

Infinite Potential: What Quantum Physics Reveals About How We Should Live

Article by Lothar Schäfer

There are many big questions to be curious about, and one of the most fascinating is this: What makes us human? I would say that everyone's life is guided by an inner potential, and our supreme good lies in actualizing our potential. More than love and intelligence, or consciousness and joy of life, this potential and our deep need to actualize it are what makes us human. Everything we have built in the material world springs from that hidden urge, our inner sway and creative source. Our inner potential makes us who we are.

It's not as if human potential is a new subject; there is a whole movement built around it. For most people, when it comes to achieving their full potential, they have barely begun to scratch the surface. The potential in you is part of a cosmic potentiality that exists in every particle of the universe. It exists as a field of states of what is possible in the world, and it is as real as gravity.

Potentiality is even more hidden from view than gravity, because it exists at a level that you could call the mind level, and science will never be able to measure it with instruments or take photos of its landscape. I define mind as the realm of inner images in us that guide our life. In our mind these images find a special level of reality in our consciousness. The concept of the "inner images" in our mind derives from psychology and was introduced by brain researcher Gerald Hüther to describe "all that, which is hidden behind the external, visible and measurable living phenomena and guides and steers the reactions and actions of living beings." Behind the physiological processes of our brain, nonempirical forms are at work that control our actions and give meaning to our life. These forms aren't visible to or measurable by brain scientists. They are true forms of potentiality, because they exist before they manifest themselves in the visible world by affecting your body and controlling its processes. Its states are possibilities that are waiting to appear in the visible world. Yet, there is enormous power in it. Everything that exists in the visible world has first existed as a state in the cosmic field of potentiality. Nothing comes out of the blue; everything emerges out of the cosmic potentiality. We build our dreams, hopes, and visions on what is possible: finding perfect love, ending war and violence, feeling the presence of God. What would be important to learn, if it can be done, is

how to use our mind to tap into the cosmic field of possibilities, in order to make our dreams a reality.

You can think about the states of cosmic potentiality in the same way you think about the inner images of your mind. The cosmic potentiality is a field comparable to other fields spread throughout the universe, such as the gravitational field, except that cosmic potentiality doesn't contain any matter or energy, just states of what is possible in the world. What exactly do I mean by that? So far, the best that physics has come up with is the suggestion that the states of the cosmic potentiality are forms, meaning mathematical forms or numerical patterns: not patterns of energy or matter, but just plain numbers. We must always keep in mind that we can't really know what the nonempirical realm of the world is like. It can interact with our world in space and time, but we can't even know that space and time apply to it, inside it. Perhaps the best way to think of the nonempirical realm of the world is like how many mystics have described their experience of God: it wasn't of anything that appeared to their senses—it wasn't anything that they could feel, hear, or see – and yet it was real and powerful.

The English word image is usually understood to mean an image of something, presenting a likeness with an object or structure that it images. In a general way, the word image can also be understood as a graphical form or pattern not of something, but a formal motif or figure in its own right. An abstract painting in modern art, for example, can be such an image that an artist put down on canvas without having any specific thing in mind. In this sense, the states of the cosmic potentiality can be described as images: They are the inner images of the universe that guide its visible phenomena.

The images in the cosmic potentiality are, of course, different from the images in our mind. Nevertheless, you will not go very far from truth if you think that the cosmic potentiality is something like a mental domain of the universe whose inner images are found everywhere in the world. Human beings have a body and a mind because the universe has a body and a mind, so to speak, even though we never use such terms in connection with the universe. The intent of this choice of words isn't to revive archaic descriptions of the universe, but to demystify the human mind: There is nothing special about its images. Its images are as physically real as the images or mathematical forms that exist in atoms and molecules and determine their physical and chemical possibilities. Chemical reactions depend on the inner forms of the molecules that participate in them. The inner forms of atoms determine what kind of

molecules can form. The visible world is shot through with invisible images that define its future possibilities. The aspect that is so difficult to get used to is the power of the images: All visible things and phenomena need an underlying image, or they couldn't have appeared in the visible world. Since this rule applies to the processes of the physical world as well as to the processes of our mind, it reveals an unexpected congruence of the physical and the mental that is typical for the new physics. In a metaphorical way, you could say that quantum physics is the psychology of the universe.



