



Fine Tuning the Multiverse Theory

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A friend of mine was enjoying a coffee break at an Open University seminar for his philosophy course. Out of the blue, a colleague asked him, "Why do you believe in God?" He was a bit taken aback but, after a few deep breaths, managed to order his thoughts and summarised several different lines of argument. As he did so, he found that other conversations in the room gradually stopped, until everyone was listening to him. When he finished, his questioner said, "That is amazing. I have never heard anyone answer that question before. In fact, I did not think that Christians had reasons for belief in God."

Certainly, the reasons we can offer are diverse, and some seem more compelling than others. I was particularly interested to see recently the 90 minute DVD called "Collision", which features atheist Christopher Hitchens and Christian pastor Douglas Wilson in dialogue on a book promotion tour.[1] I have yet to read their book, which is a conversation between them on the subject, "Is Christianity Good for the World?"

The film, anyway, is sharp, quirky and engaging. They both speak with wit and candour, and don't pull any punches. On the dust cover, Hitchens is quoted as saying, "Christianity is a wicked cult and it is high time we left it behind." Wilson is quoted alongside saying, "There are two tenets of atheism. One, there is no God. Two, I hate him." This rough and tumble dialogue is certainly educational, though not for the faint-hearted!

Despite appearances, they both hold each other in mutual respect, and this is shown in a number of informal exchanges, where they have almost

forgotten that the cameras are still rolling. A particular sequence comes right at the end of the film, when they are relaxing together as passengers in a car.

Hitchens raised the question as to which was the strongest argument used against atheists and he had no difficulty in identifying it. "The fine-tuning argument we all agree is the most intriguing. It is not trivial – we all say that." Here he is clearly speaking for his New Atheist friends. Hitchens is emphatic and repeats the point, "We all agree about that."

Now one might be forgiven for not realising this, as Dawkins is quite dismissive of the fine-tuning argument. He states the problem correctly: "Physicists have calculated that, if the laws and constants of physics had been even slightly different, the universe would have developed in such a way that life would have been impossible." This mystery has become known as the Goldilocks Enigma, because the universe appears to be 'just right' for us in the same way as the little bear's porridge, chair and bed were all 'just right' for Goldilocks in the children's story.

Dawkins concludes, "As ever, the theist's answer is deeply unsatisfying, because it leaves the existence of God unexplained. A God capable of calculating the Goldilocks values ... would have to be at least as improbable as the finely tuned combination of numbers itself, and that is very improbable indeed." He is left marvelling at the number of people, who seem genuinely satisfied by the 'Divine Knob-Twiddler' argument, as he crudely puts it.[2]

Let us then revisit the argument. For the universe to exist as it does and allow intelligent life to exist, it requires an astonishing series of 'coincidences' to have occurred. Stephen Hawking suggested that it is like a hoard of monkeys hammering away on typewriters and by pure chance eventually producing one of Shakespeare's sonnets.[3]

The remarkable fact is that the values of these numbers seem to have been very finely adjusted to make possible the development of life... It seems clear that there are relatively few ranges of values for the numbers that would allow the development of any form of intelligent life. Most sets of values would give rise to universes that, although they

In fact, I think I heard old William chuckle the other day, unless it was thunder. He must have been reading his copy of *New Scientist*, dated 28 October 2009.[12] An article entitled 'Multiplying universes: How many is the multiverse?' put forward the latest thinking from cosmologists Andre Linde and Vitaly Vanchurin, suggesting a number of 10 to the power of 10 to the power of 10 million universes. Unlike the String theorist figure of 10 with 500 zeroes after it, this new figure could not possibly be written out. Interestingly, the article itself gets the number wrong, greatly underestimating its size – they evidently couldn't believe it either! It is a number so utterly vast as to defy any sensible comment!

Having said that, is it possible that this is either a little cosmological joke (ho, ho, ho!) or have they produced something very close to a mathematical proof for the existence of God? Either way, I cannot imagine that the New Atheists will fall over themselves in their rush to comment!

References:

[1] Available from Amazon. See www.collisionmovie.com.

[2] Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, p.143.

[3] Hawking, *A Brief History of Time*, p.123.

[4] *Ibid.*, p.125.

[5] Davies quoted by Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, p.158.

[6] Hawking, *A Brief History of Time*, p.125.

[7] *Ibid.*, p.122.

[8] Craig, *God, Are you There?* p.22.

[9] Davies, *The Goldilocks Enigma*, p.197.

[10] *Ibid.*, p192.

[11] *Ibid.*, p196.

[12]

www.newscientist.com/article/mg20427323.700-multiplying-universes-how-many-is-the-multiverse.html.

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