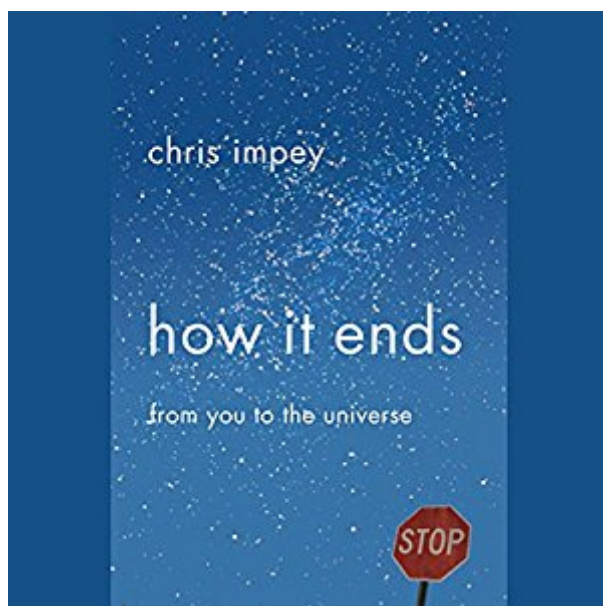


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# How It Ends: From You To The Universe



## Synopsis

The fascinating science behind the eventual end to everything - from the individual to all existence. Although we may try to keep it tucked at the back of our minds, most of us are aware of our own mortality. But few among us know what science, with the help of insights yielded from groundbreaking new research, has to say about death on a larger scale. Enter astronomer Chris Impey, who chronicles the death of the whole shebang: individual, species, biosphere, Earth, Sun, Milky Way, and, finally, the entire universe. With a healthy dose of humor, *How It Ends* illuminates everything from the technologies of human life extension and the evolutionary arms race between microbes and men to the inescapable dimming of the sun and the ultimate "big rip", giving us a rare glimpse into a universe without us.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Have you ever wondered how life will end? Chris Impey has and this book provides some interesting answers and reflection. If you're an American or a citizen of another developed nation, your life will probably end as a result of cancer or heart disease. But don't be expecting to make it to 100 or more unless that's in your family history. From the individual, Impey glides gently into our future as a species. Here is very helpfully guided by some great insight including from J. Richard Gott. Though Gott is a physicist, he's also a great thinker and in his book *Time Travel in Einstein's Universe* Gott came up with what he called the Copernican principle which says that if we're seeing something, odds are we're not in a very privileged position. To be more clear, the Copernican principle posits

that if we want to predict the future duration of a thing we assume that we are either observing that thing 2.5 percent into its life or more than 2.5 percent before it's demise. In this way, Gott predicts humanity will last at least another five thousand years and maybe as many as another 11 million years. Of course, our fate is bound up with that of our planet and our biosphere. Here Impey draws on great insight from the likes of Peter Ward whose 2000 book Rare Earth shocked the Search for Extra Terrestrial Intelligence Community by suggesting that Earth, and intelligent life along with it, might not just be rare but maybe even close to one of a kind. In terms of the future, what that means is that all the things that frustrate the emergence of life elsewhere might contribute to the likelihood of its demise here.

Trying to discover what happened just before or just after the farther most time point for which we just discovered what might have happened (past) or is going to happen (future) is an endless and increasingly speculative game. There are good theories on what may have happened at the Big Bang or even before; the author covered the events of the past in the book titled How It Began. Out here, he tries to sketch the future. What makes the book particularly interesting is its non-cosmological first part. The first section on the decay of any living being and individual mortality is fascinating. The book could have devoted some more space speculating whether/how in a 1000 or so years there could be human beings living hundreds of years (the topic of elongation of our lives and our existence in other forms - like digital data - is covered but rather too briefly). The sections that follow on the near future (by the cosmic standards) involve myriads of ways how our specie, the animal life on the planet and even the earth itself could go extinct. The biosphere discussions provide a more comprehensive makeover to the book before the author slips into his own area of expertise: cosmology. While the explanations/summaries are lucid and the flow is engaging, the discussions on the demise of the sun, stars, galaxies and even the universe are unlikely to add anything new to anyone who has read a handful of books on the cosmic theories. For the readers coming across the topics for the first time, the discussions of the multitudes of highly involved and complex topics could appear too perfunctory and rapid.

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