



As the Future Catches You: How Genomics & Other Forces Are Changing Your Life, Work, Health & Wealth

Juan Enriquez

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If you think the world has changed dramatically in the last five years, you haven't seen anything yet.

You will never look at the world in the same way after reading *As the Future Catches You*. Juan Enriquez puts you face to face with unprecedented political, ethical, economic, and financial issues, dramatically demonstrating the cascading impact of the genetic, digital, and knowledge revolutions on all our lives.

Genetics will be the dominant language of this century. Those who can "speak it" will acquire direct and deliberate control over all forms of life. But most countries and individuals remain illiterate in what is rapidly becoming the greatest single driver of the global economy. The choice is simple: Either learn to surf new and powerful waves of change—or get crushed trying to stop them. The future is catching us all. Let it catch you with your eyes wide open.

As the Future Catches You: How Genomics & Other Forces Are Changing Your Life, Work, Health & Wealth Details

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Susan says

A potentially a quick read -- but not if you'll be so enthralled by the interconnectedness of science/history/economics/culture that you must stop to ponder what you've read and then look at the endnotes. That was me.

The alphabet, the printing press, the digital revolution, and now genomics -- at one time each was a new technology that redefined literacy. And these (r)evolutions are coming at an ever faster rate -- each time by orders of magnitude in speed and knowledge. How are humans to cope with ever-changing knowledge and literacy demands? He underscores the need for future generations to know how to learn. This book should be mandatory reading for school boards and college professors.

Enriquez brilliantly integrates widely divergent ideas into a view of "the future". Although he wrote "As The Future ... " a scant 10 years ago, his vision of the future reads more like a widely curated news summary of our recent events -- yet it still feels like science fiction. Enriquez reveals how "present" the future has become and how small is the number of people who will power it.

One passage to keep in mind

"What matters are the trends going on throughout the world, not the specific knowledge available today ... that will change by the end of the week."

Tes says

Reads like just a stream of random thoughts (loosely or tightly connected to Genes). Literally very hard to read : large type, small type, italicized type, black type on white pages, white type on black pages.

Matthew says

This interesting (if dated) work offers a decade-old justification for the value of the natural sciences to our future. To say it's an unconventional book may turn out to be a bit of an understatement. (I'm immensely thankful that "omitting the narrative" never caught on more broadly in the publishing industry.) I'll say merely that Enriquez does an adequate job filling 225 pages with "tweets" of a sort - essentially bulleted facts and figures in defense of his broader theses: 1) science and technology are the future of our species 2) there's lots of stuff going on that you should know about 3) nation states rise and fall on the basis of the education and scientific knowledge of their workforces.

Since the science he references is yesterday's news (almost without exception), readers in 2010 are left to

focus on Enriquez's claims about the fragility of the nation state and its future dependence on cultivating institutions of science and technology. This is good news - since his theories in this area are the most interesting part of the book.

Enriquez suggests that the recent history of most nations follows two basic paths - the first is the typical backwards, corrupt, and repressive governance commonplace in South America, Africa, and some parts of Asia during the last thirty years. The second path, is characterized by the development of knowledge, ala the United States, South Korea, and Japan. He references compelling statistics that show how diverse the economic trajectories of the two paths have become. It's compelling stuff. But armed with ten years of hindsight, it seems to me there is a third way, as exemplified by China, which became an economic powerhouse by providing inexpensive labor and manufacturing capacity to the global marketplace.

"If you do not export knowledge," Enriquez posits "you do not get rich." Ten years later, we're through the looking glass on that, and while I'd agree that the average Chinese may still teeter on the brink of poverty, it's also true that the People's Republic of China owns close to a trillion dollars in US government treasuries thanks to its inexpensive workforce and the fact that the "industrialized" world apparently doesn't make anything anymore (an important consequence of the knowledge economy Enriquez champions).

In fact, Enriquez blithely ignores the reality that in the United States at least, the knowledge economy and globalization have marginalized whole sectors of the population. These untold millions are simply in need of more education, Enriquez might say. Train them up and send them out to write HTML or genetically engineer something. That'll fix it.

But even if that kind of wholesale retraining were an option for most people, we might have cause to wonder who'll be around in the end to stoke the engines of material productivity once we all become web designers and bio-technicians. If the future of every nation state and all its citizenry is keyboard-based "knowledge work," who's going to make stuff and fix things? The robots? We had all better hope so, because a ubiquitous knowledge economy leaves little room for anyone besides our mechanical replacements and the scientists who engineer them.

In fairness, there's a lot to like here, and on balance Enriquez got more right than wrong in my opinion. And if nothing else, it's entertaining to go back and read predictions from a decade ago and think about the decade to come. Painful references to transformative economic powerhouses of the time, like AOL Time Warner and Yahoo, are particularly enjoyable. From our post-financial meltdown perch, it's a little too easy to chastize Enriquez for paying little mind to how technical stagnation can destroy private sector companies while belaboring its effects on nation states. He can be forgiven for that, and I wonder in particular whether his attitude to government has changed, especially after hearing his TED speech from 2008. In that lecture, he talked about sustaining US entitlement programs in the midst of dark days in the financial world. Maybe Enriquez sees a role for government after all.

The book closes with a nod to JM Roberts' suggestion that history moves both faster and slower than we'd expect. It's the reason we don't have jet packs today, like everyone 50 years ago thought we would. It's also the reason we can sequence DNA today, something nobody 50 years ago even knew existed. That's a troubling paradox for society to consider, and one which obscures our ability to predict the outcomes of our scientific progress. Indeed, it's difficult to read this book after only ten years have passed and feel reassured that we have any idea what tomorrow will bring.

