

The Future Is Calling Us to Greatness

with Michael Dowd + 56 Experts



The Climate Meme Project

with Joe Brewer

Big ideas from this session:

- Effective and ineffective ways to talk about climate change and global warming
- Social innovations that promote the growth of livable, resilient communities
- Why understanding memes is vital for co-creating a just and healthy future

Michael: Joe, it's a delight to have you as part of the series. I am glad that you could do it and this theme of *The Future is Calling Us to Greatness*, I look forward to see where go on this team.

Joe: I am really excited to have this conversation and really, honestly humbled that you invited me to participate. Thanks so much.

Michael: Joe, I hope you are not humbled too much because right now, I am going to ask you to really help us get a sense because not everybody is going to be familiar with you or your work.

Those viewers or listeners who don't know who Joe Brewer is, those of us who do think that you are awesome, we want you to share with them who is Joe Brewer and what brings you to this conversation? Brag on yourself. How did you get into this? What are you known for? What are you passionate about and what are you committed to?

Joe: Cool. I guess I'd start by saying what I am well known for is having a contagious energy and positive outlook on life. I channel that energy into a rather eclectic academic background that has enabled me to do something that very few other people on the planet seem to be doing and so far, I am trying to help them do it too.

Brief background on me, I like to start by saying I was born and raised on a chicken farm in rural Missouri, before the internet of course. By the time I went to college on a

full ride scholarship, I was just starving to study whatever the hell I could get my hands on that wasn't available in my little town.

At the university, I studied physics, philosophy and applied mathematics, theater and performing arts, I had the theater and dance and I ended up in a place where I was studying what's called Complexity Science, originally Chaos Theory and then later the Study of Complex Adaptive Systems, and interestingly ended up in a graduate program in atmospheric science, studying cloud formation, which it turns out is the biggest uncertainty in climate models is how do clouds respond

What I was really interested though was how patterns arise when there are a lot of interacting parts and the patters that arise that are not directly linked to any one driving factor. So it's really the convergence of all of them together.

Taking that kind of a way of thinking about things, I moved from the physical sciences into the cognitive and social sciences, have glazed my own path. I like to say I have an informal PhD from Joe University in cognitive semantics.

I've studied psychology, linguistics, neuroscience, anthropology, evolutionary biology and a host of other fields to try to understand how human thought behavior work and especially how cultural systems change in time so that we can eventually put on our design hats and change cultural systems the way that we want them.

A lot of the work that I have been over the last 15 years has been building in that direction and now I am very excited to be in the midst of laying the foundations for a field of culture design, for evolving civilization with intention. So, it's kind of me in a nutshell.

Michael: It's great. That was a great introduction and I am curious, one of the things that actually on your Skype says, "I am involved in a climate meme project." It says, "Ask me about it." So, I'll bite.

Joe: First of all, let me say what a meme is for other viewers that are not familiar. The term meme is basically a way of thinking about culture as if it's like biology.

In biology, we have evolution and evolution involves genes, which are basically scripted programs within the cells of our bodies that help us new bodies when we create offspring, and the concept of a meme just says, similarly there are things in culture that can arise and be mimicked or imitated by other people and then spread and become normal in the same way that genes come spread across an eco-system by the reproduction and the viability of a species.

So the Climate Meme Project was really looking at the conversation about global warming through this unique lens, and so what we did was we gathered a large number of what you could think of as like snippets of thought, little stories, beliefs, attitudes that people have about global warming.

We ended up with about 1,500 unique thought constructs. An example of this, just to make it concrete, if someone says it's New Year's Day and it is sunny outside. Thank you global warming for ruining the holidays," that would be a meme. That's a little story with an implicit judgment and a belief and it's something that one person could say and then another person could share it or repeat it.

We gathered a large collection of these and then we did a pretty sophisticated kind of multi-step analysis and what we were looking for was what really drives the conversation about global warming and why is it that more people don't act on this issue?

