

The Philosophical Work of Mark Sharlow

An Introduction and Guide

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About This Document

This guide provides summaries of Mark F. Sharlow's philosophical work and positions together with references to his writings. Each section of this guide covers one major area of philosophy, such as epistemology or aesthetics, or an area related to philosophy, such as mathematics. Within each section is a summary of Sharlow's main ideas followed by a table of his writings. In each table, the first column gives the titles of the writings; the second column gives links and/or citations to the writings; and the third column gives the specific subject areas. To find the writings on a given topic, find the appropriate section, then scan the third column of the table to find the correct subject area. Some writings are listed in more than one section because they belong to more than one subject area.

For more about finding the items in the tables, see the part below titled "Where to Find Sharlow's Writings."

Note that the position summaries given here are just that - summaries. The definitive statements of the ideas, and the arguments for the ideas, are in the writings listed in the tables. Those who plan to write about Sharlow's work should consult the original writings, not just the summaries. To find out about previous thinkers' influences on Sharlow's ideas, please consult the references in his writings.

This guide is a work in progress. For more current information, please refer to Sharlow's website (including his blogs) and the PhilPapers directory page for Sharlow. At the time of this writing, these were at the following URLs:

Website home page: <http://www.eskimo.com/~msharlow>

Main blog: <http://www.eskimo.com/~msharlow/cgi-bin/blosxom.cgi>

Second blog: <http://www.eskimo.com/~msharlow/cgi-bin/rel/blosxom.cgi>

Profile in PhilPapers directory: <http://philpapers.org/profile/3746>

Please report any issues with this document (broken links, etc.) to msharlow [at] usermail [dot] com, or to the e-mail address listed for Sharlow in the PhilPapers directory.

Where to Find Sharlow's Writings

The tables in this guide contain hyperlinks to most of Sharlow's writings as they appear on his website. These links were correct at the time of writing, but like most hyperlinks they may eventually become outdated. Most of the writings listed here also are in the PhilPapers directory

and archive (at <http://philpapers.org>; see Sharlow's profile at <http://philpapers.org/profile/3746>). Papers in peer reviewed journals can, of course, be found in those journals.

Links to posts in Sharlow's blogs point to an archive file containing all the posts instead of to the live blogs themselves.

If you cannot find an item in PhilPapers, try looking inside the items titled *Patchworks* and *The Unfinishable Scroll and Beyond*, which are archived at PhilPapers. These are collections of Sharlow's writings.

Some of the writings also appear in the PhilSci-Archive (<http://philsci-archive.pitt.edu>). Some may exist elsewhere on the Internet at sites not listed here.

A few of the writings listed here might not have been archived anywhere. For those, the Wayback Machine of the Internet Archive (<http://www.archive.org>) might be of help (start by searching for <http://www.eskimo.com/~msharlow> and go from there). The Wayback Machine also should be of help if Sharlow's website ever becomes permanently inoperative.

Section 1. The Nature of Knowledge (Epistemology)

Main Ideas

- **Multiple paths to knowledge.** There are multiple ways of finding knowledge. Knowledge is not a product of only one method of investigation, such as science alone or rational thought alone. Instead, there are many ways of knowing. All these ways, if used correctly, eventually yield compatible results (they do not contradict each other), and all are compatible with reason. The ways of knowing include (but might not be limited to) science, philosophical reason, mathematical intuition, personal practical experience, and poetic and artistic insight.
- **The importance of reason.** Reason is an extremely important way of knowing and is crucial to accurate thinking. However, not all sources of knowledge are rational. One example of non-rational knowledge is the insight into reality that poetic and other artistic experience can offer. Real knowledge need not come from reason, but must not conflict with reason. Hence the nonrational ways of knowing are *nonrational* instead of *irrational*.
- **A comprehensive notion of experience.** Experience is an important source of knowledge, but the modern tendency to equate "experience" with sensory experience is arbitrary and artificial. There are other forms of experience besides sense experience. Mathematical intuition is one example. Another example is the insight into reality and human affairs that the arts, and especially poetry, can offer. All these experiences can serve as sources of knowledge.
- **Rejection of postmodernism.** The postmodernist and deconstructive critiques of science and reason are poorly conceived and are not credible.
- **Knowledge and subjective fact.** The concept of *subjective fact*, first introduced in Sharlow's book *From Brain to Cosmos*, can be used to clarify some problems about knowledge. One example of such a problem is the problem of other minds. Another example is the threat of Cartesian skepticism. Arguments using subjective fact can defeat this skepticism.
- **Science: its importance and limits.** Science is an extremely valuable way of knowing, but it is not as rational or as objective as its enthusiasts claim. Specifically, scientific confirmation is more dependent on personal intuitions and perspectives than scientists usually care to admit. For example, it is possible for experts on science to draw conflicting conclusions from the same data, even if all those experts are equally rational. This is not a criticism of science; it is just a cautionary note. Modern thought tends to be too deferential toward science. Other ways of knowing also exist and are important.

