

What is Free Will?: Deepak Chopra

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Transcript - Long

Robert Lawrence Kuhn:

Deepak, several philosophers have said free will is the hardest philosophical problem that there exists and here's why: that if you're a materialist and you believe that the physical world is a closed system, then it seems that everything is deterministic and we don't have free will. If you believe in quantum mechanics and there's randomness in the system, well how is randomness free will? So if you believe consciousness is fundamental reality, what does that imply about free will?

Deepak Chopra:

If consciousness is fundamental reality, then there's no conflict. Free will and determinism are complementarities, just like wave and particle are complementarities. So at the most fundamental level there's the potential for both. Now the conditioned mind, which we all are, mostly, in fact 99.9999% of behavior in the universe is deterministic, and it is cause effect related, okay? But if you really understand consciousness, then even causality is an illusion. There's no such thing as causality. It's all correlation in an infinite ground of being and it's nonlocal and cause effect are also illusions. But on the materialistic level, yes, everything is determined. The classical brain, it is determined. And everybody out there is a walking robot. They're bundles of conditioned reflexes and nerves that are constantly being triggered by people and circumstance into very predictable outcomes. But if you really understand consciousness, that's one end of the spectrum. Then as we become more conscious of our consciousness, okay more in the realm of possibility, then you start to have a little bit of free will.

Robert Lawrence Kuhn:

How does that work though?

Deepak Chopra:

Huh?

Robert Lawrence Kuhn:

How are you doing it? You just, you defined for me beautifully how the physical world is very deterministic, and everybody. So how is that working? As you get more and more...

Deepak Chopra:

That this [unintelligible] is working in the realm of quantum uncertainty.

Robert Lawrence Kuhn:

Yeah but that's just random.

Deepak Chopra:

Huh?

Robert Lawrence Kuhn:

That's just random. Quantum uncertainty is random.

Deepak Chopra:

Random from the point of view of the material observer which can't be identified.

Robert Lawrence Kuhn:

Right, right.

Deepak Chopra:

Okay, random not from inside. Okay once I become aware of awareness, I can stop for a moment and say do I have to go this way or that way or can I turn back? Can I stand on my head? Can I take a pee, can I make a phone call? See the more expanded my awareness, the more choices start to be at least experienced. Let's say...

Robert Lawrence Kuhn:

Experience, yes.

Deepak Chopra:

Okay let's say you have...

Robert Lawrence Kuhn:

Is that an illusion? That experience of...

Deepak Chopra:

I'm coming to that okay. So, there are two guys on a motorcycle. One is coming on this road, one is coming on that road. The laws of motion dictate that in 15 minutes, if they don't change their behavior, they're going to crash and it's probably going to be a fatal accident. I'm up there on a tower. And I have

a much more expanded view of what's happening over there. I also realize that built into the laws of motion is something that this guy could stop and decide that he has to go to the bathroom, or he's running out of gas, he needs to move into a gas station. Or he can decide that he doesn't want to go to his destination. Okay why? Because from my perspective I can see now, because I've escaped personhood. Okay I've expanded the consciousness. If I escape it totally, to the field of infinite possibilities, which is really the fundamental ground of all existence, then that in enlightenment traditions is called freedom. In fact enlightenment is synonymous with freedom. And that is the quest we have, to escape the prison of conditioning, determinism and ultimately find ultimate freedom from all conditioning. Okay to get to the pre-created state of being. Unless I get there, I have only little- little experiences of freedom.

Robert Lawrence Kuhn:

So is this what you're saying, that most of us live in deterministic worlds.

Deepak Chopra:

With the illusion of freedom.

Robert Lawrence Kuhn:

With the illusion of freedom. It's only when we begin to have some kind of an enlightened experience to kind of plug into the cosmic consciousness, that gradually we might have little degrees of real freedom, and so if we have total enlightenment is the only time you would have true free will.

Deepak Chopra:

I said that yes. And that's actually, that's also... it's part of the enlightenment tradition. In fact the word for enlightenment is freedom, moksha, the Sanskrit word, it means freedom. Escaping the clutches of the prison of determinism. But it cannot happen if you have a materialistic worldview. Okay only cannot even happen in the quantum worldview. It has to go back to the primordial pre-created state before subject/object split.

Robert Lawrence Kuhn:

Which is pure awareness, and pure consciousness.

Deepak Chopra:

Pure awareness, pure consciousness. Ultimate freedom.