What we found was quite fascinating because it really explained that and so now we know why the conversation about global warming is broken and when I say why, I mean with rich psychological detail and we started using the insights from that work to start to design different memes or different stories, or behaviors that we think are more likely to spread solutions to global warming without getting stuck in the rut of what is really a totally broken conversation.

Michael: That is so fascinating. I've just got to basically say follow your heart. Help us get more into that. What have you learned? Where do you see this making a positive contribution, because what you said just got me fired up?

Joe: One thing that we learned was that there are these things we call them resonance points in the conversation. A resonance point is basically like a wave pattern that if you speak in a way or act in a way that is similar to it, then you will get resonance, just like you can get resonance in a bridge where there is wind blowing across it and it creates a vibrational pattern and then the vibration can become stronger.

In the same way, there are beliefs or attitudes in the conversation that if you speak to them, you will get a response. One of those that was really telling was what we call the survival dimension. Survival dimension is basically that within the conversation about global warming, people had views that ranged from total extinction of all humans and possibly all life on earth up to the slightly more positive but still negative Mad Max apocalyptic future of collapse of our civilization.

What we found was psychologically speaking, the entire conversation spanned this range of horrible things. So what that tells us is a couple of things. It tells us that the

underlined belief is that human beings are bad for the planet. It would be a good thing if we were all wiped out, it's like we are this plague or this virus that's really destructive.

If we believe that humans are bad, then how can we possibly be optimistic about what we can do to make the world better? It is not even on the table. When we saw that that belief was driving that part of the conversation, we realized the antidote is to flip the belief.

Instead of humans are the problem, it's humans are actually inherently good and we have the opportunity – and now you could use different stories. You could we say, we could rise to our true selves, follow our better angels. There are different stories we could tell, different, specific memes but all of them suggesting that humans can be stewards for the planet that we can be the earth knowing and loving itself, that we can be the intelligent system that takes learnings from biology and applies it to our social systems, so urban design based on bio-mimicry and those sorts of things, but we can never that conversation or engage in those activities if we start with the assumption that humans are bad and they need to go away.

That is the kind of psychological richness of what we saw.

Michael: I am glad you brought that up because what you are pointing to is one of the reasons why I am a big history evangelist, that I share the globally evidence produced that is the first creation story that we have that is globally produced and evidence based of who we are, who we are related to, because I find this big picture of physical evolution, biological evolution and cultural evolution as our modern day common creation story.

That frame itself helps us situate ourselves who is the human? Are we just this blight on the planet that the planet would be better off without us or are we the universe becoming conscious of itself that we are not so much evil as we are young. The earth has not been thinking, self-reflecting, that the universe has not been thinking at least in this solar system self-consciously very long, we have just begun.

So how do we then come into integrity and into alignment with the right relationship to reality, given this process but given a larger, greener sense of who we are? So, I am really glad that you voiced it.

Joe: Totally, and right along those lines, I love the book that Edward Wilson, the evolutionary biologist has put out recently. It came out maybe two years ago, called *The Social Conquest of Earth*. I am not sure if you are familiar with it.

Michael: Yes, I like it.

Joe: One of the things that I love about that book that is building block of what you just said is that he makes the case for how hyper-social behavior, the ability to create a society of

individuals that have special kinds of economic diversity, like ants or bees that can have different roles within their community, that the only animal to have that type of social pattern that is also based in empathy, meaning it even has a brain that is capable of processing empathy is humans.

The humans are the only animal on the planet that has all the right ingredients to be this hyper-social organism. We can create societies with very parts and cooperate to achieve things that are bigger and more diverse than any of us can do it alone and that we are wired from the very basis of our existence to have empathy and connection.

It starts with the parent-child relationship that mothers having the biological connection to the new life growing in their uterus, all the way through to the decade or more of social role modeling and learning for our brains to even function at a basic level in society, and so all that information that confirms scientifically what you just said that statistically speaking, it's like the odds are about 10^{20} against something like us emerging again. Ten to the power of 20, that's ten with 20 zeroes behind it. It's a really damn big number, meaning there is a really small chance that anything like that will happen again in say the next 100 million years or billions of life on this earth.

