

Reply ID:
acvk

Dear Calhoun25,

Monday
January 30, 2017

First, please allow me to thank you for taking the time to respond to my post, and so many times, too! Seriously, one of the most difficult things about being in prison is the complete isolation from society, being cut off from all your family and friends, being a part of what's going on, etc. The loneliness get to be so overwhelming that you're literally hoping to hear from anyone, friend or enemy, even a bill collector, so your responses are always welcome and even looked forward to, whether you want to continue sending leaving them here, or send them to me at the address listed below.

With that said, not only did you present me with a lot to think about, you did so in a way that was remarkably easy to understand, both of which I'm grateful for. Still, the idea of a never ending universe, or even one that has a definite beginning and an end, is still difficult, if not impossible, to grasp. For every question answered, it seems that there are three more that pop up, which is, I suspect, the same problem scientists around the world have been having since the dawn of time.

Speaking of which, there's another thing that has neither a beginning, nor an end. Tell me, if time is "infinite," then why is it that we never seem to have enough of it?

I think that a large part of the problem is how, as humans, we learn. As infants, we see something, we pick it up and begin exploring it, usually with our mouths. Whatever we're using to examine our new-found object, keys, pacifier, electrical outlet, we can see a physical beginning and a physical end, a definite starting point and stopping point. As we get older, we apply these lessons elsewhere, even if to the consternation of those who supposedly "know better." So, it's no surprise that people have a difficult time grasping the infinite nature of the universe, while at the same time, not being able to understand how it would have a starting and ending point. In fact, it wasn't that long ago that people couldn't grasp the concept of the world being anything other than flat. It wasn't until some remarkably brave souls set out to see for themselves, during which time they discovered that, not only was the world not flat, but it had a definite beginning and end, although some would argue that anything circular has no beginning or end.

I wonder if there's a physical shape which could be used to explain how it's possible for a universe to be infinite. A circle, for instance, shows how a journey in a straight line could be infinite, provided, of course, you were traveling the surface, so conceivably, there should be some shape that would incorporate the infinite journey of surface travel on a circular object, while at the same time, making the same journey possible in the same way for travel away from, or into the, surface of the shape created. This still wouldn't explain how true infinity would be possible, but it would at least explain why you could never reach the proverbial end of the universe, no matter how long you lived and traveled.

Confused? Me too. Some things are easy to think about, but not quite so easy to put into words, and the written word doesn't always make such explanations easy. Actually, I don't think it's the written word so much as it's the inability to instantly see, and hear, the reactions of the person you're conversing with, which in turn show you when and where you're being misunderstood, if that makes sense.

Anyway, no matter how you choose to look at it, for humans, the concept of an infinite space is truly difficult to come to terms with, although the terms of an infinite number, even of objects, isn't quite as difficult. And the concept of a God who always was and always will be? Well, to me, that's just as difficult to come to grips with as well. Again, as humans, we're taught to believe that nothing is created from nothing. Chickens come from eggs, and eggs from chickens, hence the age old question of "which came first, the chicken or the egg?"

There was a cartoon, South Park, I believe, which dealt with this question in a similar way. In it, Kyle (or was it Stan??), contemplated the question of how he came into being, and his answer was "I think, therefore I am," and he popped himself into existence. I can't help but wonder if God didn't do the same thing, but if so, it's as I mentioned before. With each question answered, new ones come to mind. If God simply popped Himself into existence, then what, pray tell, created the matter He appropriated to make Himself? What created whatever it was that allowed Him to think in the first place?

Using science, we can explain the building blocks of how babies are made, but only the physical aspects. Even after all this time and research, we still can't figure out if a soul actually exists, and how to physically prove it, let alone explain how the soul's created, nor can we adequately explain, if a soul doesn't exist, exactly what it is that makes us "us." We're all unique, in ways we often can't define, yet there's no way to explain why identical twins, exposed to the exact same set of environmental factors, grow up to be so wildly different, yet at the same time, so remarkably similar. This inability to define, with any certainty, exactly when life begins, and how the human body comes to possess what we define as a "soul," is the reason for so much debate among the Pro Life/Pro Choice community, or those who desire to conduct research into the possibility of using aborted fetuses, stem cells, cloning, etc., to treat those who are already living outside the womb.

In your response, you said that "we're agreeing that the universe came into being a finite time ago," but upon further reflection, I'm not so certain about that. I think that a more accurate statement would be that, the universe **as we now know it**, came into being a finite time ago. I say this because I started thinking about some of the things that Steven Hawking, and others like him, have talked about, and then I started trying to figure out how these things could be true, while at the same time, allowing for the possibility of an infinite universe, and I came up with what I call "The Rubber Band" theory.

Using science, we've been able to explain that the universe, as we know it, and everything in it, originated from a single point in time and space, what we now refer to as the "Big Bang Theory." When this massive explosion happened, everything was a single piece of matter, like a planet of some sort, albeit one that was probably much too big using anything we're currently aware of. As a result of this explosion, this piece of matter, or "super planet," for lack of a better term, fractured into trillions of pieces, some large enough to be planets and stars on their own, others infinitesimally small (there's that word again!). As with any explosion, they were thrown clear from the source of the blast, a journey which caused them to separate further and further the farther away they got from the source, and in turn, farther and farther from each other. Science has proven that there was an increase in speed, which I believe is continuing to increase, I forget, it's been awhile, and that it will eventually slow down as well, which got me to thinking. Why would it slow down? If space has no resistance, and is infinite, then there shouldn't be anything to slow down the rate as we continue to leave the site of the explosion, nothing, that is, except gravity, and while the various objects speeding through space certainly demonstrate its effect on other objects around them, none of them possess the gravity needed to effect the universe as a whole. In other words, the individual objects floating endlessly through space simply don't possess the gravity needed to slow down, let alone stop, the spread of the universe, but what if the source of the explosion did, and continues to do so?

