My Cosmos: Time, Block Theory, and the Many Worlds

Beatrix Elizabeth Groves-McDaniel — October 2026

I am a multiverse person. Not because I read a lot of sci-fi, though I have, but because the alternatives always seemed to me to require a kind of philosophical violence — a truncation of logical space that left me deeply uncomfortable.

Here's how I think of it. There are branes floating in the Bulk. These are not metaphors. Well, perhaps they are, but they are the best metaphors we have for a structure that our language was not designed to describe. You create a machine that punches through that Bulk, across the membrane that separates one brane from another, and you enter a universe almost —(but, not quite) identical to our own. Almost the same. But at a time earlier than ours. You change something there. A decision left unmade. A word spoken differently. A door left open that should have been closed. And when you return home, nothing has altered. Your own past is intact. The people you love are still exactly where you left them. The change you made lives in another universe, not this one.

This is what I mean when I say I am a multiverse person. No paradoxes. No causal ruptures. No grandmother problem. Just the quiet, radical recognition that every logically possible event is being played out somewhere, in some brane, at every moment. And the ones that didn't happen here (the decisions I never made, the words I never chose, the paths I never walked…) those are equally real. They are not accessible to me. But real nonetheless.

Where did this come from? I trace it, if I'm honest, to Wittgenstein. Not the later Wittgenstein of the Philosophical Investigations — though I love him too — but the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. The early Wittgenstein, who believed that the bases of the universe were only possible on logical foundations. That what can be thought can be thought clearly. That the world is the totality of facts, **not** of things.

The *Tractatus* is, at its heart, a work about logical space. About what can be *said* (facts, propositions, logical form) versus what can only be *shown*. The logical scaffolding that makes the world possible cannot itself be directly expressed. It can only be *shown* in the structure of facts. And if the foundations of the universe are logical, then logically possible events are not merely epistemically possible — they are *ontologically real*. Part of the structure. **Part of the block.**

This is where my Block Theory comes in. I am strongly in favour of the block universe view — the idea that every universe has its own block structure, within which all events, past, present, and future, exist timelessly. The block is not something that is *created* at a point in time. It simply is. Every logically possible configuration that can arise given the laws of physics operating within that brane is already *there*, in the block. The probability of all logically possible events is played out in full. Not some of them. Not the likely ones. All of them.

You might ask: what counts as "*logically possible*"? And the answer, for me, is Tractarian. A state of affairs is logically possible if it does not contradict the logical form that structures the world. Possible within the grammar of facts. Possible within the language game that makes the world speakable. Not

physically possible, necessarily (not every logically possible world is physically achievable by us) but possible on the logical foundations that underlie everything.

And then there is the question of the ‘I’. The self. The thing that seems to stand at the centre of experience and make decisions.

Wittgenstein would say there is no ‘I’ in the way we ordinarily mean it. Not in the Cartesian sense. No res cogitans, no immaterial substance behind the eyes. The ‘I’ is a grammatical illusion, a product of language, a reification of a process rather than an entity. And I have some sympathy with this. Everything is in a state of constant quantum flux. The atoms that make up my body today are not the atoms that made up my body a decade ago. Every cell replaced, every memory reconstructive rather than reproductive. Neuroscience tells us that every time we recall something we are subtly rewriting it. The river is always the same and never the same.

And yet. I am here. I am doing what I do because of apparent decisions. The ones I remember. I remember choosing to go into teaching after being made redundant in the 1980s. I remember choosing to transition in 2008. I remember choosing to come to Tyneside, choosing to teach at the WEA, choosing to write, choosing to fight for things that mattered. Those decisions are real to me. They constitute the texture of a life. But there are a very large number of other universes where I did differently. Where I took a different path at that junction. Where I was still me, but not the same me.

And in the multiverse picture I hold to, they are all equally ‘real’. Whatever real means in this context. It means: part of the block. Logically possible, and therefore ontologically actual. Somewhere, in some brane, a version of me chose the other door, and lived the life that choice produced. And somewhere else another version chose again, and again, branching out into an infinity of Bea-ness, each one equally valid, equally real, none of them more primary than any other.

Is this a comforting view? I am not sure it is. It is more a matter of intellectual honesty than comfort. The alternative (that only one path is real, that all the unchosen possibilities are merely imaginary) seems to me a truncation of the logical space that the *Tractatus* insists must be complete. The world is everything that is the case, said Wittgenstein. And everything that *could* be the case, given the logical foundations of the world, must also be somewhere. In the Bulk, in some block, on some brane.

The multiverse is not escapism. It is not a fantasy that somewhere, everything turned out fine. It is a recognition that logical space is full.That the decisions we live with, the weight of the choices we have made and not made, are the only solid ground there is.

I am here. I am the decisions I have made and lived with. Not the ghost of the paths I didn’t take. That is enough. That has to be enough. But it is also, I think, the truth.

Bea — Cullercoats, October 2026