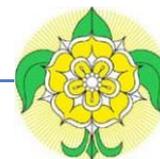


# Something from Nothing: Light from Dark



*The great philosophical question, answered by the great philosophers, scientists, religions and mystery schools, including Sir Francis Bacon and John Dee.*

Author: Peter Dawkins

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*This Love I understand to be the appetite or instinct of primal matter; or to speak more plainly, the natural motion of the atom; which is indeed the original and unique force that constitutes and fashions all things out of matter.<sup>1</sup>*

How did the world, the universe, come into existence? And indeed, how does everything new come into existence? The former question is perhaps unanswerable, because it is asking about something that is beyond reason, beyond our normal understanding, although philosophers and scientists have debated this for millennia, and still continue to do so. The latter question is usually answered with the words “natural evolution”, which of course seems true and obvious, but is not really a sufficient answer, since, for instance, there are those things which are invented seemingly out of nothing, such as an inspired idea that is then given form in the imagination. Shakespeare suggests this in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*: “And as imagination bodies forth the forms of things unknown, the poet’s pen turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing a local habitation and a name.”<sup>2</sup>

But can something come from nothing? Or does something always come from something? Using classical terminology, is the truth *creatio ex nihilo* (‘creation out of nothing’), or *creatio ex materia* (‘creation out of matter’), or *creatio ex deo* (‘creation out of God’)? But then, what is God? One of the more common classical philosophical beliefs was expressed as *ex nihilo nihil fit* (“Out of nothing comes nothing”), a belief which Shakespeare has King Lear sharing, when the King says with irony to his loving but speechless daughter: “Nothing will come of nothing, speak again.”<sup>3</sup>

This question about the origin of the universe has fuelled a major philosophical debate for millennia, continued now also as a scientific debate. There are those who argue that there must always be matter of some sort, whilst others argue that everything can indeed come from nothing or must have come from nothing. Either way, it actually remains a matter of faith as to what we believe; nothing can be proved—but then, who can prove anything about nothing?

The law of conservation of energy states that energy can be neither created nor destroyed; it merely changes form. But this begs the question, where did that energy come from in the first place? How did it come into existence? Moreover, how and why does it take form, and how does it determine what form it will take? The universe has certain laws governing things, but from where do those laws originate?

Then there is the matter of freewill. If someone asks me for something, I can choose whether to give them something or to give them nothing. I have a choice, seemingly between two things, something or nothing; only the nothing is a non-thing, a negative—that is to say, it does not exist. But the fact that it could exist, and I could give the person something, means that it does exist but in a completely different sort of way to how we would normally define existence: it exists in potential. If there were not that potential for giving something, then there would be no choice, no freewill. This perhaps brings one to the crux of the argument: the no-thing is potential. In religious terms, it is divine potential—the omnipotence of what is called God or which is God. That is to say, ‘God’ could be a religious term for unlimited potential.

What is this freewill that allows me choice? If I choose to do or not do something, it is my will which makes the choice; that is, my desire—what I want to do or not to do. It is will, or freewill, which unlocks the potential and makes things happen, or not, as it chooses. In terms of the creation of the universe, this will is the will of God, the will of Omnipotence.

If I desire to do nothing, then nothing happens; but if I desire to do something, to give something, then the potential is unlocked and something happens. The first thing that happens is a creative energy that gets things going and which carries an intention. Energy is recognised and defined as movement—movement out of nothing, or out of potential. E-motion (Latin, *ex-movere*) means the same thing. Because it is something, presumably this desire, emotion, movement or energy doesn't exist in nothing, but in a matrix of some kind. That is to say, something is moving. Or, to put it another way, when a desire (or an energy, a movement) comes into existence, a matrix simultaneously comes into existence—a matrix referred to as matter. To begin with this matter is formless, but the desire organises it into a form—an idea or thought—which can then turn into an action.

