

Science catches up to the New Sun

The Urth list — 32 messages, 12 voices, 13 Dec 2008

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/5277>

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Jordon Flato — 13 Dec 2008, 00:03

I'm pretty sure this isn't the first time this theory has been bandied about, but this sounds pretty much like the cosmology of the New Sun, except it's been posited as reality:

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Martin Bojowald and Abhat Ashtekar began researching their theory of loop quantum cosmology (LQC), an approach to cosmology that combine's Einstein's theory of gravity with quantum mechanics. They have modeled the birth of our universe, exploring the mathematics of universe as it contracts back toward its point of origin.

Bojowald's major realisation was that unlike general relativity, the physics of LQC did not break down at the big bang. Cosmologists dread the singularity because at this point gravity becomes infinite, along with the temperature and density of the universe. As its equations cannot cope with such infinities, general relativity fails to describe what happens at the big bang. Bojowald's work showed how to avoid the hated singularity, albeit mathematically. "I was very impressed by it," says Ashtekar, "and still am."

The researchers have found that when applying LQC, the universe does not revert back to a singularity as it contracts. Instead of seeing a big bang, the models indicate that the universe experienced a big bounce, with a predecessor universe contracting as it ended and then reemerging as our new, expanding universe. If the theory proves correct, it could mean that our universe does not have a finite beginning and end but is, instead, part of a chain of universes that expand and then contract to give way to a brand new universe.

Son of Witz — 13 Dec 2008, 00:15 · follows Jordon Flato

Of course, I'm far too much of a knucklehead to speak well about this theories potential veracity, but I've intuited this since I was a stoned 19 year old looking at Stephen Hawkings model where he has a big sphere with a big bang on one end and a big crunch on the other. I thought, "NO NO NO, you' have to take either pole, bring them together in the middle until they are the same point. Then you've got the Donut or Bagel theory of the Universe, where the Big Bang is the Big Crunch, and the curves of the hole are event horizons.

Then I saw this AMAZING lecture by Stan Tenen, called Geometric Metaphors for Life where he extracted the same basic theory out of a very strange reading of the Torah. Anyone know Stan Tenen? Meru Foundation. Very interesting stuff there. Hard for me to follow. there are some overview videos on youtube.

he's doing work with numbers and geometry, but it's not Kaballah, or Gematria. he comes up with geometric models exrapolated from the letters, which describe a Torus, the shadows of which can depict every hebrew letter, and further extrapolates these Apple and

Seed models that speak to this notion of Re-Genesis. Great stuff. Give it a look. trust me, incredibly interesting stuff, potentially VERY important. Sort of a voice in the wilderness.

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John Watkins — 13 Dec 2008, 00:21 · in reply to Son of Witz

On 12/12/08, Son of Witz <sonofwitz at butcherbaker.org> wrote:

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(This is my way of saying this stuff is way over my head.)

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Son of Witz — 13 Dec 2008, 00:30 · follows John Watkins

(This is my way of saying this stuff is way over my head.)

Metaphysics is over ALL of our heads.

Son of Witz — 13 Dec 2008, 00:35 · follows Son of Witz

<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-208619888961779202&hl=en>

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(This is my way of saying this stuff is way over my head.)

Seriously, watch the video. it's a very condensed overview. I find these findings edge-of-your-seat fascinating. It's science puncturing metaphysics and actually yielding results. I think it's relevant to the discussion.

brunians at brunians.org — 13 Dec 2008, 00:38 · in reply to Jordon Flato

The Big Bang is so Twentieth Century.

Steady-state forever!

.

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brunians at brunians.org — 13 Dec 2008, 00:40 · in reply to Son of Witz

It could be contracting now if time ran backwards....

.
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Jordon Flato — 13 Dec 2008, 01:06 · in reply to Son of Witz

Holy smokes, Witz. I can't believe I never followed up on this before when you tried to point it out. That is incredible incredible stuff! I'll have to see out more!!!!

Allan Anderson — 13 Dec 2008, 01:18 · in reply to Son of Witz

Heh, I loved NGE too, but I'm pretty sure that the creator's use of Judeo-Christian imagery and reference was mostly for effect and for their alien-ness to his audience.

Doesn't mean that he didn't say something touching and fascinating using these symbols (among others), but it does suggest that it's not useful to assume their intricate, deliberate, precise use.

I mustn't run away...

