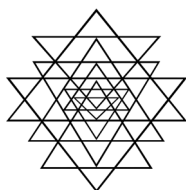


A THEORY OF EVERYTHING
including
CONSCIOUSNESS AND "GOD"



BILL HARVEY

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CONSCIOUSNESS AND “GOD”



BILL HARVEY

The Human Effectiveness Institute
Gardiner, New York

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Dedicated to
Albert Einstein & John Wheeler

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PREFACE

It is long past time to discuss the ultimate questions such as “why are we here?” — those questions we set aside because things were interesting enough in the world of the senses and everyday pleasures to keep us distracted from the deeper questions in life.

Now, when things have gotten rough and the existential challenges are many, we remember that our homework is not done. We *need* the answers to *why* we are keeping up our daily routines, in order to have the intestinal fortitude to stand up and do whatever it takes to overcome the new challenges facing civilization today.

I wrote this short book mainly for physicists but also for everyone. I’d like physicists to accept the scientific possibility of something very much like “God”, and to prioritize the

subject. This book explains why. I hope you enjoy it and feel what Freud called “the Oceanic feeling”.

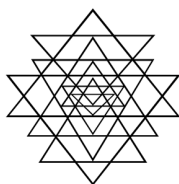
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I would also like to express my gratitude to Yana Lambert and Lalita Harvey for their invaluable ongoing editing guidance, and to the multitalented artist Endre Balogh for his exquisite art gracing the cover and his simply elegant rendering of the Sri Yantra which opens each chapter.

—Bill Harvey
Gardiner, New York
March 2023

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION



Inner Life

From the start, many of us could not shake off a strong compulsion to know more about who we are and why we are here.

Early aspirants to self-knowledge attained high levels of sophistication in contemplating the self, remembering key ideas from generation to generation as lyrics in songs or lines in poetry or symbolically in art, especially before the advent of the written and then printed

word. Spirit and mind were regarded as the same thing early in human development, which placed psychology and spirituality in the same category. Most of these key ideas being passed from one generation to the next relate to the Oneness, the interconnectedness, of all things. The *Rig Veda*, *Egyptian Book of the Dead*, *Torah*, and *Tao Te Ching* are classic examples.

It is logical for science to consider this as evidence of a long-running human intuition that there is a far greater intelligence overseeing the universe, and that we are all parts of that intelligence. Just because almost everyone at some point experiences such an intuition does not prove that there is anything scientific about it.

However, it is reasonable to keep an open mind. Science is supposed to do that all the time anyway; the only exception appears to be in this one subject domain, “God”, as if a flinch reaction to having been “deluded” by the “God” concept for so many millennia. Hopefully, most scientists do have open minds, because—as we aim to prove—this subject needs more attention, *stat*.

The “inner life” tradition—pondering the ultimate questions, studying the self—has continued alongside every step forward we have made in science and technology. In the world

of 2023, hundreds of millions of people practice meditation and yoga worldwide, taking part in at least a basic course of self-examination and thought experiments into what the world might be. The most advanced thinkers of every era gave us (sometimes only through the word-of-mouth of their followers) the findings of their own inner explorations.

For 6000 years of written history—describing as far back as 10,000 BC based upon oral “records”—the ideas of materialism and spiritualism had always been of nearly equal importance in explaining people’s behavior. That healthy balance took an odd turn a few hundred years ago, starting first with a shrinkage in the average person’s own spirituality, and then in the outward self-identification people give in surveys. This last drop took place only in the past 20 years, in which self-proclaimed spirituality (usually an exaggeration of true spirituality) dropped in the U.S., for example, from 90% to 70%¹.

President Eisenhower’s speech as he left office described Americans as “a free and religious people”. The absurdity of saying that in 2023 seems obvious. The daily news paints all of humanity as running amok. People invoke God to sanctify deeds of extreme hostility, while

(1) <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2022/09/13/how-u-s-religious-composition-has-changed-in-recent-decades/>

politicians use God as a wedge issue, pitting neighbor against neighbor. Perhaps they're still thinking of the old vengeful images of God we first developed while hiding in caves.

The "hip" thing to say since around 1970 is a bit like "I believe in something—some kind of force—it may be nothing like us—it may not care about us—but it is there." This is the way to convey that you are a spiritual, and therefore a good, person—another concept of God.

