

Foreword

Charles Tart devotes so much of this interesting and absorbing book to substantiating its title—that is, to arguing that materialism has had its day and is done for—that we think this foreword can best serve the reader by letting the book speak for itself and instead telling the reader what the *author* is for.

Tart wants to reinstate the dignity and freedom of the human mind, defending it against the view that our noblest thoughts are simply secretions of chemical and electrical events in our brain tissue, and that our notion that we have some freedom of choice is an illusion. He contends that body and mind interact: it's a two-way street. Simply defined, materialism (also called reductionism) and scientism are the idea that everything will eventually be explainable in terms of electrical currents, chemical reactions, or yet-to-be-discovered physical laws—mind and spirit are mere epiphenomena.

Science begins when experience doesn't jibe with what we know or think we know. From that, an explanatory theory is spun, with hypotheses that can be tested under controlled conditions. Materialism is a theory that has been enormously fertile in the physical sciences, but its success in that realm has caused theory to harden into the dogmatic belief in materialism that dominates much of our culture. It's not a theory that accounts for all of human experience, such as the healing influence of loving, caring relationships. It's in such relationships that spontaneous psi events occur, but scientific tests for psi phenomena require laboratory controls, not simply personal narratives.

Because skeptics insist that there must be some physical agent that has been overlooked in the experiments, Tart describes experiments in extensive detail. Readers can scrutinize them for anything that might've been

overlooked. Informed skeptics are taken seriously. When one suggested that the information in an experiment with telepathy or clairvoyance must've been transmitted by electromagnetic waves, for example, Tart's colleagues consulted physicists, who assured them that electromagnetic waves do not penetrate to five hundred feet below the surface of the ocean. The experimental subjects descended five hundred feet in a sub to repeat the experiment! The data was the same.

Science is an open-ended inquiry, not an answer, and yet it's in our nature to look for explanations. Materialism doesn't have all the answers: some can be found in the great religious traditions. Although such traditions use various names, they all teach that "being," "mind," or "spirit" is larger than the human mind—something larger than can be subjected to the laboratory, but it can be considered, and Tart is refreshingly open about his reflections on the great spiritual teachings and his own spiritual practice.

Not surprisingly, I (Huston) am reminded of some of my students at MIT, because Tart, too, was a student at MIT, and is thoroughly grounded in science and technology. I learned that some students were experimenting with water dowsing, trying to see if they could trace the water pipes under the university bookstore by moving a dowsing rod over the floor, and also experimenting with psychokinesis. For the latter, they were floating buttered needles on water and attempting to influence the needles' movement by mental concentration. For MIT students this was play, and they would've acknowledged cheerfully that their experiments weren't flawlessly designed. When I expressed surprise that students dedicated to hard-nosed science were amusing themselves in this way, one of them said, "Oh, I know science. I got my first chemistry set when I was five years old. I do science. I just want to know what else is out there." They were like Aldous Huxley, who once commented to us that he was interested in the interstices between the pigeonholes of knowledge, those big questions for which we don't have equations, much less theories. Anyone who is equally curious and open minded, and likes an intellectual challenge, will like this book.

The End of Materialism is the work of a complete human being sharing the breadth of his interests, speculations, and experiences as a scientist. There's a lighthearted seriousness about the author that sustains him in a discipline that's difficult because it's controversial and consequently poorly funded. No one is burned at the stake for questioning conventional "truth," but professional journals are wary of publishing

research papers that imply the existence of psi phenomena or legitimize it as a topic for scientific study. Yet Charles Tart is irrepressibly cheerful, sustained by his delight in finding out “what else is out there,” and he retains his capacity for love and laughter.

—Huston Smith and Kendra Smith