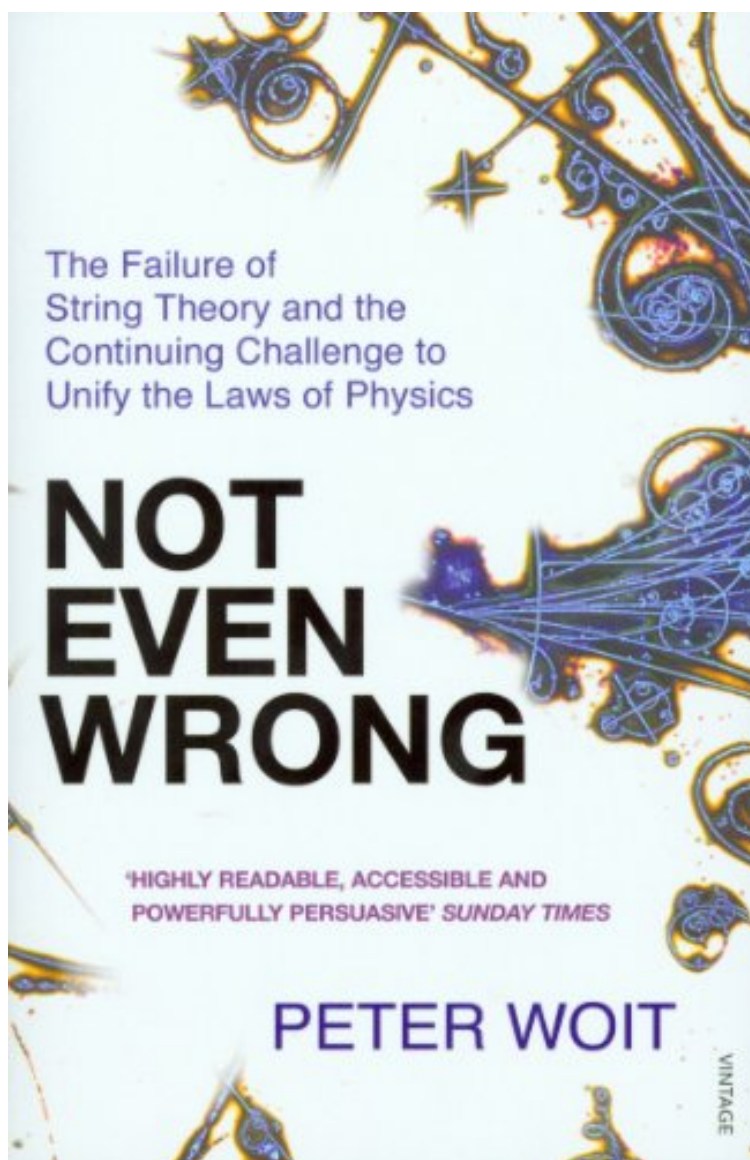


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Not Even Wrong: The Failure of String Theory and the Continuing Challenge to Unify the Laws of Physics



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Description : Description du produitWhen does physics depart the realm of testable hypothesis and come to resemble theology? Peter Woit argues that string theory isn't just going in the wrong direction, it's not even science. Not Even Wrong shows that what many physicists call superstring "theory" is not a theory at all. It makes no predictions, not even wrong ones, and this very lack of falsifiability is what has allowed the subject to survive and flourish. Peter Woit explains why the mathematical conditions for progress in physics are entirely absent from superstring theory today, offering the other side of the story.

Prsentation de l'diteurNot Even Wrong is a fascinating exploration of our attempts to come to grips with perhaps the most intellectually demanding puzzle of all: how does the universe work at its most fundamnetal level?The book begins with an historical survey of the experimental and theoretical developments that led to the creation of the phenomenally successful 'Standard Model' of particle physics around 1975. Despite its successes, the Standard Model does not answer all the key questions and physicists continuing search for answers led to the development of superstring theory. However, after twenty years, superstring theory has failed to advance beyond the Standard Model. The absence of experimental evidence is at the core of this controversial situation which means that it is impossible to prove that superstring theory is either right or wrong. To date, only the arguments of the theory's advocates have received much publicity. Not Even Wrong provides readers with another side of the story.From Publishers WeeklyString theory is the only game in town in physics departments these days. But echoing Lee Smolin's forthcoming The Trouble with Physics (s, July 24), Woit, a Ph.D. in theoretical physics and a lecturer in mathematics at Columbia, points outagain and againthat string theory, despite its two decades of dominance, is just a hunch aspiring to be a theory. It hasn't predicted anything, as theories are required to do, and its practitioners have become so desperate, says Woit, that they're willing to redefine what doing science means in order to justify their labors. The first half of Woit's book is a tightly argued, beautifully written account of the development of the standard model and includes a history of particle accelerators that will interest science buffs. When he gets into the history of string theory, however, his pace accelerates alarmingly, with highly sketchy chapters. Reading this in conjunction with Smolin's more comprehensive critique of string theory, readers will be able to make up their own minds about whether string theory lives up to the hype. (Sept.) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.Revue de presse"Highly readable, accessible and powerfully persuasive" (John Cornwell Sunday Times)"Will embolden other string critics to speak up and encourage talented young physicists to pursue other lines of research" (John Horgan Prospect)"Compulsive reading" (Roger Penrose)"It's a call to arms" (New Scientist)