

Interview with Alain de Benoist on the Human Sciences and Christianity by Bryan Sylvain

***Translator's Note:** In 2005, Alain de Benoist gave an interview to *The Occidental Quarterly*, which was published as Bryan Sylvain, "European Son: An Interview with Alain de Benoist," *The Occidental Quarterly*, vol. 5, no. 3 (Fall 2005): 7–21. The interview was lengthy, however, and the decision was made to cut it. Thus Benoist's critical discussions of Christianity and the human sciences were removed. Benoist gave me a copy of the French original, and I am translating the "lost" portions for the first volume of North American New Right. – Greg Johnson (Editor of Counter-Currents.com)*

On Christianity

According to the Manifesto of the Nouvelle Droit, the five main characteristics of modernity are individualization, massification, desacralization, rationalization, and universalization. The ND traces the roots of modernity to a secularized form of Christian metaphysics. It is also known for rejecting another product of Christianity: egalitarianism. What then are the "aristocratic values" that the ND intends to promote, and how can they counterbalance each one of these destructive tendencies? And how could everyone adhere to aristocratic values?

To describe egalitarianism as the mere "product" of Christianity is a shortcut that for my part I would no longer take. Things are a little more complex than that. What one can say, on the other hand, is that the advent of modernity can be understood and analyzed only in light of the vast process of secularization that characterizes it. That means that a certain number of themes that were formerly expressed in theological terms have been transferred to the secular sphere.

In the ideology of progress, for example, the promise of salvation in the beyond is transformed into the promise of happiness in the future. The very notion of "progress" is part of the linear vision of history (in opposition to the cyclical or spherical vision of history) privileging the future that was introduced by biblical thought.

The concept of equality (which one should distinguish from egalitarianism) finds its origin in the Christian assertion of an equal relationship of all human souls with God.

The technological enthrallment of the world (*das Gestell*, to use Heidegger's term) — which beginning with Descartes imposes a new perception of the cosmos as entirely available for human control, while consciousness begins to be reduced to an object of natural science — finds its first legitimization in Genesis (so that, as Heidegger saw quite well, technology can be regarded as the completion of metaphysics).

Jean Bodin's theory of the absolute sovereignty of the prince with respect to his subjects is a transposition of the absolute sovereignty of God in relation to creation. This is how Carl Schmitt could say that the principal concepts of modern politics are secularized theological concepts. This process of secularization was also studied in a remarkable way by Karl Löwith.

The New Right, moreover, does not defend “aristocratic” values but the values of any traditional society, i.e., any society not yet conquered by modernity. From the traditional point of view, aristocratic and popular values are about the same. These are all the values inherent in an ethics of honor. In opposition to economic and commercial values, they are also the values of disinterestedness and generosity, as expressed in the system of the gift and the counter-gift.

To the great deontological moral systems, of which Kant is the paradigm, one can still oppose Aristotle’s virtue ethics: to pursue personal excellence by practicing the “virtues.” In such a system, the good necessarily takes precedence over the just, as Michael Sandel and Charles Taylor very justly argue against John Rawls. Here one returns to Hegel’s critique of Kant, i.e., the opposition of “*Sittlichkeit*” to “*Moralität*.”

What is your view of the truth of the Christian faith? What is your view of Christian apologetics? A Christian could ask you to offer proof of the falsehood of the Resurrection, since if that were given, Christianity would crumble. How do you answer this challenge?

Strange question. I do not have to “prove” that Jesus was not resurrected any more than I have to “prove” that God did not give the Tables of the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai or that Elvis Presley is not alive and selling pizzas in Brooklyn! The reason is that one cannot prove a negative; one cannot demonstrate non-existence. It is the Christians who have to give proof of their claims, proof that they have not managed yet.

Could you say something about the violent way in which Europe was Christianized? To what extent did the Christianization of Europe rest on fraud?

Christianity was gradually established in Europe by using all available means. Its diffusion was sometimes peaceful, sometimes forcible. The struggle between Christianity and paganism, the history of which has been retold a thousand times, of course included many bloody episodes: forced conversions of whole populations, persecution of pagans, “crusades” internal and external, etc.

However, the Church does not owe its success to force as much as to the skill with which it took over the ancient pagan rites and religious inclinations and twisted them to suit its own purposes. Because it was unable to completely uproot paganism, it got busy “Christianizing” it by giving it new contents.

Churches were built on the sites of old temples, the liturgical calendar was based on the pagan one (Christmas replaced the old festivities of the winter solstice, Midsummer’s Day that of the summer solstice, etc.), the legends of the saints took over the powers ascribed to local divinities, many places of pilgrimage were preserved, and the worship of Mary compensated for the absence of a mother goddess, etc. Christianity was thus partially “paganized,” becoming at the same time more acceptable to the masses.

