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## Higher Speculations Grand Theories And Failed Revolutions In Physics And Cosmology

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In this very well written and calmly elucidated book the author goes over the history of grand speculations that raced ahead of data. This is inevitable in science. And since Descartes, many theories like vortices, steady state physics, electrodynamics as an explanation of atoms, and many others have wound up on the dustbin and are only of antiquarian interest.

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Higher Speculations is Prof. Helge Kragh's most recent contribution to the history of cosmology. Kragh's masterly series of publications in this domain has established him as one of our leading...

*(PDF) Higher Speculations: Grand Theories and Failed ...*

Higher Speculations: Grand Theories and Failed Revolutions in Physics and Cosmology Helge Kragh Oxford University Press 2011 A book review by Danny Yee © 2011 <http://dannyreviews.com/> Physics and cosmology in particular have always been prone to speculative, "top down" theorising, driven by ideals such as elegance,

*Higher Speculations: Grand Theories and Failed Revolutions ...*

Throughout history, people have tried to construct 'theories of everything': highly ambitious attempts to understand nature in its totality. This account presents these theories in their historical contexts, from little-known hypotheses from the past to modern developments such as the theory of superstrings, the anthropic principle, and ideas of many universes, and uses them to problematize ...

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*Higher Speculations: Grand Theories and Failed Revolutions ...*

In the second half of *Higher Speculations* Kragh turns to strands of speculative thinking that still, to a greater or lesser degree, drive research. Kragh focuses on a few of the many ideas that have involved varying constants of nature.

*Higher Speculations (Helge Kragh) - book review*

Higher Speculations Grand Theories and Failed Revolutions in Physics and Cosmology Helge Kragh. First comprehensive and critical study of the history of ultimate theories in physics and cosmology; Uses history of science as a resource for insight into current problems of fundamental physics; Combines scholarship with accessible presentation

*Higher Speculations - Helge Kragh - Oxford University Press*

This account presents these theories in their historical contexts, from little-known hypotheses from the past to modern developments such as the theory of superstrings, the anthropic principle, and ideas of many universes, and uses them to problematize the limits of scientific knowledge. Do claims to theories of everything

*Higher Speculations : Grand Theories and Failed ...*

In *Higher Speculations: Grand Theories and Failed Revolutions in Physics and Cosmology*, Kragh uses the past to explain the present - and sometimes even the other way around - to explore some of the current thinking in physics, from a grand theory of everything, to the multiverse, to string theory and quantum gravity.

*Higher Speculations by Helge Kragh | Laboratory News*

"Higher Speculations: Grand Theories and Failed Revolutions in Physics and Cosmology" is a book that allows readers to do just that. Written by Helge Kragh, "Higher Speculations" is a book about astronomy theories that seemed to be major breakthroughs at the time, but that

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ultimately turned out to be false.

## *Higher Speculations | Astronomy Book Review*

The idea of a history of highly speculative theories in physics is excellent. Although there are popular accounts of recent cosmological and grand-unifying theories, no historian has so far attempted to bring together old and new cases of such theories. The result makes fascinating reading and induces thought-provoking comparisons.

## *Higher Speculations : Grand Theories and Failed ...*

Thomas, William 2011-11-01 00:00:00 Helge Kragh , Higher Speculations: Grand Theories and Failed Revolutions in Physics and Cosmology ( Oxford : Oxford University Press , 2011 ), 408 pp. Helge Kragh is among the most prolific and important historians of physics at work today. He specializes in the history of cosmology and fundamental physics.

## *Higher Speculations: Grand Theories and Failed Revolutions ...*

Some commenters here a while ago made the excellent suggestion that I should take a look at a book published this spring, Helge Kragh's Higher Speculations: Grand Theories and Failed Revolutions in Physics and Cosmology. I've always wondered what historians of science would make of the increasing dominance of research in fundamental physics by unsuccessful highly speculative research programs, and have also often wondered if there are any relevant historical parallels to this situation.

Throughout history, people have tried to construct 'theories of everything': highly ambitious attempts to understand nature in its totality. This account presents these theories in their historical contexts, from little-known hypotheses from the past to modern developments such as the theory of superstrings, the anthropic principle, and ideas of many universes, and uses them to problematize the limits of scientific knowledge. Do claims to theories of everything belong to science at all? Which are the epistemic standards on which an alleged scientific theory of the universe - or the multiverse - is to be judged? Such questions are currently being discussed by physicists and cosmologists, but rarely within a historical perspective. This book argues that these questions have a history and that knowledge of the historical development of 'higher speculations' may inform and qualify the current debate on the nature and limits of scientific explanation.

