



# Why Existence? An Explanation with No Remainder

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## Abstract

The ultimate question, “Why is there something rather than nothing?” is approached through an analysis of the meaning and significance of the question, which involves a quest for both a “reason” and a “cause” for existence. The author endeavors to make transparent the Platonic claim that something “beyond existence” can give rise to existence, and holds that this “something” must involve an atemporal pre-existent possibility, such as logic, mathematics, or, as is claimed, value. Like logic and mathematics (and unlike the laws of nature) certain values are valid for all possible worlds, but only value can provide *both a reason and cause for existence*. It is argued that a “quest” for value and meaning gives rise to all existence, and that this quest is both linguistically and existentially expressed in the question “Why is there something rather than nothing?” As such, the question, as per the dictum of the Kabbalist Shimon Labis, is its own answer, answering itself without remainder.

*“Concerning Everything that Cannot be Grasped its Question is its Answer.” Shimon Labis, Ketem Paz,<sup>1</sup>*

## 1.1. Why is There Something Rather Than Nothing

The question, famously posed by Leibniz<sup>2</sup>—and later so insistently by Heidegger<sup>3</sup>—“Why is there something rather than nothing?” would seem to be the most basic philosophical question.<sup>4</sup> While a scientific explanation of the conditions, causes, and events leading to the present state of the universe may appear to promise an answer, any scientific explanation must invoke antecedent conditions and causes that will themselves require an explanation, and so on, *ad infinitum*, thus leaving the ultimate question unanswered. As Nicholas Rescher has put it, all causal or scientific explanations are “transformational” rather than “formational,” as they all rest upon something that “already is” and thus cannot satisfy the question of how it is that anything exists at all.<sup>5</sup> Further, even if a scientific explanation could *somehow* provide a causal account of how the universe came into existence it would leave at least part of the “Why” unanswered. As we will see momentarily, this is because a “why” question of the sort “Why is there something rather than nothing?” calls for a “reason” as well as a “cause” for existence.

While many thinkers have held that existence is logically necessary<sup>6</sup> or “natural” and requires no explanation<sup>7</sup>, that non-existence is logically impossible<sup>8</sup>, or that our question is meaningless<sup>9</sup>, unanswerable<sup>10</sup>, or an expression of “awe at existence” as opposed to a genuine question<sup>11</sup>, there has in recent years, been a resurgence of interest in the origins of existence, and a number of interesting and in some cases original responses to this question.

There have been sophisticated defenses of the traditional view that God is the origin of the cosmos<sup>12</sup> and renewed support for the once-respected notion that intellect or mind lies at the foundation of all existence.<sup>13</sup> It has been suggested that a “principle of selection” such as “simplicity,” “fullness” or “complexity” must be invoked in order to explain the nature, if not the origin, of the cosmos.<sup>14</sup> Others have held (not without controversy) that while there are countless ways in which a universe can exist there is only one way in which there could be absolute nothingness, and for this reason, chance and probability explain the existence of the cosmos.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, there are those who hold that since there are innumerable ways a universe could exist that are inimical to life and mind, the fact that our universe is “fine-tuned” so as to be hospitable to human existence proves that it was created by intelligent design.<sup>16</sup> And in response to this, it has been suggested that there are countless universes, with countless combinations of physical parameters, and that since we exist, we necessarily find ourselves in one that is hospitable to our existence and thus it only appears to be “fine-tuned.”<sup>17</sup>

Recent years have seen a revival of the idea that the universe exists to fulfill a certain goal or end. For example, David Birnbaum has defended the thesis that the universe was/is in effect ignited by an explosion of “Holy Potential” that embodies a drive for complexity and meaning.<sup>18</sup> A related response advocated by John Leslie<sup>19</sup>, and in a rather different form by Nicholas Rescher,<sup>20</sup> holds that the actualization of value is what brings the universe into existence. This view traces its lineage at least as far back as Plato, who in Book 6 of *The Republic* (509b) writes that “the Good” is “beyond existence,” and yet “gives existence to all things.” This view was held in one form or another by Neoplatonists, Kabbalists, Spinoza, Lotze<sup>21</sup>, and Hegel, and in various forms is present in the writings of several 20<sup>th</sup>-century philosophers, including Husserl,<sup>22</sup> Sorley<sup>23</sup>, and Levinas.<sup>24</sup>

As we will see, there have also been suggestions that the universe is created via a form of retroactive causation, and that

what we perceive to be a late stage or event in its development is paradoxically a causal factor in its origin.<sup>25</sup>

Efforts to address our ultimate question are handicapped by a certain ambiguity in the relevant terms.<sup>26</sup> Granted that the question “Why is there something rather than nothing?” asks for an explanation of “all being” or “all existence” as opposed to asking about the origins of the (our) universe or world, several questions remain: What do we mean by “nothing?” What is to be included in “being” or “existence?” Is “potential” or “possibility” to be included as part of “being?” What about abstractions, like those in logic and mathematics? By what criteria can Plato claim that “the good,” clearly an abstraction (some would call it an “abstract entity”) lies “beyond being?” Is there a difference between “being” and “existence”, such that, for example, the explanation of why there is “something” lies beyond existence but nonetheless “is”? Further, we can ask what would constitute an adequate answer to our question, i.e. a complete explanation of “everything?”<sup>27</sup> For example, if the origins of existence are to be found in its actualization (i.e. its “beginning” is to be found in its “end”) does this count as a complete explanation or does it simply leave us with a “circle” that itself needs to be explained?

My goal in this essay is to pursue an answer to the ultimate question (and hence a complete explanation of “all existence”) through a close examination of both the linguistic meaning and existential significance of the “why” in the question “Why is there something rather than nothing?” Along the way, I attempt to provide both a rational and existential justification for the view of the origin of all that appears in different forms in Plato and the Kabbalah and in the works of such thinkers as Sorely, Birnbaum, and Leslie, each of whom gives ontological primacy to value and meaning. However, I go beyond providing a justification for what Leslie has referred to as “axiarchism.” I endeavor to show that an answer to the “ultimate question” not only follows from a deep consideration of the question, but that the question “Why is there something rather than nothing?” *is its own answer*, and in this manner leaves us with nothing further to be explained. In the end, the reader will be the judge if my pursuit gets us any closer to an explanation of all (being or) existence, if it does so “without remainder,” or if I have even provided a cogent explanation of the *nature* of our cosmos, an answer to “Why this?” as opposed to “Why anything?”<sup>28</sup>

## 1.2. The Meaning of “Why”

Ordinarily, when we ask a “why” question, we are asking for either a *cause* or a *reason*.<sup>29</sup> “Why is it raining?” for example, is answered when we provide the antecedent, and presumably causal, meteorological events that have resulted in precipitation. A question like “Why did you move to Florida,” however, is not answered via reference to physical causes, but through an appeal to the reasons, motives, or ends one hoped to achieve by relocating one’s residence. While it is hotly debated whether reasons are themselves “causes,” it is clear that when a question is answered with a “reason,” as opposed to when it is answered with a (material) “cause,” a motive involving a value or values must be involved. I might say that I moved to Florida because it will be better for my health, or because I want to enjoy playing golf year-round, or because I need to care for a sick loved one—and in each case, I make an appeal to something I *value*—health, enjoyment, love, etc. A “why” question that calls for a reason and which is answered without at least an implicit appeal to a value is no answer at all. If I am asked why I moved to Florida it is not adequate to reply, “Because I got on a bus.”

There is an ambiguity in the question “Why is the something rather than nothing?” as it carries both meanings of “why?” that I have described above, meanings that we would ordinarily associate with both the questions “Why does warm air rise?” and “Why am I staying in this job?”—the former presumably calling for a physical *cause*, the latter calling for an (axiological) *reason*. However, as we have seen, any physical *cause* that we would invoke to explain the world’s existence would itself require an explanation and be subject to our original question, which would remain unanswered. If we say, for example, that the universe is the result of the “Big Bang” and such subsequent events as the formation of heavy elements in the nuclear furnaces of the stars, we are left with two questions—our original request for a cause (now the cause of the “Big Bang”, etc.) and the more pressing Why? that asks for a reason. It is, I believe, this second question, the request for a reason, that is often the more powerful motive behind our *philosophical* quest. When we ask, “Why is there something rather than nothing? we are not simply asking a question of the sort, “Why is it raining?” or “Why will there be a solar eclipse?” We are not simply requesting a causal account but are instead also set on uncovering a *reason* for the world’s existence. The answer to our *ultimate why question*, if there is indeed an answer, must appeal to some form of value and meaning.<sup>30</sup> In Douglas Adams’ *Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy* a supercomputer, “Deep Thought” calculates for 7.5 million years to conclude that the “Answer to the Ultimate Question of Life, the Universe, and Everything” is “42,” This “answer” is absurd at least in part because it provides nothing of *meaning* or *value*. The reason why an appeal to “God” as the creator of the universe seems satisfying—is because God is thought of both as the “cause” of the world’s existence and the being who provides the universe with a rationale, purpose, significance, and value. However, the appeal to God suffers from the same infinite regress problem as the scientific explanations we have discussed above. This is because it leaves us with a new mystery, this time regarding the existence of God, his will, and his purposes.

But what if we were to jettison the appeal to God? Might the universe, even in the absence of a creator god, have a *reason* for its existence, perhaps even one that from the perspective of time emerges rather late in its history? Might not the values and meanings that exist in the universe and which are brought to it through the minds and activities of human beings and perhaps other sentient beings, constitute the *raison d’être* (and perhaps even serve as the “cause”) of the cosmos? Might we not be grossly mistaken in holding that the foundation of the universe must be in its temporal beginnings rather than in its later stages? And might it not paradoxically be the case that certain presumably “late stage” occurrences, like our very asking why the world has come into existence both reveal to us, and is foundational for, *why* the universe exists?

