

Something to Believe

Digest

1. This is a theory of the universe. There are plenty already. Why another one?
2. Existing theories are mostly based on revelation or science. Both approaches have great problems which can be avoided by using a *metaphysical* method as adopted here.
3. ‘Metaphysics’ means ‘beyond physics’. A metaphysical theory combines *proven data* with *rational speculation*. It cannot provide absolute truth; it aims to produce the most satisfactory theory available at the current state of knowledge.
4. There are criteria for judging the merits of any theory including; coherence, simplicity, logicity, compatibility with science, range of explained phenomena, plausibility of predictions.
5. The theory offered here begins with a definition: The *universe* is taken to be *everything that exists, has existed and will exist*.
6. It follows that other than the universe there is *nothing*.
7. ‘Nothing’ is not darkness nor ‘empty space’; it is an ‘off’ command to the imagination. It is literally ‘no thing’ and is thus *unthinkable*.
8. The first problem addressed is; *how did the universe come into being?*
9. Aristotle was surely stating the obvious when he said; *nothing can come from nothing*. Many other philosophers have agreed. It is conceptually unavoidable that *existence has to be taken for granted*. Nonetheless this theory provides, amongst many other things, some relief from the nagging ache to understand the nature of existence.
10. Given the vast complexity of the ‘taken for granted’ universe, forming a theory might seem to be an impossible task. Things clearly have to be simplified and the first move in this process is to assert that *everything that exists and happens does so through the operation of energy*.
11. ‘Energy’ is not made of anything, it is an abstract notion; energy just *is*. It can be defined as *the essence of everything*.

12. The second simplification is to declare that energy operates in *space*. Like energy, space is not made of anything; it is also an abstraction. However, it is not ‘nothing’. It can be defined as *the absence of everything*.
13. Given that ‘nothing’ is unimaginable it must be the case that *there is no space without energy and no energy without space*. This hypothesis is supported by recent experiments in particle physics which seem to prove that the universe is pervaded by something called ‘dark energy’.
14. Taken together the two basic abstractions suggest that the simplest description of the universe is that it is *a system of energy operating in space*.
15. Emerging from these two fundamentals is *time*. This comes about because energy presents itself in two forms; the continuous (wave) and the discontinuous (particle). It is the latter which generates time. Like the other two fundamentals, time is not made of anything and is thus also an abstraction. It can be defined as *the most general expression of the operation of discontinuous energy in space*.
16. As already noted, the task of this theory is to describe, in the most general terms, the operation of energy in space but first it is necessary to dispense with the commonplace but potentially damning notion that the universe is ‘infinite’.
17. ‘Infinity’ is here taken to mean ‘without limit’. It is, by definition, not imaginable. Anything that can be contained either mentally or physically is self-evidently not ‘infinite’.
18. Further, it is impossible to ‘prove’ infinity by experiment. A super-fast probe might run and run but we could never be sure that it was not just about to hit some cosmic buffers or, more likely, come back like a boomerang. ‘Indefiniteness’ is imaginable and a familiar part of our experience but *‘infinity’ is unreal*.
19. Because ‘infinity’ is unreal, *the universe must be contained*. Put in the jargon of philosophers, the sentence ‘The universe is infinite’ is ‘un-cashable’.
20. The finiteness of the universe prompts the question as to what’s ‘outside’ it. The answer can be only ‘Nothing’; that is, *there is no outside*. This means that we are irrevocably within.
21. This leads to a further question; *what stops us ‘getting out’?*
22. Some suggest that space is curved but this will not do. Obviously, gravity causes objects to follow curved trajectories but this does not imply that the underlying space itself is curved. It cannot be so because it is not made of anything. Furthermore, measurements of temperature in space provide strong empirical evidence against inherent curvature.
23. We have only two fundamentals; energy and space. If space is not the containing agent the ‘shaping’ *must be effected by energy*. But how can energy provide the container?

