

THE ON — — ING SERIES

a lyric-philosophical essay

O N

QUESTIONING

nature exposed to our method of questioning



by Jamison Todd Johnson

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On Questioning

NATURE EXPOSED TO OUR METHOD OF
QUESTIONING

Schrödinger gave us a way to ask a question and get a number back, and then he spent the rest of his life warning us about what the number was. *What we observe is not nature itself, but nature exposed to our method of questioning.* He signed that sentence in his own hand. It is the whole of the Quantum Lens, written by its least likely witness, and it is where this piece begins — not with his famous equation, but with the quiet machinery underneath it, the part that turns a state into an answer.

Because here is the thing I did not expect to find. My equation is not shaped like the Schrödinger equation. It is shaped like the question you put to a Schrödinger state — the act physics calls taking an expectation value, which is only this: a state on one side, the whole on the other, a question standing between them, summed over everything.¹

The famous equation governs how the state evolves. But you never see the state. What you see is what you get when you put a question to it: a measurement, a number. And the recipe for that number is a sandwich every physicist writes without thinking — one state, the question, the other state, gathered over all of space. Set my equation beside it and the skeleton is the same, bone for bone: a gathering, over everything, of an

alignment standing between one self and the superposition of all selves. And the pairing is not a loose analogy — the way the collective is read onto the subjective in my equation is the very same reading the physicists' number is built from. The structure is shared, not merely alike.² My equation is a coherence expectation value. It is the answer you get when you put the question *how aligned was this life* to the whole field of lives at once.

There is even a tell in the gathering sign. Physics usually leaves its gathering open; I wrote mine closed — a loop. You reach for a loop when you are conserving something global — when the total must come back to itself, when nothing is created or lost around the circuit. And that is exactly the discipline the quantum state lives under: nothing ever leaks from its accounting. The whole of its probability is always one; its evolution turns the state without spilling any of it.³ The closed loop is the formal signature of *nothing leaks out of the accounting*. It is the same thing *On Gravitating* found in the unscreenable: there is no shield, and there is no leak.

Then the correspondences arrive almost faster than I can set them down, and I will be honest that their ease is itself something to be careful about. The equation is linear, so its answers layer; my sum over selves is a layering stated outright. Observation selects one answer out of the layered many — this outcome and not another, each with its own likelihood.⁴ That is the Quantum Lens in operator form: the manifold of simultaneous meanings is real until the act of questioning collapses it to a single one, and the collapse is the loss. None of this is borrowed.

The framework already said it; the formalism simply hands it back in a tighter notation.

And interference — interference was always the heart of it. In the quantum world, possibilities add the way waves do: in step, they reinforce; out of step, they cancel. The bright fringes and the dark ones are not two substances but one field questioned at different places. This is the framework's oldest sentence, the one the Jays were built on: coherence is constructive interference, misalignment is cancellation. A life in tune with itself reinforces down the worldline; a life at war with itself goes dark in the pattern. I did not have to argue the analogy. It is the literal mathematics of how waves sum.

But the gem — the one I would build the whole piece around — is phase. In quantum mechanics the overall phase of a state is unmeasurable. You can turn the whole state and every single measurement you make comes back identical; the phase hides perfectly from any direct question. And yet it is not nothing. It is the most consequential thing there is, because relative phase — the difference between two states' facings — is what writes the entire interference pattern. The phase never shows up in the moment. It shows up only downstream, only in the pattern, only when two histories are finally allowed to meet.

That is Intent. That is the whole doctrine of it: Intent is invisible in its moment, carried unseen, adjudicated downstream by the Design across Time. I had described Intent for years as a thing that cannot be read off the present and yet decides everything later, and I never knew that physics had a word for a quantity with exactly that signature. Phase is

Intent. It is the direction hidden inside every alignment, and inside the whole — the facing no measurement returns, the relative facing that writes every fringe. Unmeasurable in any single act, sovereign over the pattern. You cannot photograph a person's phase. You can only, much later, read the interference of their life.

Now I have to say what these correspondences are, because the saying is the discipline, and the discipline is the only thing that has ever made this series worth trusting.

