

Why Is There Something?

By Peter Bocchino

The ultimate question for both philosophy and science is what Peter Kreeft refers to as that “haunting question,” penned by the philosopher Martin Heidegger: “Why is there anything rather than nothing at all?” (*Three Philosophies of Life*, p. 9). In other words, why do we exist? Is there a God who created this universe, or has it always existed? As creationists, we believe that the first principles (self-evident truths) of philosophy and science, applied properly to the question of origins, can give us trustworthy answers. However, many modern scientists disagree and would challenge our position. For example, Stephen Jay Gould, Harvard professor and paleontologist, believes:

Science simply cannot (by its legitimate methods) adjudicate the issue of God's possible superintendence of nature. *We neither affirm it nor deny it; we simply cannot comment on it as scientists. . . .* Science can work only with naturalistic explanations; it can neither affirm nor deny other types of actors (like God) in other spheres (the moral realm, for example) (“Impeaching a Self-Appointed Judge,” in *Scientific American*, July, 1992, p.120, emphasis added).

These are interesting comments, considering that Gould’s article was a response to Phillip Johnson’s book *Darwin on Trial*. Gould felt Johnson was wrong, *morally wrong*, because Johnson allegedly misrepresented naturalistic scientists and the scientific method. It seems that Gould does think that morals apply to science! As for comments about the existence of God, if silence rules, why does he (along with so many of his colleagues) continue to write and speak so profusely on this topic? Why do we continue to hear so much opposition from evolutionary scientists on this issue? With all due respect to Professor Gould, he is guilty of breaking his own rules because he has made many comments about “the issue of God's possible superintendence of nature.” After critiquing William Paley’s design argument for the existence of God, Gould concluded, “Good design exists, and implies production for its current purpose; but adaptations are built naturally, by slow evolution towards desired ends, *not by immediate, divine fiat*” (*Eight Little Piggies: Reflections in Natural History*, p. 144, emphasis added).

Many scientists not only “adjudicate the issue of God's possible superintendence of nature,” but they flatly deny it! Professor Gould wrongly assumes the possibility of doing science while remaining philosophically neutral. Indeed, the very notion that only natural explanations apply to the universe is a philosophical assumption which leads to a metaphysical conclusion. Gould’s assumption needs an explanation and C. S. Lewis gives us one: “If the ‘natural’ means that which can be paralleled, that which can be explained by reference to other events, then Nature herself as a whole is not natural. If a miracle means that which must simply be accepted, the unanswerable actuality which gives no account of itself but simply is, then the universe is one great miracle” (*God in the Dock*, p. 36).

Is it reasonable and scientific to conclude that God is the cause of the universe? As creationists we believe that it is; yet, we must be clear about the relationship between philosophy and science. Many people believe that only what is scientifically verifiable is true. Unfortunately, no scientific experiment

can verify that assertion, for the claim is philosophical in nature, not scientific. Furthermore, science is based on logic, and there is no scientific experiment to verify logic. The word *science* literally means knowledge, having its origin in the Latin term *scire* (to know). However, science itself assumes a certain order of knowledge. What we need to understand is that the discipline of science is based on certain first principles and assumptions established in philosophy. The philosophical assumptions scientists make have priority over all scientific investigations:

Philosophy undergirds science by providing its presuppositions. Science (at least as most scientists and philosophers understand it) assumes that the universe is intelligible and not capricious, that the mind and senses inform us about reality, that mathematics and language can be applied to the world, that knowledge is possible, that there is a uniformity in nature that justifies inductive inferences from the past to the future and from examined cases of, say, electrons, to unexamined cases, and so forth. . . . All of them are philosophical in nature (J. P. Moreland, *Christianity and the Nature of Science*, p. 45).

What is the logical justification for these philosophical assumptions of science? Are our thoughts merely a product of the chemical reactions in our brains? If reason and logic are ultimately reducible to pure chemical reactions, how do we decide between good logic and bad logic? Which assumptions are reasonable and which are not? G. K. Chesterton noted that without some basis for reason, it would be a pure act of faith: “It is an act of faith to assert that our thoughts have any relation to reality at all. If you are merely a skeptic, you must sooner or later ask yourself the question, ‘Why should *anything* go right; even observation and deduction? Why should not good logic be as misleading as bad logic? They are both movements in the brain of a bewildered ape’ ” (*Orthodoxy*, p.33).

