

Ask A Genius 22 - The Future of Genetic Engineering 2

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November 27, 2016

Scott: What about some negative perceptions of these results of genetic experiments on people and animals? It's a truism that every thing about an organism has a genetic component. The results of tweaking will have an effect in some way or other as a logical consequence. Culture, in general, freaks out about it.

Rick: Maybe, one way of showing people that genetic engineering is the work of the Devil. Until the perma-puppy eats your face while you're asleep, but let's assume that they won't do that except in horror movies, a cute, smart puppy that lives for 30 years is going to be fairly irresistible, even by conservatives.

There will be a lot of it. The more radical things predicted in science fiction won't come along for a long, long time. Things like life extension, increased resistance to disease, increased abilities, and so on, are all going to become available. We won't know exactly which abilities will be easily boosted and which will be tough.

We don't know the genetic basis for various abilities. You can imagine that if we're going to have people colonizing Mars, then those people should be genetically tweaked to do better in conditions on Mars.

If we're going to terraform Mars, which is a project that will take hundreds of years to transform Mars' thin atmosphere without people having to live in a dome, we'll need people to live in the Earth equivalent of high altitudes and be more resistant to radiation. The trip to Mars will not have the atmosphere to block the radiation.

You might be less susceptible to cosmic rays.

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