

BOOK REVIEW

Quirks of the Quantum Mind by Robert G. Jahn and Brenda J. Dunne. ICRL Press, 2012. 274 pp. \$19.95. ISBN 978-1936033034.

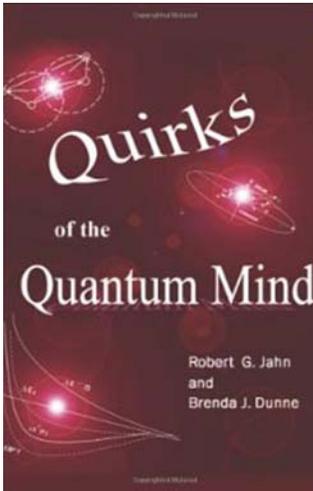
Quirks of the Quantum Mind accomplishes something that no other book to my knowledge has done. Using extensive data from the authors' multiple decades of unique field research, *Quirks* synthesizes a "metaphor" which serves as a model for understanding consciousness-related anomalies. The book coherently presents a parallel between the principles of quantum mechanics and the psychic behavior observed in the research done at the Princeton Engineering Anomalies Research Laboratory.

The authors do not presume to create a "theory" connecting quantum mechanics with consciousness. The authors steadfastly stick to the notion that quantum mechanics may serve as a *metaphor* for psychic phenomena. Yet they also make clear that the formalism of quantum mechanics itself is ultimately a reflection of the way we think. They point out that

common concepts of physical theories, such as mass, momentum and energy, electric charge and magnetic field, the quantum and the wave function, and even distance and time, are not more than useful organizing strategies consciousness has developed [for organizing its world].

This motivates the metaphor and shows us that we should not treat the quantum formalism as more fundamental than the psychic formalism. This approach successfully opens the reader's mind to a state of curiosity, without actually violating the conservative physicist's boundary between physics and consciousness.

The consciousness/quantum mechanics metaphor suggested is consistent with the properties of the vast collection of data collected by the authors (as well as experiments performed by others). In the metaphor, there exist "consciousness eigenfunctions" which are not "constructed by some grand superposition" of the individual atoms in a measuring device. Rather, they "represent its aesthetic, functional, or even anthropomorphic character as perceived by the operator . . ." The authors are able to account for the factors that seem to affect psi experiments. Examples include the importance of not only the objective properties of a measuring device but also the *perception of the experimenter* of the *qualities* of the measuring device, as well as the subtle qualities of attention necessary for positive results in psi experiments.



The suggestions in this book, though stated in a non-threatening manner, would be considered controversial to mainstream interpretations of quantum theory. There are aspects of the suggested metaphor that go farther than may seem reasonable in drawing parallels between quantum theory and consciousness. For instance, in addition to creating a consciousness version of the wave function, the authors go completely through the formalism of quantum mechanics and derive metaphorical meanings for every quantity in the formalism. An example of this is the interpretation that, with regard to the “consciousness wave function,” the quantum numbers for “spin” and “orbital angular momentum” correspond to the degree of cognitive vs. emotional qualities in an individual.

However, in order to pave a way forward through the briar patch of current theoretical quantum theory, we need to be open-minded to courageous new ideas. Given the laborious effort made by the authors to gather relevant data on this subject, it is reasonable (if not a matter of obligation) that they would provide such a framework within which the data are consistent. Although they suggest that there should be ways to gather predictions and verify the model, the authors are careful not to make claims as to the analytical correctness of their metaphor. They focus rather on the suggestive nature of the parallels between quantum mechanics and psychic experiments. Their suggestion is that it may be possible to create a model for psychic behavior that takes significant guidance from the quantum formalism.

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Quirks is impressive in its scope, translating many basic laws of physics into “consciousness space.” Yet it remains unpretentious and humble in its approach. It appears to have been written for a technical audience, in that the language used is often formal and sometimes cumbersome for the casual reader.

In the effort to make sense of the growing body of solid psychic research, *Quirks of the Quantum Mind* has made a significant and meaningful contribution.

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