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"To me it is evident for the reasons you allow of, that sensible things cannot exist otherwise than in a mind or spirit. Whence I conclude, not that they have no real existence, but that seeing they depend not on my thought, and have an existence distinct from being perceived by me, there must be some other mind wherein they exist. As sure, therefore, as the sensible world really exists, so sure is there an infinite, omnipresent Spirit who contains and supports it."

- George Berkeley (1685-1753)

Introduction

Hello, and welcome to my website. Here I present my philosophies of mind and consciousness. My name is Gibran Shah. The ideal audience for this website is one with an interest in philosophy of mind, and whose members are stimulated by fresh ideas that reach just a little outside the box. If this is you, read on (if it isn't, read on anyway).

Although I can't explain in a clear way what exactly my philosophies are in this introduction (as they require several papers to be expressed in full), I will describe the problems they are meant to resolve. This entire website centers on a core theory of the relation between mind and matter, and layered overtop this core are extended theories, ideas, and interesting implications. What do I mean by the relation between mind and matter? This is a very popular topic in philosophical circles. It has been ever since Descartes introduced his Cartesian split, the idea that mind and body are two distinct entities. The philosophical conundrum is how one interacts with the other, and also how one creates the other (typically, we assume it is the brain which creates the mind). Why should a simple resolution to this conundrum be so elusive? It comes down to the very substance of mind and matter. They are so distinct in their very essence that comparison between the two is nearly impossible. It seems so unfathomable, therefore, that one could arise from the other. How does something physical, like the brain, create something so non-physical, like consciousness? And how are we to conceive of the manner in which they interact? It's easy to conceive of the interaction between two physical objects: one bumps another, the other moves. And conceiving of mental interactions is equally simple: one idea sparks another, or a memory affects your mood. So when I talk about the relation between mind and matter, I'm referring to these concepts. To date, no one has presented the world with a resoundingly and unanimously satisfying solution. There have been countless theories put forward that resulted in factions and small followings, but none have been so overpowering that the world as a whole has ever been able to say "Ah! At last, we have the answer!" Of course, this is not to say that my theory will be the first, not by a long shot, but I do mean to introduce it as a plausible alternative to the most well-known theories we still hold onto today. In my humble opinion, I do believe my theory to be unique and to have its own special edge (which I'll point out in another paper), and of course *I* believe it to make the most sense out of all other theories built to solve the same problem (why would I hold onto it otherwise?), but the reader can judge for him/herself whether or not this seems true.



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Recommended Prerequisites

That being said, I'd like to prepare the reader before delving right into it. I'd like to state my assumptions about what the reader knows coming in. I assume that the reader...

i) is educated and has a penchant for philosophy. I try my best to elucidate the reader when I deem it appropriate. It shouldn't require a doctorate in medicine or astrophysics, but it would be very difficult for someone who has yet to achieve a high school level of education. So I assume some post-secondary education in my readers, or the equivalent in terms of natural smarts.

ii) has a thorough understanding of the concepts of determinism and free-will. If these concepts invoke headaches more readily than they do insight, never fear. I have devoted two papers in this site to the topic. One covers the basics for those who are unfamiliar, and the other delves into my own take on the subject. I recommend the former if you feel uncomfortable with it.

iii) has a thorough understanding of the concepts of neurology. Since my readers are so smart, I need not worry about this, but just incase you feel the need to brush up on your neurological facts, I've written a paper that covers the basics. This paper covers the science of neurons as well as the anatomy and functions of the brain and its parts. It is highly recommended that you get a good grounding in this fascinating subject.

iv) has a basic understanding of the philosophy of mind and matter. This one will probably take care of itself as you read through my papers, but it would nevertheless help a great deal if you understood a thing or two about the philosophy of mind at the start. For this reason, I have written a paper touching on the major issues that the philosophy of mind concerns itself with, at least the ones relevant to this website.

v) has a rudimentary understanding of quantum physics. This requirement isn't as important as the ones listed so far. It won't be necessary until you read some of the later papers, and even then I provide a brief overview plus links.

vi) has a rudimentary understanding of computer science. Like quantum physics, this requirement is also less important than the others. Unfortunately, I have not devoted an entire paper to this topic (this website is large enough as it is 😊), but where computers become relevant to the discussion, I have provided enough background to hopefully equip the reader with what he/she needs to know in order to grasp the concepts at hand. In the paper on the philosophy of mind mentioned above, I have included a section on functionalism, the view that the brain is like a computer and the mind like software, in which I provide a very brief rundown of computers and digital information processing, enough hopefully so that the reader has a sufficient start (though more will be needed).