Don't Let Your Language Wash Your Brain

There is something in us that leads us to expect, without even thinking about it, that only material things are real; that things, to be real, must be made of stuff—matter—to be of significance. I think that our language has a lot to do with this attitude, because it tells us that if a thing isn't important, it does not matter. What does that mean? It means that if it isn't made of matter it isn't important.

So somehow your language leads you to think that to be material and to be important are one and the same thing, but that isn't necessarily true. Think of how many things are important in your life that have nothing to do with matter. To some extent, all languages have a built-in hidden ideology, washing people's brains in a way that they don't notice.

Materialism—that is, the belief that only matter is real—is a brainwash of our language that tells us that only materialism is a reasonable way to look at the world. Thus, it is possible to think that Newton's physics and Darwin's biology, two of the most powerful formulations of materialism of our history, weren't inspired by the facts of nature, but by the language of their authors. So if you find it annoying that some esoteric branch of physics—quantum physics—wants you to believe that images or mathematical forms aren't irrelevant, even though they are without substance, then consider how your language influences your attitude.

Niels Bohr, for example, the twentieth-century Danish physicist to whom we owe the understanding of the structure of atoms, brushed aside the strange aspects of the quantum world by claiming that they had nothing to say about what reality really is. It is wrong to believe, or so he argued, that our experience of the world can tell us what the world is like. In a nutshell, you might say that you have no experience of things, but only of your experience of things. Thus, watching the world can tell you nothing about what the world is like. If your observations don't make any sense, just forget about them.

The Cosmic Nature of Your Inner Images

Religions of all ages have always insisted that the essential reality isn't found in the material world, but in some transcendent part of the universe. However, all that you have to do to experience an invisible world is to look inside you, where your feelings and the images of your mind are real. As a person outside of your mind, I can't see its images, but I believe you when you tell me they are there, because I have them, too. So

they are in you, they must be real, they must be somewhere. Real things are supposed to be somewhere! The question is, where exactly are the inner images in you? Asked about this, most people will point to their brain. The problem is that, when we open the brain and look inside, we see no images. That is how Gerald Hüther defined the inner images to begin with: “they are hidden behind” the visible living phenomena. The visible phenomena are the activities of the neurons in your brain. But the images they produce aren’t visible. So, no big deal: The same thing that happens with the images in your brain also happens with the inner images in atoms and molecules. When we take these things apart and look inside, we can’t see any images.

But we have to assume that they exist, because the actions of atoms and molecules can’t be understood without this assumption. This is a great example that shows how something can exist in a state that is real, and yet it is, actually, nowhere.

An important property of the inner images of molecules is their indistinguishability. Indistinguishability in this context means that the inner images of all molecules of the same type are exactly identical. The inner images in molecules belong, on the one hand, to a specific molecule. On the other hand, they are exactly the same in all molecules of the same type. The exact identity of different things should already serve as a warning that something fishy is going on here: You can’t find two objects in your environment that are exactly alike. Just think of anything! Two cars of the same make and type may look identical, but one may have a scratch under its body, and the other one not. Two salt crystals of the exact same size and shape may look identical, but one may have a hole inside its crystal lattice, where a single sodium ion is missing, and nobody can see that. No two objects of our ordinary environment are exactly identical, but molecules of the same type are exactly alike. In a cup of water there are more than 10²⁴ perfectly identical water molecules: that is, a million-trillion-trillion indistinguishable things that are exactly identical down to the minutest details of their hidden forms. The identity of the inner forms in different molecules must mean that their logical order is not the personal achievement of a given molecule, but part of a cosmic order in things; we can call it a constitutional property of the universe.

