

# The Future Is Calling Us to Greatness

with Michael Dowd + 56 Experts



## The Largest Social Movement in the World

with Paul Hawken

Big ideas from this session:

- The Ecology of Commerce, Natural Capitalism, and Blessed Unrest
- Staying inspired and in action in the face of enormous challenges
- The game changing promise and potential of Project Drawdown

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Michael: Paul, welcome to this conversation series The Future is Calling Us to Greatness.

Paul: Thank you, Michael.

Michael: I have been looking forward to this actually for years, long before I conceived this particular conversation series. You've been one of my heroes for two decades now. I'm a long-time student of Thomas Berry and Joanna Macy.

One of the things I've been inviting all of my guests to do, even people like yourself who most people will know of, is to just help us get who you are in terms of your contributions, what you're proudest of. This isn't a time to be bashful.

There may be some folks that are part of this series that are listening or watching that may not be familiar with your work. If you could just help us really get who you are, what you're most committed to and how you got to this place. Not your whole story but certainly the last couple decades since *The Ecology of Commerce*.

Paul: That's true. I am a shy person. I generally have a very hard time working on my bio. I forget huge swaths of things that I've done. People will say, "What about that?" Oh, yeah, right.

I don't think it's a virtue. I don't think it's even humility. I think it's just some intrinsic weirdness of me where I just don't look behind me. I don't mean I don't make self-reflection. That's different. In terms of the past, once it's done it's done. I keep going, keep going, keep going.

Rather than repeat the past or write son of book or daughter of book. People will take on a certain flavor or modality in the world and then they'll just reinforce it. They'll brand themselves, literally brand themselves. They'll have websites that tout themselves.

I tend to think if I can just be here and help and make it a better place, if I leave and nobody remembers me I'm cool with that. It doesn't really matter. I have a friend who's very well known and he's called the Starchitect.

Michael: Starchitect?

Paul: Yes, because he has two communications people working for him full-time and putting the message out into the world about who he is. I think one of the things that I've learned early is that we're no one at all. That gives us that freedom and ability to see and receive and understand and act rather than thinking we're a big self.

I was going to say your heroes are Thomas Berry and Joanna Macy. They are both my heroes as well. For that same reason and that is I look up to them so much as people who have really done the work on themselves. I can't claim to have done that, by the way, but I know it when I see it I think. Those people I see real heroes in a way that really is going to persist over time in terms of their contribution.

My own contribution has really been to be a questioner, to really try to understand what's going on around me. I think I've been confused since I got here and I think it's a very confusing world. My first company, for example, is called Erewhon, which is an anagram for nowhere backwards. I really thought that, wow, this is nowhere, everything is upside down and backwards. That was the theme of the Samuel Butler novel, *The 19th Century*, which was just a whole send-up of industrial England.

I had that same experience of this doesn't make sense. I'd read the Wall Street Journal, this doesn't make sense. I'd listen to the news, this doesn't make sense. I can understand the logic and the rationale that's being put forth, but in terms of the impacts that business and people like myself, what we're doing and the values that we espouse, the impacts they were having on the world just didn't make sense.

Get right down to it, gym didn't make sense when I was in junior high school. Boys snapping each other with towels and just that whole weird, hierarchical, male energy, what in the fuck is going on? Excuse my French. Even though I was a guy I had real gender confusion then in terms of I'm a guy but who are these guys and why do they act this way and talk this way? Where did they learn it? Where did they get programmed? Who are their parents?

To see that world that was basically expressing itself against the values of life, compassion, kindness, generosity was a world in which I try to make sense. My first business was in natural foods and I chose it to be a business only because I found it more easily doable than, say, a call-up or non-profit, but not because I was interested in business. I knew nothing about business.

That really came from having asthma all my life and then curing it by eating food and going back and saying, “I don’t want to be a food faddist, I don’t want to have a limited diet, I want to eat whatever I want.” Just spending a year going back and forth and realizing that just had a profound effect on my health and mental well-being.

