



Dimension of Miracles

Robert Sheckley

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It had to be somewhere, Carmody knew that much. It was waiting for him, just as he had left it. But where? He only knew he was in the center of a galaxy in a universe of galaxies. Within them lay endless varieties of the planet Earth. And there was only one way to find his Earth again: he would have to visit each one. And he would have to hurry--because his search for home had turned into a race with death.

Dimension of Miracles Details

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From Reader Review Dimension of Miracles for online ebook

Ben De Bono says

Most reviews of Dimension of Miracles seem to stress the novel's relation to Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy. While there are similarities, I'm not sure that comparison holds up. Where Hitchhiker's is laugh out loud funny, the humor here is more internally amusing. Where Douglas Adams is scattershot, Robert Sheckley gives a pretty straightforward plot. Adams' pessimism comes across as increasingly angry and cynical as the series goes on. Sheckley's is more sad and resigned.

The two works do complement each other well, but Dimension of Miracles is very much its own experience. That's a good thing to my mind. Robert Sheckley's book is too interesting and thoughtful to be forced to suffer under the weight of undue comparison to Hitchhiker's Guide

Vit Babenco says

“The right to be wrong is fundamental throughout the cosmos.”

If there is a mess on earth, the cosmic mess is much messier... And **Robert Sheckley** was the one to open our eyes:

“You provincials are all alike, filled with impossible dreams of order and perfection, which are mere idealized projections of your own incompleteness. You should know by now that life is a sloppy affair, that power tends to break things up rather than put things together, and that the greater the intelligence, the higher the degree of complication which it detects.”

And cosmic philosophy is much more profound:

“Order is merely a primitive and arbitrary relational grouping of objects in the chaos of the Universe...”

And those who play the role of God have their own cosmic theology:

“I am doubtless as vain as the next God; but the endless fulsome praise finally bored me to distraction. Why in God's name should a God be praised if he is only performing his Godly function? You might as well praise an ant for doing his blind antly duties.”

And of course galactic bureaucracy acquires a cosmic size so there are mile and miles, well, there are light years of red tape.

“The artificial consciousness personalizes me, which is very important in an age of depersonalization,” – this is exactly our modern computerized epoch...

Irena says

Absolutely brilliant. Tour de force of masterful absurdity, the treasury of paradoxes, the bliss of irony and humor. I first read Dimension of Miracles some 30 years ago as a teenager and enjoyed it back then, but now I am totally infatuated with its sheer brilliance. It was written before The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, and Douglas Adams claimed he read it only after he wrote the Guide, but the similarity of tone and mood is amazing. This may be a dangerous thing to say, but I think that Dimension of Miracles is deeper and richer beneath the same light tone sparkling with paradoxes and irony it shares with the Guide. It's a short book, but it has multiple dimensions (just like its title) and is packed with thought provoking delights.

It's a shame that with the exception of the recently released audio book *Dimension of Miracles* seems to be more easily obtainable and better known in many non-English speaking countries of Europe (France, Russia, Italy, Spain) than in US or UK.

Jamie says

How is this not more well known? This is like the granddaddy of absurd intergalactic misadventure tales, published over ten years before Douglas Adams' *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*!

The story follows an unlucky schlemiel trying to return home to Earth (and the correct one among an infinity of alternate universe Earths) after unsuspectingly winning the galactic sweepstakes. During the journey he gets a behind the scenes look at the absurd inner workings of the cosmos, the nature of god, reality and everything in between. Most of which he finds somewhat tedious. And all the while is pursued by a deadly predator of sorts. Good sci-fi comedy is hard to pull off, but Sheckley manages a superb job, in what feels like should be an enduring classic.

From Neil Gaiman's blog <http://journal.neilgaiman.com/2013/03...> -

"It's been one of my favourite books for years, and I remember Douglas Adams telling me how shaken he was to read *Dimension of Miracles* and watch someone doing something a lot like the *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* a decade before he did."

Jakk Makk says

Sheckley's finest. The writing equivalent of stepping in sun-baked gum on hot summer asphalt. The kind of plot even the editorial team of *Superman Family* would reject. But hey, talking dinosaurs with day jobs and interstellar bureaucracy. Sheckley: wanted by the consistency police for plots against humanity.

Roger says

Dimension of Miracles by Robert Sheckley is the original *Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy*. I mean it is the definitive comedy space opera novel. It follows the interstellar adventures of typical American businessman Tom Carmody after he very surprisingly wins the Intergalactic Sweepstakes. A messenger takes Carmody to the Galactic Center to claim his Prize, but Carmody has no clue how to get back home; the where, when and which of his Earth is required information he lacks. So together with his Prize they seek help getting back to the correct Earth, appealing to Gods, Planet Contractors, and others, all the while pursued by Carmody's personal Predator. The humor can't be done justice in a review, of course, you have to read it for yourself; several parts had me laughing out loud and the rest is an amusing, thought-provoking page-turner.

Here are a few sample quotations:

"Very few humans (except the insane ones) accept the premise of insanity in favor of a startling new hypothesis."

