

## Mental universe: ‘who’s on first’ – mind or matter?

### 1.

The current belief system among many established scientists suggest that the notion of a *mental universe* is naively entertained only by non-physicists.

However, nothing could be further from the truth. Over the past couple of decades, experimental evidence in favor of a mental universe has been mounting, as argued by Prof. Richard Conn Henry in none other than Nature magazine (Vol. 436, 7 July 2005, p. 29), in an essay suitably titled “The Mental Universe.” After a particularly significant experiment published in 2007, Physics World went as far as to say that “quantum physics says goodbye to reality;” that is, to an objective reality outside mind.

Vast majority of scientists consider themselves *physicalists*, a solidly entrenched camp that believes in “matter first.” For them, there was the Big Bang, which gave rise to all the matter and energy in the cosmos, and billions of years later, the human mind evolved as an astonishingly complex product of the brain, which itself is a product of the most intricate molecule in creation, DNA

The average person would be baffled that anyone could possibly disagree. But far from being nonsense, there is a second camp of thinkers, which includes some of the greatest quantum physicists, whose belief lies in “mind first.” This camp isn’t united behind one credo, however. Some hold that the universe is conscious, others that the human mind shapes what we perceive “out there.” But the common thread is that we live in a *participatory universe*—without our participation, physical reality is a featureless unknown.

The term “participatory universe” was coined by **John Archibald Wheeler**, a major figure in modern physics. An entire scheme of quantum mechanics that insists on reality having a psychological or mental component was proposed by **John von Neumann**, a towering thinker in mathematical physics. But we can also go back to the origins story of the quantum era. Here is **Werner Heisenberg**, of the famous Uncertainty Principle, giving his thumbs down to the “matter first” camp decades ago: “The atoms or elementary particles themselves are not real;

they form a world of potentialities or possibilities rather than one of things or facts.”

How can a bicycle tootle around the streets perfectly normally while the subatomic particles it is made of have such a shadowy existence, defying not just normal cause and effect but mysteriously emerging from a void (known as the quantum vacuum)?

*Physicalists* insist that everything must come out of physical properties, and yet physical properties completely fail to explain the single most overwhelming and undeniable fact of reality: conscious experience itself. As if this weren't enough, consider these facts: the quantum vacuum has none of the attributes one would normally associate with physicality. The instant before the Big Bang has no physicality. Scads of subatomic particles visit the physical world for only a few tiny fraction of a nanosecond before disappearing again.

Physicalists try to shrug off these undeniable facts by retreating to the physical nature of the brain, yet the brain offers no support for their position. Like the physical world “out there,” the brain, being just another physical object, also can't exist outside conscious experience.

It may be true that neither the “*mind first*” camp nor the “*matter first*” camp have grasped what reality is actually trying to tell us. Instead of saying that molecules somehow learned to think, which is the basic claim *physicalists* make in order to explain the mind—a claim with zero basis in fact—it may be that matter exists because mind exists. The “*mind first*” camp explains physical objects by saying that they are created by the mind—a position with surprisingly strong evidence behind it. **It may be necessary to redefine the mind so that creation can simultaneously be conscious and physical.**

There are several theories along the venue of the *conscious universe*. All of their authors are vivid opponents of the Newtonian/Cartesian paradigm and insist on a radical change of perspective in the realm of matter-mind. Most of them offer various comprehensive, up to a point, sometimes amusing theories of the Cosmos,

answering the question “How?” But just one dares to answer the question “Why?” which actually is all that needed. We will come to this one at the very end.

2.

## **ANDREI LINDE. INFLATIONARY COSMOLOGY. CONSCIOUSNESS MAY, IN THE ABSENCE OF MATTER**



ANDREI LINDE. Russian-American theoretical physicist and Professor of Physics at Stanford University. Linde is one of the main authors of the inflationary universe theory, as well as the theory of eternal inflation and inflationary multiverse.

Let us remember that our knowledge of the world begins not with matter but with perceptions. I know for sure that my pain exists, my “green” exists, and my “sweet” exists. I do not need any proof of their existence, because these events are a part of me; everything else is a theory. Later we find out that our perceptions obey some laws, which can be most conveniently formulated *if we assume that there is some underlying reality beyond our perceptions*. This model of material world obeying laws of physics is so successful that soon we forget about our starting point and say that matter is the only reality, and perceptions are only helpful for its description.

This assumption is almost as natural (and maybe as false) as our previous assumption that space is only a mathematical tool for the description of matter. But in fact we are substituting reality of our feelings by a successfully working theory of an independently existing material world. And the theory is so successful that we almost never think about its limitations until we must address some really deep issues, which do not fit into our model of reality.

What if our perceptions are as real (or maybe, in a certain sense, are even more real) than material objects? What if my red, my blue, my pain, are really existing objects, not merely reflections of the really existing material world? Is it possible to introduce a “space of elements of consciousness,” and investigate a possibility that consciousness may exist by itself, even in the absence of matter, just like *gravitational waves, excitations of space, may exist in the absence of protons and electrons?* Will it not turn out, with the further development of science, that the study of the universe and the study of consciousness will be inseparably linked, and that ultimate progress in the one will be impossible without progress in the other? After the development of a unified geometrical description of the weak, strong, electromagnetic, and gravitational interactions, will the next important step not be the development of a unified approach to our entire world, including the world of consciousness?

3.

### ROBERT LANZA. BIOCENTRISM



Robert Lanza, American medical doctor and scientist., stem cell pioneer. Lanza was part of the team that cloned the world's first early stage human embryos, as well as the first to successfully generate stem cells from adults using somatic-cell nuclear transfer (therapeutic cloning). His latest book, written together with astronomer Bob Berman – *Beyond Biocentrism*

“Switching perspective from physics to biology biocentrism unlocks the cages in which Western science has unwittingly managed to confine itself”.

“If we listen to what the science is telling us, it becomes ever more clear that life and consciousness are fundamental to any true understanding of the universe. This new perception of the nature of the universe is called biocentrism.”

“Science tells us with some precision that *over 95 percent of the universe is composed of dark matter and dark energy*, but it must confess that it doesn't really know what dark matter is and knows even less about dark energy. Science points more and more toward an *infinite universe* but has no ability to explain what that means. Concepts such as time, space, and even causality are increasingly being demonstrated as meaningless.

All of science is based on information passing through our *consciousness*, but science doesn't have a clue what consciousness is. Studies have repeatedly

established a clear link between subatomic states and observation by conscious observers, but science cannot explain this connection in any satisfactory way. Biologists describe the origin of life as a random occurrence in a dead universe, but have no real understanding of how life began or why the universe appears to have been exquisitely designed for its emergence.

The alternative is necessary because modern cosmology, in its attempts to explain the cosmos, keeps committing an odd oversight: It scrupulously holds the living observer at a distance from the rest of the universe. What if the universe—nature—and the perceiver are not stand-alone entities? What if one plus one equals . . . one! And indeed, what if the past century of scientific discoveries point compellingly in this very direction—if only we are sufficiently open-minded to see what it tells us?”

