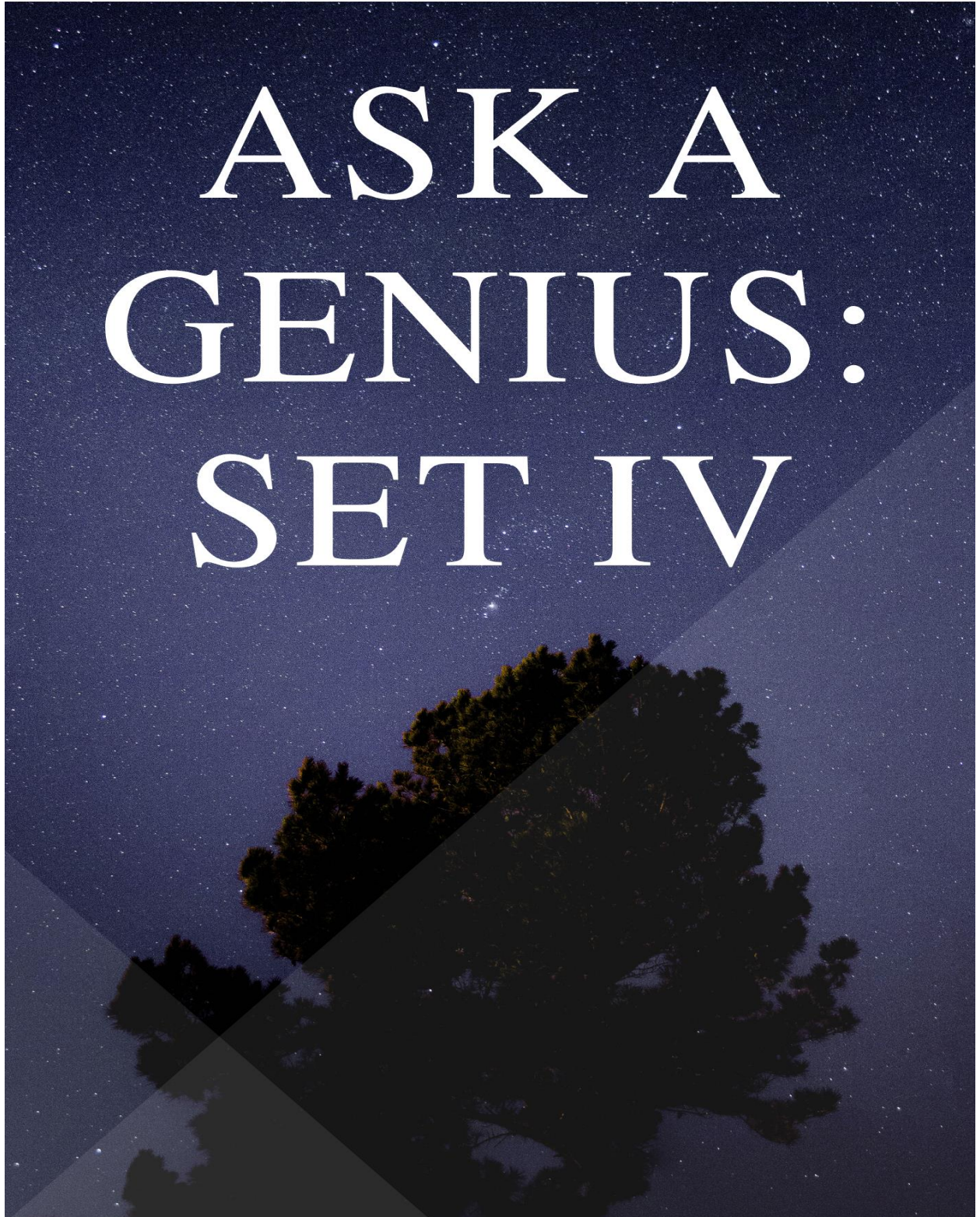


SCOTT DOUGLAS JACOBSEN  
&  
RICK ROSNER

# ASK A GENIUS: SET IV



# In-Sight Publishing

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*To three generations of women who support and tolerate me - my mom, Ruth, my wife, Carole,  
my daughter, Isabella.*

**Rick**

*To the love in my life, forever lost and kept.*

**Scott**



## **ASK A GENIUS**

## Introductory Note

Also, as a general note, the title of the series references Rick, not me, based on mainstream standardized test scores for standard psychometrician and psychology definitions of genius based on rarity of cognitive abilities out of the general population in addition to the scores on alternative high range tests and the scores there, even with the caution and care in consideration of the greater margin of error with alternative tests and the higher implied sigmas from the aforementioned high range tests. Whether mainstream or not, the title maintains some justification. Nonetheless, more or less, this amounts to two friends having fun and playing around once in a while. Thanks for tuning into us, again.

**Scott Douglas Jacobsen**

# Ask A Genius 421 – Aging, Bad Brains, and Conservatism Swings in Time and Attitudes (1)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

October 23, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Scott Douglas Jacobsen: What is the math behind reliable demographics?**

**Rick Rosner:** The deal is, for the last 20 or 30 years, people have been saying that the Republican Party in America will collapse demographically. Because Republicans tend to be older and old people tend to get even older and age out and die.

They tend to eventually withdraw from political life, from voting and everything, either because they are too old or too dead to vote. Also, America gets less white, and people who aren't white tend not to be Republicans.

Republicans have pushed them further and further into an extreme corner trying to hold onto their extreme voters, who tend to be old and white. Republicans tend to hold onto power in spite of demographic power by gaming the system.

In 2010, they gerrymandered the country, so that they, Republicans, could win; even though, they may be getting 5% fewer overall votes than Democrats. But at some point, you have to expect the Republican Party to demographically collapse.

People who are optimistic can look at 2018 as an opening salvo in the collapse. But maybe not, because the Republicans own the Supreme Court, which may allow them to get away with more rigging of elections.

Also, we can look at the creation of new Republicans. Younger people who are more altruistic and, perhaps, less motivated by money self-interest – and minorities – tend to demographically gravitate to the Democratic Party.

Republicans: let me postulate here, older people become conservative when they become afraid of change. Let's say the impetus to become conservative is, at least, somewhat proportionate to the rate of change, the faster things change in culture and technology, then the more terrifying it is to people who no longer have the up-to-date skills and intelligence to embrace the change or the changes.

Once people begin to fall behind the curve of change, they look at ways to stop it. Increasingly, since the rise of *Fox News*, conservative media has gotten increasingly used to, and increasingly good at, exploiting the characteristics that go along with the fear of change, which is the loss of thinking ability.

People live longer now. It means that they have more years with old people brains that do not think as well, and conservative media has learned to dumb itself down to be attractive to older and dumber people.

[End of recorded material]

## Ask A Genius 422 – Aging, Bad Brains, and Conservatism Swings in Time and Attitudes (2)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

October 24, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Rick Rosner:** As change accelerates, you have more of a push on the fear end and disorientation end. Then you have more old people surviving into their 70s, 80s, and 90s who need dumbed down media.

It seems ridiculous people who are not part of the demographic that 40% of America still supports Trump. But when you look at the pressures that create conservatives, those are durable.

It will take a long time, perhaps until 2030 or longer, to drive dumb, racist Trump-loving conservatives back out of public life; enough of them backing out of political life, that we begin to have a reasonable political culture again.

The next two years, will require investigations into Trump and into his Republican cronies for corruption and rigging the election, and all sorts of stuff. Mueller has already indicted dozens of people.

We are waiting on Mueller's biggest indictments and the overall report on Trump and related issues. That will roll out over the next two years. That will be a daily negative attack ad on Trump backed up by the results of investigations.

This should serve to erode support for Trump, except that the people who support Trump will continue to get their information from media, led by *Fox News*, that will continue to spin the information in such a way that they will be skeptical of the next two years of revelations of exactly how evil Trump is.

Although, *Fox News*, Wikileaks, the *National Inquirer*, and other associated Twitter accounts have been going silent, which is making people speculate – or causing them to speculate that – Mueller has told them that they are about to be indicted for campaign law violations for several things.

So if you can put some kind of a leash on the untruthful propaganda coming out of rightwing media, the next two years may serve to be more erosive of Trump supporters. In 2020, there is a new census too.

It may be that we will see reduced Republican gerrymandering. But that is not a sure thing because Trump named two Supreme Court justices and one of them, Kavanaugh, is thoroughly a political hack.

He will consistently and corruptly – in many people's minds including mine – rule in favor of Republicans. That's it.

[End of recorded material]

## Ask A Genius 423 – Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

October 25, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Scott Douglas Jacobsen:** This is about god or gods.

**Rick Rosner:** Or ways to believe in God.

**Jacobsen:** Then the ways of belief within this.

**Rosner:** You mentioned off-tape the Flying Spaghetti Monster.

**Jacobsen:** Some of them aren't meant necessarily to be mean in most aspects but as catharsis. Same with ex-Muslims who left fundamentalist Islam and lost their jobs, their family, their community, their faith, and may be restarted at 40 with a child after a rape, and so on. It is a catharsis.

**Parody religions can be a catharsis.**

**Rosner:** The mechanism could be the investigation of the arcana of a parody religion. It makes you realize some aspects of all religion are jokey and then feel catharsis about leaving it. It is social support.

**Jacobsen:** That's the biggest thing.

**Rosner:** Growing up in Boulder, I encountered all sorts of culty religions. I did a job with people who felt as though they were involved with 'higher dimensions' through engagement with float tanks of a sort.

You could find a dozen or so beliefs that are not mainstream American beliefs, which is a different form of investment. You get support if you immerse yourself. In Scientology, that would be a tough religion to maintain.

Unless you had been doing it long enough to handle being out and about and exposed to critiques of Scientology by the greater culture. To be around Scientologists for 5, 6, or 10 hours per day, I remember being in college.

My first year, Church of Christ was big on my floor. They had activities for their people 6 days or nights a week. They wanted you constantly hit with the message and not hit with "why the hell are you doing that?"

I remember one girl. I came to my school during the second semester. I missed the whole soap opera of the first semester. I joined in the second semester. The whole floor was Church of Christ.

This guy was a cool guy, ex-football player. He got sucked into it. This girl liked him because he was still a studly guy. She followed him into Church of Christ. What was supposed to happen at Christmas break, you were supposed to tell them what town you lived in, what town you were going back to; they would make sure that you were hooked up to the Church of Christ in that town, so you'd continue to be hit with the message.

Somebody dropped the ball with the football guy. He went home for a month and wasn't exposed to any Church of Christ. He was like, "What the hell? No Church of Christ for me. I am back to the Kavanaugh life of beer and babes." He was blissfully free.

But the girl who went with him was stuck in there to be with him. She was stuck there. She was stuck in this oppressive and culty version of Christianity and was pissed because she didn't get the guy that she liked.

**Jacobsen: One thing, it is much harder, as this comes up, for women in those circumstances, because women tend to have less economic degrees of freedom. Not only in America, but it is also even exacerbated worse in more poverty-stricken areas, where men hold more of the cards.**

**That is an amusing case of being the case but also serious, then there are the ones that are more serious. It comes up in the secular community. Why so many men? Why so many white men? You can not the amount of dependence forced on women in those communities.**

**The socioeconomic traps for women, not simply "I didn't get the guy and followed into the Church of Christ and got trapped."**

**Rosner:** Yes, the religions bend, you can find freedom in a culty religion if you're willing to cynically gameplay. The televangelists who tell people that God wants them to have a private plane, so send them money.

Again, there was one guy on my floor. He was super-duper Church of Christ. He dressed in disco clothes a lot of the time. It was clothes that showed off his package. Gabardine pants that were 20% stretchy material that hugged his bottom half. Satin disco shirts too; the non-believers, we would ask him, "Why are you dressed like a disco king?"

He would say, "I want to look good for Jesus." Ways of believing, you can immerse yourself in a boutique religion. You can believe with various degrees of commitment in a mainstream religion.

You can incidentally embrace the current scientism, vaguely believe science has all the answers and that the universe is a random process playing out – and nothing really matters: scientific nihilism.

Then there are a couple of ways that I believe. That I think people will increasingly believe in the future.

[End of recorded material]

# Ask A Genius 424 – Scientific Nihilism: Nihil (1)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

October 26, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Scott Douglas Jacobsen: What are scientific nihilism and its future?**

**Rick Rosner:** Scientific nihilism will not survive the era of big information. People get this idea that the universe is a big clockwork, even though it cannot be with quantum mechanics. It is indeterminate.

That doesn't disqualify the view that the universe plays out as a series of random processes. Everything is destined to go to shit. The expanding Big Bang universe will continue to expand until it is cold, dark, and mostly empty trillions of years into the future.

Everything, eventually, goes to shit. A lot of or several of those ideas aren't true now. In that, entropy does not rule the entire universe; it, certainly, doesn't rule planets with life orbiting stars. It applies to closed systems.

Open systems can shed waste heat and actually increase in order. We are the current end product of 4.5 billion years of increasing order in our solar system. I believe that a future scientifically based view will be that increasing order is built into the universe and that there are values associated with this.

If you look at ethical values, most of them or most ethical goods involve not destroying shit or preserving shit, whether preserving life or the quality of human life. The Golden Rule is treating people as you would wish to be treated and if you wish to have a good life.

Goodness in life is based on freedom from chaos to a large extent. Chaos being war and cataclysm and disease. You want to hold onto the good things in life. The holding on is preserving order.

Order is built into ethical values and vice versa. So, I believe that future systems of belief that incorporate science will increasingly incorporate ideas of increasing order rather than the half-assed belief in nothing mattering associated with scientific nihilism or that many people have in the back of their minds lazily with an acceptance of a scientific point of view.

You can also look at Feynman. He wrote this article or gave a speech 50 years ago. Where he talked about the three directions that science could go in, science could run into a wall and everything that could be discovered scientifically would be discovered scientifically but that it wouldn't explain everything, or it would explain everything, or there is an unlimited stuff to discover with science and science would continue to make gains without ever reaching completion.

That has pertinence to what we can anticipate. It can be set as an analogy to future forms of beliefs, what we believe in the near future, which I believe will increasingly be the universe having scientific explanations with a bias for increasing order.

**Jacobsen: Do you mean localized order?**

**Rosner:** It is localized negentropy. But I also believe the universe has increasing order on average as a whole. That the universe is built from order. That all the matter and structures of the universe can only exist in the proliferation of particles that we have and in the precision with which those particles are defined in their interactions and positions in space, etc., etc.

That only happens because there is enough order in the universe to permit that. If you believe that ordered systems generally have a beginning point, a point at which the system did not exist and so had zero information; you have to believe, at some point, that the system going from the point to now must have had increasing order, whether synthetically in an artificial world built or in an evolved natural universe.

You have a universe that went from zero order to a shitload of order. I believe that future belief systems would incorporate the science and this idea in the future.

**Jacobsen:** How would this work in the near future with beliefs that imply a continued belief – sorry – in things like the *Quran*, things like the *Bible*, things like the *Torah*, and things like the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*?

**Rosner:** In numerous of our conversations or interactions, I have mentioned this a gazillion times. That Reformed Jews do not even know what they believe. In Sunday School, I was taught Jesus was a great man, a great leader, who had great things to teach us. He just wasn't the Son of God.

He was not the Messiah. We were still waiting for him. Increasingly but not exclusively, there will be people who embrace traditional religions in a non-religious way. They will embrace the ritual without buying the divine aspects to it.

It would normally require belief in it. But it will be hollowed out. There will continue to be people who are adherents to the major religions. But that there has already been a large hollowing out of belief.

There will be increasing hollowing out of religion. As I said, Reformed Jews do not even know what they are supposed to believe.

[End of recorded material]



## Ask A Genius 425 – Scientific Nihilism: Nihil (2)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

October 27, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Scott Douglas Jacobsen:** Apart from individual believers, does this impact the intrinsic claims of validity or veracity to divine inspiration to holy books?

**Rick Rosner:** You can't overestimate the power of casually held and inconsistent beliefs. Right now in the world, your mainstream American Christian believes in God and in science, even when they contradict.

Because their belief is loosely held about each thing. People don't require themselves to have completely consistent belief systems. People live their lives. They casually believe what they're going to believe about God and science.

Most people are never going to examine their beliefs so that they are squared away and consistent. It will be the same thing in the future. People believing in both religion and science in casual ways; that is probably not consistent or logical, and just people will live their lives that way.

**Jacobsen:** That is the individual believers again. Given the understanding now, is it plausible, apart from possible, that these texts were divinely inspired or not?

