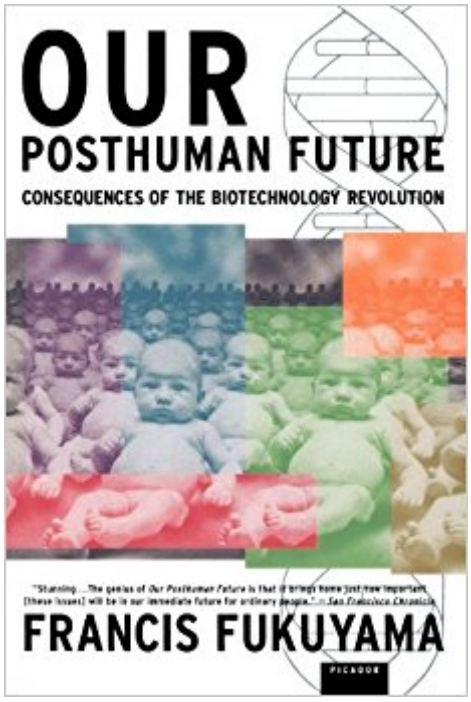
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# Our Posthuman Future: Consequences Of The Biotechnology Revolution




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## Synopsis

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.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

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 --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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.Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

What is "human nature"? And will failure to initiate widespread government oversight of scientific research that could change this definition open a Pandora's Box of dire consequences?Fukuyama suggests that failure to impose substantial government dictates over the "when's" and "how's" of future research centering on the human body and mind will precipitate a significant sea change in

the inherent nature of our species, how we interact with one another, and a potential threat to Liberal Democracy. The implicit message is that unfettered scientific inquiry will lead to developments we will come to deeply regret.While Fukuyama correctly illustrates the "easy fixes" that our society has latched onto (Prozac, Ritilin: Who said freedom to choose would mean wise choices?), his thesis fails to acknowledge the considerable roadblocks that authorities have placed in the way of the evolution of our species throughout history."Human nature" has, in fact, demonstrated a rather elastic nature over time. If one accepts the premise that human nature is fixed in an eternal quest for freedom, self-development and dignity and is manifested in superior intelligence, then one would want to remove any artificial roadblocks to creating the maximum environment in which these attributes could flourish. How else to explain the demise of almost all competing political models to Liberal Democracy? Yet, Fukuyama proposes a step backward, based on what appears to be a fixed, non-elastic definition of human nature.Were a caveman to be plopped down in the late 20th Century and witness the first heart transplant, would he recoil in disgust and declare the practice inimical to the basic fabric of human existence? Quite likely. Does that mean, with the limited intelligence of a less developed brain - but with a brain nonetheless and all basic body parts and feelings that "Modern Man" exhibits - that the caveman would be right? I don’t believe anyone would answer in the affirmative.As dispassionate and thoughtful as Fukuyama’s work appears on the surface, his call to action would have us expand the yoke of State control at a time when his beloved model of Liberal Democracy is finally expanding across the globe, toppling barriers to the practical application of human intelligence everywhere.Which, in its own way, is rather ironic.

There is no doubt that Francis Fukuyama is a thinker who performs pretty well in a strategic scale. He aptly outlines one of the leading subjects who will shape the political, cultural, religious and economic clashes of the XX1 century and is as his best both synthesizing a lot of relevant information and detecting as well the transcendence of some debates apparently out of the public and media limelight (such as the Searle-Dennett on the role and nature of consciousness) not only because their implications, but also because they are symptoms of how scientism has taken over more and more territories of the human identity to a point that is not so far away to deny it. But above all the best asset of this book consists on his clear understanding on which is at stake. The disruptive potential of the more extreme forms of technological hubris such as genetic "improvement "applied to human genome it is clearly stated: because as unintended consequence it could lead not only to a sort of "arms race" between states but also within society itself (among private citizens with

de facto different access to resources) inequality would acquire another dimension and meaning. Under a perspective where a society of classes could take the path of a society of castes, the whole foundations of political order, as was understood in the western tradition would crumble. The peril is simply that differences in socioeconomic terms turn into a difference in biological terms. The mere possibility of that gap is just unbearable for a modern society. If that happen class struggle never had before a stronger motivation.No less important is his identification of how inadequate is the utilitarian philosophy that pervades economical thinking which its mantra "minimize pain/maximize pleasure" when it invades other areas of human action especially medical practice. The peril consists on blurring the difference between healing and enhancement. Actually it disorients society in important issues such as how to deal with drugs consumption. We have not to wait to extreme forms of human nature manipulation to detect that trend in the current abuses in using Prozac or Ritalin. Some cases for which the safer bet is to enforce nerve, self control and character are taking short cuts when the easy way is a technological manipulation of behavior.In this sense Fukuyama's strongest point is that even a democratic assumption of enhancement and improvement for everyone -when genetic engineering takes the helm as the leading technology to achieve those goals- is that it is not preposterous to think the biological differentiation of beings it would yield as a result may resemble rather a sort of Nietzschean dystopia where the best intentions of that pursuit have not place at all: a new order where shared human ideals have not to be recognized any longer.Fukuyama without wasting time identifies to which extend the whole conceptual building of the ethical and political tradition -at least of the west- depends on two crucial assumptions: there is a human nature and there is a human dignity. But in taking these issues he falls short. He understands that the challenge to face now is to find new secular foundations to both ideas grounded in the disintegrating bedrock of metaphysics, religion and theology, but far to solve the conundrum (after all the book is only 218 pp long) he rather gets to draw with precision the map of the future battles to come. The author intends a solution alternative to the Kantian sharp distinction between actions based on knowledge and action based on ethics (categorical imperatives) at the time he insists that science does not have -and cannot have- the last world in defining ultimate human values and goals. But he bets anyway in some sort of knowledge in route to find new foundations to the very idea of human nature, so what kind of knowledge could be that? Maybe the sort of knowledge we can find in literature which is not systematic almost by definition, maybe the sort of knowledge that some thinkers as Merlin Donald intends (by the way with very interesting results indeed) which are at mid point between philosophy and scientific knowledge: an argumentation where the latter still is the tool, not the master.However and beyond what FF

achieved or not I am tempted to say that every citizen should read it. But because it sounds as an overstatement I only wish that someday it will be discussed in every college at any level, alongside with Neil Postman’s amazingly intelligent, witty little book entitled "Technopoly".

I don’t feel the same way about genetic modification, but his arguments were valid points, but he jumped to conclusions that are impossible at this time, so it felt like reading a conspiracy novel.

Fukuyama has been one of my favorites since "The End of History." Glad to see history has started again and science is the new narrative! "Posthuman" continues to demonstrate that the author has a very comprehensive view of current insights in many fields and puts them in a cohesive picture that rings true. Reading Fukuyama is a great way to read a hundred up-to-date books all at once and get the highlights from all of them. Expect frequent pauses while reading this as your own mind reels with the ideas.This is a great read for those who want to know everything and understand it too.Bill

Having read other titles by this author i eagerly purchased this. I put it down after a few pages and finally finished 3 weeks later. Very different writing style from what we are used to. His ideas in this book are at times far-fetched and plainly wrong.

This book is sooo good! And it is still very relevant. You do not need to know anything about biotchnology to enjoy this book!

As expected thanks!

The cocktail recipes is just a few pages with some simple illustrations by unknown artists. Why does it cost 10 $. I feel like ripped off. Why do you sell this as a .book. Ãƒâ Ã Â t is more like a leaflet. And must be free of charge.On the other side of the spectrum, Fukuyama’s book is a classic I would recommend it to everybody who can read.

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