



# Requiem for a Species: Why We Resist the Truth about Climate Change

*Clive Hamilton*

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## **Requiem for a Species: Why We Resist the Truth about Climate Change** Clive Hamilton

This book does not set out once more to raise the alarm to encourage us to take radical measures to head off climate chaos. There have been any number of books and reports in recent years explaining just how dire the future looks and how little time we have left to act. This book is about why we have ignored those warnings, and why it is now too late. It is a book about the frailties of the human species as expressed in both the institutions we built and the psychological dispositions that have led us on the path of self-destruction. It is about our strange obsessions, our hubris, and our penchant for avoiding the facts. It is the story of a battle within us between the forces that should have caused us to protect the Earth - our capacity to reason and our connection to Nature - and those that, in the end, have won out - our greed, materialism and alienation from Nature. And it is about the 21st century consequences of these failures. Clive Hamilton is author of the bestselling *Affluenza* and *Growth Fetish*, of *Scorcher*, and most recently *Freedom Paradox*.

## **Requiem for a Species: Why We Resist the Truth about Climate Change Details**

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## From Reader Review Requiem for a Species: Why We Resist the Truth about Climate Change for online ebook

### Thomas Edmund says

Hopefully it's fairly clear to any observer that this non-fiction work is 'pro' climate change (by which I mean believes its existence) – rather than debate the science this book is devoted to explaining why people so vehemently deny climate change and oppose steps taken to prevent it.

The author's strategy is to avoid running through the arguments themselves and instead rely on his references to carry the science. Initially rather than dulling us with debates, Hamilton depresses us with the bleak probabilities of the future and governments tendency to not only move slowly on the issue but more often than not do too little.

After painting a dark (or hot) picture for our environmental fate, Hamilton goes on to explore why there is such resistance to climate change science, focussing mostly on government a little social psychology. While Hamilton clearly thinks that large corporations are the true culprits behind climate change resistance, he resists polarising ranting and stresses the importance of legislation.

Then we move onto a cultural/historical look at the relationship between people and nature. While the author provides some interesting insights into how such relationships have changed, this chapter is perhaps the weakest, coming across as more of a review of the film Wall-E rather than a strong independent argument.

Hamilton finishes with a look at potential solutions, a much more uplifting section than the early chapters (although apparently the feeling of uplift is a mere delusion) and effectively decides that green energy sources such as wind, solar and tide are the way to go. Nuclear energy has some advantages but it would take an astrological amount of time to significantly replace carbon emitting power sources with nuclear, and environmental engineering would be unlikely to make sufficient difference to all the negative effects of greenhouse gases.

Requiem for a species is most likely too academic for most to enjoy, and as mentioned before is very bleak reading, however there are lessons to be learnt from this text, and while I would have preferred more psychological dabbling and perhaps solutions to changing the minds of resisters Hamilton has produced a solid book.

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### Andrew says

It is hard to disentangle my experience of this book from my general pessimism concerning humanity's response to climate change. This is certainly heightened by the recent work showing that it is in fact the tropics, home to much of the world's population and biodiversity, where the hammer is likely to fall first. However, there is something to be said for embracing some aspects of fatalism about the subject and getting on with thinking about the implications for your own life. I found On the Nature of Things to be a helpful companion read.

## Justin says

Crushing. Searing. Necessary. I'm naturally a cynical and pessimistic person, so it's been hard trying to avoid saying (if I can't avoid thinking) that yes, it really is too late to avoid catastrophic climate change. The science is stark and it all points to that devastating conclusion. Each month that goes by, the surer that becomes.

Hamilton doesn't shy away from that. He forces us to confront it. To finally say it clearly and loudly. Yes, we could -- just maybe -- avoid large-scale climate disruptions, technically, but our socioeconomic and political reality makes that an impossible dream now. We're not changing fast enough. Hell, we're not changing at all; emissions surge onwards and upwards, as we race faster for the abyss.

It's like living in a fantasy land where up is down, black is white. Growth is unassailable, even as the biosphere teeters on the brink. Hope is now simply a maladaptive delusion; optimism is no longer an appropriate response in the face of brutal empirical reality. And Clive forces you to see that.

