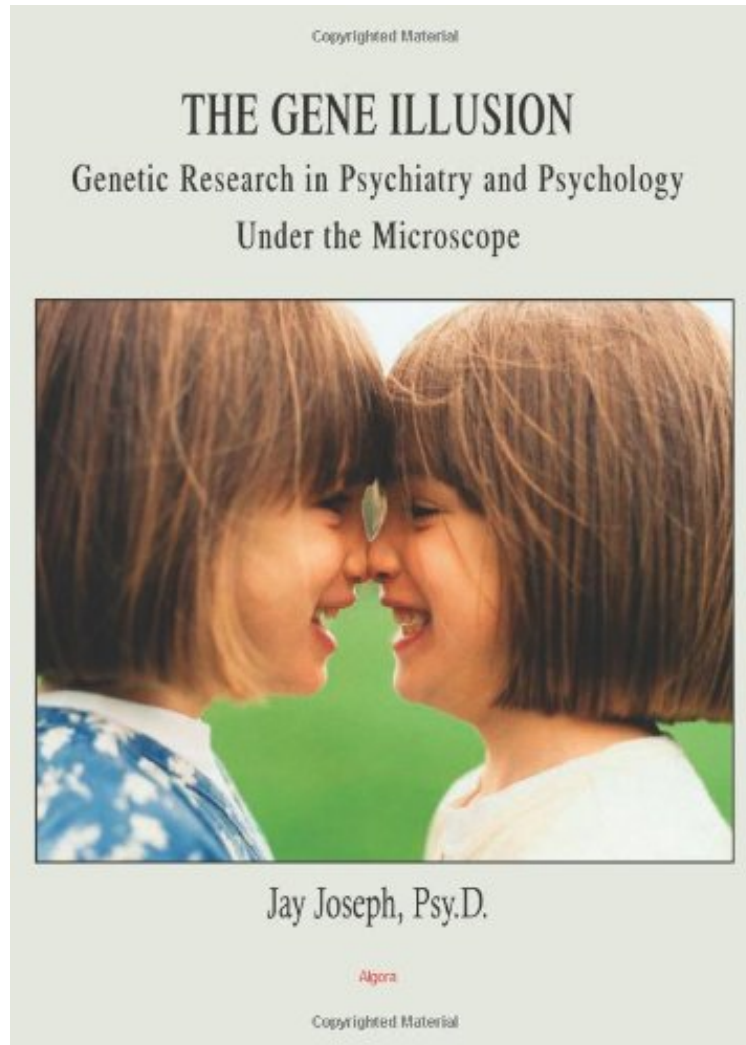


(Ebook free) The Gene Illusion - Genetic Research in Psychiatry and Psychology Under the Microscope

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Jay Joseph

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#351507 in Books 2004-02-02Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 9.00 x .95 x 6.00l, 1.40 #File Name: 0875863434420 pages | File size: 65.Mb

Jay Joseph : The Gene Illusion - Genetic Research in Psychiatry and Psychology Under the Microscope before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Gene Illusion - Genetic Research in Psychiatry and Psychology Under the Microscope:

6 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Schizophrenia, Twin Studies, and the Mirage of Genetic DeterminismBy BCA BortignonSome of us, most of us, take what science tells us very seriously. Our view of ourselves, and of others, is heavily informed by what we believe is the scientific position. If it turns out that we are little more than our genes, that we are biochemical robots, then we must face up to the truth, dispiriting as it may be,

