

## The rise and fall of genetic determinism

We've all seen the stark headlines: "Being Rich and Successful Is in Your DNA" (Guardian, July 12); "A New Genetic Test Could Help Determine Children's Success" (Newsweek, July 10); "Our Fortunetelling Genes" make us (Wall Street Journal, Nov. 16); and so on.

The problem is, many of these headlines are not discussing real genes at all, but a crude statistical model of them, involving dozens of unlikely assumptions. Now, slowly but surely, that whole conceptual model of the gene is being challenged.

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Today, 1930s-style policy implications are being drawn once again. Proposals include gene-testing at birth for educational intervention, embryo selection for desired traits, identifying which classes or "races" are fitter than others, and so on. And clever marketizing now sees millions of people scampering to learn their genetic horoscopes in DNA self-testing kits.

So the hype now pouring out of the mass media is popularizing what has been lurking in the science all along: a gene-god as an entity with almost supernatural powers. Today it's the gene that, in the words of the Anglican hymn, "makes us high and lowly and orders our estate."

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So it has been dawning on us is that there is no prior plan or blueprint for development: Instructions are created on the hoof, far more intelligently than is possible from dumb DNA.

**Read full, original post:** [It's the End of the Gene As We Know It](#)