

Race, Science, and Social Policy

Correspondents comment on a recent *Science* article

Confusion of Issues

It is not clear why standards of conceptual and definitional precision should not be as rigorous for essays labeled "heuristic" as we expect them to be for more conventional scientific reports based on research and analysis. Aside, for example, from the questionable scientific utility of using anything at all "in its popular sense," one might fairly inquire in *which* popular sense Dwight Ingle ("Racial differences and the future," 16 Oct., p. 375) uses "race," among other terms. Presumably he also uses "racists" and "equalitarians" in some popular sense. . . . Not all "racists" do in fact maintain that Negroes are genetically inferior. Nor do all "equalitarians" maintain that "all races are equally endowed with intelligence." Such is the case, at least, if "equalitarian" is extendable to the scholar who, *qua* scientist, could not offer such a contention in the absence of reasonable proof. The point is (can Ingle be unaware of it?) that in the absence of firm evidence to the contrary there is no justification for assumptions that racial groups are differentially equipped in terms of such potential as is indeed genetic for intellectual, cultural, and emotional development.

There is, then, no binary opposition between *the* "racist" and *the* "equalitarian" position. There is, rather, a large variety of positions, not all of which are conceptually discrete. Most scholars who are trained in human biology, genetics, psychology, anthropology, and so on are, *qua* scientists, neutral (an alternative not offered by Ingle's dichotomy) on ethno-racial issues, since confirmatory evidence is lacking.

They maintain *qua* citizens, however, that there is no scientifically justifiable reason to deny racial groups per se access to those opportunities and privileges that our Constitution

guarantees all citizens. Ingle does not mention that an international committee of biological scientists under the auspices of UNESCO (1952) and the American Anthropological Association (1961) have made the same points in formal statements.

I doubt that Ingle's simplistic reduction of reality to two mutually exclusive and opposed categories has even the "heuristic" value that he claims for his thoughts. Nor does such phraseology as "the average Negro" and "the average white" impress me as very useful for comparing groups on multifactor traits. . . .

The statements by the UNESCO group and the American Anthropological Association explicitly and rightly contend that there must be a separation of issues: that the scientific problem of possibly significant biopsychological differences between racial groups and access by members of such groups to Constitutional guarantees are separate questions, not to be confused. Ingle confuses them in several places. For example, he argues that if it can be shown that there are "genetically determined racial differences in drives and abilities," then "equal representation of the Negro at the higher levels of job competence and in government will be deleterious to society." The implication, presumably, is that under certain circumstances the fundamental guarantees of the Constitution can and should be abridged.

Ingle will have his own reasons for his confusing of these issues, just as he will have his reasons for believing that "voluntary integration of schools [as opposed to legally enforced integration] . . . is wise and just." The question is: Of what heuristic value are such expressions in the pages of *Science*?

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Problems of Our Own Making

Ingle writes, "Racists claim that the Negro race is genetically inferior to other races in intelligence, while equalitarians claim that all races are equally endowed with intelligence." Since, I take it, "equalitarians" means those to whom that label has been most frequently applied, namely, Boas, Klineberg, Herskovits, myself, and the majority of scientists who have written on the subject, it is in this particular connection very necessary to correct the misstatement about the "claims" of equalitarians. It should be clearly understood that the term "equalitarian" is one customarily used by racists to describe those who are critical of their views. This is a typical racist device: to distort and misrepresent what their critics have in fact stated, and then to label them with a term which further distorts the views. . . . What should be implied by the term "equalitarian" is the belief that every human being has an equal birthright, which is development. In this sense all men of good will are, I hope, "equalitarians."

It is possible that, to use Ingle's highly inaccurate phrase, "all races are equally endowed with intelligence," but until the great experiment has been performed of allowing the members of all groups called "races" equal opportunities for development we shall never know whether they are or not. No group, "race," or individual is endowed with intelligence. Individuals are endowed with genetic potentials for learning to be intelligent. Intelligence is a socially acquired ability, a complex problem-solving form of behavior which one must learn from other human beings. Not only that, human beings have to learn to learn. The capacity for intelligence becomes an ability only when it has been trained. The capacity itself varies among individuals and, allowing for differences in prenatal influences, these capacities are largely genetically influenced. Allowing for the genetic differences, all observers are agreed that what those capacities will become as abilities will largely depend upon the environmental stimulations to which they are exposed. . . .

