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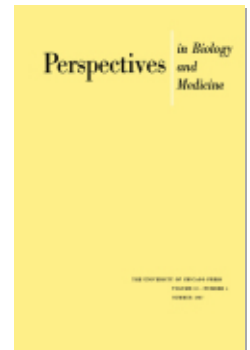
Editorial: The Need To Study Biological Differences among Racial Groups: Moral Issues

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PERSPECTIVES IN BIOLOGY AND MEDICINE

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EDITORIAL: THE NEED TO STUDY BIOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES AMONG RACIAL GROUPS: MORAL ISSUES

Free dissemination of information and open discussion is an essential part of the scientific process.—AAAS COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE IN THE PROMOTION OF HUMAN WELFARE [1].

The dogma currently expressed by agencies of government and many social scientists holds that there is no genetic basis for the average differences in test performance, school success, job success, and behavior of racial groups. The most sensitive and emotionally charged question is whether or not there is any biological basis for the disadvantages which Negroes experience as a racial group. Individuals interested in further studies find that many who are concerned with the advancement of the Negro hold that closed systems of belief are necessary to unite theory and social action.

Interesting views on the social responsibility of the scientist studying racial problems are stated by Morton Fried [2]. He makes the point that since the scientist must protect the health, security, and rights of the individual subject, he is also obligated to protect the larger social aggregates whose futures are influenced by his work. Fried seems to imply that no knowledge which can be misused should be made public. The scientist should be concerned about the uses of knowledge, but Fried fails to rationalize the withholding of knowledge that can be used for good as well as evil or the fostering of dogma that is intended to serve a good purpose but can be misused.

It is true that racists seek any possible basis for distortions and generalizations against Negroes which can be used to limit their rights and opportunities. This risk is partially averted by emphasis upon the importance

of attending to individuality rather than to racial origin, for the range of individual differences within a racial group is far greater than average group differences.

Social actions extending far beyond equal rights and opportunities are taken on the basis of the plausible but weakly supported hypothesis that the average genetic potential of whites and Negroes is approximately equal. However, if this hypothesis is incorrect, it is not rational to randomly place individuals in jobs, schools, and housing on the basis of race rather than abilities, interests, drives, behavioral standards, and the assumption of duties. It may be that the resegregation of races in schools and housing with the accompanying social upheaval—most notable in our nation's capital but occurring rapidly in other large cities—is not a desirable substitute for integration according to individuality.

When all Negroes are told that their problems are caused solely by racial discrimination and that none are inherent within themselves, the ensuing hatred, frustration behavior—largely negative and destructive—and reverse racism become forms of social malignancy. Is the dogma which has fostered it true or false?

If there are important average differences in genetic potential between Negroes and non-Negroes, it may be that one necessary means for Negroes to achieve true equality is biological. As shown by Moynihan [3], Negro women married to professional or technical workers had an average of 1.9 children, whereas Negro women below the so-called poverty line averaged 5.3 children. Since there is a positive correlation between socioeconomic status and I.Q., and since both are negatively correlated with family size, the possibility must be considered that the genetic potential of Negroes is declining. Higgins, Reed, and Reed [4] have shown that, although a negative correlation exists between family size and I.Q. among white families, those of low I.Q. have larger than average numbers of non-reproducing siblings so that the I.Q. of the whole population of whites may be approximately static. No comparable studies of Negro populations have been done.

Knowledge can be misused; this does not excuse efforts to block inquiry and debate or to deny laymen in a democratic society the right to know. Closed systems of belief can also be misused, and ignorance is a barrier to progress. All possible causes of peoples being disadvantaged should be in-

vestigated, and hopefully the application of knowledge to their advancement will be guided by moral principles.

During the past several years the undersigned editor has invited social scientists to enter into an open-ended discussion of these issues in the pages of *Perspectives*. No one has accepted the invitation. This challenge does not imply that efforts to improve environment, to correct cultural handicaps, and to insure equal rights and opportunities be withheld until there is better information on the biology of race. The issues to be discussed include the evidence for and against the hypothesis that average biological differences that are important in human affairs exist between whites and Negroes, possible means of researching the problem, and the morality of inquiry and debate of this question. The exchange would include questions to be answered. The invitation to discuss these issues in *Perspectives* remains open.

D. J. I.

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