

INTRODUCTION

We are in the midst of a sea change. Receding from view is materialism, whereby physical phenomena are assumed to be primary and consciousness is regarded as secondary. Approaching our sights is a complete reversal of perspective. According to this alternative view, consciousness is primary and the physical is secondary. In other words, materialism is receding and giving way to ideas about reality in which consciousness plays a key role (Barušs, 2007b; Koons & Bealer, 2010; Nagel, 2012; Pfeiffer, Mack, & Devereux, 2007; Sheldrake, 2012; Tart, 2009).

In keeping with that sea change, the purpose of this book is to explore what consciousness looks like when we do not automatically assume that consciousness must arise from the workings of matter. “Whoa!” the reader might say. “Not so fast! I like materialism. I didn’t know that there was anything wrong with it!” or “I’m not dogmatic, but I want to see compelling evidence before I’m willing to become more skeptical about materialism. I’m

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Transcendent Mind: Rethinking the Science of Consciousness, by I. Barušs and J. Mossbridge
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willing to be convinced by some really persuasive evidence. I just haven't seen any yet." Other readers might say, "It's about time! Let's get on with it!" We begin this book by addressing the first reader's concerns. Then in later chapters, we look at research concerning anomalous aspects of consciousness—such as near-death experiences, interactions with discarnate beings, and direct mental influence on physical processes—and examine what this research tells us about the nature of consciousness and its relationship to physical phenomena.

We first examine materialism in detail in Chapter 1 ("Beyond Materialism"). There we address the problems with materialism. Then we discuss the manner in which materialism continues to dominate academia through the suppression of contrary evidence and views. We also consider a spectrum of beliefs about consciousness and reality, some of which include the notion that meaning matters and that consciousness is necessary for the occurrence of meaning.

Next we review some of the evidence for anomalous information transfer (Chapter 2, "Shared Mind"). The evidence suggests that we can sometimes know what is going on in a place that we cannot perceive with our physical senses. We discuss the possibility of a "shared mind" that allows for interconnections between ourselves, other people, and the physical universe in which we live.

We next look at time, first as it is understood in modern physics, then in neuroscience and phenomenology (Chapter 3, "Rethinking Time"). We discuss evidence for precognition of various sorts, including studies showing that we are better able to anticipate the future at nonconscious levels than conscious ones. Looking at temporality amid alterations of consciousness, we find interesting variations, including frequent reports of individuals having stepped out of time altogether. And so we consider the differences between *apparent* time, the time described by ordinary physics and our everyday experience, and *deep* time, representing whatever ordering of events exists outside the confines of apparent time.

We next examine the possibility that there could be intelligences in the universe that we cannot perceive through our ordinary senses (Chapter 4, "Interactions With Discarnate Beings"). We consider several cases in which communication with such intelligences seems to have occurred. We note that these intelligences could offer a potential for healing but could also have a less benign effect on one's life.

Can the mind exist outside of the brain? Some lines of empirical evidence, particularly from near-death studies, are suggestive of this possibility (Chapter 5, "Separation of Mind From Brain"). In fact, the evidence could be read as indicating that, in some exceptional cases, the more the brain is compromised, the greater the clarity of mental activity when it comes to

perceiving information that seems normally to be hidden from the realm of our ordinary experiences.

Next we consider reports of mental control over physical processes (Chapter 6, “Direct Mental Influence”), a phenomenon that appears to be the opposite of anomalous information transfer. Although it may be possible to access information beyond that which is gained from our usual senses, it also seems as though we might be able to influence some physical processes outside of our bodies directly with our minds. The potential extent of this effect could be quite large, if cases of dramatic anomalous influencing continue to hold up to scientific scrutiny.

We then consider the psyche itself as an instrument for observing subjective phenomena in concert with third-person confirmation (Chapter 7, “Reintegrating Subjectivity Into Consciousness Research”). We discuss how the psyche needs to be properly prepared by attenuating our psychological biases and learning to think logically to critically evaluate whatever empirical evidence is available. As such preparation proceeds, anomalous ways of gaining knowledge could unfold, if they were not already present, augmenting rationality by providing additional tools for research. And continued self-transformation could lead to transcendent states of consciousness in which both existential and practical questions are resolved.

Finally, we examine models of consciousness that could help explain the empirical data we have discussed (Chapter 8, “Transcendent Mind”). We briefly consider quantum models of consciousness, then turn to filter models and a “flicker-filter” theory. Although none of these models are completely satisfactory, they each offer insights that could be incorporated into a yet-to-be developed model of consciousness. We also present some potential future research strategies and clinical applications of the material considered in the book. We conclude by giving our best guess as to the true nature of consciousness, based on the empirical evidence available to us, knowing that whatever we say will be put to the test of future research and developed accordingly.

This book is written for those who would like to rethink our understanding of consciousness. Specifically, this book is for clinical psychologists, psychoanalysts, experimental psychologists, psychiatrists, neuroscientists, and anyone else who wants to create a new way forward within the constraints of empirical data and logical analysis but without the restrictions of dogma. It is for those who want to entertain the questions “What is this stuff called *mind*? What are its properties? What does it do? What is its relationship to the brain? How can we use the mind to explore itself?” and, “How can we use it to heal ourselves and others?” So let us proceed.