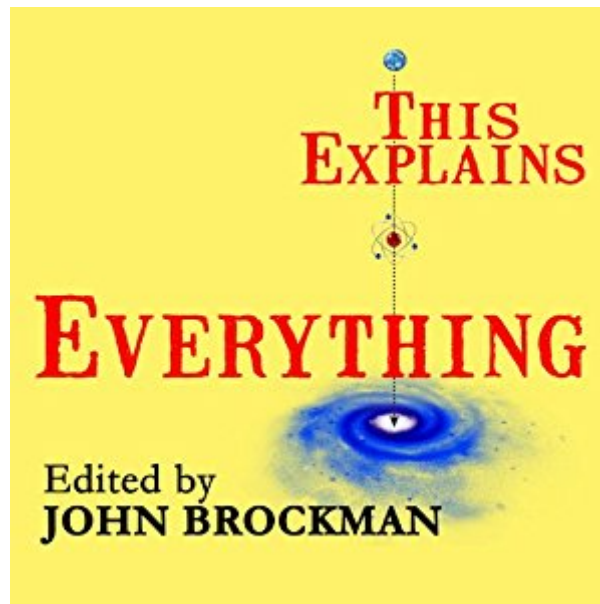


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# This Explains Everything: Deep, Beautiful, And Elegant Theories Of How The World Works



## Synopsis

In *This Explains Everything*, John Brockman, founder and publisher of Edge.org, asked experts in numerous fields and disciplines to come up with their favorite explanations for everyday occurrences. Why do we recognize patterns? Is there such a thing as positive stress? Are we genetically programmed to be in conflict with each other? Those are just some of the 150 questions that the world's best scientific minds answer with elegant simplicity. With contributions from Jared Diamond, Richard Dawkins, Nassim Taleb, Brian Eno, Steven Pinker, and more, everything is explained in fun, uncomplicated terms that make the most complex concepts easy to comprehend.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

*This Explains Everything: Deep, Beautiful, and Elegant Theories of How the World Works* Edited by John Brockman "This Explains Everything" is a wonderful book of essays from the Edge that addresses a question that inspires unpredictable answers. The Edge is an organization that presents original ideas by today's leading thinkers from a wide spectrum of scientific fields. The 2012 Edge question is, "What is your favorite deep, elegant, or beautiful explanation?" This interesting 432-page book contains 148 short essays that addresses the question. The quality of the essays range from the 3-word absurdity of "Keep It Simple" to the elegant and profound essay that addresses why the sky is blue through a brief history of converging sciences. For my sake, I created a spreadsheet of all the essays and graded them from zero to five stars based on quality. Five star essays are those that provide a great description of the author's favorite explanation. On the other

hand, those receiving a one or even a zero represent essays that were not worthy of this book. Of course, this is just one reviewer's personal opinion. Positives: 1. The book starts with a great premise, "What is your favorite deep, elegant, or beautiful explanation?" 2. A great range of scientific topics. Thought-provoking ideas. 3. Generally well written, well organized essays. High quality value. 4. You don't have to read the essays in order, you can just jump to your favorite authors or topics. 5. The theory of evolution shines brightest amongst the stars; regardless of the field of expertise these authors have a great admiration for indeed one of the most beautiful, elegant explanations in all of science. 6.

Anyone who reads this book will probably find their own highlights, insights, confirmations, and things to disagree with. This is more than a review, it's the better part of a blog entry, see [everythingequaleverything dot blogspot dot com](http://everythingequaleverything.blogspot.com), if you want to see even more. May 2013. Sorry in advance for the length of this!-----This Explains Everything, edited by John Brockman, is a string of short answers to a question posed to the Reality Club, originally New York City intellectuals and now online at the Edge Foundation. According to its website, the Foundation tries "to arrive at the edge of the world's knowledge, seek out the most complex and sophisticated minds, put them in a room together, and have them ask each other the questions they are asking themselves." The question 148 people answered was this: What is your favorite deep, elegant, or beautiful explanation? I liked it enough to go back through a second time and extract tidbits and gems, so this has become more of a book report for myself than a book review, I'm afraid. There were, as you can imagine, all sorts of answers. Why the sky is blue (not as simple as I had remembered), the origin of money, Bayesian probability, empiricism, organic electricity, the importance of individuals, germ theory, sexual selection. Why Greeks painted red figures on black pots, The scientific method. How languages change. A haiku poem. Some were sweet and obvious. One just wrote "keep it simple" and then crossed it out.. I found amongst them a lot of nice little take-aways: To learn how something works, first figure out how it got that way. Information is the resolution of uncertainty. To have a good idea, stop having a bad one.

Many of those who purchase and then begin to read this book will learn, for the first time, about Edge.org, a website offering an abundance of resources. John Brockman is the Editor of *This Will Make You Smarter* (2012) and *This Explains Everything* (2013). He is also the Editor and Publisher of Edge. As he explains, its purpose is to "arrive at the edge of the world's knowledge, seek out the most complex and sophisticated minds, put them in a room together, and have them ask each other

the questions they are asking themselves."He goes on to suggest, "Edge is a Conversation: Edge is different from the Algonquin Roundtable or Bloomsbury Group, but it offers the same quality of intellectual adventure. Closer resemblances are the early seventeenth-century Invisible College, a precursor to the Royal Society. Its members consisted of scientists such as Robert Boyle, John Wallis, and Robert Hooke. The Society's common theme was to acquire knowledge through experimental investigation. Another inspiration is The Lunar Society of Birmingham, an informal club of the leading cultural figures of the new industrial age -- James Watt, Erasmus Darwin, Josiah Wedgwood, Joseph Priestly, and Benjamin Franklin."Last year, those involved with Edge were asked to respond to a question also proposed by Steven Pinker: 'What scientific concept would improve everyone's cognitive toolkit?' Here's The Edge Question 2012: "WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE DEEP, ELEGANT, OR BEAUTIFUL EXPLANATION?"There were more than 200 online responses that were then reviewed before Brockman produced an edited selection.

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