An original name for this matrix was the Greek word *Chaos*, which means 'nothing' or 'formlessness'. When given form, it becomes *Cosmos*. According to the Orphic and classical tradition, this form of divine energy in its first appearance was that of *Eros* ('Love'), also known as *Phanes* ('Light'), *Protogonus* ('First-born'), *Ericapaeus* ('Power'), *Logos* ('Word' or 'Wisdom'), and *Metis* ('Intelligence'). All else was created by, from and within *Eros*.

Philosophers down the ages have described *Chaos* as either a fathomless, formless dark void or the "confused seeds of things". The latter description is that of formless matter; but formless matter, as we would normally describe matter, simply doesn't exist, because all recognisable matter has form of some kind. Originally the word *atom* was invented as a name for a 'seed' in the "confused seeds of things", but it is not the same as the modern meaning of *atom*, which does have a structure or form. The original sense of *atom* is that it is formless—a formless part of *Chaos*. In trying to explain this, a poetic analogy was used, in which *Chaos* was likened to an unlimited ocean of water (or 'waters', plural) in which an atom was a drop—"a drop in the ocean," as we still say nowadays as a common expression. The Elizabethan magus John Dee coined the word *Monad* for this original, formless atom, whilst an old philosophical statement describes it as "the centre that is everywhere within a circumference that is nowhere".

Mythology and sacred tradition associate the original matter with the Divine Mother (Latin, *Mater*). In its dark formless state, various traditions gave it the name of Anna, whereas in its creative, energised state it became known as Maria or Mary, a word associated with the Latin word, *Mare*, meaning 'the salt sea'. This salt sea is the crystalline ocean—the universal matter holding (i.e. conceiving) a form of energy expressing, or manifesting, the Omnipotence.

Salt symbolises wisdom, peace, purity, friendship, and the ability to purify, preserve and season. The chemical structure of salt is cubical and represents the Foundation Stone of the universe in which the sacred Name of God is mystically engraved. It signifies the very first point at which God began the act of creation—the centre that is everywhere in a circumference that is nowhere. Its three-dimensional geometric structure symbolises the Cosmic Cross, with its six main directions radiating from its centre (forming the three principal axes) and 12 diagonal directions, which establishes the Cube of Space. This Cosmic Cross portrays the 22 letters and 10 ciphers or numbers of the Hebrew Kabbalah, also known as the Tree of Life, which forms the fundamental manifestation of the Wisdom or Word of God.

The Christian story of the Virgin Mary, daughter of Anna, who conceives and gives birth to Christ, an embodiment of the Love-Light of the universe, is symbolic of this whole universal process. The Virgin Mary is symbolised as the White Virgin, whilst her mother, Anna, is represented as the Black Virgin. Like the Egyptian goddess Isis, who was depicted as both the Black Virgin and the White Virgin, the two (Anna and Mary) describe two stages of divine Motherhood—of dark, formless *Chaos* being

impregnated with the Logos, resulting in the conception and birth of Light, the perfect form that manifests the divine Omnipotence, God.

Francis Bacon appears to be one of the first relatively modern philosophers able to explain this cosmogony in more scientific and yet profoundly religious terms. His explanation is summarised in the short quote printed at the beginning of this paper, which is taken from his essay on 'Cupid or the Atom' in his book, *The Wisdom of the Ancients*, which was first published in Latin in 1609 under the title, *De Sapientia Veterum*. The following is a more expanded extract: –

They say then that Love was the most ancient of all the gods; the most ancient therefore of all things whatever, except Chaos, which was said to have been coeval with him; and Chaos is never distinguished by the ancients with divine honour or the name of a god. This Love is introduced without any parent at all; only that some say he was an egg of Night. And himself out of Chaos begot all things, the gods included.

The fable relates to the cradle and infancy of nature, and pierces deep. This Love I understand to be the appetite or instinct of primal matter; or to speak more plainly, the natural motion of the atom; which is indeed the original and unique force that constitutes and fashions all things out of matter. Now this is entirely without parent; that is, without cause. For the cause is as it were parent of the effect; and of this virtue there can be no cause in nature (God always excepted): there being nothing before it, therefore no efficient; nor anything more original in nature, therefore neither kind nor form. Whatever it be, therefore, it is a thing positive and inexplicable. And even if it were possible to know the method and process of it, yet to know it by way of cause is not possible; it being, next to God, the cause of causes—itsself without cause...

