

Ultimate Reality: A Challenge to the Materialist Paradigm

Rodger Paul Shute

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Ultimate Reality is a wonderful philosophical text that examines some of the most difficult and sublime concepts of existence with verve.

Rodger Paul Shute's philosophical text *Ultimate Reality* confronts materialism with epistemology, investigating the nature of received knowledge.

Drawing on a diverse background in archaeology, philosophy, and science, this book performs a kind of intellectual surgery, arguing that consciousness is more complex than explanations from biology and chemistry allow. Though it skirts New Age territory with some assertions about altered consciousness, it is more than just another entry into the eternal debate of soul versus hard science: it is a serious, research-based broadside that accepts the possibility that consciousness exists after organic death.

This work is most directed against materialism, or the idea that all life is organic matter, ratiocination, and applications of the scientific method. It excoriates such notions as stultifying and incapable of providing answers to human beings' most persistent questions, which are rooted in the feeling that there is more to the world than what is currently known. In support of this, the book includes ample information taken from varied sources. Thinkers and artists as diverse as Paul Gauguin, Henri Bergson, Charles Darwin, and Richard Dawkins are mentioned alongside less well known, but no less hefty, social scientists, chemists, biologists, and critics. A long bibliography and notes section are present to persuade naysayers—both helpful, as the book approaches topics like out-of-body experiences, vitalism, and esoteric and metaphysical notions with a serious tone.

Given the difficulties associated with its topic, especially in regards to basic frameworks, the book is sparing when it comes to its use of academic jargon. This makes for a clearer and cleaner presentation, without stripping down the arguments: most hit the sweet spot of being intelligent and mature, but not pretentious. Indeed, the true strength of the book lies in its presentation of arguments, counterarguments, and narrative reframings that challenge the ideas and ideals that most people hold, whether they're conscious of it or not. Concepts that seem straightforward, as of ultimate reality, are deconstructed and rebuilt in amazing ways. The book also encompasses discussions of art, creativity, UFOs, the occult, the afterlife, and other outré topics, treating each with academic seriousness, making reading it an enlightening and exhilarating experience.

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BENJAMIN WELTON (March 19, 2021)

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