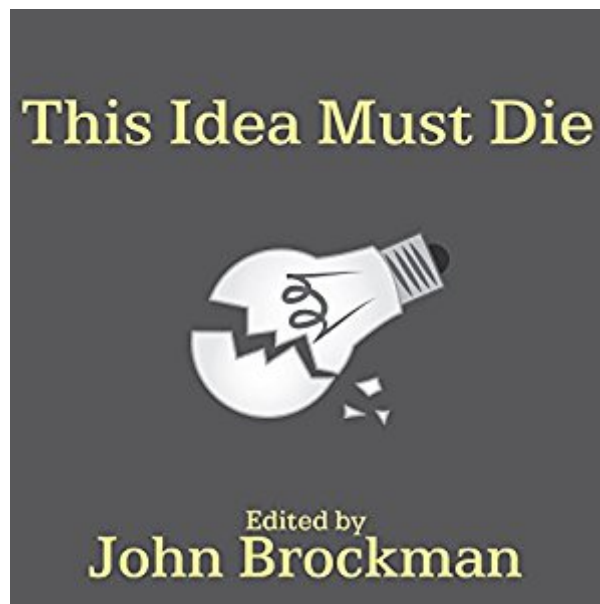




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This Idea Must Die: Scientific Theories That Are Blocking Progress



Synopsis

Each year John Brockman, publisher of Edge.org, challenges some of the world's greatest scientists, artists, and philosophers to answer a provocative question crucial to our time. In 2014 he asked 175 brilliant minds to ponder: What scientific idea needs to be put aside in order to make room for new ideas to advance? The answers are as surprising as they are illuminating. In *This Idea Must Die*: Steven Pinker dismantles the working theory of human behavior Sherry Turkle reevaluates our expectations of artificial intelligence Andrei Linde suggests that our universe and its laws may not be as unique as we think Martin Rees explains why scientific understanding is a limitless goal Nina Jablonski argues to rid ourselves of the concept of race And much more. Profound, engaging, thoughtful, and groundbreaking, *This Idea Must Die* will change your perceptions and understanding of our world today...and tomorrow.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 16 hours 25 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Tantor Audio

Audible.com Release Date: February 17, 2015

Whispersync for Voice: Ready

Language: English

ASIN: B00SVH9CA8

Best Sellers Rank: #210 in Books > Science & Math > Essays & Commentary #1232

in Books > Medical Books > Psychology > Cognitive #1515 in Books > Audible

Audiobooks > Science

Customer Reviews

I was really looking forward to this. I had imagined it was a half dozen or dozen essays from some of the renowned authors cited in the blurbs. Well, sure, it could hardly be a comprehensive essay from any of them, but it would be provocative light reading leading to more in-depth adventures, I hoped. Imagine my disappointment when it arrived and had nearly 200 essays! A few are one or two paragraphs, the most complete about two and a half pages! I've looked at about 20 mostly from people I know or subjects I follow. Based on that sample I can state what is perhaps obvious: no really informative content on subjects like the mind/matter controversy or the nature of science can

be presented in such a format. In fact some of them, for instance Dennet on consciousness, are just gooblygook, so why did he bother? I'm giving it a 3 because if you're prepared for what it is, I can see reading it in an airplane or something. Otherwise, save your money. My mistake in not being up on pop intellectualism; it seems to be one of a series of such collections of "essays".

I knew it was micro-essays, but you'd think that they could at least have a bit more content to them. Most of them felt like they were written as a half-baked ramble that slipped out after a dinner party in which the author drank too much wine and received too much encouragement. The claim that STEM majors need more liberal arts background is all too apparent in this compilation, as many of the essays were almost incomprehensible or stale (even at 3 pages!). However, I did thoroughly enjoy Jared Diamond's pokes at the very question Edge.org posed, and Nowak's sore jab at "the cult" of inclusive fitness researchers (if you don't know about that whole fiasco with the petition against his work, it's a juicy piece of scientist poo-flinging). I still like the idea. It is a conflicting set of teasers of "well-supported" opinions from scientists in diverse disciplines, aka an Ivy League Scientist gossip mag. Or, rather, it's a snippet of 175 scientists' views, allowing one to decide whether or not to completely avoid that scientist or follow up on their work. Daniel Goleman still pisses me off, and it's nice to have that affirmed after 10 years, for example. Overall, 3 stars. Mostly because it entertained me for the evening and gave me a few scientists to look into. Yet what sounded like insightful criticisms of paradigms fell very flat most of the time, and nothing really knocked my socks off, so I didn't learn as much as I'd hoped I would. I recommend reading the following essays from the book (or at least, I thought they were more coherent, well thought or nice contributions): "Indivi-Duality" Nigel Goldenfeld "The Universe Began in a State of Extraordinarily Low Entropy" Alan Guth (entropy is always fun) "Entropy" Bruce Parker (entropy is always fun pt. 2, but this guy doesn't get it) "The Uncertainty Principle" Kai Krause "Big Data" Gary Marcus (especially in conjunction with "The Scientific Method") "Bias Is Always Bad" Tom Griffiths "Unbridled Scientific and Technological Optimism" Stuart Pimm (though a bit weak at the end) "Inclusive Fitness" Martin Nowak (just for the giggles) "New Ideas Triumph by Replacing Old Ones" Jared Diamond (also for giggles)

This book has put me on to so many new trails. And relieved my anxiety about being skeptical about many accepted 'truths'. I first encountered the editor in his book 'By the Late John Brockman' back in the early 80's. It was a book carefully loaned and jealously owned. As I recall, the first lines were 'Man is dead.' He's been on the cutting edge of critical pop philosophy for a long time. Here he

brings together many of the best thinkers of our day and invites them to put a spike in one idea they think has outlived its usefulness. In many cases the mea culpa is explicit, and in many others it is subtly betrayed.

This is a great series. Choose a question broad enough for many people from different disciplines to answer and see what happens. I have had the same thoughts and nice to see experts agree (or not) with me. I think some go down different paths than I thought. Certainly the idea of that just because ideas are old, does not mean we should continue. For example: Scientific Method. Still a staple in teaching, but not a real problem is tricky and while the paper is written showing an orderly path from idea, hypothesis, experiment to theory, the reality is a lot of messy lab work and discarding the original problem and finally publishing what one can do/say. Maybe some careful/tricky thoughts that do not seem "scientific". You will not like of this book, but it will make you think.

The most interesting book in my summer list! The format is simple: a long series of very short essays by renowned scientists and thinkers on what makes science advance. You can read them in order or flip through the pages randomly. There are a few - very few! - bland and disappointing entries; but there are many more gems. All in all a recommended reading.

This collection of essays challenged my understanding of what's what in science at the moment. I'm not quite finished yet, as I can't read more than one essay at a time. When one contributor challenges one notion and the next contributor challenges its opposite, it's too mind-bending for me all at once. Maybe I'm too old. This is well worth reading for anyone interested in the current state of scientific understanding. I may update the rating when I'm finished.

This is a good book for anyone with a scientific mind, but is also written well enough for a lay person to read. It covers things some of us take for granted because we were taught the wrong thing back in the day.... I gave it as a gift and the person who received it is bad about reading books. But he did read and enjoy this one.

Good concept - uneven writing, but that's to be expected with this type of book. Some of the authors explained the favorite idea to kill and why it was bad. Some just assumed that everyone was familiar with the idea and why it should be killed. And some just thought that everyone who disagreed with them was an idiot. It was an interesting snapshot none-the-less.

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