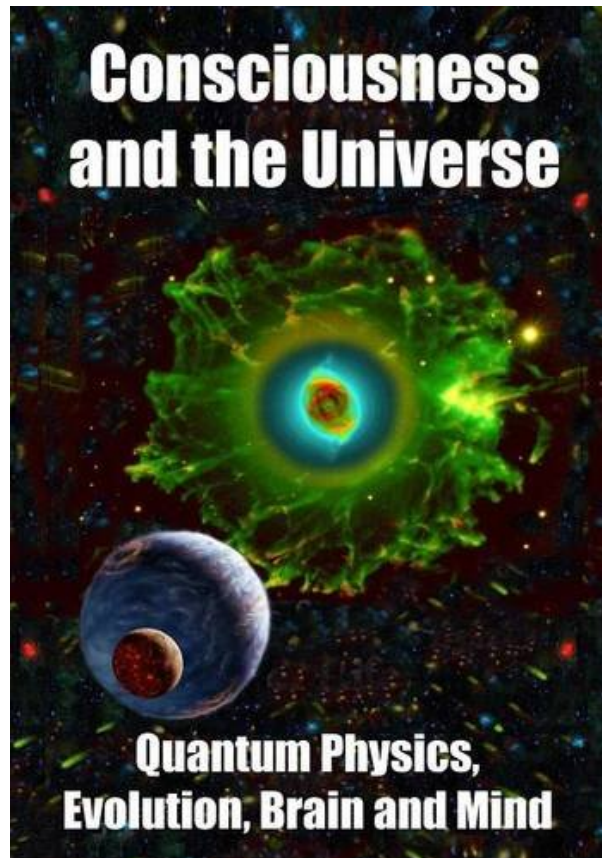


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# Consciousness and the Universe



**Quantum Physics,  
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Is consciousness an epiphenomenal happenstance of this particular universe? Or does the very concept of a universe depend upon its presence? Does consciousness merely perceive reality, or does reality depend upon it? Did consciousness simply emerge as an effect of evolution? Or was it, in some sense, always "out there" in the world? These questions and more, are addressed in this special edition. FEATURING Cosmological Foundations of Consciousness Origins of Thought Evolution of Consciousness Neuroscience of Free Will Quantum Physics & Consciousness Out-of-Body and Near Death Experiences Dreams & Hallucinations Paleolithic Cosmology & Spirituality Self-Consciousness in Apes, Dolphins, Cephalopods, Machines Consciousness in Extra-Terrestrials Sexual Consciousness How Consciousness Becomes the Physical Universe Over 70 Consciousness Raising Articles By: Deepak Chopra, Roger Penrose, Stuart Hameroff, Brandon Carter, Michael Persinger, Walter Freeman, Howard Shevrin, Arnold Trehub, Bruce MacLennan, GianCarlo Ghirardi, Don Page, Shan Gao, Gordon Globus, Fred Kuttner, Bruce Rosenblum, Jack Sarfatti, Etzel Cardena, Larry Dossey, Bruce Greyson, Roger Nelson, Paola Zizzi, Rudolph Tanzi, Ernesto Di Mauro, Michael Nauenberg, Thomas Suddendorf, Lori Marino, Andrea E. Cavanna, Ian Tattersall, Ellert R.S. Nijenhuis, Bruce Greyson, Milford H. Wolpoff, Edgar Mitchell, Thomas H. Huxley, René Descartes, Sigmund Freud, Williams James, and many more. This Text Is Divided into 14 Sections with 70+ Chapters Section I. Cosmology of Consciousness Section II. Brain and Mind Section III. What is Consciousness Section IV. Consciousness and Thought Section V. The Neuroanatomy of the Unconscious Section VI. Remote Consciousness Section VII. Self-Consciousness - Dissociated, Shared, Near Death Consciousness Section VIII. Dreams, Hallucinations & Altered States of Consciousness Section IX. Origins & Evolution of Consciousness Section X. Paleolithic Consciousness: Neanderthals, Cro-Magnon, Spirituality, Sexuality Section XI. Animal and Artificial Consciousness Section XII. Quantum Physics and Consciousness Section XIII. Consciousness and ExtraTerrestrials Section XIV. Consciousness and the Universe About the Editors Dr. Penrose shared the Wolf Prize in physics with Stephen Hawking, and is renowned world-wide for his work in general relativity, quantum mechanics, geometry and consciousness. He is the author of many important papers and books including The Emperor's New Mind, Shadows of the Mind, The Road to Reality, and his latest Cycles of Time, which proposes serial universes. Dr Stuart Hameroff, of the University of Arizona, is a world famous consciousness researcher and organizer of the conference series Toward a Science of Consciousness.

