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Just Thinking, 11/17/03:

The Physics of the Antichrist, a Theory of Everything, VI of VI:

Social Laws of Nature, Coming and Going

by Justin Katz

Don't Forget Yourself

Among the childhood picture books that I recall with particular clarity tells a story about some brothers – eight, I think – on a fishing excursion. Upon their return to shore, each brother performs a headcount, and each comes up with only seven. As they mourn the loss of one of their brethren, a person wanders by, asks what is the matter, and counts eight of them. Each had forgotten to include himself.

This story is, in the essential human tendency that it seeks to highlight, related to Frank Tipler's failure to incorporate the present, the period of movement from the beginning to the end of time, in the model of God that he proposes in *The Physics of Immortality*. The principle certainly carries through to the problem of scientists' excluding first-person experience in their models. The self is so obvious that we take it for granted and forget to include it.

The self, in this sense, includes not only our persons and our daily lives, but our entire way of experiencing the universe. When a model of reality almost explicitly excludes this central aspect, it necessarily becomes increasingly complex. Ultimately, when the concept of experience is brought back into play, the result is a surreal impression. Life doesn't *feel* like a model.

Yet, once we've overcome that surreal reaction and sought to align the model with regular ol' existence, the entire thing seems a bit too obvious and humdrum to capture anything significant. What had begun to seem like a portrait of a new and distant land has turned out merely to be a description of our own backyard. How could it be otherwise? We've never left the comfort of the patio, after all.

Seeing into Daisy's Eyes

Many years after I'd read of the resolution to the fishing brothers' problem, a high school English teacher handed me a copy of *The Great Gatsby* with the original cover. Several classes passed in discussion of the text before somebody pointed out that the eyes on the cover had naked women in their irises. I recall reaching for my book to justify my incredulity and noticing that the other student's observation was, in fact, true. The rest of the period was lost on me, as I spent it staring at the cover trying to figure out how I had missed something that was now so obvious.

I propose that, in a meaningful sense, I had been living in a world in which there were no bodies on the cover of *The Great Gatsby*. Some would object that the cover had included them all along, and I just didn't see them. That's correct. However, I'm suggesting that, in a very real and significant way, I might have been living in one of the infinite Many Worlds in which Francis Cugat had omitted that component of his cover design.

As odd as that may sound, it isn't but so original a suggestion. Some have put forward the proposition, keeping with the same example, that not only did I live in a world in which the cover was different, but also that it would be more true to say that Francis Cugat didn't exist until I looked up his name just now. Even beyond the dangerous solipsism of such a suggestion, it sets up an implausibly erratic view of Many Worlds, with people — even planets — popping into and out of existence. In the model described in the previous essays of this series, each adjacent world is only

minimally different from the next. And since everybody alive exists in each world in which they are possible, it would represent an impossible leap to reach worlds that were so significantly different.

One implication of the mesh model of Many Worlds is that we can reconverge with particular strains of reality that we had previously left; I could move back toward a world in which the naked women were not on the cover of *The Great Gatsby*. However, we cannot undo our experience, and I have thought about having not seen the bodies and have mentioned it to others, thereby moving farther and farther into the range of worlds in which the cover is as I now believe it to be. To move away from that position would involve, first, believing that the cover must have been subsequently changed and, then, believing that I'd just imagined the whole thing.

An essential rule, in this respect, is that our lives are progressive — moving forward in time. However, if time travel were possible the mesh model would easily dispense with all questions involving the meetings of multiple “yous”; you would probably inhabit the body of you at the particular time to which you'd traveled. Regardless, at present, our control over time seems largely to do with the speed of its passage, something that might be related to the number of worlds through which we move with or without conscious deliberation.

A second essential rule is that our movement across worlds must be observationally continuous; each moment must logically follow from the previous. Theoretically, if somebody had complete information about all of the laws of nature, your physiological makeup, and all input — cultural and physical — that you could possibly experience, he could plot out everything that you could possibly do. This does not mean that a person with even total information about you could do more than guess at what you *would* do.

Several physicists have, over the past decade and a half, put forward an experiment to test the Many Worlds Interpretation against alternatives. Essentially, it uses the scientist for the

Schrodinger's cat and proposes that, if the scientist never dies despite repeated runs of an experiment that gives him a fifty percent chance of survival, then there must be multiple universes. The scientist can only observe the one in which he lives. As with the definition of a person by that person's "pattern," the thought experiment is unsatisfactory. In a continuously branching Many Worlds Interpretation, why should it be that the scientist's awareness will forever follow the path in which he survives? This seems to presume some form of soul, and an immortal soul need not avoid bodily death to remain immortal.

