

The Grand Design's Unintended Arguments for the Existence of God

Let me add to the book review of *The Grand Design* by Stephen Hawking and Leonard Mlodinow (*PSCF* 63, no. 2 [2011]: 132-3). The book actually provides strong positive evidence in support of the existence of God. In chapter 7 entitled "The Apparent Miracle," the authors make the following assertions:

Most of the fundamental constants in our theories appear fine-tuned in the sense that if they were altered by only modest amounts, the universe would be qualitatively different, and in most cases unsuited for the development of life. (p. 160)

The laws of nature form a system that is extremely fine-tuned, and very little in physical law can be altered without destroying the possibility of the development of life as we know it. Were it not for a series of startling coincidences in the precise details of physical law, it seems, humans and similar life-forms would never have come into being. (p. 161)

The universe and its laws appear to have a design that both is tailor-made to support us, and if we are to exist, leaves little room for alteration. (p. 162)

[For example,] if protons were 0.2% heavier they would decay into neutrons, destabilizing atoms. (p. 160)

These facts are examples of what is sometimes called an anthropic principle.

Hawking and Mlodinow then assert, "Many people would like us to use these coincidences as evidence for the work of God" (p. 163). I myself am one of those many people, since it seems like the most reasonable conclusion to draw from these facts. Indeed, Hawking and Mlodinow should be thanked for providing us with such a clear and concise exposition of this presently available scientific evidence in support of the existence of God.

There is also a logical inconsistency in Hawking and Mlodinow's argumentation. Near the beginning of the first chapter, they propose a "model-dependent realism" theory of what they claim is the best characterization of reality that is available for us. They assert,

But there may be different ways in which one could model the same physical situation, with each employing different fundamental elements and concepts. If two such physical theories or models accurately predict the same events, one cannot be said to be more real than the other; rather, we are free to use whichever model is more convenient. (p. 7)

They then apply this approach to general explanations of the universe. For example, a typical physicist model (TP-model) of the universe would encompass all of the known and experimentally verified laws and theories of physics such as the laws of thermodynamics and electromagnetism, the theories of relativity and quantum mechanics, and the standard model of elementary particle interactions. Hawking and Mlodinow would doubtless agree with the wisdom of adapting this TP-model.

Let us go one step further and consider two somewhat enhanced TP-models which accept all verified laws and

theories of physics, but which add a judgment about the existence of God. Consider an atheistic (ATP-)model of physical reality which denies the reality of a god, and a deistic (DTP-)model which affirms God as the Creator. Since belief in God has no effect on the outcome of an experiment in physics, both models agree equally well with observation, and one is therefore at liberty "to use whichever model is more convenient." According to "model-dependent realism," any one of these three models is just as appropriate for use, and just as well "conforms to reality." This means that the argumentation against the existence of God found throughout their book is, in reality, a denial of the central postulate of "model-dependent realism." To be logically self-consistent, Hawking and Mlodinow are obliged to accept the TP-, ATP-, and DTP-models as equally authentic representations of reality. Their decision to espouse the ATP-model and repudiate the DTP-model is a flagrant rejection of the central claim of "model-dependent realism."

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It Is Time for Advocates of Evolutionary Origins of Information to Use a More Balanced Approach

I have read with interest the three articles published in the December 2011 issue of *PSCF* on biological information, and the evolutionary origins of genetic information. All three authors have taken special care to demonstrate that complex systems such as living cells need not involve an intelligent source. Those arguments, however, leave me with an uneasy feeling as a Christian who is committed to upholding truth claims that can be learned from God's two books: nature and scripture. The reasons for my concern are as follows:

1. Whether done consciously or unconsciously, there *seems to be a tendency* to give special homage to Darwinian evolution at the *expense* of biblical insights. It seems as if the book of nature is primary and scripture is secondary. This is particularly apparent in Freeland's article, where he describes the evolutionary origin of genetic information with great erudition, but ends his treatise with what seems like a *perfunctory* allusion to "a loving creator God." No effort is made to show in what ways God expresses himself in his creation, other than by the author himself *choosing* to believe that he does. There is no way for me to distinguish such a position from what can be called "functional deism."
2. In my encounter with college youth, I have found most of them to be *unable* to distinguish between methodological naturalism and ontological naturalism. As most atheists and agnostics do, they confuse the mechanical/scientific theory approach of Darwinian or neo-Darwinian evolution with its comprehensive worldview implications. Thus, Dawkins's notorious statement that "*Darwin made the world safe for atheism*" is gaining foothold everywhere. No wonder so many young people end up losing their fragile faith in