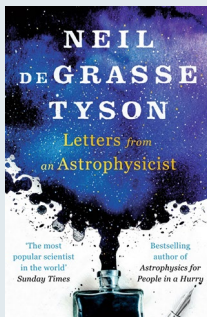


The Number of the Heavens: A History of the Multiverse and the Quest to Understand the Cosmos

By Tom Siegfried

HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS: 2019. 352PP. £23.95

How many universes are there? This sounds like a very modern question, motivated potentially by quantum theory or string theory. But as Tom Siegfried discusses in his book, it is in fact a conundrum that has been considered since antiquity. After a description of cosmology as we understand it today and the idea of a multiverse motivated by inflationary theory, the author jumps back to Aristotle and his singular worldview, followed by a historical recounting of the discussion around the multiplicity of our Universe from antiquity until today. While it is debatable how closer we might be to verifying the multiverse compared to Aristotle, a recounting of the history of this philosophical and scientific debate in the entertaining and often tongue-in-cheek tone of Siegfried is certainly fascinating.



Letters from an Astrophysicist

By Neil deGrasse Tyson

W. W. NORTON & COMPANY: 2019. 272PP. £14.99

It is often said that scientists have a very different and very specific view of the world. Be it their analytical thinking or just a larger-than-average repository of knowledge to draw from, this worldview can be of interest to non-scientists. Neil deGrasse Tyson compiles in this book a small subset of correspondences sent to him by people in different walks of life, asking him about all sorts of things (some even related to astronomy). deGrasse Tyson's responses are interesting not only for their content but also for the way they manage to be both informative and often confrontational, but never patronizing or dismissive. This book makes for an entertaining read and a good example of the communication of challenging (science) topics.

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