



DOES SCIENCE ARGUE FOR OR AGAINST GOD?

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In 1966 Time magazine ran a cover story asking: “Is God Dead?” The cover reflected the fact that many people had accepted the cultural narrative that God is obsolete – that, as science progresses there is less need for a “God” to explain the universe. It turns out, though, that the rumors of God’s death were premature. In fact, perhaps the best arguments for his existence come from – of all places – science itself.

Here’s the story: The same year Time featured its now-famous headline, the astronomer Carl Sagan announced that there were two necessary criteria for a planet to support life: The right kind of star, and a planet the right distance from that star. Given the roughly octillion planets in the universe – that’s 1 followed by 24 zeros – there should have been about septillion planets – that’s 1 followed by 21 zeros – capable of supporting life.

With such spectacular odds, scientists were optimistic that the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence, known by its initials, SETI, an ambitious project launched in the 1960’s, was sure to turn up something soon. With a vast radio telescopic network, scientists listened for signals that resembled coded intelligence. But as the years passed, the silence from the universe was deafening. As of 2014, researchers have discovered precisely *nothing*, nada, zilch, which is to say zero followed by an infinite number of zeros.

What happened? As our knowledge of the universe increased, it became clear that there were, in fact, far more factors necessary for life – let alone intelligent life – than Sagan supposed. His two parameters grew to 10, then 20, and then 50, which meant that the number of potentially life-supporting planets decreased accordingly. The number dropped to a few thousand planets and kept on plummeting.

Even SETI proponents acknowledged the problem. Peter Schenkel wrote in a 2006 piece for *Skeptical Inquirer*, a magazine that strongly affirms atheism: “In light of new findings and insights . . . We should quietly admit that the early estimates . . . may no longer be tenable.”

Today there are more than 200 known parameters necessary for a planet to support life—every single one of which must be perfectly met, or the whole thing falls apart. For example, without a massive, gravity-rich planet like Jupiter nearby to draw away asteroids, Earth would be more like an interstellar dartboard than the verdant orb that it is.

Simply put, the odds against life in the universe are astonishing.

Yet here we are, not only existing, but talking about existing. What can account for it? Can every one of those many parameters have been perfectly met by accident? At what point is it fair

to admit that it is science itself that suggests that we cannot be the result of random forces? Doesn't assuming that an intelligence created these perfect conditions in fact require far less faith than believing that a life-sustaining Earth just happened to beat the inconceivable odds?

But wait, there's more.

The fine-tuning necessary for life to exist on a planet is nothing compared with the fine-tuning required for the universe to exist at all. For example, astrophysicists now know that the values of the four fundamental forces -- gravity, the electromagnetic force, and the "strong" and "weak" nuclear forces -- were determined less than one millionth of a second after the big bang. Alter any one of these four values ever so slightly and the universe as we know it could not exist.

For instance, if the ratio between the strong nuclear force and the electromagnetic force had been off by the tiniest fraction of the tiniest, inconceivable fraction then no stars could have formed at all. Multiply that single parameter by all the other necessary conditions, and the odds against the universe existing are so heart-stoppingly astronomical that the notion that it all "just happened" defies common sense. It would be like tossing a coin and having it come up heads 10 quintillion times in a row. I don't think so.

Fred Hoyle, the astronomer who coined the term "big bang," said that his atheism was "greatly shaken" by these developments. One of the world's most renowned theoretical physicists, Paul Davies, has said that "the appearance of design is overwhelming". Even the late Christopher Hitchens, one of atheism's most aggressive proponents, conceded that "without question the fine-tuning argument was the most powerful argument of the other side." Oxford University professor of Mathematics Dr. John Lennox has said "the more we get to know about our universe, the more the hypothesis that there is a Creator . . . gains in credibility as the best explanation of why we are here."

The greatest miracle of all time is the universe. It is the miracle of all miracles, one that inescapably points to something -- or Someone -- beyond itself.

I'm Eric Metaxas for Prager University.