If you are interested in knowing what the afterlife looks like to a serious academic studying the available literature from both a scientific and spiritual perspective, there is no better book that I could recommend. Dr. Barušš's approach is thoughtful and well-informed. He is able to integrate masses of data to carefully delineate possibilities in an area that most people find confusing at best.

—Jeffrey Mishlove, PhD, Host and Producer, *New Thinking Allowed* YouTube channel

Death as an Altered State of Consciousness: A Scientific Approach is a key contribution to the scientific literature exploring the nature of consciousness. You will be delighted with the way the narrative captures your interest, as well as the clear organization of Barušš's arguments. He builds compelling evidence from a variety of research areas, including near-death experiences. This book will be of special interest to caregivers in end-of-life care, offering a new understanding of this highly debated and often misunderstood topic.

—Marjorie Woollacott, PhD, Professor, Institute of Neuroscience, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR, United States

Barušš is just one of the few real authorities on altered states. I can't wait to order a copy!

—Charles T. Tart, PhD, Professor Emeritus, University of California Davis, Davis, CA, United States; Editor, *Altered States of Consciousness*

Even the most skeptical readers will see *Death as an Altered State of Consciousness*'s relevance to ongoing developments in dissociative identity disorder, fantasy proneness, grief counseling, and psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy and other means of personality transformation. Barušs's lively writing style and his judicious use of intriguing examples make it difficult to put this book down.

—Stanley Krippner, PhD, Affiliated Distinguished Professor, California Institute of Integral Studies, San Francisco, CA, United States; Coeditor, *Varieties of Anomalous Experience: Examining the Scientific Evidence*

Perhaps the most important book of our age, and certainly among the most fascinating. Not since Rudolf Steiner, Emanuel Swedenborg, and *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* (Bardo Thodol) have we been treated to such a rich tour of conscious experience during dying and death. And this time with scientific rigor.

—Allan Leslie Combs, PhD, Author, *The Radiance of Being: Understanding the Grand Integral Vision; Living the Integral Life* and *Consciousness Explained Better: Towards an Integral Understanding of the Multifaceted Nature of Consciousness;* Coauthor, *Synchronicity: Through the Eyes of Science, Myth, and the Trickster*

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Prologue

In the past 10 years, a growing number of highly respected scientists from multiple disciplines have begun to question the nature of human consciousness. This small but very influential group has aggressively pushed back against the 100-year dogma in biology and in neuroscience that consciousness is a consequence of, and emerges from, neurochemical trafficking in the brain.

–James T. Lacatski, Colm A. Kelleher, and George Knapp (2021, p. 177)

I had been teaching a third-year, undergraduate psychology course about death as an altered state of consciousness when I made a commitment to write a textbook for that course. A few months later, the COVID-19 pandemic overwhelmed the world, and death was thrust into our collective faces. So, this book has ended up having unexpected significance—not just for my students and scientists with specialized interest in death but for everyone.

Why regard death as an altered state of consciousness? Death brings consciousness to an abrupt end, so its alteration is oblivion. Not interesting. That would be the prevailing materialist ideology. But ideology does not stop you, the reader, or me from examining some unusual phenomena associated with death. In this book, we consider deathbed phenomena, apparent after-death communication, mediumship, apparent afterdeath communication through electronic devices, physical phenomena associated with apparent afterdeath communication, near-death experiences, and past-life experiences. One of the things we will find, as we get going, is the occurrence over and

over again of anomalous phenomena—in particular, anomalous information acquisition and anomalous physical influencing—which do not fit a conventional materialist interpretation of reality. We could try to explain such anomalies by positing that they are the result of anomalous processes among the living. That is called *living agent psi* (LAP). But can we go one step further? The *survival hypothesis* is the hypothesis that consciousness of some sort survives, at least for a while, after physical death. That death is a nontrivial altered state of consciousness. Is there evidence for survival? Making an argument for survival turns out to be more difficult than it seems it should be. But what this does is set up an imaginary materialist–LAP–survival dial and the question of how far to the right we can turn that dial. We will keep coming back to this scheme as we go from chapter to chapter.

Materialism is entrenched in the academy, so there is considerable resistance to moving the dial at all. We can try to maintain a materialist stance, arguing away each apparently anomalous event on the grounds of poor documentation, misperception, mental illness, hoax, and so on. Materialists have sometimes argued that all materialist explanations must be completely exhausted before entertaining any alternatives because materialism is, after all, the correct interpretation of reality. Given such an agenda, one of my readers said that I should present only the clearest evidence against materialism in favor of survival and leave out the messy cases. Well, I am not doing that. I present some of the clear cases and lots of messy cases because the messy cases represent the way things are, and I want the reader to get a feeling for the richness of the actual terrain of this material and not some eviscerated version of it. Science is not about protecting entrenched ideologies, materialist or otherwise, but about trying to find the theory with the best goodness of fit to the data, so I freely discuss LAP and survivalist explanations throughout. Indeed, the last chapter about the nature of the afterlife is an explication of what the afterlife could be like were the survival hypothesis to be true. That information allows us to explicitly analyze death as an altered state of consciousness.

In keeping with a scientific approach, I do not want readers to believe anything but to evaluate what I say using their own judgment. I am not making some sort of global philosophical argument, although I do point out logical inconsistencies as they appear. And there are lots of those across the spectrum of explanations. Nonetheless, students frequently ask me what I think. As an expert familiar with the nuances of these phenomena and arguments about them, do I think that the survival hypothesis is true? Let me give an answer consistent with the spirit of inquiry in this book. As I worked my way through the details in each chapter, I experienced a slowly dawning

realization that the human psyche is far more expansive than any materialist reification could capture. This is a conclusion reached also by many experiencers who frequently undergo a process of self-transformation that leads to transcendent insights about the nature of consciousness and reality, including death.

I open each chapter with an epigraph that comes as close as I can find to capturing the essence of that chapter from the point of view of a believer in survival. But the epigraphs are also meant to be provocative, to pique the reader's interest. So, for instance, a key idea in Chapter 1 is the loss of critical thinking about the subject matter of death due to unwitting adherence to cultural norms. I discuss this using social cognitive ideology. But that is not how Shaman Durek sees it. What he sees is that green gas has emanated from the underworld, coating people so that they become entrained to act in accordance with mass mind. In Chapter 7, we see how near-death experiences can carry over into a person's ordinary waking state, transforming their life. But what exactly can be brought back from an encounter with the unknown? How about a goat? The point here is not to get caught up in arguing about whether the events in the epigraphs really happen but to open another perspective on the phenomenology of these experiences. Lots of discussion about the veridicality of such experiences is within the substance of each chapter. But this brings up another point. There is a stifling atmosphere to much of the academic discussion about death. I want to change that by introducing some levity into the presentation of this subject matter. So, I hope that what I have to say is not only useful, but enjoyable.

The reader may notice that the citation of references is not always in alphabetical order, which is the publisher's usual style. Throughout the book, I cite references in the order of their relevance to what I am saying, with the most significant first.