

Could this be a *positive* cult religion?

I've been amused and a little puzzled about the progress (or should I say lack of progress) of a cult religion I created. It started back in 2010 as a satirical take on Scientology which, as you know, was the brainchild of SF writer, Ron L. Hubbard and has had a chequered history. Having written SF stories for the Starblazer comic I decided that if Hubbard could create a cult religion then so could I. Only I would base mine on the leading edge of science. Could it tempt celebrities like Tom Cruise to jump ship and empty their wallets into *my* bank account? Unfortunately whilst an over-active imagination can be a boon to writers, it can sometimes prove to be a disadvantage when dealing with real life.

Anyway, I called it ScienCology and decided to base it on logic and rational thinking. It would pay homage to two of my favourite characters; Sherlock Holmes and Mr Spock from Star Trek. So what I hoped would be Hubbard's Nemesis is based on quantum physics, the Swedish philosopher Nick Bostrom's Simulation Hypothesis and the excellent book, "Programming the Universe," written by Seth Lloyd, a professor of quantum computing at MIT. Pretty heady stuff, right? Not that I'm an expert in these subjects. Far from it. To paraphrase the late Peter Cook, if I had the arithmetic I'd have been a scientist. So no arcane equations. Instead, my fascination lay purely in the hypothetical elements these subjects raised. Finally, to ensure it was kept simple, it would make use of William of Occam's excellent Razor and also introduce what seemed to me to be some self-evident truths.

After starting out as a book and then a play (the idea came after a visit to the Royal Exchange Theatre in Manchester. Don't ask me why) it ended up as a short religion. Diversity being all the rage, I told myself that this wouldn't preclude those unfortunates who suffered from short attention spans. How short are we talking? Well, whereas one version of the Holy Bible uses 30, 046 words to deliver its message, ScienCology uses only 2, 640 of them. Thus becoming what may be the world's shortest bible as well as the world's most economical religion. In this way I hoped to ensure that the Guinness Book of Records would join Tom Cruise in ScienCology's Hall of Fame.

Alas, so far the reaction has been muted to say the least. It's been posted on a number of Facebook groups and has garnered about three or four likes. A few people didn't agree with it, but from what I could see presented no cogent arguments against it. The longest discussion occurred on a Facebook group on philosophy and science. There were about 60 comments but, alas, only three of them concerned ScienCology. The others involved unrelated subjects. It was almost as though they were avoiding the subject. That ScienCology was some form of scientific leprosy shouting, "Unclean! Unclean!" And, as if to confirm the fact, one person who claimed to run a group devoted to science simply refused to read it! I just had to congratulate him on his open mindedness. Did he read it? And was he so ashamed he refused to admit it?

Here then, is ScienCology...

IT'S ALL IN THE MIND

Mike Knowles

"The mark of a good philosophy begins with a statement that is regarded as too obvious to be of any interest and from it deduce a conclusion that no one will believe."

Bertram Russell

My rival, Scientology, has Xenu who is the all powerful ruler of the Galactic Confederacy (a bit like Star Trek's United Federation of Planets, only considerably darker). Xenu brought billions of his people to earth, tied them to volcanoes and killed them with hydrogen bombs.

As for me, I had to make do with a Danish physicist; a quantum computer scientist; a professor of philosophy; a Medieval Friar; an expert at advanced cell technology and a biologist. These are the people who inspired me to create what could be the shortest religion in the world.

On the other hand these people don't have any hydrogen bombs at their disposal. And, if they do, then they're keeping very quiet about it.

But what the Danish physicist and the quantum computer scientist do have could be considered to be potentially just as powerful.

A physicist once remarked that telling non-scientists about the weirdness of quantum particles was like giving a child a loaded gun to play with. Even Nobel Prize winning quantum physicists can't get their heads around it! Not only can these particles exist in two states at the same time, they can also be in two separate places at the same time and that two particles can communicate instantaneously no matter how far apart they are.

They could even be at both ends of the universe!

I think J. K. Rowling will admit that even Harry Potter would be hard pressed to come up with sorcery like that!

But I'll leave all that stuff to the boffins.

Instead ScienCology presents you with a choice. In the film, "The Matrix," the hero was given the choice of taking a red pill or a blue one. The red pill would lift the veil and show him that what seemed to be real was just an illusion. But, if he chose to bottle out, he could take the blue one. Whereupon he'd wake up in bed and blissfully forget everything that happened to him. ScienCology gives you a similar choice. Only this red pill is metaphorical. And, unlike the pill Keanu Reeves was offered, this one is considerably larger. That's because some of the things I'll be telling you are pretty hard to swallow.