Ingle informs us that "The histories of the Negro and white races show that the latter have made greater contributions to discovery and social evolution." By this, I take it, he means that whites have made greater contri-

contributions to discovery and social evolution since the Neolithic or the first and second industrial revolutions, say roughly within the last 12,000 years? For before that time, all men were living at a food-gathering-hunting stage of cultural development. Since we know practically nothing of the prehistory or archeology of the Negroid peoples before the Neolithic, it is not possible for anyone to say what contributions to discovery and social evolution they may or may not have made. But since Africa is agreed by most authorities to have been the original homeland in which the greater part of man's evolution, both physical and cultural, occurred in the prehistoric period, it is probable that some, if not all, of these people were Negroid, and that they made fundamental contributions to discovery and social evolution. With respect to more recent history it may be true that white peoples have made greater contributions. Achievements imply opportunities, and now that some African peoples are being increasingly provided with opportunities we may not have too long to wait before the returns start coming in. If it takes a hundred years, I should consider it, by the measure of the rate at which these changes have occurred in the past, very rapid indeed.

Ingle writes, "It seems improbable that when races differ in other physical characteristics, the human brain, the highest product of evolution, would show an identical distribution of capacities among the races." . . . It should be clearly understood that the gene differences relating to the physical traits characterizing "races" are of very small number, and in any event, to reason from the existence of superficial, adaptive physical differences to the existence of significant behavioral differences is to misunderstand the nature of the conditions and modalities involved.

"The more militant Negro leaders," Ingle writes, "who now dominate the civil rights movement, having been told that there are no genetically determined racial differences in drives and abilities, are demanding equal representation in jobs and in government at all levels of competence." The American Negro's struggle for his elementary rights is not based on what "equalitarians" or anyone else may have told him, but upon the irrepressible drive and the inalienable natural right of every human being to enjoy

the satisfaction of his needs for development. This has nothing whatever to do with what anyone may have told his "militant" leaders.

Ingle says he has no doubt that "forced segregation of the Negro in schools has generally had a deleterious effect upon the Negro child." Nevertheless, he writes, "Personally, I oppose equally both forced segregation and forced desegregation in schools and housing; both are affronts to individual freedom and private judgment." "There are compelling reasons," he writes, "why the average white does not wish to have the average Negro as a neighbor or schoolmate which have nothing to do with the color of skin. I refer to poor behavioral standards, none of which are uniquely Negro." The fact is that the "poor behavioral standards" of many Negroes were created by and are the direct result of the treatment Negroes have received from the white man. Surely it would be a small thing to ask of whites, in repayment of the enormous debt they have accumulated for their past crimes against the Negro, to help him raise his "standards," at whatever level they may be. And it might just happen that some whites would find themselves learning from their Negro neighbors that there is more to being human than the proper "behavioral standards."

"The very high birth rate among indolent incompetent Negroes is a threat to the future success of this race," writes Ingle. I don't see that this is any more true of Negroes than it is of any other indolent incompetent individuals and their effects upon the "race." I wholly agree with Ingle that "Conception control is important for all who, either because of genetic limitations or because of poor cultural heritage, are unable to endow children with a reasonable chance to achieve happiness, self-sufficiency, and good citizenship." I also entirely agree that "The guiding principle should be prevention of [social] problems rather than to depend upon palliative methods." But the chronically irritating fact is that we are squarely faced with considerable social problems of our own making, which we did nothing to prevent. It is not too late to do many things directed at preventing their further exacerbation. The teaching of birth control is an imperative, and so is the institution of other social means by which we might achieve the solution of many of our social problems.

