

DOWD and BARLOW archive (2010–2016) of AUDIO podcasts

"INSPIRING NATURALISM"

Michael Dowd and **Connie Barlow** recorded and posted this audio podcast series from 2009 through 2016. Here they **interview/dialogue with scientists, educators, and other leaders** in the emerging movement toward science-based (hence, natural) worldviews and wonders. Note: This is one of 3 audio podcast series that Dowd and Barlow offered during this time-block. Access archives of the other two at: "[America's Evolutionary Evangelists](#)" and "[Evolving Faith](#)".

- LISTEN to single episodes by clicking on titles below, or
- ACCESS via the entire [28 episode SOUNDCLOUD PLAYLIST](#)

Mon, 3 May 2010

[1. David Sloan Wilson: "Evolving Beliefs and Other Motivational Systems"](#)

David Sloan Wilson, Distinguished Professor in the Department of Biological Sciences at Binghamton University, is **a leading evolutionary theorist**, both in the life and (more recently) the social sciences. David's academic writings, which he now extends into actual cultural interventions and policy recommendations, are crucial for advancing the utility and allure of the naturalistic paradigm. David's books include *Evolution for Everyone* and *Darwin's Cathedral*, and he coauthored *The Literary Animal* and *Unto Others* — the latter is subtitled "The Evolution and Psychology of Unselfish Behavior." You can access online his is "[Rethinking the Theoretical Foundation of Sociobiology](#)" (coauthored with Edward O. Wilson).

Mon, 31 May 2010

[2. David Christian: "Big History"](#)

David Christian is a **historian and acclaimed teacher** who initiated the teaching of (and coined the term for) the widest interdisciplinary field of all: **Big History**. Big History is the deep-time history of everyone and everything. Michael Dowd and Connie Barlow interviewed David in May 2010, exploring both what Big History offers the world and how it invites individuals to experience their own lives as expressions of an immense, venerable, and deeply meaningful process. David's books are *Maps of Time: An Introduction to Big History*, which won the World History Association Book Prize in 2005, and his 2007 *This Fleeting World: A Short History of Humanity*. His 48-lecture course on DVD is one of the all-time most popular courses offered through The Teaching Company.

Thu, 1 July 2010

[3. Michael Shermer: "The Role of the Skeptic"](#)

Michael Shermer, is the public face of the venerable tradition of "skepticism" in America. As he explains in this podcast, Shermer is by no means a cynic. Rather, it is his calling to seriously investigate truth claims that clash with well-substantiated principles of mainstream science. He is the founder of the **Skeptic Society** and the force behind its periodical, *Skeptic Magazine*. He is also the author of a number of books, including ***The Science of Good and Evil*** and also ***How We Believe: Science, Skepticism, and the Search for God***. In this conversation with Connie Barlow and Michael Dowd, he reflects on his worldview trajectory and the importance of diverse voices in the broad community espousing naturalistic perspectives. Visit his personal website, **MichaelShermer.com**, where you can read his monthly column in *Scientific American*, and watch an array of video newsclips of his national news and debate appearances.

Fri, 9 July 2010

[4. Jon Cleland-Host: "Inspiring Naturalism for Families"](#)

Jon Cleland-Host, chemical scientist, is a leader in bringing to Earth-centered traditions (notably, **neo-paganism**) modes of inner reflection and community and **family celebrations** that are fully **grounded in mainstream science**. He and his physicist wife, Heather Cleland-Host, have been raising their 3 sons in a milieu that nurtures relational bonds with the grand sweep of time and ancestry: the **Epic of Evolution**. Past-president of his **Unitarian Universalist** fellowship in Midland MI, Jon now chairs the religious education committee. Jon (center) is pictured here with his three sons, with Michael Dowd, and with his **"Cosmala" beads** that narrate a scientifically accurate story of the Universe. His intergenerational curriculum contributions to TheGreatStory.org website include: **Timeline for Cosmala**; **Worship Resources for Evolution Sunday**; and **Meditation on Ancestors**.

