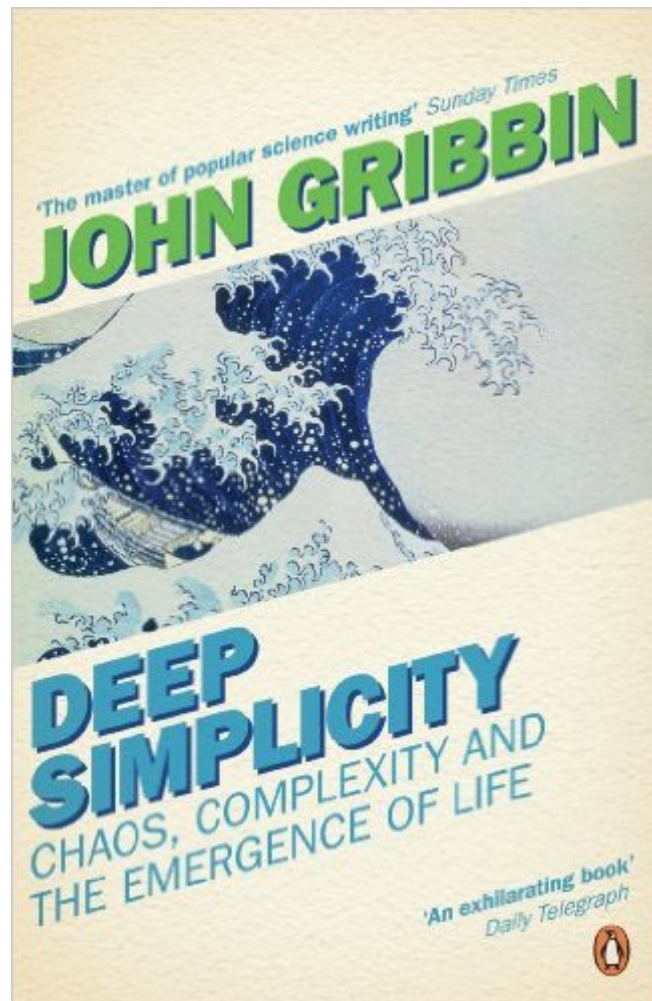


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Deep Simplicity: Chaos, Complexity And The Emergence Of Life (Penguin Press Science)



Synopsis

Simplifying chaos and complexity theory for the perplexed, John Gribbin's "Deep Simplicity: Chaos, Complexity and the Emergence of Life" brilliantly illuminates the harmony underlying our existence. The world around us can be a complex, confusing place. Earthquakes happen without warning, stock markets fluctuate, weather forecasters seldom seem to get it right - even other people continue to baffle us. How do we make sense of it all? In fact, John Gribbin reveals, our seemingly random universe is actually built on simple laws of cause and effect that can explain why, for example, just one vehicle braking can cause a traffic jam; why wild storms result from a slight atmospheric change; even how we evolved from the most basic materials. Like a zen painting, a fractal image or the pattern on a butterfly's wings, simple elements form the bedrock of a sophisticated whole. "The master of popular science writing". ("Sunday Times"). "What makes "Deep Simplicity" different from other books on complexity theory is that Gribbin ...goes back to the fundamentals". ("Daily Telegraph"). "One is left feeling even more - if this is possible - filled with admiration for science and delight at the world it investigates". ("Financial Times"). John Gribbin is one of today's greatest writers of popular science and the author of bestselling books, including "In Search of Schrodinger's Cat", "Stardust", "Science: A History" and "In Search of the Multiverse". Gribbin trained as an astrophysicist at Cambridge University and is currently Visiting Fellow in Astronomy at the University of Sussex.

Book Information

Series: Penguin Press Science

Paperback: 272 pages

Publisher: Penguin Books (January 27, 2005)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0141007222

ISBN-13: 978-0739460085

Product Dimensions: 5.1 x 0.6 x 7.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 7.8 ounces

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (6 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #831,060 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #100 in [Books > Science & Math > Physics > Chaos Theory](#)

Customer Reviews

My reason for selecting this new volume was to get a better understanding of complexity theory and

how certain laws can help us better understand our changing physical and social universes. I was not disappointed, and John Gribbin displays his well established ability to explain often quite complicated ideas in an energetic style that sweeps the reader along. He begins by discussing two states - two different ends of the spectrum between Total Order and Total Chaos. Somewhere between those two states is a zone of complexity, where nature teeters on the brink between order and chaos. To use a metaphor, this is like the moment of transition when slush could melt or freeze, or when water might turn to vapour. In this zone very interesting things happen - both in the natural world (at an atomic or larger physical level) in the social world (when social networks form) and in the biological world which is where Gribbin ultimately takes us - showing us how complexity operates in food chains, but also in terms of DNA and evolution. The book is captivating and my only regret is that I didn't write down a few notes along the way so I can dig back and think about how some of the universal laws might explain why (in my line of work) some new products do - or don't succeed. On the cusp of chaos, anything might happen. I'm actually going to read *Deep Simplicity Again* because it is both so informative and so enjoyable. A good book to read in tandem with this one is Duncan Watt's excellent *Six Degrees* which focuses on network theory.

