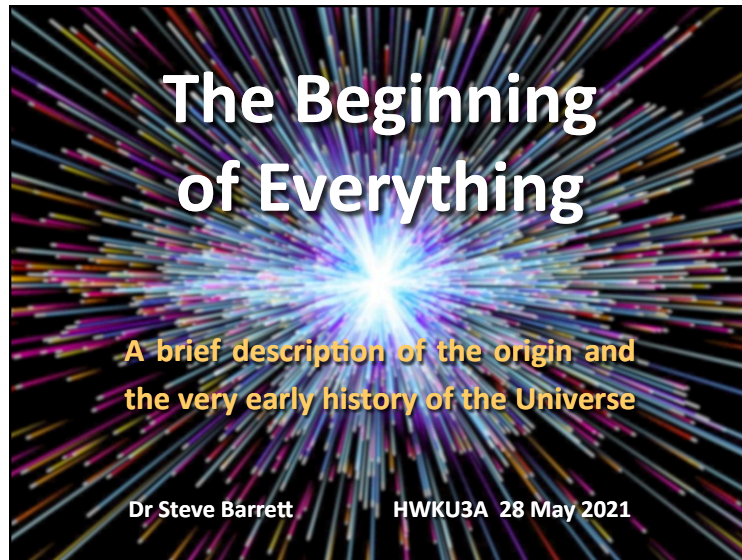


The Beginning of Everything



The Beginning of Everything

What am I talking about?	Creation of the Universe
When did it happen?	13.8 billion years ago
How long did it take?	About three minutes
Where did it happen?	Everywhere
Why did it evolve the way it did?	Laws of Physics
How do we know all this?	Laws of Physics

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Nature

Nature is not **repetitive** (If it was, it would be boring)

Nature is not **unpredictable** (If it was, it would be impossible to make sense of the world)

Hence, Nature is **interesting**

How does Nature work? What are the **Rules of the Game**?

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The Beginning of Everything

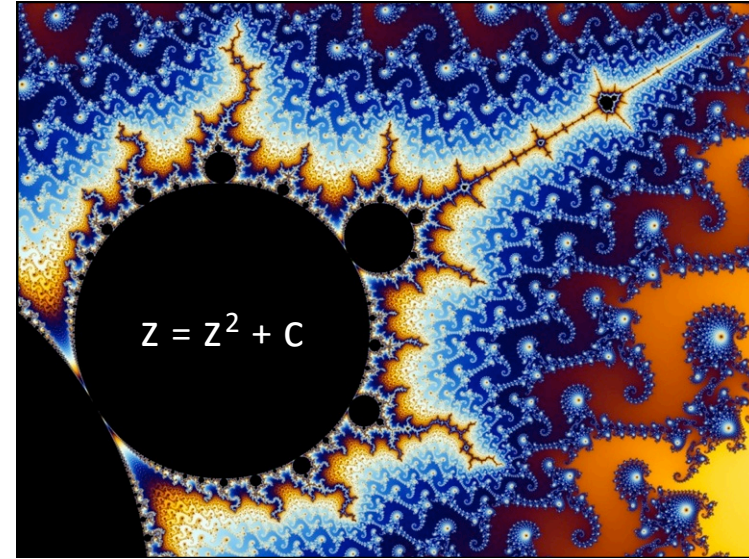
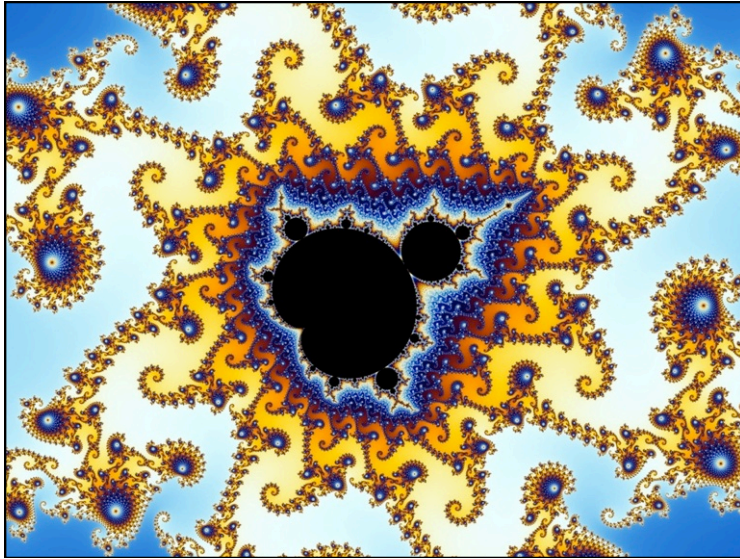
Rules of the Game



