

## **Ask A Genius 29 - Informational Cosmology 5**

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**Scott: What about the unification of the operations of the universe under a scientific framework?**

Rick: Starting around the time of Newton. Galileo did some stuff under the scientific umbrella, but Newton was the first creator of a truly effective unified theory: Universal Gravitation. It described things from the falling of a bowl of porridge to the motions of planets. Universal Gravitation was the first effective universal theory. You might go to Kepler and planetary dynamics. Although, when did people invent the idea of the clockwork universe? There might have been some obscure Greek guy, but it was until Newton.

People thought, “Hey, the universe can be a coldly mechanistic set of articles and bodies moving in completely deterministic ways.” That’s not exactly Newton himself because Newton was fanatically religious. So, whatever he thought about determinism, he thought about a universe ruled by God.

But people coming after him that looked at his work, in the 3 centuries after him, a lot of scientifically-minded people see a cold universe with nothing, no creator, behind and no processes other than cold valueless physical processes with nothing in charge. It is processes that happen due to the laws of physics.

But what you're going to see, I think, is a change from nothing really mattering – you've got the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century existentialists saying, "Life is absurd," which you can't wholeheartedly say unless you don't believe in God and begin to embrace the cold scientific idea of nothing mattering – and everything playing out, not exactly in a quantum manner because quantum mechanics makes things not entirely determinate but still playing out in a mechanistic manner according to some basic rules of physics, to information being in charge.

Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, science tried to account for how life could arise through cold, physical processes without a Creator, without teleology. Some powerful being getting in there and pushing things around and making stuff happen. To the extent that everyone thought would be achieved, life was this afterthought. Not necessary for the universe to operate; not having much to do with the business of the universe, it was a thinking froth. A meaningless icing on the cold face of empty space, largely, empty space.

In existence, with the universe eventually expanding out to cold nothingness as stars spend their fusion energy and burn out, you have the entropic death of the universe. That point of view – life is an accident and doesn't matter in the big affairs in the universe, and there's no powerful outside observer, where things play out – will be erased in the next 2 or 3 generations with the view that information is in charge.

That is, information based structures are able to persist across time. In fact, it is due to the formation of information that things can persist across time. It is impossible for things to exist

without being part of a self-consistent information containing system and information containing systems have some agency.

They have some role to play in even the very largest structure of things. It does a couple of things. There has been a struggle over the past couple centuries to bring things into the fold of physics based processes. It has been tough to bring life into it. However, more scientists say, “Yea, we have a handle on how things work and how life could have arisen through physical processes with some of the holdouts being consciousness.”

Consciousness is still tough to fold into confident science. If you ask most science-minded people, they might say, “We don’t know yet, but we will figure out how consciousness arises from basic physical processes without spiritual hocus pocus, or hidden forces or realms, independent of physics.”

It is nice to have everything under a single, non-mystical umbrella. It is probably helpful to the advancement of science. It might be helpful in eventually mitigating and limiting belief based asholery.

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