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NO TWO ALIKE: HUMAN NATURE AND HUMAN INDIVIDUALITY. Edited by Judith Rich Harris. W.W. Norton & Co, New York, London, 2006. pp. 322. Price: £16.99. ISBN 0393059480

From the author of *The Nurture Assumption* comes this brilliantly written pseudo-detective story on what makes people differ so much in personality.

Judith Rich Harris's book begins with the story of two identical twins, Laleh and Ladan Bijani, who were attached at the head, but both tragically died during the brain surgery carried out to separate them. Laleh and Ladan were known to have very different personalities and aspirations, which is partly why they took the risk of having the surgery. Identical twins, who share all their DNA, can still differ widely in personality; the question of why this is the case is at the heart of Harris's book.

Through the engaging metaphor of a detective solving a mystery, Harris pursues the scientific evidence. Personality is known to show substantial heritability and Harris does not ignore

this. She gives an excellent account of behavioural genetic methods and displays a sound understanding of the central issues, which she generously shares with her readers (as a behaviour geneticist myself this is one of the best descriptions I have come across and this would be an excellent place to start for new comers to the field). Individual differences in personality are caused by both genes and environment. Harris is personally interested in the latter, the environmental influences that make people different, including what makes individuals growing up in the same family different: namely non-shared environment, or as Harris likes to call it, the 'unexplained variance'.

Evidence is drawn from a wide range of studies from behavioural genetics, social psychology and evolutionary psychology as well as animal research and developmental intervention studies. Harris has the enviable talent of being able to get to grips with a wide variety of scientific fields, critically assess the research in them and describe it all in a fantastically lively and readable manner to her readers.

Structurally, the first half of the book is devoted to tackling whether existing ideas can solve this mystery (referred to as the five 'red herrings'). This includes, among others, a wonderful section on research into birth order effects and the politics that go with it. These chapters are brought to life by introducing scientists as individuals, which makes the reader feel more emotionally involved, in a way that is refreshing in a work of science literature. She focuses in on the data—can it support a particular theory? and she doesn't hold back on her criticisms—which add to the liveliness, as do some great, laugh-out-loud jokes (another almost unique ingredient in science literature).

The second half is devoted to Harris's own theory, which describes three systems in the brain—the relationship system, the socialisation system and the status system. These all play a part in her theory of the processes that, along with genes, lead to differences in personality. If anything, the change of Harris's position from critic to scientist half way through the book is not as natural as one would hope. Harris is excellent at critically assessing research, and she always keeps a close eye on whether data can back up scientists' claims, which is admirable. However, when Harris puts forward her own theory without any data (by no means a crime in itself), it is difficult then not to apply the same standards. Her three systems are hypothetical—we don't know if they

exist, we don't yet know how to test them and they assume a degree of modularity. One of the consequences of her proposed status system is that types of random events, which she refers to as developmental noise, are part of what makes people different, even identical twins. This may be true, but almost by definition, developmental noise is near-impossible for scientists to quantify and test, and random events, as a cause of human individuality, is not a new theory by itself, which Harris herself admits.

In the final chapter, Harris lays out the theory in a table and suggests ways in which future scientists can test her theory. This is very helpful, although the suggestions would have benefited from being more specific. To present so much, in under 300 pages, and make it as witty and concise as it is, is a huge accomplishment.

This is a highly recommendable book to anyone interested in what makes people different—what makes you the way you are. For scientists and non-scientists alike, one doesn't need to be interested in personality literature, in parenting, or children or even the environment. You don't even need to think you are interested in science, but you will be by the end.

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ORIGINS OF THE SOCIAL MIND: EVOLUTIONARY PSYCHOLOGY AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT. Edited by Bruce J. Ellis and David F. Bjorklund. Guilford Press, New York, London, 2005. pp. 540. Price: £49.95; \$65.00. ISBN 1593851030

Evolutionary psychology has often been censured for its alleged neglect of developmental issues. In all fairness, evolutionary psychologists have paid due attention to infants, toddlers, and children, typically to document the early emergence of hypothesized psy-

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