This is our one shot and so we need to really embrace what it means to be human and take those scientific insights that validate the inherent goodness of humans, like the way our brains are wired for empathy and the way that parent-child rearing is emblematic of how social and cooperative we are and so on, all of that stuff is definitely part of the way that we convince ourselves of our inherent goodness.

Michael: It's interesting, bringing up Edward Wilson's book *Social Conquest of Earth* reminds me also of two other people that have written recently, David Sloan Wilson, of course, one of the leading evolutionary theorists has written a lot on evolution, the significance of religion and adaptive behavior, and the roles that religion has played in helping us cooperate at larger scale than can altruism and reciprocal cooperation.

Joe: Yeah, his book *Darwin's Cathedral* is really wonderful.

Michael: It's fabulous, but Jonathan Haidt also, in his *New York Times* bestselling book of the *Righteous Mind*, I often recommend through Chapters 9 through 12 where I think the best articulation of the evolutionary significance of religious meaning making systems for helping us cooperate at those scales that I've ever encountered.

Joe: We think of religious meaning making systems, the ones that we live with now are actually not churches, they are not Catholicism or Islam. Those are still with us but in many ways, they are ideological systems that are based on warrior chieftain nation state agrarian societies with centralized top-down authoritarian hierarchies and of course they've evolved quite a lot since then, but that is still a core piece of how they are institutionally made up.

The big ones today, the kind of religious or belief systems of today are actually are our corporate brands, things that grew out of public relations and marketing, so when we talk about Coca-Cola or Harley Davidson or Apple Computers, Google, these brand constructs, what are they? They are meaning making systems that help us bring together and mobilize huge numbers of people to achieve complex goals and at the level of the social system, they perform a lot of the same functions as our legacy of religious institutions.

Of course they don't fill the same niche, so they don't work in exactly the same way but just recognizing them as systems of meaning and the capacity for coordinated activity, we can even go a little bit more general and say that the entire digital communications infrastructure of the internet and mobile phones is operating like an implicit shared belief system.

A shared belief system in decentralized, autonomous communication, which is anti-authoritarian at a fundamental level the way that it is architected. Looking at the way that the evolutionary biologists, like David Sloan Wilson and Edward Wilson, which of course are not related, as you know, and John Haidt and his work in political psychology, then we can see the potential to unleash these amazing tools of human cooperation.

The greatest tools of human cooperation in recent history, meaning in the last 10,000 years, are religions and then market systems, and then multi-national corporations, and centralized then increasingly decentralized governments.

We are in a place now where the newest sector of society, it's only been with us for a few hundred years and has only matured in the last 20 to 30 years is civil society. Now we have the communications and manufacturing infrastructure for decentralized economy of civil society and that is what Jeremy Rifkin has been talking about in his story about zero marginal cost societies in his new book.

We are in a place where we can have this distributed systems of meaning and have all the benefits of cooperation and large scale collective action that our religious systems have had for millennia but appropriate to the complexity of our global civilization.

Michael: That's fascinating. I just ordered the audiobook of Jeremy Rifkin's latest book and I am only in Chapter 2 at that this time. Joe, what are some of the challenges when you look at what we are currently dealing with and what the decades ahead are likely to bring?

What do you see as the greatest challenges that humanity will face, and then what do you think is the most helpful responses to those, some things that are already being done but maybe need to be done in a bigger or better way, or in a more ecological way or whatever, but some of the things that aren't yet being done that really need to be? So, two-part question.

Joe: I think that I'll start with big challenges. I'll pick two because we could talk for a while about them but that I think others may not be commenting on is I call it the problem of smoking mirrors, which is that we all live within our own filters of interpretation, our own beliefs, value judgments, perceptions and all of that, and with the advent of the internet and decentralized communications, one of the benefits is that people can form tribes around shared belief.

One of the problems is people can form tribes around shared belief, and we have a loss of authoritative expertise, not authoritarian but authoritative, meaning legitimate knowledge that now people can easily have a belief, find a presumed expert who shares that belief, treat it like it's legitimate and just get caught up in these echo chambers of conversation and not discern what is real.