### 1.3. An Answer Derived from The Question?

I will suggest that in our quest to provide an answer to the question “Why is there something rather than nothing” we have failed to consider that the answer is very close at hand, perhaps even in the very process of asking the question itself. In pursuing an answer without “remainder,” i.e. without being left with something that itself must be explained, We can provide a response that follows inexorably from the question itself, and (more radically) is identical to the question.<sup>31</sup> Here we might profitably take a hint from the Kabbalist Shimon Labi, who wrote in *Ketem Paz*, “Concerning everything that cannot be grasped its question is its answer.”<sup>32</sup>

The suggestion that the explanation of the entire cosmos is to be discerned from the very question that asks for such an explanation may appear odd and even circular, and one may be inclined to dismiss it out of hand, but I ask the reader to bear with me in my efforts to render it plausible. Heidegger held that there is a unique relationship between the question regarding the “why” of being and being itself,<sup>33</sup> and Derek Parfit suggested that any explanation of the whole of reality shouldn’t be expected to “fit neatly into some familiar category.”<sup>34</sup> I am going to advance my argument for my “unfamiliar” explanation in stages, through a discussion and critique of a series of topics that will help clarify my thesis.

I first provide an intuitive explanation of how a nonexistent *x* can be a condition or foundation for existence (2.1). I then show that values, like logic and mathematics, have validity independent of their existential realization (2.2), that they are objective and universal, and hence, candidates (indeed the best candidates) for the nonexistent *x* that can serve as the foundation for existence (2.3). I argue that, since time is something to be explained by a theory of existence, such a theory must posit a foundation that is *atemporal*. This paves the way for value, which appears late on the world scene, to be such a foundation (2.4, 2.5).

I then consider the question of how value can be considered the *cause* (as well as the *reason*) for existence (3.1). To this end I consider the place of value in the theory of knowledge, review John Leslie’s suggestion that “the world exists because it should” (3.2), and introduce the notion of “open teleology.”

I then turn to a series of objections to an axiological explanation of existence. I consider the problem of evil (4.1) and the claim that the world exists for the sake of evil and suffering (4.2). I take note of the objections that “reasons” require an agent (and design a designer) (4.3). I consider the objection that my analysis simply uncovers our *expectations* for a response to the “Why” of existence and examine my thesis from an existential perspective (4.4, 4.5).

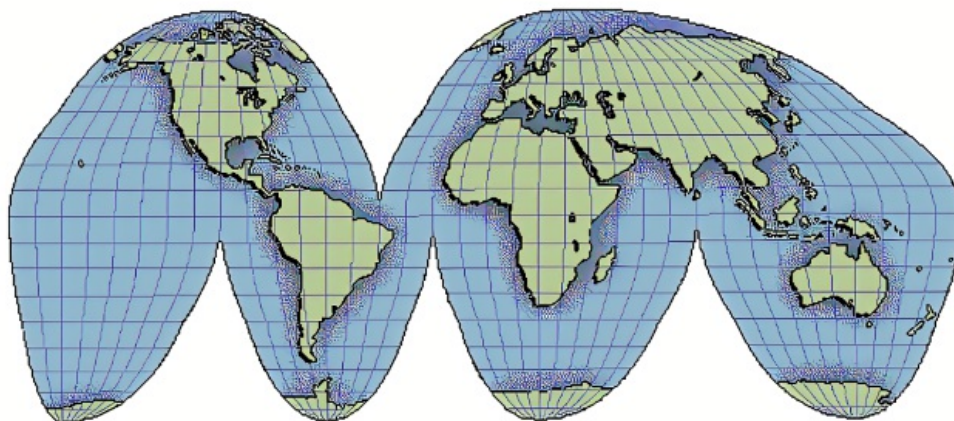
Finally, I return to my claim that with regard to the ultimate question “Why is there something rather than nothing?” the question is the answer (without remainder) (5.1) and consider whether this response can be understood in theistic or mystical terms (5.2).

## 2.1. The Representation of Nonexistence

I will begin with the question of whether it is possible to think and represent a “non-being” or “non-existence” that can serve as the condition for the emergence of “something” (viz. *creation ex nihilo*). It has often been observed that any effort to think away everything results only in an emptying of one’s thoughts of all “entities”, and that it is impossible to eliminate the spatial background of these entities, and that such spatial background is a “thing.” Further, it is said that because the world is actual and actuality implies possibility, it is impossible to eliminate or even think away possibility, and possibility, is a “something” even in the absence of all existence. We can verbalize reference to a condition of “no state of affairs whatsoever”, and speak of it as an absolute nothing with no existence, no space and time, no void, and even no possibility, but it is said that there is no “nothing” to meet this verbal description. As we have seen Plato held that the Good is “beyond being”<sup>35</sup> and yet gives rise to all things. Here I will describe a cartographic analogy that will enable us to intuit and even represent a non-existent that is nonetheless the ground of all.



A cartographic analogy will enable us to intuit a representation of absolute non-existence (if not absolute non-being)<sup>36</sup> Consider the Goode Homolosine “equal areas” projection of the earthly globe, in which the surface of the Earth is flattened, as if one were flattening an orange peel, with the result that there appear to be gaps within the world.



I would suggest that these gaps represent “nothing whatsoever,” as they have no interpretation within the map. They do not, for example, represent a series of disjunctures on the earth’s surface. They do not represent the Earth’s atmosphere or surrounding space. And most importantly, they do not represent a region of cosmic emptiness, or nothingness that surrounds, or somehow infiltrates the world. In fact, within the map itself, these gaps are uninterpretable—they do not represent anything whatsoever, they do not exist. And yet, they are a *condition* for the map’s existence and even its “being.”<sup>37</sup> If we imagine our map of the world to be a representation of “all existence,” the gaps in the map, indeed, the paper on which the map is printed, is, a condition that lies *beyond the represented existence*, and yet it is a condition for everything.<sup>38</sup>

I will argue that values are analogously a condition beyond existence that brings all things into existence. However, in order to establish this argument, we must consider the question of the status of values, if they are objective and real, and whether it is reasonable to suppose that they transcend being and/or existence. I will consider these questions in the following two sections.

## 2.2. What Is There When There Is “Nothing”

It is important to note that when we ask the question “Why is there something rather than nothing?” we do so from the perspective of our existence within an actual universe; otherwise, the question could not arise. And we should also note that the truism that *actuality entails possibility* (anything we know to be actual must be possible!), entails that we know from reason alone that any non-existence out of which a universe could have arisen contains the *possibility* of a cosmos. As John Leslie puts it, “we could not fancy that any emptiness could be so very empty that even logical possibilities were banished from it.”<sup>39</sup>

Leslie argues that with the introduction of possibility we might surmise that the “nothingness” of non-existence, what he refers to as the “blank,” also “contains” logic, mathematics<sup>40</sup>, and a range of “facts,” including the wide range of logical and mathematical facts and a countless series of factual contingencies of the form “if x...then y,” for example, “If there were six dodos there would be more than five.” According to Leslie, there are countless other facts in a “blank,” including, for example, facts about the relationship between colors on the color wheel—“which depend not in the slightest on the actual existence of anything.”<sup>41</sup> Whether or not anything with color actually existed, it would still be a fact (if there were colors) that purple would be closer to blue than it is to orange.

Leslie has argued that a “blank” would also contain a host of “ethical facts,” also in “if then” form; for example, “If there were innocent children then it would be evil to cause them needless suffering and death, and good to show them kindness and compassion.” Even in a blank, it would still be true that *if there were a world* it would be good for it to manifest love, beauty, wisdom, etc. (The assertion that these “pre-existence” ethical and axiological propositions are “facts” rather than “opinions” rest on the assumption, to be discussed below that at least certain values are objective and trans-world). Leslie calls such pre-existent facts, i.e., facts that hold regardless of whether anything has existed, does exist, or will ever exist, “synthetic necessities.” They are not “logical” or “mathematical truths” as they require some form of at least hypothetical experience to secure their validity—but they are necessities, nonetheless.

The notion that there are facts and truths even in a condition of absolute nothingness helps to explain how Plato could claim that values, i.e. “the Good,” *precedes* existence, and why certain Kabbalists could hold that these *sefirot*, the value archetypes which they held to be the elements of creation, exist indistinguishably *en potentia* within *Ein-sof*, the infinite/nothingness they regard to be beyond existence and the highest expression of divinity and only “later” serve as the elements of a created world. We will return to the question of the place of values in a “blank” after we survey their role in all possible worlds.