My Approach

Now a little bit about myself. I feel that it is important to explain my approach, background, and writing style so the reader knows what to expect.

I graduated from the University of Calgary with a B.A. in psychology and a B.Sc. in computer science. Although I do have some education in philosophy, I graduated one course shy of a minor in it (I may go back later). I work as an IT expert, mainly in the fields of web development and graphic design (Photoshop, AutoCAD, XSI). When I'm not up late after a few cups of coffee thinking about metaphysics, mind, and the underlying foundations of existence, I'm participating in discussions and debates on various internet forums. When I'm not doing this, I like to read - anything and everything. I also like to draw. I have a collection of drawings depicting strange and surreal worlds chalk full of color and weirdness. I also like to dabble in "alternate experiences" - the rest of this website will explain what this means and why it interests me.

My writing style is another point I should touch on. I aim to be understood. But doesn't everybody? Some less than others, I'd say. Some, with good reason, aim to be accurate. You'll find this approach in writings that are heavy on the technical jargon. Although my topics are philosophical in nature, it is not uncommon for professional philosophers to write in a standardized technical manner. In extreme cases, whole papers have been written in **Predicate Logic** (a standardized mode of expressing an argument that mimics mathematical notation). If it requires extensive analysis and interpretation, it can't be that easy to understand. This is not to say that I scorn such an approach. On the contrary, I strive to be as consistent and logical in my reasoning as I can, but I try not to lose sight of the point of reading, and my writing of, these papers - namely, to understand. My point is, these papers do not read like a technical manual, and I'm not sure whether or not this makes any particular reader more or less comfortable.



*Predicate
Logic*

That being said, I deal with very profound concepts in this paper, and a fair degree of complication is inevitable. So whereas my non-technical style of writing might help to ease the reader into lucid engagement, I can't help that some of the concepts are bound to stir up some degree of confusion or imagination stretching. I call myself a romantic, and so I aim, if not to reach understanding with my audience, then at least to entertain with a bit of dramatic affect.

The kind of philosophy I deal with in this website is the sort that can only be articulated properly given a multi-contextual approach - that is to say, I will often have to rely on the reader's appreciation for the appropriate context in which my statements make sense. I can't always make this context explicit, although I will be sure to do so at least once as I open each discussion anew, and so the reader needs to be aware of the context from which I speak. For example, I have been christened a **subjectivist** by more than one person, and the bane of a subjectivist is the difficulty in grappling with what usually comes across as contradictions in statements made about reality as determined by varying views and perspectives. That is to say, a subjectivist is one who believes reality is fundamentally subjective, determined by one's ways of experiencing the world - so if the air feels cool to me but warm to you, I as a good subjectivist would have to either contradict my own views by denying your experience (that the air is warm) for my own (that the air is cool) because that is my subjective experience - or withdraw into something of an anti-realist position whereby I don't believe the air to be either cool or warm in an absolute sense (I would instead have to say that the air is cool to me but warm to you, and that's all there is to say). This is the archetypical problem that has always plagued subjectivists, one to which we will offer a solution in the paper [Reality and Perception](#), and it renders subjectivists dependent on context. If I were asked, "Is the air cool or warm?" then I can only answer, "It depends on the context - either your point of view or mine." Much of what I say in this website likewise depends on context. There will be times when I refer to the mechanical workings of the physical universe, even though I will clearly state my position as an **idealist** (or quasi-idealist - not exactly the sort **Berkeley** was but close enough). I will explain my meaning early on in this website so that any subsequent mention of the "physical universe" is understood in the appropriate context, and thus makes sense even in my idealist paradigm. Other contextual paradigms will figure into my writings throughout these papers, and needless to say, the reader needs to be wary of them. I will certainly try my best to make them clear at least once before delving headlong into them.