The good news is that if you take this pill you won't wake up naked inside a high tech pod to discover that you're hooked up to a giant battery charger. Although some of you may hanker fantasies about that.

So what's in this religion I'm offering?

ScienCologists like to make good use of Occam's Razor. Philosophers and scientists regard this metaphorical shaving instrument as the intellectual version of your Swiss Army Knife. Occam's Razor works on the Law of Parsimony (popular with those of a miserly, Scrooge-like, disposition) and states that "*entities should not be multiplied beyond necessity.*" In other words, the more complicated and convoluted the explanation is, then the less likely it is to be true.

If I may be allowed to wax lyrical, ScienCologists use the razor to shave away the layers of false logic to reveal the bullshit underneath. So, unlike the theologian, Saint Maximilian Kolbe, we won't be using circular arguments. Kolbe pronounced that the Virgin Birth was far too deep and mysterious and regarded any attempt to explain it to be pointless. Thus using a circular argument to defend a form of childbirth that disregarded the laws of nature.

Nice try, Kolbe. But no cigar!

ScienCology has no places of worship and no clergy. If, after reading this explanation you decide it sounds interesting you can call yourself a ScienCologist. And what you do with ScienCology is entirely up to you. You could even do a Hubbard and use it to create a cult religion and make yourself rich. The groundwork has already been done. Whereas poor Hubbard had to construct his religion, here it's all been done for you. And, whereas Hubbard's crew churn out reams of books, pamphlets and other bumf, ScienCology is explained in six pages!

Better still; some scientists here on earth are starting to sound as if they could be potential ScienCologists!

Which cannot be said for Scientology.

At this point we should mention our nearest competitor in the theological stakes. I refer, of course, to Scientology! People have said ScienCology sounds similar to Scientology. But the difference between ScienCology and Scientology is more than just one letter. I like to think mine is a bit more scientific. For those who don't know, Scientology is a religion created by the late L. Ron Hubbard. The author of such science fiction pot boilers as "Battlefield Earth" and "Typewriter in the Sky."

Make of that what you will.

Christians have a series of interactive sessions freely exploring the basics of their faith. It's called "The Alpha Course."

Not to be outdone ScienCology also has an Omega Course! Why Omega? Because I believe the information we give you is as accurate as an Omega watch! And, by a happy

coincidence, George Clooney advertises Omega watches! So, while our rival has Tom Cruise, we have Clooney (and let's not forget Keanu Reeves).

When I started constructing ScienCology I wanted to replace the Biblical Genesis with the Big Bang Theory. After all, the story of Adam and Eve and a talking snake selling poisoned apples ran counter to advances in genetics and anthropology. Although not in Snow White.

But even the Big Bang is not without flaws. The most fundamental being the question of what happened *before* the Big Bang. Then I heard that some scientists speculated there was nothing before the Big Bang. *Nothing-to-the-power-of-nothing*, as one of them succinctly put it. Nothing-to-the-power-of-nothing had a nice ring about it. It described an absolute state.

Suddenly an intense feeling of excitement came over me!

Could the universe have been created out of nothing? Did nothingness have some special power which enabled it to trigger the Big Bang? This was Red Pill weird.

There was just one problem: as far as I knew there is absolutely nothing in nothing-to-the-power-of-nothing to do *anything*. In fact the term "nothing" presents us with a paradox. The only way to imagine nothingness is not to imagine it at all! Even the concept of "nothing" cannot exist in a state of nothingness because there's nothing in there to create that concept!

Then I remembered that there are two sides to everything. And the opposite of nothing is *something*. In other words, if a state of *nothingness-to-the-power-of-nothingness* exists then, by that argument, so should a *state of something-to-the-power-of-something*.

And, lo and behold, something *does* exist! The universe exists!

I then recalled Steven Hawking arguing that time was created by the Big Bang. Thus solving the "what happened before" problem. Which begged the question; how long did it take for time to come into existence?

And this revealed another fascinating paradox!

In the absence of time it must have *taken no time at all*.

In other words it must have happened instantaneously! And, because it was instantaneous, you could argue that time has *always* existed. This was the simplicity ScienCology needed. It was certainly far simpler than the convoluted version of Genesis one finds in the Bible.

Then I came across the philosopher Nick Bostrom. According to him we could all be living in a computer simulation run by a technologically advanced human race in the future. Again this seemed to be the sort of red pill weirdness ScienCology needed!

Clearly Bostrom's hypothetical computer is powerful enough to recreate the complexity of the real universe we once lived in. And there happens to be just such a potential computer! But more about that later.

