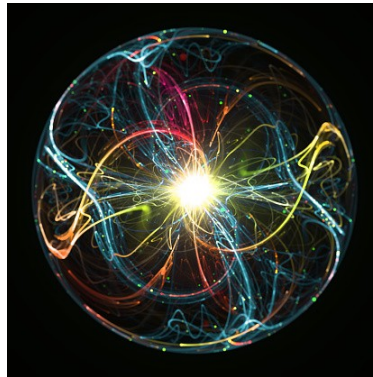


Strangeness Is Not Miracle

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WHEN THEISTS EXPLOIT the apparent strangeness of the natural world to help legitimise their beliefs in unnatural and outdated worldviews and cosmologies, I become frustrated. To be sure, I can understand their motivations for doing so, but I still find it frustrating. Perhaps I should not.

Yes, the natural world is indeed strange. The geometry of spacetime is “curved,” as described by General Relativity. The three-dimensional “flatness” of our everyday experience of space and of time, decoupled, belies spacetime’s strange curved-ness. Our everyday experience is only a small window into spacetime’s rich geometric structure—a structure which is profoundly counterintuitive. This is strange.

The quantum world is also strange, not least because it impugns something known as *local realism*. That is, physical reality rests upon a causal network which is apparently holistic in nature, not local. And our experience of local cause-and-effect is once again a small window into something richer. Indeed, the experimentally measured violations of the so-called Bell’s Inequality attest to this quantum strangeness.

But when theists try to connect these strangenesses of the natural world to the strangeness of their religious paranormal phenomena, I become frustrated. When they try to co-opt facts and ideas from modern physics, chemistry and biology to help justify their belief in miracles and signs and wonders as described in the Bible, and as trumpeted by religious charlatans and apologists everywhere, I become frustrated. There is nothing in modern physics nor chemistry nor biology that would render a virgin birth of Jesus possible, nor a bodily reanimation of Jesus post-death possible, nor a levitation of Jesus into the air and up into some heaven possible. In fact, to the contrary.

So when a religious person recently inclined to say, “General Relativity shows that spacetime is curved. Therefore it is possible that Jesus walked on water or was able to fly,” I incline to say, “Nonsense!” And when another religious person claimed, “The resurrected Jesus could walk through solid walls because he was now a meta-human living in a multi-dimensional hyperspace, and who had escaped the confines of ordinary spacetime,” I claim, “Nonsense!”