For the summary law of nature, that impulse of desire impressed by God upon the primary particles of matter which makes them come together, and which by repetition and multiplication produces all the variety of nature, is a thing which mortal thought may glance at, but can hardly take in...

For beyond all doubt there is a single and summary law in which nature centres and which is subject and subordinate to God; the same in fact which in the text just quoted is meant by the words, *The work which God worketh from the beginning to the end.*<sup>4</sup>

Bacon also expounds on it in his treatise, *On Principles and Origins according to the fables of Cupid and Coelum*,<sup>5</sup> and gives further elaborations in his *Advancement and Proficiency of Learning*. In all these instances Bacon is interpreting into plainer language the more poetic and symbolic descriptions of ancient mythologies and religions, especially the Orphic, Hebraic and Christian ones. In doing this, he is not disagreeing with them, but on the contrary believes them to be true but veiled accounts of cosmology that need explaining.

In his *On Principles and Origins according to the fables of Cupid and Coelum*, which complements and expands on his *Wisdom of the Ancients* essay, Bacon writes: –

They say then that this Love was the most ancient of all the gods, and therefore of all things else, except Chaos, which they hold to be coeval with him. He is without any parent of his own; but himself united with Chaos begat the gods and all things. By some however it is reported that he came of an egg that was laid by Nox...

This Chaos then, which was contemporary with Cupid, signified the rude mass or congregation of matter. But matter itself, and the force and nature thereof, the principles of things in short, were shadowed by Cupid himself. He is introduced without a parent, that is to say, without a cause; for the cause is as the parent of the effect; and it is a

familiar and almost continual figure of speech to denote cause and effect as parent and child. Now of this primary matter and the proper virtue and action thereof there can be no cause in nature (for we always except God), for nothing was before it...

For if the manner could be known, yet it cannot be known by cause, seeing that next to God it is the cause of causes, itself without a cause...

It has been said then that the primitive essence, force and desire of things has no cause. How it proceeded, having no cause, is now to be considered. Now the manner is itself also very obscure: and of this we are warned by the parable, where Cupid is elegantly feigned to come of an egg which was laid by Nox. Certainly the divine philosopher declares that “God hath made everything beautiful in its season, also he hath given the world to their disputes; yet so that man cannot find out the work that God worketh from the beginning to the end”.<sup>6</sup> For the summary law of being and nature, which penetrates and runs through the vicissitudes of things (the same which is described in the phrase, “the work which God worketh from the beginning to the end”), that is, the force implanted by God in these first particles [*atoms*], from the multiplication whereof all the variety of things proceeds and is made up, is a thing which the thoughts of man may offer at but can hardly take in...

But one who philosophises rightly and in order should dissect nature and not abstract her... and must by all means consider the first matter as united to the first form, and likewise to the first principle of motion, as it is found... But these three are by no means to be separated, only distinguished; and matter (whatever it is) must be held to be so adorned, furnished, and formed, that all virtue, essence, action, and natural motion, may be the consequence and emanation thereof...

For there seem to be three things with regard to this subject which we know by faith. First, that matter was created from nothing. Secondly, that the development of a system was by the word of Omnipotence; and not that matter developed itself out of chaos into the present configuration. Thirdly, that this configuration (before the fall) was the best of which matter (as it had been created) was susceptible. These however were doctrines to which those philosophies could not rise. Creation out of nothing they cannot endure...

