinking in a way that could shift society.

Then, as I said, leaders in action. It's not just thought leadership and market leadership that we need. We need team leadership that actually takes us to the next level. Sometimes I think maybe it's already too late, but that's another story.

Michael: Well, I certainly hope not. You mention a blog post that you write that was on it sounded like something you were maybe doing with David **Grishan** or certainly talking about some of the solutions. What would somebody Google?

Deepak: I can send that to you. I can send that.

Michael: What would somebody Google to find that? Somebody who's watching this or listening to it?

Deepak: Actually they can go to LinkedIn. If they go to the Influencers column, they have a site there called Influencers. You go to LinkedIn, type Influencers. Then you'll see my name there and you'll see it there.

Michael: Great. Deepak, this is fabulous. What resource, what website or websites that you would most recommend people to do?

Deepak: I think the best for now is ChopraFoundation.org because it all talks about all our non-profit work.

Michael: Fabulous. Deepak, thanks so much for taking the time to be on this call and thank you for your work.

Deepak: Thank you, Michael. Thank you very much.