Surreal Quantum Field Theory: A Deterministic Framework for Quantum Mechanics and Gravity

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February 22, 2025

Abstract

Surreal Quantum Field Theory (QFT) offers a deterministic unification of quantum mechanics (QM), quantum field theory, and general relativity (GR) using a subset of surreal numbers $\mathbb{S}$, embedded into hyperreals ${}^*\mathbb{R}$. Infinitesimal "tags" (ϵ_i) pre-set outcomes, providing a deterministic framework akin to classical mechanics while preserving measurement independence through statistical decoupling from experimental choices. The theory recovers Born statistics, resolves Bell inequalities locally, respects gauge and gravitational symmetries, and predicts subtle, falsifiable effects in the Cosmic Microwave Background (CMB), atomic spectroscopy, quantum optics, and gravitational waves, testable with next-generation experiments.

1 Introduction

Quantum mechanics (QM) and quantum field theory (QFT) have long grappled with foundational paradoxes that challenge our understanding of reality. The measurement problem—the apparent randomness introduced by wavefunction collapse—raises philosophical questions: is the universe inherently probabilistic, or does this reflect our incomplete knowledge? Bell's theorem complicates matters, suggesting that hidden variable theories must be non-local, allowing faster-than-light influences, seemingly at odds with relativity. These issues are amplified when reconciling QM with general relativity (GR), where quantum probabilities clash with deterministic spacetime evolution. *Surreal QFT* addresses these challenges by introducing surreal numbers—a maximally ordered field containing infinitesimals and infinities—as a deterministic foundation for quantum mechanics and gravity.

To ensure mathematical consistency, we restrict our use of surreal numbers to a set-sized subclass suitable for physical applications, avoiding the set-theoretic issues associated with proper classes.

1.1 Primer on Quantum Issues and Determinism

Quantum mechanics rests on the wavefunction, which evolves deterministically until measured, then collapses randomly—an apparent inconsistency known as the measurement problem. Philosophers debate whether this randomness reflects an inherent property of nature (instrumentalism) or our ignorance of underlying variables (realism). Bell's theorem adds complexity, proving that any hidden variable theory must be non-local to match quantum correlations, challenging relativity's prohibition on faster-than-light communication.

In this paper, we present *Surreal Quantum Field Theory (QFT)*, which addresses these challenges by adopting a deterministic framework akin to classical mechanics. In this theory, all events, including measurement outcomes, are determined by initial conditions and the laws of physics. This determinism allows us to resolve quantum paradoxes such as the measurement problem and Bell's theorem without invoking non-locality or randomness. Our deterministic framework not only resolves quantum paradoxes but also preserves free will by grounding it in a rational, causal order—saving it from the chaos of randomness that probabilistic interpretations, like Copenhagen, impose. As we will explore later, drawing on Leibniz and modern compatibilist thought, free will thrives in a determined universe, not in one ruled by chance.

1.2 Philosophical Rationale for Surreal Numbers

Surreal numbers, introduced by Conway [3], provide a natural framework for embedding determinism into quantum mechanics. Unlike real numbers, which struggle to capture deterministic underpinnings in continuous systems, surreals offer a structured hierarchy—finite numbers, infinitesimals, and infinities—making them uniquely suited for modeling hidden variables with precision. In *Surreal QFT*, these infinitesimals act as "tags" (ϵ_i) that resolve quantum ambiguities without invoking randomness or non-locality, restoring a realist ontology where outcomes are fixed by initial conditions.

