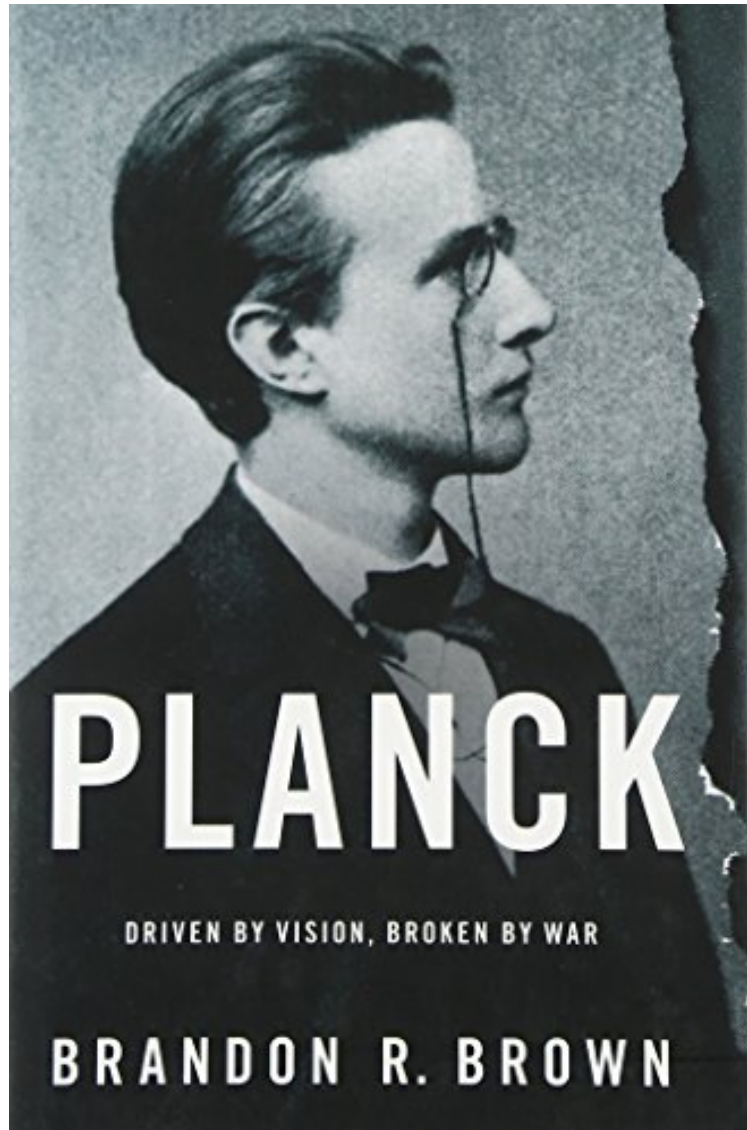


[Free] Planck: Driven by Vision, Broken by War

## Planck: Driven by Vision, Broken by War

*Brandon R. Brown*

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**Brandon R. Brown : Planck: Driven by Vision, Broken by War** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Planck: Driven by Vision, Broken by War:

14 of 14 people found the following review helpful. A deep and rich study of an enigmatic scientist.By goodcampsiteI'm a mathematician, but I majored in history in college, so I often find scientist biographies for laypeople lacking. This book is different: Brown has taken a fascinating and tragic life and turned its story into a artfully layered intellectual and personal history. He fearlessly eschews a linear timeline approach and anchors his

