

D. Fisher
1600 words

**FEATURE: Who Wrote Nature's Laws? – Antony Flew
(Second in SERIES of 4)**

PROF.: Two things remained constant throughout Prof. Antony Flew's life: His mind concentrated on “the big questions” – and he was determined to follow the evidence honestly, wherever it would lead.

VOICE: But as new scientific information was discovered, that principle led him to change – to reach a conclusion completely opposite from his original ideas.

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VOICE: Professor, you mentioned that “big questions” occupied Prof. Flew's mind. What questions did he consider “big” or important?

PROF.: Toward the end of chapter 4 of his book, Prof. Flew answers, “The first is the question that puzzled and continues to puzzle most reflective scientists: How did the laws of nature come to be? The second is...how did life...originate from nonlife? And the third is...how did the universe...come into existence?”

VOICE: Those are certainly important questions: How did the laws of nature come to be? How did life originate from nonlife? And how did the universe come into existence?”

PROF.: He entitled Chapter 5, “Who Wrote the Laws of Nature?” He began, “Perhaps the most popular...argument for God's existence is the so-called argument from design. According to this argument, the design that is apparent in nature suggests the existence of a cosmic Designer.”

VOICE: Some people call it the “argument *from* design.” Others call it the “argument *to* design.”

PROF.: Prof. Flew says, “I have often stressed that this is actually an argument *to* design *from* order, as such arguments proceed from the perceived order in nature to show evidence of design and, thus, a Designer.”

VOICE: During more than seven decades as an atheist, Prof. Flew rejected this argument to design. What made him change his mind?

PROF.: He said, “Developments in two areas in particular have led me to this conclusion. The first is the question of the origin of the laws in nature and the related insights of eminent modern scientists. The second is the question of the origin of life and reproduction.”

VOICE: How did he define “laws of nature”?

PROF.: He answered, “By law, I simply mean a regularity...in nature.” One example is Newton's first law of motion...

VOICE: ...“An object at rest remains at rest unless acted upon by an external force; an object in motion remains in motion unless acted upon by an external force.”

PROF.: That's a “regularity” or “law,” because it describes the way some aspect of nature reliably behaves. Prof. Flew pointed out, “The important point is not merely that there are regularities in nature, but that these regularities are *mathematically precise, universal, and ‘tied together.’*”

VOICE: They work smoothly together.

PROF.: Prof. Flew put the idea into perspective: “The question we should ask is how nature came packaged in this fashion. This is certainly the question that scientists from Newton to Einstein to Heisenberg have asked – and answered. Their answer was the Mind of God.”

VOICE: Several centuries ago this was a common view among scientists, including Isaac Newton and James Maxwell. But do present-day scientists ever talk about things like “the Mind of God”?

PROF.: Yes. Dr. Flew quoted several notable examples? One example is British cosmologist Dr. Stephen Hawking. He holds the position that Sir Isaac Newton occupied during his lifetime, Lucasian [loo-KAY-see-un]¹ Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge University.

Dr. Hawking told an interviewer, “The more we discover about the universe, the more we find that it is governed by rational laws.” His book *A Brief History of Time* was on British best-seller lists for five entire years. In it, Hawking discussed the question of why we exist and why the universe exists. He said, “If we find the answer to that, it would be the ultimate triumph of human reason – for then we should know the mind of God.”

VOICE: I've read conflicting statements about what Einstein believed. One quotation from him was “I want to know how God created this world... I want to know his thoughts, the rest are details.” But some authors have claimed Einstein was an atheist.

1 Named for a man named Lucas.

PROF.: Einstein answered that question, “I’m not an atheist... We are in the position of a little child entering a huge library filled with books in many languages. The child knows someone must have written those books. It does not know how. It does not understand the languages in which they are written. The child dimly suspects a mysterious order in the arrangement of the books but doesn’t know what it is. That, it seems to me, is the attitude of even the most intelligent human being toward God. We see the universe marvelously arranged and obeying certain laws but only dimly understand these laws...”