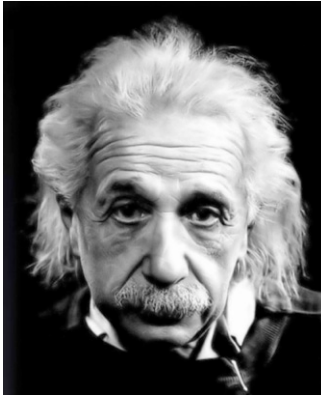
Snapshot of the Universe



The Beginning of Everything



Complex ≠ Incomprehensible



" The most incomprehensible thing about the world is that it is comprehensible "

Flow of Thought

- Observation** Galaxies are moving away from each other
- Conclusion** The Universe is expanding
- Observation** Particle physics experiments (such as the LHC)
- Assumption** Laws of physics (here) = laws of physics (there)
Laws of physics (now) = laws of physics (then)
- Conclusion** The Universe was created in a very hot dense state 13.8 billion years ago and has been expanding and cooling ever since
- Big Question** Where did all the matter we see today come from?

The Beginning of Everything

How Far Back?

How far back can we go (before we give up on the laws of physics)?

The first billion years of the 13.8 billion year history?

The first million years? The first thousand years? The first year?

The first day? The first hour? The first minute? The first second?

The first ms? The first μ s? The first ns? The first ps?

Before the first picosecond, we are on slightly shakey ground.

Everything after that is relatively well understood.

Contents

- Introduction
- A few basic ideas
- The first fraction of a second
- The first few seconds
- The first few minutes
- The next 377,000 years
- The next 13.8 billion years (in brief)

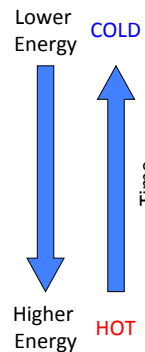
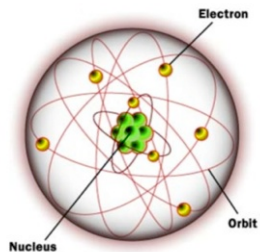
A Few Basic Ideas

We are made of atoms

atom = nucleus + electrons

nucleus = protons + neutrons

proton = 3 quarks



t = 0

What happened at the instant of $t = 0$?

Science cannot provide a definitive answer.

Maybe it was a 'quantum fluctuation' in which energy, and hence matter ($E = mc^2$), is borrowed from nothing. This sounds weird, but quantum mechanics is weird.*

How big can the fluctuation be? Energy x time has an upper limit.

You can borrow a lot of energy for a short time, or vice versa.

The total energy in the universe might be zero and so the time period we are given to 'pay back the loan' might be infinite.


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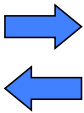
t ≈ 0.001 s **The First Millisecond**


Matter and antimatter continue to pop in to and out of existence.

Protons and neutrons, both made from three constituent quarks, are continually transforming into each other.

Proton
2 u + 1 d
quarks







Neutron
1 u + 2 d
quarks

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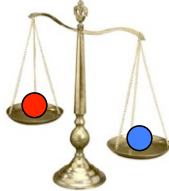
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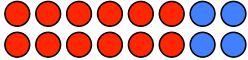
t ≈ 1 s **The First Few Seconds**

The Universe has cooled to $T \approx 1$ billion K.

It is now too cold for protons and neutrons to readily swap back and forth. Protons are a little lighter than neutrons (by ~ 0.1 %) ...

... and so protons outnumber neutrons in the ratio 75 : 25.





(Nature always favours the lower energy)
(or the lower mass)

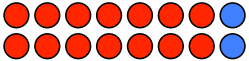
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t ≈ 100 s **The First Few Minutes**

Neutrons are unstable and some decay into protons.

