



Why String Theory?

By Joseph Conlon

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Physics World's 'Book of the Year' for 2016

An Entertaining and Enlightening Guide to the Who, What, and Why of String Theory, now also available in an updated reflowable electronic format compatible with mobile devices and e-readers.

During the last 50 years, numerous physicists have tried to unravel the secrets of string theory. Yet why do these scientists work on a theory lacking experimental confirmation?

Why String Theory? provides the answer, offering a highly readable and accessible panorama of the who, what, and why of this large aspect of modern theoretical physics. The author, a theoretical physics professor at the University of Oxford and a leading string theorist, explains what string theory is and where it originated. He describes how string theory fits into physics and why so many physicists and mathematicians find it appealing when working on topics from M-theory to monsters and from cosmology to superconductors.

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Editorial Review

Review

"There is no direct experimental evidence for string theory. And yet it is one of the biggest games in town. So why do physicists study it and what is it? To answer these questions you need an insider like Conlon, the perfect guide to lead you into the mysterious world of vibrating strings and multidimensional space. **Why String Theory?** wonderfully unwraps the science, history and philosophy behind one of the most challenging theories of the twenty-first century."

?Marcus du Sautoy, Simonyi Professor for the Public Understanding of Science, University of Oxford, UK, and Author of *The Music of the Primes*

"Joe Conlon has taken on the formidable task of explaining string theory, one of the great theoretical developments of the late 20th century. Building on the successes of fundamental particle physics and general relativity, string theory attempts to dig deeper into reality and to come up with a more consistent and mathematically powerful approach to how the universe works. With remarkable clarity and clear prose, Conlon assembles the edifice of string theory in a way that makes it clear why it is such an important intellectual endeavour. He offers a balanced account of its successes and failures and presents a robust response to the critics of string theory. This is a timely, intelligent, and exciting book that describes the joy and pain of working at the frontiers of theoretical physics."

?Pedro Ferreira, Author of *The Perfect Theory*, and Professor of Astrophysics, University of Oxford, UK

"A very engaging and up-to-date discussion of string theory that describes its main goals and achievements. It includes the history of how it was developed, with its interesting twists and turns. The surprising connections with other areas of physics and mathematics are clearly explained. Highly recommended for a lay reader with an interest in fundamental physics."

?Juan Maldacena, Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, New Jersey, USA

"This is arguably the most compelling set of arguments to explain why string theory has been so attractive to several generations of theoretical physicists in the past three decades despite the lack of experimental evidence. It is written not only with the passion of a practitioner and the broad knowledge and fresh mind of an accomplished young Oxford professor but also with an effort to be understood by enthusiasts of popular science, either young students with an interest in science, researchers in other fields, or the general public. The author introduces subjects with original, witty, and often funny arguments, without offending the intelligence of the reader. Besides being an excellent introduction to string theory, the book is also a unified presentation of the latest developments and open questions in fundamental physics, covering the importance of the basic building blocks of nature, including the recent Higgs discovery, to the latest developments in astrophysics, early universe cosmology, and black hole physics, as well as apparently unrelated subjects such as material science and superconductivity. It also addresses the standard criticisms of string theory and provides honest and thoughtful answers while recognising the weak points and open challenges. In addition, it emphasises the fact that string theory is not only a theory of gravity at the microscopic level but the most ambitious theory ever devised that encompasses all particles and interactions in a consistent manner and deserves to be explored by the most inquisitive and curious minds."

?Fernando Quevedo, Director ICTP, Trieste, Italy, and Professor of Theoretical Physics, University of Cambridge, UK

"In this book, Professor Conlon has provided?as he promises in his preface?an astonishingly clear tour of

modern physics. It is hard to think of a better, clearer, or wittier review, and one that will be particularly useful to science undergraduates curious as to where their field is heading. School students who have done some reading around the subject (e.g., who have read books by Brian Greene) might also find this work of great value. It's highly recommended."

?Nigel Seel on his blog Wading Through Treacle, January 2016

"Conlon is a lively, entertaining writer ... [he] does a great job of explaining the point of view of typical physicists now working on string theory. He also very ably explains the 'sociology' of the field, the different kinds of people who work in this area and their varying sorts of goals and motivations. ... I recommend [the book] highly to anyone who cares about these issues."

?Peter Woit on his blog Not Even Wrong, December 2015

About the Author

Joseph Conlon is a professor of theoretical physics at the University of Oxford and a fellow and tutor in physics at New College. He has been a recipient of the student-nominated Outstanding Tutor award across physical and life sciences for his undergraduate teaching. He is a world-leading researcher on string theory and the author of over 50 scientific papers. He has also given over 100 seminar and conference talks worldwide. His research mainly focuses on phenomenological applications of string theory to particle physics and cosmology. Visit WhyStringTheory.com for more details about his work.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Maria Gardner:

The event that you get from Why String Theory? may be the more deep you digging the information that hide within the words the more you get considering reading it. It does not mean that this book is hard to comprehend but Why String Theory? giving you joy feeling of reading. The author conveys their point in selected way that can be understood simply by anyone who read the idea because the author of this guide is well-known enough. This specific book also makes your own personal vocabulary increase well. Therefore it is easy to understand then can go together with you, both in printed or e-book style are available. We advise you for having this Why String Theory? instantly.

Seth Sutherland:

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Paul Dubose:

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Gary Roth:

Precisely why? Because this Why String Theory? is an unordinary book that the inside of the publication waiting for you to snap the idea but latter it will zap you with the secret it inside. Reading this book alongside it was fantastic author who all write the book in such amazing way makes the content inside easier to understand, entertaining technique but still convey the meaning fully. So , it is good for you because of not hesitating having this anymore or you going to regret it. This phenomenal book will give you a lot of gains than the other book have got such as help improving your talent and your critical thinking way. So , still want to hold up having that book? If I were you I will go to the publication store hurriedly.

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