**Rosner:** I think in the future people will increasingly put things in a secular context. These texts may or may not have been inspired by God, themselves, or their friends, but not, in fact, from divine inspiration.

**Jacobsen:** For instance, I think it's 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles. You can find a guy named Ahaziah. One says he came into power at 8-years-old. Another says that he came into power at 18-years-old.

I think it's those sorts of fine print that, as people tend to take on more secular perspectives and simply enjoy the worship and the community without really consistent beliefs about it or examines of the text, will simply ignore this more and more now.

**Rosner:** I don't think those inconsistencies are disqualifying. You are looking at many hundreds of years of potential mistranslation. In the early Renaissance, and maybe even longer, if you are looking sculptures of a Jew, sculptures of Jews would have horns sticking out at the temples.

Because there was some mistranslation in the *Bible* that Jews have horns. It was not meant as disrespect. It said that Moses and other Jews had horns sticking out. If you are a Biblical scholar, there are probably many words that can be argued over endlessly based on a mistranslation.

**Jacobsen:** I'll ask another question. If, theoretically, we had the perfect intended text in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, is it plausible to say that those were divinely written?

**Rosner:** Not to me, it is not plausible. You can still believe it. You can probably make arguments from complexity. Intelligent Design people like to argue that eyes are too complex to have evolved without intervention, which is the dumbest possible argument because eyes are one of the most independently evolved organs.

They evolve all the time. If you are an organism across hundreds of millions of years, you would have to be doing something way, way wrong not to evolve eyes. You could argue, “How could these systems evolve as set out in the *Bible* or the *Quran*, or whatever the holy book is, without God directing it?”

You’ve got a bunch of sheep herders. People who grow wheat and make shoes. These barely technological civilizations or these sub-technological civilizations. How would they come up with this stuff without God coming along?

They probably did not have underwear. I don’t know. How can people who did not make underwear make these holy books and immense ethical schemes?

**Jacobsen: Under that scheme, does that mean no magic in the universe? As you call them, the principles of existence or the more common label of the laws of the universe.**

**Rosner:** Yes, I subscribe to that. We live in the natural world. When a macro event happens, it has a cause. Quantum events can happen with a certain amount of randomness because that is built into quantum mechanics.

But when a baseball hits you in the head, there is a thrower and a ball. There is a system in place. You can argue for magic via simulation. People like to argue that there are probably more simulated worlds by a ratio of infinity to 1 than naturally evolved worlds.

I forget the exact argument.

**Jacobsen: Is this the Bostrom argument?**

**Rosner:** I forget. But the world feels natural.

**Jacobsen: You could apply a reality-simulation certainty dichotomy. Something like this as a principle. In our model, we have the possible states of existence as infinitely more than the states of non-existence.**

**In that sense, with the argument of simulation being an infinite possibility of those, you really cannot distinguish between those two. Either one of those is reasonable in an infinity context, potentially.**

**Rosner:** That’s reasonable to me, at this time.

[End of recorded material]

## Ask A Genius 426 – Scientific Nihilism: Nihil (3)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

October 28, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Rick Rosner:** Here's the argument against magic, whether in a simulated world or a natural world, a good simulation, one that you can't tell is a simulation, will not break its own rules on a regular basis; so, a simulated world where magic is possible is breaking the rules of nature, and those rules are what appear to apply.

You can not go around violating them willy-nilly. Otherwise, you're living in a shit simulation. The point of a good simulation is the simulation being good.

**Scott Douglas Jacobsen:** I like that argument. Baruch De Spinoza had this notion of a natural world. He deconstructed, maybe in *Ethics*, all these basically supernatural beliefs, e.g., the liturgy, prayer, and so on.

He simply does not take into serious account the supernatural beliefs of the standard faiths. They are irrelevant and nonsensical. He says there is a natural world, and no afterlife. What you're saying takes an IC context with that plus a digitized form of that...

**Rosner:** We will see a gazillion convincing simulated worlds in the future. We already have them. You have a number of games with believable reality. But they are market and technology-driven.

It gives them both severe limitations. Nobody or few people think, 'Wow, I am really in this world.' Unless they are psychos or idiots.

**Jacobsen:** [Laughing].

**Rosner:** Few simulated worlds, even in the super high-tech future, will be entirely devoted to being entirely convincing so that you're immersed without realizing that you're immersed.

There may be a niche for that. The people who want the San Junipero experience from *Black Mirror*. Even in the show, the characters know that they are living in a simulated world.

It is just a nice one. But they also know that they are somewhere else. That they are a digital simulation housed in a bank of computers.

**Jacobsen:** That could be programmed out.

**Rosner:** Some people may want that. But the preserving of the illusion of a simulation means that it won't glitch regularly. There are all sorts of arguments. We have already started talking about the ratios of infinities. The ratio of simulated to natural worlds; you can argue if there is such a thing as a natural world.

If there is a ladder of worlds with our information of the universe is stored in a higher storage, and same with that, and if that infinity is a real thing, and if it does make sense, how can you know that all infinity universes along that ladder are not infinity themselves?

There is a whole system of logic that has to be fleshed out. We have tried to use Set Theory to talk about the set of all possible universes. We have had reservations. In that, the members of the set are fuzzy, perhaps for quantum mechanical reasons.

**Jacobsen:** Also, there is something that should be included in that. The current fuzzy set should include an implied past, somehow, and a set of possible futures.

**Rosner:** Yes. You can characterize a fuzzy particle precisely. Thus, it is not entirely legit to state that states of quantum existence or the possible worlds are fuzzy because of quantum mechanics, because of the math of quantum mechanics.

Since a particle may be fuzzy or an electron, while not precisely defined in space and time, it is a precise object or mathematical entity in quantum mechanics.

**Jacobsen:** I have heard this defined as precise not as in 0% or 100% but as statistical precision.

**Rosner:** Also, fuzziness seems like it will always creep in. One reason: if you imagine every possible world as a moment, or as a string of moments along a worldline, the deal is, when you're working with it, you're working with a single moment or a series of moments.

But "moment" cannot be precisely defined because moments are quantum mechanically linked to one another; you cannot entirely separate the moments because the moments are defined or the worlds are defined by the playing out of a string of entwined moments, which seems brutal in a set-theoretic point of view.

**Jacobsen:** You have Set Theory. You have Fuzzy Set Theory or Multi-Valued Set Theory. The form you're talking about: let's say you have a universe with  $10^{85}$  particles, we'll call those particles elements to put them in the language of Set Theory.

You have that, in the language of set theory, with a set of  $10^{85}$  elements plus the  $10^{85}$  implied past elements plus the  $10^{85}$  per possible set future elements.

**Rosner:** It is like a tapestry. You have a bunch of tangled particles comprised of the past putting limitations on the future, but the weave untangles the further into the past or into the future that you go.

[End of recorded material]

## Ask A Genius 427 – Scientific Nihilism: Nihil (4)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

October 29, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Scott Douglas Jacobsen:** Yes. There is another layering on top of that new fuzzy, dynamic set theory. It is based on the information. I think, by the way, as a side note; I think information is important because you can put this in the language of math.

It is not only the  $10^{85}$ th and the pasts and those single sets of  $10^{85}$ ths for those sets of possible futures. It would also be the stacking of that, as everything is correlated – as has been said – but some things are more correlated than others.

So, you have these numbers but they are precise in a statistical sense without being absolute. They would not be 0% or 100%. They would be a fast landscape of ups and downs.

**Rick Rosner:** Yes.

**Jacobsen:** It is kind of interesting. I guess it would concretize the imagery given about an information map being laid out, in terms of how 3-dimensional space represents different objects in terms of relatedness to one another.

**Rosner:** Without understanding what I'm talking about. I have said that the universe is its own map. The universe as laid out may be the richest and most efficient layout of what can happen next, because not everything can happen next under the really fuzzy and f-ed up rules of this set theory, where there is a set of next possible moments.

**Jacobsen:** It can be seen as a matrix of the elements. You can invent a mathematical symbolism with the sub-numbers and sub-letters stating that this is the most likely possible next state if you were to collapse the set into what is most likely to happen next.

**Rosner:** There is a consensus or statistical consensus of next possible moments.

**Jacobsen:** A lot of summing and averaging [Laughing].

**Rosner:** There are a set of moments that are equally probable, then there are those that are less probable but related. Even though, they are super probable; they are more probable than something that's even crazier than that.

The Philadelphia Flyers have this new mascot, a terrible mascot who is orange with bug eyes.

**Jacobsen:** [Laughing].

**Rosner:** The odds that you flip a coin and it stands on an edge are vastly more probable than that the Philadelphia Flyers' mascot shows up in your living room. It is not zero but something like a 0 plus a google zero.

**Jacobsen:** Not the entire thing, but could it be more likely that little itty bitty bits of him pop into the living room.

**Rosner:** Yes. I read these textbooks that talk about the air in the room evacuating the room. It is possible but highly improbable. But there are usually more likely things happen. You're in an airplane and somebody shot out a window. There is a cause for that.

You have to wait for the lifetime of a google universe for air to just statistically drift into the corner and suffocate you.

**Jacobsen:** It doesn't crash much. The system doesn't crash much or at all. The contextualize framework of all those together – the gazillion units of whatever time or unit; one of the units can simply wink out of existence.

**Rosner:** The pog world is limited in time. The simple citizens would not live long enough to encounter a glitch.

**Jacobsen:** In a normal circumstance, the air could rush to the other side of the room, suffocating the person and then they die. In an airplane, it could be much more likely that it could exist.

But if you take a bunch of armatures, you can take a massive weave of them linked together informationally – and similar to other things rushing to one side of the room, then you could have an entire universe or armature in the massive weave simply winking out of existence as if it never existed in the superstructure.

**Rosner:** Yes, I think so. To bring this back to religion and belief, it is stuff that we are not capable of definitively characterizing, but that is pertinent to the nature of existence. It points at one of Feynman's situations, which is that regardless of what we believe now or what I think we will believe in the near future; there might be a new series of discoveries, physical and metaphysical, which will vastly change what we believe into the indefinite future.

**Jacobsen:** This raises other questions for me. If you take a rationalist or a humanist lens, or an empiricist lens, each takes the no magic position. But they also take the naturalist perspective, which you are taking.

They tend to take meta-naturalism. It is their metaphysical worldview. What an information-based view on the universe takes is an information-based metaphysicalism, that's not naturalism.

There is a similarity with Newton's and Einstein's math working in different frames. It is just that one is a little more comprehensive and contextualizes the operations of the world better because you're incorporating information theory and communication theory: Big Bang, expansion, deceleration, and the production of natural objects.

**Rosner:** You can have statistical naturalism, which incorporates tendencies towards order as a statistical likelihood that becomes informationism or the idea that the idea increases in information over time – or the universe is an embodiment of information.

**Jacobsen:** Typically, what I hear from that camp, which is an important camp from modern science, the naturalism camp, they talk about this as a conclusion of modern science or a principle of natural science.

But science was natural philosophy, so, yes, you will derive naturalism from science. The idea of the universe runs along its course in its dynamics and natural objects rise, run along, and fall away.

**Rosner:** Nothing means anything. But we have built towards that over the past 2,000 years, which is every time science stuck its nose into the world. It met a pullback in perspective and a reducing of the importance of humanity with the most famous step being the end of the or the replacement of the Ptolemaic System with the Copernican System.

The Earth at the center to the Sun as the center, building to the Big Bang and then us as simply one of  $10^{22}$ nd stars in a randomly occurring and playing out the universe. So, we are extrapolating that nothing means anything based on all these previous demotions of humanity from the center of existence to just a little blip in this vast universe.

[End of recorded material]

## Ask A Genius 428 – Scientific Nihilism: Nihil (5)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

October 30, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Scott Douglas Jacobsen:** If you look at humanism, they have the view of the cold universe but the meaning you get is the meaning you make, the Golden Rule matters, compassion matters, and science matters.

**Rick Rosner:** It is science plus existentialism.

**Jacobsen:** Yes, but not as bleak, it assumes a tendency in the inherent goodness in people.

**Rosner:** To wrap up, the possible future systems of belief are not as bleak as cold naturalism. That order in the universe might be a thing. That order might be connectable to ethics.

That is, in a set-theoretic way, there are, to some extent, absolutes of existence. Because one of the problems of cold naturalism is that universes can wink out in a quantum mechanical manner, leaving nothing.

No record of that existence. It is not as if the universe never was; it is that the universe never was, according to some versions of super cold naturalism. If there is a set-theoretic requirement of possible universes to exist, the constraints of what can and can not exist are not sufficiently tight to deny everything.

There may be a certain absolutism to our existences, even though they are temporally limited. On the third hand, the whole set-theoretic argument itself be demolished by shit we discover farther into the future.

**Jacobsen:** If you take naturalism and the characterization of a cold, random universe, in the same way the Enlightenment was a reaction to the superstition and bigotry of the Christian church for centuries, and if you build a natural philosophic worldview, then you will derive naturalism through fundamental epistemologies. Your ontology will reflect this.

**Rosner:** That's what happens a lot. As humans acquire or develop the power to make their wishes come true, they also tend to acquire the power to realize that said wishes are meaningless or some other bullshit.

**Jacobsen:** I think it's a psychological construct. If you find yourself in a world of decentralized importance, at least geographically – so to speak – or topologically, your internal locus of control probably reduces. It is a theory. But I think it might be a psychological reflection of worldview.

People saying, "Humanity and its lessening importance in a role in the universe implies a lessened importance of your own role," which is probably the wrong frame of the conversation.

When you're talking interpersonal things, you're talking about how to relate to one another, and when you're talking about how to relate to one another, then you're talking about ethics. It builds right back into the Golden Rule, and it builds right back into its fundamental emergence in compassion.



**That's not meaningless at all.**

**Rosner:** The upshot is that as we gain more and more control over the world and ourselves. We will have to rebuild ourselves. The values, translated as human values, will become, to put it glibly, post-human values.

This is what yelled at Lance for the last few sessions. What of your values will make it? He argued, "People will realize marriage is between one man and one woman." He believes it will become well-established and completely apparent to everyone.

**Jacobsen: It never was well-established. That's a new thing!**

**Rosner:** The idea that we're going to keep biologically having kids and most of the conscious entities on Earth will be biological humans having biological kids. It will be the thing for the next 100 years.

Then it is "Katy, bar the door!" for a trillion alternate forms of consciousness.

**Jacobsen: Anything that's talking outside of the universe, the natural world or the physical world, is automatically a metaphysical perspective. Hence, the prefix. If you're talking about an information processing universe that implies an armature, it automatically becomes not only an information-based universe but also a metaphysical informationalism.**

**Rosner:** That's true. Unless, you can haul it back into physics by coming up with some proof. But yes.

**Jacobsen: When people talk about naturalism, whether humanistic or rationalistic or empiricist, or they have a split in their mind between a theology and they incorporate that somehow, looking at those ideas, the concept is a natural world for all of those.**

**It is almost taking metaphysics completely out of the equation, because they don't see it as important. So, those questions do not get asked because they are keeping all the frameworks within a naturalistic perspective.**

**Rosner:** To put it in general terms, any time that you take the dominant belief system in any civilization; 100% of past belief systems have been debunked by future or coming belief systems.

So, the idea that the natural world is everything and that it rolls along randomly or according to raw randomness or probability.

**Jacobsen: Cosmic billiards.**

**Rosner:** Yes, a clockworky kind of deal, the history of the past ideas getting debunked: those ideas themselves will probably get debunked themselves before too long.

**Jacobsen: That would undermine entire philosophies.**

**Rosner:** Well, all philosophies get undermined. That's the nature of how stuff goes.

**Jacobsen: The successful one gets refined. Newton is good for engineering but not black holes.**

**Rosner:** What survived in the philosophies of antiquity, maybe Plato's Cave, everyone knows Plato's Cave.

**Jacobsen:** Laws of Logic, *Animalia* and *Plantae*, the first biological/taxonomical classifications there. But if you are talking about the world made of water, a world made of the infinite, and a world made of air, if you have Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximenes, then, yes, those are definitely gone.

**Rosner:** Democritus gets credit for first postulating atoms.

**Jacobsen:** He and Leucippus, they were the Atomists.

**Rosner:** The argument is, you have to have smallest possible things in the universe or things are infinitely divisible. Once someone makes the argument, one half of the argument will be right.

**Jacobsen:** It's those monads that you were talking about.

**Rosner:** Most philosophies get their asses kicked by increases in knowledge.

**Jacobsen:** But those are bounded to physical models of the world. So, the idea that everything is made of water, infinite, air, or atoms. Most are gone but atoms stay.

