

Chapter 1 – The infinitely far and infinitely small

The current gridlock in physics is largely due to the open question of how to reconcile quantum mechanics with general relativity. Additionally, we still do not know how to accurately describe the microcosm below the Planck Scale, with theories like String theory or Loop Quantum Gravity all having their own inadequacies and perhaps never testable. In the past few decades we made gradual progress on our journey towards the infinitely far (e.g. black holes) and the infinitely small (e.g. Higgs boson), but it feels like we're getting diminishing returns. This is akin to Zeno's paradox of travelling a path of length 1. At first we travel the distance $\frac{1}{2}$, then the distance $\frac{1}{4}$, then $\frac{1}{8}$, $\frac{1}{16}$, and so on. What if incremental scientific discoveries towards the infinitely far and the infinitely small work in the same way as Zeno's paradox, namely that the impact of each new scientific discovery gradually diminishes, and we will never fully reach the goal?¹ This would be akin to the physicists of the late 19th century realizing that for too long they believed in the hypothesis of a luminiferous ether, until the Michelson-Morley experiment convinced them to let go of this Fata Morgana. We should therefore at least consider the possibility that the infinitely far (how to ever know what lies beyond the observable universe?) and the infinitely small (weird, inaccessible wonderland physics below the Planck Scale) are also some kind of mirages that we should shackle off, and instead try to think of something else.

Since quantum mechanics is our most accurate and experimentally verified physical theory, we shall place it in the centre of our framework.² A main topic in this essay will be the attempt to reconcile the vast zoo of wildly differing interpretations of quantum mechanics³. Each interpretation provides valid viewpoints, even though they vastly differ in their view on certain fundamental questions such as wavefunction collapse, determinism, and so on, cf. Figure 1. We propose that they are equally valid ways to look at a whole, similar to how the Heisenberg picture and Schrödinger picture are equally valid views at a whole. In this essay we will not consider every single interpretation, but instead limit ourselves to the more popular ones and the ones that are the most helpful to explain our framework.

Interpretation	Year published	Author(s)	Deterministic?	Ontic wave-function?	Unique history?	Hidden variables?	Collapsing wave-function?	Observer role?	Local dynamics?	Counter-factually definite?	Extant universal wave-function?
Ensemble Interpretation	1926	Max Born	Agnostic	No	Yes	Agnostic	No	No	No	No	No
Copenhagen Interpretation	1927	Niels Bohr, Werner Heisenberg	No	Some ^[60]	Yes	No	Some ^[61]	No ^{[62][63]}	Yes	No	No
De Broglie-Bohm theory	1927-1952	Louis de Broglie, David Bohm	Yes	Yes ^[64]	Yes ^[65]	Yes	Phenomenological	No	No	Yes	Yes
Quantum logic	1936	Garrett Birkhoff	Agnostic	Agnostic	Yes ^[66]	No	No	Interpretational ^[67]	Agnostic	No	No
Time-symmetric theories	1955	Satosi Watanabe	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No ^[68]	No	Yes
Many-worlds Interpretation	1957	Hugh Everett	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	Ill-posed	Yes
Consciousness causes collapse	1961-1993	Eugene Wigner, Henry Stapp	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Causal	No	No	Yes
Many-minds Interpretation	1970	H. Dieter Zeh	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Interpretational ^[69]	Yes	Ill-posed	Yes
Consistent histories	1984	Robert B. Griffiths	No	No	No	No	No ^[70]	No ^[69]	Yes	No	Yes
Transactional Interpretation	1986	John G. Cramer	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes ^[71]	No	No ^[72]	Yes	No
Objective-collapse theories	1986-1989	Giancarlo Ghirardi, Alberto Rimini, Tullio Weber, Roger Penrose	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	No
Relational Interpretation	1994	Carlo Rovelli	No ^[73]	No	Agnostic ^[74]	No	Yes ^[75]	Intrinsic ^[76]	Possibly ^[77]	No	No
QBism	2010	Christopher Fuchs, Rüdiger Schack	No	No ^[78]	Agnostic ^[79]	No	Yes ^[80]	Intrinsic ^[81]	Yes	No	No

