

**Deepak Chopra**  
**on**  
**Prof. AKM's Work**

**In San Francisco Chronicle**

**I**  
**Who Controls Your Mind? (Hint: It's Not Your Brain)**

<http://www.sfgate.com/opinion/chopra/article/Who-Controls-Your-Mind-Hint-It-s-Not-Your-6791280.php>

One of the easiest bets to win is to offer a million dollars to anyone who can accurately predict their next thought. It would be foolhardy to accept such a bet. As we all experience every day--and yet rarely notice--our thoughts are unpredictable and spontaneous. They come and go at will, and yet strangely enough, **we have no model for where a thought comes from.**

This **lack of understanding has serious medical significance** in mental disorders, for example. A common symptom of various psychoses, particularly paranoid schizophrenia, is the belief that an outside force is controlling the patient's mind, usually through an alien voice heard in the head. Being sane, a normal person has the opposite experience, that his thoughts are his own. But if that was true, we'd call up any thought we wanted to have, the way you can call up a Google search. But this is far from true.

If you are asked to add 2+2, you can call up the necessary mental process, and there are millions of similar tasks, such as knowing your own name, how to do your job, what it takes to drive a car home from work--these give us the illusion that we control our own minds. But someone suffering from anxiety or depression is the victim of uncontrolled mental activity, and even in everyday circumstances we have flashes of emotion that come of their own accord, along with stray thoughts of every kind. Artists speak of inspiration that strikes out of the blue. Love at first sight is a very welcome example of uncontrolled mental activity.

So at the very least, the human mind can't be explained without understanding the **dual control feature** that gives us total control over some thoughts and zero control over others. That challenge is hard enough, but several others are just as thorny. If I listen to rap music and love it while you listen to the same music and loathe it, what creates this

difference, given the same input? This is a vexing question for any theory that attempts to put the brain in charge of the mind. The brain is supposedly a machine for thinking. But what kind of machine churns out a different response to the same input? It's like the world's most dysfunctional candy machine. You put in a nickel, but instead of getting a gumball every time, the machine spits out a poem or a delusion, a new idea, or a trite cliché, a great insight or a totally wrong conspiracy theory.

This gives you a tiny glimpse into why a science of consciousness has taken decades simply to be born, and is now as lawless as the Wild West. If a model of the human mind ever proves satisfactory, I'd place my faith on the work of Prof. A.K. Mukhopadhyay of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, because he is an expert in how the brain operates while not getting trapped into the fallacy that the brain creates the mind, much less that the brain is the mind. In a brilliant 2014 interview on YouTube (link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IveWxQ-KRvM>) Mukhopadhyay goes far beyond any TED talk you'll ever hear, negotiating the choppy waters of the brain-mind problem with ease.

He begins by stating his allegiance to the "mind first" camp, which holds that consciousness creates the brain instead of the reverse, the "matter first" camp, which holds that the brain creates the mind. But instead of putting his foot down about this, Mukhopadhyay asks a simple question: Why are neurons, among all the cells in the body, attracted to the mind? What turns them into thinking cells? The "mind first" camp has generally failed to pose the issue so simply, and Mukhopadhyay offers an answer that has five dimensions.

1. Brain cells are alive. a dead cell obviously can't express thoughts.
2. A brain cell exhibits its own level of consciousness. It knows what it is doing.
3. A brain cell has a self. It is self-regulating and self-organizing.
4. A brain cell responds to mental events around it. It has a life of the mind.
5. A brain cell processes information. It can communicate meaningful data, not simply random signals.

The breakthrough posed by Mukhopadhyay is that all five of these factors--life, consciousness, mind, self, and information--are being generated at the same time. They account for why no two people think alike. Each of us has life experiences, a mental history, a level of consciousness, a developed self, and a storehouse of information that is uniquely our own. Therefore, no science of consciousness can focus on only one dimension. The biologist who focuses on how cells acquire life is far from the mystic trying to understand the higher self. The psychologist trying to fathom human motivation is far from the neuroscientist trying to pinpoint consciousness in terms of cellular activity.

It seems undeniable that Mukhopadhyay's basic insight is correct: without the full dimensionality of life, mind, consciousness, self, and information, there is no way to

explain the human mind. What makes his argument undeniable is that we've all experienced exactly the kinds of differences he is describing. This is a huge leap from the cramped local approach of biologists who don't speak to psychologists, who barely speak to neuroscientists; none of them answer the door if a mystic comes knocking. To the extent that various specialties stick to their own guns, they are wrong--only a holistic approach has any chance of being right.

