

The joy of discovering new things never ends...

An eternity of surprises

By Jonathan Buck

I was jotting down some notes for this article when an earwig crawled up on the table beside me and waddled across to some cookie crumbs I'd left behind from my afternoon tea break. I'd never seen an earwig eat before, so I grabbed a magnifying glass and did a close-up. The earwig clasped each crumb with its front legs, sucked up five crumbs the size of its head at an astonishing rate, and waddled off none the fatter.

Three questions came to mind as I watched. Why, first of all, would an earwig go for cookie crumbs? Secondly, why do we actually need earwigs? And thirdly, why am I asking these questions?

But then a fly I'd never seen before landed on my notes and again I was distracted. It was slightly smaller than a housefly but with legs so long it had to splay out its front legs like a giraffe when feeding. But why would

it need legs that long when other flies didn't, and especially when long legs made feeding seem awkward?

Oh well, back to my article. But then the phone rang with incoming news about my 12-year-old granddaughter's fascination with the contents of a squid's eyeball, which she'd just dissected on her mother's kitchen counter. She couldn't wait to tell me what she'd discovered.

But why? Because, as the Bible says: 'God put this creation together in such a way that we humans might seek him, and maybe we'd reach out for him and actually find him, and discover he's not that far off at all'.¹

Oh, so it's because of God that we can't resist looking under rocks as children to see what's under them, and because of God that we spend billions on sending machines into space to see what's out there, and because of God that researchers with wild hair spend a lifetime peering through microscopes into the depths of bacteria.

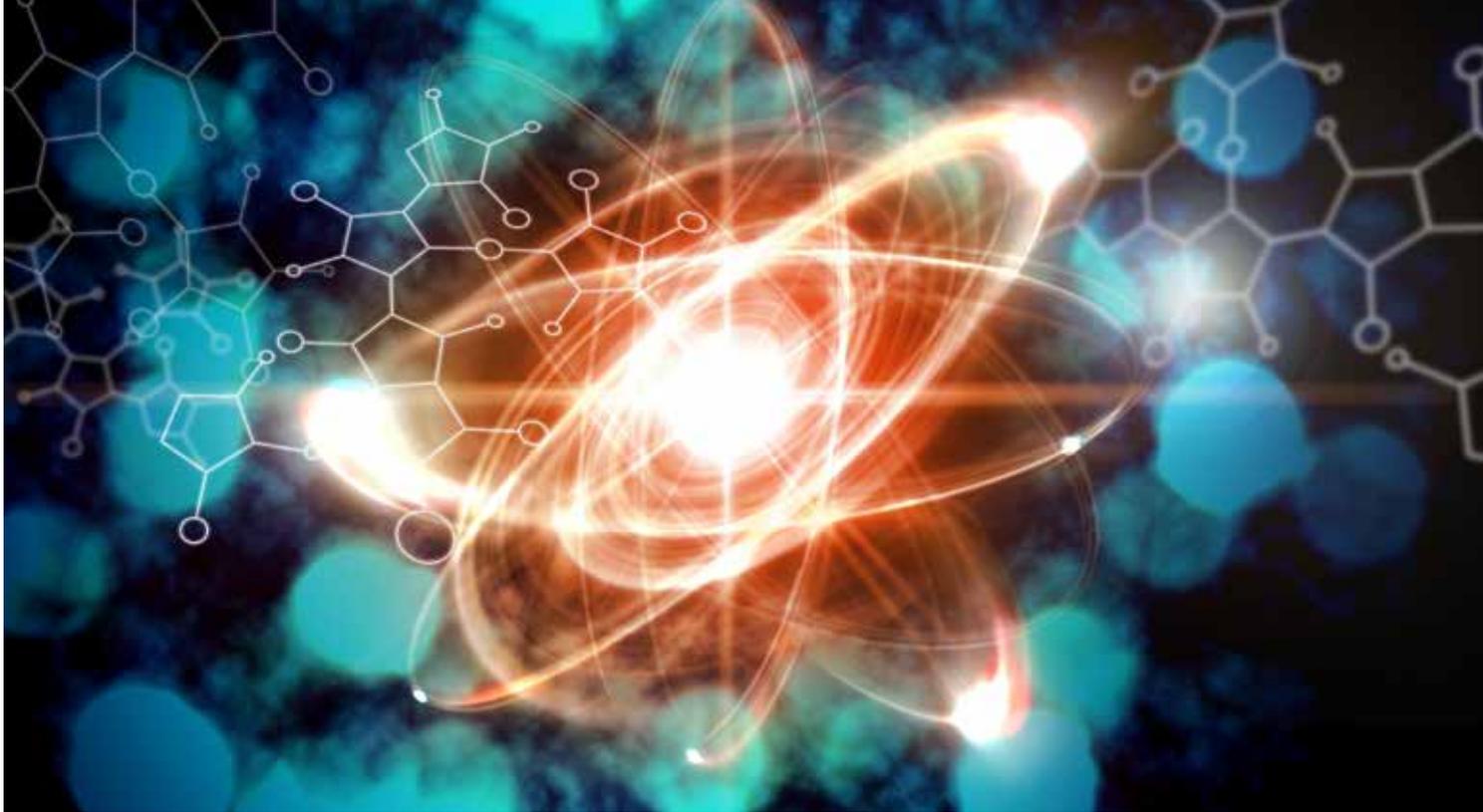
Atheist, agnostic, and Christian, we're all the same. We have this insatiable curiosity to A.S.K. It's like a code built into our heads, so that we're constantly Asking, Seeking, and Knocking—ever pushing the boundaries. And bit by bit the universe is giving up its secrets, too. New wonders keep coming to light, and we discover to our delight that the universe is an eternity of surprises!

