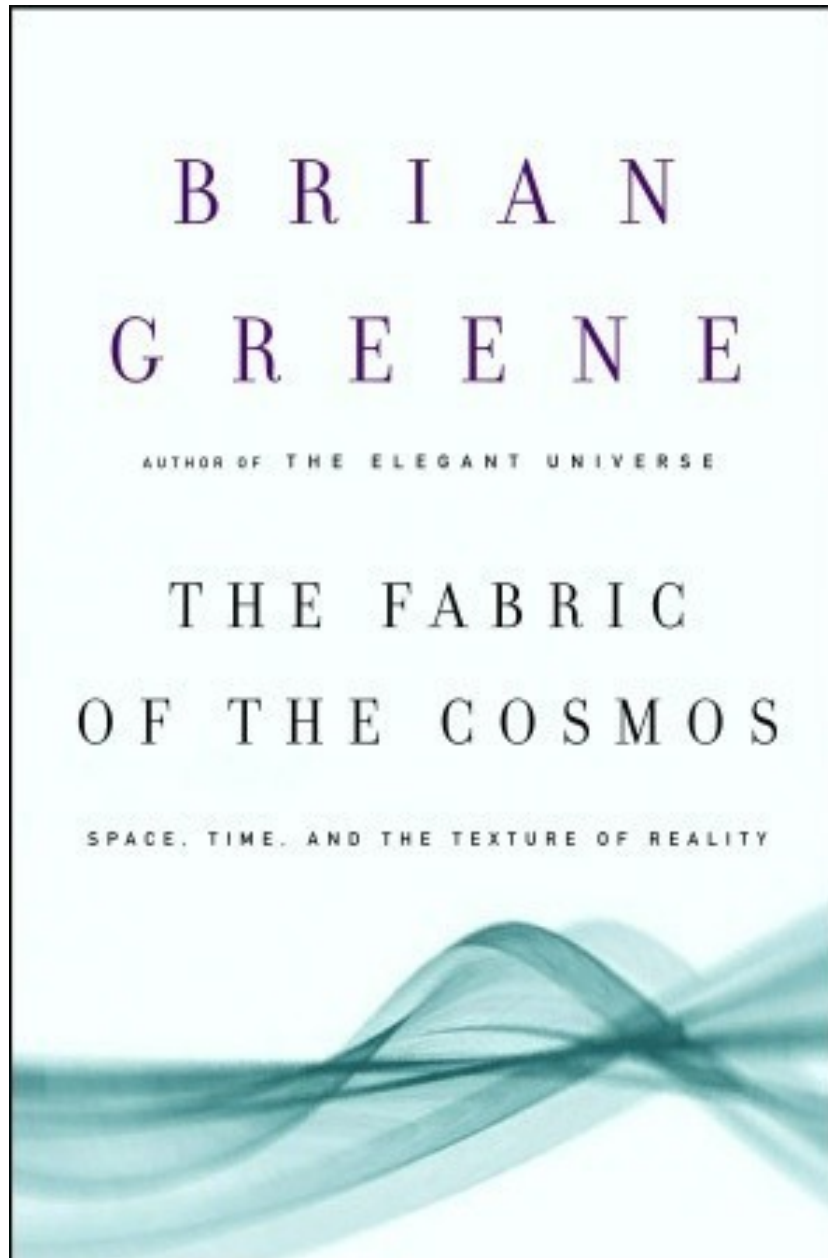


The Fabric of the Cosmos: Space, Time, and the Texture of Reality Book PDF Download



**By:
Brian Greene**

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What people Say:

Greg

I like to talk shit about science sometimes. Sometimes it's just to push people's buttons and other times it's because of the pop side of science is ridiculous (you know like the studies that get quoted on your web-browsers start-up page, which may even be contradicted a few days from now by some other article, or all those fucking pharmaceutical ad's on TV. Hey, thanks Pfizer for helping make me a drug addict!). I just made a slight at pop-science and that is hypocritical of me, it's really the

I like to talk shit about science sometimes. Sometimes it's just to push people's buttons and other times it's because of the pop side of science is ridiculous (you know like the studies that get quoted on your web-browsers start-up page, which may even be contradicted a few days from now by some other article, or all those fucking pharmaceutical ad's on TV. Hey, thanks Pfizer for helping make me a drug addict!). I just made a slight at pop-science and that is hypocritical of me, it's really the only type of science I can understand and this book basically falls into that category, it's a watered down version of real science so humanities idiots like me can understand concepts that they would stare open mouthed at if they had to read the actual articles about.

By the way, I loved this book!

