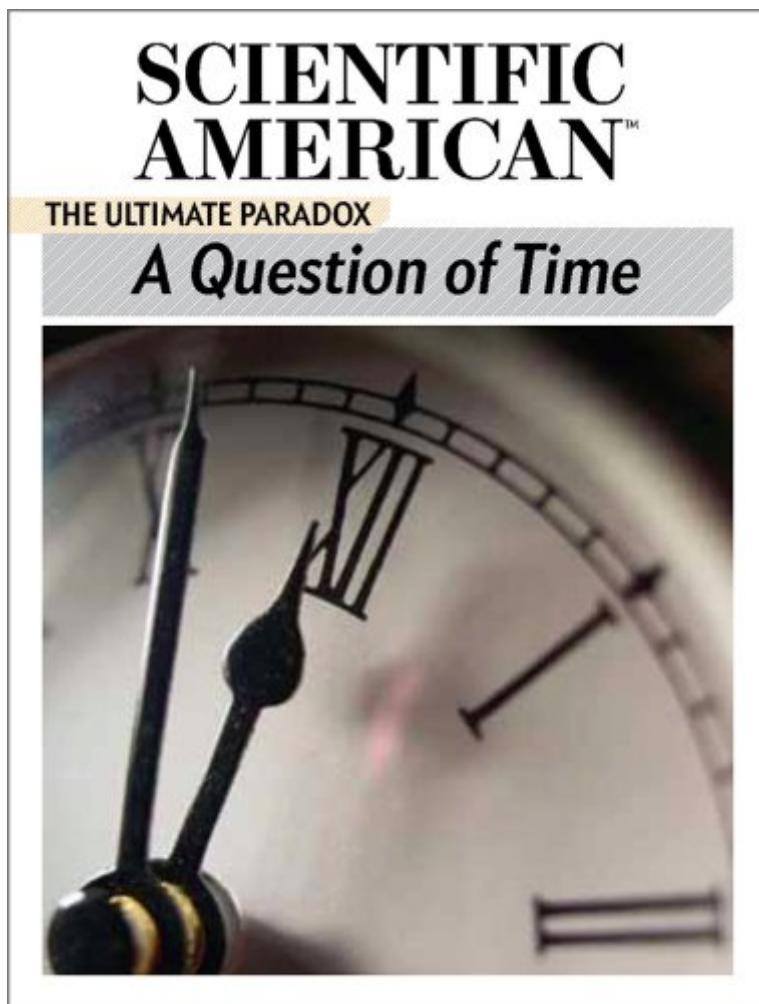


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# A Question Of Time: The Ultimate Paradox



## Synopsis

A Question of Time: The Ultimate Paradox by the Editors of Scientific American "What time is it?" That simple question is probably asked more often in contemporary society than ever before. In our clock-studded world, the answer is never more than a glance away, and so we can blissfully partition our days into ever smaller increments for ever more tightly scheduled tasks. Modern scientific revelations about time, however, make the question endlessly frustrating. If we seek a precise knowledge of the time, the infinitesimal flash of now dissolves into a scattering flock of nanoseconds. Because we are bound by the speed of light and the velocity of nerve impulses, our perception of the "present" reflects the world as it occurred an instant ago — for all that human consciousness pretends otherwise, we can never catch up. Even in principle, perfect synchronicity escapes us. Relativity dictates that, like a strange syrup, time flows slower on moving trains than in the stations and faster in the mountains than in the valleys. The time for our wristwatch is not exactly the same as the time for our head. This eBook, A Question of Time, summarizes what science has discovered about how time permeates and guides both our physical world and our inner selves. That knowledge should enrich the imagination and provide practical advantages to anyone hoping to beat the clock, or at least to stay in step with it. Synchronize your watches! |

## Book Information

File Size: 2667 KB

Print Length: 190 pages

Publisher: Scientific American (November 30, 2012)