List of Writings

Title	Link	Subject Area
<i>The Unfinishable Book</i> , chaps. 1, 4, 6 and 13	Link	knowledge (nature of)
<i>The Unfinishable Book</i> , chaps. 4, 6 and 13	Link	knowledge (multiple kinds)
<i>The Unfinishable Book</i> , chap. 4	Link	knowledge (reason)
<i>The Unfinishable Book</i> , chaps. 11 and 13	Link	knowledge (nature and limits of science)
Notes on <i>From Brain to Cosmos</i> : Questions and Answers about Subjective Fact	Link	knowledge (subjective fact)
How Subjective Fact Ties Language to Reality	Link	knowledge (subjective fact)
<i>From Brain to Cosmos</i>	Link *	knowledge (subjective fact)
<i>The Unfinishable Book</i> , chap. 7	Link	knowledge (traditional skepticism)
<i>The Unfinishable Book</i> , chap. 12	Link	knowledge (via art)
<i>Poetry's Secret Truth</i>	Link	knowledge (via art)
Seemsthat: On Going Beyond Presence and Text	Link	knowledge (postmodernism)
<i>The Unfinishable Book</i> , chaps. 1, 2, 11 and 13	Link	knowledge (postmodernism)

* This link goes to a page containing a list of links leading to chapters of the book.

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Section 2. The Nature of Reality (Metaphysics)

Main Ideas

- **The importance of the observer.** The world we live in is objectively real. It is not a figment of our minds (or, for that matter, of minds of any other kind). However, the existence of objects has deep logical connections to the way those objects appear to observers. Because of these connections, reality depends upon conscious experience, but in a logical manner, not a causal manner. Mind is not the cause of matter; instead, physical events are the causes of mind. However, minds are parts of the logical underpinnings of physical reality. These ideas about existence lead to a moderately idealistic theory of reality (*recursive idealism*), which is fully compatible with the scientific view of the relation of mind to brain. This view does not involve separate substantial minds (no dualism), but it gives natural conscious observers an important place in our picture of the universe. Central to this line of argument is the concept of *subjective fact*, which is useful for making arguments about conscious experience more rigorous.
- **The status of abstract objects.** The world includes abstract entities as well as concrete entities. Abstract entities are not merely figures of speech as nominalism claims they are. However, it would be a mistake to confuse the existence of abstract objects like properties and relations with the existence of concrete items like tables and chairs. We should not picture abstract objects as forming a parallel realm of items similar to the world of ordinary concrete things. Abstract objects are real, but they do not exist in the same way that ordinary concrete things do. The intuitive feeling that abstract objects are simply "extra things" has led to serious errors in philosophy - including all forms of nominalism and most forms of platonic realism. In spite of their non-thinglike mode of existence, abstract objects are truly real. Platonic realism is correct in a way, but it is not nearly as extravagant as its opponents claim it is.
- **The self as a real abstract object.** A person's self is not an extra, nonphysical thing as traditional dualism claims. Instead, the self is an abstract object. Materialists have made this claim and treated it as a way to debunk or explain away the self. However, if we combine this claim with the fact that abstract objects are real, we see that the self too is fully real. The abstract-object view of the self is not reductionistic or skeptical, but is simply a classification of the self into an ontological category. The self is real; materialism and behaviorism cannot succeed in debunking it.
- **Critique of the abstract/concrete distinction.** The distinction between abstract and concrete objects is indispensable for many purposes. The properties and relations of concrete things exist in a way different from the existence of the concrete things

themselves. Despite this difference, there is no sharp dividing line between abstract and concrete items in general. Depending on how we analyze objects, we may consider abstract objects to be features of concrete objects, or we may regard concrete objects (so-called) to be features of abstract objects. Both directions of analysis have their strengths. Entities of different kinds can have different kinds of existence (see above), but there is no single kind of existence that we can identify as "concrete" once and for all. The distinction between abstract and concrete is real, but is somewhat relative to the way objects are analyzed. Perhaps it is best to regard the world as a web of entities, all of which have exemplification-like relations to other entities, and none of which can be labeled "abstract" or "concrete" in any absolute way.

