

Trouble with Quantum Mechanics

10-minute play

by
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CHARACTER NAME	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	AGE	GENDER
ADAM-19	intelligent but not well schooled, about to marry, respects authority, a devout Christian	19	male
ADAM-35	now educated, unhappy marriage, an agnostic	35	male
ADAM-77	retired, happily remarried, world traveler, enjoys lucid dreaming, an atheist	77	male

The characters are the same person at different ages.

SCENE 1

Three ribbons of time in the multiverse of quantum mechanics are somehow momentarily in contact. All is dark until each ADAM brings his ribbon into illumination.

(ADAM-19 enters DR totally disoriented, wildly looking about, scared. He takes a few moments to adjust, then drops to his knees to pray, eyes closed.)

ADAM-19

Dear Lord Jesus, I don't know what happened ... or where I am.

(He opens his eyes, looking about quickly, then closes them determinedly to continue praying.)

ADAM-19 (CONT'D)

I'm really scared! But ... but I trust in you, Lord Jesus, to help me ... to save me.

(In a low tone and volume, ADAM-19 starts repeating the Lord's Prayer. With each repetition he gets a little louder. As soon as he starts, ADAM-35 enters to DC, disoriented, but not as badly as ADAM-19, and he recovers more quickly.)

ADAM-35

What the fuck?

(ADAM-35 looks around then focuses on ADAM-19, puzzlement on his face. ADAM-19's recitation is getting louder. ADAM-77 enters to DL, neither surprised nor disoriented. He looks around calmly.)

ADAM-77

Well, this is different.

(ADAM-19 rises on his knees, eyes still closed, hands lifted upward, face upward, loudly reciting the prayer. ADAM-77 addresses him loud enough to be heard above the prayer.)

ADAM-77 (CONT'D)

Hey, quiet down, you're making way too much noise!

(ADAM-19 continues, then ADAM-77 shouts)

ADAM-77 (CONT'D)

Hey, shut your face. I don't want to hear it, and I certainly don't want to be reminded. Shut the fuck up!

(ADAM-19 stops, looks toward ADAM-77, who recognizes ADAM-19 as his younger self. ADAM-77 then looks at ADAM-35, recognizing him as well. ADAM-77 is astonished. ADAM-35 is looking at ADAM-19, recognizing him with great surprise.)

ADAM-77 (CONT'D)

Ohmigod ... a multiverse dream? ... wait a minute.

(ADAM-77 puts the palms of both hands in front of him, looking back and forth at them intently, thinking. ADAM-19 rises.)

ADAM-77 (CONT'D)

Jesus H. Christ ... a quantum reality?

ADAM-19

Sir, do not use the name of my Lord in vain.

ADAM-77

Oh, fuck you. You don't know anything ... didn't know anything ... whatever. If you want to pray, do it silently. Doesn't make any difference. There's nothing up there ... over there ... down there ... whatever.

(ADAM-19 doesn't know what to do, but his anger is building. ADAM-77, pointing to ADAM-19, addresses ADAM-35.)

ADAM-77 (CONT'D)

You recognize him?

ADAM-35

Yes.

ADAM-77

Do you recognize me?

ADAM-35

No ... but you do seem a little ... oh, shit!

ADAM-77

Shit indeed, although I now say crap. Sounds better to my wife. When I retired, she asked me to clean up my language.

ADAM-35

Elaine made you clean up your language?

ADAM-77

Not Elaine ... Jackie .. Life is going to improve for you. Jackie is the best thing that ever happened to me ... you ... this is confusing.

(ADAM-77 again points at ADAM-19 but continues addressing ADAM-35.)

ADAM-77 (CONT'D)

And he's really confused. You talk to him. You're closer, and don't let him start praying again. Dumb fuck, marrying at 19, first child at 20. Fucking idiot. Shit ... I mean crap ... I need to sit down. I'm tired.

(A chair appears out of the darkness. ADAM-77 quizzically looks at its appearance and off into the darkness from whence it came. He ponders the chair, picks it up, examines it. ADAM-35 starts to speak to ADAM-19, but ADAM-19 speaks first, pointing at ADAM-77.)

ADAM-19

He is not a nice man! ... But ... but I will love him as the Lord commands, but I will not love his foul mouth. I demand he not use the Lord's name in vain.

ADAM-35

Whoa! You, ah, don't understand the situation here. First, unlike you, he and I are agnostics--

ADAM-77

No! You are an agnostic. I am an atheist.

ADAM-35

(to ADAM-77 with surprise)

Really?

ADAM-77

Things have progressed.

ADAM-35

(shrugs then to ADAM-19)

What I was about to say was that he and I are not religious, but we both very much believe in freedom of speech (he glances toward ADAM-77, who nods) so demanding will get you nowhere, believe me. And I think you need to realize who we all are. Look, let me--

(ADAM-35 approaches ADAM-19 as he speaks the last, but runs into an invisible wall. Taken aback, he starts exploring the extent of the wall with his hands.)

ADAM-19

What are you doing?

(ADAM-35 is finding that he can move UC or DC, but cannot move more than a couple of feet L or R. ADAM-77 notices ADAM-35's activity, and starts doing the same with the same results.)

ADAM-19 (CONT'D)

What's wrong, what are you doing? You're scaring me.

(ADAM-77 and ADAM-35 converse, ignoring ADAM-19.)

ADAM-35

This is one helluva dream.

ADAM-77

I don't think it's a dream.

ADAM-35

What else could it be?

ADAM-77

How many fingers do you see?

ADAM-35

Five, of course. Well, four fingers, one thumb.

ADAM-77

Exactly. If you were dreaming, your hand would have fewer fingers ... or more. Depends on the individual. I do a lot of lucid dreaming, and that's how I know I'm dreaming. I'm always missing a finger.

