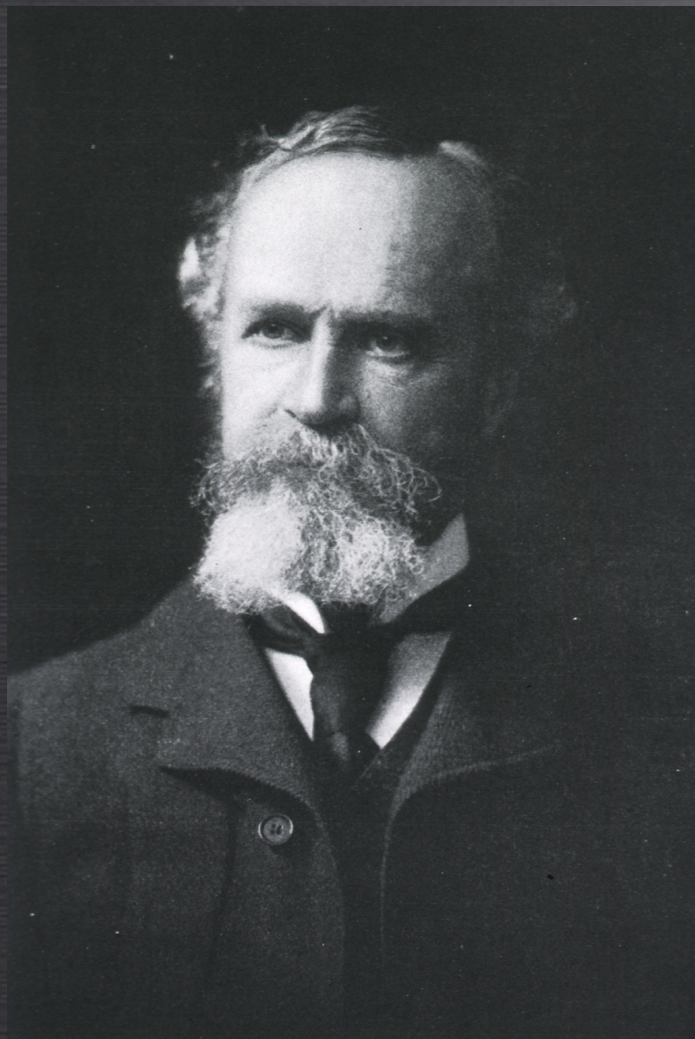


PRAGMATISM

HZT4U1 - MR. A. WITTMANN - UNIT 5 - LECTURE 4



“PRAGMATISM IS THE ATTITUDE OF LOOKING AWAY FROM FIRST THINGS, PRINCIPLES, ‘CATEGORIES,’ SUPPOSED NECESSITIES; AND OF LOOKING TOWARDS LAST THINGS, FRUITS, CONSEQUENCES, FACTS.”

-WILLIAM JAMES

MATERIALISM VS. IDEALISM

- Debate between materialism and idealism seems to be a pointless philosophical exercise.
- Material or immaterial, the things around us still feel hard, still smell, still have shapes, colours, positions, and motion.
- People who believe in an God will continue to believe, even if materialism is correct.
- Thus, our beliefs about reality are meaningful only to the extent that they have important consequences.

REALITY IN PRAGMATISM

- Pragmatism as a philosophical movement has grown in the United States during the last 150 years.
 - Charles S. Peirce (1839–1914)
 - William James (1842–1910)
 - John Dewey (1859–1952)
- James defined pragmatism as the attitude of focusing away from first principles, causes and ultimate nature, and of looking towards results, consequences, facts.
- Materialists and Idealists look for absolute truths, but reality is pluralistic truths.

REALITY IN PRAGMATISM

(CONTINUED)

- Philosophy should address psychological and sociological problems, because philosophy arises out of social and emotional needs.
- **Pragmatic method** (as opposed to scientific theory) interprets an idea in terms of its practical consequences and asks what difference it would make if it were true.
- Thus, what is believed to work is real and is empirically, psychologically and sociologically relative
- There are many different realities or **sub-universes**.

SUB-UNIVERSES

- There are pan-human, cultural and individual sub-universes.
 1. Reality of sense experience of physical things with qualities and forces
 2. Reality of science of physical things as empirical and theoretical
 3. Reality of ideal relations or abstract truths (logical, mathematical, metaphysical)
 4. Reality of cultural illusions or prejudices.
 5. Reality of various supernatural & religion (afterlife, reincarnation, spirit world)
 6. Reality of deliberate fiction
 7. Reality of individual opinion
 8. Reality of individual sheer madness and delusions

SUB-UNIVERSES

(CONTINUED)

- We choose our own ultimate reality based on its meaningful relation to our intellectual, emotional, psychological social circumstances, needs and actions.
- The reality we accept is merely one of many possible worlds that can be real because of their relation to our emotional and intellectual lives.
 - i.e. sympathetic magic, religion, science
 - i.e. Copernican model vs. Ptolemaic model

PHENOMENOLOGY



- Edmund Husserl (1859–1938) stated that being (existence) is the underlying reality
- Ultimately the only reality is our consciousness and conscious experiences
- Pragmatism too relative
- You can think (explain) away everything, but you can't think away thinking itself, which is our consciousness.
- Thus, the most fundamental reality is our conscious awareness of the world in space and time.