In some ways the book would be lesser if this is all it did. But by drawing in the understandings of psychology and philosophy to deconstruct us moderns' conception of humanity's place in the world, Clive points to where we must go from here.

Despair. Accept. Act. Yes, avoiding dangerous climate change is now impossible. But we can still stave off the worst catastrophes, and we must prepare our societies for what we have wrought on this planet, what this century will bring for our hubris.

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## gekko100 says

Agree utterly with his message and for that alone recommend to it any and everyone.

But I did find the delivery a bit rambling (what is it with these lefty anti-corporate types --- Naomi Klein's "No Logo" was another one that should have had me cheering and punching the air, but ended up a longwinded snooze-fest).

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## Reid says

Some quotes to ponder while watching the world melt and burn:

-From a senior Bush Administration official: "Americans did not fight and win the wars of the 20th C to make the world safe for green vegetables."

-From a tobacco company memo: "Doubt is our product since it is the best means of competing with the "body of fact" that exists in the mind of the general public. It is also the means of establishing a controversy."

-One paraphrase from the Stern report: we should shoot for a max of 550 ppm CO<sub>2</sub> instead of 450 because the lower threshold, although it could save the planet from near total destruction, will delay GDP growth results by 6-9 months.

## Albert Faber says

Pessimism is an understatement for Mr. Hamilton's mindset and for his argument laid out in this book. Basically, we're all doomed for our complacency in tackling climate change, that will surely have us end up in a 4C warmer world by the end of the century. The underlying scenarios are basically right and may be even worse considering e.g. the already extreme Arctic ice melt. There seems little hope for deflecting the trends, despite this urgency (a despair that may well be reinforced with daily Trump-news these days).

However, I do think Mr. Hamilton underestimates more optimistic tones that come from bottom-up, in terms of true technological progress, in terms of truly new businesses and in terms of democratic experiments everywhere. It's a world of trial and error, some may succeed and some may not, but the Anthropocene does not need to be the post-apocalyptic world that Mr. Hamilton sketches. A world without hope would go party in Mar a Lago, a world with hope will find a way to navigate towards a future that is not necessarily better or worse, but that will find a way to deal with the 21st century world.

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## Elisabeth says

I already knew we (the human race, the planet and every other living thing on it) are pretty screwed, but this book lays out just how screwed we really are. While the author doesn't promise some wind, solar, carbon capture or geo-engineering solution nicely packaged and ready for us, he does end a slightly positive note - even though we're screwed, we are human beings and we don't give up easily and after we despair for and then accept our lost future, we will act and in the process discover another, different future instead (although surely one with significantly fewer numbers of us in it).

I have already gone through the despair phase myself (most of the previous decade), and am well into the acceptance phase, so this book didn't depress me like it might others. But if you're at all interested in climate change and planning for our very different future (which is coming shortly, within the next couple of decades), then I highly recommend this well written, thoroughly researched book.

The focus of this book is more on the psychology of climate change rather than the mechanics or the causes, although the latter are discussed.

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## Esmeralda Rupp-Spangle says

A stunningly honest and refreshing take on the situation at hand.

Clive Hamilton has taken all of the swirling thoughts that have been aimlessly swooshing about in my head and combined them with many things I had not even considered, and finely woven them together into a cohesive and satisfying meditation on the future of our species. He has taken the fine lens of a scientific mind and turned it sharply on those who deny the validity of climate science yet support geoengineering, or those who know the seriousness of what is happening, yet persist in a sort of apathetic materialism. He turns his lens on those who refuse to accept facts and asks: Why? and then describes to us in glittering detail the reasons, methods, and outcomes of this behavior.

This book tackles questions I have had gnawing at me for some time, and does so elegantly and thoroughly in a highly readable language and form.  
I cannot possibly recommend this book enough.

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### **Andrew Roberts says**

3 and a half stars: I went with 3 due to the general feeling of gloom that I was left with after I finished this book. The main thesis of the book is that human nature does not respond well to abstract, future threats, which is exactly what climate change is. The long-term nature of the problem does not lend itself to being solved by politicians concerned with 3 or 4 year electoral cycles, and so we find ourselves continuing down a path we know to be absurdly reckless.

