



Guerra de dos Mundos

Deepak Chopra

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Two bestselling authors first met in a televised Caltech debate on “the future of God,” one an articulate advocate for spirituality, the other a prominent physicist. This remarkable book is the product of that serendipitous encounter and the contentious—but respectful—clash of worldviews that grew along with their friendship.

In *War of the Worldviews* these two great thinkers battle over the cosmos, evolution and life, the human brain, and God, probing the fundamental questions that define the human experience.

How did the universe emerge?

What is the nature of time?

What is life?

Did Darwin go wrong?

What makes us human?

What is the connection between mind and brain?

Is God an illusion?

This extraordinary book will fascinate millions of readers of science and spirituality alike, as well as anyone who has ever asked themselves, What does it mean that I am alive?

From the Hardcover edition.

Guerra de dos Mundos Details

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From Reader Review Guerra de dos Mundos for online ebook

Peter says

Leonard is great, I have seen , read and heard too much of Chopra's woo woo to bother with his crap. Life is too short, and too many good books around. Well worth reading half of the book ;)

Joseph Young says

Had a promising concept, but became stupid. It seemed to be in the format of
Spiritualist: (Set up scientific strawman) => knock it down.
Atheist: (Set up spiritual strawman) => knock it down.
Rinse and repeat.

One of the biggest troubles with this book is that they do not properly acknowledge their points of agreement, nor do they take time to define their terms, which leads to many stupid arguments. If they had taken the time to define consciousness and defined what is considered significant, then they could have made some actual progressive discussion, as opposed to stating speech points.

Honestly, I really liked Deepak Chopra before this book. However, Deepak is really just embarrassing! As the book went on it seemed to become more like:

Chopra: Well, there's this concept I that I don't understand or I am going to grossly misunderstand or misrepresent. Therefore it must be explained by consciousness! Other illogical conclusions and non sequitur statements supposedly proving something.

Mlodinov: Actually Deepak, this is how it works. It's science. Then a tangential scientific explanation of something else scientific, that is only barely related to the subject.

At the end, Mlodinov throws Chopra a bone, saying how all worldviews are useful if they show different ways to look at life, and how to react to life. However, Chopra does not repay the favour, but becomes a defensive dick, basically espousing the incorrect argument of: Science can't prove this, therefore it must be wrong. So my argument which has even less proof, must be correct. Nyah, nyah, nyah, I win.

This forces an epilogue in which Mlodinov basically crushes Chopra's arguments, and Chopra can do nothing but continue to be the opposite of open-minded, and deny the existence of the arguments and evidence which don't fit perfectly into his worldview.

There were a lot of interesting scientific tidbits, mostly from Mlodinov. However, the book promises a discussion, but then does not really deliver.

Doc & Charly says

If you read and think, this is a book for you. It's a brilliant debate that will likely change few minds, but will give them a clear understanding of the opposing view.

Jim says

This book addresses some very big questions (eighteen of them, all told) like “Is There Design in the Universe?” and “What Makes Us Human?”. Deepak Chopra writes as the proponent of the existence of spirituality and Leonard Mlodinow advocates a worldview based purely on science. Both authors answer each question in a sort of literary debate. Chopra believes that the intricacies of the universe and human thought and behavior are part of the works of a cosmic intelligence. He doesn’t deny the ideas of modern science, but sees them as evidence of an unseen intelligence guiding everything. Mlodinow is a theoretical physicist and as such has an enquiring mind, but a theory must be scientifically proven for him to accept it. He admits that there are unanswered questions, but thinks they will be answered by future scientific breakthroughs.

I found the book to be a stimulating read loaded with lots of interesting examples chosen to support one worldview or the other. The following quote, originally from the Gospel of Thomas, is particularly meaningful: “If they say to you, ‘Where do you come from?’ say to them, ‘We came from the light, the place where the light came into being of its own accord.’” As Deepak says “The beauty of this passage is that it is equally true for science and for spirituality.”

Thanks Goodreads for another First Reads win!

David says

Both authors are very articulate in this book. Deepak Chopra comes across a little more passionate, while Leonard Mlodinow comes across as more knowledgeable. Chopra makes it very clear that he is *not* arguing for belief in God or in religion. In fact, he seems rather neutral to both God and religion. Instead, Chopra argues in favor of spirituality. He believes that the entire universe is conscious, and that is the way we need to think. He believes that scientists have their blinders on, and do not want to consider spirituality. On the other hand, Mlodinow argues that scientists are really very open-minded, and will consider any hypothesis for which there is observational evidence.

The concept of this book is excellent, but sometimes I felt this was just a collection of related essays, rather than a debate. While Chopra has a good grasp on much of science, nevertheless he makes quite a few misstatements about evolution and neuroscience. Unfortunately, Mlodinow does not call him out on these errors. And the errors are not incidental; they are key points that Chopra uses to justify his point of view.

This is an enjoyable, excellent book for understanding these two worldviews. The prose is mostly light-hearted and easy to read. Well done!

Mag says

Leonard Mlodinow is making a case for a scientific outlook on life and universe in this book and Deepak Chopra for a spiritual. They discuss issues of cosmos, life, mind and brain and God. Chopra does not deny any of the scientific developments like evolution, Big Bang, or any scientific discovery that has been made.

He just proposes that we add consciousness to the worldview equation. 'We don't need God, either. All we need is a universe that contains consciousness as an inseparable aspect of itself. Once you grant that, then any and all observers- divine, human, or any other kind- are expressions of self-awareness. They share the same status; each is a participant in creation,' he says in his essay on Cosmos part of the book.

In response, Mlodinov presents an outlook devoid of any spirituality, but is happy to concede that what he represents is the state of the affairs for the science of today, and that does not exclude any experimental developments in the future. I like his arguments. He makes much more sense to me and what he represents is intimately familiar to me. Chopra, on the other hand, uses too many generalizations and phrases of the type "it is evident" where he presents no evidence at all. Yet, I find the idea of a conscious universe intuitively appealing to my vaguely animistic nature.

