



# Why Isn't Consciousness a Fundamental in Science?

| Stephan A. Schwartz |

**C**onsciousness is not a fundamental in the worldview that has been the dominant paradigm of science for several centuries, and from that worldview consciousness arises from physiology. There can be no continuity of consciousness; and consciousness cannot be nonlocal.

This conviction is dogma and I use that word very precisely, because Physicalism/Materialism is a worldview that does not adhere to the actual data, and like all dogmas is antagonistic to facts. Neuroscientists Jeffrey M. Schwartz and Mario Beauregard and physicist Henry Stapp put it very well:

Neuropsychological research on the neural basis of behavior generally posits that brain mechanisms will ultimately suffice to explain all psychologically described phenomena. This assumption stems from the idea that the brain is made up entirely of material particles and fields, and that all causal mechanisms relevant to neuroscience can therefore be formulated solely in terms of properties of these elements. Thus, terms having intrinsic mentalistic and/or experiential content (e.g., “feeling,” “knowing,” and “effort”) are not included as primary causal factors. This theoretical restriction is motivated primarily by ideas about the natural world that have been known to be fundamentally incorrect for more than

three-quarters of a century [emphasis added].<sup>1</sup>

I and many others have presented the experimental case, for nonlocal consciousness measured under the strictest of circumstances.<sup>2-4</sup> There are now almost a dozen standardized protocols being carried out in universities and institutions throughout the world, each of which has odds greater than one in a billion that the results could be chance.

The social implications of this can be seen in the protocols for remote viewing, a technique for obtaining objectively verifiable sense impressions and knowledge about persons, places, events, or objects from which the viewer is shielded by time space or both. I played a foundational role in creating these protocols, and I wish I could tell you that we saw what was coming, but we did not.

It turns out Remote Viewing is so functional it has transformed from a laboratory experiment into a hobby, like scuba diving. Thousands of practitioners routinely do what must now be several million remote viewing experiments. And most are done under the same double or triple blind conditions taken directly from the laboratories that created them back in the 1970s.

In 2016, three decades later, a worldwide cadre of viewers keep meticulous statistics and experience sufficient success to stay interested across years. Remote Viewing is now a kind of mental martial art with conferences, journals, and all the other accoutrements of any organized group activity.

In contrast, as the research has become tighter and more meticulous what is notable about the criticism is its growing mediocrity.<sup>5-7</sup> And what's most interesting about that is that individuals of real accomplishment in other fields

frequently reveal startling ignorance about matters involving consciousness, even though they take very public positions about it. I have twice been in public exchanges with Deniers and they have had to publicly admit they do not know the literature. Nowhere is this clearer than in the Near Death research where the technology of physiological monitoring has reached a level of sophistication that renders claims the NDE phenomenon is entirely physiological, the performance of a dying brain, antiquated and quaint. And yet such criticism of NDEs continues.

In *Science, God, and the Nature of Reality: Bias in Biomedical Research*, biomedical scientist Professor Sarah S. Knox of the University of West Virginia Medical School frames it this way:

Since [critics contend] there is no plausible mechanism within a materialist frame of reference to explain them, paranormal phenomena can't possibly be valid. This is the same reasoning that the learned men of Galileo's day used when they refused to look in the telescope. This attitude is nowhere more evident than in the number of scientists who are willing to volunteer as “expert” commentators on television programs about paranormal phenomena, astonishingly undeterred and unembarrassed by their complete lack of knowledge concerning the existing experimental data. These “experts” smile condescendingly as they explain that the phenomena under discussion can be explained by chance occurrence, brain abnormality, etc., depending on the topic at hand. Since the belief that causality can only be found in matter reigns supreme, there doesn't seem to be any requirement that these “experts”

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support their claims with actual data. They need only introduce the possibility that the same outcome might have been achieved through some other means, to convince their naïve audience that it is all 'hocus pocus.'<sup>8</sup>

So, is consciousness “fundamental and causal” as Max Planck asserted in 1931 in as public a manner as he could?<sup>9</sup> Is reality an “optical delusion” as Einstein saw it?<sup>10</sup> Is there continuity of consciousness before physical incarnation, continuing after corporeal death, suggesting that a nonlocal aspect of the self episodically manifests and incarnates another personality? I think those questions have been answered to varying degrees in the affirmative.

