

May-1982

Book Reviews

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Recommended Citation

Todd, Susan; Poule, Lois; and Dillman, Robert (1982). Book Reviews. *Bridgewater Review*, 1(1), 12-13.
Available at: http://vc.bridgew.edu/br_rev/vol1/iss1/8

BOOK REVIEWS

The Mismeasure Of Man

By Stephen Jay Gould
Norton, \$14.95

Intrinsic to American social order, from the family to education to business, and supporting class, race, and sex distinctions, intelligence has become the common yardstick for measuring the worth of every man, woman, and child. The magic number, whether ascribed through testing or merely inferred, provides the judgement limiting the possible directions your life may take, what schools you will attend, what career options will be available to you, what social circles you may join. The fundamental assumptions, that intelligence is biologically determined and that testing can measure the amount of intelligence possessed by a given individual, have achieved the proportions of a cultural myth. It is precisely this myth that Gould proceeds to systematically unravel in his scholarly, highly-readable, and often insightful inquiry into the historical and methodological foundations of intelligence testing—into *The Mismeasure of Man*.

With unpretentious humor, Gould traces the development of present-day intelligence testing. He recaps the attempts to define and assess intelligence from craniometry—the measuring of skulls and the weighing of brains—through Binet's construction of the prototype I.Q. test and its evolution into its contemporary forms and uses. The strong hereditarian bias underlying intelligence testing, with the accompanying attempts to assign racial, sexual, and class distinctions, is explicated—biology is destiny.

Gould departs from the more usual social and historical approaches to such subjects and organizes his commentary around the re-analysis of the methods used and the data collected by early researchers in support of their various theories of intelligence. Finding numerous methodological and arithmetical errors in original data collections and analyses, ranging from

simple miscalculations to conscious and unconscious fudging, Gould repeatedly clarifies the essential nature of science as a psychosocial act, demonstrating the manner in which data is utilized in confirmation of a pet theory while contradicting evidence tends to be ignored or rationalized away.

For example, based on the notion of recapitulation, that each individual must pass through the same stages the human species passed through in the course of its evolution, nineteenth century thinkers argued that black adults and white women were developmentally more similar to white male children in appearance and in intellect and were, therefore, biologically inferior—the white adult male representing the highest evolutionary stage of physical and mental development. But, by the early 1900's, recapitulation gave way to the concept of neoteny. In a curious reversal, it was then decided that retention of child-like features in the adult represented superior development, for where maturation is not retarded more ape-like or inferior characteristics appear with increasing age. By such standards, black adults and white women were clearly superior, yet the plethora of data previously accumulated in demonstrating their child-like appearance now was essentially ignored. New methods and data were sought in support of original and deeply entrenched convictions of a biologically based racial and sexual superiority.

Nor are such assumptions and attitudes restricted to some less enlightened period of past history. Gould continues his theme through a clear, non-mathematical description of factor analysis—a key statistical tool employed in contemporary social and behavioral research. He compellingly relates the manner whereby, contrary to common-sense expectation, theories are not derived from data, but rather data and their mathematical analyses become appropriated as support for favored theories.

In light of Gould's work perhaps researchers fifty or a hundred years from now will be merely amused by the remarkably powerful and pervasive assumptions underlying the current role of intelligence testing—a role based far more on bias and conviction than so-called evidence. Certainly, we can hope that Gould's work, based upon his own research into an understanding of Darwinian evolutionary theory, will prove

to be a major contribution to the history and development of critical thought in the nature and social sciences. In the meantime, *The Mismeasure of Man* is essential reading, not only for professional educators and social and behavioral scientists, but for anyone who, either themselves or through their children, must run the gauntlet of intelligence testing that has achieved the status of an American rite of passage. Surely, as Gould concludes, we need to understand that the future shape of our own lives and of human history is based upon the immense variety and potential that is inherently fundamental to human adaptation.

Susan Todd
Associate Professor of Psychology

The Dean's December

By Saul Bellow
Harper and Row, \$13.95

Albert Corde, the college dean, is an innocent abroad, another of Bellow's comic heroes dangling in radically diverse environments. Corde finds himself in Bucharest where his mother-in-law is dying terribly in intensive care at the party hospital. While Corde watches at her death and cremation in the meager, repressive atmosphere of Bucharest, he endeavors to comfort his wife, an unworldly but world renowned professor of astronomy, who having focused on the constancy and equilibrium of the heavens, cannot accept her mother's mortality. Corde is but physically present in Bucharest; his mind, hyperactive in the confining place, dwells in Chicago where his actions as journalist and dean have implicated him in a murder trial, antagonized relatives and other adversaries, and threatened his sinecure at the college. The dean spends his December reconciling Corde, the passive observer in Bucharest, with Corde, the intemperate activist in Chicago.