Figure 1: Overview of quantum-mechanical interpretations [18]

- ¹ This could be imagined as repeatedly turning on and off a light switch with each new discovery ad infinitum, as succinctly described by David Deutsch in a recent video interview (around time mark 9:15 of [1]). From this he concludes that you need something that defines the limit. Deutsch even mentions the possibility that “there may be a better understanding that tells us it [infinity] doesn't make sense.” (time mark 5:40 of [1]). Eliminating infinity is also what Werner Heisenberg did when introducing modern quantum mechanics in his 1925 paper. [56] The old, heuristic quantum theory (1900-1925) relied on infinite, convergent series to calculate observable quantities. [56]
- ² As Feynman said - to the effect - at the beginning of his famous Lecture Notes, philosophising is all good and well, but in the end “the sole test of the validity of any idea is experiment”. [58]
- ³ Fundamentally, interpretations of quantum mechanics attempt to match the mathematical formalism of quantum theory with experienced reality. [59] This “match” with physical reality is what makes quantum mechanics so unsatisfactory from a philosophical viewpoint.

Chapter 2 – Revisiting the anthropic principle

One possible avenue to steer away from the infinitely far and infinitely small is to revisit the anthropic principle, which (in a nutshell) tells us there is something exceptional about our human existence in a universe of very low probability. If we were to ever understand quantum mechanics, wouldn't it be nice if we would also get a better understanding of the human condition? For all we know, there might not even be any theory that can explain all the physical phenomena in our world without taking the human observer into account as well. Many attempts to find a path to such a theory have been made before, for example the Many-Minds Interpretation of quantum mechanics [11] or the belief of Roger Penrose that subtle physical processes on the nanometer scale at the frontier between classical physics and quantum mechanics lead to a highly developed nervous system, which we commonly call consciousness. [2] Such theories are frequently dismissed in the scientific community, despite an ever growing body of evidence that certain mesoscopic quantum states can be surprisingly robust and stable, even in far-from ideal environments. After all, there's an entire research field of Quantum Biology, explaining phenomena such as enzyme catalysis or magnetoreception of birds in terms of quantum entanglement. [3,12] Would it be that far-fetched to assume that a small part of the human brain is capable of controlling targeted quantum effects as well, leading to a better understanding of our mind, consciousness and free will? Very recent research even indicates that quantum-like dynamical effects demonstrated in human brain activity could be the computational backbone of human cognition.⁴ [14] The quantum-like effects are robust and do not exhibit the fragility of decoherence, which could point towards the emergence of macroscopic quantum computing. [14] In an even more recent book, two of the authors suggest that this could solve a deep conundrum at the heart of human cognition, namely, how the surprisingly slow information transfer between neurons (with typical latencies of around 10–20 ms) is able to solve the time-critical computational problems ensuring survival. [23] Could Penrose's theory of a quantum mind still be vindicated three decades after being originally proposed?⁵

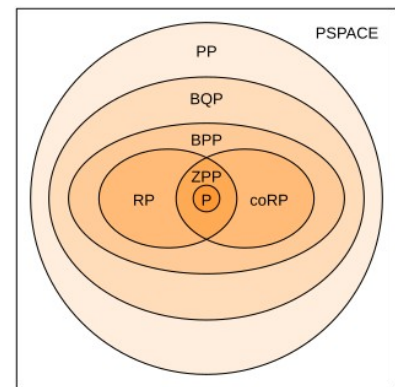


Figure 2: Hierarchy of different computational complexity classes [5]

