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Book review

The Battlegrounds of Bio-Science: Cross-Examining the Experts on Evolutionary Psychology, Race, Intelligence, & Genetics, Population, Environment, & Cloning

By Frank Miele, Bloomington, IN: 1stBooks, 2002, ISBN: 1-4033-6030-8, pp. xvi+316

Frank Miele, senior editor of *Skeptical Magazine*, is best known to readers of this journal as the author of the book *Intelligence, Race, and Genetics: Conversations with Arthur R. Jensen* (Beaujean, 2003). In this collection of his interviews, essays, and reviews, Miele engages related aspects of the nature–nurture debate in similar conversational style. Taken together, the 18 chapters provide an excellent overview and a fascinating perspective on what “evolutionary psychology” is all about, examined primarily from the vantage point of some of its key players. The opening chapter, “the (im)moral animal—a quick and dirty guide to evolutionary psychology and the nature of human nature,” is one that readers may find amusing as well as informative.

Miele has consistently found the crucial people to question and has done so in the same hard-hitting, but fair-handed manner, regardless of the position they take in the various debates covered. His interrogation of Richard Dawkins, E.O. Wilson, Robin Fox, and Lionel Tiger on the origins and current status of sociobiology is novel. He gets Wilson to admit, “Evolutionary Psychology is the same subject as Human Sociobiology, but it’s been picked up because it contains the word ‘psychology’. Most of the investigators in that area obtain employment in departments of psychology or anthropology. It would be harder to obtain one of those job slots by identifying yourself as a biologist of any kind” (p. 80). Miele’s quizzing led Wilson to exclaim, “Frank Miele you are well informed! That’s a compliment I can’t resist making . . .” This reviewer completely agrees and found that the forceful questioning enlivened the entire book.

Of particular relevance to the readers of *Intelligence* are chapters on “The Race–IQ–Genetics Debate.” In one interview, Charles Murray summarizes his data from the National Longitudinal Study of Youth at the height of the *Bell Curve* wars, discusses their implications, and names some of his colleagues who “ran for the high hills” (p. 192). In a contrasting interview, Robert Sternberg argues that the Bell Curve was mainly written for the media and that the *g* factor position is a minority one. A plethora of book reviews rounds out the picture, especially those of Nyborg’s festschrift for Eysenck, Gottfredson’s special issue of *Intelligence*, two of Sternberg’s volumes, and Nancy Segal’s book on twins and what they tell us about human nature.

Almost all the chapters touch in some way on the IQ debate. For me, a chapter on chaos and complexity provided an illuminating surprise. Miele coherently summarizes data by Hary

Jerison showing that brain size has increased over evolutionary time in markedly different genera (reptiles no less than mammals, including post-Jerison in dinosaurs). Miele then raises the question of evolutionary contingency or evolutionary determinism.

Could there actually be “progress” in evolution based on increasing neurological complexity? Or, would this be too “noxious” (Stephen Jay Gould’s term) and “racist” to even contemplate? Another good chapter is the interview with physical anthropologist Don Johanson, who explains the implications of human origins research based on his discovery of the famous African australopithecine fossil, “Lucy.” Johanson supports the “out of Africa” theory of human origins and Miele quizzes him about the relation between brain size and behavior for the differences among australopithecines *Homo erectus* and *Homo sapiens*.

Altogether, the book presents a great series of interviews and essays that could serve as supplementary reading for senior undergraduate or graduate courses in evolutionary psychology, behavioral genetics, and psychometrics. The main drawback of *The Battlegrounds of Bio-Science* is that it is self-published and lacks an index. I only wish it could have had a commercial publisher; it deserved to have had one.

Reference

Beaujean, A. A. (2003). *Book review of intelligence, race, and genetics: Conversations with Arthur R. Jensen. Intelligence, vol. 31* (pp. 93–94). Boulder, CO: Westview.

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