

Stephen Hawking and Leonard Mlodinow. The Grand Design. (Bantam Books: New York, 2012).

Book Review

Authors, Stephen Hawking and Leonard Mlodinow have at least two things in common. They are both highly esteemed theoretical physicists, and they separately appear from time to time on stage at entertainment events. Hawking who has appeared in the past with Monty Python will this coming June appear with “The Who” on stage at the Glastonbury Music Festival in London.¹ Mlodinow has appeared on Larry King and The Stoessel Show, as well as written occasional TV programs including MacGyver, Star Trek, and the comedy Night Court.²

More to the point of the review at hand, Stephen Hawking is reputed to be “one of the most brilliant theoretical physicists since Einstein.”³ In spite of having contracted motor neuron disease in 1963, he became Professorial Fellow of Gonville and Caius College at Cambridge University. For a thirty year period (1979-2009) he held the post of Lucasian Professor at Cambridge University (formerly held by Isaac Newton). He currently is the Dennis Stanton Avery and Sally Tsui Wong-Avery Director of Research at the Department of Applied Mathematics and Theoretical Physics and Founder of the Center for Theoretical Physics at Cambridge University. His former best-seller is A Brief History of Time.⁴

Leonard Mlodinow received his PhD in theoretical physics from the University of California at Berkeley. He was also an Alexander von Humboldt fellow at the Max Planck-Institut fur Physik und Astrophysik in Munic. He also taught at the California Institute of Technology. Mlodinow is also the author of numerous academic papers in physics and seven popular science books, “his last four, best-sellers.”⁵ Interestingly (in light of the philosophical position of *The Grand Design*) he also authored a book on the “subliminal” mind,⁶ which led me to wonder if he personally distances himself from a mechanistic view of human nature. The answer is “no.” He states, to the contrary, that “*human consciousness can be ultimately explained entirely in terms of physical interactions.*” Indeed, he writes further, “*There are currently an estimated fifty thousand scientists worldwide studying the brain, and none of them, nor any of their predecessors, has ever found credible, replicable scientific evidence that people’s mental experiences are the result of anything other than physical processes that obey the same laws as every other assemblage of molecules.*”⁷

¹<http://www.bing.com/search?q=Stephen%20Hawking&qsn&form=QBRE&pq=stephen%20hawking&sc=9-15&sp=-1&sk=&ghc=1&cvid=1ae4ddfb83dd47dfa1c545ccb402cc00>

² leonardmlodinow.com

³ hawking.org

⁴ Stephen Hawking. A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes. (Bantam-Dell, 1988).

⁵ Op.cit. (2).

⁶ Leonard Mlodinow. Subliminal: How our Unconscious Mind Rules our Behavior. (Knopf-Doubleday, 2012).

⁷ physics.about.com/od/scienceandreligionbooks/fr/WarWorldviews.htm

