

Cosmology in crisis—a conference report

John Hartnett

‘In May 2004, a group of about 30 concerned scientists published an open letter to the global scientific community in *New Scientist* in which they protested the stranglehold of Big Bang theory on cosmological research and funding.’

This was the opening sentence in a paper presented to *Progress in Physics* in October this year by Hilton Ratcliffe. It was entitled *The First Crisis in Cosmology Conference (CCC-1)* and reported on a conference held in Monção, Portugal, between 23 and 25 June 2005.¹

This sentence referred to ‘An Open Letter to the Scientific Community’,² which had to be a paid advertisement in *New Scientist*,³ because that was the only way it would be published. It reflected the growing disregard of the big bang even in the secular science community. It began with:

‘The big bang today relies on a growing number of hypothetical entities—things that we have never observed. Inflation, dark matter and dark energy are the most prominent examples. Without them, there would be a fatal contradiction between the observations made by astronomers and the predictions of the big bang theory. In no other field of physics would this continual recourse to new hypothetical objects be accepted as a way of bridging the gap between theory and observation. It would, at the least, raise serious questions about the validity of the underlying [big bang] theory [emphasis added].’

‘But the big bang theory can’t survive without these fudge factors.’

They outlined a few basic problems that they agreed upon, which are devastating to the standard big bang model. Their advert was also published on the web and, as a result, many more

people added their names to the list.⁴ They also said:

‘[Q]uestions and alternatives cannot even now be freely discussed and examined. An open exchange of ideas is lacking in most mainstream conferences.’

CCC-1: Cosmological Conundrums

As a result, they organized their own conference. Ratcliffe¹ summarized the main papers offered and the comments on the discussions. Here are a few highlights.

Riccardo Scarpa is reported to have said:

‘Dark Matter is the craziest idea we’ve ever had in astronomy. It can appear when you need it, it can do what you like, be distributed in any way you like. It is the fairy tale of astronomy.’

Such is the problem—because they have accepted the fact of the big bang, many crazy ideas are needed to support it. Dark matter really is a massive fudge, because they don’t have the physics right (with correct physics, there is no need for it⁵). Tom Van Flandern said:

‘It should be evident to objective minds that nothing about the Universe interpreted with the Big Bang theory is necessarily right, not even the most basic idea in it that the Universe is expanding.’

Yuriy Baryshev presented a paper of the conceptual problems with the big bang:

‘He pointed out that if one reversed the flow and shrunk the radius, eventually the point would be reached where the energy density of the Universe would exceed the rest mass, and that is logically impossible.’

Logically impossible indeed! The universe comprises a lot of matter, but if the matter is compressed passed a certain density it would have a higher energy density than its constituent matter. This is obviously an absurdity. Ratcliffe continues with a joke from Richard Feynman to his wife (upon returning from a conference), ‘Remind me not to attend any more gravity

conferences!’

He mentions the important work of Glenn Starkman on the Wilkinson Microwave Anisotropy Probe (WMAP) data:

‘Dr. Starkman has discovered some unexpected (for Big Bangers) characteristics (he describes them as “bizarre”) in the data that have serious consequences for the Standard Model. Far from having the smooth, Gaussian distribution predicted by Big Bang, the microwave picture has distinct anisotropies, and what’s more says Starkman, they are clearly aligned with local astrophysical structures, particularly the ecliptic of the Solar System. Once the dipole harmonic is stripped to remove the effect of the motion of the Solar System, the other harmonics, quadrupole, octopole, and so on reveal a distinct alignment with local objects, and show also a preferred direction towards the Virgo supercluster.’

Starkman outlined the implications:

‘This suggests that the reported microwave background fluctuations on large angular scales are not in fact cosmic, with important consequences.’

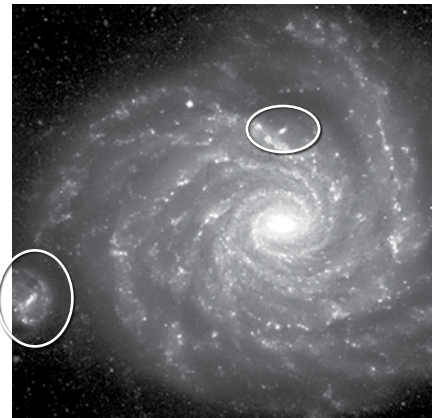


Photo by European Southern Observatory

NGC1232 with companions as taken by the ESO VLT. This is one example of a galaxy with companion galaxies (note the small galaxy in upper centre and the not-so-small galaxy in bottom left) which have been used by Halton Arp as evidence of the ejection of galaxies from the centres of parent galaxies. This idea challenges one of principle assumptions of the big bang, that all matter was created at the initial instant of time.