Son of Witz wrote:

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Seriously, watch the video. it's a very condensed overview. I find these findings edge-of-your-seat fascinating. It's science puncturing metaphysics and actually yielding results. I think it's relevant to the discussion.

David Stockhoff — 13 Dec 2008, 03:05 · follows Allan Anderson

Some kind of cyclically expanding/contracting universe theory has been around for at least several decades, if not more. But this is cool to read about.

It addresses something that has always bothered me when I read TBotNS:

That the various Hieros are rather vague on the concept of successive "universes." The word gets thrown around a lot, almost casually: you have stacked universes, sequential universes, and so on. How does one escape a universe when it implodes? Was Yesod always there, or was it created?

But if a universe is never totally destroyed, then you can imagine whole species surviving from one to the next with some predictability. Without that predictability, Apheta's theory of generation and countergeneration can't possibly go on forever. Eventually, the chain will break if every universe ends in a great melodramatic catastrophe.

Perhaps one could simply categorize Briah as a universe subject to cyclical contractions (thus, multiple bodies and a single consciousness, like Severian), and Yesod subject to none (like the Increate). The manvantara model dug up by Witz resembles this.

Message: 7

Date: Fri, 12 Dec 2008 16:03:18 -0800

From: "Jordon Flato" <jordonflato at gmail.com>

Subject: (urth) Science catches up to the New Sun

To: "The Urth Mailing List" <urth at lists.urth.net>

Message-ID:

<273409710812121603t299e1fa7ie7045e06c4a43bae at mail.gmail.com>

Content-Type: text/plain; charset="iso-8859-1"

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Gwern Branwen — 13 Dec 2008, 03:53 · in reply to Allan Anderson

-----BEGIN PGP SIGNED MESSAGE-----

Hash: SHA512

On Fri, Dec 12, 2008 at 8:18 PM, Allan Anderson wrote:
Heh, I loved NGE too, but I'm pretty sure that the creator's use of
Judeo-Christian imagery and reference was mostly for effect and for their
alien-ness to his audience.

"There are a lot of giant robot shows in Japan, and we did want our story to have a religious theme to help distinguish us. Because Christianity is an uncommon religion in Japan we thought it would be mysterious. None of the staff who worked on Eva are Christians. There is no actual Christian meaning to the show, we just thought the visual symbols of Christianity look cool. If we had known the show would get distributed in the US and Europe we might have rethought that choice." — Kazuya Tsurumaki

That's true. If you parse the imagery, you don't get anything really meaningful. When you take into account further information like the Secret Files (Lilith and Adam are organisms created by the 'First Ancestral [Alien] Race' as part of a panspermia program, but accidentally they both end up on Earth etc.), Evangelion is, if anything, profoundly atheistic.

(Personally, I consider the case for a cynical atheistic Evangelion infinitely stronger than the one for a cynical atheistic New Sun. There's an interesting essay I once saw in this vein - <http://www.geocities.com/sephkhan/rants/dharma.html>)

Random trivia: Kaworu, in the early outlines, was a cat.

Doesn't mean that he didn't say something touching and fascinating using these symbols (among others), but it does suggest that it's not useful to assume their intricate, deliberate, precise use.

If you want to analyze Eva, it's much more profitable to approach it from a Buddhist or Western psychological perspective - both are fields that Anno actually does know quite a bit about.

Random trivia: the striking phrase "Hedgehog's dilemma" is borrowed from Arthur Schopenhauer.

I mustn't run away...

"It's strange that 'Evangelion' has become such a hit - all the characters are so sick!" ?Hideaki Anno

- --

gvern

-----BEGIN PGP SIGNATURE-----

Version: GnuPG v1.4.9 (GNU/Linux)

iEYEAREKAAYFAKIDMcsACgkQvpDo5Pfl1oJsdACfa2M1OOKPixY6GkGcjRvFNoOw
a9oAol/P6yQVzd3CZYGVs/rsau1JX/G
=ImkP
-----END PGP SIGNATURE-----

Matthew Keeley — 13 Dec 2008, 04:07 · in reply to Gvern Branwen

On Fri, Dec 12, 2008 at 10:53 PM, Gvern Branwen <gvern0 at gmail.com> wrote:

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gwern

We have Eva fans here? And I thought I was the only one.