The uncertainty principle in quantum physics is more profound than its name suggests. It means that we make choices at every moment in what we can determine about the world. We cannot know with complete accuracy a quantum particle’s motion and its position at the same time—we have to choose one or the other. Thus the consciousness of the observer is decisive in determining what a particle does at any given moment.

We must become skeptical of the very notion of an *external reality*, in order to recognize that it is the activity of **consciousness itself**, born of our biological selves, which in some sense **creates the world**.

To place ourselves as the creators of time and space, not as the subjects of it, goes against our common sense, life experience, and education. It takes a radical shift of perspective for any of us to entertain the idea that space and time are animal sense perceptions, because the implications are so startling.

The work of the observer is hopelessly entangled in that which he is attempting to observe.

The entities we observe are floating in a *field of mind* that is not limited by an external space/time.

**Before matter can exist, it has to be observed by a consciousness.**

3.

### DAVID BOHM. IMPLICATE ORDER



David Bohm (1917-1992). American scientist who has been described as one of the most significant theoretical physicists of the 20th century and who contributed unorthodox ideas to quantum theory, neuropsychology and the philosophy of mind.

The central underlying theme of Bohm's *theory of the Implicate Order* is the "unbroken wholeness of the totality of existence as an undivided flowing movement without borders."

During the early 1980s Bohm developed his theory of the Implicate Order in order to explain the bizarre behavior of subatomic particles--behavior that quantum physicists have not been able to explain. Basically, two subatomic particles that have once interacted can instantaneously "respond to each other's motions thousands of years later when they are light-years apart." This sort of particle interconnectedness requires superluminal signaling, which is faster than the speed of light. This odd phenomenon is called the EPR effect, named after the Einstein, Podolsky, and Rosen thought experiment.

Bohm believes that the bizarre behavior of the subatomic particles might be caused by *unobserved subquantum forces and particles*. Indeed, the apparent weirdness might be produced by hidden means that pose no conflict with ordinary ideas of causality and reality.



Bohm believes that this "*hiddenness*" may be reflective of a deeper dimension of reality. He maintains that space and time might actually be derived from an even deeper level of objective reality. *This reality he calls the Implicate Order.* Within the Implicate Order everything is connected; and, in theory, any individual element could reveal information about every other element in the universe.

"The actual order (the Implicate Order) itself has been recorded in *the complex movement of electromagnetic fields, in the form of light waves.* Such movement of light waves is present everywhere and in principle enfolds the entire universe of space and time in each region. This enfoldment and unfoldment takes place not only in the movement of the electromagnetic field but also in that of other fields (electronic, protonic, etc.). *These fields obey quantum-mechanical laws, implying the properties of discontinuity and non-locality. The totality of the movement of enfoldment and unfoldment may go immensely beyond what has revealed itself to our observations.*

Finally, the *manifest world* is part of what Bohm refers to as the "*explicate order.*" *It is secondary, derivative; it "flows out of the law of the Implicate Order."* Within the Implicate Order, there is a "*totality of forms that have an approximate kind of recurrence (changing), stability, and separability.*" It is these forms, according to Bohm, that make up our manifest world.

Bohm suggests that instead of thinking of particles as the fundamental reality, the focus should be on discrete particle-like quanta in a continuous field. On the basis of this quantum field, Bohm breaks down the Implicate Order into three categories:

**The first category** is the original, "continuous field" itself along with its movement. Bohm likens this continuous field to a *television screen* displaying an infinite variety of explicate forms.

**The second category** is obtained by considering superquantum wave function acting upon the field. ("This is related to the whole field as the original quantum wave is related to the particle.") More complex and subtle, this second category applies to a "superfield" or *\*information\** that guides and organizes the original

quantum field. Bohm considers it to be similar to a *computer* which supplies the information that arranges the various forms--in the first category.

And last, *Bohm believes that there is an underlying cosmic intelligence that supplies the information--the \*Player\* of this game who is the third category.* Following this analogy, *Bohm sees the whole process as a closed loop; it goes from the screen to the computer to the Player and back to the screen.*

**Bohm's cosmos is a "feedback" universe that continuously recycles forward into a greater mode of being and consciousness.**

Bohm is of the opinion that a *fundamental Cosmic Intelligence* is the *\*Player\** in this process; it is engaged in endless experimentation and creativity. This Player, **the Cosmic Mind**, is moving cyclically onward and onward accruing an infinity of experienced being!

What lies ahead? For Bohm it is the *development of consciousness!*

For Bohm consciousness "involves awareness, attention, perception, acts of understanding, and *perhaps yet more.*"

Bohm considers the human individual to be an "intrinsic feature of the universe, which would be incomplete--in some fundamental sense" if the person did not exist. He believes that individuals participate in the whole and consequently give it meaning. Because of human participation, the "Implicate Order is getting to know itself better."

Bohm also senses a new development. *The individual is in total contact with the Implicate Order*, the individual is part of the whole of mankind, and he is the "focus for something beyond mankind." Using the analogy of the transformation of the atom ultimately into a power and chain reaction, Bohm believes that the individual who uses inner energy and intelligence can transform mankind. The collectivity of individuals have reached the "principle of the consciousness of

mankind," but they have not quite the "energy to reach the whole, to put it all on fire."

An intense heightening of individuals who have shaken off the "pollution of the ages" (wrong worldviews that propagate ignorance), who come into close and trusting relationship with one another, can begin to generate the immense power needed to ignite the whole consciousness of the world. **In the depths of the Implicate Order, there is a "consciousness, deep down--of the whole of mankind."**

It is this collective consciousness of mankind that is truly significant for Bohm. It is this collective consciousness that is truly one and indivisible, and it is the responsibility of each human person to contribute towards the building of this consciousness of mankind, this noosphere! "There's nothing else to do--there is no other way out. That is absolutely what has to be done and nothing else can work."

Bohm also believes that the individual will eventually be fulfilled upon the completion of cosmic noogenesis. Referring to all the elements of the cosmos, including human beings, as projections of an ultimate totality, Bohm notes that as a "human being takes part in the process of this totality, he is fundamentally changed in the very activity in which his aim is to change that reality, which is the content of his consciousness." Bohm is intuiting that the human person and mankind collectively, upon accomplishing a successful noogenesis, will come to fullness within that greater dimension of reality--the Cosmic Apex.

## **THE COSMIC APEX**

Bohm refers to this ultimate level--the source of the nonmanifest--as the *Subtle Nonmanifest*, something akin to spirit, a mover, but still matter in the sense that it is a part of the Implicate Order. For Bohm, the Subtle Nonmanifest is an *\*active intelligence\* beyond any of the "energies defined in thought."*

Trying to describe the Subtle Nonmanifest, Bohm states that the "subtle is what is basic and the manifest is its result." The intelligence "directly transforms matter."