Starting with a seemingly simple problem (or I would think it's simple, but it took a few hundred years and Einstein to adequately understand it, apparently (not that I could figure it out) about why the water in a bucket pushes up against the side of the bucket when you spin the bucket around really fast, Brian Green creates a narrative (I'm using this in it's normal manner, not in the science as narrative way that I use it when I want to piss people off, this book is a history of science book in quite a few ways) that shows how this bucket filled with some water paved the way for Relativity, Quantum Mechanics, Quantum Uncertainty, the Big Bang, String Theory, M-Theory, Branes and other concepts that helped move forward theoretical understandings of the whole universe. Oh, actually the underlying theme to the book is how do we understand the concepts of space and time, or spacetime, which is one of the problems of understanding why the water in the bucket does what it does when it is spun around.

Oh, did I mention I loved this book? I feel awkward giving it five stars because I lack the critical acumen to know if Brian Green is really telling the whole story, or if there is a huge bias here because I'm an idiot when it comes to matters like this. I felt like he was being fair though but maybe I was just dazzled by any of the mathematics he would throw into footnotes that I wouldn't have the first idea on what to do with if someone handed me even the simplest one and asked me to solve it.

About a hundred pages into the book I had the realization that I should have been more interested in math and science growing up. More exactly I had the realization that the way math and science

were taught in the schools I attended did nothing to inspire me at all. I'm fairly certain that most people never use most of the information they learn in science classes. I've never had the need to know all the parts of a flower, but if I had been taught something about what went into discovering some of the biology of (x) or say about the real awesomeness of evolution I'd probably have perked up and gotten interested. Or maybe learned about the difficulties still facing scientists when dealing with the subatomic level, and the weirdness of quantum uncertainty and entanglement might have gotten me more interested and wanting to know more in a chemistry class than endlessly learning how to balance electrons between elements (or whatever that fruitless exercise was called). I know these details are really important to doing science, but without any reason to care about wanting to know about science this is all just monumental busy work. Shouldn't it be the job of schools to get kids to care and wanting to learn rather than forcing meaningless facts onto them?

This rantish aside about the misguided importance (pedological approach?) of science education in American schools was just me being bitter. It's too late now, and I'm too dumb in too many areas of knowledge but I should have been a theoretical physicist. That is what I realized reading this book. I wish someone had told me about the weird shit these people try to figure out, explained who Parmenides was and the basic gist of his Poem was, and then told me I could work on these problems for the rest of my life if I started to pay attention in math class and gave a shit about my science classes, that there was cool stuff I'd get to later on.

Parmenides is never mentioned in this book, but at almost every step through the book he kept popping into my mind. He's my reoccurring fascination. His idea of the everything just being One at first glance is so silly. I remember the first time reading Zeno's Paradoxes (he was Parmenides student) and thinking they were just silly games with words, obviously something moves faster than something else and can over come it. Obviously an arrow shot at a target eventually hits it. Duh! But sometime soon after my immediate annoyance at these kinds of meaningless games something clicked in me and I started to try to think through what Parmenides could mean by the whole universe being an unchanging, undivisible, timeless thing. A point, if you would. On one level Parmenides can be thought of as the logical foil to the pre-Socratic materialists, the voice that says your theory is nice but what about (x)? I don't buy into the idea that was Parmenides only goal though. Unfortunately it's pretty much impossible to know exactly what Parmenides thought, because of thanks to those motherfucking Christians and Moslems (you know for their multiple burnings of the Library of Alexandria (and Christians for their wanton destruction of 'heretical' literature) we have only a scant few fragments left from Parmenides work, and most of it is second hand from the post-Socratic arch-materialist Aristotle (materialist meaning something sort of different in the Ancient Greek sense than one would think of a materialist today).

Are you bored yet?

Anyway, back to Parmenides, I don't buy the idea that his role was only as foil, or goad to the materialists to make their theories more logically consistent. Why? Because of Plato. Socrates is bested only twice in the dialogues. First as a young man by Parmenides of Elea (the guy I've been writing about) in

Trevor

Did you know that Schrödinger's equation is a perfect anagram of "A Second Herring Quits"? And is a near perfect anagram of "Surely someone's taking the piss"? The second anagram relies, of course (and almost entirely), on a rather judicious application of Heisenberg's uncertainty principle "but I do think that one may be more illuminating of how I'm finding some of the quantum mechanical experiments described in this book.