**Rosner:** Those are bound to shit visions of the world, bound to wild guesses about the structures of things in the same way we are making wild guesses about Set Theory and armatures and ladders of armatures, and all that.

All that stuff will be rejiggered by future discoveries.

[End of recorded material]

# Ask A Genius 429 – Flavours of Revolution

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

October 31, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Scott Douglas Jacobsen:** We were talking about revolution and its different manifestations.

**Rick Rosner:** We were talking about revolutions in the context of rising expectations. It is often cited within the French Revolution. People do not revolt when really, really downtrodden. It is when they see the possibility of change that is not happening fast enough to suit them.

I don't know whether this is true. Although, it would have to mathematically have to be true. In that, if change is people pushing for change, and if a revolution is people breaking from the established societal structures when the change isn't happening fast enough, it is not like they're going from 0 to 100.

0 is pure misery. 10-20 is gathering change and then to 100. But there would be some change before revolution breaks out. I do not know how helpful that idea is. But it is like that truism that has been disproved, like the frog in boiling water.

It turns out. Frogs will get out of boiling water, whether raised immediately or slowed raised in temperature. Frogs will get out in either case.

**Jacobsen:** The importance of the myth there is the reality behind the intended message, but the mythology of the actual imagery. Even though, the reality of the imagery is false.

**Rosner:** The frog in boiling water is helpful, even if it is not a thing that frogs do.

**Jacobsen:** In America, one of your more important moral voices was Martin Luther King, Jr. He had the notion of the arc of history being long and bent towards justice. In a similar way, democracies can be seen as mini revolutions happening in 4 year timespans, 5 year timespans.

**But sometimes, the political system can lock up, can gum up, can have certain stoppages.**

**Rosner:** It is two steps forward and one step backward.

[End of recorded material]

# Ask A Genius 430 – Asshole

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

November 1, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Scott Douglas Jacobsen: What is an asshole?**

**Rick Rosner:** An asshole is someone who continues to take more than their fair share in a socially understood context. Someone who continues to speak on their cell phone. Even though, we understand that, at some level, you should not do that. There is no reason for you to be standing in a line and yammering really loudly.

That is a violation of social norms. Smoking has become an asshole move, at least in enclosed public spaces.

**Jacobsen:** I see three levels there. A single of each and then a combined. One example, it was smoking. It was making some spaces unacceptable for smoking in public. Then it became possible for the culture to disapprove.

Even though, at the outset, there were campaigns to get pregnant women to smoke. In North America, now, we have #MeToo and all its variations. It is an interesting one. It is happening massively consciously.

**There can be comedic representations of what to do and what not to do.**

**Rosner:** We do not know where it is going to end up. Some things will be unacceptable that used to be, more or less, tolerated, like grabbing someone on the ass. If it is a man grabbing a woman on the ass in the context of “I like your ass, sexually,” it will go away.

One baseball game, the manager slapped one of his players on the ass, after a noble strikeout. He took a lot of pitches but he just didn’t manage to get on base: “Good job!” I was shocked.

It was obviously not sexual. I was shocked to see an ass slap in the era of MeToo. It made me think if these sorts of ass slaps will survive or not. General assholery is taking something other people have the good manners to not take, like taking the space with your noise or smoke.

The violations that generally aren’t reaching the level of reaching criminal consequences down on the perpetrator. One is texting while driving. It is also illegal but it is almost never enforced. They have better things to enforce. In LA, the first offense is a small fine.

If you are a big enough asshole, the 50 bucks will not teach you the lesson. Being an asshole is little offenses as opposed to Bernie Madoff that loses people millions of dollars, he wasn’t even good at what he was doing. He was good at the sales part of it.

He was a good salesman. But in terms of keeping the scheme going, there were plenty of people that what he was doing was so obvious mathematically that people tried to raise red flags. Because he was bad at the math part of it.

But they couldn’t get anyone in authority to believe them. Anyway, that is being an asshole.

[End of recorded material]

# Ask A Genius 431 – Sucking (1)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

November 2, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Scott Douglas Jacobsen:** What is sucking?

**Rick Rosner:** Sucking is the corporate or non-human entity aspect of an asshole. I was supposed to go into a genetic test today, because I am an Ashkenazi Jew. We have certain genetic characteristic aspects that are being studied.

A lot of Ashkenazi Jews have the BRCA gene, which predisposes you to breast cancer. I was told to go to the testing center. I am told that I do not need paperwork because I am in the system.

It turns out. I am not in the system. I leave I come back. It turns out, yes, I am in the system. No one apologizes. This sucks. If you google the title of the organization and “sucks,” there are 500,000 entries.

When you’re getting your blood tested, and any mistake is made in how stuff is made and handled, and the insurance is involved, I heard about terrible billing policies and other complaints about the managing of the company by former workers.

When a company fails or an entity, or a product fails to meet normal current expectations of quality of competence, that thing sucks in the same way a person who fails to meet standards of behavior is an asshole.

[End of recorded material]

## Ask A Genius 432 – Sucking (2)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

November 3, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Scott Douglas Jacobsen:** Can we create the Google Suck-O-Meter? The level of suckocity for this company or celebrity.

**Rick Rosner:** My Google celebrity is artificially inflated because I have the common first name and not uncommon last name. The guy who created *CHiPS* shares my last name. It is not all me. If you put quotes around it, it probably drops further.

It is still not all. It is an index but a sloppy index. But social media is an awareness of assholery and suckery amplifier. People share their gripes. I had this thing happen over the past two weeks.

Not only is it an incidental amplifier of gripes and discontent. It is used in a propagandistic way. Twitter and Facebook are built to amplify people's anger. Over the past few weeks, I have had 100,000 followers, new ones, per day, until I had gotten 1.2 million new followers.

I believe that that is a foreign government trying to amplify my recently increasingly pissy tweets, usually against the Republicans. They have been against Kavanaugh who is baldly partisan and the least popular nomination since they started polling on the public opinions about Supreme Court nominees.

He seems like a pretty terrible guy. So, my tweets have been extra angry and extra pissy. Somebody who is trying to subvert the midterm elections decided that my angry voice should be amplified by having more followers.

Because I think that the more angry tweets and then the more followers to amplify this. I looked around to say if this was happening to others. Chelsea Handler said that this was happening to her too. It is an angry time. It could happen to others.

Thanks to social media, we can widely share our gripes; even though things are better now than at any other time in history, and are getting better on average, some things are getting worst such as storms.

Storms are getting worst. Climate change is adding heat to the oceans and the atmosphere. The more energy air and water has, then the more devastating the storms will be. It is not basic physics but understood physics.

A hot hurricane will be more powerful than a colder hurricane. The heat sucks more water into the sky and propels winds, drops more rain, and so on. Others things are getting better steadily. The lifespans are increasing, except for America where opioids are impacting us and obesity.

But it is mostly in the opioids. That seems to be the main culprit. It is really the fault of a single company, Pruit Pharmaceuticals or something. It is the company that developed Oxycontin and promoted it.

They created oxycontin and the promoted it as non-addictive, which turned out to be not true. Once they were found out for that, they promoted a non-addictive or a non-abusable form of oxycontin that was harder to crush up, was time released, and was bonded with this gummy stuff.

People know this company has made billions of dollars and killed hundreds of thousands of people and nobody knows if they will be held accountable for it.

[End of recorded material]

## Ask A Genius 433 – Sucking (3)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

November 4, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Scott Douglas Jacobsen:** But you could make an argument. I mean this as a general argument that could be secondarily made: the opioid crisis, suicide in middle age, poor diet, inactivity, and obesity in men can be indications in a society.

If the development of a society declines a bit, these problems will rise. These are indicative of health problems but also of a developed society in moderate decline.

**Rick Rosner:** If this society wasn't so good, if the cheapness and availability of delicious food that made us fat were not as available, if the entertainment kept us lazy, and if the overall good conditions that allowed us to get injuries and then be treated with drugs – like Oxycontin – that we can become addicted to, I agree.

These are the secondary effects of the overall quality of life. Expectations will keep rising for the quality of life.

**Jacobsen:** That is non-trivial. What do you mean as the driver of the increased quality of life?

**Rosner:** Technology will keep driving the increased quality of life. Entertainment, medicine, and food will improve; there will be more and more awesome stuff and more and more wherewithal to experience.

**Jacobsen:** Where is this technology being driven from?

**Rosner:** It is market forces plus Moore's Law plus just increasing understanding of everything thanks to AI plus big data. We are going to figure out more and more stuff. The more and more stuff that we figure out then the more and more awesome stuff we can make.

Things will keep getting more and more awesome until our very humanity is stripped from us.

**Jacobsen:** From the inside out?

**Rosner:** Eventually, there will be better containers than bodies to contain consciousness. The individual consciousness, at some point, will be supped up to the point where it ceases to be the unit of consciousness and experience.

There will be many more ways to experience consciousness. There is a horrible and creepy movie called *Under the Skin*. It is super creepy. But basically, she is operating a venus fly trap. She draws guys in.

They get more and more excited and horny.

**Jacobsen:** [Laughing] it is like the woman from *American Gods*.

**Rosner:** They get stuck in this ooze and remain in this state of suspended horniness. But they don't matter because their brain has been taken over by this constant anticipation of getting laid by Scarlet Johansson.

**Jacobsen:** [Laughing].



**Rosner:** They are then taken over by this ooze. That is what will happen with the technology of the future. We will be more and more excited by this technology until we're completely enveloped by the technology and then morphed into all sorts of forms of the future that we, as humans, will find disturbing.

Throughout the process, we will continue bitch about stuff and continue to find examples of assholery and suckiness. It used to be the notion of a clean future and everything is awesome.

A current version is a bunch of awesome stuff in the future but people don't really find it awesome because the future is grimy, rainy, and gross. The first example of that was *Blade Runner*, which was an amazing but grubby future.

There was one show that lasted only one show on Netflix called *Altered Carbon*. It is a lazily imagined future. They took all the tropes from *Blade Runner* including the rainy sets, AIs, cyborgs, and nudity, because it was for Netflix or, maybe, Showtime. It was the dirty future, which is probably closer to the future.

It is increasing wonder and awesomeness. I'll tell you what is amazingly wonderful and awesomely sucky, Khashoggi. He transmitted his torture and murder via Apple Watch. He has an expectation of things going badly for him in the embassy.

He sets the Apple Watch to transmit to his fiancée to the cloud and on audio. He ended up transmitting his own torture and murder. It is on audio. Plus, Apple Watch tracks your heart rate. His heart during torture started beating harder and faster until it stopped.

So, the various investigating authorities have a fairly complete account of the guy's murder, which is both awesome, amazing, and super terrible. It would be science fiction if it was something that was imagined 12 years ago.

[End of recorded material]

## Ask A Genius 434 – Tolerance for Risk (1)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

November 5, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Scott Douglas Jacobsen:** You had a pitch to Bill Simmons. There was a list of stuff. It was when we started writing together, which was several years ago. One pitch was on risk.

**Rick Rosner:** The idea was that I would do a series on stuff that would be changing to such an extent that it will pretty much be going away. One of the things that I suggested would be going away was tolerance for risk.

It is another way of saying that as average lifespans increase, then life becomes more and more precious. People are going to treat themselves as being more precious. That has lots of implications.

There will be less tolerance for things like smoking, for additives that might give you cancer. An increased awareness of things that might kill you. Either based on actual studies or simply a feeling that some things are dangerous.

We are seeing this play out in certain ways. Idiots, against all science, have decided that vaccines are dangerous. An increasing number of idiot parents aren't letting their kids be vaccinated, which reverts to the old-fashioned danger that your kid will get a dangerous disease because assholes didn't vaccinate their kids out of a misplaced sense of the risk of vaccines.

[End of recorded material]

## Ask A Genius 435 – Tolerance for Risk (2)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

November 6, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Rick Rosner:** I grew up in a time when bullying was almost considered okay. A certain amount of bullying from peers and adults in life, especially PE teachers, was considered good because it would ‘toughen you up.’

We internalized this stuff. I punched myself in the face, repeatedly, to toughen myself up, on general principles. I punched walls. I still punch walls. Everyone was supposed to be tough.

Now, we are entering an era when we are supposed to be much more conscious of bullying and less tolerant, conscious of microaggressions, and then old guys, such as myself might say, “Aren’t we raising a generation of soft babies?” The response, “Is that so bad?”

If we raise a generation that has been conscious and do not tolerate bullying, does that mean we will end up with a generation of soft and weak adults? I would suggest that “No! It is a false connection or a not 100% solid connection.”

That raising a generation of compassionate people doesn’t mean that it is weak people. If you want to talk about weak, 2/3rds of Americans are obese. Speaking of weak, this ‘tough’ generation isn’t tough enough to stop themselves from overeating.

Much of the adult population thinking Trump is okay. Affection for Trump is probably largely correlated with age. The older that you are then the more you are to think that Trump is good.

These older and tougher generations are not even tough enough to exercise the mental discipline to realize that Trump is this incredibly bad guy who is corroding American society.

[End of recorded material]

## Ask A Genius 436 – Tolerance for Risk (3)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

November 7, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Rick Rosner:** So, the purported softer generations that are cognizant of bullying is contradicted by what these tough older people are doing, which is getting fat and being stupid. You had a question.

**Scott Douglas Jacobsen:** Mores and norms change over time. What defines “weak” now compared to 60 years ago and 2 millennia ago?

**Rosner:** I think one is that people are more reluctant to die. If you look at history, there have been plenty of opportunities of people to go off to war. There has been a risk of death for ill-defined ideals of nationality.

World War I was a particularly ill-defined war. What were the countries fighting for, it wasn't clear to the people fighting. It is not clear to us now. The Civil War was pretty clear, though people still argue about the causes.

World War II was particularly clear. In that, the German and Japanese agendas seemed super bad. But most wars via thoughts about nationality are vague and are based on the idea of, basically, not wanting to die.

The Vietnam War was, according to most measures, made things worse. Yes, Saddam Hussein was probably killing thousands and tens of thousands of his own people. Going in there and deposing him in a sloppy way has lead to the deaths of a million people or more since 2003, the prospect of even more deaths across the Middle East deriving from this too.

You can probably get 80% or more of reasonably informed people to say that that was a fucking terrible war. I would suggest that people on average are less willing to participate in war or run the risk of getting themselves killed.

[End of recorded material]

## Ask A Genius 436 – Tolerance for Risk (3)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

November 7, 2018

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[End of recorded material]

## Ask A Genius 437 – Tolerance for Risk (4)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

November 8, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Scott Douglas Jacobsen:** Does this relationship with less willingness to die more impact men's self-image than women's because women tend not to be the ones doing the deadly activities as much?

**Rick Rosner:** Yes, there are gender differences. But the mindset that we should die for stupid reasons has become more and more part of our culture. That when you look at cars; cars have metal dashboards and no seatbelts in the 1930s.

They also went as fast then as now. There were fewer streets or freeways where you could go 80 and most cars could not. But most people probably regularly drove more than 40 miles per hour in the 30s from time to time.

If you got in a wreck driving 45 miles per hour in 1938, there is a high probability you'd be dead. You would hit the dash or fly through the front windshield, be impaled by the steering wheel, and then be crushed by the crunching of the car.

Now, cars have acquired probably more than 100 safety features. If you buy a car now, you would be surrounded by 100 airbags, have a passenger compartment not crumpling with the rest of the car, and a seatbelt plus shoulder harness.

You have computerized collision dynamics prevention. You have a self-driving doodad setup. Even though, people drive crappier now than in the 30s, probably. The risk of dying in a car wreck is – I don't know – probably a tenth of what it was then because of the safety features.

[End of recorded material]

## Ask A Genius 438 – Tolerance for Risk (5)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

November 9, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Rick Rosner:** The average lifespan in the 30s was probably 65/67. Now, it is closer to 80. Actually, it is probably much more if you take the more health conscious sectors. There have been splits in lifespans over the last couple decades.

For the first half of the 20th century, everybody was pretty much leaving their longevity to chance. There weren't that many Jack LaLannes trying to figure out how to maximize their lifespans.

Now, you have larger segments of the population interested in living a healthy life, as healthy as they can. But then, you have people who are chaotic and dumb, and eat whatever they want.

But if you take out the people who aren't trying to maximize their longevity and health, that leaves the people who are having a lifespan of close to or at 90. It is a big enough segment of the population or a big enough part of the national zeitgeist or mindset.

Now, the avoidance of risk is a huge part of our culture now. Although, people are not overly aware of that because it is not presented to people as a unitary idea. Instead, it is presented to people as a bunch of individual products or initiatives, or fixes when stuff turns out to be dangerous.