Fri, 9 July 2010

[5. Jon Cleland-Host: "It's All Really There!"](#)

Chemist **Jon Cleland-Host** turns his attention from his parental role in giving his young sons an inspiring naturalism (see **podcast episode 4a**) to the ways that his **deep-time, scientific awareness** shapes his inner world: **spiritual, emotional, and moral**. Several times he refers to the **"Symphony of Science"** music video series — at one point, poignantly crying out "It's all really there!" (echoing Richard Feynman's now-famous proclamation). Cultivating **gratitude** on a daily (and usually deep-time) basis brings him intense communion with his human and prior-to-human **ancestry**: all their struggles and joys that made his own moment in time possible and for which he now feels the **ethical imperative** to "pay it forward." Along the way, he chastises fellow **freethinkers** who

have not yet rooted in their evolutionary story, and thus who may have neglected the need to cultivate lives of naturally inspired **meaning and purpose**.

Thu, 5 August 2010

[6. PZ Myers: "Changing the World One Blogpost at a Time"](#)

PZ Myers is a biologist who teaches at the Morris campus of the University of Minnesota. He is **the most widely read science blogger** in the world. His blog, **Pharyngula**, is read by more than 50,000 people a day. PZ's role as a blogger is not only to keep the rest of us informed of new developments in biology, and science in general, but also as a way to keep abreast of the latest skirmishes on the science and religion front. He is one of the **New Atheists** and is thus an outspoken critic of supernaturalism in any form. In 2009 PZ received the **Humanist of the Year** award.

Fri, 27 August 2010

[7. Ursula Goodenough: "The Sacred Depths of Nature"](#)

Ursula Goodenough is Professor of Biology at Washington University in St. Louis. In addition to her technical publications, she is the author of the acclaimed book in the genre of **religious naturalism**: ***The Sacred Depths of Nature***. In this conversation, Ursula shares how a purely naturalistic worldview offers emotional and spiritual benefits generally associated with the religious. She also expounds on several key concepts she uses to meaningfully interpret mainstream sciences in soul-satisfying, yet technically rigorous ways: **awareness, emergence, assent**, and her personal "**credo of continuation**." At Washington University she was a founder of the interdisciplinary course, "**Epic of Evolution**." The podcast hosts focus a portion of the discussion on the paper she coauthored with neuroscientist Terrence Deacon, "**The Sacred Depths of Emergence**." We also highly recommend her 2005 talk at the Skeptics Society: **Video: "Brain, Mind, and Consciousness"**.

Sun, 3 October 2010

[8. Paul Kurtz: "Planetary Humanism"](#)

Paul Kurtz is one of the prime movers of the secular humanist movement, including his authorship in 1973 of **Humanist Manifesto II**. Among his accomplishments is the founding of the Council for Secular Humanism, the Center for Inquiry, *Free Inquiry* magazine, and Prometheus Books. Kurtz is Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at the State University of New York at Buffalo. In this interview, Kurtz discusses the "planetary humanism" he sets forth in his 2010 "**Neo-Humanist Statement of Secular Principles and Values: Personal, Progressive, and Planetary**". See also the 1 October 2010 *New York Times Magazine* feature on Kurtz, which focuses on the tension

between Kurtz' long-standing form of secular humanism and that of the New Atheists: ["Closer Look at Rift Between Humanists Reveals Deeper Divisions"](#).

Sun, 19 June 2011

[9. Shane Dowd: "An Evolutionary Understanding of Gaming Addiction"](#)

Shane Dowd is a 26-year-old physical trainer who is bringing an understanding of evolutionary brain science and evolutionary psychology into his life and into his work of empowering clients. Here he reflects on the gaming addiction that had his grades in high school plummet and that interfered with his social development, but which he finally began to kick halfway through college. Today he advises a **3-step process for overcoming game addiction**: First, understand how our **evolved instincts** can so easily be led astray by the **"supernormal stimuli"** of our modern world. Second, use that understanding to kindle **reverence** for your instincts and **compassion** for yourself and for others who suffer from addictions. Third, honor your instincts and yourself by **re-structuring your environment** to minimize your exposure to supernormal stimuli and maximize health-giving aspects of life.

