

*Seven Brief Lessons on Physics* by Carlo Rovelli

This fascinating little book could become a classic. Rovelli is no mere popularizer. He's a leading theoretical physicist, one of the developers of loop quantum gravity, an attempt to resolve the apparent contradiction between Einstein's general relativity (which gives us curved space at the cosmic level) and quantum mechanics (which reveals the randomness of events at sub-atomic levels). He wrote the lessons for "those who know little or nothing about modern science." That includes me and probably some of the Newsletter's readers.

The lessons are brief essays on seven different topics in modern physics. Beautifully, even poetically written, the essays elucidate general relativity, quantum mechanics, elementary particles, gravity, black holes, the structure of the universe, and the role we human beings play in it all. Although the entire book is only 81 pages, it is making an almost spectacular impression on the world. Originally published as a series of newspaper articles in Italy, in book form it was next published in French. Now it has been translated into English and at least 24 other languages and is a runaway best seller in many of them. No doubt the main reason for this phenomenon is the clarity of Rovelli's thought and the beauty of his writing.

Rovelli's chief professional position is as head of the quantum gravity group at Aix-Marseilles University. His graceful prose expresses profound, almost religious awe at the wonders of our universe that have been revealed by modern theoretical physics. He is also in awe, I think, of the intellectual process we call science, which he sees as a continuing quest for an ever more accurate understanding and description of our beautiful universe, from the cosmic to the subatomic.

Bob McDonnell