

Glass on Racism

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In a recent provocative paper entitled, "Anti-Racism and Unlimited Freedom of Speech: An Untenable Dualism,"¹ Professor Marvin Glass contends that Marxism provides a superior moral stance, compared to liberalism, for justifying suppression of free speech by some individuals, e.g. racists (p. 560).

But what does Glass understand by 'racism'? His only general statements about this appear to be the following:

Racism can be boiled down to the assertion that a group of people — usually identified by national, religious or physical characteristics (such as skin colour) — is innately inferior to other segments of the population. Biologically inherited characteristics, it is claimed, are the chief determinant of intellectual ability and thus the environment is not a major factor with regard to intellectual contrasts between groups of individuals (p. 564).

1 *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 8, (1978), pp. 559-575.

And who are the people who hold such a view? One person Glass singles out is the psychologist Arthur Jensen. To support the charge that Jensen is a racist Glass offers the following quotation from Jensen's 1969 report:²

So all we are left with is various lines of evidence, no one of which is definitive alone, but which viewed all together make it a not unreasonable hypothesis that genetic factors are strongly implicated in the average Negro-white intelligence difference....(in the United States).

Is this what racism is? And is Jensen a racist? In order to look further into the matter, I located a more recent publication of Jensen's surveying the ongoing controversy.³ There I discovered, to my amazement, that Professor Jensen recommends, first, that racial discrimination in any form be legally prohibited and that equal employment and educational opportunities be provided for members of all minority groups in the United States; and second, that educators and government policy makers in that country adopt an official policy of 'open agnosticism' as to the cause of scholastic differentials between the races until a scientific consensus exists on the matter. Assuming that Jensen is sincere in these statements, it seems clear that to hold a genetic view of IQ differences between subspecies of *Homo sapiens* is not tantamount to espousing 'racism' in the sense of advocating discrimination by race. Yet Professor Glass, in failing to mark this distinction, makes it appear that they are one and the same and equally worthy of suppression in a free society.

However Glass and others could argue that, even if one does not advocate racial discrimination on this basis, the genetic view of intelligence differentials between races lends itself to those who do, and so should be suppressed anyway. Against this I shall urge the following brief points.

1. There is nothing specially prejudicial about IQ differences between races. The Gypsies of Europe were long despised for being crafty and

2 A. R. Jensen, "How Much Can We Boost I.Q. and Scholastic Achievement?," *Harvard Educational Review*, 39 (1969), pp. 1-123. The quote is from p. 82.

3 A. R. Jensen, "The Current Status of the IQ Controversy," *Australian Psychologist*, 13, (1978), pp. 7-27. Sadly, it is remarked on the bottom of the first page that the article is based on lectures given at four Australian universities in the fall of 1977, but that similar lectures ".....were cancelled by the authorities in three other Australian universities because of threatened demonstrations against the author's appearance on their campuses."

devious; and the one thing Hitler did not accuse Jewry of was stupidity. The plain fact is that where bigotry is concerned facts have little relevance: the bigot typically believes in the *ontological* inferiority of those he despises.

2. If one takes a deeper look into the literature, as Peter Urbach⁴ has done, one finds that IQ differences by race hardly support claims of white supremacy. In Canada Eskimos show higher mean IQ scores than Caucasians; and in the United States Oriental Americans the highest. I can think of no good reason for suppressing this information.

3. Such IQ differentials between races have statistical significance only. As Jensen himself has been at pains to point out, there is just as great a variation between individuals of any major racial population, and such an overlap in frequency distributions of individual IQs between races, that nothing in the overall figures would ever sanely justify discrimination against a given individual on the basis of skin colour alone.

4. Marxism, as a materialist view, can hardly rule out in advance a claim that general intelligence depends on the central nervous system, which could therefore be subject to genetic variability between subspecies of man. If, for example, educability and hence socioeconomic status in a racially mixed society are thereby affected, this should make little difference to Marxists, who hardly see themselves as dedicated to getting the proletariat through university and into cushy jobs. In the coming socialist stage of the dictatorship of the proletariat any such genetically disadvantaged elements would get rewards commensurate to their productive contribution, which seems fair. And in the communist stage, rewards accrue according to needs rather than contribution, which seems more than fair. So where is the problem?

5. What is so important about being intelligent anyway? We surely do not pick friends, or make enemies, on the basis of their respective IQs. Nor is this surprising, since the model of friendship is love and trust, not cleverness. If green people have an average IQ of 90, and blue people 110, how does it follow from this that public knowledge of such a fact would threaten human solidarity? To fear that it would, and to use this fear to justify suppression of speech in our society, is to betray a misconception of how human beings come to relate to each other.

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4 "Progress and Degeneration in the 'IQ Debate'," *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science*, 25 (1974), pp. 99-135 and 235-259.