Wed, 17 August 2011

[10. Jennifer Morgan: Born with a Bang](#)

Jennifer Morgan is the author of the most popular (and scientifically accurate) **children's book series on the Epic of Evolution**. Titled *Born with a Bang*, Jennifer's trilogy was illustrated by **Dana Lynne Andersen**. In this conversation with hosts Connie Barlow and Michael Dowd, Jennifer reflects on **how creativity emerges from chaos**, time and again, in the 13.7 billion year history of the universe — and how this theme provisions individuals and cultures with **gratitude for the past and hope for the future**. The importance of **offering children the Story of the Universe**, and **Maria Montessori's** advocacy of universe-based education are also explored. She says, "There is so much happening in the world today that we need to know we have the eyes of the Universe within us."

Tue, 6 September 2011

[11. Primack and Abrams: View from the Center of the Universe](#)

Barlow and Dowd engage with astrophysicist **Joel R. Primack** and cultural historian **Nancy Ellen Abrams** about their unique partnership in translating a fully scientific understanding of the universe (and our place in it) into memorable and inspiring words and images. Because this dialogue was recorded in July 2010, it focuses on their coauthored 2006 book, *The View from the Center of the Universe*, and their autumn 2009 Terry Lectures at Yale University ("**Cosmic Society**"). At the time, they had just

finished a manuscript version of the Terry Lectures, which Yale University Press would publish in Spring 2011, titled [The New Universe and the Human Future](#). Reversing the widespread assumptions that science is just too difficult to understand in deeply personal ways, Nancy recounts her difficulties in Hebrew school as a second grader trying to square God's goodness with the frightening story of Abraham and Isaac, and declares, "The Bible's stories are much harder to understand than the Universe." Joel recounts an episode of awe (indeed, mysticism) he felt when, in 1992, data confirmed the theory of dark matter's role in the universe that he had co-developed in 1984. Ancillary resources mentioned in the interview include: [46 quotations](#) from *View from the Center of the Universe*; [Bible Stories Your Parents Never Taught You](#) (by Michael Scott Earl); and Connie Barlow's [children's curricula](#) for teaching the Epic of Evolution. See also a [video profile of Joel](#) and a [video profile of Nancy](#).

Wed, 12 October 2011

[12. Richard Dawkins: The Magic of Reality](#)

Barlow and Dowd take an inside look at Richard Dawkins' first children's book, *The Magic of Reality: How We Know What's Really True*. The couple recite excerpts and discuss why this "courageous and necessary book" may indeed help evolve the religions of the world along the lines of, what Dowd calls, the Evidential Reformation. Note: This commentary was originally recorded in video format and posted on Youtube [here](#). Other resources mentioned in the commentary include: • Jennifer Morgan's *Born with a Bang* book trilogy for kids • [Evolutionary Parables](#) (stories and dramatic scripts) • [Great Story Beads](#) (13.7 billion years represented in beads)

Thu, 9 February 2012

[13. Terrence Deacon: "How Mind Emerged from Matter"](#)

[Terrence \(Terry\) Deacon](#) highlights the core ideas in his 2011 book, *Incomplete Nature: How Mind Emerged from Matter*. A professor of biological anthropology and neurosciences at the University of California (Berkeley), Deacon is the author of the acclaimed 1997 book, *The Symbolic Species: The Coevolution of Language and the Brain*. As interviewers, Connie Barlow and Michael Dowd ensure that Deacon also talks about his motivation for writing this book, the paradigm shift he is aiming for, and the practical fruits that he hopes this emergent worldview (which transcends the discord between the nihilism of mechanism and the supernaturalism of traditional religions) will offer individuals and societies. Note: We also highly recommend the [audio interview of Deacon by Dr. Ginger Campbell](#) and the online book review (in *Skeptic Magazine*) by Sam MacIntosh, titled "[Mind Matters](#)".