The deists who founded the USA believed that whatever God was, "He" was supremely benevolent and had our best interests at heart. And they believed that the teachings of Judeo-Christianity and Islam well describe what God would want of us, for our own good. We trust in God. Even though we don't know what "He" is.

Except that nowadays, even with the social pressure to go along with the herd, a third of us boldly state that we don't trust God or even acknowledge that "He" exists.

Eisenhower was not alone in his association of spirituality with the economic, social, and political success of a nation. He *did* trust God.

A plausible social science theorem would be that the degree of civility in a culture is pre-

dicted by its degree of trust in God. If we trust that a benevolent intelligence protects us all, we are less likely to overreact to inconsiderate behavior.

If we are to trust God in this modern cynical age where society seems to be mostly ruled by violent mood swings, we cannot avoid discussing the nature of God within a scientific framework.

If God cannot be reconciled within science, the game is over. The denouement shall not be pretty. The cards are stacked against us: Hedonism, materialistic accidentalism, cynicism, selfishness, egotistical self-centeredness, scarcity of wealth (only a few have it), power-mongering, hatred of “the other”, racism, misogyny, xenophobia, fear, weapons of mass destruction, collapsing environment, dying species, fiat money, superficial education systems, unmoderated platforms of social mass communication—all of which are the self-destructive negative forms of creative expression in the absence of spirituality.

Civilizations have been here before; we know that such forces have been capable of bringing down great empires, disposing millions of people to have to start all over again.

The Benefits New Science Can Bring

If science concludes that there is no scientific basis for ruling out intelligence in the universe itself, the ensuing shift in the bedrock assumptions of the culture is likely to gradually bring about the strongest upsurge in positive emotion in hisandherstory. For the same sorts of reasons as “The Good News” brought by Jesus was perceived as cause for happiness by his followers then and now.

Science’s acknowledgement of possibilities very similar to the existence of God—a conscious, intelligent universe, with a logical desire to protect itself and its parts, functionally the equivalent of benevolence—makes each of us important again since we were important enough to have been created by something like God. Life is important and has great meaning, not to be treated frivolously or callously.

Better behavior will steadily take over. Working together in a friendly way will become the norm. People doing things they enjoy shall be the employment principle, inspiration and creativity and compromise shall all blossom, and love will flower.

What Exactly Is Needed

These are the upside benefits to humanity if science proclaims that there is no scientific basis for ruling out a benevolent God whom we are right to trust. Such a new position would encourage us to take a fresh look through the lens of science at how consciousness might be related to matter and energy, for that is the experimental direction to determining what “God” there really might be.

A “fresh look” means *not* again and again solving for the matter-energy quantum brain phenomena which generate the epiphenomenon of consciousness. Instead, science should be studying and explaining why we experience consciousness, why and how Flow state happens, why there are other states of consciousness and powers of mind that come and go.

We need theoretical scientists to focus on all of the possibilities for how the universe came to be, without any presuppositions.

For example, could Wheeler’s first cause “quantum foam of probabilities” exist within a consciousness? Wheeler was a great coinor of words and phrases, and was the first to use the term “quantum foam”, although he was describing the implications of the ideas of Werner Heisenberg in that coinage.

The standard interpretation of quantum theory states that even in nothingness, something is going on, and that something consists of probability waves which spontaneously morph into virtual particles which appear and disappear.

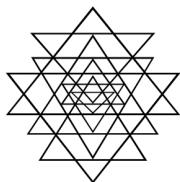
To us, that sounds more like what goes on in a consciousness, not like what goes on in a material world. Why not design experiments by which to test that hypothesis?

A Role for Individuals

A second experimental path, which individuals could take, is described in the last chapter of this book: how an individual can test various ways of using his or her own consciousness, and observe what the results might be. These results may not be of use to science, but could turn out to give people useful new tools and possibly even a profound spiritual feeling.

CHAPTER 2

UNIFIED FIELD THEORY— THEORIES OF EVERYTHING



Einstein died before completing his Unified Field Theory, which would have explained how gravitation, electromagnetism, and the strong and weak nuclear forces fit together and why each of those four forces exist at all.

He did not explicitly state any intention to include consciousness with the four physical forces (“physical” meaning matter *and* energy). However, without connecting the dots for us, his thought experiments which led to his rela-

tivity theories always included an observer. Somehow, he needed to use an observer in order to describe how reality works. He did not use the word “consciousness” but it is implicit in the word “observer”.

