

2008: A NEW INTRODUCTORY ESSAY

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Every physicist of today should read Eddington's great book—from cover to cover! “The Nature of the Physical World” was written (for the layman) immediately following the discovery of quantum mechanics, and Eddington here presents his correct appreciation of the full implications of that *most fundamental ever* discovery regarding the nature of the so-called “physical” world.

Eddington also says (*bottom of page 141*), and extremely presciently, that “It is difficult for the matter-of-fact physicist to accept the view that the substratum of everything is of mental character.”

What an understatement! In the year 2008, we live in a world where, sadly, there is almost no acceptance of this most fundamental discovery: that of the purely mental nature of the world.

The person most responsible for this dismal state of affairs is undoubtedly Albert Einstein, whose *rejection* of quantum mechanics “won the war,” despite his losing *all* the battles. Einstein (quite properly) proposed experiments to *break* quantum mechanics—but, the proposed experiments have subsequently *been carried out* (most recently in 2007 by Anton Zeilinger and his colleagues), with *complete vindication of quantum mechanics*.

Eddington (and Sir James Jeans), in their day, were able simply to look at the simple mathematics of quantum mechanics, and fully realize that this new and hugely successful theory deals with *nothing* but observations. And they realized that *observations are all that there is*. Observations of course are purely mental.

Eddington was a Quaker, and he was deeply religious. I, in contrast, until quite recently, have always been an atheist materialist. I purchased the particular copy of the present book, that I have now transcribed for your delectation, when I was a teenager living in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. I read the book then, and I loved it.

Forty years of *teaching* physics, gradually made me realize what Eddington realized at once: one *must* reject materialism, as *there is no material*. And, should one wish to *remain* an atheist, which one may—then one is *forced* to be a solipsist. (Physicist: should *you* make the *latter* choice—*do be careful not to blush!*)

Well, in 2004—to my utter astonishment—I ceased to be an atheist and, instead, I turned into a theist. I became religious *solely* through study of physics. The one result is that I am now happier than I have ever been in my life. I recommend it!

Science and religion reconcile perfectly. I believe completely in evolution—except backwards. We *know* from physics that our observations *create* the past.

In addition to the profound social implications, I think physicists should find this book helpful in simply growing their appreciation of the meaning and nature of physics.

I commend this book to their attention. Lay readers (who formed Eddington's original audience) will also benefit from reading this book, but not nearly as much as physicists will.