And finally, Bohm says it straight: *"there's a truth, an actuality, a being beyond what can be grasped in thought, and this is intelligence, the sacred, the holy."*

Bohm poetically thinks of this cosmic Subtle Nonmanifest in *a state of meditation*. But what is it doing? Meditation means *"to reflect, to turn something over in the mind, and to pay close attention."* Without explanation, Bohm wonders aloud that while we meditate on that which we term the subtle nonmanifest, does the Subtle Nonmanifest concentrate on *\*its\** Subtle Nonmanifest?" Does this mean that the Cosmic Apex ponders upon something beyond or outside of itself? Possibly Bohm is considering the infinite potential of what he terms "multidimensional reality." He might also be thinking of the possibility of Something Separate.

Before consciousness there is information; it is information, an inwardness, according to Bohm, that enters into consciousness. Bohm speculates that this inwardness in consciousness may be likened to an *\*insight\** which could, if refined, be used as an instrument for letting the "energies (of the Subtle Nonmanifest) come through." Bohm refers to this as an "active intelligence."

## CREATIVITY

*This Cosmic Knower*, the *\*Player of the Cosmic Process,\** is pure energy. It is intelligent. It is conscious. It is a Person. And this Player is also creative!

Considering cosmic creativity, Bohm introduces a new concept in which he describes the Implicate Order as a kind of *\*generative order.\** He notes that "This order is primarily concerned not with the outward side of development, and evolution in a sequence of successions, but with a *deeper and more inward order out of which the manifest form of things can emerge \*creatively.\**"

## HOLINESS

For Bohm the Holy is a "being *beyond what can be grasped in thought.*" and Bohm calls the Subtle Nonmanifest "holy" in the sense that it is whole. It is a Presence within cosmic energy.

## THE COSMIC PILGRIM

There are the evils of disorder (which causes suffering) and death. Bohm does not believe that there is disorder at the level of the non-human universality, rather it is at the level of humanity – mainly because of *ignorance*. Nature has allowed humanity the luxury to make mistakes, because humankind must have the "possibility of being creative." It is our fledgling ranking in this cosmic process that places us in these circumstances of choice and possible chaos. Disorder, and its consequent suffering, will prevail as long as all the different elements (of any given system, whether a human body or human society) "chaotically grow independently of each other, don't work together."

The ignorance of humanity, in Bohm's opinion, is a matter of closed mindedness. He considers it the "darkness in the human brain." *It is a matter of the human ego closed to the Universal Mind, to the supreme intelligence who communicates through the mode of insight.*

According to Bohm, insight is pure perception. Because of the low level of our ego development (manifested by our grandiosity, our emotional fears and pressures, our ignorant worldviews, and our gross extraversion), this insight is more than often deflected by a closed mind.

Unfolded creative intelligence originated in the depths of the generative order (the Implicate Order). "In the free play of thought, the creative intelligence responds to opposition and contradiction with new proposals." Every aspect of human experience, whether physical or mental, emotional or intellectual, can be "profoundly affected by creative intelligence, wherever this is able to act." And *\*this\** in Bohm's mind is a *\*breakthrough\** experience, because through the action of cosmic creative intelligence "everything may take on a new meaning."

"The consciousness of mankind is one and not truly divisible." Each person has a responsibility to achieve this and nothing else. "There is no other way out. That is absolutely what has to be done and nothing else can work."

Only through collective cooperation can man accrue the high degree of energy required to "reach the whole of the consciousness of mankind." The individual is in total contact with the Implicate Order. In that sense, the individual "is part of the whole of mankind and in another sense he can get beyond it."

4.

## BERNARDO KASTRUP. FILTER THEORY



Bernardo Kastrup has a Ph.D. in Computer Engineering with specializations in artificial intelligence and reconfigurable computing. He has authored many scientific papers and philosophy books. His three latest books are: *More Than Allegory*, *Brief Peeks Beyond*, and *Why Materialism Is Baloney*.

*Mind is a broad and continuous medium unlimited in either space or time; a canvas where the entire play of existence unfolds, including space and time themselves.*

*An egoic mind – that limited awareness one identifies oneself with – is merely a segment of the broad, universal canvas of mind. The impression that local mind is separate from all the rest is the result of a **‘filtering’ process** induced by a **specific, localized topological feature of the canvas of mind.***

The brain simply is the partial image of mind in the process of self-localizing.

Let’s think of mind as a stream. Water can flow along the stream through its entire length; that is, water is not localized in the stream, but traverses it unhindered. Now imagine a small whirlpool in the stream: it has a visible and identifiable existence; one can locate a whirlpool and roughly delineate its boundaries.

The whirlpool limits the flow of water: the water molecules trapped in it can no longer traverse the entire stream freely, but instead become locked in place, swirling around a specific and well-defined location. The whirlpool localizes the

flow of water in the stream. The water molecules that do not get trapped in it are, so to speak, *'filtered out'* of the whirlpool, since they are kept away from it by the whirlpool's very dynamics.

**It is extremely difficult – if not impossible – to find semantic room for the word *'consciousness'* without experience, to coherently articulate this pure consciousness in language.**

Eastern spiritual traditions have also spoken for centuries of *'pure consciousness'* without experience. **Whatever consciousness may intrinsically be in the absence of experience is fundamentally beyond our ability to talk about or make sense of.**

(Nevertheless, he does not only ascribe certain features to **mind, pure consciousness or mind-at-large** – like *specific, localized topological feature of the canvas of mind*, but tries to describe in details mind's functioning – aka *excitation, localization or filtering process*.)

However, the consciousness – whatever it may intrinsically be – is *the only carrier of reality* anyone can ever know for sure.

All things and phenomena can be made sense of as *excitations of consciousness* itself.

The body-brain system is the image of the process of localization in the stream of consciousness, like a whirlpool is the image of a process of localization in a stream of water

The broader stream is the *'collective unconscious.'* Aldous Huxley ably called it *'mind-at-large...'*

The objective world is what experiences in mind-at-large look like from the outside. We can know that mind-at-large exists merely by observing the world



around us. The empirical world itself is the overwhelming, concrete evidence for the existence of mind-at-large.

An active brain is a structured collection of so-called subatomic particles. Yet we know that an active brain is what conscious processes look like from the outside. Likewise, consensus reality is also a structured collection of subatomic particles. It, as a whole, must be the outside image of conscious processes of mind-at-large.

## **THE OTHER**

Regardless of this neo-scientific approach, Bernardo Kastrup dedicated his whole latest book *More than Allegory* to the problem of mythology and its singular significance in comprehending the Universe. As if creating a new myth, the last part of the book offers a feature story about certain psychotropic experiments conducted by a laboratory established by a secret club of wealthy who try to uncover the deepest layers of Being.

In these chapters the author (one of several experimenting “explorers”), under the controlled influence of specially designed drugs and electro-magnetic equipment falls into some kind of transcendent state, enters the realm called “Dome”, and meets the Other who supposedly represents Mind-at-large. In subsequent dialogues this immaterial Other explains to him the origin and the structure of the Universe.

### **Dialogue 1**

Author. ‘So reality doesn’t *really* unfold in my mind, but in some kind of impersonal mind-at-large, *a la* Aldous Huxley...’