Why did this application elude Conway himself? As a mathematician, Conway focused on the abstract beauty of surreals within game theory and number systems, not their potential in physics. In 1976, when he introduced them, quantum mechanics was dominated by probabilistic interpretations, and the unification of QM with general relativity was nascent. Moreover, the tools to apply surreals to physics were lacking. Surreal calculus—defining limits, integrals, and series for surreal-valued functions—remained underdeveloped until later work, notably by Ehrlich in the 1990s and 2000s [5]. Similarly, non-standard analysis, pioneered by Robinson [13] and refined over decades, provided the hyperreal field ($^*\mathbb{R}$) into which we embed surreals. Early hyperreal applications in physics (e.g., stochastic mechanics [1]) were limited, and only recently have they gained traction for modeling infinitesimal effects in quantum and gravitational systems [6]. This convergence of surreal calculus and hyperreal analysis, matured long after Conway's initial discovery, enabled us to bridge mathematics and physics in *Surreal QFT*. Philosophically, surreals are necessary because they bridge

quantum and gravitational scales, offering a unified, deterministic theory that aligns with the quest for a complete description of nature. Surreal probabilities, handling measure-zero events, justify continuous distributions in a deterministic universe, potentially resolving measurement mysteries [12].

1.3 Overview of Surreal QFT

Surreal QFT leverages surreal numbers to unify QM, QFT, and GR in a deterministic framework. It resolves paradoxes like the measurement problem and non-locality by pre-tagging outcomes with ϵ_i, providing a deterministic approach akin to classical mechanics while preserving measurement independence. The theory recovers standard QM statistics (Born's rule), resolves Bell inequalities locally, and respects gauge and gravitational symmetries. It predicts subtle, falsifiable effects in the CMB, atomic spectroscopy, quantum optics, and gravitational waves, testable with next-generation experiments. This paper explores Surreal QFT's conceptual foundations, mathematical structure, experimental predictions, and philosophical implications, bridging physics and philosophy.

2 Conceptual Foundations

2.1 Embedding Surreal Numbers into Hyperreals

Surreal numbers $\mathbb{S}$ form a vast ordered field encompassing real numbers, infinitesimals, and infinities. In *Surreal QFT*, we embed a subset of $\mathbb{S}$ into the hyperreal field $^*\mathbb{R}$, a cornerstone of non-standard analysis in physics [6]. Philosophically, this embedding is necessary because surreals capture scales beyond reals, allowing deterministic hidden variables at sub-Planckian levels. Mathematically, each surreal number is defined by its "birthday" in an ordinal sequence, mapping into $^*\mathbb{R}$ while preserving order and algebraic properties, as every hyperreal field is isomorphic to a subfield of surreals [5].

We focus on surreals corresponding to hyperreal infinitesimals (e.g., $\epsilon \sim l_P/L$, where $l_P \approx 1.6 \times 10^{-35}$ m is the Planck length and L is a macroscopic scale) and finite numbers. This subset ensures physical quantities remain measurable and supports Loeb measures for probability in infinite-dimensional systems [1]. Imagine zooming into a fractal: hyperreals provide tools to analyze infinite detail, enabling a rigorous probability framework for quantum fields.

2.2 Determinism and Measurement Independence

In *Surreal QFT*, the universe is fully deterministic, with all events determined by initial conditions and the laws of physics. Specifically, the ϵ_i-"tags", which are infinitesimal markers set by initial conditions, pre-determine the outcomes of measurements. This is analogous to how initial positions and momenta determine the trajectories of particles in classical mechanics.

Importantly, the ϵ_i-"tags" are statistically independent of experimental settings, such as the choice of measurement bases in Bell tests. This independence

is ensured by the joint probability distribution:

$$P(a, b, \epsilon_i) = P(a, b)P(\epsilon_i), \qquad (1)$$

where a and b are the measurement settings, and ϵ_i are the tags. This indicates that there is no correlation between the measurement choices and the tags, preserving the freedom of experimentalists to choose their measurements independently of the hidden variables.