- **Complex and simple objects are equally fundamental to reality.** It is a mistake to regard only the ultimate parts of things (such as "elementary" physical particles) as ultimately real. Instead, composite objects are just as real as their simplest parts. Composite wholes cannot be identified with their parts, even if we can explain their behavior in terms of the behavior of their parts. Composite objects can exist in ways very different from the way in which their parts exist. In some cases, we can regard whole systems as belonging to ontological categories different from those of their parts.
- **The reality of the subjective.** The subjective or "inner" items found in conscious experience are abstract objects. As such, they have an existence of their own, not the same as the existence of material objects. These items are real. This view does not require anything supernatural; it is simply a consequence of the reality of properties and relations. What is more, subjective facts (see above) are objective facts in a certain sense. Therefore, we cannot dismiss subjectivity as unreal or as a mere frill on the real world. The subjective is a subset of the real. This conclusion is important to our view of human nature and to several areas of philosophy. For the philosophy of art, it implies that art is an important way of knowing reality and can discover genuine facts that science overlooks.
- **The importance of possibilities.** Unless we classify possible worlds and other possibilia as concrete objects, we must classify them as abstract objects. Therefore, possibilia exist in some manner, whether or not this manner resembles ordinary "concrete" existence. The world is not just a world of actualities; it also is a world of possibilities.
- **The metaphysics of persons.** This topic has a separate section in this document.

List of Writings

Title	Link	Subject Area
About Idealism	Link	metaphysics (idealism)
<i>The Unfinishable Book</i> , chap. 7	Link	metaphysics (idealism)

Notes on <i>From Brain to Cosmos</i> : Questions and Answers about Subjective Fact	Link	metaphysics (subjective fact)
<i>From Brain to Cosmos</i>	Link *	metaphysics (subjective fact, idealism)
Qualia and the Problem of Universals	Link	metaphysics (abstract objects)
Getting Realistic about Nominalism	Link	metaphysics (abstract objects)
<i>The Unfinishable Book</i> , chaps, 7, 8, 9, 12 and 13	Link	metaphysics (abstract objects)
Is Everything Abstract?	Link	metaphysics (abstract objects)
Nonrealism and the Relativity of Logical Type	Link	metaphysics (abstract objects)
Spirit without the Supernatural	Link	metaphysics (abstract objects)
What Is the Thingy Illusion and How Does It Mess Up Philosophy?	Link	metaphysics (abstract objects)
<i>God, Son of Quark</i>	Link ** Ref.	metaphysics (complex systems)
<i>The Unfinishable Book</i> , chap. 12	Link	metaphysics (reality of the subjective)
Lewis's Modal Realism: a Reply to Naylor	Ref.	metaphysics (possible worlds)

* This link goes to a page containing a list of links leading to chapters of the book.

** This link goes to a page with information about the book.

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Section 3. Philosophy of Mind and the Nature of Persons

Main Ideas

- **The reality of the subjective features of consciousness.** Consciousness and its contents are real, though the contents of consciousness are abstract and not concrete. The qualities encountered in conscious experience (qualia) are real. Consciousness may have a scientific explanation, but it cannot be eliminated from our worldview or reduced to something devoid of subjectivity. The neurobiology of consciousness suggests ways that conscious experience could develop genuine first-person properties even within a naturalistic model of mind.
- **The truth of much of folk psychology.** Although folk psychology contains some errors, the central insights of folk psychology are true and cannot be overthrown by any present or possible future knowledge of neuroscience. Persons really have mental states, and those states play roles in the production of behavior. These facts have a logical and semantical basis that make them immune to empirical disconfirmation. No scientific discovery can contradict the main insights of folk psychology.
- **The reality of free will.** Free will is compatible with determinism. The reality of conscious will is compatible with evidence sometimes thought to contradict it, such as split-brain data and the timing of brain states leading to actions. None of the findings of science have ruled out the reality of free will or of conscious will. Aside from compatibilism, there also are indeterministic models of free will that would be compatible with *apparent* determinism in the physical world. Overall, free will is safe from the current wave of supposedly scientific attacks upon it.
- **The full reality of the self.** The self is neither a mere social construct nor an illusion, but is an abstract entity having the type of reality that such entities possess. The self is not a substantial Cartesian soul, but it has the most important features that people usually attribute to those souls. The self really exists through time, and also has features that may give it a kind of atemporal existence.
- **Persons as ultimately real.** Persons might, for all we know, be subject to reductive explanation in the scientific sense. However, persons are not completely reducible in an *ontological* sense. A person cannot be equated to a byproduct of anything simpler (such as the physical particles of which the body is made). A person is fully and unqualifiedly real, and is as much a part of "ultimate" reality as any particle of matter.
- **Logical personalism.** Much of present-day philosophy marginalizes persons by portraying them as mere frills on the material world, devoid of any real freedom, autonomy or subjectivity. This trend may be popular in academic philosophy, but it is wrong. Reason supports the full reality of the self and of subjective life, and even allows