I liked that both authors were respectful and civil to each other and both picked up on each other's thought threads. I listened to the audio version of the book and both Chopra and Mlodinov read their own material, which enhanced the content and made it quite cool in my opinion.

Diane Kistner says

In the classic movie, "The Princess Bride," Vizzini keeps exclaiming, with a bit of a spitting lisp, "INCONCEIVABLE!" The intrepid Inigo Montoya at last turns to him and says calmly, "You keep using that word. I do not think it means what you think it means."

The word in War of the Worldviews: Science Vs. Spirituality, presented in a first-named Deepak/Leonard debate, is CONSCIOUSNESS. The scientist/physicist Leonard (Mlodinow) keeps using that word, apparently thinking it means something very different from what Deepak (Chopra) thinks it means. The book could have been a lot stronger without this point of confusion.

From the very first debate, Deepak attempts to define "consciousness" and offers a common bridge between the spiritual and scientific perspectives, an effort Leonard mostly seems to shun (I think unfairly). Deepak argues that consciousness is fundamental in the universe; it is inseparable from and infuses all that is. He sees consciousness as an underlying property not just of thinking human beings but of all universal manifestations down to the most ephemeral quantum level. For Deepak, there is no mind/body dichotomy; it's all an infinite, infinitely creative continuum of consciousness. In other words, consciousness is inseparable from the universe.

The scientist conflates "consciousness" with the Freudian concept of "conscious" (in contradistinction to "unconscious"), a level of awareness that is largely the province of human beings that is rarely found (or, I should say, perceived) in non-human beings and never in inanimate matter. Therefore, many of Leonard's arguments do not seem to address Deepak's points; rather, he seems focused on knocking down narrow religious perspectives that demonize science and completely ignore its clearly spectacular achievements.

The lost opportunity resulting from this difference in understanding of the term "consciousness" is perhaps most obvious in the debate, "Did Darwin Go Wrong?" Here, Deepak advances the notion that consciousness itself, in Darwinian fashion, evolves because it is part and parcel with everything that is evolving. But instead of engaging Deepak at the level of what I found to be a very exciting idea, Leonard attacks him for what he sees as Deepak's misguided notions of Darwinism and what scientists actually do. Throughout the

book, Leonard keeps saying that the spiritual perspective is based on anthropomorphism, ascribing human characteristics to the physical universe. This is not what Deepak is advancing at all. (See Deepak/Is the Universe Conscious?) Ironically, Leonard (like so many scientific types I run into online) seems not to recognize his own anthropocentric stance. I could see what was coming in the first Perspectives section, when Leonard asks, "How do those unthinking atoms we are made of conspire to create love, joy, pain?" (If I'm not mistaken, I don't think science has proven that atoms are "unthinking.")

This is not to say that the scientist/physicist's arguments do not make for fascinating reading or that the juxtaposition of the two men's arguments is not hugely thought-provoking. Deepak is better at speaking the language of science, however, than Leonard is at speaking the language of spirituality, and I think Deepak sees points of commonality that Leonard does not. When Leonard sticks to the science he knows so well (e.g., *How Do Genes Work?*), he really shines; even those determined to cling to narrow religious assumptions will gain much insight from reading what he has to say. But when he overtly shows disdain for the spiritual perspective without bothering to understand what that perspective actually is, he comes across as both defensive and obnoxious. It is then that I find myself less willing to forgive his unexamined biases. (Don't get me wrong: Deepak reveals his biases, too; he just does it more consciously and humbly than Leonard does.)

This book is definitely worth reading, thinking about, and discussing with others, and I heartily recommend it. I did not give it five stars, though, because at times it reads a little like a politician mindlessly spouting talking points while refusing to hear what "the other side" is saying. I would have enjoyed it more had bridging the divide between the spiritual and scientific communities been the goal of both authors.

Rod Van Meter says

This book gave me religion, but not of the kind Chopra intended.

"He who refuses to do arithmetic is doomed to talk nonsense," John McCarthy said in 1995, though the sentiment is certainly older. Charles Babbage's formulation of a related sentiment on the need for experiment is a little long to quote here, but equally addresses the fundamentals of how we assess ground truth. I was always in spirit a Missourian, but this book drove me over the edge.

This book is essay-and-response, thrust-and-parry on a series of Big Questions, with newage ("rhymes with sewage," in the immortal words of some pundit or another) guru Deepak Chopra and physicist Leonard Mlodinow of Caltech. "Is God an Illusion?", "Did Darwin Go Wrong?", "Is the Brain a Computer?" and the like.

After having the book recommended by a friend, I tried to come at the book with an open mind, though it took quite a bit of willpower for me even to open a book by certified woo-master Deepak. It also took a little logistical gymnastics, as I refused to give Deepak money, so I had to find a library with a copy. I did invest several hours of my own time, which ultimately surprised me; I figured in a matter of minutes I'd be endangering nearby pedestrians with a flying hardback. Indeed, my first comments on the book were:

YE GODS Chopra's half of this book is awful! "Einstein, Schroedinger, Pauli and other so-called quantum mystics..." who calls them mystics?!? Every bloody sentence in this half of the book abuses scientific language, logic, history, scientific concepts, or all of the above.

Having just finished it, I'm not entirely sure whether he gets less offensive as the book progresses, whether I just get inured to it, or if the questions just get harder and the logic of both combatants more obscure, but I grew less continuously exasperated as I went.

Chopra's argument essentially amounts to, "I don't understand X, therefore it can only be explained by assuming the existence of Y." X is variously the origin of the universe, how consciousness arises from a physical brain (and associated body), and how random change plus natural selection can result in more complex organisms. Y is that the universe itself is conscious (presumably a single consciousness, though he doesn't say), that (bizarrely) individual electrons have consciousness, and that the universe is actively and consciously directing its own evolution and that of its component species.

