

# The Clockwork Universe: Isaac Newton, the Royal Society, and the Birth of the Modern World

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New York Times bestselling author Edward Dolnick brings to light the true story of one of the most pivotal moments in modern intellectual history—when a group of strange, tormented geniuses invented science as we know it, and remade our understanding of the world. Dolnick's earth-changing story of Isaac Newton, the Royal Society, and the birth of modern science is at once an entertaining romp through the annals of academic history, in the vein of Bill Bryson's *A Short History of Nearly Everything*, and a captivating exploration of a defining time for scientific progress, in the tradition of Richard Holmes' *The Age of Wonder*.

The Clockwork Universe is the story of a band of men who lived in a world of dirt and disease but pictured a universe that ran like a perfect machine. A meld of history and science, this book is a group portrait of some of the greatest minds who ever lived as they wrestled with nature's most sweeping mysteries. The answers they uncovered still hold the key to how we understand the world.

At the end of the seventeenth century—an age of religious wars, plague, and the Great Fire of London—when most people saw the world as falling apart, these earliest scientists saw a world of perfect order. They declared that, chaotic as it looked, the universe was in fact as intricate and perfectly regulated as a clock. This was the tail end of Shakespeare's century, when the natural and the supernatural still twined around each other. Disease was a punishment ordained by God, astronomy had not yet broken free from astrology, and the sky was filled with omens. It was a time when little was known and everything was new. These brilliant, ambitious, curious men believed in angels, alchemy, and the devil, and they also believed that the universe followed precise, mathematical laws—a contradiction that tormented them and changed the course of history.

The Clockwork Universe is the fascinating and compelling story of the bewildered geniuses of the Royal Society, the men who made the modern world.

Edward Dolnick is the author of *Down the Great Unknown*, *The Forger's Spell*, and the Edgar Award-winning *The Rescue Artist*. A former chief science writer at the *Boston Globe*, he lives with his wife near Washington, D.C.

#### Other Books

*Teaching & Researching Big History: Exploring a New Scholarly Field*. According to the working definition of the International Big History Association, 'Big History seeks to understand the integrated history of the Cosmos, Earth, Life and Humanity, using the best available empirical evidence and scholarly methods.' In recent years Big History has been developing very fast indeed. Big History courses are taught in the schools and universities of several dozen countries. Hundreds of researchers are involved in studying and teaching Big History. The unique approach of Big History, the interdisciplinary genre of history that deals with the grand narrative of 13.8 billion years, has opened up a vast amount of research agendas. Big History brings together constantly updated information from the scientific disciplines and merges it with the contemplative realms of philosophy and the humanities. It also provides a connection between the past, present, and future. Big History

is a colossal and extremely heterogeneous field of research encompassing all the forms of existence and all timescales. Unsurprisingly, Big History may be presented in very different aspects and facets. In this volume the Big History is presented and discussed in three different ways. In its first part, Big History is explored in terms of methodology, theories of knowledge, as well as showcasing the personal approach of scholars to Big History. The second section comprises such articles that could clarify Big History's main trends and laws. The third part of this book explores the nature of teaching Big History as well as profiling a number of educational methods. This volume will be useful both for those who study interdisciplinary macroproblems and for specialists working in focused directions, as well as for those who are interested in evolutionary issues of Astrophysics, Geology, Biology, History, Anthropology, Linguistics and other areas of study. More than that, this edition will challenge and excite your vision of your own life and the exciting new discoveries going on around us!

Ⓝ Ⓝ Ⓝ Ⓝ Ⓝ . The New Sciences of Religion: Exploring Spirituality from the Outside in and Bottom Up. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. Hölldobler B., and Wilson E. O. 1994. Journey to the Ants: A Story of Scientific Exploration ."