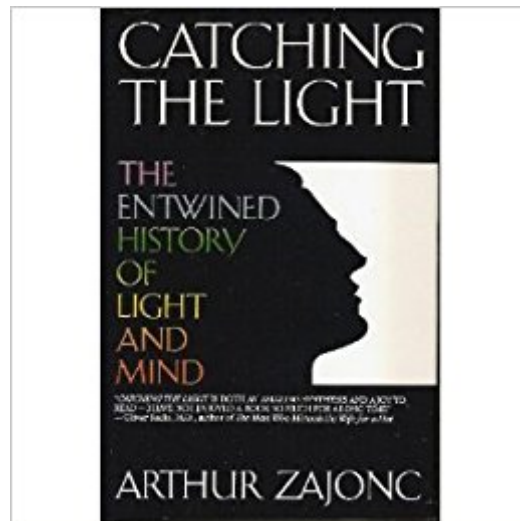




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Catching The Light: The Entwined History Of Light And Mind



Synopsis

A history of science blends religion, physics, painting, and literature to answer questions concerning light, describing the myths of light, recounting human anecdotes, and placing current views on light in evolutionary perspective.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

To the ancient Egyptians, light was "the sight of God." To quantum physicist Max Planck, light consisted of discrete particles or photons. How humanity has conceived of and responded to light is the subject of an intriguing investigation by Amherst physics professor Zajonc. In lyrical, precise prose, he argues that while Plato viewed the "mind's eye" as a form of cognition uniting inner and outer light, Newton and Faraday signaled a transition to a mechanistic conception of seeing and of light. Goethe's theory of color and light, rooted in the imagination, and Rudolf Steiner's metaphysics of light as angelic emanations brought "a renaissance of the mythic," which Zajonc welcomes as he seeks to restore a spiritual dimension to our perception of light and of the world. Along the way he considers Kandinsky, linear perspective, a cultural history of rainbows, Zoroastrianism, Keats and Einstein. Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Zajonc is an academic physicist who specializes in quantum physics, but his approach to the subject of light is somewhat unconventional from the perspective of many of his colleagues. He provides a capsule history of humans' changing understanding of the nature of light; scientific developments are interspersed with the comments of numerous philosophers, literary figures, and

miscellaneous other non-scientists. In summary, he appears to argue that modern science has failed to supply us with a complete understanding of light and that we would be better off with an amalgam that incorporates spiritual and philosophical aspects as well as scientific models. His views are in part unorthodox but deserve a hearing. Recommended chiefly for academic libraries.- Jack W. Weigel, Univ. of Michigan Lib., Ann Arbor Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc.

This is a profoundly insightful, yet remarkably simple, book. The author (a well-credentialed physicist) shows, in non-technical language, how two themes for Light -- light as a physical bridge to science's most profound truths, and light as a symbol for the artistic/ philosophical/ spiritual part of our mind -- have changed as our understandings have changed. Dr Zajonc treats both themes with respect and authority, as he shows how Light gives us a catalyst for Epiphany -- a sudden conscious, mysterious insight into Reality. The author uses Light to show a rigid distinction between science and the spirit is a false dichotomy, because the study of Light shows how firmly science and spirit are rooted in a skillful Imagination. The "Entwined" in the book's subtitle is not a twisting together of opposites, but a weaving of a fundamentally unified entity. And this is a book itself deeply rooted in a productive and beautiful Imagination. You can read, for example, how the legend of the Holy Grail can be an allegory for the growth of scientific understanding, how a spiritual and humble son of an impoverished blacksmith became arguably the most beloved and competent practical scientist of all time, how quantum theory both weakened and reinforced the security of scientific understanding, some ecological implications of that quantum theory, how Goethe considered his scientific insights far superior to his literary ones (and why he may have been correct), and so much more. This well-written, exciting book shows science can be as beautiful as poetry, and full of adventure, beauty, and mystery. Don't miss it if you are at all interested in how science and spirit/art can be compatible after all.

A stupendously wonderful book! If the anomaly exists "poetic scientist" then Mr. Zajonc is its embodiment. This is not just a science book; though in many respects it is that. It is also a history book. Still, it is a well-told story, the main characters being light and mind; though it is hardly fiction. The flavor of chapters and sections are given by quoting esteemed people. Among those quoted are Emily Dickinson, the Egyptian god Ra, Najm Razi, Albert Einstein, Lao-tzu, Milton, St. Paul, Black Elk, John Ruskin, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Goethe, and Augustine. These names alone should help persuade one that this is not another esoteric science book. If you think you understand either light or mind then you must be one of Einstein's rascals, mentioned at the

start of this book. Don't be a rascal. Read this book!

Excellent book. Arthur is a friend of mine through Anthroposophy and gives a very balanced approach to the spiritual nature and understanding of light from the past - to the present understanding including that knowledge derived from experiment, mathematics, and modern physics. Very interesting and useful. I'm greatly indebted to him as this is very useful for my present color theory research as a visual artist and Anthroposophist. And, you don't have to be an Anthroposophist to benefit from it.

very cool book. great read for anyone into philosophy, spirituality, consciousness, vision, light, art history, astronomy.

A beautiful book, that will change the way you look at light. Poetic, yet full of fascinating information, moving easily among the worlds of science, art, and spirituality.

one of the most educational and informative books I have ever read. Should be required reading in school

One of the best books for dreaming a new world into being. If you are curious to discover, already fully accomplished within, the light by which you see, I recommend this book to get you ready.

From the first page this book really pulls you in. By far one of my favorite non-fiction books. If you have any fascination with optics and light you will appreciate this book.

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