So I think the smoking mirrors problem, if I had to pick one word I would say it's a problem of discernment, the ability to discern what is actually going and a good example of this is the anti-vaccine discussion where there is this peer-reviewed articles published in the late 90s, suggesting a link between vaccines and autism, it turns out we've learned just last year that the guy cooked his books and that it was a fake study but it had all the air of legitimacy.

Now, there has been several decades of growing discussion in these tribal communities around anti-government distrust, distrust of big pharma and feeding mad into an anti-vaccine discussion, and it's really difficult to unlock people from the strongly held beliefs.

So that smoking mirrors problem keeps us from seeing real problems and working to solve them in a way that actually has efficacy. I think it's a big issue.

Michael: I think so too.

Joe: Another one that is related to that is I call it the problem of tribalism, because we also have the solution of tribalism which is using the same mechanisms, but as you know from studying human evolution, if there is one thing we could say about humans we are wired in every single way to naturally and automatically formed groups and we have all of these implicit biases that are very important for us to think that my group is better than your group and there we see lots of psychology studies and sociology studies showing this.

So we form tribes so naturally. That means that we very easily become insular, divided and polarized, and there is a strength to that because it creates a diversity of opinions and diversity of views, and I think that that diversity is incredibly important from an innovation perspective.

One of the challenges is that it is very difficult to have concerted action when it's needed. Like let's say that we wanted to dismantle the fossil fuel infrastructure and all of the

corruption in government that's associated with it so that we could transition fully into renewable energy, which is something we desperately need to do.

We already have the smoking mirrors problem that I mentioned earlier, which includes climate skepticism and climate denial, which has all been fabricated through public relations to confuse people about authoritative science.

We also have the problem of lots of people that are in their own issue groups battling and competing, and not able to come together to address the strategic issues. As an example in progressive politics in the US, people are debating about reproductive rights for women and they are looking at environmental issues, and this list that goes on and on.

If they all came together and dealt with something like corporate personhood or dismantling the tax haven system that conceals literally tens of trillions dollars of stealing, of theft every single year, these large systemic issues, then we can address those systemic issues and so that's the siloing of fact which is so natural and innate to the way that our minds work and the way that we form communities is a big obstacle or challenge for us to overcome.

Michael: Definitely.

Joe: I just talked about the problems, I should talk about the solutions?

Michael: Yeah.

Joe: I think that one thing we can acknowledge about the modern era roughly from the 14th century forward is that we have created increasingly effective trends, tribal identities, meaning where there would be a place where there were several tribal identities and then they would form a larger, integrative shared identity, so the nation state, the corporation, regional economies and now we have things like metropolitan areas which are basically conglomerations of cities and towns.

These abilities that we have to introduce something like cosmopolitanism where we can see a similarity at a higher identity level while maintaining diversity at a lower identity level.

For example, I might be a white male from the United States, living in Seattle, Washington but I can collaborate with a female with dark skin in India who is part of some tribal group there in say North India, and she and I can work together for something that's about common humanity and so we can have diversity of identity on one level and a collaborative identity at another level.

So I think that this smoking mirrors problem and this tribalism and the issue of siloing that comes with it can be addressed by having really good storytelling that creates a foundation of shared sentiment and shared perspective that maintains the diversity that is needed.

Probably the best example of this in the world is the story of the United States. The myth of America, and I mean myth in both the sense that it is a cultural narrative of origins and history, and identity, and also myth in that it's not entirely true.

It doesn't need to be entirely true. When I travel the world, I see that the American dream is a story that is very much alive in places Tanzania or Zanzibar, Kenya, or Bolivia and other places. It's just as much theirs as it is mine, it is not a birthright of physical locale.

Yet, that story is one of celebrating the bringing together of diversity in a common story of discovering and progress. Like I said, it's a myth, it's not entirely true and in some ways it's egregiously misleading but it's an example of a tribal shared tribal identity. Many different subgroups come together to form a higher level integrated group and it's worked.

