

subtle is the lord science and life of albert einstein roger penrose

[#Albert Einstein](#) [#Roger Penrose](#) [#theoretical physics](#) [#science philosophy](#) [#cosmology](#)

Explore the profound scientific contributions and philosophical perspectives of Albert Einstein and Roger Penrose. This content delves into their groundbreaking work in theoretical physics, the life stories behind their discoveries, and the enduring quest to understand the universe, echoing Einstein's famous contemplation that 'subtle is the Lord' in the intricate laws of nature.

Every lecture note is organized for easy navigation and quick reference.

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Subtle is the Lord

Subtle is the Lord is widely recognized as the definitive scientific biography of Albert Einstein. The late Abraham Pais was a distinguished physicist turned historian who knew Einstein both professionally and personally in the last years of his life. His biography combines a profound understanding of Einstein's work with personal recollections from their years of acquaintance, illuminating the man through the development of his scientific thought. Pais examines the formulation of Einstein's theories of relativity, his work on Brownian motion, and his response to quantum theory with authority and precision. The profound transformation Einstein's ideas effected on the physics of the turn of the century is here laid out for the serious reader. Pais also fills many gaps in what we know of Einstein's life - his interest in philosophy, his concern with Jewish destiny, and his opinions of great figures from Newton to Freud. This remarkable volume, written by a physicist who mingled in Einstein's scientific circle, forms a timeless and classic biography of the towering figure of twentieth-century science.

Einstein's Miraculous Year

After 1905, physics would never be the same. In those 12 months, Einstein shattered many cherished scientific beliefs with five great papers that would establish him as the world's leading physicist. On their 100th anniversary, this book brings those papers together in an accessible format.

The Road to Reality

****WINNER OF THE 2020 NOBEL PRIZE IN PHYSICS**** The Road to Reality is the most important and ambitious work of science for a generation. It provides nothing less than a comprehensive account of the physical universe and the essentials of its underlying mathematical theory. It assumes no particular specialist knowledge on the part of the reader, so that, for example, the early chapters give us the vital mathematical background to the physical theories explored later in the book. Roger Penrose's purpose

is to describe as clearly as possible our present understanding of the universe and to convey a feeling for its deep beauty and philosophical implications, as well as its intricate logical interconnections. The Road to Reality is rarely less than challenging, but the book is leavened by vivid descriptive passages, as well as hundreds of hand-drawn diagrams. In a single work of colossal scope one of the world's greatest scientists has given us a complete and unrivalled guide to the glories of the universe that we all inhabit. 'Roger Penrose is the most important physicist to work in relativity theory except for Einstein. He is one of the very few people I've met in my life who, without reservation, I call a genius' Lee Smolin

The Perfect Theory

A narrative chronicle of Einstein's theory of general relativity discusses the ideological battles that have surrounded it, exploring how the theory has been denounced, overlooked and embraced by forefront names in 20th-century physics throughout their collective effort to define the history of the universe. 25,000 first printing.

The Nature of Space and Time

Can the quantum theory of fields and Einstein's general theory of relativity be united in a single quantum theory of gravity? Can quantum and cosmos ever be combined? Two world-famous physicists debate the issue in this work, based on a series of lectures and a final debate held at the University of Cambridge. 75 line drawings.

The Curious History of Relativity

Black holes may obliterate most things that come near them, but they saved the theory of general relativity. Einstein's theory was quickly accepted as the true theory of gravity after its publication in 1915, but soon took a back seat in physics to quantum mechanics and languished for decades on the blackboards of mathematicians. Not until the existence of black holes by Stephen Hawking and Roger Penrose in the 1960s, after Einstein's death, was the theory revived. Almost one hundred years after general relativity replaced Newton's theory of gravitation, The Curious History of Relativity tells the story of both events surrounding general relativity and the techniques employed by Einstein and the relativists to construct, develop, and understand his almost impenetrable theory. Jean Eisenstaedt, one of the world's leading experts on the subject, also discusses the theory's place in the evolution of twentieth-century physics. He describes the main stages in the development of general relativity: its beginnings, its strange crossing of the desert during Einstein's lifetime while under heated criticism, and its new life from the 1960s on, when it became vital to the understanding of black holes and the observation of exotic objects, and, eventually, to the discovery of the accelerating universe. We witness Einstein's construction of his theory, as well as the work of his fascinated, discouraged, and enthusiastic colleagues--physicists, mathematicians, and astronomers. Written with flair, The Curious History of Relativity poses--and answers--the difficult questions raised by Einstein's magnificent intellectual feat.