Then thinking, gosh, other people are going to figure this out, too. Then starting a natural food company. I really started it because I wanted a place to shop. It wasn’t so much that I was trying to be a big business person. That was 1966.

By the time I got to seven years later we had 30,000 plus acres under contract that were organically grown. That hadn’t been prior to that. This was in 1973. I learned so much about farmers and farming and land and soil and crops and food and nutrition and just such a blessing.

After seven years I left that, I wanted to do something else. Somebody once asked me because I started a business around fluid dynamics based on biomimicry. They said, “What do you know about this?” I said, “Nothing.” They said, “Why would you do something that you don’t know anything about?” I said, “Why would you do something you already know how to do?”

I didn’t mean it to be impertinent or cute. The whole reason I’m doing this is because I don’t know anything about it. I feel that way about all of the books I’ve written which is each book is totally being paid to learn because the publisher gives you an advance and then you learn a lot and then you write about it.

It’s not that there isn’t a great passion or interest already there. Of course there’s a fire. Then you organize those around an idea for a book and then you write it. Each of those books that I’ve written and the ones I’m writing now have been the secrets of really exploration, of learning.

I think going back to the natural food business and really thinking, “Gosh, I think other people are trying to figure this out, too.” If I can help make it clearer or see things in a way that allows them to recognize what they already know, re-cognize means already known, already understood. To recognize something is actually to see something that was obscured but which you already knew.

I think great writing, or even good writing, is really about pointing out to people, putting ideas and concepts into words that people already know.

Michael: It's funny you should say that because Connie, my wife, and I as you know have been living all over North America for 12 years now speaking in churches and colleges and universities and stuff. The most common comment that we get after our programs, because what we focus on of course is sort of the intersection of science, inspiration and sustainability.

By far we get this comment three or four times as often as any other comment which is people will say, "I never heard it quite put together the way you've done yet I've always known it's true."

Paul: Exactly. Exactly.

Michael: This deep resonance with our nature. When I first encountered Thomas Berry in 1988, that was my sense. Oh my Lord, here is my story of my atoms and my molecules and my environment and just everyone and everything. It just helped make sense of everything.

Then, of course, it lit a fire because when you get the big picture you realize how dramatically unsustainable the direction that we're headed. It's sort of a boot in the butt to say, "What's my legacy? How am I going to make a difference given my unique gifts and my unique limitations?"

Paul: Exactly, absolutely. I'm doing two books now on climate and carbon. The first time I've done two at the same time. It really comes from going back to 1976 where at SRI with Peter Schwartz and Jay Ogilvy I was first introduced really to this climate change.

I've been watching it, reading it. Befriended Bill McKibben in the early '90s and watched how it's taught and have not really said much about it. Certainly mentioned it in my books but not really talked about it in a global way.

For the first time I'm going to write about it. The two books are *Draw Down* and *Carbon*. It really comes from years and years of thinking, observing, listening, watching, reading, studying and then do I have anything to say? Most of the times I don't, people say it better.

Sometimes I have a way of looking at things that isn't being expressed. When that happens then I'll do a book.

Michael: I'm going to want to ask you because there's few things that I am personally more excited about than *Project Drawdown* and that whole enterprise. Before we get there, if we could just, again, for people who aren't familiar with what I consider to be three books that are just so

timeless I'd recommend them to anybody listening to this conversation now, *The Ecology of Commerce*, *Natural Capitalism* and *Blessed Unrest*. If you could just say a little bit about each of those.

Paul: Sure. *The Ecology of Commerce* was written in '92, published in '93. Was a New York Times bestseller. It actually was published I think in 28 countries now, no 28 languages, excuse me, in the world. Basically it said something that was an etyma at the time which is that the business could make a very profound contribution to healing the Earth. At that time business saw the environmentalists as the problem, regulation. Environmentalists certainly saw business as the problem, and it still is.

