

## Atheism's Best Arguments? (Part 2 of 2): Victor Stenger

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### Transcript - Long

#### Robert Lawrence Kuhn:

So we have logical arguments for the nonexistence of God and evidentiary arguments. Now, within evidentiary arguments there are different categories. There are criticisms of evidence that is being used for God, or what you've pioneered, is affirmative arguments that show that the way things are would be what you would expect if there is no God. That's what I'm interested in.

#### Victor Stenger:

Yes, the fact, in the area of cosmology, I think we can give several examples where the universe looks like it should look if there was no God, in fact, you can even go so far as to say that if you believe the results of modern cosmology you can demonstrate that there was no creator. So, let me just mention the two of them. First of all—and incidentally, many of the arguments that are given for God were once very good arguments, and that's true for cosmology. Prior to the early 1900s, it was very difficult to see how the universe could have come about without some kind of external force acting. Just the very fact that the universe existed—we had matter, we had energy—where did that come from? It had to come from something. And we also had the fact that the universe had order. Where did that order come from? It had to come from something. And these two reflected two fundamental laws of physics—the first law of thermodynamics, which is also conservation of energy, and the second law of thermodynamics, which is that the — as the universe goes on it becomes increasingly disorderly. So those were good arguments at one time. Now, let me take the first one. What happened with modern cosmology was discovered that the universe ah, has exactly the right amount of ah, both positive and negative energy; positive energy and the rest energy, and kinetic energy of particles of the universe, and negative — a balance between that seems to exist with that and negative gravitational energy. And this is exactly—this is now measured with extreme accuracy—cosmology is now a very accurate observational science just in the last 20 years or less, and it now can be shown with very good precision that this balance is exactly what it should be if the universe came from zero energy, so it looks just like it should look again if there was no external creator. Now, that's probably not as strong an argument against a creator, because you could say the creator just happened to create ... Yeah, designed it that way. So, one of my favorite arguments, and I think this is unique, a unique argument of mine, is that the chaos, the universe began in total chaos. If you look at modern cosmology, it implies that the, ah, if you project back to the earliest possible time, you find that the universe had maximum entropy—the highest entropy, the highest amount of disorder — entropy is a physics word for disorder—the highest amount of disorder that was possible for an object that size, and so later on, as the universe expanded and blew up into the big bang, the maximum possible entropy increased faster than the actual entropy and so there became room for order to form.

#### Robert Lawrence Kuhn:

In pockets.

#### Victor Stenger:

Yeah. Before we knew about the expansion of the universe, we had no explanation for this, but now that we know the universe is expanding we know that as time goes on you have increasingly more room to organize matter. Let me try to give you a simple example for this. Suppose that you had — you cleaned your house once a week, and every week what you did is you swept up and you got all of the rubbish together and you tossed it out into the yard. Eventually your yard would be filled with rubbish. And you could solve the problem, however, by just continuing to buy up the land around your house. And as long as you kept doing that you would have room to cast off your disorder, to cast off your rubbish, your entropy. And so the universe is that way, because it's expanding there's always more room for order to form consistent with the law of thermodynamics. But it also implies that it was — that the disorder of the universe was maximum at the earliest possible time. It was sort of like a black hole in maximum chaos. And this means that even if there were a creator, there's no memory of that creator in the existing universe today. All that information—whatever he wanted to put into the universe, the only thing that he could have created is chaos. The only thing that we remember is the total "non." The total disorder, the total nonorganization that existed at that earliest possible time.

#### Robert Lawrence Kuhn:

I kind of like that kind of God. He's a probabilistic God. He's pretty smart. He knows that he can start with total disorder, knowing full well that the expansion of the universe is going to be faster than the entropy will grow and he has this nice space so pockets of order can develop within this process and maybe with great variety and opportunity all sorts of interesting things will come. That's very creative. You're getting me more and more convinced to believe in God. I didn't start off that way.

#### Victor Stenger:

Well, that's the God that is possible, right. But it's not the God that most people would believe in. For example, that God could still step in along the way after the creation and then we would have to see evidence for that to believe, and sure. It's always possible to conceive of a kind of God that agrees with all observations, and the only difficulty is that that's not the duty of Christian/Islamic God that most people worship. Maybe some theologians will tell you that, oh, yeah. This is my God. I can see my God in what you're describing there, and they can twist around the history of Christian thought and make it agree with the thought; I'm sure they can do that, but when it all comes down to it, they still have to have a reason for that. If the universe can do everything by itself why do you even need to introduce a God to do anything at all?