

The Universe-Making Machine

Peter van Inwagen, in his book *Metaphysics* (Westview Press, 1993), gives the following version of the Fine Tuning Argument:

(1) Suppose we fancifully think for a moment of the cosmos [the universe] as the product of a machine designed to produce cosmoi [universes]. The machine has a largish number of dials on it, perhaps twenty or thirty, and the overall features of the cosmos are the result of the ways the dials were set when the cosmos was produced. If they had been set in other positions, a different type of cosmos would have emerged from the machine. (2) It seems to be the lesson of modern physics and cosmology that many statements like the following ones will be true: "the pointer on dial 18 is set at .0089578346198711. If it had not been set at some value between .0089578346198709 and .0089578346198712, there would be no carbon atoms and hence no life"; "The pointer on dial 23 is set at 5.113446 and the pointer on dial 5 is set at 5.113449; if the values of the two readings had been exactly equal, there would have been no matter, but only radiation; if the two readings had differed by more than .000006, all stars would be of a type that would burn out before multicellular organisms could evolve on their planets". (3) The suggestive metaphor of a cosmos-producing machine with lots of dials on it that must be very precisely set if the machine is to produce a cosmos that could contain life . . . has led some writers to say that the cosmos is "fine-tuned" in such a way as to enable it to contain life. Only a vanishingly small proportion of the totality of possible cosmoi are suitable abodes for life, and yet the actual cosmos is one of these very few . . . not only is it a suitable abode for life, but it actually contains life; in fact, not only does it actually contain life, but it contains life that is rational [human beings]; these features make it an even rarer specimen . . . (4) Why is the cosmos one of the few possible cosmoi that permit life? Why does the cosmos appear to have been fine-tuned by someone who had life in mind? Why are the numbers [on the dials] right for life? . . . (5) If the cosmos is a very special cosmos among all possible cosmoi, and if it has every appearance of being a cosmos that has been designed to be an abode for life, might not the most obvious explanation . . . of the fine-tuning of the cosmos be that it has been fine-tuned? That its large-scale features . . . have been carefully chosen and put into place by a conscious, purposive being who wanted to make an abode for living things? (pp. 130 - 131).

van Inwagen suggests that God acts like this:

The *Selector* = permitting life.

For every setting of the dials on the Machine,

God figures out whether the setting satisfies the Selector;

if the setting satisfies the Selector,

then God presses the "Make Universe" button on the Machine.

But why is God needed? Why not just the Machine?

The *Selector* = permitting life.

For every setting of the dials on the Machine,

The Machine calculates whether the setting satisfies the Selector;

if the setting satisfies the Selector,

then the Machine makes a universe.