For instance, in California, we have been having these deadly wildfires. It is only in the past decade; there is now a push for fireproof houses. It is a question as to whether we should build houses in forested areas or not. If you do, how do you make those houses less burnable? But part of those less burnable houses, it is making people not burned up in wildfires rather than part of this overall risk averse push.

[End of recorded material]

## Ask A Genius 440 – Waiting for the Shoes (and the Beat) to Drop (2)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

November 11, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Rick Rosner:** We are waiting on Mueller. Trump's behavior keeps getting more destructive. He is noting that he is ready to start a trade war with China. It has become increasingly clear that he is just terrible at everything.

He doesn't give a shit about the country. He has said that he doesn't care about blowing up the national debt. He is presiding over a tax cut. He doesn't care. He notes that if this debt becomes even more serious; it doesn't matter because he won't be in office.

You have to be increasingly dumb or racist to continue to support him. He continues to surprise at the level of incompetence and cravenness that he shows. But the consequences of his awfulness continue to fail to catch up to him.

It seems as if the consequences that will manifest themselves starting in 2019 will be so much greater than the consequences that Trump has suffered so far. We are in a limbo.

Reasonable people expect things to get more horrible for him. But in the coming months, things will continue along the trend of craziness that we're increasingly used to, but it is unprecedented. We may be expecting much worse to the point that some point in 2019; they may have – the White House staff – to prevent Trump from using the nuclear football.

But even that, it may be too crazy even for him. It is a weird limbo. We have much more awfulness. But it is even dangerous to the country.

[End of recorded material]



## Ask A Genius 441 – Waiting for the Shoes (and the Beat) to Drop (3)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

November 12, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Rick Rosner:** Stupid stuff continues to happen and come out of the White House every day. So, I think that in the years to come; this period will be the focus of some movies, some books, similar to other crisis points in history, e.g., the Cuban Missile Crisis, Watergate, and so on.

All of those have been crisis points in the history of the country. With the Cuba Missile Crisis, it was supercharged for 10 days, where Americans didn't know whether or not they would be blown up in a nuclear war.

Similarly, we don't know how much damage will be done when Trump is held to account. It is not 100% certain if he can be held in check via normal legislative means. That's it. We are in limbo.

We are in limbo with the real possibility of horrible stuff happening and now know what that horrible stuff will be.

[End of recorded material]

# Ask A Genius 442 – Intelligence and Minimal Feedback Systems (1)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

November 13, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Scott Douglas Jacobsen:** How does a principle of persistence and a base feedback with the environment imply a level of intelligence?

**Rick Rosner:** You can argue the information content or the amount of information in the model of the environment and the repertoire of responses, the flexibility of responses, can be an index of how smart the organism is.

You have to distinguish between things that are purely mechanical reproductions of the environment. You can have a glass lens. It can show an inverted or distorted image, or a focum or more focused image, depending, of the environment.

But that is not modeling the environment. It is simply a purely mechanical manipulation of rays of light. There is an index. It should be possible to assign a value to the amount of information held within consciousness. Max Tegmark, maybe, has attempted to do that.

I don't think entirely successfully. You can intuitively index that. Humans have a highly developed and multifaceted understanding of the outside world as a model within consciousness, which is replicated in many ways within consciousness.

Higher mammals, including dogs, have less sophisticated models. As you work your way, we down the ladder – we have talked about this – of mental development. You have models of the environment that are less and less detailed or less and less encompassing.

[End of recorded material]

# Ask A Genius 443 – Intelligence and Minimal Feedback Systems (2)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

November 14, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Rick Rosner:** You can have moths. Moths may have some idea of space, still; moth space is, maybe, still 3-dimensional but doesn't have much in it. They have reacting to light, navigating via light sources, and so on.

Bugs are often fatally attracting to street lights. They are attracted to light whose angle to the bug does not depend on changes in the bug's location. If you're navigating via the Sun, your angle to the Sun doesn't change.

It is in the same location in the sky relative to you because it is so far away from you. But if you move from the streetlight, since it is so close, and you move, your angle to the streetlight moves

You are drawn into this fatal spiral of bouncing off the streetlight because your navigation system doesn't understand the nearby light sources.

Anyway, in a moth's picture of the world, you have the source of light, which has a position in space; you're navigating by the light, the food odors, maybe some visual signals, but it is underpopulated and under-understood space. Intelligence in non-biological systems is the ability to model, understand, and react.

[End of recorded material]

# Ask A Genius 444 – Paths of Increasing Order (1)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

November 15, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Scott Douglas Jacobsen:** Why is information processing the path increasing order takes?

**Rick Rosner:** In another discussion, we talked about what life is, or at least higher animal life. It leads to the question, “Why is information processing via modeling the external world internally and react to it the path that increasing order in the universe takes? Are there other paths of increasing order that the universe can take?”

Let’s assume information processing is the preferred path, why does the universe need additional information processing when the mechanics of the entire universe encompass information processing on a universal scale?

That all the physical interactions in the universe involve sharing information or, in some cases, obliterating information. Why does the universe generate little individual information processors? There are many other associated questions.

What role do these individual information processors play in the overall business of the universe?

**Jacobsen:** In most cases, would the answer be “not much”?

**Rosner:** I am not sure, because we do not have a good model. It is reasonably safe to assume that the universe, if it is conscious, is, for the most part, not aware of the evolved structures within the information that comprises its consciousness.

Imagine the universe is conscious, it is also easy to imagine that the universe has no idea what is in the information-bearing structures that is its consciousness from moment-to-moment, including structures such as us – and others on other planets – that have evolved as information processors.

That is the answer to one questions. Evolved conscious beings or manufactured conscious beings made of the information that comprises the universe may or may not play a role in the overall business of the universe.

But it is possible for the universe to simply not be aware of us. We live on almost entirely different planes of existence.

[End of recorded material]

## Ask A Genius 445 – Paths of Increasing Order (2)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

November 16, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Scott Douglas Jacobsen:** How can that argument be misinterpreted or misused?

**Rick Rosner:** One of the greatest philosophical cottage industries has been being wrong about consciousness. It is easy to make category errors. The category error is one of the most fruitful areas of doing jokes.

We should talk about category errors in joke-making. You are talking about one thing but then it turns out that you're talking about another thing. I should be sitting in front of Twitter looking for some of these.

It is hard to talk about evolution without teleological language or biases slipping in. Because the deal is evolution doesn't want anything. It doesn't have a purpose. Evolution exploits niches in the world.

For instance, there is a niche or set of niches biased towards the formation of visual receptors. It turns out that it is relatively easy to evolve eyes. So, eyes have evolved a gazillion times over evolutionary history.

When you discuss stuff like that, it is often easy shorthand to say stuff like, "Evolution likes eyes," or, "Evolution is biased towards eyes," which, if you're not careful, assigns purpose to evolution.

I assume, similarly, if you're not careful about talking about information processing that is at a high enough level to be considered conscious to avoid certain mysticisms sneaking in, I don't know.

To reiterate, we have a lot of questions as to why increasing order in the universe tends to generate little individual information processors. This becomes more about questions than about answers.

[End of recorded material]

# Ask A Genius 446 – The Future of Values (1)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

November 17, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Scott Douglas Jacobsen:** Let's talk about the future of values and what this implies for sectors of society, we can focus on America, since this is where you're from.

**Rick Rosner:** I am not talking about the Golden Rule. The last few months, my wife who seldom unreservedly likes something. She likes these little mini-mosaics from the 19th and the first half of the 20th century that were from Italy.

They were these little flower brooches and sometimes pendant earrings that are made of tiny pieces of colored glass. I have been looking at stuff 80-to-100-years-old. For the past two years, I have been a model for Lance while he creates a fantastically accomplished portrait.

I was thinking that sometime in the future; this stuff will not be valued as much. Because the dominant culture and the dominant constituents of that culture, or the dominant entities who determine what that culture is, will be to some extent augmented or trans-human.

People who have been tweaked biologically or technologically to have increased capabilities, increased lifespans, increased physical characteristics, and so on, not necessarily superhero-like.

It will be focused on information processing. You and I have talked about the near future, the mid-future, and the far future. If you are speaking in terms of the replacement of humans as the dominant entities, the near future is still human-dominated, the mid-future is the changeover, and the far future is the most powerful entities on Earth around as we add stuff to the Earth and other parts of the Solar System.

The various cutoffs are between near and mid-future. It may be 100 years from now. Then there will be more than 100 years. There will be humans around, lots. But they will not be running the show; unless, they are augmented.

The things that will be valuable will be changed. For one, anything manufactured that is not overly complicated will be dirt cheap. Because of a lot of manufacturing, e.g., food and furniture, will be pumped out by the hundreds of thousands of items with automation.

The fabrication of stuff will not cost much. Unless, you're talking about stuff that is very intricate at a microscopic level, e.g., biotechnology, and whatever the future of integrated circuits looks like.

Everything else will be cheap. Augmented or not very augmented humans will be able to live their lives if society makes room for them – if we don't run into some form of dystopia. People will get along even though humans are not in charge anymore.

[End of recorded material]

## Ask A Genius 447 – The Future of Values (2)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

November 18, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Rick Rosner:** There will continue to be some form of human economy. The financial transactions at the highest level of civilization will be built around the value of all bunch of stuff that is valued now.

Human artifacts, I assume there will still be some market for human-produced items. It will be a weird ghost market. Where all the necessities of life not costing much, and the ability to produce anything, including things that are almost identical to human artifacts, it will wreck the market for human artifacts, except in the ghost economy.

The economy that remains when the more powerful and sophisticated economy has moved on. It is probably the safest bet to say that durable and powerful information processing and storage will be the most valuable thing.

The civilization of the future; the economy and the whole culture will be information processing based. You will still have consciousness, as we've talked about. It will turn out to be inseparable, in most instances, from powerful information processing.

It won't be this weird, sterile robot world with sterile robots living sterile lives. It will be vibrant and full of emotion. Those things will happen among all those entities that will be super AI'd up.

Things will be super fast too. Moment to moment transactions will be super fast. But there will be longer arcs around big data phenomenon. Things will still unfold over months and years.

The civilization will put a premium on things that can process data. That means there may be some things on the Periodic Table of Elements that may still be pricey, because the automated mining and refining may make some things like gold and platinum semi-rare.

I guess real estate will still be valuable. Because you still need places to put stuff, infrastructure. Humans will still take a lot of space. Although, the structure of real estate will change too.

With automation, you will be able to make the whole planet down a couple miles down all over it into honeycombs or something. You can maximize the level of the surface area of things that can be done 30, 100, or a 1,000 fold. But you still need land to build things in and on.

That's enough of that.

[End of recorded material]

# Ask A Genius 448 – The Future of Cultures (1)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

November 19, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Scott Douglas Jacobsen:** What is the future of cultures or, in particular, sub-cultures?

**Rick Rosner:** Culture is two things. One is the structure of society. Another is the type of entertainment people like. Let's talk about the future of societal structure, societal structure lines up with what is convenient and productive for that society.

I am thinking in terms of game shows because I worked on game shows. *Who Wants to be a Millionaire* began in 1999 and is still on the air 19 years later. *Jeopardy* was on the air in the 60s, went off for a few years, and has been on solid since the 70s, I think.

It is similar for *Wheel of Fortune*. It is a pretty straightforward show where the best competitors win. They are watchable but basic shows. You want to root for somebody. You want someone to do well. The competitor to do well.

It is a straightforward show. The show *The Weakest Link* is an unwatchable show because things did not line up in the same direction. They went through various rounds of questioning. In the various rounds, they would vote off the player they thought was the weakest link.

It was never the weakest link. It was always the player who was the strongest who the weaker ones teamed up on.

So, a couple dickheads would be competing at the end. Then the MC insulted the contestants. It was a hard show to watch. It was unwatchable, at cross purposes to itself, and things did not line up.

I wrote on it for a while. The questions were easy. It was easy to write insults. But it was hard to make a show that you would want to watch more than 2 or 3 times. It wasn't pleasant and never delivered the desired outcome, which is that the best player won.

We can expand that general principle to societal structures. The most pleasing family structures and societal units are the ones that exist in agreement with the overall principles and objectives of the society.

For human society and to the extent that animals have culture, everything lines up with what has arisen through evolution. That the different sex couples pair up in the case of many, many species and, certainly, humans, and then they reproduce.

[End of recorded material]



## Ask A Genius 449 – The Future of Cultures (2)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

November 20, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Rick Rosner:** Although, there is room for variation on that. There are plenty of gay people among humans and a certain gayness among animals. That may or may not – gayness – add to the reproductive fitness of a species.

But it certainly doesn't detract by much. If it were really a hindrance to the reproductive success of a species, it might get evolved out. But it hasn't. The people who will have the easiest time in human society, at least until recently, would be heterosexual reproductive couplings.

That is where evolution gets its oomph. Family, tradition, culture, religion, and communal life have all arrows pointing towards this. If you live by the dominant forces, the structures living by dominant forces become extinguished when those forces change; and, we're about to see a huge shift in what the dominant forces shaping human society and transhuman or post-human – whatever you want to call it – will be.

The shift away from the purely biologically and evolutionarily determined forces, and towards market forces combined with technology. It is already happening. It seems weird because we live in a highly sexualized society stuffed with porn.

But people are having less sex than they did in the 60s. People are having fewer kids than before. People are less preoccupied with hooking up and relationships, because there is so much other compelling stuff being generated by our media plus our social media in combination with our increasingly powerful technology.

We have talked about this before. As we get closer and closer to replicate consciousness, we will be able to augment ourselves; we will be able to build other powerful information processing entities.

All these will be able to change what our base drives if we wish to. All these forces will erode the old forces.

[End of recorded material]

## Ask A Genius 450 – The Future of Cultures (3)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

November 21, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Rick Rosner:** You mentioned off-tape the traditional forces or the forces for tradition out-reproducing simply the more eccentric ways of living. A good example might be Catholic families.

If Catholic families pump out 5 kids on average and atheist families only pump out 1.6 kids on average, then eventually Catholics and Christianity more generally, and more religion more generally, will be the more dominant cultures.

Because the big religions that survive across the generations and centuries are good at passing on themselves, at indoctrinating people – as opposed to people with more fringy beliefs like forms of atheism and agnosticism. It is only recently within the last couple hundred years that scientism has been powerful enough to be instillable from generation to generation.

**Jacobsen:** These beliefs do not have to map onto the real world to any high degree of fidelity. In fact, they simply have to value the particular set of things that shorten the span between generations and increase the offspring per generation

**Rosner:** You're saying get them barefoot and pregnant and spit out as many kids as possible.

**Jacobsen:** But also provide the values for family and community to provide the comfort to be able to do these things in contexts where this wouldn't happen otherwise.

**Rosner:** Yes.

**Jacobsen:** In other words, in terms of the traditional roles being affirmed, men orient yourselves in such a way to be able to provide for your family. Women, in terms of your role being affirmed, take care of the home, have and take care of the kids, and bring forth life in an image of Christ thing.

**Rosner:** Yes, because of everything lining up.

[End of recorded material]

# Ask A Genius 451 – The Future of Cultures (4)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

November 22, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Rick Rosner:** My wife and I, before we were married; we are broke. Once we got married, it turned us into a powerful income generating and savings team.

It made me straighten up and get employed. We played by the rules. We didn't think of this in terms of a strategy to accumulate assets. But married people tend to get assets. I was friends with lesbians back in the 80s.

There was the whole deal. Lesbians tended to be broke, at least young lesbians. They were kind of at odds with the culture. It meant to some extent taking shitty jobs and not have easy lives.

That would apply to anybody at odds with the culture. You can make the argument that the very best people in the culture; those who are opposite of Asperger's people. The super glib and social people can schmooze themselves into leadership positions, higher paying jobs, higher quality spouses.

If you're good at riding society, whether intentional or not, it is the way society is set up. You are going to thrive. It is almost tautological.

**Jacobsen:** Those people dominated the culture as per the rules set out before It is a simple recipe of three things: have strong family and communities ties with bonds across generations, have shorter generations between generations, and also have an affirmation of large families where kids are seen as "gifts from God" rather than financial burdens within a certain range of finances.

**Rosner:** Lance likes to argue the immigrants and Muslim, mostly worried about Muslims, will out-reproduce non-Muslims in America until they become a significant part of the society.

He likes to talk about European countries where Muslims are more than 10% of the population and disruptive cultural forces. He likes to bring up Sharia Law and so on. He thinks this will happen in America. Right now, Muslims are 1% of the population.

Yes, they tend to have larger families. But it will take a long time for the demographics to play out.

