

# Book Reviews

***Intellectuals and Society*** (revised ed.) by Thomas Sowell, softcover, 680 pp, \$26.99, ISBN-13: 978-0465025220, Basic Books, 2012.

In discussing the “problem” of intellectuals, Thomas Sowell distinguishes between intelligent people who produce products, provide services, and solve problems, and intellectuals who just peddle ideas. The latter promote ideas for which they are never held accountable, which are not based on logic, evidence, and disciplined analysis, but which are baubles suffused with arrogance and self-congratulation. Sowell’s analysis reminds one of George Orwell’s statement that “some ideas are so preposterous that only an intellectual would believe them.”

This book was originally published in 2009 without a section on intellectuals and race, which now appears as chapters 16 – 19. This section discusses racial differences, the impact of multiculturalism, the causes of disparities in outcomes, and the intellectual class’s attitudes about “cosmic” (also read social) justice and egalitarianism. Sowell shows how intellectuals’ utopian goals conflict with the real world of inequality of outcomes for individuals and for racial/national/ethnic/gender groups.

Sowell told David Hogberg, in an interview published by *American Spectator* online as “Thomas Sowell Live” on Apr 12, 2013, that he left out race as a subject in the first edition of the book because he wanted to avoid the slanted and antagonistic treatment the book *The Bell Curve* by Richard J. Herrnstein and Charles Murray received in 1994. Media elites ignored 20 of the 22 chapters of that monumental book on intellectual differences in favor of vilifying the authors as racists because they reported on ethnic differences in test scores of intelligence.

Sowell also discusses intellectuals’ knowledge and attitudes on a variety of subjects including economics, social visions, law, war, international relations, and national security. He suggests that intellectuals settle on bad ideas because of their constant search for a cause, coupled to a canon of utopian theories that confers on them the status of

keepers of the “Vision of the Anointed.” This vision attributes all inequalities to white males, capitalism, and the cruel system of oppression known as Western Civilization.

Sowell finds it ironic that intellectuals who were on board for eugenics and attribution of ethnic racial differences to genetics in the early 20th century are now all in for blaming racism and political oppression as the causes.

Sowell writes that fundamental flaw of the multiculturalists is that they abhor any judgments about culture, holding that all cultures should be considered equally valid, even if there is evidence to the contrary.

Sowell skewers leftist utopian intellectuals for sloppy thinking, lack of evidence, and intellectual dishonesty.

***Intellectuals and Race*** by Thomas Sowell, hardcover, 184 pp, \$21.82, ISBN 978-0465-05872-3, Basic Books, 2013.

Sowell stated that he published this book because his added sequence of chapters on race in *Intellectuals and Society* did not do justice to the subject and were buried in the second edition that usually gets less attention and fewer readers. He discussed his views with David Hogberg in a series of interviews in the *American Spectator* online.<sup>1</sup>

Sowell observes: “Absent a quota I can’t find any place anywhere in the world where different racial and ethnic groups have the same track record in any field.” Differences in outcome are the norm, both inside groups, families, tribes, and clans, and certainly as compared to other groups. Causes include choices as well as cultural, geographic, and historical circumstances.

One reasonable explanation for racial and ethnic differences in IQ is the high proportion of first and second-born children in populations that have small families, which produces a higher average intelligence and achievement.

Sowell points out, “The people who believe that disparate impact is a sign of malice (read racism and oppression by whites, capitalists, or Western Civilization) are not required to produce one speck of evidence of that malice.”

Sowell asserts that intellectuals today are just as doctrinaire and disconnected from proper scientific methods on issues of racial disparity as the intellectuals of the early 20th century who espoused eugenics and argued that racial differences were genetic and immutable, and argued for eliminating the “inferior” castes and races.

While citing many examples showing that inequalities between groups are the norm, Sowell also emphasizes how individuals have unique talents and often do not fit the mold. He warns that multiculturalism “paints people into the corner in which they happen to be born,” resulting in “the same problems that the caste system creates.”

One of Sowell’s most important points is that intellectuals engaged in the race-and-outcomes game are not humanist in outlook, as they treat race and ethnic or other oppressed groups in the abstract. He calls their lack of human engagement “intertemporal abstraction” of the issues.

Sowell regretfully points out that modern race hustlers and politicians adhere to the multicultural scam because they benefit from their positions as leaders of a grievance campaign, while those caught in the trap suffer. He contrasts this with the example of the Scotsman David Hume, who insisted that the Scots, who were a less educated, less accomplished culture than the English, learn English and engage the English for their own benefit. Soon, Scotsmen were sitting at the top of the then combined Scot/English society, claiming intellectual achievements in many areas from philosophy to the arts, and economics to engineering.<sup>2</sup>

Please read this book. Sowell is a monument of intellectual talent, eloquence, and scientific integrity.

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1. Hogberg D. Thomas Sowell and the intellectuals. *Amer Spectator*, Mar 28, 2013. Available at: [https://spectator.org/55884\\_thomas-sowell-and-intellectuals/](https://spectator.org/55884_thomas-sowell-and-intellectuals/). Accessed Nov 23, 2018.
2. Hogberg D. Sowell, race hustlers, and David Hume. *Amer Spectator*, Mar 29, 2013. Available at: [https://spectator.org/55874\\_sowell-race-hustlers-and-david-hume/](https://spectator.org/55874_sowell-race-hustlers-and-david-hume/). Accessed Nov 23, 2018.