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Opening Session | Keynote Address

# Insights into Material and Nonmaterial Reality

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*“All matter originates and exists only by virtue of a force... We must assume behind this force the existence of a conscious and intelligent Mind. This Mind is the matrix of all matter.”*  
—Max Planck

*Clearly, the universe had meaning and direction ...an unseen dimension behind the visible creation that gives it an intelligent design and that gives life purpose.*  
—Edgar Mitchell

The title of this keynote address, “Insights into Material and Non-material Reality,” was requested by the organizers of the Second International Conference on Science and God. Given the scope and significance of this visionary conference, I have felt a special responsibility to honor the organizers’ intent to address the big picture of this unfolding revolution in science and society, as illustrated, for example, by the emergence of postmaterialist theory, research, and applications (for example, see [www.AAPSGlobal.com](http://www.AAPSGlobal.com)).

For over a century, many philosophers, scientists, and other scholars have proposed that we re-envision<sup>1</sup> the existence of a greater reality whose

fundamental existence is nonmaterial, namely, the very stuff of Mind itself. They have argued not only that the primacy of Mind and Consciousness reflects a truer description of Reality but also that universal appreciation and acceptance of this understanding are essential for humanity's survival, restoration, and evolution (for example, Schwartz et al. 2020).

As a Western-educated scientist trained in materialist science,<sup>2</sup> I never questioned my materialism-based education prior to my early forties. My unquestioned beliefs about the material foundation of reality were fortified by my nonreligious upbringing and my assumptions that all spiritual theories and experiences reflected some combination of ignorance, superstition, faulty reasoning, and self-confirming biases.

However, the second half of my academic career has radically transformed my understanding and appreciation of nature, the Cosmos, and Mind itself. Although painful at times, what I have learned over the years is that instead of science taking us away from the idea that consciousness is fundamental in the universe, science is inexorably taking us to the primacy of consciousness hypothesis (for example, Schwartz et al. 2020). I have learned that (1) logic and reasoning, and (2) observations and evidence, combined with (3) direct personal experiences triangulate and converge on the thesis that "Mind is the matrix of all matter," as Max Planck proposed.

So, what potential insights might I bring to bear on the nature of material and nonmaterial reality that may be useful in broadening and deepening your appreciation of these matters (no pun intended)? The following discussion combines information that I have published previously, with information I have rarely or never previously shared, either in presentations or in print. I should acknowledge that, to the best of my knowledge, I have never used, and certainly never featured, the words "nonmaterial reality" in a presentation or paper. Hence, to minimize miscommunication, I will briefly explain how I am using this phrase.

The following discussion is organized in four parts:

Part I presents some exemplary insights gleaned from the physics of light that speak to the fundamental existence and nature of a nonmaterial reality.

Part II provides some complementary challenging insights from contemporary research on life after death that illuminate the novel (and often surprising) nature of a greater, nonmaterial reality.

Part III discusses evidence documented in daily life—derived from extraordinarily complex and astronomically improbable serial synchronicities—that offer compelling justification for Max Planck’s conclusion that “Mind is the matrix of all matter” and Edgar Mitchell’s conclusion that there exists “an unseen dimension behind the visible creation that gives it [the material universe] an intelligent design and that gives life purpose.” (For the full quotation, see the sidebar.)

Part IV considers how the emergence of postmaterialist knowledge heralds an opportunity for humanity to make a “quantum jump” in its “Meta-Consciousness,” that is, in its “consciousness of Consciousness,” extending from our experiences of the material world to nonmaterial reality and to the Source/Divinity itself. Such Meta-Consciousness promises to inspire personal, environmental, and global restoration and evolution.

To facilitate the discussion in being accessible to nonscientists as well as scientists, I have minimized methodological or statistical discussions in this keynote address.