Mon, 7 May 2012

[14. Alison Gopnik: Evolution, Modernity, and the Teenage Mind](#)

Alison Gopnik speaks about her research toward understanding **how young children acquire their picture of the world** -- especially the ways in which they seem to develop, test, and amend hypotheses not unlike the methods of scientists. What sparked the interviewers' interest, however, was a widely read essay she published in a January 2012 edition of the *Wall Street Journal*, titled "**What's Wrong with the Teenage Mind**". There she offers both **an evolutionary understanding of why making the transition from childhood to adulthood is so prolonged and problematic today** -- and what can be done to improve the situation. Gopnik is a professor of developmental psychology at the University of California, Berkeley, and the author of *The Scientist in the Crib* and *The Philosophical Baby: What Children's Minds Tell Us About Truth, Love and the Meaning of Life*.

Thu, 15 November 2012

[15. Deirdre Barrett: Supernormal Stimuli](#)

Deirdre Barrett is a psychologist who conducts research at Harvard Medical School. Her 2010 book, *Supernormal Stimuli: How Primal Urges Overran Their Evolutionary Purpose*, is the subject of this interview. Here she explores the practical implications of evolutionary psychology for helping us all thrive in our modern world -- despite the Stone-Age instincts we still carry.

Fri, 21 December 2012

[16. Thomas W. Clark: Worldview Naturalism](#)

Tom Clark, philosophical naturalist and consultant, is creator of naturalism.org, founder and director of the **Center for Naturalism**, author of *Encountering Naturalism: A Worldview and Its Uses*, and former host of the Philosophy Café at Harvard Book Store in Cambridge, MA. In this conversation, host Michael Dowd invites his guest to compare and contrast their understandings of worldview naturalism, how it applies to the subjective experience of **freewill**, meaningful interpretations of life, and why it is very helpful for those yearning to overcome **addictions**.

Thu, 14 March 2013

[17. Jonah Sachs: Winning the Story Wars](#)

In this episode we dig beneath the evidence and ideas that support a modern, naturalistic perspective and seek out the patterns and emphases that propel concepts into the realm of inspiring. Our guide is **Jonah Sachs**, author of *Winning the Story Wars: Why Those Who Tell (and Live) the Best Stories Will Rule the Future* (2012, Harvard Business Review). As the co-founder and creative director of Free Range Studios, Jonah has helped

hundreds of social brands and causes create breakthrough campaigns. His work on legendary viral videos like *The Matrix* and *The Story of Stuff* series have brought key social issues to the attention of more than 60 million people. We have entered "**the Digital Era**", Jonah suggests, in which the best of the oral traditions that supported our ancestors return, thanks to leading edge opportunities of the digital landscape.

Sun, 26 May 2013

[18. Jonathan Haidt: The Righteous Mind](#)

Jonathan Haidt is the author of the best-selling *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion*. A moral psychologist now at The Stern School of Business at New York University, Prof. Haidt writes, "My research in recent years focused on **the moral foundations of politics**, and on ways to transcend the "culture wars" by using recent discoveries in moral psychology to foster more civil forms of politics." A recent TED Talk of his is called, "**How Common Threats Can Make Common (Political) Ground**".

Sun, 15 December 2013

[19. Chris Henderson: Aboriginal Power](#)

Chris Henderson is one of Canada's foremost thinkers on innovation in the areas of business, cleantech, renewable energy, and corporate sustainability. His 2013 book, *Aboriginal Power: Clean Energy and the Future of Canada's First Peoples* is the topic of this conversation with Michael Dowd and Connie Barlow. Other websites he speaks of are: **Excel Partnership**, **1000 Solar Rooftops**, and **3iSummit: Collaborating for Action in Ottawa**. A Canadian television station recorded a superb interview with him on his work with in helping aboriginal communities develop renewable energy sources, available online as **video**.

Sun, 19 January 2014

[20. Jan Dash: The Climate Portal Online](#)

Jan Dash introduces the **Climate Portal**, for which he is the Managing Editor. The portal is part of the Climate Initiative of the **Unitarian Universalist United Nations Office** in New York City. The Climate Portal is a massive aggregator linking to reliable information online regarding the science, politics, finance, economics, human and environmental impacts, social costs, and ethics of climate change, along with what we can do and why responsible climate risk management is vital.