Now, here is a stunning parallel involving the images in the human mind: On the one hand the images in you belong to your brain; on the other hand there is, as Carl Jung has shown, an important group of inner images that are identical in the minds of all people. They appear in our mind out

of what Jung called the collective unconscious. This leads us to a question: Is the logical order of the images in our mind also a constitutional property of the universe? On the one hand, your inner images belong to you; on the other hand, they are on loan from the cosmic potentiality.

With this we have reached a defining point of our humanity whose implications are giant. If the inner images in us are cosmic, it could mean that we are connected with the cosmic potentiality. It could mean that we are part of a cosmic field that is acting in us. Of course, spiritual teachers of all times have told us all along that something like this is going on: God is in you. But to discover hints of a cosmic presence and cosmic activities within us, in the context of science's description of the world, redefines the playing field. It allows us to consider the matter without archaic threats and darkness. If it could, indeed, be shown that our mind is an extension of the cosmic potentiality, this would open exciting vistas of our cosmic role and dignity that are in complete contrast to the ruling Darwinian picture of human animals. That picture wants to tell us that we are creatures of chance, diced together pieces of rubble, and meaningless structures in a meaningless world. But, as it now appears, we are not like that. We are singular points in the cosmic field of potentiality, which seems under pressure everywhere to actualize in the visible world; and in us it has found a special way to do so, defining a cosmic destiny for each one of us!

Quantum Physics as a Kind of Spirituality?

Physicists typically believe that their experiments have forced them to develop the concepts of quantum theory. Out of the experiments with elementary particles, atoms, and molecules, all these unexpected ideas arose of wave functions, quantum numbers, and so on. In reality, practically all of the unexpected concepts that quantum physicists are using to describe the world were invented by spiritual teachers thousands of years ago. The quantum numbers, the concept of potentiality, the principle of wholeness, the importance of waves as the source of the manifested world—all of these ideas have historically spiritual roots. Does that make quantum physics a kind of spirituality?

Idealists in philosophy are people who believe that true being rests in an invisible realm of ideas and not in the visible world of things. In Western philosophy, such schools of thinking go back to Plato, who believed that all visible things are copies of ideas that exist somewhere in some invisible, transcendent part of the world. I am sure you will notice the

similarity of Plato's views with quantum theory and its thesis that all material structures are actualizations of invisible forms. So, because it seeks the essential reality in an invisible part of the world, without any doubt, quantum theory is a form of idealism! It shares this aspect with Einstein's relativity theory, which also places the essential reality in an invisible space; that is, the four-dimensional space-time.

So let's face it: In the context of ancient spiritual teaching, the nonempirical reality is the liaison reality where the physical becomes spiritual, and the spiritual turns physical.

The visible world around us exists because an underlying field of invisible forms defines the potential of the world. And now we find that you and I, too, can exist only because an underlying field of invisible forms defines our potential. Identical in all human beings at all times and in all places, these forms, archetypes, or ideas are universal: Why should it be outrageous to take this as a sign that the forms of our thinking also belong to some cosmic field? Is it such a long shot to think that Jung's realm of forms and the realm of forms of quantum physics are one and the same realm of the cosmic potentiality—a medium of spirit where our scientific, philosophical, and spiritual convictions are integrated in the nondual order of the One?

To many scientists such thoughts are upsetting. The view is widespread that science shouldn't get involved with such issues. It should be useful and technical, not inspiring; logical, but mindless.

However, we should have the courage for an enlightened and liberated science that does more than serve stockholder equity. We must make an effort to understand the nature of all levels of physical reality: the empirical and nonempirical, the material and spiritual.

(Excerpt from the introduction of Lothar Schäfer's book "Infinite Potential: What Quantum Physics Reveals About How We Should Live")

[Source:](#)

<https://scienceandnonduality.com/article/infinite-potential-what-quantum-physics-reveals-about-how-we-should-live/>