Of course, we don't yet have all of the answers on these problems, and they do touch on deep philosophical issues, but that's hardly grounds to leap all the way to some metaphysical explanation. And just because Deepak doesn't understand it, doesn't mean that nobody does. Moreover, *never once in the book does Deepak propose a test for his ideas*. This is what drives me insane as I read his stuff. The ideas are outlandish, but many of them would have testable implications, if Deepak cared to look. But that is, in his worldview, unnecessary.

Deepak also weasels deeply and continuously. When he claims things like "the Universe is alive," he redefines the term "alive" to mean something so vacuous that almost anything that changes over time counts as "alive". "Evolve" likewise gets a disingenuous treatment. The many legitimate but differing English uses of "evolve" are ultimately all lumped together, with anything that changes over time being said to evolve in the Darwinian sense, and therefore be in need of an explanation that only he can provide.

I did have some hopes for the book as I read it. The Big Questions they are addressing are important, unsettled (and unsettling) ones. And I feel like I profited by thinking about them while reading the book, if not necessarily from the writers' arguments themselves.

Both writers write nice sentences, and Deepak in particular leavens his with beautiful quotes from the Sufi poet Rumi, the Bhagavad Gita, and elsewhere. But the difference in the ultimate respect with which they treat the reader is enormous. Deepak seems to think that he only needs to present a beguiling "What if..." in attractive language, and readers will swoon and join him. Leonard, on the other hand, actually creates coherent arguments, backed up by actual evidence, at least by reference.

I know that Leonard is getting the short end of the stick in this review, which is unfair, but his work is solid (both in logic and presentation) and doesn't drive me nuts the way Deepak's part does. **BRING ME SOME DATA!** I want to shout.

I'm a little surprised neither of them brought up Dwight Jaeger's pithy, "Experiment is asking God to conduct peer review." One thing's for sure: the book convinced me to be harder on my students! A few days ago I heard a talk by the famous physicist Michel Devoret, who mentioned that his own mentor had a sign in his office that read, "In God we trust. All others must bring data." Word.

Luis Lapham says

Esta obra nace de un debate televisivo para discutir sobre el futuro de Dios, en el Instituto Tecnológico de California. En el debate Deepak Chopra defendió la espiritualidad y se dijo investigador de la misma, y Leonard Mlodinow ofreció al primero enseñarle un poco de física cuántica, y así nació una buena amistad, pero lo duro del choque de visiones del mundo motivó la idea del libro.

Leonard Mlodinow es un científico, doctor en física por la Universidad de California en Berkeley y escritor para la serie Star Trek: The Next Generation. Cuenta con varios libros de divulgación como la ventana de Euclides, el arco iris de Feynman y el andar del borracho, entre otros.

Deepak Chopra es fundador del centro Chopra para el bienestar en Carlsbad, California y es reconocido como uno de los grandes maestros de filosofía oriental en el mundo occidental. Ha escrito más de 55 libros, algunos bestsellers durante décadas. Se auto denomina un investigador de la conciencia.

El libro trata 18 temas y un epílogo. Temas que van desde el origen del cosmos y la vida en la tierra, pasando por la mente y el cerebro, hasta concluir con Dios y la realidad. El método es simple: alguno de los autores inicia su exposición sobre alguno de los temas, desde el punto de vista de la espiritualidad o de la ciencia según corresponda, y el otro contesta el mismo tema desde su enfoque. El propósito de la obra es poner en la balanza del entendimiento de cada lector ambas perspectivas sobre estos temas fundamentales, con la finalidad de que conozca, reflexione y decida cual enfoque le convence o satisface más, o si ambos se podrían complementar en su visión del mundo.

Pienso que la obra es muy interesante y enriquecedora, ya que los personajes tienen la autoridad necesaria para disertar sobre cada temática, bajo su enfoque, claro está. Y debo decir que desde antes de leer el libro, me encuentro ubicado en el bando de la opinión científica, aunque abierto y curioso por conocer y aprender aspectos nuevos del enfoque espiritual que domina Deepak. Esperaba que el libro contestará preguntas tales como: ¿Qué es la conciencia y cómo se relaciona con la espiritualidad? ¿La teoría de la evolución puede explicar la aparición de la conciencia humana? ¿Los dos enfoques presentados en la obra pueden coexistir? ¿Qué pasa con la energía vital o conciencia del ser humano cuando muere? Y otras muchas preguntas más. En la primera parte, La guerra, fijan sus posiciones de manera clara y contundente. Para Deepak el futuro de la humanidad está en juego, ya que ni la religión ni la ciencia han podido dar una salida satisfactoria. Afirma que la única vía es la espiritualidad y la conciencia, ya que una totalidad oculta subyace a la creación. Acuña la frase "superstición del materialismo" en la que da a entender que para los científicos ateos, la realidad debe ser externa y que no aceptan el viaje interior del ser humano. Para Leonard el triunfo de la humanidad es la capacidad de comprensión que tenemos, y afirma que la ciencia procede de un círculo de observación, teoría y experimento. Afirma que la metafísica de Deepak va más allá de la guía espiritual para ofrecer una explicación subjetiva sobre la naturaleza del universo, el cual tiene un propósito y una conciencia. Comenta que la ciencia no tiene claro, aún, el origen de la conciencia humana, pero afirma que funciona de acuerdo con las leyes de la física y no de acuerdo a un mundo sobrenatural. Y finaliza afirmando que los seres humanos practicamos la ciencia porque tenemos la curiosidad de saber como ajustamos en el rompecabezas del universo.