book with events in the 1940s (when Planck was in his 80s, long after his greatest scientific discoveries), intertwining them with his earlier life and his relationships with pretty much all the giants of 20th-century physics (especially, Einstein) as well as Hitler and the Nazis. It's a short book---barely 200 pages---but it's dense and deep and rich. A very thought-provoking book about an enigmatic man, with many insights about the nature of science and impossible choices that people must make in times of war. Highly recommended. 9 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Highly Recommended. By G. Kraai This is a great book. Brandon Brown is an excellent writer who makes everything crisp and clear. The relationship between Einstein and Planck is extremely interesting. I was only vaguely aware of the depth their relationship until I read this book. The book also sheds an interesting light on the Nazi times and the fervent, but blind belief many in Germany had at the time. It is also the sad story of the "h" man immortalized in  $E=h\nu$ , an equation nearly as famous as  $E=mc^2$  of 1 people found the following review helpful. Quantum Theory The Hard Way By CT This is a brilliant book. It won me with its first sentences and held me until its last words. Anyone interested in General history, the history of physics or even just biography should read this book. Max Planck is best known as the discoverer of So-called "quantum physics". He probably would not have made this self-description until he was an old man. When he was young, he was mostly working in the Clausius-Helmholtz school of thermal physics. Planck's careful work on the foundations of thermal physics helped him join the vaunted pantheon of those who discovered the correct statement and practical importance of the "second law of thermodynamics" - that entropy is non-decreasing. Planck's greatest single contributions were noticing that black body radiation formulas worked out correctly if you supposed energy was granular (for whatever reason) and his discovery championing of Einstein. To his we can add: the first demonstration that energy etc. were relativistically invariant, the Fokker-Planck equation, some excellent books on statistical mechanics and the inculcation of high standards in German mathematical physics. But this is only half the story. Max Planck the man was, as the title suggests, destroyed by the world wars. He was a man of old Europe, a Prussian Junker, a man who believed in Nationalism for all, universal truth, responsible institutions and - in essence - everything that died with Hitler's rise. Planck saw his purpose as being the head of an institution that would push forward German science, but not in a narrow way. Racial, religious and sexual requirements were foreign to him, the only criteria that made sense to him was quality of work (being a conservative, he played lip service to such concerns but his actions demonstrate what I have said). Unfortunately, as Orwell pointed out in one of his essays on Kipling, this kind of conservative was an impossibility after Hitler. When there were no more responsible institutions to be faithful to, faithful service becomes impossible. This is on a very abstract level. The fact is that Planck not only was not only not prepared for the world wars on an intellectual level, but they destroyed his entire family. Hitler had his last remaining son shot. Planck was an enormously fit man, but this only gave him the sorrow of seeing his family destroyed. As I said at the beginning, this is a great book. Well written, well conceived and worth reading. Highly recommended.

Max Planck is credited with being the father of quantum theory, and his work was described by his close friend Albert Einstein as "the basis of all twentieth-century physics." But Planck's story is not well known, especially in the United States. A German physicist working during the first half of the twentieth century, his library, personal journals, notebooks, and letters were all destroyed with his home in World War II. What remains, other than his contributions to science, are handwritten letters in German shorthand, and tributes from other scientists of the time. In *Planck: Driven by Vision, Broken by War*, Brandon R. Brown interweaves the voices and writings of Planck, his family, and his contemporaries--with many passages appearing in English for the first time--to create a portrait of a groundbreaking physicist working in the midst of war. Planck spent much of his adult life grappling with the identity crisis of being an influential German with ideas that ran counter to his government. During the later part of his life, he survived bombings and battlefields, surgeries and blood transfusions, all the while performing his influential work amidst a violent and crumbling Nazi bureaucracy. When his son was accused of treason, Planck tried to use his standing as a German "national treasure," and wrote directly to Hitler to spare his son's life. Brown tells the story of Planck's friendship with the far more outspoken Albert Einstein, and shows how his work fits within the explosion of technology and science that occurred during his life. This story of a brilliant man living in a dangerous time gives Max Planck his rightful place in the history of science, and it shows how war-torn Germany deeply impacted his life and work.