I'd love to have an involved debate, but I think I agree with everything you said. I do think Eva is atheistic (or I think I do) but a Buddhist brand of atheism as opposed to a Death-of-God sort of atheism. The end of the show harps so damn much on relativism that it's hard to conclude otherwise.

Video for the initiated: Shinji's voice actor, frustrated at the end of the show (some language)

<http://video.aol.com/video-detail/shinjis-rant-animated/48171386>

"If I were to run away, OK, let's analyze that, where the f--- would I go!?"

-Matt

John Watkins — 13 Dec 2008, 04:14 · in reply to Matthew Keeley

I agree with all of this. I was merely using the infamously opaque ending to Evangelion to express my bafflement at the theoretical physics.

Also, uh, Witz and I had had a heated exchange, so I wanted to make a joke.

On 12/12/08, Matthew Keeley <matthew.keeley.1@gmail.com> wrote:

On Fri, Dec 12, 2008 at 10:53 PM, Gwern Branwen <gwern0@gmail.com> wrote:

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Matthew Keeley — 13 Dec 2008, 04:20 · in reply to John Watkins

On Fri, Dec 12, 2008 at 11:14 PM, John Watkins <john.watkins04@gmail.com> wrote:
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Joking is good. Hence my link to "Shinji's Rant".

Theoretical physics is insane.

In a good, mind-blowing way.

-Matt

David Duffy — 13 Dec 2008, 04:56 · in reply to David Stockhoff

On Fri, 12 Dec 2008, David Stockhoff wrote:
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That the various Hieros are rather vague on the concept of successive "universes." The word gets thrown around a lot, almost casually: you have stacked universes, sequential universes, and so on. How does one escape a universe when it implodes? Was Yesod always there, or was it created?

But if a universe is never totally destroyed, then you can imagine whole species surviving from one to the next with some predictability. Without that predictability, Apheta's theory of generation and counter-generation can't possibly go on forever. Eventually, the chain will break if every universe ends in a great melodramatic catastrophe.

Perhaps one could simply categorize Briah as a universe subject to cyclical contractions (thus, multiple bodies and a single consciousness, like Severian), and Yesod subject to none (like the Increate). The manvantara model dug up by Witz resembles this.

From: "Jordon Flato" <jordonflato at gmail.com>

. . .

The researchers have found that when applying LQC, the universe does not revert back to a singularity as it contracts.

When BotNS was written, a big crunch (and restart) was seen as quite likely, but now, of course, we live in a flat universe.

I might point to Star Maker as another model -- progressive but atemporal. If you haven't read it, download it immediately ;) <http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks06/0601841.txt>

David Duffy.

| David Duffy (MBBS PhD) ,_-|\n
| email: davidD at qimr.edu.au ph: INT+61+7+3362-0217 fax: -0101 / *\n
| Epidemiology Unit, Queensland Institute of Medical Research _-_-/_\n
| 300 Herston Rd, Brisbane, Queensland 4029, Australia GPG 4D0B994A v

Jeff Wilson — 13 Dec 2008, 06:07 · in reply to Matthew Keeley

Matthew Keeley wrote:
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Video for the initiated: Shinji's voice actor, frustrated at the end of the show (some language)

Not all of Evangelion's ambiguity is on screen: I had similar baffling experience "meeting" Asuka's US voice actress at a con. I kept hearing Asuka's voice in the tiny tower room with me but could not see the person, until I realized Asuka's 15-yr-old-voice was living in a body about four decades older.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com
< <http://www.io.com/~jwilson> >

John Watkins — 13 Dec 2008, 16:36 · in reply to Matthew Keeley

The video is hilarious.

On Fri, Dec 12, 2008 at 11:20 PM, Matthew Keeley
<matthew.keeley.1 at gmail.com> wrote:

On Fri, Dec 12, 2008 at 11:14 PM, John Watkins <john.watkins04 at gmail.com> wrote:

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Joking is good. Hence my link to "Shinji's Rant".

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-Matt

Son of Witz — 13 Dec 2008, 17:46 · in reply to John Watkins

On Dec 12, 2008, at 8:14 PM, John Watkins wrote:

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Also, uh, Witz and I had had a heated exchange, so I wanted to make a joke.

ha.

hot and bothered. no big deal though, right?

now, talk about over my head... I have NO idea what the hell that last bunch of stuff was. some anime thing?