KIERKEGAARD'S EXISTENTIALISM



Søren Kierkegaard
(1813-1855)

- There is no ultimate nature of reality, no underlying human nature.
- Each of us creates our own reality and nature through the results of the actions of our free choices.
- Like phenomenology, existentialism is wary of applying the objective scientific method to the solution of human experience.
- Understanding reality through individual subjectivity and free choice.

HEIDEGGER'S EXISTENTIALISM



Martin Heidegger
(1889–1976)

- Philosophy should study the individual's very act of existing within the human world.
- To understand reality, we must understand our own individual temporal and finite existence in the world
- No past, no future, just present

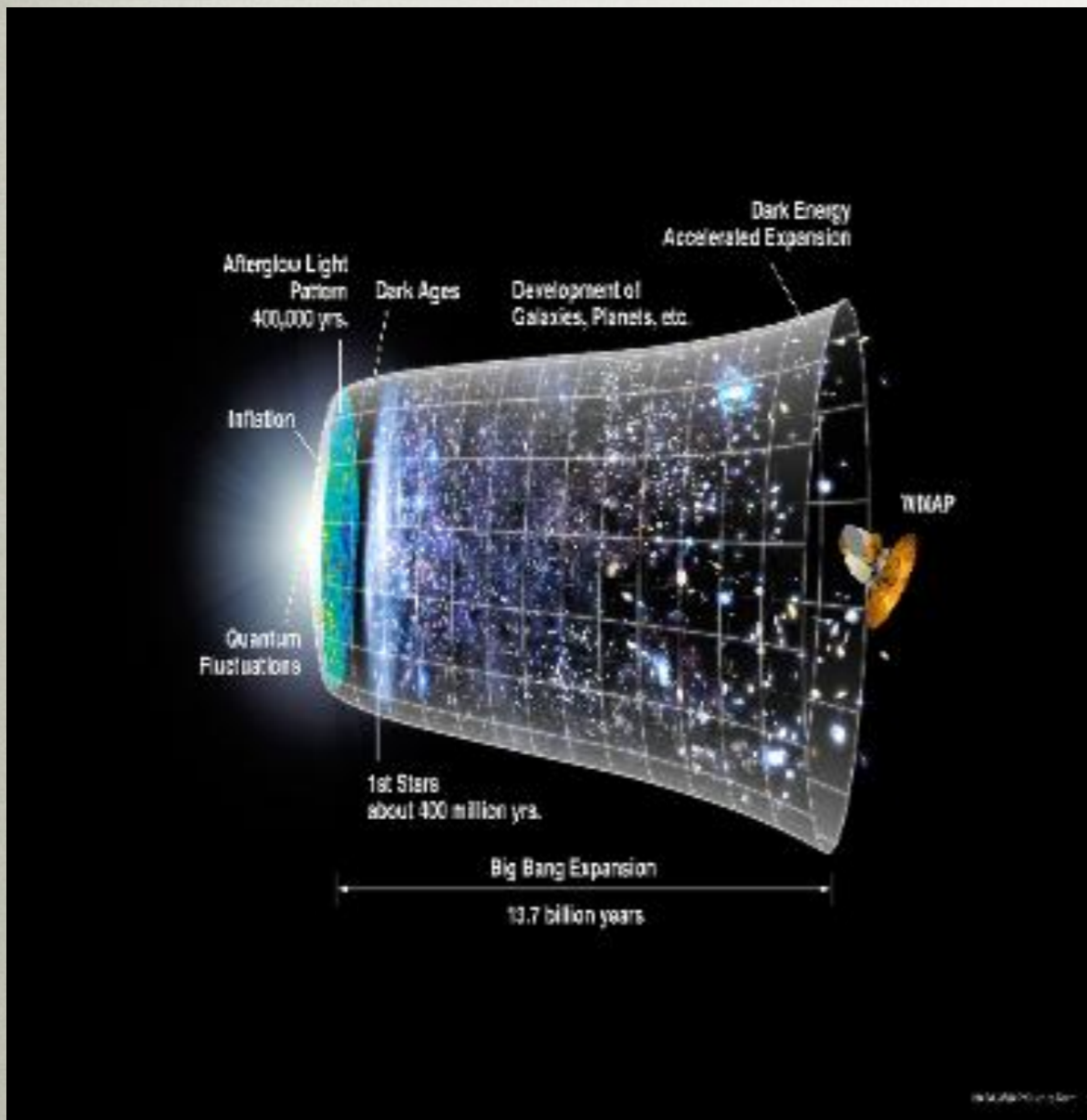
SARTRE'S EXISTENTIALISM



Jean-Paul Sartre
(1905–1980)

- There is no fixed reality or human nature.
- We make our own realities by our choices so that we are completely responsible for what we are.
- A phenomenological study of our conscious experience reveals two kinds of reality:
 1. consciousness
 2. the objects of which we are conscious

DETERMINISM



- Contrary to free will
- Modelling time as a dimension in physics, similar to that of space.
- Future events are "already there", and that there is no objective flow of time.
- AKA the **Block Universe** theory due to its description of space-time as an unchanging four-dimensional "block".
- Time and free choice are illusions.