To write a book with that title managed to alienate both sides for a while. I lost friends. I'd been in business and I tried to express myself in business from the very first time I went into business in natural foods in an environmental and socially responsible way. To me, they didn't seem different.

That book, the prior two books *Growing a Business* and *The Next Economy* had been reviewed by publications everywhere. Every business publication reviewed both books, 200 reviews each. Then *The Ecology of Commerce* came out, it was reviewed three times, Don's Business Week and I forget the others. The editors killed the review.

There was only one review done by Michael Pellicchia at the Dallas News, some Dallas Times, I forget the paper in Dallas. There was a business writer who reviewed the book. It was a pariah book and it still went on to be a bestseller. It just showed you that business was not interested at that time.

The irony is that 18 years later Wal-Mart was pushing it to all of its associates and saying, "You should read the book." That book came out and basically it bridged a gap that is no longer a gap really. At the time it was heretical.

*Natural Capitalism* came out later, '99. The first article I wrote of that title was in '96. It was for Mother Jones. The question I was asking and trying to answer by asking it was what happens when natural capital is the limiting factor to human wellbeing. The limiting factor to human wellbeing up until the industrial age was housing and transport and food and just the basics.

The industrial age really changed that dramatically with great consequences, both positive and negative. In the process it continues to use up all our natural capital. Natural capital is all those resources and assets and colonies and ecosystem resources that are not on the balance sheets of the world but actually provide life on Earth.

Michael: What EF Schumacher, I believe, called primary goods as opposed to secondary goods.

Paul: Absolutely, absolutely. That was published in Mother Jones in '97. The editor, **Carrey Trumane**, said, "How do we title this article?" We said, "Let's just call it Natural Capitalism," because it was about natural capital. We thought the play on words would definitely tweak the Mother Jones readers, and it did. It did. He got fired by the board.

Michael: Oh, Jesus.

Paul: People thought it was an apology for capitalism. It had nothing to do with it whatsoever. It was just a play on words. To this day that plagues it. When I came up with the book with Amory Lovins he loved the title and I said, "No, we're just having fun when we named it that," but it stuck. I just want to tell your listeners it is not about capitalism. It's about natural capital.

Michael: Natural capital, the primary goods, what the entire human economy is based on.

Paul: Exactly. What is an economy that actually honors it? Not just honors it but actually increases the amount of it. I've said recently to Q&A sustainability comes down to a very simple point. You're either increasing life on Earth or decreasing it. That's it. It's binary. Let's move on.

*Natural Capitalism* is very, very much about increasing the amount of natural capital in the world, not about capitalism.

The third book, *Blessed Unrest*, really emerged from years of doing what you and Connie do, which is to talk to people and go out and give sharings and lectures. I've been doing that for a long time. In the process, as you know and I think everybody knows, people have business cards and they give them to you.

Michael: I'm swimming in business cards.

Paul: I have stacks right now.

Michael: Yes, I know.

Paul: I don't know what to do with them. I kept them all, I never throw them away. At that time I'd been on the boards for Trust for Public Land and Friends of the Earth and Conservation International. There's this sort of feeling you have in the big environmental NGOs, NRDC, WRI, you get this feeling we're it. The G10 as it's called. They meet together and they do wonderful things, Sierra Club, amazing things.

What struck me when I was out at colleges, universities and cities and towns and conferences was that I didn't recognize the NGOs that were being presented to me. Name after name after name after name. That's when I began to wonder and question how many there were. What's going on out there? There is no out there but at the time that kind of was my thinking, that, wow, there's a lot going on on the ground that we don't know about. We, these larger NGOs.

At one point I had a shopping bag full of cards. Really, literally. I would come home, lay them out and look at them and go, "Oh, there you go," and put them in the shopping bag.

Then I started to do research. I grew up at the University of California Berkeley. My father taught there in the library. Marion, the librarian, was a hero in my family. I went to the library and said, "I'll find out just how many NGOs, environmental and social justice NGOs, there are in the United States." I couldn't find out.

