

The Universe is Immaterial, Mental and Spiritual, concludes Physical.

Source: pijamasurf.com

Link: https://pijamasurf.com/2016/12/el_universo_es_inmaterial_mental_y_espiritual_concluye_fisico/

Date of the original article: 2016-06-12

Published on web-ur.com: 2024-04-04

Date of last update: 2024-04-04

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JOHNS HOPKINS PROFESSOR OF PHYSICS AND ASTRONOMY RICHARD CONN HENRY CAME TO THIS CONCLUSION THAT SEEMS ASTOUNDING TO SCIENCE, BUT IS ACTUALLY QUITE LOGICAL IF YOU UNDERSTAND THE IMPLICATIONS OF QUANTUM MECHANICS.

In a much-publicized article published in 2005 in the journal *Nature*, Johns Hopkins University physics and astronomy professor Richard Conn Henry concludes that the universe "is immaterial, mental and spiritual". Needless to say, his assertion is controversial and somewhat strange to be published in *Nature* magazine, a sort of institution of the dominant materialistic scientific paradigm. Let's break down Conn Henry's article a bit.

Conn Henry's thesis is based on the fact that, unlike the postulates of classical physics that have modified our worldview—such as establishing that the Earth revolves around the Sun—the postulates of quantum physics that have been proven have not been equally assimilated into our perspective, perhaps because they are even more radical than those of Copernicus, Galileo or Newton, since they necessarily hold that there is no material universe independent of our mind. On this Conn Henry writes:

The most recent revolution in physics in the last 80 years has not yet transformed the general public's knowledge in a similar way. Still, a correct understanding of physics was accessible even to Pythagoras. According to Pythagoras, "numbers are all things"; and numbers are mental, not mechanical. Likewise, Newton referred to light as "particles," knowing that this concept was an "effective theory," useful if not true. As

Newton's biographer Richard Westfall recognized: "The ultimate cause of atheism, Newton asserted, is 'this idea that bodies have, as it were, a complete, absolute and independent reality in themselves.'" Newton knew about Newton's ring phenomenon and was not concerned with what is trivially known as "wave-particle duality."

The above paragraph requires a brief comment. There is no suggestion that Newton knew the wave-particle duality as it has been revealed in quantum physics (where light is shared as a wave or a particle depending on the measurement being made). Newton was against the Cartesian notion that matter exists separately and independently; he believed that matter depended on God and that we could not know its essence, we could only describe it (it is in this that there is a similarity). It must be remembered that Newton was a theologian and an alchemist and believed that matter was animated by a single spiritual principle.

Continuing with the article, Richard Conn Henry states that quantum mechanics roughly solved the problem of the nature of the universe, which is mental, in that we cannot prove that matter exists beyond our observation of it. To paraphrase Heisenberg, we do not observe nature, but only nature exposed to our method of interrogation.

According to James Jeans: "the stream of knowledge is moving toward a non-mechanical reality; the universe is beginning to look more like a great thought than a great machine. Mind is no longer akin to an accidental intruder into the realm of matter...rather we should receive it as the creator and regent of the realm of matter." But physicists have not yet followed Galileo's example and convinced everyone of the wonders of quantum mechanics. As Arthur Eddington explained: "It is difficult for the realistic physicist to accept the view that the substratum of everything is of a mental nature."

Conn Henry then explains that the so-called particles are not really things per se, but only a concept, a linguistic tool, a narrative that we superimpose on the world. He quotes Michael Frayn, author of the play *Copenhagen*, about Niels Bohr and his interpretation of quantum mechanics: "neither stories nor narratives are independent elements of the universe, but human concepts, as subjective and restricted in their point of view as in the act of observation."

We repeat certain narratives to ourselves and project onto them a character of solidity and stability in order to make sense of the world. Bohr himself had suggested that if we understood quantum mechanics, the world on which we stand would shudder, and that is why there remains a certain resistance to adopting the view derived from quantum mechanics, which literally questions the solidity of the ground on which we stand. There is a kind of divorce between the reality perspective of quantum physics and the reality we commonly experience, which does not have to be explained by saying that quantum mechanics should not be applied to the classical macroscopic world, but can be explained precisely as an effect of the universe being mental: its solidity is a projection of our beliefs.

Physicists avoid truth because truth is so alien to everyday physics. A common way to avoid the mental universe is to invoke "quantum decoherence," the notion that "the physical environment" is sufficient to create reality, independent of the human mind. However, the idea that any irreversible act of amplification is necessary to collapse the wave function is wrong: in "Renninger-type" experiments, the wave function is collapsed simply by your human mind seeing nothing. The universe is purely mental.

[...] The world is quantum-mechanical: we must learn to perceive it as such.

It does not seem that we are ready to assume the quantum vision of reality, however, some less materialistic cultures have conceived something similar, as occurs with Mayahana Buddhism (and higher vehicles such as Vajrayana and Dzogchen) where it is taught that all phenomena should be seen as if they were dreams, since they do not have a substantial reality independent of the mind. Likewise, some currents of Hinduism, such as Vedanta or Kashmir Tantrism, conceive of the world as consciousness only. So it is possible that if we stop identifying with our concepts and do not cling to our projections we might find looseness and freedom and even the bliss of lightness, although the ground might first seem to shake and we might succumb to terror. Conn Henry concludes:

One advantage of correcting humanity's perception of the world is the resulting joy of discovering the mental nature of the universe. We have no idea what this mental nature entails but, more importantly, it is true. Beyond acquiring this perception, physics can no longer help. You can sink into solipsism or deism, or something else if you can justify it, but don't ask physicists for help.

There is another advantage of seeing the world as a quantum mechanics: whoever has learned to accept that nothing exists but observations is far ahead of his colleagues, who stumble through physics hoping to find out "what things are". If we can "do a Galileo" and get people to believe the truth, they will discover that physics is very simple.

The universe is immaterial, mental and spiritual. Live and enjoy.

Of course it would be completely dogmatic and unintelligent to assume that this is true simply because one physicist says so—especially when many other physicists say the opposite. However, we rescue Richard Conn Henry's interpretation because we believe that in it there is a quite lucid argument free of the materialistic dogma that predominates in physics. That is, it is a natural conclusion of what quantum physics has discovered when analyzed philosophically, beyond the fact that when philosophy is mixed with quantum mechanics, scientists immediately speak of pseudoscience and other pejorative arguments that reveal a hint of fundamentalism (unlike what some scientists believe, we do not live in objectivity, all we have is our subjective experience and therefore it is essential to make sense of science from there). The clearest proposition in a purely logical sense that we can make is that quantum mechanics shows that matter, its basic components, do not exist independently of our observation, i.e. they are relative to our mental perception and therefore do not have an absolute existence. Likewise, the things we call the foundational bricks of the world—the atoms—are not really things, but something more mysterious that Heisenberg once described as tendencies or possibilities. And in his book *Physics and Philosophy*: "In fact, the smallest units of matter are not physical objects in the ordinary sense; they are forms, ideas, which can be expressed unambiguously only in mathematical language." Reality is beyond a scientific description that divides it into subject and object: "scientific concepts always cover only a very limited aspect of reality, the other part that has not yet been understood is infinite." In Bohr's words: "I believe that the division of the world into objective and subjective is arbitrary. The fact that religions throughout time have spoken in images, parables and paradoxes means only that there is no other way of grasping those realities to which they refer." Perhaps we should assume, as John Wheeler suggested, that the subject-object scheme is very limited and therefore understand the universe to be participatory or, to use a Buddhist term, co-emergent.



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