The ratio of protons : neutrons is now ≈ 14 : 2




The Universe has cooled to $T \approx 100$ million K. Nuclei can now form.



12 nuclei of H

+



1 nucleus of He

After 3 minutes, the relative abundance of H and He is determined.

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The Next 377,000 Years

Nothing (much) happens for the next third of a million years. The Universe continues to expand and cool.

Eventually the Universe cools to $T \approx 3000$ K.

At this temperature nuclei can hang on to electrons and so atoms can exist for the first time. The Universe changes from an ionised **plasma** to a collection of **atoms**. It becomes **transparent** to light.

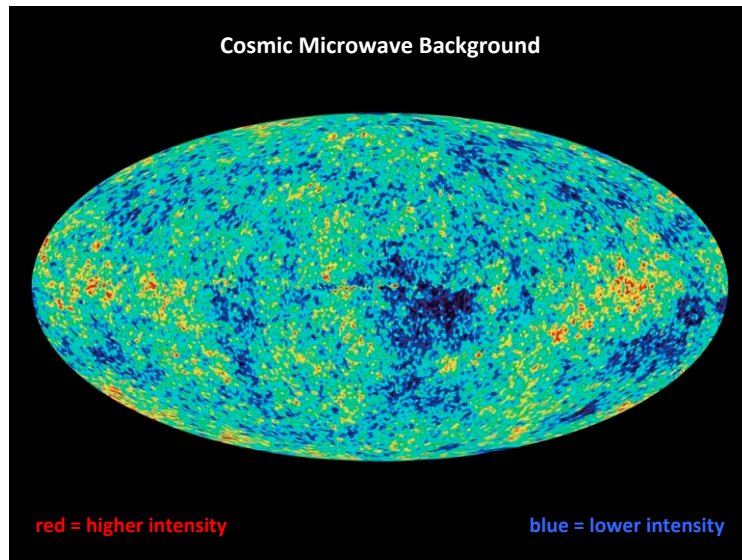
Light that was, until this point, 'trapped' inside the plasma is now free to fly around the Universe. We see this light today, but much stretched out by the subsequent expansion of the Universe.

The wavelength of the light is now 1000 x longer — **microwaves**.

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Cosmic Microwave Background

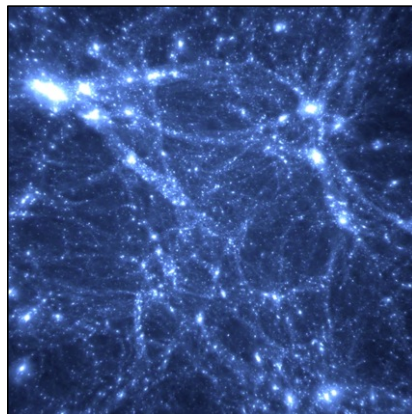
The cosmic microwave background (CMB) that we observe today is approximately the same intensity in all directions, but is not perfectly smooth.

The **small variations** in intensity seen in the all-sky map are the result of the 'dimples' in the cosmic golf ball.

Satellites are being used to study the CMB to greater precision to improve our understanding of the very early Universe.

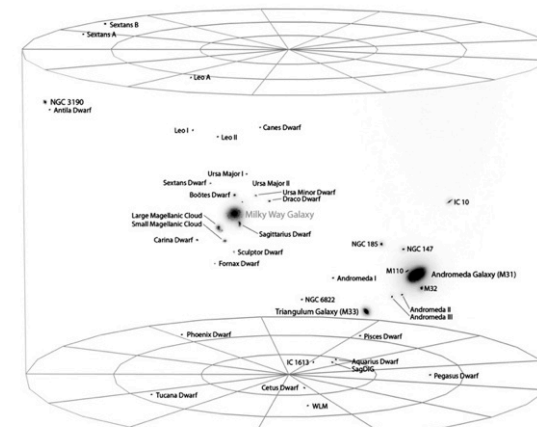
Cosmic Web

The 'dimples' in the cosmic golf ball gave rise to the variations in the CMB...

