



The Eleven Pictures of Time (Sage Masters in Modern Social Thought)

C K Raju

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Time is a mystery that has perplexed humankind since time immemorial. Resolving this mystery is of significance not only to philosophers and physicists but is also a very practical concern. Our perception of time shapes our values and way of life; it also mediates the interaction between science and religion both of which rest fundamentally on assumptions about the nature of time.

C K Raju begins with a critical exposition of various time-beliefs, ranging from the earliest times through Augustine, Newton and Einstein to Stephen Hawking and current notions of chaos and time travel. He traces the role of organised religion in subverting time beliefs for its political ends. The book points out how this resulted in a facile dichotomy between 'linear' and 'cyclic' time, thereby inaugurating a confusion which, according to the author, has handicapped Western thought ever since, eventually influencing the content of science itself. Thus, this book daringly asserts that physical theory, traditionally regarded as amoral and objective, has depended on cultural beliefs about time.

The author points out that time beliefs are again being manipulated today as the credibility of science is being exploited to promote a picture of time and, hence, a pattern of human behaviour which is convenient to the agenda of globalisation of culture. The linkages between modern theology and this 'brave new physics' are traced against the wider context of the so-called 'clash of civilisations', and the attempts to remake the world order.

The conclusions point to the need to de-theologise time. The author challenges Einstein's understanding of relativity theory and suggests that a 'tilt in the arrow of time', or a small tendency towards cyclicity, will help repair the prevalent confusion about time. A 'tilt' also enables a physics that permits both memory and creativity, so that purpose and spontaneous growth of order are returned to human life. The book ends with a vision of Man as Creator, surprising God.

Extensive research in physics, the history of science, comparative religions, and sociology lend weight to the important and challenging conclusions reached by the author. Written as a rejoinder to Stephen Hawking's A Brief History of Time, this book goes much further and, unlike any previous book, it gives a critical exposition of various world religions-Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Jainism-while exploring their intricate links, through time beliefs, to current physics on the one hand, and to global political and economic trends, on the other. This book will appeal to scholars and laypersons equally. It will fascinate anyone who reads it and will teach its readers to question the unquestionable.

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