24. Modern science has revealed that there are two types of energy, the 'light' and the 'dark'. Dark energy cannot be directly perceived yet it makes up around three quarters of the substance of the universe.
25. Scientists have also discovered that the tiny packages and particles (quanta) that make up perceivable energy have extraordinary capabilities. Sometimes they behave as if they are hard and concentrated, at others they behave like waves. Other examples are that they seem to be able to communicate over vast distances and to move instantaneously from one location to another. And also, against the basic scientific principle that everything is caused, they can seemingly move 'at random'. These phenomena are known as **quantum properties**.
26. It is here suggested that dark energy, either on its own or aided by quantum properties, sets the limits of the universe such that any long distant probe going 'straight' would eventually return to its starting point. (This might seem very odd but some cosmologists maintain that the universe is organised in such a way that that everything seems to be in the middle).
27. So, the picture of the universe here presented is of a vast ball of energy from which there is no escape. Since it is logically impossible that the universe starts and ends with nothing it is vitally clear that **any viable account of the history of energy must be circular**.
28. But this throws up a tricky problem in that we know that the universal ball is relentlessly cooling down. In a process called **entropy** the availability of energy is gradually reducing. If a circular account is to be produced, **the running down of energy must somehow be reversed**. How can this be?
29. The answer proposed here begins with the observation that living beings experience an inner world of mental events and an outer physical world. Normally we assume that only animals and humans have these two perspectives but here it is claimed that **all energy has subjective and objective aspects**.
30. Some entities, animals for example, have a very evident mental life whereas a rock appears to have none. The hypothesis is that **inanimate objects do have a mental aspect** but it is usually too small for us to perceive. Obviously the seemingly inanimate entities cannot initiate action but it is proposed that their energy has an effect on their immediate environments.
31. If it is true that consciousness is a matter of degree rather than some evolutionary 'step' function, what factors govern the balance between the mental and physical elements for any given entity?
32. The proposed answer is that there are two factors which determine the level of consciousness; **complexity** and **dynamism**. A rock is a relatively simple object with no moving parts (other, of course, than its constituent atomic particles). A human being is very complex and has many active organs and is thus much more conscious than a rock. But what has this to do with entropy?

33. It is crucially relevant because highly complex and dynamic beings possess **will-power**. We know of will power at first hand (*a priori* as the philosophers say) it is discernable scientifically only by its effects.
34. It is here predicted that, as the universe evolves, complexity and dynamism will increase. The entropic decline in the physical aspect of energy will be countered by a growth in the mental aspect. We humans are generators. Doubtless we are still at a relatively primitive stage of the development of the universe but ***our successors will ensure that will-power steadily grows.***
35. For complexity to increase, things have to be brought together. The prediction is that ***the current expansion of the universe will be gradually reversed through the agency of conscious beings.***
36. Eventually the universe will reach a very highly organised state where the physical aspect of energy is at a minimum and the mental aspect at a maximum. This phase can be called ***Omega.***
37. It was noted earlier that any viable theory of existence has to be circular. It follows that this predicted state of maximum consciousness (Omega) ***must have previously existed.*** Happily for this theory, science strongly suggests that it did.
38. It is generally held by scientists that billions of years ago all of the energy in the universe was concentrated in an entity which is often called the ***primal atom.*** In this theory, this phase is called ***Alpha.***
39. For complete circularity it is essential that Alpha and Omega are absolutely identical. They can thus share a name, ***Alphoma.***
40. It seems almost scientifically certain that something over fourteen billion years ago Alphoma exploded, reducing the wondrous organisation to fragments, converting mental energy to physical and thereby initiating the phase in which we are now living which is called ***Nature.***
41. It is suggested that, aided by the potent universal force of gravity, the purpose of Nature is to re-integrate energy. The universal circle is thus: ***Alphoma – explosion – Nature – reintegration – Alphoma.***
42. It is ***crucial*** at this stage to supplement linear thinking (which has been and still is so vital to survival) with what might be called '***structural thinking***' which, it is suggested, is utterly essential for understanding. There is time *within* the circle but overall it is time-free so ***the universe is both process and structure.***
43. For those who are inclined to reject the structural approach it might be useful to reiterate that, because nothing can come from nothing and infinity is unrealisable, ***a linear account is logically impossible.***

