



The Meaning of It All: Thoughts of a Citizen-Scientist

By Richard P. Feynman

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Many appreciate Richard P. Feynman's contributions to twentieth-century physics, but few realize how engaged he was with the world around him—how deeply and thoughtfully he considered the religious, political, and social issues of his day. Now, a wonderful book—based on a previously unpublished, three-part public lecture he gave at the University of Washington in 1963—shows us this other side of Feynman, as he expounds on the inherent conflict between science and religion, people's distrust of politicians, and our universal fascination with flying saucers, faith healing, and mental telepathy. Here we see Feynman in top form: nearly bursting into a Navajo war chant, then pressing for an overhaul of the English language (if you want to know why Johnny can't read, just look at the spelling of “friend”); and, finally, ruminating on the death of his first wife from tuberculosis. This is quintessential Feynman—reflective, amusing, and ever enlightening.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

In this series of lectures originally given in 1963, which remained unpublished during Richard Feynman's lifetime, the Nobel-winning physicist thinks aloud on several "meta"--questions of science. What is the nature of the tension between science and religious faith? Why does uncertainty play such a crucial role in the scientific imagination? Is this *really* a scientific age?

Marked by Feynman's characteristic combination of rationality and humor, these lectures provide an intimate glimpse at the man behind the legend. "In case you are beginning to believe," he says at the start of his final lecture, "that some of the things I said before are true because I am a scientist and according to the brochure that you get I won some awards and so forth, instead of your looking at the ideas themselves and judging them directly...I will get rid of that tonight. I dedicate this lecture to showing what ridiculous conclusions and rare statements such a man as myself can make." Rare, perhaps. Irreverent, sure. But ridiculous? Not even close.

From Publishers Weekly

It requires an unusually strong intellect to remain relevant on a wide variety of social, religious and political issues after 35 years. Feynman, a Nobel Prize-winning physicist, had just such an intellect. Originally delivered as a three-part lecture series at the University of Washington in 1963, this collection touches on such far-ranging topics as the existence or nonexistence of God; the Constitution; and UFOs. At times, Feynman's comments seem uncannily prescient, as when he discusses the dumbing-down of media: "The whole idea that the average person is unintelligent is a very dangerous idea. Even if it's true, it shouldn't be dealt with the way it's dealt with," he says here. As readers of his previous works (*Surely You're Joking, Mr. Feynman*, etc.) know, Feynman, who died in 1988, was never one to shy away from strong opinions: "Incidentally, I must explain that because I am a scientist does not mean that I have not had contact with human beings," he explains. These memorable lectures confirm that Feynman's gift of insight extended from the subatomic world to the cosmic, and to the very human as well. BOMC featured selection. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From Library Journal

"I have completely run out of organized ideas, but I have a large number of uncomfortable feelings about the world which I haven't been able to put into some obvious, logical, and sensible form. Perhaps someday, when I find a real deep reason behind them all, I will be able to give them in one sensible lecture instead of this thing." Alas, the world has only this posthumous "thing," a 1963 tripartite lecture by redoubtable Cal Tech professor Feynman (1918-88). And what a disappointment it is. Absent any meaningful insight or reflection, this maundering monolog, delivered largely in a halting, querulous voice at the University of Washington, weaves unevenly through such matters as advertising, astrology, war, paranoia, nuclear radiation, outer space, radio religion, and the beautification [sic] of Mother Seton. The publisher calls it "Pure gold, pure poetry, pure Feynman." It is anything but. Recommended only for academic libraries that are compelled to own Feynman's complete works. Robert C. Ballou, Atlanta
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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Charles Montiel:

In this era globalization it is important to someone to obtain information. The information will make professionals understand the condition of the world. The healthiness of the world makes the information better to share. You can find a lot of referrals to get information example: internet, newspaper, book, and soon. You will see that now, a lot of publisher that will print many kinds of book. The book that recommended to you personally is *The Meaning of It All: Thoughts of a Citizen-Scientist* this publication consist a lot of the information from the condition of this world now. This book was represented how does the world has grown up. The vocabulary styles that writer value to explain it is easy to understand. The actual writer made some exploration when he makes this book. That is why this book suitable all of you.

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Mark Klein:

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