EA-1

Eben Alexander:

Basically I grew up in Winston-Salem. I had a very conventional upbringing, I would say. My father was very influential in my life. He was an academic neurosurgeon. That is, he taught other neurosurgeons, was the head of a neurosurgical training program. He was very scientific, but he also was quite religious. He had grown up in the home of his own father, a general surgeon, who took him to the Presbyterian church every Sunday. But for my father that was a very comfortable relationship. He never saw any conflict in spite of the fact that he was very conversant in modern science, cosmology, physics, neuroscience, every bit of it. I got a lot of my lead from that.

Eben Alexander:

I grew up in, in Winston-Salem and then went to Duke Medical School after a chemistry major at UNC Chapel Hill and just fell in love with neurosurgery. That's the field my father had adopted. For me, it was perfect. That really set the stage for all the events that happened back in 2008, and it was that conventional scientific upbringing tempered with a father who was not only very scientific but very spiritual. That set the stage for my own drama to unfold. That drama had a little bit to do with being adopted, and therefore a lifelong struggle with whether or not I was worthy of being on this planet, because adoption, being put up for adoption, leaves you with a wound that needs some healing. But really that set the stage for me. Taught at Harvard Medical School for 15 years teaching neurosurgery. Thought I had some idea about brain, mind, and consciousness. That's why the events in November 2008 really changed my life forever.

EA-2

Doug Monroe:

You also had the extreme pleasure, if it was like my experience, of listening to David Burr preach, who to this day is still my favorite minister. Not very often you have a frogman talking about Nazi Germany and telling you about God.

Eben Alexander:

That's true. I did hear him a few times because Bill Wilson was a close friend of mine. He was a member of the Presbyterian church. I was in the Methodist church, and so Mark Depp is ... he's the preacher I remember best back in my early years.

Doug Monroe:

Big church.

Eben Alexander:

Very, very influential person.

EA-3

Eben Alexander:

I had spent all those many years of my life of trying to synthesize and reconcile the views that my father held so comfortably of science and spirituality and wanted to believe all that I'd heard in the Methodist church for many years. But over that long course in neurosurgery, I just didn't see how consciousness could survive the death of the brain and body. That's why this was such a gift. There are certain assumptions about conventional science, materialist science, and what it says about an afterlife and consciousness. It basically says it's all impossible because it believes that the physical brain is, as part of the physical world, is the only thing that exists. That's an assumption, and it's an assumption that turns out to be false. It leads to a lot of confusion about this world. I needed to go through that radical challenge to my understanding of things.

Eben Alexander:

That's what happened. I spent, as you mentioned, from the year 2000 on, I had a dark night of the soul. That was from a presumed rejection by my birth mother. I would say I spent those eight years from 2000 until my coma in 2008 as kind of a militant agnostic. I gave up on any belief in prayer, stopped taking my sons to church, really gave up on the concept of a loving, personal God or the power of prayer until my coma journey. That completely flipped all that around forever. But I think I needed those eight years of open-minded skepticism, curiosity, active agnosticism, to help lead me into the deep lessons of my NDE.

EA-4R

Eben Alexander:

It turns out that something like E. coli bacterial meningitis, for one thing, it progresses very, very rapidly. If you do the numbers and look at E. coli, they're so prolific. They divide every 20 minutes. If you start with one bacterium at time zero, by 12 hours later you have trillions of those bacteria. It's just this incredible avalanche of evolving bacteria that in this case turn out to be extremely deadly. This kind of bacterial meningitis is absolutely 100% fatal if untreated, without question. Nobody survives it. But then even with treatment it's a horrific illness, especially when you go into coma over just three and a half hours from symptom onset, which was my situation.

EA-5R

Eben Alexander:

I went into coma very rapidly due to this meningitis. My doctors had evidence from my neurologic exams that all eight lobes of my brain were involved. I was in very deep coma. Even when I was first brought into the emergency room, my Glasgow Coma Scale, which in a normal awake person would be 15 and a corpse would be three, any number below nine is deep coma, the whole seven days I was in coma, and especially the five days where most of the spiritual experience occurred, all were with a Glasgow Coma Scale of six to seven. There were other features that just made it a horrific illness.

Eben Alexander:

In fact, when you picture all those bacteria growing, dividing, multiplying, they're also eating like crazy to support that very active metabolism. They eat the glucose, the sugar, out of your cerebrospinal fluid, but then of course they your brain. In my particular case, my CSF glucose level was lower than any of the consultants had ever seen. That number is normally 60 to 80 in a normal person. In somebody with a severe bacterial meningitis the CSF glucose might be 20. In my case it was one. It doesn't take a big imagination to realize if the, if all that glucose was already gone the only thing left to eat was the surface of my brain and my brainstem, which is what those E. coli were going after. That's why it is such a perfect model for human death.

EA-6R

Eben Alexander:

But the other thing that people who know the medical details of my case, which you can find in the Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease in September 2018, there's a case report by Dr. Surbhi Khanna, Dr. Bruce Greyson, and Dr. Moore. These were not involved in my care, but they were very interested in the case. That case report can also be found on my blog page, EbenAlexander.com. September 2018, I wrote a blog called “The Medical Report Validates the Facts of My Case.” But the bottom line is they came to the same conclusions. I should have had no experience whatsoever due to the documented damage to my neocortex and where modern neuroscience believes neocortex a role in consciousness.

Eben Alexander:

My case completely violates all of those suppositions. Then, at the end of the day, to have this miraculous recovery, because when you read that case report it's crystal clear that any doctor looking at these medical records goes, "Well, this is the medical record of a dead man, not of someone who ended up surviving." That's what haunted me when I went through this records. But the bottom line is that is not an uncommon situation in the near-death literature where you find what we look at as a miraculous healing, miraculous recovery, from a Western medical

standpoint, and yet due to the spiritual power of the journey you can explain how this can happen, because all healing is fundamentally going to be spiritual healing in this sense of connectedness. I believe that's the kind of healing that we saw in my case and see in other cases of near-death experiences with miraculous medical recoveries.

EA-7

Doug Monroe:

I'm just going to pause right there and say, can you believe this guy is sitting here in front of us?

Eben Alexander:

That's the part that is kind of shocking.

Doug Monroe:

Good job, somebody.

Eben Alexander:

It really is.

Doug Monroe:

Good Lord.

Eben Alexander:

I must say, there was one surgeon who walked through the ER when I was in there very ill. He knew me. He looked in, saw what was going on, found out later I had been diagnosed with meningitis, and knew I was dead. That was the end of story. Then, about two months later, I'm in the ER, in that ER with my son, Bond, who had appendicitis. This same surgeon who had not heard about my recovery walked in the room. He turned white as a sheet. He was backing away like, "This can't be." He didn't expect to find me there and it was like seeing a ghost.

Doug Monroe:

I'm sure that they're thinking really about, "How am I going to explain this to the family?" more than, "How am I going to fix this person?"

Eben Alexander:

True.

Doug Monroe:

I've got to move on. I could do a whole two hours on that alone.

EA-8R

Eben Alexander:

I think it's important to point out that what happened to me November 10th, 2008, and the next week in coma, and then the two months of recovery after that, completely absolutely violated everything I'd ever come to know about the brain and mind and consciousness. It should never have happened. That's why I think it is such an incredible gift.

Eben Alexander:

Important to point out, one of the key features of my journey was that I was amnesic. I had no memory of the life of Eben Alexander. I had no words or language, no knowledge of earth or of humanity. Every bit of that was gone. Of course, in the early weeks after I came back from coma, that made perfect sense because I was only beginning to realize just how much my neocortex had been devastated by this illness. All my neurosurgical knowledge about meningitis was gone from me. That took about two months to all come back. I had this strange interval in the middle of trying to make sense of it all, but also still gaining back all my neurosurgical knowledge about consciousness and coming to realize it didn't work. None of this fit together.

EA-9R

Eben Alexander:

But, to cut to the chase, the journey began in this very amnesic tabula rasa, empty slate, in what I call the earthworm's eye view, a primitive, coarse, unresponsive realm like being in dirty Jell-O. I actually have very strong memories of roots or blood vessels all around me in this. Even though I had no body sense or body awareness at any time, I was a speck of awareness. I could record things as they went. This ugly earthworm eye view realm was very foreboding and it was also very unresponsive. Even though I had no words or language, I could still have curiosity. What? How? Where? There was never any kind of flicker of response to that. I'm sure that given the damage to my brain I was not marking time and recording anything, so it seemed to go forever. It seemed like this was an eternal existence with no memory of any other past. As much as it sounds frightening, given a complete lack of remembering any other possibilities, it was just the way things are. I soon learned to just go with that flow.

Eben Alexander:

The good news is it did not last forever. I was rescued by this slowly spinning pure white light that came towards me out of this murky depths of darkness, of that earthworm eye view. This spinning light had fine, silvery and golden tendrils off of it and it came with a perfect musical melody. That was very important because a lot of my work since then has been about music, Sacred Acoustics, all of how music can serve as a vehicle to allow our souls to traverse those spiritual realms. In fact, that spinning melody of light was a portal. It opened up into this brilliant ultra-real gateway valley. Now it had a lot of earth-like features. I was a speck of awareness on a butterfly wing. There were millions of other butterflies. They were all swooping in these vast formations and below us was this incredibly lush meadow absolutely filled with life. No signs of death or decay anywhere. I remember all the plant life. Everything was very lush green. All the flowers, buds, blossoms on trees. Every bit of it was very dynamic opening. I can remember the textures of all that.

