



The Singular Universe and the Reality of Time: A Proposal in Natural Philosophy

By Roberto Mangabeira Unger, Lee Smolin

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Cosmology is in crisis. The more we discover, the more puzzling the universe appears to be. How and why are the laws of nature what they are? A philosopher and a physicist, world-renowned for their radical ideas in their fields, argue for a revolution. To keep cosmology scientific, we must replace the old view in which the universe is governed by immutable laws by a new one in which laws evolve. Then we can hope to explain them. The revolution that Roberto Mangabeira Unger and Lee Smolin propose relies on three central ideas. There is only one universe at a time. Time is real: everything in the structure and regularities of nature changes sooner or later. Mathematics, which has trouble with time, is not the oracle of nature and the prophet of science; it is simply a tool with great power and immense limitations. The argument is readily accessible to non-scientists as well as to the physicists and cosmologists whom it challenges.

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Review

"It might be one of the most important books of our time ... Right or wrong, this book is an event."
Bryan Appleyard, The Sunday Times

"A hefty explication setting out clear agendas for research into quantum foundations, explanations for the 'arrow of time' and other parts of this puzzle."
Nature

"Any serious intellectual rebellion is worth watching. This one is ambitious: it seeks to root out one of the oldest impulses in the western imagination."
The Spectator

"Is time, after all, real? Two mavericks take an axe to the established theories of cosmology."
The Guardian

"... an admirable restatement of cosmological ambition."
The Times Higher Education Supplement

"Anyone that wants to thoroughly deliberate over the question of cosmology should read this book."
Peter Eisenhardt, translated from Physik Journal

About the Author

Roberto Mangabeira Unger is a philosopher, social and legal theorist, and politician. His engagement with cosmology and natural philosophy in this book deepens and generalizes ideas that he has developed in False Necessity, The Self Awakened, and The Religion of the Future among other writings.

Lee Smolin is a theoretical physicist who has made important contributions to quantum gravity. He was educated at Hampshire College and Harvard University. He is a founding member of the Perimeter Institute for Theoretical Physics. His earlier books explore philosophical issues raised by contemporary physics and cosmology: Life of the Cosmos, Three Roads to Quantum Gravity, The Trouble with Physics, and Time Reborn. Lee Smolin was awarded The Buchalter Cosmology Prize 2014 for his co-authored paper 'The Universe as a Process of Unique Events'.

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