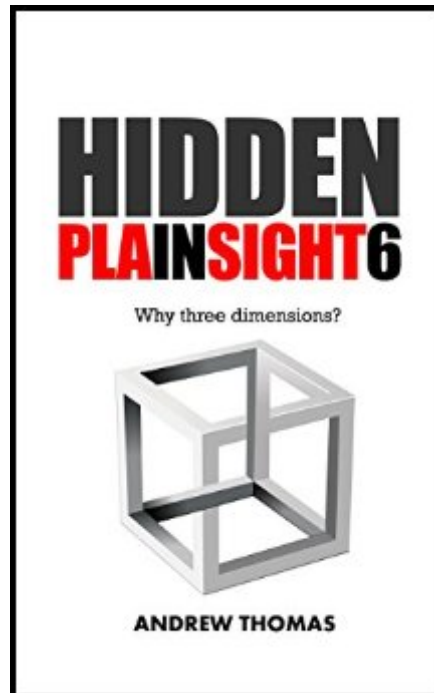


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Hidden In Plain Sight 6: Why Three Dimensions?



Synopsis

Why are there three dimensions of space? It is surprising that science does not know the answer, though there have been some inventive and controversial ideas. This book considers many of those ideas and presents a new solution why three is the magic number.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Andrew Thomas presents an excellent overview of special and general relativity by covering the fundamentals of tensor algebra and explaining Einstein's thought process. The question of why there are three dimensions is postponed until the final chapter. Chapter 6 makes a strange digression into string theory. In that chapter, Dr. Thomas "proves" the infinite sum of natural numbers is equal to minus one twelfth, somehow causing the existence of 25 dimensions, which string theory then whittles down to 10 (or maybe 11). I think all this proves is just how silly string theory is. The proof concerning the infinite sum relies on a sleight of hand that appears in step 2, namely the assertion that $1 - 1 + 1 - 1 + \dots = 0.5$ which is false. If that assertion were true, then $0.5 = 1$ which is obviously false. The infinite sum of natural numbers can be shown to equal infinity minus one twelfth plus zero. String theorists simply subtract the infinity part to suit their own needs. I don't know why Dr. Thomas took this strange detour -- it adds nothing and only detracts from an

otherwise sound and lucid work. The final chapter sets out to prove why there are three dimensions instead of two or four. To Dr. Thomas' credit, he does not invoke what I feared would be the anthropic principle. I agree with both Thomas and Lee Smolin that anthropic arguments can be used to prove virtually anything, and they should never be used in science. Instead, Dr. Thomas argues that space-time emerges from the properties of matter, although this argument seems circular. The argument is that fermions are required to spin in order to move through space-time at light speed, as all non-zero masses are required to do per SR; however, SR itself is predicated on the existence of space-time.

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