"Machines! We have many of them, some exquisitely complex. But even the best of them are like idiot savants. They do adequately on tedious straightforward tasks like building stars or destroying planets. But give them something tough, like solacing a window, and they simply go to pieces."

"In short, Earth is a diseased place. I believe it is being phased out of the Galactic Master Plan on the basis of chronic cosmic incompatibility. The place will then be rehabilitated and turned into a refuge for daffodils."

"An error exists by virtue of its consequences, which alone give it resonance and meaning. An error which is not perpetuated cannot be viewed as any error at all. An inconsequential and reversible error is the merest dab of superficial piety. I say, better to commit no error at all than to commit an act of pious hypocrisy!"

"This is what has happened to you, Carmody. You have left your normal habitat, which also means that you have left your normal predators. No automobiles can stalk you here, no virus can creep into your bloodstream, no policeman can shoot you down by mistake."

"The rules, doctrines, axioms, laws, and principles of science are there to help you, not to hinder you. They're there in order to provide you with reasons for what you do. Most of them are true, more or less, and that helps."

Pamela says

Before Douglas Adams, there was Robert Sheckley. Before "Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy," there was "Dimension of Miracles."

This is a very strange book to read. Strange not only because the plot is so twisted and weird it's pretty much impossible to tell with a straight face--it involves a lottery ticket that was never purchased, a prize that rivals the Major Award in "Christmas Story," and lots of other things--but the writing...oh my goodness The Writing!

To compare the writing to Douglas Adams would be a disservice to Sheckley since he came before Adams, but they are definitely of the same cloth. In short, if you enjoyed HHGtG, then you will love DoM. If you didn't, you won't.

Mike says

I picked this up from Audible when I had some cash on my account that was about to expire. It caught my attention, because it was one of the Neil Gaiman Presents selections. I really like Gaiman's work and I figured I would probably also like a book that he recommends. I was right.

Dimension of Miracles was amusing, witty, and well-written. In many ways, it was like Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, only it came first. It begins when Tom Carmody is whisked away from his New York apartment upon accidentally winning the galactic lottery. In his exploits thereafter, he meets a number of strange characters on several interesting worlds as he attempts to return to Earth.

My favorite part was probably when Tom was transported to Earth during the dinosaur age and proceeds to have a very charming conversation with a Tyrannosaurus Rex.

John Hodgman was an excellent choice to narrate this novel. I thought his tone perfectly embodied the author's dry wit.

Overall, the novel was quite enjoyable. The story was light and amusing, but still had some deeper points as

well. It won't go down as my all-time favorite, but it was still a fun read that I would recommend to anyone looking for a comedic sci-fi story.

Manny says

[The hero, Thomas Carmody, has been taken from Earth to receive a Prize in the Ga

?Misericordia? ~ The Serendipity Aegis ~ ?????? ✨*♥♥ says

Q:

Wherever you go in the galaxy, you can find a food business, a house-building business, a war business, a peace business, a governing business, and so forth. And, of course, a God business, which is called 'religion,' and which is a particularly reprehensible line of endeavor. (c)

Mike says

Comic science fiction isn't a genre that appeals to me that much, but this was as charmingly dated as a Bradbury story and as fresh and current as an episode of *Rick and Morty*. I listened to the audiobook, terrifically read by John Hodgman; if anyone would like it, holler at me and I'll Dropbox it to you.

Manuel Antão says

If you're into stuff like this, you can read the full review.

Homo Ludens: "Dimension of Miracles" by Robert Sheckley

Viva la dialecticacacaca! Anyway, on the unitary consciousness and death, here is a very nice excerpt from Robert Sheckley's "Dimension of Miracles", in which the hero (Carmody) has a chat with a God (Melichrone):

"I abolished them," Melichrone said. "I did away with all life on my planet, living and otherwise, and I also deleted the Hereafter. Frankly, I needed time to think."

"Huh," Carmody said, shocked.

"In another sense, though, I didn't destroy anything or anyone," Melichrone said hastily. "I simply gathered the fragments of myself

back into myself." Melichrone grinned suddenly. "I had quite a number of wild-eyed fellows who were always talking about attaining a oneness with Me. They've attained it now, that's for sure!"

"Perhaps they like it that way," Carmody suggested.

"How can they know? Melichrone said. "Oneness with Me means Me; it necessarily involves loss of the consciousness which examines one's oneness. It is exactly the same as death, though it sounds much nicer."

I love all that Robert Sheckley kind of stuff.

Becky says

I am a big fan of both The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy and Neil Gaiman, so when I saw that this was one of Neil's recommended/produced audiobooks, and that it was very similar to HHGTTG (though it came first), I decided to give it a listen.

And it was... interesting. It was quirky and different, and some parts of it had me giggling, but I didn't like it nearly as much as I'd hoped to. I thought about this book for a full day before writing this review, trying to figure out what I thought about it rather than just doing a knee-jerk review (as is my usual style), but I don't think it made a difference, or at least not one in favor of the book. The more I think about it, the more disappointed I am in it.

For one, I think there's just something about British humor (is it "humour" when it's British?) that just does it for me. If I had to put my finger on exactly what it is that makes it so appealing to me, but I think it's the sheer outrageousness combined with a straight-faced "Yeah, I said it. What? You know you want to laugh. Go on, then. Laugh." quality. It's just so dry and almost serious that that in itself makes me laugh because it's so absurd. And that makes me happy. I love it.