But this “paganization” remained superficial, because it touched only the external forms of worship. Nevertheless, it makes it possible to understand the difference that has always existed between popular Christianity and institutional Christianity and its specific theological system.

Is Christianity a foreign religion for Europeans? Does the fact that Christianity was the carrier of a non-European culture, Judaism, which thus became a part of the European heritage,

constitute a problem? A whole tradition, according to which the Church is the “New Israel,” makes Christians “spiritual Semites.” Does it follow from this that the Jewish tradition belongs to the Western tradition?

My critique of Christianity, which is primarily intellectual and philosophical, has nothing to do with the fact that it was born historically outside of Europe. I feel sympathy to certain Eastern religions or spiritualities, like Zen Buddhism or Shintoism, which are not strictly European at all. On the other hand, I am completely hostile to many ideologies that were born in Europe. The provenance of an idea is not a criterion of truth, and the surplus of identity is not reducible to its origin.

Jesus was a Jew of the 1st century of our era who was most likely regarded as a prophet, but who never intend to create a universal “Church,” much less a new religion. Convinced of the imminent arrival of the “kingdom of God” (*Olam haba*, “the world that is to come”), it was in the name of the Torah that he opposed the dominant, institutional current of the Judaism of his time. “I was sent only to the ewes of the house of Israel,” he says very clearly in a passage of the Gospels (Matthew 15, 24) which completely contradicts the words added later found at the end of Mark (16, 15) and in Matthew (28, 19).

It was only after his death that some who thought he was the Messiah came to see him as the “son of God” come to save all men. Christianity as we know it is above all the work of Paul, and it is in the Mediterranean world, then the Western, that what is essential to its history unfolded.

The concept of a “Judeo-Christian tradition” is, moreover, quite ambiguous. In all rigor, one can speak of Judeo-Christianity only in two precise senses: first historically, to indicate the very first “Nazarene” communities in Palestine which, under the direction of John, vigorously opposed the “hellno-Christians” led by Paul; then theologically, to indicate the common theological beliefs of Jews and Christians (belief in single God, the distinction between the created being and uncreated being, etc).

After the destruction of the Temple in 70, the two religions separate completely: the Christians were expelled from the synagogues, and the *Tannaim*, the chief rabbis who then reorganized Judaism based on the Pharisee current, instituted the *birkat-ha-minim*, which curses the partisans of Jesus. For its part, the incipient Christian Church adopted explicit anti-Judaism, which first appears in the Gospel of John, the latest of the four canonical Gospels.

Christianity did not become less dependent on its Old Testament roots, but over the centuries it came to adhere to the theology of substitution, which claims that the Church incarnates the true Israel, excluding the Jews while preserving their metaphysical identity (obviously an unbearable claim for the Jews themselves). This rift between its origin and its history is characteristic of Christianity.

But one can grasp the whole of Christianity only by ceasing to regard it as a unitary block: early Christianity is different from medieval Christianity, which is not the same thing as Counter-Reformation Christianity, modern Christianity, etc.

How can Celsus, who published polemical writings against the Christians around 178, be used as a guide for the 21st century?

Celsus was a neoplatonic philosopher, the author of an anti-Christian book the *True Discourse*, the text of which is known to us today only through the attempts to refute it by the Fathers of the Church (this is also the case with the treatises of Julian, Porphyry, etc.). I can't really see how one could make it a "guide for the 21st century." Reading his book—the text of which has been reconstructed by specialists—does, however, help us to better understand the ancient pagan polemics against Christianity.

Does Christianity constitute a viable vehicle for the perpetuation of the European people and their culture, or does it lead to a non-European future because of disappearance of the "Germanic" element that had transformed it in the Middle Ages, as James C. Russell shows so well in his book [The Germanization of Early Medieval Christianity: A Sociohistorical Approach to Religious Transformation](#) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002)? Do you think that there is a reason to preserve Christianity? Can it play a positive role in European culture?

All told, I do not think that one should be pleased by the appearance of Christianity and its development. The pre-Christian ages of Europe were not spiritually deficient in any way. What is good in Christianity isn't new, and what is new in it isn't good. But as I have just said, Christianity is not a unitary block. St. Francis of Assisi and Torquemada gave the same Church quite different faces! There is nothing wrong with preferring the former. I have written a book entitled *On Being a Pagan*, but that has never prevented me from appreciating Catholic authors like Léon Bloy, Charles Péguy, Georges Bernanos, and Gustave Thibon, or from feeling agreement with certain aspects of the social teachings of the Church.