I went to try to find out in Europe and other countries in the world and I realized there is no way to know. We don't know. I kept sort of doing the research.

Then I was at the WTO protest in Seattle in 1999. I didn't go there to write about it at all. I went there just to be another body but ended up writing about it just because what was written about it in the popular press, Time, the New York Post and Washington Times was just so flagrantly, ridiculously wrong and misguided and really not present. The people who were writing about it like Thomas Friedman and others weren't even there. They certainly took strong positions.

I wrote a piece about it but the thing that struck me about the Seattle protest was the way it was organized. I had been in the civil rights movement, the anti-war movement. This is not the old male, top-down, hierarchal way that these movements were organized. I sort of tried to figure out how it was organized. It went back to the encuentras that were done in '90 and 1992 by the indigenous and first peoples of South, meso and North America to really get together for the quincentennial of the conquest, of the genocide.

It was a Mayan form of organization. That, again, began to raise questions in my mind. What's going on here? How is this happening? What are the lines of communication? How is this being organized? It seemed like there was a movement afoot in the world that does not rise to the surface very often in terms of, say, Seattle, but was very, very powerful. That's when I started to think about *Blessed Unrest* and do that book.

It took about seven years to really gather the information. It took about only a year or so to write it. It took about seven years to just listen, gather, talk, research.

During that time I started *Wise Earth*. We researched. One of the things I came up with which is in the appendix of the book is the typology or the taxonomy really of the movement. There's 3,000 roughly different things that the movement is doing. It's just so beautiful. It's like life itself, so nuanced and granular and specific.

The movement is often criticized for that, it doesn't know what it wants. Yes, it knows what it wants. It wants everything. It wants to increase life on Earth and to make this a planet based on compassion, kindness, generosity and potlatch rather than greed, fear.

It does encompass everything because it's a systemic approach to the problem and it's manifest everywhere. That was *Blessed Unrest*.

Michael: That's great. That was a fabulous overview. I actually want to read a paragraph from *Blessed Unrest*. I think it's on page 194. It just so perfectly captures the essence of the way I end my program. I've done 100 speaking engagements across the United States this past year in support of the Great March for Climate Action. We started in LA and that's when I began these Skype interviews in March and have been interviewing folks ever since.

At the end of every program that I've done first of all I quote Carl Sagan. Carl Sagan says, "How is it that I hardly any major religion has looked at science and concluded this is better than we thought? The universe is much bigger than our prophet said, grander, subtler, more elegant. God must be even greater than we dreamed. A religion, old or new, that stresses the magnificence of the universe as revealed by modern science might be able to draw forth reserves of reverence and awe hardly tapped by the conventional faiths."

Then he concludes and he says, "Sooner or later, such a religion will emerge." Then I pause and I say I think he was correct on intuition and dead wrong on the detail. It's not a religion that's emerging. It's a set of values, priorities and commitments.

In fact, I would say it this way, a worldwide meta-religious movement has been emerging for decades, largely unnoticed, at the nexus, the intersection, of science, inspiration and sustainability. Beliefs are secondary. What unites us is a pool of common values, priorities and commitments regarding living in right relationship to reality and working together in the service of a just and thriving future for all.

Then I'll pause for just a couple seconds and I'll say, "I'm not the only one saying this." Then I show your book *Blessed Unrest* and I quote both the subtitle of the soft cover then I always say I actually like the subtitle of the hardcover better, *The Largest Movement of the World that Came Into Being and Why No One Saw It Coming*.

Paul: Me, too.

Michael: I wanted to just quick read this one paragraph that's just a fabulous overview. You say, "It's axiomatic that we are at a threshold in human existence, a fundamental change in understanding about our relationship to nature and each other. We are moving from a world created by privilege to a world created by community."

