

The Big Bang: Who Really First Suggested It?

Stewart Campbell¹ suggests that Edgar Allan Poe should be credited with the idea of the Big Bang. While it is now generally well known that Poe was the first correctly to explain Olbers' paradox, that is technically different than his Big Bang theory, despite the impressive list of similarities with modern cosmology which Campbell lists. (Campbell also admits that Poe's intuitive concept is a bit vague.) The main difference is that Poe's explanation of Olbers' paradox is identical to the modern one, while his cosmology, though strikingly similar in many respects, is more speculation than science, although it turned out to be at least superficially right. As Campbell notes, Friedmann was the first to discuss something like an initial singularity in a scientific context, and Lemaître the first to speculate about the physics of the early Universe. So, depending on the definition of Big Bang, the honour should go to Friedmann or Lemaître, at least in a scientific context.

(Broadening the definition can push the limit back even farther, though it is a stretch to equate the Bible's "Let there be light" with the epoch of recombination or even with the Big Bang itself.)

Yours faithfully,
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References

- (1) S. Campbell, *The Observatory*, **138**, 170, 2018.