One of The London Times' Best History Books of 2015. Selected as one of the Best Science Books of 2015 by Science for the People. One of Scientific American's June 2015 recommended titles. One of Discover's recommended reads for the summer of 2015. Selected as one of Choice's 2015 Outstanding Academic Titles in the History of Science Technology category. Honorable Mention, 2016 Prose Award: Popular Science Popular Mathematics 2016 Housatonic Book Award for Non-Fiction Recipient. "Max Planck's name is one of the best known in twentieth-century physics and Planck's story is one of the least known. Brandon Brown's eminently readable book helps us get to know better this giant of science." --Istvan Hargittai, author of *Martians of Science*, Budapest University of Technology and Economics "Planck had his flaws, but readers of this engrossing, insightful, and definitive biography will share

Brown's admiration and agree that he deserves his iconic reputation." --Publisher's Weekly, starred review "[Planck's] latest biographer, physics professor Brandon Brown, is his best: searching, sympathetic, and technically informed. ... He's a lively writer and a first-rate explainer... Certainly a worthwhile thing to read..." --Open Letters Monthly"Like Max Planck, the subject of his fascinating and deeply moving new book, Brandon Brown assembles prose "in the manner of a master watch maker," placing readers with care and precision in the heart of history, science, friendship, and family. The book throbs with the warmth and tragedy of human connections, and it is suspenseful on many levels: cultural, emotional, intellectual. Einstein once said Planck pursued science from a hunger in his soul: Brown's book proceeds with a similar pure urgency. Seldom have life, work, and love, and their nourishing intersections, been so well, so attentively, and so beautifully described." -- Tracy Daugherty, author of *The Last Love Song: A Biography of Joan Didion*, *Just One Catch: A Biography of Joseph Heller*, and *Hiding Man: A Biography of Donald Barthelme*. "Planck is beautifully written, dramatic, engaging, and completely accessible. ... This engrossing and surprising book helps us understand some of the deepest and most fascinating topics in physics, while it also shows how personal relationships shaped the history of science. -- Laura Helmuth, Science and Health Editor, Slate magazine"[T]his biography looks more deeply into the mind and personality of its subject than many scientific biographies. And Planck's life is worth examining for the lessons it illustrates about scientists working within a society that values ideology over intelligence." --Science News"[T]here's ... an important story to be told about these tragedies, and its told rather perfectly by Brandon Brown... Wonderful." --London Times"Max Planck is a compelling character and Brown's fervour is inspiring. He has done a great service by shedding light on the life and work of a very brilliant though troubled individual, 'father of quantum theory' and witness to the greatest upheavals of the 20th century." --History Today"Brown paints an intimate portrait of Planck in lithe, lively prose and avoids the worshipful tones that sometimes mark popular scientific biographies. ... Although this is a popular history that focuses more on its subject's life than his work, Brown demonstrates careful attention to the historical literature. The brief discussions of the scientific research conducted by Planck and his cohort, interspersed throughout, are deftly described and true to their times. The story of Planck's life is a remarkable one, and no fuller or more readable account exists in the English language. Highly recommended." --CHOICE"The life of Max Planck, 'father of quantum theory,' smacks of enigma: his personal papers were mostly destroyed in the Second World War. Physicist Brandon Brown has mined what survived for this illuminating biography." --Nature"Brown's engaging biography of Planck is beautifully written and will be accessible to a broad readership of physicists and historians. It is popular history of science at its best." --Physics Today"Planck is an illuminating and thought-provoking book about one of physics' near-greats and his troubled times." --Physics World"Historians of leading physicists and their complex scientific theories will appreciate Brown's inclusion of many of them here. ... Understanding the science is not necessary to appreciate the main points of the book, however." --H-Net Online"I loved every aspect of this engaging portrait of Max Planck." --Naomi Pasachoff, MetascienceAbout the AuthorBrandon R. Brown is a Professor of Physics at the University of San Francisco. His biophysics work on the electric sense of sharks, as covered by NPR and the BBC, has appeared in *Nature*, *The Physical*, and other research journals. His writing for general audiences has appeared in *New Scientist*, *SEED*, the *Huffington Post*, and other outlets.