The current thrust of history is too simple to be labeled but global themes are emerging in response to cascading ecological crises and human suffering. These ideas include the need for radical social change, the reinvention of market-based economics, the empowerment of women, activism on all levels and the need for localized economic control.

There are insistent calls for autonomy, appeals for new resources, ethic based on the tradition of the commons, demands for the reinstatement of cultural primacy over corporate hegemony and a rising demand for radical transparency in politics and corporate decision-making.

It's been said that environmentalism failed as a movement or, worse yet, died. It is the other way around. Everyone on Earth will be an environmentalist in the not too distant future, driven there by necessity and experience."

Bam, I love it.

Paul: That paragraph is inspired by Rick Tarnas and *Cosmos and Psyche*.

Michael: That's great.

Paul: Amazing, amazing thinker.

Michael: Could you please share? As I mentioned earlier in this conversation that there's hardly anything I'm more excited about than *Project Drawdown*. Say a little bit about that, both the writing and just the whole project.

Paul: Sure. drawdown, the word refers to that point in time when the amount of CO2 and greenhouse gases in the upper atmosphere are reduced on a year-to-year basis. That's what drawdown is.

The book goes back, the project, it's really a project. Hundreds of people, post-docs, PhDs, institutions, NGOs, politicians, businesses are involved in creating it. It's really a crowd-authored book. It's not crowd-sourced, it's crowd-authored in the sense.

I wanted to be that for a very important reason. I'll get back to that. It started in 2001 when the third assessment came out from the IPCC. As they are sequentially more cautionary and gloomy than preceding ones, this one was very much so.

At that time the carbon mitigation project came out from Princeton University talking about the 15 wedges. Each wedge could avoid a billion tons of carbon emissions every year. If we did 15 of them then we could reach climate stabilization.

I read the wedges hoping or expecting actually to be hopeful and like, wow, we have a path here. I had the opposite experience. It made me really pessimistic. Nine of the 15 could only be done by big utility companies or energy companies. One could only be done by big car companies. One could only be done by big appliance companies. There's 11 out of the 15. One were agricultural practices that have been espoused by the USDA during the dust bowl.

Two you could do something about which was to drive less and put solar panels on your house. I thought we are in trouble after all. What we're saying there with that is that the fate of the world basically rests in the hands of Boards of Directors of huge companies. I hope not because that's what got us in this place in the first place, Boards of Directors of companies.

I began to go to NGOs and friends and say, "We should make a list of all the solutions and do the math." We don't know what the math shows. I kept talking and asking other people to do that. I remember NRDC, people said, "Great idea. That's not what we're going to do."

It was really a year ago, a year and a half ago, Amanda Ravenhill who I thought a course with at Presidio Graduate School. We were just talking about what's missing in the literature. Then I mentioned this idea to her and she said, "Let's just do it." Okay.

We're doing it. It's Drawdown.org. You can go there to the website. What it does is it lists 100 substantive solutions that are in place, that we're already doing. We know very well. It's [www.Grainger.com](http://www.Grainger.com). You can buy it now, you can get it now, it's a going to be. That are scaling in every instance, that are growing. Just going out 30 years, 2045 from 2015, and seeing what the impact would be on carbon emissions in 30 years and can we achieve drawdown? That is to say a year-to-year reduction.

The idea of stabilizing at 550 ppm or 600 or whatever is chaos. It's not stability. That's a misnomer. The only goal that's worthwhile for the 21st century is reduction and drawdown. No other plan makes any sense whatsoever. If that's the goal, let's name it and then let's figure out how to get there and where we are right now. That's what *Drawdown* is about.

What's interesting about it is that the solutions we normally think of as supply side, solar, wind, ethanol. We think about efficiency for sure in terms of our buildings and our cars in terms of mileage or even going to electric. Beyond that it sort of trails off pretty quickly.

What we realized, Amanda and I, when we did the table of contents and started to assemble in a sense the list of substantive solutions, there is something for everybody to do here. It's a complex problem but the good thing about complexity and the complexity of the problem as Andy Revkin

points out, the green columnist and blogger for the Times, is that there's something to do for everyone.