### 2.3. Values and Possible Worlds

I mentioned earlier that there are philosophers who hold that because the physical parameters (e.g., the gravitational constant, the strength of electromagnetic forces...) are so fine-tuned for the existence of life in the world we live in, the universe must be the product of intelligent design. Others have countered this claim by speculating that there are an infinite number of worlds with *varying physical* characteristics and it is therefore chance rather than design that dictates that our universe has a series of physical parameters suited for the development of life and mind, as it is obvious that if we were to find ourselves in any universe at all it would be one that appeared to be “fine-tuned.” We should note that an implication of this latter argument is that the so-called laws of nature that apply to our world are *accidental* features that differ in other regions of the multiverse. Similarly, if as Nick Bostrom and Elon Musk, suggest, we may be living in a simulated reality created by a vastly powerful computer in a “base world” (or at least one level closer to the base world than our own) it becomes clear that what we take to be the laws of nature have been “programmed” into our reality and are not necessarily universal. As the cosmologist Max Tegmark puts it, “...if we are living in a simulation, we have no clue what the laws of physics are. What I teach at MIT would be the simulated laws of physics.”<sup>42</sup>

For these and other reasons it has, in recent years, become clear to many physicists and philosophers that the so-called “laws of nature” and such parameters as the gravitational constant and the speed of light could (and on some views almost certainly are) different in other regions of the multiverse. However, such “relativity” would presumably not apply to the laws of mathematics and logic, as these cannot even be conceived of varying from world to world. *Neither would it apply to at least a range of ethical and axiological propositions.* This is because while we can conceive of a universe in which the laws and parameters of physics (such as the gravitational constant and the speed of light) vary greatly from those in our world, we cannot conceive of a universe where the values of truth, compassion, beauty, freedom, and wisdom are vitiated. For example, if we were to somehow find ourselves in an alternative reality where the speed of light is 10 miles per second, we would see the evidence for this and accept it as fact. But if we traveled to a universe where we observed the inhabitants honoring mathematicians and scientists for their lies and errors, praising those who tortured children for sheer amusement, celebrating the enslavement of minorities, and morally justifying the incineration of an entire ethnic group, we would not accept and could not be convinced of the validity of their *values*.<sup>43</sup>

We simply *cannot conceive* of worlds in which it would (without qualification) be *morally or axiologically right* to value truth over untruth, ugliness, and disease over beauty and health, enslavement of minorities over their freedom, or arbitrary inequality over impartial justice.<sup>44</sup> Many individuals might hold such wrong values<sup>45</sup>, (and in the modal realist view that all possible worlds exist, certainly would) but they would clearly be mistaken, i.e.—as mistaken as those who believed the truth of the formula  $2 + 2 = 5$ . Values, unlike the laws of physics, are in many instances “trans-world.”<sup>46</sup> While I cannot in this brief space claim to resolve all issues related to value objectivity, the conclusion that at least certain values are objective and universal is critical (and in my view justified) if we, like Plato, are to appeal to values or “the Good” as the foundation of all.

## 2.4. The Privileging of Temporal Origins

In seeking an answer to the question of why anything exists we are prone to become mired in a linear form of “bottom-up” thinking where we look for an origin, as if the answer will appear only if we go back far enough in time. But since in our quest to determine the origins of all that exists *time is itself an aspect of the universe that we need to explain* it makes no sense to think in terms of its categories, or even in terms of categories such as “beginning” that are built upon temporality. Perhaps we can further our quest if we first set aside the idea of beginnings and look at what the universe is or has *become*.

As we progress, I will discuss the “ultimate question” in the context of *a complete suspension of linear time*. But I would like to first note that even from within a temporal framework, we can gain some understanding of how the “reason” answer to our ultimate question might operate “backwards” through time. In both history and biography, we find that it is invariably only *after* the occurrence of certain events that earlier events take on their significance. For example, it is only after an individual achieves great heights as a violinist that his uncle’s gift of his first violin at age five becomes so valuable and significant. In a sense, value and meaning have a way of flowing contrary to the direction of time. We typically find that it is



only *after* individuals achieve their adult identity, for example after Obama has become president of the United States, that we can begin to make sense of the “why” and “how” of who they are, the essence, meaning, value, purpose and even the “reason” for their existence. In such cases we can create a biographical narrative leading to the individual’s becoming, a narrative that would be completely unavailable to us if we tried, as it were, to start from the beginning without any consideration of what came afterwards. In history, too, we are always working backwards, beginning with the end, for example the fall of the Roman empire, and then tracing events that brought it about. History could not be written at all without constantly looking backwards from the perspective of what has become. Such looking backwards is always conducted from the point of view of what the biographer or historian finds interesting, i.e., meaningful and valuable, in subsequent events.

Once something has occurred—once there is an “effect”—we can know with certainty that this occurrence or effect was both logically and empirically possible, i.e., that it existed *in potential* at some “earlier” point in a temporal or logical series. Thus, when we say that an individual or a nation has attained its *raison d’être* once it has realized certain values or significances this does not mean that these values and significances appeared out of nowhere, but rather a potential, perhaps one of many that are too numerous to fathom, was fulfilled in its development. Might not the same reasoning be applied to the cosmos as a whole?

Looked at from a temporal perspective, the universe *could not have had a purpose at all until purpose, meaning and value developed within it*, and once purpose, meaning and value did develop, they become the only possible *reasons* for its existence. This can again be understood through the analogy with life-meaning. Presumably, when individuals “discover” their life’s purpose, meaning, and value they have not discovered something that was pre-ordained before or at the time of their birth, nor does this mean that some external force guided their development. One’s life purpose and meaning, if one is fortunate enough to have “discovered” it, is something that evolves out of the course of one’s life. Its only “pre-existence” was its *potential*, a potential that can be inferred from the fact that it ultimately became actual. While the meaning or purpose of one’s life is very often experienced as a discovery, it is actually just as much a creation. I am arguing that the same reasoning applies to the meaning of the universe as a whole—it evolves out of and is created from the sentience and values that have developed within it.

Several writers on our subject have suggested that the world arises through retroactive causation. The physicist Paul Davies points to the scientific discovery that the character of a photon of light, as either a wave or a particle, is altered by an experimenter’s observation. Unobserved, a photon acts as a wave, but once observed, it loses its wavelike behavior and acts as a particle. Davies notes that John Wheeler suggested a hypothetical experiment in which the experimenter delays his decision whether to observe the photon or not, for example, by utilizing a pair of telescopes from a great distance. In such a case the experimenter’s observation retroactively determines whether the photon of light was a wave or a particle, and as such has an impact upon the past.<sup>47</sup> Theoretically such retroactive causation or “quantum post-selection” could reach all the way back to the beginning of time, a hypothesis that prompted Stephen Hawking and Thomas Hertog to assert that one is mistaken to think that there is a single cosmic history leading from the Big Bang to our current universe.<sup>48</sup> According to Hawkin and Hertog, there are numerous possible cosmic histories, and we, in a sense “select” which possibility is realized through the measurements we make and the precise questions we ask. Davies

writes that “in other words, the existence of life and observers today has an effect on the past.”

Davies goes so far as to suggest that, in Wheeler’s view the fine-tuning of the universe, which permits the emergence of life and mind, might well be explained by our own “reaching back into the past through acts of quantum observation.” There is, according to Davies, a coincidence of opposites in which “the bio-friendly universe explains life even as life explains the bio-friendly universe.”<sup>49</sup> He speculates that because the physical laws emerging from the Big Bang, were initially flexible, some form of retro-causality might be said to have resulted in the universe having created itself in a circular temporal loop.<sup>50</sup> Pointing to the various “fine-tuning” accidents of physics which have resulted in the possibility of life, Davies follows Freeman Dyson in suggesting that the early universe can be said to have anticipated the actualization of life and mind.<sup>51</sup> For Davies, “life and mind are etched deeply into the fabric of the cosmos.” He believes that there is evidence that the universe is “about something.”<sup>52</sup>

In this manner, Davies provides a naturalistic, if speculative, pathway that supports David Birnbaum’s retroactive theology. Birnbaum uses a business metaphor to suggest that like an individual involved in a “leveraged buyout” and who utilizes a company’s projected future earnings as a vehicle for purchasing that company in the present, the later fulfillment of what he calls “Holy Potential” retroactively ignites creation.<sup>53</sup> Birnbaum’s thinking is rooted in the theosophical kabbalah, where such retroactivity is present in *Sefer Yetzirah*’s dictum that the beginning is embedded in the end,<sup>54</sup> the *Zohar*’s notion that one who walks in God’s ways in effect “makes” the One above,<sup>55</sup> and in the Lurianic notion of *Tikkun ha-Olam*, in which the infinite God, *Ein-sof*, is said to only become itself only once its potentiality is actualized in the values structure of a redeemed world.<sup>56</sup>

In sum, we must consider undoing the privileging of Alpha over Omega and treat the end with the same respect that we are prone to give to the start. As we will see, because “time” is itself something in need of explanation we do not ultimately require recourse to such temporal reversals in order to explain the role of value and meaning in existence.

## 2.5. Value and Meaning as the Atemporal Condition for Existence

Once we surrender the linear temporal perspective, which assumes beginnings in time must be equivalent to origins, we have the opportunity to look at the cosmos from a more neutral standpoint, one that recognizes values and meanings, like logic and mathematics, are atemporal, hold in all worlds, and are hence candidates for the foundation of all existence.

While Tegmark, for example, has argued that mathematics is the foundation for everything<sup>57</sup> (and Plato himself seems to have deeply considered Pythagorean this view<sup>58</sup>) it is, as I am about to explain, only values, and not these other presumably<sup>59</sup> atemporal, “pre-existence” and trans-world elements of reality that can provide a *reason* for the world’s existence. To return to our cartographic analogy, it is only values that can serve as the “paper” on which existence is “written,” i.e., only values that can serve as a proper non- or pre-existent “condition” for all existence.

Think of a metaphorical “box” in an atemporal, non-spatial non-actual, non-existence that contains within itself a variety of *possible* elements: (possible) matter and energy, space-time, logic, mathematics, mind, value, and meaning. Now ask the

question, “Why is there something rather than nothing?” (or “Why does possibility become actuality?”) and arrange these elements to accord with your answer.

