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Where is mankind located in the Universe? What goes on inside atoms? Was Einstein always right? Will we find extraterrestrial life in the near future? And what should be done about global warming? Sébastien Balibar, a leading authority in physics, uses illuminating stories from his own life to answer the most intriguing questions in the physical sciences today. The Atom and the Apple considers aspects of our environment--the things we see around us, but seldom truly understand--and shows that science can be an exciting adventure grounded in the phenomena of the daily world.

Balibar examines twelve problems spanning the frontiers of physics, and he devotes a chapter to each issue. He looks at chaos theory, cosmology, fluid mechanics, and climatology. He explains how we discovered the age of the Earth, how we know the Universe is expanding ever more rapidly, and why the spiral patterns of pinecones and sunflowers are related to the Golden Ratio in mathematics. He scrutinizes how the collective behavior of atoms leads to such amazing results as lasers, superconductors, or superfluids. As Balibar invites us to appreciate the physics hidden within the sights and sounds of the natural world, he also recounts the experiences of his childhood and career that were pivotal to his lifelong passion for science.

Written for general readers, The Atom and the Apple explores fascinating aspects of our world, and demonstrates why the pursuit of scientific knowledge is well worth everyone's time, regardless of scientific background.