

In The Beginning GOD...- But When Was That? by John Knapp II

-A Multiverse for the Day-

"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of water of life freely to him who thirsts." -Rev. 21:6 NKJV

From the old test maker comes a simple question: Which best states what is?

- a) Nothing exists
- b) Everything exists.
- c) Something exists.

And, your reasons why?

Kids from about age 6 begin to ask questions like this—though certainly not in those words—until 6th grade when they begin to think as the adults and older peers around them. Daydream only in private and get on with your life, they're told in so many ways. There's a sadness in this, but later a few return to seriously consider such questions—on one side of the teacher's desk or the other. Strapping on a bit of armor, these few once again begin to chew on fundamental musings.

Like physicist Robert Mann.

In 2009, toward the end of the International Year of Astronomy, Mann said that if “matter emerged from Mind” (as would be the case if “God created”), it should lead us to consider some interesting things. Key to this is making a case for the existence of “*something* instead of everything”¹: If we accept, as Mann and I do, recent understandings that there are about 10^{58} (different kinds of) particles per (average) star², 10^{11} stars in a galaxy, 10^{11} galaxies in the universe (observed and implied from recent space photography), we can picture the package of things that *are*...a bit more easily.

And count up the “amount” (mass) of everything.

Mann goes like this:

Any finite collection of objects could be counted as “1” (ignore now the exponents) by taking the number of objects (or particles, if you will) in the “set” of the universe and dividing it by that number.

If, of course there’s nothing in a set, then there are no numbers in it except “0” or nothing.

But what if there are too many objects in the set to count? And, no matter how high you go with your calculator, there are still more numbers to enter? If so, we would say that the set is *infinite*, or ∞ . (The symbol for infinity is an “8” flat on its back.)

Therefore, to restate the question presented at the beginning:

What, then, is the best way to express “what is?” Choose

from these answers:

a) 0

b) ∞

c) 1

Let's react to this welcome brevity with a bit of explanation:

First, accepting a "0" total doesn't make much sense to us ordinary folk because, for one thing, there's the reality of such things as my fingers pressing the keyboards to make these words, and the reality of your eyes horizontally zig-zagging to pull them off the screen. Accepting this choice, which really reduces everything to an illusion, is like waking after a complicated bad dream and realizing there's no reason, or even language, to think about or share where you've been.³

So no to "0."

Now ∞ is the assumption that some—just some—scientists, philosophers, and religious thinkers would choose (for reasons that walk away from the box of science, though some may disagree). But infinity cannot be divided by itself. (Abbreviating math logic here, if you tried this and came up with "1," or some other answer here, by *definition* you could still add more to your answer because infinity is "unbounded." No "1" is possible in this case.)

Looking for a metaphoric parallel? With this choice all that we presently know in science is but Act 1 in a play that forever begs for an ending. (Of course, choosers of this response wouldn't say it quite that way...)

At the core of this choice is an elephant called “multiverse” that blind scientific cognoscenti approach from different directions. The first touches a trunk (a “water spout”); the second, a leg (or “pillar”); the third, a tail (or “rope”); the fourth, a tusk (a “plow”), and so on. Hopefully, the elephant doesn’t wander away as the group later sits and summarizes.

What are “multiversers”⁴ saying and doing? Let me recommend Brian Greene’s instructive (secular), readable (for many) summary, *The Elegant Universe*⁵ that tells you everything that you wanted to know, and more, about multiverses, String Theory, and M-Theory.

Though subscribers to multiverse are usually bright and often clever, they go in several different directions and are hard to pigeonhole. Key to the thinking of many is the notion that the universe is, something like...infinite (as we best understand that word), with some postulating other worlds, or universes, where everything has “duplicates,” and/or “similar” or “opposite particulars” for every possibility of existence.

Further, say some, everything—everything—can eventually be connected by equations and numbers, giving us TOE, the Theory of Everything.

So how then do they *now* account for the delicate fine-tuning of so many earth features that make life—especially human life, even the creation of this article—possible? Well...everything is (must be)—naturally—possible somewhere if we go “in” or “out there” far enough. And, perhaps, we’re the ones out there already.

The problem with multiverse? It sounds impressive, modern,

and progressive. But if we're honest, though its various varieties are fascinating to consider and discuss, it is highly controversial even among scientists. Even more, we must clearly recognize that *it is not supported by any objective verifiable evidence*—at least not yet. But stay tuned...