**Jacobsen:** 1/3rd of those born into a religion leave while 2/3rds stay.

**Rosner:** Just because you are out-reproducing other religions, it doesn't mean that you win, especially with losing so many followers.

[End of recorded material]

## Ask A Genius 452 – The Future of Cultures (5)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

November 23, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Rick Rosner:** But with the 80-100 years that it will take the Muslim population to rise to the larger portions of the population.

By then, you are looking beyond the near future with the human domination and then moving into the mid-future. It won't be Muslims increasing their demographic significance in America.

But more overwhelmingly, the entire or all of the existing societal structures will be more thoroughly overturned by the market and technology-driven changes to society. Within 150 years, people will have practical immortality.

Science will be advancing at a fast enough clip – and medicine – that whatever ails you; for most people, for every ten years older that you get, science is able to add another 10, 20, or 30 years of life.

Eventually, people, in practical terms, will be immortal. They could look forward to living for several centuries.

**Jacobsen:** If you take the modern scientific advances, the societies that accept those or put those into the educational curricula; they see a whittling down of fundamentalist strains of religion.

By liberal religious and non-religious people, they seem like the problem. As they become more dominant around the world, noting, of course, evolution is not seen as the dominant accepted theory by the global population.

There will be a necessary shift in worldview as there is an adaptation of traditional religious beliefs.

**Rosner:** We have called this the “hollowing out of religion” People stop believing in the mystical aspects of religion less and less, and follow the principles less and less.

**Jacobsen:** Yes, they become more Spinozan. I think evolution will be the big one. Because it is so simple. I think Daniel Dennett called it a “universal acid” in that sense.

[End of recorded material]

## Ask A Genius 453 – The Future of Cultures (6)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

November 24, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Scott Douglas Jacobsen:** But if we look at the width and size of generations, the bigger impact on this will be the respect for women's rights and aspects of this emerging in movements like #MeToo, as this is hitting big countries like India now. It will have a significant impact on all of us.

**Rosner:** The general tendency driven by the Golden Rule is not judging a book by its cover. To judge whether people are fully human or not, it is not judging by race, ethnicity, sex, or gender, but everyone has a brain.

The brain is the great equalizer. No other set of characteristics determines someone's humanity more than the ability to think. It happens in the demographic segment by demographic segment.

That women are considered to be intellectual equal; that ethnicities are considered equally justified in wanting to be treated decently. Now, for the middle of an awakening, where people with different sexual and gender orientations, they are fighting to be considered equal and not crazy.

In the end, you're left with anything that can think. In the future, we will be left with controversies about what thinking and feeling mean in augmented beings and in artificial beings.

That already extends to some extent to animals, where something with a tinier brain but still has consciousness. This sort of stuff will play out over time. Biological family structures will, eventually, cease to be the, by far, most culturally convenient way of being or living structure.

[End of recorded material]

## Ask A Genius 454 – The Future of Cultures (7)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

November 25, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Scott Douglas Jacobsen:** It would be a change of over 6,000 years. Much of the family unit was constructed within the framework of a holy text.

**Rick Rosner:** It was probably around a bit before that. You hear speculation. I have heard the theory that prehistoric human culture was matriarchal.

**Jacobsen:** It might have been patriarchal but matrilineal.

**Rosner:** I read texts speculating or postulating that women were the leaders. That they gave out the sex and had multiple male partners. They were in charge of things. That is not a traditional family structure. But at some point, the most convenient structure was pair bonding.

It was two different-sex couples or people raising kids.

**Jacobsen:** I mean the last 6,000 years of heterosexual pair-bonding with a framework provided by a holy text and so a literate culture guiding it.

**Rosner:** The religious texts reinforced it first, or, maybe, the pair bonding was already pretty solidly in place, and then the reinforcement came later.

**Jacobsen:** Regardless of what happened before, if we take a holy text, it is, at least, a change in 2,000 to 6,000 years of human history.

**Rosner:** Without a doubt, it has gone on for 6 millennia and probably before that with different levels of formality or civilizational support. You always had a minimum biological support.

To get someone pregnant, you need, at least, a momentary pairing up, enough to have sex at least. At some point, I have heard arguments about the birth of romance. The idea of love as fairly recent within the past 2,000-3,000 years.

The idea that you should be emotionally bonded. That emotional bond should be the number one thing in the relationship, as opposed to the economic bonds, which may be more recent than the heterosexual pairing itself.

Love as the glue is a recent idea.

[End of recorded material]

## Ask A Genius 455 – The Future of Cultures (8)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

November 26, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Scott Douglas Jacobsen:** Helen Fisher is a leading biological anthropologist. She talks about love and aspects of it. It matches some of what you're saying.

**Rick Rosner:** The economics of love is there, of two people making shoes as a couple is more effective than one person. But then there is the biological economics of it. That two people may be more successful at producing kids who survive.

All those forces are braided together and in the same direction, in the same way a game show pushes towards the same direction. The pushes in the future will not come from nature but from altered nature.

The beings who take charge of their own drives and objectives as well.

**Jacobsen:** There is also the sexual wall of the progressive and non-religious popular culture, and the traditional and conservative religious culture of much of the world. Those two sub-trends with the overarching narrative of technologically driven change.

There is a wall. There won't be much change. But once that wall is collapsed with replication of human-level consciousness, then it becomes immediately cheap. Something akin to the Genome Project costing a billion dollars and then going down to 1,000 bucks.

**Rosner:** It is Black Friday specials. You can get two genomes run for you, your sister, and your spouse for 100 bucks.

[End of recorded material]

## Ask A Genius 456 – The Future of Cultures (9)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

November 27, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Scott Douglas Jacobsen:** I think similar trends can exist with these familial and other trends, how ever they are formed, will continue to persist based on natural inertia of history and culture.

**Rick Rosner:** We have talked about this before. There is a splitting of paths. Depending on how much technological weirdness you can tolerate, there will continue to be unaugmented humans living what we consider normal human lives even 1,000 years from now.

Those lives, what is continued normal, will continue to change and suck up more technology but still living lives we will still understand. But above and around those, there will be increasingly weird, to us, augmented, changed, and tweaked humans and other thinking entities establishing stable cultures and easy ways of being.

The forces that will line up to make it convenient to live in a number of different ways. 200 years from now, there may be four demographically dominant ways of living: 1) traditional humans living traditionally with potentially expanded lifespans, 2) augmented humans living like superheroes and practically indestructible but still following human objectives and imperatives to be studly and rich and powerful and to get laid, and following this, maybe, 3) augmented humans and AI entities are finding it convenient to merge as hyperconnected information thought blobs, and then beyond that 4) you have the worldwide thought blob manufacturing consciousnesses at its convenient, where it needs it.

Beings voluntarily popping in and out of existing based on the information processing needs of the overall information processing enterprise, all these levels, if these are persistent means of culture, will be reinforced by how easy it is for people to live in that culture.

There will be some mobility. People will balls or gumption can change. There will always be escapees. In your interviewees, you talk to a lot of people who have left Islam and religion in general to kind of go out on their own.

People who were part of fundamentalist and constraining religions who have had enough of what they consider oppressive, to try and live without it. You will have people and entities who travel out into the various ways of living.

[End of recorded material]



## Ask A Genius 457 – The Future of Cultures (10)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

November 28, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Scott Douglas Jacobsen:** Based on the interviews, the issue is a religion per se. It is fundamentalist forms of it. The liberal forms are fine. The fundamentalist forms of non-religion can, sometimes, be more dramatic than that.

**My concern is freedom of religion and freedom of belief, and freedom of conscience. Someone who is being mistreated in a fundamentalist religion should have the right to leave and have the free choice to do so.**

**If someone is experiencing this in some non-religious group, they should have the right to leave it too. My concern is people able to freely live and guide their own lives as they see fit, especially as this is more of a problem for women – which is why women's rights are more of a concern for women.**

**It is deeply simple “religion...”**

**Rick Rosner:** What we see in America over the past couple of decades with religion, it has been politicized. It has been politicized in a way in which bad guys are in charge. At various points in the past, even now, religion politicized in such a way to be more tolerant and to help people.

But the forms that the politicization of religion in America has taken are mostly toxic, lately.

**Jacobsen:** In terms of the narratives of religion, they can be more functionally true in terms of guiding life compared to some of the ones on offer in the secular community.

**Rosner:** Yes, you can have traditions stretching back hundreds of years. That is concerned with or synonymous with being a good person.

**Jacobsen:** Maybe, it is less about functional truths about the larger cosmos and more about the functional truths of everyday life.

**Rosner:** Of being a good person in society, as you noted about the larger metaphysical beliefs about existence, they are less about the general ideas of existence and more about the specific precepts about how to live among people.

If you take the rules of living as a decent person, you can strip away the mysticism and still have the beliefs of what is good and effective ethically, long-established. Some are outmoded like not eating pork or what to do about sleeping on the sheets of someone menstruating.

It may have been practical 2,000 years ago, but not so much now.

[End of recorded material]

## Ask A Genius 458 – The Future of Cultures (11)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

November 29, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Scott Douglas Jacobsen:** If someone feels warm to their Jewish ancestry, they educate their families, get together with their families, have some meals, and feel a connection to their ancestors and those who are alive and present.

**Some want to trash on that. But they seemed to have made a category error. It is painting religion with the same brush.**

**Rosner:** People who critique religion come in different flavors. Some are thoughtful; others are looking to be an asshole.

**Jacobsen:** If the religion endorses or the sect of leader has a leader in its history that endorses, and the community affirms, the misogynistic aspects of it, those seem clearly bad to me.

**Those deserve open critique and widespread condemnation. Other ones that simply speak to vague notions of doing good to other people, including the Freemasons: brotherly love, relief, and truth. Are those bad?**

**Even though, those are vague. Does that make Freemasonry bad, religion bad, or mysticism as a whole bad? I think this notion reaches its apex and collapses in the modern period.**

**Rosner:** This has been a place for open assholery. Aggressive atheism is a breeding ground or attractor for assholes. I guess you could almost consider this fundamentalist atheism. There is a certain combative jerk who embraces atheism as a cudgel to get into vicious troll wars with people.

**The same way that MAGA people often in combination with coming out of an evangelical tradition could get into vicious troll wars. It's a function, partly, of social media giving everyone a hammer to go after everybody else.**

[End of recorded material]

# Ask A Genius 459 – Religion, the Scientific Framework, Physical Models of the World, and Diminishment (1)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

November 30, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Scott Douglas Jacobsen:** One of the main conflicts over time has been religion and, well, theology which comes from religion and changes in the scientific framework of looking at the world, which is a refinement of looking at the natural world.

Often, this has led to a diminishment of religious authority as a say on what the world is or looks like.

**Rick Rosner:** The authority is on what set of beliefs that you give yourself over to. To the huge percentage of Americans who profess to believe in some fully Christian point of view, then the scientific view does not hold sway, except insofar as science giving so much to the world and then you're denying what you find convenient.

Historically, it starts with a beginning. There was no religion or science. But religion got there first in terms of philosophy. In that, it is easier to construct a system of belief that doesn't have to account for the entire world.

It doesn't have to be a full on match; I am putting myself in a cul de sac here. With religion, you can make a set of stories about the world, which would fit whatever aspects of the world that you need.

But it doesn't have to be subject to any form of rigorous logic. Religious institutions and churches come into being. They get a lot of leverage over people's lives and beliefs, and have all sorts of authority in various ways.

The Greeks and the Romans did not embrace a program of experimental science to any significant degree; they did not science. But it wasn't part of an overall philosophical push; that science can be used to fully understand and explain the world.

So, there were little outbreaks of science. As far as I know, there was no thorough conflict with religion. But then you have a religion that has been in place for a millennium or more, like the Catholic Church, and with Copernicus and Galileo, their view of the world is challenged.

Catholicism and others have had a long time, like 1,200 years to fully being fleshed out. But you can imagine a younger version of Christianity not having a problem with the Earth orbiting the Sun.

It is not anti-Christian at the root. God made the Sun and the Earth to orbit around it, for us. That does not seem too blasphemous. It did bug powerful Catholics, though.

[End of recorded material]

## Ask A Genius 460 – Religion, the Scientific Framework, Physical Models of the World, and Diminishment (2)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

December 1, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Rick Rosner:** But I don't think there the level of conflict seen in the past 100 years seen between religion and science. Science wasn't seen or embraced as a program that fully explained everything until the 1600s, 1700s, 1800s.

Yet, you had Newton was arguably more religious than scientific. He believed that he was doing God's work by doing science. He believed that God wanted us to know the world, and doing that was working on His behalf.

It is God helps people who help themselves. Newton was one of the first guys, people, to come up with a scientific theory that really was fairly concrete and made predictions about the universe.

It extended from us to the rest of the universe into infinity. It was right there in the Universal Law of Gravitation. Universal theories are going to start crashing into religious doctrines, which tend to be universal.

Then you have the tendency of science to keep pushing humanity away from the center of creation with the biggest push or the biggest shove against humanity is the theory of evolution, which comes up in the 1850s.

It arose before that but not convincingly until Darwin and someone else who I forget who did it. He was the co-thinker-upper. He co-published, almost, with Darwin. Darwin's version of evolution caught on.

[End of recorded material]

## Ask A Genius 461 – Religion, the Scientific Framework, Physical Models of the World, and Diminishment (3)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

December 2, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Rick Rosner:** In the 160 or so years since Darwin, halfway through it, you have Big Bang theory coming up, which postulates a world without any special agency.

Nobody had the idea of a unified field until the 1700s, which is compact equations for physical phenomenon. You do not get unified field theories until Maxwell in the second half of the 19th century.

Those are four equations that thoroughly describe the behavior of electromagnetic waves. After that, the idea of unification really catches on; we've been on that program strongly with most scientists not thinking about philosophy on a daily basis.

But if you ask most scientists about if they believe in the idea of a unified explanation for the entire universe, I'd say they believe in a unified explanation of the universe with 2/3rds believing in one or that it's possible in the future.

A unified scientific explanation under the current theoretical and experimental support for that point of view; there's no room for a creator. There are some views that try to work together with modern Big Band physics.

God is in the world but God is simply in everything in motion, or set everything in motion. But beyond satisfying compromises like that, God has been squeezed out.

[End of recorded material]

# Ask A Genius 462 – Religion, the Scientific Framework, Physical Models of the World, and Diminishment (4)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

December 3, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Rick Rosner:** However, you and I have been talking about IC for years now.

IC still proposes a unifying set of principles that account for what goes on; although, those principles do not necessarily mix or are fuzzy at the edges. The principles of existence, under IC, which are the principles that we're talking about, pertain to things that not only are non-contradictory in terms of existence.

But non-contradiction becomes stronger the more information that you have in the system; a system without information is fuzzy. You have all sorts of things that are dictated more or less by quantum mechanics and that can exist, or cannot exist, or are on the cusp of being existent, to the extent that they do or don't contradict the rest of the information in the system.

The more information that you have in the system. The more you have to be contradicted. The more things have to come in line with the information in the system. It is a fuzzy system of rules of existences that get tighter and tighter the more information that you have, which means more space, more time, and more matter because these reflect the amount of information in the system

That still doesn't allow for a creator or a religious point of view. However, if you look at consciousness, and this is probably the second principle of IC, consciousness is a technical principle or attribute of large-scale information sharing in a large self-consistent system.

For a large system to exist, it must have a large degree of self-consistency. That self-consistency requires large-scale sharing of information because you can't be consistent about what you don't know, what information you don't have.

The universe has to consistently keep the rest of its positions as part of self-consistency. As defining it, the universe has to continually define itself. If consciousness is a necessary adjunct of this large-scale sharing of information, then it is largely unavoidable in large-scale information processing systems.

Unless, it is specifically designed against. If specifically designed against, that implies the hand of a creator, because we create worlds. At some point, we will have the technological wherewithal to create simulated worlds with simulated beings if we wanted.

We could create a self-consistent world that has all the self-consistency imposed from the outside and then there is no large-scale information sharing. We build computers. They process information linearly. They do not police themselves, mostly.

Computers aren't conscious. But the existence of large created systems implies that they are part of a larger world of beings that are conscious. Consciousness, then, may be an unavoidable aspect of existence.

That while still not implying a creator in many instances, or even most instances, does imply the existence of consciousnesses of unlimited extent and power.

[End of recorded material]

# Ask A Genius 463 – Religion, the Scientific Framework, Physical Models of the World, and Diminishment (5)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

December 4, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Scott Douglas Jacobsen:** A functionally unlimited of them, too. It is a “for all intents and purposes” infinite.

