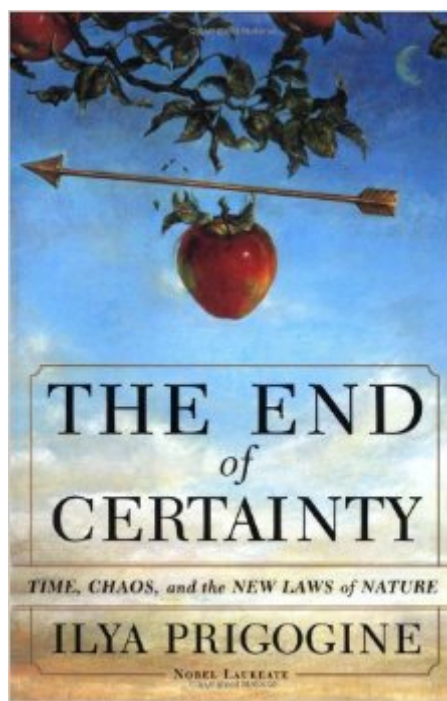


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The End Of Certainty



Synopsis

Time, the fundamental dimension of our existence, has fascinated artists, philosophers, and scientists of every culture and every century. All of us can remember a moment as a child when time became a personal reality, when we realized what a "year" was, or asked ourselves when "now" happened. Common sense says time moves forward, never backward, from cradle to grave. Nevertheless, Einstein said that time is an illusion. Nature's laws, as he and Newton defined them, describe a timeless, deterministic universe within which we can make predictions with complete certainty. In effect, these great physicists contended that time is reversible and thus meaningless.

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Customer Reviews

Many people presume that the integration of various domains of science into a single unified "superscience" will ultimately show that everything reduces to physics. In fact, one earlier reviewer of "The End of Certainty" closed his review saying, "Biology is, in the end, physics." There is a way in which biology could be "reduced" to physics, but only if we learn to define "physics" very differently than we do today. Prigogine shows why biology CANNOT be reduced to context-independent, deterministic contemporary physics. (Read Robert Rosen's "Essays on Life Itself" for the most profound and fundamental explanation, based on non-integrable, complex, "impredicative loops of efficient causation".) "The End of Certainty" is an important work because it points toward a revolutionary realignment of fundamental physical principles, theoretical perspectives, and even scientific methodology. In fact, it draws together many of the crucial elements that ultimately will result in the inevitable emergence of a fundamentally transformed model of scientific epistemology.

It's an important snapshot of a pivotal stage in the evolution of scientific knowledge. There has not been a coherent major shift in the foundational paradigms of physical science since the emergence of relativity and quantum physics in the early 20th century. The pioneers of those physical models, if not the models themselves, behaved as feuding brothers from the start. That disputatious relationship is perhaps best typified by Einstein's famous rebuke of the indeterminacy of quantum physics: "God does not play dice with the universe."

I did buy this book some time ago and then I was fascinated. I studied the basis of his theory, but unfortunately, Prigogine passed away recently, before I can discuss with him some topics in more detail. The greater part of the book is written in a natural style, but some sections are highly mathematical even for the majority of scientists! This mathematical presentation has a curious explaining. There are several versions of Prigogine's theory, but the first versions had been "abandoned", and then Prigogine details the new approach: "Star-unitary theory for LPS outside of Hilbert space". An earlier reviewer said that the book provides a solution to three of the most important problems in science: (1) Time's arrow. (2) The measurement problem in QM. (3) The existence of freewill. Precisely, I am working in those and other questions, and I do not believe that claim was completely correct (and perhaps Prigogine believed the same, because in his last communication, said me "The questions that you ask are very difficult."). In my opinion, the novel theory is conflictive both in mathematical and physical details, but I consider that, at least, the aim of the School is correct one. Irreversibility and uncertainty are two fundamental features of our universe. I see that orthodox physics (including particle physics and the so-called String-M theory) is incorrect and/or inapplicable. I believe that, whereas other "popular" books (The Quark and The Jaguar, The Elegant Universe, etc.) should be "relics" in 21st century physics, Prigogine's book will be then a basic work. The contributions of Prigogine's physics to the understanding in other disciplines, as chemistry, are not clear.

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