Surprisingly, only a tiny part of the human brain would need to be able to perform basic quantum computational tasks, while the vast remainder of the brain only performs classical information processing, and still we would reap the fruits of a profound computational speed-up! This is due to computational complexity theory, specifically the complexity class PP (probabilistic polynomial-time), the class of decision problems solvable by a classical, probabilistic Turing machine in polynomial time with an error probability less than $\frac{1}{2}$. [5] The complexity class PP is widely considered to be much more powerful than the purely deterministic class P (polynomial-time) that governs classical information processing (cf. Figure 2), but from the viewpoint of theoretical

- 4 Not yet peer-reviewed, but authored by prestigious scientists, including Oxford Professor Morten Kringelbach. From a LinkedIn summary of one of the co-authors [22]: A QL (quantum-like) system is a complex network of coupled oscillators, whose spectral properties are strikingly similar to those of quantum systems. *This is interesting because we can then use quantum mechanics to model these classical systems.* An advantage of this is e.g. the ultra fast information transfer at a distance encoded in entanglement. For a system like the human brain, which uses almost 1,000,000 times less power than the most advanced computing systems, the QL model provides an intriguing solution to how a system can transmit information so efficiently. We show that functional connectivity of the human cortex is most precisely given by a QL model. *In other words, it is likely probable that our brain regions talk to each other the same way as a group of entangled electrons.*
- 5 In this introductory Part 1 of the essay we only introduce the most striking arguments for quantum effects in our brains. Further arguments will be summarised in Chapter 8 of Part 2.

computer science it is not straightforward to add probabilistic behaviour to a Turing machine. For us quantum physicists, however, there is a workaround: by performing quantum measurements, which leads to probabilistic outcomes based on genuine randomness on a physical level.⁶ If the small “quantum part” of our brain acts as an observer and performs inherently probabilistic quantum measurements, then together with the large “classical part” of our brain, we could in principle solve problems that lie in PP.

What is more, Scott Aaronson proved that $PP = \text{PostBQP}$ (Postselected Bounded-Error Quantum Polynomial-Time), the latter being the class of problems efficiently solvable by a quantum computer equipped with the ability to postselect on the outcomes of measurements.⁷ [4] This provides us with an operational interpretation to imagine what is happening inside the tiny “quantum part” of our brain: Our mind or (sub-)consciousness are very simple quantum computing devices (perhaps quantum annealer), and what we consider our free will is the ability to prepare a quantum state, measure it, and – to a certain degree – postselect the desired measurement outcome. So, if we make a resolution in our mind, for example to go out for a walk in the park, then our “quantum brain” would prepare and pick those measurement outcomes that gradually steer us towards getting dressed, get out of the house, walk to the park, and so on.⁸ As unorthodox as this sounds, this would allow us to integrate two pivotal interpretations of quantum mechanics: the Copenhagen interpretation and the Many-Worlds interpretation (MWI). The Copenhagen interpretation suffers from the unexplainable role of a classical, external observer, whereas the MWI suffers from the unknown branching rules between universes. We propose the following combination of three concepts, namely free will, Copenhagen interpretation and the MWI: The measurement process of the Copenhagen interpretation takes place in the quantum part of our brain in the form of a “weak” measurement⁹, and instead of a wavefunction collapse, the outcome decides our branching in the multiverse. This would solve long-standing issues with the Copenhagen interpretation, the MWI, and whether humans have a free will. Note that the idea of mind influencing matter by means of quantum processes is not new (see e.g. references in [55]), but to our knowledge this has not been linked to both the Copenhagen interpretation and the MWI before.