En la segunda parte, el cosmos, Leonard nos comienza hablando sobre el modelo estándar de la cosmología, que es la evolución de la teoría del BigBang, y de como la teoría general de la relatividad de Einstein superaba la cosmovisión de Newton para distancias y velocidades muy grandes. Luego nos explica como Hubble descubre que el universo se está expandiendo y cómo los problemas del horizonte del problema, el de la plenitud y otros del BigBang fueron resueltos a finales de la década de 1970. La inflación cósmica que fue descubierta por Alan Guth, lo que significa que las regiones del universo que ahora están separadas por una gran distancia, estuvieron lo suficientemente cerca antes de la inflación como para que sus diferentes temperaturas se hubieran equilibrado antes de la expansión, lo que resuelve el horizonte del problema y de la plenitud. Y todo esto gracias la teoría cuántica y la relatividad general. Y finalmente, nos platica que la especulación más impactante es un principio cuántico denominado fluctuaciones de vacío, que se refieren a que incluso "la nada" exhibe fluctuaciones y, por lo tanto es inestable, como un caldero de agua hirviendo cuyas burbujas entran y salen constantemente de la existencia. Además puntualiza que la masa de la materia proviene de la energía del vacío que está entre los quarks que forma el protón. Y como consecuencia lógica,

que el universo pudo haberse generado espontáneamente de la nada, con todas las consecuencias que esto implica, de ser comprobado por la ciencia en el futuro.

En cambio, Deepak comienza su disertación afirmando, de manera temeraria, que la física cuántica ha sido obligada a detenerse al borde de un abismo sin salida, y que no es necesario dominar las matemáticas para entender los orígenes del cosmos. Afirma que la nueva historia de la creación se apoyará en 5 postulados: Totalidad, orden, evolución, creatividad y conciencia. En resumen expone que la existencia no es el vacío inerte, sino un campo dinámico que conecta el universo en una sola totalidad invisible a los 5 sentidos del hombre. La experiencia interior de esa totalidad es válida como forma de conocimientos y más satisfactoria que lo logrado por la ciencia. Que el universo tiene significado, y el azar es únicamente un acto intermedio en el comportamiento del cosmos. Además, añade que la evolución da saltos de creatividad en forma cuántica, ¡lo que esto signifique! Y finalmente, concluye que la conciencia siempre ha existido en el universo consciente de sí mismo entendiendo lo que hacía. E invita a la ciencia a aceptar, sin más ni más, ésta elegante explicación.

Los autores discuten también acerca de que si el universo es consciente, bajo argumentos muy parecidos a los que ya hemos apuntado, solo que Leonard puntualiza que hasta que observaciones sobre el cosmos indiquen que el universo es consciente de sí mismo y que actúa con un propósito, pocos científicos aceptarán un universo consciente y vivo, como asegura Deepak.

Creo que una de las citas más curiosas e increíbles de Deepak es cuando afirma: "La evolución es el club que la ciencia formó para vencer la religión" Esta frase denota un total desprecio por el duro trabajo científico detrás del descubrimiento de la teoría de la evolución de Darwin y otros notables científicos, o bien le falta leer y estudiar mucho más para opinar fuera de su casilla espiritual. También afirma, de manera campechana, que la conciencia es la fuerza que dirige la evolución del universo, olvidando la mutación y la selección natural de las cuales parece que no entiende ni papa.

Para la tercera parte, la vida, Deepak afirma que siempre ha sido y que la espiritualidad no requiere de un momento especial en que la vida apareció repentinamente, puesto que el universo está vivo y consciente de sí mismo. En cambio Leonard nos da cátedra sobre las teorías que dan luz sobre la aparición de la vida en la tierra, pasando por la generación espontánea, los experimentos de Redi y Louis Pasteur que proporcionaban evidencias convincentes de que microorganismos transportador por el aire eran la causa de la descomposición de los seres muertos. También nos habla que dos de las características fundamentales de la vida son el metabolismo y la respuesta al estímulo de los seres vivos.

Además, los autores miden fuerzas en temas tales como: ¿Existe un diseño en el universo? ¿Qué nos hace humanos? ¿Cómo funcionan los genes? ¿Se equivocó Darwin? Y otros más sobre temas como mente y cerebro, Dios, la FE y la realidad, que pienso que son los más interesantes de la obra.

Mi conclusión sobre el libro es positiva en cuanto nos ofrece dos visiones sobre 5 temas fundamentales, aunque me hubiera gustado que hubieran especulado sobre la posible existencia de otros seres vivos en otras partes del universo. Me hubiera gustado escuchar a Deepak como los encaja en la conciencia universal. Reconozco también a la editorial Aguilar, que tradicionalmente trata temas metafísicos, editar este libro que confronta estos temas con el sólido edificio de la ciencia.

Finalmente, después de leer la obra mi visión cosmológica basada en la ciencia se ve reforzada, debido a las claras y amenas presentaciones de Leonard, que admite que la ciencia no explica el origen de la vida, ni puede, ahora, explicar lo que es la conciencia. Además, afirma que la ciencia no excluye las recompensas de la espiritualidad por el camino de la racionalidad. En cambio, detecto varios peros en lo expuesto por Deepak. Primero, creo que tiene razón en el hecho de que las religiones han fracasado en su misión de llevar paz, amor y elevación espiritual a la gente, y él, de manera sumamente astuta y oportunista, se auto denomina "investigador de la conciencia", una especie de Mesías espiritual sin religiones que le estorben en sus negocios. Segundo, No aclara cómo lleva a cabo esta investigación, de que tipo es, si tiene un equipo de trabajo calificado, como llegó a los resultados que plantea y si han sido verificados, que avances y fracasos ha tenido. Lo más sorprendente es que ha publicado 55 libros, creo, sobre esta temática. Tercero, Me parece, como a Leonard, que las técnicas para realizar viajes al interior de nuestro ser, la meditación y otras, son

muy benéficas para limpiar, ordenar, motivar, expandir y aumentar la creatividad en la mente de las personas para su bien. A los científicos, y muchos otros personajes, les vendría muy bien, si tuvieran tiempo, tomar esos cursos en el Instituto de Deepak, para mejorar y expandir su quehacer científico. El problema comienza cuando Deepak, y demás maestros ancestrales, afirman que el universo es consciente de sí mismo y que fue creado con un fin, centrado en el ser humano. Cuarto, pienso firmemente que el vacío espiritual que subraya Deepak causa la superstición del materialismo, lo origina en gran medida el sistema económico capitalista impuesto a la mayoría de los habitantes del planeta, y apoyado por varias religiones y muchos medios de comunicación. Si hubiéramos construido un sistema económico solidario, colaborativo y no lucrativo, en donde no hubiera la explotación tan despiadada del 99% por el 1% de la población, estoy convencido de que no habría tal vacío, ni necesidad de dioses, drogas, televisión y demás subterfugios para evadir la dura realidad, y vivir plenos y felices en sociedad, hasta evolucionar a un ser humano superior.

