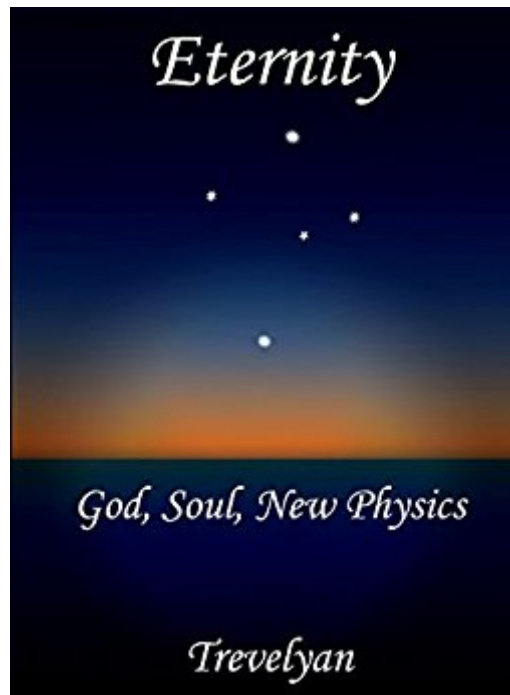




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Eternity: God, Soul, New Physics



Synopsis

Eternity, the theologian's concept of timeless space, created in the laboratory... Experiments with accurate clocks shattering our instinctive view of time... The world of atoms behaving like miniature billiard balls shown to be an illusion, the underlying reality being pure information, devoid of physical substance... These are the challenges that modern science brings to the materialist view of the world, a view which dominated the 20th century, but has since become untenable. We now see that the ancient philosophers were in many ways on the right track all along. Religion and science, despite their incompatible language, are revealed as the two sides of the same coin. Our universe is made from pure mentality, the stuff of minds, of souls. Armed with such insight, we can now tackle topics, such as the problem of good and evil, which have traditionally been regarded as impenetrable to scientific analysis. The proselytizing of the militant atheists who dominate today's popular press is ironic. Despite their claim to be defending science, it is science itself which shows their position to be indefensible. This book is written for a lay audience. Modern concepts are discussed on an intuitive basis, without mathematics, and the reader need recall no more than the broad outline of high-school science to be comfortable with the presentation. Care has been taken to ensure that the logic of the story flows unimpaired for the reader who chooses to skim past areas of fine-grained detail. Because many in the popular science audience will have little familiarity with religion, chapters are included which outline the history of religious traditions and the evolution of religious philosophy from ancient to modern times.

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Customer Reviews

There is a lot to this book. In short, it is about the answers that new scientific discoveries can provide to age-old questions (as the title suggests!). I very much enjoyed the easy-to-read writing style, which is a little like listening to a good lecture. This is a complex book, with a lot of information to wrap your mind around, and I recommend it for those who like to have their worldview expanded by what they read. The book opens with a discussion of what physics can tell us about time and the theological and scientific concepts of eternity. The science in the book is very well explained and there are diagrams to help illustrate the main points. I went back to this first section after reaching the Conclusion, and found I better understood the main points the second time around. I would perhaps suggest that readers unfamiliar with the 'science and religion' genre read the Introduction and Conclusion first before getting into the detail in the main chapters. The book also explores in summary what the major religious traditions have to say about the big questions of our existence. This is then linked in nicely to the discussion of what science can say about those same questions. The author then moves on to look at the implications for our lives as human beings and our moral and ethical frameworks. Thomas Nagel's *Mind and Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature Is Almost Certainly False* is a comparable publication and if you enjoyed Nagel's work you should definitely read this too. Nagel, being a philosopher rather than a scientist, does presuppose that science cannot answer our deepest and most fundamental questions, and seeks a new frame for doing so. This book, on the other hand, demonstrates that science can in fact provide real and deep answers. The author argues on evidence from scientific experimentation. I would recommend this book to those who have read a lot of the popular physics and popular cosmology books that are out there but found them frustrating or too dense for their own good. This book draws a lot of conclusions that - while potentially controversial - are more intellectually satisfying than what publishers seem to go for at the moment: atheist diatribes and neo-materialist, somewhat facile analyses of major scientific advances. This could be the sort of book that people either love or hate. I enjoyed it, and will read it more than once. There are several major ideas advanced in the book, so in a way you're getting bang for buck! Some of the main themes could be unpacked in more detail. Spin-off publications, perhaps? For example, a whole book in itself could

