

Foreword

This is a fairly close English translation of the Danish article “Videnskabelig Fup”, written by associate professor Morten Kjeldgaard at the University of Aarhus. The Danish version is found at the present homepage under “Heksejagt”

The article was submitted by Kjeldgaard on <http://www.bioxxray.dk/~mok/taxonomy/terms/38> shortly after a TV transmission from the 1997-meeting of the “International Society for the Study of Individual Differences” in Aarhus. The homepage bears the logo of the Aarhus University and refers to the university by name and address. I protested in 1997, and the university asked Kjeldgaard to remove the university reference. Since then the university nevertheless allowed it to be in existence with its references to the university until 2009, when I protested once more. It has played a prominent role in the university’s decision to remove me from my chair (see under “Witch Hunt”).

Keywords: Eugenics; Pseudoscience; Politics.

Scientific Fraud

TV viewers capable of keeping awake into the late hours of Tuesday 07.10.97, were probably witnesses to a choking TV program in the public Danish TV show (DR1) “Harddisken – Color”. The program reported from an international conference [“The International Society for the Study of Individual Differences”, my addition], chaired by professor Helmuth Nyborg, Institute of Psychology, University of Aarhus. The conference had a fine and well-sounding name, but what this precisely refers to is irrelevant in this connection, because the part of it transmitted by the DR1 TV show was unquestionably humbug and pseudo-science.

The participants in the congress were presented as “The bad boys” of psychology, an expression that can be said to represent an extremely powerful understatement. The viewpoint expressed by the participants rather referred to the type of “research” taking place under Hitler’s and Stalin’s terror-regimes. Among various things we heard about the future vision of the American Arthur R. Jensen with respect to how future societies would divide into two classes: The gifted and the rest, and how we by necessity had to apply eugenics and race-hygienic methods in order to prevent the latter from “breeding”. We heard that it was necessary to keep the two groups separate in order not to pollute the gene pool. From other participants we heard touching stories about how rich people in the future would be able to “improve intelligence” and stop children from becoming alcoholics and criminals through medicine and gene-therapy. With point of departure in pseudo-scientific studies we were presented with viewpoints which extremists on the radical right wing no doubt would swallow with great pleasure.

Professor Nyborg and his colleagues promote themselves with a new “Natural Science Knowledge” within Psychology. By drawing on concepts shamelessly stolen from serious natural science disciplines like genetics, biochemistry and molecular biology they present a mismatch of

empirical studies, statistics and predictions of the future, spiced with ideological wreckage from since long gone times. But as serious natural scientists we cannot allow swindlers like Helmuth Nyborg and his miserable friends to discredit the good name and reputation of natural science. In a time when difficult ethical questions are debated in the public, it is important to watch one's step. It is therefore extremely important to emphasize the following: This is not natural science! This is unquestionably plain bogus.

Helmuth Nyborg and his friends build their major conclusions on, among other things, intelligence tests from a very large number of people. They then extract one or more numbers which they then treat statistically. From the statistics they strive to deduce psychological and biological conclusions. An infamous and extremely controversial result from this type of investigation is presented in the book "The Bell Curve" by among others Charles Murray, who also was present at the conference in Aarhus. The book shows, for no apparent reason, that the intelligence of black Americans is distributed below that of a similar distribution of intelligence for white Americans. One may say that this statistical method is "natural scientific", because it is often used by genuine natural scientist in order to treat their data. However, the difference is that genuine natural scientists *know* [original emphasis] what they are measuring, whereas Helmuth Nyborg and his friends do not know what they are measuring. It is obvious that intelligence test results (even if they may be of some use in connection with an analysis of a single individual) are totally subjective and value-loaded measures which reflect the current values in the particular society and in the social groups that defined them. The fact that they then use "natural scientific" statistics does not alter the reality that nothing comes from nothing, except perhaps fluff, and this is precisely what this type of pseudo-scientific trash is. Anybody can easily envision that intelligence tests constructed by bushmen in Africa most likely would measure human capacity to survive in the Kalahari Desert, and that the majority of people [outsiders?] would miserably fail these tests. Let everybody be assured that if one chose to measure a random variable, such as the distance between the eyes, one would attain one or another distribution of numbers, and if one then compared the distributions for men, women, blacks, white, yellows, and reds – yes, then one would without question conclude that they are different. To this I can only say: "And so what"? The fact that one can take a measure and apply a standard statistical program on a PC may in no way turn this into a scientific investigation. However, there is after all in this case a real measurement, with a ruler, in centimeters, but in the case of intelligence studies there is *no* [Original emphasis] real measure because nobody knows what one measures, and nobody, *nobody* [Original emphasis] can relate the number to the incredible complicated biochemical, biological, and psychological processes going on in the brain. When one pile up more or less meaningless numbers and pull them together in a statistics they become – precisely meaningless. Moreover, when one then combines these numbers with concepts and more or less misconceived results from other, respectable sciences, it turns into – fraud.

The conference in Aarhus undoubtedly received public economic support, and even featured a reception at the town hall. I wonder if the town council knew that they thereby supported people with points of view that were common during the Nazi-regime in Germany. Moreover, can it be true that governmental research money was set aside for the conference? Hopefully this was not at the expense of Helmuth Nyborg's honest working psychology colleagues, people who use

completely different (sic!) humanistic methods and different theories in order to enhance our insight into the human mind.

Helmuth Nyborg's concluding greetings to the participants of the conference – “may your molecules be with you” elicited a genuine laughter at my home, but unfortunately my toes have not yet straightened out. As a natural scientist I work daily with molecules, and I can assure you that my molecules are not the same as Helmuth Nyborg's.