However, because soul is rejected at the very beginning of the scientific examination, the "quantum suicide" thesis has expanded to the "quantum immortality" thesis, which suggests that the first-person observer can never die. Of course, although I accept this immortality within a Christian context, it isn't logically possible for a human body to exist forever, which is the immortality intended by the philosopher physicists. Immortality in their meaning essentially gives a human the ability, or the natural tendency, to "choose" a world in which he survives. If our experience is really a progression through possible instances of time, then we will eventually become "trapped" in fatal events.

If we reject the completely solipsistic view that one's personal reality is all that matters, then it is certain that other people, or merely chance, put us in situations in which survival simply isn't a reality that our souls can choose. Consider two people heading toward each other in a particular region of the Many Worlds, with a man about to run over a woman accidentally with his car. Once the car is bearing down on the woman, it is too late for her survival to be a matter of her choice. She cannot jump in time, and she cannot move to worlds that are not connected to the one in which she exists.

The only way she could deliberately choose to avoid the accident would be if she had some foreknowledge or suspicion about the event. In that way, she could arrange not to be in that spot

at that time, or alternatively, she could somehow prevent the man from playing his role in her death. Even for those who don't believe in premonitions, the procedure through which the woman avoids her death seems obvious. And that's the point: reality is as we experience it to be.

Soul Messages

Of course, different people experience reality in different ways, which makes sense if people are, indeed, inhabiting different realities. This divergence, in my view, is the nugget of truth on which the various forms of relativism are built. However, while relativists are correct that everybody's reality is equally *real*, they err in presuming that this means that all realities are equally valid or true.

The line between solipsism (only my reality is true) and multiplicity (every reality is equally true) has proven to be a difficult one to walk for those who ponder the intersection of physics and philosophy. In the former case, the tendency is to suggest that the individual exists in the most true world by definition, sometimes with the suggestion that he or she is the decisive personality for the universe. In the latter case, the tendency is to see every version of an individual as equally valid, existing in self-contained realities that can't be compared judgmentally.

Those who have chosen to reject the notion that the physical world exists entirely inside the individual's mind, and who take an essentially materialistic view of reality, have had to reconcile two beliefs. The first is the assumption that the mind and experience result from the workings of our bodies and surroundings (our minds *supervene on*, or follow from, our bodies). The second relates to the observation that we interact with each other and our desire for those interactions to be real.

If the mind supervenes on the brain, then each of the Many Worlds could only correspond to a single mind. Thus, when the world splits, your mind moves to only one of the possibilities

according to your belief about what happened. However, if somebody else believes differently than you, then that person's mind must move to a different world. Therefore, the version of that person with whom you thereafter interact is a "mindless hulk." To resolve this melancholy outcome, philosophers have proposed a "many-minds interpretation," in which every version of us has its own mind, which may or may not communicate in some way with our other minds and/or with the many minds of other people.

In this area of thought, the mesh model of Many Worlds would fall somewhere between a "single-mind interpretation" and a "many-minds interpretation" because, in it, each of us has a single soul (or mind), yet that soul could reach and "be present in" every iteration of our bodies. The world is as a person believes it to be, so one cannot hold different beliefs about the same physical state; rather, belief – the disposition of the soul – dictates which physical world one inhabits. As the Eucharist reminds us, the universe has a lower-level implementation that is spiritual and exists along with the physical level as one reality.

If, as implied in a previous essay in this series, the Eucharist can act as a beacon guiding us to the correct path through the Many Worlds, fading but still reaching us as we move away from the Son, then the "mindless hulk" problem dissipates. We aren't always interacting with ensouled people as we work our way through life, but this admission is only objectionable if one insists on seeing the world as in continuous motion – transforming, rather than stepping, from one state to another. With each world being just a momentary state, and your soul moving through imprints of you from moment to moment, your multiple physical manifestations are essentially connected. They're faces of a single identity: you. Attributing this perspective to other people, while a given person's soul may not be present in the specific version with whom you're interacting, it makes no sense to see that version as "mindless." After all, it would be harsh to label somebody as a mindless hulk just because he was daydreaming and not paying attention to you.

The practical implication of this model is that, when we argue and can't resolve the difference, the person really is living on a different track of reality — perhaps not the right one. Although I characterize our perception as points on the spectrum-like playing board of the many world, we can think of our souls emanating out from that point. This would be how we persuade others to move toward us — by seeking to enfold them in such a way as to direct them toward the concentrated points of our souls lie. It may be that this is no more than what we might call “sincerity,” or perhaps it is seen in the strength of emotion conveyed.