be written on the subject of morality (cultural relativism) and science, which is covered in only one section here (Sam Harris' book 'The Moral Landscape,' which I personally found to be flawed and unsatisfying, tackles this question). In summary, this is a very interesting and challenging read that I would recommend for people who have popular physics, nature and theology books on their shelves and are interested in exploring the ultimate nature of reality, life, and the human relationship with the universe.

Here's a book that combines the philosophical concept of a "first cause" with the theological concept of God, melding these ideas together with the latest thinking in quantum science - all in one volume! While I think the book is clearly worth the read and it is a book that a non-scientist can grasp, those who tackle it should recognize that this work will take more than one sitting to complete. You can simplify quantum concepts just so far and even at that point, the non-scientist will find some of the discussion quite complicated. The author should be complimented on the way in which he develops the idea that the universe is not random and the consequences of that proposition. Excellent book!

Certainly Trevelyan dares to go where few minds or men have gone before. After thoughtful selection and reading countless books on the topics of his title I was surprised by the amount of information and ideas not previously encountered. Certainly much or most familiar but containing enough new concepts and grounded hypotheses to be a delightful surprise. These include some radical and thought provoking proposals about cultural relativism and the physicality of soul. However ample arguments are made for the basis of reality to be found in pure information as deduced from the otherwise contradictory and puzzling evidence in quantum mechanics. Highly recommended for the serious seeking clear insight for the questions of scientific reductionism versus religion and spirituality.

Interesting, but I've heard most of it before. Plus, it had a tone of argumentation that was a bit off putting. It seemed a little to quirky. Other books on the same topic handle it better. Try The Mind of God or The Devil's Delusion

This book reminds me of others like Fritjof Capra's "Tao of Physics" or more recent works like "Quantum Buddhism" by Graham Smetham. These authors tend to conflate the meaning of statements in ancient (mostly Eastern religious) texts and teachings with the content of modern physics. In this book, the author tries instead to recalibrate a Western concept of monotheism in

physical terms -- more specifically, in information-theoretic terms which, strictly speaking, he claims is non-material. He begins with the notion of eternity. He claims (and I have no reason to doubt him) laboratory experiments can produce small regions of space (quantum tunnels and small gaps through which wave phenomena pass under certain conditions) that are timeless in the sense that no time is consumed crossing them. Although this appears, superficially, to violate the special theory of relativity it does not because information cannot pass through these regions at greater than light speed. He says that these small pieces of space are examples of eternity which he merely defines as "timeless space". It is true that the theological notion of eternity must be timeless, but it might be more as well. This is the sort of "inductive error" committed here and throughout the book. From eternity, we are led into a discussion of information which dominates the second half of the book. He hits on all the right topics: The universe as "giant computational engine", the nature of consciousness, personal identity, the "problem of evil", and free will. He ends up casting all of it in information terms and in the end dismisses the notion of a transcendent God in favor of panpsychism not realizing that this commitment results in all of being floating free of any underlying metaphysical ground while declaring that he has uncovered the god that religions talk about all along. The way he puts it, if the universe is an information processing engine, it must be conscious!!

I struggled with rating this book. I suppose I should give the author kudos for attempting to bring any discussion of physics and religion together. But in my opinion, while he does a reasonable job of the physics, he fails to understand that religion isn't merely a creation myth and that having demolished the myth a more nuanced view of religion, including a transcendent and personal God outside of time might end up being a better explanation of our experience. Mostly, rather than illuminating religion, he simply explains it away. Still the book provides a good discussion of the unusual nature of timelessness, the nature of information, and its relation to physics. In particular beginning with David Chalmers work on consciousness and information theory (which he mentions several times) he goes on to discuss concepts introduced by Chalmers in more elaborate detail. I found this treatment illuminating, even if it doesn't really come to discover God.

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