Thus, while the theory is deterministic, it does not impose any unnatural constraints on measurement choices, aligning with the practical autonomy of experimenters. Moreover, this determinism aligns with a compatibilist view of free will, as articulated by philosophers like Dennett [4] and Leibniz [9]. In superdeterminism, human choices are determined by internal states—such as beliefs, desires, and reasoning processes—which are themselves part of the physical, deterministic system. Thus, while the theory is fully deterministic, it does not undermine free will; rather, it provides a framework in which free will is compatible with physical law. In contrast, interpretations relying on fundamental randomness, such as the Copenhagen interpretation, introduce an element of chance that could be seen as undermining the notion that our choices are truly our own. This deterministic framework counters objections that superdeterminism negates free will, as it ensures that choices arise from the experimenters' own deterministic processes, not from randomness beyond their control.

2.3 Notation

To facilitate understanding, we introduce the key notations used throughout this paper, emphasizing their philosophical significance:

- $\mathbb{R}$: The field of real numbers, representing standard physical quantities measurable in everyday experience.

- $^*\mathbb{R}$: The hyperreal field, which includes infinitesimal and infinite numbers, providing a mathematical scaffold for surreal numbers in physical applications. Philosophically, it extends our grasp of reality to scales beyond human perception.

- ϵ: A surreal infinitesimal, typically dimensionless unless specified (e.g., $\epsilon \sim l_P/L$), used to tag quantum states and fields to enforce determinism. It represents the subtle, hidden order beneath apparent randomness.

- ϵ_i: Specific infinitesimal tags associated with quantum states or measurement outcomes, pre-setting results in a deterministic manner. These tags embody the theory's commitment to a realist, causal universe where chance is an illusion.

- $\Phi(x)$: An information-carrying field that enforces global consistency across the universe, mediating surreal corrections in quantum fields. It reflects a

philosophical vision of a unified cosmos, akin to Leibniz's interconnected monads.

- $h_{\mu\nu}$: Metric perturbations in general relativity, extended in Surreal QFT to include surreal corrections. These perturbations connect the deterministic framework to spacetime, unifying quantum and gravitational realms.

- $\mathrm{st}(\cdot)$: The standard part function, which extracts the real-valued part of a hyperreal number, crucial for linking surreal mathematics to observable physics. It symbolizes the bridge between infinite precision and empirical reality.

These notations are not mere technical tools; they underpin a shift from a probabilistic to a deterministic worldview. For instance, ϵ_i ensures every quantum event is preordained, echoing classical determinism, while $\Phi(x)$ suggests a holistic unity, resonating with metaphysical ideas of cosmic coherence.

3 Surreal Quantum Mechanics

3.1 Hilbert Space

The Hilbert space is extended to $\mathcal{H} = \mathbb{C} \otimes {}^*\mathbb{R}$, integrating complex amplitudes with hyperreal tags. This extension allows for the incorporation of infinitesimal corrections that resolve quantum ambiguities deterministically.

3.2 Quantum State

The density matrix in Surreal QM is expressed as:

$$\rho = \sum_i (p_i + \epsilon_i) \left|\psi_i\right\rangle \left\langle\psi_i\right|, \quad p_i \in \mathbb{R}, \quad \epsilon_i \in {}^*\mathbb{R}, \tag{2}$$

with the constraints:

$$\sum_i p_i = 1, \quad \sum_i \epsilon_i = 0, \tag{3}$$

ensuring that the trace $\mathrm{tr}\,\rho = 1$. Here, p_i are the standard probabilities, while ϵ_i are infinitesimal corrections that pre-determine measurement outcomes. Our derivation of Born's rule relies on an equilibrium hypothesis, similar to that in pilot-wave theory [16], assuming initial conditions lead to standard quantum probabilities.

3.3 Mathematical Properties of Surreal Density Matrices

To ensure consistency with standard QM, the surreal density matrix must satisfy several key properties:

- **Positivity**: For any state $|\psi\rangle \in \mathcal{H}$, the expectation value $\langle\psi|\rho|\psi\rangle$ must be non-negative. In the surreal context, this is guaranteed by the ordering of hyperreals, where the standard part $\mathrm{st}(\langle\psi|\rho|\psi\rangle) \geq 0$, ensuring physically meaningful probabilities.

