

**FEATURE: Did the Universe Know We Were Coming? – Antony Flew
(Third in SERIES of 4)**

VOICE: Professor, I dreamed last night about a luxurious holiday. In my dream, the hotel where I stayed pampered me with all my favorite things.

PROF.: That sounds very enjoyable. Tell me about it.

FORMAT: THEME AND ANNOUNCEMENT

PROF.: British emeritus philosophy professor Dr. Antony Flew began his next chapter, “Imagine entering a hotel room on your next vacation. The CD player on the bedside table is softly playing a track from your favorite recording. The framed print over the bed is identical to the image that hangs over your fireplace at home. The room is scented with your favorite fragrance. You shake your head in amazement and drop your bags on the floor.”

He continues, “When you open the refrigerator, you stare in wonder at the contents. Your favorite beverages. Even the brand of bottled water you prefer.

“You gaze around the room. You notice the book on the desk is the latest volume by your favorite author. You switch on the television; it is tuned to your favorite channel.”

VOICE: What is he illustrating?

PROF.: He continues, “Chances are, with each new discovery about your hospitable environment, you would be less inclined to think it was all a mere coincidence, right? You might wonder how the hotel managers acquired such detailed information about you. You might marvel at their meticulous preparation. You might even double-check what all this is going to cost you. ***But you would certainly be inclined to believe that someone knew you were coming!***”

That's the way Prof. Flew introduced a chapter entitled “Did the Universe Know We Were Coming?” It's chapter six of the book that this former atheist calls *There Is a God*.

VOICE: What does he mean, “Did the Universe Know We Were Coming?”

PROF.: He explains, “That vacation scenario is a clumsy, limited parallel to the so-called fine-tuning argument. The recent popularity of this argument has highlighted a new dimension of the laws of nature.”

The chapter title is inspired by a statement from physicist Freeman Dyson: “The more I examine the universe and study the details of its architecture, the more evidence I find that the universe in some sense knew you were coming.”

- VOICE: I think I understand. The laws of nature seem to have been deliberately chosen, to make a universe where life can exist.
- PROF.: When scientists study the most basic laws of physics, they realize that if the value of even one of the fundamental constants had been even slightly different, then no planet capable of permitting human life could have formed. Two of the many examples are the speed of light and the mass of an electron. They have to be exactly what they are, or life on Earth could not exist.
- VOICE: If I understand correctly, very few scientists claim that this fine-tuning was purely a result of chance factors at work in a single universe.
- PROF.: You're right. So they try to explain this fine-tuning in either of two ways. Some scientists think it's possible that our universe is not the only universe. They speculate about multiple universes – a multiverse. They imagine that maybe many universes began to develop but went wrong in some detail and failed to develop – but that our universe got lucky.
- VOICE: You said there are *two* possible explanations for the fine-tuned precision that makes life possible. What is the other one?
- PROF.: Theoretical scientist John Leslie reasons in his book *Infinite Minds*, that fine-tuning is best explained by divine design. He thinks the idea of a wise God makes more sense than the idea of mindless matter assembling itself in precise ways. He says no one instance of fine tuning convinces him, but he is persuaded by the fact that these arguments exist *in such large numbers*.
- VOICE: ...That the universe contains *so many* fine-tuned features.
- PROF.: Yes. Dr. Leslie writes, “If, then, there were aspects of nature's workings that appeared very fortunate and also entirely fundamental, then these might well be seen as evidence specially favoring belief in God.” He lists several examples of nature's “fortunate” and “fundamental” aspects. He says one or two of these details might have happened by chance, but *the combination of many dozens of them* strongly implies a designer made them.
- VOICE: I've been reading about the multiple-universe hypothesis, and I think it's worth discussing. Cosmologist Martin Rees writes, “Any universe hospitable to life...has to be adjusted in a particular way. The prerequisites for any life of the kind that we know about – long-lived stable stars; stable atoms such as carbon, oxygen and silicon, able to combine into complex molecules, etc. – are sensitive to the physical laws and to the size, expansion rate and contents of the universe.”
- He says if there are many universes with different laws and physical constants, fine tuning would not be surprising on at least one of them.