Luis Lapham
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Adam Shand says

Disclaimer: I read the first few chapters and the last couple chapters. There may have been magic in the middle that I missed, but I wasn't convinced enough of the possibility to spend the time finding out.

Perhaps if I'd paid more attention to the word "war" in the title I wouldn't have bothered picking this book up. What caught my fancy was the idea of a conversation between a modern spiritualist and a physicist, with them both attempting to find commonality in their beliefs and worldview. Had they been able to work together to create a synthesis of their knowledge, I think they could have come up with something fascinating. Instead the book follows a debate format with each taking turns to express their own opinions on the topic, largely ignoring the other except for the occasional pot shot.

Both Deepak and Leonard are excellent writers and do a beautiful job of teaching the fundamentals of their worldview. They both use some lovely metaphors and relate charming stories to express their points.

Deepak on why an impersonal god shouldn't be threatening to people who believe in a personal god:

Think of somebody you love. Now think of love itself. The person you love puts a face on love, but love existed before they were born and will exist after they die. This is the same difference between a personal and impersonal god.

and on the problem of fundamental reality:

What is fundamental reality? The thorn in everyone's side when posing this question is that whatever fundamental reality is, it cannot be created. If you plant a stake and say, "This is it. X is the most basic aspect of reality." Anybody can raise their hand and ask, "But who or what created X?"

Leonard relating a friend's response to why she felt that rationality and belief aren't at odds:

Belief too can be a working hypothesis. I once asked a friend whose rationality I respected why she believes in both god and an immortal soul when there is no evidence for either. I expected her to disagree about the absence of evidence, but she didn't. Do your beliefs have to be consistent, she asked? Can you enjoy a film even if you are at a loss to describe its merits? Can it speak truth to you even if it is not a cinematic masterpiece? Why is it wrong to believe in a higher power even if you don't have proof? Then she told me of a book published in German, a collection of people about to be executed for helping Jews survive during World War II. All were written by people either deeply involved in their faith or by children. There was only one exception, she said—a nineteen year old secular man who got involved in the resistance movement as a sort of adventure. His letters were different than all the others, she said. He was the only one who feared death.

Unfortunately it more often reads like this:

Deepak: Science is fully armed, while a new spirituality divorced from religious dogma, is a fledgeling. I'd suggest that the war doesn't need to be fought anymore, because it's already over. **Hidebound science is ready to topple**, making way for a new paradigm where consciousness takes centre stage.

Leonard: When I talk to other scientists about the possibility of identifying a phenomena that pokes a hole in our current theories, the most common response I hear is a desire for such an anomaly to occur. For while **metaphysics is fixed and guided by personal belief and wish fulfilment**, science progress and is inspired by the excitement of discovery.

<sigh> Science is a set of tools which can be used to investigate and build models of the objective reality of the universe we live in. Spirituality is a set of practices which can be used to empirically explore each of our subjective reality. Both are valid, useful tools which have contributed a wealth of knowledge and skill to humanity.

What is interesting to me, and more than a little tragic, is that I think they are both making the same mistake. Each is confusing the theory vs practice, or perhaps the possibilities vs the implementation of science and spirituality. Deepak attacks the institution of science and points out its many flaws. Leonard attacks the institution of religion, barely even addressing the Godless spirituality which Deepak is speaking of.

Both claim that their worldview includes the option for the others viewpoint to be an important and cherished part of the whole. However they both use the language of debate, a language which has the necessity of a winner and loser at the core of its practice. Truly this was a "War of the Worldviews" and sadly there are no winners in war.

I'll leave you with this, my favourite quote from what I read:

"Reality is modest, it won't be seen naked."

Trevor says

This book is a mistake on so many levels. I struggle to believe Mlodinow was stupid enough to have done this, but the evidence is here right before my eyes, so what can I say?

Naturally enough, Chopra wins this war even before he writes a single word. Mlodinow is a respected writer of popular science – he has even written a couple of books with, in the immortal words of Homer Simpson, ‘that wheelchair guy’ Stephen Hawking. Chopra, on the other hand, is some fruitcake that believes rocks have consciousness. Mlodinow has given Chopra much more respectability than he deserves or warrants. And it isn’t as if Mlodinow can argue that Chopra’s spirituality is so typical that in his arguing against it he will be arguing against all spirituality. Chopra intentionally begins by distancing himself from ‘religion’ and by casting himself as both underdog and as alienated keeper of the true knowledge of the ancients. Is Mlodinow now going to write books arguing with Catholics, Jews, Scientologists and the Christian fundies of the Tea Party? Because let’s be frank here, all of which have a larger following than Chopra has and all of which present an alternative to the scientific conception of the universe. Chopra’s views are too foolish to deserve serious consideration.