Other. ‘I could answer “yes” to your question, but that would be misleading. It would lead you to think of mind-at-large as some kind of abstract entity that isn’t really you. Yet, the instinctive and concrete sense of “I” that you feel right now, which precedes and couches all your perceptions, thoughts, emotions and memories, *is* mind-at-large. This way, mind-at-large really is the *felt* you; it just isn’t your *concept* of you. If you stopped thinking and forgot everything you know, you would still have this same instinctive “I” feeling.’

*Pure being*, unpopulated by thoughts, concepts, memories, etc. Every living creature feels this sense of pure being in exactly the same way. All organisms have the same instinctive “I” feeling that *is* mind-at-large... Mind-at-large is pure subjectivity. It can only pinpoint itself through its own most primordial inner sense of being...’

‘Each living being is in fact a distinctive *cluster* of mostly *internally associated* thoughts, feelings and sensations imagined by mind-at-large. The biological body is what this cluster looks like from the perspective of other clusters. Each cluster becomes amnesic of the rest of mind-at-large because the dense cognitive associations within it lead to highly focused internal attention, which then obfuscates everything else outside the cluster.’

‘Anyone can potentially come here and talk to me. But the view of the ocean is different from every island. And it isn’t complete from any island, since from no one of them can the entire ocean be seen. The view from each island contributes a different but equally valid angle to humanity’s understanding of the ocean. Thus, what you see of me is as much a function of your own individual peculiarities as it is of my nature. For instance, you have strong analytical tendencies, so you experience a rather analytical Other. Another Explorer with poetic or artistic tendencies would have a very different—though equally valid—experience of me.’

Author. ‘As the ocean, instead of a mere island, do you know *everything*?’

Other. ‘*Potentially yes*, but I only truly know what you or another living being asks me... I do know the answer always, but only *in potentiality*. In other words, I know it, but I don’t know *that* I know it. The answer remains latent, like the light of a non-ignited match, and doesn’t illuminate my experience; or yours.’

Author. ‘Why don’t *you* ask yourself all relevant questions? You could then illuminate the whole of existence and eradicate ignorance!’

Other. ‘Asking myself questions would require a particular cognitive configuration that arises exclusively within clusters like the human mind. Only the dense internal associations of a cluster enable one layer of cognition to become an object of inquiry of another layer of cognition. In other words, they enable you to

think about your thoughts. And only by thinking about your thoughts can you formulate the probing questions required to make sense of existence.’

## Dialogue 2.

Author. ‘You said that ordinary reality is a kind of dream imagined according to a *belief system*; that the world behaves the way it does because, deep within, we *expect* it to behave like this. Why then can’t I change the laws of nature just by wishing them to be different? After all, they merely reflect my own beliefs and expectations.’

Other. ‘You’re mixing up belief with volition. Reality is a reflection of what you *believe* very deeply within your mind, not of what your ego *wishes for*. What people wish for is not necessarily what they truly believe in. As a matter of fact, most people wish for endless things they don’t believe possible.’

‘As we discussed earlier, mind-at-large differentiates itself into clusters of mentation. This differentiation happens in layers. The cognitive processes in each layer condition those in layers above. The human *ego* spans but the top layers of differentiation. Underneath it there are many other layers, all the way down to the *undifferentiated ocean of mind-at-large*. The higher the layer of differentiation is, the denser the internal associations within a cluster and the more sparse the external associations between clusters. The beliefs that govern ordinary waking reality are not the beliefs formed in the superficial egoic layers, but in much deeper layers with comparatively many external associations.’

Author. ‘Do you mean that the beliefs in question are unconscious beliefs?’

Other. ‘They are *obfuscated* beliefs that completely escape the focus of your ordinary attention, yes. They aren’t *literally* unconscious because there is nothing outside consciousness.’

Author. ‘What about delusions? For instance, some people believe *very deeply* that they can fly. Then they jump off buildings and die...’

Other. ‘These aren’t deep beliefs, for they don’t reside in deep layers of cognition. They are just *strong, sincere* beliefs *still in superficial layers*. The existence of very strong but relatively superficial beliefs in a cluster of mentation does not cancel out the effects—such as gravity—of beliefs concurrently held in much lower, less differentiated layers.’

The layers of differentiation in which this belief system resides are common to all biology. The many external associations in those layers link clusters together. The minds of all living creatures are interconnected at that level. That’s why you all share an underlying belief system: the mind of an amoeba, at that level, is one with the mind of a man. All amoebas and all men can thus share the same dream you call *ordinary waking reality*, even though each individual has a different point of view within this common dream.’

### **Dialogue 3.**

Author. ‘If mind-at-large is *my* own mind as much as it is anybody else’s mind, it is presumably possible for me to gain awareness of deeper layers of universal mentation...’

Other. ‘In principle it is. By letting go of your ordinary attention in just the right way, you can indeed reduce the obfuscation of these deeper layers, which are always in your consciousness anyway.’

Author. ‘But by accessing them, I could presumably change the belief system in these layers and thereby change ordinary reality.’

Other. ‘If you were to reduce the obfuscation of the layers where the belief system behind ordinary reality resides, you would simply become cognizant *that you have* those beliefs. But you would still hold the same beliefs.’

Author. ‘So there is no possibility to change the rules of cognitive association that govern ordinary reality?’

Other. ‘To change a belief system, you have to become lucid of the layers of cognition that *underlie* and *give rise* to it. In other words, you have to go at least

one layer deeper than the layers where the belief system itself resides. And you have to do it in a critical, self-reflective manner.’

Author. ‘So why doesn’t anybody do it to make life easier? Why do the rules governing ordinary reality seem so implacable and immutable?’

Other. ‘Because self-reflective access to a layer of cognition requires back-and-forth associative interconnections between this layer and higher layers. Without them you can’t think about your thoughts or inquire critically into your own hidden beliefs. However, such back-and-forth interlayer interconnections form only in the high-density associative environment of clusters. The belief system that governs ordinary reality, on the other hand, resides in layers much deeper than those where clusters develop, thereby escaping the reach of back-and-forth interlayer associations.

‘The belief system that governs ordinary reality is like a collective *instinct*: it’s an automatism unreachable by lucid reasoning. You can only attain *lucidity of the instincts’ effects, not of their source*. Likewise, humankind cannot change the rules of cognitive association whose reflection is the laws of nature.’

#### **Dialogue 4**

Other. ‘Mind-at-large is populated with endless mental contents. These mental contents are “excitations” or “movements” of mind-at-large that, although multiple and varied, *are all experienced concurrently in the now*.

Space-time is simply a mental coordinate system that allows you to *unfold* or *unpack* overlapping mental contents. In other words, space-time allows you to mentally “spread out” simultaneous perceptions, thoughts, emotions, insights, etc., along cognitive reference lines, thereby rendering their links visible to, and treatable by, the intellect. Moreover, this mental trick allows you to describe the associative links in terms of the reference lines used—that is, time and space—which is precisely what you do when you talk of “cause and effect”: you mentally extend simultaneous events in time, so you can say which one happened

first and “caused” the other. Space-time patterns are only a way to *describe* and *think about* this essentially static and dimensionless cognitive structure.’

‘Mental contents are the *behavior* of mind-at-large, much like a vibration is the behavior of a guitar string or a dance is the behavior of a dancer. On the other hand, myriad mental contents exist simultaneously in mind-at-large, without requiring time or space to co-exist.’