In this connection such genetic differences as may exist between American Negroes and American whites are of no relevance whatever.

Let us work toward the development of a society in which everyone is afforded the opportunity for self-development, and then let us observe what happens. This seems to me the only practical approach to the problem of human relations in any society. In spite of very real appearances to the contrary, I believe that this is the direction in which humanity is traveling.

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Whose Bad Culture?

. . . We are familiar with the eugenics argument that individuals or classes or races should be prevented from reproducing their kind because of an alleged genetic defect. What I find novel and mischievous in Ingle's discussion is the recommendation that adherence to a culture that is definable, somehow, as "bad" or "substandard" (Ingle's terms) should be taken as grounds for eugenic measures ("conception control"). Ingle directs our attention to the effect on the American Negro of the heritage of slavery, and the difficulty that successive generations experienced, into the present, in breaking out of the "vicious cycle of culturally handicapped adults—culturally handicapped children—culturally handicapped adults." Here he seems to face the problem squarely as a social one and suggests for our consideration a pair of measures that . . . might have a meliorative effect on this self-compounding process: a gigantic slum-clearance project, and "nursery care and youth programs which would place each child in an environment favorable to his making the most of his native abilities." He compares the cost of such a program with the cost of crime and of relief. Well and good as far as that goes . . . But now follows a strange turning in his presentation. Having outlined a partial program of environmental improvement, he demurs abruptly to the efficacy of these undertakings ("The problem is complex . . ."). He then goes on immediately to propose another course of action, either as replacement or as accompaniment to the program of environmental melioration, it is not clear which. "Considering the grave dangers

of overpopulation," he says, "an intensive conception control program among those who for either cultural or biological reasons are unqualified for parenthood would be far cheaper and effective." . . . Having placed a large question mark against the two programs of environmental improvement that he outlined, he proposes one policy (conception control based on biological insufficiency) that is not justified by his discussion of the biology of race, and a companion policy (conception control based on cultural insufficiency) whose ethical ruthlessness overshadows its sociological ineptness. . . .

The judgment that this proposal is ruthless is a matter of taste and perhaps not arguable. But I would like nevertheless to have us reflect on one aspect of Ingle's proposal, its effect of continuing a historical injustice. . . . The Negro's condition as a slave forced him into the position of a backyard adjunct to white society. The rudimentary social right of maintaining a family was denied him in many cases. . . . His very color and physiognomy have become symbols of inferiority, functioning to confirm him in his place, blocking achievement, or, where achievement has occurred, overshadowing it. Ingle's proposal would be effective, as he claims; but death is also effective as a solver of earthly problems. It would be "cheaper," too, as he claims. (It is not clear whether he means cheaper than meliorative housing and youth programs or cheaper than the costs of crime and relief to which he refers. But no matter; it would be cheaper.) . . . When all this is said, we must ask whether we could really opt for such an easy way out of the consequences of our actions toward the Negro. . . .

After stating his radical proposal for conception control, Ingle advances in the very next sentence to tell us that "the procedure for sterilization of each sex is now simple," and in the following sentence suggests that "barrenness could be economically subsidized." There is an unseemly haste in this sequence of technical observations. Not even the looming problem of overpopulation seems to justify such haste in implementing a program that is so questionable in its foundation. For a question that is central to Ingle's proposal remains unanswered (I think it is not even raised): by whose standard is anyone's culture to be judged as a disqualification for

parenthood? Each of us privately maintains his own judgment as to what is bad culture and bad behavior. I will be so bold as to say that I consider Ingle to be manifesting bad culture himself when he launches forth on this awesome set of proposals in the detached spirit of a sanitary engineer. But I am far from advocating the sterilization of him and his kind.