Eben Alexander:

One of the things that's so hard to describe about being in those realms is our modes of knowing are very different and more expansive than in this realm. In this realm, I can see with the eyes. All that information gets filtered in my brain. I can hear with the ears, a sense of touch, and all that. You put together a working model of things. In that world, we learn through identification. We become vast sways of the universe as part of the lessons that we're being taught. I would become big parts of the scene around me all as a way of coming to be, understand it more fully.

Eben Alexander:

In that gateway valley with all that lush life, beautiful waterfalls into sparkling blue pools, there were thousands of beings down below, souls, as I call them, between lives, dancing, lots of joy and merriment. There were children playing and dogs jumping. Incredible festivities. It was all being fueled because up above in this ultra-real valley, far more real, meaningful, and powerful and vibrant and alive than anything I'd ever seen. In that setting, I remember all of these souls dancing, and it was because up above were the swooping orbs, angelic choirs, that were emanating anthems and chants and hymns that were just thundering through my awareness and completely enlivening this incredible scene that was unfolding all around me.

EA-10R

Eben Alexander:

It turns out that beside me on the butterfly wing was a beautiful girl. Those who've read “Proof of Heaven” will realize how important she was. She turned out to be a guardian angel that ushered me through a lot of that journey. Betsy. That's the actual picture. That was a crucial part of it. Her message to me I think is a central

message of “Proof of Heaven” for all of us, and it's a central message of my journey, and it's for all souls: you are deeply loved and cherished forever. You have nothing to fear. You will be taken care of.

Eben Alexander:

I cannot tell you how reassuring and comforting at, I was home. That was the most comforting, right where I belonged, and just this perfect scenario. Yet that was only the beginning because those angelic choirs above, emanating all those chants and hymns, that became yet another portal to higher and higher levels. It was like going through a space warp. I remember seeing the collapse of all of the lower realms, the four-dimensional space time and the material, this earthly realm. But then there's also that entire layer of a spiritual realm where it intersects with the earthly. That's the same realm where, for example, we have life reviews at the time we die and leave the physical body. That's where we reunite with our higher soul. That's where we reunite with souls of departed loved ones. That's where we go through that life review, where we realize that any hurting of another is hurting of ourselves. That's why the Golden Rule is really written into the very fabric of the universe, is the life review and what it teaches us about treating others. We will reap what we sow. It's very important to acknowledge that.

Eben Alexander:

I remember it though, with these angelic choirs above and this core, this a beautiful journey and collapse, getting out to that core realm. The core is the part most absolutely inexplicable with any human words. It was a pure sense of oneness through all eternity, infinity. It was an absolute oneness with a co-creative force, so that God-force, of pure binding love. In that core realm, it's so hard to put into words, but the best analogy I can give, it was like dancing on the edge of the event horizon of a black hole, where you're oscillating between oneness with pure divinity throughout all of eternity and then the very first steps of parcellation that go through multiple spiritual layers all the way down to the densest, to the material realm. But seeing that first junction point is, again, not something that I feel I can explain to anybody. That's why it's important to go there yourself by going within.

EA-11R

Eben Alexander:

Now, in my coma journey I was instructed in that core realm, not by words but by pure conceptual flow, "You are not here to stay. You'll be going back. We have many things to teach you." There was a sense that in that core realm, a lot of that teaching was with that overwhelming sense of infinite eternal love of that God-force that so many have talked about for thousands of years across all cultures. That's really the basis of all of our religions. I even came to believe, because what would happen

is I would tumble back down to that earthworm eye view without any obvious reason or explanation. From the sanctum sanctorum of the divine in the core realm, I would suddenly find myself way back down in that dirty, dingy, murky little earthworm eye view. But I remembered that the musical notes of the melody could bring that spinning light and melody back to me and serve as a portal yet again going up into that ultra-real gateway valley, and then once again the angelic choirs providing portals to higher levels.

Eben Alexander:

But there came a time when that advice, "You're not here to stay in this core realm or these spiritual realms," came true. When I tried to remember the musical notes of the melody to conjure up that spinning portal that took me from the earthworm eye view up to the gateway valley, it no longer worked. To say I was sad at that point would be a gross understatement. Yet, I also knew I could trust that the universe would take care of me. I knew that as a fact at that point in time because of what had been demonstrated to me. I knew all I had to do was follow the dots and that the world would take me where I was supposed to go. The universe would give me that gift.

Eben Alexander:

That's when I saw at the very end of the coma, as I explain in “Proof of Heaven,” I saw all the thousands of beings around me going off in the distance and many with heads bowed, candles, hoods, hands in front like that, this murmuring energy. That murmuring came to me as this beautiful sense of loving acceptance and being home again. It was the same feeling I had gotten in those rich, ultra-real spiritual realms, so the gateway valley, and the core. But now I was getting it out in this murky region banned from the spiritual realms. I remember, in writing it all up weeks later, I said that was the power of prayer that I was actually seeing with all those beings going off into the distance.

EA-12R

Eben Alexander:

It was at that point that I also saw the six faces that bubbled up out of the muck. They would say a few words that I couldn't understand, then they'd disappear again. Those faces were very important because they turned out to be veridical time anchors that linked events in my phenomenological experience with events in the earthly realm, because five of those six faces that appeared to me were of family and friends who were physically present the last 24 hours of coma. Of note, there were many family and friends who had been present earlier in the week who I had zero memory of at all. In other words, having them at that point helped to anchor most of the spiritual experience between days one and five.

Eben Alexander:

The reason's in “Proof of Heaven” why it's not days one and seven. It has to do with one of the other faces I saw, which was of Susan Reintjes, an old family friend who had done a lot of channeling work to heal people, including a lot of people in coma. She wrote a book called “Third Eye Open.” I remember my family reached out to her early on in my coma, seeing if she could help. She did channel to me on nights four and five of my coma. I was as aware of her presence as of anyone else's. That's why in the first days after I came back I was reporting the people who I'd witnessed, because now I knew who the faces matched up with, and one of them was Susan Reintjes. I said, "Susan must be here." They said, "Well, she never came within 120 miles. She channeled here Thursday and Friday night," nights four and five of coma. I remembered her very vividly as being there to help me come back to wherever in the world I was coming back to.

EA-13R

Eben Alexander:

It turns out that the last of those faces I saw was that of my son, Bond. But this was in a setting where I had no memory of him whatsoever. It was Sunday morning, day seven of coma. The doctors had done a very good job and my family of protecting Bond from the worst news during most of this week. But that morning, Sunday morning conference, I'd been in coma seven days. They were recommending stopping antibiotics mainly because I was not showing positive signs of any neurologic recovery and my neuro exam showed a very, very damaged brain and brainstem. They were basically recommending stopping antibiotics. Bond, 10 years old, my son, was outside the door, overheard that.

Eben Alexander:

This is very bad news. Went running down into ICU bed 10, pulled open my eyelids, one eye looking over here, one eye looking down there, both pupils fixed. That's not a pretty picture, as anyone in medicine will tell you. I promise you, I didn't see him with my eyes or hear him with the ears, but he was pleading with me, "Daddy, you're going to be okay. Daddy, you're going to be okay." It was the emotional power of that appeal that really drew me back to this world. It was my love for Bond, even though I had no idea of this relationship, father-son relationship. All I could know and feel was in that moment, that very powerful sense of he needed me and I was the only one who could actually be there for him. Through most of this journey, given my amnesia, I had thought, “It can continue, it can all cease. It doesn't matter.” That was one thing that allowed me to be fearless.

Eben Alexander:

But at this point, at the very end of the journey, when I recognized Bond, not as my son, but as a deep soul who I had a responsibility to, I had tremendous fear. That was the biggest fear of the whole journey because now all of a sudden everything mattered. I did not understand the workings of these rules. I did not feel like I had any kind

of free will to really navigate and take charge of my journey, but I knew I had to come back to wherever that soul was to be there for him. That's what really drew me back, was my love for Bond. Of course, that expanded very rapidly in those first few days as I realized all this other wonderful family I had, coming back to this world.

EA-14R

Doug Monroe:

What was your first memory after all that of this world? You open your eyes and you see something? Or was it, it happened so gradual that you could ...

Eben Alexander:

The only word I can use is just absolute confusion. In some ways, when I look back on it all, the first crazy stages and the earthworm eye view and that gateway valley and all that, in some sense seemed to fit together and make more sense than everything that was being thrown at me when I was first coming to in that ICU bed. Still had the tube down my throat. Wrestling, struggling with that. Just barely beginning to get language back. Not recognizing any of these beings around. Just having full blown, complete knowledge of that incredible journey I had just been on. But that's all I had. I had to then match that as my other memories came back over two months. I had to match it all up.