Through the Looking Glass

In summary, the mesh model of Many Worlds holds that an imprint of a person exists in every world and in every position that he can take, given the laws of physics, his biological make-up, and the location and circumstances into which he was born. The individual soul, observable as continuous experience, takes logically consistent steps through this mesh of possibilities, moving progressively through time. As the person travels through time, he can sense the positions of other souls — the most prominent of which is God. Moreover, people can communicate with each other in ways that transcend language and take cues from each other about what is important, or even what is real.

This framework for life would obviously have implications for childhood development. For one thing, it proffers a formulation of the nature versus nurture distinction. For another, it highlights the importance of stability and emotional connection with parents — preferably two parents, who give their child more than one reference point (which diverge, at the very least, based on the different worlds made likely according to gender).

It would be romantic to believe that two people's souls must connect in order for them to conceive, but it is more plausible that only the mother's is required (which is not to say that

presence of soul guarantees conception). It could be the case that a child's soul travels along with the mother's during pregnancy. After birth, the child begins to have more options according to the world's input.

This is the point at which a father's presence is beneficial — crucial — for the child's wellbeing. If we consider that the Eucharist is a sacrament, then it seems reasonable to suggest that sacramental marriage would work on the level of soul in some way, as well. Perhaps it serves to call the spouses' souls toward the same range of worlds. If this were the mechanism, then it would still be possible, although less certain, for people to maintain relationships that duplicate marriage with respect to their souls and the benefits to their children.

As for the children for whom a couple is "fated," the chances that the same parents could conceive the same child in significantly different worlds are slim; even just a shift of a few variables would result in a different sperm meeting a different egg. Regardless, versions of us who differ dramatically in origin would be very difficult to reach because the belief in our parents is pretty central, and we would emotionally avoid options that moved beyond some core matters of identity.

Whatever the familial particulars, it is indubitable that the society in which one lives imparts guidelines for what is to be considered reality. This is how the idea that social and cultural factors are akin to laws of nature fits into the mesh model; like the laws of physics, they determine what states of being are possible, although social boundaries lean more toward probability than do natural ones. Including the "law" that we look to each other for cues of what is real, the foundation for claims of relativism becomes apparent. Mass delusion exists when many souls convince each other that they are on the right track, which presents us with a sticky problem through which to work in our lifetimes.

On an individual basis, what we see as insanity would result from choosing to move to worlds that are outliers in the general consensus. The world of the lunatic is equally real, but it is

isolated from the community of souls. Increasingly so, until he or she moves beyond where it is even logically possible for certain other people to exist, because their genetic makeup and individual circumstances would have determined closer horizons.

It is an interesting question whether one could go so far beyond the norm – become so crazy – as to move to worlds in which they could actually do the impossible. My inclination is to say that it is unlikely, since they would still be bounded by the laws of physics. However, the point is almost moot since, in the range of worlds in which everybody else lives, the impossible act wouldn't occur.

Another interesting question is whether historical events can lead to diverged clusters of soul-inhabited realities. I think of this in relation to an historical anecdote from high school history class. During the European/American conquest of North America, a shaman of a native tribe blessed some reed vests and declared that they would stop bullets. Of course, in our history books, the bullets proved stronger than the magic. But could those Indians' souls have followed a path in which, whether by magic or luck, the trick worked? I would offer a tentative affirmative, but with the options that the group would either have been killed at some other event on the periphery of the range of worlds that we now inhabit, or they would have moved off in paths that it would be nigh impossible for you or me to reach.

“Well, Duh!” Metaphysically Speaking

This entire endeavor may very well seem odd from multiple directions. The idea that there is a heretofore largely unexplored “level” of experienced reality, which gives continuity to a moving picture universe that flickers from one complete world to the next can certainly evoke surreal impressions. In that respect, the theory will be disclaimed because life doesn't *feel* that

way. In the other direction, from a scientific point of view, it will be attacked because life isn't *measurably* that way.

Both criticisms are correct.

The difference between the two reactions has to do with basic strategies for understanding the world. One side believes only what can be proven; the other believes based on intuition. In these essays, I'm talking about the point of intersection between observable reality and experiential reality. This entire theory represents a mere model to connect reality as it feels to reality as it is observed. It is an abstract model, and as such, it loses the experience of the thing. Life is a matter of experience, not of comprehension.

When I started to think about ways to test my proposals, I considered an experiment in which a person decided to believe differently about something important and devoted maximum effort to coming to believe it. If it became true, that would provide some indication that the world in which the person lived had actually changed. There are two problems with this experiment.

First, there are too many variables, deriving both with the subject and the observer. Human beings are chronically unwilling to honestly change their minds, except by accident. Therefore, it would be impossible for the subject to be sure, even him or herself, that the outcome wasn't "tainted"; obviously, if one believes something important to be true, convincing oneself otherwise is difficult indeed. Moreover, the observer inherently lives in a different world from the subject and, therefore, would be unable to tell that a fundamental belief had changed.

