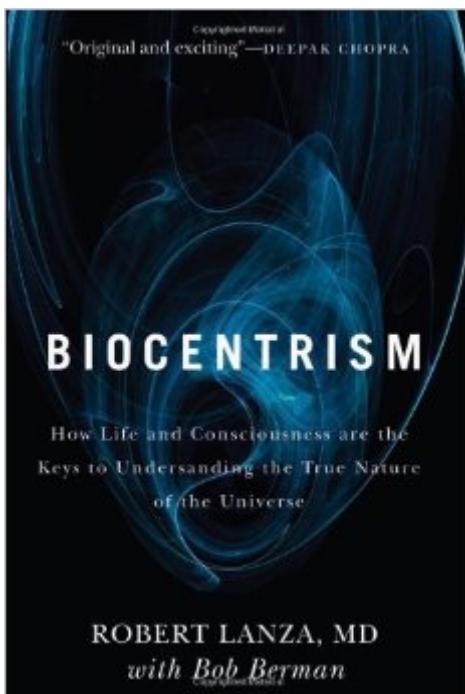


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Biocentrism: How Life And Consciousness Are The Keys To Understanding The True Nature Of The Universe



Synopsis

Robert Lanza is one of the most respected scientists in the world; a US News & World Report cover story called him a "genius" and a "renegade thinker," even likening him to Einstein. Lanza has teamed with Bob Berman, the most widely read astronomer in the world, to produce Biocentrism, a revolutionary new view of the universe. Every now and then a simple yet radical idea shakes the very foundations of knowledge. The startling discovery that the world was not flat challenged and ultimately changed the way people perceived themselves and their relationship with the world. For most humans of the 15th century, the notion of Earth as ball of rock was nonsense. The whole of Western, natural philosophy is undergoing a sea change again, increasingly being forced upon us by the experimental findings of quantum theory, and at the same time, towards doubt and uncertainty in the physical explanations of the universe's genesis and structure. Biocentrism completes this shift in worldview, turning the planet upside down again with the revolutionary view that life creates the universe instead of the other way around. In this paradigm, life is not an accidental byproduct of the laws of physics. Biocentrism takes the reader on a seemingly improbable but ultimately inescapable journey through a foreign universe; our own; from the viewpoints of an acclaimed biologist and a leading astronomer. Switching perspective from physics to biology unlocks the cages in which Western science has unwittingly managed to confine itself. Biocentrism will shatter the reader's ideas of life; time and space, and even death. At the same time it will release us from the dull worldview of life being merely the activity of an admixture of carbon and a few other elements; it suggests the exhilarating possibility that life is fundamentally immortal. The 21st century is predicted to be the Century of Biology, a shift from the previous century dominated by physics. It seems fitting, then, to begin the century by turning the universe outside-in and unifying the foundations of science with a simple idea discovered by one of the leading life-scientists of our age. Biocentrism awakens in readers a new sense of possibility, and is full of so many shocking new perspectives that the reader will never see reality the same way again.

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Customer Reviews

Challenging assumptions is always excellent mental exercise. In this book Robert Lanza takes on one of the key tenets of modern thinking: that all scientific disciplines ultimately reduce to physics. In its place he offers the provocative thesis that biology is primary, and the Universe literally flows from the conscious perceptions of living creatures. On its face this sounds absurd, which demonstrates all the more just how brilliant this man is. He draws on findings from quantum physics and anatomy studies to establish a series of foundational principles for his biocentric theory, which he then elaborates on and defends. He begins by reminding us of something we all know but rarely think about: that reality is literally "all in our heads." We don't see the sunset, we see the interpretation of it our brain creates. We don't smell the rose, we experience the sensation of a scent created by a neural network. We believe that these impressions are imposed on us by what Stephen Hawking calls the RWOT (Real World Out There). But our evidence for this belief amounts to subjective internal experiences! In pointing this out Lanza shifts the burden of proof to the physicalists, who assert that the outside world is what is truly real, while our qualia are illusory. He expands on this thought by citing evidence from quantum physics. The famous two slit experiment, observations of split photons switching spin directions simultaneously, and observations of true backwards causation (the present determining the past) are all cited. Einstein once asked a colleague if he truly believed that the moon wasn't in the sky if no one was looking at it. Lanza would reply "of course it's not!"

I've just finished reading the book and there is still a lot I need to process. The comments I have read (not so much here but on other sites) have been, not surprisingly, mostly negative. Personally I do think Lanza is on to something important. Reading the many criticisms of his ideas, however, makes me aware that evaluating biocentrism is going to be very difficult because it is a proposal for a paradigm shift. By definition, a new paradigm always appears to be nonsense from within the established paradigm. A proposal to change from one paradigm to another is very different than a

proposal to replace one idea with another within a paradigm. Most of biocentrism's critics, it seems to me, are treating it as if it's the latter rather than the former. It's been a long time since I read Kuhn's *Structure of Scientific Revolutions* but this is, I think, one of its most profound insights. For example, from the Ptolemaic perspective Copernicus and Galileo were crazy. Their critics and persecutors were not unreasonable. What Copernicus and Galileo were proposing, however, was a change in reason. As Kuhn shows, the shift from one paradigm to another is inevitably messy and chaotic. In the end, a new paradigm is finally adopted for very pragmatic reasons: it works, or at least works better than its predecessor. For this reason, I think there is a lot of misunderstanding of what Lanza is proposing. He is being critiqued from within the assumptions of the paradigm he is seeking to replace, which is understandable and even inevitable, but nonetheless very confusing. For example, traditional Christianity and modern science have debated whether God created the universe or whether it originated spontaneously in an event like the Big Bang.

I must concur with all of the thoughtful reviews so far presented that Robert Lanza and Bob Berman have crafted a beautifully written account of a potentially revolutionary idea. Where as most current cosmological theories represent life and consciousness as emergent, and even accidental, properties of an otherwise lifeless universe. Dr. Lanza proposes, to the contrary, that life and consciousness are actually fundamental properties of the universe and all that it represents, so much so that the universe cannot possibly exist without life to give it reality. From this simple idea, some might immediately assume that Dr. Lanza is seeking to justify a form of Intelligent Design or Creationism, but that would be a huge mistake. Dr. Lanza is a consummate scientist who fully embraces the latest knowledge that science has brought us, from evolutionary theory to relativity and quantum mechanics. His biocentrism, in fact, proposes to make sense of some of the most perplexing discoveries that quantum mechanics has revealed together with Einsteinian relativity, and he does this in the most engaging, patient (to this layman), and conversational style, with a minimum of mathematics. He even takes the time to explain the little math that he uses for the most innumerate among us to understand. Basically, he contends that any unobserved universe can only exist in a state of probability that requires living observation and measurement to give it any certain reality. Some have assumed that Lanza refers only to human consciousness and question the idea on this very basis: what gave the universe reality before humans arrived? However, it is clear that he is referring to consciousness as it exists, to one degree or another, in all forms of life, known and unknown.

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