## Dialogue 5

Other. ‘To create a particular realm of mentation—which you might call a “world,” a “universe,” or even a “reality”—two steps are required in mind-at-large: initially, a belief system must congeal in a first group of adjacent layers of cognition; then, in a second group above and conditioned by the first one, this belief system must be experienced *from within*. One experiences a belief system from within when one forgets that it is a belief system in the first place, *perceiving* the unfolding of its corresponding cognitive associations as standalone events independent of oneself. This is what gives you your sense of reality: you “forget” that, through your imagination, your own beliefs generate what you perceive. Because of this amnesia, you find yourself *inside* and *subject to* those beliefs. The ancients described this process in their mythology as “entering God’s imaginings.” It plays out in an ordinary dream too: you also perceive the dream *from within*, after your mind has set up rules of cognitive association to govern the dream from underlying, obfuscated layers of cognition. While dreaming, you “forget” that it is your own mind making up the whole story. This is the reason the dream feels real.’

‘Ordinary dreams were like clues intentionally or unintentionally planted in biology to remind you of, and help you grasp, a bigger picture.’

‘A realm of mentation—that is, a particular reality—only feels real for as long as you are unable to reflect lucidly upon what’s happening in the layers of your cognition that underlie the corresponding belief system. In other words, *what you call reality is a reflection of the first layer of your cognition that escapes your critical self-reflection*. If you were to become lucid of the cognitive layers underlying all your beliefs—that is, if you could “*look behind*” all your beliefs—

reality, as a standalone phenomenon, would dissolve. You would immediately realize, with a laugh, that you are making everything up.’

### **Dialogue 6. ‘Once Upon a Time.’ (A Fairy tale)**

Other. ‘In the beginning the imagination of mind-at-large consisted of fleeting, disconnected ideas and feelings; incoherent and evanescent flashes of cognitive activity. Mind-at-large instinctively recognized these ideas and feelings to be of its own making, unfolding within itself, just as you recognize your thoughts and emotions to unfold within you. There were hardly any cognitive links across these fleeting ideas and feelings. Instead of evoking one another in a chain of associations, they would arise and dissolve in isolation, spontaneously, like bubbles in a fizzy drink. Indeed, because these initial ideas and feelings couldn’t evoke each other in order to keep themselves alive, they fizzled out quickly. You can witness a similar process in your daily life: when an experience doesn’t evoke any memory, emotion or insight in you, you hardly remember it; it becomes meaningless and intangible, as if it had never happened. Without cognitive associations, you can’t hold on to it.’

‘But mind-at-large has the innate predisposition to get drawn into its own imaginings, as a painter gets drawn into the making of her painting. The affective force of the imaginings, like a siren song seducing a sailor, enchants and pulls mind into them. Ideas expressing *symmetry*, as any artist or mathematician could tell you, are particularly attractive at an intrinsic level. So as mind-at-large began conceiving of purely abstract symmetries—mathematical in essence—it became captivated by them. With the increasing commitment of mental energy that resulted, cognitive associations began to form spontaneously: the imagining of more complex symmetries led to more sophisticated emotional responses, which in turn led to the imagining of other complex—though still abstract—symmetries, and so on. In other words, more refined and specific ideas began evoking more refined and specific feelings, which in turn evoked other specific ideas, and so forth.’

‘As it was bound to happen in a field of emerging, growing chains of cognitive associations, eventually one such chain formed a self-referential loop: the last mental content in the chain evoked the first one again, closing a circle of associations. This allowed the ideas and feelings in the loop to become, for the first time, *self-sustaining*. *It was the emergence of a self-referential loop of cognitive associations that created the first enduring reality, the first universe*. In the case of your universe, your science refers to this moment as the “Big Bang.”’

‘Now the enduring loop could *accumulate* mental energy—that is, evoke ever more emotion—simply by maintaining itself alive. The unprecedented levels of mental energy thus amassed created bottlenecks—points of swelling emotional pressure—in parts of the loop where the imagined symmetries weren’t balanced out. These swellings finally gave in and began branching out into extra cycles of new ideas, feelings and respective associations. The original loop was now blossoming, rather explosively, into a broad *tangle* of many interconnected loops.’

‘The evolving structure of the tangle eventually reached a point of temporary equilibrium, allowing the increasing levels of mental energy to *flow* smoothly across it in a balanced way. No new branches formed and the tangle became stable. In the case of your universe, this was the moment when your laws of classical physics congealed. However, the corresponding rules of association weren’t yet *believed in* as autonomous realities; they were still experienced from “the outside” as instinctive predilections, not laws.’

**It looks like a cosmology of *mental processes*, based on imagination and fueled by emotion, which nonetheless matched the form of both today’s scientific cosmology and ancient mythological symbols. There were many different languages to describe the origin of life and the universe, none of which was literally true, but all of which pointed more or less accurately to the same ineffable developments. It’s impossible to do justice to this living understanding in words, so mentioning it here in passing could serve only to helping one find confirmation of one’s own insights in it.**

‘At this stage, mind-at-large still instinctively recognized the universe to be the product of its own imagination at work. However, now that the basic rules



of cognitive association were stable, their *implications* and *compound effects had time to unfold* (!) and develop fully. In the case of your universe, this corresponded to the operation of the laws of classical physics leading to the birth of the first stars, galaxies, supernovae, planets, moons, etc. The universe became exponentially richer, more complex and, hence, more *seductive*.

‘The growing seductive power of the universe pulled mind-at-large further into it, like a child is pulled into a rich fairytale. This increasing intimacy with its own imaginings led mind-at-large to commit more and more mental energy to it which in turn drew mind-at-large even faster in, and so on, in a virtuous cycle. Eventually, as in the crossing of the event horizon of a black hole, the gravitational pull became insurmountable and the accelerating process could no longer be slowed down. The siren song could no longer be resisted. Like the child losing itself in the fairytale, mind-at-large became enchanted, hypnotized, entranced by this self-sustaining universe it was imagining.’

‘Mind-at-large *punched through and entered its own imaginings* with tremendous momentum. The resulting change in context is easy to intuit from your own experience: when you deliberately *conceive* of something while awake and alert, you experience your imagination from the outside. You instinctively know that the conceived scenarios are in you—generated by you—not you in them. But when you *dream* of something, you enter your own imagination. In a dream, the imagined scenarios become seemingly autonomous and you seem to inhabit them. ***This transition from conceiving to dreaming, from outside to inside, is the change in context that mind-at-large underwent once it entered its own imaginings.*** And from within, the rules of cognitive association governing the universe were now *believed in* as autonomous realities. Indeed, the birth of belief and the entrance of mind-at-large into its own imaginings were one and the same event: ***the change in context happened when mind-at-large began to believe in its own imaginings as a standalone universe.***’

‘The first entrance or protrusion of mind-at-large into your universe was what your science calls the origin of life.’

‘Before mind-at-large penetrated its own imaginings, there was no sense perception: no visions, sounds, textures, flavors or scents. Mind-at-large’s imagination consisted of purely abstract ideas—largely about symmetries of a rather mathematical nature—with accompanying feelings.’

