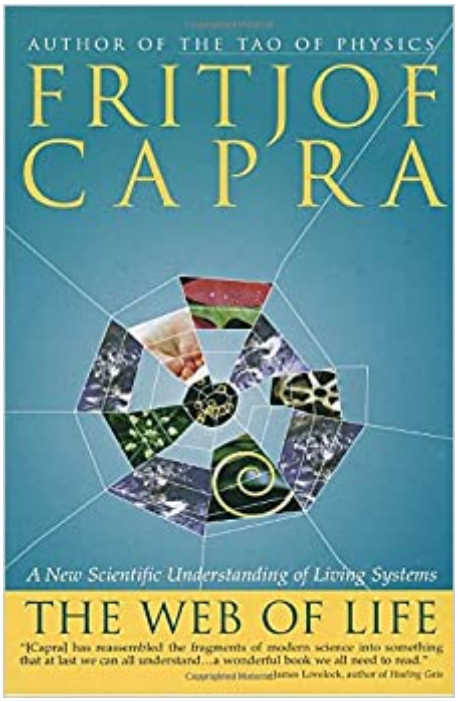
The Web Of Life: A New Scientific Understanding Of Living Systems



Synopsis

The vitality and accessibility of Fritjof Capra’s ideas have made him perhaps the most eloquent spokesperson of the latest findings emerging at the frontiers of scientific, social, and philosophical thought. In his international bestsellers The Tao of Physics and The Turning Point, he juxtaposed physics and mysticism to define a new vision of reality. In The Web of Life, Capra takes yet another giant step, setting forth a new scientific language to describe interrelationships and interdependence of psychological, biological, physical, social, and cultural phenomena--the "web of life."During the past twenty-five years, scientists have challenged conventional views of evolution and the organization of living systems and have developed new theories with revolutionary philosophical and social implications. Fritjof Capra has been at the forefront of this revolution. In The Web of Life, Capra offers a brilliant synthesis of such recent scientific breakthroughs as the theory of complexity, Gaia theory, chaos theory, and other explanations of the properties of organisms, social systems, and ecosystems. Capra’s surprising findings stand in stark contrast to accepted paradigms of mechanism and Darwinism and provide an extraordinary new foundation for ecological policies that will allow us to build and sustain communities without diminishing the opportunities for future generations.Now available in paperback for the first time, The Web of Life is cutting-edge science writing in the tradition of James Gleick’s Chaos, Gregory Bateson’s Mind and Matter, and Ilya Prigogine’s Order Out of Chaos.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In his bestsellers, The Tao of Physics and The Turning Point, physicist Capra charted a paradigm shift from a mechanistic to an ecological worldview. In his new book, a rewarding synthesis that will challenge serious readers, he claims that a comprehensive theory of living systems is now emerging. Applicable to cells, chemical structures, people, ecosystems and social systems, such a theory flows from deep ecology (which assumes humanity's embeddedness in nature's processes), systems thinking and the new mathematics of complexity. Capra identifies a pattern of organization common to all living systems, characterized by internal feedback loops and self-organizing behavior. His own theorizing builds upon the work of important scientists, including American microbiologist Lynn Margulis and British atmospheric chemist James Lovelock, the co-founders of the Gaia hypothesis, who see planet Earth as a living, self-regulating organism. Capra also draws from the work of Chilean neuroscientists Francisco Varela and Humberto Maturana, whose theory of autopoiesis ("self-making") defines organisms as "network patterns" whose components continually transform one another. Extrapolating from ecosystems research, he sets forth guidelines for building sustainable human communities based on interdependence, cyclical flow of resources, partnership and conflict resolution. Illustrated. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

