

Ask A Genius 28 - Informational Cosmology 4

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Scott: If “guarantee” and “can” have similarity there, the winking out you’re talking about is imperceptibly small, to us, moments linked together with an implied past and set of possible futures.

Rick: The way I look at it is to see if a consciousness-based theory of the universe makes sense. If each of our awarenesses can be expressed as an information space, can you express the physics of what happens to consciousness when somebody is shot in the head with a bullet and their brain is basically exploded?

The physics of that, looking at the information map of a brain that’s suddenly obliterated, is all that information collapses into a super-hot, primordial, zero-information, system. Suddenly, everything becomes undefined, the Planck wavelengths of everything expands effectively a quadrillion-fold, everything overlaps everything else, and there’s no longer any available information.

What happens at the speed of light, since nothing can happen faster than the speed of light, though effectively, since everything is happening at the speed of light, maybe, if the universe evaporates at the speed of light everywhere, you probably don’t have to wait for the evaporation to happen in one place and wait for the evaporation to reach you.

The universe loses any capacity to hold information. The tendency of things is to not expand at the speed of light due to quantum interaction and entanglement with other quantum things. Suddenly, nothing is entangled. Everything expands at the speed of light and everything is erased.

Though, I don't know how that looks for a strict physics point of view. We know what the agent is working on - the hardware that contains the information, but there needs to be an assistant picture of that happening to the information – even though you don't know what is actually happening to the hardware.

But it seems like a physically plausible thing that that could happen. Maybe, there are limits on how predictive physics can be from within the universe. In that, we have existed for, maybe, trillions or quadrillions, based on the apparent age of the universe, of moments, what we consider moments.

Based on that, there is an expectation that for each further moment then it is the end of moments, but, maybe, there is a limit to the predictive validity of something like that given that the universe's existence under this is dependent on the continued existence of hardware that is perceived by us from within the universe or by the universe itself.

Scott: Effective theories fit here. You can describe individual particles. You can describe momentum, spin, etc. It is impossible, in practical terms, to explain that with current and near future technology.

So, that puts a limit on our descriptive capacities about clouds or water. Collections of atoms of things. Effective theories are what we have. We have theories effective enough to describe clouds without having to describe every particles' properties and interactions.

I think it can be expanded. It can be expanded to most disciplines that are serious such as physics, chemistry, and biology, even in some social sciences like psychology and neuroscience. Where you aren't describing every particular thing, but you are getting degrees of accuracy by going with effective theories. So, based on these general principles, these general things will unfold and these formulations will provide varying degrees of predictability, validity, and accuracy about the phenomenon.

We don't have infinite accuracy about even orbits of planets, but we have a high degree of accuracy – much more so than orbits of bodies in other solar systems. I think it can be spread across fields. For instance, we've talked about artificial intelligence. We talked about Neil Degrasse Tyson brains in an artificial intelligence or a synthetic intelligence that is 90% accurate.

Let's say the technology in the future gives more than 90% accuracy to one instantiation of Neil Degrasse Tyson's brain. That's an effective theory in neuroscience of a Neil Degrasse

Tyson brain. I think IC is about that in a lot of ways. It just takes a highly informational framework for it.

Rick: It is an offshoot of that. It does, in a hand wavey way and in a perhaps less hand wavey way later, explain the way things work. It gives a rough framework for why stuff might exist and why certain things might work and why simple patterns work in a variety of contexts. They are the things most likely to exist and persist. Let's talk about Neil Degrasse Tyson's brain.

When I'm not totally freaking out about Trump, I view Trump as at least a part of technical change causing social upheaval in a way that perhaps has not happened to this extent before. Social media is partially responsible for the results of this election. Besides that, there is the job upheaval due to AI and increased abilities of mechanization to replace human work.

We're not always going to elect Trump. Hillary Clinton got about 2.7 million more votes than Trump, but it is just due to the distribution of those votes that Trump won. It took a lot of stuff for Clinton to not get elected: campaigning style and strategies, Russian interference, fake news whether it came from Russia or not. There's a lot of stuff.

Trump is not inevitable. So, we will not always be electing clowns. However, from now on, science fictioney social disruption, societal disruption, will be a part of the political landscape, even though politicians are fairly slow to acknowledge that. Not only social and political disruption, we're going to have, not 'existential' because it can mean a lot of different stuff, but existential disruption.

I mean by that the discounting of consciousness. If you created a Neil Degrasse Tyson simulation that was 90% accurate, then you told Neil Tyson, “This is all you’re going to get. We’re going to kill you, but we built this 90% accurate version of you.” He would say, “This is not good enough.” But if you said to him, “This one is 99.1% accurate.” By this point, Neil Tyson is in his 80s. He might say, “I can pass on feeling okay with that.”

But that’s one manifestation of what I see as the discounting of consciousness, that we have a world in which human consciousness is fairly well understood and there are a bunch of alternate consciousnesses and augmented consciousnesses at various levels of sophistication comparable to human consciousness and even go beyond human consciousness.

The value we place on human consciousness will probably become discounted. It is similar to the way that we don’t give that much of a crap about pig consciousness, chicken consciousness, or cow consciousness. We kill 40 billion chickens per year. If we cared about the consciousness of chickens, we wouldn’t do that. Mostly, we don’t think about that.

Pets, most people with pets acknowledge pets have an inner life, an emotional life, and we feel bad when a pet dies or when they are too old to be living well. But we don’t feel overwhelming angst at the cessation of a pet’s consciousness. So, the angst that is attached and the emotional import that we attach to human consciousness may be discounted.

Somebody arguing with a Neil Tyson, say the heirs to Neil Tyson. He's 86. He wants to spend another \$2.2 million to upgrade his simulation from 99.1% accurate to 99.7% accurate. His heirs are like "that in our minds is bullshit because you're spending all of this money to have slightly more accurate memories about what happened to you in high school and college. Really, why? You'll have memories. They'll be .6% less accurate. You'll have memories, but they won't be as potentially accurate as your brain would provide. But so what? You don't recall what car your friend drove back in the day. You're a hoarder, a mental hoarder and using all of this money."

So, I feel as if these kinds of issues will eventually erode our foundations of human society. It doesn't mean it will be replaced with chaos, but it will be replaced with something else that will be perceived as a kind of a 'fuck you' to traditionalists of our era. Again, the Trump thing is at least in part a reaction to change, whether or not people are conscious of it. You can read all sorts of documents on these sorts of things. The people who are voting Trump are voting against their best interests, or voting for illusions.

I'd argue some of that pressure is sci-fi pressure. Weird-world-coming pressure.

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