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**Duckworth, Angela – Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance**

Scrobner, 2016, [Surrounding Knowledge] Grade ★★★★★

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I initially intended postponing writing this review until next year but given the topic of Angela Duckworth's book it felt out of place to put it off. This is a book on following through on the goals you set up and the results that over time come with showing grit. The overriding theme is that effort trumps innate talent when it comes to which personality traits that drive success.

While there are several academics that study positive psychology and related topics Angela Duckworth, who is a psychology professor at the University of Pennsylvania, literally invented the research field of grit. Wikipedia defines grit as "passion for a particular long-term goal or end state, coupled with a powerful motivation to achieve [the] objective." Related concepts are said to be perseverance, conscientiousness, resilience, hardiness, ambition etc.

There are three parts to the book. The first lays out the theory framework of grit that is said to consist of two parts; passion and perseverance. The latter is perhaps more intuitive but without passion it's hard to muster the strength to be perseverant. The passion in question is of an enduring, slow burning kind, allowing a person to consistently and stubbornly over time work towards a set direction despite at times suffering setbacks. It's the intrinsic motivation that brings hardiness in effort.

Gritty people often have their priorities in order and consciously or unconsciously work towards a hierarchy of ambitions but doable goals where each lower one supports a higher in a consistent fashion, in the end leading to the desired state where the sum of all the efforts creates something larger. In achieving one's goals Duckworth shows that effort counts twice as much as talent. Talent multiplied by effort builds skill. That skill multiplied by more effort builds achievement. Hence, putting in even more effort is what makes skill productive. "*Without effort, your talent is nothing more than unmet potential. Without effort, your skill is nothing more than what you could have done but didn't.*"

The question is whether the capability for grit that overpowers talent is itself in the genes? The answer is yes, but as the author shows the environment is even more important. One study she refers to assigns a roughly 70/30 split for the environment and for innate talent when it comes grittiness. This means that grit can be grown and part two and three of the book address how to grow grit inside-out and outside-in, i.e. how to grow one's own grit and how to grow grit in others.

Part two goes into detail of much of what's already been stated and the author brings forward 4 key concepts for building one's own grit: 1) interest – where the quest to find something to arouse passion is usually a trial-and-error process, 2) practice – where we get a quick tutorial in the concept of deliberate practice as popularized by Anders Ericsson, 3) purpose – that adds in the motivation that comes from doing work that in some way matters also for others and 4) hope – that deals with the grinding work with the ambition locked in, helped by what Carol Dweck calls a growth mindset. Part three addresses how to build grit through parenting or coaching sports teams. Apart from bringing forward the concept of the social multiplier where grit rubs off in groups I found the ending part less worked through, with more anecdotes and the author's own opinions.

This is an engaging and at the same personal book. Duckworth starts and ends *Grit* with how her father had noted that she wasn't a genius when she was a child. From a fixed mindset this might have been true but Duckworth showed that grit and a growth mindset mattered more. Where Anders Ericsson's book *Peak* focuses on the type of practice needed to be an expert performer, Duckworth's publication answers much of the questions around how to find the motivation to pursue this training. Reading *Grit* first and *Peak* thereafter will give anyone the ammunition to become the best version of who they aspire to be – and it also turns out that grittier people are happier than others!

Mats Larsson, Dec 23, 2016