

# CONSCIOUSNESS RESEARCH AND PSYCHIC PHENOMENA<sup>1</sup>

## Interview with Dean Radin (IONS)

Mariana Cabral Schweitzer

**Dean Radin** is a scientist, electrical engineer, and former classical violinist. Since 1979 he has been conducting experimental studies about consciousness and psychic phenomena. He is a former researcher at Princeton University, University of Edinburgh, and University of Nevada, and is presently Chief Scientist at the Institute of Noetic Sciences (IONS) and Distinguished Professor at the California Institute of Integral Studies. He is the author of more than 200 articles, three dozen book chapters, and books including *The Conscious Universe* (1997), *Entangled Minds* (2006), *Supernormal* (2013) and the forthcoming *Real Magic* (2018).

**Mariana:** How do you see the importance of studying psychic phenomena to the science of consciousness?

**Dean:** The neurosciences today view consciousness as being generated by brain activity. This suggests that the only way the mind can gain information about the world is through the conventional senses, which are assumed to be constrained by the classical boundaries of space and time. Psi phenomena indicate that the mind can transcend these boundaries and gain information without regard to constraints of space or time. Psi thus strongly challenges the prevailing neuroscience view. The strength of science, as opposed to religion, is that it allows (or at least it is supposed to allow) experimental evidence to challenge prevailing assumptions. And if those assumptions are found to be wrong, then new assumptions are formed. Science at its best is a flexible set of ideas about reality, not a set of dogmatic beliefs.

**Mariana:** What is your perspective about the evolution of consciousness' studies and the production of evidence about psychic phenomena in the beginning of this century and in the future?

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<sup>1</sup> This interview was kindly granted by e-mail in august 2017.

**Dean:** Consciousness as a legitimate topic of academic study was out of favor for about 50 years when the fad of behaviorism had a stranglehold on acceptable beliefs in academia. After that idea ran its course, it took another 30 years before it became scientifically acceptable to study consciousness, and now it is a popular topic in universities around the world. By contrast, psi phenomena are still too challenging for academia, and other than the small foothold gained in UK universities, it is still very much taboo and excluded from academic study. This is likely to remain the case for several more decades. We will likely see a change first in physics, which is the discipline that is probing the domain in which psi phenomena occur. The last discipline to accept psi may ironically be psychology, because while psychology focuses on the subjective side of reality, psychologists aren't taught much about the extremely strange nature of objective reality, as discovered over the last 120 years.

**Mariana:** What is necessary to the studies of consciousness and psychic phenomena in order to become more scientifically? Or are they scientific enough?

**Dean:** The experimental study of psi is more rigorously scientific than "standard" science because it has benefited from decades of severe criticism, much more so than is normally encountered in conventional scientific disciplines. What is needed are theoretical advancements that make psi effects viewed as plausible and then natural, or practical applications that finesse the scientific controversy. I suspect we will see theoretical advancements first.

**Mariana:** How research and evidence about consciousness, mind-body connection and compassion has assisted yourself and others considering self-care?

**Dean:** I'm not sure I understand this question, except perhaps in the rising acceptance of the mental and physical health benefits of meditation.

**Mariana:** The idea was to ask if the researcher's own self-care changes by studying consciousness, mind-body connection and compassion.

**Dean:** For me, the primary effect of conducting these studies was to increase my personal discipline to meditate. Other than that, it hasn't significantly affected my behavior.

**Mariana:** How do you see the future of health care considering Distant Healing Intention (DHI) development? How energy connects with it?

**Dean:** DHI may eventually become an accepted modality in health care, but we know so little about it that it will take a long time. The term "energy" in the context of DHI may or may not have anything to do with what a physicist means by that term. This is a continuing problem with DHI and any form of "energy medicine." From a scientific perspective we really don't know what DHI is or how it works.

**Mariana:** Interparadigmas is a journal of Conscienciology's doctors. Do you observe a bridge or connection between your research and Conscienciology?

**Dean:** In that we're both interested in the far capacities of consciousness, yes, there's certainly a connection.

**Mariana:** Can you summarize what has been your main scientific approach to the study of psi phenomena and consciousness? What are the main progresses you consider having achieved over the years?

**Dean:** I've studied telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition, psychokinesis, and mediumship phenomena using methods borrowed from the disciplines of psychology, psychophysiology, the neurosciences, computer science, and physics. I've also aimed at publishing my work in the mainstream scientific literature as much as possible. Placing this type of work in specialty journals that are already sympathetic to psi phenomena only maintains the fringe status of psi research.

**Mariana:** How do you think the science of consciousness relates to a paradigm shift in a large scale? Did it already happen, is it happening right now, will it happen in the future or perhaps not necessarily will it happen?

**Dean:** Much depends on whose science we're talking about. The conventional neuroscience perspective, which is uncritically assumed to be correct by the majority of scientists, views consciousness through the lens of the mainstream scientific worldview. That worldview regards reality as purely nihilistic, as meaningless and purposeless. From that perspective, consciousness too is therefore meaningless. This is the prevailing paradigm in science today, and as such it is being tightly defended by the mainstream. Meanwhile, the alternative worldview, which regards consciousness as fundamental, is (in my view) probably more correct, but it is definitely not part of mainstream science. From what I see, I believe that an increasing number of scientists and scholars are beginning to understand that the mainstream worldview is limited, and as such they are slowly beginning to view the alternative worldview as more attractive. This may eventually lead to a major paradigm shift, but for that shift to become mainstream will take time. This shift, from the scientific doctrine of reductive materialism to what some are now calling "post-materialism," has been underway for about 30 years, but it has notably accelerated in the last 5 years.

**Mariana:** What institutions and researchers could you recommend or highlight as promising in this field?

**Dean:** That depends on what you mean by "this field." Our organization, the Institute of Noetic Sciences, is one of the leaders in advancing the scientific view of consciousness as fundamental. There are other academic-based groups and organizations pursuing similar ideas around the world, but as far as scientific work goes there are perhaps 50 to 100 individuals engaged in this line of work, some at

private organizations and some at universities. Many are members of the Parapsychological Association. See [parapsych.org](http://parapsych.org).

**Mariana:** Do you consider possible the idea of a self-research of psi phenomena? Like a psi research in the first person?

**Dean:** Sure, we are all doing that all the time, if we pay attention.

**Mariana:** Do you agree that the best profile for a psi and consciousness researcher would be the gathering of scientific and psi training?

**Dean:** I'd prefer scientific and meditation training. Psi comes along naturally. Psi can manifest in people in so many different ways that I don't think specific training is necessary.