

Is a Creator playing hide-and-seek?



Highland Views
Chris Highland
Guest columnist

Among the top go-to sources I click on for news and, well honestly, interesting stuff, is BBC.com. During one particular morning of clicking around the site, flicking by fascinating reads like "The Mouse with Super-healing Powers" and "The Forest Tended by an Elusive Giant," an article on particles collided with my attention span. That's a hint at the subject: the Cern collider in Switzerland ("Large hadron collider: A revamp that could revolutionise physics," April, 2022). I wouldn't pretend to grasp even a particle of understanding here, but I did find the comments from physicists explosive.

One Dr. Harper explains: "I've been hunting for the fifth force for as long as I've been a particle physicist." We all have some comprehension (I think)

when we're talking about gravity, magnetism and several little nuclear things (my sophistication is showing), but scientists are spending big time and big money to build big machines to find ... the smallest bits of the universe. This would blow my mind, if my mind could even imagine a "small bit" that might possibly hold everything together. As the article describes the exciting challenge: "As well as believing that they may find a new, fifth force of nature, researchers hope to find evidence of an invisible substance that makes up most of the Universe called Dark Matter."

Here's where my brain matter shrinks to a neutron. Then, I'm energized by the electrons of theological questions. The scientific pursuit of knowledge, particularly about particles, building-blocks of our universe, may have something to say about the eternal religious pursuit of the Building-Block Maker.

This thought collides with one troubling fact: As we discover more blocks, we aren't uncovering an Undercover Personality. Unless of course, as I'll

mention below, one believes the blocks themselves are a deity.

Do you ever wonder why a Creator of such marvels, mysteries and matter would hide behind a cloak or curtain? Wouldn't you want to stand out in the open and proudly announce: "Hey, look what I made!"? Instead, like the tiniest bits of the cosmos – like the known and unknown creative forces – any Creative Force remains incognito, beyond cognition.

This leads me to speculate as to the reason such a being would hide:

1) Perhaps, like the parent of a toddler, this Creator is standing back watching as we "learn to walk" – hoping that one day we will toddle back and show gratitude – maybe a type of Deistic image

2) Perhaps, like a professor, this Creator has written everything we need to know on the black blackboard or white whiteboard of the universe and the rest is a test – maybe a more philosophical image

3) Perhaps, like a practical joker, this Creator is having fun, playing with us –

a great galactic game of hide-and-seek – maybe a lighter, more insouciant image

As I see it there may be one other option:

4) Perhaps (as some believers, including some believing physicists believe), like a pantheistic potentate, this Creator IS the creation, IS the particle, and every particle – God is Nature and Nature is God kind of image (all images colliding into one)

So where does this leave us? Some people of faith might believe in a blend of these views. They may feel that the Creator is a parent, professor, somewhat playful, as well as an essential part of everything. Others may hold one or more of these images.

Near the conclusion of the BBC article, Dr. Harper reveals his concerns: "Because the worst thing in the world will be that the new physics is there, and we don't find it." His enthusiasm propels his research forward: "The thing that drives all particle physicists is that we

See HIGHLAND, Page 4C

Highland

Continued from Page 1C

want to discover the unknown and this is why things like the fifth force and dark matter are so exciting because we have no idea what it could be or if it exists and we really want to find this out."

Is this what religion is doing? Is this similar to what faith seeks? Or, could it be said that religious faith actually avoids the whole enterprise since faith is quite often not concerned with exploring new questions and frontiers, of revealing the unknowns? A scientist who is a person of faith might say the more we discover in nature, the more we uncover the creativity of the Creator. No

doubt there are scientists who believe the "fifth force" may be divine. But what if it collides with their theology?

The question cycles back: Why stay hidden? Why appear to be playing an eternal game of hide-and-seek with a massively minute mass of matter called Humanity?

I'd like a proton more light on this before I collide with the problem again.

Chris Highland served as a minister and chaplain for many years. He is a teacher, writer and humanist celebrant. Chris and his wife, the Rev. Carol Hovis, live in Asheville. His latest books are "Friendly Freethinker," "Broken Bridges" and "A Freethinker's Gospel." Learn more at chighland.com.