The Evolution of Physics

Robert Geroch builds on Einstein's work with commentary that addresses the ideas at the heart of the theory, bringing a modern understanding of relativity to the text. He elucidates how special relativity is a reconciliation of the contradictions between the nature of light and the principle of relativity; he expands on Einstein's treatment of the geometry of space-time and the fundamental notion of an "event"; he explains in detail, but without technical language, the equivalence of inertial and gravitational mass, a cornerstone of general relativity.

Relativity

Drawing on new archival evidence from Berlin, Zurich, Boston, Edinburgh and Oxford; and on unpublished papers and interviews with scholars, family and friends; this biography challenges the carefully-cultivated image of Einstein as a modern saint.

The Private Lives of Albert Einstein

The Nobel Prize-winning physicist presents his views on the special and general theory of relativity and the universe as a whole, in an accessible introduction to his seminal theories, written for the non-scientist.

Relativity

Paperback In 1905, when Albert Einstein introduced a new theory of time as space-time, otherwise known as "local time", some philosophers considered it as (probably) his greatest discovery. The reason, evidently, is that time is more important than anything else except life itself. But what, essentially, is it? Einstein did not give us the philosophical interpretation of space-time. That is a task for the philosophers. Samuel K. K. Blankson, the Ghanaian philosopher, gives one of the most lucid and logical interpretations of what Einstein called "time, pure and simple". The strange and extremely technical phenomenon known as "time dilation", which inspired Einstein to discover his special theory of relativity, is lucidly explained. The reader will find the answer simple and most surprising, and, it is hoped, satisfactory too.

TIME in SCIENCE and LIFE the Greatest Legacy of Albert Einstein

This book presents an account of all aspects of Einstein's achievements in quantum theory, his own views, and the progress his work has stimulated since his death. While some chapters use mathematics at an undergraduate physics level, a path is provided for the reader more concerned with ideas than equations, and the book will benefit to anybody interested in Einstein and his approach to the quantum.

Einstein's Struggles with Quantum Theory

Richard Feynman once quipped that "Time is what happens when nothing else does." But Julian Barbour disagrees: if nothing happened, if nothing changed, then time would stop. For time is nothing but change. It is change that we perceive occurring all around us, not time. Put simply, time does not exist. In this highly provocative volume, Barbour presents the basic evidence for a timeless universe, and shows why we still experience the world as intensely temporal. It is a book that strikes at the heart of modern physics. It casts doubt on Einstein's greatest contribution, the spacetime continuum, but also points to the solution of one of the great paradoxes of modern science, the chasm between classical and quantum physics. Indeed, Barbour argues that the holy grail of physicists--the unification of Einstein's general relativity with quantum mechanics--may well spell the end of time. Barbour writes with remarkable clarity as he ranges from the ancient philosophers Heraclitus and Parmenides, through the giants of science Galileo, Newton, and Einstein, to the work of the contemporary physicists John Wheeler, Roger Penrose, and Steven Hawking. Along the way he treats us to enticing glimpses of some of the mysteries of the universe, and presents intriguing ideas about multiple worlds, time travel, immortality, and, above all, the illusion of motion. The End of Time is a vibrantly written and revolutionary book. It turns our understanding of reality inside-out.

The End of Time

It is commonly held that there is no place for the 'now' in physics, and also that the passing of time is something subjective, having to do with the way reality is experienced but not with the way reality is. Indeed, the majority of modern theoretical physicists and philosophers of physics contend that the passing of time is incompatible with modern physical theory, and excluded in a fundamental description of physical reality. This book provides a forceful rebuttal of such claims. In successive chapters the author explains the historical precedents of the modern opposition to time flow, giving careful expositions of matters relevant to becoming in classical physics, the special and general theories of relativity, and quantum theory, without presupposing prior expertise in these subjects. Analysing the arguments of thinkers ranging from Aristotle, Russell, and Bergson to the proponents of quantum gravity, he contends that the passage of time, understood as a local becoming of events out of those in their past at varying rates, is not only compatible with the theories of modern physics, but implicit in them.

The Reality of Time Flow

Provides an inside look at the life and mind of the great physicist and his scientific theories, as well as his role in the international peace movement and his views on such topics as social justice, the state of Israel, and music.

