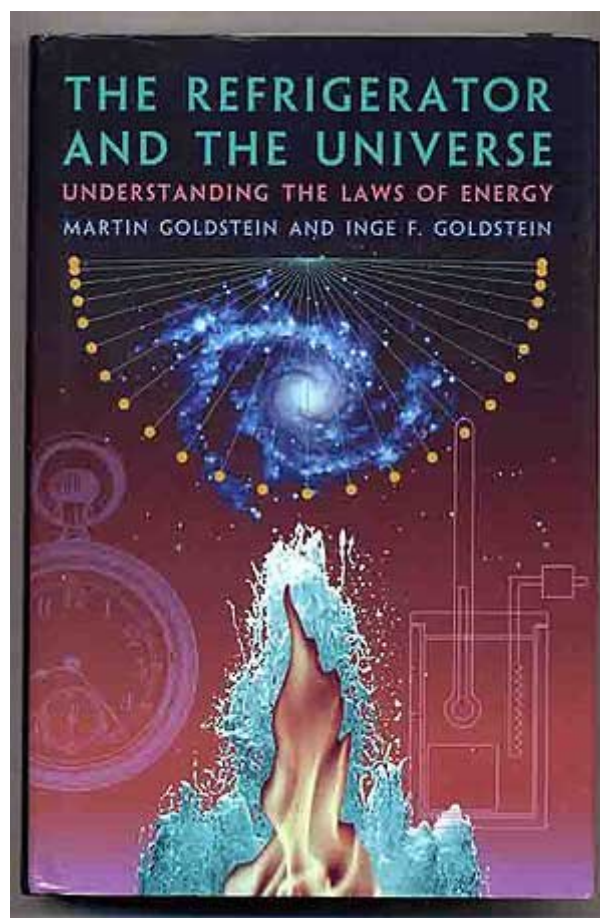
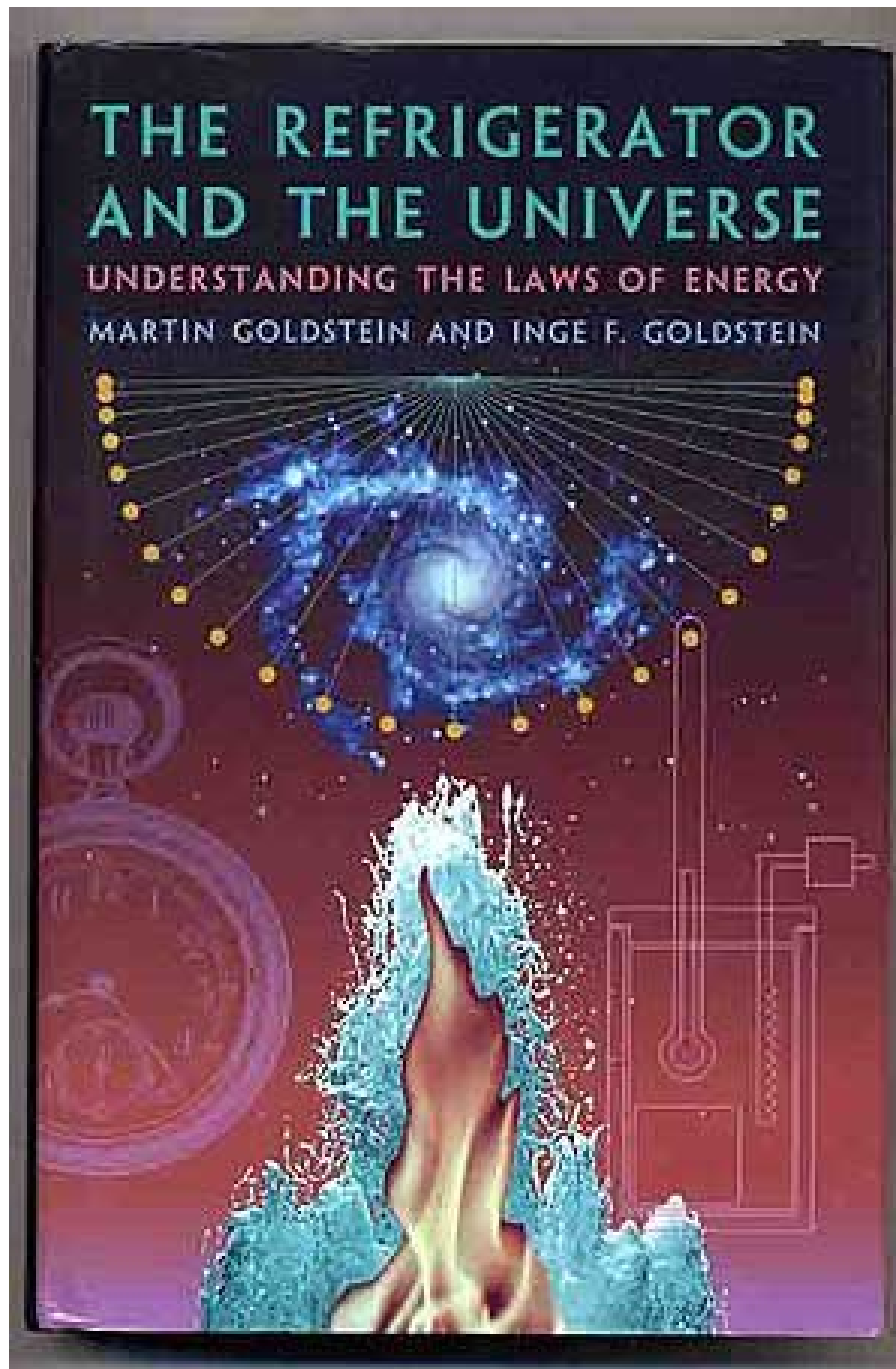