We note that our framework is similar, but not equivalent to the “consciousness causes collapse” interpretation of quantum mechanics, as once advocated by Eugene Wigner. [6] Firstly, in our framework there is no collapse of the wavefunction, but rather branching of the universal state, and secondly, our framework does not lead to the controversial self-centered philosophical idea of Solipsism, [7] because not only one’s own free will, but also the free will of all other people

6 In general, PP speed-up can also be achieved by a pseudorandom number generator, but depending on the complexity of the problem, the randomness must be sufficiently good to explore enough of the search space. Considering the incomprehensible complexity of the quantum universe or multiverse, one could argue that in this case only quantum randomness suffices. A quote of John von Neumann springs to mind: “*Anyone who considers arithmetical methods of producing random digits is, of course, in a state of sin.*” [21]

7 Interestingly, Aaronson’s motivation for this result came from the idea of “anthropic computing”, namely arranging things so that we are more likely to exist if a computer produces a desired output. [4]

8 What could be happening inside our brain if we instead ponder on deeper philosophical or scientific questions that go beyond the complexity class P: the conscious, classical (P) part of our brain is querying the subconscious, quantum (PP) part as a kind of biological oracle with a yes/no question, and the quantum part is returning the answer to the classical part of the brain, which could in rare events lead to a major discovery. In fact, this querying of an “oracle” can be described in the language of computational complexity theory, which also has the concept of an oracle: PP is closed under polynomial-time truth-table reductions, [4] which refers to a machine making non-adaptive queries to a PP oracle. [16] In other words, $PP = P^{PP}$, where P^{PP} is the class of problems solvable by a P machine that can make a polynomial number of non-adaptive queries to a PP oracle.

9 Possibly, this “weak measurement” is the one theorised by Yakir Aharonov. Weak measurements are the experimental procedure of extracting minute amounts of information about a quantum system without collapsing its state. Weak values are the statistical outcomes - often unusual or seemingly impossible - that emerge when weak measurement is combined with postselection. [42,43]

influences our branching in the multiverse.¹⁰ Which leads us straight to the thought experiment of Wigner's Friend. [8] In our framework this gedankenexperiment does not lead to a paradox, because both Wigner and his friend independently perform weak measurements in their minds, and each measurement results in a branching of the world that affects them both. This is also very much in line with the Relational interpretation of quantum mechanics (RQM), where the notion of "state" is always relative to some observer and there is no privileged, "real" account. [52] The essential idea behind RQM is that different observers give different accounts. For example, to one observer, a system is in a single eigenstate, but to a second observer, the same system is in a superposition of two or more states and the first observer is in a correlated superposition of two or more states. [52] This example can be translated into our framework as the two observers having branched into two different universes.

Our hypothesis of a dual classical and quantum brain is also highly compatible with the long-standing dual process theory of neuroscience, [24] namely that there is intriguing behavioural evidence that the human mind consists of two competing fast and slow systems. [23] System 1 is fast, instinctive and emotional, whereas System 2 is much slower, more deliberative, and more logical. System 2 has limited access to System 1, which is the main source of impressions, intuitions, intentions and emotions. [23] A firm neurobiological foundation of these systems has not yet been established, but we might be able to provide a clue: System 1 could be understood as the quantum computing part and System 2 as the classical information processing part!¹¹

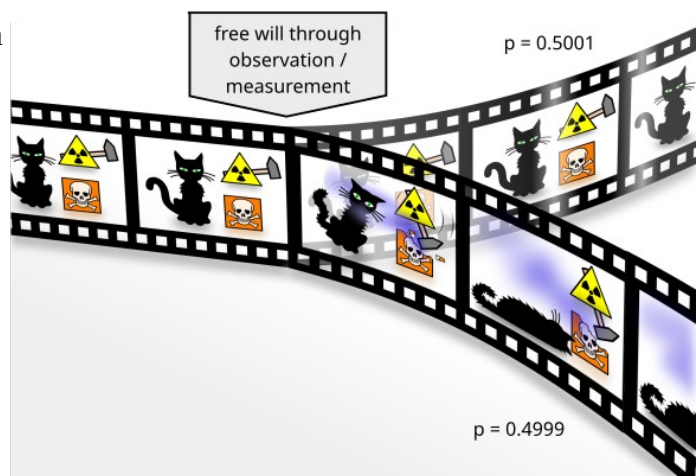


Figure 3: as an observer the Schrödinger cat subtly alters its fate through its will to live

