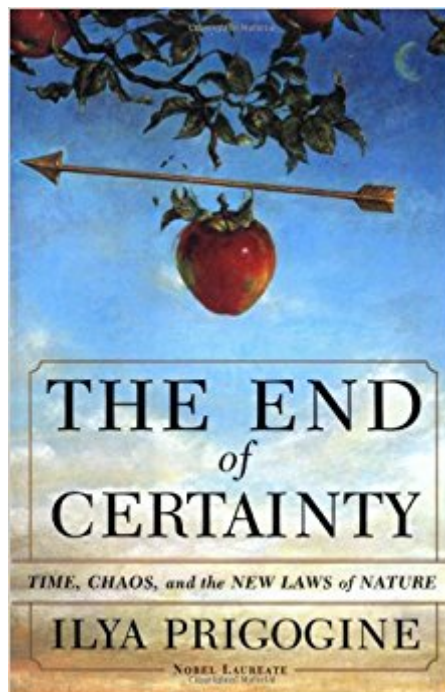


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The End Of Certainty



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.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In this intellectually challenging book, Nobel laureate Ilya Prigogine tackles some of the difficult questions that bedevil physicists trying to provide an explanation for the world we observe. How is it, for instance, that basic principles of quantum mechanics--which lack any differentiation between forward and backward directions in time--can explain a world with an "arrow of time" headed unambiguously forward? And how do we escape classical physics' assertion that the world is deterministic? In a sometimes mathematical and frequently mind-bending book, Prigogine explores deterministic chaos, nonequilibrium thermodynamics, and even cosmology and the origin of the universe in an attempt to reach an explanation that can reconcile physical laws with subjective reality.

Since adolescence, Nobel laureate Prigogine has been haunted by the thorny problem of time,

which has so preoccupied him that he scrawled "Time precedes existence" on a scientific memorial in Moscow. One of the founders of chaos theory, Prigogine has for decades propounded a view contrary to the assumption of temporal reversibility that is commonly accepted by theoretical physicists (ordinary folk have always been baffled by the idea that minus-t and plus-t [terms representing, respectively, time going backward and going forward] can somehow ever be the same). Although accepting relativity and the time-space continuum, Prigogine proposes a radical synthesis of Newtonian and quantum physics that is intriguing enough to reward the tough going that the book's intense concentration of formulas (on which Prigogine's arguments center) will be for most general readers. Prigogine claims that it is time's arrow that finally makes clear how probabilities become actualities and how "becoming" becomes "being." A groundbreaking work by a major figure in today's scientific revolution. Patricia Monaghan

This is one of the most profound books ever because it clearly lays out a whole new scientific and philosophical way of viewing the world that can be applied to biology and health drbob

Excellent reflection of the path of being to becoming as the Universe processes as order arrives out of chaos.

After finishing the book, I realized how clever/ironic the cover is..a Newton's apple dropped from the "arrow of the time"...

excellent!

As someone with a fair amount of scientific background I must say that this book, which purports to be aimed at a general audience, contains a considerable amount of material that is less than clear. The author suddenly transitions from prose to mathematics on a number of occasions and often leaves it to the reader to construct understanding. Scientists often fail to take account of their audience and are, in effect, trained by example in both written and verbal communication to make little effort to construct clear explanations. As an effort to communicate clearly with non-scientists, this book is quite a bit less than successful although it contains material of substantial interest. Not recommended for the general reader.

Prigogine wrote better books than Hawking, and with more varied content

This is the book that all of today's physicists should read. The more I learn about the impressive edifice of modern physics the more I learn that it's built on quick sand due to the many inconsistencies between theories, a strangely anti-empirical stance when it comes to the nature of time, and a willingness to accept paradox as an interesting feature of a theory when this should be an obvious hint of major problems. I can't comment on whether Prigogine's work is the necessary antidote but I do feel that his re-injection of asymmetrical time into the equations of physics is a very important first step. I also appreciate his appreciation for a broader view than most physicists are capable of today. It seems that the way to solve the many impasses of today's physics will require a broad interdisciplinary approach to knowledge. And key to that approach is the realization that Heraclitus was right: all things flow.

i LOVED this book, even though for large sections i didn't know what the hell he was talking about. he's a math wizard and has an amazing mind, but the clarity of his reasoning is superb and if you skim through what you don't understand, you'll find pages and pages of amazing conclusions and well thought out points. A CLASSIC.

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