

[NEW AND NOTABLE

Listing does not preclude future review.



DEAR MARTIN / DEAR MARCELLO: Gardner and Truzzi on Skepticism.

Edited by Dana Richards. This book is a major contribution to the history of modern skepticism. It will also be of considerable interest to the history and philosophy of science more generally. Martin Gardner comes back to life in the

form of sparkling, never-before-seen correspondence with one of the most enigmatic figures of skepticism, sociologist and gadfly (and CSICOP cochair and eventual critic) Marcello Truzzi. The lively and surprisingly substantive and detailed exchanges are filled with fascinating insights into the intense intellectual debates, arguments, and disputes they and others had over how to identify crank science and scientists and how best—or even whether—to counter pseudoscience and occultism. Not to mention their differences on how scholars on the fringe should be treated. The letters animate the divergent perspectives and personalities of key figures who founded the modern skeptical movement. Divided into four sections: The Road to CSICOP, The Demarcation Problem, The Dissolution, and Return to Cordiality. Editor Dana Richards (George Mason University) expertly guides us through the nuanced issues. World Scientific, 2017, 458 pp., \$88 hardcover, \$48 softcover.



QUANTUM PHYSICS: What Everyone Needs to Know. Michael G. Raymer. A few years ago, Oxford University Press launched a high-brow version of the wildly popular “For Dummies” and “An Idiot’s Guide” franchises—accessible introductions to complex subjects written by experts in the field. The

Oxford series covers a broad range of topics from ADHD to Venezuela, but the new edition on quantum physics may be of particular use to skeptics and science literacy educators who want to refute or address pseudoscientific claims by New Agers (looking at you, Deepak Chopra) about the nature of quantum physics. Quantum physicist Raymer explains the basic principles of this field, complete with references and illustrations. The book is organized into hundreds of short, simple questions arranged in fourteen chapters covering everything from basic terms to nuances of quantum entanglement. Reading the book won’t make you an expert on quantum physics, but it will arm you with a basic understanding of the topic. Oxford University Press, 2017, 336 pp., \$16.95.

A Brilliant Climate Collaboration

ROBERT LADENDORF



The Madhouse Effect: How Climate Change Denial Is Threatening Our Planet, Destroying Our Politics, and Driving Us Crazy. By Michael E. Mann and Tom Toles. Columbia University Press, New York, 2016. ISBN: 9780231177863. 186 pp. Hardcover, \$24.95.

President Trump—who has called climate change a “hoax” and has pulled the United States out of the Paris climate accord—gives more urgency to reading Prof. Michael E. Mann and Tom Toles’s excellent book, *The Madhouse Effect*, a short primer on climate change and its denial.

In a brilliant collaboration between a climate scientist known for the “hockey stick curve” that shows unprecedented global warming and a Pulitzer Prize-winning cartoonist at the *Washington Post*, Mann and Toles complement each other’s work in chapters ranging from climate warming science explanations to the stages of its denial to making action plans for the future.

The chapter on the war on climate science is particularly enlightening, briefly tracing the history of the climate science doubters, many of whom, including scientists, were paid lavishly by fossil fuel advocates. Mann, the Distinguished Professor of Atmospheric Science and director of the Earth Systems Science Center at Pennsylvania State University, isn’t above being a bit snarky at times in his writing and includes this quote from writer Upton Sinclair: “It is difficult to get a man to understand something, when his salary depends on his not understanding it.”

Mann, who spoke at the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry’s CSICOn skeptics’ conference in Las Vegas last October and is scheduled to do so again this year, also relates his own involvement in controversies over climate change studies, including Virginia’s former Attorney General Ken Cuccinelli’s ill-fated lawsuit against the University of Virginia over government-funded research on climate change by Mann. A lower court ruled that Cuccinelli provided no evidence of wrongdoing. One of Toles’s cartoons drawn at that time on that issue is included in the book.

Toles’s cartoons indeed provide fresh text breaks that illustrate what Mann writes about. There are just enough of them to provide occasional chuckles while reading about the serious science, history, and future of climate change.