for the possibility of free will. The view that persons are fully real, autonomous, and significant is not a mere byproduct of religion or of folk psychology. Instead, the reality and dignity of persons is central to a rational view of the world.

- **The place of the spiritual in human nature.** Persons have qualities traditionally regarded as spiritual. Human nature has intangible aspects that are not merely bodily and are not, strictly speaking, physical. There is nothing supernatural about these conclusions; one can reject the supernatural and still accept them. We can establish these points using reason alone, without resorting to religious faith. The assumption that mind and self are features of the brain does not contradict any of this.
- **Metaphysics in the philosophy of psychology.** Certain psychological theories, particularly in psychoanalysis, have much weaker metaphysical commitments than we usually realize.

List of Writings

Title	Link	Subject Area
Restoring the Foundations of Human Dignity	Link	persons (human dignity)
I Am an Abstraction, Therefore I Am	Link	persons (abstract)
Platonizing the Abstract Self	Link	persons (abstract, ultimately real)
The New Face of Spirit: Part One	Link	persons (ultimately real)
The New Face of Spirit: Part Two	Link	persons (ultimately real)
Spirit without the Supernatural	Link	persons (ultimately real)
Mind Is to Brain as Digestion Is to Digestive Tract. Oh, Really?	Link	mind (ultimately real)
<i>From Brain to Cosmos</i>	Link *	mind, persons (ultimately real)
<i>God, Son of Quark</i>	Link ** Ref.	mind, persons (ultimately real)

Yes, We Have Conscious Will	Link	persons (free will)
<i>The Unfinishable Book</i> , chap. 10	Link	persons (free will)
Still No Disproof of Free Will	Link	mind, persons (free will)
As True as "You Think": Preserving the Core of Folk Psychology	Link	mind (folk psychology)
Can Machines Have First-Person Properties?	Link	mind (consciousness)
Qualia and the Problem of Universals	Link	mind (consciousness)
Drawing a Blank: In Search of Empty Consciousness	Link	mind (consciousness)
Cortical Feedback and the Ineffability of Colors	Link *** Ref.	mind (consciousness)
Why Science Cannot Disprove the Afterlife	Link	persons (ultimately real)
Jung and His Skeptical Critics	Link	mind (psychological theories)

* This link goes to a page containing a list of links leading to chapters of the book.

** This link goes to a page with information about the book.

*** This link goes to a site besides Sharlow's site.

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Section 4: Art and Beauty (Aesthetics)

Main Ideas

- **Beauty is objectively real.** Beauty is "in the eye of the beholder" (that is, relative to the observer's state), but this relativity does not imply that beauty is illusory or unreal. The aesthetic qualities of natural and artistic objects are real, but are apparent to an observer only when the observer is in an appropriate psychological state. Beauty is objectively real, but the perception of beauty depends on the state of the observer. There is more beauty in natural objects than any single observer can perceive.
- **Art is a way of knowing the world.** The experiences associated with poetry and other arts reveal real qualities, relationships, and facts that are beyond the reach of scientific confirmation. (There is nothing supernatural about this claim. These qualities, relations and facts might well be completely natural.) Aesthetic experience is a legitimate way of knowing, and is complementary to, though never in contradiction with, science.

