



Discipline

Paco Ahlgren

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Douglas Cole is being hunted - and protected - but he doesn't know it. His life has been shattered by inexplicable tragedy, his mind haunted by ominous visions, and yet the more he questions the horrifying events plaguing him, the more elusive the answers become.

Discipline Details

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Author : Paco Ahlgren

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Topher says

Not entirely sure what shelf to file this under - a bit of magical realism, a la the south american novelists, but with a focus on tao and economics.

I'm a little surprised at how well those two went together. And, I really had to read any book that included a 'suggested reading' section at the end with both "the tao of physics" and the complete works of Benjamin Graham.

Pretty good book.

Jesiah says

This book is currently holding it's place as my favorite book. It brings many different concepts together to create it's own unique universe where parallel universes, the modern day economy and drug abuse seamlessly intertwine to create one of the best stories I've had the pleasure of reading through. Pay particular attention to the first three to four chapters though because they come back countless times throughout the rest of the story.

Arlo says

Discipline is a great book on many levels, and very relevant to what is going on in the world today. Paco Ahlgren gently uses a couple of key concepts from quantum physics and a deep understanding of economics to build a story of global economic crisis and survival, weaving it into a tale that is exciting, mysterious, and fun to read.

The social climate of the story feels just like home, and if you're a sucker for a new scientific angle, the way Ahlgren uses quantum physics to further the story and develop the premise will delight and amuse you. If on the other hand, it sounds like a turn-off, rest assured there are no lengthy explanations of the science involved, and if that kind of thing makes your head hurt you will still be able to enjoy this book.

Taking a look into global economics, psychology, science fact and fiction, human nature, and destiny, this excellent work has something to appeal to everyone.

Darrendriven says

It wasn't quite what I was expecting, and it seemed to transmogrify from a very personal individual account for most of the book into a more global story near the end. Started REALLY strong and I couldn't put the book down, but I felt that the author lost steam as the last few chapters closed. Still a great book, though, and anyone that enjoys time travel stories in a more realistic setting would enjoy this.

Joan says

Intriguing tidbits on quantum physics, Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle, leading to Hugh Everett's Many Worlds Theory and David Deutsch's Parallel Universes gave me the idea early on that this book would be pretty far out, and yet have some substance. This is an "Advance Reader's Edition" – actually got it free when I bought a couple of books at the Erie Bookstore, and it was in need of some editing. The plot gets a kick start with a very weird horror scene, which might be enough to discourage squeamish readers. But then a plot with rich details of chess matches and futures trading begins and just enough mystical cosmic stuff happening to hook you into the book. The story is told in chronological time in first person, but there is an element of time travel that becomes an integral part of the plot – if only you can figure it out. Is this a Tao tale or a tall tale? Is this a science fiction story, a thriller, a horror story, or all of the above? Unfortunately, near the middle, things got bogged down. Still I plowed through to the end. I started wondering if the author had a glimpse into the future – in the story, a total world-wide economic collapse occurs – piloted, it seems by an evil genius. The way out of the financial chaos is one of the more interesting aspects of the plot.

Theresa Leone Davidson says

Dear Mr. Ahlgren,

Readers always appreciate when authors attempt to tell you, in an arrogant, needling fashion, the meaning of life, especially in some convoluted mess of a story, and at the end even supply a recommended reading list, although, like myself, most of the titles we've already read. Nevertheless, your superiority runs through this long, tedious novel, one in which only the first 50 or so pages seems authentic or, for that matter, well written. One can't even characterize the story: it's a mishmash of horror, science fiction, and at its core, simply a story of a drug addict, the lows to which he will drop to get a fix, all incredibly repetitive, and told too many other times by too many other, better writers. Moreover, your grasp of economics and politics, always a fun addition to an already boring novel, is tenuous at best, despite the many, many years you claim to have spent working in finance (this is stated next to a photo of someone who looks to be about 12, so perhaps that's your son). Your next book, sir, could sell more copies than the Bible and I wouldn't read it. I now know why I was able to purchase this book for only a penny from a used book store, sold to the store by someone who actually got your signed autograph on the inside of the book! I don't suppose she thought much of it either.

Sheesh - I hate wasting valuable reading time on CRAP. NO STARS.

Chris says

I met Paco Ahlgren in a Borders when he ran through the aisles passing out copies of his first book, Discipline. He said something like, 'Hey, I wrote this book. Check it out and I'll sign it for you if you're interested in reading it - no pressure.' I had never personally met someone at a book signing and, it being his first book, I thought it might be tough for him when there's not too many people at his table. In any case, I

turned right to the copyright page to see under which categories this book is listed, and I thought, 'Interesting - I'll buy it.' So he signed it and off I went.

