

From no God to God Particle

Edinburgh's Great Minds

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What this power is I cannot say. All I know it exists." Alexander Graham Bell

Many great minds walked through the streets of Edinburgh. Most of them now immortalized as monuments, watching forever over the town. If there really is a forever, an eternity, was part of many of their thoughts. And whether this eternity could be harmonized with the idea of a God.

For David Hume, the city's greatest philosopher, it was obvious. As an empiricist, he examined this question of course empirically. The statement that „God exists“, expresses a fact about reality. If the statement expresses a fact, then the statement „God exists“ is not analytic. So it must be either synthetic or nonsense. If the statement „God exists“ is synthetic, then it can be verified or falsified empirically.

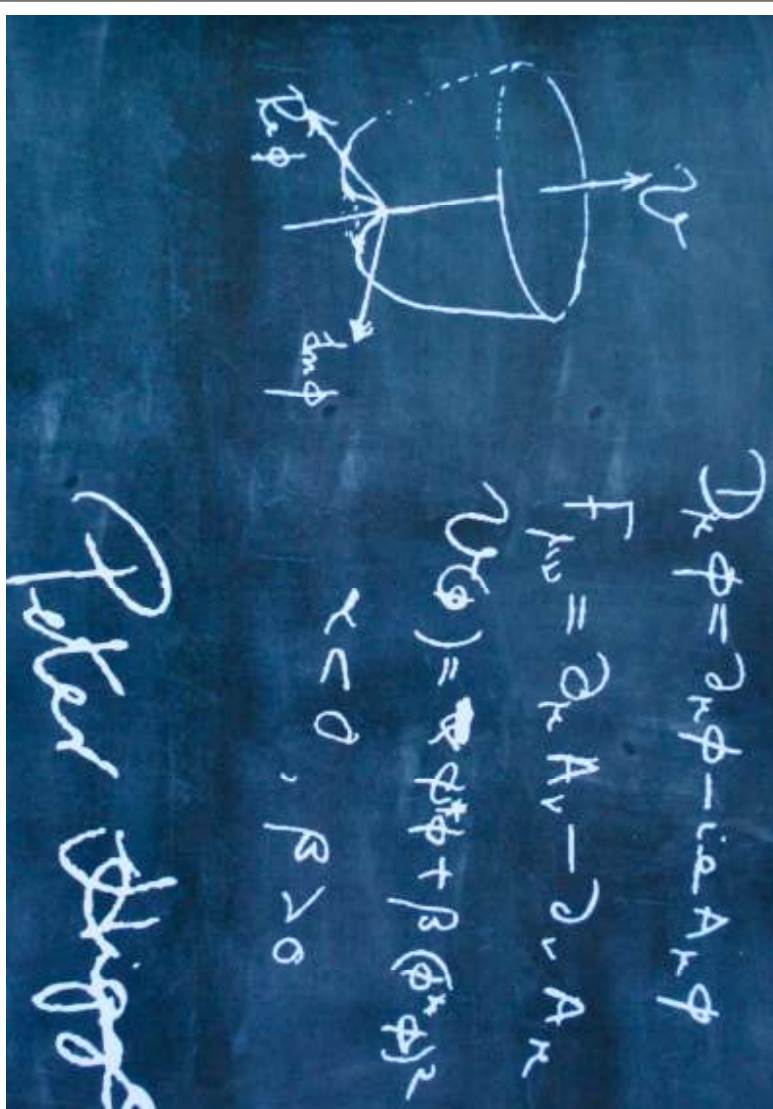
Since there is no way to verify or falsify the statement „God exists“, the claim falls into the nonsense category. Hume used to say *“Examine the religious principles which have, in fact, prevailed in the world, and you will scarcely be persuaded that they are anything but sick men's dreams.”*

The uniformitarianism theory of James Hutton, the father of geology and a contemporary of Hume, should confirm Hume's assumption. Although being a theist, Hutton disproved the interpretation of the bible that says that earth is only a few thousand years old. Hutton's main point was, that the past history of the planet must be explained by what can be seen to be happening now. Everything on the surface of the earth could not be created within a short period of time, but in millions of years. Nevertheless Hutton was of the opinion that God had created the world and the laws of nature. The major task for geology is to research these laws.

