

THE SCIENTIFIC CRITIQUE OF RACE

The classic conception of race assimilating the genetic revolution contains 4 elements meant to differentiate one racial group from another.

1. distinctive genotypes
2. distinctive somatic characteristics/phenotypes
3. distinctive continental origins
4. distinctive mental and psychological characteristics

In order for "race" to be a true description of human diversity, 2 general things must be true of this list:

A: fairly sharp divisions between/among the alleged races must be possible with respect to each of 1-4. E.g. the alleged races must be sharply distinct; must have clearly distinct continental origins; etc.

B: The division, e.g. of genotypes, must have a reasonably objective and non-arbitrary basis

C: 1-4 must align with each other. People with one continental origin must also have one particular phenotype, one particular genotype, etc.

Critiques of A or B offered by Blum or Roberts [not complete!]:

- I. Classifications by genotype are arbitrary. There are many genetic characteristics that can serve as a basis for classifying human beings, and none are more objective than others, or anyway, many of them are rational. (against B) (Blum 141-42)
- II. Different genetic classifications will result in many different groupings and most of these will not align with the other characteristics (2-4) (against B and C) (Blum 141-42)
- III. It is not possible to clearly differentiate groups by phenotype; conventional racial groups are not entirely distinct from one another phenotypically (against A with respect to 2) (Blum 137f)
- IV. Human beings are much more similar genetically than different, e.g. share c. 99.8% of their genetic make-up (Blum 139) [possible problem with this argument: they share 98% with chimpanzees]
- V. Genetic variation within each racial group is much greater than the average difference between groups. Specifically, 84-85% of the total human genetic variation can be found within each racial group, and indeed within ethnic groups that are geographically located. 6-7% is "distinctly racial." (Blum 138)
- VI. There are, nevertheless, some statistically significant genetic differences between racial groups; but there is no evidence these have any relation to characteristics of mind or psychology (Blum 139-40)
- VII. Many individuals' ancestry does not align with distinctive continents in a sharp way (Roberts 66) (against A with respect to 3)
- VIII. The continental groups alleged to be part of the definition of race can themselves be divided into genetically distinct subdivisions (Roberts 66) (against B with respect to 4)