

## Easter 2026 Consciousness

Assuming you slept for any amount of time last night, at some point this morning you woke up. Maybe from some external stimulus, like an alarm clock or a shouting child (never in my house!). And your eyes popped open and various light waves or particles – wavicles-- hit your eyes and your rods and cones and retinas did some things and you put your reality together on the screen in front of you, or more accurately on the “display” inside your head. Granted, some of our realities are a little more hazy, we need our glasses, because our receptors don’t work quite right.

Regardless, aware of this reality of waking up, which made you feel tired or excited or a need to rush to the bathroom, you used what bit of reality you were aware of to guide yourself through your morning and somehow you ended up here so now the particles of the easter lillies have now entered your olfactory systems in your nose and stimulated an awareness of either a joyful memory of easter, or an allergic reaction – which is fun no doubt.

And you, biological machines, now sit with your minds going all over the place, wondering how long this sermon will take so you can get to that next hymn you like, or that meal your stomach and enzymes are gearing you up for.

And that’s how it is no? Here we are. Seeing and receiving light and sound and thinking and feeling. It’s what we call being alive, and to be aware of that --because a tree is alive, is it aware of that?-- Is called consciousness.

What are we to make of all this? As the philosopher’s call: this absurdity of existence? Where are we? What holds up this planet? Surely as Einstein points out – the relative masses of the universe! But a universe spinning on what exactly? The fabric of space and time – which is

where? And made up of what? The Higgs Boson particle, and what are those? And we go smaller to the quantum matter beyond quarks, to strings, made up of 1s and 0s like a computer program. And here I go again, arm-chairing philosophy and science – and for what reason? To broaden our vision to see there is perhaps more going on. To see that we are indeed, in a simulation – or rather the most logical explanation of a simulation: a creation.

What you see playing out on the screen put together in your brain - your reality, is a construct of *something*- right? You reach out and touch the bulletin to read it while this guy rambles on and... well... the bulletin is there. *Something* is real, and you are aware of it.

And that awareness cannot be understated! Because it means we are more than just machines. The computer--when we put in the external stimuli, pressing the letter L, and the O, and the V, and then E, it, like your brain, takes that stimuli and processes it electronically and displays a word on its screen: Love. But, when the computer does that, does it think of the beautiful mountains? Does it think of fresh parchment, or the smell of a wife's hair, or a child's laughter? No, it doesn't. But we do!

And I would like to think we *know* that love for the spouse or friend is something real. Which means that perhaps there is there more than just external stimuli hitting receptors going on with us!

And we might say “No, love is a series of conditioned responses for our evolutionary flourishing! And we can prove it!” they claim. “We can bring a child's laugh, and a picture of the mountains and we can show them to a person and (look!) this part lights up in their brain! And we can do more, we can give them this medicine to sedate that brain, or this chemical to induce a hallucination – to alter what they see as reality in front of them!”

We can. We can do all of that and to animals too. But the hard part of consciousness isn't that there are synapses firing in our heads when we see stimuli. The hard part is that we are *aware* of that. And that those synapses can actually lead us to experience reality – that there is a wall there, my eyes see it-- and beyond even that: to truth – that something is right or wrong beyond some societal norm, to see and be *aware* that something is real and meaningful or beautiful or tragic or eternal beyond what a sensory input might bring to us.

Because if existence is all “cause to effect” to “cause to effect” that led these particular sets of molecules and electrical impulses (you and me) to end up here then that leaves three questions. 1. What caused the first cause? 2. Why are we even thinking about it? And 3. Why are we thinking we can come to a true conclusion about it if it's all just a jumble of chemicals?

For even the materialist that doesn't believe in anything supernatural (and we will set aside the fact that the laws of physics demand a supernatural-outside of physics -cause to create matter, you can look that up on your own time – the universe is NOT eternal) but the materialist thinks they are correct about their statement that there is no supernatural. They think their synapses have reached a truer conclusion than our synapses, at random, or at least because, by some cause and effect, they have shed some coping mechanism about life and death that we need for some survival purpose – but they apparently, without that belief, don't need it for their survival purpose? And for what reason? So that our descendants, who are more confused and depressed than ever, can flourish, by cause and effect, in this accident of reality? “Happy Easter!”

So much time and energy is given to figure out the absolute complexities of the mind and matter, and each discovery leads the world to conclude that once we have used our Intelligence and Design to see how something is done and can be replicated that we don't have the need of an Intelligent Designer anymore. But folks, that's the wrong and opposite conclusion! If we need to

spend billions and our best intelligence to create a cell, or an AI, or map out consciousness, that's MORE proof that intelligence is necessary for them to be here – not less.