In this fascinating journey to the edge of science, Vidal takes on big philosophical questions: Does our universe have a beginning and an end or is it cyclic? Are we alone in the universe? What is the role of intelligent life, if any, in cosmic evolution? Grounded in science and committed to philosophical rigor, this book presents an evolutionary

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worldview where the rise of intelligent life is not an accident, but may well be the key to unlocking the universe's deepest mysteries. Vidal shows how the fine-tuning controversy can be advanced with computer simulations. He also explores whether natural or artificial selection could hold on a cosmic scale. In perhaps his boldest hypothesis, he argues that signs of advanced extraterrestrial civilizations are already present in our astrophysical data. His conclusions invite us to see the meaning of life, evolution and intelligence from a novel cosmological framework that should stir debate for years to come.

A religion professor elucidates the theory of the multiverse, its history, and its reception in science, philosophy, religion, and literature. Multiverse cosmologies imagine our universe as just one of a vast number of others. Beginning with ancient Atomist and Stoic philosophies, Mary-Jane Rubenstein links contemporary models of the multiverse to their forerunners and explores the reasons for their recent appearance. One concerns the so-called fine-tuning of the universe: nature's constants are so delicately calibrated that it seems they have been set just right to allow life to emerge. For some thinkers, these "fine-tunings" are evidence of the existence of God; for others, however, and for most physicists, "God" is an insufficient scientific explanation. Hence the multiverse's allure: if all possible worlds exist somewhere, then like monkeys hammering out Shakespeare, one universe is bound to be suitable for life. Of course, this hypothesis replaces God with an equally baffling article of faith: the existence of universes beyond, before, or after our own, eternally generated yet forever inaccessible to observation or experiment. In their very efforts to sidestep metaphysics, theoretical physicists propose multiverse scenarios that collide with it and even produce counter-theological narratives. Far from invalidating multiverse hypotheses, Rubenstein argues, this interdisciplinary collision actually secures their scientific viability. We may therefore be witnessing a radical reconfiguration of physics, philosophy, and religion in the modern turn to the multiverse. "Rubenstein's witty, thought-provoking history of philosophy and physics leaves one in awe of just how close Thomas Aquinas and American physicist Steven Weinberg are in spirit as they seek ultimate answers."—Publishers Weekly "A fun, mind-stretching read, clear and enlightening."—San Francisco Book Review

Entropic Creation is the first English-language book to consider the cultural and religious responses to the second law of thermodynamics, from around 1860 to 1920. According to the second law of thermodynamics, as formulated by the German physicist Rudolf Clausius, the entropy of any closed system will inevitably increase in time, meaning that the system will decay and eventually end in a dead state of equilibrium. Application of the law to the entire universe, first proposed in the 1850s, led to the prediction of a future 'heat death', where all life has ceased and all organization dissolved. In the late

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1860s it was pointed out that, as a consequence of the heat death scenario, the universe can have existed only for a finite period of time. According to the 'entropic creation argument', thermodynamics warrants the conclusion that the world once begun or was created. It is these two scenarios, allegedly consequences of the science of thermodynamics, which form the core of this book. The heat death and the claim of cosmic creation were widely discussed in the period 1870 to 1920, with participants in the debate including European scientists, intellectuals and social critics, among them the physicist William Thomson and the communist thinker Friedrich Engels. One reason for the passion of the debate was that some authors used the law of entropy increase to argue for a divine creation of the world. Consequently, the second law of thermodynamics became highly controversial. In Germany in particular, materialists and positivists engaged in battle with Christian - mostly Catholic - scholars over the cosmological consequences of thermodynamics. This heated debate, which is today largely forgotten, is reconstructed and examined in detail in this book, bringing into focus key themes on the interactions between cosmology, physics, religion and ideology, and the public way in which these topics were discussed in the latter half of the nineteenth and the first years of the twentieth century.

At the end of the nineteenth century, some physicists believed that the basic principles underlying their subject were already known, and that physics in the future would only consist of filling in the details. They could hardly have been more wrong. The past century has seen the rise of quantum mechanics, relativity, cosmology, particle physics, and solid-state physics, among other fields. These subjects have fundamentally changed our understanding of space, time, and matter. They have also transformed daily life, inspiring a technological revolution that has included the development of radio, television, lasers, nuclear power, and computers. In *Quantum Generations*, Helge Kragh, one of the world's leading historians of physics, presents a sweeping account of these extraordinary achievements of the past one hundred years. The first comprehensive one-volume history of twentieth-century physics, the book takes us from the discovery of X rays in the mid-1890s to superstring theory in the 1990s. Unlike most previous histories of physics, written either from a scientific perspective or from a social and institutional perspective, *Quantum Generations* combines both approaches. Kragh writes about pure science with the expertise of a trained physicist, while keeping the content accessible to nonspecialists and paying careful attention to practical uses of science, ranging from compact disks to bombs. As a historian, Kragh skillfully outlines the social and economic contexts that have shaped the field in the twentieth century. He writes, for example, about the impact of the two world wars, the fate of physics under Hitler, Mussolini, and Stalin, the role of military research, the emerging leadership of the United States, and the backlash against science that began in the 1960s. He also shows how the revolutionary discoveries of scientists ranging

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from Einstein, Planck, and Bohr to Stephen Hawking have been built on the great traditions of earlier centuries. Combining a mastery of detail with a sure sense of the broad contours of historical change, Kragh has written a fitting tribute to the scientists who have played such a decisive role in the making of the modern world.

