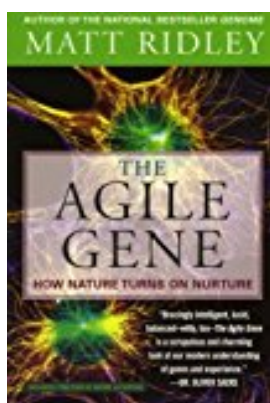


[PDF] The Agile Gene: How Nature Turns On Nurture

Matt Ridley - pdf download free book



Books Details:

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Description:

In the follow-up to his bestseller, , Matt Ridley takes on a centuries-old question: is it nature or nurture that makes us who we are? Ridley asserts that the question itself is a "false dichotomy." Using copious examples from human and animal behavior, he presents the notion that our environment affects the way our genes express themselves.

Ridley writes that the switches controlling our 30,000 or so genes not only form the structures of our brains but do so in such a way as to cue off the outside environment in a tidy feedback loop of body and behavior. In fact, it seems clear that we have genetic "thermostats" that are turned up and down by environmental factors. He challenges both scientific and folk concepts, from assumptions of what's malleable in a person to sociobiological theories based solely on the "selfish gene."

Ridley's proof is in the pudding for such touchy subjects as monogamy, aggression, and parenting, which we now understand have some genetic controls. Nevertheless, "the more we understand both our genes and our instincts, the less inevitable they seem." A consummate popularizer of science, Ridley once again provides a perfect mix of history, genetics, and sociology for readers hungry to understand the implications of the human genome sequence. --*Therese Littleton* --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

From Publishers Weekly "Nature versus nurture" sums up in a nutshell one of the most contentious debates in science: Are people's qualities determined by their genes (nature) or by their environment (nurture)? The debate has only grown louder since the human genome has been found to comprise only 30,000 genes. Some scientists claim that we don't have enough genes to account for all the existing human variations. Ridley, author of the bestseller *Genome*, says that not only are nature and nurture not mutually exclusive, but that "genes are designed to take their cue from nurture." Genes are not unchanging little bits of DNA: their expression varies throughout a person's life, often in response to environmental stimuli. Babies are born with genes hard-wired for sight, but if they are also born with cataracts, the genes turn themselves off and the child will never acquire the ability to see properly. On the other hand, stuttering used to be ascribed solely to environmental factors. Then stuttering was found to be clearly linked to the Y chromosome, and evidence for genetic miswiring of areas in the brain that manage language was uncovered. But environment still plays a role: not everyone with the genetic disposition will grow up to be a stutterer. Ridley's survey of what is known about nature-nurture interactions is encyclopedic and conveyed with insight and style. This is not an easy read, but fans of his earlier book and readers looking for a challenging read will find this an engrossing study of what makes us who we are.

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