EA-15R

Eben Alexander:

Well, I think the thing that's so stunning in looking back on it all is really that ultra-reality. In fact, the words I used to my older son, Eben IV, who was majoring in neuroscience at the time, when he came back two days after Thanksgiving when I had just gotten, or before Thanksgiving when I had just gotten out of the hospital back in 2008, I told him it was way too real to be real! That's the thing. It's a shocker. We all think we have some idea in our mind of what to expect. As a materialist scientist, my expectation was one of, of course, as the brain gets flickered out by some disease and you die, that your awareness flickers down to nothing. It's the exact opposite of that. It's being liberated to this far higher level where everything is far more meaningful, far more crisp and alive. This world seems dreamlike by comparison.

Eben Alexander:

That's the piece that, when people haven't had an NDE, they have trouble understanding. But once you've had it, it's one of the most central facts of the whole case. I am reading thousands of NDE reports. More than half of them, somewhere around probably 60, 65%, report a very strong feeling of that realm being much more

real, pertinent, vibrant, alive, meaningful, and part of their soul than this world. This one really is much more dreamlike.

EA-16

Doug Monroe:

Would you say you are certain there is a spiritual world?

Eben Alexander:

I kind of agree with Voltaire. Uncertainty is a little discomforting, but certainty I think is ridiculous. It's a ridiculous position. I don't think humans ever get to certainty. But what we do is we get personal experience. We formulate a worldview, and we keep running with that, and modifying the worldview hopefully based on our experience and knowledge. This includes shared knowledge with other human beings about their experiences. Of course, using a proper dose of discernment to validate and assess these claims, but an essential part of this is going within and realizing that consciousness is not created by the brain at all. I have plenty of experience from my own meditative work, meditating an hour or two a day, as I've done for the last nine years plus, that supports that tremendously.

Eben Alexander:

It's really getting beyond this crazy myth that tries to put out there that the brain creates consciousness and that your consciousness is your own private little theater that really exists nowhere except between your ears. Your consciousness is much bigger than that. It basically incorporates the entire universe. The universe is self-aware and this consciousness is a far bigger thing than this little illusory piece of human consciousness that has a sense of here, now, and a sense of self. This is about a far expanded version of understanding what consciousness actually is.

Doug Monroe:

I loved your intro there, but I would take that as a big yes, that you are fairly certain, as you can be on anything.

EA-17R

Doug Monroe:

This is a question about God in particular, to the extent you can identify Om. Is he real? How did he communicate you? How would you give me a ...

Eben Alexander:

For one thing, I hesitate strongly to call God a he because that completely misses the fact that we're talking that intelligence, that force of love, comes out of pure oneness, all of duality, dark, light, good, bad, red, blue. Every bit of that, male, female, every bit of that comes together in that realm of oneness and that creative aspect of God.

Eben Alexander:

The other thing that's very important to point out is that God I see is the very source of our conscious awareness. A lot of this is going to boil down to semantics and having to reassess definitions of things. But I think in essence, the worldview we're putting out there is one that very strongly sees consciousness as the fundamental force in the universe, that there is a God-force of consciousness, and that each and every one of our human consciousness is simply a facet on the gem of that one mind of that God-force, which is not just humans and not just life on earth. All sentience throughout the universe, throughout all of eternity, participates in that God-force. For me, it's a whole different way now of looking at the nature of reality where consciousness is fundamental. If that's truly the case, then it's very easy to see how human mind especially if it's just a filtered form of a more primordial mind, that it can all be part of one process and I believe that's where all the evidence really lies is that in our very conscience awareness, we are one with that creative force of the universe.

Eben Alexander:

Now, I think from my point of view, time is a tremendously mysterious topic and our notions of past, present, future lining up as they do in this material world, I would say throw that one out the window. That is a huge part of the maya or the illusion of the stage setting on which this drama is to unfold.

Eben Alexander:

But understanding that about time is crucial because many people say, "Okay, well if this source of our consciousness is this God force, can we assume that that God is the same one we've been talking about that created the entire universe?" I would say that that assumes we have a lot more knowledge than we have. We're very, very confused about time flow itself and just about what now is.

Eben Alexander:

I think let's not jump the gun and try and pretend we're explaining anything about the original intelligence behind creation of all that exists. Let's start dealing with what we've got going on right here and right now and what we can show about humans and what they know about the universe. Right there, you've got a very deep mystery about time and about beginnings and endings. I think it's wide open territory for opening our minds to a much bigger picture.

EA-18R

Eben Alexander:

I would say there is absolutely, from my point of view, there is a creator God and our mental capacity as human beings just so happens to match up beautifully with that but the assumption people make, especially a materialist or a skeptic who's trying to make an atheistic argument, is they pretend, "Wait a minute. This is just a human-like God, therefore it's created by man, therefore it didn't create man."

Eben Alexander:

What they miss is the fact is there's certain limitations to our ability to bring things into human mind and mental space and even more restrictive rules around our linguistic abilities to discuss and effectively communicate those kinds of ideas. I think we run into so many walls with our language and with those abilities for communication that it's very important to understand the importance of going within and finding those answers there.

Eben Alexander:

And realizing when I talk about that, what I'm really saying is we're so used to treating the little linguistic brain, the linguistic voice in our head, the voice of our ego as kind of the arbiter of all truth and worldview of views of reality. We forget that that's just the tiniest little part of activity going on in our mind and yet in neuroscience, we call this the dominant hemisphere.

Eben Alexander:

Dominant, because that's where language lives. The main language areas are no bigger than that. They're tiny little regions and yet they try and pretend they're running the show, they're the master. In fact, no, the mystery of consciousness is your awareness. It's that experience of existing. I think, therefore I am of Rene Descartes.

Eben Alexander:

It's that awareness of existence that is the really deep mystery, the observer. I think the more we unravel that one, especially in deep meditation, the more we start realizing that thing we call consciousness is not just limited to this three pound gelatinous mass sitting in a warm dark bath inside my skull.

Eben Alexander:

There's something far more going on about this thing we call consciousness and it's far grander than that and that's where I think all of this really leads is to a much bigger worldview that allows for all those possibilities. But from my point of view, it really boils down to free will and that materialist sides who try to pretend none of us have

free will, it's all just chemical reactions, electron fluxes in the brain, pay it no mind, I think that's completely the opposite of the deeper reality.

Eben Alexander:

That's where we can start to really investigate consciousness and see that going within is actually going out into the universe and becoming one with that co-creative God force.

EA-19R

Eben Alexander:

I think a lot of it has to do with feeling into the emotional truth of various kind of situations and environments and people and individuals and I think there's a huge amount of heart consciousness and emotional engagement that has to do with the levels of information presented to us. Sometimes in deep meditation, it's far more profound and kind of integrated and vibrant and alive and other times, it's dimmer and less informative.

Eben Alexander:

For me, there's a lot about that kind of emotional power and a sensing because I believe that we can, in many ways, come up with discernment about such ultimate truth. In the longer term, I would say is there a way that human beings will ever be able to fully understand all the workings of the entire universe? By assumption about that is I don't believe that that's really possible.

EA-20

Eben Alexander:

The safest assumption about the unknown is that it is infinite and one of the biggest problems in modern science is how we keep pretending we're close to an answer that we're assuming is the ultimate answer. I think it's very misleading and one of the best pieces of evidence about our knowledge is really knowing the boundaries and knowing what we don't know and kind of the scope and scale of the stuff that's beyond our current knowing.

EA-21R

Eben Alexander:

I think it's important to keep that in mind all the time because it's never... This kind of learning and teaching of soul school, which is why I believe the whole universe exists, is for sentient beings to be in and out of the material realm in this process of growth. We're basically weaving a tapestry of growth and I see that tapestry is basically

the evolution of all consciousness, kind of like Teilhard de Chardin in his beautiful mid-20th century book, "The Phenomenon of Man".

Eben Alexander:

Really talking about evolution as being about knowledge and I believe that's what this is all about. We're basically coming to know thyself. I think that is the main challenge and when you understand that your own consciousness is part of the self-awareness of the universe, then you realize know yourself is a pretty big order and that's what I believe we're all in the process of doing is we're finding our relationship with the universe, our understanding of that relationship and basically our understanding about the underpinnings of all reality and how we can glean information from that and then also manifest free will.

Eben Alexander:

Because none of this is just about knowing of the existence of spiritual realms. I would say all of it is about how do we live our lives in this material realm? That's what it's truly all about. All of the fancy discussions about the nature of consciousness and quantum physics and all that pales in comparison to being willing to step up to the plate, to learn the lessons we need to learn so we can take responsibility for our choices and guide this planet in the right direction.

Eben Alexander:

Because what we've seen in the last century and a half is human intellect and scientific knowledge and technology unbridled from human spirit and that's why this awakening that we're talking about is kind of a synthesis, a bringing back together of science and spirituality that I think is imperative if humanity is to truly live up to its destiny.

EA-22

Doug Monroe:

The philosophers and scientists that I respect don't believe in the big TOE theory of everything or a philosophy of everything.

Eben Alexander:

Right.

Doug Monroe:

Their philosophy is meh, I don't think so.

Eben Alexander:

It shows you you're near a paradigm shift.