Publication Date: November 30, 2012

Sold by: Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B00AF692ZS

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #183,315 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #17 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Nonfiction > Science > Physics > Time #24 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Nonfiction > Science > Physics > Nuclear Physics #31 in Kindle Store > Kindle

## Customer Reviews

In my opinion, Lee Smolin's contribution, "Atoms of Space and Time," make this issue well worth the money. Part of the reason is the synopsis and insights he gives on loop quantum gravity. Perhaps the most valuable aspect, which I have not yet seen in a popular format, is the presentation of "spin networks" visually as "graphs." I found this presentation valuable, and Smolin does well to explain what's going on. Beyond this, the issue contains articles about time within the ambit of the sciences most heavily geared toward the hardest of science, physics, but it also includes insights from the historian, the biologist, the psychologist, to name a couple, all of which stand as moderately to fairly interesting contributions. Those contributions closely related to physics (I would just lump them in with the domain of physics, broadly construed) include astronomy, cosmology, relativity, and string theory, to name a few. So far as I have judged, I think the editors did a good job of compiling selections that covered most of the angles on time, the most obvious clashing contestants being string theory and quantum loop gravity, and I thoroughly enjoyed this, almost discussional, format. In very, very few cases, I go out of my way to recommend editions of magazines or other periodical, but this is one of them, and is deserving of 5-stars for its memorable contribution to general science literacy. I recommend this for the general audience, intellectual, (u)grad student, and professor alike.

One of the problems with any text composed of a compendium of articles to make book chapters is the lack of a smooth flow of ideas and the unevenness of the article that are bound together. Some of the articles are wonderful; others not so much. The range of the articles is broad. Some of them deal with the subject of the book title, the paradox of time, and they talk about the physics of time. Others cover the development of clocks. Some cover the philosophy of time. If this is what you are looking for then this book is your cup of tea. I was more interested in the implications of the title, the physics of time. Some of the articles/chapters did not appeal to me.

As a Ph.D. physicist, I found the physics articles a bit thin. Just big assertions made by the authors, without the supporting descriptions of evidence. But it is an enjoyable collection of articles about time, from the various points of view - from philosophical to social. A good read and worth the money.

Interesting and informative collection of recent articles on the concept of time, seen from different perspectives, written in an accessible language. I have found some consolation in learning that time does not really exist and could just be a fabrication of our minds. I also found interesting that in trying to understand the deep meaning of time, philosophy comes to the rescue of physics.

Definitely a recommended reading. Stefano from Brussels

This book contains a series of articles that appeared in print and online on Scientific American website, primarily between 2012 to present. Most of the articles are written by specialists in the field, including some by leading researchers and Nobel Prize winners. Overall the book makes for excellent reading and makes cutting edge research intelligible to the ordinary man. Reasonably priced and definitely well worth a read.

The physics explanations contained in the book are challenging to say the least. The articles contain a mixture of philosophical and scientific ruminations on the nature of time. I found myself not really interested in the philosophy so much and craving more of a layman's description of the physical processes of time.

An excellent but somewhat technical treatise on time. Not for the newbie but aimed more at the layperson already familiar with quantum mechanics, cosmology, and biology.

First you have to understand that this book is comprised of articles from Scientific American magazine. As such, these articles are not written for the average Joe on the street but rather for someone who has had at least some schooling in science and has an interest in the subject. That being said, I have a degree in engineering and still found it difficult to wrap my mind around some of the contents in these articles. The problem, I guess, is that a person cannot fully grasp these concepts unless s/he can thoroughly understand the math behind them, making things difficult for the layman. A goodly number of articles dealt with the problem scientists have with reconciling quantum physics with general relativity, two diametrically opposite theories behind how the universe is to be understood. What I came away with in the end is that physicists and mathematicians are falling all over themselves and coming up with explanations that are less real science and more like speculative philosophy (e.g.  $\alpha$  string theory). That being said, though, I found this book to be interesting and informative even though I was unable to fully grasp some of what was being presented. I would highly recommend it to anyone with an interest in the subject of time and has at

least some minimum level of scientific education.

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