I believe that there is only one *reasonable* answer. Our question “Why is there anything at all?” understood as an inquiry into the *reason* for existence points to values and meanings as the only possible candidates. While we can readily conceive of time, space, logic, mathematics, matter, and energy *serving as the mediums or vehicles* through which values and meanings are realized, it is hardly possible to conceive any of them as ends served by meaning and value. It is only a linear, temporal view of things that prompts us to regard these non-axiological elements as foundational. However, in our atemporal understanding, when we ask for the reason not only for existence, but also for logic, mathematics, space and time, matter and energy and mind we find that each of these is readily conceived of as vehicles for the actualization of such values as truth, beauty, love, compassion, pleasure, wisdom, beauty, etc. Logic and mathematics serve the value of “truth,” while space, time, matter, and energy provide the conditions for and thus serve such values as beauty, love, pleasure, etc. While some might initially be attracted to the idea that “mind” or “sentience” can serve as the reason for existence, it is hard to imagine a mind disassociated from value serving in this role. Such a “valueless” or “value-neutral” mind would not be unlike an elevator camera passively and indiscriminately processing and recording whatever is in its environment. Without values, such a mind would have nothing to recommend itself as the reason for the cosmos. I will discuss the supervenience of values on mind below.

In sum, among the elements in our primordial box, only value can provide us with the reason for the existence of the other elements, and only value can provide us with the reason for existence in general. Value and meaning are the only possible “reasons” answer for why there is something rather than nothing.

### 3.1. Value and Mind as the “Cause” of Existence

We have seen that values are the only possible *reason* for existence. Either there is no reason for existence, or the reason involves the realization of one or more values. Given that finite values answer finite “why questions” we might provisionally surmise that since existence is (presumably) infinite its reason is *infinite value*. We will have occasion to qualify this later, but before doing so we must ask the important question of whether values might also be the *cause* of existence, the power that brings potentiality into actuality. Here I would note that Plato himself recognized that the Good played a double role as both the *reason for* and *cause of* all existence. In his second epistle, referring to “The Good” as the “King of All,” Plato writes that “for his sake, all things exist, and [he] is the Cause of all lovely existence.”<sup>60</sup> To grasp why this is the case we need to further flesh out the relationship between values and mind.

Philosophers in the idealist tradition have long suggested that mind is both the foundation and goal of the universe. There is what might be spoken of as a “bi-directional” or interdependent relationship between mind and value. On the one hand, it is intuitively clear that most, if not all, values are necessarily correlative to consciousness or mind, and can be expected to be realized only in a realm where mind exists. Indeed, a wide range of thinkers have held that there is an essential relationship between consciousness and value. The Scottish moral philosopher W. D. Ross held that all “intrinsic goods”

are “states of mind” or the relations between them.<sup>61</sup> In recent years, the neuropsychologist Sam Harris, who holds that science can determine human values, writes, “We can know, through reason alone, that consciousness is the only intelligible domain of value.”<sup>62</sup> Charles Siewert argues that conscious experience is the *sine qua non* of value and that life without conscious experiences would be “little or no better than death.”<sup>63</sup> Even the M.I.T. physicist Max Tegmark, for whom the entire universe is a vast “mathematical object,” writes that value arises only because “through us humans and perhaps additional life-forms, our Universe had gained an awareness of itself.”<sup>64</sup> For each of these thinkers values are dependent upon consciousness because unless something is experienced or supports the possibility of sentience, it will not have value for anyone or anything.<sup>65</sup>

While mind certainly appears to be a necessary condition for the actualization of all, or at least most, values, I believe a strong case can be made in the opposite direction as well, for the proposition that values are intrinsic to the mind’s very operation and existence. To see why this is so we need only ask what would determine the *direction* of a mind’s attention and intention if there were no values directing it. What principle would a mind utilize to select one object or perspective over any other? What principle would it use to comprehend and categorize experiences? The movement from sensation to a world of objects arises because *consciousness encounters a world that it conditions via value* Hegel, in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, critiqued the notion that sensation is the foundation for knowledge on the grounds that all sensations, all experiences occur under the aegis of a category conditioned by thought. But what leads a mind to one thought, one category as opposed to another? Our categorical schemes and language are always conditioned by and reflective of values. This is not only because our interest and values dictate the categories through which we think and speak about the world, but also because the very *acts* of speaking and thinking are themselves conditioned and regulated by values such as truth, freedom, mutual respect, and trust, which enable us to create, speak and think about a reality consensually shared with others.

From an epistemological perspective, the very objects, categories, ideas, actions, persons, etc. that comprise our world are conditioned by value. There is a serious question of whether there could be facts, *information*, and even “things” in the absence of value. What are facts, information, and things except that which is cognized by a conscious mind for a particular goal or purpose?

A similar point is made by Iain McGilchrist, who is known for his research and writing on the divided brain. He writes:

*Attention is not just another ‘function’ alongside other cognitive functions. Its ontological status is of something prior to functions and even to things. The kind of attention we bring to bear on the world changes the nature of the world we attend to...Attention changes **what kind** of a thing comes into being: in that way it changes the world.*<sup>66</sup>

And yet, as McGilchrist suggests, attention is in all instances guided by human goals and interests: “A mountain that is a landmark to a navigator, a source of wealth to the prospector, a many-textured form to a painter, or to another the dwelling place of the gods, is changed by the attention given to it.” While, according to McGilchrist, “[t]hrough the direction and nature of our attention, we prove ourselves to be partners in creation, both of the world and of ourselves,”

our attention, as well as other psychological functions (thinking, memory, feeling, imagination), are guided by values. He writes, “Values enter through the *way in which* these functions are exercised.”<sup>67</sup>

The upshot of McGilchrist’s observations is that if attention is of ontological significance values are of an even deeper, more fundamental ontological level, and are *constitutive* of both consciousness and the world. We might say that attention directed by “value” causes the cosmos to appear as cosmos. This is a point that is seldom recognized by idealists,<sup>68</sup> who by virtue of their view that reality is grounded in consciousness, should be the first to understand that values direct consciousness, and are hence foundational for both mind and world.<sup>69</sup> As we have seen, if mind could be abstracted from all value it would hardly be a proper candidate for a response to the question, “Why is there something rather than nothing?”

Here we have another important reason for selecting values from our “box” of pre-creation elements to serve as the foundation for everything. Values serve not only as the reason for existence, but also, to the extent that something analogous to causation survives our decommissioning of time, as the power (at least from an epistemological perspective) that brings objects, the “things” that exist into existence. To the extent that mind serves as the foundation for existence, it is a mind that is immersed in and conditioned by an entire matrix of values.

### 3.2. The World Exists Because It Should

John Leslie has proposed another reason why when considering our box of atemporal existence elements we would select values as the foundation for everything. Leslie has pointed out that of all the possibilities in the *blank*, only values have the characteristic of “shouldness.” Unlike logic, mathematics and purely factual possibilities, axiological possibilities, as John Leslie has argued, carry with them *the demand for their own realization*.<sup>70</sup> Truth, justice, ethics, love, and compassion have a hortatory aspect missing from logic and mathematics. “If six dodos exist there would be less than seven” demands nothing, but the possibility of a good, just, and beautiful world demands implementation. Leslie holds that this demand is sufficient to create the world. He thus argues that the Good is not only the reason for the world’s existence, but also its cause. Controverting the Humean tradition that we cannot obtain “is from ought,” Leslie holds that with regard to the general case of “being,” “ought” is sufficient to produce “is,” and that no god, force or catalyst beyond this ought is required to effect the transition from a possible good to an actual world. He writes, “The ethical requirement that a *good world exists* is ‘itself beyond existence’ because even if nothing existed the presence of such a world would still be called for ethically.”<sup>71</sup> The world, according to Leslie, *exists because it should*.

When confronted with our question, “Why is there something rather than nothing?” Sidney Morgenbesser, who for many years was a professor of philosophy at Columbia University, is said to have responded “... And if there was nothing *you would still be complaining*.”<sup>72</sup> If we look behind Morgenbesser’s unmistakable Jewish humor we realize that he may well be suggesting that the demand for value logically precedes and transcends existence, for even if there was nothing there would still be a *complaint*, which is a call for the fulfillment of an unrealized value. When one complains one asserts that something that is not should be, or that something that is should not be, and in each case one is claiming that that some



form of the good that is not present should be present. Morgenbesser's philosophical joke can be read to imply the metaphysical claim that the world, in effect, arose from a *complaint about nothing*.

Leslie writes that he believes the ethical requirement *that there should be a world* is the only possible “beyond being” notion that could conceivably account for the world's existence.<sup>73</sup> He explains that the “should” quality of the world's existence is *not a moral requirement*, which could only exist in a world of beings that had duties towards one another. Rather, it is an *axiological* requirement that doesn't involve duties or even “how the thing stands to intelligent agents.” Leslie argues that the “status of being marked out for existence” is a good in and of itself.<sup>74</sup>

We will return to Leslie's argument below.

### 3.3. Open Teleology

We have thus far considered epistemological and axiological accounts of how values can serve not only as the *raison d'être* of the universe but also as its “cause” or the power that brings it into existence.<sup>75</sup> With regard to “cause,” from an *epistemological* point of view, we have seen that values serve as the guiding impetus to consciousness' discernment and differentiation of objects in a world. Without values to guide consciousness' attention and intentions, “being” would at most be an undifferentiated chaos, effectively indistinguishable from the nothingness out of which it is said to have arisen. From an *axiological* point of view, we have seen that values have a “hortatory” quality that is absent from each of the other elements of existence. This quality, the “shouldness” of their existence provides values with an impetus and potential causal role in the cosmos, one that is foreign to a mechanistic worldview, but which is quite familiar from the realm of human activity, which, after all, provides our template for understanding values and their actualization.

