



God and the Multiverse: Humanity's Expanding View of the Cosmos

Victor J. Stenger

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Cosmologists have reasons to believe that the vast universe in which we live is just one of an endless number of other universes within a *multiverse*—a mind-boggling array that may extend indefinitely in space and endlessly in both the past and the future. Victor Stenger reviews the key developments in the history of science that led to the current consensus view of astrophysicists, taking pains to explain essential concepts and discoveries in accessible terminology. The author shows that science's emerging understanding of the multiverse—consisting of trillions upon trillions of galaxies—is fully explicable in naturalistic terms with no need for supernatural forces to explain its origin or ongoing existence.

How can conceptions of God, traditional or otherwise, be squared with this new worldview? The author shows how long-held beliefs will need to undergo major revision or otherwise face eventual extinction.

God and the Multiverse: Humanity's Expanding View of the Cosmos Details

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Jeff says

Having read at least a dozen books on cosmology over the last 8 years or so, I believe Victor Stenger's book, God and the Multiverse, is the best because he does such an excellent job of explaining difficult scientific concepts in ways that are understandable as he traces the historical development of cosmology from ancient times until the present. This is not true of all of his books--some earlier volumes are much more difficult to understand, but this one is one of the clearest explanations of astro- and quantum physics that I've ever seen. It has become my favorite out of all the works on cosmology that I've read.

Peter McLoughlin says

This is a very simple book on the history of Cosmology and the ideas that lead to the development of the multiverse. It is a fun book and can be understood by a sixth grader. It glides over details however and a science junky like myself will want much more detail. I don't claim to be an expert on cosmology but from what little I know of the subject the book seems Hunky Dory. I would have liked to have gotten more detail but it is a short book made to be accessible to anyone. It tells an easy to understand story of how we arrived at the idea of the multiverse in the 21st century. Definitely a good book for a complete novice.

Bryan says

This is a very good overview of the history of cosmology, but it suffers from two flaws, in my mind. First, it would be difficult for most general readers to wade through. Stenger repeatedly wades into the deep end with a minimum of explanation, relying on the reader to know a considerable amount of physics and mathematical reasoning. He not uncommonly will flippantly say things in the vein of, "this obviously leads to this," or "this, of course, leads to . . ." I am pretty sure that there are many general readers who would put the book down once they get into the modern cosmology portions of the book where he wades deeply into particle physics. I even had a tough time in places, and I have a moderately strong scientific background in the topics.

Second, he seems to have visceral need to refute theistic and deistic beliefs and continually takes jabs at religious belief. I would have no problem with that if his arguments were as sound as he believes they are. Although I can recognize some of the validity in his arguments against fine-tuning arguments for the existence of a creator, he oversteps his bounds when he so emphatically supports a belief in the multiverse. He seems to believe that unless there is evidence to the contrary, the multiverse is a perfectly reasonable explanation for why our universe is the way it is and that it is amenable to life. The problem is, there is no evidence whatsoever in support of the multiverse, so, although it is an acceptable theory, its weight is nowhere near what he makes of it.

Lastly, even if all the fine-tuning arguments can be refuted, which I am not convinced he has accomplished, the origin of life problem remains. He offhandedly mentions that there is currently no theory that explains the origin of life, and then goes on to act as if that is no barrier to life being possible on many of the other

very numerous planets in the universe sporting the correct conditions to support life. Being able to support life, and evolving life are two very different things. To rule out an intelligent designer who is responsible for life in our universe on such nonexistent grounds is irresponsible, and represents a poor argument at best.

Kaleb says

Its wonderful for atheist.

James says

After reading Tegmark's Our Mathematical Universe and Greene The Hidden Reality, I buried myself in Stegner's God and the Multiverse. The author has taught physics, astronomy and philosophy at the university level and addresses the theological implications of our ideas since the ancient days of *Homo sapiens* about our outside environment. "In short," Stegner summarizes, "nothing in our observations of the universe requires the existence of God."

Max Skidmore says

I loved the science in this book and it was nice to get an update to the rapidly changing field of astrophysics and cosmology. He makes a convincing argument that ours is not the only Universe, hence the "Multiverse" title. The author's primary objective in the book is to use science to convince the reader that there is no God. I don't know why my belief system (and that of many others) offends him. I enjoyed the science so much that I am now rereading Bill Bryson's book, "A Short History of Nearly Everything" which I first read 10 years ago.

