

DAVID J. CHALMERS

The Australian philosopher behind Reality+: author biography



FEATURED BOOK | 2022

REALITY+

Virtual Worlds and the Problems of Philosophy

Original graphic; not the book cover

ORIGINS AND FAMILY

- **Born:** April 20, 1966, in Sydney, Australia; age 60 in 2026.
- **Growing up:** Lived briefly in Boston and London as a preschooler; moved from Sydney to Adelaide at age nine and remained there until age 21.
- **Father:** John Chalmers, an internationally recognized physician and hypertension researcher.
- **Mother:** A teacher, social worker, spiritual seeker, and scholar; one biographical directory identifies her as Julie Ann Kierath.
- **Stepmother:** Alex, a physician and medical educator. His parents separated when he was five; he lived mainly with his father and stepmother from about age seven.
- **Siblings:** Older sister Helen and three younger brothers: Matt, Mike, and Johnny; one is a stepbrother.

EDUCATION AND EARLY YEARS

- Began programming around age 10; later represented Australia in the International Mathematical Olympiad.
- **University of Adelaide:** Honors B.S. in pure mathematics, 1983-1986.
- **University of Oxford:** Mathematics graduate study as a Rhodes Scholar, 1987-1988.
- **Indiana University:** Ph.D. in philosophy and cognitive science, 1993; worked with Douglas Hofstadter.

PARTNER AND HOME

- **Partner:** Claudia Passos Ferreira, a Brazilian philosopher and psychologist associated with NYU bioethics.
- **Home:** He describes dividing time between Greenwich Village and New York's Hudson Valley, with frequent connections to Australia and Brazil.
- **Children:** Reliable public sources reviewed do not establish whether he has children.

WORK, HONORS, AND IDEAS

Why David Chalmers matters to readers of Reality+

ACADEMIC CAREER

- Taught at UC Santa Cruz and the University of Arizona, then led consciousness research at Australian National University.
- Joined New York University in 2009; now University Professor of Philosophy and Neural Science and co-director of its Center for Mind, Brain, and Consciousness.

SELECTED HONORS

- Rhodes Scholarship, 1987.
- Stanton Prize, 2004; Jon Barwise Prize, 2008.
- American Academy of Arts and Sciences fellow, 2013.
- Jean Nicod Prize, 2015; Marc Sanders Prize, 2020.
- American Philosophical Association Eastern Division president, 2022-2023.
- British Academy international fellow, 2024.



Chalmers at an AI conference, 2025.

IDEAS THAT SHAPE REALITY+

- **Consciousness:** Why do physical processes produce subjective experience?
- **Virtual realism:** Virtual worlds can be genuine realities, not illusions.
- **Meaning:** Relationships, achievement, and ethics can matter in virtual environments.
- **Other books:** The Conscious Mind (1996), The Character of Consciousness (2010), and Constructing the World (2012).

PHOTO AND COPYRIGHT CREDITS: 2021 portrait: DannyGolcman. 2025 conference photograph: Horcrux. Both appear unaltered under Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0. The book-title illustration is original and does not reproduce the copyrighted cover.

[2021 portrait and license](#)

[2025 photograph and license](#)

[Creative Commons license terms](#)

[Author biography and family interview](#)

[Current curriculum vitae and awards](#)

[John Chalmers: medical research](#)

[Author's Reality+ book page](#)

[Mother's name: directory listing](#)