Let's assume that not only humans, but also animals such as cats, have tiny, rudimentary quantum computing capabilities that allow them to weakly influence measurement outcomes through their actions or desires. Then we could reformulate the Schrödinger cat *gedankenexperiment* as follows: If the cat is placed inside a box where the probability for the apparatus to kill it within a certain timespan is $p = 0.5$, then the cat might be able to minimally improve its likelihood to survive, say to $p = 0.5001$, simply by being a conscious observer with a will to live, cf. Figure 3. Such a change of

10 How exactly the free will of other people affects our own branching is a more complex topic and will be explored in Part 2 of this essay. In brief, Carl Jung might have been onto something with his theory of the collective unconscious, encompassing the "soul of humanity at large", [17,19] a concept that always struck me as highly unscientific, but which might have a scientific explanation in our framework.

11 With regard to learning new skills such as how to drive a car, the activity in our brain could be described as follows: While learning how to drive in driving school, we have to consciously and deliberately think about each individual step (such as staying in lane or shifting gears) with our classical System 2, which is slow, arduous and takes a lot of effort. Once we have mastered the basics, car driving becomes much easier and intuitive for us, as we can rely on our much faster, subconscious quantum System 1. This is also very much in line with what Marvin Minsky, the MIT professor who built the world's first neural network machine, once said about intelligence: "In general, we are least aware of what our minds do best." With this quote, Minsky refers to the fact, that things we do with apparent ease, such a reading a face, walking through a crowded room, understanding a sentence, etc. are not simple at all. They are the products of staggeringly complex networks running so smoothly, so far below conscious access, that you experience them as effortless. The things that feel like work, the logical arguments, the deliberate choices, the careful plans, are actually the clumsy surface layer, the small fraction of mental activity you can observe at all. So in some sense we are taking credit for the wrong parts of our own intelligence.

probabilities sounds unscientific, but firstly we note that the increased survival rate applies to the cat's own branching in the multiverse, and thus cannot be directly experimentally verified by a second observer branching into a different universe. Secondly, the increased survival rate might express itself into reality by the cat instinctively feeling that something is very wrong indeed while being placed inside the box and frantically trying to escape.¹² This would be strikingly reminiscent of the intriguing, or rather instinctive animal trait of getting alarmed of natural disasters long before humans. Kudos the famous expression of rats leaving the sinking ship, but also well-documented events during the 2004 Thailand tsunami, where e.g. elephants sensed the pending danger much earlier than humans and fled for higher grounds (see e.g. [9,10]). This incident of a "sixth sense" is generally attributed to elephants being able to feel the seismic vibrations of the earthquake or the infrasound of the nearing tsunami, but such explanations do not sound very convincing to me. Even if elephants were such highly sensitive laboratory apparatuses on four feet, then how come they can correctly interpret the sensations as omens of an impending natural disaster, rather than e.g. an industrial vacuum cleaner in operation nearby? After all, from a purely intellectual viewpoint, elephants are considered less intelligent than humans. Within our framework Occam's razor [60] would suggest that the quantum part of elephants' brains provides a stronger survival instinct than humans, resulting in a more pronounced universal branching in case of life-threatening situations, resulting in them to subconsciously flee before disaster hits.¹³

But for now let's return to more tangible physical concepts. Although our framework still lacks proper experimental validation, it would solve a surprisingly large number of open questions in quantum mechanics, quantum information theory, and some aspects of the human condition. We note that our framework is also compatible with the Consistent Histories interpretation of quantum mechanics, which allows to assign probabilities to various alternative histories of a system such that the probabilities for each history obey the rules of classical probability while being consistent with the Schrödinger equation. [15] This interpretation could also provide probability distributions for our branching in the multiverse between different histories that are counterfactual to each other¹⁴, but from our viewpoint as the observer our own history always appears fully consistent.¹⁵ Criticism of the Consistent Histories interpretation is based around the lack of a selection rule, [15] but this can be resolved in our framework through the aforementioned branching in the multiverse. So far we managed to reconcile quite a few concepts and interpretations of quantum mechanics that are frequently considered to be at odds with each other, just like the pieces of a very complicated puzzle finally coming together. An open problem in our framework, however, stems from the very beginning of our essay, namely that we still need to provide a moderately convincing explanation for why we can disregard the infinitely far ("General Relativity") and infinitely small ("String Theory"). We will tackle this in the next chapter.