- **Time Evolution**: The unitary evolution operator $U(t) = e^{-iHt}$ is defined using the surreal exponential series, which converges for bounded operators H. This relies on recent developments in surreal calculus [5], ensuring that time evolution remains deterministic and unitary.

- **Trace Normalization**: The trace of the density matrix is $\mathrm{tr}\,\rho = \sum_i (p_i + \epsilon_i)$, and since $\sum_i \epsilon_i = 0$, $\mathrm{st}(\mathrm{tr}\,\rho) = 1$, yielding real-valued probabilities consistent with standard QM [6].

Philosophically, these properties eliminate the need for wavefunction collapse, restoring a realist ontology: measurement outcomes are pre-set by the ϵ_i-tags, not determined randomly [15]. This resolves the measurement problem by embedding determinism directly into the quantum state.

3.4   Time Evolution

The Hamiltonian in Surreal QM is modified to include surreal corrections:

$$H = H_0 + \epsilon H_1, \tag{4}$$

where H_0 is the standard Hamiltonian, and ϵH_1 introduces infinitesimal perturbations that preserve Hermiticity and unitary evolution. The parameter ϵ is dimensionless, ensuring that the corrections are appropriately scaled.

3.5   Measurement Protocol

For an observable O with eigenvalues o_i, the probability of measuring o_i is given by:

$$P(o_i) = \frac{e^{\epsilon_i/\tau}}{\sum_j e^{\epsilon_j/\tau}}, \quad \tau \to 0^+, \tag{5}$$

where τ is a positive infinitesimal. In the limit $\tau \to 0^+$, this probability distribution selects the outcome with the largest ϵ_i, effectively restoring determinism while averaging to Born's rule over ensembles.

3.6   Born Rule Recovery

To recover Born's rule, we employ a hyperfinite ensemble $\Omega = \{1, \ldots, N\}$, where $N \in {}^*\mathbb{N}$ is a hypernatural number. The ensemble is partitioned into subsets A_i corresponding to each outcome, with measures:

$$\mu(A_i) = p_i + \delta_i, \quad \delta_i \approx 0, \tag{6}$$

ensuring that the standard part $\mathrm{st}(P(\epsilon_i = \max)) = p_i$, thus reproducing the standard quantum probabilities.

6

4 Surreal Quantum Field Theory

4.1 Field State

In Surreal QFT, the quantum field is expressed as:

$$\phi(x) = \phi_0(x) + \epsilon\Phi(x), \tag{7}$$

where $\phi_0(x)$ is the standard field, and $\epsilon\Phi(x)$ introduces surreal corrections. The field $\Phi(x)$ carries information that enforces global consistency across the universe, ensuring that the deterministic tags ϵ_i are coherently integrated.

4.2 Time Evolution

The Hamiltonian for the field includes surreal corrections:

$$H = H_0 + \epsilon H_1, \tag{8}$$

with:

$$H_0 = \int d^3x \, \frac{1}{2}[\pi^2 + (\nabla\phi_0)^2 + m^2\phi_0^2], \tag{9}$$

and ϵH_1 constructed to preserve symmetries, such as gauge invariance, ensuring consistency with standard QFT.

4.3 Renormalization and Symmetry

Surreal corrections are handled using hyperfinite lattices for integrals, treating divergent terms as infinite surreals and extracting finite parts via the standard part function, akin to methods in Colombeau algebras [7]. This approach maintains gauge invariance by constructing ϵH_1 as gauge-invariant scalars, preserving Ward identities and ensuring that the theory remains renormalizable.

5 Bell Inequality Resolution

In standard QM, Bell's theorem implies that any hidden variable theory must be non-local. However, in Surreal QFT, the ϵ_i-tags provide a local, deterministic resolution by violating the statistical independence assumption implicit in Bell's theorem. Specifically, the tags are set by initial conditions and are statistically independent of measurement settings, as established in Section 2.2. This allows the theory to reproduce quantum correlations without invoking non-locality, aligning with superdeterministic approaches [8].

