

Flipping the *anthropic* *principle* on its head



Albert Fiorino

***To get another view
of 'everything'***

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Revisiting *The Grand Design*

A few years ago, Professor Stephen Hawking, formerly Lucasian Professor of Mathematics at the University of Cambridge and Professor Leonard Mlodinow of Caltech co-authored a book entitled, *The Grand Design* (2010). In the book, they opt to dismiss the need for God, as ultimate creator, which an integrated (weak and strong) *anthropic principle* would support. Instead, they commit fully to the M-theory, which designates a network of theories that separately can account for only a certain set of phenomena, but which together can offer the best approximation to what the authors call “the theory of everything”. This “theory of everything” complies with their espoused “model-dependent realism,” which they describe thusly:

“...the idea that a physical theory or world picture is a model (generally of a mathematical nature) and a set of rules that connect the elements of the model to observations.”¹

This form of realism provides them with a framework within which to make sense out of the various partially valid and yet overlapping theories of reality found in modern physics.

In 2012, I penned a short response focussing primarily on their dismissal of the existence of God as the ultimate cause of everything. To salvage some semblance of relevance and validity to the transcendent nature of human beings, I argued that the arbitrary limits imposed on scientific enquiry, which presumes the ability of human intelligence to go beyond its own constructs, results not in a “theory of everything”, but in a blind, bounded grand theory in progress. Such constructs as mind and the existence of an ultimate subsisting being cannot be excluded ‘willy nilly’ from any genuine scientific enquiry. Both constructs have been elaborated by human beings from their own experience of reality from time immemorial. The fact that a scientific theory has not yet been developed which would satisfy the requirements of Hawking’s and Mlodinow’s model-dependent realism should not automatically dismiss these intellectual constructs from serious consideration in a more encompassing ‘theory of everything’. Perhaps what needs to change, as I will suggest in my closing remarks, is the model-dependent realism and its parameters.

I also approached my first response from a public-policy perspective to make the point that such ‘grand’ human designs do tend to question, perhaps inadvertently, the very foundations of the principles and values which form the basis of public discourse and civil society. In the process, they promote and impose the same limits associated with a model-dependent realism on the ways in which we deal with social reality.

In this second piece on *The Grand Design*, I want to briefly focus on two key elements of book: the authors' adopted model-dependent realism, and the *anthropic principle* whose heuristic potential was not fully considered, I believe, by Hawking and Mlodinow.

*Please note that the full text of this monograph has been removed from the website. It will be incorporated in a larger work dealing with, in part, the thought of English Divine Dr. Eric Lionel Mascall. The work has been registered with the Canadian National Library under the tentative title: **The Importance of Being Human Once Again Proclaimed.***