And once you realise that, you're hooked. When my granddaughter was 11 years old, she got hooked the moment she entered the Natural History Museum in London, England. Her mind exploded! She ran from exhibit to exhibit gulping in worlds she'd never encountered before. No wonder she's into squids' eyeballs a year later. But now she knows a wonderful secret—tucked away in 'The Teddy Bear's Picnic' song—that if you go out in the woods today (take a peek into God's creation), you're sure of a big surprise!

That's why Science can never stop searching. If we'd stopped with



Jon Buck asks: why do we need the common earwig or European earwig (forficula auricularia)?



An artist's close up illustration of one of those 'subatomic whizzy things' for nuclear energy imagery.

Isaac Newton, for instance, we'd still be thinking the universe is a quietly ticking machine, operating according to fixed, observable laws like gravity, and that's all we'd need to know. Einstein, however, blew that idea right out of the water. No way is the universe that simple or boring. Arrows in flight, for instance, don't hit the ground just because of gravity, they arc toward the ground because space bends. And for those who took the time to follow Einstein's thinking, new worlds opened up that spawned new technology, like the satellite-tracking systems we now use when driving instead of paper maps.

We thought Evolution was amazing too, but scientists are pressing beyond the bounds of how life developed on the earth to how life came into existence in the first place, to try to explain why the universe exists at all when it had no reason to. A whole new breed of scientists, therefore, has been looking under other rocks, at the very core of matter, and how matter could be formed out of subatomic whizzy things that appear and instantly disappear. Science is zooming in ever closer to the substance of life itself.

True Science—real, exciting, mind-blowing Science—comes from the endless birthing of new understanding by those who've caught on that life is full of surprises, and the surprises never stop coming to those who seek with an open mind. Would that Religion caught on to that in its search for God, too: instead of nailing God in a box and telling people that's all there is to know about him, it let God reveal himself his way, with new and endless surprises.

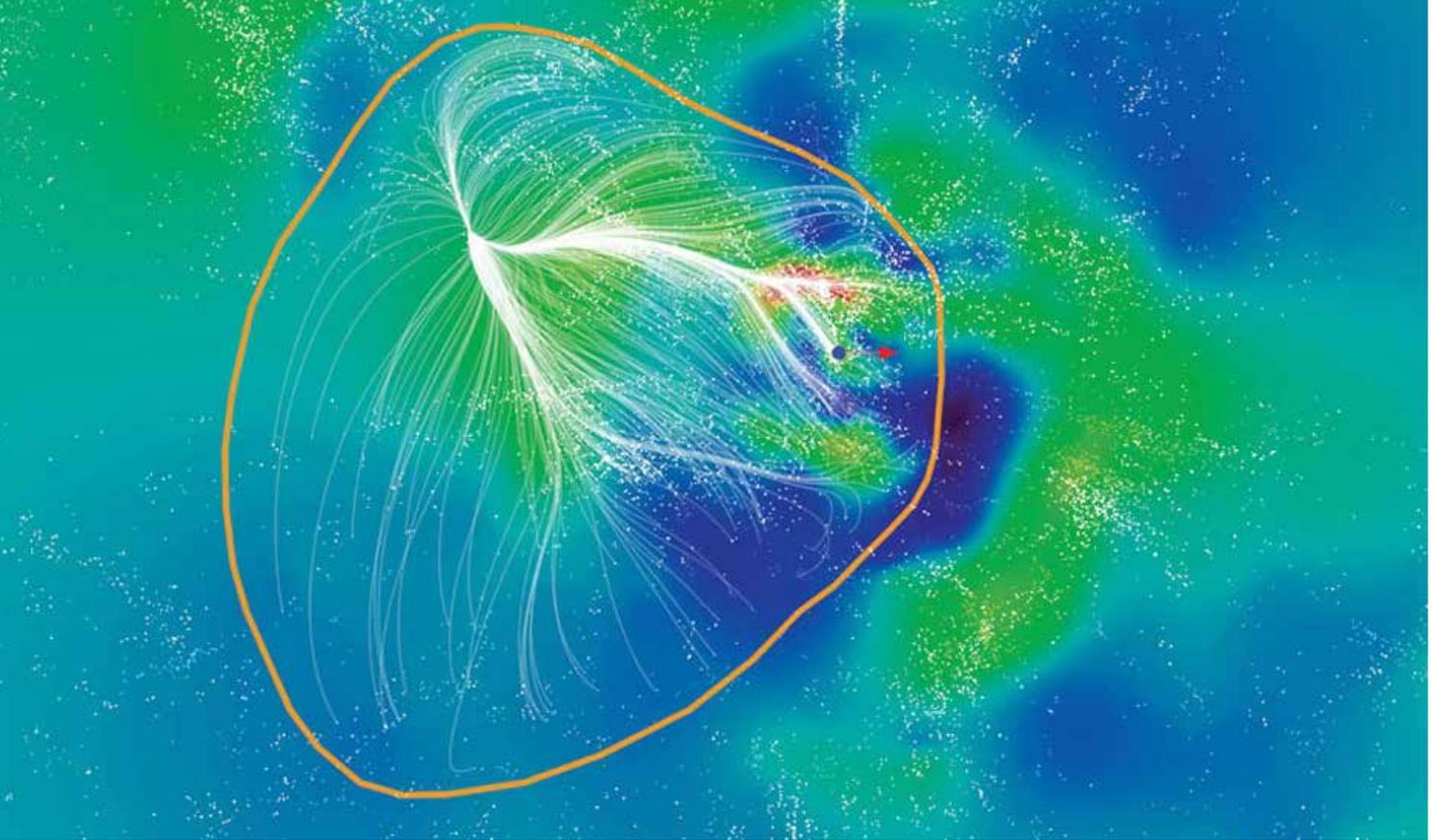
Like the surprise he landed on Religion when he came as a human being. Talk about a 'Big Bang' moment, because every previous picture, concept, preconceived idea, and pet notion about God up to that point disintegrated. Jesus blew more fuses in people's heads by stopping a storm, healing a maniac, and raising a dead child to life again. Here, all of a sudden, was a human being breaking fixed laws of nature, bending time and space, and even demonstrating personally what life looked like after death.

