

Renewal

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Cracks in the Big Bang

When a religion dies, the mental habits that it once instilled can take a long time to fade away. So it is with Christianity and modern scientific cosmology.

In Christianity the ultimate evidence was not to be derived from a study of reality, but rather from appeal to an authority of some sort. This might be a priest or a pope, a scholar or a saint. Ultimately, though, the appeal was to a book, a particular book, the Bible. This over-valuation of the printed word is so ingrained in our thinking that the very word "authority" comes from the same source as the word "author".

According to the first words of the Bible, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." To Christians, that was how the universe came into existence. God made it. It said so in the Bible. Since the Bible was "God's sacred Word", according to its best translators, it must be true and infallible.

Conversely, anyone who contradicted the Bible must be a sinful heretic. That is why they burned Giordano Bruno in 1600, and forced Copernicus to recant his discoveries, and why they kept an Index of Forbidden Books. Not because Bruno et al were wrong, but because they were blaspheming God by questioning his "sacred Word".

All of modern science and technology has been, at bottom, a struggle against this attitude. For instance, Edward Jenner successfully tested smallpox vaccination in 1796. Yet as late as 1829 a pope, Leo XII, was still forbidding vaccinations because the Bible saw illness as a consequence of sin. (In some backward areas there are still a few Christians today who regard vaccinations with deep suspicion.)

Scientific progress was made, of course, but at a much slower rate than would otherwise have occurred; and always, initially, in the face of Christian hostility.

But a far greater stumbling block than the waning powers of the church has been the mental habits ingrained by centuries of Christian reliance on the Bible. In too many fields of modern science and technology, the Bible has simply been replaced by some other authority figure. An authority who must be right because, well, everyone says he's an authority!

Some of these men (and they were all men) were utter charlatans like Franz Boas, who derailed anthropology for the best part of a century. Some were mere cranks, like

Sigmund Freud. Some were geniuses, like Isaac Newton and Charles Darwin. And then there is Albert Einstein.

Einstein, the father of the atomic bomb, occupies a unique place in both the popular and the scientific mind. To the ordinary person in the street, Einstein is not just a genius, but *the* genius. "You don't have to be Einstein to figure that out," is an expression used daily by millions of people who couldn't give even a rough account of Einstein's supposed achievements. Even worse is the too-common scientific assumption that anything contradicting Einstein's theories is not just wrong, but verging on blasphemy.

So Einstein now occupies the same position as the Bible once did. And that is why orthodox cosmology now tells a story of the origin of the universe that is fundamentally Biblical. God may have left the metaphorical building, but the universe still came into existence in a "big bang" at a precise time – an extremely precise time, in fact, being 13.7 billion years ago.

As this journal has stated previously (see <http://www.geocities.com/osred/cosmology.htm>), Indo-European heathen cosmology is far more subtle. Our ancestors believed in a universe of endlessly repeated cycles. Vedic tradition, for instance, conceives of "great cycles of Brahma" made up of 2,560,000 "mahayugas" of 12,000 years each. Every cycle fits within another, larger one, and so the universe continues, endlessly renewing itself. The Classical pagan philosophers inherited this Indo-European cosmology of eternal recurrence, which is most familiar today from Heraclitus, Empedocles, Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics. It is an idea that is central to all intellectually developed forms of paganism, and is Nietzsche's central philosophical concept.

Of course, it can't be right because it flatly contradicts the Big Bang theory, and Big Bang is derived from Einstein's equations. QED.

Yet something strange has been happening to Big Bang over the last few years. Cracks have started to appear in just about every aspect of it, cracks that have had to be papered over with new ideas like dark matter, dark energy and "inflation". The trouble is that every emergency cover-up just leads to yet more new problems.

Right now, Big Bang is in crisis. Here are some of the problems:

- The new NASA Spitzer telescope has

detected stars from the farthest galaxies. Given the time it has taken their light to reach us, they must have been formed in the first billion years or so after the Big Bang. Trouble is, these stars are red giants – elderly stars on their last legs, not young hot ones emitting blue light. Some of the Spitzer stars are therefore much older than the universe – which is simply illogical.

- According to Einstein's theories the cosmic microwave background, which was in fact discovered in 1965, should be randomly uniform throughout the universe. A team at Imperial College London, led by João Magueijo and Kate Land, has found that this is not the case. The standard Big Bang theory rules out this discovery. Perhaps the WMAP satellite, which discovered the problem, is malfunctioning in some way. Much more likely, the theory is wrong.
- Globular clusters are tight groups of stars orbiting the Milky Way and other galaxies. Some of these clusters, such as Omega Centauri, are orbiting so fast that they should spin off into intergalactic space. The only thing that could possibly hold them in place, according to Big Bang theory, is dark matter. Yet globular clusters are the very last places where the theory suggests dark matter could possibly exist.

The dominant theory is clearly in deep trouble. As Magueijo has said, "People made these assumption because, without them, it was impossible to simplify Einstein's equations enough to solve them for the universe."

So it's yet another case of the old, old story. The Pope, or the Bible, or nowadays Einstein, is infallible, so any new finding that contradicts their divine insights is self-evidently wrong. Burn Giordano Bruno! Terrorise Copernicus into submission! Cut out the tongues of blasphemers! Make bonfires of dissenting books! Blame instrumental errors when Einstein's theories are shown to be wrong.

One day our science will be liberated from this authoritarian belief in sacred authorities. When that time comes we will have a truly Odinist science, one that, like Odin himself, believes in pursuing knowledge "beyond the utmost bounds of human thought". Only then will we be intellectually, and thus morally, spiritually and ethically, truly liberated.

May our sacred gods and goddesses help us to reach that glorious day!