**Rick Rosner:** Yes, although, that gets scary. But when you say, “Unlimited,” it tends to imply an infinity. Our experience of the world implies huge worlds but not infinite.

**Jacobsen:** I like the phrase “functional infinite” or “functional unlimited,” which means a very large finite but an unknown number for that finite.

**Rosner:** The whole thing is either an infinite set of things in the set of all possible things, which is problematic, or you have this infinity, or maybe not.

**Jacobsen:** In a similar way with can or cannot exist, some things are perceived to different degrees of fidelity. Not perceived by someone does not necessarily mean non-existent, but it’s not perceived into one’s cognitive apparatus. But then, other things are perceived to different perceived grainily or crisply.

**Rosner:** The best we can say is infinite or not infinite. Our ancestors will argue over this for generations to come.

**Jacobsen:** That’s why I like the prior mentioned phrase.

**Rosner:** The idea of IC, of the universe as a self-consistent information system, where any large system is built from information. It is a step back from the purely cold and godless Big Bang, big science, framework; that we’re currently under.

In that, it doesn’t impost God the Creator, but it does suggest a proliferation of consciousness in entities across the universe. In that, the universe has  $10^{22}$  stars with something like half of those stars potentially having planets.

So, you have, at least, a billion-billion environments for life to evolve. If you look at the evolution of life on Earth, if life is going to evolve, then cognition is going to evolve. So, you have both the probabilistic argument, the Drake Equation or some version of the Drake Equation, that says, “Yes, it is unlikely that we’re the only consciousness in the universe,” then the technical aspect of consciousness as information sharing is not a miraculous thing but is a natural consequence of a large self-consistent set of systems.

It means that you have a system potentially full of conscious entities. Not in the kumbaya crystals and I hang amethysts from the wall of my bedroom and my chakra power...

**Jacobsen:** [Laughing] or hanging a picture of Mother Mary Magdalene on the wall.

**Rosner:** Yes, thinking beings probably arise in a bunch of contexts and they probably have consciousness, and the universe itself may have consciousness. Some of these thinking beings



may survive for millions of years and, in the case of the universe, maybe many hundreds or thousands of millions of billions of years.

It presents that idea that there are conscious entities with godlike complexity and persistence, which is a baby step away from the fully cold universe.

**Jacobsen: What about the pre-fully cold universe with the original major religions posited? Their views of the world.**

**Rosner:** You talked about a particular religious philosophy that lives and serves to live in the cracks to fill in the blanks. There will always be blanks. What comes after people and future people will always yearn, people will not only yearn for science, for purely mechanistic explanations of things.

People evolved to search for significance. We evolved as omnivore survivalists. We look for exploitable regularities in the world to survive. So, people will always look for patterns within patterns and patterns within the ineffable.

The possible wondrous things that exist but just beyond our understanding. So, religion and mysticism will never go away. But there will continue to be squeezing, one would think, in the way religion has been squeezed for hundreds of years.

But the understood squeezes out the incompletely understood wonderful, which doesn't mean what is understood isn't wonderful; it also means the possibility that what becomes understood involves things that would be considered wonderful by religious people of past eras.

The idea that the unification or the unified nature of the universe, how every point in the universe knows how just about every other point in the universe is doing at every level of the universe speaks for a cohesiveness that may not have the same coziness of God being in charge of everything but does, possibly, offer a certain satisfaction in the wondrous ways that this happens.

[End of recorded material]

## **Ask A Genius 464 – Spirituality as a Political Tool (1)**

**Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner**

**December 5, 2018**

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Scott Douglas Jacobsen:** Conceptions of the world apart from factual knowledge. We take the scientific knowledge or a theology from the past, then they are applied to describe the real world in some way, either to derive meaning or functionality, or both

Another way that this has shifted is as a political tool. We have talked about how some spiritual conceptions of the world are used as political tools.

**Rick Rosner:** You're talking about Evangelicals and politics.

**Jacobsen:** Not just them.

**Rosner:** Maybe, Saudi Arabia driving religious fervor up with anti-Western fervor in particular, and politicians using religious fervor for cynical purposes.

**Jacobsen:** Yes, I would extend this to Catholics and Evangelicals too, which are big hunks of the population.

**Rosner:** You're from Canada. Is it there too?

**Jacobsen:** Take, for instance, Alberta or even Saskatchewan, there is controversy over the implementation of a single school system or a merger of the religious and secular public schools, to reduce costs.

Also, the Catholic kids are paying for the Catholic schools and the non-Catholics are paying for the Catholic schools, apart from the contentions of labeling kids "Catholic" rather than "kids with Catholic parents."

The finance differential seems unfair to me. So, there is a proposal for a single educational system without any particular religious or other orientation.

**Rosner:** I am sure this pisses off a bunch of Catholics.

**Jacobsen:** 40% of the population are Catholics, so certainly.

[End of recorded material]

## Ask A Genius 465 – Spirituality as a Political Tool (2)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

December 6, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Rick Rosner:** Let's talk about the whole deal, the use of Evangelicals in politics.

**Scott Douglas Jacobsen:** The political use of religion.

**Rosner:** There is a better word than "use." The energizing of the base.

**Jacobsen:** The zeal?

**Rosner:** It feels like, with the Evangelical voters, this has been going on for the last 150 years, but it hasn't been. Because this has only happened for the last 30 years. Because conservative think tanks have been thinking about how to get leverage over the American populace, how do they get voters to vote in their people.

Before, in America, you had a more benign form of evangelism. "Christianity close to home" would be a good phrase for it. The 50s and 40s in the, at least, idealized form of America.

You have a bunch of towns each packed with a bunch of churches. Each person went to a church or a synagogue. Each worshipped in their own way, but each in their own Judeo-Christian values and each more or less worked out for each other.

In more sinister cases, they became busybodies on people's behavior that fell short. It was a more benign form of pervasive religious values, not particularly coercive but with some aspects of coercion.

It is not strident and not feeling threatened and not trying to opposed religious values of others. When necessary, it is not seriously impinging on politics; this is where the conservative side has been piling up now, and a large number of the Evangelical voters.

Any mainstream politician, liberal or conservative, has to claim to be religious. It is a very brave and exceptional politician who doesn't claim to be religious. It is a rare group of voters that will vote that person in.

The dog whistling in politics every time a politician makes a public statement. The religious voter understands the statement in its nuanced meaning but the non-religious don't because it is a dog whistle to the religious. It can be used cynically.

The American version of this isn't new. There is always the potential for it, as long as there has been religion or politics. Although, you have instances of it. There has been the potential for it as long as there has been religious and politics.

**Jacobsen:** It goes back to Constantine.

**Rosner:** We don't burn people at the stake. It has been done at the cross-purposes of politics and religion. By embracing science, you don't necessarily avoid; you open yourself up to a whole different set of tragedy.

The atomic bomb is one.

[End of recorded material]

## Ask A Genius 466 – Spirituality as a Political Tool (3)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

December 7, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Scott Douglas Jacobsen:** What about the types of the first discussion? What does continual encroachment of more accurate views of the world mean for religious faith and faith in general? Because the trend over centuries has been a decline in outright belief and liberalization of those who do believe.

**Rick Rosner:** Generally, there is a low cost to have beliefs or large philosophical beliefs about how the world is, believing in a god or a bunch of gods, or no god or whatever. Whatever you believe at the large scale, unless you're working in the field and or somehow run afoul of some grinding mechanism of where religion meets politics, it doesn't affect daily life.

You navigate your daily life using a bunch of specific knowledge, situational knowledge. You don't cross the street on a red light. You don't drink Drano. You cook the chicken before you eat it.

None of those have large religious import. It is a whole different set of knowledge. People will continue to believe in and have hopes about what the world is. People's beliefs that are, to some extent, religious over time, on average, be more informed by actual information about the world.

It is a rare person who continues to believe that the Earth is flat. But just because no one thinks the Earth is flat anymore, except lunatics, and the flat Earth is a naive belief from thousands of years ago, that that naive belief has gone away doesn't mean that religion will go away. It is just that specific areas of knowledge will squeeze out religious belief in certain areas.

There will always be room for religious, spiritual, or philosophical beliefs about the world, even a fully scientifically explained world and science will change too. That fully explained world will still have room for religious overlays.

There will always be places to have or insert mystical beliefs. There is a thing in quantum mechanics called Bell's Theorem. Einstein had trouble with quantum mechanics. He thought that you just can't have a world functioning this randomly.

He thought there was a structure behind the structure in quantum mechanics; that behind randomness of quantum mechanics there was a layer not accessible to us that made the random not really random.

But with Bell's Theorem, no, it works and to the extent that quantum mechanics has been proven to work; you can't have secret mechanics behind determining outcomes. However, under IC, the things that happen apparently randomly in quantum mechanics; those things bring information into the world.

Under IC, that information reflects the state of something; that state of, say, the information being brought into the universe, as the universe accumulates information then it has to be about something.

It doesn't imply a certain framework behind the apparent randomness of the universe, but not in the way Einstein believed. But in a similar way, it is possible to say, "There is this system. It

explains things. But there is still room to say that this also exists. That, yes, you have a scientific world but there is also room for beauty, good, bad, and truth.”

That will always be. Although, the evidence and theory-based framework will continue to shape not just science but non-scientific beliefs.

[End of recorded material]

## Ask A Genius 467 – Spirituality as a Political Tool (4)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

December 8, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Rick Rosner:** It is a rare person who continues to believe that the Earth is flat. But just because no one thinks the Earth is flat anymore, except lunatics, and the flat Earth is a naive belief from thousands of years ago, that that naive belief has gone away doesn't mean that religion will go away. It is just that specific areas of knowledge will squeeze out religious belief in certain areas.

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That will always be. Although, the evidence and theory-based framework will continue to shape not just science but non-scientific beliefs.

[End of recorded material]

# Ask A Genius 468 – Buying or Selling Online (1)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

December 9, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Scott Douglas Jacobsen:** What do you know about buying or selling online?

**Rick Rosner:** Like we've said, high-IQ types get obsessed online; I have been obsessed. My wife has simple tastes. She shops at thrift stores. I used to get her a lot of flowers 30 years ago.

Now, we have a garden. So, we can get them out of our garden. There are no needs to buy flowers anymore. She did get some collectibles. She liked this collectible item. I have been cruising for cheap but good examples of this type of item.

Plus, you can use eBay to buy stuff. If you look around, you can get fantastic deals, because China wants to bury us. It is the way the Chinese economy and the economic disparities have made it so that you can buy stuff from other countries for just a pittance.

That is using eBay to buy it now option. You are not bidding or competing with people. You are simply buying the lowest price and not the lowest auction price. But if you're going to bid on stuff, I am a swooper.

The swooping philosophy is coming in at the end with your best offer with about 8 seconds to go before the auction ends. This doesn't give people time to get in there and outbid you, to think about it.

If their best offer is less than your best offer, and if you bid 10 minutes before it ends, it gives people time to think about it. If you come in at the end, then if your best offer is higher than theirs, then there is no time for them to reconsider and raise their bid.

It feels good and bad. You are not permitting others to outbid you. At the same time, that is the way that it works.

[End of recorded material]

## Ask A Genius 469 – Buying or Selling Online (2)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

December 10, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Rick Rosner:** eBay, there are about 3,000 items in this category for sale at any given time; this category that my wife likes. It gives you a chance to see how much stuff is really worth by seeing how much stuff is really worth.

In terms of being able to buy things, obviously, eBay is being able to buy stuff that you couldn't buy before the internet. Early adopters of the internet, they went on in roughly 1995. I do not know when eBay came online, but I think 10 years after that.

It gives anybody sufficiently diligent an idea of what stuff is worth, which is, sometimes, great because sometimes people will put stuff up for sale and they have not done sufficient research. Then they give it a buy now option; then you may be able to get a bargain.

But generally, that doesn't happen. When my kid was younger, I was trying to get us a whole bunch of Legos for cheap. But because eBay has established a stable price point for Legos.

There weren't bargains to be had. That aspect of eBay is great for sellers. If you do your research and look at comparable items, you can get a decent idea of what price you should accept.

[End of recorded material]



## Ask A Genius 470 – Buying or Selling Online (3)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

December 11, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Rick Rosner:** eBay, you can look around and find other places that offer slightly – like Etsy – similar stuff, depending on your category. Etsy is not a bid based app. Everybody sets the price.

It is good if you do not want to wait. But on eBay, you are waiting 6 days or something until the bid ends. On Etsy, you, sometimes, pay a little more. But then, there are of items listed simultaneously on Etsy and eBay with the minimum starting bid being the Etsy price.

I do not know the etiquette of doing that is. But then, there are other places. If you want really high-end stuff where you will pay a lot more, and the prices have been or may seem double or triple what they might be on eBay, one place is called First Dibs. There is a place called Ruby Lane.

There are other boutiquey collectible sites. If you look around, you can find versions of eBay that are crappier than eBay with items even cheaper than eBay.

I don't know if anyone has done anything on the economics of collectible stuff. Where there should be a mathematical function of what the price of collectibles is, given the absence of other factors, other factors being, for instance in the case of Beanie Babies; they were very collectible 20 years ago.

It was right at the end of the 90s and 2000s. People paid a bunch of money for them until everyone realized that they were bullshit. The people hoping to make a lot of money ended up losing it.

But in the absence of some market collapse, for something where there has been an established market for a collectible over decades, there will still be waves of fashionability and unfashionability.

Like *Antiques Roadshow*, people will realize – like the fancy heavy wooden granda furniture – stuff is kind of worthless. People do not want it; it reminds people of their grandparents. Fashion aside and market collapses aside; I suspect the price of collectibles to go up based on inflation or based on attenuation of supply, like with comic books, where decades of parents throwing away their kids' comic books.

I had a comic book collection. If there is a rate at which the collectible items become more rare, because they are subject to loss and destruction, and then there is an increase in population; if the population has doubled or tripled since the first issue of action comics with Super Man, you would expect a number of collectors to, at least, have tripled and, actually, maybe, more than tripled because the internet gives people opportunities.

We know it gives people to share their terrible political opinions and to radicalize one another. But it would increase the number of collectors at a greater rate than the numbers of increase in the population because more information about stuff is out there.

Which you'd think would make collectibles an investment, it probably would not, because you are buying from people who know what they are doing. If you are buying from an auction house, when you can buy things online, you are paying a premium to the auction house.

One more thing about knowing whether what you're purchasing on eBay is fair priced or not. If it is a popular item with 6, 8, or 12 bids on it, you can click on the bids and see who is bidding on it. Not the names of the people but the number of transactions that they have done on eBay.

If a bidder has a thousand or more transactions listed with a number listed in parentheses beside their name, they are probably a dealer. It would be insane for someone to go on eBay to then buy a 1,000 things without selling anything.

A big number means a dealer is trying to buy that thing and means that that dealer thinks that he or she can make money if they get the item at the price that they have bid, which means that it is fairly priced; unless, you're dealing with a crazy obsessed person.

That's about it.

[End of recorded material]

# Ask A Genius 471 – Corroding Unifying Institutions (1)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

December 12, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Scott Douglas Jacobsen:** What will happen the short-term with these hammer blows to standard institutions like the church? How will society adapt to this?

**Rick Rosner:** I haven't thought about this much before but the entire 20th century, the second half at least, functions to erode unifying institutions. Patriotism, religion, fricking Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts; from the '60s on, there was increasing cynicism about big institutions that people had believed in or at least a century before.

That's continued as you indicated with more and more revelations about the Catholic Church and perhaps churches in general that they may facilitate sexual abuse and other abuses. And so, the question becomes if these institutions continue to erode what replaces them and what provides an alternate glue for the social fabric.

I would suggest that the new glue is pop culture/current events literacy; that just keeping up with what's going on occupies more and more of people's...well; it is what was formerly occupied with institutional knowledge and in deference and attachment.

People, in general now, are attached to just keeping abreast of what's happening, what interests other people, what's highly ranked among other people, and what political views are held by people they respect.

Joe Haldeman, a science fiction writer; one of his novels probably written in the '70s or the '80s had moment-to-moment rankings of the most popular celebrities in the world and this ranking would be constantly available and it was constantly shifting.

It is not too far off from what we have with social media right now where people are particularly concerned with where Ariana Grande ranks in say the number of Twitter followers or Instagram followers versus Kylie Jenner at any given moment.

But you can look up that stuff if you want, but people are cognizant of what Kylie and Kendall are up to and what Ariane is up to and what their thoughts on stuff are or what videos, for instance, Ariana's released, which express her thoughts about her own celebrity and other stuff.

