

Review of: "The Intelligence of Nations. National IQs and Correlates"

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Review of "The Intelligence of Nations. National IQs and Correlates" by Ronald Henss.

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In his new article, Ronald Henss points out the sweeping pertinence of different intelligence levels of entire nations to their well-being, their economic power, and further achievements in politics, sciences, and culture. He denotes "intelligence" as the most important and potent factor in shaping society and history. Different national levels of intelligence decide whether societies or nations create immiserate or rich economies, have corrupt, arbitrary, and authoritarian political regimes or live under the rule of law and in free, democratic states, suffer from slavery, exploitation, and violence or enjoy humanitarian standards and adherence to elaborated moral values in their societies.

The article excels in its ability to apply intelligence research to reconstruct main patterns of world history and the origin of the modern world, including the scrutiny of differences between different world regions in current world society. The article relates to a great many ancient, medieval, and contemporary societies, refers to a great host of patterns pertaining to culture, politics, sciences, education, and economy, and includes numerous patterns of behavior and mind. Thus, it delivers an encompassing overview of societal and historical developments seen from the vantage point of intelligence research.

This readiness to overtake a bird's perspective refers not only to the objects chosen for scrutiny, but also to the theories and instruments by which the research is undertaken and administered. Henss resorts to intelligence research, school achievement tests, Piagetian psychology, and further approaches, intertwining them, discussing, and validating their coherences.

Henss shows that ancient and medieval societies were inhabited by peoples with IQs of less than 80 points, compared to present-day standards. These ancient nations furnished their achievements usually despite their lack of abstract intelligence, a fact historical disciplines will still have to swallow and understand in their future development. Nonetheless, this lack of abstract intelligence severed or curbed ancient societies' possibilities to advance in sciences, economy, and politics. There was some progress in the great ancient civilizations in comparison to truly archaic societies living from pasturing, foraging, or farming only. However, the progress did not reach a level to attain the modern, industrial society. Henss rightly points out that the emergence of modern, industrial society during the past centuries, originally in Europe, took root in the rise of intelligence. It was this increase of intelligence that created sciences, industrial economy, political

progress, and a moral upheaval.

The rise of intelligence became during the 20th century more and more a global phenomenon due to Westernization and globalization, accompanied by the breakthrough of modern, industrial society on a worldwide scale. This more or less global increase of intelligence is called the Flynn effect, according to James Flynn, the author who promulgated this phenomenon most in scientific circles and the public.

Henss devotes a great deal of his article to the uneven development of intelligence and advanced culture in contemporary world society, inherited by the inequalities of the past. While the Western world and the Far East edge out in their intelligence scores, those of the Muslim world, Africa, South Asia, and Latin America fallback or stagnate. Obviously, the problems these world regions suffer from are deeply intertwined with their lower scores, already apparent in their weak school performance, the latter one complained about by a great many observers and institutions.

As abovementioned, Henss also refers to Piagetian psychology to find corroboration for his resort to psychometric intelligence research. Accordingly, he rightly sees archaic peoples mainly in the preoperational stage and the great ancient civilizations partially in the concrete operational stage. The Europeans in early modern times were the first to establish the adolescent stage of formal operations, a stage that is required for the formation of sciences and industrial society. Accordingly, the Flynn effect and the attainment of the formal operational stage are two parts of the same coin. Correspondingly, the spread of the formal operational stage will be the prerequisite for societal advancements in the so-called Global South presently and in the future.

However, Henss seems to treat Piagetian psychology only as an assistant approach to his main instrument, psychometric intelligence research. This evinces itself in the proportions he assigns to the two approaches, measurable by pages, for example. As with so many other intelligence psychologists, he seems to believe that both approaches may have the same rank, or refer to the same phenomena. I rate this otherwise. Psychometric intelligence research measures differences in intelligence without having a full theory of intelligence. Piagetian stage theory, however, describes the growth of mind and intelligence from their very beginnings, illuminates the internal structures of mind, and reveals the patterns that originate different levels of mind and intelligence.

Piagetian stage theory delivers a full description of mind and psyche, both of the child and of the psychogenetic development of humankind. The preoperational stage yields a complete and coherent description of the internals of the mind and intelligence, rationality, and worldview of archaic human beings wherever they have lived. Stage theory can illuminate and disclose the entire ancient thinking about politics, law, physics, nature, morals, religion, and philosophy. Psychometric intelligence research is not able to do this.

Stage theory – its usage and application in Oesterdiekhoff's structural-genetic theory program – is capable of explaining ancient belief systems such as animism, magic, religion, superstition, judicial prosecution of animals, realistic dream concepts, use of oracles, etc. The structural-genetic theory program has reconstructed the world history of society, culture, politics, law, morals, religion, sciences, philosophy, and arts in terms of stages.

Accordingly, the formal-operational stage explains the emergence of the rational worldview and the decline or decay of magic, animism, and superstition in modern society. The modern patterns of politics, morals, and philosophy originate in the adolescent stage.

Consequently, Piagetian stage theory and the structural-genetic theory program delve much deeper into the psychology of peoples than intelligence research does. The latter moves on the surface, being unable to reach the very foundations. They again are touched when one describes psychological phenomena that emerge from the trajectory infant - child – adolescent – adult because there are no phenomena beneath this track and stage development.

People who try animals before courts or use iron or fire oracles to decide over guilt and innocence are surely less intelligent than those who know about these follies. However, psychometric intelligence research cannot and could not explain why people with IQs of 70 or even less do those weird things. Horses or dogs have even less intelligence but do not apply oracles and trials against their comrades. Accordingly, psychometric intelligence research cannot do more than determine correlations between the two phenomena, but it cannot answer the question why low scores are connected to them, that is, why these phenomena exist. Stage theory, however, can disclose the internal patterns from which these two phenomena emerge.

These two examples can be translated to the entire reconstruction of world history, society, culture, sciences, philosophy, law, politics, morals, and arts. Psychometric intelligence research cannot disclose the internal structures behind the evolution of these branches, whereas stage theory can describe both their archaic structures, their intermediate structures, and their modern structures.

Stage theory is more important and more fundamental than intelligence research, the latter being the small sister and the assistant, not conversely. Intelligence researchers haven't understood the true relationship between Piagetian stage theory and psychometric intelligence research during the past 100 years; they presumably won't understand this in the future.

Nonetheless, Henss' article is highly commendable pertaining to many facets such as documenting a true bird's-eye perspective concerning recourse to the broad bunch of theories used and objects scrutinized and interlocked alike.

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