## **Part I: Insights into the Inherent Nonmaterial Reality of Photons, Energy, and Information**

I have had a longstanding interest in the quantum and relativistic properties of light, and I have employed state-of-the-art optical sciences in some of my academic research over the past decade (for example, Schwartz 2010, 2011a, 2021a). As a psychologist, I have been fascinated with how sophisticated quantum physicists (and, by extension, the rest of us) struggle to understand the empirical nature of light and fields of energy and information.

For example, optical scientists observe that, in certain contexts, light behaves as if it is a particle localized in space and, in other contexts, light behaves as if it is a wave distributed in space. Scientists observe that in certain states, light appears to have no mass, and in other states (particularly at the speed of light) it behaves as if it has a tiny amount of mass. Scientists

## From Outer Space to Inner Space: An Astronaut's Odyssey

Excerpt from an article by Edgar Mitchell,  
Apollo 14 astronaut

**B**ut there was another aspect to my experience during Apollo 14, and it contradicted the “pragmatic engineer” attitude. It began with the breathtaking experience of seeing planet Earth floating in the vastness of space.

The first thing that came to mind as I looked at Earth was its incredible beauty. Even the spectacular photographs do not do it justice. It was a majestic sight—a splendid blue and white jewel suspended against a velvet black sky. How peacefully, how harmoniously, how marvelously it seemed to fit into the evolutionary pattern by which the universe is maintained.

In a peak experience, the presence of the divinity became almost palpable, and I knew that life in the universe was not just an accident based on random processes. This knowledge came to me directly—noetically. It was not a matter of discursive reasoning or logical abstraction. It was an experiential cognition. It was knowledge gained through private subjective awareness, but it was—and still is—every bit as real as the objective data upon which, say, the navigational program or the communications system were based. Clearly, the universe had meaning and direction. It was not perceptible by the sensory organs, but it was there nevertheless—an unseen dimension behind the visible creation that gives it an intelligent design and that gives life purpose. ◇

observe that light behaves as if it has energy as well as complex patterns of information (that is, frequencies) over space and time.

In physics, energy is defined as the capacity to do work and overcome resistance, and information is described as abstract (mathematical) patterns in space and time. What is important (and often ignored) is that neither energy nor information is described as having “mass” or being “material.” In other words, in a deep sense, the foundational descriptions of photons, energy, and information are conceptually “nonmaterial” in nature.

In addition, contemporary physics posits the existence of dark energy (estimated to be approximately 68% of the known universe) plus dark matter (missing mass, estimated to be about 27%). This means that, given current assumptions, virtually 95% of the known universe is not only “dark” or imperceptible, but its existence can only be inferred at best.

Furthermore, there is the even deeper question regarding the empirical holograph-like nature of photonic information. This abstract, nonmaterial nature of light is often ignored by scientists and philosophers alike.

For example, it is relatively easy for a person with normal vision to see the North Star in a cloud-free night sky. The North Star has been estimated to be 434 light-years away from planet Earth.<sup>3</sup> In other words, patterns of photonic information and energy travelling from the North Star take about 434 Earth years to reach us. This means that when we see the North Star on a given night, what we are really seeing are patterns of light (or patterns of photonic information and energy) representing the state of the North Star as it was 434 years ago. In other words, we are not seeing the material North Star in present time, but, rather, we are seeing its nonmaterial dynamic, photonic, info-energy history as it has been “preserved” in the “vacuum” of space.

Although the North Star is estimated to have a radius of 35,400,000 kilometers, and by comparison, Earth’s radius is only about 6,400 kilometers, the radius of the photonic patterns that reach us and pass through the lenses of our eyes is extraordinarily small: less than 0.000001 kilometers, or 1 millimeter.

Imagine that we are on a football field filled with people, with everyone looking at the North Star simultaneously. If there are 54,000 people on the

field and they all had normal eyesight, 54,000 people could simultaneously report seeing the North Star.

What does this fact imply about the existence of multiple, non-material North Star patterns existing simultaneously in space and time? The logical implication is that there are at least 108,000 tiny, nonmaterial North Star photonic patterns (one per eye, two eyes per person) simultaneously reaching the football field at any moment—and this, of course, is a gross underestimate of the actual total number. The nonmaterial nature of photonic light patterns strains our imagination as we try to comprehend this deep complexity.