~witz

James Wynn — 13 Dec 2008, 21:17 · in reply to David Stockhoff

the various Hieros are rather vague on the concept of successive "universes." The word gets thrown around a lot, almost casually: you have stacked universes, sequential universes, and so on. How does one escape a universe when it implodes? Was Yesod always there, or was it created?

Since Time collapses with successive universes, the idea of "sequentiality" between universes would be either naive or would mean something totally different from what we mean by it. If we assume that the Hieros are "causality-based", then successive universes would be a theoretical model rather than an observed phenomena. It would mean that the Hieros have the ability to move between parallel worlds...some adjacent and others not...like those in "There Are Doors".

David Stockhoff — 13 Dec 2008, 22:56 · follows James Wynn

James---

Apheta makes it fairly clear that causation has occurred. The Hieros happened, and then the Hierogrammates happened. The Hieros' old universe is gone, and Briah has not. Naturally, the Hieros can move from Yesod to any universe, but only any universe that exists. So the model of universes separated by time is a given in her version.

They aren't successive in the sense of occupying the same space, since that would be meaningless. But it's reasonable to guess that universes are not actually created or destroyed, just like matter.

Message: 2
Date: Sat, 13 Dec 2008 15:17:14 -0600
From: "James Wynn" <crushtv at gmail.com>
Subject: Re: (urth) Science catches up to the New Sun
To: "The Urth Mailing List" <urth at lists.urth.net>
Message-ID: <06A23F1ABA0E4BB484E342A66C55D6BA at GATEWAY>
Content-Type: text/plain; format=flowed; charset="iso-8859-1";
reply-type=response

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They aren't successive in the sense of occupying the same space, since that would be meaningless. But it's reasonable to guess that universes are not actually created or destroyed, just like matter.

There are however questions of scale that can make them practically inaccessible.

Also, it's more like "Science catches up to Anderson's Tau Zero" or Lee and Kirby's Fantastic Four", as both featured means of side-stepping the grand gnab into new universes ten years before the Book appeared.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com
< <http://www.io.com/~jwilson> >

James Wynn — 14 Dec 2008, 06:49 · in reply to David Stockhoff

the various Hieros are rather vague on the concept of successive "universes." The word gets thrown around a lot, almost casually: you have stacked universes, sequential universes, and so on. How does one escape a universe when it implodes?

Since Time collapses with successive universes, the idea of "sequentiality" between universes would be either naive or would mean something totally different from what we mean by it. If we assume that the Hieros are "causality-based", then successive universes would be a theoretical model rather than an observed phenomena. It would mean that the Hieros have the ability to move between parallel worlds... some adjacent and others not...like those in "There Are Doors".

Apheta makes it fairly clear that causation has occurred. The Hieros happened, and then the Hierogrammates happened.

David,

Yes, I agree, the Hierogrammates are causality-based beings they can only exist in some relative Time. However, when you say:

The Hieros' old universe is gone, and Briah has not.

You are making a conclusive leap here. The story is that "at the destruction of their universe" the companions escaped to Yesod. That is a point in Time within their universe. But what does it mean when you say "the Hieros' old universe is gone"? Look at your next sentence:

Naturally, the Hieros can move from Yesod to any universe, but only any universe that exists. So the model of universes separated by time is a given in her version.

If the Hieros can move to "any" universe then they can move to one of various manvantara accessible from Yesod simultaneously, not only the *next* one. They don't have to wait for the current universe to end before moving on to the next. So the sequentiality of the universes is irrelevant to them. They can't go back to a time in their original universe because it would create a paradox--so in a practical sense, I guess, it is "gone", but only in a practical sense. That's why I said that "successive universes would be a theoretical model [for the Hieros] rather than an observed phenomena." They know their own universe collapses, and can probably determine that the others will as well. Given what we know they know, the "successive universe" theory would be a pretty obvious one. Yet, they could not examine various world's from a place beyond causality. For them, they are merely moving like Adam Green in "There Are Doors", from one parallel "dimension" to another--or rather, they are moving in a more sophisticated fashion through a corridor beyond the dominance of any particular dimension. Immediately successive universes would be like Green's adjacent dimensions (his guitar string analogy).

Does it matter? Only when trying to imagine the vague "concept of successive 'universes.'"

James Wynn — 14 Dec 2008, 07:39 · follows James Wynn

Let's post this in Plain Text.