European Union is an example of this that's created a governing system around it and so, I think examples like these are suggestive and certainly multinational corporations that have offices in 50 or 100 countries are doing the same thing as well.

So I think that we've figured out a lot of how to do this, it's just taking the learnings of how it's been done before and applying it strategically to solve key global challenges in the next few decades.

Michael: Yeah. What you are saying reminds me of a quote. I used to have it memorized, I am sure I'll butcher it, from Thomas Barry where he says something along the lines of, "The main task of the immediate future is to assist in the intercommunion of all living and non-living beings in a way that further affirms and enhances the unique identity and distinctions of each, so it's that both.

Joe: Yes, that's like the American story when it is actually at its best does that extremely well. Where I live in Seattle, we have people from a hundred different countries all coming here and working for big companies like Microsoft and Boeing, Amazon or Starbucks, RAI and these things, and they share a lot of similarity while maintaining an incredible amount of diversity.

On a more mundane level, just look at job descriptions, someone who is trained in marketing, someone who is trained in organizational management, someone who is trained in visual design, someone who can create software, someone who can facilitate groups, etc. We

create these communities or diversity with shared agendas and shared purposes and shared aspirational identities to be better selves.

We do this all the time but what we don't do is we don't observe the ways that we do this all the time, and that applies strategically to things like the climate crisis and if we do this better, if we get better at this collectively, then we can change things much more quickly than we have so far.

Michael: Yes, amen. Joe, when you wake up on a given day or it's Monday morning and you are looking at your week, what is it that you personally find soul nourishing, mission nourishing, what inspires you on a day by day, week by week basis in the face of some really scary stuff?

Joe: I learned something a long time ago, before I got caught up in all the global crises and then I forgot it and then remembered it later and that is that the greatest nourishment of the soul is to surround yourself with people that you think are better than you.

So differently, if you surround yourself with inspiring people, you are going to live an inspired life.

The greatest joy of my work and the greatest joy of my personal life is that my work and personal life are not separate. I did this on purpose so that I am constantly surrounded by smart creative, inspiring, beautiful compassionate people from everywhere on the planet and actually, my job, when I don't speak at conferences it's not the content.

I come and talk about applied mimetics or cognitive linguistics or whatever, it is not that. The thing that I actually bring is a perspective that I see inspiring things happening everywhere and I can confirm it because I am friends with people in all of those places.

I will say things like I've got this friend who lives in Northern Italy. His name is this and this is what he is doing, and it's awesome. I've got this other friend in Brazil and her name is this, she is doing this and it's awesome. So by surrounding myself with these people every day, I see people that are physically active and healthy, people that go to visit beautiful places and go and do things outdoors, I do this myself.

People that really enjoy food, people that like sitting down to a good meal, people who really enjoy music, and I enjoy all of these things so when I see others that are working hard and doing the good work, but also living what I see as a quality life, then that just reinforces for me that this is what I should be doing and then I do it, and I feel nourished every single day.

Michael: Amen. That's one of the places where I feel a little soul or kinship, or collegiality with you is that people will often, when they find out if they haven't known what Connie and I

have been doing for the last 12 years and they find out, “Wait a second. You’ve been effectively homeless for 12 years, living out of the generosity of other people without an apartment, without a home or anything else. What are you guys, crazy?”

Yet, we have the actual subjective experience, our felt experience is that we are the richest people in the world because we get to do what we do, we follow our bliss. We’re both following our bliss in a way that’s deeply nourishing to each other and we fortunately calibrate to each other such that we have a really great, thriving, juicy, wonderful, heartfelt, mission-centered marriage.

We also are always in the context of other people, so the people that we stay with as we travel North America for now 12 years are often people who are very bright, well-read, heartfelt, compassionate, generous, deeply committed to a healthy future kind of people and because we are not there year round, we get to interact with them for several days to a week or two and then we are unto other people, so we are also play this cross-fertilizing role of sharing what this person is doing over here with what these people are doing over there.