When I teach this deep insight to students, I ask them to wonder how it is that, regardless of where they are sitting in a classroom consisting of a hundred students, they can see the complex patterns of light that define my hair, facial features, body features, clothing, and so on.

I then ask them to imagine how big this patterned information is inside their eyes (again, maybe 1 millimeter) compared to my actual height (170.2 centimeters).

Then I ask them how many tiny, nonmaterial, photonic Professor Schwartz's are in the room right now, given that each of the 100 students can see me simultaneously? They quickly realize there are at least 200—which is a profound underestimate.

After pondering this insight, I ask them to imagine that we are all standing outside, looking up at the sky, and that the nonmaterial photonic patterns representing each of us are being reflected up into space. I remind them that the existence of our individual, reflected, nonmaterial photonic patterns reaching outer space is a scientific fact established by spy satellites that detect these individual photonic patterns present in space, and therefore “see” us as individual beings.

I then ask them to try to imagine how many millions or billions (or some huge number) of an individual person's nonmaterial photonic patterns are spreading out, simultaneously and continuously, in the “vacuum” of space—that is, places in space having no material mass.

Finally, I ask them to imagine what happens to all this holistic, holograph-

like nonmaterial information after a physical star dies, or a physical person dies. They realize that, in principle, it is still there. The individualized, nonmaterial, photonic info-energy patterns survive.

I shall end this discussion with a description of the discovery of the cosmic background radiation and the subsequent quantification of these ancient patterns of photons that are believed to have been created only a few hundred thousand years after the Big Bang. In other words, these historic photonic patterns, present everywhere in the universe, are presumed to be at least 13.7 billion years old, and they therefore have a kind of immortality.

It is as if the universe is a gigantic, nonmaterial photonic pattern (or info-energy) memory storage system. I raise the question, “Is it possible that the reason the universe appears to be expanding is to continue to make room for all this emerging historical information and energy?”

Other questions come to mind.

Is it possible that, in some deep sense, every “thing” that has ever existed continues its existence in some sustained, potentially evolving, info-energy way?

Is it possible that every “thing” that has ever existed subsequently has a nonmaterial, info-energy “afterlife,” and that this survival potential is built into the very fabric of the universe, as expressed in the essence of light itself?

Does this mean that contemporary science allows for, and even predicts, the survival of consciousness after physical death, or what has been historically called soul?

Moreover, can we ponder what kind of Extraordinary Source Mind would be required to create such an extraordinary, photonic, quantum field-like universe?

My experience has been that students who “get” this nonmaterial reality insight never see the world in quite the same way again.

The distinguished physicist Richard Feynman said, “If you think you understand quantum mechanics, you don’t understand quantum mechanics.” Or, as Niels Bohr, one of the fathers of quantum mechanics, said, “If quantum

mechanics hasn't profoundly shocked you, you haven't understood it yet."

A general, take-home message is: *As strange as the known properties of light and quantum mechanics are, they only hint at the inherent extraordinariness of the greater, nonmaterial reality.*

## **Part II: Insights into What Survival-of-Consciousness Research is Teaching Us about Nonmaterial Reality**

Let us now turn to examples of what I have learned about nonmaterial reality as revealed through contemporary, life-after-death research.

Many areas of research contribute evidence that supports the survival-of-consciousness hypothesis. They include: (1) near-death research (for example, van Lommel et al. 2001); (2) past-lives research (for example, Tucker & Nidiffer 2014); (3) multi-blinded, controlled laboratory experiments with documented evidential mediums (for example, Sarraf et al. 2021); and (4) multi-blinded controlled laboratory experiments employing state-of-the-art, ultra-weak signal-detection hardware and software (for example, Schwartz 2021a). Reviews of this research, including its methodologies and statistics, can be found in the references.