Let's fast forward a month and a half when I finally have time to read it. At first I thought the book was a little self-important and sensationalist. But then I thought, well, it's his first book - maybe it doesn't start the best, but I like the topics that the book claims to be about - and continued reading. Before I knew it, I couldn't really put it down..except when I had to, which was all too often, unfortunately. Ahlgren's character is developed quite well, but the others not so much. That's okay because that wasn't the point. I thought that some of the dialogue was stilted and unrealistic at times. But did I care? No, not really. I was more interested in the plot and the events, which I thought were fantastic. For someone who is a musician, works in finance, studies Eastern literature and philosophy, and likes chess (but can't really play it) like me, this book was a great match. Sometimes, I thought it was written for me...minus the drug habit - I have a phobia about things like that. Plus I liked Empire Star by Samuel R. Delany, which this book seems to mimic somewhat (i.e. the character that goes from rather stupid/simple and a little repulsive/dirty to multiplex and likable; the fact that the book is a loop in time).

Anyway, it's really a great voyage of a book and Ahlgren should be well congratulated. I wish I would have spent more time talking with him when we met. I can't wait for his next book and I hope he'll sign it for me again!

Brooke Jones says

This book is decent but over the top technical in terms of explaining time loops and financial banking.

Character development was good and it was interesting overall however it was too much for me to read large quantities in one sitting.

Megan says

Very interesting and intriguing concepts spanning eastern philosophy, economics, politics, and physics, basically all the lenses through which we view the world. Therein lies the inherent problem of this book, it's simply trying to do too much. You can feel the author trying in each word. I prefer not to be beaten over the head with concepts, but instead to let them flow naturally. Ironically this is one of the things this book tries to make us change about the way we look at the world, it's trying to make us stop forcing things and just let things wash over us.

Jennifer says

Meh, it was way too narrate-y (for lack of better term). This happened and then that happened and then that happened. Descriptions were a bit too straightforward rather than made with subtle impressions. There wasn't much of a weave, which I'm partial to in my fiction.

Truth be told, I didn't make it all the way through the book. I probably read 1/2 - 2/3. There was a time when I would see any book I started through to the end, but I've lately come to the conclusion that time is too

precious to read something that doesn't grab me.

Ed Fire says

The ending was cool. I also loved his universal approach to things.

Ian Forsyth says

It started out promising (with that hooky sort of commercial fiction style) because of the ideas I assumed would be explored: quantum mechanics, parallel universes, etc. through fictional characters.

But then it just devolved into bullshit about finance and currency that seems to be heavily influenced by warren buffet and libertarian philosophy etc

I thought it might go somewhere interesting but in the end it just wasted that, guess i could expect that somewhere halfway through the book

Zoe Rider says

After reading the excerpt and seeing the 48 5-star reviews on Amazon, I was excited to get this book and start in on it. The opening is vivid and visceral--it's the excerpt I read. (The jacket copy is likewise excellent, by the way.) Beyond the opening, there are some engaging scenes--family stuff involving the main character (Douglas), his dad, and his little brother, and sometimes friend-of-the-family Jack. In between and around those scenes was a lot of stuff that made me roll my eyes, or wish that it had been handled more...deftly. The author had to set up some special things about the main character, but they went over like lead balloons with me. And then the five pages of Jack explaining quantum physics to Douglas....

And, you know, some of the writing is just really, really good--but it's offset by really, really flat stuff like this:

As we drove down my street, something seemed out of order. Even in the dark I could see several unfamiliar vehicles parked in front of our house, one of which was a police car.

I recently read a blog post by Matthew Cheney in which Cheney was trying to pinpoint what it is that bothers him about many contemporary novels these days. Here are some of the highlights from his post and the comments to it:

"too much...intrusive analysis"

"my brain isn't being engaged enough"

"the abstraction sends my readerly brain down paths it finds dull and vacant"

"The details in stories seem to be presented too clearly, too obviously"

"Background information that should be made important through implication, not assertion."

"every time I pick [up Dan Simmons' THE TERROR] and try to read the first page, I feel as if he's just telling me all there is to know, leaving no room for inference or any sense of richness beyond the bare words"

"part of it might be the sense that the 'author' (as in the outside agency and not merely the story writer) is too visible in the text, almost as if the gears were seen poking through a windup toy, ruining the simulacrum of a 'live' story"

"distracted from the story itself by the explanatory intrusions and other various small niggling bits that don't permit me to forget "that little man behind the curtain"

(The full blog post is [here](#))

I quote these because they so well describe my experience with DISCIPLINE.

And what frustrates me most is that, judging from the bits that *do* work, Paco Ahlgren had the potential to make this a fantastic book. Missed potential gets under my skin like nothing else.

Maybe he'll hit closer to his potential with his next book. Unfortunately, if it's a sequel to DISCIPLINE (one of the Amazon reviews mentioned he was working on one), I'll have to take an automatic pass on it.

Laura says

Many of the reviews capture the book's shortcomings. The premise is interesting enough, but the story gets bogged down in explanations, descriptions, and events, failing to move the plot forward at a decent pace. The author also leaves several several loose ends--not in the intriguing way that keeps you thinking about the book long after you've finished but more in the "What? How did he write 400 pages and still not resolve that" kind of a way.

Liviu says

Very interesting read and quite absorbing but the sfnal content is over-familiar and the big final twist is obvious many pages before the end to any seasoned sf reader. Since a lot of the impact of the novel depends on that final twist, Discipline falls a bit short from what it could have been.

I would have liked to read this book 1000 sf novels earlier since then I would have probably been bowled over by it, but even so its emotional impact is powerful to make it a worthwhile read.
