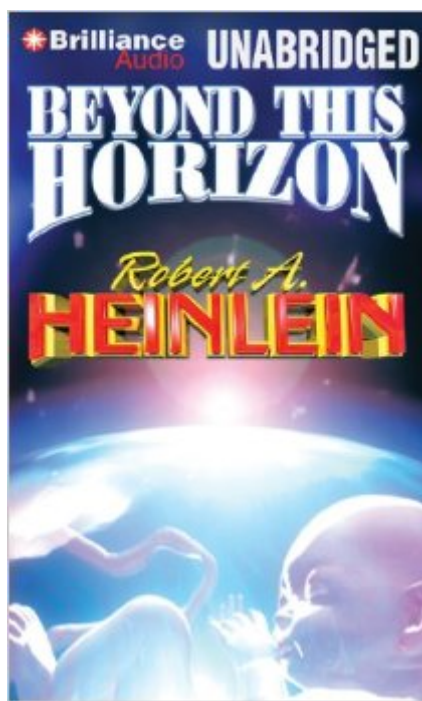


The book was found

Beyond This Horizon



Synopsis

Utopia has been achieved. Disease, hunger, poverty and war are found only in the history tapes, and applied genetics has brought a lifespan of over a century. But Hamilton Felix is bored. And he is the culmination of a star line; each of his last thirty ancestors chosen for superior genes. He is, as far as genetics can produce one, the ultimate man, yet sees no meaning in life. However, his life is about to become less boring. A secret cabal of revolutionaries plan to revolt and seize control. Knowing of Hamilton's disenchantment with the modern world, they want him to join their Glorious Revolution. Big mistake! The revolutionaries are about to find out that recruiting a superman was definitely not a good idea. . . . Not only America's premier writer of speculative fiction, but the greatest writer of such fiction in the world. • Stephen King • "There is no other writer whose work has exhilarated me as often and to such an extent as Heinlein." • Dean Koontz

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Customer Reviews

Beyond This Horizon (1948) is a "post-utopian" novel. After the problem of world hunger, and all other issues of wealth distribution, have been solved, what problems will remain? If everybody is rich and healthy, what more could a rational person desire? In this novel, Hamilton Felix visits his friend, Monroe-Alpha Clifford, to show off his new pistol, a .45 caliber automatic, and then invites him out for dinner. As they dine on the balcony, Monroe-Alpha fumbles a crab leg, which slips from his fingers and lands in a drink on a table below, splashing purple liquid onto a woman's lap.

Monroe-Alpha is called to task for the accident and apologizes, admitting his fault. However, another man chides him for his clumsiness and Hamilton does the honors, but only wounds the man in the shoulder. Unknown to Felix and his friend, the wounded man is an assassin for a group that believes that utopia lacks only one thing: a ruling class. The story goes on to detail the uncovering of this irrational plot and the eventual actions taken, including a shootout in the Genetics Clinic. The author draws upon the old saying, "man cannot live by bread alone", to point out that a material utopia will not settle all human issues. Such problems include not only the ambitions and aggressions passed on through our genes, but our higher aspirations for ourselves, for our families, and for the whole human race. This story is the author's first adult novel published in book form. He had been writing shorter works for the magazines for some time and two previous juvenile novels, but this was his masterwork, his proof that he could sell in the adult book market.

Heinlein started his publishing career with quite a bang, with three novels, a couple of novellas, and numerous short stories all published in a short two-and-a-half-year time span. Due to this copious output, he frequently had more than one story in a single issue of Astounding magazine, necessitating his use of several pen names. This story, as it did not fall into his 'Future History' chart, was first published as by Anson MacDonald, though its style and subject material, being so different from most of what was being published at that time, pretty clearly marked who the author really was. This is a book of many and various ideas, both social and scientific, some of which may seem a little ludicrous, others of which are very valid and of great import to today's society. One of the most confounding ideas presented here is the idea that government should not be taxing people, but rather should be distributing money to all citizens so as to provide as much new money in circulation as there has been in new production of products. Next up is an idea that an openly armed citizen will command respect and demand polite behavior, while those who choose to go unarmed are to some degree second class citizens - an idea that probably was not very well thought out for all of its implications, unusual for Heinlein. But most prevalent is the idea of managing the human genome to produce a 'better' human, better in this case being defined as 'entity most able to survive under changing conditions'. The converse of this is also shown, of what happens when genetics are manipulated to produce particular types of supermen (or monsters, depending on your point of view).

To be sure, this is far from being one of Robert A. Heinlein's best novels, but it is a good book, and nowhere near as bad as it is often made out to be - I found it to be an engrossing read. The book

was written in the early 40's, but it tackles a subject that has only much more recently been seriously looked into on more than a mere esoteric level (due to books like Jurassic Park and such): genetic engineering. If you knew nothing of genetics, this book could teach you some (although certain "facts" in the book - 48 chromosomes - have been outmolded by subsequent science, which Heinlein wisely decided to leave well enough alone), and it's speculation can be enlightening. This book explores the issue pretty thoroughly, almost on a remarkable level for the time, and it really should get more credit for that. This is surely one of the very earliest science fiction books to deal with the subject on such terms - perhaps not too surprisingly, as Heinlein is generally credited with introducing the social sciences into science fiction, and genetic engineering is a logical tangent from that springboard. Perhaps the reason it hasn't received such credit is the ease with which certain subjects are dispensed. Aside from the occasional absurd coincidences in the story (Phyllis showing up at Hamilton's house and Marion meeting Cliff at the park are never explained) which can be overlooked with a knowing wink towards artistic license, this book makes an issue of bringing up most of the major philosophical points in existence (including, but certainly not limited to, "What is the meaning of life?" itself), but never really attempting to answer them (Heinlein has done the same thing in subsequent writings, too - Gulf, for instance.) Of course, on the byline, such questions cannot be answered.

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