However, in the spirit (no pun intended) of addressing insights learned about material and nonmaterial realities and their interactions, I will reveal four exemplary, extraordinary insights:

1. Specific and identifiable "deceased" individuals—whom we now refer to as "post-material persons" (PMPs)—not only deeply care about bridging nonmaterial and material realities but are also actively collaborating in this research (that is, they are post-material collaborators, or PMCs).

I first revealed the identity of one of these hypothesized PMCs in my 2011 book, *The Sacred Promise: How Science is Discovering Spirit's Collaboration with Us in Our Daily Lives*.<sup>4</sup> The reason I titled this book *The Sacred Promise* was because the totality of the research provided compelling evidence indicating that these special, high-level PMCs have made three levels of profound promises for science and society:



**Promise I:** Specific PMCs have committed to actively collaborating in this research to help prove scientifically, once and for all, that the survival of consciousness is real.

**Promise II:** Specific PMCs have committed to fully complying with experimental protocols for the shared goal of scientifically establishing their participation, and we can depend on their participation. For example, they have agreed that if we, who are in the physical realm (the “B” Team), will show up in the laboratory for a given experiment, then they, who are in the realm of spirit (the “A” Team), will show up in the laboratory as well.

**Promise III:** If and when a practical PMP communication technology (referred to as the SoulPhone—see [www.thesoulphonefoundation.org](http://www.thesoulphonefoundation.org)) becomes viable, they will continue to help humanity in their role as experienced and caring advisers and collaborators—if we (humanity) seek their assistance for the best and highest good.

The idea that material technology can be combined with specific individuals living in nonmaterial reality for the purpose of healing, restoration, and evolution is an inspiring, humbling, and sacred opportunity for humanity.

2. When evidential research mediums associated with the laboratory (such as Rhonda Schwartz, the chief selective evidential research medium) request members of the A Team to appear at spontaneous meetings, the PMCs see their responsibility as being “on call.” Unless the PMCs indicate otherwise, the totality of the evidence is that they virtually always show up.
3. The evidence indicates that the ability of PMCs to “travel” from their nonmaterial reality to our material reality seems to operate at the “speed of thought.” There are numerous instances where the behavior of PMCs, who exist in nonmaterial reality, is less constrained or obstructed than our behavior in material reality.
4. PMPs in general are typically perceived by evidential mediums as being

in physical-like form as they historically appeared on the Earth, in terms of physical size, shape, hairstyle and hair color, choice of clothing, and so on. Consequently, they can be recognized by their loved ones. Moreover, PMPs can produce physical-like effects on physical sensors—albeit, at greatly attenuated, ultra-weak levels—whether the sensors involve scientific precision optical instruments (such as silicon photomultipliers) or sensitive consumer devices (such as plasma globes). It is the physical-like nature of PMPs, at least as they appear on Earth, that promises to make it possible to invent electronic texting and video conferencing technologies to communicate with them (for example, see [www.thesoulphonefoundation.org](http://www.thesoulphonefoundation.org)).

To illustrate some of the physical-like parallels between material and nonmaterial reality, I will briefly share two illustrations from controlled research where an evidential medium who has training as a portrait artist (and who prefers to remain anonymous) was requested to draw portraits of selected PMPs (reported in Schwartz 2021b).

One of the research paradigms that the late Susy Smith taught me, after she died, is what I have called the “double-deceased” paradigm (Schwartz 2011b). What this means is that one deceased person—for example, Susy Smith—is requested by a laboratory-tested evidential medium (R. Schwartz 2016) to bring another deceased person—for example, the distinguished quantum physicist David Bohm—to a second medium (previously tested or claimant<sup>5</sup>) under blinded conditions. In other words, in this instance, the claimant artist-medium (medium 2) was not told who Susy Smith (as invited by medium 1) is purportedly bringing to sit for a portrait.

Since the claimant artist-medium was open to being tested, and Susy Smith was apparently enthusiastic to demonstrate the medium’s purported skills, we repeated this double-deceased experiment nine times with different hypothesized spirit collaborators who had been involved in previous afterlife research. Two portraits by claimant artist-mediums and photos of the PMPs who sat for her are shown below. As can be seen, the portraits closely match the photos of the secretly invited hypothesized spirit participants.

