

## Books

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**Cosmic Coincidences: Dark Matter, Mankind and Anthropic Cosmology** — John Gribbin and Martin Rees. Explores the relationship of humans with the rest of the universe. A science writer and an astronomer investigate the many "coincidences" that allowed humans to establish themselves on Earth, presenting for the general reader the current theories and the latest advances in understanding such physical phenomena as dark matter, black holes, brown dwarfs and quark nuggets. Bantam, 1989, 302 p., illus., hardcover, \$19.95.

**A Forest Journey: The Role of Wood in the Development of Civilization** — John Perlin. A survey of wood's importance from the Bronze Age through the 19th century. Chronicles how civilizations have dealt with problems of desertification, lack of firewood, flooding and erosion caused by centuries of deforestation. This is a well-illustrated and documented reference to the age-old problem of deforestation, but it does not address the current deforestation debate. Norton, 1989, 445 p., illus., hardcover, \$19.95.

**The Material of Invention** — Enzo Manzini. Chronicles the influence of materials science on engineering and product design. With the development of new plastics, fiberglass and composite materials, a product design is no longer constrained by available materials, and the possible innovations seem endless. Discusses the history of design in relation to the materials available and concludes with designers' speculations on a future in which new materials will lead to new product designs. Translated from Italian by Antony Shugaar. MIT Pr, 1989, 255 p., b&w and color illus., hardcover, \$45.00.

**Stars and Their Spectra: An Introduction to the Spectral Sequence** — James B. Kaler. A well-illustrated, technical overview of spectral classification ranging from the cool M to hottest O. Begins with the fundamentals of stars—what they are like, how they are constructed and organized. Explains the history, development and physical basis of spectral classification, then goes on to look at prominent members of each of the seven spectral classes. Concludes by explaining how a star can change from one type to another and even pass through all the classes in its lifetime. Cambridge U Pr, 1989, 300 p., illus., hardcover, \$29.95.

**Three Scientists and Their Gods: Looking for Meaning in an Age of Information** — Robert Wright. Examines how three distinguished and quite different scientists think about the universe and our place in it. Wright profiles Edward Fredkin, a physicist and computer scientist; Edward O. Wilson, a biologist and architect of sociobiology; and Kenneth Boulding, an economist and the originator of the general systems theory. The author says the book is about, among other things, information — its concept, its function at various levels of organic organization, and the meaning of the information age — and the meaning of life. Originally published in hardcover by Times Books in 1988. Har-Row, 1989, 324 p., paperback, \$8.95.

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*Cosmos and Metacosmos* will offend some true believers in science and religion, yet it will gratify many others in both camps, for it offers a satisfying, hard-headed synthesis of religion and science—a "nontheistic nonmaterialism". The universe, argues Dr. Wesson, cannot be conceived as a fortuitous outcome, yet neither is it under the guidance of a supreme person.

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The Cosmos, or material universe began from a point about 15 billion years ago; it was generated from a matrix Dr. Wesson calls the Metacosmos. The Cosmos is so improbable in its parameters that the Metacosmos must contain something parallel to creativity, intelligence, and purpose. The order behind the universe is more basic than its material substance.

The truths of physics, argues Dr. Wesson, are open-ended: every answer must always raise new questions. The evolution of life cannot be fully explained by natural selection. The mind is also beyond complete understanding; all these limitations of theory become comprehensible in the context of *Cosmos and Metacosmos*.

A distinguished political scientist, Robert Wesson is senior research fellow at the Hoover Institution and professor emeritus at the University of California at Santa Barbara.

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## COSMOS AND METACOSMOS

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