I would like now to consider a *metaphysical* perspective on the causal role of values in the universe, one that is evident in the thought of Steinsaltz<sup>76</sup> and Birnbaum.<sup>77</sup> This perspective, what I will call “open teleology,” suggests that the universe, from its atemporal inception, is structured as an arena for the realization and development of values and, as I suggested earlier, space, time, matter and energy, and the entirety of the natural world, are the vehicles for this realization and development. However, this is not to suggest that the universe will inevitably and teleologically realize a certain end but only that it is a realm of axiological possibility within which certain value ends are potentially achieved. In this way, the universe is analogous to a human life, a life that is born into a realm of value possibilities and endeavors to realize a range of these possibilities in the face of various and at times insurmountable obstacles. Similarly, the universe, indeed the entirety of existence, is conditioned by the general principle that provides the reason for its existence, the potential maximal realization and development of value in each of its multifarious forms.

### 4.1. The Problem of Evil

In order to gain a fuller comprehension of “open teleology,” we must consider a major objection to the view that the Good is both the cause of and the reason for existence, i.e., the obvious fact that the universe is riddled with both natural and

intentional destruction and evil. How can Plato and others claim that the “the Good...gives existence to all things,” if as we can readily observe the world is filled with death and destruction? How can John Leslie claim that all of existence arises out of an ethical and axiological requirement when it is so obviously filled with immense suffering? What efficacy can we grant to an ethical/axiological “should” when it is obvious that many things that should be, are not and that many that should not be, are? Indeed, it is precisely this consideration that led the moral philosopher Derek Parfit to reject what he regarded to be an otherwise reasonable philosophical hypothesis that value is the metaphysical principle that lies at the foundation of existence.<sup>78</sup> It should also give us pause before we assert that values can in any way explain the cosmos’ existence.

We can address this problem by considering the conditions that would lead to a maximization of values in an actual universe. The 20<sup>th</sup>-century kabbalist Adin Steinsaltz has argued that both natural and moral evil must exist because it is only in a world within which obstacles to values are maximized that the values that are the *raison d’être* of the world’s existence can be fully actualized. Steinsaltz held, “We live in the worst of all possible worlds in which there is still hope-- and that is the best of all possible worlds.”<sup>79</sup> According to Steinsaltz, a “world on the brink of disaster” is the best possible arena for realizing infinite value and meaning. This is because value can only be fully realized in a realm of pain, suffering, and dis-value. Compassion can only be maximized in a world of great suffering, courage in the face of great danger, the values of truth and knowledge appreciated only when they are hard-won, and morality fully realized when it confronts rank evil. (This explains why classical narrative moves us and is most meaningful when protagonists overcome immense obstacles to achieve their value-goals. It also helps to explain why, on the basis of observation and experience, it can readily be concluded that the world is largely evil, tragic, or absurd.)

In making his claims Steinsaltz explicates the Kabbalistic principle that the repair and transformation of a broken world, is indeed the highest perfection, a perfection that is axiologically superior to any “Eden world,”<sup>80</sup> and it is for this reason that evil exists. In the Lurianic Kabbalah, the tradition Steinsaltz addresses, both God (*Ein-sof*, the Infinite) and the world become fully actualized only after the *sefirot*, the value archetypes through which the cosmos was created, *shatter*, and “sparks” of value (kindness, beauty, compassion, etc.) fall into a shadow realm of evil and destruction and are then restored and elevated through the ethical and spiritual activities of humankind.

For Steinsaltz there is no guarantee that the world will realize all or even a portion of its “should,” and this *possibility of failure* is the very condition for the potential maximization of value. He uses a race car analogy to explicate this idea: we only come to understand the limits of a car’s excellence when we drive it at enormously high speeds on an extremely difficult track on which it *might* fail. In Steinsaltz’s analogy the “extremely difficult track” is a proxy for our world.

Steinsaltz (and Birnbaum) suggest that the guiding open teleological principle of the world maximizes the possibilities for value rather than directly maximizing value itself. Indeed, this can only occur in a cosmos filled with evil and destruction. While existence does not guarantee that any value will be realized, it provides an arena in which all values *can* be realized to the greatest degree. On this view, the multiverse is in effect a “high-risk portfolio” for the realization of value.<sup>81</sup> This is essentially also the view of Birnbaum, who views the cosmos as being driven by “Holy Potential,” a potential that can only be maximized by free agents acting in a world of evil, i.e., a world that provides severe obstacles to the realization of the

good.

The philosophical problem of evil becomes less acute if we regard the *reason* for existence to be the possible (but hardly inevitable) maximization of meaning and value (which can only occur) in *the face of obstacles*. This claim does not require our world to be perfectly or even largely good, only that it be, as we have seen, *an arena within which value and meaning can be realized and maximized*. What I have described as the “reason for existence” entails that there be a world in which there is not only the possibility but the actuality of evil.<sup>82</sup>

## 4.2. The Asymmetry Between Value and Disvalue

A related problem that could potentially cast doubt on our analysis, rests upon our elevation of value (and the Good) over disvalue (and evil). Why not answer the question, “Why is there something rather than nothing?” with an appeal to disvalue or evil? After all, we often answer finite “why” questions by pointing to an individual’s immoral or otherwise bad intentions. For example, it is perfectly appropriate to respond to the question “Why did Robert travel to Florida?” with the response, “In order to poison his mother so he could receive his inheritance.” This shows that an appeal to disvalue (in this case extreme avarice) can adequately answer finite *why questions*. If so, why can’t we respond to the *infinite why question* with an appeal to infinite evil? Indeed, this appears to have been the view of the ancient Gnostics, who held that the world was created by the demiurge with bad intentions, and it also comports with the Buddhist view that our world is a world of suffering. Indeed, *based on the evidence* we might argue that the world was created to produce suffering in humans and other living things. While we read in Genesis that at each step of creation “God saw that it was good,” it might seem that precisely the opposite is the case in the actual world, and that the struggle to realize good in the face of evil only serves to maximize pain and suffering.

Here we might observe that there is an asymmetry between good and evil. One reason for this is that all “why” explanations that involve an appeal to disvalues or evil also appeal to one or more values that are fulfilled, albeit in unethical or perverse ways. Plato, in the *Gorgias*, suggests that when we do the simplest of things like walk and sit we do so for the sake of the good, and even “when we kill a man we kill him...because, as we think, it will be conducive to our good...”<sup>83</sup> The sadist who tortures his victims does so because he finds *pleasure or satisfaction* in doing so, and certainly pleasure and satisfaction (when ethically obtained) are one of the “goods” of sentient experience. On the other hand, one who pursues truth, love, compassion, wisdom, etc., does not (except under the most unusual circumstances) do so to achieve a disvalue.

There is a second “asymmetry” between values and disvalues that we should take note of: the actualization of values such as kindness, compassion, truth, and wisdom promote life and sentience, whereas disvalues tend to limit or destroy it. Death, of course, is a disvalue as it brings an end to sentience and the realization of values by the individual who succumbs to it. Indeed, disvalues, if allowed to reign unchecked would ultimately bring destruction upon the cosmos, and hence are hardly a good candidate to explain its existence. However, as have seen, even in a world conditioned by a Platonic “Good,” disvalues and evil play an important role.

### 4.3. Design Without a Designer?

I have argued that when we ask the question "Why is there something rather than nothing?" we are often asking for a *reason* without necessarily implying that there is a God or other agency behind it. However, it might be objected that in every ordinary case where a "reasons" explanation is provided for an event, there is a human (or in some cases a non-human living or sentient) agent who acts with intention or design. To argue that there is a "reason" for existence without attributing that reason to such an agent might be said to be taking "reasons" outside of their natural home and importing them into an arena within which they have no legitimate application.

My response to this objection is as follows: People often speak about the "architecture of the universe," referring to the mathematically precise and elegant character of its laws and structures, and while many have argued, on the analogy with human architecture, that these laws and structures must be the product of a "designer," the consensus, amongst naturalists is that no such designer is necessary to explain the order of things. What I am suggesting here is that the "architecture" of the metaverse involves the *quest towards the maximization value* that I have described in this paper and this quest is itself in the order of things and does not require a separate agent for its implementation.

Some, including Leslie, have been prompted to suggest that the universe itself must in some sense be sentient for it to be governed by value, and there are both spiritual and philosophical traditions that view all existence as being imbued with, or manifesting a collective, mind. The Indian notion of *Brahman Atman* and the Kabbalist's *Ein-sof*, each in their own manner, come close to symbolizing such a universal mind or soul. Hegel described a series of dialectical stages in thought and human history, culminating in the "Absolute" mind or spirit, which achieves a condition of self-knowledge not unlike Aristotle's "thought thinking itself." C. G. Jung was of the view that we each have the capacity to realize an inner universal "self," a self that provides us with a connection with the collective unconscious, which he regarded to be experientially indistinguishable from a "higher world."<sup>84</sup> Whitehead proposed a form of "panpsychism" in which sentience is present everywhere and in everything.<sup>85</sup> While such proposals are intriguing they are not, to my mind, necessary as support for the notion that there is an axiological reason for all existence. While, as I have argued, value is to a very large extent interdependent with mind, for an explanation of existence to hold it is sufficient that there are sentient, agential, beings *within* the universe.