If this single insight were fully absorbed, the entire field of consciousness studies, along with every specialty involved in mind and brain, would be revolutionized overnight. We'd be starting with a five-piece puzzle that forms a complete picture, where the present state of confusion is based on specialists hoarding one piece of the puzzle and claiming it offers the answer. So how should the five pieces be assembled? There is a way, and we'll discuss it in the next post. With any luck, hitting on the right answer will restore control of the mind to each person, where it belongs.

**Deepak Chopra MD, FACP**, founder of [The Chopra Foundation](http://www.thechoprafoundation.com) and co-founder of The Chopra Center for Wellbeing, is a world-renowned pioneer in integrative medicine and personal transformation, and is Board Certified in Internal Medicine, Endocrinology and Metabolism. He is a Fellow of the American College of Physicians and a member of the American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists. Chopra is the author of more than 80 books translated into over 43 languages, including numerous New York Times bestsellers. His latest books are [Super Genes](#) co-authored with Rudolph Tanzi, PhD and [Quantum Healing \(Revised and Updated\): Exploring the Frontiers of Mind/Body Medicine](#). [www.deepakchopra.com](http://www.deepakchopra.com)

||

## **What's the Point of Being Human? The Best Answer So Far**

<http://www.sfgate.com/opinion/chopra/article/What-s-the-Point-of-Being-Human-The-Best-6812996.php>

The point of being human is to push the envelope of being human. This is worth remembering when times are tough and we lose confidence in ourselves. No other creature on earth has the capacity to redefine itself. We do. How humans gained this ability remains a totally mystery. Looking at physical remains, it's possible—although controversial—to outline the evolutionary march from ape to hominid, from hominid to Homo, and finally from Homo to our specific species Homo sapiens.

But the physical evidence is blurry at times, and even a simple achievement like the [discovery of fire](#) is up in the air; estimates could be off by hundreds of thousands of years. But not a single physical trait explains why we are self-aware. Awareness gave us the ability to push the envelope of being human. Ten thousand years ago the higher brain, [the cerebral cortex](#), was a finished structure, more or less. In other creatures, once their brains are finished, that's the limit. An elephant's huge brain allows, we think, for

emotional empathy. Elephants grieve over the dead and are emotionally tied to one another.

But an elephant's brain can't do math, write poetry, or invent the atom bomb. The human brain is the secret, physically speaking, behind our incredible abilities with language, tool-making, art, and weaponry. But no one knows the secret behind how the mind uses this brain. On the one hand, we remain totally confused about who we really are. We don't even know if we are basically good or bad. At the moment, opinion has turned us into baddies destroying the environment. But that's a lopsided view, given the fact that no matter how horrible our behavior, we can look in the mirror and change it.

If this is true—and it seems undeniable—then what's the next stage in pushing the envelope? No one knows, because the whole point of human evolution is that you can't predict where it's going. Indeed, none of us knows what our next thought will be. We plunge into the unknown at every second. But in the face of confusion, uncertainty, and low morale, one possibility remains untarnished. We are likely to become even more self-aware. That's the pattern that has held good for all of recorded history, and despite every catastrophic setback and horrifying turn of events, the march of awareness continues.

Some people have even made awareness their life's work. They take it upon themselves to push the envelope into higher consciousness. What they report back to the rest of us then becomes the new frontier. "Here's what we can become. Now choose." That's the message repeated over and over again.

Recently I've been inspired by Dr. A. K. Mukhopadhyay of the All Indian Institute of Medical Sciences, who has developed the most important model for where human beings are headed, based on this ever-renewing theme of higher consciousness. In a sense Mukhopadhyay has picked up the thread offered by Jonas Salk, whose later career after achieving worldwide fame for the vaccine that eradicated polio was devoted to the future path of humanity. Decades before we got ourselves into the present ecological crisis, Salk saw that the evolution of our species would no longer be physical. The only way forward would be mental and spiritual. The force of evolution, which for millions of years has pushed on the physical plane, has now been internalized. The inner world is our future.

Mukhopadhyay has taken this insight, which is now accepted by millions of people, and has convincingly shown (both in his books and more succinctly through YouTube videos) that higher consciousness isn't a spiritual aspiration open to a few gifted saints, sages, and gurus. In reality it's a universal trait; we would not be who we are without it. I am synopsisizing here, but the essence of Mukhopadhyay's insight lies in the term "[supracortical consciousness](#)," and I will spend the rest of this post unfolding why this obscure term holds the key to a leap in human evolution.

