

Sent Before Their Time

Kaleidoscope of views through the prism of premature birth. Thought provoking at many levels.

Ed Dutton books are always a treat. This book is not only fascinating in the usual way, but doubly so because he explains why he is who he is. Premature babies are different, and he shows how he fits the mold.

Some of the characteristics are as follows. Dutton is not afraid to tell you 150% of what he knows. Whereas another author might be more cautious, not venturing a hypothesis without ironclad support, Dutton will give you his hunches, provide you the supporting data, and encourage you to come to the same conclusions. He is thorough – there are about 1600 footnotes in the book.

I find this extremely refreshing in the realm of social sciences. So many people who hew to political correctness are predictably dull. I just read a 504 page anthropology dissertation on a Brazilian Indian tribe with whom I spent a month in 2004. It managed to say less than the 20 page term paper I wrote back then. Dutton is so refreshing – he recognizes no shackles!

Another of Dutton's delightful traits is that he is an iconoclast. He attacks every liberal shibboleth with great gusto and often great effect. He could not possibly combine a vastly encyclopedic range and vast depth on all of them. Yet, the amount of reading he is done, the number of sources he cites is amazing, even if not all of us of his points are equally well supported.

But that's not the point. The pleasure of reading Dutton is the insights that one gets, and in this he never fails. So without further ado let's go on.

This review more or less tracks his table of contents. It appears that he creates a detailed outline of the things he wants to cover and simply fills it in. Providing the outline as his table of contents is more useful than an index in searching for content. You find it at the end of this review.

Dutton starts out with a catalog of premature babies. Top of the list is Sir Isaac Newton, the poster child. An erratic genius, antisocial, withdrawn, able to spend incredible amounts of time working on problems. He became a universally acknowledged genius. Dutton names others such as Kepler, the astronomer. Germany's greatest poet is Goethe, also apparently a preemie. He names some others just to get our interest, and sets the stage with the observation that a child born prematurely is quite likely to be damaged in the birth process. The skull is not adequately formed to protect the brain and preemies characteristically have problems in breathing, jaundice in one thing and another as they sit in incubators.

The effect on the brain is uneven. In most cases they have below average intelligence. But such intelligence as they have tends to be quite spotty – deficient in some areas, sometimes genius in others. Idiot savants have disproportionately been premature.

Dutton goes off into territory that he has covered many times before, with a chapter on the nature of genius. He has covered this in *At Our Wits End - Why We're Becoming Less Intelligent and What it Means for the Future*, his *J. Philippe Rushton: A Life History*, and even *The Silent Rape Epidemic: How the Finns Were Groomed to Love Their Abusers*. He does a good job of it for all with an interest in state-of-the-art intelligence research.

Several themes recur throughout Dutton's work. Slow and fast life history is the theory that was adapted from biology by J. Philippe Rushton to apply to human populations. Northeast Asians have a slow life history pattern. They are adapted to a severe but stable environment, in which planning ahead, perseverance and endurance are rewarded. They mature late, procreate late live long, have modest sex drive, relatively few children and invest very heavily in those children.

The opposite end would be peoples in more benign but less predictable climates. They don't have to work hard, do not invest greatly in having children, have them at an early age, and accept that they may die young from unforeseen circumstances such as wars or animal attacks.

Individuals also display fast and slow life history patterns. The stereotypical northern European plans for the future, invests in his children, saves for retirement and basically is forward-looking. That would be a slow life history. However, we observe that a substantial minority choose a fast life history. That involves a lot of sexual partners in the interest of spreading their seed wherever it might fall, little investment in the children, and risky behavior. Being criminal, manipulative and antisocial are fast life history traits.

Dutton makes the point that these premature children, and indeed many of the geniuses that he has described in his previous works, were fast life history sorts in that they were not stable husbands, good providers and all around good citizens. They were antisocial and absorbed in their own work. I add that many geniuses of this age, such as Richard Feynman, Elon Musk and Larry Ellison are not stable spouses. They have other things in mind. At any rate, Dutton brings up this notion of fast and slow life histories in just about every work. It is relevant, though not central to his discussion of premature children.

Connected with this is the theory of group selection. The individual genius often does not pass on his genes. Quite a few are uninterested in sex,. They often don't marry. When they do have children they may not invest vastly in them.

But, as Dutton points out, human populations are group selected. We succeed in groups, and genius helps the group. This has certainly been the case in England. Nineteenth century England had a higher percentage of geniuses than perhaps any time and place in the world; rivaled perhaps only by the Golden Age of Greece.

I'll expand on the case that Dutton sees as self-evident. The inventions of the industrial age wove together beautifully. Gentlemen scientists such as Humphry Davy isolated a great many atomic elements. Other scientists of the same era were learning about electricity, putting together the powerful batteries that Davy needed for electrolysis to break apart molecules.

London was small enough that the geniuses knew and recognized one another. Davy befriended country boy Michael Faraday who experimented with electricity, developing motors and generators. Faraday in turn worked with mathematical genius James Clerk Maxwell who put together the theories of how electricity worked.

They existed alongside mechanical and industrial geniuses exploiting the newfound knowledge, putting chemistry, electricity, metallurgy and other advances to practical use.

There is no doubt that these men who sparked the Industrial Revolution made all of British society vastly richer, enabling population expansion on its home island, and the global expansion of British influence through the British Empire. This included vast emigration of British people to settle Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States. Brits from the Empire set the tone throughout the Commonwealth and even in countries such as Argentina, never part of the Commonwealth but with a substantial British upper-class responsible for the railroads, telegraph and other advances.