44. For Nature to succeed in reintegration, Alphoma must be bonded by a powerful mental force akin to gravity which will *eliminate conflict* and create a state of *maximum desirability*. This force can be only *love*.
45. This powerfully implies that Alphoma is a place of bliss. If this is so, *why does such a beautiful entity explode?*
46. It does so because the Nature phase is necessary for the generation of entities with the capability of producing *will-power* without which the availability of energy could not be renewed.
47. Our successors thus design the universe such that there is freedom in Nature but yet also control which guarantees that the cycle is successfully concluded. (Thus, both *determinism* and *libertarianism* are true).
48. It is here proposed that *dark energy* is the enduring agent of control which operates at two levels, namely the maintenance of immutable *forces* such as gravity and the delivery of '*nudges*'.
49. These 'nudges' are perhaps most evident in the crucial process of *evolution* which, in conventional scientific theory, depends upon 'random' mutations. Einstein held that every action in the universe has a cause and he was surely right, To a scientist, the word 'random' can mean only 'cause yet to be identified'.
50. The only truly random events come about through conscious acts of deliberately spontaneous thought but the suggestion is that dark energy does not operate at a conscious level but rather provides a machine-like input. It is not a deity, it does not wreak punishments nor bestow favours; its major role is to ensure that Nature stays on track.
51. For there to be choices with real import there have to be 'opposites'; creation/destruction, happiness/sadness and so forth hence, alas, the presence of pain and misery in Nature.
52. These opposites give meaning to the processes of Nature which is like a river contained by totally secure banks. We individuals are tiny fleeting droplets with only partial control over our movements but we all contribute to the flow.
53. A pair of speculative proposals about the 'guidance' of Nature concern information. At the big bang all is distributed but it is suggested that each of the fragments holds bits of information. When we 'rack our brains' we are perhaps trying to fit pieces together. So, when Plato claimed that all learning is remembering he was not far from the truth.
54. The second proposal about information is that every time energy is reorganised it is permanently changed. There is as yet little evidence in support of this but it seems likely and helps to explain a great deal. Perhaps this possible process is facilitated by dark energy.

55. It has been argued that Nature is necessary for the emergence of free will but we all die. What is the point for us?
56. The point is that as Omega approaches, our successors will engineer the *revival* of every aspect of consciousness, including us of course.
57. They will be *able* to do this because they will have total control over energy. They will also have a complete map of history because all events, including those caused by acts of will, have causal consequences.
58. They will *want* to do this firstly because of the need *to generate power*, secondly because the reintegrated universe has to *include everything* and finally because they will be *maximally motivated by love* and will want all who have been through the process to share in the blissful rewards.
59. When we die our consciousness ceases to exist. We therefore have no sense of time. At revival time we will be ‘instantly’ aware of renewed existence.
60. In Alphoma all is love. Clearly most of us have imperfections in this respect. We have to be revived ‘as we were’ because if change is imposed we would not be ourselves. There must therefore be a process of change which will in no way be punitive and which, given the lure of bliss, will doubtless be almost instantaneous.
61. When all is ready the ‘folding in’ of Alphoma will take place. Our Alphoman selves will ‘exist again’ and, since there is no individual sense of time for we Alphomans between the big bang and reintegration, our lives in Alphoma seem to be continuous.
62. Nonetheless there will be a small temporal element within Alphoma which triggered/will trigger the explosion.
63. The theory produces two fundamental values, *truth* and *love* which are the essentials for the success of the universal process. The general precept is that we should aim to lead truthful and loving lives. Where love and truth seem to clash the primary value must be love.
64. The theory also offers some explanations of ‘supernatural’ phenomena.
65. Further support is offered in a section of questions and answers.
66. Finally it is argued that the theory is worthy of consideration because it is logical, coherent and compatible with science and also because it explains many phenomena and makes plausible predictions.