Scientists assume reason applies to reality. They assume that our thought processes can actually make sense out of the data we obtain when we study the universe. Yet from where do the laws of thought come and what or who provides the absolute explanation for them? Where did these laws come from? C. S. Lewis plainly demonstrates a need for the ultimate justification of reason:

One man’s reason has been led to see things by the aid of another man’s reason, and is none the worse for that. It is thus still an open question whether each man’s reason exists absolutely on its own or whether it is the result of some (rational) cause--in fact, of some other Reason. That other Reason might conceivably be found to depend on a third, and so on; it would not matter how far this process was carried provided you found Reason coming from Reason at each stage. It is only when you are asked to believe in Reason coming from non-reason that you must cry Halt, for, if you don’t, all thought is discredited. It is therefore obvious that sooner or later you must admit a Reason which exists absolutely on its own (*Miracles*, pp. 27-28).

Ultimately, the only way to justify correct reasoning is to posit the existence of a thinking entity (God) who is the primary cause, or rational basis, for scientific assumptions. Scientific investigations are not isolated from philosophical assumptions and we need to examine these assumptions to see if they are based on good logic or faulty logic. Correct reasoning necessarily precedes science; therefore, in order for science to be valid, it must *keep the faith* it has in reason!

Is it reasonable to believe that the universe came into existence due to a supernatural cause? Does belief in God mean that we have to posit an immediate supernatural cause for every event that takes place in the universe? No, physical laws may be the secondary causes that explain much of what we

observe in the daily operation of the universe. But what is the primary cause of the physical laws that we discover in nature? The cause of falling rocks can simply be explained as the result of the universal law of gravity, a natural cause, pulling them to the center of the earth. Gravity is a part of reality, one of the fundamental laws of physics. However, gravity is the result of the force of attraction between any two objects in the universe that have mass, or substance. Moreover, mass can be thought of as the measure of the amount of matter in a body and matter, a material substance, which has extension in space and time. Matter may also be considered a specialized form of energy ($e= mc^2$). Think about these causal connections:

1. The cause of falling rocks is gravity.
2. Gravity is a force of attraction caused by mass.
3. Mass is a measure of matter and mathematically equivalent to energy, which is caused by?

What is the cause of the energy in the cosmos? Does it need a cause? If energy is matter, and the universe is made up of matter, is it infinite? Is there a limit to the universe? Carl Sagan said, “The Cosmos is all that is or ever will be.” Is Sagan right? Is the cosmos the cause of all things? Can the cosmos, as a whole, be explained by purely natural causes? If it cannot, then we must look outside, or beyond, the cosmos to the existence of a supernatural cause for its explanation and the place to start looking is in the beginning.

In The Beginning?

Our faith in God and His word tells us that the universe had a beginning. In Genesis 1:1 we read, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” However, is there objective scientific evidence that corresponds to what we believe? Some cosmologists believe that the universe must have always existed. Carl Sagan said, “The Cosmos is all that is or ever will be” (Sagan, *Cosmos*, p.1). This view of the universe is consistent with naturalism, but is it compatible with the scientific evidence? Is it scientifically credible to believe that the universe is infinite (unlimited) with no beginning, or to believe that it is finite (limited) and had a beginning? Which view of the cosmos is consistent with what we already know from the laws of science? To answer this question we must first identify the foremost law of science and understand how it figures into a valid view of the nature of the universe.

Everyday, everyone and everything is becoming older and more deteriorated. Consequently, people die, cars corrode, buildings fall, landscapes erode and our natural resources are depleted. No matter how hard we try, we will never be able to reverse this process and get things back to their original state. Things and systems are constantly breaking down. As we continue to fix the car, paint the house and try to put things back to their original order, some counter-force seems to be at work undoing what we do. This propensity towards deterioration is explained by the most universal law of physics, known as *the second law of thermodynamics*. Thermodynamics is the scientific discipline that concentrates on the study of heat (thermo) and its ability to do mechanical work (dynamics). The effects of the second law are directly observable from an overwhelming body of scientific evidence. This law’s greatest power is its universal predictive quality that, on the whole, the rise of disorder will eventually prevail. When we look at the nature and structure of the universe through the scientific discipline known as *cosmology*, the one law of physics that stands above the rest is the second law of thermodynamics. Therefore, we must use this law as the foundation of any valid view of the nature and origin of the universe.