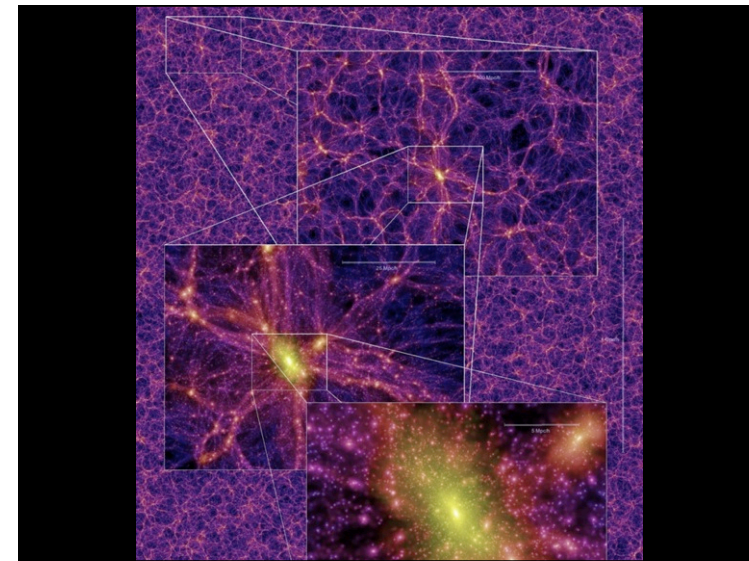
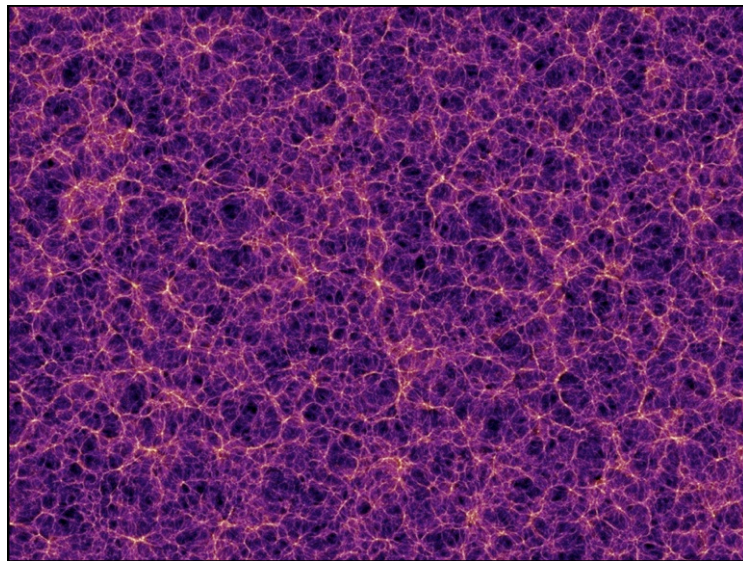
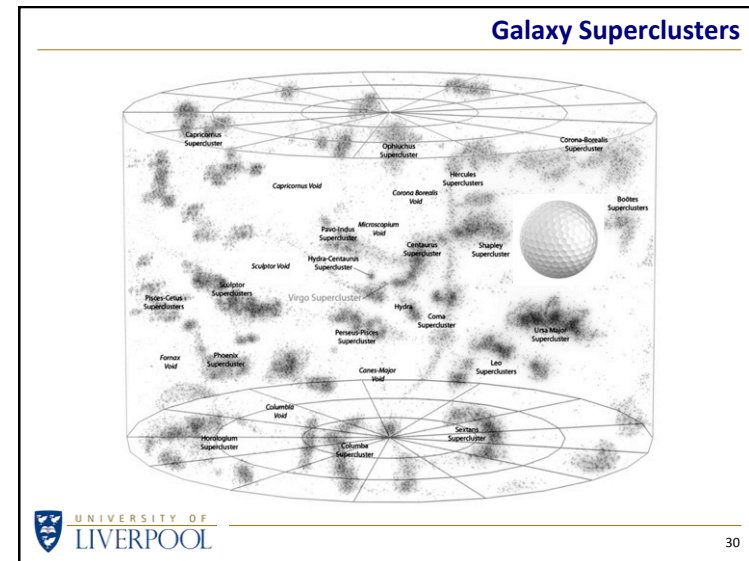
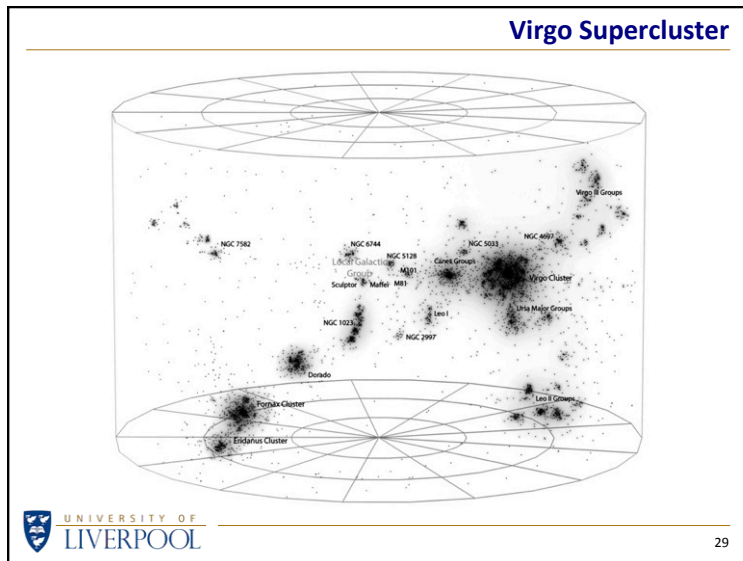