- PROF.: Dr. Rees suggests three different ideas of how a multiverse might have originated. But he admits that all of them are “highly speculative.”
He notes that only one of them can be right. And, in fact, he adds, “*Quite possibly none is [right]*: there are alternative theories that lead just to one universe.”
- VOICE: But he says that, if the universe is infinite, “anything that can happen, will happen.”
- PROF.: Physicist Dr. Paul Davies answers that “it is *trivially true* that, in an infinite universe, anything that can happen will happen.”
- VOICE: *Trivially true?* Is he saying that, even if that idea might be true, it has no significance?
- PROF.: Yes. This is not an explanation at all. If we are trying to understand why the universe contains at least one planet where animals and man can live, we are not helped by being told that all possible universes might exist. “It explains everything and nothing.”
- VOICE: “It explains everything and nothing”? What does he mean by that?
- PROF.: It is a claim that can't be tested. Davies says the idea of a multiverse replaces the rationally ordered real world with an infinitely complex imaginary arrangement that makes the whole idea of “explanation” meaningless.
- VOICE: We can't directly observe the origin of the universe, because we can't go back in time. But what would be a more logical explanation than the multiverse speculation?
- PROF.: Oxford University philosopher Dr. Richard Swinburne says, “It’s crazy to postulate a trillion...universes to explain the features of one universe, when *postulating one entity, God, will do the job.*”
- VOICE: That makes sense. It is less logical to speculate that there are a trillion universes to explain the features of one universe, than to reason that one God could make the only universe that we know exists.
- PROF.: Prof. Flew says three things about fine tuning.
First, we know definitely that we live in a universe with certain laws and constants, and that life would not have been possible if some of these laws and constants had been different.
Second, the fact that the existing laws and constants allow the *survival* of life, does not answer the question of the *origin* of life!

VOICE: For example, the food and water and air that *keep* us alive, don't *make* us alive.

PROF.: Third, the fact that it is logically possible that there may be multiple universes with their own laws of nature, does not show that such universes do exist.
There is currently no evidence in support of a multiverse. It remains a speculative idea.

VOICE: Then why is the multiverse idea popular?

PROF.: Partly because scientists try to find scientific explanations of everything.
A second reason that many people like the multiverse idea, is that it gives them a semi-logical alternative to believing in God.

VOICE: Why do you say it's only a "*semi*-logical" substitute for God?

PROF.: Even if multiple universes do exist, these speculations don't explain how the laws of nature originated. To ask how the laws governing the multiverse originated is the same as asking how the laws of nature in general originated.
Prof. Flew concludes the chapter entitled "Did the Universe Know We Were Coming?" with this summary statement: "So multiverse or not, we still have to come to terms with the origin of the laws of nature. And the only viable explanation here is the divine mind."

VOICE: God's mind.

PROF.: Yes.

VOICE: So, did the universe know we were coming?

PROF.: The God who *made* the universe knew. God knew He would be creating us humans. So he prepared the universe and Earth for us, "fine-tuning" all the details to make the universe function smoothly – and to make the kind of atmosphere and temperature and thousands of other details that would enable us to live here.

VOICE: He did that even more carefully and thoughtfully than the manager "tuned" all the details for my arrival at his hotel.

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Contact us:

If you live in India:

E-mail: testtube@radio882.com

Postal address:

Truth in the Test Tube
P.O. Box 4320
Bangalore 560043 India
Telephone: 91-984-561-6412

From other countries:

E-mail: truthtest@truthinthetesttube.org

Postal address:

Truth in the Test Tube
TWR
P.O. Box 8700
Cary, NC 27512-8700
U.S.A.