To answer your question more precisely, I do not think that Christianity is a "viable vehicle for safeguarding the European people and their culture." But above all, I believe that it should be well understood that we already no longer live in a Christian society. The dominant public discourse certainly remains impregnated with themes of Christian or biblical origin, but behaviors have changed. There as elsewhere, individualism has taken the lead.

The Churches, just like the parties and the trade unions of the traditional type, are passing through a deep crisis. In France, less than 8% of the population goes to mass or Sunday worship, the number of ordained priests continues to drop year after year, and nobody obeys the pope any longer regarding sexual morals or manners.

It is different in the United States, where religious belief and practices remain incredibly more widespread than elsewhere. In continental Europe, there is no equivalent of the "creationists" and "born-again Christians," the "moral Majority," or the ridiculous American "televangelists"! Even in the United States, however, it is no longer possible to speak about "Christian society." And that is what constitutes the postmodern version of secularization.

Individuals or groups of individuals can of course continue to find reasons in the Christian faith to live and to die, but it has lost the decisive role that it played in the past. It no longer constitutes the total frame of reference and the principal normative criterion of social existence. That means that religious membership today merely has the status of one opinion among many, on the general foundation of indifferentism and practical materialism. It is a radical change in the very definition of religion.

Under these conditions, the question is no longer whether Christianity should or should not be

“preserved.” The Churches try to survive, clinging nostalgically to a past that no longer corresponds to anything, while seeking on the contrary to adapt to the current world, by reaffirming their universalist vocation, trying to pose as “moral authorities,” etc. That is their business. The real issues of the future lie elsewhere.

Why doesn't the New Right refer to Christianity when it preaches a return to the roots of Europe? Paul Piccone and Gary Ulmen, in their introduction to Michael Torigian's, "[The Philosophical Foundations of the French New Right](#)" (Telos, no. 17, Autumn 1999, pp. 4–5), wonder if two thousand years of Christianity is not sufficient to make this religion an indigenous tradition, even if certain parts of Europe (like Scandinavia and the Baltic States) were Christianized only much later. Are there many political movements eager to return to roots that preach a return to paganism?

The New Right has never preached a “return” to paganism or a “return” to roots, or a return to anything for that matter. Instead, we wish to go beyond current society, but we wish to envision the future through the lens of a clear consciousness of the past. These two approaches are quite different: *recurrence* is not synonymous with *return*! Let us say simply that one can “futurize” the present only by “historicizing” the past.

The problem is that the majority of our contemporaries live in a perpetual present, i.e., a point of view where only the present moment counts and one is no longer capable of awaiting the future or drawing lessons from the past. The past is not limited to the point of origin, which is an always conventional limit anyway, but takes into account all accomplished history. To make any sense of history, we must look at the longest possible term.

Christianity obviously forms part of European history, but Europe was not born with it. When Christianity appeared, Europe already had five or six millennia of culture and civilization behind it. To speak about the “Christian roots” of Europe amounts to denying that the Latin, Greek, Celtic, Germanic, and Slavic cultures of Antiquity ever existed, which is obviously indefensible.

You have sometimes described Christianity as the “Bolshevism of Antiquity.” Does the New Right regard Christianity as the ancestor and principal carrier of totalitarianism?

When Christianity was spread in Europe, it necessarily had to destroy the old order. That entailed the struggle against paganism. We have innumerable testimonies on the ways in which the early Christians profaned the old places of worship, destroyed the temples and the statues of the gods, tore down the altars, toppled the colonnades, burned the philosophical and literary works that displeased them, etc. It was indeed a question of “making the past a clean slate.” The polemical phrase you quote is alluding to this.

On the other hand, to say that Christianity is the direct origin of totalitarianism is excessive. It nevertheless contributed to it by introducing into the Western realm a type of intolerance—religious intolerance—that was previously unknown. Paganism quite naturally recognized the legitimacy of the various beliefs professed by the various peoples. With Christianity the concepts of absolute good and evil appear, a single God, orthodoxy, dogma, heresies, inquisitions, wars of religion, etc.

The Christians intended both to convert all humanity and to fight against what they regarded as “idolatry.” Their religion being above all a moral religion, they tend to see in their enemies, not

just as the adversaries of the moment but as figures of Evil. To eradicate Evil, those who claim to incarnate the Good are quickly led, in all clear conscience, to employ any means.

In modern times, the totalitarian regimes acted no differently: they claimed to carry out “just” wars, declared their adversaries criminals, and were inevitably led to place them outside humanity. One consequence of this way of thinking is the elimination of the *third*: “He who is not with me is against me,” said Jesus—a saying recently repeated by president George W. Bush.