... and over billions of years collapsed into a cosmic web of filaments and voids.

Local Group



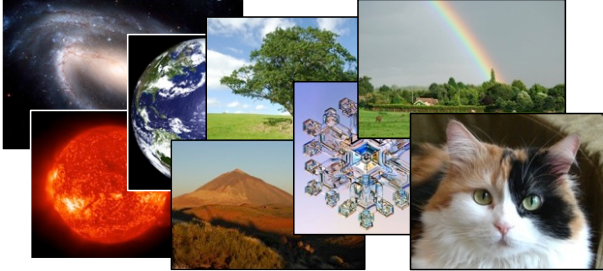
The Beginning of Everything



The Beginning of Everything

The Next 13.8 Billion Years

Now that we have hydrogen atoms we can understand...

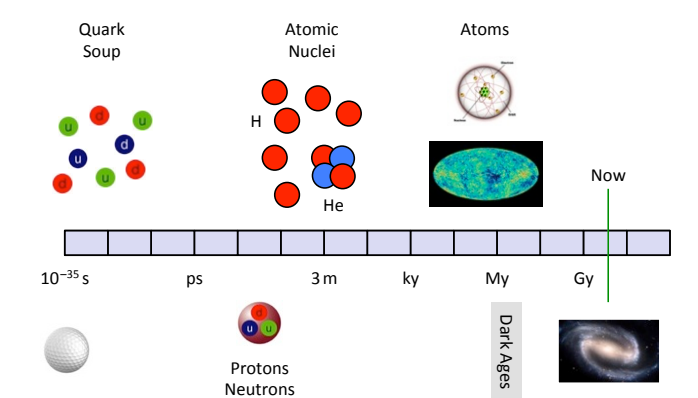


There are still some details of cosmic evolution to be worked out, but you get the basic idea.

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Time Line



Quark Soup

Atomic Nuclei

Atoms

Now

10^{-35} s ps 3 m ky My Gy

Protons Neutrons

Dark Ages

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Questions

The jigsaw is still not complete. (We have found the corners, the edges and most of the landscape, but there are still pieces of sky missing.) The remaining questions are:

- Why did **Matter** win over **Antimatter**? (what caused the asymmetry?)
- What is **Dark Matter**? (causing galaxies to rotate at the 'wrong' speed)
- What is **Dark Energy**? (causing the Universe to *accelerate* its expansion)

This talk is titled 'The Beginning of **Everything**' but all the ordinary matter in the Universe accounts for only 4% of the total.

The other 96% is still a bit of a mystery. But that's another story...

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The Beginning of Everything

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Dr Steve Barrett HWKU3A 28 May 2021