Subjectivism



Berkeley's Idealism

Finally, my philosophical stances: Of the more popular philosophical topics such as determinism vs. free-will, realism vs. anti-realism, physicalism vs. idealism, and so on, I don't like picking one side exclusively and completely. I have come to realize that, given a context, either side of a particular topic can be deemed valid. Therefore, I will not say that I am a determinist, a realist, or an idealist point blank. I will say that, *in a certain sense* I believe determinism, realism, and idealism are sound ideas, but in a different sense free-will, anti-realism, and physicalism are also sound ideas. That being said, I will say that I am *partial* to determinism, realism, and idealism (the latter two perhaps seeming an odd couple, but you'll see why as you read through this website - in fact, the whole theme of this website pivots on their synthesis). I used to be intractably latched onto determinism in particular, but now I only feel *comfortable* with determinism. That is, I'm convinced of the possibility that there are phenomena in nature (namely, quantum phenomena) that are non-deterministic, and even that our will is, *in a certain sense*, non-deterministic, but also that I would have no problem accepting a fully closed deterministic model of reality if it were undeniably proven. I suppose the reason is that I have an insatiable desire to understand, which determinism promises can be satiated, more so than I have a desire to be free, even though freedom is truly a wonderful thing. But then I realize this is an idiosyncrasy, which is no justification at all for determinism. Nevertheless, I give some good arguments for determinism, and equally as many good arguments for free-will, in the paper [Determinism and Free-Will](#).

On the topic of religion, I won't say much except that I don't ascribe to any of the institutionalized religions, but neither am I an atheist nor a secularist. I am quite certain about what I believe, so that eliminates agnosticism as well. In fact, you'll find that my thoughts on Truth in general are, to say the least, unconventional. I don't think of any one religion as right or wrong, nor do I believe any two religions that logically conflict can't both be right. It'll become clear how this can be as you read on. On almost every other philosophical issue, I will not elaborate here since they are all intrinsically related to my theory on mind and matter. Not that the topics of realism vs. anti-realism, determinism vs. free-will, and religion vs. secularism are unrelated, but they are more unrelated than these other topics. I leave it to the rest of this website, therefore, to express my stance on them.