People are occupied with keeping up with this stuff and are rewarded for keeping up with the best entertainment that society has to offer. There's too much entertainment now. There's too much consumable stuff.

There are too many takes on things and by being able to keep up with who has the best takes and the best entertainment, you're able to sort through the avalanche of pop culture and pick out what you like. I guess that's all I have on that for now.

[End of recorded material]

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[Beginning of recorded material]

**Scott Douglas Jacobsen:** What will happen the short-term with these hammer blows to standard institutions like the church? How will society adapt to this?

**Rick Rosner:** I haven't thought about this much before but the entire 20th century, the second half at least, functions to erode unifying institutions. Patriotism, religion, fricking Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts; from the '60s on, there was increasing cynicism about big institutions that people had believed in or at least a century before.

That's continued as you indicated with more and more revelations about the Catholic Church and perhaps churches in general that they may facilitate sexual abuse and other abuses. And so, the question becomes if these institutions continue to erode what replaces them and what provides an alternate glue for the social fabric.

I would suggest that the new glue is pop culture/current events literacy; that just keeping up with what's going on occupies more and more of people's...well; it is what was formerly occupied with institutional knowledge and in deference and attachment.

People, in general now, are attached to just keeping abreast of what's happening, what interests other people, what's highly ranked among other people, and what political views are held by people they respect.

Joe Haldeman, a science fiction writer; one of his novels probably written in the '70s or the '80s had moment-to-moment rankings of the most popular celebrities in the world and this ranking would be constantly available and it was constantly shifting.

It is not too far off from what we have with social media right now where people are particularly concerned with where Ariana Grande ranks in say the number of Twitter followers or Instagram followers versus Kylie Jenner at any given moment.

But you can look up that stuff if you want, but people are cognizant of what Kylie and Kendall are up to and what Ariane is up to and what their thoughts on stuff are or what videos, for instance, Ariana's released, which express her thoughts about her own celebrity and other stuff.

People are occupied with keeping up with this stuff and are rewarded for keeping up with the best entertainment that society has to offer. There's too much entertainment now. There's too much consumable stuff.

There are too many takes on things and by being able to keep up with who has the best takes and the best entertainment, you're able to sort through the avalanche of pop culture and pick out what you like. I guess that's all I have on that for now.

[End of recorded material]

## Ask A Genius 472 – Corroding Unifying Institutions (2)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

December 13, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Scott Douglas Jacobsen:** What would be the downside of this shift?

**Rick Rosner:** It is the constant distractions. I am reminded of another science fiction story from probably 60 years ago by Kurt Vonnegut, where the concept of equality in his future, in the future of the story has been taken to the point that people who are smarter than average have a buzzer going up in their ear every 30 or 45 seconds, which makes it impossible for smart people to form coherent streams of thought, and thus reduces them down to the same constant level of cognition as everybody else.

And so, constantly being occupied with social media and ephemeral noise people are completely distracted. You see it on the street. You see people who have been zombified by the content coming over their phones. And it is not exactly pop culture; it is the stuff over people's phones via text, which is individualized culture.

They are getting texts from people they know about themselves so it is even more specifically tailored for them and it eats up people's attention and productivity. So, that's a huge downside, especially if they are doing that shit while they are driving.

But the upside, once we get a better handle on being able to deal with this stuff, will in the future involve adding to our cognitive abilities and information processing ability. The upside is that people who are good at keeping up will gain enhanced abilities; having the best apps, by having the best add-ons to their brains, they will be the most productive effective citizens of the worldwide thought cloud and will gain more and more resources, whatever those resources are in the future.

More and more in the future, information will create money and the people who are the best at sucking out the processing information will be the rich people of the future. And the people who are bad at it, they'll make bad decisions about their consumption or will become technologically Amish to some extent; they will miss out on being the apex predators of information of the future.

There are all niceties we can think about and work out in general. That's the deal that the old institutions fall away and are replaced by attention to new and constantly changing stuff.

[End of recorded material]

## Ask A Genius 473 – The King’s Ball(s), and All Out Celebration (1)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

December 14, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Scott Douglas Jacobsen:** What’s going on today?

**Rick Rosner:** Alright, so, it is Friday, December 14th, 2018. Trump: there are more investigations into Trump than ever before. I have not tried to dig up a list of all the different investigations. It was taking some time. I have not found a compiled a list. But there are at least six investigations going on, possibly more in a month when the new Democrat-controlled House of Representatives takes over.

That will probably mean another half a dozen or more additional investigations, new investigations, including what happened to the hundred and seven million dollars that donors sent to pay for the inauguration festivities.

That is nearly one-eighth of a billion dollars. Where did the money go? Because that is one night of parades and parties costing a lot of money. However, there is no way it cost one hundred and seven million, especially since people were happy when Obama was elected.

Obama had like close to a dozen presidential balls. Trump had three or four. So, there is no way that you could spend one hundred seven million. Unless, there was a crime. Twenty-seven million or twenty-six-million to the party planner for it. What party planning results in a twenty-six-million-dollar bill?

So, there is that is a new investigation.

[End of recorded material]

## Ask A Genius 474 – The King’s Ball(s), and All Out Celebration (2)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

December 15, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Scott Douglas Jacobsen:** How is this going to be perceived?

**Rick Rosner:** There is the investigation that will start shortly into one of Trump’s country clubs. Abuse of mostly undocumented labor and these laborers have been abused.

So, all this stuff is going to come out about Trump. Reasonable people think this will be revealed when the Democrats take over the house and have the power to subpoena tax records and everything else.

And when Mueller gets closer to the end of his investigation, it will show that Trump has had a criminal career spanning 40 years or more. But Republicans and evangelicals are saying well as long as the country is in good shape.

None of this stuff matters. It is all inconsequential stuff that nobody got killed. It is in. It is violating campaign finance laws and paying off mistresses and all this is okay. It wouldn’t have been OK. I get most of my information from Twitter. Everybody is saying, “Well, this is rank hypocrisy.”

That had Democrats did any of this stuff. It would be different. The Republicans were going crazy. In fact, they did go crazy over stuff that was much more minor when it was done by Democrats. Some angry liberals think Springsteen, possibly Michael Moore, are saying that Trump may well get re-elected, even as all the stuff he’s done as a fraud is revealed.

[End of recorded material]

## Ask A Genius 475 – The Next While in Crazyville's Villa

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

December 16, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Scott Douglas Jacobsen:** Where does this leave real knowledge of the situation?

**Rick Rosner:** There are plenty of reasonable opinions, which means nobody knows what's going to happen exactly.

But it is reasonable to think that all these investigations mean that Trump will not get re-elected. His approval currently runs at about 42 percent, which is a crazy high number for a guy as bad as he is. He thought earlier this week; he got pissed that Michael Cohen was going to prison.

Mueller issued two more memos about ongoing investigations. Trump did not even show up to work one day this week on Wednesday. Even though, he lives in the place where he works. All he had to do was put on a robe and slippers and go downstairs, but he stayed upstairs all day sulking.

I do not think that has ever happened before in the history of the presidency; that a president takes a sulk day. I mean everything is completely nuts. and the Republicans and Trump's base, which include lots of faithful Christians, are pretending that this is okay.

It means that even after Trump fails to be re-elected, if he does fail to be re-elected; this will probably by then be one quarter to one-third of the country. They won't go away. That strain of nationalism, xenophobia, and anti-science.

[End of recorded material]



## Ask A Genius 476 – Scientists in Science Costumes, Clowns with Clown Patois

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

December 17, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Scott Douglas Jacobsen:** Even with this clownish behavior, what will happen with science?

**Rick Rosner:** We are not going to do anything about global warming. That whole set of related belligerent people with belligerently ignorant beliefs will persist even beyond Trump.

Probably, as long as *Fox News* keeps telling people that everything happening to Trump is a witch hunt and its fake news, this chunk of the American population will continue to buy that. When Nixon went down, there was a sense of national shame. His base still had 50 percent support among Republicans, even as he resigned. But they got quiet for a while.

That may not happen now because the same way global warming makes the oceans hotter, which makes hurricanes and tropical storms more powerful; *Fox News* continues to pump energy into the delusions stream, which will keep tens of millions of Americans not smart – when Americans need to stop thinking wrongly.

Even as Trump is revealed to be a terrible guy, I am not sure what you can do about *Fox News*. There used to be a thing called the Fairness Doctrine, which said that if you had a politician representing one silo. I do not know exactly. I should read it.

But somebody representing one side had to be countered by stuff on the other side. You couldn't have a Rush Limbaugh on the air for three hours a day. Unless, you had the obvious contravening viewpoint on an equal amount of time.

Then the Fairness Doctrine is gone. The Fairness Doctrine did not even address people spewing out fake news. Except I do not want to call it fake news, because that is what the Right calls, "Actual news," with people spewing out a stream of lies.

Because that did not even enter into the national awareness; that that would be a thing that was done as a vividly at it's being done now.

I do not know that you could ever pass legislation requiring truth in what is pulp news or, even more, opinion. Without that, even as Trump falls, it will continue to have a huge chunk of the population of 60 million people, maybe, believing bullshit. Okay! That is it.

[End of recorded material]

# Ask A Genius 477 – Free Energy Principles and the Mechanics of Emergence in Life

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

December 18, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Scott Douglas Jacobsen:** What's the deal with the free energy principle of Karl Friston? This you brought up. I'd like to talk about it more.

**Rick Rosner:** I started learning about it. I came across an issue of *Wired Magazine*. It has an article on Karl Friston and his principal free energy minimization. The overall principle or of an organizing principle of all animal life.

He calls this free energy. It has analogies with entropy and lack of information or free energy. What's important about his system, it at least puts a lot of ideas about cognition on a vaguely mathematical basis.

It has a sense of adventure about analogies between mathematical properties and cognitive processes. Free energy is basically the capacity to be surprised, which is also equal to, in certain ways, the entropy of the system.

The capacity to be surprised about a certain situation is the number of different possible outcomes that there could be. So, a thousand different outcomes for some game between a couple of teams.

You have the capacity to be surprised if you read nothing about the outcome. Because it could be any of a thousand things. So, many of the outcomes would be a one in a thousand event, which is a rare surprise.

But knowing what the outcome is going to be, you minimize your surprise; you minimize your free energy; you minimize your entropy. Because what's going to happen, you are not going to be surprised.

If you go to one of three things that could happen out of a possible thousand, you minimize your surprise with this principle.

[End of recorded material]

# Ask A Genius 478 – Freely Give and Ye Shall Freely Receive

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

December 19, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Scott Douglas Jacobsen:** How does this free energy principle fit into the framework of thinking in animals?

**Rick Rosner:** I have started learning about this. That it's thinking in animals. Maybe even animals are not sophisticated enough to think but have some agency in the world or it is not a true agency because it is not based on thinking.

It is still moving along a gradient moving some wavering poisonous substance, like an amoeba. They are minimizing their free energy, which goes along with a general trend in cognitive science. It is in the right direction. That the thinking in the brain as predictive tools.

These predictive tools are for your brain's main job. Your brain's main job is to predict what happens next and prepare you for that to do it, thus reducing risk and increasing longevity. This free energy minimization also has something to do with a bunch of principles of physics including the path of least resistance.

The shortest path and time that the light will always pick. A light will pick the path that gets from one place to another in the shortest time, which can be used to explain things like refraction.

However, free energy minimization is a tendency of thinking systems without being the absolute determinative factor so it might be better. I am sure the guy is Karl Friston who has written more than a thousand papers. He addressed a lot of stuff that I have not come across yet.

[End of recorded material]

# Ask A Genius 479 – Predicting Sex, Expecting Sex, and Entitlement as Evolutionary Baggage in Incorrect Prediction

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

December 20, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Scott Douglas Jacobsen:** What about the prediction from a central processing arena for conscious thought? Is this always and only the main operation of the brain?

**Rick Rosner:** There are plenty of instances where prediction is not the main job of the brain. A more general way of starting to think about what the brain's job is, is to think of it as a game that your brain is trying to score points; or, you in combination with your nervous system use you as an organism, or try to score points with these points vary from person to person and from moment to moment.

And even with the inner person, you have various parts of the brain and body trying to accomplish various things that may be at odds with each. Maybe, one of the biggest areas in which accurate prediction and surprise minimization is not the objective of you as an evolved organism is in the area of sex.

Think about how many guys both human and otherwise walk around inaccurately thinking, "She wants it," when they mean females, it is evolution. Given that you are good, you've evolved as something that has managed.

You come from a long line of organisms, billions of them, stretching back for hundreds of millions of years. All the way back to the beginning of life. A source of beginning is sex. Those who all managed to get laid.

Given that the guy did try to get laid, it is safe to say that your brain will set you up to say the wrong things if it will help you get laid. So, the guy thinks that she wants it. Even though in reality, she does want it.

But it may help you get laid because you think she wants it. "I am going to go ahead with this," and then the woman like you that maybe goes along with it, or maybe she has no choice because you are that big an asshole.

But your prediction that she wants it is inaccurate. However, you move forward anyway because your evolutionary history is of a being who evolves through a lot and comes from a long line of creatures who managed to get laid in one form or another.

Evolution says, "I want you to make that mistake and go ahead and try to get laid." But I will try to learn more about this principle and see what subtleties are since he's written a thousand papers [Ed. Karl Friston].

I am sure you are also this guy started off as a physician, psychiatrist, or somebody who deals with the issues of people with broken brains. So as soon as he addresses the idea, the situation of brains making an accurate prediction.

Because that has been his clinical practice for his whole life. So, it is an interesting place to start.  
[End of recorded material]

# Ask A Genius 480 – The Wonderful Future and Happy Endings

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

December 21, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Scott Douglas Jacobsen:** I like happy endings. Does the end of the human era with the slow dismantling of problems about comprehension of the human organism lead to one?

**Rick Rosner:** I have been thinking. It is now clear that humanity is going to have a happy ending. There is a certain irony to that. That is, it is clear that it is highly unlikely – that given the state of technology that there is little chance – humanity on the planet will be wiped out either by something of our own making or by something not of our own making.

That is before we can build a structure that will intercept all possible asteroids which we eventually will. It is unlikely that our planet will be destroyed if the asteroid is going to hit us or that a random black hole will cross the path of Earth and destroy it – if it isn't the sun burning out.

It will burn out five billion years before it is supposed to or any other cosmic accident will happen in the next 50 to 100 years before we can get a handle on most cosmic accidents. Similarly, it is apparent that the accelerating pace of technology and the scope of technology is such that we are going to have something like the singularity.

That the singularity people believe that all human questions and problems will be answered and solved. Although, probably not the one the singularity people sketch because their schedule is it all happens by around 2040.

I guess you could call me a slow singularity person where it all happens, but it may take another hundred years past that to get everything going. We will solve all those medical problems. They will be understood, and almost all medical problems will be addressable and even if they are not within 100 years. You'll be able to move out of your body.

[End of recorded material]

# Ask A Genius 481 – Consciousness at the Crossroad of Eternity and Immortality

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

December 22, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Scott Douglas Jacobsen:** What about our own minds? What other about other possible futures?

**Rick Rosner:** The problem of consciousness is still not entirely acknowledged as a problem, as a technical or a technological problem. It will be solved too. It will be figured out. We will know how consciousness works mathematically, physically.

That'll make it possible for everyone – eventually, for people who want to relieve their poverty of mind – to augment their consciousness. So, everything we want as humans will become a possibility, including immortality and various forms of worldly power through understanding.

Then the long ones that are following shortly thereafter are all the things that make it a less than a happy ending, which is that humanity becomes extremely devalued in terms of its consciousness becoming extremely devalued.

New structures, new conscious information processing entities and collaborations of merged beings and all that come along and transform the world into something that most people.

Most human throughout history would find this disquieting. So, the beings of the future will thrive and we'll face new non-humans. But as far as humanity gets it; there will be humans who continue to live as humans but like super-powered humans, immortal humans with happy satisfied lives.

They will live in a possibly abridged post-singularity environment where they can do whatever they want. But perhaps somewhat shielded from the more intrusive disquieting aspects of the super big data, super high tech future.

So, one hundred years from now, you can live a life is a superhuman as a transhumanist who's living in an abridged world. A world where you can do all the fun human stuff without necessarily facing the ugly parts of transhumanism. The humans do not count for shit anymore. All right. That is it.

[End of recorded material]

# Ask A Genius 482 – Heating Up: Climate Change, Mathematicizing Consciousness, and Denzel Washington in Black Trenchcoat

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

December 23, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Scott Douglas Jacobsen:** What are some other possible futures?

