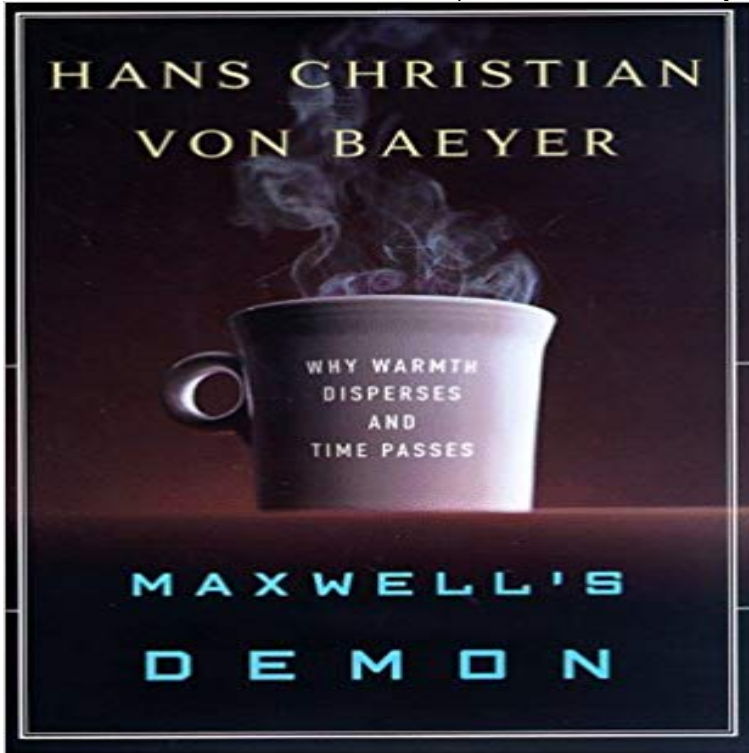


Maxwells Demon: Why Warmth Disperses and Time Passes



You arrive at your office and unpack your breakfast from the local deli. The piping-hot coffee and chilly orange juice you purchased just minutes ago are now both disappointingly lukewarm. Why can't the coffee steal heat from the juice to stay hot? Why does even the most state-of-the-art car operate at a mere 30 percent efficiency--and why can't Detroit ever better the odds, no matter what space age materials we invent? Why can't some genius make a perpetual motion machine? The answers lie in the field of thermodynamics, the study of heat, which turns out to be the key to an astonishing number of scientific puzzles. If you want to know what's happening in the physical world, you've got to follow the heat. In *Maxwell's Demon: Why Warmth Disperses and Time Passes*, physics professor Hans Christian von Baeyer tells the story of heat through the lives of the scientists who discovered it, most notably James Clerk Maxwell, whose demonic invention has bedeviled generations of physics students with its light-fingered attempts to flout the laws of thermodynamics. An intelligent, submicroscopic gremlin who could sort atoms as they flew at him, Maxwell's Demon would effectively make an impossible task--forcing heat to flow backward--possible. Explaining why the Demon can't have his day has been an intellectual gauntlet taken up by a century and a half of the world's most brilliant scientists, whose discoveries Professor von Baeyer vividly etches. The centuries-old discipline of thermodynamics informs today's most cutting-edge research in chaos, complexity, and the grand unified theory of everything--physics Holy Grail. Even more amazing, the study of heat turns out to explain something seemingly unrelated--time, and why it can run in only one direction. With his trademark elegant prose, eye for lively detail, and gift for lucid explanation, Professor von Baeyer

turns the contemplation of a cooling teacup into a beguiling portrait of the birth of a science with relevance to almost every aspect of our lives. Readers will find themselves rooting for Maxwells ever-mischievous Demon even as they come to appreciate that he is doomed to failure.

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