An excellent non-math explanation of chaos theory. Mr. Gribbin is able to touch the essence of chaos theory by discussing its application to various real life scenarios. Interesting and entertaining. It changed the way I view complex systems.

I appreciate greatly the author's aim, sharing his sense of wonder with his readers. Gribbin gives a wide perspective about chaos and complexity with facts from the history of science. Simple laws, non-linearity, sensitivity to initial conditions and feedback give rise to chaos and complexity. Gribbin tries to reveal the facts of our universe with these concepts. Also the author gives some good examples for accessing the subject with ease. Power law pattern and gaia concepts are also analyzed in the book for understanding life. I derived much benefit from this book.

I'm no scientist. Nor an academic. And it's been about twenty years since any formal full-time education. I found this book after rifling through ten or so boxes of assorted second-hand books up for grabs in a community centre on the Isles of Scilly. Something about the cover appealed to me. Maybe because I'm an artist/creative. Perhaps because I recognised the Hokusai reference and liked the clarity of the art-work. Certainly I'd read and loved James Gleick's classic book on chaos in the Nineties. And the words 'deep simplicity' resonated in my bones. Especially to a man forever in

search of simpler ways of existing, to a man drawn instinctively to Zen. Whatever my reasons for picking up this book, I came to love it. I read a fair amount. Every book has its pace, some quicker, some slower, some turgid, some dense, some with big spaces between paragraphs, and some with type so small it leaves your eyeballs raw. I had a very slow entry into this book, one of those 'I've read this page twenty times and it's still not quite getting in there' scenarios. One of those occasions where you wake yourself up with a 'huh?' as your head nods to the side, you try re-reading the same sentence to once again find yourself five minutes later staring blankly at a book with a crick in your neck and a numb buttock. That may have had to do with my inability to focus my mind on the job in hand at the time, or perhaps that I was sizing it up as to whether to bother reading it at all. Was it just too geeky? I hadn't paid for it, so didn't feel that there was any reason to suck my money's worth of juice from it. Perhaps I was just plain tired and needed sleep more than information at that moment in my life. But I persevered. Initially I felt back in a classroom. Out of my depth. Wrestling with concepts, that although expressed with a beautiful clarity, wallowed in the murky depths just out of reach of my present level of understanding. Like a deep sea diver I only saw glimpses of those things that my sphere of illumination touched. And they were strange. Although also familiar: 'strangely familiar'. I needed time to absorb the paragraphs, to 'update my operating system'. Just a few pages and I'd have to stop, put the book down, digest for a few hours/days, allow my brain to chew over the content. But not for too long. If I did, the thread would go cold and I'd have forgotten what went on before. And so started a dance between myself and this book. It grew on me. Fast. And illuminated so many diverse corners of existence that I was left reeling with the implications. Giddy. It's a must read. An enormous read. Should be compulsory reading for every human. The highest wisdom that we now know, the cutting edge of contemporary science/physics/thought written in simple terms for a lay person like me to understand. With stacks of fascinating references to contemporary life and culture, examples being illustrated with traffic jams, telephone noise interference, spots on leopards, estuaries, earthquakes, boiling water, the shape of ferns, to make difficult concepts very accessible and relevant to the world in which we live. It was a pleasure to go on this journey. To rediscover the joys of learning from one with a much clearer world-view than my own. Made me feel like I'd been living in Plato's Cave! My diver's sphere of illumination is now so much bigger. Perhaps, dare I say it, I've even been allowed a glimpse of the bigger picture. Of the essence of the nature of creation. And no, it isn't a guy on a cloud with a long flowing beard! It has deep simplicity at its heart. I only wish John Gribbin had been my science teacher at school. He's given me a passion for the subject, a relevance that the dry, dusty delivery of my teachers of yore never managed to kindle. Perhaps I'd have made different decisions along

the way, and my current life of yoga, paint-brushes and guitars might instead be replaced with lectures and seminars and bright brains chewing over the big questions of existence? Perhaps this doorway is still open. Whatever, I only hope that you too can experience the joys of this book. Maybe my very own copy will find its way to you one day. I passed it on to someone I thought would be interested, as I do with most of my books. I'd like to think it'll keep doing the rounds until there's more Sellotape than pages holding it together! Namaste.

I have just finished reading *Deep Simplicity* and felt the urge to tell anyone who would listen how I felt about the book. Read the other reviewers to find out what the book is about. There have been very few occasions and very few books that moved me in the way that *Deep Simplicity* did, for it is a work of art and without doubt a genuinely beautiful piece of literature. What's more, I feel that the beauty inherent in the book is self-similar on many scales, from the lucidly illustrative metaphors, to paragraphs that grab you as they weave delicately expounded threads together, to the overall structure and flow of the book itself. I felt privileged to have read the book. After I finished I was left with a tremendous sense of appreciation for and recognition with our planet, its biosphere, life, and the Universe at large; even for my fellow man - although our depredations are made strikingly apparent. My final and lasting feeling is one of profound enlightenment; something felt when previously reading Gribbin, but not to this extent. Thank You John Gribbin, for writing this book; \$24.95 in one currency, priceless in another.

Outstanding service, great product!!

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