To me one aspect of Mind is self-evident and requires no proof whatsoever. It's the simple fact that the universe and everything in it would not exist without a conscious awareness of its existence.

But wait, I hear you cry!

Surely there's plenty of hard evidence to show the universe existed *before* the Mind appeared. Yes. But that begs the question: how do we know that? We know it because the Mind tells us so.

Indeed, the Mind is the only reason we know the universe exists or ever existed!

But I will concede that the universe could have existed before the Mind. But what if there was no such thing as the Mind? That it was *absolutely impossible* to observe the universe? Impossible to the power of impossible.

Would the universe exist?

Some hardy souls say it would. These are the scientists who advocate the hypothetical theory of a multiple group of universes known as a multiverse. They'd argue that there could be universes where there are no conscious minds. But, once again, the concept of a multiverse was, surprise, surprise, created by the Mind. And in the absence of proof that's the only place where it currently exists.

So how long did it take before the Mind appeared?

It's been calculated that it may have taken at least 3.77 billion years before life appeared on this planet.

Or did it?

By now it should be obvious that the awareness of time requires a Mind to be aware of it. So, it stands to reason to assume that before the Mind existed there was no concept of time. So how long did it take for the conscious mind to appear? Well, as far as the Mind is concerned, it took no time at all.

I looked for a suitable analogy and thought of someone who'd just emerged from a deep coma. To them no time at all would have passed between going into the coma and coming out of it.

I also amused myself by considering what this could do to those religions that relied on the existence of a deity. I reckon even the most devout Christians may have to concede that a Mind must exist before there's an awareness of God.

So, using the Law of Cause & Effect, ScienCology suggests that it was our Minds that created God, not the other way round. Of course religious people would argue that it was God who gave us the Mind. But then we'd wonder who gave God *his* Mind? Because without it God wouldn't know he existed.

So who really *is* running this show? The only logical answer is it's not God, it's the Mind. The bottom line is we created God, not the other way round. In fact, according to ScienCology God should be worshipping *us*!

And there's no reason why he shouldn't be generous when the collection bowl comes round.

So here's ScienCology's final stab at Genesis. ScienCology argues that in the beginning there was Mind and before that there wasn't even nothingness. It takes the Holy Bible 30,046 words to describe their version of Genesis!

Whereas we can do it using only 13 words! 30,033 words less, Making ScienCology the economical religion!

As you may know, computers work on the binary system. They only understand two things. 1 or 0, On or Off. If this was a human we'd be saying the lights are on but there's no one home.

That's what I thought until I read the book "Programming the Universe" written by Seth Lloyd, a professor of Quantum Mechanics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Lloyd explains that the universe is a physical system made up of "bits. In other words, the universe contains "bits" of molecules, atoms, and particles (to computer geeks a "bit" is the smallest data in a computer with a value of either 1 or 0). And each of those "bits" interacts with another and this interaction alters those "bits." Therefore Lloyd tells us the universe itself it could be simulated by a computer.

Lloyd then points out that to simulate a few hundred atoms from the universe for a fraction of a second on your PC or Mac would take more memory than there are atoms in the universe. To make matters even worse, it would take longer than the current age of the universe.

But that's if you're using a conventional computer.

Except that Lloyd's expertise is with *quantum* computers!

Lloyd tells us the universe is indistinguishable from a quantum computer.

Instead of an electric current, the quantum computer uses quantum fluctuations (a temporary charge in the amount of energy in a given point in space) to represent the binary On/Off sequences.

It sounded really red-pill weird. So what would be so special about this universe sized quantum computer?

Super-powerful computers have been the stuff of dreams for science fiction writers. Douglas Adams gave us a version with his “Deep Thought.” And what about Arthur C. Clarke’s “Hal” who raised havoc aboard “Discovery One” as it headed out towards Jupiter.

Except that Lloyd’s computer is based on science fact, not fiction!

The thing that sets the quantum computer apart is the fact it has the power to perform a number of calculations *simultaneously*.

Now try and imagine how powerful a quantum computer the size of the known universe would be. Our friend Lloyd came up with a calculation. According to him “a litre of the universe – roughly a kilogram of matter – can perform a million billion billion billion billion billion operations a second.” Lloyd even amuses us (and presumably himself) by calculating that since the dawn of time, the universe has completed around 10, followed by 122 zeros, operations on 10, followed by 92 zeros, binary digits. Which, in computer terms, is not to be sniffed at. So we can assume that with the right broadband package, the universe will have no trouble streaming movies.

