

**Ask A Genius 81 – Other Arms Races**  
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**Scott: We've talked, off tape, about overlapping arms races. Let's label and describe some.**

Rick: The biological arms race is one. It is considered weird to be living as long as possible outside of the normal realm: "I can exercise and eat well to live well into my 90s, if I'm lucky." People consider that cool for the most part.

Anybody that talked about wanting to buy pig organs, take 100 pills a day, or get stuff built into their brain so they can live to 120 or 150, or indefinitely into the future, were considered creepy and weird. Only now, this is coming out of the closet.

The only celebrity that says he wants to be cryonically preserved upon death to see if he can be resurrected later is Simon Cowell, who is widely know for being a dick who doesn't care what anybody thinks about him or what he says.

It is considered less and less creepy. If you want to live more than 100 years, it will be more and more acceptable. These little baby industries that will be fighting for, not exactly dominance but, the same goals, and once any one of them cleanly achieves the goal of helping people live indefinitely, the others will atrophy.

One possible means is cryonic freezing. You turn people into frozen pieces of class. It is called vitrification, which is different than freezing. You put them in 200 degrees below 0 temperatures. You can put them there for as long as you want, then resurrect them when medicine is able to cure them of whatever was going to kill them.

Another technology is keeping your body going as long as possible with supplements, gene therapy, and growing organs in pigs. It's like we're cars in Cuba. Everyone has a 1954 Chevy. We have to keep the cars going for 60 years because there's no replacement with the car as us.

The parts wear out. We need to replace the parts. The third technology, which is not even conceivable by a lot of people, is figuring out consciousness and learning how to move the information and the structure of thought in your brain out of your brain.

The way to digitize and replicate it elsewhere. Once that technology takes over, the whole body-centric civilization that we've lived in for millions of years begins to erode. If you can move yourself out of your body into cyberspace or into another body, or into a partner body, so many different foundational elements of civilization fall under attack.

Once you're able to move consciousness easily out of the body, easily and cheaply, and not just rich people, and preserving the body at all costs becomes less of a deal, you can build replacement bodies and put your consciousness in them.

Ditto for cryonics. Why try to freeze the one body you have if the one body you have isn't the one body you have anymore? There will be an arms race in these three areas of life extension technology. Another area of future arms races that are barely starting now is in transportation.

Where making transportation faster is a little bit boutiquey at this point, every place is like a day away from any other place on Earth, except crazily out-of-the-way places like Antarctica. The greatest distance between two places on Earth is about 12,500 miles, which is about a day away.

Unless, you have connecting flights. From any point on the Earth, you can travel to the most distant point from that point in a day or a day and half. The idea that you need to shave another 10 hours off of that or an hour and a half off of the 5 or 6 hours it takes to go from coast to coast in the US via some rocket that shoots you into low orbit, then comes back down.

So, you can do LA to New York in 2 hours rather than 5 hours. Who is that for? It is for rich pricks. They can't bother with 3 hours on the plane. Ditto with the Hyperloop. Somehow, you need to get from LA to San Francisco in 2 hours because you don't want to do it via plane.

Or, maybe, somebody builds rapid transit from LA to Vegas. You either fly or drive. Anyway, the idea that we need to go faster to transport people around Earth is a little goofy. We've done as fast as we need to go. We just need to figure out how to make existing transportation systems suck less.

Yes, it would be great if we could build competing transportation systems with flying that avoids the sucky aspects of flying, but transporting people places is an actively developing industry. However, a competing industry that will kill the further development of transportation or make it atrophy is when telepresence becomes completely satisfying.

When people don't need to actually travel to do business, or to do other things in life, when the sensory input is satisfying enough that you can strap on VR junk and you get 94% of what you get by travelling 8 hours to meet some other person. Telepresence since the 90s, in terms of what in-person stuff gives you, has been becoming better than the things transportation gives you.

Transportation needs to constantly improve. It is the same way TV killed radio. Radio is a suck ass wasteland because TV is so much more satisfying. Those are two technological arms races that will play out over the next 100 years.

There's been a long unending arms race between science and religion. Where religion offers deep solace and satisfaction in areas that are most frightening or painful to us, death, ultimate justice, suffering and being compensated for it, then explaining stuff that we desperately want to have explained.

Science has been taking over some of those functions. Science is good at explaining stuff, but terrible at offering solace. Under science, under the cold, randomly originating universe, once you're dead, you're dead. So, religion beats science in that area.

There's no ultimate justice under science. Everything is random. However, science, I believe, will get better at offering some of the things that are benefits traditionally offered by religion. Life after life, e.g. technical resurrection.

If technology can offer unlimited wish fulfillment in some kind of cyberspace and some afterlife, or current life, then science will gradually win the arms race with religion. People feel sad about the loss of mystical satisfactions, but there are plenty of bad epiphenomenons of religion.

Violent religious fundamentalism. It would be great if those things were attenuated over time. There will always be assholes who will find excuses to commit violence and destroy stuff. It would be great if - now, I'm confusing things - religion were less available as a means to commit destruction and violence.

It would be great if as science continues to raise the standard of living and takes over some of the comforting functions of religion that religious violence would decrease. Although, that may not satisfy the A-holes who use religion as an excuse for anti-social acts.

But if religion becomes increasingly hollowed out, becomes less of a part of people's daily lives, it might turn out to be beneficial 100 years from now because it will be a less obvious place to turn to when you're shopping for, whether you know you're shopping for them or not, philosophical frameworks that justify your destructive behaviour.

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