For the anticipation of time is as much a miracle, and belongs to the same omnipotence as the formation of being. Now the Divine nature seems to have chosen to manifest itself by both these emanations of omnipotence, by operating omnipotently, first on being and matter in the creation of something out of nothing; secondly on motion and time in anticipating the order of nature and accelerating the process of being...<sup>7</sup>

By “Love” Bacon is referring to Divine Love, called Cupid or Eros by the Ancients—the ‘Firstborn’ or ‘First Manifestation’ of God, which is the Logos (‘Word’) and Phanes (‘Light’) of the universe. He identifies this Love as the unique force that creates or manifests everything. Moreover, he explains this Love as being the desire (i.e. will) of primal matter, Chaos—the Nothing; and also that this Love is the Cause of causes, itself without any cause, God excepted. In his essay ‘Of Goodness’, Bacon states his belief that God is the All-Good, whose nature is Goodness or Love. That is to say, the transcendent, abstract principle of Good, which dwells potentially in a state of Nothing, is the Power or Omnipotency that is called God, whilst Love is the creative force and nature (“character”) of the Divine Good, which manifests itself in the perfect form of energy that we call Light. In this manifestation, motion, matter and form constitute a Trinity-in-unity.

Love is the manifestation of Good; both are descriptions of the One God. This is especially an Orphic and a Christian revelation, the latter being given by Jesus and his beloved disciple, John: –

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.<sup>8</sup>

This Love is both the character and the desire or will of God. It is also the “summary law of being and nature”. By “nature” Bacon is referring to not just physical nature but rather the nature of all things, physical and metaphysical, psychological and spiritual, including the nature of God. That is to say, Bacon is identifying Love as being the highest, original and all-embracing law of all Creation—the law that is the divine will. He also describes this Love, using a biblical quote, as the “work that God works from beginning to end”—i.e. a labour of love.<sup>9</sup> He believes the scriptural teaching that mankind is made in the image of God,<sup>10</sup> and therefore considers that each human being has a duty to become that image, which we can do by becoming godlike. To become godlike all our labours must be ones of love, because God is Love, and such labours are called charity or philanthropy. Only in this way can we fulfil the law or will of God and at the same time thereby know the truth, which truth is Love, the summary law of being and nature. Such knowledge of truth is illumination, wherein we are each lit up by the Light of God.

I take Goodness in this sense, the affecting of the weal of men, which is that the Grecians call *Philanthropia*; and the word *humanity* (as it is used) is a little too light to express it. Goodness I call the habit, and Goodness of Nature the inclination. This of all virtues and dignities of the mind is the greatest; being the character of the Deity: and without it man is a busy, mischievous, wretched thing; no better than a kind of vermin. Goodness answers to the theological virtue Charity, and admits no excess, but error. The desire of power in excess caused the angels to fall; the desire of knowledge in excess caused man to fall; but in charity there is no excess; neither can angel or man come in danger by it.<sup>11</sup>

In sum, I would advise all in general, that they would take into serious consideration the true and genuine ends of knowledge; that they seek it not either for pleasure, or contention, or contempt of others, or for profit, or fame, or for honour and promotion, or such like adulterate or inferior ends; but for the merit and emolument of life; and that they regulate and perfect the same in charity.<sup>12</sup>

This echoes and expands on Jesus’s teaching concerning the two Commandments or Laws—the Old and the New—that together constitute the Great Commandment: –

And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, “Which commandment is the most important of all?” Jesus answered, “The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”<sup>13</sup>

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.<sup>14</sup>

This is also the fundamental theme of the Shakespeare play, *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, which reaches its climax at the end when Berowne asks Rosaline to “Impose some service on me for thy love,” and she tells him to spend a year in visiting the “speechless sick” in hospital and “with all the fierce endeavour of your wit, to enforce the pained impotent to smile.” Such service done for love and in love is a true act of charity—a labour of love.

Bacon also makes a strong distinction between Divinity, the Word or Wisdom of God inspired into the human heart or revealed to the prophets, and Philosophy, the human understanding and knowledge regarding divinity, humanity and nature. He urges us to study and become proficient in both “Books”,

but at the same time to make sure we don't confuse the two. Our philosophical speculations and scientific knowledge has its limits and should be a "wise servant and humble handmaid" to Divinity, helping us to understand and practice the divine wisdom, which is Love, and not be a substitute for the wisdom.