List of Writings

Title	Link	Subject Area
<i>The Unfinishable Book</i> , chap. 12	Link	knowledge (via art)
<i>Poetry's Secret Truth</i>	Link	knowledge (via art)
The Meaning and Beauty of the Universe	Link	aesthetics (reality, knowing)

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Section 5. Philosophy: Its Aims and Importance

Main Ideas

- **Philosophy as a way of knowing.** Philosophy is an important way of knowing, complementary to science and answering different questions.
- **The need for a revival of philosophy.** In the past few centuries, philosophy has declined from being the center of knowledge to being a much less important academic discipline. The tradition of speculative and synoptic philosophy has dwindled away; many philosophers regard this "great tradition" as obsolete. This decline of philosophy was not necessary, and has caused more damage to world civilization than we usually realize. It is essential that we revive speculative philosophy. The standard arguments against speculative philosophy (such as its lack of rigor and the philosophers' inability to agree) all miss the point. Speculative philosophy need not be fully rigorous to provide important insights. The production of multiple alternative systems is not a fault in speculative philosophy; different interpretations of the world can teach us different truths and insights. We should welcome this diversity, not use it to build a case against synoptic thought. We must update the old philosophical systems, learn how to adapt them to modern times, and develop new systems for today.
- **The bad consequences of philosophical ignorance.** Widespread ignorance about philosophy is a characteristic of our time. This ignorance causes many unnecessary conflicts and misunderstandings. The supposed conflict between science and human values, and the noisy "war" between science and spirituality, are caused largely by ignorance of philosophical methods.
- **The need for a more comprehensive worldview.** The scientific worldview, currently popular among intellectuals, is not itself scientifically verifiable but instead is an untestable philosophical position. This worldview is seriously incomplete from the standpoint of reason. For the sake of humanity's future, we must replace the "scientific" worldview with a truly rational and comprehensive picture of reality and humanity. This new view will include science as an important part, but will restore the arts and synoptic philosophy to their proper places as equal partners of science. This change in the prevailing trend of thought will require a major shift in the zeitgeist. Humankind is up to this task. The philosophical and logical tools for this badly needed change already exist.

List of Writings

Title	Link	Subject Area
<i>The Unfinishable Book</i> , chap. 1	Link	philosophy (nature of)
Confused about Science, Religion, or Morality? Let's TOK!	Link	philosophy (importance of)
Anti-Dawkins Paper No. 8: Are Scientists and Other Smart People Atheists?	Link	philosophy (importance of)
<i>The Unfinishable Book</i> , chaps. 3 and 13	Link	philosophy (call for revival)
<i>The Unfinishable Book</i> , chap. 13	Link	philosophy (need for new worldview)

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Section 6. Philosophy of Religion

Main Ideas

- **Religion is neither all bad nor all good.** There are many different kinds of religion, ranging all the way from dangerously irrational forms like militant fundamentalism, to reasonable and level-headed forms that are best described as "spiritual but not religious." In view of this diversity, it is silly to try to generalize too much about religion. Atheistic arguments that label all religion as fanatical are just as irrational as religious arguments based on unthinking faith in authority.
- **Real religion as a way of knowing.** Religion at its best is not a surrender to unthinking belief, but is based on the thoughtful analysis of personal awareness, insights, and values. Religion or spirituality of this reasonable kind is a way of knowing, just as science, philosophy and the arts are ways of knowing. Aesthetic values play a major role in real spirituality.
- **The reality and natural origin of spirit.** Since the self, as a feature of the brain, is an abstract entity distinct from the body (see earlier in this document), it follows that the concept of spirit has a basis in fact. Even if there are no substantial ghostly souls, persons still contain an element that transcends the merely physical. We can call this element spirit. This element is abstract and is natural instead of supernatural. Therefore, we must understand the concept of spirit in a new way different from the traditional, supernatural way. However, that does not take away anything important from spirituality. The human spirit is real. Also, spiritual qualities are present throughout nature.
- **The validity of spiritual experience.** Although many so-called "religious" experiences are products of illusion, there are other experiences that reveal genuine abstract spiritual realities. These valid experiences involve perceptions of qualities and relationships instead of alleged concrete supernatural items. Records of such valid spiritual experiences can be found in the world's contemplative traditions, in the annals of poetry, and in the literature of romantic love. Experiences of this kind pose no threat to logic or to science, and can provide a firm basis for spiritual thought independent of any faith.
- **Compatibility of religion and science.** Obviously, some religious beliefs are incompatible with scientific findings or with reason. Such beliefs should be rejected. However, the most important ideas of the world's great religions (such as the existence of a supreme spiritual reality of some kind) are fully compatible with scientific knowledge. Real spirituality can exist without belief in the supernatural. Even a supreme spiritual reality (or being) need not be supernatural. Evolutionary theory is no threat to *legitimate* religion at all, and does not rule out a spiritual understanding of nature.

