

Letters

Defining Racism

I could not more wholly agree with the sentiments against racism expressed by Goldstone, Schwartz, and Scully (Letters, 10 Feb., p. 598). At the same time, I could not more wholly *disagree* with their directing these sentiments against Arthur Jensen and his work.

What is vital in this connection is a clear definition of racism, and what seems to me to be the essence of racism is the advocacy of a certain methodology of dealing with individuals, namely, that we should treat them in terms of some general aspect of their group rather than in terms of their manifest characteristics as distinct individuals. This feature is obviously basic to the old Jim Crow laws in the South, and to apartheid in South Africa. But Jensen advocates no such thing and, indeed, he has been absolutely scrupulous in maintaining that *no* general property of groups should interfere with the treatment of individuals solely in terms of their individual qualities. Not only has he stated this explicitly on numerous occasions, but his entire corpus of work is in accord with it, and his criticisms should be fair enough to recognize this.

Readers familiar with the writings of the social theoretician F. A. Hayek (a Nobel laureate in 1974) will recognize here an instance of a conflict between two opposing approaches to analyzing and ordering social affairs, namely, in Hayek's terms, "methodological individualism" versus "methodological collectivism." The former, in brief, allows the fair treatment of individuals to determine the situation of the group as a whole, while the latter seeks to discover in some belief about what group manifestations "ought" to look like how we should go about treating individuals. Racism, inasmuch as it takes a trivial property of the group as the guide to how to treat individuals, obviously belongs in the latter category. Equally obviously, Jensen, both in his practice—of seeking to ascertain as validly as possible the mental characteristics of *individuals*—and his advocacy—of structuring the educational sequence around the individuality of persons—is a methodological individ-

ualist. Hence, we need have no hesitation in asserting that he is not a racist.

I have the profoundest respect for the manifest intentions of the International Committee Against Racism, and for those others who have been sincerely troubled by Jensen's work. But intellectual clarity is a necessity in this most sensitive matter if these laudable energies are not to be wasted on false targets; their proper focus should be, not Jensen, but those who would deliberately misuse and misrepresent his work to foster racism and other pernicious political goals.

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Primate Testing: Adequate Alternatives

While recognizing that the embargo placed on the export of rhesus monkeys from India (News and Comment, 20 Jan., p. 280) will disrupt research, toxicity testing, and vaccine production programs, we suggest that the opportunity should be taken to critically evaluate current use of primates in biomedical laboratories and the potential for developing adequate alternative techniques and systems.

At a symposium on comparative medicine in London last year, a speaker (who uses primate models) stated that primates are of limited or no value in drug testing. This produced surprisingly little reaction from the audience, apart from one or two claims for specific models which had proved useful. Considering that 25 percent of the primates used in the United States are required for pharmacology and toxicology laboratories (1), this claim is significant and deserves much closer scrutiny.

We have been informed of a number of cases where primate testing is inappropriate. For example, primates (except for the great apes and in certain circumstances the marmosets) tend to have steroid metabolic patterns very different from those of humans (2). As a result, the relevance of 10-year studies of the ef-

fects of oral contraceptives on monkeys, as demanded by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, is questionable. It has also been claimed that drug development and toxicology studies will not benefit from primate data, especially when the drug has already been tested on rodents, rabbits, dogs, and cats.

In 1976, a letter in *Science* (3) called for the development and validation of a range of short-term toxicity tests which, it was argued, would lead to little or no sacrifice of confidence since such tests usually err on the side of false-positives. We support this call, which has now been given added urgency by the action of the Indian government.

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References

1. Committee on Conservation of Nonhuman Primates, Institute of Laboratory Animal Resources, *Nonhuman Primates: Usage and Availability for Biomedical Programs* (National Academy of Sciences-National Research Council, Washington, D.C., 1975), p. 39.
2. C. H. L. Shackleton and F. L. Mitchell, in *Breeding Simians for Developmental Biology*, F. T. Perkins and P. N. O'Donoghue, Eds. (Laboratory Animal Handbook No. 6, Laboratory Animals, London, 1975), pp. 159-181.
3. I. Muul, A. F. Hegyeli, J. C. Dacre, G. Woodard, *Science* 193, 834 (1976).

"Sympathetic" Computers or Programmers?

Of what help could it possibly be to anyone to know that he is worthy of being liked *by a computer*? asks Joseph Weizenbaum (Letters, 28 Oct. 1977, p. 354). It should be remembered that any sympathetic response provided by the machine results from the programming made by a human being. So it is not really the machine which is talking to the patient, it is in fact the programmer, who considered many possible responses in advance. A computer could very well be instructed to reply, for example, "Your case is so interesting that I will report it to Doctor Weizenbaum, who will contact you tomorrow." The medium should not be confused with the message, which was originally devised by a real person. When I get a love letter, I don't think that *the letter* has fallen in love with me!

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Erratum: In the letter from Pietro U. Capurro, (17 Feb., p. 731), the first sentence of the second paragraph should have read, "The Galaxy Chemical Company's solvent recycling plant started operation in the Little Elk Valley in 1961."