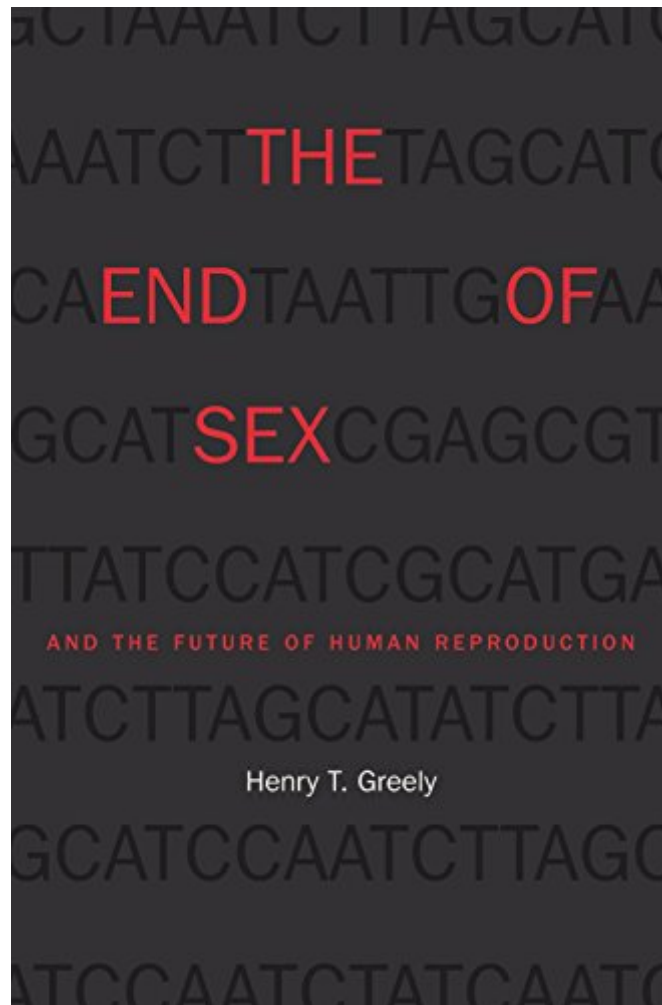


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The End Of Sex And The Future Of Human Reproduction



Synopsis

Within 40 years many people will stop having sex for reproduction. After IVF and preimplantation genetic diagnosis, parents will pick embryos for implantation, gestation, and birth. It will be easy, safe, lawful, and free, Henry Greely predicts. He explains the new technologies and sets out the deep ethical and legal challenges facing humanity.

Book Information

File Size: 679 KB

Print Length: 373 pages

Page Numbers Source ISBN: 0674728963

Publisher: Harvard University Press; 1 edition (May 30, 2016)

Publication Date: May 30, 2016

Sold by:Â Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B01G5B45GW

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Not Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #440,900 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #26

inÂ Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Medical eBooks > Reproductive Medicine & Technology #80

inÂ Books > Medical Books > Medicine > Internal Medicine > Reproductive Medicine & Technology

#85 inÂ Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Medical eBooks > Physician & Patient > Medical Ethics

Customer Reviews

Hank Greely's "The End of Sex" is a timely and important book treating the complex and ethically fraught issue of reproductive medicine and diagnostics with care as well as candour. Greely's enjoyable prose introduces readers to the technologies available today and those on the horizon without fear or favour, neither condemning them, as many conservative and technologically skeptical authors are wont to do, nor making them seem a panacea to all societal ills, as some of his futurists neighbours may tend to. Instead, he vividly describes how embryos might be selected in the future and what other technologies may come to reduce or even eliminate the role sex plays in reproduction. Through this, he confronts the reader with tough and personal questions that our

technological progress raises: what does the world we want to live in look like and how do we start shaping policy today to account for the technological developments of tomorrow? Greely implores readers to "pay attention to these issues, think about them [and] talk about them with others" and I cannot but agree. If we don't follow his advice now, we will forgo the chance to "shape a world where these new technologies bring as much benefit, with as little harm, as humanly possible." I believe our children could never forgive us that.

A pleasure to read. Greely's style is clear, specific, and engaging. Part One is devoted to the biological foundations of the growing revolution in human reproduction, and for me it was both illuminating and enjoyable to read. Greely packs a lot of information into a relatively short space, synthesizing an impressive amount of information into a coherent whole centered around his concept of "Easy PGD." He then turns to explore the path for the coming decades that he thinks will transform the way in which human beings in industrialized (i.e., affluent) societies will reproduce. I think things will move more slowly than Greely does, simply because things always seem to move more slowly than we think in the moment. (I remember watching the first U.S. moon landing in 1969 in a little village in Germany in the middle of the night, and it would have been hard to imagine that we wouldn't have colonies on the moon in twenty years. Similarly, after a decade of Concorde supersonic commercial flight, we are back to subsonic-only flight. Or the early promise of gene therapy, maturing decades after we expected.) Greely, nonetheless, plots a careful pathway into this (probably inevitable) future. Part Three deals with the ethical, legal, and policy implications of Easy PGD, and here Greely is at his best, illuminating without being pedantic, carefully showing why certain extremes are either impossible or highly undesirable, and then laying out the issues that we will face in dealing with the available possibilities. Greely doesn't get ahead of his data and does not try to solve all these issues, but he does present very careful examinations of the arguments that will leave the reader more informed and with a much more nuanced understanding of the contours of these issues.

I've read my share of science books, and this is among the best. Greely writes clearly and explains complex concepts in a way that most laypeople can follow. As a bonus, he'll make you laugh from time to time. Greely has thoroughly thought through (say that five times fast) the implications of "artificial" gamete production and cheap whole genome sequencing. If this future of "Easy PGD" plays out, it will be a fascinating one. Barring regulation, we will be able to eliminate genetic diseases (yes!); gay and lesbian couples will be able to have their own biological children (thumbs

up!); so will geriatric women (that seems okay?); so will deceased individuals (hmm); close relatives will be able to have healthy children together (still weird, Jaime Lannister); and a single person will be able to have offspring as a "uniparent" (WTF). This is just a sampling of the intriguing possibilities Greely suggests lie in our near future. As a science fiction writer, this book is a gold mine. I don't know how the future will play out, but I'll probably invest in genomics technologies, and I'll certainly recommend this book.

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