Science and Faith Can—and Do—Support Each Other Science and Christianity are often presented as opposites, when in fact the order of the universe and the complexity of life powerfully testify to intelligent design. With this comprehensive resource that includes the latest research, you'll witness how the findings of scientists provide compelling reasons to acknowledge the mind and presence of a creator. Featuring more than 45 entries by top-caliber experts, you'll better understand... how scientific concepts like intelligent design are supported by evidence the scientific findings that support the history and accounts found in the Bible the biases that lead to scientific information being presented as a challenge—rather than a complement—to Christianity Whether you're looking for answers to your own questions or seeking to explain the case for intelligent design to others, The Comprehensive Guide to Science and Faith is an invaluable apologetic tool that will help you explore and analyze the relevant facts, research, and theories in light of biblical truth.

Presents a collection of essays from leading physicists, philosophers and historians of science providing perspectives on the epistemic status of fundamental physics.

During its forty year lifespan, string theory has always had the power to divide, being called both a 'theory of everything' and a 'theory of nothing'. Critics have even questioned whether it qualifies as a scientific theory at all. This book adopts an objective stance, standing back from the question of the truth or falsity of string theory and instead focusing on how it came to be and how it came to occupy its present position in physics. An unexpectedly rich history is revealed, with deep connections to our most well-established physical theories. Fully self-contained and written in a lively fashion, the book will appeal to a wide variety of readers from novice to specialist.

This inaugural handbook documents the distinctive research field that utilizes history and philosophy in investigation of theoretical, curricular and pedagogical issues in the teaching of science and mathematics. It is contributed to by 130 researchers from 30 countries; it provides a logically structured, fully referenced guide to the ways in which science and mathematics education is, informed by the history and philosophy of these disciplines, as well as by the philosophy of education more generally. The first handbook to cover the field, it lays down a much-needed marker of progress to date and provides a platform for informed and coherent future analysis and research of the subject. The publication comes at a time of heightened

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worldwide concern over the standard of science and mathematics education, attended by fierce debate over how best to reform curricula and enliven student engagement in the subjects. There is a growing recognition among educators and policy makers that the learning of science must dovetail with learning about science; this handbook is uniquely positioned as a locus for the discussion. The handbook features sections on pedagogical, theoretical, national, and biographical research, setting the literature of each tradition in its historical context. It reminds readers at a crucial juncture that there has been a long and rich tradition of historical and philosophical engagements with science and mathematics teaching, and that lessons can be learnt from these engagements for the resolution of current theoretical, curricular and pedagogical questions that face teachers and administrators. Science educators will be grateful for this unique, encyclopaedic handbook, Gerald Holton, Physics Department, Harvard University This handbook gathers the fruits of over thirty years' research by a growing international and cosmopolitan community Fabio Bevilacqua, Physics Department, University of Pavia

A radical new view of the nature of time and the cosmos—"at once entertaining, thought-provoking, fabulously ambitious and fabulously speculative" (The New York Times Book Review). What is time? This deceptively simple question is the single most important problem facing science as we probe deeper into the fundamentals of the universe. All of the mysteries physicists and cosmologists face—from the Big Bang to the future of the universe, from the puzzles of quantum physics to the unification of forces and particles—come down to the nature of time. The fact that time is real may seem obvious. You experience it passing every day when you watch clocks tick, bread toast, and children grow. But most physicists, from Newton to Einstein to today's quantum theorists, have seen things differently. The scientific case for time being an illusion is formidable. That is why the consequences of adopting the view that time is real are revolutionary. Here, the author of *The Trouble with Physics* argues that a limited notion of time is holding physics back—and what we need now is a major shift in scientific thought. The true reality of this manmade construct could be the key to the next big breakthrough in theoretical physics—and could hold implications relevant to issues from climate change to the economy. What if the laws of physics themselves were not ageless? What if they could evolve? *Time Reborn* offers a radical approach to cosmology that embraces the concept of time and opens up a whole new universe of possibilities. "With rare conceptual daring, Smolin beckons toward a new perspective for doing cosmological theory . . . A thrilling intellectual ride." —Booklist, starred review