A psychiatrist, commenting on a similar problem of classification in his field, wrote, "It has been said, with a good deal of truth, that what a man with a character disorder has is a 'character that the diagnosing individual disapproves of' [Martin Hoffman, *Yale Review* 54, 22 (1964)]. Can we presently, or foreseeably, hope for markedly better results than this in diagnosing cultural disorder? . . . The very indolence with which the Negro is charged, which is so unacceptable to true upholders of the Protestant ethic, is passing into the majority society in a form that I would call spiritually enhancing and psychologically beneficial. The pattern of non-violent resistance developed by Southern Negroes in recent years is in one view feckless, impertinent, and disruptive, and in another a heartening improvement over our traditional reliance on violent methods of struggle. . . .

The scientist should be encouraged to explore where his fancy carries him, but, when it comes to stating social policy, it is extremely irresponsible to base recommendations on an unproven hypothesis, and to slight a rich field of action that bases itself on demonstrable relations between a massive historical cause and a widespread social defect. . . . It would be humane and sociologically sound to try with all the resources at our command to introduce into the flow of contemporary history such actions as will help Negroes to direct themselves toward a more rewarding existence—resources, incidentally, which the Negro helped open to us by several centuries of unpaid and underpaid labor. . . .

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Political Physiology

. . . Possibly Ingle may be forgiven for knowing far less about politics than about physiology. . . . He should know that the demands made by civil rights groups have never been for jobs for Negroes regardless of ability, but for

jobs precisely on the basis of ability, without regard for color. There are demands for special training and opportunities for Negroes to make up for past injustices, but such demands have no connection with genetic differences or lack of difference. As for opportunity to enter schools or to obtain housing wherever vacancies exist, Ingle's unstated assumption is that genetic differences might serve as justification for maintaining segregation. Possibly he would like to have landlords give I.Q. tests to prospective tenants, but this would be a political question, having little to do with either genetics or physiology.

Ingle says that there are efforts to extend the concept of racial equality to the point where it conflicts with "the rights of each individual to seek self-fulfillment [and to] move ahead in a competitive society." The Negro who would like to become a salesman, a bank clerk, plumber, electrician, or brickmason notes that the only genetic difference of interest to the prospective employer (or labor union) is the color of his skin, and he has long found this an obstacle to self-fulfillment and to his right to move ahead competitively. Ingle refers to "poor behavioral standards" as one justification for opposing forced integration. It is inexcusable that he ignores the obvious fact that, no matter how "well-behaved," Negroes have difficulty obtaining housing in white communities.

The setting up of such straw men as "forced integration" and "the philosophy which abhors competition" is a standard tactic in political speeches, but has no place in a scientific paper. Possibly Ingle should study the genetics of such straw men. That would be more useful to science than is his unfortunate article.

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Trading upon Science

. . . As a "source of data" Ingle suggests "comparisons of the highest achievers of different races who have never experienced either substandard culture or poor schools." Difficulties spring to mind at once: (i) It might be difficult to find Negro "high achievers" who met the condition. Negro writer James Baldwin, whose talents were nourished in the Harlem slums, would be excluded, for instance.

(ii) What is a "highest achiever" anyway? A handicapped person who triumphs in a small way over his handicap? Earner of more than \$100,000 a year? Nobel Prize winner? One who has fought to the top in the savagely competitive sport or entertainment world? Reformer? Pillar of the Establishment? Successful rogue? Professor of physiology? (iii) Suppose some comparison of achievements were possible. Would magnitude of accomplishment measure the intelligence of its agent? How to evaluate the difficulty of the achievement, obduracy of circumstances, the factor of luck, the co-operation of others? These are fairly obvious difficulties, suggested by common sense. A slight acquaintance with psychology suggests many others. . . .

Ingle suggests that those who emphasize environmental effects are misled by an "equalitarian dogma." Such a statement discounts work by Piaget, McCulloch, Pitts, Rosenblatt, and others on formal theories utilizing environmental feedback mechanisms. This work is not inspired by such a dogma; it arises from the assumption that internal cognitive structures are unknowns, to be discovered empirically. That environment is very important in the organization and modification of such structures is a theory which has proved to be scientifically fruitful in investigating learning and intelligence, not something that was assumed a priori.

