

The Tangled World(s) of Quantum Physics: September 2017



Photo by Patricia Klich

The Tangled World(s) of Quantum Physics is an original eight-minute-long 1950s style retro quasi-educational film exploring numerous concepts of quantum mechanics including the Heisenberg uncertainty principle, the Schrödinger cat thought experiment, the Copenhagen interpretation, and quantum entanglement. The film stars me along with two children, Tadhg Woodhouse and Lilly-Rose Woodhouse. I wrote the script with assistance from long-time collaborator Clifton Barnhart.* Andy Crook* suggested that I create an original film, rather than using generic quantum physics videos from the internet. Patricia Klich* provided videography and editing. This film was first screened during the opening of *Eddie Dean, Telepathy Rock Star: Smells Like Dean Spirit*.

In *The Tangled World(s) of Quantum Physics*, I humorously attempt to explain a number of foundational theories of quantum mechanics to two children while they drink milkshakes and eat French fries in a retro 1950s style diner. Various surreal scenes depict me dancing, juggling, and attempting to recreate the Schrödinger Cat experiment with actual cats. The film concludes with a simplified explanation of the theory of quantum entanglement, famously described by Albert

* 'Biographies of Collaborators.' See appendices: <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/676366/676367>

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Einstein as a ‘spooky action at a distance.’¹ Some parapsychologists have argued that quantum entanglement might conceivably provide a theoretical basis for telepathy.²

This short film took a light-hearted approach toward the complex and daunting topic of quantum mechanics in order to make the topic accessible. In the act of “teaching” the children about these concepts, I aimed to simultaneously educate audience members at my live performance. Perhaps most significantly, through this process, I attempted to position myself as an authority on quantum mechanics, and in so doing, to increase the credibility and legitimacy of my telepathy demonstrations. This film project was influenced by my dark TED Talk and Superstar approaches.

By rolling this film at the top of my one-man show, I hoped to achieve several outcomes. First, by depicting me playfully “teaching” quantum physics to children in a 1950s diner setting, the film is intended to endear me to the audience before I even take the stage. Second, the inclusion of this film was intended to frame the entire performance as “having something to do with” quantum entanglement, and consequently, to misdirect attention from associations with conjuring, tricks, and deception. In doing so, the film was intended to align me with scientific knowledge, albeit in a tongue-in-cheek manner. Finally, the humorous tone was intended to relax the audience, foreshadowing my darkly playful approach to the performance of telepathy.

The effectiveness of comedy as a means to relax and distract (misdirect) potentially skeptical audience members was something with which I explored throughout my praxis. Some performances, such as *Mental Wi-Fi*, *Meet the Deans*, and *Two Minds with a Single Thought*, were virtually comedies, bordering on parody. As previously noted, such an approach comes with trade-offs. During the creation of *Unfathomable*, for instance, producer Martin Hart pleaded: ‘just don’t be *too* funny.’ By contrast, *Visions and Revisions*, *Post-Cartesian Telepathy*, and *Project Viola Ten* were not funny at all. My latter performances such as *Eddie Dean*, *Telepathy Rock Star: Smells Like Dean Spirit* and my appearance on *Ireland’s Got Talent* were intended to be neither overly serious nor overly comical, but rather to employ a dark humour in an attempt to find a balance between the disturbingly serious and playfully silly.

¹ ‘Spooky action at a distance.’ *The Economist*. 16 Mar 2017.

² von Lucadou, Walter, et al. ‘Synchronistic Phenomena as Entanglement Correlations in Generalized Quantum Theory.’ *Journal of Consciousness Studies*. No. 4. 2007. p. 50.

Works Cited:

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