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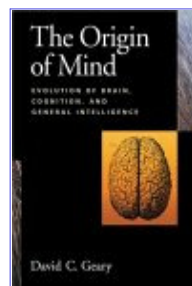
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I Hate You, Don't Leave Me: Understanding the Borderline Personality



Origin of Mind

Evolution of Brain, Cognition, and General Intelligence

by David C. Geary

American Psychological Association, 2004

Review by Keith Harris, Ph.D. on Sep 3rd 2005

Why and how have humans developed a type of consciousness unlike that of other creatures? Although targeted at readers already knowledgeable in this area, this book does a very good job of developing and extending evolutionary theory to explain our cognitive faculties.

The author's background in developmental psychology (in which he holds a doctorate) serves as a solid platform for this overview of the history of the human brain, including the evolution of our type of intelligence and the intricate social functioning for which it serves so well. Having previously published over a hundred professional articles and several books, in this work, Geary gets at what are among the most interesting -- and largely unresolved -- issues about being human: why are we conscious and why do we have such a well-developed sense of self?

The first chapter is a concise integration of the facts, themes and arguments that make up the book. The second chapter covers the basic processes that underlie the evolution of species, and does so in a thorough but concise manner. Readers are advised to pay close attention to the first two of the books' nine chapters, as a good grasp of these are needed well for an understanding the later chapters.

Geary explains that our sophisticated cognitive apparatus, and the way we perceive and process information about the world, are both understandable products of our evolution as a species. Chapter 3 specifically deals with this hominid evolution. In our line as with other species, the three universal selection processes are active: climatic change, ecological pressures such as the interplay of evolving

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species as they compete for resources, and social pressures such as access to mating partners. Increasingly, of course, our species focused more and more on the pressures of competition with our own kind, both between and within groups. Beginning at least 2.5 million years ago, the divergence of *Homo* came with fundamental changes in cognitive structure and increases in brain size. Improvements in the precision of social awareness and in the specificity of behavior are also known or inferred from archaeological evidence. A correlation between EQ (*encephalization quotient*, ratio of brain volume to body size) and cognitive complexity becomes apparent when comparing the species to which we are (or were) most closely related.

Of special interest is Geary's discussion of the peaking of our own species' average EQ about 20,000 or so years ago. In fact, he points out, there has been a drop of 3% to 4% in EQ since then, suggesting, as Geary explains "The implication is that changes in social organization resulted in a relaxation of the selection pressures that drove the rapid increase in EQ" (p. 53); presumably these pressures have been stable in the millennia since.



The middle section of the book, Chapters 4 through 7, address issues such as brain organization, the modularity of mind, the role of heuristics and "controlled problem solving," and the neurobiology of information processing.

While there is much of interest in these chapters, Chapter 8 -- the most powerful and interesting chapter of the book, in my opinion -- continues this line of thought. This chapter links the evolution of fluid intelligence most directly to climatic change over time, and to the evolution of social relationships.

Geary posits that human cognitive structures permit us to mentally "generate a problem space that includes a representation of the 'perfect world'" in which we are totally in control. In other words, we are an omnipotent agent in this inner world. The real world, obviously, does not generally conform to this mental world, and the primary mental goal is then "to generate strategies that will reduce the difference between conditions in the real world and those simulated in the perfect world, that is to generate ways to gain better control of important relationships and resources" (p. 301).

Chapter 9, the last of the book, considers the way society handles the issue of general intelligence. Referencing well-accepted studies of these issues, Geary notes that "general intelligence, especially gF [fluid intelligence] evolved to facilitate competition with other people for social and resource control and it is still used that way" (p. 336).

This book develops several lines of thought about issues that are crucial to understanding human nature. Readers will find this a rewarding experience, despite the unavoidably dry and detailed accounts of some of the foundational material.



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