But more surprises were to follow, because right after Jesus' short stint on earth a new breed of humans appeared on the scene, who shot the old hidebound rules of human

behaviour to pieces, too. They weren't driven by self-preservation or ego. They could face death and suffering without fear or resentment. They gave their lives to revealing the truth about God and serving people in love, and they got along together even when they were vastly different in personality and background. This was territory no one had trodden before.

And now Science faces that challenge too, because it's pushing boundaries into areas where no one has trodden before either, and the old models of the universe are gurgling down the plughole. Old concepts suddenly become antiquated and quaint, as new interpretations of the universe blow the old views to pieces.

Unfortunately, influential scientists and religious folk have often become entrenched in tradition, and they've frozen people's knowledge for centuries. They left so many 'why' questions unanswered, and they still do, like 'why was there a Big Bang in the first place?', or 'why would God create a beautiful earth if we all end up in heaven?'



One of the newest interpretations of the universe is depicted in this computer-generated visualisation of the just-identified Laniakea Supercluster of galaxies. The colossal supercluster contains thousands of galaxies, including our Milky Way Galaxy, the Local Group of Galaxies, and the entire nearby Virgo Cluster of Galaxies. An outline of Laniakea is given in orange, while the blue dot shows our location. The Laniakea Supercluster spans about 500 million light years and contains about 100,000 times the mass of our Milky Way Galaxy. The discoverers of Laniakea gave it a name that means “immense heaven” in Hawaiian.

On the other hand, we can all go round in circles asking ‘why’ questions we can’t answer, much like the Athenians the biblical apostle Paul came up against in the early days of Christianity. These people were constantly seeking for truth, but were rather confused. It’s interesting to see how Paul handled them. He tells them that if they seek God they can find him.² That’s Paul’s starting point, because he knows God is at the source of everything, so that’s where the answers are: know God first and the rest follows. Now they could ask whatever ‘why’ questions they wanted, and somewhere in their understanding of God the answer would emerge.

But Paul went one step further and also explained that God designed us to want to seek him out and find him.³ That way God could reveal answers directly to us. Imagine being a scientist, then, and seeking from God’s point of view why things happen the way they do in the universe, and finding God’s answers.

God’s always liked direct communication with humans, though. He walked and talked with Adam and Eve; he dwelt with the Israelites in the tabernacle and temple; and he sent his Son to dwell with us in person to tell us everything we needed to know. And he likes us contacting him for answers. He even promises to answer.

And for those not quite ready yet for direct communication with God, the universe still whispers. From the vastness of space to the microscopic wonder of what matter consists of, a little voice in our head eggs us on to ‘keep looking, because you know there’s always more to find, and you know what you find will be amazing’. Amazing enough, perhaps, that one day a person says: ‘You know what? In every direction I seek, I come up against the extraordinary. Why would that be, I wonder?’

Why? Because science and religion both tell us we’re dealing with a God who loves to surprise. He

loves getting us hooked. He loves distracting us with more amazing things about himself, about his creation, and about...about...I’m sorry, I have to stop here because a strange insect just landed on my leg. It’s shaped like a monstrous hairy mosquito with a giant dragonfly-like head, and what appear to be bright yellow hooks on each foot.

I’ve never seen anything like it before. Where’s my magnifying glass? I must take a closer look...

P.S. All the insect stories actually happened while writing this article.

Notes

^{1, 2, 3} Acts 17:27

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