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Order Out Of Chaos



Synopsis

Ilya Prigogine, winner of the Nobel Prize in 1977 for his work on the thermodynamics of non-equilibrium systems, makes his ideas accessible to a wide audience in this book, which has engendered massive debate in Europe and America. He and his colleague, Isabelle Stengers, show how the two great themes of classic science, order and chaos, which coexisted uneasily for centuries, are being reconciled in a new and unexpected synthesis.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The whole problem with writing about a book, and especially this one, is that one has to cut a long story short. A story long enough to encompass a fair amount of scientific history - elaborated, if not referenced exhaustively. Not that it is meant to be. Prigogine's journey does not offer to take you by the hand for a guided tour of order, complexity and self-organisation. Rather, it keeps to the spirit of Toffler's introduction, (Was it coincidental that it was the other way round?!) where he talks about the wonderful art of scientific dissection. Order out of chaos, however, is a difficult read for the anyone who has been initiated into the scientific non-fiction. For those who expect the book to be a popular account of concepts in complexity and self-organisation, the intense style and the depth of detail can be exhausting. Like Penrose in the Emperor's New Mind, Prigogine's style is uncompromising. Toffler's introduction is fitting, if only in parts. The book does not offer explanations. Rather, Prigogine prefers to illumate his readers with his keen philosophical bent. It is here that the book triumphs. The effort that has gone into integrating the ideas in the book, the subtle nuances reflecting Prigogine's own views is truly commendable. But then, one should be fairly conversant with the loopholes that science finds itself in. The description of the behaviour of

complex systems warrants some mention. The idea of switching between reality and mathematical description does not gel with the rest of the narrative in parts - specially when chemistry is the running example. Well, Prigogine wasn't writing the book with the intention of it being self-contained - and he makes no bones about it.

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