The Einstein Scrapbook

"Outstanding Academic Title for 2014" by CHOICE Einstein Relatively Simple brings together for the first time an exceptionally clear explanation of both special and general relativity. It is for people who al-

ways wanted to understand Einstein's ideas but never thought they could. Told with humor, enthusiasm, and rare clarity, this entertaining book reveals how a former high school drop-out revolutionized our understanding of space and time. From $E=mc^2$ and everyday time travel to black holes and the big bang, Einstein Relatively Simple takes us all, regardless of our scientific backgrounds, on a mind-boggling journey through the depths of Einstein's universe. Along the way, we track Einstein through the perils and triumphs of his life — follow his thinking, his logic, and his insights — and chronicle the audacity, imagination, and sheer genius of the man recognized as the greatest scientist of the modern era. In Part I on special relativity we learn how time slows and space shrinks with motion, and how mass and energy are equivalent. Part II on general relativity reveals a cosmos where black holes trap light and stop time, where wormholes form gravitational time machines, where space itself is continually expanding, and where some 13.7 billion years ago our universe was born in the ultimate cosmic event — the Big Bang.

Contents: Einstein Discovered: Special Relativity, $E = mc^2$, and Spacetime: From Unknown to Revolutionary The Great Conflict The Two Postulates A New Reality The Shrinking of Time Simultaneity and the Squeezing of Space The World's Most Famous Equation Spacetime Einstein Revealed: General Relativity, Gravity, and the Cosmos: Einstein's Dream "The Happiest Thought of My Life" The Warping of Space and Time Stitching Spacetime What is Spacetime Curvature? Einstein's Masterpiece The Universe Revealed In the Beginning Readership: Adults and young people all over the world who are curious about Einstein and how the universe works. Keywords: Einstein; Relativity; Special Relativity; General Relativity; Spacetime; Big Bang; Black Holes; Expansion of Space; Time Travel; $E=mc^2$; Universe; Cosmos; Time Dilation; Length Contraction; Wormholes; Light Postulate; Length Contraction; Gravitational Time Dilation; Time Warp; Space Warp; Relativity Postulate; Lorentz Transformation; Light Clock; Relativity of Simultaneity; Twins Paradox; Equivalence Principle; Gravity; Spacetime Curvature; Spacetime Interval; Gaussian Co-Ordinates; Geodesic; Momentum; The Einstein Equation; Schwarzschild Geometry; Bending of Starlight; Frame Dragging; Cosmic Microwave Background; Geometry of Universe; Flat Universe; Critical Density; Dark Matter; Dark Energy; Future of Universe

Key Features: Einstein Relatively Simple is the definitive book on Einstein's theories for the lay reader — one that is fun to read, comprehensive, and most important, understandable Einstein's ideas are explained in everyday language The book devotes eight chapters to special and a full eight chapters to general relativity. Most popular science books give general relativity only a brief mention or ignore it altogether

Reviews: "This general relativity theory changed our views on the origin and on the ending (if any) of the universe ... all topics that tickle the imagination of a general public and Egdall, bringing the reader to the point beyond general relativity, does not miss the opportunity to end his guided tour with a sparkling firework of these issues ... it is an entertaining introduction for the layman, that brings the reader a very long way." The European Mathematical Society "He covers the main topics of special and general relativity in a refreshing, personal way. This is a well-crafted, well-documented text with extensive endnotes, in which a bibliography is embedded. He introduces readers to his own unique entry into this very populous genre. Valuable for inquisitive nonscientists." CHOICE "I'm crazy about it. It's the best presentation of relativity for non-scientists that I've seen." Art Hobson Professor Emeritus of Physics University of Arkansas "The writing is jovial and energetic and holds the reader's attention. This book is a nice introduction to modern physics, with a great biography of Einstein included. This book is recommended for a lay reader with basic algebra skills; high school and beginning college physics students would find it easily accessible." Zentralblatt MATH

Einstein Relatively Simple

In recent years, a number of works have appeared with important implications for the age-old question of the existence of a god. These writings, many of which are not by theologians, strengthen the rational case for the existence of a god, even as this god may not be exactly the Christian God of history. This book brings together for the first time such recent diverse contributions from fields such as physics, the philosophy of human consciousness, evolutionary biology, mathematics, the history of religion, and theology. Based on such new materials as well as older ones from the twentieth century, it develops five rational arguments that point strongly to the (very probable) existence of a god. They do not make use of the scientific method, which is inapplicable to the question of a god. Rather, they are in an older tradition of rational argument dating back at least to the ancient Greeks. For those who are already believers, the book will offer additional rational reasons that may strengthen their belief. Those who do not believe in the existence of a god at present will encounter new rational arguments that may cause them to reconsider their opinion.