- **Diversity in the concept of God.** Religious thinkers have proposed many different concepts of God. The most central idea of God is not that of a creator, but that of a supremely good or perfect being. It is possible to accept the existence of such a being without believing in anything supernatural at all. Indeed, reason points to the existence of a perfect being, provided we assume that real values exist in the world. It is silly to try to prove there is no God by showing that there is no supernatural creator, for there can be a supreme being who is not a supernatural creator.
- **The intellectual failure of the New Atheism.** The movement known as the New Atheism is irrational despite its rational pretensions. The New Atheism is rooted largely in ignorance, confusion and hostility. The main arguments of the New Atheism are easy to debunk. (These criticisms are not aimed at all atheistic thought, only at the so-called New Atheism.)

List of Writings

(*In this table, asterisks point out the writings that seem most important for understanding Sharlow's position on religion. Of course, this decision on what is "important" is largely subjective.)

Title	Link	Subject Area
Spirit without the Supernatural*	Link	religion (new view, science and)
The Guts of Religion*	Link	religion (nature of)
The New Face of Spirit: Part One*	Link	religion (new view, science and)
The New Face of Spirit: Part Two*	Link	religion (new view, science and)
Introducing a New Version of God*	Link	religion (new view, God concepts)
<i>God: the Next Version*</i>	Link	religion (God concepts, new view)
Why There Very Probably Is a God - but Not the Kind Some People Want*	Link	religion (God concepts, new view)
The Meaning and Beauty of the Universe*	Link	religion (new view)

The Crossroads of Logic and Poetry: Toward a Rational Version of Religion*	Link	religion (new view)
Why Science Cannot Disprove the Afterlife*	Link	religion (science and)
<i>The Unfinishable Book</i> , chaps. 1, 6, 13*	Link	religion (science and, nature of)
How Real Spiritual Experience Might Work*	Link	religion (experience)
Am I Really Defending Religion?*	Link	religion (new view, tolerance)
The Hidden Tension Within Belief in God*	Link	religion (God concepts)
Anti-Dawkins Paper No. 1: Overlooking the Idea of God*	Link	religion (atheism, God concepts)
Anti-Dawkins Paper No. 2: Why Dawkins' Main Argument Against God Is Wrong*	Link	religion (atheism, complexity)
Anti-Dawkins Paper No. 3: Dodging the Issue of Personal Religious Experience*	Link	religion (atheism, experience)
Anti-Dawkins Paper No. 4: Evolution and the So-Called Illusion of Design*	Link	religion (atheism, science and)
Anti-Dawkins Paper No. 5: The Causes of Religion Cannot Prove Religion False*	Link	religion (atheism)
Anti-Dawkins Paper No. 6: Does All Religion Cause Evil?*	Link	religion (atheism)
Anti-Dawkins Paper No. 7: Dawkins Misrepresents Some Opposing Ideas and Thinkers*	Link	religion (atheism)
Anti-Dawkins Paper No. 8: Are Scientists and Other Smart People Atheists?*	Link	religion (atheism)
Anti-Dawkins Paper No. 9: Of Science and Miracles*	Link	religion (science and)

Anti-Dawkins Paper No. 10: Hate by Any Other Name?*	Link	religion (atheism)
Anti-Dawkins Paper No. 11: A Summary of the Papers, and What It All Means*	Link	religion (atheism)
Playing Fast and Loose with Complexity: A Critique of Dawkins' Atheistic Argument from Improbability*	Link	religion (atheism, complexity)
Why Dawkins Needs to Study Theology - Especially if There Is No God	Link	religion (atheism)
The Courtier's Reply Exposed: Why Dawkins Still Needs Theology	Link	religion (atheism)
A Final Word on Leprechology and the Courtier's Reply	Link	religion (atheism)
The Worst Atheist Argument in the World?	Link	religion (atheism)
Beyond Atheism, Theism, and Agnosticism: What Am I?	Link	religion (new view)
What Is an Atheist (and Are You One)?	Link	religion (atheism)
Why Secular Humanism Can't Be Scientific	Link	religion (atheism)
Why God Is Not Like Leprechauns and Fairies	Link	religion (atheism)
Evolution Has No Purpose. So What?	Link	religion (science and)
Why I Don't Believe in So-Called Intelligent Design Theory	Link	religion (science and)
What's Really Wrong with the Argument from Design?	Link	religion (science and)
Happy Holidays! (And Incidentally, Science Can't Disprove Religion)	Link	religion (science and)