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63 of 71 people found the following review helpful.

Consciousness of the new millennium

By Dr. James Paul Pandarakalam

Consciousness of the new millennium

This bulky, elegantly written and intellectually rigorous book of Penrose et al is an impressively fluent compilation, cleverly converting the specialist knowledge of several investigators of consciousness into a succinct review of the many dimensions of consciousness. Those who are disenchanted with the current materialistic views of consciousness would find the book useful in expanding their model of consciousness. The chapter on extraterrestrial consciousness makes this book abreast of times. Quantum is only bedrock of matter, but some believe that mysticism inform us of the bed-rock of reality. The current world is in a transitional stage from the 20th century materialism to a new mysticism and this book clearly depicts such a switch over. Consciousness and the Universe is a 21st century way of approaching the issue of consciousness- consciousness of the New Millennium.

Reductionism is the assumption that nothing can be greater than the sum of its parts. There has always been pitched intellectual battle between the adherents of reductionist and non-reductionist ideologies and this book gives food for thought to both sides. In the reductionist view, mind is an epiphenomenon - caused by physical phenomena and incapable of causing anything. A non reductionist could argue that such a view is like believing that Olympic pool created the swimming events held there. In the 20th century the brain was accorded more significance than the mind; to the reductionist of 20th century, consciousness is nothing more than a causally ineffectual by-product of the grinding of our neural machinery, of which nobody is in charge. In the last century, neuroscientists have been criticised for diminishing the mind to a scientific nullity making consciousness to a subjective illusion but some particle physicists are now shifting the goal post.

Section, five and sixth offers evidences to support non reductionist views. The non-reductionist view is that with the recent growth of meta-analysis, all the basic phenomena of experimental parapsychology, extrasensory perception, psychokinesis and so on have been justified by statistical analysis; they challenge a materialistic model of mind. There is evidence from survival research to support their case. For reductionist views to be successfully challenged, it has to be established that minds can exist independent of brain. One way of proving that humans have a non-physical part in association with the brain which can also exist independent of brain is proving post mortem existence. According to survival researchers, there is now as much evidence to justify belief in life after death as there is for the historical existence of dinosaurs. The reductionists have to accept the limit of their approach to phenomena like near death experiences, collective apparitional experiences, death bed visions, supernormal states etc. There are mounting evidences to support the claims of enhanced cognitive faculties in Near Death Experiences when brain is truly underactive. Whether memories can outlive physical extinction is a matter of scientific significance. A narration of the different findings of survival research would have made the book more appealing for the non reductionist.

The volume does not offer any watertight evidence -based conclusions, but has put forward many thought provoking and worthwhile contributions. Human beings may be electrical animals, quantum beings and spiritual personalities, and therefore may also have a higher consciousness. Consciousness studies should ideally have intellectual and spiritual benefits; this book is geared essentially for the former. It has a bottom up approach to consciousness as opposed to top down approach and is a brain praising book; I have no problems with that. Consciousness and the Universe is a serious attempt to develop a deeper understanding of mind and is a milestone in cognitive sciences. This book marks a return of consciousness studies to the map of neurosciences. Last chapter offers a conclusion with an overtone of metastatic monism as opposed to metastatic dualism. Consciousness and the Universe has not demystified consciousness but has made it more mysterious, and that is probably the novelty of this book.

Dr. James Paul Pandarakalam

32 of 36 people found the following review helpful.

In the grand scheme of things, it may be mere anthropological to assume that a conscious universe is more fitting !

By Didaskalex

\*\*\*\*1/2

"Science as usually interpreted does not provide for consciousness. Accordingly, there has arisen a conflict ..., a conflict which is frequently dismissed because, it is said, science is not concerned with final issues. ... modern science is at a loss to explain the presence of life or consciousness in a cosmos governed by entropy, ... How is science to deal with this? ..., science is about to undergo a radical transformation, a revolution to rival any that has previously occurred." -- Arthur Young.