Ingle's hypothesis that there may be a genetic basis of intelligence and that we ought therefore to upgrade our genetic heritage, or ought to breed for more intelligent people, is open to objections other than that we don't know what intelligence unrelated to culture is. W. R. Thompson and T. L. Fuller have shown that there is little if any relation between genotype and phenotype (roughly, heritage and character), at least for such traits as are polygenic [W. R. Thompson, *Eugenics Quart.* 4, 8 (1957)]. As for a genetic basis for cultures (or subcultures), also suggested in Ingle's article, the comments of Steward and Shimkin [in *Evolution and Man's Progress*, H. Hoagland and R. W. Burhoe, Eds. (Columbia Univ. Press, New York, 1962)] seem relevant:

A demonstration that genetic factors have shaped cultural patterns will require a rigorous scientific methodology that has not been developed. The assumption that

individuals can be bred for superior culture not only lacks scientific validation of the relation between genetics and culture, but presupposes indefensible conclusions concerning the superiority of any culture.

Given the known difficulties, the thesis that a racial basis for intelligence can be tested seems not at all worth debate. A program to test now for a genetic basis of intelligence is a mischievous suggestion, not a scientific speculation.

A curiosity in the Ingle piece is worthy of note: Why should "private enterprise . . . have a major role in defining goals and development of plans" for upgrading "the genetic and cultural heritage of all the races" by sterilization, various economic subsidies, and Little Dandy Superior Sperm Banks for the genetically underprivileged?

And finally, a major curiosity: Why was the article published? Since publication in *Science* confers a cachet of some minimal scientific respectability, the editors must certainly be responsible for screening out those manuscripts which seek to trade upon the neutrality of science, and their authors' competence as scientists, in order to engage in special pleading. Since one must suppose (now having evidence) that scientists, like others, succumb occasionally to their prejudices, the principal blame for this irresponsible publication, during an election campaign when civil rights of Negroes are a major issue, must rest with the editors of *Science*.

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An Analogous Problem

Ingle has suggested that, until we find out whether or not there are any important differences between races as popularly defined, we should supplement our present treatment of one of these "races" with a bold program of eugenics and eugenics. Not only would such a program be more humane than Swift's classic proposals for the handling of overpopulation in Ireland, but it could also be applied to the Bigot problem.

Although there is no trait which is found exclusively in a single race, it is well known that Bigots possess a substandard culture. The following points are commonly accepted: (i)

Bigots tend to form closely knit cultural groups and to mate almost exclusively among themselves. This racial homogeneity may limit their biological variability and encourage the preservation of harmful mutations among them. (ii) Bigots tend to confuse biologically, sociologically, and popularly defined races, an obvious indication of their lack of any capacity for abstract thought. (iii) Bigots are good citizens, and their efforts to preserve our nation from mystical-magical pollution and impurity are surely commendable. Regrettably, Bigots are not good neighbors or good schoolmates; evidently this is related to the fact that they can perform well only on intelligence tests of their own devising. (iv) The common beliefs that Bigot males tend to form Saturday-night alliances with members of other ethnic groups (meaning cultural or genetic groups or something like that), that they tend to solve their problems through outbursts of uncontrolled aggression, or that they fear competition have been shown to be false. All racial groups (a popular concept used here in its strict biological sense) possess these characteristics; they are simply much more common among Bigots.

Action on the Bigot problem (by which I mean sterilize the lot of them) requires only the following steps: (i) We must find a biological definition of race which conforms to the prejudices of the paranoid and the uneducated and is also acceptable to biologists and physical anthropologists. (ii) We must find out what genes human beings have and which ones are responsible for substandard culture. We do not, of course, have good evidence to prove that Bigot aggressiveness is genetic, but we do know that mice bite. In any case, the concept of bio-social means that all human behavioral traits are biological unless proven otherwise. (iii) We must work out some way of sterilizing millions of Bigots without offending them. Unfortunately, this is a social science problem and therefore outside the scope of a paper conceived in purely biological and rational terms.

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[This series of letters will be concluded in the next issue.]