Merry Darwinmas - Now Let's Get Evolution Right!	Link	religion (science and)
Religion and Beyond	Link	religion (tolerance)
<i>God, Son of Quark</i>	Link ** Ref.	religion (science and)
The Trouble with the Supernatural	Link	religion (new view, science and)
Can Intelligence Ever Be Purely Abstract?	Link	religion (new view, science and)
Some Thoughts on the Ontological Argument	Link	religion (God concepts, new view)
A Few Stray Thoughts on God	Link	religion (God concepts, new view)

** This link goes to a page with information about the book.

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Section 7. Science (including Philosophy of Science)

Summary of Work

- **Early scientific work.** Early in his career, Sharlow was a scientist doing research in chemical physics. Most of his scientific publications were in statistical thermodynamics - a field of science that is of philosophical interest.
- **Branching spacetime and its implications for physics.** Sharlow also wrote some papers on the concept of branching spacetime. He defended the view that branching spacetime might help reconcile general relativity and quantum mechanics. He also suggested that branching spacetime might lend new plausibility to some old ideas about fundamental physics, such as the reduction of matter to spacetime geometry.
- **Neuroscience.** Sharlow published a paper about the ineffability of conscious experience. He pointed out a way in which known neural mechanisms might cause this ineffability.
- **Philosophy of chemistry.** Sharlow supported the position that chemical elements and substances are best understood as abstract objects.
- **Logic applied to the sciences.** Sharlow described new uses of mathematical logic for analyzing concepts in two very different sciences: chemistry and phonetics.

List of Writings

Title	Link	Subject Area
Cell Model and Computer Simulation Studies of Layered and Hexagonal States of Aligned, Hard Disks versus Rods [with coauthors]	Ref.	science (chemical physics)
On the Parallel-Perpendicular Transition for a Nematic Phase at a Wall [with coauthor]	Ref.	science (chemical physics)
Cortical Feedback and the Ineffability of Colors	Link* Ref.	science (neuroscience)

A New Non-Hausdorff Spacetime Model for Resolution of the Time Travel Paradoxes	Ref.	science (branching spacetime)
Papers on Branching Spacetime	Link	science (branching spacetime)
What Branching Spacetime Might Do for Physics	Link	science (branching spacetime)
The Quantum Mechanical Path Integral: Toward a Realistic Interpretation	Link	science (branching spacetime)
Generalizing "Charge without Charge" to Obtain Classical Analogs of Short-Range Interactions	Link	science (fundamental physics)
"Charge without Charge" in the Stochastic Interpretation of Quantum Mechanics	Link	science (branching spacetime, fundamental physics)
Chemical Elements and the Problem of Universals	Ref.	science (philosophy of chemistry)
Chemical Possibility and Modal Semantics	Link	science (logic applied to)
Phonetic Possibility and Modal Logic	Link	science (logic applied to)

* This link goes to a site besides Sharlow's site.

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Section 8. Critique of Popular Skepticism

Main Ideas

- **Critique of modern popular skepticism.** Rationality and critical thinking are extremely important. However, the current wave of popular "skepticism" and "rationalism" is not truly rational. Today's so-called skepticism and rationalism have little to do with real skepticism and rationalism. These modern fads are driven by a doctrinaire denial of anything that seems too unusual or too spiritual. Believers in these fads confuse rationalism with empiricism and misunderstand the nature of science. (This statement is not a defense of irrational beliefs, but is a reminder that so-called skeptics and rationalists can be irrational and weird too.)

List of Writings

Title	Link	Subject Area
Debunking the Skeptics	Link	popular skepticism
Anecdotal Thinking: You'd Better Believe It (Sometimes)	Link	popular skepticism
A Warning about So-Called Rationalists	Link	popular skepticism
Why Secular Humanism Can't Be Scientific	Link	popular skepticism
<i>The Unfinishable Book</i> , chap. 13	Link	popular skepticism

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Section 9. Culture (Progress)

Main Ideas

- **The importance of progress.** The idea of progress is one of the most important ideas in human thought. Despite the naysaying of postmodernists and other doubters, real progress is possible and desirable. Progress can be social, moral and technical. All these forms of progress are equally indispensable. We must not let the faults and disasters of human history drive us away from visions of progress and of a better future. Those visions remain true, now as always.

