

Recent advances in biotechnology, especially the use of the CRISPR-Cas 9 system, have made possible increasingly precisely targeted modifications, or “edits”, of the genomes of microbes, plants and animals, including, in principle, humans. This has led to all kinds of speculation about possible changes, or “improvements” to all kinds of organisms, again including ourselves. In this talk I shall look at what kinds of changes to the phenotypes of organisms may reasonably be expected to be made possible by these technologies, and then discuss the question of what ethical limits there may be to the use of such techniques.