### 4.4. A Being Who Interrogates Being

Another objection to our analysis is that the question "Why is there something rather than nothing?" simply uncovers our *expectations* regarding the answer and tells us nothing about whether those expectations are valid. When we ask this ultimate question, we may well be asking for or even demanding that there be a value or meaning that serves as the reason or ground for the cosmos' existence, but this in no way guarantees that there is one. This is an important objection, one that I will respond to in stages.

When we examine our own *being* we see that the *raison d'être* of our existence is the values and meanings that over a

lifetime become important to us and characterize our lives. It is reasonable to assume that the same applies to all sentient creatures. Since meaning and value are the reasons for existence for the only portion of the universe for which this could possibly matter it is not too much of a stretch to argue that in evolving beings for whom value and meaning are the *raison d'être*, that value and meaning are the *raison d'être* of the multiverse.

One way of looking at our question is to understand “Why is there something rather than nothing?” in existential terms. We might say that in the case of our asking this question the “multiverse” or even being itself has come to question itself through us. As we have seen, Heidegger held that a “unique relation arises” between being as a whole and the question regarding its foundation; “For through this questioning the essent as a whole is for the first time opened up as such with a view to its possible ground, and in the act of questioning it is kept open.”<sup>86</sup> Insofar as we questioners are beings ourselves, our questioning amounts to *an interrogation of being by being itself* and is thus of profound ontological significance. As human beings, we are in the unique position of being a *being who can interrogate being*. And being’s response to our interrogatory? The response is not some proposition regarding the absurdity of nothing, probabilities, God, the Big Bang, or “fine-tuning,” but is rather, I would venture, to infuse our existence with values, disvalues, meanings, and absurdities.<sup>87</sup> It is not only, as I have argued, that when we ask the question “Why is there something rather than nothing?” we are implicitly (and necessarily) asking for an explanation in terms of value and meaning, but also that the existential and ontological press of our question demands and inevitably receives a response in value/disvalue (axiological) and meaning/absurdity terms. Even if, in a dark mood, we receive the response that the cosmos is valueless and meaningless chaos, the response is on the plane of value and meaning.

The notion that value and meaning answer the question “Why is there something rather than nothing?” is, as we have seen, implicit in the question itself. However, this does not mean that this answer is simply a matter of language or that it is true by arbitrary definition. Rather it is present in language because it reflects the very nature of the existential quest of a being *who has the capacity to interrogate being*. This being, who by its very nature can interrogate being, is a being immersed in value and meaning, and this informs us about the nature of being itself. By asking the question we show, even though we may not be aware of this (and thus feel we must ask the question) that we are immersed in the answer prior to our asking the question, and our asking facilitates the process of revealing this answer to ourselves.

The notion that at least our world exists for the development of life, mind, meaning, and value makes eminent sense even without formal argument. Anyone who gives it serious thought will realize that the truly important things are the values that ought to guide human life. This has been recognized by virtually all philosophical and spiritual traditions. If one answered the ultimate question by saying that the universe exists for the development of a particular supernova in a distant galaxy, we would find this perplexing and unsatisfying unless it could be shown that this supernova had some sort of supreme cosmic value. There are moments when each of us believes that the universe has no reason for its existence and no meaning at all but such an attitude of despair flies in the face of our absolute certainty that there are indeed values and meanings within it. One does not completely deny the existence of gold on earth because of its scarcity.

## 5.1. The Question is the Answer



I have argued that the answer to the question “Why is there something rather than nothing inevitably follows from a close look into the meaning of the question. It remains to be demonstrated that the answer to our ultimate question *is the question itself*.

We have seen that our question asks for both a cause and a reason for existence. *At its core, our question involves a quest for meaning and value, and our analysis has shown that it is precisely such a quest that is the ground of existence and serves as the answer to our question.* We have taken a long route, and have appealed to linguistic, scientific, and existential considerations to arrive at this conclusion; in the end, returning our question back to itself in a manner that leaves “no remainder” to be explained. (If we ask “from whence the question?” we already know the answer—for it is we who have asked it!).

Certain of the Kabbalists held that the foundation of the world is better understood as a question—that the deepest layer of reality is interrogatory as opposed to propositional.<sup>88</sup> We have seen that one Kabbalist, Shimon Labes, phrased this as follows: “Concerning everything that cannot be grasped its question is its answer.”<sup>89</sup> Through an analytic and existential consideration of our ultimate question, we are a manifestation of the universe reflecting upon and awakening to itself.<sup>90</sup> This awakening, as I have argued throughout this paper, is an awakening to value and meaning, and we now have gone so far as to say that the awakening of the universe to itself is *the awakening of the universe*. It is in this way that the question “Why is there something rather than nothing?” with its quest for value and meaning, reflects the *nisus* of existence, and is thus answered by itself.

## 5.2. A Return to God and Awe?

One could conceptualize the drive towards value within the cosmos as *divine*. Indeed, David Birnbaum described this drive as a quest for “Holy Potential”.<sup>91</sup> One might even conceptualize this open teleology or *nisus* in personal terms, as it embodies the values and sentience that in human terms, comprise the person. I believe it was Nicolai Hartmann who held that “personality” is the highest manifestation of the cosmos, as it embodies an integration of values in an agent who can render them fully actual. And to the extent that such a *personalized* *nisus* or principle is, as Plato held, “beyond being” (or better, “beyond existence”) this may be a more satisfactory way of understanding a “transcendent God.” However, here we run the risk of reifying such a divinity and returning to the very linear form of thinking that made “God” an unsatisfactory explanation in the first place.

One can, and should, be in awe of the entire system of possibilities and their ordering by value that I have suggested pre-exists all. I have done my best to provide an answer to our ultimate question that brings us back to the question itself and thus results in “no remainder.” Yet one may still stand in awe of the actuality and even the very possibility of this question. Here, as Heidegger suggested, we leave the realm of calculative rational thinking and enter what he spoke of as a form of meditative thought. I believe this is also what Wittgenstein was getting at when he spoke of the mystical and suggested that it is an arena about which we must remain silent.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> D. Matt, "Ayin: The Concept of Nothingness in Jewish Mysticism," in *Essential Papers on Kabbalah*, Lawrence Fine, ed. New York: New York University Press, 1995, p. 96, note 37.
- <sup>2</sup> Leibniz wrote; "the first question we have the right to ask will be why is there something rather than nothing, For nothing is simpler and easier than something." J. Leslie and R. Kuhn, *The Mystery of Existence. Why Is There Anything At All?* Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013, p. 13.
- <sup>3</sup> M. Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, tr. By R Mannheim. Garden City: Anchor Books, 1961. Original German edition, 1953.
- <sup>4</sup> My thinking on the topic of this paper dates back to my doctoral studies with J.N. Findlay at Boston University in the late 1970s, my study of Hasidism and Kabbalah with the Chabad Hasidim in Brooklyn, my reflections on the 1989 book *God and Evil* by David Birnbaum, and an interview I and Harris Tilevitz conducted in 1990 with Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz. Birnbaum's thesis that the universe came into existence in order to realize a potential for complexity and meaning has been particularly influential on my thinking, as has been John Lesley's notion that the world exists because it *should*.
- <sup>5</sup> Nicholas Rescher. "Optimalism and Axiological Metaphysics." *Review of Metaphysics* 53, 4, 2000: 807-835, p. 807.
- <sup>6</sup> Logical necessity. J. Heil, "Contingency" in T. Goldschmidt (ed.) *The Puzzle of Existence: Why Is There Something Rather Than Nothing?* New York: Routledge, 2013, pp. 157-181.
- <sup>7</sup> A. Grünbaum, "The Cosmos Needs No Explanation." Leslie and Kuhn, *The Mystery of Existence*, pp. 56-70. From A. Grünbaum, "Cosmos in Cosmology", in N. S. Hetherington,, ed. *Encyclopedia of Cosmology*, New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1993, 126-135, and A. Grünbaum, "Why is IsThere A Universe AT ALL Rather Than Just Nothing," in C. Glymour, et. al., eds., *Logic, Methodology and Philosophy of Science: Proceedings of the Thirteenth International Congress* (London: King's College London Publications, 2009), pp. 7, 9, 10, 15.
- <sup>8</sup> Logically impossible argument citations.. Rundle "Why There is Something Rather Than Nothing" Leslie and Kuhn, *The Mystery of Existence*, pp. 25-26 excerpted from Ch. 5, section 5.2 of *Why There is Something Rather Than Nothing* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004).
- <sup>9</sup> P. Edwards "Why?" *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. New York: MacMillan, 1967. Vol. 8, 206-302b.
- <sup>10</sup> M. Munitz, *The Mystery of Existence*. New York: New York University Press, 1974.
- <sup>11</sup> V. Koestenbaum, "The Sense of Subjectivity," *Review of Existential Psychiatry and Psychology*, Vol. 2 (1962), 47-64, pp. 54-5. Cited in Edwards "Why?", pp. 300-301.
- <sup>12</sup> T. O'Connor. *Theism and Ultimate Explanation*. Malden, MA, Blackwell Publishing: 2009.
- <sup>13</sup> P. Davies, "Mind, Cosmos: A Self-Explaining Loop." In Leslie and Kuhn, *The Mystery of Existence* pp. 163-170. From

“Laying Down the Laws.” *New Scientist* (30 June 2007), pp. 30-34.

<sup>14</sup> See D. Parfit, “Why Anything? Why This?”, in *On What Matters*, Vol. 2. Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2011, 623-48.

<sup>15</sup> R. Nozick *Philosophical Explanations*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981, pp. 127ff; P. van Inwagen, “Why Is There Anything at All?” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society Supp* Vol. 70, 1996: 95–110. For a contrary point of view see M. Kotzen, The Probabilistic Explanation of Why There Is Something Rather than Nothing, In T. Goldschmidt, ed. *The Puzzle of Existence*, pp. 215-234.

