majority of them guilty of what they are charged with and a lot more beside; it is easy to show that the re-offending rate of people on community sentences must be several hundred per cent per year; Home Office research suggests that recidivist criminals commit, on average, 140 offences per year; and only one in 120 domestic burglaries ends in a prison sentence. This is hardly the unthinking severity that Dormandy implies, rather the reverse.

Moreover, the connection between addiction to heroin and crime is almost the reverse of what he supposes. Criminality is a better predictor of addiction than addiction of criminality. I estimated that most heroin addicts who ended up in the prison in which I worked had committed between 50 and 200 offences *before* they ever took heroin; and those few who claimed to have started taking heroin in prison (not necessarily to be believed, for in 14 years of duty in a prison with 1400 prisoners I never saw a case of overdose of opiates, whereas I saw scores of cases outside) could hardly claim thereafter that their criminality was a result of their addiction.

Dormandy quite rightly mocks the naivety (and later the hypocrisy) of those who sought to eliminate non-medical use of opiates from the world. But he is not short of his own naivety about the wonders to be achieved by legalisation. Colombia probably held the world record for the number of civil wars during the 19th Century. In the twentieth century it had two episodes in which, adjusted for population, the equivalent of more than a million people were killed, and this was before drug trafficking became important. Likewise its Marxist guerrilla insurgency there has lasted half a century and started well before the drug trafficking. Mexico now has a murder rate a quarter of what it was in the 1940s.

I must end on a positive note. No student of the subject will fail to learn a lot from Dormandy, and in the most pleasant way possible.

back to Contents

# Choose your Parents Carefully

Christie Davies

**Dysgenics, Genetic Deterioration in Modern Populations**, Richard Lynn, Ulster Institute for Social Research, 2011, Hb £46, Pb £25.

Richard Lynn has produced yet another work of remarkable cogency and erudition. In addition to data from his own speciality, psychology, he has delved into demography, social and economic history, medicine and genetics.

The first dysgenic factor he discusses is, curiously enough, the advance of medical science. In the past many of those with transmittable genetic defects died before they were old enough to have children. The faulty gene remained in the population because many were carriers only and only the children of two carriers suffered the full consequences. With the increased survival of the latter and, more to the point, their production of children this is likely to mean that the number of those carrying the defective gene increases. They are not harmed directly but some of these additional descendants will come to suffer the full consequences, which remain tragic, even if mitigated by modern medicine. It is a humanitarian and utilitarian paradox.

Yet possibly some of the protective genes of the past are now obsolete – who now needs an inherited resistance to smallpox, the lack of which led to so many deaths in the past? Likewise, what if those carriers of a genetic problem who are not directly affected do provide a general advantage in other ways? It has been argued for instance that those populations with a higher incidence of the truly devastating Tay-Sachs disease may be more intelligent because of the presence of the genes that can lead to it. These only lead to disaster when combined, which may be both uncommon and, with modern knowledge, predictable. Natural selection moves in a mysterious way.

Subsequent chapters show that today those who are less intelligent and less conscientious have more children than those who possess these universally worthwhile qualities. This would not have been true in the past, at least in those societies where there was a degree of social mobility. On the contrary, those who rose by intelligence and conscientiousness tended to have more surviving children than those who failed to do so. Some factors would have reduced this effect in the past, notably a high incidence of observed or enforced clerical celibacy which meant the social sterilisation of intelligent and ambitious poor peasants, and, as Lynn points out, the introduction of strict monogamy, which prevents the more successful men from having more wives than the others.

Lynn's model rests on a well-established finding, namely that intelligence and conscientiousness are to a substantial extent inherited. In regard to both these qualities identical twins, who have the same genes, resemble each other far more than fraternal ones do and this is true even when they have been separated at birth. Likewise adopted children tend to resemble their

natural parents more than their adoptive parents in both intelligence and conscientiousness. Lynn produces a great deal of further evidence to back up this thesis. Yet he will not convince his ideologically prejudiced opponents whose minds are closed on this matter. They will continue to try to pick unimportant holes in the data or the argument while ignoring the fact that their own environmental edifice is crumbling as new data becomes available. Lynn's thesis is a progressing research programme that continues to predict and explain more things, whereas those who believe in the dominance of environment expound a degenerating one which tries to evade its increasing problems by semantic trickery. At some time in the future our enhanced knowledge of the genetic mechanisms of the transmission of qualities of character and intelligence among normal people will conclusively decide the matter and probably in Lynn's favour. If it did not, Lynn would accept the verdict of science and change his mind but, if new findings turn out strongly in Lynn's favour, his egalitarian opponents will try dishonestly to wriggle out of accepting defeat.

Lynn is not a dogmatist, and indeed he has pioneered the study of the effect of improved nutrition in off-setting the genetic decline in intelligence – the Lynn-Flynn effect. The better feeding of pregnant women and of very young children ensures the proper development of the brain in the child's earliest years. In consequence today's four-year-olds are brighter than in the past; this happens before they enter the educational system. It is a savage condemnation of our primary schools that this improvement has not been translated into improved literacy and numeracy. The problem that remains is that in the richer countries this progress in nutrition is coming to an end and the genetic factors are coming to the fore.

Where I must disagree with Lynn is when he translates genetic decline directly into social crisis. Lynn ascribes the rise in crime in Britain in the latter half of the twentieth century to the observable greater fecundity of the unintelligent and feckless, whose command of contraception is poor and who lack foresight and self-control. However, the difference in birth rate between the bright and the dim, the conscientious and the feckless was at its greatest between 1870 and 1930, which was a time of falling crime. By the 1930s low fertility was almost universal in Britain and differences in birth rates between social groups were much lower, yet the incidence of delinquency was now starting to rise. As I have shown in my book *The Strange Death of Moral Britain*, there are other and better explanations of the steady rise in crime in Britain between 1955 and 1990, namely secularisation and the elephantiasis of the welfare state leading to a decline in the ethic of respectability. Lynn is right that criminals have more siblings than the law-abiding (or undetected) but the effects of this would have been small by comparison. Curiously and very controversially, crime rates fell from the early 1990s in several countries and this has been ascribed to the liberalising of the abortion laws. Certainly the American data compiled by the economists Steven D. Levitt and John Donohue, which Lynn does not cite, seem to point in that direction. For obvious reasons their work has drawn the ire of American conservatives as well as liberals.

It is striking that Lynn's opponents never confront his statistical data properly. Some are scientists whose expertise is in very distant fields (such as palaeontology) and whom we know from their political activities to be driven by ideology – the blind watch-destroyers. Some of their notions to which Lynn refers are crackpot, for example the view that the intelligent are undesirable because they come to occupy positions of power and thus are able to do more damage than the stupid ever can. Lynn's book is well-worth reading. It exposes a problem which those who hold political power in Western (though not in Far Eastern) nations prefer to ignore.

back to Contents

# Inside an Animal's Mind

## Celia Haddon

**Why Animals Matter. Animal consciousness, animal welfare and human well-being**, Marian Stamp Dawkins, Oxford University Press, 2012, £16.99.

Are animals conscious? Do they have emotions like we do? Do they feel pain as we do? Or do they live without consciousness in the same way that we humans drive our cars – automatically performing actions without thinking or feeling? *Why Animals Matter* is the latest contribution to a debate about animal consciousness and animal welfare, written by the Professor of Animal Behaviour at Oxford University.

In the seventeenth century, the philosopher René Descartes identified consciousness and self-awareness as the distinctive properties of the human mind. Thus animals, beings without either consciousness or self-awareness, were merely automata. If that was so, a living dog being cut up without anaesthetic by scientists only *appeared* to feel pain. The agonised