David Melbie says

There is no other author that better explains scientific concepts than Victor J. Stenger. I have read several of his books - even own a few - and I refer to them often. He will be missed, as he passed away last year.

John says

One or two chapters are heavily laden with technical jargon and formulas, but the rest is accessible to us more mundane star-stuff clumps. A worthy parting gift from the late Professor Stenger.

Jason Marciak says

A very cleverly designed book. Stenger starts the reader off at the beginning of the early cosmological theories and takes them through the histories of the various discoveries that changed humanity's understanding of the universe. The science in the book can get a little heavy and theoretical for a single sit down and read however this book is worth reading for a clear understanding for one of the theories of the creation of the multiverse.

Book says

God and the Multiverse: Humanity's View of the Cosmos by Victor J. Stenger

"God and the Multiverse" traces the history of humanity's view of the cosmos and examines how that view has changed over the last ten thousand years to the present. Sadly, Dr. Stenger passed away before the release of this book in which he makes use of disciplines within physics to present plausible scenarios for a natural origin of our universe and though more speculative infers that our universe is but one of an eternal multiverse that contains unlimited number of other universes. This provocative yet challenging 447-page book includes the following sixteen chapters: 1. From Myth to Science, 2. Toward the New Cosmos, 3. Beyond Unaided Human Vision, 4. Glimpses of the Unimagined, 5. Heat, Light, and the Atom, 6. The Second Physics Revolution, 7. Island Universes, 8. A Dynamic Cosmos, 9. Nuclear Cosmology, 10. Relics of the Big Bang, 11. Particles and the Cosmos, 12. Inflation, 13. Falling Up, 14. Modeling the Universe, 15. The Eternal Multiverse, and 16. Life and God.

Positives:

1. A well-written and well-researched book.
2. An interesting topic, humanity's evolving understanding of the cosmos.
3. Dr. Stenger has a great command of the topic and tries his darndest to keep it accessible.
4. The book's emphasis is on science. That is a focus on observation and experiment than theory. "If a model agrees with the data, then it has something to do with reality."
5. Plenty of graphs, illustrations and charts to assist the reader.
6. Provocative. "Short of divine revelation, for which no evidence exists, I know of no method by which we can determine what is ultimately real. The best we can do is make ever-improving observations and describe them with ever more accurate models."
7. The interesting and often times difficult interaction between religion and science. "They also tried to deal with Psalm 93, which declares that the foundation of Earth remain forever unmoved, and other biblical contradictions. Rheticus wrote a tract attempting to rectify Copernicus with holy scripture, but it was never published."
8. Far-out facts. "From these and other observations, it has been determined that luminous matter—the stars and hot gas we see in the sky by eye and instrument—constitutes a mere 0.5 percent of the total mass of our universe."
9. Contributions from the great scientists of the past and present throughout the book. "Einstein also predicted that a clock in a gravitational field runs slower, as observed by someone outside the field. This is called gravitational time dilation and is derived directly from general relativity. This effect is also well confirmed. If the GPS in your car did not correct for gravitational time dilation, it would not always take you to where you want to go."
10. Does a great job of chronicling the history of astronomy by highlighting the most note-worthy

developments in cosmology. “Then, in January 1913 he obtained his result: The spectrum of Andromeda was blue-shifted, that is, shifted to shorter wavelengths. Assuming the mechanism was a Doppler shift, Slipher calculated that Andromeda is moving toward us with a speed or radial velocity of 300 kilometers per second.”

11. An interesting look at the big bang model and its implications. “In other words, the big bang should not be taken as evidence for a creator God since that God is hidden. Many like Lemaître who choose to believe in God despite the fact that his existence is far from obvious have little recourse but to assume that he must have reasons to hide from us. However, this “hiddenness argument” has been shown to fail.”

12. The discovery of the Cosmic Microwave Background (CMB) and the rise of particle physics. A look at the theoretical ideas behind the standard model.

13. An interesting look at the theoretical problems with the big-bang model: the flatness problem, the horizon problem, the structure problem, and the monopole problem.

