



Divine Action in the Framework of Scientific Thinking: From Quantum Theory to Divine Action

Christoph Lameter

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During the Enlightenment, many theologians gave up the claim that God could act in the universe because the world was envisioned to be completely describable and governed by scientific laws. Surprisingly the development of quantum theory has resulted in the discovery of limits to causality. The universe is no longer considered to be a closed system and therefore an account of divine action compatible with scientific theories might be possible now. First, the concept of divine intervention as envisioned in the nineteenth century is investigated and then a survey of the development of quantum theory is provided. The disputed character of the interpretation of quantum theory and of the measurement problem is noted. It is suggested that the controversy continues because the straightforward acceptance of quantum theory-as already suggested by von Neumann in 1932-would imply a connection between mind and matter and question the notion of an objective, observer independent universe. It is shown using the literature on quantum theory that other solutions to the measurement problem are questionable on scientific grounds alone. Henry Stapp's recent rearticulation of von Neumann's arguments integrating them with Heisenberg's thinking is then selected as a potential basis for a theory of divine action. Existing theories of divine action are investigated starting with William James's idea of an indeterministic universe and ending with the contemporary approaches by Robert Russell and Nancey Murphy. Contemporary proposals are based on the notion of quantum events. A search is made for a scientific basis for quantum events but it is found that none of the interpretations of quantum theory would be compatible with the proposed idea of quantum events. Finally, a new theory of divine action is proposed understanding divine action as a holistic act, analogous to personal agency, through quantum determination. The universe is creating potentialities that are then collapsed by consciousness. These consciousnesses could be the minds of humans or the mind of God. The universe is proposed therefore to function-as also suggested by Karl Heim-like an interactive medium and not as a mechanism.

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