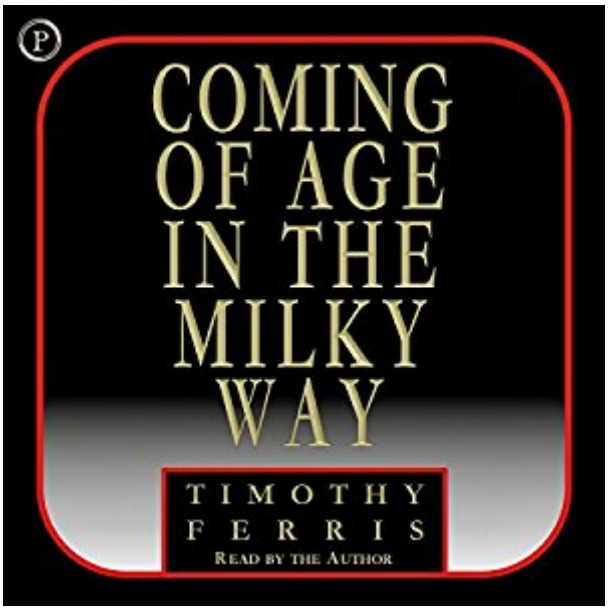
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# Coming Of Age In The Milky Way




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## Synopsis

From the second-century celestial models of Ptolemy to modern-day research institutes and quantum theory, this classic book offers a breathtaking tour of astronomy and the brilliant, eccentric personalities who have shaped it. From the first time mankind had an inkling of the vast space that surrounds us, those who study the universe have had to struggle against political and religious preconceptions. They have included some of the most charismatic, courageous, and idiosyncratic thinkers of all time. In Coming of Age in the Milky Way, Timothy Ferris uses his unique blend of rigorous research and captivating narrative skill to draw us into the lives and minds of these extraordinary figures, creating a landmark work of scientific history. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The book was a history of cosmology. It explained the evolution of man’s understanding of the universe through the ages. The author used quotations, excerpts, anecdotes, and little known facts on his descriptions of the major figures who shaped our present understanding. Most entertaining were the chapters on Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler, and Newton. The little tidbits on their lives and struggles were interesting - they humanized these great scientists. We tended to hold our heroes in a high pedestal, forgetting that they were also mortal and had human frailties and problems like everyone else..The chapters after Newton became harder to understand. Although the goal of the book was to provide a non-mathematical story to an obvious technical subject, it was difficult to do. I became very confused when complex ideas, formulas, and equations were explained. It was almost

impossible to understand quantum mechanics, sub-atomic particles, and the latest research. Using everyday English to explain mathematical equations with their scientific implications was also pointless. The technical ideas tended to get lost in the translation.

Coming of Age in the Milky Way is an enjoyable history of cosmology and related fields. Ferris explains both the science itself and the personalities that made monumental contributions to our understanding of the cosmos. Although itÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s a bit dated now, this is still a good book for the layperson interested in astronomy and cosmology. Some of FerrisÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s metaphors regarding the size of the cosmos are truly stunning, and the sizable glossary and timeline at the end of the book are handy references.One downside for me was that after assuming very little scientific background on the readerÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s part for the majority of the book, Ferris seems to make less effort to explain the science of quantum mechanics and recent developments in particle physics. These concluding chapters give an overview of how these fields developed, but are not the best introduction to these topics. Otherwise this is an enjoyable and highly accessible book for scientific beginners or novices.

Cosmos is a battlefield for the conflict between science and religion. Putting aside those books that defends one option (there is a god behind everything) or the other (there isn’t), you have the chance of reading a book with no side to defend. This is the case, from my perspective, of "Coming of Age in the Milky Way."Timothy Ferris is not a scientist but a journalist. In fact, a very special one. As long as you read the book you realize how much work there is behind the writing. I mean, hard work. Given that it is not easy to write about Space, Time and Creation, given the math and the physics and the chemistry involved, the merit is so big that you think that --in the case of Ferris-- that is not a virtue but a talent.Thus, the merit of the book is that give you not only information but a Weltanschauung (a world view) that you won’t forget. In fact, I finished the reading two weeks ago and some ideas are still with me. Referring to the Kepler second law ("Each planet sweeps out equal areas in equal times"), Ferris writes: "The second law revealed something even more astonishing, a Bach fugue in the sky." He is always giving you those sparks of beauty. And they are always in the right place. The book was not written as an excuse to make poetry but for showing us what we know about the cosmos and what we should expect for the next years. Anyway, the author has his inspired moments and --fortunately-- share them with us.In this vein, chapter 19 "Mind and matter" offers the most inspired and attractive lucubration. The idea of a galaxy whose "ultimate purpose" is to build a nervous system brings you to the limits where poetry and science are touching

each other. "Life," tells us Ferris, "might be the galaxy's way of evolving a brain."All right, I won't tell you the whole program that Ferris proposes. I would prefer you to read it by yourself. In any case is astonishing, beautiful and (why not) probable. It makes you dream and hallucinate. I mean it.To read "Coming of age..." won't let you with the sensation that you could do something better, independently of having a program for proving that there is a god out there or not. Ferris is not trying to convince you of nothing. What he does is to let you hear the celestial music of the spheres. Nothing else.Finally, if you want to know about science, scientist, scientific progress, and not only that but understand them at a very good level, just buy it and then read it. You'll see I'm right.

This is not a science book, but rather a history of science book. Although precise and interesting, it does go way too far in scientific nomenclature for the average reader. The part on quantum physics gets a little too specific, making concepts hard to understand, possibly making the reader feel lost at times.It does a great job though, unifying many centuries worth of knowledge (and ignorance) into a compact book that helps to grab the whole scope of cosmology throughout the centuries.

The book does include explanations of items I've been wanting explained.But I think that the author may have weakened the strength of his explanations by a too broad assessment of astronomical history.

Coming of Age in the Milky Way, by Timothy Ferris is one of my favorite books. Ferris has a way of explaining how early astronomers discovered what we now take for granted about the cosmos, and does so with such depth of knowledge - not just about the discovery being discussed, but also provides the reader with an in-depth look at what was happening in society at the time the discovery was being made. Really excellent.

I read this book when it was first published in the late 80's. I read it again recently. A few areas might now be outdated, but most of this book is timeless, since it primarily deals with the process and wonder of discovery. Definitely my favorite science book, and one of my favorite books in any area. This book instilled in me a yearning to know more in all fields of science: astronomy, cosmology, evolution, genetics, physics ...

A great science history book that reads phenomenally well, what Ferris is so well-known for. Found myself engaged throughout and laughing aloud in some sections, such as the chapter on Isaac

Newton.

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