We often say we are richer than kings. We actually feel like we are richer than kings that we get to do this work at this time in history with each other and do it this way, even though we are technically homeless.

Joe: Yeah. I had this great experience last year where I traveled the world for a month. I started in Seattle and went to San Diego. From San Diego, I went to Tanzania and Zanzibar. Then I went to Upstate New York and then I came back to Seattle.

In that month of time, the amount of money I was compensated for my work was exactly the same as the money I spent traveling, meaning that I had net zero money. What I realized was that the money was so secondary. I had this amazing experience of abundance, traveling and meeting people.

I went to where the fossil remains of Lucy, *Australopithecus Boisei*, where it was found, I got to go to the Serengeti and I got to go to Stone Town and look at the apartment where Freddie Mercury was born. These were experiences that were super cool. I got to stand at the altar where the East African slave trade was ended by Sir David Livingston, these kinds of experiences and money did not exchange hands, or at least it didn’t for me. Someone paid someone else to cover my travel for me to do all of this.

At the end of the day, I was zero dollars richer in money but immeasurably richer in life experience and so it’s a good reminder how skewed all of the simplistic thinking is about our economy and its real value.

One of the big paradigm shifts that we are in the middle of right now, in terms of economic thinking, is moving away from exclusive financial measures to things like the national happiness metric, coming out of [indiscernible 31:37] and other things like that that suggests that a really well-lived life is enriched because of social experience and personal health and the ability to seek and learn, and grow.

There is a level of money that's needed for that but it's impressively low and accessible for everyone.

Michael: Yes, exactly. Living a life of tremendous joy, happiness and fulfilment does not require that we have a carbon intensive lifestyle, nor does it require the kinds of things that are ordinarily associated with wealth. One can actually live rather simple and yet feel like they are richer than kings and have that experience.

Joe: Yes. There is that amazing difference in complexity science, the difference between complex and complicated and on the other side the difference between simple and simplistic.

The difference between complex and complicated, complicated is something that is hard to achieve, hard to understand. It is hard to pull off. Creating the rocket thruster for the space shuttle that's complicated. Something that's complex is something that is surprising and unexpected but happens so easily it's almost for free.

You start heating up the air over the surface of the ocean and pretty soon you are going to get a thunderstorm, very complex set of things that have to happen but in a way you kind of got it for free. The system just moved into its lowest energy state level and stepped along the way and the storm arose, and the storm dissipated.

Same thing for the difference between simple and simplistic. Simple, a lot of things that are complex are actually simple at the same time because think about simple like the ability to be happy is actually an emergent state in your life and the way to get to a place of happiness is to remove all the complications.

Michael: Yes.

Joe: Notice how this is not about being simplistic. It's about being wise and being wise is about following the path of complexity. Basically, letting the system of your life create joy for you and don't get in its way.

So this is why these concepts from complexity science are so helpful for keeping in mind that a simple life is not simplistic and it can be full of richness because it enables

complexity to arise because complexity is not about being complicated and then there you have it.

Michael: What this is bringing up is actually a conversation I just had with Connie yesterday, because one of the most important decision places that we always have is the decision of what context, what environment we will place ourselves, both natural context and social context and that's really where she sees the emphasis in terms of free will, the whole "Do humans have free will and what is the nature of free will and what is the nature of choice?"

All that is I think secondary, certainly it is to Connie, because the most important choice that we have at any moment and then on any day and any season of our life is what context will we put ourselves in? The context natural and social that we put ourselves in illicit us, that's what creates us, that's what draws us forth.

I often say that the environment is not our surroundings, it is our source and it is our sustenance. What we today call the environment, the ancients called god. We are talking about the fertile context of our being that draws us forth in ways that we wouldn't have been drawn forth before, and I think that's one of the things that many times when somebody dies, we just read yesterday or the day before, just in the last few days we read something somewhere – I think it might have been in *New York Times* - about this nature of part of the grief when somebody dies is that who you are, if that was a close relationship, you showed up in a way in relationship to that person in a way that was unique and that you didn't show up in that way with other people.

