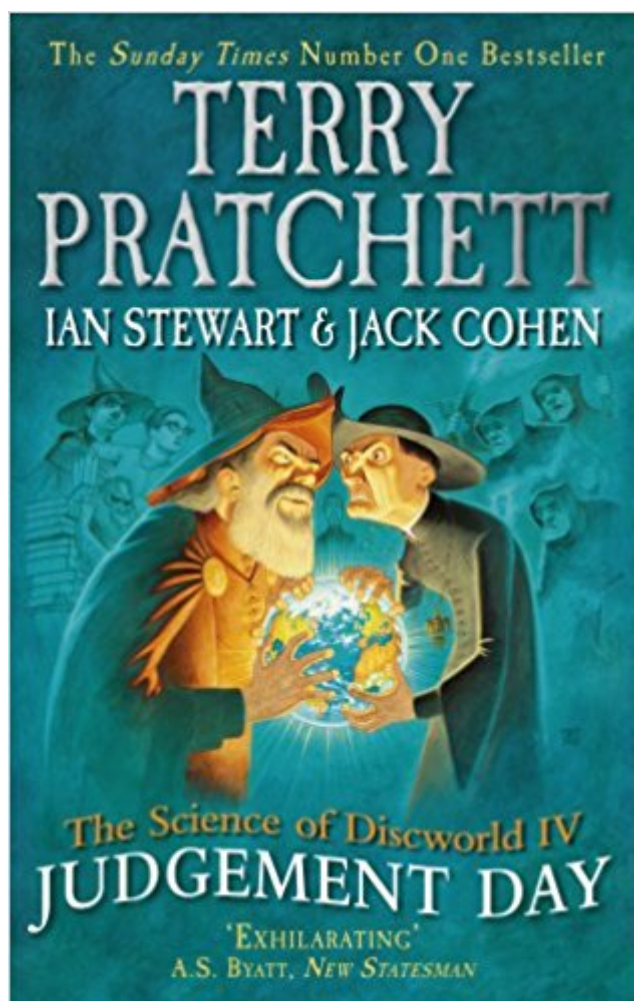


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The Science Of Discworld IV: Judgement Day



Synopsis

A brilliant new Discworld story from Terry Pratchett combined with cutting-edge science and philosophy from Ian Stewart and Jack Cohen. This time the trio take on THE REALLY BIG QUESTIONS -- God, the Universe and, frankly, Everything Else. The fourth book in the Science of Discworld series, and this time around dealing with THE REALLY BIG QUESTIONS, Terry Pratchett's brilliant new Discworld story Judgement Day is annotated with very big footnotes (the interleaving chapters) by mathematician Ian Stewart and biologist Jack Cohen, to bring you a mind-mangling combination of fiction, cutting-edge science and philosophy. Marjorie Daw is a librarian, and takes her job -- and indeed the truth of words -- very seriously. She doesn't know it, but her world and ours -- Roundworld -- is in big trouble. On Discworld, a colossal row is brewing. The Wizards of Unseen University feel responsible for Roundworld (as one would for a pet gerbil). After all, they brought it into existence by bungling an experiment in Quantum Thaumodynamics. But legal action is being brought against them by Omnians, who say that the Wizards' god-like actions make a mockery of their noble religion. As the finest legal brains in Discworld (a zombie and a priest) gird their loins to do battle -- and when the Great Big Thing in the High Energy Magic Laboratory is switched on -- Marjorie Daw finds herself thrown across the multiverse and right in the middle of the whole explosive affair. As God, the Universe and, frankly, Everything Else is investigated by the trio, you can expect world-bearing elephants, quantum gravity in the Escher-verse, evolutionary design, eternal inflation, dark matter, disbelief systems -- and an in-depth study of how to invent a better mousetrap.