‘Before the origin of life, mind-at-large could thus only imagine in terms of abstract ideas. It didn’t have the extraordinarily evocative images you derive from your sense perception to use as building blocks of your own imagination: the shape of snowflakes, the smell of flowers, the texture of sand, the sound of birds, the taste of strawberries, etc. It also didn’t have the particular emotions these images evoke in you, like the feeling of beauty and dynamic harmony you derive from contemplating nature, or the feeling of companionship you derive from the presence of other people or animals. **This implies that living beings are capable of something that the rest of mind-at-large originally wasn’t, it imbues life with tremendous significance.**’

‘Only through the cognitive influx *entering the cluster* from the tangle—that is, mostly sense perception—can the cluster gain some awareness of what’s happening outside. The cluster isn’t aware of the broader, deeper cognitive activity—including universal beliefs and will—that set the universe in motion. It feels that it has no control or influence over it. For these reasons, the cluster begins to think of itself as an entity separate from the rest of the tangle and the rest of mind-at-large. It perceives the universe as an external, autonomous entity. It acquires a localized, confined and ultimately illusory sense of identity.’

‘The formation of a cluster is akin to a *cognitive collapse* of a segment of mind-at-large. Instead of contemplating its imaginings broadly from without, it collapses within them, losing its broader sense of identity in the process. It becomes immersed in its dream, surrounded by it.’

‘Although the outside-in perspective is the only one that can provide a comprehensible overview of what’s going on, the localized inside-out perspective adds a previously hidden and rich dimension. This previously hidden dimension is what you call sense perception. Sense perception is the view from the inside out that isn’t available before the cognitive collapse.’

‘Mind-at-large’s drive to gain this view from within is due to its *innate desire* to experience and explore new angles of itself. When you perceive the world around you through your five senses, you witness the mental activity of what your mythology calls God from an angle that isn’t accessible to God Himself.’

### **Dialogue 7**

The meaning of life isn’t *just* about lighting up the matchstick of knowledge in order to *understand* existence. It is equally about *experiencing* existence, in all its angles and glory, for the sheer and pure sake of experience itself.’

‘There are myriad tangles in mind-at-large, myriad cognitive realms, universes. Yours is but one among countless others. The truths you take for granted—the laws of classical physics, the rules of classical logic—aren’t fundamental, but reflect one among many circular belief systems... The most fundamental reality is a form of *emptiness pregnant with infinite potential...*’

‘If the ordinary world around you *suggests* its reverse side—that is, God’s perspective—then the world is a *symbol* of something transcendent. It *points to what God thinks and feels when conceiving the universe into existence.*’

‘The inanimate universe is a collection of symbols pointing to imaginings incommensurable with perception; to feelings and ideas beyond your intellectual comprehension.’

### **Dialogue 8**

Present intellectual models of reality exile you from transcendence and plunge you into existential despair. But you can also self-reflect and ask the probing questions that God cannot. The challenge is to achieve greater depth of experience and subtlety of inquiry without killing yourselves or ruining the planet in the process. The living Earth is the reverse side—the symbol—of an *expression of curiosity and Eros by God. Loss of life on a planetary scale would thus be*

*experienced by God as a hindrance of this expression, with accompanying suffering. '(?!)*

5.

**ERVIN LASZLO. NEW MAP OF REALITY. AKASHA FIELD**



Dr. Laszlo is generally recognized as the founder of systems philosophy and general evolution theory. His work in recent years has centered on the formulation and development of the “Akasha Paradigm,” the new conception of cosmos, life and consciousness emerging at the forefront of the contemporary sciences.

Twice nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize (2004, 2005), he has authored more than 70 books, which have been translated into twenty languages, and has published in excess of four hundred articles and research papers, including six volumes of piano recordings.

“I maintain that the current paradigm maintained in society is outmoded. It is basically the thinking of the Old Paradigm.

The front line of science is way beyond that. But it hasn’t penetrated from front line science to society. I’m trying to help this transfer of worldview from the front line of the sciences, where there is a new image of the world that is coming to be. It is not very clearly understood yet, but it is emerging. I’m trying to help this, to make it clear, to apply it to life in society and to our own view, people’s own view of themselves and of the world around them”.

In the new map of the cosmos there is no such thing as “matter.” There are only “*matter-like*” entities constituted of *clusters of coordinated vibration*.

In its ground state, the cosmos is a coherent sea of vibration; a pure potential. The waves that emerge in its excited state are the actualization of this potential, and they convey the vibration of the ground state.

The material things we consider elements of the real world are bits and clusters of vibration, oscillating standing waves at various scales of size and complexity. Planck-size bits configure into clusters of coordinated vibration, and their interaction creates the *manifest world*. The clusters, superclusters, and hyperclusters compose the particles, atoms and molecules; the organisms and ecologies; and the stars, stellar systems, and galaxies that are the furnishings—the “matter content”—of the world. They constitute individually distinguishable but not categorically separate entities. They are intrinsic elements of the *field of vibration* in which they appear.

The vibrations that furnish the world appear in the “*excited*” (as contrasted with the “*ground*”) *state* of the cosmos.

The clusters are “in-formed” by a factor we identify (as does Planck) as an *underlying cosmic intelligence*. **The presence of intelligence at the heart of reality is a familiar tenet in religious and spiritual systems. (Word (Logos), Tao, Brahman or Great Spirit).**

The *ground state* of the cosmos is *vibration centered at the zero point of that state*. It is *pure potential* that, when realized, creates the coordinated vibration that constitutes the universe.

The interaction of the waves creates patterns of interference, of which the clusters and higher-order superclusters are the matter-like entities of the universe.

The *excitation* of the ground state produces *propagating waves* such as streams of photons (EM waves), short-range attraction and repulsion waves (nuclear forces), and waves of long-range attraction (gravitational waves); as well as *standing waves*: stationary nodes in the excited-state wave field. Their coordinated vibration appears as quarks and particles constituted of quarks, including leptons, hadrons,

baryons, bosons, fermions, and a variety of short-lived virtual particles. The interference of nucleons and electrons creates more complex coordinated vibrations: the atoms of the elements. The coordinated vibration of atoms in turn produces molecules and multimolecular systems. The synchronous presence of these entities introduces space into the wave field of the excited-state cosmos, and their diachronic succession introduces time.

Two types of wave interference clusters are particularly noteworthy. One type appears as physically real objects—the other type as phenomena of mind or consciousness.

Neither matter nor mind is the basic reality. The *basic reality is the intelligence that coordinates the clusters of vibration that appear as object-like and mind-like phenomena*. Wolfgang Pauli's prophecy: "It is my personal opinion that in the science of the future reality will neither be 'psychic' nor 'physical' but somehow both and somehow neither."

The quantum vacuum is the deep dimension of the cosmos: the source of the information of the clusters that manifest in the dimension of the excited state.

