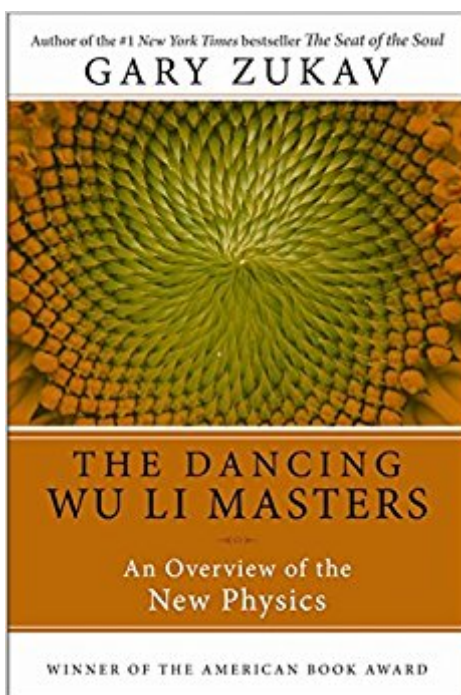


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Dancing Wu Li Masters: An Overview Of The New Physics



Synopsis

“The most exciting intellectual adventure I’ve been on since reading Robert Pirsig’s Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance.” —Christopher Lehmann-Haupt, New York Times
Gary Zukav’s timeless, humorous, New York Times bestselling masterpiece, *The Dancing Wu Li Masters*, is arguably the most widely acclaimed introduction to quantum physics ever written. *Scientific American* raves: “Zukav is such a skilled expositor, with such an amiable style, that it is hard to imagine a layman who would not find his book enjoyable and informative.” Accessible, edifying, and endlessly entertaining, *The Dancing Wu Li Masters* is back in a beautiful new edition—and the doors to the fascinating, dazzling, remarkable world of quantum physics are opened to all once again, no previous mathematical or technical expertise required.

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Customer Reviews

At an Esalen Institute meeting in 1976, tai chi master Al Huang said that the Chinese word for physics is Wu Li, "patterns of organic energy." Journalist Gary Zukav and the others present developed the idea of physics as the dance of the Wu Li Masters--the teachers of physical essence. Zukav explains the concept further: The Wu Li Master dances with his student. The Wu Li Master does not teach, but the student learns. The Wu Li Master always begins at the center, the heart of the matter.... This book deals not with knowledge, which is always past tense anyway, but with imagination, which is physics come alive, which is Wu Li.... Most people believe that physicists are explaining the world. Some physicists even believe that, but the Wu Li Masters know that they are only dancing with it. The "new physics" of Zukav's 1979 book comprises quantum theory, particle

physics, and relativity. Even as these theories age they haven't percolated all that far into the collective consciousness; they're too far removed from mundane human experience not to need introduction. The Dancing Wu Li Masters remains an engaging, accessible way to meet the most profound and mind-altering insights of 20th-century science. --Mary Ellen Curtin --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"'Stripped of mathematics, physics becomes pure enchantment'...I don't care how dumb you are at science; you'll come away from this book feeling like a Wu Li master yourself."--Christopher Lehmann-Haupt, The New York Times"Zukav is such a skillful expositor, with such amiable style, that it is hard to imagine a layman who would not find this book enjoyable and informative."--Martin Gardner, staff writer, Scientific American --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I first read this book more than twenty years ago, and I found both its explanation of quantum physics understandable for the first time in my life (after many tries), and its conclusions about the nature of the world around us totally profound. I took it up again this year after reading *Surfaces and Essences: Analogy as the Fuel and Fire of Thinking*, by one of my intellectual heroes, Douglas Hofstadter, and his colleague, Emmanuel Sander. They presented the compelling argument that we can only form thoughts via analogies. From these we create the categories by which we organize our lives. The problem is that whenever we finally settle on a set of categories that we are comfortable with, it turns out that those categories don't really explain as much as we thought they did. Our youth consists of successively having to recognize the inadequacy of the categories we have so laboriously developed--only to discover, once we've finally developed some categories that seem to work, that those categories are wrong, too! What was profound about that book was their recognition that great scientific discoveries may be expressed in mathematical terms, but the insights came from skilled expansion of each genius' analogies/categories. Einstein's recognition that the speed of light was the only constant, when everything else is relative, and that gravity is equivalent to acceleration represented creative extension of analogies, were a total disruption of the way people had categorized things in the past. In short, the combined conclusion that we can only make sense out of the world via analogies--and the analogies we've come up with are probably wrong--was disturbing. After that, I read much of *The Age of Entanglement*, by Louisa Guilder. Her position is that physics is not the tidy finished product that those of us who don't really know much about it believe it to be. Modern physics is a process that entails