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Customer Reviews

SIR TERRY PRATCHETT is the acclaimed creator of the global bestselling Discworld series, the first of which, *The Colour of Magic*, was published in 1983. In all, he is the author of fifty bestselling books. His novels have been widely adapted for stage and screen, and he is the winner of multiple prizes, including the Carnegie Medal, as well as being awarded a knighthood for services to literature. Professor IAN STEWART is the author of many popular science books. He is the mathematics consultant for *New Scientist* and a Professor of Mathematics at the University of Warwick. He was awarded the Michael Faraday Prize for furthering the public understanding of science, and in 2001 became a Fellow of the Royal Society. DR. JACK COHEN is an internationally-known reproductive biologist, and lives in Newent, Gloucestershire. He is mostly retired.

Terry Pratchett, Ian Stewart and Jack Cohen continue their joint effort on "The science of Discworld" with this fourth addition to the series. In this edition a new UU experiment causes an accidental crossover between Discworld and Roundworld through the extra-dimensional L-space, which results in the sudden abduction of Marjorie Daw from her Roundworld library to the halls of UU. Once there she becomes a witness and then a main character in a court case being brought by the Church of the Latter Day Omnians against the university for custody of Roundworld. As usual in the Science series, the Discworld short story is used as backdrop for the chapters written by Stewart and Cohen covering physics, chemistry, mathematics, biology, evolution and philosophy in a popular-science fashion. In this case they cover the latest insights into the origins and shape of the universe, the patterns of thought and belief of the human mind, rational and systematic thinking in contrast with belief-based and snap decision thinking (including the evolutionary value of both) and the origins and value of religion. The result is quite a nice read for those fans with a slightly more-than-passing interest in such topics. However, the book is not quite as good as the earlier editions: the scientific chapters are written more like essays with a "moral" than in earlier editions, which I find an irritating style. Also, the discussion of religion versus rationality and evolution seems less philosophical and more pushy than in previous editions, which is strange for a book that makes a big point of how science is about deriving models from observation rather than pushing the tenets of blind faith...

As much as I enjoy the Pratchett novels (and even the Science of Discworld set's previous three volumes), I have to say that a lot of the "interim" chapters (dealing with topics not necessarily germane to the story....probably didn't spell that right but don't have a spell check!) are, in many respects, redundant and drag on quite a bit longer than necessary. I'd like to have been able to read a bit more about the "real" story, and I think that more of that would have made the interim wanderings a bit more palatable. ("story" chapters average about 4-6 pages, and interim "science" chapters from 15-25 or so...not an exact count, but you get the idea) Still and all, I do enjoy the time in Discworld, no matter how short it is. We still love ya, Terry! (from a 65 year old fan...)

So clever those guys writing this in various directions with Terry actually having gone on ahead. It is interesting and I find I roar out loud reading some of the books. My dog barks when I do....

I love Pratchett as a writer and have read just about anything he's written that I can get my hands on. Having read the previous three Science of Discworld books I have to agree with some other reviews that this is not the best of the four. Found it mired in too much technical data at times, learned more than I every wanted to about quantum indeterminacy, topology and particle or sparticles. Some of the science stopped being fun and turned into homework! I also felt the whole thing would have benefited from larger chapters of the Discworld storyline that runs throughout the book. Sorry Sir Terry but this one wasn't as much fun as the last three.

Made a great Christmas gift for a huge fan of the Pratchett universe

Some of the science was a little tough for me to follow, but the alternating chapters with the Discworld characters more than made up for it. With Mr. Pratchett's death, meeting those characters again was a bittersweet treat. Be prepared for some serious science (with a lighthearted touch) and a bit of atheism, but if you've enjoyed the previous Science of Discworld books, you'll also like this one. I learned a bit, got some other viewpoints, and had some laughs - what's not to like?

A great read. A cogent defense of logic and rational thought over ignorance and superstition. Makes its point without slinging mud at the religious, who are such easy targets. (Although I enjoy mud slinging too.) Their distinction of human centered vs universe centered thinking is apt and illuminating. Terry's chapters are short and don't tell a story so much as provide a setting for the science.

Sir Terry does it again. Well worth the price and effort, just beware, your mind might get seriously expanded. You might also learn something.

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