



Dear Uncle Mike,

I'm having this recurrent dream. A large black Labrador retriever who is actually my ex-husband is in my kitchen baking brownies. I pet him and he starts humping my leg. Suddenly, we're in Paris. He's still a black lab, but now he has a moustache and is my waiter. I order french toast and he laughs. He brings me several small children, floating a foot off the ground, tethered to large red balloons. A big crow starts diving at them, popping the balloons with his beak. Now it's raining children. I run but can't get away. The dream always ends the same. I'm in a topless bar with Richard Gere. We're both naked, but he has a black leather collar with studs and a heart-shaped dog tag. Just when he starts licking my ankles, I wake up. Night after night, it's driving me crazy. Does this mean anything?

Donna W., Lake Oswego

Dear Donna,

Not to me, but then I don't need professional help.

Dear Uncle Mike,

On a recent trip to Nevada, my girlfriend and I found an abandoned baby bird. Turns out it's a vulture. It's getting pretty big and we wonder if we should take it to the zoo or adopt it. Do vultures make good pets?

Steve S., Eugene

Dear Steve,

In a word, no.

Those choosing to live with birds should not forget they are linear descendants of dinosaurs. The canary's forebearers were merciless, meat eating lizards who, before they learned to fly, stood fifty feet tall. Being short and captive has done nothing to erase memories of life at the top of the food chain. Under the brightly colored feathers, your budgie is a twisted little assassin who sings only to draw you close to the cage. Usually, because of their size, their dreams of rendering you carrion come to nothing.

The same cannot be said for vultures. Like hawks and eagles, your vulture is a raptor. A raptor is what your little lovebird would be if its prayers were

answered---a large, winged carnivore with all the compassion of a puff adder. Forget the Audobon specials, Steve, and listen to reason. When push comes to shove, and it will, your buzzard will cut you no slack. As it launches itself from the armoire and shrieks down at you, its psychotic eyes flaring and its talons outstretched, it will be thinking of the good old days.

Buzzard apologists will swear up and down that, given a chance, these morbid hulks are no end of fun. They'll be lying. It's no accident that nothing in the wild kingdom seeks out the Boris Karloffs of birddom as companions. As you must have noticed by now, your buzzard is not given to bursting into song. It will not, if you're lucky, follow you or your mate around the house, chirping as you dust. What free time it has (and since buzzards are notoriously resistant to training of any sort, it will have as much as it likes) will be spent slouching morosely on the mantle, watching your every move. If you're a normal person, you'll tire of this.

Which brings us to the only good thing about vultures. Given a good scattergun and a little determination, one can sometimes drive them off.

Dear Uncle Mike,

Do you think quantum mechanics is a complete description of observed reality?

Naomi M., Scappoose

Dear Naomi,

Be serious. Quantum theory fails in three fundamental ways. No, make that four.

First, quantum mechanics has no explanation for the quantum effect---the appearance of a particulated something (an electron or the Eiffel Tower) from what the equations show clearly is a background of undifferentiated and unmanifested potential. In order for there to be something there when we look, all other possible somethings must somehow disappear, reduced to zero by some statistical deus ex machina. The mechanism is, as they say, unclear. Without an explanation for the rise of the observable universe from a mathematically pregnant nothing, quantum theory lacks a generative logic.

Second, nothing in quantum theory predicts or explains the values of the fundamental constants--among the the velocity of light, the gravitational constant, Planck's constant of least action, and the masses of the quanta. While these hubs of the phenomenal universe remain apparently random numbers, quantum theory can scarcely claim to be a complete description of anything.

Third, quantum theory is a theory of 'things'. As such, it depends upon 'locality'---a quality that boils down to 'thisness' and 'thatness'. The quanta are depicted as mass/energy islands in a sea of potential difference. The separation between these islands of object/events is space/time which is measured in terms of the velocity of light (see random numbers above). A strict rule of quantum mechanics (and of general relativity, the modern theory of gravitation) is that nothing in the universe moves at a velocity greater than light. And for good reason. At velocity c , mass becomes infinite (which is to say, equal to all that is) and space/time disappears as a concept with meaning. Without space/time, there is no separation and so, no locality---objects and events as we know them. We've suspected since 1935 (see EPR, or the Einsein-Podolsky-Rosen paradox) and have known flat out since 1964 (Bell's Connectedness Proof) that something in the observable universe travels faster than light. Or, more correctly, signals exist with link events in a relative simultaneity disallowed by the framework of space/time. Something is happening but we don't know what it is. We do know this. Given superluminal (or, faster than light) connections, the universe becomes 'nonlocal'--a state of prephenomenal cosmic oneness in which there is no room for 'things' like quanta. In short, if quantum theory is correct, then quantum reality is a limited case of deeper reality about which quantum mechanics can, by its own rules, say nothing.

Finally, Naomi, there's the schizoid nature of our current paradigm. The current model of the universe is a forced marriage of two incompatible viewpoints -- quantum theory and general relativity. It's not just that, as one might hope, they describe two halves of the same reality. They are logically irreconcilable, and worse, mutually exclusive. In the microcosm (the world of the unimaginably small) described by quantum mechanics, the universe is a swarm of probabilistic point particles in which there is no room for anything resembling a space/time continuum. In the macrocosm (the world of unbelievably large) described by general relativity, the universe is a space/time continuum in which there is no evidence of point particles. Observation bears out both theories, and neither is in the slightest doubt. But, if one is a true picture of reality, the other is patently false.

It's a pretty funny world.

THERAPY PAGE

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