

# The heresy of heredity



**I**n this issue, Richard Lynn writes with characteristic verve and erudition about race differences in intelligence. Prof Lynn is an acknowledged expert on this subject, cited by the mainstream media as well as the technical press, and his writings are always exhaustively researched. The subject of intelligence is self-evidently of central importance to schools, universities, employers, NGOs and government departments in every country, and cuts to the heart of what it is to be human.

Yet Prof Lynn's article will be the most disputatious in this issue of the journal. The reasons for this are complex, but boil down to the essential incompatibility of hereditarian theories with the mighty post-war political and cultural superstructure that has been raised teeteringly skywards on notions of human plasticity and equality. These fondly-held notions are invariably accompanied by an illogical (if perhaps understandable) belief that difference equals discrimination equals genocide.

If IQ is not only largely heritable, but differently distributed amongst physically distinguishable groups, then our modern cults of internationalism, multiculturalism and egalitarianism are based on stupendous self-delusion – and decades of cultural grandstanding, political posturing and uncountable billions in public spending may have been bootless.

With so many reputations and so much else at stake, it is hardly surprising that audacious thinkers past and present such as Richard Lynn, J Philippe Rushton, Charles Murray, Arthur Jensen, Hans Eysenck and William Shockley have been so roughly treated when they pointed out that IQ varies between groups as well as individuals; that these population differences have persisted over a century of testing; and that IQ has predictive powers on all kinds of

personal, professional and economic indices. There is also mounting evidence for the heritability of various behavioral traits – evidence that to date has been either ignored or anathematized by those who lay the loudest claim to political liberalism and scientific objectivity. Such panicky responses are becoming daily less appropriate, as we learn more about behavioral genetics and fill in the gaps in the map of the human genome.

Nevertheless, it may be misleading, and could actually be dangerous, to use IQ as the chief determinant of human worth or possibility. There are millions of worthy people of average intelligence who nevertheless make important contributions to society. And maybe intelligence is not enough anyway. It has been averred that humans require emotional intelligence just as much as IQ – although this concept of emotional intelligence has hardly been defined satisfactorily.

It is asserted by some that the concept of IQ is dependent on European cultural assumptions for which there are no direct parallels in non-European cultures, although efforts have admittedly been made by psychologists to refine the testing methodology to eliminate cultural bias. There is also irrefutable evidence that the IQ of the economically advanced nations has increased over time (the so-called “Flynn effect”) and is alterable through improvements in tuition and nutrition.

In any case, IQ is obviously not the sole guarantor of cultural preeminence. For example, East Asians have the highest average IQs of all peoples, yet as Professor Lynn acknowledges in his *IQ and the Wealth of Nations* their societies (albeit admirable) lagged behind those of Europe until the second half of the twentieth century. Other unmeasured factors are obviously at play.

The ultimate causes of different group IQs are also unclear. It is claimed by Professor Lynn for one that high median IQs are the product of millennia of adaptation to harsh and challenging (cold) climates. Yet sub-Saharan Africans and Australian Aborigines (who score badly on IQ tests) also live in harsh climates.

Another reason why hereditarians will continue to meet resistance is simply that most people do not think in statistical terms. They think in terms of individuals rather than groups, and everyone knows someone who is an exception to the (probably real) rule.

This is an argument that will doubtless continue indefinitely, as new data constantly emerge and politico-cultural dynamics are constantly reshuffled. The one thing that is certain is that seeking to suppress politically inconvenient or morally unnerving opinions is a disservice not just to science – but also to humanity. ■