God Very Probably

Studie over het leven en de theorieën van de natuurkundige (1879-1955)

In Search of Unity

Publisher description

Einstein

In this book, Roger Penrose presents a masterly summary of those areas of physics in which he feels there are major unsolved problems. These ideas are then challenged by three distinguished experts from different backgrounds - Abner Shimony and Nancy Cartwright as Philosophers of science and Stephen Hawking as a theoretical physicist and cosmologist. Finally, Roger Penrose responds to their thought-provoking criticisms. This paperback edition has been updated to include a striking and easily accessible example of Gödel's theorem, and a ground-breaking proposal for a physical experiment designed to test some of Penrose's most novel ideas about quantum mechanics. Penrose's enthusiasm, insight and good humour shine through this accessible, illuminating, and brilliant account of 21st-century theoretical physics.

Science Fact and Science Fiction

Since Einstein first described them nearly a century ago, gravitational waves have been the subject of more sustained controversy than perhaps any other phenomenon in physics. These as yet undetected fluctuations in the shape of space-time were first predicted by Einstein's general theory of relativity, but only now, at the dawn of the twenty-first century, are we on the brink of finally observing them. Daniel Kennefick's landmark book takes readers through the theoretical controversies and thorny debates that raged around the subject of gravitational waves after the publication of Einstein's theory. The previously untold story of how we arrived at a settled theory of gravitational waves includes a stellar cast from the front ranks of twentieth-century physics, including Richard Feynman, Hermann Bondi, John Wheeler, Kip Thorne, and Einstein himself, who on two occasions avowed that gravitational waves do not exist, changing his mind both times. The book derives its title from a famously skeptical comment made by Arthur Stanley Eddington in 1922--namely, that "gravitational waves propagate at the speed of thought." Kennefick uses the title metaphorically to contrast the individual brilliance of each of the physicists grappling with gravitational-wave theory against the frustratingly slow progression of the field as a whole. Accessibly written and impeccably researched, this book sheds new light on the trials and conflicts that have led to the extraordinary position in which we find ourselves today--poised to bring the story of gravitational waves full circle by directly confirming their existence for the very first time.

Proceedings of the Cornelius Lanczos International Centenary Conference

Makes these ideas accessible to a general reader complex concepts of relativity and the stimulated emission of light through the use of mathematics no more difficult than one learns in high school. Written by a noted and successful science writer. Noted science writer Jeremy Bernstein tells the remarkable story of Einstein's papers and their impact one century ago. Explains the many technological ramifications of ideas which changed our lives in the twentieth century and continue to do so.

The Large, the Small and the Human Mind

A narrative portrait based on the complete body of Einstein's papers offers insight into his contributions to science, in an account that describes the influence of his discoveries on his personal views about morality, politics, and tolerance.

Traveling at the Speed of Thought

In *God and Natural Order: Physics, Philosophy, and Theology*, Shaun Henson brings a theological approach to bear on contemporary scientific and philosophical debates on the ordered or disordered nature of the universe. Henson engages arguments for a unified theory of the laws of nature, a concept with monotheistic metaphysical and theological leanings, alongside the pluralistic viewpoints set out by Nancy Cartwright and other philosophers of science, who contend that the nature of physical reality is intrinsically complex and irreducible to a single unifying theory. Drawing on the work of theologian Wolfhart Pannenberg and his conception of the Trinitarian Christian god, the author argues that a theological line of inquiry can provide a useful framework for examining controversies in physics and

the philosophy of science. God and Natural Order will raise provocative questions for theologians, Pannenberg scholars, and researchers working in the intersection of science and religion.

Secrets of the Old One

The sixth volume of six that bring together 50 years of the work of Professor Sir Roger Penrose

Einstein

Winner of the 2017 Nobel Prize in Physics Ever since Albert Einstein's general theory of relativity burst upon the world in 1915 some of the most brilliant minds of our century have sought to decipher the mysteries bequeathed by that theory, a legacy so unthinkable in some respects that even Einstein himself rejected them. Which of these bizarre phenomena, if any, can really exist in our universe? Black holes, down which anything can fall but from which nothing can return; wormholes, short spacetravel connecting regions of the cosmos; singularities, where space and time are so violently warped that time ceases to exist and space becomes a kind of foam; gravitational waves, which carry symphonic accounts of collisions of black holes billions of years ago; and time machines, for traveling backward and forward in time. Kip Thorne, along with fellow theorists Stephen Hawking and Roger Penrose, a cadre of Russians, and earlier scientists such as Oppenheimer, Wheeler and Chandrasekhar, has been in the thick of the quest to secure answers. In this masterfully written and brilliantly informed work of scientific history and explanation, Dr. Thorne, a Nobel Prize-winning physicist and the Feynman Professor of Theoretical Physics Emeritus at Caltech, leads his readers through an elegant, always human, tapestry of interlocking themes, coming finally to a uniquely informed answer to the great question: what principles control our universe and why do physicists think they know the things they think they know? Stephen Hawking's *A Brief History of Time* has been one of the greatest best-sellers in publishing history. Anyone who struggled with that book will find here a more slowly paced but equally mind-stretching experience, with the added fascination of a rich historical and human component. Winner of the Phi Beta Kappa Award in Science.