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There is part of me that would like to believe that in the early part of the last century (I don't remember the year, but surely on an April First) a group of European physicists got together and decided to come up with an idea so monumentally ridiculous that it would have them chuckling at the gullibility of we more mathematically challenged for years to come. Einstein was in on the joke at the start, but ended up thinking it had all gone on for far too long. Frynman introduced some slapstick into the equations (in a fine American tradition) "but, as always, it takes an Irishman (John Bell) to put the final touches on the comedy and to make it truly surreal. So, why isn't anybody laughing?

If you are not disturbed by the findings of Quantum Mechanics, well, you're really not trying hard enough. This is quite some book so far.

Update

Okay, I've finished and I've had problems with this one. In fact, I have many problems with modern physics and believe that the only way I could really understand it more would be to go back and finish off a degree in this stuff. Since I'm unlikely to do that, I am going to have to accept that this stuff will have to remain a mystery to me.

This guy really does try to make this stuff accessible, but I've a feeling that without the maths it just does not make any sense on any level.

My problem is exacerbated by the fact that it seems that every time there is a problem in Physics we are having trouble solving we just make up something invisible to solve it. Universe not expanding fast enough? Stuff it full of dark matter. Expanding too fast? Bring back the Cosmological Constant. Can't make gravity fit in with quantum theory? Postulate string theory. Having trouble with quantum theory? Why not create an infinite number of universes that can't access each other.

Having trouble explaining the vibrations of one dimensional strings? Vibrate them in 11 dimensional space.

Bring back the Ether, I say. Physics never seems to do anything by half. Even cosmic inflation seems to have inflated the universe to a ridiculous extent in the first nanosecond of the universe.

Fortunr

Wow, what a wonderful book. What a ride it was.

Brian is definitely one of the best science popularisers about, hands down. It is amazing how he manages to convey potentially complex subjects, such as quantum mechanics and relativity, in a simple but at the same time rigorous manner. And he does that with a contagious enthusiasm which reminded me why I love physics. I also greatly appreciated the fact that he never gets into the game (like so frequently happens in popular science books, unfor

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While the book may be a bit too simple at times, more quantitative detail is available in the notes at the end of the book (which I strongly recommend you read, to get more detail), and bibliographic references are pretty good. It is a fantastic introductory book to the realm of contemporary physics - of course, if you are interested in more quantitative treatments of such subjects, then this is probably not the book for you - although I must say that everybody with an interest in science should really take the time to read this masterpiece.

The author, being a foremost scientist directly involved in the most advanced research efforts in areas such as String Theory, does have his own preferences and biases (all honestly acknowledged by him, and also they do not impact the overall objectivity and impartiality of his book). Moreover, being particle physics an area of such intense and frantic development, there are a couple of area where the book looks a bit dated (for example, even if SUSY is not officially dead, the results coming out of the LHC are such that there is increasing doubt over the real prospects of SUSY and

consequently of Super String Theories - although it is completely premature to claim that they are dead).

Overall, it is an amazing introductory book, informative, entertaining, lucid, and a complete pleasure to read.

Stian

Let's start with the positives:

Greene does an excellent job of explaining very hard-to-understand concepts in non-mathematical ways. That said, I think it was unnecessary to use popular culture the way he did. It feels silly, reading about Einstein and general relativity and getting an example which uses the Kwik-E-Mart, Bart, and Lisa and so forth. But okay, I admit that this is a fairly small detail that shouldn't take too much away from the overall experience. The important thing is that the

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Furthermore, Greene is obviously passionate about the subject matter, and that is something that is contagious. Reading about the bucket argument (

) and the various attempts at answering it; the exciting exploration of time, the arrow of time, and its mysteries; the exhilarating explanation of entropy; the outline of general relativity, quantum mechanics and a whole host of other physical theories, and on the whole Greene's passionate way of writing makes this an extremely engaging read.

And the subject matter

interesting. I mean, the bending of space and time, particles being "entangled" ("spooky action at a distance") through space, possible hidden dimensions, elusive particles, multiverses.. Paul Erdos said that "if numbers aren't beautiful, I don't know what is." Well, if this stuff isn't interesting, I don't know what is! Thus, overall, the book is extremely engaging and exciting, and it's one of those books that are very much, in many ways, unputdownable.

Now, the negatives.

First of all, the illustrations are almost no help, because they are of awful quality. I read the hardcover version, and even here they are small, with no colour and in fairly awful quality.

Jen Padgett Bohle

Hmmm...I can now talk basics about String Theory and physics at a cocktail party. Get me into anything more than general commentary, discoveries, famous names and famous theories, and I'm completely at a loss. Green is a likable and passionate author, but for readers without a physics knowledge base, his little treatise is tough going, even with all the Simpsons references. I remember the most important concepts, but the intricacies didn't stick with me. This book is best read in segments, prefe

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