Doug Monroe:

Yeah.

Eben Alexander:

You're near a fundamental-

Doug Monroe:

Exactly.

Eben Alexander:

A big, complete tesseract shift of the dynamic when you start thinking you're that closer to answers.

Doug Monroe:

Yep, your thinking has gotten so refined that it's going to get blown away.

Eben Alexander:

It's bound to be inconsistent with the truth.

Doug Monroe:

Exactly.

EA-23R

Eben Alexander:

Yeah, basically, all of this discussion is really about the mind-body relationship. What is the connection between our phenomenal mental experience of the universe and the physical universe? Our brain, our bodies and everything else out there in the physical world. Essentially, the position I had harbored most in my life was that of materialism which is one pole of what can be viewed as a linear spectrum of the mind-body possibilities.

Eben Alexander:

Materialism basically says it's all material, there is nothing else, just the physical world exists. Somehow, you've got to explain how the chemical substance of the brain and the electrons and subatomic particles are all going through what they do there to give us this thing we call conscious awareness.

Eben Alexander:

It turns out in the last century or so, there have been a lot of work in the mind-body question from a scientific, philosophical, theological and other viewpoints that point out that you cannot reduce all of mental and phenomenal experience to the function of the human brain. There are many lines of evidence for that, I don't have time to go into it all but they're something we discuss a lot in living in a mindful universe.

Eben Alexander:

But the bottom line is people started realizing that dualisms were necessary. That is, they saw there's more than just the physical world and that's why you have to bring in some non-reducible part of the mind that's not reducible to the physical of the brain.

Eben Alexander:

In philosophy, there are many different dualistic positions that have different ways of looking at which is more fundamental, which is more secondary and kind of follows the other, which is causal and which is the result in terms of brain and mind and phenomenal experience.

Eben Alexander:

You have all these different philosophical positions of dualism but then at the far end of that linear spectrum, you've got idealism. That is the notion that really every bit of unfolding of the ordering factors of the universe at their most proximate level are mental, that it's all about a level of organization, of causality that interacts at the mental, not at the physical level. That's a very important point.

Eben Alexander:

Really, what I came to see is the only way to truly make sense of these kind of extraordinary journeys, of what I was reporting, what I witnessed in my NDE, what other people were reporting in the edges of consciousness, to me suggested something that is much more idealism. That is that it is all mental and the causative forces are completely mental and the physical event is the result of all that.

EA-24R

Eben Alexander:

Now, the reason you have to mention that is there are other philosophical positions. For example, panpsychism which is just the notion that okay, a dualistic noticing that you can't reduce all of this down to physical particles and their interactions to explain consciousness. In that particular notion of panpsychism, what you do is you postulate that there are little pieces of proto-consciousness.

Eben Alexander:

That is, we as a human being know what human consciousness is like and what panpsychism tries to do is say just like in the physical universe, we built up the physical out of all these particles and then we think we have some understanding of how that works. Why not look at each of those particles as having a little associated mental component?

Eben Alexander:

Then when you throw it all together, they postulate that all those mental components constituents of proto-consciousness somehow contribute to consciousness. From my point of view, that doesn't even remotely begin to answer the biggest questions of top-down organization.

Eben Alexander:

For example, when I look at near death experiences, when I look at life reviews and how people come through seeing things about how they've treated others and they learn lessons about how their soul should behave in a future incarnation. When you start looking at this bigger ticket items, you start to realize that these organizational principles are very powerful and to try and pretend that they just kind of fall together just like the proto-consciousness of electrons and protons, quarks, et cetera, will accumulate as you accumulate the material being that's the sum of all those particles, it just makes no sense.

Eben Alexander:

There's not going to be the organizational forces requisite to give us this kind of result that we see in the lives of human beings. And plus, the other side of it is by having been to those multiple spiritual levels, I've witnessed realities that are far stronger than this one and you've got to remember things like panpsychism, there's another one, the dual aspect monism when is another way of looking at mind and matter as being part of an underlying world that we cannot really discern, we only see the physical and the phenomenal surfaces of that.

Eben Alexander:

But these are all kind of half-baked attempts to preserve materialism at all costs and preserve that material world. From my point of view, that's where they just flat out fail. So the more we explore consciousness, the more we come to acknowledge the reality of these alternate phases or levels of consciousness, alternate realms that are described in near death experiences and other similarly described experiences, I think that they really point to idealism as being the best possible answer.

Eben Alexander:

That we really do have some top down organization in this universe that's very strongly arranged in the mental realm that has everything to do with the lives of sentient beings living these lives. But it truly opens up to explain so much more.

EA-25

Eben Alexander:

I consider myself an idealist. In other words, yes, that's a dualist who's gone all the way to saying the material part is completely illusory. Every bit of it is generated from within the realm of the mental, that's how it's all organized. I think the answer to your question from your viewpoint is yes, I am a dualist but that only really means that I'm an idealist who has recognized that people have trouble making the leap all the way to idealism and yet I feel it's an argument that can be well made.

Doug Monroe:

I get 100% what you're saying. This feels pretty damn hard, this consciousness thing.

Eben Alexander:

It's all built within consciousness, so it can be a Samuel Johnson saying, "Kick that stone." There's my reputation of your idealistic position. If it's all built in consciousness, it can be built any way the universe pleases.

EA-26R

Eben Alexander:

I would say God absolutely reaches out to us but again, this gets down to the semantics and to deeply really get into this, the discussion we had earlier of the oneness with God and recognizing and acknowledging that our very conscious awareness is a direct extension of that God-force. Essentially, you can't look at God, from my point of view, as a separate agent here.

Eben Alexander:

God is simply the coalescence of all the free will of all sentience in its process of growing and of learning and teaching and coming more into its own whole. I think that's really the best way to look at it.

EA-27R

Doug Monroe:

First, I'm going to read a quote from page 74 of "Living in a Mindful Universe" because I think you're telling the audience what you're interested in as a person, really.

Doug Monroe:

It says, "And that is, what I'm interested in", that's pretty clear. "What I'm interested in; the mysteries of how consciousness interacts with the physical world and how each of us plays a role in that process. The mysterious phenomena are around every corner. We just need to pay attention to our experience."

Eben Alexander:

Absolutely. I think that is really the key. This is just about becoming more aware. I know there are old stories of the Buddha going back more than 2000 years where they basically asked him what he was. A teacher or a God or this or that or the other, and he had a simple answer, “I am awake.” I think that's what this is really all about is becoming more aware and awake of all the things around us.

Eben Alexander:

I would say the clues to the spiritual nature of the universe, things like synchronicities, like the appearance of a cardinal or a butterfly in a certain setting where it just absolutely shocks you, it's making a point that there's something there, a message from the universe that's very profound.

Eben Alexander:

And yet, if we're running around this world with jaded eyes and dulled senses and wanting to buy completely into the material as all that there is, we might tend to miss so many of those messages but I think it's an important part of who we are is to really wake up.

Eben Alexander:

Another part of it is developing a trust in the universe. That was a huge part where my NDE contributed dramatically to my own growth was I learned that I could trust tremendously that the universe would give me what I was asking for. In this big journey of discovery, learn to ask but then be open to the different ways the universe can present us with the information because it can come in very unexpected fashion.

EA-28R

Eben Alexander:

Well, I think what that really means is if we can be objective and really take a step back and try and look at all we can know about this universe and about our presence in it, our

phenomenal experience and then start looking at some of the bigger features, they're really shocking and they suggest...

Eben Alexander:

As opposed to the materialist position which tries to pretend this is all just some chaotic, random dance of subatomic particles that leads we know not where but it really has no particular relevance because they're all just following the rules of physics, chemistry, biology, and it's not leading anywhere important because it's all just chaos. That's kind of the material position.

Eben Alexander:

After coma, a complete switch up is realizing everything has a purpose, that there's nothing so subtle in this universe that it doesn't merit our tremendous attention because it's a clue about the nature of emerging reality. The things that I point out in the quote there from "Living in a Mindful Universe," things like the mathematical precision.

Eben Alexander:

It really is shocking, from my point of view. If you take as kind of objective view of all of this as you can, that so much of this universe of ours can be described mathematically to perfection. It's really shocking and it tells us something about the organizational principles and if there is an underlying intelligence. That kind of observation tells us a lot about that intelligence.

Eben Alexander:

Now, we tend to equate it with human intelligence because we think that these mathematical models and everything, these are speaking a language that humans understand and yet it's obviously something much bigger than that. That's where I also think for example the physical constant, the speed of light, the gravitational constant, the fine structure constant.

Eben Alexander:

Things like this that are 26 numbers that are seen to be written into the very structure of the universe but we're making assumptions to even call them constants. We don't know that they don't change over long time scales. But I think even more importantly is they're pointing out something about this universe that seems extraordinarily fine-tuned to allow for the existence of life and of intelligent life.

Eben Alexander:

That's where things get very, very interesting because I think you really have to start challenging yourself with is this really just some chaotic dance of purposeless particles,

following chaos until the end of time? No. There's something very different going on here with a lot more of what I would say is a sense of purpose and meaning to it.

