

This Explains Everything: Deep, Beautiful, and Elegant Theories of How the World Works (Edge Question Series)

By John Brockman

In *This Explains Everything*, John Brockman, founder and publisher of Edge.org, asked experts in numerous fields and disciplines to come up with their favorite explanations for everyday occurrences. Why do we recognize patterns? Is there such a thing as positive stress? Are we genetically programmed to be in conflict with each other? Those are just some of the 150 questions that the world's best scientific minds answer with elegant simplicity.

With contributions from Jared Diamond, Richard Dawkins, Nassim Taleb, Brian Eno, Steven Pinker, and more, everything is explained in fun, uncomplicated terms that make the most complex concepts easy to comprehend.

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This Explains Everything: Deep, Beautiful, and Elegant Theories of How the World Works (Edge Question Series) Summary Details

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editorial:

From [Booklist](#)

Every year, the website Edge.org—a sort of online round table where experts in various fields trade ideas—asks its contributors a specific question. The 2012 Edge question was, “What is your favorite deep, elegant, or beautiful explanation?” (A beautiful or elegant explanation is one that reduces a complex puzzle to a simple set of principles or assumptions.) The responses Brockman, founder of Edge, received range from the obvious (Darwin’s theory of natural selection; DNA’s double helix shape; the principle of inertia) to the obscure (the Higgs Mechanism, for example, or the Faurie-Raymond hypothesis). The more than 100 responses have a couple of things in common: they are clearly written, and their authors are enthusiastic, in some cases downright passionate, about selling their response as the one true answer to the Edge question. It’s an eclectic collection of contributors, too: famed theoretical physicist Freeman Dyson is here, but also actor and writer Alan Alda; noted psychologist Susan Blackmore weighs in, as does musician and producer Brian Eno. A thought-provoking collection that should appeal to both general readers and trained scientists. -David Pitt

Review

“A smorgasbord of ideas.” (Kirkus Reviews)

“Offers a rare chance to discover big ideas before they hit the mainstream.” (New York Times Book Review)

“Fun and inspirational. ... This engaging collection can be read from cover to cover or browsed as interest dictates, but all inquisitive readers will enjoy it. Highly recommended...” (Library Journal)

“Characteristically thought-provoking and reliably cross-disciplinary, *This Explains Everything* is a must-read in its entirety.” (Brain Pickings)

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“Rich in mental fodder. ... An indispensable way to sample thinking from many corners of the intellectual spectrum.” (Pop Matters)

From the Back Cover

Drawn from the cutting-edge frontiers of science, *This Explains Everything* will revolutionize your understanding of the world.

What is your favorite deep, elegant, or beautiful explanation?

This is the question John Brockman, publisher of Edge.org ("The world's smartest website"—*The Guardian*), posed to the world's most influential minds. Flowing from the horizons of physics, economics, psychology, neuroscience, and more, *This Explains Everything* presents 150 of the most surprising and brilliant theories of the way of our minds, societies, and universe work.

Jared Diamond on biological electricity • Nassim Nicholas Taleb on positive stress • Steven Pinker on the deep genetic roots of human conflict • Richard Dawkins on pattern recognition • Nobel Prize-winning physicist Frank Wilczek on simplicity • Lisa Randall on the Higgs mechanism • BRIAN Eno on the limits of intuition • Richard Thaler on the power of commitment • V. S. Ramachandran on the "neural code" of consciousness • Nobel Prize winner ERIC KANDEL on the power of psychotherapy • Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi on "Lord Acton's Dictum" • Lawrence M. Krauss on the unification of electricity and magnetism • plus contributions by Martin J. Rees • Kevin Kelly • Clay Shirky • Daniel C. Dennett • Sherry Turkle • Philip Zimbardo • Lee Smolin • Rebecca Newberger Goldstein • Seth Lloyd • Stewart Brand • George Dyson • Matt Ridley

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