Early in the book Mann explains how the word *skepticism* has been misused by climate change deniers and briefly explains scientific **skepticism**. He points out that the exploited weakness in science is the public understanding of it. “Deliberate confusion can be sown under a false pretext of ‘skepticism,’” Mann writes. “And the scientific process is continually under assault by bad-faith doubt mongers.”

In another chapter, they skewer most of the proposed geo-engineering ideas to combat global warming, arguing that the costs are exorbitant, the technological challenges difficult, and the adverse regional climate effects real. Mann convincingly argues that **geoengineering schemes will prove the law of unintended consequences**.

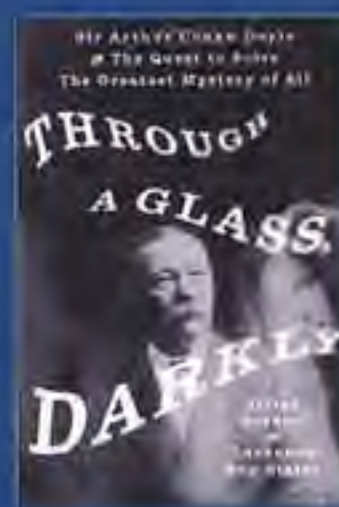
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The book lacks a glossary, which would have been helpful in briefly explaining scientific terms, identifying numerous organizations that are hard to keep straight as being for or against climate change science, and individuals. But Mann does include brief explanations within the text, so this omission is minor.

The authors remain hopeful about the ability of humans to adapt and help avoid the destruction of our planet, encouraging carbon pricing and promoting environmental sustainability in general. But Mann does say there’s an urgency. “Dreams of slowly adapting to climate change,” he writes, “will have to be replaced with the hard reality of an ever-escalating pace of disruption and unpredictability.”

By the time the reader reaches that last chapter explaining “The Path Forward,” the subtitle of the book will make perfect sense: “How Climate Change Denial Is Threatening Our Planet, Destroying Our Politics, and Driving Us Crazy.” If a reader has time for just one book explaining climate change science and denial, *The Madhouse Effect* is the one to read. ■

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THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY: Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and the Quest to Solve the Greatest Mystery of Them All. Stefan Bechtel and Laurence Roy Stains. Spiritualism, a movement that attempted to show that the soul is eternal and to make contact with the dead, was a worldwide movement from the mid-nineteenth century to the 1930s with millions of adherents. Two journalists, fascinated by this extraordinary subject and concerned that Sherlock Holmes creator Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, perhaps its foremost spokesman, has been painted as “a credulous old fool,” here attempt what they say is “an approach to the historical record without prejudice.” They say they are presenting a “fair-minded report” of what they found. All sounds nice and balanced, but be aware that they also say, enigmatically, “We are not true believers, but it’s fair to say we don’t *not* believe” (their emphasis). And also that while they were impressed by “the thoughtfulness and sincerity” of the highly intelligent men and women who participated in this movement, “Skeptics quite willfully spread lies about them and attempted to ruin their lives.” Of course. St. Martin’s Press, 2017, 303 pp., \$26.99.



WORRIED ABOUT THE WRONG THINGS: Youth, Risk, and Opportunity in the Digital World. Jacqueline Ryan Vickery. Vickery, assistant professor in Media Arts at the University of North Texas, takes a skeptical look at media and cultural narratives of risks that the digital world poses to children and teens. Divided into seven chapters in two parts (“Risk” and “Experiences”), topics include online bullying, suicide risk, online predators, pornography, and peer pressure. While there are real dangers—many of them exaggerated and sensationalized—Vickery suggests that a larger problem is the inequitable opportunities for youth participation in today’s digital culture. Vickery proposes solutions and notes that the policies enacted on behalf of “endangered” children do not always benefit them; as S. Craig Watkins notes in the foreword, “As you read this book it is clear that youth labeled ‘at risk’ or ‘disadvantaged’ are seldom if ever genuinely considered in the policy prescriptions advocating risk avoidance and protection.” The MIT Press, 2017, 360 pp., \$35

—Kendrick Frazier and Benjamin Radford