The book is organized according to agency, which is this is what individuals can do, this is what neighborhoods and communities can do and only, individuals can't do it, businesses can't do it, just neighborhoods and communities, this is what facilities and buildings can do, this is what businesses and utilities can do, this is what cities and towns can do, this is what farmlands can do, this is what we can do with our grasslands, this is what forestlands can do, this is what provinces and states can do.

It's organized according to agency, where the fulcrum, the leverage point is, in terms of effecting carbon emission strategies. There's only three things we can do really. We can change the source of energy from high-carbon to low-carbon. Even renewable ones have some carbon component in their manufacturing. We can change the source.

We can reduce the amount of energy we are using from that source, and that's efficiency. We can bio sequester carbon from the atmosphere back into the soil through our farming practices, our grazing practices and our afforestation and reforestation practices. We need to do all three because we've got to bring it back home. That carbon, there's nothing wrong with it, it just needs to come home. Home is right here in the biosphere, in our soils.

That is 100 solutions. What we find is that we come up with solutions that I think are overlooked. Clean cookstoves is a really, really important solution that not only stops the burning of firewood all over Africa and other places but improves the health and wellbeing of the women and the family and the children.

Michael:       What was that? Clean?

Paul:           Cookstoves.

Michael:       Oh, clean cookstoves, sure.

Paul:           Big, important solution for climate. Educating girls in the developing world, very important solution. Birth rates plummet when girls go past fourth or fifth grade to 10th, 11th or 12th grade.

What's interesting about this is that there's a lot of things people don't know about. Air heat pumps, carbon farming. Of course they know about efficient cars but there's so many other areas. The book really has a very clear, clean, engaging description of what it does, its history, how it works, etcetera.

It also has numbers and the numbers are based on extraordinary models that we've developed that really are extremely granular, going all over the world, to measure exactly the impact these technologies or solutions will have over 30 years with respect to the number of gigatons avoided of carbon emitted in the atmosphere.

Number two, what is their first cost if they're scaled up in the way that we project. What is the net savings of cost which is a very, very important number. So often carbon solutions on the right by deniers are portrayed as something that costs society, that takes away from the economy, that's going to cost jobs, that's going to be a taxable event.

In fact, what we see, there's no question about it, it's an investment and the return is extraordinary. I have said it costs nothing when you get everything back. That's what's at risk is everything we know. In real dollar terms it is a fantastic investment. It has cascading benefits. There's that.

Finally what we have, on the right bottom corner of the page as you turn the page, you see what the PPM will be in 2045 if this is implemented. Go to the next page and it goes down, then it goes down, then it goes down. It's like a flipbook. You go and you can actually see what the PPM will be at that time instead of what it would be with business as usual, which is being projected by IEA and other organizations.

All our data is based on the UN, IEA, the best agencies. Everything is double or triple sourced. We have, like I said, scholars. We have IPCC lead authors. We have the best people in the world, I think, working on this. Fourteen universities.

When you see it it's not going to be like this is not Paul's idea, this is not Paul's plan. This is what we know reflected back to ourselves.

Michael: Yes, yes. One of the things that it reminds me of, I remember having a conversation not long after I met Thomas Berry I think in 1989 or something where he quoted **Taran Deshardan** around his concern that the greatest issue may be human energy. That if we don't have the passion, the enthusiasm, the energy, the excitement to do this, if we just get bummed and depressed and overwhelmed and suicidal about it then we're not going to have that energy.

Somewhere on your site, I can't remember where, it says, "Showing the diverse and beneficial implications of climate-focused solutions is the key to reversing apathy." That's one of the things that struck me as I first went to the site and was reading it. I think a lot of us who have been committed to climate change and who are aware of peak oil and some of the large-scale challenges, peace and justice, we can be overwhelmed with the bad news. We can be overwhelmed with, oh my God, these problems are so large, what can we do, what can I do that could really make a difference.