To conclude therefore, let no man upon a weak conceit of sobriety or an ill-applied moderation think or maintain, that a man can search too far, or be too well studied in the Book of God's Word, or in the Book of God's Works—Divinity or Philosophy. But rather, let men endeavour an endless progress or proficiencie in both; only let men beware that they apply both to charity, and not to swelling [pride]; to use and not to ostentation; and again that they do not unwisely mingle or confound those learnings together.<sup>15</sup>

The knowledge of man is as the waters, some descending from above, and some springing from beneath; the one informed by the light of nature, the other inspired by divine revelation. The light of nature consisteth in the notions of the mind and the reports of the senses... So then, according to these two differing illuminations or originals, knowledge is first of all divided into Divinity and Philosophy.<sup>16</sup>

And if it be said, that the cure of men's minds belongeth to Sacred Divinity, it is most true: but yet Moral Philosophy may be preferred unto her as a wise servant and humble handmaid. For as the Psalm saith, *that the eyes of the handmaid look perpetually towards the mistress*,<sup>17</sup> and yet no doubt many things are left to the discretion of the handmaid, to discern of the mistress's will; so ought Moral Philosophy to give constant attention to the doctrines of Divinity, and yet so as it may yield of herself, within due limits, many sound and profitable directions.<sup>18</sup>

Whereas, in his *Wisdom of the Ancients* essay and *On Principles and Origins* treatise, Bacon is mainly interpreting the Orphic creation myth, in the *Advancement of Learning* he refers to the Christian version. In this way Bacon shows not only his understanding of both but also how they are each in fact relating the same truth but with different words: –

In the work of Creation we see a double emanation of Virtue from God: the one referring more properly to Power, the other to Wisdom; the one expressed in making the subsistence of the matter, and the other in disposing the beauty of the form...

The works of God summary are two, that of the *Creation* and that of the *Redemption*: and both these works, as in total they appertain to the unity of the Godhead, so in their parts they refer to the three Persons: that of the *Creation*, in the mass of matter, to the Father; in the disposition of the form, to the Son; and in the continuance and conservation of the being, to the Holy Spirit. So that of the *Redemption*, in the election and counsel, to the Father; in the whole act and consummation, to the Son; and in the application, to the Holy Spirit; for by the Holy Ghost was Christ conceived in flesh, and by the Holy Ghost are the elect regenerate in spirit.<sup>19</sup>

The Hebraic-Christian cosmogony is recorded in the Bible in the first chapter of Genesis: –

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.  
And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep.  
And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.  
And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.  
And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.  
And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.<sup>20</sup>

The Orphic cosmogony declares that in the beginning there was Chronos ('Eternity'), Ananke ('Necessity') andAdrasteia ('Inescapable'). They combined to become primordial Aether ('Spirit'), Chaos ('Formlessness') and Erebus ('Darkness'). Then, in the first act of creation, Aether moved. In her movement she was known as Nyx ('Night') or Eurynome ('Wide-ruling'). This movement, described as a dance, was to the south. As she danced faster and faster, she whirled Erebus into a wind that followed her. This wind was the North Wind, Boreas, also referred to as Ophion, the primordial Snake or Serpent. Boreas-Ophion watched as Nyx danced and was filled with desire for her. He coiled his body seven times around Nyx and made love to her as she danced. Impregnated by Ophion, Nyx laid the Cosmic Egg. Then, at Nyx's bidding, Ophion wrapped his body seven times around the Cosmic Egg, helping it to hatch. As it burst open, out sprang Eros ('Love'), the Protogonus ('First-born'), also known as Ericapaeus ('Power'), Logos ('Word' or 'Wisdom'), Metis ('Intelligence') and Phanes ('Brilliant'), the Light of the universe. All else was then created by, from and within Eros.

