A Universe of Pitiless Indifference?

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Gazing up at the stars, what do you see? What of the size of the universe? Even just a passing knowledge of astronomy reveals the hugeness of the numbers that are truly "astronomical." 400 billion stars just in our own galaxy, the Milky Way. Ten billion trillion stars estimated in the whole Universe. A rough guess, for who's counting?

Then think about the light that's coming from them. The light from Alpha Centauri, the nearest star to planet Earth, takes four years to get here, even traveling at 186,000 miles per second! The light from Rigel, the blue star in Orion, takes over 900 years to get here. So the light we now see is like looking back into the past to the twelfth century!

On the other end of the physical scale, the atomic physicist finds a universe in a single atom, its electrons orbiting protons and neutrons, and even further down to the sub-atomic particles of pentaquarks and mu-mesons…

All controlled by laws and processes that seemingly become more complex by the year. Formerly, Newton's laws—motion, gravitation, and so on—appeared easy enough. You could imagine them in terms of billiard balls bouncing off each other on the table… But now it becomes that much harder to conceive, especially when Heisenberg's principle affirms that a scientific observer can identify where a particle is or its speed, but not both. Quantum mechanics takes us down unfamiliar paths of probabilities and statistical values, where to the commonsense mind nothing seems certain anymore. And when such theorists start talk about string theory and dark matter and cosmic inflation, it seems like a cosmic game played with strings in the dark.

Does it make any sense? Maybe the universe it much more complex than we once thought. Perhaps we do not understand all its laws, what makes it "tick." But even so, is it just a mass of rules and laws, just a mechanical object that has no meaning, though admitting its incredible complexity.

Some say that's exactly what the universe it. The product of the interplay of physical forces, with no rhyme or reason. A "thing" that just "is," without any reason for right or wrong, for moral or ethical values, for beauty or compassion or love.

Just a mechanical whirling random meaningless incomprehensible blob of matter and energy.

Concludes Richard Dawkins, "In a universe of electrons and selfish genes, blind physical forces and genetic replication, some people are going to get hurt, other people are going to get lucky, and you won't find any rhyme or reason in it, nor any justice. The universe that we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil, no good, nothing but pitiless indifference."[1]

Is it true? A universe of pitiless indifference? Is that an objective assessment, or is that as subjective a comment as any other interpretation that might be given?

What are the precise properties of the universe, and how do we relate to them?

Interestingly, scientists are finding that more and more the universe in which we find ourselves is exactly the kind of universe that we can exist in. Either we exist in this universe because it is the only kind of universe among all possible universes in which we could exist (!); or we exist because the universe and us were deliberately made to be able to exist together.

The physical laws have been so fine tuned that even the tiniest changes would make life, our existence, or our planet impossible to occur.

The conclusion of Stephen Hawking, when looking at the way the universe is thought to have started, is that "It would be very difficult to explain why the Universe should have begun in just this way, except as the act of a God who intended to create beings like us."[2]

Astrophysicist Fred Hoyle concluded after looking at some very specific evidence:

"A commonsense interpretation of the facts suggests that a superintellect has monkeyed with physics, as well as chemistry and biology, and that there are no blind forces worth speaking about in nature. The numbers one calculates from the facts seem to me so overwhelming as to put this conclusion almost beyond question."[3]

A superintellect monkeying with the physics? As if some creator Being was making sure the laws were fixed so his intended result "came out right"!

We live in a universe that has great evidence of specific design and purpose, where the laws have been so arranged for our existence. That's hard to conceive of in a universe of "electrons and selfish genes, blind physical forces." It's just too *illogical* to believe in so much *random chance*—in fact such a theory becomes less and less believable the more evidence of how remote the possibility is that the universe, life, and us ourselves came about by mere chance. Writes Hugh Ross:

"The bottom line is that the universe is at least ten billion orders of magnitude (a factor of $10^{10,000,000,000}$ times) too small or too young for life to have assembled itself by natural processes."[4]

In other words, the odds of life occurring in our universe are so low that you cannot accept such an idea. It's simply not scientific to place your belief in such extremely low probabilities. The chance is effectively zero.

And that's just one aspect—let alone the other aspects of physical laws and the whole issue of human origins!

Meaning in a meaningless universe

Just as significantly, why are we looking for meaning and purpose anyway? In a meaningless universe, why would any being arise that sought to look for meaning? There is no mechanism by which such a being could occur in the first place.

As C.S. Lewis writes, "If the whole universe has no meaning, we should never have found out that it has no meaning: just as, if there were no light in the universe and therefore no creatures with eyes, we should never know it was dark."[5]

The whole concept of meaning has no meaning in a meaningless universe.

So when Greek playwright Euripides asked his famous question:

"Do we, holding that the gods exist, deceive ourselves with insubstantial dreams and lies, while random careless chance and change alone control the world?"

—the obvious question in response is how would such a question occur in a universe is based on "random careless chance?"

The evidence and our existence say *no* to a universe of pitiless indifference. On the contrary, what we see, both from the physical world around us and from our higher values, our search for meaning, is a universe that only makes sense with God.

A God who made the universe "just so," a God who gave us principles of truth, right, and love, and a God who seeks to bring us back to him.

Not pitiless indifference. The kind and compassionate actions of a gracious God who intimately concerns himself with us, his children he loves so much.

References

1. Richard Dawkins in "God's Utility Function," *Scientific American*, November 1995, p. 85.

2. Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time*, (New York: Bantam, 1988), p.127

3. Fred Hoyle in *Engineering and Science*, Nov 1981, cited in *The World Treasury of Physics*, Timothy Ferris (ed.), 1991, p. 392.

4. http://www.reasons.org/resources/apologetics/newproofs.shtml?main

5. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*.