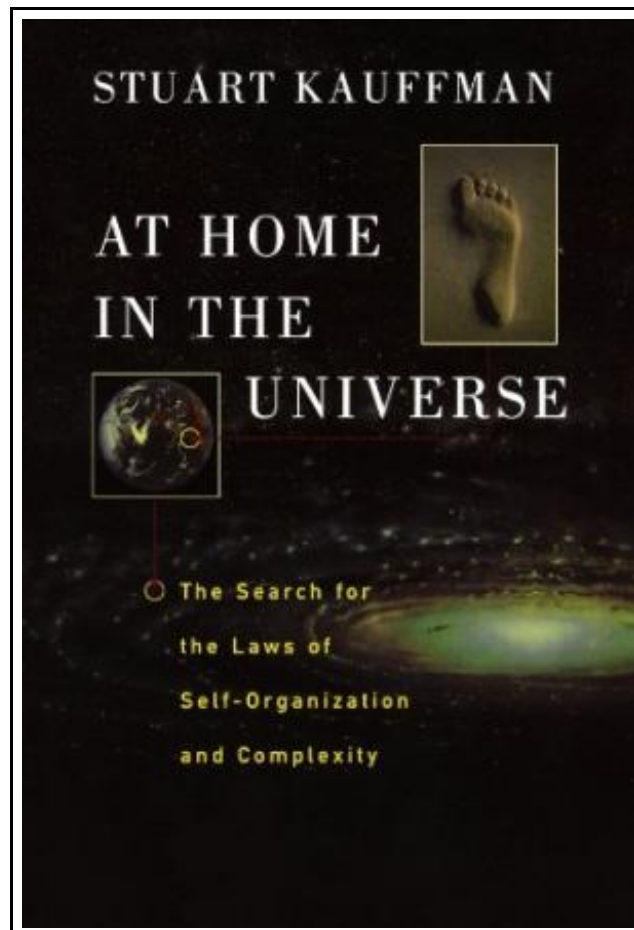


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AT HOME IN THE UNIVERSE: THE SEARCH FOR THE LAWS OF SELF-ORGANIZATION AND COMPLEXITY



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Oxford University Press. Paperback. Book Condition: New. Paperback. 336 pages. Dimensions: 9.1in. x 6.1in. x 0.8in. A major scientific revolution has begun, a new paradigm that rivals Darwin's theory in importance. At its heart is the discovery of the order that lies deep within the most complex of systems, from the origin of life, to the workings of giant corporations, to the rise and fall of great civilizations. And more than anyone else, this revolution is the work of one man, Stuart Kauffman, a MacArthur Fellow and visionary pioneer of the new science of complexity. Now, in *At Home in the Universe*, Kauffman brilliantly weaves together the excitement of intellectual discovery and a fertile mix of insights to give the general reader a fascinating look at this new science--and at the forces for order that lie at the edge of chaos. We all know of instances of spontaneous order in nature--an oil droplet in water forms a sphere, snowflakes have a six-fold symmetry. What we are only now discovering, Kauffman says, is that the range of spontaneous order is enormously greater than we had supposed. Indeed, self-organization is a great undiscovered principle of nature. But how does this spontaneous order arise? Kauffman contends that complexity itself triggers self-organization, or what he calls order for free, that if enough different molecules pass a certain threshold of complexity, they begin to self-organize into a new entity--a living cell. Kauffman uses the analogy of a thousand buttons on a rug--join two buttons randomly with thread, then another two, and so on. At first, you have isolated pairs; later, small clusters; but suddenly at around the 500th repetition, a remarkable transformation occurs--much like the phase transition when water abruptly turns to ice--and the buttons link up in one giant network. Likewise, life may have originated...

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