Let's go now to Option c, or "1" (that we postulated many paragraphs ago). How does this fit our knowledge of the universe? (1) It recognizes that we and the world around us are real, not imaginary. (2) It recognizes that the universe though vast, is finite. It is made of things that are identifiable and countable. You could tally them and come up with a sum.

Add to that (3) A strong scientific case can be made that time is linear and sequential, and that the universe—the "something" we've discussed—had a real beginning about 13.7 billion years ago, and will have a real ending in the future. And further, (4) There is wide support from science that Earth is in fact amazingly fine-tuned in dozens of ways essential for life, especially human life.

And what does all this imply for Jewish or Christian believers who seem at the drop of hat to say "It took a miracle," and who trust in a caring, creating, sustaining supernatural God to explain the natural world? And the needs of creatures said to be created in his image, who love, care, hurt, wonder, experience fear and joy, and seem to always be reaching beyond themselves?

First, there is nothing for believers to fear from science—true, up-to-date modern science. And second, oddly perhaps—perhaps not—believers should recognize that the Judeo-Christian Bible, is unique among ancient religious

texts. It alone is wonderfully congruent with, and complementary to, findings of modern science learned thousands of years later (such as the four items cited above) we've discussed. But you may need to read Holy Scripture again with open eyes—and good notes—to make sure.

And as to the question "Why?" mentioned at the beginning: What is the purpose of all this "something"? On all teleological questions true science, by its very nature, is silent. A key consequence of this is that we have to get our spin on what's right and wrong somewhere else.

The Bible is not silent on purpose and value. Believers are grateful for guidance there. As to understanding about things, there's science for that...and the Bible.

(For a look at what the Bible also says about Earth and Heaven and creation, astrophysicist/evangelist Hugh Ross's list, "The Major Biblical Creation Accounts" on p. 54ff. in *Creation As Science* and on p. 216 in Ross's *Why the Universe Is the Way It Is*.⁶ In these passages allow for metaphor, effects of translation from biblical languages, and surrounding historical and philosophical context. Gen. 1; Gen. 2; Gen. 3 – 5; Gen. 6 – 9; Gen. 10 – 11; Job 9; Job 34 – 42; Psa. 8; Psa. 19; Psa. 65; Psa. 104; Psa. 139; Psa. 147 – 148; Prov. 8; Eccl. 1 – 3, 8 – 12; Isa. 40 – 51; Rom. 1 – 8; I Cor. 15; II Cor. 4; Heb. 1; II Pet. 3; Rev. 20 – 22.)

NOTES

¹Robert Mann, "The Puzzle of Existence," *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith*. Vol. 61, No. 3 (Sept. 2009).

Though Mann is building a case for Mind coming before matter, which I agree with, I'm using his three-choice pattern here in a more basic way. I'm talking about the reality of "everything" not just matter (and energy) that Mann and all scientists, though not all philosophers, already assume. In this and the rest of his article, which I've highly adapted and paraphrased, I follow some of Mann's clever parsing of contrasting views of how to think about existence in a broader way. If my generalizing is soft and short-circuits Mann's ideas, that problem lies at my own feet, not his.

²If you're bewildered about exponents, just realize they're short ways (usually) to write big numbers using "powers of 10." Ex.: 10 is 10^1 or 1 times 10; 100 is 10^2 or 10 times 10; 10,000 is 10^4 ; 10^9 is 1,000,000,000 and so on. Hint: Count the zeros. Remember, too, though exponents are convenient, they can be snake oil to glaze over the eyes of the uninitiated.

³Mann would, correctly, say I'm oversimplifying the problem here. True. But, then (see Note 1), I'm using his useful model in a broader way.

⁴I, an occasional poet, could—but cannot—pass up the opportunity to go further with "multi-verse" and share a little folk "versing" about this shadowy elephant. "The Blind Men and the Elephant" has a rich folk history.

It was six men of Hindustan
To learning much inclined,
Who went to see the Elephant
(Though all of them were blind),

That each by observation
Might satisfy his mind.

And so these men of Hindustan
Disputed loud and long,
Each is his own opinion
Exceeding stiff and strong,
Though each was partly in the right
And all were in the wrong.

– John Saxe (1816 – 1887)

⁵Brian Greene, *The Elegant Universe*. Vintage Books (Random House), 2003. Though a bit dated, this also has good information about the Big Bang.

⁶Hugh Ross, *Creation As Science*, NavPress, 2006; and Hugh Ross, *Why the Universe Is the Way It Is*, Baker Books, 2008.

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