

The Fabric of the Heavens The Development of Astronomy and Dynamics



BOOK DETAILS

- Author : Stephen Toulmin
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BOOK SYNOPSIS

The story of our relationship with the stars and their celestial cousins is long, involving, and full of surprises. The Fabric of the Heavens, by science historians Stephen Toulmin and June Goodfield, outlines thinking about astronomy and dynamics from "pre-theoretical" Babylonian times to the Newtonian revolution that seeded our modern conceptions of space. Fully integrating the two cultures of science and the humanities, the authors find evidence of new thinking in Miltons writing and medieval tapestries as well as classic scientific and pre-scientific works. Using language that is beautiful, compelling and precise, they trace the threads of history which are woven into todays science (which, they predict, will find itself woven into something even more startlingly unrecognisable in years hence). Why were the ancients so fascinated by the sky and stars? Interestingly, it seems that their concerns were mostly practical; theological significance took longer to attach itself to the patterns up above. Agricultural and navigational concerns, once resolved, gave way to deeper philosophical, mythological and religious curiosity-which used the mathematical tools of its predecessors to great effect. The lives and works of Aristotle, Copernicus, Galileo and Newton are all thoroughly explored, and it is easier to see the continuity between them and their contemporaries in the breadth of this writing. First published in 1962, The Fabric of the Heavens was one of the first postmodern studies of the development of physical science; even were it not such a pleasure to read, it would still merit careful study.

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