Your book is an antidote to that. Here I am interviewing you at the very end and I wish I could have recommended. Actually, I will actually because now I have communication with these other 50 thought leaders on this. I want this to be an international bestseller because it's so vital for shifting our energy and giving solutions that are practical.

Paul: I couldn't say it better. Absolutely. There's a thing called availability heuristics which is really when you say a word or phrase what comes up for a human being, the thought that comes up. If you go into a crowded room and say climate change find me one person in that room who doesn't go into fear, anxiety, numbness, disempowerment, anger, you can name all these emotions.

Nobody really goes, "Wow, yes, isn't that cool? This is the transformation that transforms everything in the world." That's why I say in my talks now you have to ask yourself is climate change happening to you or for you. If it's happening to you or to us that means we're victims and we're disempowered and something out there is doing it to us. If we say it's for us then we are integrated, there's no other, it's us.

It is the key to transformation, to creativity, to innovation, to all the things that have been espoused and being put forth by the various organizations that I highlighted in *Blessed Unrest* and that we, you, me and so many other people have been trying to work on all our lives, all our adult lives if not before.

Climate change is the transformation that brings us together because nothing can stay the same and everything we know will be changed and modified into something far better for both all living systems, including human systems, and all the children and families to come.

That's why I want to do *Drawdown* so that when you think about it you go, "Yes, the science, wow. That is holy smokes." It's fantastic science, really extraordinary. The biggest science project in the history of the world far exceeding anything that's ever been done before. Two billion separate data points going into the assessment.

This is an extraordinary achievement of humankind. Now the IPCC itself says we are not so good about really understanding what to do and the solutions. We know they're there but that's not what we do. They don't need to do it. We need to do it because we are doing it. Not because we need to figure it out. We are figuring it out and we are doing it. It's, again, one of those unknown stories.

Michael: Wow, fabulous. Thank you, Paul. There was one other thing that I wanted to ask you about. It was something that frankly I had never heard of until very recently. I've been teaching and preaching about the need to have our economy and products reflect their true cost. Of course, taxing carbon or putting a fair price on carbon pollution and all this.

I interviewed Jim Hansen just yesterday. Of course he's been promoting, just as I have, citizens climate lobby and the need to essentially have the market work for us. Then I just discovered because it was linked to your Wikipedia page Pigovian tax. It was like how could I be completely unaware of this concept? If you could just say a little bit about that.

Paul: Arthur C. Pigou was an economist who just in the 19th century who said that the damage that was being done to villages and buildings by coal-fired industrial plants should be paid for by the people causing the damage, not by the people who were receiving the damages.

It seemed fair and simple and straightforward. It became to be known as a Pigovian tax. They have not been implemented very often. Any tax on carbon would be essentially a Pigovian tax. However, what is even more innovative really is to have a fee on carbon and then to rebate it back. Then you have the incentives, which are correct, but you also have the reward.

That gets out of the no tax or don't increase our taxes, which most people are going to vote against because they don't have enough money now. At least they think they don't.

Pigovian taxes have really graduated to instruments, policy instruments, that actually reward. The thing is if you pay a higher price for carbon, whether it's in your gas or your heating oil for your home, then things that make your home more efficient or incentivize you to buy a different type of car or an electric car, then actually save you money both ways. You're paying less for something. At the same time you're actually saving money.

It actually gets people to save money. As they save money they improve the environment, they reduce emissions and everybody benefits. We have a situation now which is completely the opposite.

Michael: Exactly. In fact, the person who said it most succinctly, I quote him all the time in my programs, is Bob Ingliss, a Republican from South Carolina. He says, this is a direct quote, "I favor a conservative approach that marshals the power of the market and doesn't increase the size of government. Here it is in a nutshell. Put all the costs in all the fuels and eliminate all the subsidies. Then watch the free enterprise system solve the climate and energy problem."

