

“It's Not What You Think: An Evolutionary Theory of Spiritual Enlightenment”

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12:30 - 2:00pm
Room 7-431

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Abstract:

Take a broad perspective: Evolutionary theory provides us with an unpredictably deep connection with the cosmos — a 13 billion year-old family tree. Your grandfather 300 million years ago was a lizard. How did it experience life? Imagine the conscious experience of a reptile. Elements like vision are similar, but higher functions are absent. Reptile consciousness is, in some way, a definitively 'smaller' version of consciousness than what we have today. As evolution has changed the structure of organisms, so has it changed the subjective experience. Don't forget, before any life existed, you were once rocks, air, and water, with a dash of lightning.

This particular pattern of molecules known as a 'human being' has evolved an amazing depth of consciousness: an ability to internally model the reality beyond the senses, to imagine futures that have never happened, to use language, to use rationality to build and test theories about our universe, to become self-aware. We often assume, due to these extreme capabilities, that the average adult consciousness in 2011 is the apex of the evolution of consciousness, and that it is now up to technology to propel us forward. So we work on changing the outside world to suit our needs, instead of changing ourselves and the way our minds function.

As consciousness evolves, we gain wider and deeper understandings of the universe and of ourselves. Where might it be headed next and what insights might we find? I believe that we have specific pointers in front of us about the next qualitative stages in our evolution, and where this has led has been surprising. As our evolutionary shifts in consciousness define how we see the world in which we live, there may be nothing more important.

Bio:

Jeff Lieberman explores the connections between the arts, sciences, education, passion, creativity, and the potential future of human consciousness. He hosts ‘Time Warp’ on the Discovery Channel, composes music in the duo gloobic, and shows technological sculptures around the world.

Lieberman finished four degrees at MIT (BS: Physics, Math, MS: Mech. Engineering, Media Arts and Sciences)