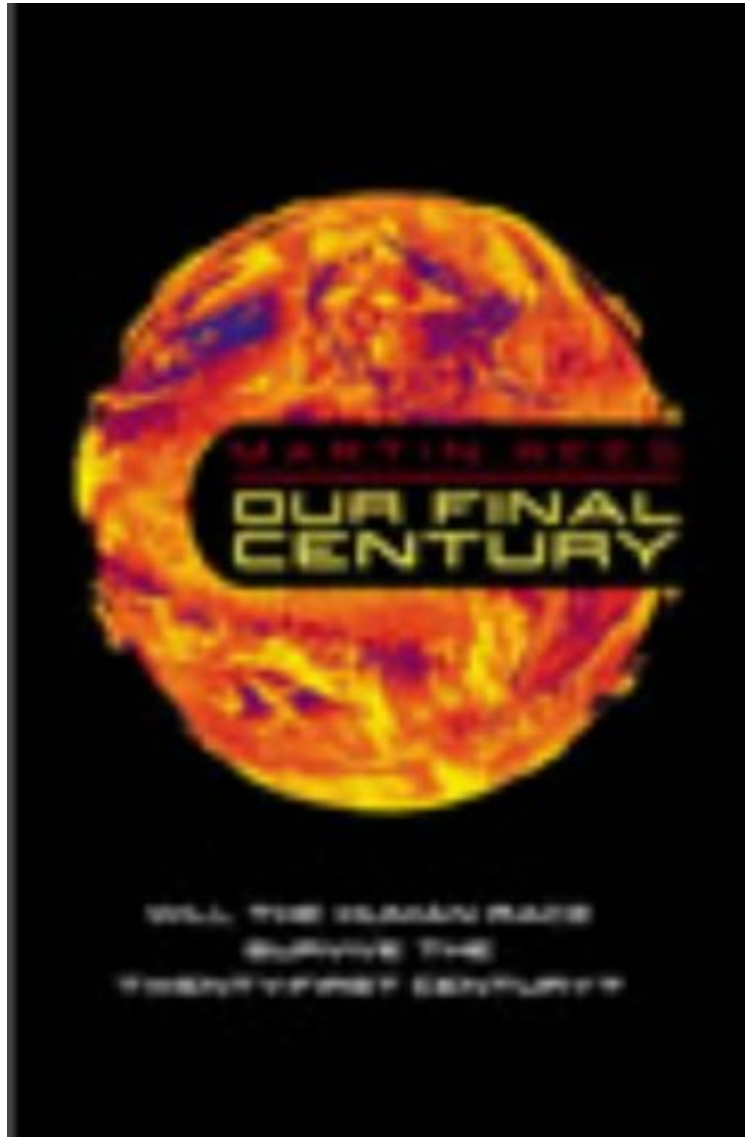


[FREE] Our Final Century?: Will the Human Race Survive the Twenty-first Century?

## Our Final Century?: Will the Human Race Survive the Twenty-first Century?

*Martin Rees*

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**Martin Rees : Our Final Century?: Will the Human Race Survive the Twenty-first Century?** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Our Final Century?: Will the Human Race Survive the Twenty-first Century?:

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Great book, and a needed warning.By Cat LadyThis book sounds

alarm bells of what the future holds if things do not change drastically and quickly. It'll mean the end of humans, taking much of the ecosystem with us. It is important to note that this is the British release of the book released in the US as *Our Final Hour*. I accidentally bought both of them. Realizing that they were essentially duplicates, I gave this one away as a gift. It's a very sobering read. 24 of 24 people found the following review helpful. future catastrophe scenarios