Einstein was intuitively certain that all scientific discoveries, which revealed to him beautiful complexities beneath the appearance of things, proved that there was an incredible intelligence behind the universe. To him it was highly unlikely that everything came together to form this universe completely by the accidental crashing of matter and energy.

Certain it is that a conviction, akin to religious feeling, of the rationality or intelligibility of the world lies behind all scientific work of a higher order... This firm belief, a belief bound up with deep feeling, in a superior mind that reveals itself in the world of experience, represents my conception of God.

—Albert Einstein¹

The God Spinoza revered is my God, too: I meet Him every day in the harmonious laws which govern the universe.

—William Hermanns²

(1) *Ideas and Opinions*, “On Scientific Truth” (New York: Crown Publishers, 1954), p 261.

(2) *Einstein and the Poet* (Brookline, MA: Branden Press, 1983), p. 9.

*I shall never believe that God plays dice
with the world.*

— Albert Einstein³

*In essence, my religion consists of a humble
admiration for this illimitable superior
spirit that reveals itself in the slight details
that we are able to perceive with our frail
and feeble minds.*

— Albert Einstein⁴

John Wheeler, who had been highly influenced by Einstein,⁵ went further than his mentor in drawing connections between consciousness and matter-energy. His theories of consciousness within a quantum physics framework evolved in two phases.

(3) Philipp Frank, *Einstein, His Life and Times* (New York: Knopf, 1947).

(4) April 24, 1929 in response to the question of New York's Rabbi Herbert S. Goldstein: "Do you believe in God?"

(5) Contrary to popular belief, while Wheeler and Einstein collaborated on a unified field theory of the physical forces of nature, they did not collaborate on the building of the first atom bomb. Einstein's famous equation $E=mc^2$ explains the energy released in an atomic bomb but doesn't explain how to build one. To quote Einstein, "I do not consider myself the father of the release of atomic energy. My part in it was quite indirect... I believed only that release was theoretically possible. It became practical through the accidental discovery of chain reactions, and this was not something I could have predicted." (*The Atlantic*, November 1945, "Einstein on the Atomic Bomb"). Wheeler in his autobiography writes extensively about his work in the Manhattan Project. Although his role was limited to the extension of nuclear theory, he had a personal reason for wanting to accelerate the bomb project so as to save lives: his younger brother had been killed in action during the Allied invasion of Italy.

“Bits Before Its”

Wheeler concluded that the substrate underpinning matter-energy—asteroids, people, dogs, mountains (“Its”)—was preceded by encoded information (“Bits”), which was the blueprint for the It and its cause of existence.

This is eerily similar to the words of the Bible in Genesis, in which the matter-energy universe was created by “the Word”. A word is a form of encoded information.

The Participatory Anthropic Principle

In Wheeler’s ultimate view of reality, matter-energy preceded the existence of consciousness, and existed as probability waves rather than as concrete “Its”—not yet what we apprehend as matter and energy, which only became what we see and feel after our consciousness came into existence.

Wheeler did not comment on whether the universe was random or guided in its development of consciousness, but he did state that it was as if the universe somehow knew it needed to develop consciousness in order to collapse probability waves into the universe that we are able to behold.

*The Question is what is The Question?
Is it all a Magic Show?
Is Reality an Illusion?
What is the framework of The Machine?
Darwin's Puzzle: Natural Selection?
Where does Space-Time come from?
Is there any answer except that it comes
from consciousness?
What is Out There?
T'is Ourselves?
Or, is IT all just a Magic Show?
Einstein told me:
"If you would learn, teach!"*

—John Wheeler⁶

What Changed During the History of Science

Reading about Wheeler and making inferences by reading between the lines, it seems that Wheeler did not want to risk his reputation by defying what has gradually become an unwritten convention of modern science: assume that the human mind's intuition of (and/or belief in) an intelligence as the source of the universe is "magical thinking", "superstition", and "anti-scientific".

(6) Speaking at the American Physical Society, Philadelphia (April 2003)

It has not always been that way. Going back to the earliest scientists (originally called “natural philosophers”) there was an easy coexistence with the idea named “God”, which goes back much further than written language. For Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, Galileo, Newton, Leibniz—the list goes on and on—there was never a binary schism forcing them to choose between spirituality and science. That hard line has been drawn in just the last few centuries. We take this dichotomy for granted due to our cultural conditioning. But the dichotomy is itself a theory, not a proven fact: no scientific proof exists that rules out the existence of an intelligence in the universe itself.

