Stephen Hawking – A great mind (8 January 1942 – 14 March 2018)

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Received: 03.04.2018 • Accepted/Published Online: 10.04.2018 • Final Version: 26.04.2018

Abstract: Hawking induced a knowledge revolution in theoretical physics. His bedrock concepts and explanations reshaped modern physics.

Key words: Stephen William Hawking, theoretical physics, passion in life

Stephen William Hawking was an English theoretical physicist who is considered one of the best physicists after Einstein. He was Director of Research at the Centre for Theoretical Cosmology, University of Cambridge.

Hawking’s life has three strong aspects, which are science/physics education, cosmology research, and the passion to work. His commonly read book A Brief History of Time is a standard science book, but its narrative is simple and beautiful. I have enjoyed reading it twice, like a realistic story. It pictures the universe in an interesting and simple manner. It describes the laws of physics that govern the universe. In the book, Hawking documents the formation of scientific ideas about the universe starting from Aristotle’s time to the present. His narrative in the book includes special and general relativity, quantum mechanics, the big bang, inflation, the arrow of time, and unification of physics, among others. In the end, Hawking presents his thoughts and speculation about the universe. It describes the universe from the big bang to black holes.

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Cosmological research and gravitation theories are Hawking’s prime pieces of work. He (with Gibbons) presented suggestive evidence of black holes in binary solar systems [1]. Black holes are regions of intense gravitational fields. Hawking predicted in 1974 that under intense gravitational effects, black holes would emit black-body radiations. The representative temperature of a black hole is inversely proportional to its mass. These radiations are also called Hawking radiations [2]. Hawking also described the beginning of time in the big bang and its arrow.

Hawking has been a great inspiration to the whole world as he proved something special through his performance, despite his serious sickness. If you are determined and trust in yourself, nothing can stop you from reaching your destination. From his early twenties, Hawking suffered from motor neuron disease, which increasingly paralyzed him with age. His disease specifically affected his brain’s ability to control his muscles. It continued deteriorating his capacities with time, but he continued his work with distinct vigor.

Hawking became engaged to Jane Wilde, a friend of his sister, shortly after he was diagnosed with motor neuron disease. They were married on 14 July 1965. Hawking and Jane had three children: Robert, Lucy, and Timothy. After 1985, Hawking grew close to one of his nurses. After divorce from Jane, Hawking married Elaine Mason. Hawking and Elaine were divorced in 2006. The world’s scientific community, top leaders, and the public paid a remarkable tribute to Hawking upon his death, expressing sorrow and sadness. News of Hawking’s death on March 14th was a big shock to me, like millions of physics lovers around the world. We can only read his old articles now. His bedrock concepts and explanations reshaped modern physics. For more information about Stephen Hawking’s funeral, mourners, and related matters, see the BBC story published on 31 March 2018 (http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-cambridgeshire-43582950).
References
