
 Book Reviews

Darlington, C.D.: *Die Wiederentdeckung der Ungleichheit*. Stuttgart: Umschau 1980. 391 pp., 14 figs., 15 tabs. Soft bound DM 29,80

The new book of Darlington's focuses on the development of human civilization and culture. It moreover describes in a comprehensive way historic developments on the various continents. These processes are seen against the background of the genetic properties of man or, more precisely, of the different races of man. In essence, all developments in the history of man are considered as an outcome of the inheritable properties of each specific population. The major force in history is the development of economy. It principally follows the same determinants in all cultures, although with different methods, dependent on the specific requirements of (genetically determined) mentality and behaviour.

The misuse of the natural resources of the earth – resulting from overpopulation and an unlimited optimistic belief in progress and expansion – is originally due to the selective advantage in evolution of high fertility. This inborn behaviour today turns out to be destructive for the development of man because of the limits of our environment. Control of fertility and changes in attitudes against progress and against the use of scientific knowledge are essential requirements to guarantee survival of man.

Darlington reiterates many ideas which he has already stated in his earlier books. He extends these ideas in more fashionable directions of thinking without introducing basically any new aspects. His discussion and judgment of history in various parts of the world is of interest and displays considerable insight and understanding of the particular regions, although it does not arrive at a level of differentiation of parameters that, for example, Mumford achieved in his book "The myth of the machine". Naturally, such a discussion is based on individual evaluation and must thus be expected to be dependent on a particular person (or, in fact, his genetic constitution if one accepts Darlington's views).

It is one of the basic ideas behind all his books: that most of our attitudes and behaviour are purely genetically determined (as is implicitly indicated by the German title of the book, which in this respect is more direct than the original English title). This is not necessarily in full agreement with our present understanding of the genetic basis of intelligence and behaviour. In this field of genetics, judgments should, in my opinion, be expressed more cautiously because of our relative ignorance of the parameters involved in the determination of individual intelligence.

Darlington relies heavily on the publications of Burt which have influenced or even directed thinking about genetic determinants on intelligence and behaviour for a long time. It is now clear that this work is worthless because its experimental details are faked.

I also believe that an inconsistency exists in Darlington's argumentation. If the genetic determinants of human behaviour and cultural systems are as strong as he implies, it can hardly be seen how human attitudes can be changed to the extent which he considers necessary for survival of man on earth.

This leads to another point of criticism raised by the book. Although Darlington tries carefully to display and evaluate the various parameters responsible for the deleterious development in the relationship between man and nature – as in fact others have done before with a different emphasis – he does not succeed in arriving at substantial conclusions how this relationship in practice must be changed. As a consequence, his book summarizes a pessimistic view of factors contributing to the destruction of the natural resources of our life without indicating practical alternatives. It thus joins the series of other publications with comparable attitudes. It must be regretted that the geneticist Darlington, who relates most problems of man to his genetic properties, provides no alternatives derived from his expertise as a scientist.

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