And then Mlodinow falls into all of the standard traps such arguments inevitably lead to. Those traps include:

1. The utter ignorance of the audience. Chopra is able to say that quantum theory proves consciousness is a fundamental principle of the universe because he knows no one listening will have anything but the vaguest notion of what quantum theory means. Mlodinow ought to have watched *What the Bleep Do We Know* – if he needed to be reminded of the utter dearth of understanding ‘spiritualists’ have of quantum theory. Physicists should have come out against books like *The Dancing Wu Li Masters* and *The Tao of Physics* – now just about everyone believes that quantum theory confirms mysticism and spirituality – it does nothing of the kind, but ask a follower of Chopra what is quantum theory and they will tell you it is modern physics proving that ‘with our thoughts we make the world’. This is an own goal to physics and I can’t deny that there is a part of me that thinks physics should be left to bloody-well live with the consequences.
2. Thinking that if you explain complex physics and biology it will overcome the skilful half-truths and misinformation Chopra litters his essays with. Mlodinow’s essays are too often turgid and too frequently obscure about the point he is trying to make to refute some nonsense Chopra has blurted out without a shred of evidence. The problem is it takes no effort at all to say something like, the universe wants you to be happy – and endless discussions about the number of atoms in the universe that will not end up in a conscious person’s body do nothing to overcome Chopra’s wishful thinking – or that of his audience. I found myself wondering why Mlodinow was going into so much detail about some experiment that, no matter how that experiment turned out, was never going to convince anyone except those already convinced. Chopra is the master of the sound bite with no content behind it – Mlodinow is cast as the dull old teacher who never seems to ever really get to the point.
3. When Mlodinow plays the kinds of emotional games Chopra is an expert at, they all too often make him look somewhat less than humane. The problem is that in bringing up the members of your family that were killed in the holocaust as an argument against spirituality is always going to come up against the argument that for very many people their spirituality was the only thing that helped them make it though the holocaust. This is even an argument Mlodinow acknowledges. It is, therefore, an argument that he will never win. Yes,

spirituality leads people to remarkable acts of bravery – just look at Osama bin Laden. But the bottom line here is that living in a spiritual world is terrifying – and only the light of science gives us any hope of escape from the world of fear and terror that is spirituality.

4. The only grounds Mlodinow could have won on are that without the advances in science – made possible by rejecting the stultifying intellectual environment spirituality inevitably produces – we would still be ravaged by TB, small pox, endless deaths of children and mothers in child birth, deaths from poor sanitation and so on and so on and so on. A call to ‘spirituality’ is a call to silence science and therefore is a call for a large proportion of humanity to die or to have never been born. You want to talk about the holocaust – Chopra is in effect calling for a holocaust multiplied beyond conceiving. But Mlodinow doesn’t consistently make this his main argument – he is far too polite – and so Chopra is able to pretend he is ‘pro-science’ (so he can accept all of the benefits of science) while being against all of the bad consequences of science (which are presented as being due to science rejecting spirituality) – AND while also being ‘pro-true-spirituality’, but while rejecting all of the bad consequences of religion. Chopra gets to cherry pick and thus avoid responsibility for every negative consequence. You can’t argue against someone like that – they have no position for which to argue.

Like I said, this book is Mlodinow’s greatest mistake – one we will all pay dearly for, I’m afraid. I have read three of his other books – the other three are well worth reading. I mourn the trees that gave up their lives that this book could be printed.

Michele Harrod says

I did enjoy this book, which was a hearty debate between a spiritualist with all the belief in the (currently) unprovable power of humanity, the secrets locked within our DNA and our own ability (and responsibility) to create the world around us; and a scientist, who is also fully supported by indisputable facts about where we come from, and the likelihood that it is all random and meaning is something we simply strive for because of our overly large brains, that have probably evolved faster than our consciousness ever had the ability to cope with, without a written manual.

I'm summing both writer's up in simple terms, because I stand with feet on both sides of this wonderful fence. Personally, I like to think that Science has much to discover, which is why I have now re-entered its realms, and that the secrets of Spirituality have much to reveal, because really, if we don't start using both constructively, they are just wasted labels for the impotent.

Quite frankly, the planet and every species on it, is in desperate need of a miracle - and whether it comes from the impassioned heart of a scientist or the inspired one of a spiritual guru - I really don't care. We just need to find out what it is that makes some people do the right thing, and feed it, and find what it is that allows us to accept the wrong things, and starve it before we lose it all. I personally love that Science and Spirituality can have the mutual respect to have a constructive debate, without either feeling the need to kill the other for not agreeing wholeheartedly with their principle beliefs, or facts that they stand by. This alone is why this is an important book, regardless of who you need to be right!! And perhaps after all, the only real war going on in the world, is the war within.

Book says

War of the Worldviews: Science Vs. Spirituality by Deepak Chopra and Leonard Mlodinow

"War of the Worldviews" is an interesting debate on two worldviews: science and spirituality. On the side for science is Leonard Mlodinow a theoretical physicist and an accomplished author in his own right. While in defense of spirituality is the well-known author and internist Deepak Chopra. The debaters tackle on eighteen topics that cover a wide spectrum of the human experience. This surprisingly even-handed 336 page-book is broken out in the following five parts: Part I. The War, Part II. Cosmos, Part III. Life, Part IV. Mind and Brain., and Part V. God.

In order to make this review more comprehensive and useful, I have broken out the positives and negatives section by General, Deepak and Leonard.

Positives General:

1. A civil debate covering fascinating topics.
2. Both debaters established fairly early their worldviews. Deepak's position is that higher consciousness is the key to obtaining knowledge while Leonard defends science as the best tool to find the truths about our world.
3. Fair format, both debaters alternated.
4. Many fascinating topics.
5. Thought-provoking essays.
6. Both debaters are very accomplished authors and thinkers.
7. A lot of great insight of the brain, neuroscience.