Materialistic Accidentalism

The denial of “God” (intelligence in the universe itself) became a fashionable style among scientists. It was fairly easy to convince many people to give up on that old-fashioned notion of God. The omnipresent wars and injustices going on around us seemed supportive of the idea that all of reality was an accident in the first place, leaving us to deal with the “dog eat dog” bar brawl however we can.

Deeper thinkers rationalized the ability of crashing matter and energy to build complex and self-reproducing structures by accident, saying, “In infinite time, everything has to

occur,” like a million monkeys playing with typewriters eventually writing “Hamlet”. But we have never observed crashing waves on a beach building a turreted, arch-windowed sandcastle. Nor does probability theory inherently contain any mathematics that would require all possibilities to come to pass.

Nevertheless, people absorb the biased information they receive, and each individual makes a worldview out of it. At the present time (2023) the human race collectively appears to largely pay lip service to the idea of “God” if they live in a place where this is the tradition, or they call themselves “atheists” if their personal community (e.g., most scientists today) has greater respect for that side of the dichotomy.

The Meaning of Life

Each human being can choose what their purpose shall be in life. This choice can be made independently of the choice of what to think about the question of “God”. However, there is a covariance between these internal personal decisions. People who actually feel that God exists tend to choose more noble purposes in life, whereas people who are certain that God is a fiction tend to be motivated by money, power, sex, fame, and being treated with respect more than anything else.

There are of course notable exceptions, humanists who are altruistically motivated without need to base that on any ontology. Those humanists are sometimes scientists such as Einstein, who worshipped the brilliant beauty he saw in obviously intelligent Nature, which he saw in the intelligent universe itself. Others express themselves in similar ways without spelling out their vision of intelligence or consciousness in the universe itself:

My atheism, like that of Spinoza, is true piety towards the universe and denies only gods fashioned by men in their own image, to be servants of their human interests.

—George Santayana⁷

Human decency is not derived from religion. It precedes it.

— Christopher Hitchens⁸

With the U.S. moving from the aforementioned 90% to 70% claiming to be spiritual in the last 20 years, and knowing that those truly “behaving spiritually” are a subset of even the 70%, the motivations we might refer to as “baser” (less noble) are on the rise. We’ve already seen the consequences of this decline in spiritual identification and such consequences are not

(7) *Soliloquies in England, and Later Soliloquies*, “On My Friendly Critics” (1922)

(8) *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* (New York: Twelve Books, 2007)

going away just because individual leaders are being voted out of office, perhaps on the contrary.

Having an open mind rather than a prejudged bias about whether the universe is intelligent would appear to have some relation to the existential challenges humanity now faces.

Separating God from Organized Religion

Organized religion has done its fair share of good though has done more than its share of harm through the ages. The cultural cancelling of “God” in recent history has apparently subconsciously undermined even clerics, causing some of them to behave as if they too are motivated by money, power, sex, fame, and a craving for respect, from which we might infer that their mental/emotional grip on the concept of God has been loosened. The Bible recounts that even thousands of years ago, well before modern science, clerics could similarly go astray. Today’s atmosphere of materialistic accidentalism in science only feeds such derelictions within religious organizations.

The suggestion to separate “God” from organized religion is offered in this sense: many people jump to the hasty closure of throwing out the baby, God, with the bathwater, organized religion. In considering that the universe

may itself be intelligent and may have had a creative role in bringing about our conscious existence, we need to peel away that objective reconsideration from irrelevant side issues like the good versus harm done by organized religions throughout history. One has nothing to do with the other in terms of logical rational thought; they are separate questions, and must not be muddled together.

How Can We Reconcile “God” with Science?

Because of the habits of the human mind, especially in a culture in which humans have created more complexity than our minds can easily handle, it may initially be useful to temporarily set aside the word “God” and speak only of a conscious, intelligent universe.

It is far easier for today’s human mind to objectively consider the possibility that something as big and as filled with inanimate objects as the universe could itself have intelligence, than to discuss a word so saddled with millennia of baggage associations. The word itself unleashes emotions, chemicals in the body, muscular reactions, imagery, feelings beyond description. Let’s park the word and continue the investigation of where we are at this cross-roads of life and self-extermination, and how

our current exigency relates to our thinking and ways of being.

Wheeler again has theorized that consciousness is a real thing and has vast importance in the scheme of things in this universe in which we live. Consciousness, according to Wheeler, transforms a universe of probabilities into a world of tangible matter and energy events.