Dimension of Miracles is American, which can be funny too, and while it was certainly absurd and quirky, it just didn't strike that funny nerve in me. There were some things that did, like the toddler T-Rex, but on the whole, it just didn't really mesh with my sense of humor. (No "u" this time. I'm American.)

Secondly, DOM is short. Very short. The audio was 5 hours, and the book is around 190 pages, depending on which edition you look at. I felt like it should have been longer, a little more fleshed out, a little more... something. HHGTTG is the trilogy that just won't quit, which gives the story time to grow and fully be something other than just random slideshow pauses.

"...And here's when I visited wrong Which Earth #3. That city was so dull and naggy! Nag nag nagnagnag! Pretty! Yes, pretty, and I could have and do anything I wanted, because I was the only one there, but my goodness was that city controlling. And then I couldn't take the nagging and passive-aggressiveness anymore and I left.

And wrong Which Earth #4 is..."

Dull. That's what it was.

There are quite a lot of similarities to the two stories, like how worlds are created, and the atheistic leaning, and interesting physics and philosophy questions, though again I have to say that I prefer HHGTTG's storyline to DOM's, because, oddly, it seemed more realistic. I found it a little hard to believe that a Galactic Lottery system would be able to select a winner out of billions of possible entities, locate that winner, teleport a messenger to alert the winner, who never even knew the lottery existed, let alone entered, transport said winner back to the Galactic Lottery headquarters for processing (promising that they'd be returned afterward, mind you), award the prize, and then not be able to actually return them because there's a rule against calculating where/when/which coordinates for non-winner-selection purposes. I mean, it's ridiculously bureaucratic enough to be realistic, but I remain unconvinced. Carmody should have asked for a supervisor, and then their supervisor, and so on, until he got his ride home.

But he didn't. And so he tries to find his own way. Or, that's the most succinct way I can think of to say that he's entirely useless and that well-meaning aliens/people/gods/whatever shuttle him around space & time in search of his Earth, repeatedly saving his ass from a Predator that spawned out of the out-of-true nature of the universe because Carmody isn't where he's supposed to be, and will hunt him until he either returns to his proper Earth or is eaten.

Carmody is accompanied throughout space & time by his Prize, which is sentient, rather annoying, and I-still-don't-know-what-it-was-other-than-that. Really. The Prize is the damn catalyst for the story, and I have no idea what it actually was. Why was it worth winning? What is its value? I know its value to Carmody as a companion, now, but what is the value that the Galactic Lottery folks thought that they were giving away? Honestly, if it weren't for the Prize's constantly referred to self-aware prizedom status, I'd swear that the Lottery folks "awarded" away their irritating know-it-all intern just to get him out of their hair or something.

Finally, the ending of the book just really annoyed me. I get it, and I get that it's supposed to be profound and brave, and whatever, but I just can't help thinking that it's pretty damn selfish and entitled, and any small liking that I had for inept and dull Carmody was wiped out with his final decision. (view spoiler)

So, yeah. I wanted to like this one quite a bit, but that ending ruined it.

Waco Glennon says

What a spectacular book. I have read Sheckley before, but not this novel. I was in for a real treat. Due to an error, Tom Carmody has won an intergalactic lottery. Please disregard the fact that Carmody had no clue there was any life outside of Earth, let alone they had contests and he was someone an entrant. Carmody takes this news with poise and he collects his Prize after a challenge from another contestant. Oh yeah, the Prize....is sentient.

From here, Carmody goes on an adventure to find three pieces of information about home. He needs to know the Where, the Which, and the When. There are people who hold him up and help in equal measure. He constantly encounters beings who are far more powerful but seem unable to avoid meddling.

Add to this he is being pursued by a predator.

In the end, this is a novel about the peculiarities of life and how it drives all players crazy. I find Carmody's final response to be incredibly sane.

By the way, this book is often cited as Hitchhikers' Guide before there was a Hitchhikers' Guide. If you like Douglas Adams, try this book. One last thing, I listened to the audiobook of this novel. It was introduced by Neil Gaiman and narrated by John Hodgman. Stellar!

Anna says

Order is merely a primitive and arbitrary relational grouping of objects in the chaos of the Universe.

Absurd in a Hitchhikeresque way, published a decade before The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy. Absurd and sometimes hilariously funny, sometimes convolutedly philosophical.

Carmody was a quiet man, of a predominantly melancholic humour, with a face that neatly matched the elegiac contours of his disposition. He was somewhat above the average in height and self-deprecation. His posture was bad, but his intentions were good. He had a talent for depression.

Carmody has won a Prize in the Intergalactic Sweepstakes, and is taken to the Galactic Centre to collect it. He then somehow has to get back to Earth, which is no mean feat. And so his adventures and temporal, spatial and philosophical meanderings begin. Earth isn't **where** it was when he left; if he gets back comes the question: **when** does he get back – in his own time or not (not) and of the possible Earths, **which** is his? Infinite (im)possibilities.