In **Figure 1**, the image on the left is a portrait of Susy Smith drawn by the medium; the picture on the right is a photograph I had taken of Susy a few years before she physically died. The resemblance of the portrait to the photograph is readily apparent.



**Figure 1** Portrait by Medium



Photo by Author

A second example is shown in **Figure 2**. The resemblance of the artist-medium's portrait to the photograph of the PMP (namely, Edgar Mitchell) is again apparent.



**Figure 2** Portrait by Medium

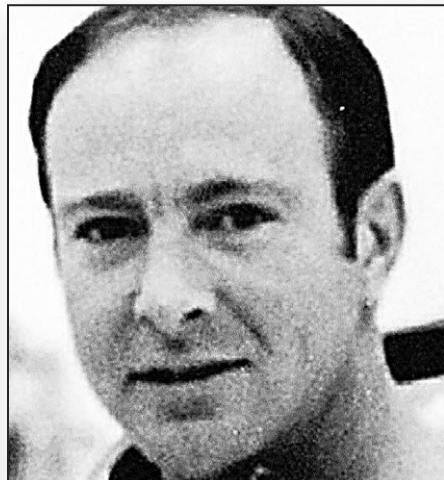


Photo by Author

I might mention that the claimant artist-medium (who was blind to the PMP's identity) spontaneously said, and I paraphrase slightly, that the unidentified spirit "thinks he's an astronaut," as if "the spirit must be a little crazy." The secret PMP we selected to be brought by Susy Smith to the medium's home was Edgar Mitchell.

### **Part III: Evidence for a Universal Source Mind Playing a Role in Human Life**

Logic dictates that if a nonmaterial/greater reality exists and consists of Mind at its core, it follows that this nonmaterial Universal (Source) Mind should have the ability to influence the minds within it, and this includes human minds. Consequently, if the Universal Mind so chooses (with intelligence and intention), it can subtly influence our choices and decisions, and thereby create complex patterns of human activities, both in series (that is, sequentially over time) and in parallel (that is, simultaneously within time). Examples of complex, serial and parallel patterned events and processes, conceived and implemented by intelligent and intentional human beings, include (1) the composing of complex orchestrated music, and (2) the programming of complex, synchronized computer software.

Mathematical and statistical analyses confirm that such complex patterns of serial-parallel events cannot be achieved through random processes, especially when the constraints of physical time are considered. In my 2017 book, *Super Synchronicity: Where Science and Spirit Meet*, I provide arguably definitive evidence for the existence in real life of super-complex, serial "coincidences" or "synchronicities" that cannot be accounted for using conventional materialist explanations such as randomness, faulty data collection, or conventional external stimuli, such as physical forces or events per se (G.E. Schwartz 2017).

The totality of the serial coincidence evidence supports the humorous statement attributed to Yogi Berra that "Some things are too coincidental to be a coincidence"; or, as Susy Smith paraphrased it, "Some things are too coincidental to be accidental." When carefully applying conditional probability statistics to real-life, complex, serial synchronicities, my calculations

reveal that the probability of such super synchronicities occurring by chance is “astronomically improbable.” In other words, it would literally take longer than the age of the entire universe (roughly 13.7 billion years) for the documented sequence of events to have occurred by chance. Moreover, these astronomically improbable super synchronicities typically convey meaningful information of significance to our individual as well as collective lives.<sup>6</sup>

#### **Part IV: Awakening to Nonmaterial Reality and the Primacy of Consciousness**

When the controlled experiments involving mediumship and technology are considered as a whole, the totality of the findings strongly point to the non-material reality of hypothesized PMPs.<sup>7</sup> However, skeptical scientists require definitive findings that can be independently replicated. Toward this end, we have been developing a paradigm to make it possible to conduct multi-experimenter, multi-center, multi-blinded, randomized control trials investigating hypothesized spirit presence and communication (Schwartz 2021a).