ADAM-35

You're kidding me. I've never heard of such a thing, or lucid dreaming.

ADAM-77

I'm not kidding. You can Google it. I'm not--

ADAM-35

Google it? What does that mean?

ADAM-77

Ah, sorry, no Google yet for you. The point is though, we're not in a dream. I think that, somehow, our respective universes have come together ... and it appears they don't proceed on the same time scale.

ADAM-35

I find that all very hard to believe.

ADAM-77

You have a better explanation?

(ADAM, having been listening with increasing intensity, gives in to his fear, drops to his knees, and again starts to pray aloud.)

ADAM-19

Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will--

ADAM-77

ADAM, ADAM, stand up, I want to talk to you. Pray later if you want. Right now we need to talk. You want out of here?

ADAM-19

(standing)

Yes!

ADAM-77

What's the date, what do you think the date is?

ADAM-19

It's December 19th.

ADAM-77

The year? What's the year?

ADAM-19

1959 of course. How could it be anything else. I have to get home. This is really scary!

(ADAM-35 and ADAM-77 look knowingly at each other.)

ADAM-77

Yes ... but how, how did you know? ... Look, I don't understand what you were saying, what he was talking about? I don't understand. Just tell me how to get home! I don't like it here.

(ADAM is close to tears, ADAM-35 and 77 ADAM contemplate him for a moment.)

ADAM-35

Wait, wait. ADAM, aren't you a little young to be getting married? If I were you, I'd wait until you were a little older. A lot of people have advised you to wait. Elaine doesn't graduate high school until next June and--

ADAM-77

Careful, careful, them not marrying might be dangerous. Besides, you did it, I did it, he's going to do it. They're in love. They really are. Don't ruin it. It was great for 14 years. And the sex. Remember the sex. Nobody ever had better sex.

ADAM-35

Yeah, but the last couple of years have been hell, and--

ADAM-19

I love her! She loves me! We're getting married this afternoon! What has that got to do with you? How do you know all this. How do you know our names?

ADAM-35

Jesus, he doesn't understand yet.

ADAM-77

(to ADAM-19)

Look, ADAM, you're in an invisible ribbon. You can go forward, not left or right, but forward. Maybe even back, but I don't think that's a good idea. The ribbon may turn, probably will turn, but just go forward. When you hit a side, turn a little away until you can go forward. I don't think you'll have to go far ... and, ADAM, think about ... just think, never stop thinking, never stop wondering, demand proof for everything, accept nothing on faith alone. All things considered, you're going to have a great life.

(ADAM-19 starts to speak, but doesn't, turns forward, puts his hands out to feel the invisible ribbon, and exits forward.)

ADAM-35

So, down to just the two of us. You, ah, you don't happen to have any good stock tips for me?

ADAM-77

Yeah, well, maybe I could make you rich, but that might change things for me, and I've got it pretty damn good. No way I want to risk that. Ah, what's your date?

ADAM-35

October 10, 1974. Why?

ADAM-77

Just trying to figure out why we're here, why this has happened. ... His date and your date are in my memory, never to be forgotten, the beginning and the end. What started at 19 ended at 35.

ADAM-35

I don't follow.

ADAM-77

On October 10, 1974 Elaine called me at work, said she wanted to meet for lunch at the Chinese restaurant on Franklin, said she wanted to talk. When I sat down in the booth, she said she'd been to an attorney, said he told her to meet me in public so I wouldn't make a fuss, said that if I didn't move out, she'd get a court order.

ADAM-35

Ah, Christ! I was about to leave to meet her when ... this happened. ... What can I do? What can I do?

ADAM-77

Move out, you have no choice. You'll be heartsick for a few months. Well, maybe not since we're talking, Who knows, whatever. The thing is, you're only a few months away from meeting your real soulmate. With Jackie, you'll live abroad, you'll see the world, every continent except Antarctica. I've been with her for 42 years, and it just gets better. She's an extraordinary woman, and we go together so well.

(The lights cycle to dim to bright twice, both ADAMs notice.)

ADAM-77 (CONT'D)

I suspect this ... nexus? is breaking up. You should get going, meet the future, meet Jackie.

ADAM-35

Yeah ... you want to go side-by-side for as long as we can?

ADAM-77

No, I'll stay here for a bit ... if that's possible. I need to think some, maybe resolve something. Get going!

ADAM-35

Right ... you take care, okay?

(ADAM-35 looks warmly at ADAM-77 then exits forward. ADAM-77 nods a goodbye, returns to the chair, sits, stretches, pauses.)

ADAM-77

Well, it's been a long time since I've talked to nothingness, talked just in case someone ... something ... is listening. The problem is this chair. Why did it appear when I said I was tired and needed to sit down. Was I listened to, was the chair a response, or does quantum mechanics allow the conjuring of the mind to provide what one wants, like lucid dreaming.

You see, when I was 19 and got married, that was the most life-changing event that had happened to me to that point. Then at 35 when I was divorced and then met Jackie, that changed my life completely, more so than marrying Elaine. So, those two events and this ... present circumstance beg the question: Is something life-changing about to happen to ADAM, age 77.

(He waits, looks around, puts his hands out, palms up gesturing a question.)

ADAM-77 (CONT'D)

The thing is, the thing that comes to mind, is death. Mine? Jackie's? Both of us? We'd like to go out together. Neither of us has any interest in being without the other.

(He rises from the chair,
moves to behind it, takes a
final look at his hands.)

ADAM-77 (CONT'D)

I've got all my fingers. This is no dream. Whatever it is, is it something other than a random event? More importantly, what about this chair?

(Again he waits, looks around,
puts his hands out, palms up,
gesturing a question.)

ADAM-77 (CONT'D)

Silence. Always silence. ... There's nobody there.

END OF SCENE