**Rick Rosner:** Oh! The deal is that there are a bunch of different possible futures but most reasonable possible futures now encompass us riding this accelerating wave of increasing technological expertise with a few possible futures having the world entirely falling apart.

You can still go to the movies. There are three zillion dystopian books that have climate change in destroying the world. But if you look at possible futures, the more probable futures rendering climate change destroying the world of the future is almost super unlikely.

Instead, climate change futures, which are all reasonable futures, will be reasonable to an extent but will simply fuck a lot of things up. Then there will be technological solutions coming along to soften blows.

We'll eventually engineer ourselves around most of the worst effects of climate change. We have some tough decades for the next 40 to 60 to 100 years from now, but technology eventually gets a handle on it.

Even if it is slightly the default technology of now, we may solve the problem of consciousness. Which means that more and more humans will live in the future equivalent to cyberspace, they do not live fully fleshy existences of the human population.

Eventually, the population starts dropping around a hundred years from now. By 200 years from now, the human population is maybe five or six billion down from a peak of 15 billion and the 5 billion humans will have a much smaller aggregate footprint because there are fewer of us.

Also, technology's carbon footprint minimizing aspects will exist more than ever before. So, climate change will be solved after reaching a certain amount of havoc along the coastal areas of the world.

Also, the non-coastal areas of that stuff get to solve, like the gun problem in America. Even if we never get a handle on guns, and guns continue to proliferate, eventually, people become bulletproof because consciousness becomes storable and downloadable.

So even if you are shot by some maniac in the year 2147, you are able to be reconstituted because you've been frequently downloading your consciousness. You are able to be reconstructed. Having only lost a few minutes up to between the last time, you were downloaded and when the active shooter obliterated the consciousness.

There will be one in the future. There will be other means of liberation. There may be cyber wars that result in the obliteration of the backups of hundreds of millions of people. But that is almost a level beyond regular humans' problem.



Where the technology exists, everybody can be practically immortal and indestructible, except for these political wars. You get to live forever, except there is a small chance that you get a race to the cyber war.

But everything points to our current problem and our current questions, scientific questions, besides the biggest being answered solved: consciousness. The super powerful technology is our future, without us necessarily facing the dystopian apocalyptic future or if it is Denzel Washington walking around in a long black leather trench coat.

[End of recorded material]

# Ask A Genius 483 – Everything Falls Into the Paradox Vortex

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

December 24, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Scott Douglas Jacobsen:** When we are talking about the media and the proliferation of media in different forms connecting to social media, there is also a breaking apart of, not entirely, the state propaganda. That is not just Trump. It can be Xi Jinping. It can be Putin. It can be others. Paradoxically, it is changing the discourse of the public.

**In that before, they would probably more readily take in state propaganda.**

**Rick Rosner:** I am going to be slightly more pessimistic than you in the short term, but not in the long term. Was it Archimedes who said to give him a level and a place to stand and he could move the world? Everyone has a lever or a megaphone. Nobody really knows what kind of leverage they have.

The proliferation and weaponization of social media have created issues in conjunction with the amplification of horrible movements and horrible people. Nobody knows what is happening and nobody knows who is winning. If you go through the sheer number of people who think he is a jackass and a monster, there are at least 4 billion across the Earth who would rate him negatively.

So, it is easy on Twitter, almost everybody I follow is anti-Trump and anti the rest of his ridiculous family. Although, Don, Jr., usually tweets stupid tweets. But he came to the defense of Chelsea Clinton who was under attack on the streets of New York for saying that Ilham Omar is antisemitic.

It is a little blip in the first thousand points of light for the first George Bush has turned into the Trump thousand crazy shits happening in a single day. Nobody knows who is going to prevail. Really, it is an inability to contextualize the social media technology. It is as if. You are too young to remember how cell phones were when they came out and only 1% of the population had them.

We just celebrated the 10-year anniversary of the smartphone. Imagine if instead of a gradual thing from the 80s to the 90s with the gradual penetration of the cell phones and smartphones into the population, everyone went from cell phones to everyone has a smartphone.

It would be chaos. Nobody would know how to deal with them. It is a little bit like chaos now. Because we have not been able to judge and incorporate social media and technology into our lives and our worldviews. The added accelerant is Trump adding a fire every 42 seconds.

[End of recorded material]

# Ask A Genius 484 – Generic Information and Context

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

December 25, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Scott Douglas Jacobsen:** There are different forms of information. One in a highly organized system but spread out. Another tightly knit and appears to make information, too.

**Rick Rosner:** Information probably isn't information without context and the ability to interpret it as information. The information to the universe is only information to the universe. It is matter, space, and energy to us, not information.

We can pull information out of it. The universe isn't an information map to us. The universe is the material universe. That's not to say that we can at some point become sufficiently technologically advanced to figure out to some extent the information of which the universe is made from.

But if it is holographic, then good luck with that. It probably is given the lack of specificity. The universe is basically a bunch of solar systems. It is not like one means asparagus and another means orange.

The information is probably not that localized. Which means, it is some kind of holographic or distributive deal. In any case, when people think of information, I have not thought about what people think about when they think of "information."

I think people think information is there for the seeing. You see a stop sign that says, "Stop." Okay, it is information. All information has a conveyance of what it is via a visual aspect.

I am looking at a vanilla folder, a box from Target, a plant. I suspect the information is conveyed visually. But I suspect the information is only available if you have evolved to interpret the information, as we have done.

Those former examples are bits of information. They are conveyed. But they are only available through my sensory and thought apparatus. This probably applies to all information. The easy information that we see.

There is the big data information is on the way, once we're half computers in 40 years. We will all sorts of new information in the universe. Because we will have all these new sensory and processing capacities.

All information in the universe may be this way. It may be opaque and unreadable unless you have the right apparatus to read it properly. It doesn't mean that you need a conscious entity to gather information and to act on information.

Information may only exist to the extent that it is registered by the rest of the universe.

[End of recorded material]

# Ask A Genius 485 – Consciousness and Its Registry, and Register-ers (1)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

December 26, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Scott Douglas Jacobsen:** What distinguishes information in the universe that constructs it, and information in individual consciousness, such as evolved organisms like human beings?

**Rick Rosner:** I do not think information is information unless it is registered and produces action in the world around it. The register-er does not have to be conscious. A security system can be triggered and take preventative measures without being conscious.

Somebody steps on a foot pad. Or if it is a dumb movie, somebody breaks a laser beam and all sorts of stuff happen. A system has been set up to register information. Somebody is stepping into the path of a laser beam and the system reacts to it.

Conscious beings, we can register and react to a whole bunch of different information. We are not specially built to register information; we've evolved to react to a wide range of sensory inputs as well as internal inputs.

If a tree falls in a forest without someone around, it might not have fallen. It is a terrible philosophical question because it forces the question. Because there is no tree falling in any forest that is not registered by some external system, like a frog being squashed.

A tree is a macro object in an area freely accessible over a long period of time to all sorts of entities that can register the tree. Nobody may care that the tree falls. But two years later, someone will see the fallen tree and know that the tree has fallen.

A better setup may be that if a tree falls or if a megalith falls on an uninhabited planet 25 light years away. Did it really happen?

[End of recorded material]

## Ask A Genius 486 – Consciousness and Its Registry, and Register-ers (2)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

December 27, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Scott Douglas Jacobsen:** What would this imply for the world informationally? How does a registering set of things give an indication of the universe?

**Rick Rosner:** The world is only full of entities that register and detect things, and exchange information, which gives us a sense of everything being information.

It might not always be the case. Because if you cannot tell what is happening 40 light years away or in a galaxy on an uninhabited planet, what you have is an indeterminate set or an indeterminate picture of what is happening elsewhere, if events occur in the material universe that don't really affect other events, then it might be an open question as to whether or not those events really happen.

That's all I have. The big deal is if something, whether conscious or not, registers the event. That applies to a wider framework across space and time. If a series of events happen and there are clues of recognizing something happening, and if all the registrants are wiped out, a megalith lands on a planet that has three aliens left and then wipes out all of the aliens, and then there is no further interaction or registration of the events on the planet, then it is as if that didn't happen.

Because no unobliterated record of it exists, which leads to the nihilistic idea. If our universe ever collapses back into nothingness, it is as if it never happened, which probably is the case in a cosmological and quantum mechanical sense.

But information is only information when it is registered, when it causes other events to happen. If those events themselves are registered and if you break the chain, then it is as if those events didn't happen or as if those events are among a multiplicity of events that may have happened.

But you don't know. It is like putting Schrodinger's cat back into the box.

**Jacobsen:** If you were to excise part of a brain out, it is as if the event never existed.

**Rosner:** If somebody's brain is the only thing that registered events, and if you mess with the brain to obliterate the information of the event, then, yes, the event didn't happen. All the thoughts that anyone has ever had become probabilities within thoughts that could have happened in someone's head, once the brain shuts down, rather than being actual thoughts.

Information only exists to the extent that it can be recognized and recorded and the recording or the registering continues to be or at least at some point causing further action.

[End of recorded material]

# Ask A Genius 487 – Decoupling (1)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

December 28, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Scott Douglas Jacobsen:** What else follows from structure and information?

**Rick Rosner:** Some information is encoded non-locally, not the same way exactly. In holograms, information is not entirely locally distributed. You get information from the whole of the hologram.

If you cut a hologram in 2, you do not have half of a photograph. You have a whole photograph but just more blurry. If the information is not fixed and localized in the structure that we live in, then there is a chance that material events that we experience do not correspond to the changes in the information structure of the universe.

That there is a decoupling. We have always assumed that the information-processing entity isn't necessarily, and probably isn't, aware of what is happening to the material manifestations of its information.

In other words, it doesn't know. This entity doesn't have any awareness, except the supposition of what is going on with the matter that is the material manifestation of the information in its, say, awareness.

But we had assumed that the material events that happened in the universe – all the way down to the micro level – reflect micro changes in the information processing changes in the thought – to think sloppily – of the information processing structure.

[End of recorded material]

## Ask A Genius 488 – Decoupling (2)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

December 29, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Scott Douglas Jacobsen:** What does this imply for material events in relation to information and information processing?

**Rick Rosner:** Material events can happen without much affecting the information processing or the way the information processing is perceived in the information processing entity; unless, the material events in our universe are of sufficient scale.

That all the little things happening on planets and the individual nuclear reactions within stars are not each notable information events within the information processing entity.

That the same way – not the same way as I am still looking for a good metaphor – or in the metaphor of a captain of a ship not caring or perceiving what is happening in the individual planks of the ship.

Unless, something macro happens with those planks. But any kind of cellular events in the wood or even if the wood has worms or barnacles stuck to it. The general motion of the ship through the water in the operation of the ship does not get affected by what is going on in the planks.

Similarly, the graininess of the material world, which is necessary for us to exist because we are made of trillions of cells and the cells each have their own mechanisms and everything is important for our existence down to the atomic level.

But in terms of how the atomic events that we depend on... when you're talking on the beach, you perceive sand approximately. You do not perceive what happens under the sand. All your perceptions.

A lot of stuff goes unperceived. Even though, the sand is supporting you. There is possibly a large decoupling between material events in our universe – the stories of our lives – and the information processing that is going on and manifested in the matter that we're composed of.

[End of recorded material]

## Ask A Genius 489 – An Apple is Not an Orange or a Puppy, From This Angle

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

December 30, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Scott Douglas Jacobsen:** You gave an example several weeks ago about an apple. If Newton had the apple hit his head, if it is not apocryphal and, in fact, true, then he saw an apple and not something else. If he saw it from space, it would not even be an apple, be seen.

**Rick Rosner:** A couple of weeks ago, we were talking about the consistency of the universe. The apple doesn't disappear based on what angle you're viewing it from, if you're in the apple's world.

But if you go far, far away from the apple, you can't tell what the situation for the specific apples is on Earth from direct observation. You're too far away. If you're an astronaut on Mars, you can assume a bunch of stuff happening on Earth with apples because it is a common fruit. It is being grown, transported, and eaten.

But you cannot tell anything directly about specific apples. Unless, you have a specific feed on an apple being eaten back on Earth.

**Jacobsen:** Two assumptions floating there: one is the prior knowledge of appleness and another is a conscious entity to know of something.

**Rosner:** Yes, within the sphere of everything within the universe, it is all consistent. You may not know the specific apple from a million miles away. But if you're within the visual contact of an apple on Earth, the status of that apple will not depend on where you're viewing it from. Unless, you're directly viewing it.

The status of the apple does not change as long as you're within the world of that apple. It doesn't become an orange or a puppy if you're standing one foot to the left of that apple. There is a consistency up to the limit of where you can track stuff.

The universe is set up to keep track of itself. It is overall consistent within its macro and micro places.

[End of recorded material]



# Ask A Genius 490 – Wind Not in My Hair, Sun in My Eyes and Can't See

December 31, 2018

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Scott Douglas Jacobsen:** What about in-built biases and also in-built accuracies?

**Rick Rosner:** The in-built accuracies in perception and thought are a result of us evolving perceptual and computational systems that look for and act on the near certainties that are based on gathering a lot of information from the external world and from our memory. I do not know how many photons are perceived by our eyes every single second.

But it is a lot. It has to be in the millions, at least. Enough photons hit our eyes that they give us a near-certain indication of things in the environment. The standard example that people always use is a red light.

When we see a red light and decide whether or not to cross the street, our decision is based on seeing many thousands of red photons from that red light. It might be more. But it is a shitload. There is basically a zero probability that we have made a mistake about the status of the light.

In fact, when people make errors in perception, it is often that they are basing their perception based on suddenly getting less information than they are used to, like Albuquerque in 1986. The Sun was in my eyes.

I did not even see a traffic light. I blew through it. I bounced off one car and hit another one, because the Sun was in my eyes and I didn't get any information about a traffic light. I assumed in the absence of information about a traffic light that there wasn't.

We have a shitload of information. We have macro information. That the probability that we're wrong about those aspects – that we're focusing on because they're important – is near zero.

Because when you add them all up, we make millions of judgments a day. You add those up. It depends on the definition of judgment. It could be billions. We may make an error once every million or so times.

The error rate will be so low that it doesn't kill us.

[End of recorded material]

## Ask A Genius 491 – What? (1)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

January 1, 2019

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Scott Douglas Jacobsen:** You were mentioning holographic information processing. It has a sort of analog. I do not want to draw a direct connection. In a live conversation, we have a sort of easy communication. That distribution all-around may produce a sort of priming everywhere.

**Rick Rosner:** I don't know if you've noticed. But I am old and don't give a shit. I don't know if Gmail is doing this. Hotmail, when you want to reply, gives different kinds of replies. Somebody says "Hey, I sent these attachments."

Then you click reply, it says, "Hey! I sent you these three attachments." It can give a bunch more. The first instance everyone had of this was when the robot has a heads up display within the eyeball. It gives possible responses based on what is being said to him.

Someone says something to him. One response is "fuck off." It was the 80s when that *Terminator* movie came out. We are seeing this in our emails now. In conversation, we are able to respond super fast because the brain is predicting what is needed based on the context.

That we're constantly like a lineman in football before the play begins. They are constantly poised and ready to leap forward into what it thinks is going to happen. We are not usually aware of it.

[End of recorded material]

## Ask A Genius 492 – What? (2)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen & Rick Rosner

January 2, 2019

[Beginning of recorded material]

**Scott Douglas Jacobsen:** Does this play into personal dynamics for you?

**Rick Rosner:** I am a little aware of it. Because I am conversationally awkward. Perhaps, it is more conscious than other people in other situations. I worked in bars for 25 years. I worked in a very loud environment.

I was constantly on my toes, because I was getting incomplete information. What is something that I can say based on me not being able to hear this drunk guy that will be innocuous, my responses were head nodding or “Yeah, for sure.”

And I was hoping that what I didn’t hear the guy saying, “You think I am a real dick, don’t you?” But that was a low probability. Most people don’t go around saying, “You think I am a real dick.”

But I was aware of the pitfalls of agreeing. In conversation, we are doing the same process. We are predicting and setting up different responses on a different basis. It pops into our head. But what pops up is preconscious and non-verbal processing, it sets the brain.

Also, I have been on a couple of cheesy talk shows. I have been on Geraldo once. I have been in situations, where I have been on a panel. The deal is that there are three or four people talking.

In that deal, you have to be very conscious of the next point that you want to make, and then be willing to move on from making a point if the topic has changed. I am pretty interrupty.

Obviously, I am not great at conversation, but I am aware of, at least, some situations in which I am conscious or doing conscious monitoring of the flow of conversation. A lot of the time, we are not conscious of the flow of the conversation.

[End of recorded material]

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