By Brian Allen Martin Rees is a professor of Cosmology and Astrophysics and Matter at the University of Cambridge and holds the honorary title of Astronomer Royal. He is the author and co-author of more than 500 research articles and seven books on astrophysics and cosmology. According to [...] he is "arguably the finest all-around theoretical physicist working today". In "Our Final Century" he provides his projection on the course of human history for this 21st century. Although the title is grim he does not leave one without hope. In the author's own words this book ... "ranges widely". The first half of the book covers likely and less probable threats to civilization and the earth mainly due to inappropriate uses of advanced technology from fissionable materials in the hands of terrorists to escaped genetically engineered bacteria and "nanorobots". The "gray goo scenario" is particularly chilling and fun to relate in conversation with friends. Rees is able to explain the physics of events like a possible strangelet disaster that could potentially arise from a heavy particle accelerator experiment and cause the earth to transform into "a hyperdense sphere about one hundred metres across". Unfortunately some of the book is a digression into over familiar themes such as earth-asteroid collisions, and topics seemingly unrelated to the book's intent, such as the search for extra-terrestrial intelligence. This only detracts slightly from the impact the book has. I have not read Rees's other book on the related subject titled "Our Final Hour" which seems to have a similar subject matter according to the reviews. Finally I had picked up this book after reading James Lovelock's "The Revenge of Gaia" where he cited this book. See below for 30 other writers that were influenced by this book and cited it in their works. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Every chapter is a masterpiece, prescient warnings of "terror or error"

By Chad M Although the topic is daunting I was drawn to read more after the first few pages. Prof. Rees addresses each challenge with expertise, yet provides the encompassing breadth of the challenges as well. There are many books that focus on a single major global threat; this book takes them all on at once. An ongoing theme of the book is that a single event caused by one person or a small group may cause irreversible havoc, the kind which could make the 21st century a narrow bottleneck for future civilization. The author is particularly concerned about biotech and its misuse. One could say that humanity's vulnerability to current or synthetic infectious disease is our "weak point." Our culture and technology has advanced but we still have Stone Age bodies. In this way, it could be that a 21st century of "eugenics wars" may occur -- not on purpose as has long been contemplated in archaic science and speculative fiction but instead by accident. If a small group of people has immunity to a virulent airborne disease this group could have more "Darwinian fitness." The search for greater immunity, not brawn or brains as previously envisioned, may be a desperate and high-stakes endeavor, and one which is damaging to the less wealthy masses of people around the world. Margaret Atwood also explores this topic in her MaddAddam trilogy. In response to this issue, Prof. Rees argues for a meta-science that would demarcate "no go" areas for biological research (p. 187 "putting the brakes on some research" and Ch. 6, "Slowing Science Down?"). Finally, it's interesting that Prof. Rees says in his Reith Lectures on Kindle that the original title had a question mark "Our Final Century?" He is an optimist, according to his writings in the Reith Lectures, and I also thought the title should have a question mark. If this optimism is well-grounded, a new meta-science as envisioned by Prof. Rees to guide future RD may come into existence through the work of academics, the G-20, and the UN.

It is suggested that we may be on the verge of destroying the planet on which we live. Whilst discussing various topics, including genetically engineered viruses, nanotechnology and pollution-induced environmental catastrophe, Sir Martin Rees demonstrates the risks we are taking, as well as the enormous difficulties of imposing limits upon them.

"Sir Martin is no doom merchant ... His prognostications, written in laymen's language, are all the more chilling for the reasonable tone in which they are expressed" \* Sunday Telegraph \* "Alarming, certainly, but alarmist never - Rees delivers his terrible prophecies with donnish understatement" \* The Evening Standard \* "One of the most provocative and unsettling books I have read for many years ... That a scientist so distinguished as Rees should air these fierce anxieties is a sign that something is amiss" -- J G Ballard \* Daily Telegraph \* "It matters that one should understand the provenance of this important and disturbing book. It is not another futurological diatribe saying that the end is nigh, but a lucid, calm, profoundly well-informed work by a distinguished scientist, whose humanity - evidenced by a serious ethical commitment and a quiet sense of humour - balances the dispassionate logic with which he surveys his subject: the multitude of threats facing humanity in the twenty-first century from error and terror in the nuclear, biological and environmental spheres" \* Literary \* "Rees does the maths of risk beautifully, as well as explaining the vital importance of understanding the fragility and cosmic smallness of the human present... The odds are small, but the risks are staggering, and that is Rees's excellent point in this thought-provoking book" \* Sunday Times \* About the Author Sir Martin Rees FRS is the most eminent cosmologist in Britain, the Astronomer Royal and Professor at

Cambridge. He lives in Cambridge.