Website Structure

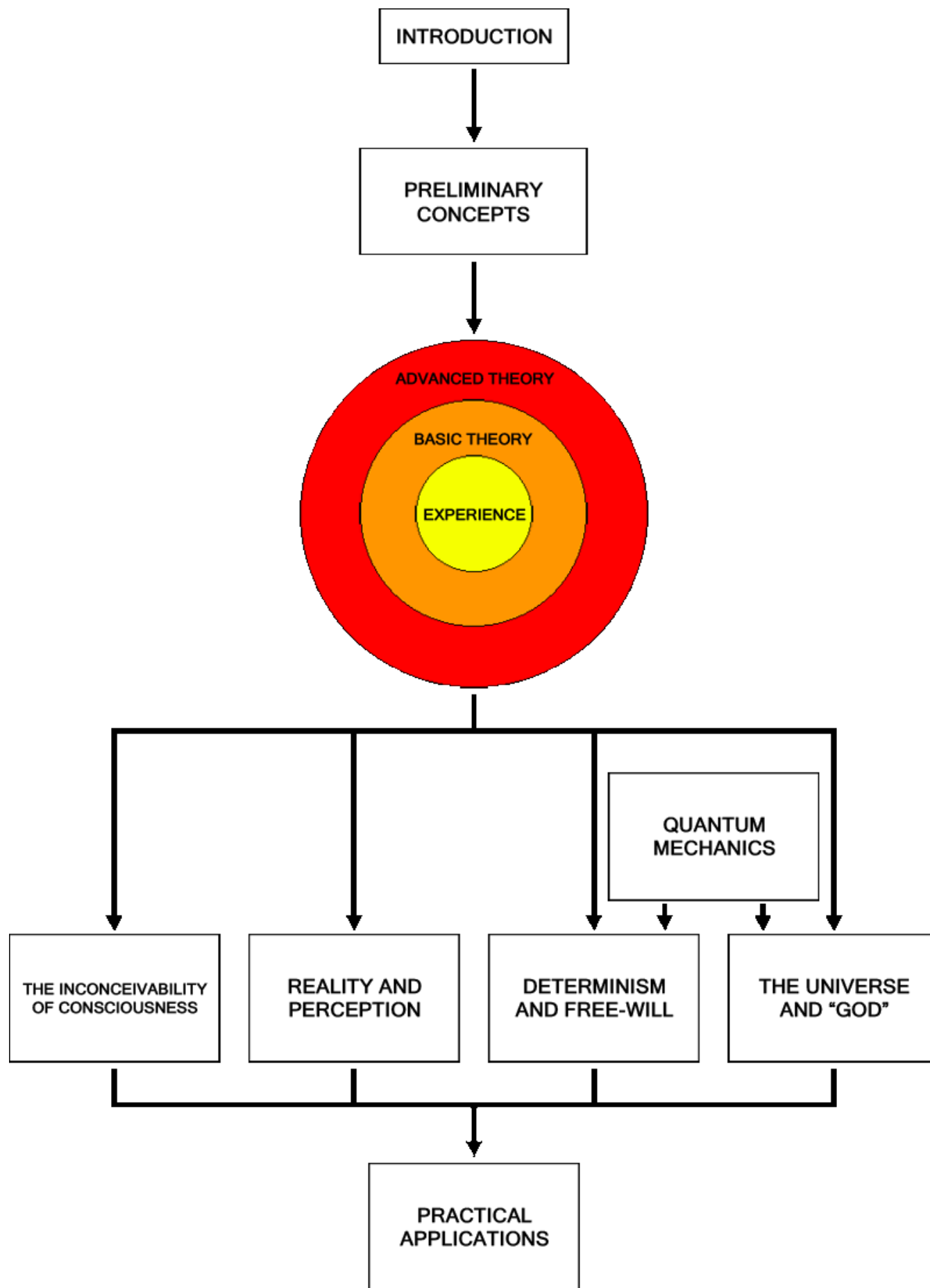


Figure 1: Structure of this website.



Dualism



Monism

Figure 1 shows the structure of the relationship between all the papers included in this website. Although the order in which the reader should get through these papers is less than clear by this figure, there are links to the left of this page, and assuming you have javascript enabled on your browser, to the right as well, and they list each paper in the proper order. Besides this introduction, the reader should start with *Preliminary Concepts*, which covers the basics of neurology as well as the major relevant topics in the philosophy of mind that one should have a rough grasp on before getting to the core of the theory. The reader may skip this paper if he/she feels his/her understanding of these topics are adequate enough to delve fully into brand new material. The theory itself is divided into two papers titled *The Basic Theory of Mind and Matter* and *The Advanced Theory of Mind and Matter*. Together, they form the complete body of the theory of mind and matter in general. The Basic Theory has, at its core, a customized definition of "experience" as well as a formal correlative description for the relation between mind (or experiences) and the brain. The Basic Theory only gives this correlation as a descriptive formula for such a relation, and doesn't diverge too much from a crude **Cartesian Dualism**. The full theory, the reader should be aware, is *not* dualist however, and the Advanced Theory extends our customized definition of "experience" along with our descriptive correlation to all matter and physical systems in the universe, and fuses the material and the mental into one ubiquitous substance ("substance" in this case being used liberally). Ultimately, the theory is rendered as a brand of **monism**.