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### **George Barrett says**

Clive Hamilton spells it out like it is. The reality of what's our hotter planet is going to be like in the very near future. The poor will suffer more, the affluent will have the means to migrate to cooler climes or put up with a hotter climate. The reality is, it's to late the current rate of carbon and greenhouse emissions has or will be at the tipping point of runaway climate change. Time has effectively run out for us as a species. The great industrial and technological miracles that set humanity apart from nature will be the very thing that will destroy us. Runaway climate change doesn't end on a positive note. Our future generations will inherit a lesser world not a better world. They will survive but they will fear the wrath extreme weather events.

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### **David Wood says**

An incredibly scary book in that Hamilton not only presents the evidence in a clear and precise manner but also why the world and its leaders are psychologically unable to accept the change that will soon be upon us. It is as if we look up in the sky and can see a massive meteor heading towards Earth but we are unable to focus or comprehend that it is going to wipe us out.

I read this book as it was recommended by Dr. David Suzuki, who has been Canada's most active voice against CO2 emissions and the need to listen to scientists warnings. He suggested the book is so accurate as to where we are headed, that it could leave one in a state of severe hopelessness.  
He's right, read this book if you dare.

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### **====D says**

It ought to be clear to everyone by now that modern humans' main characteristic is hubris: the manner in which we (will) have exhausted our environment's resources is exactly the same as the manner in which a horde of rabbits or rats would if introduced to a new place, i.e. Australia. We creatures reproduce and devour until there is nothing left to devour, then die off en masse to a more sustainable level-- although this is something yet to be seen in the case of the human species as our environmental depletion is somewhat deeper and more complex than in the case of rabbits. Neither having big brains, nor consciences, has made

an iota of difference in the population trajectory of our species, leaving one to reconsider the question of what it is, if anything, that separates humans from other creatures. Could it be that, objectively, there is nothing that gives us the right to claim the status of top dog in the critter hierarchy? After all, there are many animals which thrive, but only one which seems hell-bent on driving not just its own kind to extinction, but most other creatures as well.

But I am being facetious, here, because I don't believe for a second that it is really human nature to behave as we have been behaving now for some time, with well known consequences. Not any more than masochism is in the nature of dogs trained to attack bears, or suicide is in the nature of rats kept in solitary cages with nothing to do but push a button releasing intravenous morphine into their bloodstream until they keel over. These are all, clearly, aberrant scenarios. Let us not forget that people are equally related to bonobos as to chimps, meaning that we are at least as likely to cooperate and play, help each other and explore each other, as we are to devour each others' young. I suggest that the dominance of competitive behaviors versus cooperative ones is determined by the environment we find ourselves in.

But it is all a moot point, it seems: not only are we going to destroy the planet which has nurtured our kind and those of all others for millennia, but we won't even enjoy ourselves in the process. Unfortunately, it's just not fun to live in a dog-eat-dog world of the sort we've had created for us, not even in the unlikely case you happen to be the top dog.

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### **cerebus says**

I'm in two minds about this book....I agree with Hamilton's view on the desperate situation we are in regarding climate change, but I disagree with his skimming over of nuclear power. From all the reading I have done I don't think we have a better option than nuclear to reduce greenhouse gases due to power generation, and similarly I found his belief that renewables such as solar and wind can do a better job than nuclear to be wishful thinking (including his figures on the percentage of power Denmark derives from wind power, which I have seen dealt with elsewhere as being hugely overstated and misleading).

I was also not impressed when in the final chapter he appeared to lay the blame for the situation we are in on science and 'militant atheism', and that "...as the climate disruption unfolds and the sky seems to turn against us, we will abandon the lesser gods of money, growth and hedonism and turn to the celestial god, the creator god who alone has the power to save us." If this is his actual belief then it is only his willingness to pull no punches when describing the dire situation we find ourselves in that prevented me from giving the book 1 star.....

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### **Peter Hawkeye says**

A compelling, sombre work that I feel should be read by everyone.

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### **Carmel says**

As I said, I give up. Incredibly boring, laden with statistics, and no hope for us all. I tried twice to read it and gave up after 10 pages. Normally I am a prolific reader, but this one has me stumped. I will try again, maybe. But I doubt I would change my rating.