Science has not rejected Wheeler's ideas. It has largely ignored them. That is, science has ignored those ideas of Wheeler's that have a bearing on the existence of consciousness as an essential aspect of the universe. Science has certainly not ignored his other ideas about black holes, nuclear fission, thermonuclear fusion, quantum foam, or wormholes.

Given the scientific community's respect for Wheeler and the non-rejection of his theories about consciousness and the universe, it should not be too difficult for scientists to accept the possibility that Wheeler may have been right about everything, except perhaps the sequence of early universe events.

Our theory is that Wheeler was incorrect about consciousness coming after the beginning of the universe. It makes more sense that before matter and energy, there was consciousness,

which compelled matter and energy to come into existence.

Defending the Idea that Consciousness Came First

Any cosmological theory faces the challenge of explaining why there is a universe at all. Logic suggests that nothing should ever have existed. Something cannot come from nothing. Therefore, there must always have been something.

In scientific thought today, it is Wheeler's quantum foam of probabilities that was always there. Then the big bang came from that, and eventually crashing matter and energy led to self-reproducing complex structures accidentally, and those eventually became life, and life eventually brought forth brains, and brains generated consciousness.

Doesn't this picture seem overly optimistic about what can come about accidentally?

Not to mention the question of where the quantum foam of probabilities came from.

Science has made it a tradition to dodge these questions of how things started.

Glimmers of light appear from time to time. Today most physicists acknowledge that “the hard question” is how to incorporate consciousness properly in the unified theory of everything. This is the direction from which science can begin to theorize about the start of the universe.

A Possibility to Consider

Let’s imagine what it could have been like before the existence of what we experience as the universe.

Imagine total nothingness. No quantum foam probabilities, no anything. Just endless nothingness.

Imagine that after the passage of unimaginable amounts of time, the nothingness realizes itself as something noticing a persistent experience of nothingness: the Noticer.

The time that has passed is merely the subjective experience of the nothingness that has always existed in the mind of the Noticer.

“The nothingness has always existed, it exists right now, and will probably go on existing forever,” might have been the first intuition of the Noticer.

“I AM THAT nothingness” might have been the next intuition the Noticer had.

“I am the Nothing’s imagination”, might have been the third intuition.

That Consciousness could have continued to think and found it to be more fun than just watching nothing happen forever.

Why did we just slip in “Noticer” and “Consciousness” with initial caps? If we are considering a scientific proposition regarding a theoretical consciousness of the universe itself, it seems proper respect to use initial caps.

Does it follow that all of the connotations of “God” are to be assumed of the consciousness of the universe? Not necessarily.

What we are suggesting is that, if nothing else, it is simpler to assume that a persistent experience of nothingness could lead to the experienter realizing that it exists as an observer—simpler than to imagine that a quantum foam of probabilities existed, exploded, and things slammed against each other until this world we see around us in lightyears in all directions came to be in all its wondrous complexity, and eventually created consciousness, the ability to perceive oneself as a persistent entity which experiences things.

The Better of Two Bootstraps

The standard model at the moment is that a complex physical form evolved from random collisions we call The Replicator Molecule, and thus life came to exist.

The model we present here is similar in that it starts with random information bits representing nothingness, assembling a self-referential viewpoint, a permanent memory-creating self.

One could argue that it is less implausible to envision random information becoming a self-organizing system than it is to envision random collisions of matter-energy building any complex physical thing let alone one that is also a factory for others of its kind.

What would you do if *you* were the first self?

There you are, you just realized that you exist, and you are alone amidst nothingness.

You might think and think and think and at some point, come to the conclusion that you and imagination are one and the same.

This might lead to experimentation as to how far you could go just by imagining things. How intensely could you visualize something

else besides nothingness? How real could you make your imaginings seem to you?

After all, once having become consciously self-aware, were you going to simply accept nothingness as your way of life forever? Or would you want to at least try for something else?

What else was there to do but to explore one's own capabilities? How far could imagination be pushed?

Never a Beginning

Although the better of two bootstraps is appealing, a simpler theory is that it has always been this way. There never was a beginning.

Our present theory is that time itself is not intrinsic to the One Consciousness, who has the computing power to experience all time at once. Time is part of the imaginary world the One Consciousness creates and inhabits through its avatars.

The expanding universe since the Big Bang suggests a cycle similar to an inbreath alternating with an outbreath, with all of creation sucked back into the Creator for what might be a sleep cycle, followed by a reawakening expansion.