12 It might not even be necessary to come up with a good "explanation" as to how the improved survival rate emerges in reality, as the well-documented and statistically significant phenomenon of the placebo effect in medicine demonstrates. As scientific studies have shown, simply by believing that a placebo works the health outlook will be improved. Conversely, a nocebo or also a clinical depression can sometimes be crippling to a patient's health, something which is also acknowledged among medical practitioners.

13 This could also be an avenue to explain further instinctive zoological phenomena such as the Waggle dance of bees to exchange surprisingly detailed information about direction and distance to food sources.

14 The field of counterfactual history rejects philosophical determinism, highlighting human choice instead. As a field of study, it however struggles for acceptance by academic historians.

15 At first glance it's not clear if in our framework the branching in the multiverse is only permitted between so-called strongly consistent histories (Trace of class operator over density matrix = 0) or if branching is also permitted between weakly consistent histories (Trace of class operator over density matrix ≈ 0). [15] The latter may possibly be related to the weak measurements and thus the concept of free will in our framework.

Chapter 3 – The game of life

In mathematics a set of simple rules and initial conditions can often lead to surprisingly complex systems. One well-known example is Conway's Game of Life from 1970, a cellular automaton set in an infinite, two-dimensional orthogonal grid of square cells, each of which is in one of two possible states, live or dead. [25] A few very simple rules determine the evolution of the entire system, resulting in vastly different outcomes depending on the initial configuration, with live cells forming e.g. still lifes, oscillators or spaceships. We also note that already Edward Fredkin and Konrad Zuse pioneered the idea of a computable universe, the former by writing a line in his book on how the world might be like a cellular automaton, and the latter having the idea that the universe is running on a grid of computers as early as 1967. [40,41] More recently, Stephen Wolfram claimed in his book "*A New Kind of Science*" that simple computational systems are needed to model and understand complexity in nature. [40] He predicted that the realization of this within scientific communities would have a revolutionary influence on physics, chemistry, biology, and most other scientific areas, hence the book's title. [26] His belief is that complexity is not a special quality of systems, but simply a label for all systems whose computations are sophisticated, [26] something that shares parallels with our framework of a human mind experience that is dependent on quantum computing processes in our brain. Wolfram suggests that the theory of computational irreducibility may explain how free will is possible in a nominally deterministic universe. He posits that the computational process in the brain of the being with free will is so complex that it cannot be captured in a simpler computation, due to the principle of computational irreducibility. [26] In our opinion, however, a mistake that Wolfram makes is his assumption that quantum mechanics is only an approximation to an underlying classical theory (see e.g. page 416 of [28]), something that does not stand the test of Occam's razor in our framework.

Thus far we have established that in our framework our reality would be governed by quantum processes, yet we cannot fully grasp this with our senses, because we are predominantly classical-information processing lifeforms that process quantum information only in our subconsciousness. In other words, what we perceive as our reality could be considered an information-theoretical projection of an underlying, deeper quantum-information theoretical nature, a bit like living in Plato's cave! [38] A more modern allegory is the 1884 novella "*Flatland*" by Edwin A. Abbott, with a two-dimensional world that is inhabited by geometric figures such as triangles, squares, and so on. The main character, a Square, dreams of visiting the one-dimensional world "Lineland", where only points and lines can exist and which are unable to see the visiting Square as anything other than a set of points on a line, or in other words a one-dimensional projection. The Square tries to convince the monarch of Lineland of a second dimension, but is unsuccessful to do so. After his return to Flatland, the Square is later visited himself by a Sphere from the third dimension. The Sphere tries to convince the Square of the existence of a third dimension through various means, but is unable to do so, because in Flatland the Sphere can only manifest itself as a two-dimensional projection. Only after the Square is taken by the Sphere to the third dimension, Spaceland, does the Square finally realize and accept the existence of higher dimensions. Why this digression with the story of "Flatland"? It serves as an illustration that even intelligent and educated minds can struggle with concepts that are so outlandish and novel, that the conscious mind is unwilling to believe them. The idea that we formulate next can be similarly perplexing even for physicists working on the foundations of quantum mechanics.