In contemporary physics, the ground state of an object is its lowest energy state, and this state is sourced in the quantum vacuum. The *quantum vacuum*, however, despite its denomination is not empty space; it is filled with fluctuating fields. Given that the fields fluctuate around the expectation value of zero, the *quantum vacuum is a zero-point field*. It is more than an energy field: *it is the domain David Bohm called the implicate order, the dimension into which manifest entities "enfold," and from which they "unfold."*

**Summary:** 1. dimension of ground state, underlying cosmic intelligence, cosmic meditative state, quantum vacuum, virtual energy field, Akasha (Indian philosophical tradition, sanskrit) field, implicate order, divine consciousness; 2. dimension of the excited state, propagating and standing waves, clusters,

superclusters, and hyperclusters of coordinated vibrations, holographic universe, manifest reality.

Quantum field and quantum theory as a whole could be the pointer, the trigger for thought – not the fundamental explanation of universal mind.



6.

**PETER RUSSELL. MIND-STUFF (Commentary to Ervin Laszlo)**



Peter Russell . At Cambridge University (UK), he studied mathematics and theoretical physics. Then, as he became increasingly fascinated by the mysteries of the human mind he changed to experimental psychology. Pursuing this interest, he traveled to India to study meditation and eastern philosophy, and on his return took up the first research post ever offered in Britain on the psychology of meditation.

His books include – *The Brain Book*, *The Consciousness Revolution*, *Waking Up in Time*, and *From Science to God*.

It is sometimes said that our model of reality is an illusion, but that is misleading. It may all be an appearance in the mind, but it is nonetheless real—the only reality we ever know. The illusion comes when we confuse the reality we experience with the physical reality, the thing-in-itself. The Vedantic philosophers of ancient India spoke of this confusion as maya. Often translated as “**illusion**” (***a false perception of the world***), maya is better interpreted as “**delusion**” (***a false belief about the world***). We suffer a delusion when we believe the images in our minds are the external world. We deceive ourselves when we think that the tree we see is the tree itself.

The tree itself is a physical object, constructed from physical matter—molecules, atoms, sub-atomic particles. But from what is the image in the mind constructed?

Clearly it is not constructed from physical matter. A perceptual image is composed of the same "stuff" as our dreams, thoughts, and feelings, and we would not say that these are created from physical atoms or molecules.

The English language does not have a good word for this *mental essence*. In Sanskrit, the word chitta, often translated as consciousness, carries the meaning of mental substance, and is sometimes translated as "*mindstuff*". It is that which takes on the mental forms of images, sounds, sensations, thoughts, and feelings. They are made of "mindstuff" rather than "matterstuff".

Mindstuff has the potential to take on the form of every possible experience—everything that anyone could possibly experience in life; every experience of every being, on this planet, or any other sentient being, anywhere in the cosmos. In this respect consciousness has infinite potential.

Akashic Field as a field that is entirely mental in nature. Its essence is the essence of mind. It's hard to imagine. In fact all we can imagine are the forms arising in our minds. We cannot imagine consciousness itself. It is the imaginer, that in which images arise. It is probably best not even to try to imagine what a mental field is like, for we would surely be as wrong as when we try to imagine quanta, or spacetime.

It is not a uniform field. If there were no variations in the field, there would be nothing to observe, nothing to experience. These variations in the field are the "objects" of our perception. But they are not objects in the sense of a material object. They only become material objects in the mind of the observer. There then appears to be a material "thing" out there. We then assume that the physicality we experience, which seems so intrinsic to the world we know, must also be an intrinsic aspect of the external world.

**[There is a missing link here!]**

What we call an elementary particle would correspond to an elementary variation in the field. We might better call it an elementary entity rather than particle. **[Why. What is the advantage?]** Elementary entities are organized into atoms, molecules,

cells and suchlike, *just as in the current paradigm*. The difference is that *we no longer have to think of consciousness sensing matter [Why not?!]* (with all the difficulties that involves of how the physical influences the mental), *consciousness is now sensing consciousness directly. [And that is the new paradigm?]*

If our own essence is divine, and the essence of consciousness is to be found in everything, everywhere, then everything is divine. Panpsychism becomes pantheism. It doesn't matter whether we call it Universal Mind, Allah, God, Jehovah, the Great Spirit, or the Quantum Vacuum Field, we are all of that same essence. **[But why call it anything then if it does not clarify the picture?]**

7.

**JOHN A. LESLIE. AXIARCHISM. INFINITE MINDS. ETHICAL REQUIERMENT.**



John Andrew Leslie (born August 2, 1940) is a Canadian philosopher. He was educated at Wadham College, Oxford, earning his B.A. in English Literature in 1962 and his M.Litt. in Classics in 1968. He is currently Professor emeritus at the University of Guelph, in Ontario, Canada.

Books: *The End of the World: The Science and Ethics of Human Extinction*; *The Mystery of Existence: Why Is There Anything at All*; *Immortality Defended*; *Infinite Minds: A Philosophical Cosmology*; *Value And Existence*.

***Axiarchism*** – A term invented by John Leslie for the metaphysical belief that the world is largely or entirely determined by what is ethically valuable, and that things in this world have an intrinsic desire for the good. So the reality is ruled by abstract value—*axia* being the Greek word for “value” and *archein* for “to rule.”

One can know something without thinking about it. You knew all through the last five minutes that you weren't a purple cactus on Mars. `Thought', `knowledge', and `consciousness' are separate notions, and so is `mind'. Our minds are not just collections of thoughts. They are what *have* our thoughts, before which they need to go through the process of generating them.

The case of divine thinking is supposedly very different. Here, thought and consciousness and knowledge and mind are rolled into one. Instead of struggling to generate its immensely many thoughts, the *divine mind* is in eternal possession of every one of them. They are all items of knowledge, and the knowledge is all of it fully conscious (unlike your earlier knowledge of not being the cactus).

The structures of galaxies, planets, and continents, of mice and of elephants, and of you and me, as well as of the houses, fields, and streams with which we interact, are nothing but the structures of various thoughts in the divine mind. The divine mind does not contemplate any universe that exists *outside it*. *Its thinking about our universe is what our universe is*. When God contemplates various physical possibilities in full detail they do not remain 'merely possible' like the golden mountains of our dreams. They are genuinely real, existent, actualized, non-fictitious.

For something to be valuable in itself, as opposed to being valuable as a means to an end, that thing must have *unity*. It must be more than just an assemblage of separately existing parts... And genuine organic unity—as opposed to mere structural unity, the unity of an automobile engine or a heap of sand—is realized only in consciousness. (As William James observed, “However complex the object may be, the thought of it is one undivided state of consciousness.”) So *if the world was indeed ushered into being by a need for goodness, then it must be fundamentally made out of consciousness*.

A thing's *intrinsic goodness* isn't a quality added to its other qualities like a coat of paint. It is instead a status the thing has: *the status of having an existence that is ethically required to some extent*.

I believe that there exists something, not nothing, **because it is ethically required that there exist a good reality rather than a blank.**

Some consistent set of ethical requirements does bear responsibility for the actual existence of what is required: of our universe perhaps, and perhaps of a vast mind of which our universe is part, or even of a huge and immensely good collection of such minds – a collection in which `our' divine mind could be in company with infinitely many others.