\*

Penrose response to criticism of 'The Emperor's New Mind' resulted in three books, latest of which with anesthesiologist Stuart Hameroff. They have expressed that consciousness is the result of quantum gravity effects in microtubules, which they called 'orchestrated objective reduction'. Penrose argued that the theorem showed that the brain had the ability to go beyond what could be achieved by axioms or formal systems. He argued that this meant that the brain had some additional function that was not based on an algorithm (a system of calculations), whereas a computer is driven solely by algorithms. Penrose asserted that the brain could perform functions that no computer could perform, dubbed as non-computable processing. Given the algorithm-based nature of most of physics, he decided that the random choice of position that occurs when a quantum wave collapses into a particle was the only possibility for a non-computable process.

The process by which collapse selects from a set of possibilities is seen by Stapp as literally a process of choice, and not merely a random pick, an approach having implications with regard to time. Given the future is a consequence to present decisions, it is not pre-existing, rather there is an evolving universe in which subjects participate, as in Whitehead's cosmology. Stapp's version of the conscious brain is proposed as a system that is internally determined in a way that cannot be represented outside it, whereas for the rest of the physical universe an external representation with a knowledge of the physical laws concede an accurate prediction of future events. Stapp claims that the proof of his theory requires the identification of the neurons that provide the top-level code; and most importantly, the process by which memory is turned into an additional top-level code.

The main argument against the quantum mind proposition is that quantum states in the brain would induce decoherence (the loss of coherence or ordering of the phase angles between the components of a system in a quantum), before they have reached a spatial or temporal scale, at which they could be useful for neural processing. Michael Price, thinks that quantum never affects, or rarely affects human decisions, while classical physics determines the behavior of neurons. The answer to, "For how long will it remain in its present semi-conscious state? depends on how prolific the universe is at producing conscious life." If it is widespread throughout the universe, the odds are that, "some pockets of consciousness on some planets will survive for a reasonable length of time." For all we know, so far, ours may be the only planet in the universe embracing consciousness, within mindful lives. Our conduct and our decisions will determine whether the universe has an extended future as a conscious body or will it soon lapse back into unconsciousness.

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Conscious Universe in perspective:

When we recognize that the mind is the activity of an evolved brain, it radically transforms our view of the mind's place in the universe, and of the universe itself. The physical universe ceases to be an unconscious object, observed and explored by conscious minds which somehow stand outside it. Conscious minds are

part of the physical universe, as much as planets and galaxies. Our consciousness is not just of the universe; it is part of the universe, and hence the universe itself is partially conscious. Similarly, our knowledge of the universe is not something separate from the universe; it forms a part of the universe itself. As Carl Sagan put it, "humans are the stuff of the cosmos examining itself," since, for humans to know the universe is for the universe to know itself.

The universe was eternally there and was never recognized, the universe itself had no idea that it existed. Following the Big Bang, four billion years since life first evolved, something peculiar started to develop, as tiny parts of the universe became conscious, and came to know something about themselves and the universe of which they are a part. Eventually, some of these tiny parts, cosmologists, scientists, and the informed lay people came to conceive the Big Bang and the creative evolution through which they came to exist, that our universe now had some glimmering awareness about its existence and some clues about the whereabouts it came from, that might sound like a strange way for a universe to behave. Darwin's theory of evolution supports how clumps of matter could come to be integrated in such a way that they are able to contemplate with the cosmos.

In the grand scheme of things, it may be mere anthropological to assume that a conscious universe is more fitting than an unconscious one, since consciously aware beings are often discontented and sometimes just miserable, that after all an unconscious universe could be the more fitting. Nonetheless, it may be the fate of the universe to spend an eternity in darkness, except for a brief display of self-awareness in the middle of nowhere. Fr. Teilhard de Chardin, the eminent French palaeontologist, foresaw the universe to continue to expand into a greater awareness, and finally coalescing into an integrated, universal consciousness, which he gave an epithet, the Omega Point, an eternity identified with Christ. Although the universe is deemed conscious of itself at present, its ultimate projected fate makes it uncertain that a time will come when the universe slips back into unconsciousness.

#### The Conscious Universe: Parts and Wholes in Physical Reality

9 of 9 people found the following review helpful.

A Compelling Work

By Orrin Schwab

The book is an edited compendium of articles on the nature of human consciousness from a wide range of disciplines. Theologians, psychologists, other social scientists, neuroscientists and quantum physicists espouse intriguing albeit controversial and unproven theories of the mind and its relationship to universe. Some of the contributors suggest that consciousness is not situated in the mind at all but is part of the universe- a dimension of space-time that humans and other life forms have discovered. I found the work fascinating, stimulating and a must read.

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