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Does it matter? Only when trying to imagine the vague "concept of successive 'universes.'"

David Stockhoff — 14 Dec 2008, 14:56 · follows James Wynn

I think it's somewhat more important than that--if only to rule out disturbing implications such as a literally repetitive cycle of universes where everything plays out the same or nearly so. (For example, for all we know, if there was a Severian 1, he lived in a previous Briah and the current Briah overlays his.) Such a theory is not necessary because Yesod is an over-universe in which time is not any kind of constant. That allows the Hieros to move among universes almost at will, I assume. At very least, it allows them to look "forward" and to send themselves "backward." However, if I understand you, you are making a distinction between a past universe being "gone" and being "inaccessible." This makes sense, because there must be some limitations on the Hieros' abilities.

Two specific phenomena may or may not depend on this. First, the "future" history Apheta lays out, using Gunnie's "lady parts" as a model. I presume that some kind of agonism is always needed for each "species" to evolve or to do whatever it does. Thus, the point of this (hi)story is not the cyclical and alternating repetition, which is maddening, but the struggle played out in each universe. (This struggle is analogous to a constant struggle of good vs evil, which is readily understood because those principles can be grasped as universal constants, but rather it is a struggle against ourselves with the aid of higher beings, which is more complicated.)

Is it really played out over and over with variations, or is it played out once, simultaneously, in two universes connected only at Yesod? In myth, it is a basic assumption that the god or hero dies the same death over and over, or every year, or whatever. Is this the same idea? Or is Apheta actually describing a seemingly nearly pointless and Sisyphean process in which two species keep each other alive through all of eternity?

Are all the universes either human universes or Hiero universes, and each species are as gods to the other? If so, which was the first? And what about all the other sentient species?

Second, the Hierodules who supposedly live their lives moving backward through time. I can grasp going on a time-travel mission in which one pops in and out of time, but I do not understand beings who live time backwards, or how that fits into the model. Which is meant? Clearly, not only do all universes exist, but all time exists. What does this do to Apheta's agonistic model? Her race has already either won or lost its struggle. If it ever once misses in its aim of raising up Man or being raised up in turn, does it become always already extinct? And if it doesn't, who cares whether they succeed or not? Why is it SO IMPORTANT that their scheme succeed? (Humans don't care if their descendants go extinct in a few centuries--why should the Hieros care?)

David,

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Does it matter? Only when trying to imagine the vague "concept of successive 'universes.'"

James Wynn — 14 Dec 2008, 19:20 · in reply to David Stockhoff

Clearly, not only do all universes exist, but all time exists.
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And if it doesn't, who cares whether they succeed or not?
Why is it SO IMPORTANT that their scheme succeed?
(Humans don't care if their descendants go extinct in a
few centuries--why should the Hieros care?)

Well, it is frustrating in that Apheta is clear about what they do and why they do it but not why it is necessary to do it as opposed to doing something else. So it is not clear whether Wolfe ever considered any of that. But --since I think manvantara are more like parallel dimensions than anything else-- let's go back to Green's guitar string analogy: Adjacent dimensions are like adjacent parallel guitar strings that are tuned to the same note. When you play one, the other vibrates. Consequently adjacent dimensions seem to be similar. In "There Are Doors", men in the other dimension wear black at their weddings because men will die shortly after sex. But in our dimension, we do it because THEY do it. Well, what would have happened if a manvantara next to the Hieros's did not have the Hieros escape? What if they were never created? It could be a problem. What if another race of beings escaped to Yesod and began tinkering with other manvantara as the Hieros did?

It could be seen as a matter of existential importance for the Hieros to continue the process for every nearby manvantara and then for ever manvantara near those.

J.

Jeff Wilson — 14 Dec 2008, 20:40 · in reply to David Stockhoff

David Stockhoff wrote:
Are all the universes either human universes or Hiero universes, and
each species are as gods to the other? If so, which was the first?
And what about all the other sentient species?

Alien sapients seem deliberately off the table in the BOTNS, but as for your other question, I think it's been fairly settled that the Hieros are the humans of a previous incarnation of the universe, so it's a cycle involving successive forms of the same "species". This may be a late add on, and not airtight, but it seems necessary to prevent Noah's God from being a liar.

Second, the Hierodules who supposedly live their lives moving
backward through time. I can grasp going on a time-travel mission in
which one pops in and out of time, but I do not understand beings who
live time backwards, or how that fits into the model. Which is meant?