Before we jump into a system as big as the universe, let's apply the second law to a familiar mechanical system such as a car engine. If we were to build a car engine, we would design it in such a way as to keep the level of disorder to a minimum. A car engine burns gasoline and the heat generated by that combustion process is converted into mechanical energy which turns the wheels of the car. Ideally if 100% of the fuel we put into the engine could be directly converted to energy to power the car, we would have built a highly ordered system with no increase in disorder or waste of fuel. We must keep in mind that the energy that goes into this system must equal the energy that comes out of this system (this law is known as the *first law of thermodynamics*). Unfortunately, the second law of thermodynamics will not allow us to build a system that is 100% efficient. In reality, a heat engine is only 25% efficient. This means that only 25% of the gasoline we put into the tank of a car gets converted into mechanical energy. Where does the other 75% of the energy go? It obeys the second law and is radiated from the car in the form of wasted energy that exits through the exhaust pipe and elsewhere. Therefore, the typical car engine operates at a fairly high level of wasted heat energy and as time goes by the car will run out of fuel. Of course a car can always be refueled, but what about the universe?

The second law forces cosmologists to treat the universe as a gigantic heat engine with no external source of energy input. This means that the total amount of usable energy in the universe is decreasing as time increases, similar to a clock winding down. Since the universe is unwinding, it must have been wound up at some very early point in time. This inference fits very nicely with what we know about the universe and the second law of thermodynamics. According to the second law, the universe is expected to unwind and run out of energy at some future point in time. However, unlike a car, there is no evidence to support the idea that a cosmic gas station exists for the universe to obtain more fuel. This fact can only lead to one conclusion: *We live in a finite universe.*

The implication of the universal power of the second law is that cosmologists may choose to overlook some scientific law or principle when developing a model of the universe, but a valid model cannot avoid this law. If theorists do disregard the second law, then in order to be logically consistent, they must also ignore the other laws of science as well. No matter how complex or exotic a model of the cosmos may be, if it violates the second law it must be ruled out as a credible model. Paul Davies, professor of mathematical physics at the University of Adelaide in Australia, said that whereas some scientists try to escape the death grip of the second law, most scientists have confirmed that it is absolutely fundamental. Davies quotes Sir Arthur Eddington, contemporary of Einstein and one time professor of astronomy at the University of Cambridge:

The Second Law of Thermodynamics holds, I think, the supreme position among the laws of Nature. If someone points out to you that your pet theory of the universe is in disagreement with Maxwell's equations--then so much for Maxwell's equations. If it is found to be contradicted by observation--well, these experiments do bungle things sometimes. But if your theory is found to be against the Second Law of Thermodynamics I can give you no hope; there is nothing for it but to collapse in deepest humiliation (Davies, *The Cosmic Blueprint*, p. 20).

Did the universe have a beginning? The foremost law of physics answers this question in the affirmative! To believe that the universe has always existed violates the second law of thermodynamics. Robert Jastrow, founder of NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies, aptly summarizes the plight of the modern astronomer:

The scientist's pursuit of the past ends in the moment of creation. This is an exceedingly strange development, unexpected by all but the theologians. They have always accepted the words of the Bible: In the beginning God created heaven and earth. . . . For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries (Jastrow, *God and the Astronomers*, pp.106-107).

God is the first cause of the universe! As Mortimer Adler has said, "IF the existence of the cosmos as a whole needs to be explained, and IF it cannot be explained by natural causes, THEN we must look to the existence and action of a supernatural cause for its explanation." (Adler, *How to Think about God*, p.131). Since it is impossible for nothing to produce something, something must have always existed as the first cause of the universe. Furthermore, this first cause must be eternal (since time is a part of the universe) and infinitely powerful in order to account for the origin and existence of the universe. Hence, it is scientifically credible to believe that God brought the cosmos into existence.

The universe had a beginning, but *why* is there a universe? Is our presence an accident, or is there a *supermind* behind the *superforce* who intended for us to be here? Paul Davies said that "science may explain the world, but we still have to explain science." He continued by saying:

The laws which enable the universe to come into being spontaneously seem themselves to be the product of exceedingly ingenious design. If physics is the product of design, the universe must have a purpose, and the evidence of modern physics suggests strongly to me that the purpose includes us (Davies, *Superforce*, p. 243).