There is both the grief of the loss of that person but there is also I think at some deep level the grief of a part of you that may not show up that same way again because you don't have that context elicited.

Joe: Absolutely. One of the things from childhood development and the psychology of early childhood development, there is this very important concept of inter-subjectivity, which is that we become who we are as graded levels of seeing ourselves as different from but in relation to another.

When I am six months old and I am being held against my mother's bosom, I literally cannot tell the difference between her skin and my own. All I do is I feel warmth and affection and the boundary of warmth and affection does not exist in the way my brain understands it.

There comes a point somewhere between 18 months and two years, roughly for the typical person, where we start to create this boundary of empathy. What empathy is literally the ability to see two perspectives in that experience instead of one, my perspective and my mother's perspective.

This ability to be me is partly an extension of being someone else and then being not someone else as a kind of differentiation, and so in the same way as we become our adult selves, everyone's identity is actually a community. There is a tribe of Michael Dowd and I mean that literally, in your head, you are a collection of identities that is really an interwoven tapestry of relationships.

That's true for every one of us. So just like there is no autonomous, rational actor in economics, there is no autonomous individual self in the human mind. Then of course the Buddhist mystics knew this 2,500 years ago. This idea of a singular self is illusory. If you take the time to just observe the self in action, meditation, you will quickly see that you have many different selves in many different moments and while there is continuity across it, there is also a lack of continuity and it changes distinctly and that's because we are a web of relationships.

Michael: When you add to that our microbiome self, the fact that we have all these other creatures with their own DNA that we wouldn't exist without them that skin encapsulated ego that myself stops here and doesn't include all of that and all of the community, which you were just now speaking of is kind of crazy.

Joe: Yes, and it gets even more interesting to me when we think about the opportunity we have now, going toward the middle of the 21st century. It is 2014 and we are moving forward in time is that this kind of insight is now becoming ubiquitous in the scholarly world.

Every single domain of research, whether it's humanities or science or whatever is taking a systemic view, it is taking an integrative view. We have moved beyond several hundred years of analysis, which basically means break it into simpler parts because it's the only way to deal with it to put the pieces together and see what happens when the parts come together.

This is the way every domain of scholarly work is done now and has been for at least 20 years. If you go in to study English literature, you will take an emergent view of integrating the pieces. If you go study media and communications, it is the same thing. Religious studies, same things. Anthropology, physics, chemistry, whatever.

So what that means is that we are now riding this wave of shift from seeing the world in a break it down to the separate parts sort of way to see the world as how the parts come together and look at the patterns and flows.

When we see the patterns and flows, we start to see something that gives me a great deal of hope and that is that we start to see the pattern of transformation within our civilization. So rather than seeing it as this linear sequence of carbon dioxide building up and we are not doing anything about it, it's getting worse or poverty becoming more chronic and getting worse.

Whatever the problem is, we start to see that there is an awakening, there is a realigning of sentiment and action, there are new kinds of communities and new tools for creating community and they are actually accelerating the expression of compassionate collective action in a way that even five years ago, when a lot of people still didn't understand that Wikipedia was a legitimate economic model.

Think about it. They are going to do something for free and ask tens of thousands of people to put in hundreds of hours of hard work to build a global repository knowledge for now money whatsoever, even five years ago a lot of economists thought that that was not physically possible.

Wikipedia exists and same thing with the way that we are now seeing this decentralized energy production with 3D printers, the rise of the do-it-yourself culture and hacker maker spaces, and the plummeting cost of solar panels, and various other energy sources like having bacteria that's basically digesting your garbage in your house and producing all the energy in your house.

All of this stuff is happening in tiny pockets everywhere and if we take a piecemeal approach we don't see how it's all converging on the same thing. The thing that it's converging toward is a macro-organism where our civilization begins to behave in the same way that our bodies are made up of all of these different species that are collaborating.

Basically, you can think of macro-economics in the last 500 years has been us doing that badly and now, we are finally doing it well. We now have the ability for communication to happen quickly enough in the system that the system can nourish itself at the global scale.