I am pretty sure that Barbatus, Famulimus & Ossipago progress moment to moment in the same direction as everyone else in their current plane of existence as there is no reverse speaking, dropped objects returning to their hands, etc. but it is their mission to help supervise Urthly progress during Severian's life, so they they begin at his end and use travel once or more likely on multiple occasions to progressively earlier periods, spending months or years at each stop. With their short lidespans, this is a life-long mission (maybe not for the mechanized Ossipago) for them even if they skip the boring half of his years, so they might well be said to

live backwards.

Clearly, not only do all universes exist, but all time exists. What does this do to Apheta's agonistic model? Her race has already either won or lost its struggle. If it ever once misses in its aim of raising up Man or being raised up in turn, does it become always already extinct? And if it doesn't, who cares whether they succeed or not? Why is it SO IMPORTANT that their scheme succeed? (Humans don't care if their descendants go extinct in a few centuries--why should the Hieros care?)

I think Yesod's time is not the same as Urth's, and most closely aligns with narrative time, falling somewhere between the Urthly skein of timelines (mostly parallel but some seriously tangled) and the eternal, changeless nature of the Catholic God. Most points on Urthly timelines are visible by the powers in Yesod, but they can be changed by earlier Yesodi influence so that "later" in Yesod's view Urthly affairs seem to have proceeded differently in numerous eras.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com
< <http://www.io.com/~jwilson> >

David Stockhoff — 15 Dec 2008, 00:07 · follows Jeff Wilson

James---

I see what you mean by the guitar strings analogy now. Yes, perhaps the implications of the gods' failures need not be absolute, nor strictly limited to the universe where they happen. Yesod's actual workings remain unknown.

Of course the text doesn't supply any clues to a guitar-string model, and I'm inclined to think that Wolfe intends every "echo" in TBotNS to have a very precise and particular mechanism. For example, the Conciliator is known in the past because he went there and Conciliated. The whole novel is constructed of such mechanisms, plotwise, and it required a lot of work.

Even though I can accept the idea of temporal resonance in general and its usefulness in Wolfean cosmologies in particular, Wolfe plots this story specifically to avoid any such concept, I think.

So many other writers will simply appeal to that vague concept, and indeed have done so---even Frank Herbert, for example, engages in a certain amount of hand-waving about prophecies. Wolfe may rely on cross-universe resonance for TAD and TWK (trickle-down Platonism?), but I don't see it here.

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J.

David Stockhoff — 15 Dec 2008, 03:10 · follows David Stockhoff

Agree to all that. I think one way to summarize it is to say that the cosmological scheme of TbotNS is a literary device, like time travel itself. It's an idea, not a working model.

As such, it arbitrarily closes off certain possibilities and elides others. This is similar to the standard problem already pointed out with branching-timeline models: unless some Overseer is judging the value of all lines, all lines must exist, even if the likely ones vastly outnumber the unlikely. So one must simply ignore what doesn't fit.

Message: 1

Date: Sun, 14 Dec 2008 14:40:44 -0600

From: Jeff Wilson <jwilson at io.com>

Subject: Re: (urth) Science catches up to the New Sun

To: The Urth Mailing List <urth at lists.urth.net>

Message-ID: <49456F4C.1000100 at io.com>

Content-Type: text/plain; charset=ISO-8859-1; format=flowed

David Stockhoff wrote:

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David Duffy — 15 Dec 2008, 07:56 · in reply to David Stockhoff

On Sun, 14 Dec 2008, David Stockhoff wrote:

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There are a few papers from Deutsch and others on the many worlds interpretation and ethics. Specifically, that you should choose actions that maximize a utilitarian type measures over as many futures as possible. Everyone's average history, summing over all time lines, is what your overseer will have to judge on. Time travel, however, does offer a possibility of fixing up all your time lines (depending on the infinities involved, you could recruit an infinite number of version of yourself to go and fix up the "lesser" infinity of timelines where you made the wrong choice).

Wolfe has an awful lot of time travel stories, and must have thought at least a little bit about them. Some random thoughts:

The time travel paradoxes are very similar to many theological paradoxes eg perfect foreknowledge in general, that of Jesus in particular with respect to his actions; as well there is the idea of working in mysterious ways (someone recently gave an example from CS Lewis -- Ransomes name, one also taken up later by Kurt Vonnegut ;)). I think Wolfe comes back to them because he thinks they are somehow relevant, rather than just cool. Specifically, if we live in a universe run by an actively interventionist god, then all these issues have real consequences and real solutions, some of which may be accessible to entities at a higher level of development than poor old present-bound humans.

