# God and the Atom by Victor Stenger: A Very Brief Review

### Post by “Godfrey” of February 21, 2020 at 2:55 PM

Excellent question. Basically his point in the book is that we don't know, but that there are various mathematical models which fall into a limited number of categories. To the question of "is there a beginning" he provides the following five categories:

1) Yes. Creation from something.

2) Yes. Creation from nothing.

3) Yes. Order out of chaos.

4) No. Eternal existence.

5) No. Rhythmic universe.

From the book's final chapter, "Beginnings:"

"*Two of the open 'origins' questions that are particularly interesting to me are the origin of matter, that is, where did the matter we and everything else are made of come from, and the origin of the Universe as a whole. Although these are two 'origins' questions, they are quite different. While we can try to answer the question of the origin of all matter using well-established (well, almost well-established) ideas in physics, the question of the origin of the Universe as a whole is much more complicated. Even though it is possible to use general relativity and quantum mechanics to build mathematical models that exhibit a self-consistent picture of a possible beginning, models are simply not enough to understand the question of the origin of the Universe. Since all these models assume the laws of physics to be valid as a tool to forge a possible beginning, they cannot possibly explain where the laws of physics themselves came from. If we simply say that the laws of physics were created with the Universe, we fall into an endless regression.*

"*...it is the question of the origin of the laws of physics that truly deals with 'the Beginning.' And the answer to this question is beyond the scope of physical theories, at least as they are formulated at present.*"

My dissatisfaction with Stenger stating that the universe is eternal is that it read to me as an opinion, albeit one formed through a life of study (I emphasize that I only have read his book on atomism and not his other books which may deal more directly with this). What I found so compelling about Gleiser's book is that he doesn't provide an answer but provides tools (other than equations) with which to think about the issue.

Although he doesn't say "Epicurus was right!" (Stenger basically does), after reading this book I've come away with more respect for Epicurus. Understanding how he laid the foundation for so much that followed makes his achievement even more impressive. And his assertion that nothing comes from nothing hasn't been proven wrong.