Think about the human body, how your hemoglobin goes around – hemoglobin is what makes the blood cells red – and it's what stores oxygen and moves it around to nourish the body. If your circulatory system cannot provide oxygen to every cell in your body every single moment, then your body goes away. That is a thermodynamic problem.

The question is, can you distribute this nutrient in a way that it's energy efficient enough that it's physically possible to do? Before the digital communications infrastructure, we could not communicate on a global scale fast enough to allocate resources where they needed to go in a way that the system could operate as a macro-organism, which is why it's only just happening now.

We would not even see that pattern converging if we were taking a reductionist approach.

Michael: This is so great. You are actually reminding me of a book I read 15 or 14 years ago, Joel de Rosnay, *The Symbiotic Man* where he talked about the humans – it should have been titled *The Symbiotic Human* – but humans, our technology and nature, we are creating a cell or organism at the scale of the planet that we are creating it from the inside. That's what this conversation is reminding me of.

Joe, I know we are running a little bit short on time and I want to ask you a question that Connie has just requested I ask everybody, which is that if you could have dinner with three of the most amazing people in human history, all four of you together at a dinner party or if you invited three amazing people at any time in history to share a beer or a cup of coffee or a glass of wine, a meal or whatever, who would those three people be and why would you invite them?

Joe: It's a great question. This is the question that I'll answer now and then ten minutes from now, I will have a different answer. It's such a great question.

One of those people would be Buckminster Fuller because he had a truly unique mind in the way that he went about learning, because he was mostly self-taught, which is why his reading is so esoteric and difficult for people to understand. He just did not think the way that anyone else around him has and no one does now. I don't think it's possible to produce another Buckminster Fuller, at least not just like him. So I think he would be a fascinating one.

It would be really cool to bring him together with I think Jesus' mother. We know so little about the historical Jesus, because it was all written down decades after he died. You could tell he was a pretty amazing human being but there is really a lot we don't know.

What it would be like to be – either his mother or his possibly wife, if he really was married to Mary Magdalene but one of them, a woman who was in a place of great significance whose culture memory has been destroyed, because I would want that female perspective on what's happening now based on what was happening in her life. I think that would be really powerful.

She with Bucky would be pretty cool. Then I guess the third one – gosh, this is really tough – I think actually it would be really interesting to have a conversation with one of the great conquerors, whether it's Genghis Khan or Napoleon, those people who really understood power and even violent power.

I am not an endorser of violence and aggression but I recognize its place in history and its importance and I would love to counterbalance the people who share my views with someone who took a very different approach so I can understand them.

So maybe like Genghis Khan or Attila the Hun, I am not sure which one but one of them, to sit down and have this conversation about whole system's design where there is a real experiential body of knowledge about political and military power.

Michael: Fabulous, great response. Joe, anybody who wants to learn more about your work to go more deeply into it, where would you send them?

Joe: I would send them to Google and type in my name, because I make myself easy to find. I have a new blog that I am running now called ChangeStrategistforHumanity.com which is where I am laying the foundations for creating a global research center on culture design, but I am also JoeBrewer31 on Facebook or something like that.

That's where I do most of my connecting with people, but really literally the easiest way is to go on Google because I am a serial collaborator and so I am currently working with eight or ten organizations, I have my name and different job titles on lots of organization and it's really hard to find one that really tells my story but you can come live my story with me if we're Facebook friends. Then we can actually partner on projects.

I would recommend people go to ChangeStrategistforHumanity.com, click on any of the links at the bottom to connect with me on LinkedIn, Twitter or Facebook and we go from there.

Michael: Great. Fabulous. Joe, thank you so much. I just feel such a love and appreciation for you, who you are and what you are doing in the world and I just can't wait to see you again in person and I look forward to actually catching up on a more personal level offline at some other point.

Joe: Me too. These conversation hugs are awesome but physical hugs are better.

Michael: Yes, amen. Thanks.

Joe: Thanks so much, Michael. It's really been a pleasure.

Michael: Great, thank you Joe. Bye-bye.