<sup>16</sup> J. Polkinghorne, “A Purpose behind Cosmic History.” Leslie and Kuhn, *The Mystery of Existence*, pp. 178-189. From Polkinghorne, *Beyond Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

<sup>17</sup> L. Susskind, “A Purpose behind Cosmic History” in Leslie and Kuhn, *The Mystery of Existence*, pp. 189-192. Reprinted from “Because We’re Here.” Interview in the *New Scientist*, Vol. 188, No. 2530 (17 Dec 2005), pp. 48-50. Portions reprinted as “Tuning in String Theory’s Multiverse”

<sup>18</sup> D. Birnbaum, *God and Evil*. New York, Ktav, 1988.

<sup>19</sup> John Leslie, John. “Existence Because Ethically Required.” In *The Mystery of Existence: Why Is There Anything at All?*, edited by John Leslie and Robert Kuhn, 126–141. West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014.

<sup>20</sup> Nicholas Rescher. *Optimalism and Axiological Metaphysics*.

<sup>21</sup> W. R. Sorley, *Moral Values and the Idea of God* Cambridge University Press, 1918, p. 3:

Lotze wrote that he felt “certain of being on the right track, when I seek in that which should be the ground of what is.”

<sup>22</sup> Husserl wrote about “values extending indefinitely” as an “Absolute” that transcends both the world and absolute consciousness (*Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, W. R. Boyce Gibson, trans, London: Collier Books, 1931/1969) p. 158). Further, in his *Nachlass* we read: “The ultimate meaning of being is the Good, and that is the divine activity toward which the All of divine action is directed...God as will of the good is ultimate reality” (quoted in Edith Wyschogrod, *Crossover Queries: Dwelling with Negatives, Embodying Philosophy's Others* New York: Fordham University Press. p. 19, n. 13, p. 507. Wyschogrod cites Husserl’s *Nachlass*, BII, 2, 54, 146, as cited in James G. Hart, *Essays in Phenomenological Theology*, SUNY Press, 1986.

<sup>23</sup> Sorley, W. R. *Moral Values and the Idea of God* Cambridge University Press, 1918.

<sup>24</sup> Emmanuel Levinas writes, “The Place of the Good above every essence is the most profound teaching, not of theology, but of philosophy” (Levinas, *Totality and Infinity; An Essay on Exteriority*, A. Lingis, trans. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1961/1969, p. 103)

<sup>25</sup> P. Davies, Mind, Cosmos: A Self-Explaining Loop. in Leslie and Kuhn, *The Mystery of Existence* pp. 163-170. From “Laying Down the Laws.” *New Scientist* (30 June 2007), pp. 30-34.

- <sup>26</sup> T. Goldschmidt, "Introduction: Understanding the Question." In T. Goldschmidt, ed. *The Puzzle of Existence*, pp. 1-21
- <sup>27</sup> T. O'Connor. "Could There Be a Complete Explanation of Everything?" In T. Goldschmidt, ed. *The Puzzle of Existence*, 22-45.
- <sup>28</sup> Here I am alluding to D. Parfit, "Why Anything Why This?"
- <sup>29</sup> Under certain circumstance, e.g when we ask "Why do you believe x?" "why" may also call *forevidence*, but this use of "why" is not relevant to the present inquiry. See M. Munitz, *The Mystery of Existence; An Essay in Philosophical Cosmology*. New York: New York University Press, 1974, Ch. 10.
- <sup>30</sup> In discussing "value and meaning" I am referring to "meaning" in the sense in which it is intrinsically related to purpose and value. See S. Drob, *Psychology, Values, and the Meaning of Life: Bridging the Philosophy—Psychology Divide*. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, Aug 2022, 1-24,
- <sup>31</sup> The kind of explanation I have in mind might be imperfectly analogized to an explanation that can be offered in response to the question, "Why be rational?" In such a case the very fact that we are asking this question means that we have already assumed the possibility of a rational answer, and the question, in effect, answers itself, with no further remainder requiring an additional explanation. An analogous (but not equivalent) point is made by Nicholas Rescher, who argues that if one asks the question "Why should it be that reality is rational? it is "already too late to raise the issue." This is because once we ask for the reason of the world's rationality, we have already in a sense assumed the possibility of a rational answer.
- <sup>32</sup> see D Matt, "Ayin: The Concept of Nothingness in Jewish Mysticism," p. 96, note 37.
- <sup>33</sup> M. Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 4.
- <sup>34</sup> D See D. Parfit, "Why Anything? Why This?", p. 633.
- <sup>35</sup> The distinction between "being" and "existence" is more than semantic. It can be argued that abstractions such as "the Good" have "being" even when they are not actualized in existence. Plato's claim may work better for "existence" than it does for "being."
- <sup>36</sup> I introduce and provide an extended discussion of this analogy in Chapter 8 of my book *Kabbalah and Postmodernism: A Dialogue* (New York: Peter Lang, 2009), where I relate it to Jacques Derrida's claim that *différance* is older than being." Jacques Derrida, "Différance", *Margins of Philosophy*. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982, p. 11. Original French edition, 1967.
- <sup>37</sup> I am here reminded of the Midrashic dictum (Genesis Rabbah 68.9) that "God is the Place of the world."
- <sup>38</sup> This analogy not only helps us to understand how Plato could hold that a condition for all existence lies beyond being (or at least beyond "existence"), but also why he considered this condition to be "The Good." Extending our analogy, we might observe that Plato's "Good" is, in effect, *the potential for significance and value*, just as a blank piece of paper

provides a *potential for significance and value* prior to it being written, drawn or printed upon.

<sup>39</sup> John Leslie, John. "Existence Because Ethically Required." In *The Mystery of Existence: Why Is There Anything at All?*, edited by John Leslie and Robert Kuhn, 126–141. West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014, p. 129.

<sup>40</sup> The assertion that "mathematical facts" exist in a "blank" is generally consistent with realist and logicist views of the foundations of mathematics but would likely not be supported by conventionalist, constructivist, embodied mind, psychologistic, fictionalist, empiricist and certain formalist interpretations of mathematics.

<sup>41</sup> John Leslie, John. "Existence Because Ethically Required", p. 130.

<sup>42</sup> Quoted in Olivia Solon, "Is our world a simulation? Why some scientists say it is more likely than not." *The Guardian*, Tue 11 Oct, 2016. <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/oct/11/simulated-world-elon-musk-the-matrix> Downloaded, February 6, 2018.

<sup>43</sup> The question of whether ethical and axiological "facts" are "trans-world" in the sense I have described differs from the question of whether logical and mathematical truths are "real" and universal. There are "conventionalist" theories of both ethics and mathematics but the criteria for evaluating them are different. Indeed, it may indeed be the case that certain ethical and value propositions have a stronger claim to universality than either logic or mathematics, a proposition that I do not argue for here, but which is consistent with my overall thesis. I would only observe that if mathematics is "socially constructed" it would be constructed on the basis of values.

<sup>44</sup> It is worth noting that Isaac Luria held that the *Sefirot*, which are, according to the kabbalah, the archetypes of mind and value, are present in all worlds.

<sup>45</sup> Some *wrong* values might even have survival value for the species—for example robust males fertilizing as many women as possible. Some "right" values (e.g. those involved in preservation of the earth) might even entail bringing an end to the human species.

<sup>46</sup> See S. Drob, *Are you praying to a videogame God? Some theological and philosophical implications of the simulation hypothesis*. March 2023. *International Journal of Philosophy and Theology* 84(4):1-15. DOI:[10.1080/21692327.2023.2182822](https://doi.org/10.1080/21692327.2023.2182822).

<sup>47</sup> P. Davies, *Mind, Cosmos: A Self-Explaining Loop*. in Leslie and Kuhn, *The Mystery of Existence* pp. 163-170. From "Laying Down the Laws." *New Scientist* (30 June 2007), pp. 30-34.

<sup>48</sup> S. Hawking and T. Hertog, "Populating the Landscape: A Top Down Approach." High Energy Physics-Theory Cornell University, 2006. [[hep-th/0602091](https://arxiv.org/abs/hep-th/0602091)] *Populating the Landscape: A Top Down Approach (arxiv.org)*. Downloaded May 7, 2023.

<sup>49</sup> Davies. *A Self-Explaining Loop*, p. 168.

<sup>50</sup> Davies. *A Self-Explaining Loop*, p. 169.



<sup>51</sup> While the role of value as the reason for all existence is highly compatible with the observation that our universe is “fine-tuned” for life, it is not vitiated by the argument that the existence of “many worlds” in a multiverse shows that our world is not fine-tuned *by design*. Consider the following analogy: The state lottery sells millions of tickets, and there are millions of possible numerical combinations that can result in the grand prize. When an individual wins, we cannot say that the lottery was fine-tuned for their victory, but neither can we say that it is an inexplicable accident that *someone* won. Indeed, we know that the purpose of the lottery, the reason for its existence, is to produce a single or at most a few winners, and the fact that there are millions of losers takes nothing away from this purpose. This purpose is why there are millions of dollars held by those who operate the lottery, dollars that in effect exist in *potentia* for everyone who enters. Similarly, the fact that our world may be the one world that contains life, mind and value and exists amongst a nearly infinite number of other worlds that do not, shows that the potential for life, mind and value exists *ab initio*, and is in effect, “held in reserve” even in non-existence. It is this reserve, this potential that may well be *the reason* for everything.

<sup>52</sup> Davies. “A Self-Explaining Loop,” p. 170.