Tetsuya says

The author leads us to justify genetics's value by introducing several beneficial applications such as medical treatment, while doesn't mention about its potential risks in ecological context in the application to agriculture. Also indeed genetics is a part of knowledge economy however it is illogical to justify genetics in justification of knowledge economy. It must be inappropriate to measure the value of sciences by referring the amount of generated money and the number of patent requests.

Tyler says

4 stars to the quality of the ideas presented in the book, 2 stars for the ridiculous "writing style" the author employed. Personally, i felt like i was being talked down to the entire time; does Enriquez really feel that unless he capitalized, italicized, and underlined every significant point (which, one would be led to believe, is in almost every single sentence) his readers would be left clueless? Come on, trust us a little bit. It actually reminded me of writing essays in high school, when you hadn't written quite six pages and messed with the font and spacing until it came out long enough. This book has a similar feel, especially in light of the fact that almost every sentence ends with an ellipsis(sp?). Do you remember when you discovered the power of "dot-dot-dot"? Enriquez takes it to a whole new level...

I will admit that it changed the way i think about technology (genomics and computers, specifically), and it was an incredibly quick read (there are really only a few sentences of content on each page). I just wish i could have read it without all the annoying quirks in the text. Seriously, it hurt my eyes.

Fernando Olvera says

great book!!... as the author said: "you can stand on the sidelines and assume fate will guide things... or you can help yourself, your family, your company and country..." as many scientific reading, many topics looks too close to fiction, but 14 years after this edition, the reality show us the importance to be constantly in education. Today the tech approach ourselves to many ways to keep us intellectually active; now depends of ourselves make the difference.

Dave says

This is not meant to be read cover to cover, but it does contain some interesting thoughts on why countries are rich and others poor, the computer, and so on. Most intriguing to me is his assertion that genetics and programming - the language of ACTG and 1,0 are the 'languages' of the future.

Nicko says

Technology and knowledge turbocharge economic growth.

In a borderless world....

Those who do not educate.....

And keep their citizenry.....

Will lose most intellectual wars.

The US has gotten lazy in this area. It prefers to import brains rather than generating them in its highschools.

The U.S. patent application rate fueled by Chinese, Nigerian, and Indian intellectual mercenaries is a result of this.

As a developing country you can lower inflation, reduce corruption, cut your budget, privatize and still not get rich

Amie says

Although it was written in the early 2000s, this book still scares the crap out of me. I recommend this read to anyone looking for a glimpse into genetics and how it will (and already has) changed our lives.

Alejandro Sandoval says

Excelente libro. Hace más de 10 años que lo leí. Da una visión futurista del mundo y la economía. Dado que es un autor Mexico-Americano, da crudos datos sobre México.

A pesar de ser un libro, no tan nuevo, sigue dando muy buenas referencias y alertas sobre lo que deberíamos hacer. Muchas de sus predicciones hoy ya son un hecho.

Finalmente, la "estructura gráfica" de como esta escrito lo hace un libro muy dinámico y original.

Paul says

An excellent read and a treatise on the state of America's "knowledge economy", the potential it holds and the direction it may head if we neglect our intellectual capital. Examined through the lens of the genomics revolution, the author suggests that those societies who commit to economies based on intellectual horsepower are destined to significantly outpace those who do not.

George Dimitrov says

Nothing spectacular about this book. Just a lot of nonsense. A few years latter, Venter is downsizing his Institute and has not come even close to the financial level of Bill Gates. This book is a good front for Juan's lectures and company, but aside from that is a flop.

Michael Friess says

The book was published in 2001 when the human genome was just about to be decoded. It is primarily about life sciences and the dramatic change the author predicts it will have for individuals, nations and companies. It is written in a provocative style to make the reader uneasy and surge for further information.

In the author words: "My objective is not to teach you everything you need to know about technology rather, to start a debate. I hope this will feel like a Chinese meal and leave you hungry to read more ..."

It is a quick, provocative read - more like a snack than a full meal

Jack says

Interesting, but not terribly enticing as prose goes. I like complete sentences, come to think of it.

As the Future Catches You really makes you stop and question some of the basic notions about wealth and how it is generated. It would be pretty interesting to see how some of the predictions in the book have played out, now that it is nearly a decade old.

Melissa says

This book blew me away!! I had no idea how scarily futuristic genetic science is these days. I tried to talk to friends and family about the things I learned in this book and people just shrugged like, "oh well." I finally stopped because no one seems interested and therein lies the problem. Most people are not extremely science literate and discussions of science and genetics are a bit frightening. These experiments have huge implications and ethical concerns and we all should be more interested in them.

Brent says

I loved the book. But, like many books I read with a science theme, I find myself disagreeing with some of the applications/conclusions drawn by the author.

The author shares a lot of valuable and thought-provoking information; however, I certainly do not believe that I need to re-think my religious beliefs in light of science.

There is nothing that a scientist can come up with that God didn't put into motion many, many years ago.

As I first time scanned through *As The Future Catches You* by Juan Enriquez, I knew it would be something totally different. Typography of the book looked strange with lots of different font sizes and lots of free spaces throughout the book. Even I was prepared, book was able to surprise me.

Problem with a book that has controversial thoughts about the future is that anyone criticizing it's thoughts can be stamped to be old fashioned and not understanding anything about the trends of the future. I think that's also the style how Juan Enriquez wrote the whole book. It is meant to diss the people who don't believe in his thoughts and prophecies.

Josh says

Oat says

Mixing Apples, Orange and Floppy Disks

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"If you change this code, just as if you change the code in floppy disk or on a CD, you change the message, the product and the outcome."

Nick says

An excellent, easy to read review of some of the coolest things that our amazing technology driven culture is currently cooking up that will have a profound impact on our lives in the next 20 years. Enriquez does a great job of making complex concepts easy to understand and also of placing them in the right context so you can see what the impact of his theories will be.