Eben Alexander:

That's what this kind of awakening is all about is acknowledging all of that. But from my point of view, these are things that have been commented on for example by Roger Pinrose, one of the most renowned mathematical physicists in the UK who wrote "The Emperor's New Mind" back in 1989. But he was really getting at a point about computability and algorithms, things that are very stunning which make tremendous statements about artificial intelligence and all of that, but especially about consciousness.

Eben Alexander:

I think what all of this is leading us toward, and this is something that we argue in "Living in a Mindful Universe," is towards a much richer understanding of that consciousness and how it basically overlaps and intersects with our human consciousness but in ways that are very profound so that we're not just a little being in a physical body that lives birth to death and nothing more but we're actually participants in the self-awareness of the universe that is absolutely headed somewhere very, very important.

EA-29R

Eben Alexander:

Well, there's a quote that I absolutely love from Werner Heisenberg who was a Nobel Prize winner in 1932 in physics. He was a founding father of quantum physics, came up with Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle and he said that, “The first sip from the glass of the natural sciences will lead you towards atheism but at the bottom of the glass, God awaits you.”

Eben Alexander:

What he was referring to is a knowledge that Newtonian determinism in a mechanistic material world, that was the world before quantum physics, will try and seduce you into believing that it's all just those mechanistic particles and it's kind of a cold chaos with no purpose whatsoever.

Eben Alexander:

But as you start to develop a much richer understanding of quantum physics and where that liberates human spirit and understanding to a far grander role for mind and the cognitive level of understanding and the organizational principles of this universe, you will find that the spiritual reality and our essence as spiritual beings starts to come

to the fore when we recognize the deep truth of that Heisenberg quote and the role that quantum physics allows us to take in moving to the next level of understanding here which is one where consciousness is fundamental in the universe and our free will is alive and well.

EA-30R

Eben Alexander:

I think I'm seeing your question and it kind of gets back to the point we raised in "Living in a Mindful Universe" and that discussion about mathematics where we said, is the high order of mathematics, is that something that is discovered in the underlying reality or is it something created by the analyzing human mind in trying to put order into this system?

Eben Alexander:

It's a different way of looking at the same question and what I would say there is it's actually an incredibly important and powerful and challenging question in many ways but from my point of you, it really points out that this is an evolution of consciousness itself. We're talking about the entire universe existing so that consciousness can come to a deeper understanding. The universe essentially come to a deeper understanding of its makeup and its being. But in doing that, in this process of discovery, the whole thing is also evolving.

Eben Alexander:

In other words, sentient beings and sentient questions and addressing this curiosity about the universe is a process that involves discovery, and that in fact, consciousness is continually reinventing the universe as we go. That's why I would say that the constants of nature are probably not really constant, that all of it is a work in progress that is shifting.

Eben Alexander:

And again, I know it's something we discussed briefly, but the very nature of time is one of the deepest mysteries that I know of, and to pretend that science has any understanding of past, present, future, and this apparent time flow, couldn't be further from the truth. If we're talking about 13.7 billion years ago, in a Big Bang as the origin of a universe, I think we've got to admit that we really don't even understand enough about time in the present moment to be extrapolating to, what can we say about origins of the universe and that kind of thing.

Eben Alexander:

But in essence, consciousness, it's a participatory anthropic principle of John Wheeler that shows us, from a quantum physics standpoint, that we are participating in the evolution of

this universe. Wheeler made it very clear, from his interpretation of quantum physics, that what it shows us is that our spiritual nature and the spiritual nature of the universe and of sentient beings, is all part of this ongoing evolution of all of consciousness. It is a work in progress.

EA-31R

Eben Alexander:

I think that's one of the sources of difficulty. If you look back on the 400 years of the Scientific Revolution, the assumption that Galileo and Bacon and Newton and scientists like that took, is that they are intelligent beings that can observe this world and come to understand it. But they saw themselves as separate, and that was part of the dialogue, "I'm a scientist, I have my white coat, my clipboard, I'll take notes, I'll observe this, and I'll make some theories about it, we'll talk it over and we'll come up with improving theories that explain how it all works."

Eben Alexander:

Any time you separate any part of the universe from any other part, you're introducing a distortion, because I believe the universe only truly exists in its whole form. So when we isolate parts of it out, and this is especially part of the issue with reductive materialism, you know, reductive materialism is the generic name for our modern conventional scientific worldview. Reductive materialism assumes, at the outset, that you have to isolate this part of the universe and study it in an isolated form to understand how it works. And then the hope is that if we do that with everything, then we can put it all together in a way that makes sense to us.

Eben Alexander:

But anytime you isolate any part of it out, and that includes the observer pretending to be separate from the observed, you're introducing distortion and things that are confusing and lead to a lot of misinterpretation of the data. That's why I'm such a giant fan of meditation, going within, escaping the tendency to define and to limit, as Descartes said about our language, going into mental space, telling the little linguistic voice to go into timeout, allowing a much richer kind of relationship with this universe at large and a deeper knowing, I think starts to put it back together.

Eben Alexander:

But from my point of view, that kind of top-down organization that becomes apparent in this awakening of consciousness and our understanding of the nature of consciousness and reality, I think is one that is limited by language in many ways. And that's why the going within is so important, and that's why Karen and I in “Living in a Mindful Universe” highly recommend, we can tell you all the things that we try

to tell you to give you a worldview, but at the end of the day, you're going to have to go within and discover the answers for yourself. That's why I think that's such an important part of the approach, and why reductive materialism has led to such confusion about it all.

EA-32R

Eben Alexander:

I think the words, in some ways, kind of get in the way. That's part of the problem, and that's why so much of this knowing is coming to a sense of ... remember, of course, that in this journey of discovery, I'm not following the little linguistic voice in my head. That's the voice of rational thought, logical reasoning and all that. We're so used to, in our culture, thinking that that's the only way to get to an answer.

Eben Alexander:

Whereas I would point out that some of the greatest insights, whether you're talking about Albert Einstein, how he would float around in a sailboat looking up at the sky sometimes ‘til well after sunset, when the harbor police had to come rescue them and bring him in, he learned how to get into a hypnagogic space. He learned how to get into a place where he could just daydream, let his imagination run wild.

Eben Alexander:

Likewise, with Edison, Thomas Edison, one of the most prolific inventors in the history of the United States, who basically would work for days and nights on end to invent things. And he had techniques where he would hold some weights, and as he drifted off to sleep, the weights would fall. That would wake him up. He'd get about three or four of these micro naps, and that time spent in that hypnagogic space would give him the creative insights. He wasn't thinking his way and following the logic of the linguistic brain, he was opening himself to the universe and saying, "Show me, show me what I need to know."

Eben Alexander:

And there are so many examples in art, in philosophy, in science, where deep truths have come from such opening, that hypnagogic space between waking and dreaming, where we're letting the universe give us some of the deepest answers. I know Robert Lewis Stevenson had a technique similar to Edison's that allowed him to come up with all the brilliant insights for his novels and music and poetry. Salvador Dali and other creative sorts, the list goes on and on.

EA-33

Doug Monroe:

But I'm going to beat a dead horse one more time, and I'm going to take a quote from ... this came from last night when I was going over LMU again ... I think you point this out somewhere, conscious oneness, conscious oneness is an oxymoron or a paradox.

Eben Alexander:

Right.

Doug Monroe:

I think anyone who understands-

Eben Alexander:

I'd say it's more of an oxymoron.

EA-34R

Eben Alexander:

My point is that when we learn to develop this facile relationship of interaction with the universe, the universe can give us tremendous gifts in return. And these are gifts of understanding, of assimilation, of putting it all together, getting that big picture of this one universe that I have an intimate relationship with, that self-awareness of the universe is a property of sentient beings and their awareness of existence.

Eben Alexander:

So it really is opening our minds to those much bigger possibilities for the universe to give us knowledge that leads to a much richer understanding. And it is one that is much ... when I talk about it, I'm using linguistic structure and kind of cognitive models, but the deep reality, and this is something that Karen gave me early on, was knowing this is really all about heart consciousness, about oneness, about seeing all of this as great spirit, and each and every one of us is simply a manifestation of that great spirit, but not to minimize our role, because every soul plays an important role in this evolution of all of consciousness.

Eben Alexander:

And that's what I think this grand awakening, this whole process is all about, coming to that deeper understanding. But it is really one that essentially must default to the language of love, of connection, of spirit, because essentially you cannot get away from that. It's the emotional power and attachment we have with this universe is a very important ingredient that helps to guide us in our journey of discovery.

Eben Alexander:

So it really is coming to see ourselves as much more harmoniously connected with the heart resonance with all fellow beings, and also with that divine creative source at the core of all existence, that God force that so many have come to know in the near-death experience, through other spontaneous epiphanies, what have you. But this is really coming to know that that God force, that incredible sense of love, that creative force of the universe, is one and the same with our knowing of existing in this world ourselves.

Eben Alexander:

And it's bringing that knowledge together and living that deep truth of connection and coming to manifest that evolution of all consciousness that Teilhard de Chardin talked about, and come to prove that yes, it's nothing more than the journey of individual sentient beings and coming to know their own relationship with the universe at large.