And yet materialism endures. It is the default meme of our culture because of psychological forces of which we are at best only dimly aware are driving us. Dan Kahan at Yale organized a team including George Washington Law School professor, Donald Braman, and University of Oklahoma Hank Jenkins-Smith. Their research goal was to understand the relationship of facts with beliefs. They found that “The cultural cognition of risk refers to the tendency of individuals to form risk perceptions that are congenial to their values.”

What did they mean by cultural cognition of risk? They defined it as the “tendency of individuals to fit their perceptions of risk and related factual beliefs to their shared moral evaluations of putatively dangerous activities. The *cultural cognition thesis* asserts that individuals are psychologically disposed to believe that behaviour they (and their peers) find honorable is socially beneficial, and behavior they find base socially detrimental.”<sup>11</sup>

This unconscious bias, extends to such a point that, “... cultural cognition influences perceptions of credibility. Individuals more readily impute expert knowledge and trustworthiness to information sources whom they perceive as sharing their worldviews and deny the same to those whose worldviews they perceive as different from theirs.”<sup>11</sup>

The Kahan team's research shows that for a large number of people being accepted in your group and protecting your status by not going against the

group consensus is more important than facts.<sup>12</sup> It is a fear response.

As Thomas Kuhn, perhaps the most influential historian and philosopher of science in the 20th century, points out, “The scientific enterprise as a whole does from time to time prove useful, opens up new territory, displays order, and tests long-accepted belief. Nevertheless, the *individual* engaged on a normal research problem is almost never doing any one of these things [emphasis Kuhn].”<sup>13</sup> He finds himself instead working from a different motivation, the desire to demonstrate that he is capable of solving a problem within the paradigm that no one has ever solved before, or has not solved as elegantly. “Scientists” Kuhn says, “normally [do not] aim to invent new theories, and they are often intolerant of those invented by others.”<sup>13</sup>

So I think we know why materialism has continued past its sell by date. What I have begun to think about is how did consciousness get exiled from science in the first place? And why?

It certainly was not that way in the pre-Christian world. Thinking about consciousness and its role in physical reality could not have been more mainstream. The idea of nonlocal consciousness and that all life is interconnected and interdependent, and that space-time itself arises from consciousness, not consciousness from space-time, is not a new idea. Empedocles (≈ 490–430 BCE), considered one of the greatest pre-Socratic philosophers, put nonlocal consciousness this way, “The nature of God is a circle of which the center is everywhere and the circumference is nowhere.”

Plato (429?–347 BCE) who founded the first institution of higher learning in the West, The Academy in Athens, explains his concept, “Do you not know also that although they (students) make use of the visible forms and reason about them, they are thinking not of these, but of the ideals which they resemble; not of the figures which they draw, but of the absolute square and the absolute diameter, and so on—the forms which they draw or make, and which have shadows and reflections in water of their own, are converted by them into images, but they are really seeking to behold the things themselves,

which can only be seen with the eye of the mind?”<sup>14</sup> And he saw this nonlocal domain as informational in nature.

Even Aristotle, a physicalist but not a materialist saw the information aspect of consciousness and recognized a form of nonlocal consciousness, “The knowledge of the soul admittedly contributes greatly to the advance of truth in general, and, above all, to our understanding of Nature, for the soul is in some sense the principle of animal life. Our aim is to grasp and understand, first its essential nature, and secondly its properties; of these some are taught to be affections proper to the soul itself, while others are considered to attach to the animal owing to the presence within it of soul.”<sup>15</sup>

And this worldview continued in the early Christian world. Plotinus (≈ 204 CE) and Augustine also saw consciousness as fundamental.<sup>16</sup>

In Eastern cultures, consciousness and a kind of proto-neuroscience were closely linked. The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali (≈ 500–200 BCE) expound upon the concept.

And it was not just theoretical; in both East and West it was espoused by philosophers, and also put to practical use in healthcare.

Ayurvedic medicine dates back to India and the Indus Valley Civilization (3300–1300 BCE) and “is based on the belief that health and wellness depend on a delicate balance between the mind, body, and spirit.”<sup>17</sup>

Similarly acupuncture, which dates back over 5000 years recognized it was manipulating consciousness as a part of the treatment. Although it is usually assumed that acupuncture developed in Asia, recent archeological evidence has established a much older Western example. In 1991 the frozen and extraordinarily intact body and kit of the “Iceman” Otzi, a Neolithic man dating back 5300 years was found in the Italo-Austrian Alps. Forensic anthropologists brought in to examine the body found groups of lines and crosses tattooed into his skin. Unlike modern tattooing methods, the tattoos were not produced with needles but by means of fine incisions into which charcoal was rubbed so their location would forever be precisely sited.

