



On the podcast
www.bbcfoodmagazine.com

EN HERE BEFORE?

The Universe appeared from the Big Bang – a cataclysmic explosion 13.7 billion years ago in which space, time and matter were all created. So is there any truth in the theory that universes and civilisations existed before our own? **Robert Matthews** investigates

WHAT HAPPENED BEFORE THE BIG Bang? It's a question so perplexing even the likes of Stephen Hawking have dismissed it as being beyond answer. But breakthroughs in our understanding of the basic nature of space and time are prompting theorists to suggest it may now be possible to peer into the past and look at the start of the Universe – and even before that.

There is now a growing belief that the Big Bang wasn't the moment a universe was born for the first time – it was just the latest in an endless cycle

of cosmic birth and deaths. And if universes existed before ours, this surely means that life, in some form, could have existed as well.

The theory of the 'cyclic universe' is about to be put to the test, with the launch of Planck, an orbiting observatory that will study the aftermath of the Big Bang in unprecedented detail, looking for clues to the creation of today's Universe some 13.7 billion years ago.

Many Eastern religions have long included the idea of a cyclic