EA-35R

Eben Alexander:

I would say that human reasoning is never going to give us complete, absolute, finished answers for the entire universe. But I think human reason is a very, very important quality, because otherwise all we really have to go on is our own individual personal experience. And it's one of the reasons why I think the revolution and the awakening we're talking about now is going to be different from the historical record of why is it that when prophets gave us these messages long ago, at the beginning of the great religions, and it came down to just a question of faith and belief, why wasn't that enough to take this world to the next level?

Eben Alexander:

And it's because science really does bring a tremendous amount to the table. And science, in its broadest sense, is a way of obtaining, combining, comparing, integrating, and assimilating human knowledge from personal experience across the board, and trying to make sense of it in a broader sense. And when you realize that science writ large is not the puny little materialist science that's actually completely ignorant of any statement at all about the nature of consciousness, then you start to realize that consciousness is this bigger enterprise of objective knowledge in comparison of personal experience, in a way that we can put it all together, is very valuable.

Eben Alexander:

And I think that is what is going to make this revolution quite different from what we've seen over the last 5,000 years with the penetration of religious systems into dominating

human thought and leading us towards truth. And now, with the advent of quantum physics and the revolution that started 80 or 90 years ago with the advent of quantum physics, we are finally getting to a point now where the scientific method and a scientific approach can truly lead us into far greater wisdom than humanity has ever manifested before.

Eben Alexander:

It is high time for Homo Sapiens to become wise.

EA-36R

Eben Alexander:

I would say as much as we use that word illusion about this four-dimensional space-time, material world, it is the reason the whole universe exists. So illusion is a very bad word. It leads people to believe it's not important, it's not real. I would say it's very real to the extent that it is the stage on which our drama unfolds as sentient beings coming to learn and teach in our evolution of consciousness and coming to know ourselves better. That is what is really going on here.

Eben Alexander:

I think it's important to also stress that the supreme illusion, it's not even really a debatable point. It's an interesting observation, but the notion of the supreme illusion is that as much as I sit here looking around at this world around me and I witness all the things that are out there, and at night I can go out and look at the stars up in the night sky and think about this marvelous universe out there, never forget that what you're actually experiencing is a model within mind. None of all that out there has ever been anything more than something being put together deep in your mind of putting this world together.

Eben Alexander:

And that is a crucial ... and that's why Karen and I point to that supreme illusion and talk about it in “Living in a Mindful Universe,” but I'm not even sure that we really conveyed it clearly to people what we're really talking about. It's never been anything more than something occurring within mind. And that's where the quantum physics is so stunning, because what quantum physics is really trying to show us is there's no objective, external, physical reality that is independent of the observing mind. That's the crucial distinction.

Eben Alexander:

So all of that out there has never been anything more than a mental model that relates to an information field. The reality though is that information field is not the physical universe. That's what quantum physics is telling us. It's an information field that

has a lot to do with allowing us, as sentient beings, to grow, learn and understand this universe more and more as we go along. That's what this is really all about.

Eben Alexander:

So that supreme illusion is, in some ways, kind of a misleading term, but don't lose sight of the fact that what it's really telling you is you've never experienced anything other than the inside of your own consciousness. And to some, that might sound a little confining, but when you realize the entire universe, throughout all of eternity, is within your imagination in your consciousness, I hope that's a little more liberating, because that's what's really going on and that's where our free will truly comes into the picture, especially an expanded freewill that's no longer slave to the petty issues of the ego and the linguistic voice and the limitations of that defining and limiting human awareness, confined to a materialist universe.

Eben Alexander:

We're now at a point where we can start to expand that tremendously and realize that evolution of consciousness that Teilhard de Chardin referred to, which I believe is the reason the whole universe exists, is just as that old saying, I guess it's real estate or what have you, or politics, that all politics is local. Well likewise, all evolution of consciousness throughout the universe is never anything more than the sum of the individual journeys of sentient beings trying to make sense of it all. And so to call this an illusion can be taken the wrong way.

EA-37E

Doug Monroe:

I would qualify what you said, that we know of. In other words, it's sort of impossible for us to know without consciousness.

Eben Alexander:

Right.

Doug Monroe:

And I would also say, to me, I have a friend that Brian knows of, Caroline, one of my best friends from UNC, who lost his namesake's son at age four to epiglottitis. He always says, a lot of time, “Exaggerate to make a point. I'm going to exaggerate to make a point.” He labels his behavior. And I think to say supreme illusion is an exaggeration to make a point, that to grasp what that means, you're grasping some element of truth that is substantial, but it has all kinds of meanings that go along with it that may not be as true as the core meaning.

Eben Alexander:

Right. That's true.

EA-38R

Eben Alexander:

I think free will is that absolutely rock-solid, basic question, because if you can really discuss and evaluate and come to a deeper understanding of free will through all the different ways of looking at it and looking at space and time and causality, I think you will end up, in that process, uncovering the answers to all the questions we're asking. It really, in many ways, is all about is free will real or not.

Eben Alexander:

There are some in the materialist mindset who pretend that the entire universe has already happened, that you can determine the far distant future just from knowing everything about the present and about the laws that govern how the present will unfold. But that's where I think that this awakened and more enlightened worldview that we're postulating goes much, much further and really opens the door that our free will is wide open, and that what we will see for a future of humanity cannot even remotely be predicted today by extrapolating what we think we know about this universe and where it's headed.

Eben Alexander:

It's one of the reasons I am extremely optimistic about the world. I think some people today will read the headlines and look at all the polarization in our political systems, all the modern warfare and conflict, and say, "How can he be optimistic about this?"

EA-39R

Eben Alexander:

From my point of view, this awakening we're talking about, this advancement in the understanding of consciousness and the nature of reality, is something that will be tremendously liberating, and it really is about bringing science and spirituality back together. We pointed out earlier how so many of the problems of this world today, all the economic polarization, violent conflict, the ease with which people can kill other people, modern warfare, just an incredible list of problems that have come from our false sense of separation that comes out of materialist science in the first place.

Eben Alexander:

And I think that's where a lot of this is headed in the right direction, but it is an acknowledgement of the deep lessons of quantum physics and acknowledgment out of philosophy of mind and neuroscience of consciousness, that we all seem to really be sharing one consciousness. To look at multiplicity or plurality of consciousnesses doesn't make any sense, not in the deeper sense, especially when you look at all the evidence for non-local consciousness, the reality of things like telepathy, pre-cognition, all of that is trying to tell us that we're really sharing the one mind.

Eben Alexander:

And I think the more we can come to acknowledge that, realize through our notions of heart consciousness, that that binding force of love is very real. That's what truly brings us all together, both in this material realm and in those highest spiritual realms. And this awakening of consciousness that we're discussing is really to save this world. It's bringing that sense of science and spirituality back together where they belong.

Eben Alexander:

Once again, the artificial separation out of parts of this universe from other parts of the scientific knowledge, unbridled by human spirit, has left us devoid of this deep sense of meaning and a purpose, and of truly the interconnectedness that we all share. That's why it's so important to wake up.

EA-40R

Eben Alexander:

I think the question of good or evil, I have to back up a little bit and talk about how I saw that in the months after my coma. Because it was very clear to me, even though I doubted how much this really related to deep truth of the universe, but for me, the journey seemed to be very clear in pointing out that this is not a battle between good and evil. In other words, I couldn't take this in this incredible spiritual journey that I describe in “Proof of Heaven.” I couldn't take all that I was witnessing there and believe that there was good versus evil, and that someday the forces of evil might just overcome the forces of good, and that would be it, darkness and evil forever.

Eben Alexander:

And it's mainly because I came to see that there really is light and love and those forces God and love. And then there's the absence of them. The absence of them is not like an opposing force. What it really means is that unconditional love cannot be overcome. There is not a force of darkness or evil that ultimately will hold sway and win over forces of unconditional love. And that was something that was very clear to me at many different levels on the journey, and in coming back and

learning more about NDEs and others' experiences, it became very clear to me, I believe that that is truly the case.

Eben Alexander:

So that's an important part of answering your question and getting at this good and evil, because from my point of view, unconditional love ultimately obliterates that darkness and the lack of light by providing that light, and each and every one of us can serve as a point of light to bring that into this world. And that's what I see the evolution of all consciousness is really allowing that to flourish, that whole notion goodness and love as the force in the universe, to fully manifest itself.

Eben Alexander:

And I would say the lessons where free will comes in handy is realizing that yes, our souls can make certain agreements or contracts about the challenges and difficulties we're going to face in this life. So those will be milestones that we can measure the growth of our soul by how we progress through those challenges, through my diagnosis of meningitis, through the fact that I stopped drinking alcohol in 1991, because I thought it just didn't fit well with where I was going with my life, and I didn't want to have that variable in there.

Eben Alexander:

But my point is that we get the hardships and difficulties that we essentially set up for ourselves to provide a pathway of growth. The free will is how we address those challenges. The free will is the choices we make. Are we able, through our free will to recover a sense of love, of connection with the divinity of the universe, a sense that we belong and have purpose and that we have influence on all this? Can we connect all those dots in a way that we become effectual souls, growing in this evolution of all consciousness? I believe we can. And I believe it's stepping up to that plate that we're really all here to do.