The Rig-Veda says: –

If in the beginning there was neither Being nor Non-Being, neither air nor sky, what was there? Who or what oversaw it? What was it when there was no darkness, light, life, or death? We can only say that there was the One, that which breathed of itself deep in the void, that which was heat and became desire and the germ of spirit.<sup>21</sup>

The German theoretical physicist, Max Planck, who originated quantum theory (which won him the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1918), stated almost *verbatim* Bacon's views: –

There is no matter as such. All matter originates and exists only by virtue of a force which brings the particle of an atom to vibration and holds this most minute solar system of the atom together. We must assume behind this force the existence of a conscious and intelligent mind. This mind is the matrix of all matter.<sup>22</sup>

Both religion and science require a belief in God. For believers, God is in the beginning, and for physicists He is at the end of all considerations... To the former He is the foundation, to the latter, the crown of the edifice of every generalized world view.<sup>23</sup>

300 years earlier, Bacon wrote: –

I had rather believe all the fables in the Legend, and the Talmud, and the Alcoran, than that this universal frame is without a mind. And therefore God never wrought miracle to convince atheism, because his ordinary works convince it. It is true, that a little philosophy inclineth man's mind to atheism; but depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds about to religion. For while the mind of man looketh upon second causes scattered, it may sometimes rest in them, and go no further; but when it beholdeth the chain of them, confederate and linked together, it must needs fly to Providence and Deity.<sup>24</sup>

The words of the Sufi poet, Rumi, make a good conclusion: "There is little one can say about love. It has to be lived, and it's always in motion."<sup>25</sup>

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Francis Bacon, *Wisdom of the Ancients*, 'Cupid or the Atom.'

<sup>2</sup> Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act 5: 1.

<sup>3</sup> Shakespeare, *King Lear*, Act 1: 1.

<sup>4</sup> Francis Bacon, 'Cupid or the Atom,' *Wisdom of the Ancients* (1609).

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<sup>5</sup> The text's full title is *De principiis atque originibus secundum fabulas Cupidinis & Coeli. Sive Parmenidis et Telesii & praecipue Democriti philosophia tractata in fabula de Cupidine*. It was probably composed in or just after 1612 but remained unpublished at the time of Bacon's death.

<sup>6</sup> Ecclesiastes 3: 11.

<sup>7</sup> Francis Bacon, *On Principles and Origins according to the fables of Cupid and Coelum*.

<sup>8</sup> 1 John 4: 7.

<sup>9</sup> Ecclesiastes 3: 11.

<sup>10</sup> Genesis 1: 27.

<sup>11</sup> Francis Bacon, 'Of Goodness and Goodness of Nature,' *Essays, Civil and Moral* (1625).

<sup>12</sup> Francis Bacon, *Advancement of Learning*, The Preface (1640).

<sup>13</sup> Mark 12: 28-31.

<sup>14</sup> John 13: 34-35.

<sup>15</sup> Francis Bacon, *Advancement of Learning*, Book I (1605).

<sup>16</sup> Francis Bacon, *Advancement of Learning*, Book I (1605).

<sup>17</sup> Psalm 123: 2.

<sup>18</sup> Francis Bacon, *Advancement of Learning*, Book I (1605).

<sup>19</sup> Francis Bacon, *Advancement of Learning*, Book I (1605).

<sup>20</sup> Genesis 1: 1-5.

<sup>21</sup> David Adams, Leeming, *Creation Myths of the World: An Encyclopedia*, Volume 1 (2010).

<sup>22</sup> Max Planck, 'Das Wesen der Materie' ['The Nature of Matter'], speech at Florence, Italy (1944) (from *Archiv zur Geschichte der Max-Planck-Gesellschaft*, Abt. Va, Rep. 11 Planck, Nr. 1797).

<sup>23</sup> Max Planck, 'Religion and Natural Science' (Lecture given 1937), *Scientific Autobiography and Other Papers*, trans. F. Gaynor (New York, 1949), pp. 184.

<sup>24</sup> Bacon, 'Of Atheism,' *Essays, Civil and Moral* (1612, 1625).

<sup>25</sup> Rumi, *The Book of Love: Poems of Ecstasy and Longing*.