

Race and IQ

Ashley Montagu

The science is dead wrong. The misbegotten ideas still govern American and European politics.

This book is a collection of articles edited by Ashley Montagu in 1999. This review is superfluous in that the other three here on Amazon all agree with me: this is a one star effort. It is unusual for any book on Amazon to be so thoroughly panned.

It is important to bring up and refute Montague's arguments because however wrong he may have been, a great deal of social policy is still being formed on the basis of his misbegotten ideas. He states his thesis in the second of the articles, which he himself authored, entitled "The IQ mythology."

"'Race' and 'IQ' are terms which seemingly possess a clear and well-defined meaning for millions of people. Their common usage implies them for them the belief in a reality which is beyond question. When, on occasion, the suggestion is made that these terms correspond to no reality whatsoever, but constitute an amalgam of erroneous and stultifying ideas of the most damaging kind, the suggestion is received with either blank incredulity or open derision. Nevertheless, the truth is that these terms are not only unsound, but in fact correspond to no verifiable reality, and have, indeed, been made the basis for social and political action of the most heinous kind."

The facts are that

- (1) The commonly accepted notions of race and IQ do correspond to reality. They define real things.
- (2) The idea that they are not real is nonsense. In fact, more than half of the articles that Montagu has collected in this book recognize their reality. He is an outlier even in his own little world.
- (3) It is Montagu's ideas, not the ones that he denigrates in this book, that have served as "the basis for social and political action of the most heinous kind."

Committing the moralistic fallacy, confusing what ought to be with what is, has led to disastrous social policy. The first corollary to the assumption that all people are equal in ability is the conjecture that there is some monstrous conspiracy afoot to hold certain peoples down. That is the meme of the "evil white man." American society has launched a myriad of programs in the name of Montagu's favored theses:

- School busing
- Affirmative Action
- Quotas in college admissions
- Disparate impact assessments
- Policies forcing lenders to favor unqualified minority borrowers
- Unrestrained immigration from the Third World
- Leniency for black and Hispanic criminals.

None of these programs of achieved their stated ends. Most of the problems have been impervious to solution. They have been especially unfair and discouraging to white men. Jews and Northeast Asians, who have on average more of that "nonexistent" quality called intelligence than white people, do not as often compete with Blacks and Hispanics. They are not firemen, policemen or skilled

tradesmen. American Indians do not compete much, as they generally continue to avoid the labor market. White Americans have taken the brunt of these policies.

This book represents the last gasp of a failed ideology. Stephen Jay Gould last updated his "Mismeasure of Man" in 1996. A second edition of the 1984 "Not in our Genes" by Lewontin, Rose and Kamin recently appeared, though all but Rose are dead.

The arguments were weak even in 1999, replete with false analogies, failed syllogisms, straw men and other such dubious semantic tricks. I point some out below. More significantly, advances in the science of genetics and the mechanism of the brain confirm the arguments that so alarmed Montagu in 1999. Human evolution is rapid. It accelerated significantly after the dawn of agriculture. There are differences among human brains, and among the averages of different peoples, that can be subjected to scalar measures through images and electronics – not latent variable measures like IQ tests. Moreover, recent science has confirmed the correlation that Stephen Jay Gould sneeringly rejected, that there is a correlation between brain size and intelligence and that average brain size differs among the races of man.

The differences in the genomic makeup of different populations correspond to the traditional concept of races. Although intelligence is governed by thousands of genes, scientists have found genes that are statistically associated with intelligence. Moreover, the incidence of these genes has grown measurably among civilized peoples since the dawn of agriculture.