Positives Deepak:

1. Deepak's strengths: friendly-approachable demeanor, accepts evolution, has panache, able to mask his beliefs in a scientific-sounding manner with ease, and has a positive outlook.
2. Makes it clear that religion isn't the same as religion.
3. Accepts science as a viable partner.
4. Provides a new creation story. Not buying it but some interesting thoughts. "Spirituality hold that consciousness is basic to creation".
5. Makes a lot of thought-provoking comments regarding consciousness, "everything we experience occurs in consciousness; therefore, there is no reality 'out there,' divorced from consciousness.
6. Give Deepak credit he didn't shy away from criticizing religion and uses science skillfully to do so: " Having declared the creator perfect, religion couldn't call God's creation imperfect; therefore, the universe didn't need to evolve, either. But the rise of intelligent life from primitive life-forms is undeniable".
7. It takes skill to defend your position with what appears to be science..."Spirituality will win the struggle for the future by restoring consciousness to evolution". Hmm, hey I don't understand his logic but I admire his passion.
8. Deepak is clever too, " But people don't use subjectivity to measure time; we use it to experience time".
9. Deepak is much better at asking the tough questions than answering them. "Where did DNA come from?"
10. Deepak is skilled at appealing to common sense notions even if it is flawed.
11. Deepak shows off style but does it really have substance?, "Science can make life better in material ways, but no one could say that the world is suffering from a lack of materialism; in fact, the world is suffering from the exact opposite: a lack of self-knowledge".
12. Claims that spirituality comes closer to science than religious faith, well that's positive. It still isn't science though...

13. The clever Deepak even attempts to find an opening for spirituality in the genetics world.
14. Deepak does make some good points regarding how chemicals keep track of time.
15. A good point regarding selfish genes. Even Dawkins had reservations about the title of book.
16. Feedback loops is an interesting concept.
17. Deepak's spiritual approach is very positive. Kudos for that.
18. Since science admits we don't know much about the world of consciousness, Deepak masterfully incorporates his worldview. The "hard problem"...
19. Once again let me give Deepak credit for defending the indefensible. It takes a lot of mental gymnastics to pull off such a feat but somehow Deepak does. He provides a map to a journey of higher consciousness...
20. "We must free ourselves from the burden of religious dogma" I agree...now don't your back on materialism.
21. Deepak I may disagree with you...but I give you credit, the ten qualities of pure consciousness.
22. "All experience occurs in consciousness". The unrelenting Deepak. "Reality is pure consciousness".
23. Another tough question, "Where do qualia come from?"
24. Positive outlook.

Positives Leonard:

1. Leonard's strengths: methodical, bright, able to convey difficult subjects to the masses, never overextends himself and limits what we do know versus what we don't, realist and a humanist.
2. Leonard defends the scientific method with gusto.
3. The scientific method works!
4. "In science it is only the evidence that matters". Amen...ummm, scratch that last part.
5. Provides many great examples of scientific discoveries.
6. Quantum theory in its proper perspective.
7. Leonard attacks consciousness straight forward never once extending science beyond what it knows. And posts interesting questions that Deepak can't answer scientifically, "If the universe is conscious, how can we tell?"
8. Evolution in its proper perspective. "Natural selection is what makes evolution more than just a random process". The purposeless laws of nature...
9. Deepak's first cause argument debunked.
10. Has the guts to take the tough stance, "It takes special courage to instead believe in science—to face the fact that after death our bodies return to the temperature of the inanimate objects around us, that we and our loved ones reach equilibrium with our environment, that we again become one with the dust".
11. Good quotes, "Biologists tell us that the designer of life was not a being, but the environment".
12. Argument from design debunked.
13. Language as an inherently human experience.
14. Free will debunked don't go there Deepak.
15. Great defense of materialism even when he doesn't use the term.
16. Great chapter on genes. The fact that our ancestors needed a tail and we still have the gene for making one is enlightening indeed!
17. Good explanations on altruism.
18. Makes it very clear what we do know and what we don't know about consciousness. I admire that trait. We know very little about the "felt quality".
19. Great section on Mind and Brain, one of my favorites. Debunks the Aristotelian worldview of purpose in the universe. Worth the price of the book.
20. One of the strongest rebuttals against mind -brain dualism, "split-brains".
21. The power of oxytocin.
22. Another great quote, "But if Deepak is right about a universal consciousness, and that the universe is loving through us, then it must also be hating through us, murdering and destroying through us, doing all the

things that humans do in addition to loving, including the acts that blew up my mother's faith in God".

23. The mind is the phenomenon of the brain.

24. "You might believe in an afterlife, but you're in no rush to perform the one experiment that could tell you if you are right". Good one...

25. NDEs and OBEs and their causes.

26. A look at how we come to beliefs.

27. "Science is open to new truths. What it resist is accepting untruths". Excellent quote.

28. Consciousness is science's last frontier.

29. A worldview grounded in observation and evidence.

Negatives General:

1. The format though fair as debaters alternated, didn't work as well as I had hoped. It seemed at times, as if the debaters were not debating but stating their position in an essay.
2. No bibliography or notes, a shame.
3. I would have added a couple of wildcard topics or a section where a blow-by-blow debate actually occurred.

Negatives Deepak:

