

The View from the Center of the Universe

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Since I could only get to the middle of the book before discarding it, I cannot recommend it. I did not check out the book carefully before laying my money down. I quickly found that there were areas of useless verbiage that were best skipped. The first chapter I passed on. Not too far along the way I was jumping and skipping more than reading. I then did what I should have done at the bookstore. I looked in the back of the book to see what the authors were about. I did what a math drooler should never do – I assumed. I assumed that both authors were physicists presenting science to the masses. One author is a physics professor who has done research in cosmology. The other author is a “lawyer, writer, Fulbright scholar, with an interest in history, philosophy, and politics of science.” One finds in the book, at least the first half, mixed with some interesting physics such titles as “Is the Universe Something?” , “Myth is Cosmology’s Native Language, and of course “The Cosmology of the Bible”. Then there is the “Cosmic Uroboros”, an Uroboros being a serpent swallowing its tail. From tail to head are placed the sizes of various objects or scales from the small of Grand Unified Theory to the large of the Universe. Man is in the middle of the Uroboros, i.e. the center from which he is viewing. That is, men is in the center on a log scale depending on how one draws the serpent and fits objects in it and what one names their book.

Like many books on science for the masses written nowadays, there is an intent that is not indicated on the cover. The intent is to present the author’s religion. That religion is usually atheism and is manifested by attacking a particular religion. Christian authors are usually up front with their religious views if they are going to address any such views in their writing. Atheist authors who present their religious views mostly do so without a direct statement that that is what they are doing. I do not like Richard Dawkins’ science in “The Blind Watchmaker”, but I do admire him for his honesty in expressing his purpose. When I read a book about the physical world written for the masses, I do not care what the author’s religion is in regard to the subject matter. If they want to relate the subject matter to their beliefs and they tell me so, fine. I will take in what is presented and form my own beliefs.

I have a few comments on the subject matter in the book, at least up to the point where I discarded it. On page 180 of the soft back copy was the

following – “Cosmologists’ methodology is simple: come up with the best theory you can, and ‘run with it.’ Assume it’s true and try to find out all the consequences. Live mentally in that kind of universe, sometimes for many years.” This sounds like the recipe for insanity. It also shows the degree to which math grunters, those who grunt out math from the mountain tops, have taken over physics. The authors go on to say that you live with the theory until someone figures out how to test it and it is proven wrong. Einstein said that no amount of testing could prove relativity correct, but just one test could prove it wrong. The authors go beyond that. They say live with the theory until someone can figure out how to test it. Of course this is leading to something with religious overtones.

Many cannot accept that the universe had a beginning. That is they cannot accept the seemingly logical conclusion of a big bang. I say seemingly because although it is claimed that we know everything back to 10^{-34} sec after the big bang event, the fact is that no one was there to say what actually happened. Only the math grunters claim to have been there in a sense. So, one should not get too excited about it. But some do because the universe having a beginning brings up the question of a creator, which naturalist cannot tolerate. The authors, and others, point to or have come up with a mathematical model they call “eternal inflation”. The big bang was just a bubble in eternal inflation. Take that you pesky Christians. There is a model that explains the beginning of the universe, which is “truth” until you can prove it wrong. The problem is that it is not physics. It is metaphysics. It cannot be proved or disproved. I purchased the book thinking it presented reality as best as it can be understood. I do not read metaphysics, let alone metaphysics mixed with meaningless phraseology. I discarded the book and got a book my brother sent me I had set aside for a time when I needed to clear the air by getting back to the beauty of undergraduate college physics – “Six Easy Pieces” by Richard Feynman.

P.S. On my next trip to the book store I gazed at the science section. What is at first striking is how small it is compared to the size of the book store. What is then striking is how many books in the physics section have the words “god” or “religion’ in their title. Maybe we are at the end of physics.