A Note for Impatient or Skeptical Minds

Impatient or skeptical minds should probably begin at the New Précis, (“In a Nutshell”) –at the very beginning of Chapter 1 and then skip to Chapter 12 which shows two relatively contemporaneous criticisms of my ideas and my answers to them.¹

Those violently opposed to materialistic approaches beforehand should probably turn to the opening pages of Chapter 8 to get some foretaste of my ultimate position on this issue. My answer is not so bleak as you may presume.

If you want to go straight to the heart of my conception however, you should probably skip directly to Chapter 4 which is the actual beginning of my thesis. I must warn you, however, that in doing so you will probably not understand it as you will have no understanding of its origins and context! (The first three chapters are presented to give you a basis from which, hopefully, you may interpret it. See the “Kantian Caution” to follow shortly.) It is a radically new and very different conception of the fundamental problem of cognition itself.² It ends with a claim for a new grounding for “scientific realism” in biology itself rather than in physics!

¹ (Note: This is a new and definitive rewriting of my original book: “Virtual Reality: Consciousness really Explained”. The original book was completed in 1995, (revised 1998). Though this book lacks some of the detail of the former, it incorporates a later and richer perspective with much new material and elucidates my second thesis far better than the original. I do not think it changes, but rather enriches the substance and sense of the earlier book –and clarifies its rationale. It also includes the new and important D’Espugnay Chapter 13 on quantum physics and an appendix devoted to Niels Bohr which I think prove my essential case.

This book uses a mix of footnotes and endnotes. The footnotes, (in ordinary numerals), are necessary for immediate clarity, but I felt the material included in the endnotes, (in Roman numerals), interrupted the flow of thought. Hence they were relegated to their endnote status.)

² As I quoted on the cover, Arnold Leiman, a respected neuroscientist, said he thought it was an entirely “new and original theory of cognition”.

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I should probably also state at the very outset that my solution incorporates a conception of “epistemological relativism” at its very foundations. But consider the meaning of those words! It is a very specific and particular kind of epistemological relativism that I will argue! It is a precise and scientifically rigorous position deriving from the actual mathematical invariants of our most successful scientific theories, (i.e. from those that Roger Penrose would deem “SUPERB”).

It would perhaps have been better to have renamed this characterization of my ideas as something else: to have called it “the epistemological relativism of scientific invariants” for instance, but I have kept the original term as it is the one used to characterize Ernst Cassirer’s position and I wish to keep the association. This is not “anything goes relativism”, “cultural relativism” or “irenic relativism” however, but a specific, rigorous and purely scientific conception. As such, it has a natural affinity with Einstein’s equations of special relativity or Galileo’s laws of motion. Ultimately, my usage is derived as an extension of Cassirer’s “Theory of Symbolic Forms” –but taking the latter within a very special and delimited context and with a very specific and rigorous meaning. That specific meaning is itself explanatory to and operative within my conception.

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3 i.e. it incorporates any given theory’s fundamental relationality, but considers it in a context-free perspective. This will become clearer in Chapters 7 & 9.

4 His CAPS

5 Kant did something very similar when he characterized his ideas as “critical idealism” – see Chapters 4 & 6. I think it was the greatest mistake he ever made, but I will make the same gamble he did –with the codicil above– in hopes that my reader is more sophisticated than his.

6 i.e. “make everybody feel good (peacemaking) relativism”

7 (George Lakoff had the same problem in decontaminating his own brand of “epistemological relativism” –“ICM’s”– to deal with, but I think I have gone far beyond his conception.)

8 See Chapter 8: Contra Cassirer: (What are the Real Parameters?)
A Kantian Caution for your Reading:

At this beginning point please let me add a final and specific caution for your own reading of this work. Kant defines your personal and hardest problem as a reader quite explicitly:

"If in a new science which is wholly isolated and unique in its kind, we started with the prejudice that we can judge of things by means of alleged knowledge previously acquired—though this is precisely what has first to be called in question—we should only fancy we saw everywhere what we had already known, because the expressions have a similar sound. But everything would appear utterly metamorphosed, senseless, and unintelligible, because we should have as a foundation our own thoughts, made by long habit a second nature, instead of the author's." (Immanuel Kant, Prolegomena, my emphasis)⁹

What I propose is just what he characterized: i.e. “a new science which is wholly isolated and unique in its kind”. I propose a new science of mind!

The reflections above should resolve many difficulties before they start. This is a very difficult subject to present with any perspective other than the standard ones: i.e. the very ones that have already clearly failed! Give me some space and I’ll try to make a revolutionary out of you! I think the answer is important as I think it is our one chance of restoring “humanity” to the human brain!

On the other hand, let me insert an apology at this point. I am currently 73 years old, and have had several strokes which have impaired my abilities. And yet I consider the new content

⁹ Note: The d’Espagnat letter of Chapter 13, (“D’Espagnat Replies”), almost exactly mirrors this passage as you will see!
of this book important. What it is lacking is an overall stylistic form of sufficient refinement to do it justice as my concentration has been narrowed to specific problems which I have responded to and which I think make my perspective clearer.10 Some of the citation references might need “tweaking”, but that should be achievable with minimal effort given sufficient interest. There is also a certain amount of redundancy –partly from a lack of sustainable concentration, and partly because this MS may perhaps be read in parts wherein certain citations must be explicit and considered in context. This is the “hard problem” and you’d better begin by expecting it to be so.

Jerome Iglowitz, 2012

P.S. Some of my illustrations require a higher resolution than is possible within this book format. I am therefore supplying them in a hi-resolution form at: http://foothill.net/~jerryi/Illustrations. You are free to examine or print them, but are required to acknowledge their source in any subsequent usage. Also please note that I have not included a Glossary because of the easy usage of the internet –which will probably serve your special needs better!

P.P.S. If you need a C.V. to cause you to evaluate even the very plausibility of these ideas, then you had probably best go elsewhere as you will not do well here. I abandoned academia long ago as I felt it was not possible to fully explore this huge problem within its rigid confines.11 I think my completed answer

10 Purely from the standpoint of organization, my first book is clearly superior to this one. From the standpoint of understanding however, I feel this rendition is a marked improvement.

11 Note: Upon the conclusion of your reading, I will make a challenge to your ingenuity. I will challenge you to compress the content of this book into an acceptable paper suitable for a journal, (10,000 words). I tried innumerable times,
validates this presupposition. Is it complete and final? Of course not! This is the very beginning of a dialogue and I have repeatedly asked for help, but it will take more courage than I have found in academia to go beyond trivial answers, risk association with a maverick mind, and face up to the real problem like a man, (woman)! No sexism intended.

always received backhanded compliments on the part it specifically addressed, but was always derided for not covering the other issues which that particular reviewer considered the ultimate problems! (See, as just one example for instance, the “JCS review” incorporated as part of chapter 12.) The concept itself is just too big for such a format!