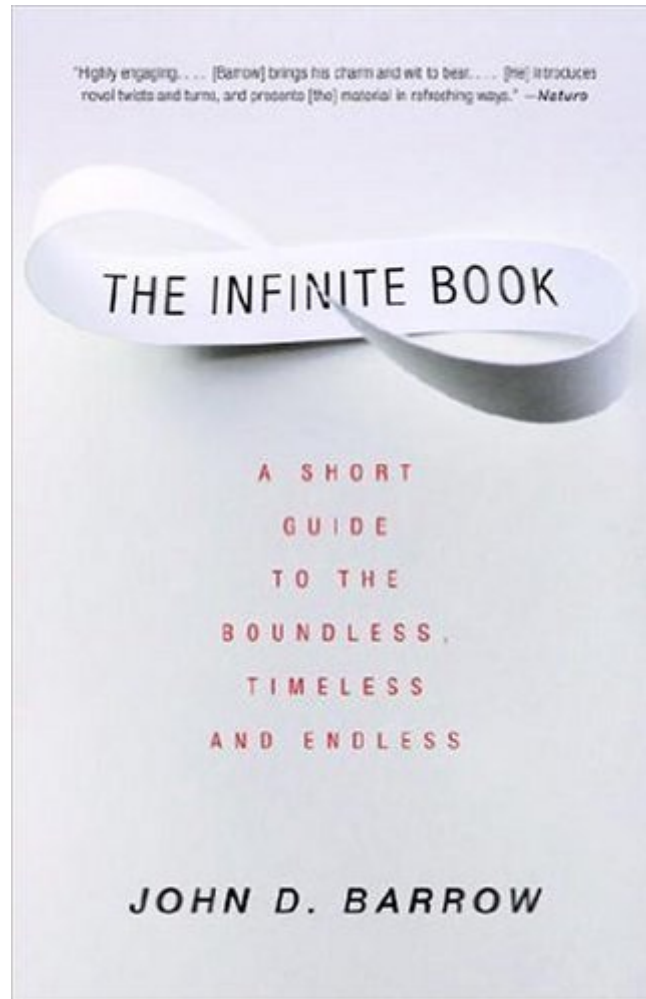


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The Infinite Book: A Short Guide To The Boundless, Timeless And Endless



Synopsis

For a thousand years, infinity has proven to be a difficult and illuminating challenge for mathematicians and theologians. It certainly is the strangest idea that humans have ever thought. Where did it come from and what is it telling us about our Universe? Can there actually be infinities? Is matter infinitely divisible into ever-smaller pieces? But infinity is also the place where things happen that don't. All manner of strange paradoxes and fantasies characterize an infinite universe. If our Universe is infinite then an infinite number of exact copies of you are, at this very moment, reading an identical sentence on an identical planet somewhere else in the Universe. Now Infinity is the darling of cutting edge research, the measuring stick used by physicists, cosmologists, and mathematicians to determine the accuracy of their theories. From the paradox of Zeno's arrow to string theory, Cambridge professor John Barrow takes us on a grand tour of this most elusive of ideas and describes with clarifying subtlety how this subject has shaped, and continues to shape, our very sense of the world in which we live. The Infinite Book is a thoroughly entertaining and completely accessible account of the biggest subject of them all—infinity.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

When we get the capacity to look closer and closer into molecules, atoms, and subatomic particles, will we always be able to find something smaller? When our telescopes or probes look deeper into space, will we always find something larger? Is there a limit to the shortness of an instant, or the duration of eternity? In The Infinite Book: A Short Guide to the Boundless, Timeless, and Endless, John D. Barrow has invited us to look at infinities in many ways. He's competent to do so, as a

professor of mathematical sciences at Cambridge, and as the author of previous books which successfully explained such concepts as nothing or impossibility. Like his previous efforts, this is highly readable stuff, but extraordinarily mysterious. The topic is something that everyone has pondered in some way; who has not, looking into the stars, wondered how far they go? It has a universal appeal, and a history within religion, philosophy, mathematics, and physics, all of which Barrow goes into here, in an entertaining summary. There are answers here, but plenty of mysteries. Consider a universe that is infinite in space; this is a possibility, for no one knows that space is not infinite. In a universe of infinite size anything that can happen does happen, and does so infinitely often. In such a universe, not only are you here, but somewhere out there is another you doing exactly what you are doing; in fact, there are an infinite number of you. There is also somewhere out there another you who has done everything you ever did, but on the day after his sixteenth birthday, wore black socks instead of brown. This has to be the case in an infinite universe, Barrow shows; it is enough to make us uncomfortable, but discomfort is not an argument that an infinite universe cannot exist.

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