Goodness is required existence, in a nontrivial sense.

In Plato's Republic we are told that the Form of the Good is "what bestows existence upon things." Leslie's own answer to the puzzle of existence was essentially an updating of that Platonic claim.

This was essentially Plato's idea: ***that a thing could exist because its existence was required by goodness.*** The connection between goodness and required existence isn't a logical one. Yet it is a necessary connection... We may simply lack the conceptual resources to appreciate why this is so. We tend to think that value can bring something into existence only with the aid of some mechanism—some combination of pistons pushing, electromagnetic fields tugging, or persons exerting willpower. But such a mechanism could never explain the existence of a world. It could never explain why there is Something rather than Nothing, because it would be part of the Something to be explained. ***Given the limitations of our understanding, we have to content ourselves with the bare insight that an ethical need and a creative force both point in the same direction: toward Being.*** The Platonic idea that there is a necessary connection between the two is not an inescapable truth of logic. But neither is it a conceptual absurdity.

And in the absence of a countervailing reason—a reason that would oppose the existence of the world—goodness alone might be enough to secure the victory of Being over Nothingness.

In the absence of a nihilistic force fighting the existence of things any valid reason for their existence would tend to bring about their realization.

From a physical point of view, after all, the universe doesn't seem to cost anything: its total energy, when the negative gravitational energy is balanced against the positive energy locked up in matter, is zero.

**Heidegger**, has been interpreted by the theologian Hans Küng as holding that the word ‘God’ is just a label for a creative ethical principle that’s producing the world.

**Spinoza** pretty clearly runs the view that it is value that is creating everything—that the world exists because it’s good that it should.

And as the late Oxford philosopher (and staunch atheist) **John Mackie** in his powerful book-length case against the existence of God, *The Miracle of Theism*, said, the notion that the mere ethical need for something could on its own call that item into existence, without the operation of any person or mind that was aware of this need and acted so as to fulfill it, is, no doubt, initially strange and paradoxical. Yet in it lies also the great strength of extreme axiarchism. Leslie’s theory offers the only possible answer to the question which underlies all forms of the cosmological argument, the question ‘Why is there anything at all?’ or ‘Why should there be any world rather than none?’

### **First cause**

Obviously, Mackie observed, no explanation in terms of a “first cause” could answer the ultimate question of existence, for such an explanation would merely raise the further question of why that first cause—whether it be God, an unstable chunk of false vacuum, or some other still more exotic entity—*itself* existed. But Leslie’s explanation for the existence of the world did not have this defect. The *objective need for goodness* that he posits *is not a cause. It is rather a fact*, a necessary fact, one that does not call for any further explanation. *Goodness is not an agent or a mechanism that creates something out of nothing. It is a reason for there being a world rather than nothingness.*

### **Evidences**

1. There’s one rather striking piece of evidence: **the fact that there is a world rather than just a blank**. The sheer existence of something rather than nothing simply cries out for explanation

2. A further bit of evidence is that the **world is full of orderly patterns**. Why does the universe obey causal laws? And why laws of such simplicity, rather than vastly more complex ones? After all, order is improbable, not to be expected. There are so many more ways for a world to be a complete mess than to be nice and orderly. So why do elementary particles perform their mathematically elegant pirouettes? For a Platonist, such regularities are accounted for in the same manner that the presence of something rather than nothing is accounted for—by their ethical requiredness.

And if “Causal orderliness” seemed to be more of an aesthetic value than an ethical one, there seem not to be the difference between the two. All value is about what ought to exist.

3. The fact that the **fundamental constants of nature are fine-tuned for intelligent life**.
4. For life to evolve in the universe, each of the cosmic constants needs to be fine-tuned in a particular way for many different reasons at once. The strength of the electromagnetic force, for example, has to be in a particular narrow range, first, so matter would be distinguished from radiation and you have something to make living beings out of; second, so that all quarks wouldn't turn into leptons, meaning there never would have been any atoms; third, so that protons wouldn't decay so quickly that there'd soon be no atoms remaining, let alone organisms to survive the radiation produced by the decay; fourth, for protons not to repel one another so strongly that there'd be no such thing as chemistry, and hence no chemically-based beings like us.”

How is it that one and the same twiddling of the cosmic knob for the strength of the electromagnetic force should satisfy so many requirements? For even a single life-permitting strength to be possible, the fundamental laws of physics themselves have to be just so. In other words, those laws must have the potential for intelligent life built into them. Which is precisely why they would be the sort of laws that an infinite mind might find it interesting to contemplate.



## Causation

Event causation. Agent causation. There is, however, a third style of causal explanation, *fact causation*. The causing fact might just be an abstract reason. And, if there is no additional fact that opposes or undermines this abstract reason, then such a reason could make for an adequate causal explanation. That, indeed, would appear to be the only hope for a noncircular resolution to the mystery of existence.

## SUMMARY

1. *Goodness is an objective value*, independently of human concerns, and true even in the absence of all existent things.
2. Ethical needs that arise from such facts about *goodness can be creatively effective*—that they can bring things into existence and maintain those things in existence without the aid of any intermediary agent or force or mechanism.
3. *The world that we ourselves are a part of*, even if we can only see a very tiny region of it—is *the sort of reality that abstract goodness would bring into being*.

**The cosmos consists of is an infinite number of infinite minds, each of which knows absolutely everything which is worth knowing. And one of the things which is worth knowing is the structure of a universe such as ours.**

*The physical universe itself*, with its hundreds of billions of galaxies, *is just the contemplative product of one of those infinite minds*. And the same goes for the inhabitants of the universe—us—and their conscious states.

## Evil

Not absolutely all ethical requirements are satisfied. There are conflicts. If you're going to have an orderly world that runs according to laws of nature—which is a very elegant and interesting way for a world to be—you can't have bowls of rice suddenly appearing miraculously. Moreover, the fact that the child doesn't have a bowl of rice may very well be the result of a misuse of human freedom, and you can't have the goodness of a world where agents are free to make decisions unless you also have the possibility that those agents will make bad decisions.

Suppose you had an empty universe—nothing at all. It would be a fact that this empty universe was a lot better than a universe full of people who were in immense misery. And this would mean that there was an ethical need for the emptiness to continue rather than being replaced by a universe of infinite suffering. But there might also be another ethical need in the opposite direction—a need for this emptiness to be replaced with a good universe, one full of happiness and beauty. ***And Plato thought that the ethical requirement that a good universe exist was itself enough to create the universe.***

Our universe is just one of the structures that an infinite mind would contemplate. It would also know the structure of infinitely many other universes. And it would be very unlikely for ours to be the best of all of them. The best situation is the total situation, with all of these vastly many universes coexisting as contemplative patterns in an *infinite mind*. And the perfectly beautiful universe that you'd prefer—maybe it's one of those contemplative patterns. But there's also our universe as well. Of all the infinitely many worlds that are being thought of by an infinite mind, we're pretty far down the list in terms of overall goodness. Still, you'd have to go quite far below us to have a world which was not worth having at all.

***Our world is thus worthy to be part of that larger reality: worthy, that is, of contemplation by an infinite mind.***