



The Touchstone of Life: Molecular Information, Cell Communication, and the Foundations of Life

Werner R. Loewenstein

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No one can escape a sense of wonder when looking at an organism from within. From the humblest amoeba to man, from the smallest cell organelle to the amazing human brain, life presents us with example after example of highly ordered cellular matter, precisely organized and shaped to perform coordinated functions. But where does this order spring from? How does a living organism manage to do what nonliving things cannot do—bring forth and maintain all that order against the unrelenting, disordering pressures of the universe? In *The Touchstone of Life*, world-renowned biophysicist Werner Loewenstein seeks answers to these ancient riddles by applying information theory to recent discoveries in molecular biology. Taking us into a fascinating microscopic world, he lays bare an all-pervading communication network inside and between our cells—a web of extraordinary beauty, where molecular information flows in gracefully interlaced circles. Loewenstein then takes us on an exhilarating journey along that web and we meet its leading actors, the macromolecules, and see how they extract order out of the erratic quantum world; and through the powerful lens of information theory, we are let in on their trick, the most dazzling of magician's acts, whereby they steal form out of formlessness. *The Touchstone of Life* flashes with fresh insights into the mystery of life. Boldly straddling the line between biology and physics, the book offers a breathtaking view of that hidden world where molecular information turns the wheels of life. Loewenstein makes these complex scientific subjects lucid and fascinating, as he sheds light on the most fundamental aspects of our existence.



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