Research revealed that, “Most of Ötzi's tattoos are located on parts of

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his body that must have caused him pain during his lifetime due to degeneration or disease.” The tattoos were therefore primarily intended as therapeutic measures rather than as symbols. There is little doubt that the Iceman underwent pain-relieving treatment on multiple occasions.

“Astonishingly, many of the tattooed areas correspond to skin acupuncture lines ...”<sup>18</sup> And remember this was 2000 years before acupuncture appeared in Asia.

Nonlocal consciousness was also explicitly put to use in the service of the state for planning purposes for millennia. The Egyptians, the Greeks, the Etruscans, the Romans all maintained institutions whose function was a to create a cadre of what today we would call remote viewers, often boys and girls, whose task was to provide the kind of practical guidance one can get from remote viewing. Oracles were honored. The oldest recorded double-blind remote viewing experiment we know of is to be found in the 46th chapter of *The History of Herodotus*, written in 440 BCE by Greek social observer Herodotus of Halicarnassus, (ca.484–425 BCE) considered the world’s first historian.

Let me quote myself to tell the story. In his histories Herodotus recounts how a wily Lydian King, whose name to this day is associated with great wealth—Croesus (BCE 560–547)—carried out the first experiment in what today we would call anomalous perception, the ability to describe persons, places or events from which one is shielded by reason of time or space, or both. Croesus had lost his son, and was in deep depression when his mourning was interrupted by the news that he might be attacked by the Persians. He wanted to consult an oracle to tell him what to do. But which one could he trust?

The solution Croesus devised was both a blind protocol experiment and the first description of what today would be known as Remote Viewing. He sent out couriers to all the famous oracles of his day. To the Greek oracles he sent delegations to Delphi, to Abae in Phocis, to Dodona, to the oracle of Amphiaraus; to Trophonius; and another to Branchidae in Milesia. To

Libya, which was then considered part of Asia, he sent another embassy, to consult the oracle of Ammon at Siwah in the Libyan desert.

All of these messengers were given an identical task. “They were to keep count of the days from the time of their leaving Sardis, and, reckoning from that date, on the hundredth day they were to consult the oracles, and to inquire of them what Croesus the son of Alyattes, king of Lydia, was doing at that moment. The answers given them were to be taken down in writing, and brought back to him.”<sup>19</sup>

None of the replies survive except the most accurate one that of the oracle at Delphi which was recorded by Herodotus.

Following their king’s instructions the Lydians waited until the 100th day. No sooner had they entered the sanctuary, even before they could ask their question the Pythoness, as, the entranced young woman within was known, answered it in hexameter verse:

But the number of sand I know,  
and the measure of drops in  
the ocean;

The dumb man I understand, and I  
hear the speech of the speechless:

And there hath come to my soul  
the smell of a strong-shelled  
tortoise

Boiling in caldron of bronze, and  
the flesh of a lamb mingled with it;  
Under it bronze is laid, it hath  
bronze as a clothing upon it.<sup>20</sup>

Even though it sounded like gibberish, the Lydian embassy faithfully wrote it down and set off for Sardis to report to Croesus.

Herodotus says, “When all the messengers had come back with the answers which they had received, Croesus undid the rolls, and read what was written in each. Only one approved itself to him, that of the Delphic oracle. This he had no sooner heard than he instantly made an act of adoration, and accepted it as true, declaring that the Delphic was the only really oracular shrine.”<sup>20</sup>

Croesus, in stipulating 100 days, had set up an experiment, one little different from such blind protocols today.

Herodotus says, “He set himself to think what was most impossible for any one to conceive of his doing, and then, waiting till the day agreed on came, he

acted as he had determined. He took a tortoise and a lamb, and cutting them in pieces with his own hands, boiled them both together in a brazen cauldron, covered over with a lid which was also of brass.”<sup>18</sup> It is a double-blind protocol, neither the young woman pythoness, nor the embassy knew the answer to the question, essentially identical to the protocols we would use today.

