



# The End Of Science: Facing The Limits Of Knowledge In The Twilight Of The Scientific Age

By John Horgan

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## The End Of Science: Facing The Limits Of Knowledge In The Twilight Of The Scientific Age By John Horgan

In *The End of Science*, John Horgan makes the case that the era of truly profound scientific revelations about the universe and our place in it is over. Interviewing scientific luminaries such as Stephen Hawking, Francis Crick, and Richard Dawkins, he demonstrates that all the big questions that can be answered have been answered, as science bumps up against fundamental limits. The world cannot give us a “theory of everything,” and modern endeavors such as string theory are “ironic” and “theological” in nature, not scientific, because they are impossible to confirm. Horgan's argument was controversial in 1996, and it remains so today, still firing up debates in labs and on the internet, not least because—as Horgan details in a lengthy new introduction—ironic science is more prevalent than ever. Still, while Horgan offers his critique, grounded in the thinking of the world's leading researchers, he offers homage, too. If science is ending, he maintains, it is only because it has done its work so well.

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### Editorial Review

#### Amazon.com Review

In a series of interviews with luminaries of modern science, *Scientific American* senior editor John Horgan conducted a guided tour of the scientific world and where it might be headed in *The End of Science*. The book, which generated great controversy and became a bestseller, now appears in paperback with a new afterword by the author. Through a series of essays in which he visits with such figures as Roger Penrose, Stephen Jay Gould, Stephen Hawking, Freeman Dyson, and others, Horgan captures the distinct personalities of his subjects while investigating whether science may indeed be reaching its end. While this book is in no way dumbed down, it is accessible and can take the general reader to the outer edges of scientific exploration.

#### From Publishers Weekly

Scientific American columnist Horgan here interviews an impressive array of scientists and philosophers, who seem sharply divided over the prospects and possibilities of science. Among the pessimists, molecular biologist Gunther Stent suggests that science is reaching a point of incremental, diminishing returns as it comes up against the limits of knowledge; philosopher Thomas Kuhn sees science as a nonrational process that does not converge with truth; Vienna-born thinker Paul Feyerabend objects to science's pretensions to certainty and its potential to stamp out the diversity of human thought and culture. More optimistic are particle physicist Edward Witten, pioneer of superstring theory (which posits a universe of 10 dimensions); robotics engineer Hans Moravec, who envisions superintelligent creative robots; and physicist Roger Penrose, who theorizes that quantum effects percolating through the brain underlie consciousness. Other interviewees are Francis Crick, Noam Chomsky, David Bohm, Karl Popper, Murray Gell-Mann, Sheldon Glashow, Ilya Prigogine and Clifford Geertz. Despite the dominant doomsaying tone, this colloquium leaves much room for optimism.

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#### From Library Journal

Rich in provocative ideas and insightful anecdotes, this book investigates a serious question concerning empirical inquiry: Is there a limit to the discovery of theories about nature? The ongoing success of scientific research suggests that a final (ultimate), comprehensive, testable, and effective theory explaining the unity of all reality may soon be forthcoming. Exploring this possibility, Horgan, who writes the interview column for *Scientific American*, introduces the reader to a wide spectrum of opinion, from Francis Crick, Karl Popper, Stephen Hawking, Richard Dawkins, Stanley Miller, Margie Minsky, Frank Tipler, and Edward Wilson, among others. His probing interviews discuss engaging themes ranging from language, neuroscience, and evolution to quantum physics, complexity and chaos, and cosmology. This celebration of curiosity and speculation as well as of science and reason is a unique contribution to appreciating the human quest for understanding. Recommended for both academic and public science collections. —H. James Birx, Canisius Coll., Buffalo, N.Y.

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**Lamar Santiago:**

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