In his 1997 book "*The Fabric of Reality*", Deutsch assumes that a "Theory of Everything" (TOE) would be emergentist rather than reductive, and that it would include multiversal, computational, epistemological and evolutionary principles. [29] I fully agree with Deutsch that bold conjectures

that resist falsification need to be taken seriously, but I don't share his view of a purely realist¹⁶ interpretation of scientific theories. [29] Yet again, I agree with Deutsch regarding the significance of constructor theory, [30,31] and him predicting that constructor theory will supersede the entire structure of physical explanation, allowing the conjecturing of new laws (time mark 16:15 to 17:10 of [1]). Enter the constructor theory of life, as proposed by Chiara Marletto. [32,57] This is an attempt to combine constructor theory and neo-Darwinian evolutionary theory, typically by considering our genetic code, such as DNA or RNA. Instead of considering classical information, however, I suggest that constructor theory could be connected to quantum information, specifically our quantum brain. We have already seen in Chapter 2 that our free will could be linked to our branching in the multiverse (cf. Figure 3). If the quantum processes in our brain can be linked to the constructor of life, then the reality that we perceive with our mind could be understood as being generated by constructor theory in accordance with our branching in the multiverse.¹⁷ This would imply that most objects, phenomena and even natural laws are emergent rather than pre-existing, created by the programmable constructor in our minds.¹⁸ In this framework, "the universal constructor, a machine that can be programmed to perform not just all possible computations, but all physical transformations that are allowed by the laws of physics" [33] could be assumed to be intimately related to our own subconsciousness as well as that of other people.¹⁹ Note that the phrase "allowed by the laws of physics" in the previous sentence may have to be re-phrased as "allowed by the laws of physics *constructed so far*"²⁰, since we cannot change our individual past, but we *can* jointly build our future. Marletto speculates that there could be an era, far in the future, where this all-powerful 3D printer could be a part of our lives as computers are now. [33] I propose that it has been with us already, in our brains!²¹

Bearing this extremely anthropocentric theory in mind, it's already fairly obvious that we need not concern ourselves too much with the infinitely far and infinitely small. The *ignorabimus* regarding what might lie beyond the observable universe (93 billion light-years in diameter) or what happens

16 As opposed to idealist/antirealist, [39] once more popular, but nowadays a minority belief held by only 5-15% of philosophers. [36,37] Notably, in his '*Critique of Pure Reason*' Immanuel Kant argued for transcendental idealism, [44] which asserts that space and time do not have an independent existence outside of our human mind. It is also important to realise that while this vision cuts sharply against Western thought, Indian and Chinese philosophy have explored for centuries that nothing enjoys absolute metaphysical priority, not even the universe as a whole. [51]

17 An alternative viewpoint to our reality playing out through branching is the following: As Feynman already noticed, a quantum computer can be used to efficiently simulate quantum systems. Hence, our quantum brain has in principle the potential to influence the quantum universe that we perceive as our reality – akin to a literal game of life. Max Planck already said in 1931: "*I regard consciousness as fundamental. I regard matter as derivative from consciousness.*" [61]

18 Note the connection to the "It from Qubit" paradigm, which proclaims that space, time and matter are not the fundamental building blocks of the universe, but emerge from quantum information.