Here is a list of books that absolutely destroy the centerpieces of Montagu's argument. There are so many of them that the authors could not possibly be united in a racist conspiracy. These are leading intellectuals on American campuses – and most of them are documented liberals:

Spencer Wells, [[ASIN:B002RI989W The Journey of Man: A Genetic Odyssey (Princeton Science Library) ]]

Richard J. Haier [[ASIN:B01N2PFJPO The neuroscience of Intelligence]]

Robert Plomin [[ASIN:B07TD7DMJB Blueprint: How DNA Makes Us Who We Are (The MIT Press) ]]

Gregory Cochran and Henry Harpending [[ASIN:B0042FZRPC The 10,000 Year Explosion: How Civilization Accelerated Human Evolution]]

W. Tecumseh Fitch [[ASIN:052167736X The evolution of language]]

Montagu argues: *"Race differences arise chiefly because of the differential action of natural selection on geographically separated populations. In the case of man, however, structural and mental traits are quite likely to be influenced by selection in different ways."* This was nothing more than a hypothesis – Montagu offered no proof. Genetic analysis has shown that somatic (visible) traits can co-vary strongly with mental traits. One does not cause the other, but they coevolve. A good example would be blue eyes, lactose tolerance and altruism. These qualities have nothing to do with each other, but they are each highly evolved in northern European populations. The statistical correlations are strong.

Montagu writes: *"...by contrast, the survival value of a higher development of mental capabilities in man is obvious. Furthermore, natural selection seemingly favors such a development everywhere. In the ordinary course of events in almost all societies the spirit likely to be favored to show wisdom, maturity of judgment, and ability to get along with people – qualities which may assume different*

*forms in different cultures. These are the qualities of the plastic personality, not a single trait, but the general condition, and this is the condition which appears to have been at a premium in practically all human societies."*

This is a trivial observation. The qualities that Montagu names lead to success in monkey and great ape societies as well.

With regard to increasing brain size, the brain is a metabolically expensive organ – 20% of our energy goes to the brain. The increasing size of the brain has forced some compromises: to accommodate our growing brain, our jaws have shrunk to be not nearly as strong as those of the great apes, not even as strong as our recent ancestors. Big brains come at a cost. It is not a coincidence that the biggest brained and smartest of today's human populations are the least physically imposing.

The pressure for selection on the brain will differ from place to place. Although smarter people are favored to become the chiefs among tribes of Africa, in the Amazon, as well as in the colder climes, the need for the specific types of intellect that are measured by IQ tests, spatial, mathematical, and verbal, were not under severe selection pressure until man encountered harsher climes. In fact, much of the pressure seems to have come since the advent of agriculture.

Human societies do change, and do so more rapidly under civilization than was previously possible. The rate of change in modern hunter gatherer societies has probably not changed much in 10 millennia. In contrast, the pressure has been immense in Occidental and Northeast Asian societies.

Montagu writes of man: "*...he became capable of acting in a more or less regulated manner on his physical environment instead of being largely regulated by the process of natural selection. Selection in all climes and at all times favored genotypes which permit greater and greater objective ability and plasticity of mental traits under the influence of the uniquely social environment to which man is been continuously exposed."*

This is not so. Even prior to agriculture, the hunter gatherers who migrated to the cold climates of northern Europe and Asia needed to evolve technologies to deal with the cold: building shelters, making clothes, controlling fire, preserving food for winter and much more. These would have placed more selective pressure on intelligence than life in the warm savannas of Africa.

After the dawn of agriculture, people began to rapidly and significantly modify not only their physical environments but social environments. Among other things, they needed to learn to interact with each other in the anonymity of cities. It required the brains to acquire specialized skills such as baking, iron working, carpentry, wagon making, horsemanship, farming, pastoralism and much more. Meanwhile, the hunter gatherer environment remained pretty much as it always had been. Civilized man placed himself under huge evolutionary pressure. Geneticists can trace the change, comparing the genomes of fossil DNA from millennia back with the genome of modern descendents of the same populations.

Montagu, in service of his politics, constructed an articulate but unconvincing argument even for his time. He obfuscated and danced like a lawyer defending an obviously guilty client. It absolutely will not play before a modern scientific jury. The tragedy is that it is still accepted by witless voters and politicians.

One star, the consensus vote.