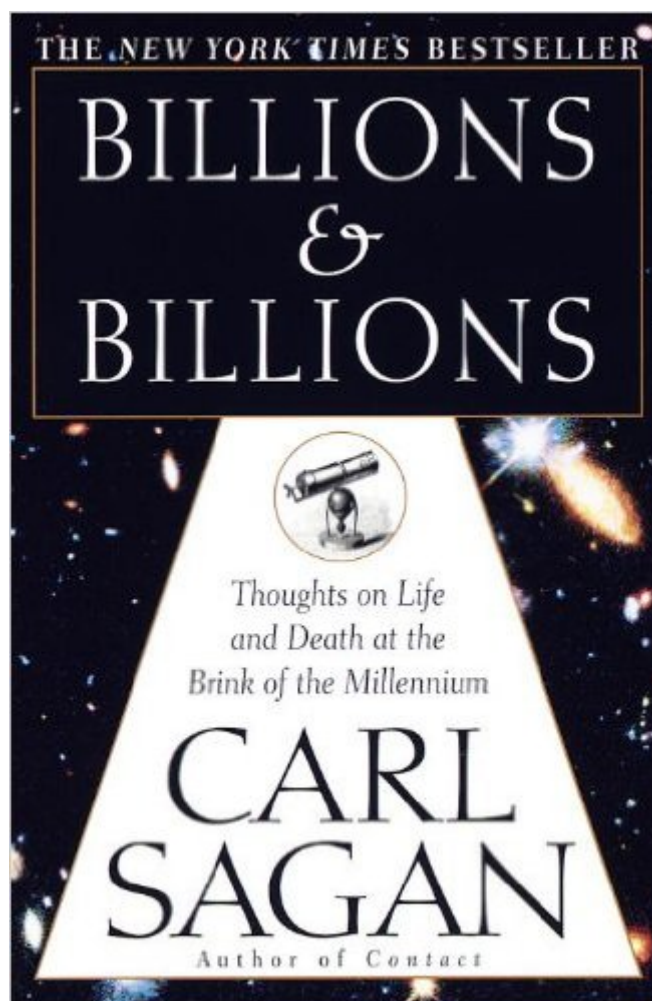


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Billions & Billions: Thoughts On Life And Death At The Brink Of The Millennium



Synopsis

In the final book of his astonishing career, Carl Sagan brilliantly examines the burning questions of our lives, our world, and the universe around us. These luminous, entertaining essays travel both the vastness of the cosmos and the intimacy of the human mind, posing such fascinating questions as how did the universe originate and how will it end, and how can we meld science and compassion to meet the challenges of the coming century? Here, too, is a rare, private glimpse of Sagan's thoughts about love, death, and God as he struggled with fatal disease. Ever forward-looking and vibrant with the sparkle of his unquenchable curiosity, *Billions & Billions* is a testament to one of the great scientific minds of our day.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

After reading his two best known works, "Cosmos" and "Contact" and receiving a suggestion to read this, I ordered *Billions and Billions* off the internet. After the first two chapters, I was confused. They had the same heart-felt, easy-to-read style Sagan is known for, but this book seemed more private and passionate. Unlike his other works, this seems to peer into his soul much more than other stuff I've read. The book is broken up into three parts. The first part is basically an introduction. It consists of a few chapters that educate you on such subjects as the importance of exponentials, the connection between hunting and football, and the true size and scope of the known universe. Like always, if the readers happens to already know a subject, it is still not painful to read through it. Sagan has a way with words that I can only describe as elegant. It is elementary enough to understand and yet intriguing enough to keep your interest. The second section I would consider the

"Warning Section". Pretty much the entire thing is a giant speech on the horrible things we are doing to our planet. It touches on CFC's, CO2 poisoning, and the greenhouse effect. While 100 pages of this can take its toll on your patience every once in a while, I never truly lost interest. Right when you can consider it boring it switches subjects just enough to keep you reading. This is definitely the section when you realize this must be Sagan's last work. The true opinion and passion that comes out in his writing is so unlike his other books that I forgot I was reading the author of "Cosmos". But right as I was about to get tired of hearing about the atmosphere and its decline, the third section of the book came.

+++++This book by scientist, professor, and author Dr. Carl Sagan is his last of thirty books that was published posthumously. It is a compilation of selected previously published articles (some of them revised) that he wrote for the publication "Parade" (which is one of the most widely circulated publications in the United States). This book is foremost an expression of Sagan's "thoughts" (a word in the book's subtitle). What he does is express his thoughts on various social, political, religious, and scientific issues. These selected articles are divided into three parts that make up nineteen chapters. The epilogue makes up the fourth part. Below I shall state the "nuclei" of each chapter or article (as I see it) and give for selected articles a sample thought in quotation marks. (1) (6 chapters) (1) The meaning of big numbers and their importance when dealing with complex issues. (2) Exponentials and their relation to complex issues. (3) The human hunting instinct, a remnant from our past. "[I]f we're stranded a few hundred centuries from when we long to be--if...we find ourselves, in an age of environmental pollution, social hierarchy, economic inequality, nuclear weapons...with [ancient] emotions but without [ancient] social safeguards--perhaps we can be excused for [liking rough, contact sports] like...football." (4) The physics of waves, sound waves & human communication, and light waves & human sight. "[T]he elegant machinery of the evolutionary process...has brought us into ...superb harmony with our physical environment." (5) Four cosmic questions. Sagan explains the details behind these questions that are as follows: (i) Was there ever life on Mars?

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