



Our Posthuman Future: Consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution

By Francis Fukuyama

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A decade after his now-famous pronouncement of "the end of history," Francis Fukuyama argues that as a result of biomedical advances, we are facing the possibility of a future in which our humanity itself will be altered beyond recognition. Fukuyama sketches a brief history of man's changing understanding of human nature: from Plato and Aristotle to the modernity's utopians and dictators who sought to remake mankind for ideological ends. Fukuyama argues that the ability to manipulate the DNA of all of one person's descendants will have profound, and potentially terrible, consequences for our political order, even if undertaken with the best of intentions. In *Our Posthuman Future*, one of our greatest social philosophers begins to describe the potential effects of genetic exploration on the foundation of liberal democracy: the belief that human beings are equal by nature.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Maybe we have a future after all: *Our Posthuman Future* is political historian Francis Fukuyama's reconsideration of his 1989 announcement that history had reached an end. He claims that science, particularly genome studies, offers radical changes, possibly more profound than anything since the development of language, in the way we think about human nature. He makes his case thoroughly and eloquently, rarely dipping into philosophical or critical jargon and consistently maintaining an informal tone.

Fukuyama is deeply concerned about the erosion of the foundations of liberal democracy under pressure from new concepts of humans and human rights, and most readers will find some room for agreement. Ultimately, he argues for strong international regulation of human biotechnology and thoughtfully disposes of the most compelling counterarguments. While readers might not agree that we're at risk of creating Huxley's Brave New World, it's hard to deny that things are changing quickly and that perhaps we ought to consider the changes before they're irrevocable. --*Rob Lightner*

From Publishers Weekly

Fukuyama (*The End of History and the Last Man*; Trust) is no stranger to controversial theses, and here he advances two: that there are sound nonreligious reasons to put limits on biotechnology, and that such limits can be enforced. Fukuyama argues that "the most significant threat" from biotechnology is "the possibility that it will alter human nature and thereby move us into a 'posthuman' stage of history." The most obvious way that might happen is through the achievement of genetically engineered "designer babies," but he presents other, imminent routes as well: research on the genetic basis of behavior; neuropharmacology, which has already begun to reshape human behavior through drugs like Prozac and Ritalin; and the prolongation of life, to the extent that society might come "to resemble a giant nursing home." Fukuyama then draws on Aristotle and the concept of "natural right" to argue against unfettered development of biotechnology. His claim is that a substantive human nature exists, that basic ethical principles and political rights such as equality are based on judgments about that nature, and therefore that human dignity itself could be lost if human nature is altered. Finally, he argues that state power, possibly in the form of new regulatory institutions, should be used to regulate biotechnology, and that pessimism about the ability of the global community to do this is unwarranted. Throughout, Fukuyama avoids ideological straitjackets and articulates a position that is neither Luddite nor laissez-faire. The result is a well-written, carefully reasoned assessment of the perils and promise of biotechnology, and of the possible safeguards against its misuse. (Apr.) Forecast: As the FSG publicity material notes, Fukuyama famously declared in the wake of communism's collapse that "the major alternatives to liberal democracy" had "exhausted themselves." This less dramatic assessment should still win a hearing, if not among scientists then among a public concerned about science's growing power.

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From Library Journal

In 1989, Fukuyama proclaimed the end of history. So what happened? Here he explains that we haven't yet reached the end of science.

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Users Review

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