These are not measurements. We are testing against the framework, not against nature. The Schrödinger equation earns its authority by being measured to the bone — its constants weighed, its spectral lines confirmed to a dozen decimals, its probabilities checked against the counts on real detectors. My equation earns nothing of the kind, and by design: the alignment is not operationalized, no instrument runs it, and that refusal is the whole reason the equation cannot die the death the consciousness-equations died. So the resemblance is real and the warrant does not transfer. Looking like an equation that is measured is not the same as being one. To let Schrödinger's empirical credit flow into my equation along a structural rhyme would be the exact borrowed-authority move the framework was built to refuse — physics' hard-won proof smuggled in under philosophy's lighter burden. I will not make it, and I am naming it here so that no careful reader can accuse the work of making it quietly.

Two more honesties. The Schrödinger equation is the physics of one particle, moving slowly; it is not a field theory, and it does not even contain relativity. Of every artifact one could pin to the wall, it is the

least unified — so it cannot be the measurement that proves a Unified Field, and I will not present it as one. And the Unified Field, in my pages, is a framework term, a capitalized thing in the grammar of the Jays. It is not the physicists' unification program, and the two must stay visibly apart, or a careful reader collapses them and the series loses in one sentence everything it spent twenty-odd pieces earning.

So let me say plainly what I think we have turned up. Not a proof. A startling structural fidelity: the framework's central claims — superposition, collapse, coherence as interference, Intent as the hidden phase — each find a precise formal echo in the most thoroughly tested machinery in the history of science. That fidelity is worth something. It is worth exactly what a good rhyme is worth, and not one grain more. It tells us the framework is well-formed — that it speaks a grammar the universe also speaks — without telling us it is true. Those are different properties, and the difference is the lamp I am trying to keep honest.

Schrödinger already knew the ending. The answer depends on the question; what comes back is never nature itself but nature exposed to our method of questioning. If phase is Intent and the question is the instrument, then his sentence becomes the framework's deepest warning to itself: be careful what you ask, because the asking is half of what you will find. We put the question of coherence to the world, and the world returned a shape that looks like coherence. I believe that shape is real. I also know that I am the one who chose the question.

We do not get to stand outside the questioning. We only get to ask honestly, and to write down, every time, that we were the ones holding the pen.

Forever, my friends.

NOTES

1. The expectation value of an observable $\hat{A}$ in state Ψ : $\langle \hat{A} \rangle = \int \Psi^* \hat{A} \Psi dV$ — state, operator, state, integrated over all of space. Measurement returns an eigenvalue λ of the corresponding operator (Born, 1926; von Neumann, 1932); for presence, this series reads $\lambda = 1$.
2. The functional in full, all seats named per *On Explaining* (Johnson, 2026):
 $L(t) = (1/\Xi) \oint_{\Omega} A(S_i, \tau) \cdot \Psi(\tau) d\sigma + \Lambda$, with $\Psi(\tau) \equiv \sum_j S_j(\tau)$ and $A(S_i, t) = \alpha(S_i, t) \cdot e^{i\phi_i(t)} \cdot S_i$. The central dot is a Hermitian inner product, $\langle \text{collective, subjective} \rangle$ — the same inner product the expectation value is built from. L is complex: $|L|$ the conserved intensity, $\arg L$ the Intent; the working quantity is relative facing, $\Theta_{ij} = \phi_i - \phi_j$.
3. Unitarity: the norm of the Schrödinger state is conserved; total probability remains one under evolution. The closed contour $\oint$, against physics' customary open $\int$, is this essay's formal signature of global conservation.
4. The Born rule, $|\Psi|^2$, gives the probability that a measurement returns a given eigenstate. That observation selects the outcome is a contested reading of the unsettled measurement problem, offered here as a lens, not a verdict.



On Questioning belongs to *On —ing*, an ongoing series of lyric-philosophical essays by Jamison Todd Johnson, within the wider jays framework — that an aligned life leaves legible traces, ripples of intent, through Time. The quantum mechanics here — the expectation value, unitarity, the Born rule, the unmeasurable global phase — is borrowed as shape and lens, never asserted as a physics of mind; the structure is shared, the warrant is not. The functional beneath the essay stands unchanged in its fully seated form, per *On Explaining* (Johnson, 2026); the earlier editions were this one with some of its names still waiting to be learned. One further step rides with it, seam kept visible: coherence carries whatever it is given — both directions work — but a life aligned *against* something borrows its facing from its target and fades with it, while a life aligned with itself persists. Both work. Only one persists.

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ON DEPOSIT

THE ON — — ING SERIES

read in any order — each entry stands alone

On Arriving	On Learning
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