and deal with it as best we can. We must not shirk. The philosopher J.R. Lucas said: 'Modern man is inclined to be a metaphysical masochist, drawn to any world-view that denies his humanity by cutting him down to merely animal or thingly size.' In the face of genetic determinism, we are many of us masochists, and nearly all of us half-believers. Our 'thingly size' is the size of a gene. Is this masochism really necessary? Is this view of ourselves really demanded by current science? Addressing the fields of psychiatric and behavioural genetics, Jay Joseph argues that the genetic determinism so taken for granted in modern times is not based on sound science. This is a serious and controversial claim. Many people become angry if you even so much as suggest that a psychiatric disorder may not be genetic. Strong arguments are therefore needed. With the knowledge that he is militating against a well-entrenched orthodoxy, Joseph has written this extremely detailed, rigorously argued book, dedicating many of its chapters to lengthy critical assessments of original research papers. While some may be put off by the rather pedantic level of argumentation, it is, to my mind, absolutely necessary; and if you are willing to put the time in, occasionally exhilarating. It is too easy for genetically oriented researchers to blithely dismiss serious criticism as the work of know-nothing 'armchair critics' with ideological agendas. Joseph is no armchair critic. Although he is a clinical psychologist and not a research scientist, his doctoral thesis was a critical examination of the schizophrenia twin studies literature, and the majority of his publications since then have been dedicated to this very specific, and very important, area. This is one of those publications. It is the first of a pair of books dedicated to psychiatric and behavioural genetics, the other being the equally excellent *The Missing Gene*. (This review is an altered version of my 'The Missing Gene' review, available on this website.) As both books make clear, Joseph is often more familiar with the foundational research of psychiatric genetics than the researchers themselves. The large majority of this book's contents are devoted to trenchant scientific analysis. Joseph's critique of the Equal Environment Assumption is a supreme example of logical analysis. Here Joseph cuts to the quick of psychiatric and behavioural genetics, because if the EEA is invalid, as Joseph cogently argues, then the vast majority of twin studies done to date are scientifically useless. When one considers their many other, more particular, invalidating flaws (biased statistical manipulation, the post hoc redefinitions of the disorder under study to achieve statistical significance, among many others) the case for the genetic transmission of psychiatric disorders is about as scientifically compelling as phrenology, and have led, and still lead, to medical treatments just as dubious and far more dangerous than the blood-letting of yore. Most of this book is dedicated to scientific, conceptual and historical analyses of the schizophrenia twin studies. There is a fascinating chapter on the misunderstandings and attendant misuses of the heritability concept, and an informative chapter on intelligence. The latter, however, is not as detailed as it could be; most of the book's time is concerned, and rightfully so, with schizophrenia research, it being psychiatric genetics's oldest and most influential field, and the one in which Joseph is a real expert. While using cogent reasoning and analysis to come to generally sound conclusions, I think this chapter could be expanded upon in order to come slightly closer to matching the detail of the chapters on schizophrenia. Explication of the work of K. Anders Ericsson, for example, would strengthen the chapter's positive case for the environmentalist view of intelligence, and also establish the compartmentalisation of cognitive ability, which runs counter to the 'general intelligence' of the IQ doyens. Though the book is already very long, and I wouldn't want to see any of the chapters shortened, so perhaps I'm asking for too much. There is much more to this book than a one thousand word review can do justice to. Joseph's work has convinced me that the well-publicised claims about the genetic determination of psychiatric disorders and psychological attributes are based more on politics, rhetoric and second- and third-hand information than sound science. It took both of Joseph's complex and detailed books to convince me. Vague humanistic platitudes, while comforting for a time, are hard to sustain against a countervailing science. It is liberating to know that, in the case of psychiatric and behavioural genetics, the 'countervailing science' is largely built on air, a sort of tabloid science, and that the evidence, in fact, supports a more open view, where human beings are genuine individuals, not shambling automata, whose psychological difficulties are not the fault of their broken genes, but caused by well-known, and repairable, psychological and environmental factors. I will end this review as I began it: with a quotation from J.R. Lucas, former president of the British Society for the Philosophy of Science. His writings on human identity and value are among the best I've ever read, and show that to be scientific does not imply belief in the brutal pessimism of reductionist science, of which psychiatric and behavioural genetics are complementary parts. I am confident that Joseph would agree with the following passage. 'Each [of us] is a definite individual, ultimately responsible for what he decides to do, while being also an indeterminate shimmering of different personalities, revealed and developed in different personal relationships. Each is unique, of infinite complexity, transcending all stereotypes and neat classification, while needing also to be a safe pair of hands, who can be relied on to do his bit when required.' 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Wonderfully researched. Should be required reading for all mental health professionals from psychiatrist to psychologists to social workers to counselors. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Dr. S. This is a great book. It is an essential part of my library and my work.

