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Scientists look into crystal balls

By Frances Burns

Britain's New Scientist magazine celebrated its 50th birthday by inviting scientists to speculate on what the next half century will bring.

The wisest of the group was probably Steven Pinker, a Harvard psychologist who refused to make any predictions, The Telegraph reported.

"This is an invitation to look foolish," he said.

Other scientists were more forthcoming. Ellen Heber-Katz of Philadelphia's Wistar Institute predicted that in the next 50 years drugs will be developed that will allow hearts to regenerate and severed spinal cords to fuse together.

Daniel Pauly, head of the Fisheries Center at the University of British Columbia, said he believes a big step will be devices that allow scientists to determine what other animals are thinking. He expects the process to start with the nearest relatives to humans, the great apes, and then move to other mammals and then to other vertebrates like fish.

"This would cause, obviously, a global revulsion at eating flesh of all kinds, and we would all become vegetarians," he said.



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