I don't know how old you are, or if you're even male or female, but I'm guessing that you're probably old enough to remember those wooden paddle balls, or whatever they were called. They had this tiny rubber ball attached to the wooden paddle by a rubber tether. The object of the game was to hit the ball, thereby forcing it to the end of its rubber tether, and then, as hit returned, you had to hit it again and again. Whoever hit it the most times in a row won.

Now, assume, for the moment, that the universe, as a whole is about to reach that moment in science when the speed of our inertia is slowed by the gravity pulling on us, after which time the force of that gravity begins to reverse our course, slowly at first, and then with ever increasing speed as we get closer and closer to the monumental source of this gravity. What do you suppose will happen when we finally reach the source of this gravity? I speculate that it will be another explosion, thereby forcing us to once again make that journey towards the outer edges of the "universe." Over and over, who knows how many times now, or how many times to come, each with an infinite number of possibilities. This could very well explain why there always was a god, why there was always a universe, because, for whoever, or whatever, came first, they knew of no other existence. There was simply nothing before it, and it's lived longer then everything else in existence, combined, making the concept of being both the beginning and the end a physical possibility. After all, it was there before anything else, and if the past is any indication, it will be there long after everything else has died (especially if we continue on the course we've set). It's also possible that this entity created everything on Earth, and in this solar system, maybe even further out, as we know it.

Incidentally, people always try to argue for one or the other when it comes to science and religion, but personally, I don't subscribe to this philosophy. I think that both are possible, or at least, they are when we stop looking at things so literally. So the Bible says that God created the Earth in a single day, which science tells us is physically impossible. Isn't it conceivable that, for someone powerful enough to create the Earth, and to have lived since the beginning of time, that a "day" for Him (or Her, depending on your personal beliefs), might have lasted for millions, or not billions, or "Earth" years? And as far as "how" man was created, who said that He just snapped His fingers and created man? Why isn't it possible for Him to have created Man in exactly the same way we would have? By building, and then rebuilding upon and altering previous structures, until the final result was achieved? People get so hung up in semantics that they often end up fighting so long and furiously that they miss out on enjoying life, regardless of how it was created.

Anyway, as far as God being alive for all of eternity, past and present, it's certainly possible under the "Rubber Band Theory," if "eternity" is defined as the beginning and end of the universe as we currently know it. And if not, well, if I'm right, then no one will ever be around to know about it one way or the other, will they? ;)

One thing I think we can say for certain is that today's man will never live long enough to find out for certain whether or not the universe is truly infinite. All we can do is theorize, but what it might be possible to do is develop instruments to see things that were previously too small to see. I, for one, would like to see what electrons are made of, and what those things are made of, and so on and so forth. That's a question we might live to see answered, and in so doing, get answers to the questions surrounding the universe.

Just a quick question for you... What did you do with that "infinite" number of coins you took away? Is it possible you could send me half of the odd numbered ones? ;)

Out of curiosity, where exactly in the Midwest are you? I ask because I'm originally from Akron, Ohio, the outskirts of the Midwest, and I miss it tremendously. As far as how cold it is out here, we've had a few cold days in this part of the Valley, but nothing compared to other areas. California's one of those places where you can travel a few hours in just about any direction to experience just about any weather condition. Want to go skiing? Just travel up to Tahoe. Likewise, if you want to go swimming in the middle of winter, just travel to the beaches in the south. In fact, when they give the forecast, they often give you four options to choose from, **four**! You've got the Valley, the Foothills, the Delta and the Sierra's, and each can be wildly different. I'm in Ione, which I understand is about 40 miles from Sacramento, just shy of the foothills, so our weather is usually a mix of Valley forecasts and foothill forecasts. For the past couple of days, the weather's been beautiful, but it's supposed to start raining again in a few days, which means more snow in the mountains. A couple of weeks ago, they got so much snow that they actually had to shut down a few of the ski resorts. Now you **know** you got a lot of snow when the ski resorts have to shut down!

You'll have to tell me more about this Civic Knowledge Project from the University of Chicago and the Prison + Neighborhood Arts Project. I'm always interested to see the take that people have on prisons and how to prevent people from returning. As someone who's devoted much of his life to contemplating this very issue, I can tell you how to drop the recidivism rate low enough to close half the prisons, while at the same time promoting a health economy and preparing those who are in prison for a life outside these walls, including retirement for those too old to "start over." Sadly, however, the powers that be simply aren't truly interested in any of these ideas, and why should they be? Prisons are big business, huge. And were you aware that, contrary to popular opinion, the Constitution wasn't amended to outlaw slavery? The 13th Amendment was actually created to **legalize** slavery and indentured servitude, although it was limited to those convicted of a crime. This could explain a lot, such as why judges hand out such harsh sentences, why prisons work so hard to keep inmates from getting out early, and why parole officers work so hard to see their parolees returned. There's so much money involved, whether you're simply working at the prison as a guard, or filling one of the thousands of contracts that go along with keeping a prison running. Close a prison, and you've eliminated hundreds of millions of dollars, and thousands of jobs, from the economy.

As always, I genuinely look forward to your next reply, and should anyone else feel the desire to chime in, by all means, please do so. Should you, or anyone else, wish to write to me direct, I can be reached at the address listed below (I'd love to find some pen pals to write), or you can leave your response here, whichever you prefer. In the meantime, thanks again for taking time out to respond.

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