In Bucharest, Corde touches palpable limitations. His status as college dean and

American journalist holds no sway with the hospital administrator who curtailed his wife's visits to her dying mother. Corde feels thwarted by the morass of bureaucratic regulations, in themselves clear, efficient, emphatic, like the life-supporting monitors in the intensive care unit or the row of coffins edging toward the furnace of the crematorium. Bucharest is a place of lines -- bread lines, telephone lines, reception lines, surveillance lines. It is also a place of deviously complex ties. Ioanna, the concierge, is a government informant and a close personal friend, loved by the family because she is too dangerous to exclude. She is trusted and suspected exactly to a point of understanding. Such clear lines of relationship bewilder Corde, who all his life has talked to himself on a bad connection and who usually cannot get a clear line to those he loves. Poor Corde whispers his scrupulously chosen final words to his dying mother-in-law, and her life support machines go berserk. A clear signal but what does it signify? The intricate machines, like the bureaucratic regulations, function to intensify, not to interpret. No telescope, no monitor, no philosophy, Corde finds, can fathom the irrevocable loss of a mother's love that a husband's love cannot console.

In Chicago, Corde searches for restraint. He reviews segments of the essays he published in *Harper's* on the violence and corruption in the city. The streets of Chicago are cluttered with human rubbish: a student hurled out of a third story window, bound and gagged; a housewife abducted, raped, stuffed into the trunk of a car and driven around the city for two days before being shot in the head and dumped beneath trash in a vacant lot. What are the bounds of human behavior; what provokes such careless waste? High above the violent city, insulated by forty floors in the apartment tower along Lakeshore Drive, Corde attends a lavishly catered brunch -- champagne, sturgeon, lobster -- a birthday celebration with gifts and songs in honor of Dolphie, a great dane. Is the human rubble in the streets a perverse mirror of the conspicuous consumption in the penthouse, the ultimate product of materialism? Corde's labyrinthine mind stores a myriad of impressions from the city which impinge but do not cohere.

Corde sojourns in academe long enough to characterize its detachment. At one extreme is the representative administrator, Alec Witt, who prefers to keep a low profile. He believes that wisdom is

avoidance, that any agitation on campus will, if ignored, die down by and by. Witt confuses collegiality with conformity and considers journalism only a form of public relations. At the other extreme is the representative professor, a pure scientist named Beech who applies the theory of the classroom to the behavior in the city streets. According to Beech, an excessive level of lead in the environment produces the biological and mental disturbances that are causing the violence and degradation in society. Corde considers the application of science to behavior an apocalypse at first. Will future prisons be elaborate dialysis rooms purifying the blood of contamination and correcting behavior? Corde's experience in Bucharest eventually tempers his confidence in clear, mechanical solutions to the vagaries of human behavior.

Saul Bellow is demanding but never dull. His ninth novel and the first to appear after his receipt of the Nobel Prize shows no waning of creative energy. With lucid eye and mixed emotions, he captures the profusion of diversity in modern life and the paucity of solutions to its problems.

Lois Poule
Associate Professor of English

The Mapmakers

By John Noble Wilford
Alfred Knopf, \$20.00

A sense of wonder about places never seen, the images of continents far away like Africa or Asia or Australia, the curiosity about people living in cities such as Timbuktu, Johannesburg, or Singapore are the experiences that most of us share during our lives. The desire to know more about places or areas of the earth has drawn all of us to become acquainted with maps and their usefulness in our lives. Few of us become expert at cartography (map making) or with the exacting science of earth measurement (geodesy), but all of us, young or old, rich or poor, interested or disinterested, are often called upon to use or interpret the maps that portray the earth as it is.

The Mapmakers is an interesting and scholarly account of not only maps and cartography, but also the diverse characters that make the maps that touch the curiosity in all of us. John Noble Wilford provides a unique look at the individuals that drew the maps that led to the great explorations of our earth in past centuries, as well as in the current one. As Noble points out in his introduction, much has been written about exploration and about cartographic presentations, but little has been reported about the people who did them. This book provides an interesting story about the cartographers from antiquity to the space age, and particularly about the human experiences and often great risks they took to get the information recorded on maps.

The book is divided into four parts, the first part devoted to the broad trends and significant achievements in cartography and geodesy up to the twentieth century. The last two parts provide a close look at this century. Noble investigates the new technologies that have allowed the mapping of not only the earth surface more accurately, but the ocean basins, the rock strata below the surface, and even the Moon and Mars.

One of the most important aspects of the book is that it provides a broad perspective of the field from the beginning of map making to the highly technical period of today. Throughout this historical account, the author utilizes his writing skill and map philosophy to enhance the story of the individuals involved in the cartographic presentations.

Not all of *The Mapmakers* is perfect. Some of the descriptions used to convey certain technical aspects of map making are not clear to the untrained. Occasionally the descriptions of events or some technical point become too lengthy or detailed. But the quality of his research, the sources of his information (well documented), the portraits of important individuals, makes this book well worth reading. John Noble Wilford has provided the science of cartography with a more human dimension. More importantly, he has allowed all map users to better understand the people that have produced the maps which have stimulated our imagination of the world.

Robert Dillman
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