



Empire of the Stars: Friendship, Obsession and Betrayal in the Quest for Black Holes

Arthur I. Miller

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In August 1930, on a voyage by boat from Bombay to England, the young Indian scientist Subrahmanyan Chandrasekhar—Chandra, as he was called—looked up at the stars and contemplated their fate. He calculated that certain stars would suffer a violent death, collapsing almost to nothing. This extraordinary claim, the first mathematical description of black holes, rankled one of the foremost astrophysicists of the day, Sir Arthur Eddington. When Chandra expounded his theory in front of the Royal Astronomical Society in 1935, Eddington subjected him to humiliating public ridicule, setting into motion one of the greatest scientific feuds of the 20th century—and hindering the progress of astrophysics for nearly 40 years. In its clash of personalities, epochs, and cultures, this story reveals the deep-seated psychological and philosophical prejudices at work in the acceptance and rejection of new scientific ideas.

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