1. I have to say it...but spirituality until it's able to come up with hypothesis that is falsifiable is in essence pseudoscience. Deepak is very adept at making his claims sound science friendly but when you dig a little deeper you are dealing with pseudoscience.
2. Key definitions were lacking, what is a spirit? If you claim that some immaterial spirit or soul is ultimately controlling the actions of the brain, you have to ask yourself, how does this immaterial thing that carries no energy or momentum provide energy and momentum to particles in the brain? What characteristics does a spirit have that would enable you to know objectively that it exists let alone what mechanism would allow it to operate in the material world?
3. "Science lost its sense of awe, increasingly seeing Nature as a force to be opposed and conquered..." nothing can be further from the truth. Leonard clearly shows this not to be the case, it's his awe of nature that lead him to science to begin with. Really Deepak?? In fact, here is a direct quote from Leonard, "The universe is an awe-inspiring place, especially for those who know something about it. The more we learn, the more astonishing it seems".
4. "But here the superstition of materialism breaks down..." superstition??
5. Deepak said Jesus was a scientist...honestly?
6. The fact that science hasn't been able to explain consciousness doesn't mean it belongs in the supernatural realm. Our world is full of examples that once were attributed to the supernatural and now have been fully explained by science.
7. Too many times Deepak makes comments that seem to have come out of the side of his mouth instead of being dare I say it "conscious" about it, consider when Deepak calls the scientific explanation of how we got her "science's creation myth". Really? Come on Deepak...
8. Deepak just frustrates me at times, consider this. "When you and I can experience the timeless, then phrases like "eternal life," "the immortal soul," and "a transcendent God" aren't just wishful thinking. When we look at it closely, eternity doesn't mean a long, long, long time. It means a reality where time is not present". Oh my science!
9. Deepak makes claims he can't support with science. Answers that lie in the realm of consciousness?? As of yet, nothing sufficiently profound to be considered believable.
10. Once again Deepak overextends himself. "He (Deepak) says that to look for the physical basis of humanity's essence will fail, because we are unpredictable, and "unpredictability destroys all forms of determinism" and so is "fatal for physical explanations." That's not in fact true. Quantum theory, for

example, is famous for the limits it places on predictability, and physicists do fine with that".

11. Now this comment is just plain wrong! "Today evolution is bringing people closer to God". Not in America!

12. Spirituality can be seen as a higher form of evolution, best described as "metabiological"—beyond biology". Oh no he didn't?!

13. "You cannot explain this kind of self-sacrifice as contributing to survival; the bee is dead". And I thought Deepak understood evolution.

14. Oh here we go again..."The human brain, like the universe itself, delivers whatever you expect it to, in accordance with your deepest beliefs". Really Deepak?

15. Deepak believes that the brain is the puppet of the immaterial mind. There is no evidence that, our brains are controlled by something outside of them but in the case of Deepak...

16. "The mind has looked deeply into itself and discovered its source, which is transcendent". What does this even means?

17. "The fine-tuned universe"...the universe wasn't fine tuned with us in mind, we evolved into it. If anything the cosmos appears to be fine-tuned for black holes.

Negatives Leonard:

1. A little more passion. A bit too controlled for me but it's effective.

In summary, let me use an analogy from boxing to describe this book. Deepak is that flashy boxer, he's got a lot of moves, he talks a big fight but what he gets in the ring all he does is dance a lot, connects a couple of jabs and he smiles to the audience every time he lands an otherwise ineffective punch. Leonard on the other hand, is methodical, the technician, he lands his jabs and follows up with effective blows to the midsection. He lands the bigger punches and proceeds to wear down the opponent until he lands the final blows that forces the end of the match. Honestly, that's how I saw it. Deepak provided style while Leonard provided the substance; and substance carries more weight for me. The book is worth 4.5 stars, Deepak's misrepresentations keeps the book from getting 5 stars. Leonard by technical knockout!

Further suggestions: "The Believing Brain" by Michael Shermer, "The Fallacy of Fine-Tuning" by Victor Stenger, "Physics of the Future" by Michio Kaku, "SuperSense" by Bruce M. Hood, "Human" by Michael Gazzaniga, "Hardwired Behavior" by Laurence Tancredi, "Braintrust: What Neuroscience Tells Us about Morality" by Patricia S. Churchland, "The Blank Slate" by Steven Pinker and "The Brain and the Meaning of Life" by Paul Thagard.

Snehil says

I never thought I would ever listen to a book written by Dr. Deepak Chopra. To me he has always been a spiritual leader and for me there is no room for a leader in spirituality, spirituality being a personal and a very unique journey for every one. But thanks to the limited availability of ebooks and audiobooks through the public library, I was almost forced to give this book a chance. I was pleasantly surprised by this book. This is a debate between a scientist who only believes what can be proven and a firm believer of God. Leonard and Deepak both very respectfully debated their worldviews. Though the conclusion of the debate was quite predictable but the journey of the debate was quite amusing and informative. The pattern of the

debate was, Deepak would pose a situation and challenge Leonard to prove it through science. Leonard gave all the scientific proofs he could but obviously could not prove everything through science. His arguments were mostly sound but still were fundamentally flawed. At the end Leonard himself sums it up in a few sentences how flawed his arguments were. It sounded almost like this. We have proven the Earth is round, we have proven the Earth revolves around the Sun, we have shown how our body functions and how our brain works, thus there is no God. He failed to address the real question, could there be an architect for this universe? Deepak need not prove it that there is an architect, he just claims that there is because Science cannot prove it otherwise. A good debate, better than two people standing on the stage and debating. In this they had ample time to research adequately to justify each argument and thus concluded from very many scientific experiments. Leonard obviously gave more scientific evidence but Deepak's understanding of science and physics was quite wonderful. His questions were intelligent.

Only the last part of the book, where Deepak brings his spiritual teaching, could be kept out. That part reminded me why I never wanted to and will never read Deepak's spiritual books.

Overall a good book, worth the time I spent listening to it.

Melissa says

Deepak could read me the phone book. I love his voice and how effectively he can make a point with parables and metaphors. I also love to hear Leonard speak. Being a nerd, his facts and figures are actually entertaining as well such a dilemma It was obvious early on in the debate that the gloves were off.

I didn't read the book to confirm any beliefs, or to be sold in one direction or the other. I merely wanted to hear the argument for each side and see what they came up with. They both gave their opposing worldviews backed with compelling arguments, like two 'goldfish physicists' :). In the end, I found that I still agreed with them both and believe the answer to be a combination of both, or somewhere in-between - in the silence within maybe....

The scientific facts and figures are too compelling to write off, but they just don't answer the big questions that spirituality gives rise to. I believe they were both correct to rule out organized religion as viable to either explain or fix anything.

I thoroughly enjoyed the audiobook version, and found it easier to follow than the printed book. However, as a reference for comparing arguments, the physical book wins. Obviously, I loved this if I read it and listened to the audiobook!
