





Chapter III

What existed before the beginning?



Stanley Sfekas, Professor of Classical Philosophy at the University of Indianapolis, Athens Campus, accepted my proposal to search in the Athens National Library for evidence concerning the correlation between the positions of contemporary astrophysicists and of the ancient Greek philosophers regarding the beginning of the world.

Professor Sfekas has published a doctoral dissertation on Aristotelian Metaphysics, and his views have always been especially valuable to me. After a detailed investigation that we conducted in ancient texts concerning ancient cosmology, we reached common conclusions, a fact that made me particularly happy.

The important point about the question concerning the beginning of the world and its functioning that Professor Sfekas emphasized in his discussions with me is whether the question itself is of exoteric or esoteric significance, that is to say, extrinsic or intrinsic content.

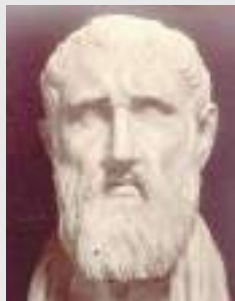
I took this to mean that if we were to formulate a theory about the **“beginning of the world”**, based solely on cold numbers and equations, then we would create a theory grounded in the nature of numbers, which is extrinsic, but not in the functioning of the principle itself, which is intrinsic.



In order to discuss the hypothesis of a “**cosmic beginning**” one is compelled, from a logical point of view, to raise the question “**what existed before the beginning?**” If we assume that prior to the beginning of the world there were only laws, we come to the legitimate question, how in an infinite past, a certain god instituted a cluster of infinite laws without any possibility of their manifestation, trapped, as it were, in complete inertia. However, because law has as its main feature the expression of motion in any type of matter whatever, the notion of the inertia of laws contradicts common sense.

Aristotle holds that matter is not generated, nor is form. Both are eternal. That which is generated is neither new matter, nor new form. “Becoming” is a transition from a possibility to a reality, from potentiality to actuality. This is precisely what the all-powerful

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Zeno of Elea 490BC - 425BC Zeno, the Eleatic was an Eleatic philosopher of Ancient Greece, the son of Teleutagoras and the beloved disciple of Parmenides. Zeno was born around 488 B.C. in Elea (today's Velia) in Italy. It is said that he helped Parmenides write the laws of Elea to which the Eleians pledged loyalty each year. Zeno devoted all his energy to the explication and development of Parmenides' philosophical system. Zeno's contribution to the Eleatic philosophy was completely negative. He added nothing positive to Parmenides' teaching; rather he dedicated himself to negating and counter-arguing the views of opponents. Zeno showed that the common perception of reality leads to paradoxes and oxymorons. Zeno's book meant that he had achieved a certain fame in Athens before his visit there. Unfortunately no work by Zeno has survived, but there is very little evidence to suggest that he wrote more than one book. The book Zeno wrote before his visit to Athens was his famous work which, according to Proclus, contained forty paradoxes concerning

the continuum. Four of the paradoxes, which we shall discuss in detail below, were to have a profound influence on the development of mathematics.

motion that transforms potentiality into actuality validates. This motion is identical with cause and effect, which define the constitution and the essence of Matter in the World. From this it follows that for the universe there was never a "**Beginning**". Professor Sfekas referred to the views of the great founder of Stoic philosophy, Zeno, who lived in the 4th century BC. Zeno claims that there is no matter without spirit, or spirit without matter. Matter is the passive element of nature, which is in constant transformation, while spirit, which is considered an inseparable part of matter, is the active element. Every real entity has a physical constitution. The action of spirit upon matter manifests itself as what he calls "**Seminal Reason**". For Zeno, the first principle of the world is spirit, that which defines and safeguards the lawful order of nature, Assuming that there was a "**Big Bang**" from a hydrogen molecule, that molecule would have to carry within it the "**Seminal Reason**", meaning the breath of life, which expresses itself in its automatic interior activity.

If this did not occur, then the Universe is only mechanistic.

If however, it is only mechanistic, without the privilege of automatic motion, then its machine must be condemned to eternal inertia. But, the dominant feature of the Universe is motion. Thus, the Universe as a whole, in this view, must be composed of Matter and Spirit, indissolubly bound.

Returning alone to my home, that rainy night, I was thinking that the most

serious question in our lives is **“why does the Universe exist?”**

I posed myself questions and tried to answer them...

“Is the Universe perfect?”, “If it is not perfect, then why is it amenable to equations, and why do the laws which define its existence and its essence not collapse?” , “If it IS perfect, is it Eternal?”

“If it IS Eternal, can it have a beginning?”

“If it does not have a beginning, does it have a divine source?”

“If we assume that it evolves with an outward tendency, ought it not to have an automatic tendency to flow inwardly, for it to construct its perfection?”

“If the Universe functions mechanically, can it also be animate? Does it have a divine origin? Does it have a divine destination? If not, why not?”

As I turned the key in the door, I recalled the scientific view pertaining to the “weak anthropic cosmological principle,” which claims that approximately 10 billion years were needed for intelligent life to develop on our planet. In short, sentience, thought and human intelligence, according to this theory, must have begun from a zero basis, with a tendency towards an infinitely evolutionary state of affairs. Conversely, the more one examines the past, the more man is seen as less intelligent, according to the same theory.

If this is the case, I said to myself, the entirety of Greek philosophy must be abolished, as it concerns the autonomous existence of complete knowledge. And this, because I have always believed that science is the servant of wisdom and never the converse, and that the key to every scientific demonstration is the experiment produced by the mind for the solution of each problem.

I was happy as I closed the door of my house. I was certain that at the apex of the pyramid of “becoming” there was spirit... only spirit!

Spirit, which is eternal, unborn and immortal. Intellect is an eternal creation of eternal man in an eternal world!