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UNDERSTANDING THE LAWS OF ENERGY
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Review

Readers at all levels, from high school to professional scientists, will find something intriguing in this book...It provides a very readable and informative account of a difficult topic. (Science Books and Films)

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From the Back Cover

C.P. Snow once remarked that not knowing the second law of thermodynamics is like never having read Shakespeare. Yet, while many people grasp the first law of energy, 'Energy can neither be created nor destroyed, ' few recognize the second, 'Entropy can only increase.'

About the Author

Martin Goldstein, is former Professor of Chemistry at Yeshiva University.

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THE REFRIGERATOR AND THE UNIVERSE: UNDERSTANDING THE LAWS OF ENERGY BY MARTIN GOLDSTEIN, INGE F. GOLDSTEIN PDF

C. P. Snow once remarked that not knowing the second law of thermodynamics is like never having read Shakespeare. Yet, while many people grasp the first law of energy, "Energy can neither be created nor destroyed," few recognize the second, "Entropy can only increase." What is entropy anyway, and why must it increase? Whether we want to know how a device as simple as a refrigerator works or understand the fate of the universe, we must start with the concepts of energy and entropy. In *The Refrigerator and the Universe*, Martin and Inge Goldstein explain the laws of thermodynamics for science buffs and neophytes alike. They begin with a lively presentation of the historical development of thermodynamics. The authors then show how the laws follow from the atomic theory of matter and give examples of their applicability to such diverse phenomena as the radiation of light from hot bodies, the formation of diamonds from graphite, how the blood carries oxygen, and the history of the earth. The laws of energy, the Goldsteins conclude, have something to say about everything, even if they do not tell us everything about anything.

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Inge F. Goldstein is Associate Professor of Clinical Public Health in Epidemiology, Columbia University.

Most helpful customer reviews

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful.

A classic account

By Chris C. Hill

Quite a few good to excellent pop science books have been published since this volume was released in 1995. After close to a score of years the Goldsteins' book still stands for this reader as one of the most rewarding. For one thing, the authors are serious about getting historical detail right. They write fluently, but there is a clear expectation that the details of the intellectual adventure, not merely anecdotes, are what will engage and sustain your interest. For those not already well versed in thermodynamics, the book will require closer attention than some other very good books on overlapping topics such as Boltzmann's Atom by David Lindley. The payoff from the Goldsteins' book is, however, exceptional. As with John Derbyshire's Prime Obsession, when you finish this book, you will have much of an insider's understanding of an important but difficult subject (up through the early 1990s), even if you knew little or nothing about it going in. Highly recommended.

9 of 9 people found the following review helpful.

Useful introduction to, or review of, thermodynamics

By A reader

The book presents the three laws of thermodynamics: the first law (conservation of energy) in chapters 1-4, the second law (dispersal of energy) in chapters 5-9, and the third law (low temperature behavior) in chapter 14. Other chapters apply thermodynamics to light, chemistry, biology, geology, and cosmology. The authors present thermodynamics using both classical and statistical mechanical arguments. References are listed for further study of topics.

Although the book is intended for a general audience, the book will be interesting even to a reader who already has some familiarity with thermodynamics because the book probably treats at least a few applications with which he is unfamiliar. The book also makes a number of refreshing admissions about the limits of thermodynamics; for example, thermodynamics can't be strictly applied to living organisms (p. 297), and in general relativity, energy need not be conserved (p. 370).

The book requires a knowledge of simple algebra and logarithms; however, a tutorial on these subjects is presented in an appendix.

8 of 19 people found the following review helpful.

The laws of entropy in the most elementary terms

By Wurkz@webtv.net

This book is truly a gift to those who desire to understand in depth the making of that which exists. The thinking and aggressive search for understanding behind this work has brought the laws of entropy to its most basic level. Knowing that the breakup of order does not designate disorder but instead order to a higher degree, seems to be the rudimentary step in discovery. The question seems to merely be what phase of order is one looking at and through what psychological belief patterns is one viewing the order? Martin Goldstein and Inge F. Goldstein takes one through the phases of development with simplicity and ease. Knowing that order is the framework by which visualization takes place and that disorder fragments vision until the loss of visual effect becomes total, surely gives one a different way by which to understand an environment and its connecting forces. Does change in its most elementary meaning then bring about disorder to an ordered system? Perhaps ordered systems can expand connecting additional knowledge to itself or expand and break apart, all governed according to the forces feeding it. Martin and Inge have certainly begun a cycle of reconsiderations and reevaluations of one's basic pattern of thinking.

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