Large-scale, dual-center, validation experiments have been completed and submitted for publication in a mainstream journal. Below is a draft abstract of this paper (slightly edited for clarity). The term “hypothesized discarnate intelligences” was employed (rather than PMPs) to maintain consistency with terminology appropriate for a mainstream journal.

##### ***Abstract***

*The gold standard in biomedical research is the multi-center, multi-blinded, randomized control trial (RCT). An experimental randomized control method was devised to test for the presence of and communication with hypothesized discarnate intelligences. The method uses readily available laboratory equipment, automated data collection, and real-time analyses. A total of 1504 experimental sessions and 864 matched control sessions were run at two separate laboratories in the United States (in Arizona and Ohio). Using a controlled, binary, personal identification test, replicated findings were obtained independent of*

*investigators' beliefs about the presence of the discarnates, with experimental conditions associated with  $p < .0001$ , and control conditions associated with  $p < .533$ . The protocol involves an automated means of inviting discarnates to interact with high-voltage electrical plasma contained within a sphere. The methodology minimizes false-positive and false-negative outcomes. Independent RCT replications are underway employing skeptical experimenters. If the current findings are replicated, the evidence for the survival of human consciousness after death can be arguably interpreted as being definitive.*

If the multi-center studies produce replicate results as predicted, the simplest and most parsimonious explanation for the totality of the evidence, including genuine personal experiences, is the metaphysical reality of the presence of and communication with beings in a greater, nonmaterial reality.

Due to space and time constraints, my concluding remarks are limited to a few salient points.

First, ancient ideas about the nonmaterial nature of a greater reality are being re-examined and re-envisioned today. Contemporary scientific theory and research are lending ever-increasing support to statements such as, "Mind is the matrix of all matter," and "an unseen dimension [exists] behind the visible creation that gives it [the material universe] an intelligent design and that gives life purpose." The international conferences on "Science and God" exemplify this emerging trend.

Second, our current understanding of light, energy, and information not only illuminates inherent nonmaterial theory and research but also provides a practical "starting point" for approaching the relationship between material and nonmaterial reality. It includes foundational questions on the survival of consciousness after physical death and the existence of a pervasive Universal Mind that, in principle, could be playing a role in all aspects of the universe, from the micro to the macro dimensions of the cosmos.

Third, the integration of ancient wisdom with illustrative contemporary science (such as the survival of consciousness and synchronicity science) pro-

vides not only new inspiration and hope for humanity but also practical advice and collaboration from experienced and wise minds living in the greater reality, as well as from the One Mind itself (Dossey 2014).

Finally, in keeping with the concepts and evidence shared in this address, I raise this challenging question: Is it possible that beings in the non-material, greater reality, including the Source itself (for example, Laszlo 2020), are playing some sort of behind-the-scenes role in organizing these conferences on “Science and God”?<sup>8</sup> ◇

## Endnotes

1. Some might prefer the word “resurrect,” employing its more generic meaning, “to revive the practice, use, or memory of (something); bring new vigor to” (Oxford Languages).
2. For example, I received my PhD at Harvard University in psychology with a specialty in psychophysiology in 1971, and I was a mainstream, tenured professor of psychology and psychiatry at Yale University and director of the Yale Psychophysiology Center before I was recruited in 1988 to the University of Arizona.
3. Various studies have produced differing estimates of the distance of the North Star from Earth, ranging from 323 to 447.6 light-years. A study in the late 1990s with a European satellite gave a distance of 434 light-years, which has often been cited in the scientific literature.
4. The hypothesized PMC is Harry Houdini, the distinguished magician and revealer of fraudulent mediums.
5. That is, a person who claims to be an evidence-based medium.
6. Space and time preclude my sharing empirical data here, but substantial evidence has been reported elsewhere (G.E. Schwartz 2017).
7. And higher spiritual beings, including angels (for example, see Schwartz 2011b).
8. This is now becoming a logic-based and evidence-based testable scientific question.

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