



Theories of Everything: The Quest for Ultimate Explanation

John D. Barrow

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The Holy Grail of modern scientists is the "Theory of Everything, " which will contain all that can be known about the Universe -- the magic formula that Einstein spent his life searching for and failed to find. In this elegant and exciting book, John Barrow challenges the quest for ultimate explanation.

"An exhilarating journey that cuts across a vast terrain of conceptual landmarks: from physics to metaphysics, mathematics to philosophy, and from mythology to theology." -- New Scientist

Theories of Everything: The Quest for Ultimate Explanation Details

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Joseph Carrabis says

Theories of Everything is (to me) a pop-sci book that wants to make profound mysteries "accessible". I've often wondered if "accessible" means "so watered down as to be worthless". People with a background in such studies may find this book an entertaining read before they go to some party as they can use it as a reference when asked questions about what they do, but other than that its value (except to interested lay readers) is questionable.

Kevin says

Barrow is a galaxian thinker. He extrapolates several qualities and quantities as necessary criteria for figuring out a full explanation of all physics and time. Billions of years are involved. By building short case studies of nuances of physics like gauge symmetry and string folding time, he studies the known scales of time and atom through key data. The data is also vexing at times. Atomic building block valences point to either 9 or 25 dimensions, while we see only 3 and perceive mathematically only 4. A staggering book missing an ending.

Todd Stockslager says

Barrow opened my eyes to some interesting ideas about the Theories of Everything physicists have been pursuing throughout the 20th century. What if there is no Theory of everything because

- 1). Instead of multiple scientific theories converging as they drill down to a single root at lower levels, what if they continue branching apart?
- 2). What if physicists aren't discovering how the universe really is (discovering platonic universals as they claim or assume), but are only describing the universe the best way that they have yet found.. The description may be no better than a very detailed "just-so" story.

Problems arise in discovering the laws, forces, and constants of nature, especially in defining the initial conditions which may have existed at the creation of the universe. The laws, forces, and constants break down at the extremes of infinity past and future, and very minute differences in initial conditions make huge differences in potential outcomes.

Another problem point for the physicists is time. Unable to account for it in their equations, or to explain why it appears to move forward inexorably when in fact they find it can appear to move backward for some subatomic particles.

Jimmy Ele says

Great book, but not EVERYTHING I thought it would be. Lol, get it? Might do a more thorough review later, if the urge strikes me.