In BotNS, FTL and time travel go together as they should.

If you can construct a suitable closed loop involving yourself, you are then cut off from the First Cause -- most such loops, starting at The Third Policeman are hellish.

The BotNS loops are more healthy, as presumably they are connected backwards as well as forwards ?

Master Ash's discussion and fate remind me of the model in Jack of Eagles. One character in that book tells the hero he believes he is in a low probability future. Folks might remember that Blish has there being a canonical reality, but it is the average of all the subpaths taken. The heroes action leads to a shift in that mixture.

Back to work, David Duffy.

Thomas Bitterman — 15 Dec 2008, 16:57 · in reply to Gwern Branwen

On Fri, Dec 12, 2008 at 10:53 PM, Gwern Branwen <gwern0 at gmail.com> wrote:
(Personally, I consider the case for a cynical atheistic Evangelion infinitely stronger than the one for a cynical atheistic New Sun.
There's an interesting essay I once saw in this vein -
<http://www.geocities.com/sephkhan/rants/dharma.html>)

The big difference may be in who holds the power. In Evangelion, people do. In UotNS, the Hieros do. The supernatural looks different from the outside.

Enamel

There are those who claim that magic is like the tide; that it swells and fades over the surface of the earth, collecting in concentrated pools here and there, almost disappearing from other spots, leaving them parched for wonder. There are also those who believe that if you stick your fingers up your nose and blow, it will increase your intelligence.
-- The Teachings of Ebenezum, Volume VII

David Stockhoff — 15 Dec 2008, 17:46 · follows Thomas Bitterman

I think that analysis is correct. Foreknowledge is one thing, but throw in interventionism and you have something to chew on, both in theology and in (science) fiction. Time travel in TBotNS is critical to the plot, but I don't consider it the main event---it is not simply a "time travel" story at heart. Nor is it intended as a time-paradox puzzle story---we're told enough that we should be able to figure it out without getting very elaborate.

One reason I resist the 2-Severian theory is that it is unnecessary (from an authorial perspective), which is to say it is not strictly needed to avoid paradox and in fact would render the Hierodules redundant; another is that it is too showboaty and gimmicky. The rest of the cosmology is probably best not thought about.

However, I still want to hear more corpse-in-the coffin theories!

P.S.: I don't know Jack of Eagles, but I'm amazed that someone else has read The Third Policeman.

Message: 2

Date: Mon, 15 Dec 2008 17:56:07 +1000 (EST)

From: David Duffy <David.Duffy at qimr.edu.au>

Subject: Re: (urth) Science catches up to the New Sun

To: The Urth Mailing List <urth at lists.urth.net>

Message-ID: <Pine.LNX.4.64.0812151704340.30669 at orpheus.qimr.edu.au>

Content-Type: TEXT/PLAIN; charset=US-ASCII; format=flowed

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Back to work, David Duffy.

Son of Witz — 16 Dec 2008, 17:05 · follows David Stockhoff

-----Original Message-----

From: Jordon Flato [mailto:jordonflato at gmail.com]

Sent: Friday, December 12, 2008 05:06 PM

To: 'The Urth Mailing List'

Subject: Re: (urth) Science catches up to the New Sun

Holy smokes, Witz. I can't believe I never followed up on this before when you tried to point it out. That is incredible incredible stuff! I'll have to see out more!!!!

yeah, seriously. One of these days I'll have to buy the lectures.

of course, that video clip was truncated and foreshortened. some of the stuff he was getting at "the fruit that contains it's seed" was given extremely hasty treatment. That stuff blew my mind in the longform video I saw. Only place I've ever bumped into that Geometric Metaphors For Life video was West Side Video in Santa Cruz back in the mid nineties. Thanks to the web I was able to track it down again. Stan Tenen is onto something very profound, I think. It's a bit tough because I'm fairly well out of my waters in that realm, so it's hard to judge his accuracy and such. The level of encoding that this suggests seems, to my mind, beyond mere human construct, beyond mere subconscious channeling. mindfuckingly huge implications. Glad you checked into it a bit.