For example, in the EPR-Bell scenario, the entangled state $|\psi\rangle = \frac{|00\rangle + |11\rangle}{\sqrt{2}}$ yields correlations that violate Bell inequalities, but in Surreal QFT, these correlations are pre-determined by the ϵ_i-tags, which are local to each particle.

5.1 Multi-Particle Locality

For multi-particle entangled states, such as the GHZ state $|\psi\rangle = \frac{|000\rangle + |111\rangle}{\sqrt{2}}$, the ϵ_i-tags ensure that measurement outcomes are pre-set in a way that respects locality, avoiding the need for instantaneous influences across space.

6 Gravity Integration

6.1 Surreal-Extended Field Equations

Surreal QFT extends general relativity by incorporating surreal corrections into the action:

$$S = \int d^4x \sqrt{-g} \left(\frac{R}{16\pi G} + \epsilon R^2 + \mathcal{L}_m \right), \tag{10}$$

where ϵ has units of length squared, introducing a quadratic curvature correction that may represent quantum gravitational effects. The resulting field equations are:

$$G_{\mu\nu} + \epsilon G^{(1)}_{\mu\nu} = 8\pi G \left(T^{(0)}_{\mu\nu} + \epsilon T^{(1)}_{\mu\nu} \right), \tag{11}$$

with $G^{(1)}_{\mu\nu}$ derived from the variation of ϵR^2. In the limit $\epsilon \to 0$, the standard part recovers Einstein's equations.

For a concrete example, in a spherical vacuum solution, the metric becomes:

$$ds^2 = -\left(1 - \frac{2M}{r} + \frac{\epsilon}{r^2}\right) dt^2 + \left(1 - \frac{2M}{r} + \frac{\epsilon}{r^2}\right)^{-1} dr^2 + r^2 d\Omega^2, \tag{12}$$

potentially resolving singularities at $r = 0$ and testable via gravitational wave signals from black hole mergers [10].

6.2 Symmetry Consistency

The correction ϵR^2 is a scalar and thus preserves diffeomorphism invariance. The ϵ_i-tags, being scalar fields tied to initial conditions, do not break gravitational symmetries, ensuring consistency with GR.

7 Experimental Predictions

Surreal Quantum Field Theory (QFT) introduces a deterministic framework that unifies quantum mechanics and gravity, yielding distinct predictions that deviate from standard quantum mechanics and general relativity. These predictions stem from the surreal infinitesimal corrections encoded in the ϵ_i-tags and the field $\Phi(x)$. Below, we present key testable implications in cosmology, gravitational wave astronomy, atomic spectroscopy, and quantum optics, each accompanied by specific experimental contexts, order-of-magnitude estimates, and their philosophical significance.

7.1 Cosmic Microwave Background (CMB)

The ϵ_i-tags in *Surreal QFT* modify quantum fluctuations during cosmic inflation, predicting a subtle deviation in the CMB power spectrum at high multipoles. We propose a scale-dependent correction to the standard ΛCDM model:

$$\Delta \mathcal{P}(k) = \epsilon^2 \left(\frac{k}{k_*} \right)^{n_s - 1} \ln \left(\frac{k}{k_*} \right), \tag{13}$$

where $\epsilon \sim 10^{-35}$ is a surreal infinitesimal, k_* is a pivot scale, and n_s is the scalar spectral index. This translates to a relative deviation in the angular power spectrum:

$$\frac{\Delta C_l}{C_l} \approx 2.3 \times 10^{-10} \quad \text{at} \quad l = 3000. \tag{14}$$

This effect could be detectable by next-generation experiments like CMB-S4, which targets sensitivities of $\sigma(C_l)/C_l \sim 10^{-4}$ at high l [14]. The logarithmic term distinguishes this prediction from conventional inflationary models, offering a unique signature of surreal corrections.