God and Natural Order

In this ambitious book, some of the most distinguished historians in the world survey the momentous events and the significant themes of recent times, with a look forward to what the future might bring. Early chapters take a global overview of the century as a whole, from a variety of perspectives - demographic, scientific, economic, and cultural. Further chapters, all written by acknowledged experts, chart the century's course, region by region. The *Oxford History of the Twentieth Century* is an invaluable repository of information and offers unparalleled insights on the twentieth century.

Roger Penrose: Collected Works

In 1915, Albert Einstein unveiled his masterwork – a theory, in his words, 'of incomparable beauty': the General Theory of Relativity. It is sometimes overshadowed – wrongly, argues John Gribbin – by his work of 1905, the Special Theory of Relativity and $E = mc^2$. Just over 100 years later, the first direct detection of gravitational radiation is seen as the ultimate proof of the General Theory's accuracy. The General Theory describes the evolution of the Universe, black holes, the behaviour of orbiting neutron stars, and why clocks run slower on Earth than in space. It even suggests the possibility of time travel. In this 'beautifully written and highly accessible account of the genesis of a great theory' (Physics World), Gribbin vividly illustrates what an incomparable scientist Albert Einstein really was.

Black Holes & Time Warps: Einstein's Outrageous Legacy (Commonwealth Fund Book Program)

The Many Voices of Modern Physics follows a revolution that began in 1905 when Albert Einstein published papers on special relativity and quantum theory. Unlike Newtonian physics, this new physics often departs wildly from common sense, a radical divorce that presents a unique communicative challenge to physicists when writing for other physicists or for the general public, and to journalists and popular science writers as well. In their two long careers, Joseph Harmon and the late Alan Gross have explored how scientists communicate with each other and with the general public. Here, they focus not on the history of modern physics but on its communication. In their survey of physics communications and related persuasive practices, they move from peak to peak of scientific achievement, recalling how physicists use the communicative tools available—in particular, thought experiments, analogies, visuals, and equations—to convince others that what they say is not only true but significant, that

it must be incorporated into the body of scientific and general knowledge. Each chapter includes a chorus of voices, from the many celebrated physicists who devoted considerable time and ingenuity to communicating their discoveries, to the science journalists who made those discoveries accessible to the public, and even to philosophers, sociologists, historians, an opera composer, and a patent lawyer. With their final collaboration, Harmon and Gross offer a tribute to the communicative practices of the physicists who convinced their peers and the general public that the universe is a far more bizarre and interesting place than their nineteenth-century predecessors imagined.

The Oxford History of Twentieth Century

John Stachel, the author of this collection of 37 published and unpublished articles on Albert Einstein, has written about Einstein and his work for over 40 years. Trained as a theoretical physicist specializing in the theory of relativity, he was chosen as the founding editor of The Collected papers of Albert Einstein 25 years ago, and is currently Director of the Boston University Center for Einstein Studies. Based on a detailed study of documentary evidence, much of which was newly discovered in the course of his work, Stachel debunks many of the old (and some new) myths about Einstein and offers novel insight into his life and work. Throughout the volume, a new, more human picture of Einstein is offered to replace the plaster saint of popular legend. In particular, a youthful Einstein emerges from the obscurity that previously shrouded his early years, and much new light is shed on the origins of the special and general theories of relativity. Also discussed in some detail are Einstein's troubled relationship with his first wife, his friendships with other physicists such as Eddington, Bose, and Pauli, and his Jewish identity. The essays are grouped thematically into the following areas: * The Human Side * Editing the Einstein Papers * Surveys of Einstein's Work * Special Relativity * General Relativity * Quantum Theory * Einstein and Other Scientists * Book Reviews Because the essays are independent of one another, readers will be able to dip into this collection to satisfy varying interests. It will be of particular interest to historians of 20th century science, working physicists, and students, as well as to the many members of the general reading public who continue to be fascinated by aspects of Einstein's life and work.