In previous books (The Tao of Physics, Shambhala, 1991; Belonging to the Universe, LJ 2/1/92), Capra was never timid about expounding grand, scientific/philosophical theories of the physical universe. Now, he offers this sweeping discourse on the life sciences. Incorporating elements from such contemporary schools of thought as the Gaia hypothesis, deep ecology, complexity theory, systems theory, and even eco-feminism, Capra herein pronounces a new synthesis that integrates all into a single conceptual context. Many of these ideas are still being developed, though, and many disputes remain unresolved. Advocates will find Capra's theories intellectually and spiritually satisfying. Others will quibble; some will rage. For this to become a true synthesis, it must gain consensus, which will be difficult. Regardless, this book is breathtakingly ambitious and certain to generate response. Public and academic libraries will need it.?Gregg Sapp, Univ. of Miami Lib., Coral Gables, Fla.Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Having taught Psychology and Marital Family Therapy graduate school for many years, I was immersed in that area of systems thinking, which had in my mind become too mechanical in its applications, missing the individual's unique inner life and the unpredictable and uncertain in living

human knowing and choosing. I went searching for material that spoke to that void, material that could be consistent with a Humanistic Existential linked to a depth psychology and philosophy of psychology umbrella. I stumbled onto Chaos Theory and its alternative, Complexity Theory and saw its consistency with living systems, which threw me into the question, What is life? Just when I had read enough to imagine writing at least a paper on some of that material, Fritjof Capra published The Web of Life. He had done it. Capra's very readable presentation of living systems is still the best of its kind. Due to my own limitations, I moved slowly through the mathematics of Chaos/Complexity Theory but, with effort, even that section became accessible. Capra's prior works contain an emphasis that in The Web of Life he names "deep ecology," a welcome and clarifying concept that is a real world concern for anyone who wishes to integrate "the feminine principle" and a Tao sensibility (see his early book, The Tao of Physics). I helped years of new grad students access The Web of Life, which consistently became instrumental in their understanding of natural living human systems. With his brother, Capra's "art house" film, Mindwalk is a plus in understanding what Capra is doing here. His work applying this material to teaching systems thinking to kids as well as to more "mature" people, we well as his later work on ecosystems applied to real world, contemporary concerns makes The Web of Life even more important. I have a habit of ordering copies of the book for people like my University of Florida freshman nephew, Caio, who is chasing early Asian and South American history and thought. Read it and pass it on.

While this book isn't perfect, it is certainly a very nice introduction for the average person to systems theory and its implications to other areas.I basically agree with some of the criticisms in the spotlight reviews about the flatland or a web of life vs. a heirarchy (or even better holarchy) both in nature and in other spheres of life. For example, in a holarchy is a heirachy of wholes that are part of larger wholes in the way that atoms make up molecules, molecules make up cells, collections of cells make up a tissue, etc. This is concept is underplayed in this book, but it seems to be true inside and outside of nature. Ken Wilber offers a more complete explanation of this concept in A BRIEF HISTORY OF EVERYTHING and many other writings.I also think it's important to keep in mind that a systems view is an outside look of a collective. Empiricism represents an outside look of some single topic. I think it is also necessary to look at the interiority of both individuals and collectives to get a complete understanding of something as complicated as life, politics, religion, etc. I don't think system theory alone is the magic bullet.This book is relatively short, easy to follow and provides a nice introduction to systems theories and some other important topics. It has some shortcomings, but it is basically solid although there is a bias toward a "flatland" view of nature and reality. If you

supplement reading it with some other material such as the book I mentioned above, it may open up some new horizons for you.Happy reading... I hope you found my interview helpful. Feel free to leave comments if you wish.

Love this. Systems theory grounds.

great for my class

"The Web of Life" by Fritjof Capra is a book of break-away thinking for anyone who desires to get out of the trap of old science. From the beginning, the book is clear, even for the technically underdeveloped, and patently authoritative in delivering the reader into the new world of scientific discovery. Major changes in science have occurred beyond the recognition of the embedded educators and many scientists. This book is founded on revolutionary scientific insights such as quantum physics, system theory, and holistic analysis that will propel the science of the new century into realms of discovery and application barely dreamed of in the past century.

Grid, Wind And Solar Power Systems) The Web That Has No Weaver: Understanding Chinese Medicine Understanding Health Insurance: A Guide to Billing and Reimbursement (with Premium Web Site, 2 terms (12 months) Printed Access Card and Cengage EncoderPro.com Demo Printed Access Card) Understanding ICD-10-CM and ICD-10-PCS: A Worktext (with Cengage EncoderPro.com Demo Printed Access Card and Premium Web Site, 2 terms (12 months) Printed Access Card)