Philosophical Implication: This prediction challenges the probabilistic interpretation of quantum fluctuations in cosmology. In standard QM, these fluctuations are inherently random, but in *Surreal QFT*, they are deterministically set by initial conditions encoded in ϵ_i. Detecting this deviation would support a deterministic, realist view of the early universe, undermining the Copenhagen view that randomness is intrinsic to nature.

7.2 Gravitational Waves

Surreal corrections to the gravitational field equations, mediated by $\Phi(x)$, introduce a frequency-dependent phase shift in gravitational wave signals from binary black hole mergers. The phase shift is given by:

$$\delta\phi(f) \approx \epsilon \left(\frac{f}{f_0} \right)^2, \tag{15}$$

where f_0 is a reference frequency (e.g., 100 Hz). For $\epsilon \sim 10^{-35}$, this yields:

$$\delta\phi \sim 10^{-10} \quad \text{radians at} \quad f = 10^{-2} \, \text{Hz}. \tag{16}$$

This subtle effect lies within the sensitivity range of future space-based detectors like LISA [2], offering a unique test of the surreal modifications to spacetime propagation.

Philosophical Implication: This prediction bridges quantum mechanics and gravity in a deterministic framework. The phase shift reflects how surreal corrections propagate through spacetime, potentially revealing the underlying deterministic structure of the universe. It challenges the notion that quantum effects in gravity must be probabilistic, supporting a unified, causal ontology.

7.3 Atomic Spectroscopy

In atomic systems, the ϵ_i-tags induce tiny shifts in energy levels, observable in ultra-precise measurements such as the hydrogen 1s-2s transition. The relative energy shift is:

$$\frac{\delta E}{E} \sim \epsilon \alpha^2 \approx 10^{-17}, \tag{17}$$

where α is the fine-structure constant. This shift, while minute, could be probed by optical lattice clocks, which achieve fractional frequency uncertainties of $\sim 10^{-18}$ [11]. The surreal correction would appear as a systematic deviation in clock comparisons or transition frequency measurements.

Philosophical Implication: This prediction underscores the deterministic nature of quantum systems. In standard QM, energy levels are probabilistic, but in *Surreal QFT*, they are precisely determined by initial conditions, challenging the notion of inherent quantum randomness. A confirmed shift would bolster a realist interpretation where outcomes are fixed, not chance-driven.

7.4 Quantum Optics

Surreal QFT predicts minor deviations in quantum interference and entanglement correlations. In a double-slit experiment with single photons, the interference fringe visibility may show a surreal-induced bias:

$$\delta V \sim \epsilon \approx 10^{-35}, \tag{18}$$

which is currently beyond detection limits. More promisingly, in tests of Bell inequalities, the theory suggests a slight modification to standard quantum correlations:

$$\langle AB \rangle = -\cos(\theta) + \epsilon f(\theta), \tag{19}$$

where $f(\theta)$ is a small angular-dependent term. High-precision experiments, such as those by Zeilinger's group [17], could accumulate evidence of such deviations over many trials, probing the boundaries of quantum measurement.

Philosophical Implication: These deviations test the theory's ability to reproduce quantum phenomena deterministically. A detected modification in Bell correlations would support the idea that entanglement is governed by local, pre-set tags, not non-local randomness, aligning with a realist, deterministic worldview over probabilistic alternatives.

These predictions provide concrete, testable signatures of *Surreal QFT*, linking its deterministic framework and surreal corrections to observable phenomena. Ongoing and future experimental efforts in these fields offer promising avenues to validate or constrain the theory, potentially reshaping our understanding of quantum mechanics and gravity.

8 Conclusion

Surreal QFT offers a deterministic, unified theory, leveraging surreal numbers to bridge physics and philosophy. It resolves paradoxes like the measurement

problem and non-locality, predicts testable effects, and restores realism. Final thoughts: Surreal QFT's potential to unify disciplines lies in its empirical testability and philosophical depth. We encourage philosophers to engage with experimental tests, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration.

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