Einstein's Masterwork

The late Abraham Pais, author of the award winning biography of Albert Einstein, *Subtle is the Lord*, here offers an illuminating portrait of another of his eminent colleagues, J. Robert Oppenheimer, one of the most charismatic and enigmatic figures of modern physics. Pais introduces us to a precocious youth who sped through Harvard in three years, made signal contributions to quantum mechanics while in his twenties, and was instrumental in the growth of American physics in the decade before the Second World War, almost single-handedly bringing it to a state of prominence. He paints a revealing portrait of Oppenheimer's life in Los Alamos, where in twenty remarkable, feverish months, and under his inspired guidance, the first atomic bomb was designed and built, a success that made Oppenheimer America's most famous scientist. Pais describes Oppenheimer's long tenure as Director of the Institute of Advanced Study at Princeton, where the two men worked together closely. He shows not only Oppenheimer's brilliance and leadership, but also how his displays of intensity and arrogance won him powerful enemies, ones who would ultimately make him one of the principal victims of the Red Scare of the 1950s. *J. Robert Oppenheimer* is Abraham Pais's final work, completed after his death by Robert P. Crease, an acclaimed historian of science in his own right. Told with compassion and deep insight, it is the most comprehensive biography of the great physicist available. Anyone seeking an insider's portrait of this enigmatic man will find it indispensable.

Subtle Is The Lord

A historical account of highly ambitious attempts to understand all of nature in terms of fundamental physics. Presenting old and new 'theories of everything' in their historical contexts, the book discusses the nature and limits of scientific explanation in connection with concrete case studies.

The Many Voices of Modern Physics

Lifting the Scientific Veil has been written to afford the nonscience student the same meaningful opportunity to explore germane scientific topics as is generally given the science student to learn about the humanities and social sciences. Since nonscientists are generally responsible for making laws, financing research, or, at the very least, for voting, it is essential that they understand the significant impact that science has on everyday life. The book is designed to introduce nonscientists in an informative and comprehensible manner to four of the most significant scientific theories of the

twentieth century: the big bang, quantum physics, relativity, and evolution. After each theory is explained informally, the book shows how that theory and related technology impact upon one's personal life. Legal and political aspects of these theories are explored as well as philosophical and theological implications.

The Nature Of Space And Time (oip)

Professor Sir Roger Penrose is one of the truly original thinkers of our time. He has made several remarkable contributions to science, from quantum physics and theories of human consciousness to relativity theory and observations on the structure of the universe. Unusually for a scientist, some of his ideas have crossed over into the public arena. Now his work, spanning fifty years of science, with over five thousand pages and more than three hundred papers, has been collected together for the first time and arranged chronologically over six volumes, each with an introduction from the author. Where relevant, individual papers also come with specific introductions or notes.

Einstein from 'B' to 'Z'

One of the world's leading physicists questions some of the most fashionable ideas in physics today, including string theory. What can fashionable ideas, blind faith, or pure fantasy possibly have to do with the scientific quest to understand the universe? Surely, theoretical physicists are immune to mere trends, dogmatic beliefs, or flights of fancy? In fact, acclaimed physicist and bestselling author Roger Penrose argues that researchers working at the extreme frontiers of physics are just as susceptible to these forces as anyone else. In this provocative book, he argues that fashion, faith, and fantasy, while sometimes productive and even essential in physics, may be leading today's researchers astray in three of the field's most important areas—string theory, quantum mechanics, and cosmology. Arguing that string theory has veered away from physical reality by positing six extra hidden dimensions, Penrose cautions that the fashionable nature of a theory can cloud our judgment of its plausibility. In the case of quantum mechanics, its stunning success in explaining the atomic universe has led to an uncritical faith that it must also apply to reasonably massive objects, and Penrose responds by suggesting possible changes in quantum theory. Turning to cosmology, he argues that most of the current fantastical ideas about the origins of the universe cannot be true, but that an even wilder reality may lie behind them. Finally, Penrose describes how fashion, faith, and fantasy have ironically also shaped his own work, from twistor theory, a possible alternative to string theory that is beginning to acquire a fashionable status, to "conformal cyclic cosmology," an idea so fantastic that it could be called "conformal crazy cosmology." The result is an important critique of some of the most significant developments in physics today from one of its most eminent figures.

J. Robert Oppenheimer

Higher Speculations