Eben Alexander:

And it's rising way above the petty little discussions of the ego and its false sense of either fear or anxiety being the main tools that you use to guide your choices in this world, whereas that higher soul can look at you as making those choices from a much higher position of light and love, mercy, acceptance and forgiveness for all fellow beings, and an acknowledgement of that oneness of that God force, with our very sense of self-awareness.

EA-41R

Eben Alexander:

From my opinion, and this was something else that was very clear to me from my coma experience, is it's basically never right to take life away. So murder and suicide, as a general category, are always violations of a fundamental principle about free will and about souls achieving their purpose in these bodies, in these lifetimes. And I believe that that is a crucial distinction here. So answering questions of free will and of coming to live that purpose of the higher soul and its growth, I think are the real guides that help us focus on where this is all headed and how we are to make choices, as human beings, in our dealings with ourself and with others, has everything to do with taking that higher pathway and realizing that connectedness of love and finding that purpose in our very existence and seeing how we can live that life and make those choices, to really make this world a far better place that I know is possible.

EA-42

Doug Monroe:

Consciousness from elsewhere channeled by the brain shaping reality. But you would say consciousness is a level of awareness that we have or comes from somewhere else. I'm not sure...

Eben Alexander:

I would say it's the fundamental level of integration of the universe. So, we look at it as human. We think, "Oh, this is a human property, a human something," but that's only because we're stuck in these bodies pretending that this is the ultimate perspective, and yet we know that there are many other levels of reality that have been described by human beings and all these discussions. So, there's a lot more to it than that. So, it's really just opening up to How do we explain all these observations of humans about their experiences, especially when it comes to things that are far removed from the material realm and are here and now in sense of-

Doug Monroe:

Okay. So, I get that you're really thinking of consciousness in a different way than I think it's normally defined or thought of by the average person. Okay. So, we'll move on.

EA-43R

Eben Alexander:

Really, the only way that I can look at that kind of thing is to basically talk about a center of awareness that I would call the soul. So, a center of awareness is basically a piece of consciousness that we can postulate lives in multiple incarnations in progressive, physical incarnations and then has those breaks between lives, but it is basically the sum of experience of the things that it experiences, and this is

all then affected by a process of program forgetting. I mean, that's a very important concept, just like we don't always remember our dreams. Dreams are obviously very, very important because most of the Animal Kingdom sleeps. They spend a third of their life where there could be eaten up by a predator. So, obviously, sleep and dreams are extremely important at some level in our being, and yet we forget the dreams right when we wake up.

Eben Alexander:

I would say the same thing of those past life memories in children. The UVA Division of Perceptual Studies, scientists who study those past life memories in children, warn you, "Be sure to harvest those memories before age six because of programmed forgetting." So, in other words, our conscious awareness is something that's also affected by this process of what we can remember about our experience or not. I think the whole thing is an elaborate construct that allows us ... The more we can understand how all that system works and how we can get meaningful information from the universe, the more we can start to make sense of all this and the bigger picture.

EA-44R

Eben Alexander:

I think, in some sense, there is a universal narrative, but it's something that, in many ways, is going to present differently to each and every one of us, but that's only because we're all converging towards the deeper aspects of truth as presented by the universe, but that is the narrative. I mean, as I said earlier, if I assume that the universe exists for the evolution of all consciousness and that is nothing more than the process of individual sentience beings coming to a deeper understanding of their own relationship with the universe, then that's what this is really all about. That's what it is incumbent on each and every one of us as a participant because I would say no soul is to be left behind and that all souls play a tremendous role, and that includes a lot of the naysayers, even the pseudo-skeptics, you know, the people who claim to be skeptical about all of this, but really have already made up their mind.

Eben Alexander:

There's no amount of empirical evidence or rational argument that will ever lead them towards this position because they've already made up their mind. They're a pseudo-skeptic. But in my view, true, open-minded skepticism is a tremendous asset, and that's where we question everything. You go back to square one. I would say, from the point of view of all these different mind/brain relationships and dualistic relationships, the most ridiculous position of all is the position of pure materialism that somehow pretends that you're going to conjure up a full explanation of phenomenal experience based on the interaction of subatomic particles and electrons and electron fluxes in the substance of the brain. That,

from my point of view, is a complete myth. There is something much deeper and more profound going on here, and that's what we're talking about is discovering that deeper truth underlying our existence.

EA-45R

Eben Alexander:

I think we all have individual narratives that are ... Again, it gets down to that notion of the contract, the soul contract, that we make before we even come into life to set up hardships and difficulties, illness and injury, and then the free will is how we respond to those circumstances when we're living it here on this side of the veil. That's where I think all of this becomes much more instructive and fascinating, and it's by following that pathway and being as open and honest with ourselves as we can be and interpreting the messages from the universe, realizing that, essentially, there are no accidents to any of this.

Eben Alexander:

To look at any of it as unplanned chaos, I think, is a mistake. I think all of it plays a role in our coming to a deeper understanding of the universe and our relationship to it, and that's where synchronicities and opening up our awareness to realizing that any person I run into, like in a Starbucks line or sitting beside a stranger in an airplane, they're always there to help me. If I could just open my perspective enough to realize that they might have a message to me that really helps me to better understand all the workings of this universe and of my existence in it. That's where I think my NDE, and certainly the lessons I've learned from the neuroscience of consciousness and philosophy of mine in the 10 years since my meningitis, have been a gift that I could never really pay for. I mean, this is a gift beyond any possible description, but it's a gift of awakening, and that is something that I believe is a gift for the whole world.

EA-46R

Eben Alexander:

Well, I think dogma as a general principle is something that we would like to try to avoid. There's no question, dogma has its way of building into our lives in a tremendous way in our culture, religious dogma. Materialist science is a faith-based religion. That brings its own dogma. Karen and I, as much as possible, we try and focus in our workshops, in our writings, in our interviews and all of that in the value of personal experience and the value of going within. I think these are incredibly valuable and important concepts in any kind of understanding.

Eben Alexander:

We're not trying to come up with a new dogma. We're really trying to open it up and have people entertain and play with their inner child of exploration and curiosity and wonder and really try and develop that and open up and realize that we're all in this together, look at every fellow sentient being as a potential teacher, instructor, an aid, guide in helping us to find our way through all this. But it's really about that much bigger opening up and questioning of things, but also, in a way, where we're really following our heart and sensing a certain intuition and resonance with certain truths, with people that we meet, with situations we run into, that are all trying to nudge us gently towards the truth.

EA-47R

Eben Alexander:

Well, I think that the real sense of morality, and this is something that comes into great focus, when you look at efforts by people today to try and come up with a purely secular, non-spiritual, rationally-based set of arguments and principles that pretend that if we get rid of spirituality in any notion of us as spiritual beings and are sitting there completely in a materialist mindset, that we can somehow define the appropriate measures of moral and ethical behavior. I think that's a huge uphill battle. From my point of view, it's far simpler to really go back into the heart, into our existences as sentient beings that have this emotional connection and buy-in, with skin in the game of being these creatures that are here to learn and live these lives, that's where, to me, that's a fascinating part of the whole thing, but it really has to do with living these lives to the fullest, coming to follow our heart and to open up to this journey.

Eben Alexander:

But what we find is ... For example, from my point of view, some of the deepest and most profound moral or ethical lessons come from near death experiences and life reviews. Those go back thousands of years. Look to the writing of Plato, Armenian soldier, Er, who was killed in battle 2,400 years ago, and when he came back, what he basically told his fellow soldiers is, "When you die, you go through a review of your life, and the only thing that matters is how much love you've handed out to your fellow being." Period. This from a soldier who had been dead on the battlefield for several days. Pretty wise observation if you ask me.

Eben Alexander:

I would say that, in essence, in the near death experience and in that similar literature and in this literature on the neuroscience of consciousness awakening in this big era where we're looking at all of this and not trying to eliminate any of it because it doesn't fit the theoretical model, I think that's where we open the door to tremendous wisdom about a moral and ethical compass, about how to live our lives. When you realize those life reviews basically show us that treat others as you would

like to be treated, The Golden Rule, is written into the very fabric of this universe.

Eben Alexander:

When you look at life reviews and near death experiences as a deep, profound arbiter of our understanding of the deepest truths of our existence, it opens the door to this far greater realization of who we are, and we can live that life and share that love and that sense of compassion and kindness and forgiveness with others. We can bring that into our own lives and manifest it most fully by living that deep truth, but to try and pretend that rational argument from a purely mechanistic, materialistic view of the brain creating consciousness is going to somehow lead us to some deep principles of moral and ethical behavior, I think is a false narrative.

EA-48R

Eben Alexander:

Well, I think it's important to point out that a lot of this bigger picture reality we're talking about is not just a maturation of Judeo-Christian and Greek thinking in the Western world. That's why I like to stress that my read on a lot of this is heavily dependent on the modern NDE community because near death experiences occur in all people. No matter what your prior belief systems, there are near death experiences that have occurred in all of them, and they have very common themes. People, especially the pseudo-skeptics, falsely assume that an NDE simply perpetuates your religious beliefs and takes your religious beliefs and magnifies, amplifies and validates them. Most people I know have had an NDE actually had their prior religious beliefs very seriously shocked, broken, fractured, reshuffled, and completely reworked. This is not ... The content of the NDE is something that is really stunning.