While the genius of these individuals may not have been passed on in their own direct lineage, the gene pool in which it was embedded spread enormously, bequeathing through the chance pairings innate in sexual selection sparks of genius that would come together throughout the Empire. Dutton cites Frank Salter's classic on this theme [[ASIN:B07V1P4Y83 On Genetic Interests Family, Ethnicity and Humanity in an Age of Mass Migration]].

Dutton's contention, original with him and obvious once you think about it, is that premature babies simply by their propensity for genius are disproportionately responsible for the success of the societies in which they live.

Intelligence and IQ are not the same thing. Intelligence is the innate quality that reveals itself by which problems one individual can solve that another cannot, how fast that person can come up with a solution, and how many such questions he tackles. IQ is an artificially constructed measure of the qualities that make up intelligence. Some very accomplished people – DNA discoverer James Watson and transistor inventor William Shockley – had measured IQs in the 120s.

Genius, the accomplishment of great things, is a matter of personality traits as well as intelligence. It requires doggedness, imperviousness to disappointments and criticism, vast self-assurance and absolute devotion. These are not the traits of a well-rounded individual. They are associated with mild autism, which association Dutton often notes, and also with above normal testosterone levels, aggressiveness and other traits. Dutton analyzes the

relationship between being premature and all of these characteristics, though some correlations are stronger than others.

Dutton writes about the differences in how five moral foundations correlate with group and individual orientation, fast and slow life histories, and liberal and conservative politics. The five moral foundations and their opposites are:

care-----harm

fairness----cheating

loyalty -----betrayal

authority----subversion

sanctity. ----degradation.

The Dark Triad traits – on the negative side of the above – are treated in sections on evil genius and on woke women. These are Psychopathy (mental imbalance), Narcissism (excessive interest in being admired), and Machiavellianism (being status-hungry).

Liberals and individualists embrace the two individualizing moral foundations, care and fairness. They want their fair share of society's goodies, but they don't want society telling them what to do. Conservatives tend more to embrace the other three as well, the binding moral foundations, seeking arrangements that are optimal for the group.

A consistent theme in Dutton's writing is liberal versus conservative:

"... being right wing, which tends to be adaptive at the group level, and related perspectives such as religiousness and nationalism, is associated with mental and physical health as well as with fertility. It is also associated with having a more attractive and symmetrical face and thus with a lower mutational load. Being left-wing (especially on the extreme left where there is a pronounced imbalance of moral foundations), which relates to anti-group ideologies such as Multiculturalism (where you place the interests of another group above your own), and nihilism, is associated with poor mental and physical health and low fertility.

"These associations make sense because we would expect everything that was adaptive to be reflective of a low mutational load. Thus, a slow Life History Strategy correlates with being high in all the moral foundations, which is what conservatives are characterized by. Liberals, however, are low on binding foundations and high on individualizing, consistent with their fast Life History traits such as depression."

Mutational load is another recurrent theme. The case goes like this. Under normal evolutionary conditions the gene pool is cleansed of deleterious genes in every generation. 50% of the children born do not survive to adulthood and reproduce. That 50% consists disproportionately of people with high levels of mutations. Their failure to reproduce cleanses the gene pool.

The past two centuries have seen several changes. First, 99% of children born survive to adulthood. All have the opportunity to reproduce. Secondly, the more cognitively capable members of society have been more inclined not to have children. Religion no longer compels them. There is no social status associated with having big families. They are more inclined to homosexuality, transsexuality, and hedonistic lifestyles that do not lend themselves to creating families. Those children that do appear are not raised with the expectation that they will carry on traditions. Lastly, there have been substantial increases in immigration, which has diluted the formerly dominant European descended gene pools, which have higher average IQs.

The net is that the people whose genome carries the traits that had been selected for fitness over millennia are precisely those who are not having children. Conversely, the less fit are passing on their genes. Deleterious genes that appear as random mutations are not being cleansed from the gene pool. In previous books Dutton has estimated that this has resulted in a 15 point decline in average intelligence since the Industrial Revolution.

The biographical material is perhaps the most fascinating part of the book. We learn that Dutton was not an exceptional student, at least until his mid-teens. He was distracted and off in his own world until he found topics that interested him. One such topic, in his mid-teens, was genealogy. He got absolutely immersed; in the fashion that he describes is typical of preemies and genius, and the result is his 2015 book *The Ruler of Cheshire* about his distant ancestors.

This is also consistent with findings by the many heretical associates he has found in his intellectual journey, such as Richard Lynn, who has recently published a book entitled *Sex Differences in Intelligence*. Lynn substantiates the long-standing observation that the male brain reaches maturity later than the female brain but winds up on average about four IQ points higher. Premature babies likewise mature – intellectually - later, although Dutton's precocious interest in genealogy would belie that point.

He writes about being physically awkward. He was always the last kid to finish in any race, often mocked for the ungainly way he walked. The last three months in the womb are a time for finishing touches, much better done there than later. One finishing touch is vision. The eyes come together late in gestation, and premature children often have vision problems.

Consistent with his thesis in *At Our Wits' End*, Dutton is dour about the future of humanity. He writes that "where once the crucible of evolution was child mortality, it is now the genetic ability to resist this dysphoria-inducing ways of thinking. Those who can resist it will constitute the future." Briefly put, the future will belong to those who are willing to have children and raise them to be like themselves. They so not appear to be numerous.

This review only scratches the surface of a five star book. Enjoy it!

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