

The Yijing: Metaphysics and Physics

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Abstract

In this paper I explore the connections between the traditional metaphysics of the *Yijing* «易經» and some contemporary ideas that have emerged from physics. The general background to this discussion is the idea that the study of mathematics forms a spiritual pursuit; that the investigation of abstraction through precise formal language provides, at the least, an analogue of transcendent reality. This was once a key underlying assumption of mathematics, but it is largely neglected in the modern world. The Image and Number (*Xiangshu* 象數) approach to the study of Change embodies this ideal and asks us to take seriously the idea that, just as mathematics can describe the physical dimensions of the world, so too it can provide a language to investigate the psycho-spiritual dimensions.

Because physics is the primary application of mathematics to the phenomenal world, the relationship between quantum theory and the metaphysics of the *Yijing* «易經» is taken to be key. In this connection, vacuum polarization is explored. This started as a theoretical consequence of a mathematical description from quantum physics, which decades later later received experimental verification. I then suggest a strong parallel between this effect and the metaphysical progression from *Wuji* 無極 to *Taiji* 太極. This serves as the canonical example of the meeting point between mathematics, physics and metaphysics. I then look at comparisons between the three realms of Heaven (*Tian* 天), Earth (*Di* 地) and Humanity (*Ren* 人) as described in the *Dazhuan* «大傳» and the philosophical physics of David Bohm, in particular his key idea of the implicate and explicate orders and their relationship to each other and to consciousness. The patterns inherent in the implicate order unfold to create the manifest reality we experience as the explicate order. Similarly, consciousness, through memory, locally enfolds the explicate order back into an unmanifest implicate order.

The pivotal role of consciousness in the structure of the cosmos suggested by both of the traditional and modern approaches then suggests a way of understanding the Jungian notion of synchronicity as something more than a purely psychological phenomenon. Instead, this phenomenon can be seen as a direct effect of recognizing the integration of the human psyche into the broader fabric of the universal reality. In turn, this leads to a consideration of what the process of divination means in the context of the Western scientific mind set and, finally, how such a shift in perspective should lead us all to seek a harmonious way of being, both with each other and with the world which supports us.