



Prospects for Human Survival

Willard H. Wells

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Advanced technologies such as computers, genetics, nanotech, robotics, and artificial intelligence (AI) are progressing at an accelerating pace. Futurists speak of a time called The Singularity when progress will be so rapid that humans can no longer comprehend it. Many expect it during the mid-century.

Wells shows that the pace is too rapid for us to safely adapt. He discusses several of the most frightening hazards to our survival. He also develops simple mathematical formulas for survival probability. This formulation is not based on any list of specific hazards, but rather on the pace of progress. Statistical indicators of this pace include gross world product, number of papers published in science and engineering, and production of electricity and selected minerals.

Wells makes a strong case for developing friendly superhuman AI as quickly as possible, hopefully a nurturing artificial overlord that will protect us from ourselves. The danger is that it will not be as friendly as we hope, but the alternative is unacceptable risk.

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