Another time Einstein said God makes himself known in the laws of the universe.

VOICE: Einstein sometimes wrote about “a superior mind,” “a superior reasoning force,” and “the mysterious force that moves the constellations.”

PROF.: He also wrote, “Anyone who is seriously engaged in the pursuit of science becomes convinced that the laws of nature manifest the existence of a Spirit vastly superior to that of men, and one in the face of which we with our modest powers must feel humble.”

VOICE: Besides Einstein, have other Nobel Prize-winning scientists expressed a belief that God exists?

PROF.: Yes. Nobel physicist Erwin Schrödinger stated, “The scientific picture of the world around me is very deficient. It gives me a lot of factual information, puts all our experience in a magnificently consistent order, but is ghastly silent about all that is really near to our heart, that really matters to us. ...It knows nothing of beauty and ugly, good or bad, God and eternity. Science sometimes pretends to answer questions in these domains, but the answers are very often so silly that we are not inclined to take them seriously.”

VOICE: I also read that Schrödinger called the idea of God “the most sublime idea that presents itself to the human mind.”

PROF.: Nobel laureate Max Planck said, “There can never be any real opposition between religion and science; for the one is the complement of the other.” He also said, “Religion and natural science are fighting a joint battle in an incessant, never-relaxing crusade against skepticism and against dogmatism, against unbelief and superstition...”

Nobel-winning quantum physicist Paul Dirac [dee-RAHK] observed, “God is a mathematician of a very high order and He used advanced mathematics in constructing the universe.”

- VOICE: So, many famous scientists agree that their discoveries fit the argument to design – and imply that a very intelligent creator-God exists.
- PROF.: Templeton Prize winner Paul Davies agrees, “Science can proceed only if a scientist adopts an essentially theological worldview. ...[E]ven the most atheistic scientist accepts as an act of faith the existence of a law-like order in nature that is at least in part comprehensible to us.” The laws of nature are written in cosmic code that scientists decipher. Davies says the intricacy that we discover in nature is so “fantastic” that “It points to a deeper underlying meaning to existence.”
- Oxford University philosopher John Foster is convinced that the best explanation of why nature operates by a scientific law is that God's mind made nature. He says it is logical to think that God “creates the laws by imposing the regularities on the world...”
- Philosopher of science Richard Swinburne reasons that a personal God is the best explanation of the way the laws of nature operate.
- VOICE: In our previous episode, Prof. Flew illustrated a point by referring to a primitive civilization discovering a satellite phone. He imagined the natives arguing about whether the phone was *originating* the voices that came from it, or whether it was *relaying* voices from humans speaking at a distant place.
- PROF.: In this chapter, he refers again to it, saying, “...[T]he laws of nature pose a problem for atheists because [these laws] are a voice of rationality heard through the mechanisms of matter.”
- VOICE: The laws of nature are a voice of rationality heard through the mechanism of matter? Similar to the way a human voice is heard through the “mechanism” of a telephone?
- PROF.: Yes. Dr. Paul Davies says, “Science is based on the assumption that the universe is thoroughly rational and logical at all levels. Atheists claim that the laws [of nature] exist reasonlessly and that the universe is ultimately absurd.”
- VOICE: Probably the most famous person who thinks that, is Nobel Prize-winning physicist Dr. Stephen Weinberg, who is an atheist. He said, “The more the universe seems comprehensible, the more it also seems pointless. The effort to understand the universe is one of the very few things that lifts human life a little above the level of farce, and gives it some of the grace of tragedy.”

PROF.: Prof. Flew reacted, “As a scientist, I find this hard to accept.” The universe is arranged in a logical, orderly way. So our logical minds tell us that the universe is the work of a logical engineer and builder.

As a former atheist, Dr. Flew concluded chapter 5 of his book entitled *There Is a God* with these words: “Those scientists who point to the Mind of God do not merely advance a series of arguments or process of...reasoning. ...It is a vision that I personally find compelling and irrefutable.”

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