The standard view of human consciousness is physical, based on primitive life forms that exhibit no mind to evolved species like reptiles that have advanced nervous system but still no mind, then lower primates, higher primates, and finally Homo sapiens—in short, a 4-billion-year evolutionary march that saw mind emerge very gradually. Humans may feel guilty about many things, from war and crime to our despoiling of Nature, but we still see ourselves standing on the highest rung of evolution. Until we evolved, mind was totally or partially undeveloped, as witness our unique higher brain.

The problem with this physical view of consciousness is that it's like saying that a better computer will make you smarter. In reality, it's the other way around. When you're smarter, you can build a better computer. That is exactly what nature did, in Mukhopadhyay's view. Higher consciousness built a better brain, and using this ever more intricate mechanism, it pushed the envelope of mind—a process that hasn't ended and never will. There has always been an organizing intelligence higher (supra) than the cortex. Hence Mukhopadhyay's choice of "supracortical" to describe it.

The notion of a cosmic mind that human evolution is trying to reach isn't new. It lies behind every spiritual tradition, even though the name for this supracortical consciousness has shifted. Sometimes it's called God, sometimes Atman, Brahman, soul, or simply spirit. Mukhopadhyay unabashedly links his thinking to India's spiritual past, but his overarching aim is scientific. In this regard he has offered a brilliant and very challenging hypothesis, which says that current sciences, including biology, chemistry, physics, medicine, and even the "soft" science of psychology, cannot explain what makes us human unless supracortical consciousness is introduced.

Without it, a host of mysteries remain unsolved:

1. Why did Homo sapiens' higher mind evolve? There doesn't seem to be a need for it, since lower species have thrived without self-awareness for billions of years.
2. How did the human body learn to self-organize? Every cell has self-interest in surviving and reproducing. Yet there is no physical structure that contains the invisible ability to have a self in the first place.
3. Why do our bodies hold on to energy? The law of entropy, which governs all inert physical objects, dictates that any concentration of energy will dissipate, which is why ice melts and stars die. But life is an anomaly, a so-called island of negative entropy. All living things increase their store of energy. Why did nature take this route when entropy was left unchecked everywhere else in the cosmos?
4. Where did evolution come from? The universe began as a swirling chaos, a kind of quantum soup that had no reason to evolve. Entropy already had the infant cosmos in its grip. Beyond a few constants that allowed primitive matter to clump into atoms and molecules, the journey from interstellar dust to human beings exhibits no logical reason. It happened because it happened.

5. Why is the universe fine-tuned? Fine-tuning is the term for how the various aspects of time, space, matter, and energy mesh to sustain a viable universe. With a change of less than a millionth in any constant, sometimes less than a billionth, the infant universe would have either collapsed in on itself or flown apart too fast for atoms to form. Instead, it turned into the exact universe needed for human beings to call home.

The beauty of Mukhopadhyay's interpretation is that he encompasses the whole picture, giving each science its due while steadfastly asserting that no branch of science can explain why reality is what it is. All come up against dead ends. Physics cannot explain the origin of space and time. Biology cannot explain the spark of life and why it caused simple sugars and amino acids to become living entities. Psychology cannot explain where thoughts come from. Neuroscience cannot explain how the dark, silent, watery recesses of the brain create a four-dimensional picture of the world filled with light, sound, and color.

The only way to get past these dead ends is to find a single organizer that knows what it is doing. It has known all along that evolution, life, creativity, intelligence, and Homo sapiens would emerge, because at the level of cosmic mind, only an all-encompassing vision that attended to the smallest subatomic particle and the vast reaches of outer space could possibly link them into a dynamic, coherent whole.

With this in mind, we now know why human beings keep pushing the envelope of being human. Our self-awareness extends beyond the cortex, which after all is merely a physical receiver for what consciousness wants to tell us. We are supracortical creatures. We always have been, but like an infant that lives for today without a vision of adulthood, we are confined inside the present moment. The present moment is a laboratory of possibilities. Infinite possibilities are embedded in higher consciousness. It's our destiny, enclosed in time and space, to unfold them one by one, to be amazed by what it means to be human, and then to move on to whatever lies ahead.

Deepak Chopra MD, FACP, founder of [The Chopra Foundation](#) and co-founder of The Chopra Center for Wellbeing, is a world-renowned pioneer in integrative medicine and personal transformation, and is Board Certified in Internal Medicine, Endocrinology and Metabolism. He is a Fellow of the American College of Physicians and a member of the American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists. Chopra is the author of more than 80 books translated into over 43 languages, including numerous New York Times bestsellers. His latest books are [Super Genes](#) co-authored with Rudolph Tanzi, PhD and [Quantum Healing \(Revised and Updated\): Exploring the Frontiers of Mind/Body Medicine](#). [www.deepakchopra.com](http://www.deepakchopra.com)