



Die Tyrannei des Schmetterlings

“Artificial Research and Exploring Systems“ A.R.E.S
Frank Schätzing

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A strange cover and a promising title, the „new Schätzing“ raised my curiosity, promising to talk about artificial intelligence (AI), robotics quantum computers and the blessings of Silicon Valley in particular and in general.

The grandiose and mysterious first chapter describing the struggle of men and nature in Africa caught my immediate interest.



*Downieville, CA and
St. Charles Place, one of the
anchor places in our “real”
Universe*

Loving and knowing California I was enchanted to find Downieville, Sierra City and Loyaltown on Google earth, where Sheriff Luther Opoku gets called to a car accident scene with a dead body. Suspecting foul play further investigations lead to large scale illicit biological weapons trafficking.

Opoku gets sucked into the story immediately and in a literary sense because he has to deal with a gigantic, accessible neural networked computer system hidden underground, working with qbits allowing the digital “0” and “1” conditions at the same time – the “synchronicity of all states”, enabling time travels into the future and past, like “time resets”, raising the question of once having been part of this system and seen the future – whether you can prevent things to happen in your own system, reflected in Opoku’s paradox statement: “I saved a dead human’s life”.

After Opoku’s visit to the underground computer sphere (“the Gate”), approximately one-third into the book, the plot turns into a “realistic-technology fictional mystery” novel featuring two possible scenarios of Opoku’s struggle through life by resetting his life-experience by one single day and let him take off on a different tangent under changed conditions. The interaction with the so far “known” environment and the other actors is masterly and plausible so you start asking yourself how the author will get out of either scenario (“different planes of realities and their overlaps”) even by consulting the “big bang”, cosmic inflation, multiverses, Einstein and the latest genetic-, biotechnological-, neurological networking- and quantum-computing techniques i.e., how to provide the one answer explaining everything.

Visk-Tech, Silicon Valley’s secret high tech developer’s motto is: “We construct living cells in the same way as we program computers”

The only way back for Opoku would be through “the Gate”, enabling journeys between alternative courses of action”.

In chapter 5, with the background of “high octane” action set in a utopian scenario of San Francisco of the year 2050 (Parallel Universe PU 435), also the current interpretation and problematics of artificial intelligence is discussed: what is AI, can system be developed with conscience and emotions, can AI make decisions based on a human ethical system?



Lilium (the name is in honor of the German flight pioneer Otto Lilienthal) start-up company at Oberpfaffenhofen (Bavaria).

Lilium's website slogan: Frank Schätzing's protagonists are taking Lilium Jets to a parallel universe. We're working on it – just one step at a time!)

The transport means of choice in 2050 is an autonomous air taxi called Lilium. It is interesting to note that the real Lilium start-up company is located at Oberpfaffenhofen (Bavaria), close to the German Columbus control center (Col-CC) for the International Space Station ISS.

What I also liked is, that PU 435 features tourist flights to Moon (Village?) and Mars (greetings from Elon Musk).

The trick to enable transfer of know-how from a more advanced universe to our own is to find and visit with the help of “the Gate” a suitable parallel universe out of the number of infinite universes which represent an alternate, more advanced version of our own universe.

Thankfully, PU 435 or the “crystal planet” are just possible variants - not the future, because according to PU 435, the future and the final triumph over human mortality will be handled within the all dominating computer – “from the battered body into storage memory as the end of all survival struggles. With the download we make the body redundant” (Elmar 435).

The reviewer of this book is convinced, that this thriller raises the readers' awareness for the digital revolution, and helps him to remain skeptical of the highly acclaimed progress of the digital revolution and "industry 4.0" in which we are right in the middle, affecting each of us. The hope is that this book inspires to make our own little contribution to choose the right variant for our future universe. I hold it with the realization of one of the PU expedition participants after visiting two different alternative universes: “Why don't we make the most of what we have?”

In Summary – a clever game with infinity, parallel universes and thoroughly researched insights and theories of the latest research results of biological-neurological networks, quantum physics and probabilistic calculations mixed with a very deep knowledge of homo sapiens' behavior.

I recommend enjoying this book as an intelligent thought-experiment like "Schrödinger's cat", with a very high entertainment value.

High praise also for the narrator of the audiobook, Sascha Rotemund – I liked the more intimate American method of getting involved with the characters by giving them different shades of voices – it kind of adds an additional dimension to the story.