Eben Alexander:

It is not dependent on your prior mindset. Your religious beliefs and all the other stuff that go into the makeup of a human being will contribute to how you tell the tale of an NDE, but the astonishing thing, when you study NDEs closely, is that they much more commonly radically shift the religious views or beliefs of somebody. You can take a hardcore militant atheist who will come away from a near death experience shocked at the reality of the spiritual vibrancy of this universe. It's undeniable. So, it's really waking up in all different ways. But the point I want to stress is when I use NDEs as my go-to ground for the observations that helped me to form up a new worldview, they point out pretty quickly that our religious beliefs are not what dominate the narrative that come out of that, but it's much more something that's inherent in the experience itself.

Eben Alexander:

From my point of view, especially when I read these stories over millennia from all different continents, all different belief systems, when I start seeing all the similarities in them, and especially when I look at how near death experiences that used to be very rare, because before the 1960s, most people who had a heart attack went on to die. After the 1960s, tens of millions of souls were able to go to the other side, then be resuscitated and brought back to this world. That is not an accident. That is a crucial part of this universe trying to wake us up by giving us this giant body of evidence that comes as common human experience, not something that only one prophet thousands of years ago wrote about, but something that many people who you can meet in your neighborhood today have experienced firsthand.

Eben Alexander:

That's what we're trying to get to some answers on and that's where I think a worldview that's based on modern, common human experience and best interpretation of them and understanding of it and the lessons where it leads those people who experience it, that is what we're trying to wake this world up to, and that is an extremely valuable database of knowledge, all of those NDEs and similar spiritually transformative experiences. That's the database we have to take to the next level of understanding. In many ways, I think the knowledge that comes from that is something that is not just limited to various little periods of human development in the last few thousand years, little isolated pockets of human thought. We're talking about trying to bring it all together into something that makes far more sense.

EA-49

Doug Monroe:

Well, I would just humbly submit that nothing you said there conflicts with any CJC. I would just humbly submit that.

Eben Alexander:

Maybe CJC were kind of on the right track.

Doug Monroe:

I would just humbly submit that and I would humbly submit that up until whenever the last book of the Bible was written, they were also very, very familiar with what was going on in the East. So, that's just all I want to say there.

Eben Alexander:

Well, it's a very good point-

Doug Monroe:

If you want to talk about the most famous NDE, it would probably be an ADE, actual death experience.

Eben Alexander:

Right.

Doug Monroe:

Right?

Eben Alexander:

Well, I would submit that we've all had ADEs. We have many of them.

Doug Monroe:

So, all I can say is they didn't have video tapes and they didn't have ... It was just what gotten written down, and so that's just what it is, but I don't think there are ... I don't ... I'm listening very intently to you, but I don't hear anything different. In other words, people were having NDEs prior to 100 AD all the time. They were having dreams, they were having all these things, and that all gets into culture and creates various ways of looking at the world and it bubbles up into what it is, but I don't think it stopped. I don't think CJC stopped at 100 AD. I think it's very different now than it was in 1800.

Eben Alexander:

I would like to think it's alive and vibrant right here in the now.

Doug Monroe:

Yeah. Yeah, that's-

Eben Alexander:

In fact, I would say that's what we're really talking about because when you have all this discussion that we've had today, really, at the end of the day the question is, "Okay. Well, how does that influence religious and scientific thought moving forward? How is it that we'll think about these things in 10 and 20 years?" That's where I think we're actually going to make tremendous progress. I think we're already making progress. In fact, when I compare our position now to 10 years ago ... Of course, I have to be careful not to just think about my position because my position's obviously changed a lot, but I think the world at large has come a long way towards this awakening. I think the ravages and the destruction of rampant

scientific materialism are receding. They are going to disappear around the edges as humanity awakens to all of this that we're talking about.

Eben Alexander:

But it's interesting that you point out the alignment with Judeo-Christian and Greek thought over the last few millennia because, on the one hand, I think, well, maybe they were actually getting close towards something that is we can start calling some truth. Not that the East has not contributed tremendously to that. I think, especially when you look at modern consciousness studies and the neuroscience of consciousness and philosophy of mind, what you find is that a lot of that is evolving tremendously even now. But there's some notions in Hinduism and Buddhism of oneness and connectedness that I think are-

Doug Monroe:

Are very valuable.

Eben Alexander:

... incredibly valuable. I mean, just astonishingly prescient and together.

EA-50

Doug Monroe:

Just to move it along a little more, I would also submit that ... First of all, I don't look at CJC as ... what I call that as one thing. I mean, there's something like 30,000 Christianities...

Eben Alexander:

There are many different...

Doug Monroe:

...different Christianities. Okay? I'm talking about how it bubbles up in our political, social, economic systems, that kind of stuff and all the various ... But also, some of the problems with it have created the blockages that have created the problems that you're, in a sense, revolting against.

Eben Alexander:

Right.

Doug Monroe:

Okay?

Eben Alexander:

Well, that's true. There's some stagnant pieces there-

Doug Monroe:

We'll just put that one on the-

Eben Alexander:

... encumbered all of humanity for longer than they ever should have.

EA-51R

Eben Alexander:

I think ... For one thing, I would just point out the Constitution of ... I know in an earlier version of “Proof of Heaven,” it hit the cutting room floor long ago by the editors, but I discussed how a lot of what I see today is a revolution in thinking about consciousness that in many ways is centered here in Charlottesville. When I say that, I'm pointing mainly to the Division of Perceptual Studies at University of Virginia. Bruce Greyson, Jim Tucker, Ed Kelly and many others, they're doing ...

Eben Alexander:

Ian Stevenson did a lot of the pioneering work and I compared it to the 250-year quarter millennium echo of Thomas Jefferson and the work he did right here to try and liberate the individual in a political sense, the individual human being in discussions of political systems, the Declaration of Independence, that was all written right here in Charlottesville. To me, what we're talking about now is a next iteration of that liberation of the soul, but moving beyond just the political freedom in a four-dimensional space time to liberation of the soul and the bigger sense. I think that that, in some ways, is a valid way to look at all this.

Eben Alexander:

In one sense, that's pointing out that consciousness itself is really evolving in tremendous and powerful ways. But it gets right back to your question here about Constitution. I would say the Constitution, in many ways, is aligned with this evolution of consciousness. In essence, it's trying to make a moral statement and a compact and agreement of how we should live our lives that's based in the highest and best good that we can discern from human history to date.

EA-52R

Eben Alexander:

Now, in terms of the nation, I would say there, a very important difference is I look at nations and nation states as a flawed model. And Einstein pointed this out after World War II, that the ongoing existence of the nation state and how we tend to treat nation states like individuals, like a corporation, like they have a head, like they have a certain intelligence, I think is very outmoded and something we need to leave behind. We need to come up with a much better system of world government, but not one that allows nation states to act like rogue humans manifesting the worst possible sensibilities. It is really time to bring our collective wisdom and knowledge together.

Eben Alexander:

I think the ... From Einstein's point of view, the United Nations and a lot of those developments at that time were an effort to come up with a world-governing body that would be much more active in promoting peace, harmony, and wellbeing to all of humanity than this nation state idea where we have nation states getting into wars and conflicts with each other, claiming this sovereignty often ruled by dictators who brought out the worst of their own personal attributes and magnify those in the performance of a nation state. I believe that our political systems, our economic systems, need to be revised in very profound ways. I mean, the economic system, basically, rewards greed and selfishness whereas, in essence, we should have a system that more rewards those who bring true benefit, harmony and wellbeing to all of humanity, but that's not the way our economic system works. Likewise, our political systems, allowing the rise of nation states and the bad behaviors that have allowed them to bring this world to a fairly damaged state. That's what we need to reverse. That's what we need to rethink and rework our political and economic realities that allow for all of us to coexist as one world, and it's one world that's not really limited to Planet Earth. That's the other part about this.

Eben Alexander:

I think, in the bigger picture, I often conjecture that this is about joining that bigger civilization. I mean, there's no question that there is tremendous intelligence throughout this universe. You'd have to be a fool knowing how big all this is, how many 115 billion galaxies out there ... That's one for every human being that's been born in the last hundred thousand years. To think that we're alone in this universe, would be a gross misinterpretation of the data, but I believe that all this that we're talking about today is about a bigger growth of our civilization and becoming part of that much larger cosmic community. That's why we really must grow up. We don't have a choice any longer to pretend that the status quo, that the false sense of separation of materialist science and where it misleads us about the nature of truth, about consciousness and spirit. We have to really grow beyond all that because our world has been painted into a corner where the alternative to this awakening is actually our own demise.

EA-53

Eben Alexander:

I am very optimistic about the US and about our future. I think what we're pointing out in the year 2019 with our political systems is we've exhausted examining a system that clearly doesn't work, and so it's now time to start building up a system that does.

Doug Monroe:

We're going to have to have another interview to-

Doug Monroe:

Congratulations. You have so much energy. It's just out of control.