Thu, 9 October 2014

[21. Loyal Rue: Amythia](#)

Loyal Rue, professor emeritus of Luther College in Decorah Iowa, wrote his first book, *Amythia*, in 1989. In August 2014, Connie Barlow and Michael Dowd conversed with Loyal about his book and the malady of modernism, amythia. View the interview in VIDEO format on youtube: [Loyal Rue pt 1: "Amythia" \(interviewed by Barlow and Dowd\)](#).

Mon, 17 November 2014

22. Loyal Rue: By the Grace of Guile

Loyal Rue, professor emeritus of Luther College in Decorah Iowa, published his second book, *By the Grace of Guile: The Role of Deception in Natural History and Human Affairs*, in 1994. In August 2014, Connie Barlow and Michael Dowd conversed with Loyal about this book. This is the second episode in what will become a 5-part series in the "Inspiring Naturalism" podcast. View this interview in VIDEO format on youtube: [Loyal Rue pt 2: By the Grace of Guile](#).

Wed, 10 December 2014

23. Loyal Rue: Everybody's Story

Loyal Rue, professor emeritus of Luther College in Decorah Iowa, published his third book in 2000 titled, *Everybody's Story: Wising Up to the Epic of Evolution*. In August 2014, Connie Barlow and Michael Dowd conversed with Loyal about this book: how it is that the global scientific enterprise of science has given us a universally produced and evidentially based story that is not only meaningful but adaptive for these times. View the interview in VIDEO format on youtube: [Loyal Rue pt 3: "Everybody's Story"](#)

Mon, 5 January 2015

24. Loyal Rue: Nature Is Enough (pt 1)

Loyal Rue, professor emeritus of Luther College in Decorah Iowa, published his fifth book in 2011 titled, *Nature Is Enough: Religious Naturalism and the Meaning of Life*. In August 2014, Connie Barlow and Michael Dowd conversed with Loyal about this book, which is a good introduction to our shared understandings and differences in the realm of religious naturalism. View the interview in VIDEO format on youtube: [Loyal Rue pt 4A: "Nature Is Enough" \(w Barlow and Dowd\)](#)

Thu, 13 August 2015

25. Loyal Rue: Nature Is Enough (pt 2)

Loyal Rue, professor emeritus of Luther College in Decorah Iowa, published his fifth book in 2011 titled, *Nature Is Enough: Religious Naturalism and the Meaning of Life*. In August 2014, Connie Barlow and Michael Dowd conversed with Loyal about this book, which is a good introduction to our shared understandings and differences in the realm of religious naturalism. View the interview in VIDEO format on youtube: [Loyal Rue pt 4B: "Nature Is Enough" \(w Barlow and Dowd\)](#)

Thu, 21 January 2016

[26. Loyal Rue: Religion Is Not About God](#)

Loyal Rue, professor emeritus of Luther College in Decorah Iowa, published his fourth book in 2006 titled, *Religion Is Not About God*. In August 2014, Michael Dowd conversed with Loyal about this book. Loyal's biographical reflections on what in his youth eventually led him to write this book are noteworthy. View the interview in [VIDEO format](#) on youtube.

Fri, 22 January 2016

[27. Friends on Dark Mountain \(pt a\): Rue, Dowd, Barlow](#)

Loyal Rue, Michael Dowd, and Connie Barlow gather outdoors at Loyal's cabin in Iowa to share what too few are willing to discuss: **a worldview shift** that precludes the possibility of a bright future for our civilization. They begin with readings from "[Dark Mountain Manifesto](#)", then pose and challenge one another's ideas for how to speak to young people about the future. Watch this conversation in [VIDEO format](#) on youtube.

Wed, 9 March 2016

[28. Friends on Dark Mountain \(pt b\): Rue, Dowd, Barlow](#)

Loyal Rue, Michael Dowd, and Connie Barlow gather outdoors at Loyal's cabin in Iowa to share what too few are willing to discuss: **a worldview shift** that precludes the possibility of a bright future for our civilization. A recurrent theme is the tension between, what Rue calls, "**truth and comfort**" when discussing with others the ecological crisis and its implications for humanity. Watch this conversation in [VIDEO format](#) on youtube.