<sup>53</sup> D. Birnbaum, *God and Good*, NY: J Levine/Millennium, 2008, pp. 59, 71-2.

<sup>54</sup> *Sefer Yetzirah* 1:7. Aryeh Kaplan, *Sefer Yetzirah: The Book of Creation*, revised ed. (York Beach, NE: Samuel Weiser, 1997), 57.

<sup>55</sup> Zohar III:113a, translated in in H. Sperling and M. Simon, *The Zohar*, 5 vols. (London: Soncino, 1931-1934), Vol. 5, p. 153. Idel translates this passage as follows: “Whoever performs the commandments of the Torah and walks in its ways is regarded as if he made the one above.” M Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), p. 187.

<sup>56</sup> See my discussion of *Tikkun* in relation to *Ein-sof* in S. Drob, *Symbols of the Kabbalah: Philosophical and psychological perspectives*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 2020

<sup>57</sup> Tegmark, *Our Mathematical Universe*.

<sup>58</sup> On Plato’s mathematization of the Eide—see J. N. Findlay *Plato: the Written an Unwritten Dialogues*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974, pp. 6-7, 17-18 and Appendix I: Translated Passages Illustrating Plato’s Unwritten Doctrines.

<sup>59</sup> See note 38.

<sup>60</sup> Plato, Second Epistle (to Dionysius) 312d-e. As translated by J. N. Findlay *Plato: the Written an Unwritten Dialogues*, p. 296.

<sup>61</sup> W. D. Ross. *The right and the good*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1930/2002, p. 140.

<sup>62</sup> S. Harris. *The moral landscape: how science can determine human values* New York: The Free Press, 2011, p. 32.

<sup>63</sup> C. Siewert. The significance of consciousness. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998. P. 329.

<sup>64</sup> M. Tegmark, *Our mathematical universe: My quest for the ultimate nature of reality* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014, p. 391.

<sup>65</sup> While it can certainly be argued that even in the absence of higher consciousness there is great value to the preservation of the earth and (especially, life, and that, for example, it would be unethical to destroy lower animal and plant life without good reason, it is clear that a whole range of values (e.g. those involving knowledge and wisdom, and perhaps love and beauty) are inextricably linked to the higher levels of consciousness. Values are in this sense “subjective” in that they are inextricably linked to the experiences, intentions and actions of a sentient subject. This, however, takes nothing away from either their objectivity or universality.

<sup>66</sup> Iain McGilchrist, *The Master and His Emissary*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009, p. 28.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. McGilchrist, *The Master and His Emissary*, p. 28.

<sup>68</sup> We have seen that Husserl is a notable exception. He wrote about “values extending indefinitely” as an “Absolute” that transcends both the world and absolute consciousness (*Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, W. R. Boyce Gibson, trans, London: Collier Books, 1931/1969) p. 158). See Note 23 above.

<sup>69</sup> Leslie, who appears at first to place values at the foundation of the cosmos ends up in a form of speculative idealism in which he sees the universe as grounded in an infinite series of infinite intelligences. My argument in this paper is that his “axiarchism” does not require such speculative support and that at least from an idealist perspective the “mechanism” through which being arises/appears need be nothing beyond an axiologically directed consciousness.

<sup>70</sup> J. Leslie, Existing Because Ethically Required. In Leslie and Kuhn, *The Mystery of Existence*, pp. -141. From “A Cosmos Existing through Ethical Necessity.” *Philo: A journal of Philosophy*, 12 (2) special issue, *Theism and Naturalism* (Fall/Winter, 2009), pp. 172-187, p. 92.

<sup>71</sup> Leslie, “Existing Because Ethically Required,” p. 131.

<sup>72</sup> Sidney Morgenbesser - Wikiquote, [https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Sidney\\_Morgenbesser](https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Sidney_Morgenbesser). Downloaded February 26, 2023.

<sup>73</sup> Leslie, “Existing Because Ethically Required,” p. 131. Leslie considers the objection that the values we have are conditioned sociobiologically. He argues that this is of little importance in relation to his overall argument. Our biological heritage and various social pressures may condition, even “force” us to view “saving happy children from drowning” to be better than “drowning them for fun,” but this neither makes this view wrong nor provides a justification for it being correct. Just as the criteria for whether a mathematical calculation is correct is unrelated to the brain processes that “cause” us to make the calculation, the criteria for whether an action is ethically or axiologically correct is totally independent of the material causes that lead us to believe in its value. There are material (presumably neurophysiological) causes that lead one to conclude that  $8+8 = 16$ , but those causes do not justify the calculation. Similarly, there may be socio-biological causes that condition one’s negative judgments about lying or murder, but these causes do not have any bearing on whether these judgments are ethical.

<sup>74</sup> In this Leslie is in accord with G. E. Morre who held that a beautiful world would have value even in the absence of a sentient being to appreciate it.

<sup>75</sup> There is another, perhaps unsettling reason to hold that values are the “force” that brings at least the world into existence. Earlier in this paper I drew upon the “simulation hypothesis,” the notion that we may be living in a computer simulation in which there are layers of digitally constructed informational realities superimposed upon a presumably material base, in my discussion of the objectivity and trans-world nature of scientific laws. I have elsewhere argued that the simulation hypothesis, though grounded in a materialist view of the mind, paradoxically reinforce the argument for philosophical idealism. The simulation hypothesis proposes that we have no access to reality other than the world of ideas and information created by the interest and values of sentient beings who from a higher or “deeper” level of reality have simulated our world. While religious traditions hold that the world is created according to the values and intentions of a transcendent God, the simulation hypothesis understands our world to be a function of the interest and values of those who have engineered. In this case, it follows that because the world is constructed in accord with values (and disvalues), these become not only the reason but the cause of all existence. See S. Drob, *Are you praying to a videogame God?*

<sup>76</sup> S. Drob and H. Tilevitz, “The Mystic as Philosopher – An Interview with Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz” *Jewish Review* 3:4 (March 1990), pp. 14—17.

<sup>77</sup> D. Birnbaum, *God and Evil: A Unified Theodicy/Theology/Philosophy*. New York: Ktav, 1989.

<sup>78</sup> Here we might note that the Talmud (*Eruvin* 13b) informs us that both the houses of Hillel and Shammai concluded that there is so much suffering in the world that it would have been better if man had not been created. (In this they seem to directly contradict the divine pronouncement after each day of creation that “it was good.”)

<sup>79</sup> S. Drob and H. Tilevitz, “The Mystic as Philosopher.” <http://www.thejewishreview.org/articles/?id=180>. Downloaded May 7, 2023.

<sup>80</sup> D. Birnbaum, *God and Evil*.

<sup>81</sup> It is here interesting to note the *midrashic* narrative that God created and destroyed numerous worlds where the balance between *chesed* (loving kindness) and *gevurah/din* (rigor/judgment), i.e., the balance between good and evil, was different than our own. These worlds were destroyed because an over-abundance of either loving kindness or judgment would fail to result in the kind of reality envisioned by the creator. From a *possible worlds* perspective, we might regard these created and destroyed worlds as infinite variations on the axiological plane, analogous to the infinite variations on the physical plane that some have called in order to explain the fine-tuning of our material reality. On this view “fine-tuning” characterizes the axiological and ethical balance that provides our cosmos with the unique opportunity to fulfill the divine will, or in the language I prefer, that maximizes the potential for value.

<sup>82</sup> Just as an individual person can fail to achieve life-meaning, there is no guarantee that the universe as a whole will fulfill its potential for meaning and value. The fact of the holocaust and other great atrocities proves this, but these events, however horrific, take nothing away from the proposition that the meaning of the cosmos, the answer to “Why is there

anything at all?” is the realization of “the Good,” the development and perfection of value and meaning in the face of such horrors and other obstacles.

<sup>83</sup> *The Dialogues of Plato*. Vol. 6. *Great Books of the Western World*. M. Adler, ed., World. B. Jowett, trans. Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 13rd printing, 1991, p. 264.

<sup>84</sup> C. G. Jung, *Mysterium Coniunctionis*. Trans. R. F. C. Hull. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963p. 473, par 673.

<sup>85</sup> A. N. Whitehead. *Modes of Thought*. New York: MacMillan, 1938. Reprinted, New York: The free Press, 1968, p. 156.

<sup>86</sup> Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 4.

<sup>87</sup> Heidegger, in spite of his disdain for philosopher’s preoccupation with “values,” observed that the ultimate question is experienced most authentically in moments both great rejoicing and despair “when ...all meaning becomes obscure” M. Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 1.

<sup>88</sup> The Zohar, the locus classicus of the Kabbalah, described certain the *Sefirot*, the archetypal elements of creation, as the questions: Who? What? And What are these? See Zohar I:2a, H. Sperling, M. Simon, and P. Levertoff, trans. *The Zohar* (London: Soncino Press, 1931-4), Vol. 1, p. 6, and discussion in I. Tishby and F. Lachower, *The Wisdom of the Zohar: An Anthology of Texts*, trans. David Goldstein, 3 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989) Vol. I, p. 294-5.

<sup>89</sup> Shimon Labis, *Ketem Paz*, see Daniel Matt, “Ayin: The Concept of Nothingness in Jewish Mysticism,” in *Essential Papers on Kabbalah*, Lawrence Fine, ed. New York: New York University Press, 1995, p. 96, note 37.

<sup>90</sup> Compare T. Nagel, *Mind and Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature Is Almost Certainly False*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, p. 117, 124.

<sup>91</sup> Birnbaum, *God and Evil*, p. 54ff., 66-7.