So I was pretty confident that any universe sized quantum computer would have no trouble creating a simulation like Bostrom’s virtual reality. In fact, it could create as many of them as you wanted! And, what’s more, you wouldn’t need Bostrom’s race of super-intelligent humans to build this computer. Because it’s already been built and it’s working away all around us.

So I decided there and then what ScienCology’s Grand Hypothesis would be. The hypothesis is that we’re the result the ultimate form of computer simulation. That the universe has constructed the ultimate online Multi-User Domain. A multiplayer, real time, virtual world.

So just what sort of computer program are we talking about?

Well, the best analogy I could come up with was to compare it to a popular computer game called “The Sims.” (For those unfamiliar with this game, The Sims is described as a series of life-simulation computer games in which you create virtual people and control their lives).

Which you could argue is what the universe is doing right now. Except it’s using real people.

Unless, of course, you believe it’s God or Xenu that’s controlling it.

I then took this a step further. I remembered that the universe wouldn’t exist unless there was a Mind to be aware of its existence. And that’s when I decided ScienCology would suggest that the *Mind* created the universe.

And that Lloyd may have got it the wrong way round. That it's the *Mind* that's the quantum computer!

Let me leave you with this thought.

It may just a sheer coincidence that the universe is based on duality; it may just be sheer coincidence that quantum particles exist in two states. That using just two instructions even ordinary computers can create virtual realities almost indistinguishable from the reality around us.

Or are our computers trying to tell us something?

Just how many coincidences does it take to make a certainty?

We Sciencologists call it the Power of the Obvious! And it's all in the Mind.

Your Mind.

Something else is worrying me. Reading some scientific journals I can't shake the feeling that some scientists may be on the way to becoming Sciencologists! Hopefully not because I'm hoping the whole thing will just die away. Anyway, here are just some of the articles I've come across...

"...Others keep probing the theory. In 1961 a prominent theorist, Eugene Wigner, proposed a thought experiment similar to the conundrum of Schrödinger's cat. Instead of the fabled cat in a box, imagine that a friend of Wigner is inside a laboratory monitoring a radioactive specimen. When the specimen decays, a detector flashes.

Now imagine that Wigner is outside the lab. If Wigner's friend sees the detector flash, he knows that the specimen has decayed. But to Wigner, standing outside the lab, the specimen, his friend and the entire lab hover in a blur of possible states. Wigner and his friend seem to occupy two distinct realities.

In 2020, physicists performed a version of Wigner's thought experiment and concluded that his intuitions were correct. In a story for *Science* headlined "[Quantum paradox points to shaky foundations of reality](#)," physics reporter George Musser says the experiment calls objectivity into question. "It could mean there is no such thing as an absolute fact," Musser writes, "one that is as true for me as it is for you."

A newish interpretation of quantum mechanics called QBism (pronounced "Cubism," like the art movement) makes subjective experience the bedrock of knowledge and reality itself. David Mermin, a prominent theorist, says [QBism can dispel](#) the "confusion at the foundations of quantum mechanics." You just have to accept that all knowledge begins with "individual personal experience."

According to QBism, each of us constructs a set of beliefs about the world, based on our interactions with it. We constantly, implicitly, update our beliefs when we interact with

relatives who refuse to get vaccinated or sensors tracking the swerve of an electron. The big reality in which we all live emerges from the collisions of all our subjective mini-realities.

QBists hedge their mind-centrism, if only so they don't come across as [loons or mystics](#). They accept that matter exists as well as mind, and they reject [solipsism](#), which holds that no sentient being can really be sure that any other being is sentient. But QBism's core message, [science writer Amanda Gefter says](#), is that the idea of "a single objective reality is an illusion." A dream, you might say.

Proponents bicker over definitions, and physicists and philosophers fond of objectivity reject QBism entirely. All this squabbling, ironically, seems to confirm QBism's premise that there is no absolute objectivity; there are only subjective, first-person viewpoints."

"There may be no independent physical substance constituting our reality.

"...Rovelli argues that, since our world is ultimately quantum, we should heed these lessons. In particular, objects such as your favorite book may only have their properties in relation to other objects, including you."

Finally, let me reiterate: ScienCology does not claim to be true; it merely claims that it could be true. The quotes above are not meant to prove ScienCology's assertions. However, one could discuss how they could fit within ScienCology's hypothesis.

There were some other journals that discuss the possibility that we may be living inside a simulation and there are some who believe the universe could be conscious. On the other hand, should this prove remotely interesting to you I'm sure you'll find them for yourselves. After all, why should I do all the work?

For good or ill, I'll leave it with you.

Regards,

Mike Knowles.

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