And so perhaps we can look at truth, beauty, morality, consciousness, fine tuning, quantum theory, relativity, the laws of thermodynamics, and—no, not just because we haven't figured it out yet—and see that all of these point straight toward a Creator.

And that means we aren't accidents and the reality playing out in your brain based on what your receptors are picking up, is purposeful and real.

And we have some evidence of some people, who in their purposeful and real existence, let their clumps of cells, their bodies, their attachment to this reality, be destroyed and stop functioning, because they told of seeing someone by the name of Jesus of Nazareth who likewise had died.

Died on a cross. Dead. Nothing working anymore. No heartbeat. No brainwaves. Lights out. No stimulus response. A fly lands on the nose, no tickle, no swiping it away. Bacteria feeding and growing, no immune response. A body dragged off a cross. Wrapped in linens. Sealed in a dark tomb.

And what he said, what he promised--so impossible, so supernatural, something that doesn't register in the brain—we've never seen it – the dead rising? “That can't be true! We aren't stupid!”

It's no wonder the women come to the cemetery with spices – pounds and pounds of them to cover a smelling rotting body. It's no wonder 2 disciples pack up, “Welp, I guess it's best to go home now. Forget that coping mechanism of hope.” Perhaps, some of the disciples hatched a plan - some way to get famous off of Jesus' fame: steal the body, hide it, proclaim a resurrection.

Or maybe their science was so bad he didn't really die after all and just fainted. Maybe there was

a mass delusion that hit all of the disciples and the women, a hallucination, a false reality of which none of them got better or worse?

We hear of these things each easter don't we? You might be sick of hearing these same old arguments, or maybe you rejoice in hearing them?

Hearing that people don't die for lies. Not a group of them who would know their leader was a fraud if he wasn't alive like he said he would be.

Hearing that bodies beaten and crucified and stabbed with a spear, even if not dead (and he was), don't look healed in 3 days, they look bruised and infected- he didn't faint.

Hearing that folk tales and legends developing over hundreds of years, don't fit the timeline of the early Christian creeds already in circulation so Paul can put them in his earliest writings at like 55ad - well within the lifetime of people who saw the events themselves. Nor does a folktale fit the timeline of Roman responses to the verifiable reality that people started proclaiming a resurrection real early.

Which means that at some point early on the first easter morning. Something happened in that tomb. Someone woke up. A breath was taken, a heart beat, a synapse fired, and eyes opened. And by the power of the One who can call all things that we see and feel and experience into being, he called life back into lifeless clay and purged it clean and knitted it back together.

And since that happened, as hopefully a few of the things we've talked about point to (If I have made any sense at all), then why should we doubt anything else he has said?

Is he incapable of preserving our consciousness, our life? Is he incapable of knitting a set of molecules back together and making them "us"? With eyes that open and synapses that fire? He's

done it once, we are here experiencing it right now! Can he not knit it back together after a car accident, or cancer, or decay, or cremation?

We often talk about dying and going to heaven – can I be honest? That seems more incredible than a resurrection to me! Because in the resurrection I can equate some experience to what we've seen and tested here and now – matter, space, energy, movement.

What of heaven as our bodies rot in the ground or are burned to ash? What is that experience? It must be beyond what our receptors are given to now – like asking an organism with no eyes what light looks like – it has no concept of it. But please don't mishear me, that does not mean it isn't real – even as our Risen Lord promised a thief who was tossed in a cheap tomb, that “today you will be with me in paradise.” God is beyond time and space and must be to be God at all.

But it's easter. And Christ is alive again. Brothers and sisters, you will be too. He has promised it by grace. Grace that is given solely out of his love for even people like us with doubts and fears and sin. Love: a computer can process the word and look up references. A robot might even sacrifice itself for the calculated greater good – but God, who is all that is good, comes out of love, to die, to rise, that we, evil and sinful, might be washed clean and his forever. This is love. Real love. Sacrificial love. And this absurd existence we are in points to it, not as a cope, but as a reality, made sure by his resurrection and his word of promise.

Rejoice this easter. Rejoice in the truth and beauty of the world we are privileged, privileged to be written into – God's tapestry of history – you are in it – not as an accident no! Enjoy it, celebrate! And when it turns dark and cold and evil – take heart, Jesus knows that pain well, he has died to overcome it, and has promised, by his power to subdue all things in heaven and on earth to himself, he has promised to make it all-- even you-- new. Amen.