

Mommy, Where Did I Come From?

The little child in all its innocence asks with pristine curiosity the same question that has perplexed man, poet and philosopher, scientist and metaphysician, gifted intellect and ordinary citizen, from time beginning to time present, and will ask to time future, "Where did I come from?" Equally important, and puzzling, is the question, "Where am I going?" We all find ourselves in the midst of a continuum, perceiving neither the beginning nor the end. Anyone who has ever stumbled around in the dark or found themselves lost on a trip can sense, to a small degree, the anxiety that is produced when we do not know where we are or where we are going. I tremble when I imagine what it must be like to be suddenly struck blind, or to lose my memory, and consequently my identity. We are by nature creatures who crave to have control over our destiny, or at least know what lies around the next corner, especially in a hostile world.

Astronomers form conclusions about the physical origin of the universe by charting its present movement and calculating backwards to a source point. Through the same processes they predict our future position. By knowing where we are now and where we came from, physically, we attempt to determine where we will be in the future. Analogously we do the same with our spiritual journey. Before we can conclude where we are going, or even where we are now, it is necessary to know from whence we came. In the process of exploring our origins, from a scientific perspective, three possibilities have been proposed: 1) the universe arose from nothing, 2) the universe is eternal, and 3) the universe is not eternal and, therefore, created.

What can we say concerning the proposition that the universe arose from nothing? We can quote learned men such as Dr. George Davis, "No material thing can create itself," or Thompson and Jackson who write, "...it is absurd to even suggest that matter could create itself," but to turn to experts to make a pronouncement of the obvious seems itself absurd. The difficulty in addressing such a proposition is that the answer is axiomatic, i.e. evident without proof. An axiom is harder to prove than a theory. If one cannot see that it is self-evident that matter cannot produce itself from nothing, there is no basis for rational discussion.

The second proposition suggests that matter has been eternal. Nothing preceded it because it has been here forever and will be here forever. For that matter it has to be here forever, for if something has an end, it most certainly implies that it has a beginning. But Thompson and Jackson observe that the "fact that scientists attempt to assign an age to the universe admits to it having an origin." Somewhat more demonstratively, Dr. Robert Jastrow in his book, *Until the Sun Dies*, writes:

...in science, as in the Bible, the World begins with an act of creation. That view has not always been held by scientists. Only as a result of the most recent discoveries can we say with a fair degree of confidence that our Universe has not existed forever; that it began abruptly, without any apparent cause, in a blinding event that defies explanation (emp. added)."

The most recent discoveries by the most renowned scientists acknowledge that the universe has a beginning. Scientifically speaking, the beginning is unobservable, thus unexplainable. Nevertheless, concerning these recent discoveries Dr. George Smoot, astronomer and project leader for COBE from the University of California at Berkeley, writes, "What we have found is evidence for the birth of the universe... It's like looking at God." The scientific discoveries confirm what the vast majority of humans have always understood: we have not always been here, neither we as humans nor the universe in which we live.

Having dispelled the first two propositions about our existence, namely that the universe arose from nothing or that it is eternal, we are left with only one remaining possibility... the universe, and we who are in it, have been made by someone or something. This fact does not establish that God exists or, if He does, anything about Him, but it certainly clears the way for exploring in that direction. We are a long way from answering the child's question, "Mommy, where did I come from?", but we have certainly validated