With the exception of *Practical Applications*, all other papers center around what I've deemed the most pressing issues and implications that follow from the general theory. We have, to begin with, *The Inconceivability of Consciousness*, which addresses the issue of how a theory of consciousness can stand when consciousness itself is thought to be inconceivable. I should say that I don't take a contrary stance on this notion, but seeing as my theory reduces consciousness to something more fundamental - namely, being - I take being to be the troublesome issue, and my account of how consciousness reduces to it a feasible equivalent to a fully conceivable explanation. Then there is *Reality and Perception* where I expound and rectify the most conspicuous pseudo-paradoxes that typically come up as objections to a subjectivist theory like mine, one for example being the apparent contradictions in truth claims when we consult different people's perspectives, the kind alluded to above. I also make a few innocuous concessions in this paper, one for example being that I can't claim to be "right" in proposing the major tenets of my theory, at least not in the conventional sense of a theory being "right". My theory offers an entirely different twist on what it means for a theory - or an idea, or a proposal, or a thought, or anything of that nature - to be "right", and according to *that* sense, I surely can claim to be "right". But understanding this sense is the real hurdle, and if overcome, the clearing of this hurdle does away with some of the major pseudo-paradoxes hindering my theory (and don't worry - it does bear a fair degree of elegance). Between *Reality and Perception* and *Determinism and Free-Will*, there is a brief overview of Quantum Mechanics. The reader will need at least a rudimentary understand of the concepts therein, so I have provided the paper *Quantum Mechanics* at this point since the following two papers assume the reader has this understand. The reader may skip this paper if he/she feels his/her understanding of quantum mechanics is up to specs. From there, we go on to *Determinism and Free-Will* wherein we explore what kind of implications my theory has for free-will and determinism, and visa-versa. My theory is foremost deterministic, but in this paper, we will show in what minor ways my theory can be "tweaked" so as to include free-will as a welcome ingredient. Before the last paper, we have *The Universe and "God"* where I touch on the religious and theological aspects of the theory. Indeed there are some profound ones. One major implication of the theory is that there is indeed some kind of god-like ultimate being serving as the foundation of existence, and I feel it is important to touch on this notion and explore what can and can't be said about it. I also cover all miscellaneous ideas that haven't been covered up to this point. Finally, in *Practical Applications*, we explore the many ways by which the principles of the theory can be applied in a practical sense, proposing the feasibility of a systematized methodology for producing powerful "mental technologies".

Margin Icons

Throughout this website, you'll find icons in the left-hand margin. You might have already seen a few in this introduction, such as the dictionary symbol (📖) above. These signify further information that I've made available, information on certain points made in the adjacent paragraph. These points will usually be indicated by one or two words in bold. Below is a list of these icons along with a description of what they mean.



Dictionary: Click this to get a definition of the term in bold in the adjacent paragraph.



Principle: Click this for a reminder of the principle mentioned in the adjacent paragraph.



Sidenote: Click this for a sidenote relating to the topic of the adjacent paragraph.



Generic Link: Click this for further information on the world wide web pertaining to the topic of the adjacent paragraph.



Neuroscience: Click this for an explanation of the neurological topic in the adjacent paragraph.



Physics: Click this for an explanation of the physics topic in the adjacent paragraph.



Computer Science: Click this for an explanation of the computer science topic in the adjacent paragraph.



Philosophy: Click this for an explanation of the philosophical topic in the adjacent paragraph.



Rule: Click this for a reminder of the lingual rule mentioned in the adjacent paragraph. This mainly pertains to the fundamental principles underlying a rudimentary subjectivist language we will expound in the paper *Reality and Perception*.

At first, I wanted to include such links inline (in the paragraphs themselves) but I also wanted the nifty little icons. I tried this at first, but felt the icons were more of a distraction and took away from the flow of reading, so I opted to relegate them to the left-hand margin instead, bolding the text where they would have been otherwise.


The great majority of links to other websites take you to wikipedia. Wikipedia doesn't have the best reputation as a reliable source (anyone can edit its contents and really mess with people who just want to be better informed), but the way I see it, I am providing these links as an extra step towards helping the reader understand, and I feel the reader has the power to search for other reliable sources on his/her own if he/she feels wikipedia doesn't meet acceptable standards. Wikipedia is a good place to start though, and it usually offers links to other relevant websites at the end of each article. Furthermore, it has been evaluated as equal to Encyclopedia Britannica in terms of reliability. Nonetheless, as I come across better websites myself, I may replace certain links with them, but I will do so at my own leisure (don't expect anything soon 😊). If anyone has any good sources or suggestions, please [email me](#).

Quick Links

I have included a collection of links at the top of every paper, including this introduction. The same collection is at the bottom of every paper, along with a link to return to the top. If the reader has javascript enabled, this collection will also be available in a drop-down menu at the top of your screen (it will follow you as you scroll

up or down the full page). Click these links to be taken to the specific sections of the paper you are visiting. For example, if you click on "Website Structure" at the top of this introduction, you will be taken to this major section. If you click on "Quick Links" at the top of this introduction, you will be taken to this minor section. The difference between a major and minor section is just a matter of categorization. All papers are split into major sections, and each major section is (sometimes) split into minor sections. If a major section is split into minor sections, I sometimes integrate the heading of the first minor section with that of the major section (this major section - Website Structure - is an example; Figure 1 above could be said to be in the first minor section even though there is no separate heading for it apart from "Website Structure" which is the heading of the major section).

