

The World's Haecceity is the Dual of My Thrownness

J. A. Durieux
truth@b.biep.org

1 Introduction

We live in a contingent world, a world that could have been different. A common way to deal with this contingency is by positing the existence of all possibilities. This, however, doesn't get rid of the contingency - it merely moves it from the third-person view to the first-person view.

2 Haecceity

The haecceity of the world is its contingent thisness - the fact that is it what it is, even though it could have been different. One way to account for it is by **bloating**, i.e. postulating a total encapsulating the other options. Some examples of bloating:

- Albert Einstein extended the actual world to include the past and future by adding a time dimension.
- Hugh Everett III posited the existence of all possible outcomes of a quantum collapse in his many-worlds interpretation.
- David Kellogg Lewis posited the existence of all modally possible worlds, thereby removing the special status of our world relative to others.
- Many people have proposed a multiverse, for instance to explain the anthropic effect.
- Max Tegmark has proposed that all finitely-describable mathematical structures exist.

All these approaches have as their effect that the third-person contingency, the haecceity, of the total thus posited disappears. And as science can only deal with third-person information, superficially it may seem that the contingency has disappeared.

3 Thrownness

I am placed in this world, in this place and time, with this mind and body, without having a choice about it. That is my existential given, and the place from where I must live my life. Martin Heidegger called this my *Geworfenheit*, my "thrownness". Though I see others, and can imagine myself, in different situations, I shall have to come to terms with me being what I am, and from there to become what I ought or want to be. I have no other option.

The characteristic features of my thrownness are inaccessible from the third-person perspective - and so to science. Consciousness, qualia, moral obligations, conscience, freedom, religious experience - all of those are subjective, and hidden from objective investigation. Yet subjectively they are the most important aspects of reality.

Of course *reports* of these subjective features, or *physical correlates* of them can be investigated scientifically, but not as phenomenal, as existential, me-related.

4 Duality

Max Tegmark has introduced the useful concept of our *address* in the multiverse: we are here, and not elsewhere. The more we bloat, the larger the multiverse, and the larger also our address. But that address is precisely the third-person representation of my thrownness - it describes what I am relative to what I could or might have been.

My thrownness is the very contingency that matters to me - and it still bears all the philosophical questions that apply to third-person contingency, only with a "me" pointer in them. "Why is¹ the world this way (of all the ways it could have been)?" merely becomes "Why do I have² this address (of all the addresses I could have had)?"

The fact that with most other addresses I would not have been a rational, living, or even physical being is hardly an answer - it answers *why given the fact that I can ask this question* I am here, but that given is already part of the question itself. If a platoon of twenty sharpshooters shoot at me from close range and

1 Or "did God make", and so on.

2 Or "did God give me", and so on.

I survive, I have all reason to be amazed, and the fact that if I hadn't survived I wouldn't have been there to be *not* amazed doesn't change that.

Given the questionable meaning of "existence" when applied to worlds one cannot even in principle observe (and that is what bloating produces), the first-person question is the more important one, and what positing many worlds - whatever their factual status - does, is to move contingency from third-person to first-person, and thereby outside the scope of science. It does not eliminate it, but it helps bring the question of our thrownness into focus.

5 A further remark

As an aside, it may be remarked that this strategy potentially goes very far. Instead of finding an explanation for the lawfulness of our world, we may posit **total bloat**: that given enough worlds, there must be some where a seemingly lawful sequence like the one we experience occurs. It is just part of our address that we live in such a world. This, of course, means the end of induction³.

In fact, total bloat would be the simplest proposal of all: all there is is an infinite amount of randomness. Any fully random sequence contains arbitrarily large subsequences of order, so any possible finite universe would be "out there". That is easier than accepting that all mathematical structures exist, or that fundamental laws exist that lead to orderly universes or multiverses.

It also makes the thrownness question all the more pressing.

Any theory proposing lesser forms of bloat has the burden of explaining why it stops before taking the ultimate step.

6 References

Everett, Hugh (1957). *On the foundations of quantum mechanics*.

Lewis, David Kellogg (1986). *On the Plurality of Worlds*. Blackwell.

Tegmark, Max (2014). *Our Mathematical Universe*. Vintage Books.

³ All order being accidental, even our spatial and temporal intuitions almost certainly won't correspond to any actuality: it would be vanishingly unlikely that we are anything but Boltzmann brains. Why posit a seemingly orderly past and environment, if positing some false memories and perceptions will do the trick?