Second, these changes happen over time, and we are bound by the rules of our existence. As the subject looked into reasons that the desired belief might be true, he or she would simply believe that it was, in fact, true. Perhaps this point would be better illustrated if the hypothetical experiment centered around circumstances rather than beliefs. Suppose you decide that you want to test the mesh model of Many Worlds by willing your soul to move toward a version of you who

is a millionaire. The conclusion of my theory is that, if it is logically possible for you to do so given your current circumstances and traits, you can become a millionaire by making the right decisions according to the laws of physics and the society within which you live. Well, of course.

This “difficulty of the obvious” would almost definitely arise with any theory that seeks to describe reality accurately and in totality. Some philosophers and physicists seem to get caught up in their equations and their jargon and to lose sight of what it is they’re seeking to model. Perhaps they believe the complexity to be necessary in order to excise sensed knowledge or revelation. Unfortunately, one cannot describe reality without acknowledging the central truth about it: it is felt. Experience is in every way greater and more important than models.

By the same token, however, those who privilege experience, feeling, and faith require a model because the secular ideal will not accept those forms of knowledge without a rational justification. All of the components of this “theory of everything,” with the exception of the explicitly Christian components, can be expressed in terms of psychology, sociology, or other secular formulations for intangibles. However, even that might not satisfy physical scientists who recoil even from the encroachment of supposed “social scientists” into their territory.

For such people, even without the religious associations, this theory would likely seem too obvious and simple to resolve such highfalutin problems as Many Worlds. I think scientists, as a group, have gotten so used to discovering *new* things, the new worlds of ever-smaller and ever-larger reality, that it would naturally evade them that what they are describing is something so obvious to any first-person observer. It’s fascinating to think of multiple realities all existing in parallel. It’s somehow more mundane to see them all as merely the possible moments in the realities that we all experience every day. And perhaps it has the feeling of ceding turf for scientists to admit social science, the arts, and (most especially) religion into important roles in the functioning of the universe.

Between Two Gods

In Romans 12:2, St. Paul exhorts the reader, “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.” Although this translation, from the *New International Version*, is unique in the extent to which it does so, this passage is applicable to the ideas that I’ve presented throughout this series of essays. Whether it is the “pattern of this world” or merely “this age” to which we must not conform, it is through transformation and renewal of the mind that we align ourselves with God’s path through the history of the universe.

Tipler is absolutely correct, in his physics-only sense, to confirm the shared identity of emulations, of the patterns, because each *could be* inhabited by the soul of the person. We must offer our bodies as sacrifices (Romans 12:1), concentrating on the direction of our souls. With souls bouncing from one world to another throughout time, it is a puzzle that, according to my theory (and accepting Tipler’s), the universe near the Omega Point will be entirely soul-less.

As I’ve previously written, the Omega Point would be God creating Himself on our level of implementation, like a divine story writing itself into a book. But we must not concentrate too much on the mechanism by which that story would be written. My greatest offense at Tipler’s theory was the implication that life, “the biosphere,” would *create* or *become* the Omega Point. This cannot be the case.

The eternity, the immortality, of Tipler’s Heaven becomes possible because time extends to infinity. The inhabitants of the universe must make it collapse in such a way as to ensure that it is in the process of collapsing forever. It never reaches the point of its end, the singularity. Even in that future time, we would only be moving *toward* God, eventually with the decreases in distance becoming so minute as to make the “lines” appear parallel.

The Heaven of the Omega Point, it is important to remember, exists at a higher level of implementation. The “computer” itself exists at the level of reality that we currently experience, and our emulations would be run on it. Thus, if we take our souls to be written in the emotional face of reality, and if we imagine those souls one day claiming their rightful patterns within the Omega Point, then perhaps this is God’s method of tying His creation of Himself, the Omega Point, to Himself. Our souls, in this scenario, are not necessary for the creation of the Omega Point – indeed, they contradict its development – but they are necessary in order to connect it to God.

This concept of connection is critical. It is how God guides us to the proper world. It is how we reach out to each other as we move through the mesh of the Many Worlds in what would otherwise be a lonely, solitary journey. And perhaps it is this connection across worlds – through Love – that was the catalyst for Jesus’ Resurrection and, if Tipler is correct, the quantum tunneling that made it possible. In the end, when all the science has been applied and digested and made to conform with our *experience* of reality, the lesson is one that should surprise no Christian: the universe was created for the purpose of Love. And we were created to be God’s expression of love for His creation.

Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. (Revelation 21:3)

Tipler, Frank J. *The Physics of Immortality* (Anchor Books, 1994)