Paul: There you go.

Michael: Especially what Jim Hansen and I said, I think he's so right, when we give that back, when we basically refund that then because most poor and middle class people would actually be getting more than they would be paying they're going to be incentivized and excited to vote this kind of thing into being.

Paul: Yes, absolutely. Amory and I in *Natural Capitalism* made suggestions which have been made before which is basically you do a tax on cars and you do whatever it is, \$100. You take the average mile per gallon of your fleet. Every mile per gallon under that that a car does you have to pay \$100. If the fleet averages 22 and it gets 17 miles per gallon, you have to pay \$500 more for that car.

Now, this person who gets a car that gets 27 miles per gallon gets the \$500. The 27 mile per gallon car is cheaper, the 17 mile per gallon car is more expensive. Basically you're just taking money from here and you're putting it over there and you're incentivizing people to make a super-efficient fleet.

Michael: Exactly. Wow. Well, Paul, this is fabulous. There's one last question that my wife, Connie, has asked me to ask everybody. It's just been so fun. I purposely don't let anybody know about it ahead of time just to see what emerges.

That is if you had the opportunity to have a dinner with any three people in human history, whether it's the three of them and you or a one-on-one over a beer or glass of wine or a hike or whatever, who would those three people be and why would you choose them?

Paul: I'd have a beer with the Buddha.

Michael: Amen.

Paul: I would probably say the Buddha, Emerson and, gosh, those are the two people that come up right away. Ralph Waldo Emerson. Maybe, I don't know, the third person. The Buddha because I think that he has been glamorized and like every religion has been totemized. I remember watching a documentary on the Buddha on PBS and people were saying, "The Buddha said this and then he did this." How do you know? Nothing that the Buddha said was even written down for 300 years until after he died.

There's a book by Pankaj Mishra called *The End of Suffering* which really tried to go back and find out who is he really. I would love to sit down and find out who is he really. I like to think he must have been an amazing guy. To make him human again. The promise of Buddhism is our humanity, not our liberation. Liberation is just another kind of duality between bondage. His ability to really see through dualism and then express it is so extraordinary.

Emerson I wrote about in *Blessed Unrest* and I feel like he was really a mystic. It's interesting, Stephen Mitchell who is a friend and wrote so many beautiful translations, *Tao Te King*, *Bhagavad Gita*, married to Byron Katie.

He said something interesting about how the mystics during the transcendental period, Whitman and Emerson, really got sort of not went downhill but kind of lost that sparkle as they got older.

Many of the Asian sages did not. They actually got more and more sound. He wonders if it was because they lacked a practice. They actually didn't have a practice.

Michael: That's interesting.

Paul: It's a very interesting question and comment. I'd like to meet a younger Emerson when he was just looking out there, writing nature and just I don't know what he was smoking but it must have been awesome. Just their writings are extraordinary. You read them now and look back and you wonder how they even got published because they were so **elegaryic** and paradisiacal but non-dual in their thinking.

Michael: I'd say the same thing about Jesus. I can't imagine actually sitting down over a cold one and really getting to know the man without all the mythology built up afterwards.

Paul: Absolutely. Maybe actually the third person is his wife.

Michael: Yes, yes, yes.

Paul: Mary Magdalene. I think I'd like to talk to her.

Michael: You're the second person that has said that in this series precisely.

Paul: Yes, now that I remember. She's going to tell me everything about herself and him. It's going to be a two-fer.

Michael: Paul, this has been fabulous. Thank you so much for making the time to do this. Blessings on your work and your life. May you continue to have good health. The next time that we're out on the west coast I'll let you know when we're coming and see if we can get together for a cold one or whatever.

Paul: Absolutely, Michael. Thank you so much for what you're doing. It's so important. I just again and again, people think that they're doing something "small" and it's not important. Everything big comes from small things. Nothing big comes from big things except damage. Thank you for what you're doing. I really, really appreciate it.

Michael: Cool, thanks.