James Clerk Maxwell, physicist and developer of the electromagnetic theory, agreed with the ideas of Hutton. Maxwell saw God's design everywhere in his science, *“Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him for ever.”* God not only created heaven and earth, but also the materials of which they exist.

Modern physicists like Stephen Hawking or Peter Higgs, Emeritus Professor of the University of Edinburgh and prospective Nobel Prize Winner for his prediction of a new particle, the Higgs Bo-

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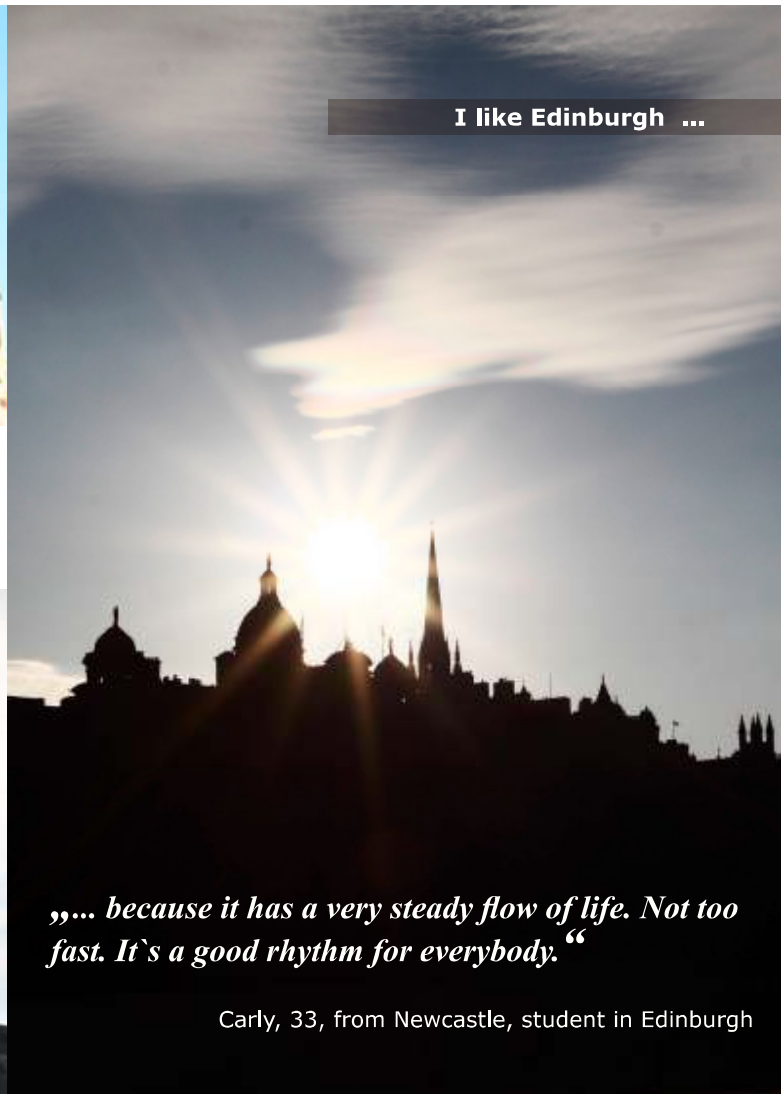


David Hume, High Street

son particle, stick rather with Hume. Ironically the particle named after him and which could change our understandings of physics, is often refereed as the "God Particle". The name was made up by Nobel Prize winning physicist Leon Lederman and Higgs isn't quite happy about that. *"I wish he hadn't done it,"* he says. *"I have to explain to people it was a joke. I'm an atheist, but I have an uneasy feeling that playing around with names like that could be unnecessarily offensive to people who are religious."* But will that change of the courses of physics, a theory of all, a combination between the theory of relativity and quantum mechanics, and bring God back on the plan?

Einstein once said *"God doesn't play dice"*. Hume would have agreed with him. If someone doesn't exist he obviously couldn't play dice. Hawking and Higgs take a similar view. There is no God, because before the Big Bang time didn't exist. And when there is no time, there is no space for a creator. There is only space for the eternity of the universe.

James Clerk Maxwell, George Street



I like Edinburgh ...

„... because it has a very steady flow of life. Not too fast. It's a good rhythm for everybody.“

Carly, 33, from Newcastle, student in Edinburgh