

THE UNEXPLAINED FILES
— BOOK TWENTY-ONE —

THE MYSTERY OF HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS

EXPLORING THE NATURE OF AWARENESS,
THE MIND AND THE ULTIMATE QUESTION:
WHO ARE WE REALLY?

SCIENCE

PHILOSOPHY

NEUROSCIENCE

SPIRITUAL TRADITIONS

UNANSWERED QUESTIONS



ALDEN M. CORVALE

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BOOK TWENTY-ONE

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THE MYSTERY OF

HUMAN

CONSCIOUSNESS

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*Exploring the Nature of Awareness, the Mind and the Ultimate Question:
Who Are We Really?*

ALDEN M. CORVALE

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PUBLISHING NOTE

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This is a work of general-interest nonfiction about consciousness, neuroscience, philosophy, altered states, artificial intelligence and extraordinary claims. It distinguishes established research from interpretation and metaphysical speculation. Scientific literature was checked through August 2026 where relevant. No philosophical or spiritual claim is presented as established scientific fact merely because it is influential or intuitively compelling.

The book is written for a broad audience and is not a substitute for clinical advice or the primary scientific and philosophical literature. Readers interested in consciousness research should consult the peer-reviewed studies, consensus statements and major works listed in the selected references.

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PREFACE

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Consciousness is the one mystery we can never observe from the outside in the same way we observe a planet, a fossil or a machine. Every experiment, every measurement and every theory appears within consciousness first. We know directly that experience exists because each of us is having one now. Yet science still does not have a generally accepted explanation for why activity in a physical brain is accompanied by a private world of color, sound, pain, memory, thought and selfhood.

That gap has made consciousness a meeting place for neuroscience, psychology, philosophy, medicine, artificial intelligence and ancient questions about mind and soul. Modern laboratories can switch awareness off with anesthesia, detect signs of hidden awareness in apparently unresponsive patients, compare competing theories with brain imaging, and alter the structure of experience with sleep, meditation and psychedelic drugs. None of this has made the central question disappear.

This book takes mystery seriously without treating mystery as permission to claim more than the evidence shows. Scientific findings are separated from interpretation. Philosophical positions are presented as positions, not discoveries. Spiritual traditions are discussed as human attempts to understand experience, not as laboratory conclusions. The aim is not to force a final answer. It is to understand how far the evidence has taken us - and why the remaining distance is so fascinating.

INTRODUCTION

THE EXPERIENCE WE CANNOT STEP OUTSIDE

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A telescope can be pointed at a galaxy. A microscope can be pointed at a cell. But no instrument can directly display the redness of red, the ache of grief or the feeling of being the person who is reading these words. Neuroscience can measure the activity associated with those experiences, yet the experience itself remains first-person.

This creates the central methodological difficulty of consciousness science. Researchers must infer subjective experience from reports, behavior, physiology and patterns of brain activity. That works well when a healthy volunteer can press a button and say what was seen. It becomes much harder during sleep, anesthesia, severe brain injury, infancy, animal research or possible machine consciousness.

The result is a field where progress is real but certainty is limited. Instead of one dominant theory, consciousness science contains competing frameworks that emphasize broadcasting, integration, recurrence, higher-order representation, prediction, attention or large-scale brain dynamics. A major adversarial collaboration published in *Nature* in 2025 directly tested predictions of two leading theories and found results that challenged important claims on both sides. That is not failure. It is what a young science looks like when theories finally become precise enough to risk being wrong.