

'The mind of God': top quotes from Stephen Hawking

March 14 2018

The world-famous British theoretical physicist Stephen Hawking, who died on Wednesday at the age of 76, was known as much for his profound and witty comments as his scientific discoveries.

Here are some of Hawking's best known quotes:

On why the universe exists

"If we find the answer to that, it would be the ultimate triumph of human reason—for then we would know the mind of God"

From *A Brief History of Time* (1988): Hawking later said he had used the word "God" figuratively and was in fact an atheist.

In *The Grand Design* (2010), he wrote: "It is not necessary to invoke God to light the blue touch paper and set the universe going"

On his illness

"My expectations were reduced to zero when I was 21. Everything since then has been a bonus"

Interview with *The New York Times* (2004)

On his life purpose

"My goal is simple. It is a complete understanding of the universe, why it is as it is and why it exists at all"

From Stephen Hawking's Universe by John Boslough (1985)

On his celebrity status

"The downside of my celebrity is that I cannot go anywhere in the world without being recognised. It is not enough for me to wear dark sunglasses and a wig. The wheelchair gives me away"

Interview with Israeli TV (2006)

On human imperfection

"Without imperfection, you or I would not exist"

From "The Universe With Stephen Hawking", Discovery Channel (2010)

On contact with aliens

"I think it would be a disaster. The extraterrestrials would probably be far in advance of us. The history of advanced races meeting more primitive people on this planet is not very happy, and they were the same species. I think we should keep our heads low"

From "Naked Science: Alien Contact", National Geographic Channel (2004)

On artificial intelligence

"The primitive forms of artificial intelligence we already have, have proved very useful. But I think the development of full artificial intelligence could spell the end of the human race"

Interview with the BBC (2014)

On death

"I'm not afraid of death, but I'm in no hurry to die. I have so much I want to do first"

Interview with The Guardian (2011)

On women

Once when asked what he thinks about most during the day, he answered: "Women. They are a complete mystery"

On football

"England couldn't hit a cow's arse with a banjo."

In May 2014, on the England football team's penalty-kicking record

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Citation: 'The mind of God': top quotes from Stephen Hawking (2018, March 14) retrieved 20 September 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2018-03-mind-god-quotes-stephen-hawking.html>

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