

Can humanity survive the 21st century?

September 19 2016

Our civilisation faces the greatest challenge in the history of our species. It consists of ten huge, man-made threats, which are now coming together to imperil our future.

"Surviving the 21st Century" (Springer International Publishing 2017) is a powerful new book out this week which explores these risks – ecological collapse, resource depletion, weapons of mass destruction, climate change, global poisoning, [food crises](#), population and urban overexpansion, pandemic disease, dangerous new technologies and self-delusion – and what can and should be done to limit them.

Citing the world's latest and most authoritative science, author Julian Cribb explains clearly the focal issue of our time – and what humanity as a whole and we, as individuals, can do about it.

"In recent years I've met many well-educated, well-informed people – scientists, parents, grandparents and millennials especially – who are fearful that we may be entering the end game of human history. That civilisation, and maybe even our species, will not survive the compound dangers we are building for ourselves," the Australian science writer explains.

" 'Surviving the 21st Century' assesses this concern. It surveys the objective evidence for these ten mega-issues – and what we can and should do as a species and as individual citizens to overcome them," he says.

The third volume in Cribb's scientific trilogy about the human future, 'Surviving the 21st Century' explores in detail the scientific basis of the ten intersecting existential threats, and the importance of developing cross-cutting solutions that do not make matters worse.

"To take one example: many of the solutions proposed by industry and governments to sustain the world food supply also involve making the climate worse for agriculture, increasing drought, ruining more landscapes, extinguishing more species, throwing small farmers off their land and causing a worldwide consumer health crisis. In other words, they defeat their very purpose.

"However the good news is that there are ways to produce food that involve ameliorating the climate, repairing landscapes, saving water and endangered species, raising farmers' incomes and improving consumer health. It is cross-cutting solutions like these the world needs to discuss and pursue."

The book also probes two controversial themes. The first is whether our cherished beliefs in areas such as money, politics, religion and the human narrative now prevent our recognising the dangers that surround us and hinder their solution – and how these powerful human belief systems can be re-conceived for our survival.

The second questions whether our species, Homo sapiens (wise man) is fit to bear the title and whether or not our collective behaviour can be described as 'wise'.

Surviving the 21st Century also identifies uplifting and positive solutions, being developed around the world, to our most pressing problems. And it explores two paradigm-shattering developments in society – the evolution of the human ability to 'think as a [species](#)' through global connections made at lightspeed on the internet and social

media, and the emergence of women as world leaders for a safer, more sustainable future.

Finally, it proposes a 'report card' which will enable everyone in the world to judge our collective progress towards a safer, cleaner, more sustainable future.

More information: Surviving the 21st Century: Humanity's Ten Great Challenges and How We Can Overcome Them.

www.springer.com/us/book/9783319412696

Provided by Springer

Citation: Can humanity survive the 21st century? (2016, September 19) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2016-09-humanity-survive-21st-century.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.