List of Writings

Title	Link	Subject Area
Liftoff to Progress	Link	culture (progress)
Liftoff to Progress [alternate format]	Link	culture (progress)
The Meadow, the Sky, and the Vision	Link	culture (progress)
Progress: the Boundless Quest	Link	culture (progress)

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Section 10. Politics and Political Philosophy

Main Ideas

- **Libertarianism.** The individual has a right to liberty. This right is not derived from some particular concept of human nature. The right to liberty is much more robust than that, and follows from a logical analysis of the circumstances of the individual. Governments have no rights apart from the rights of individuals. Government power should be kept to a minimum. (**Important note:** This libertarian position should not be confused with today's right-wing "libertarianism," which advocates "free markets" at the expense of poor individuals and families. Sharlow's brand of libertarianism stands for the liberation of all individuals from oppression and poverty.)
- **The economics of universal self-sufficiency.** True liberty cannot exist unless individuals are able to support themselves without getting permission from others. This requires an economy rooted in universal self-sufficiency, along the lines proposed by the distributist thinkers. Most distributists were not libertarians, but libertarianism and distributism can be combined. We must combine them if we want a just world.
- **The end of punishment.** Punishment must be replaced by constructive means of dealing with interpersonal wrongs and conflicts. Parallel changes must be made in the civil law, which should aim to set things right instead of destroying people.

Other Work

- Beyond his general political outlook, Sharlow has written about specific issues of current interest. He has been especially critical of government efforts to forcibly regulate people's health (including the so-called "war on obesity"). Also, he supports childrens' rights and school reform.

List of Writings

Title	Link	Subject Area
Toward Freedom – Toward Progress – Toward a Better World	Link	politics (general)
Statement of Principles [HTML version]	Link	politics (general)
Statement of Principles [PDF version]	Link	politics (general)
Manifesto of the Good Society	Link	politics (general)
Tomorrow Is for Freedom	Link	politics (general)
A Pressing Moral Necessity: Statement on the Reform of Prison Conditions	Link	politics (specific issues)
Statement against Anti-Americanism	Link	politics (specific issues)
Why Libertarians Should Tolerate the Big Bailout	Link	politics (specific issues)
Statement on Weight Prejudice and the "War on Obesity"	Link	politics (specific issues)
Resist the War on Obesity!	Link	politics (specific issues)
Say It Isn't So, Mrs. Obama! The New War on Fat Children	Link	politics (specific issues)
Study Does Not Show that Fat People Are Brain-Damaged	Link	politics (specific issues)

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Section 11. Logic, Pure and Applied

Summary

- Early in his career, Sharlow did research in logic and set theory. His main contribution consisted of some new ideas about proper classes (very large collections) and the nature of sets. Later, he used formal logic to analyze concepts in two very different sciences: chemistry and phonetics.

List of Writings

Title	Link	Subject Area
Proper Classes via the Iterative Conception of Set	Ref.	logic (set theory)
Broadening the Iterative Conception of Set	Ref.	logic (set theory)
Chemical Possibility and Modal Semantics	Link	logic (applied)
Phonetic Possibility and Modal Logic	Link	logic (applied)

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Section 12. Mathematics (besides Logic)

Summary

- Sharlow wrote a few pieces on mathematical topics besides formal logic. The main one is a paper on the foundations of dimensional analysis.

List of Writings

Title	Link	Subject Area
Generalizing the Algebra of Physical Qualities	Link	mathematics
The Crossed Integers (or, Fun with Arithmetic Modulo n)	Link	mathematics
The Folded Complex Numbers: a Mathematical Curiosity	Link	mathematics

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Section 13. Miscellaneous

Summary

- The items in the following table are collections of Sharlow's writings. *Patchworks* does not contain any ideas besides the ones in other writings. It is included here for completeness' sake. *The Unfinishable Scroll and Beyond* is an archive of Sharlow's two blogs, *The Unfinishable Scroll* and *Religion: the Next Version*.

List of Writings

Title	Link	Subject Area
Patchworks	Link	(collection of some of the writings listed here)
The Unfinishable Scroll and Beyond	Link	(collection of Sharlow's blog posts)

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Notices

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