What are the forces shaping who we are, how we live, and how we act? Are we shaped primarily by our environment, or by our genes? These very old questions form the basis of the "nature-nurture" debate. Increasingly, we are told that

research has confirmed the importance of genetic factors influencing psychiatric disorders, personality, intelligence, sexual orientation, criminality, and so on. Jay Joseph's timely, challenging book provides a much-needed critical appraisal of the evidence cited in support of genetic theories. His book shows that, far from establishing the importance of genes, family, twin and adoption research has been plagued by researcher bias, unsound methodology, and a reliance on unsupported theoretical assumptions. Furthermore, he demonstrates how this greatly flawed research has been used in support of conservative social and political agendas. This is particularly evident in Chapter 2, which contains the only in-depth critical review of the history of twin research ever published. Much of the scientific evidence cited in support of genetic theories has been produced by the fields of behavior genetics and psychiatric genetics. It has been delivered to the public in numerous magazine and newspaper articles, as well as by the authors of several popular books. In particular, studies of twins (both reared together and reared apart) have been cited as providing conclusive evidence supporting the importance of genetic influences on psychological trait differences. The reared-apart twin studies performed by researchers at the University of Minnesota have been the subject of much attention, including stories of individual pairs of "reared-apart" identical twins who, it is claimed, displayed remarkable similarities upon being reunited. Joseph shows, however, that both systematic reared-apart twin studies, and stories about individual pairs, prove little if anything about the role of genes. Schizophrenia is the most studied, and at the same time the most feared and misunderstood, of all psychiatric disorders. Two chapters are devoted to problems with genetic research in this area. One of these chapters reviews schizophrenia adoption research, which includes the well-known and frequently cited Danish-American and Finnish investigations. Another chapter looks into the alleged genetic basis of criminal behavior an idea more popular today than at any time in the past 60 years. Additional chapters look into other areas of current interest in genetics, such as IQ, the heritability concept, and molecular genetic research. Regarding the latter, in Chapter 10 Joseph concludes that it is unlikely that genes for the major psychiatric disorders exist. In contrast to the bleak view of humans and their future held by people claiming that heredity is of overriding importance, there exists a radically different perspective. Faulty genes are not the cause of human suffering or socially disapproved behavior. Rather, the likely causes are well-known and well-documented psychologically harmful events and environments. This book is essential reading for anyone seeking an alternative to the increasingly popular, yet mistaken view that "genes are destiny."

From the Inside Flap Genetic factors are increasingly presented as an important influence on psychiatric disorders, personality, intelligence, and various types of socially unacceptable behavior as if that were an unassailable fact, proven by research. Jay Joseph's timely, challenging book provides a much-needed rebuttal of the evidence cited in support of genetic theories in psychiatry and psychology, which are based mainly on twin and adoption studies. He shows that, far from establishing the importance of genes, psychiatric genetic and behavior genetic research on twins and adoptees has been plagued by researcher bias, unsound methodology, and a reliance on erroneous theoretical assumptions. Furthermore, he discusses how this faulty research has been used to support the interests of those attempting to bolster conservative social and political agendas. "Real science takes on the myths of biological psychiatry: the public and professions alike have been misled by claims for a genetic and biological basis for mental disorders. Dr. Jay Joseph's work subjects these speculations to scientific scrutiny. Every dedicated mental health professional and interested lay person should read this book". Peter R. Breggin, MD, psychiatrist, author of Toxic Psychiatry About the Author Jay Joseph, a licensed psychologist and psychotherapist, received his Psy.D. in clinical psychology from the California School of Professional Psychology, Alameda, in 2000. He received a B.A. in Political Science from the University of California, Berkeley, and an M.A. in Social/Clinical Psychology from New College of California. The Gene Illusion is his first book. Through November, 2004, he has published more than 25 articles and book chapters on issues relating to genetic research in psychiatry and psychology. His articles have appeared in journals such as Developmental ; The American Journal of Psychology; Psychological Reports; Genetic, Social, and General Psychology Monographs; Politics and the Life Sciences; Journal of Mind and Behavior; Psychiatric Quarterly; New Ideas in Psychology; and Ethical Human Sciences and Services. He is an assessing editor for The Journal of Mind and Behavior, and an associate editor of Ethical Human Psychology and Psychiatry. He lives in Berkeley, California.