14. Key concepts of science conveyed to the public. “Even when a model passes a test that could have falsified it, this does not mean that the model has been proved conclusively and will not someday be superseded by a better model.” Another one, “Major discoveries in physics usually lead to simpler theories with fewer adjustable parameters.”

15. Provides conclusions based on the best of our current knowledge. “In short, our universe had a beginning, but it need not have been the beginning of everything.”

16. Explains the concept of the multiverse. “The ‘World Ensemble’ or multiverse was motivated by established science—with no thought whatsoever to theology. It is the conclusion of our best current models of cosmology based on the extremely precise observations of modern astronomy and our best knowledge of fundamental physics.”

17. Eternal Inflation. “According to eternal inflation, once expansion starts it never ends, with new universes being created all the time. In 1986, Andrei Linde elaborated the idea, showing how it was possible that the universe reproduces itself indefinitely and “may have no beginning or end.”

18. The last chapter of the book covers some of the big philosophical questions. “However, based on our best current knowledge it is hard to imagine that in this immense universe there aren't countless planets with some form of life.” “Why should nonbeing, no matter how defined, be the default state of existence rather than being?”

19. Dr. Stenger takes glee in debunking some of the more popular arguments for theism including the Fine-Tuning Argument. “In short, nothing in our observations of the universe requires the existence of God. Furthermore, the absence of evidence that should be there for the actions of God rules out beyond a reasonable doubt the kind of God worshipped by most of humanity.”

20. Notes and formal bibliography included.

Negatives:

1. Though intended for the masses, most laypersons will struggle with this book. Elementary particle physics and astrophysics even at its most basic is challenging.
2. Surprisingly, this book is not as engaging as I'd hoped. It can be dry and even tedious.
3. A graphical timeline of the multiverse theory would have been helpful.
4. It requires an investment of your time.

In summary, this may be too challenging of a book for the layperson to really enjoy. Elementary particle physics and astrophysics even at its most basic will perplex the average reader plus the book does not do any favors by being too dry. The late Dr. Stenger does provide the public with a solid chronicle of the cosmos and makes a good case for the multiverse. A solid effort but may have limited appeal. Recommended for science lovers but not for laypeople.

Further recommendations: "God: The Failed Hypothesis", "The Fallacy of Fine Tuning", and "God and the

"Folly of Faith" by Victor Stenger, "The Universe" by John Brockman, "A Universe from Nothing" by Lawrence M. Krauss, "Our Mathematical Universe" by Max Tegmark, "Farewell to Reality: How Modern Physics Has Betrayed the Search for Scientific Truth" by Jim Baggott, "The Elegant Universe" and "Hidden Reality" by Brian Greene, "About Time" by Adam Frank, "Higgs Discovery" and "Warped Passages" by Lisa Randall, "The Grand Design" by Stephen Hawking, and "The Quantum Universe" by Brian Cox.

J. D. says

This book by the late VJ Stenger, probably his last, is an extended tour of current-day Cosmology and its mind-bending ideas to explain the universe(s). Like all his other books, it has a very personal account of science, sometimes super-detailed, always historically-grounded, and sometimes excessively advanced for the mainstream reader (who might hate the many plots and calculations). There are, however, quite a few gems of clarity for the reader who'd persist through the book, and a sense of getting a comprehensive view of things not available elsewhere.

Perhaps because of this extensiveness, the religious component suffers and gets compressed to occasional bursts (a Mormon universe?) and to an argument against fine-tuning (aka the Anthropic Principle) that goes on way too long. There isn't here—the book's title notwithstanding—much about God on the traditional sense, and certainly not about why He might have created a multiverse. Did He get bored after the Seven Days of Creation? Is He still out there, busily creating other universes? Cosmology has, in some sense, gone well beyond our holy book-bound theologies.

I'm saddened by the loss of such a great mind, and hope a book like this, a true labor of love, will remain in a visible spot in our shelves, now being crowded by so-and-so, book-of-the-month science offerings. This is more of a last philosophical stand for reason, or a benchmark of what we can say about what we (don't) know. I don't think it will be improved upon any time soon.

Roger Howell says

Fascinating — mostly non-technical — explains the implications and meaning of the word MULTIVERSE quite well

Ryan Clifton says

There just isn't enough acid in the world for me to understand particle physics.
