

Ask A Genius 80 – Present-Day America (3)
Scott Douglas Jacobsen and Rick Rosner
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Scott: Polarization is another issue.

Rick: There could be belligerent yahoo-ism to the point where violence and riots break out among the Trump-ish states and the Liberal states. You could imagine something like that happening. It is more likely in our currently polarized environment.

Obama was president for 8 years and widely loathed by many tens of millions of Americans, but we heard of no attempts on his life. Maybe, we're not told about every possible attempt, but a couple of attempts were made on President Ford within a couple of months.

He's one of our most innocuous presidents, but we knew all about it. I think nobody making an attempt on Obama's life indicates that, even though we're belligerent on social media, day-to-day belligerence leading to actual violence between or among Americans is still not a significant threat.

If violence were to break out in a number of cities among thousands of people across the country, it could be seen as a beginning of peaceful era in America or the beginning of a violent era in America. We had at least 3 million women's march marchers across America with zero arrests.

We're going to have a science march on Earth Day. There will be a similar thing on Tax Day to urge Trump to release his taxes. Nobody is expecting, except for yelly assholes on conspiracy-oriented Right-wing talk radio, these to erupt into violence.

Scott: A lot of the problems have technological sources. However, most of the solutions, aside from going back to the Dark Ages, are technological themselves.

Rick: That's a good point.

Scott: With America on possible technical decline, how will that have an impact? Also, what are some thoughts on America's technological dominance?

Rick: Before we get to America's technological dominance and possible decline, let's get to the Four Horseman of potential modern disasters: war, disease, ecological collapse, and technical decline. There are fixes to most of these things that will roll out over the next decades.

There are tech fixes for this stuff. America is screwed with regard to guns. We're not entirely screwed. We lose as many people to guns as we do to cars, about 35,000 people dying due to guns including a significant number of people who use guns for suicide.

There about 375 million guns for 325 million American. It doesn't mean everyone has a gun. It means the guns are mostly in about 1/3 of American households. The average gun owner owns

like 8 guns. Guns are concentrated among gun lovers. You are never going to make guns go away in America.

It is unlikely we'll have an Australian solution, where we legislate against guns and knock them down and reduce the number of mass killings. There are science fiction solutions to this, which is to make people bullet proof.

If you can't get rid of guns, make people bullet proof. The way you make people bullet, disaster, and disease proof is to make consciousness transferable out of the body. So, you make it so that you can record and duplicate consciousness and download it into something else, and that makes people, to some extent, immortal.

If you get killed, and if you downloaded your consciousness in the morning before you got run over or shot, you can be started over from the version of you at 8 in the morning. It is like a hundred years away, but it's not a million years away or time travel, which is unlikely, or anti-gravity, which is unlikely.

It is the technology to take the information and the way we process that information in our heads then record it, duplicate it, and make it transferable. Once we're not locked into the body we were exclusively born into, accidents like guns are less expensive.

But there will be other things like computer hacking and the risks of a hundred years or a hundred and fifty years will be magnified versions of some of the informational problems now like viruses and technological failure.

Also, the disruption of normal societal behavior by new technology, but, even though it presents a whole new set of dangers, many of the solutions to our most frightening and intractable problems lie in super-advanced technology.

Although, it is in ways that will pretty much rejigger society in ways that would make us very disturbed if we saw them – if we were shown life a century from now.

Scott: On the other hand, as you know as well as I do, there are movements, which are global Luddite movements. They want to move back to pre-Industrial eras, if not tribal and hunter-gatherer levels, as retribution for colonization, but also as a stance of self-esteem.

Rick: I'm sure little Luddite movements will form and will go after advanced technology, but they are ultimately doomed to be swamped by the wave of delicious technology that will crash onto us.

Technology is fun, entertaining, and helpful. It means technology wins. We evolved as information-exploiting creatures. As a species, we are the most information-exploiting creatures who have ever lived on the planet. We look for exploitable patterns everywhere.

We are omnivorous in our appetite for information. Dogs like dead things and sniffing butts. Dogs are specialized. Same with most other creatures. We are not. We made the breakthrough

from being specialists in survival tightly adapted to certain behaviours to being completely flexible in where we look and what we do to survive.

It means that we have to be receptive to information. We love information. A trend in entertainment across all of history is the medium that delivers the most information wins! It was a slow thing.

You go from grunting and waving your hands 10,000 years ago to language, which contains more information. Language wins. Nobody grunts! There's a lot less grunting than 10,000 years ago because spoken words contain more information and written words are even more efficient at transmitting and preserving information.

All of the different mediums too. Each type and each genre under each medium. Everything shows a general bias towards showing more information and faster – and more dense data. Rap music is super fast. More words per second than any other music. Superhero movies contain more visual information than any other kind of movie.

We're going to continue to be drawn into it. You can't fight delicious information. Technology will offer more and more entertaining ways to absorb information. We will continue to love and embrace it, even as that technology completely re-engineers what we are.

We're going to become the Borg, except fun Borg. We'll become fun Borg. I didn't watch much *Star Trek*, but the Borg seemed like assholes of the universe. They seemed to not have a lot of fun. We're going to be all tied together with devices all around us, on us, and in us. We'll still be using that stuff to still be transmitting entertaining non-sense.

It is the sugar-coating on the pill of transformation. That's one reason I don't like *Star Trek* because there's no fun in *Star Trek*. Occasionally, Spock will crack a joke at the end of an episode, but there's no non-sense. There's no crap. There's no ridiculousness.

When they show a future city, it is all clean. It's not polluted with all sorts of signage and advertising blimps. Compare the Los Angeles of 2019 in *Blade Runner* to the future on *Star Trek*, the *Blade Runner* future is all craped out. There's shitty advertisement in neon and funky dominatrix clothes all over the place.

Or *Minority Report*, which is semi-crappy and semi-cluttered with non-sense and junk, compare that to the occasional future US city you see in *Star Trek*, which is all clean and people walking around like healthy, well-adjusted people in plazas wearing asymmetrical clothing.

It is bullshit. That's not what the future will be. The future will be awesome and filled with crappy non-sense, as is everything all of the time.

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