brilliant observations and conclusions, but very painful ones, with different physicists having very different views on what is "truth". Basically, Einstein's tidy categories got upset when the quantum physicists claimed that in the world of sub-atomic particles there is no underlying reality that we can perceive. That is there is no underlying reality that we can perceive without changing it. The best we can do is to identify probabilities that events happen. There is no "particle" in sub-atomic particles. Einstein died being convinced that somewhere out there was a theory that could unite the perceptions of reality we have when we look at the outside world and the probabilistic understanding of sub-atomic physics. He was absolutely convinced that "God does not play dice". The problem with that book is that in focusing on the disagreements between the physicists, it made use of extensive (and, yes, verbose) communications among them. This tended to confuse the underlying arguments. So, I dusted off *"The Dancing Wu Li Masters"*. (OK, I couldn't find my copy, so I bought the Kindle edition.) And yes, it is much clearer both in describing the subject matter, and in driving home the problem we have with the analogies (categories) we have for looking at the world. The last three hundred years of (at least western) civilization have been unusual in history. Discoveries by Galileo and Newton that the physical world follows natural "laws" that can be identified and catalogued, have given us the illusion that we understand what is "reality". In the limited perspective of us walking around, this is true, and the insights have changed all of our lives. From nuclear energy to the space program, the world we understand is vastly different from what it was at the beginning of the 14th Century. But in the Twentieth Century, the quantum physicists have returned us to the era of Eastern Mysticism. The universe is energy, that occasionally (sort of) coagulates into what we see as matter. But this is all an illusion, based on the limitations of our ability to see inside what's going on. And we are limited in our ability to see what's going on. In Chinese, one word for physics, "wu li" means Patterns of Organic Energy. But the same syllables pronounced differently in Chinese can mean "My way", "Nonsense", or "I clutch my ideas". There is definitely something to think about, here. At the risk of extending another analogy that occurred to me the first time I read it. We are each actually part of an incredibly realistic video game.

I first read this when I was a teenager, and fell in love with it. Quantum mechanics are translated into English for the lay reader, and it's an eye opener. Although the writer didn't specifically make the argument, this is the first book I read where I started to connect the dots between science and spirituality. When I saw it in ebook format, I couldn't resist revisiting this old favorite.

Still the very best introduction to the mysteries of quantum physics. As Sir James Jeans said, "not

only is the universe stranger than we imagine, it is stranger than we can imagine. Gary Zukav brings that strangeness home in mathematics-free, clear language, and he does it like no one else. This book is a must read for anyone who claims to be educated.

Having just re-read both books, in my mind I inevitably compare this to "Tao of Physics", as both of them relate ideas in quantum physics to Eastern mysticism. However, "...Wu Li Masters" only kind of touches on that, but it provides a much more solid introduction to the basic ideas of physics as they relate to subatomic phenomena. My background in physics is very limited and I found myself struggling with many of the concepts Zukav covers (& he kind of lost me in the last chapter or two). But overall, the book was very interesting - to the extent that, as mentioned, I read it twice and took copious notes the second time through. The book was written about 4 decades ago, so I'd be very interested to learn how the ideas he described have developed since then.

An excellent book on quantum physics treating this very difficult to understand subject, that is from my point of view being not so knowledgeable about the deeper understanding of quantum theory. The book is very readable and puts the reader in touch with the way the physicists have arrived at their various theories. Quantum theory seems to be a never ending quest to discover the meaning of the grand design, the ultimate building blocks of life itself. Gary Zukav has written a very good book for the laymen.

Great introduction to the seductive world of subatomic physics. Simply written yet covers a wide range of complex thoughts. The perpetual fascination for connecting western science with eastern religion is a needless distraction. I prefer this as an introductory book of science rather than everything else this book attempts to be.

Great run down on classical physics and the exceptions that paved the way for a more metaphysical understanding of the new physics.

Read this book cover-to-cover some years ago - and I NEVER read books on physics. Written in a way that a layman can easily grasp the concepts of such things as the speed at which light travels. Gave it as a gift to someone who's interested in science and physics. Recommended it to my brother who IS a science person and he liked it, too.

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