Technical Issues

There are a few technical things about this website that might be useful to know. For one, each paper is quite lengthy and full of images, and depending on the speed of your computer and internet connection, it might therefore take a while to download. The shortest paper, in PDF format, is 31 pages and 1.3 MB. In fact, PDF format might be the preferred way to read them. Therefore, I have created links in the left-hand margin ([above](#) ) through which you can download each paper in PDF format. Please be aware, however, that although the download time might be less than optimal for reading in your standard web browser, it is optimal after downloading. This is due mainly to the spacing and positioning of text, margins, and images (which the PDFs may not have captured properly in a few cases). Ironically, the best browser for viewing these papers is Mozilla Firefox even though I developed it exclusively in Internet Explorer 6.0. If you choose to read these papers in PDF format, keep in mind that the links don't work. This means that the margin icons don't work either. Concerning the sidenotes in particular, I have worked around this shortcoming by appending them to each paper in an appendix, so be sure to flip (or scroll) to the end should you want to read them. If you prefer reading in your web browser, however, you should know that I developed this website with a screen resolution of 1280 by 800. The width of every page should fit within these dimensions or greater, but anything small than 1280 by 800 will force the reader to have to scroll left and right to view the entire width of the page (and the text). Needless to say, it is a work in progress, and I will get around to ironing out these wrinkles in due time. As for now, however, it is functional, and the reader can proceed to explore any area of this website without trouble.

My Philosophy

To elaborate a bit on the central thesis of this website, let me just say a few things about what I believe my theory on mind and matter accomplishes. As I already pointed out, it addressed head-on the problem of mind and matter - the problem of how a material entity like the brain can have any relation to something so immaterial as consciousness - but in solving this problem, it goes beyond it with implication on cosmology, metaphysics, and the foundations of reality itself - in fact, I'm willing to go so far as to say the very *essence* of reality - that is, of "realness" - for that, in the end, is precisely what the theory turns out to be. I used to describe my theory as one that explains what consciousness is. But after years of refining my thought on the matter and learning to be more disciplined in my philosophical reason, I came to grips with the fact that, despite my theory, I still had no idea what consciousness was. So instead, I settled for describing my theory as one that solves the problem of mind and matter in terms of explaining the *relation* between consciousness and the brain; not consciousness itself. But as it turned out, even that wasn't enough; it wasn't wrong, and I still use this articulation at times, but there were other, and better, articulations. The best I've come up with to date is one that describes my theory in terms of ontology. To understand this, one has to realize that the solution I bring to bear on the problem of mind and matter doesn't exactly tie up all loose ends on the mystery, but rather hands those loose ends off to a seemingly unrelated philosophical mystery - namely, the problem of ontology - that is, the problem of being and what it essentially is. Like consciousness, being - that quintessential "stuff" that resides in all things that exist and necessitates their existence - is, it seems reasonable to say, beyond the grasp of human understanding. Well, it follows from my theory that the whole reason why consciousness and being seem to share this eternal obstinacy to human inquiry is because the former reduces to the latter - that is, consciousness simply *is* being. Therefore, my official articulation on what my theory is - that is, what it contributes to philosophy - is to show how two virtually unrelated philosophical topics are indeed one - only the manner in which they are articulated, in terms of vocabulary and conceptual models, distinguishing them. This is why my theory ends up being a theory on reality - that is, "realness" - itself. How this philosophical simplification is carried out is what I've set out to explain in this website.

