

## Stephen Hawking and The Grand Designer

In this critique of cosmologist Stephen Hawking's recent book *The Grand Design*, philosopher Peter S. Williams will show why philosophy is not 'dead' as Hawking proclaims and will interact with Hawking over some key arguments for the existence of God, showing why the arguments come out on top.

**Peter S. Williams** studied philosophy at Cardiff University (BA), Sheffield University (MA) and at the University of East Anglia in Norwich (MPhil). He then spent three years as a student pastor at Holy Trinity church Leicester before moving to Southampton to work alongside the Christian educational charity Damaris Trust ([www.damaris.org](http://www.damaris.org)), where as 'Philosopher in Residence' he leads Philosophy and Ethics conferences for sixth form students as well as undertaking various writing, speaking and broadcasting engagements. Peter is also Assistant Professor in Communication and Worldviews at Gimlekollen School of Journalism and Communication in Norway. His publications include *A Sceptic's Guide to Atheism: God Is Not Dead* (Paternoster, 2009), *Understanding Jesus: Five Ways to Spiritual Enlightenment* (Paternoster, 2011) and *C.S. Lewis vs the New Atheists* (Paternoster, 2013).

### 1) Hawking on Philosophy

1a) Hawking's denial of philosophy is his philosophy

1b) Hawking's philosophy of science is very unusual

### 2) The Big Bang Argument for God (my own formulation of Kalam argument)

1) Since the universe had a beginning, there was a first physical event

2) All physical events have at least one cause outside and independent of themselves

3) Therefore, the first physical event had at least one cause outside and independent of itself

- 4) The cause of the first physical event cannot have been physical
  
- 5) Therefore, the first physical event had a non-physical cause
  
- 6) The non-physical cause of the first physical event must be a personal cause
  
- 7) Therefore the first physical event must have had a non-physical, personal cause (i.e. 'God')

  - 2a) The 'Who created the creator?' question begs the question against an uncreated creator
  
  - 2b) Explanations don't need explanations

### 3) The First Cause Argument for God

Premise 1) Some things are caused by other things (e.g. you and me, physical events)

Premise 2) It is impossible for *everything* to be caused

After all:

a) There can't be an actually infinite regress or set of causes

b) 'From nothing, nothing comes' and there's nothing outside of *everything* to do any causing

Conclusion) Therefore, something exists without a cause – i.e. God

3a) Hawking makes an ad hoc exception to the causal law on behalf of the whole universe

3b) Hawking relies upon a triple self-contradiction in response to the first cause argument

4) Two versions of the Fine Tuning Argument for God

Version 1)

If it looks like a duck, quacks like a duck, walks and swims like a duck, etc., the *burden of proof* is on the person who says that it isn't a duck

Version 2)

1) The fine-tuning of the universe is due to either physical necessity, chance, or design.

2) It is not due to physical necessity or chance.

3) Therefore, it is due to design.

In support of premise 2:

1) Things exhibiting 'specified complexity' are probably designed

2) The 'fine tuning' of the universe exhibits 'specified complexity'

3) The 'fine tuning' of the universe was probably designed

4a) Hawking's real objection:

Premise 1) *If* there were enough different universes, *then* the specified fine tuning of our universe wouldn't be complex enough to justify a design inference

Premise 2) There *are* enough different universes

Conclusion) Therefore, the fine tuning of our universe does not justify a design inference

### **Recommended Resources**

John Lennox, 'A Matter of Gravity: God, the Universe and Stephen Hawking'  
[www.dundee.ac.uk/externalrelations/events/lectures/2010/religion.htm](http://www.dundee.ac.uk/externalrelations/events/lectures/2010/religion.htm)

John C. Lennox, *God And Stephen Hawking: Whose Design Is It Anyway?* (Lion, 2010)

Peter S. Williams, 'Stephen Hawking & The Grand Designer',  
[www.damaris.org/cm/podcasts/682](http://www.damaris.org/cm/podcasts/682)

Peter S. Williams, 'Stephen Hawking & The Grand Designer',  
[www.damaris.org/cm/podcasts/663](http://www.damaris.org/cm/podcasts/663)

Peter S. Williams, 'A Universe From Someone: Against Lawrence M. Krauss' *A Universe From Nothing: Why There Is Something Rather Than Nothing*', [www.bethinking.org/science-christianity/advanced/a-universe-from-someone-against-lawrence-krauss.htm](http://www.bethinking.org/science-christianity/advanced/a-universe-from-someone-against-lawrence-krauss.htm)