So philosophically, scientifically, governmentally, and medically consciousness was seen as fundamental. Why did all this change and the idea of consciousness become lost to science? The answer I think is a story of geopolitics, culture, and fear that led to consciousness and science parting ways.

It began with the formal establishment within the Roman Catholic church of the Inquisition—the word means to inquire—that was authorized by Pope Gregory IX in 1232 to combat heresy. Initially this meant the Cathars but it would eventually extend into many aspects of medieval life. And from the beginning there were stories of torture and grisly death at the hands of the inquisitors. In 1252 Pope Innocent IV made what had been ad hoc institutional and authorized the establishment of torture chambers. Often this ended in publicly burning people alive for their beliefs. The cultural impact of this echoes down to the present day. The Inquisition has become a cultural meme associated with persecution, horror, torture and death.

The Inquisition had receded by the 14th century, but the emergence of the Protestant Reformation brought it back with a vengeance in 1542. And the Protestants, not to be outdone, had their own heresy trials and burnings. How many died across those medieval centuries? It turns out that is a hard answer to pin down.

In 2004 Sophie Arie, looking at just the Spanish variant, wrote in *The Guardian*, “Estimates of the number killed by the Spanish Inquisition, which Pope Sixtus IV authorised in a papal bull in 1478, have ranged from 30,000 to 300,000. Some historians are convinced that millions died.”

But according to Professor Agostino Borromeo, a historian of Catholicism at the Sapienza University in Rome and

curator of the 783-page volume released on 15 June 2016, only 1% of the 125,000 people tried by church tribunals as suspected heretics in Spain were executed.

“Other experts told journalists at the Vatican that many of the thousands of executions conventionally attributed to the church were in fact carried out by non-church tribunals.”<sup>21</sup>

Yale Historian William Graham Sumner who held the first professorship in the U.S. in sociology spent a considerable time in the 19th century trying to work out an answer, and his research suggests that burning of heretics (which included a lot of women herbalists, and people whose views did not conform with those of ignorant village priests) became a customary practice in Europe beginning in the 12th century, and became a statutory punishment by the early 13th century.<sup>22</sup>

How many were actually tortured and burnt alive may be largely lost to history, but in terms of the question of science and consciousness, the numbers are not the important point. What does matter is that the persecution of individuals who varied from the accepted paradigm became a dominant theme in Western cultures; one that over the centuries struck profound fear in people’s minds.

The element of consciousness in this drama takes center stage with the Council of Trent which ran from 1545 to 1563. Meeting in both Trento and Bologna, Italy the Council held 25 plenary sessions that redefined in the strongest terms that the Church controlled all matters of the spirit—read consciousness. The nonlocal domain therefore became the province of the Roman Church. And driven by the Protestant Reformation, the Council became the vortex of the impulse to root out and punish heresy, which is to say anyone whose views offended the dominant paradigm defined by the Church.

The Council decreed that the Church controlled the ultimate interpretation of Scripture,<sup>23</sup> as well as, as well as the power of spirit (in modern terms read nonlocal consciousness). “This configuration to Christ and to the Church, brought about by the Spirit, is indelible; it remains for ever in the Christian as a positive disposition for

grace, a promise and guarantee of divine protection, and as a vocation to divine worship and to the service of the Church.”<sup>24</sup>

Armed with decrees of Council sessions and popes, the Inquisition was a wind to which the boat of science tacked, not for a few years, but from generation to generation across centuries.

I think what separated consciousness from science was fear. It was dangerous to delve into matters the Church claimed for itself; it could lead to humiliation, pain and even a gruesomely painful death. I think it cast a psychological pall over any inquiry that might put one in conflict with accepted orthodoxy about matters concerned with what the Church saw as spiritual doctrine. It influenced the careers of generations of scientists. The last man killed by the Inquisition was in Spain in 1826, a teacher named Cayetano Ripoli, who was garroted for teaching Deism to his class.<sup>25</sup>

And when it became clear to the scientific community that materialism and reductionism were very productive ways of exploring the universe the need to consider consciousness as a factor in science withered. It is only now coming back into currency because fields such a quantum biology, resuscitation medicine, neuroscience, and even physics have reached a point where they realize that Planck was right. Consciousness is causal and fundamental. We are not there yet, but that is the trend direction.

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