My Intention

Finally, a word on my intentions is in order. I *do not* intend to convey my theory in the conventional manner. The conventional manner is to put forward a claim as though it is a fully accurate and exhaustive depiction of reality itself - that is, as though reality is exactly as the theory describes it, standing independently of the theory itself, and if the theory were to deviate from its structure in the slightest, it would be wrong. I'm of the school of thought that distances itself from Platonism - the view that there are independent absolute eternal metaphysical Truths, Principles, Morals, and other such abstract residents in a realm of existence parallel to the physical. The only thing I share in common with the typical Platonist is that I am a metaphysicist, but the reader will find out that my brand of metaphysics diverges from the classical (Platonic) kind. I don't think truths, principles, morals, and the like can sustain an independent existence from one's mind (I'm a subjectivist recall). We will show in the paper [Reality and Perception](#) how this leads to the aforementioned alternate sense in which a theory can be "right". I take the view that we make our own realities, and that includes truth. We make our own truths by what we believe, and therefore what it takes for a theory like mine to be "right" is internal to the theory itself - that is, on its own intrinsic logical merit (and *not* solely on the fact that one believes it). In other words, my intention is to be consistent, painting a picture of reality that seems sensical and plausible without clashing with any of the known facts of science or any other reliable method of inquiry. My claim is not that I'm right - not in the conventional sense, that is - but that I'm consistent. According to my views, and those of many others - some not even subjectivists - reality and truth aren't even things we can comprehend, let alone be right about. The best we can do is conjure up mental models that seem logical through-and-through and match up, more or less, with the way we experience the world. I further claim that my theory explains a great deal. It's one thing, after all, to claim that a proposal is consistent (for example, the notion that "if the Boogiemer lives in the closet, then the closet contains a monster." is consistent), but it's quite another to claim something that deserves serious consideration, something that explains a great deal more than other proposals can.

I also take the attitude that this website belongs to me, and that it is my right to express my views in whatever way I want. It is a labor of love, not an occupation in which I'm obliged to fulfill certain mandates imposed on me. I can write whatever I want however I want. Having said that, however, I don't want to come across as reckless or belligerent. I don't want to seem like I care nothing for reason and rationality. I hope to make a good impression on my readers, whatever their positions and backgrounds, and I therefore understand the importance of explaining my views thoroughly and clearly. I need to use reason and logic wherever possible, and this is indeed what I've strived to do. However, I feel it is important to stress the freedom with which I will express my views, for I have come across the objection more than once that, however true or reasonable my views are, they aren't useful. Despite the fact that I think nothing can be further from the truth (as *Practical Applications* will attest to), this is really irrelevant to me. I'm writing this primarily for fun. It's a hobby. It can be as useless and unproductive as I want.

I also feel I don't have to be rigidly deductive in all my arguments. I don't believe a single philosophical paper was ever written that was immaculately deductive from beginning to end. Even the best of philosophers make inductive leaps here and there, argue points based on the power of persuasion and plausibility, posit assumptions on the grounds that their alternatives would be absurd, appeal to the readers emotions and values, come clean and admit that his/her views are just opinions but press on with them regardless, so on and so forth. That being said, I try to maximize my use of deductive reasoning, and I feel I've formulated my views with enough deduction to be able to say such reasoning is sufficiently abundant throughout this website. Where it is lacking, I feel that I stick close to reason and plausibility to the extent that a level headed reader will find that I'm making good sense and that little reason exists to doubt me. That's not to say that I expect no contentions or disagreements. I don't think it's possible to cultivate full unanimity among all possible readers, and I expect a fair amount of objections, even ridicule, but I fully accept this and hope to strike a cord in at least a few readers (even one would be nice). I feel strongly that I've argued my case cogently and reasonably, and I'm confident that this feeling will stick with me for a long time - through all kinds of challenges and objections - for it has sunk its roots deep within my worldview to the extent that I really find it hard to see the world any other way.

In fact, I feel that it has awoken a spiritual side to me, a side that craves the richness of life and the multitude of qualities that come with all walks of mental experiences. It finds a deep place in my heart where it perpetually replenishes my appreciation and fascination for the beauty and wonder of the world we live in. Maybe you will walk away with the same sense of wonder, or maybe not. Maybe you will walk away shrugging it off as hardly moving at all. Maybe you will walk away confused and burdened with a headache. Or maybe you will walk away with something else, something *inspired* by the theory, but not the theory itself. I'm sure there is the potential for a whole gamut of impressions it can leave you, but foremost I hope it will sustain the your interest.

I hope you will like what you read, whoever you are, and I certainly feel you won't be disappointed.

You may begin with [Preliminary Concepts](#) or plunge right into [The Basic Theory of Mind and Matter](#).

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Philosophy

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Appendix

An Even Deeper Problem



Actually, for those well versed in the neurosciences, the problem is even more complicated than this. For them, the question is how does free -will fit into a brain that seems almost completely deterministic?