The evidence strongly supports the idea that the sea of microwave radiation, which has been claimed as the one true prediction of the big bang model, is not cosmological in origin but arises from the vicinity of the solar system. Therefore, if we are to agree that this is a true prediction then it falsifies the big bang model.⁶

On the final day they discussed viable alternative cosmologies. Ratcliffe personally preferred the Plasma Cosmology of Eric Lerner:

‘Lerner summarised the basic premises: most of the Universe is plasma, so the effect of electromagnetic force on a cosmic scale is at least comparable to gravitation. Plasma cosmology assumes no origin in time for the Universe, and can therefore accommodate the conservation of energy/matter. Since we see evidence of evolution all around us, we can assume evolution in the Universe, though not at the pace or on the scale of the Big Bang.’

Clearly these big bang dissidents are evolutionists, and have other biases to deal with. Also they reject the notion of an origin, which they see as religious dogma. The Plasma Cosmology has no such constraint. Ratcliffe believes they are only using empirical science in their alternative approach, but falls into the same trap as the big bangers, and the steady statesmen before him. This trap is to believe that natural science, which excludes God, is all there is and that they can find ultimate truth without God or reference to His special revelation.

However the biggest surprise at the CCC-1 was the paper by Oliver Manuel. He is not an astronomer but a nuclear chemist. Ratcliffe reports he was

‘... one of a handful of scientists entrusted with the job of analysing Moon rock brought back by the Apollo missions. His “telescope” is a mass spectrometer, and he uses it to identify and track isotopes in the terrestrial neighbourhood. His conclusions are astonishing The hard facts that emerge from Professor Manuel’s study indicate that the chemical composition of

the Sun beneath the photosphere is predominantly iron! Manuel’s thesis has passed peer review in several mainstream journals, including *Nature*, *Science* and the *Journal of Nuclear Fusion*. He derives a completely revolutionary Solar Model, one which spells big trouble for BBN [big bang nucleosynthesis].

‘He makes the following claims:

1. The chemical composition of the Sun is predominantly iron.
2. The energy of the Sun is not derived from nuclear fusion, but rather from neutron repulsion.
3. The Sun has a solid, electrically conducting ferrite surface beneath the photosphere, and rotates uniformly at all latitudes.
4. The solar system originated from a supernova about 5 billion years ago, and the Sun formed from the neutron star that remained.’

A note of caution must be added. I am not personally endorsing the views held by Manuel, whose ideas about the Sun are viewed with great scepticism by mainstream scientists, and maybe not without reason. Nor do I endorse Lerner’s plasma universe which has problems of its own. Van Flandern also has some unusual views of the nature of the universe. The main point is that there are alternative voices that should be heard. Science should be open to new ideas—regardless of the researcher’s bias he should get an opportunity to air his case. This so often is not what happens in the mainstream journals. And it should be added that Alain Blanchard of the Laboratoire d’Astrophysique in Toulouse attended to explicitly defend big bang, and according to Ratcliffe he did so admirably.

Dogmatic against dogma

Ratcliffe finishes with:

‘That the Big Bang theory will pass into history as an artefact of man’s obsession with dogma is a certainty; it will do so on its own merits, however, because it stands

on feet of clay.’

There is the reference to dogma. Most of those at the conference would obviously believe that we can find truth without resorting to presuppositions, especially without bringing the first book of the Bible into it. By undermining the big bang with its beginning, they also believe they do mankind a service by eliminating religious notions, considering that the Pope has accepted the big bang origin of the universe for Catholicism anyway. If they win the case against the big bang on scientific grounds, the many compromising Christian apologists who invoke the big bang will have no case.⁷ But regardless of the biases of the big bang’s critics, as Ratcliffe aptly puts it:

‘Nonetheless, that there is a crisis in the world of science is now confirmed. Papers presented at the conference by some of the world’s leading scientists showed beyond doubt that the weight of scientific evidence clearly indicates that the dominant theory on the origin and destiny of the Universe is deeply flawed.’

References

1. Ratcliffe, H., The First Crisis in Cosmology Conference, *Progress in Physics* 3:19–24, 2005. <www.americanantigravity.com/documents/Crisis-in-Cosmology-2005-Ratcliffe.pdf>, 17 January 2006.
2. <home.pacbell.net/skeptica/an_open_letter_to_the_scientific_community.html>, 17 January 2006.
3. Lerner, E. *et al.*, Bucking the big bang, *New Scientist* 182(2448):20, 2004.
4. <www.cosmologystatement.org/> with 219 scientists and engineers signed as of 18 January 2006.
5. Hartnett, J.G., Carmeli’s accelerating universe is spatially flat without dark matter, *Int. J. Theor. Phys.* 44:485–492, 2005; <arxiv.org/PS_cache/gr-qc/pdf/0407/0407083.pdf>, 22 March 2005.
6. Hartnett, J.G., Cosmologists can’t agree and are still in doubt, *Journal of Creation* 16(3):21–26, 2002.
7. Wieland, C., Secular scientists blast the big bang: what now for naïve apologetics? *Creation* 27(2):23–25, 2005; <www.answersingenesis.com.au/bigbangbust>, 18 January 2006.