19 Now it becomes clearer that the Many-Minds interpretation (MMI) of quantum mechanics is also compatible with our framework. [11] It correctly predicts that while the wavefunction follows deterministic evolution without collapse, the observer experiences a single, classical reality, because their mind (or rather, many copies of their mind) has branched to experience each outcome separately. The main critique of MMI is its reliance on a strict dualism - the separation of mind from the physical world - and the philosophical difficulty of defining exactly what constitutes a "mind", all aspects for which our framework could provide reasonably plausible explanations.

20 Regarding special relativity, it has been shown very recently that relativistic spacetime structure does emerge from intrinsic properties of quantum information, and the authors finish on the note that the formulation of an explicit mechanism for this emergence remains an open and profound challenge. [34]

21 To quote Vedral (p. 8f of [35]): '*Once we have a theory with too many things in it, we can try to winnow them down with some anthropocentric statement, such as "The laws are the way they are because we humans are here," or perhaps we throw up our hands and take the related view that all mathematical realities are actually represented and we just happen to be in one of them. Neither of these views is testable, and they completely lack explanatory power.*' – Yes, a bit like this, except that we could get a better understanding of quantum mechanics and free will, and it is even testable! Part 2 will deal with this in more detail when we start doing proper philosophy.

below the Planck scale (1.616×10^{-35} m) could be due to hitting construction-related dead ends. So why not rather try to understand how to “revolutionise our civilisation”? [33]

Outlook

If we had to sum up our bold framework in one sentence, then it would be: “It’s not so much quantum mechanics that is utterly bizarre, it’s our own existence and reality.” Or put in a different way: “We are trying to understand the hard sciences by trying to understand the hard problem”, as the problem of consciousness is known in the philosophy of mind. Accepting this would allow us to gain a better understanding of quantum mechanics²², the anthropic principle and free will. Regarding possible experimental validation, we point out an intriguing proposal that due to local activity in neuronal axon hillocks “weak violations” of the second law of thermodynamics (a statistical law, not a conservation law) may manifest themselves inside the quantum-part of the brain in the form of local temperature decreases of the order of 10^{-9} K, which could in principle be detected experimentally. [55] A physical explanation for such statistically unlikely thermodynamical effects could be the previously mentioned weak measurements that often result in statistically unlikely measurement outcomes.

We conclude Part 1 of this essay with the anecdote that in his later life Feynman was pessimistic about the future progress of physics, due to the academic system increasingly forcing us to think in prescribed, standardised ways about physics (time mark 22:45 - 24:00 of [1]). Indeed, we are committing a bit of a “heresy” against established beliefs in physics by turning humans into the centre of our world and by dismissing the frontiers of spacetime through scientific idealism. If we can provide experimental validation for our theory that cannot be reasonably explained from the viewpoint of scientific realism, then Occam’s razor would imply that our theory is the better one. We hope that Feynman would have enjoyed this essay, even if our framework should turn out to be critically flawed.

In Part 2 of this essay the focus gradually shifts from physics to philosophy, for example by revisiting the Free Will Theorem of Conway and Kochen. [62] Other academic fields such as psychology (e.g. the Pauli-Jung conjecture) will be investigated as well. Towards the end of Part 2 we will also discuss the possible application of our framework to improve scientific progress and especially our quality of life.

22 We haven’t looked at QBism and Bohmian mechanics in detail, but remark that in QBism the degrees of belief an agent has about the possible measurement outcomes could be linked to our concept of free will in conjunction with the transformations allowed by the universal constructor. [53] The “hidden variables” of Bohmian mechanics could be linked to the weak values resulting from the weak measurement performed by the mind. Indeed, “Generalized particle trajectories can be extrapolated from numerous weak measurements on an ensemble of equally prepared systems, and such trajectories coincide with the de Broglie–Bohm trajectories.” [54]

References

(We consider Wikipedia and similar websites to be as trustworthy as peer-reviewed papers, because their non-profit authors are generally not interest-driven, whereas peer-reviewed research is generally interest-driven due to the “publish or perish” maxime.)

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