THE TENTH DIMENSION VIDEO



FREEWILL VS. DETERMINISM

Free Will

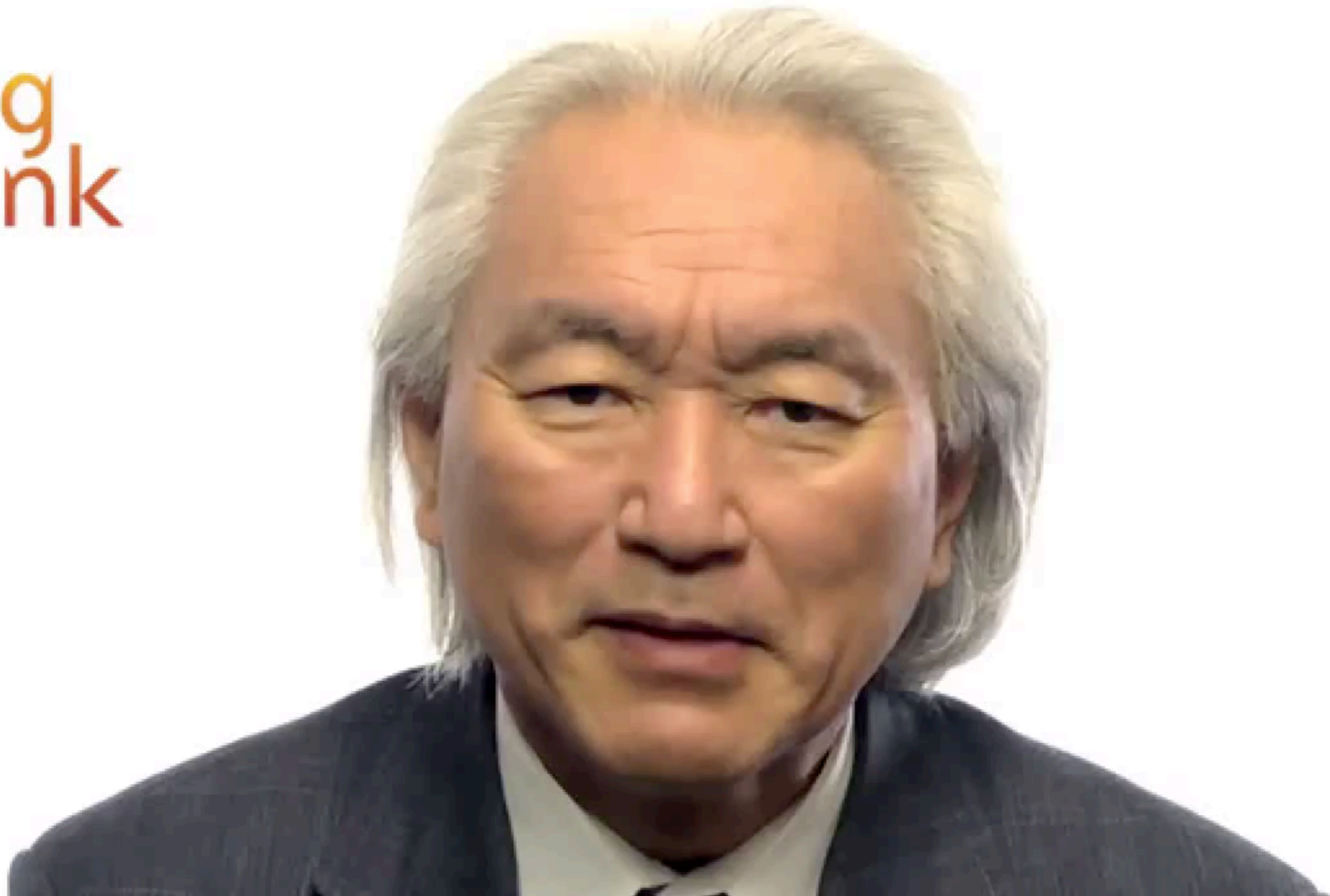
- Religion
- Humanism
- Spiritualism
- Existentialism

Determinism

- Physics
- Biology
- Genetics
- Psychology
- Sociology

WILL SCIENCE END THE FREEWILL DEBATE?

big
think



THE END