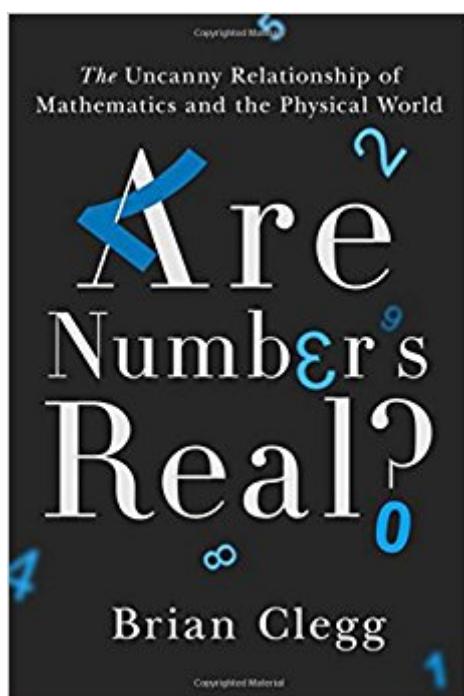


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# Are Numbers Real?: The Uncanny Relationship Of Mathematics And The Physical World



## Synopsis

Have you ever wondered what humans did before numbers existed? How they organized their lives, traded goods, or kept track of their treasures? What would your life be like without them? Numbers began as simple representations of everyday things, but mathematics rapidly took on a life of its own, occupying a parallel virtual world. In *Are Numbers Real?*, Brian Clegg explores the way that math has become more and more detached from reality, and yet despite this is driving the development of modern physics. From devising a new counting system based on goats, through the weird and wonderful mathematics of imaginary numbers and infinity, to the debate over whether mathematics has too much influence on the direction of science, this fascinating and accessible book opens the reader's eyes to the hidden reality of the strange yet familiar entities that are numbers.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"In *Are Numbers Real?* Clegg tackles a very deep question in his usual way; with clarity, wit and a wonderfully clear narrative writing style. For me, numbers are like natural language: they obviously don't exist in a physical sense (you cannot trip over the number '2' in the street) yet numbers are at the heart of understanding the universe. Clegg covers a wide variety of subjects to seek out the truth of the matter in an engaging and hugely accessible way. I personally couldn't put it down, and as an active researcher in the field itself, it has provided me with some very real (?) food for thought." Dr. Peet Morris, University of Oxford

"Brian Clegg's *Are Numbers Real?* is a compact, very readable, and highly entertaining history of the development and use of mathematics to answer the important practical

questions involved in advancing civilization... Even for the reader not versed in the vector calculus used in the statement of Maxwell's Laws, simply seeing the four Laws mathematically stated will induce (certainly the mot juste here) the feeling that this is the way the Universe is meant to be understood. And that sense of wonder permeates the entire book...a superb introduction to mathematics, science, and that branch of philosophy devoted to exploring the nature of reality."

Dr. James Stein, California State University, Long BeachPraise for Brian Clegg:"Satisfying soul food for your inner geek: an enjoyable tour of science fact and fiction by a writer who obviously revels in both." Kirkus Reviews on *Ten Billion Tomorrows*"Clegg accomplishes the impressive feat of persuading readers that ESP might exist, while delivering a delightfully astute examination of...evidence." Kirkus Reviews (starred) on *Extra Sensory*"feeblest of the...universal forces, gravity is the only one we experience continuously. Every inquisitive person should read a book about it, preferably this one...lucid and free of jargon, bad jokes, and math phobia." Kirkus Reviews (starred) on *Gravity*"Clegg's accessible presentation offers insight into everything from Aristotelian science to black holes and string theory as it reveals the complexities...of a familiar force." Publishers Weekly on *Gravity*"Final Frontier is an enjoyable romp across space and time... A timely reminder of what might be possible in the light of current discussions about the commercial exploitation of the Moon and asteroids." John Gribbin, author of *In Search of Schrödinger's Cat*

BRIAN CLEGG is the author of *Ten Billion Tomorrows*, *Final Frontier*, *Extra Sensory*, *Gravity*, *How to Build a Time Machine*, *Armageddon Science*, *Before the Big Bang*, *Upgrade Me*, and *The God Effect* among others. He holds a physics degree from Cambridge and has written regular columns, features, and reviews for numerous magazines. He lives in Wiltshire, England, with his wife and two children.

Ok, good on the history of numbers as a tool but I was left feeling that the question remains unanswered -- are numbers real? Beyond the use of numbers as "abstractions" of actual things I felt it was a bit light on delving into number theory and to what degree numbers themselves, as a construct can be said to be real...

This a great book. I do not have a background in science or mathematics and I found it engaging and fascinating. It's free of unexplained jargon, has a great sense of humor about the inherent nerdy nature of the subject, and makes pretty advanced concepts accessible for the layman to consider.

It's okay.

Great read

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