On the Human Sciences

E. O. Wilson describes neuroscience, human genetics, evolutionary biology, and conservation biology as four “frontier disciplines” of the natural sciences that today are bridging the gap between the scientific and humanistic cultures. Does the New Right support Wilson’s call for “consilience,” i.e., a unified knowledge joining together the life sciences and the human sciences?

Edward O. Wilson is certainly an excellent researcher, but I do not believe that he is a great philosopher. The theme of the “unity of knowledge” ignores the irreducible difference that exists between the exact sciences and social sciences (which Wilhelm Dilthey called the “sciences of the spirit”). Generally, it amounts to an attempt by the former to annex the domain of the latter. The call for “consilience” is in this respect quite similar to the attempt launched in the 1930s by men like Otto Neurath or Philipp Frank to arrive at the “unification of science.” The only difference is that Neurath privileged theoretical physics as the supreme discipline, whereas Wilson stresses biology, which today has become the “queen of the sciences.”

Wilson writes, “Nature is governed by simple universal laws of physics, to which all other laws and principles can be reduced” (*Consilience*, 1998, p. 59). His approach is thus clearly reductionistic—understanding everything from the point of view of physics, if one takes into account the Copenhagen interpretation of the Uncertainty Principle. To believe that the essence of politics, for example, can be reduced to “simple universal laws of physics” makes one smile. The same applies to all the values that apply to human life insofar as the human realm is a realm of evaluation, in keeping with hermeneutics and phenomenology: man seeks to give *meaning* to his life, and this meaning necessarily goes beyond the biological order of life. Wilson’s “scientific evangelism” reminds one of Auguste Comte’s “religion of science.” In my view, such projects are doomed to fail.

Specialists in the social sciences are too often ignorant of the findings of the life sciences. Specialists in the life sciences, for their part, tend too often to reject the findings of the social sciences as the realm of non-rigorous speculation or “philosophy,” i.e., non-knowledge. I think they are both wrong.

Both the life sciences and the social sciences should learn how to mutually illuminate one another. The social sciences make it possible to understand and study what is uniquely human, while the life sciences make it possible to better understand the foundations of this uniqueness. The social sciences tell us about what in man is changing, while the life sciences tell us about what remains the same. Instead of opposition or unity, the social sciences and the life sciences should seek complementarity.

In 1928, Helmuth Plessner, one of the principal founders of philosophical anthropology, wrote,

“No philosophy of man without philosophy of nature.” The assertion can be turned around: no the philosophy of nature without philosophy of man. One can also quote Aristotle: no kind of thought is valid if it is unaware of its own limits.

Francis Fukuyama (Our Posthuman Future: Consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution, 2002), Gregory Stock (Redesigning Humans: Our Inevitable Genetic Future, 2002), and Richard Lynn (Eugenics: A Reassessment, 2001) are some recent authors who are interested in a possible return of eugenics. What is the New Right's position on eugenics? What are the consequences of today's gap between Western and East Asian nations regarding eugenics?

Historically, in the 19th and 20th centuries, the principal theorists of eugenics were chiefly men of the left. The United States and the Scandinavian countries, moreover, adopted eugenic policies well before Hitler's Germany. These facts are forgotten today, and eugenics is largely discredited because it is mistakenly seen as specifically “Nazi.” But at the same time, all the Western countries practice a minimal eugenics that does not dare speak its name: embryonic sorting, therapeutic abortion, the fight against hereditary diseases, etc. I am not sure that eugenics will ever be rehabilitated as such, but I am certain this trend will continue.

The eugenic practices that the development of the life sciences makes it possible to consider in the earliest stages of embryonic life will not be imposed by the state, but on the contrary they respond to the desire of parents who of course wish to have the best children possible. In my eyes, this desire is perfectly legitimate: a society with fewer sick people is objectively better than a society with more.

The true difficulty begins when one wishes to pass from negative to positive eugenics. Indeed, this raises the crucial question of the criterion of “quality” one selects. The most common answer is general intelligence as measured by IQ (the “g” factor evoked by Spearman in 1927, or the “fluid intelligence” of Raymond B. Cattell, in opposition to “crystallized” intelligence). But this criterion is in many ways debatable. I know quite well the literature about IQ and the polemics to which it is continually subjected (I published a bibliography about it in 1998). The work of the London school, from Galton to Robert Plomin, while passing by Eysenck and Jensen, arrived at conclusions that cannot be seriously disputed — even if it is also necessary to take account of Robert J. Sternberg's work on “triarchic” intelligence. The contemporary state of research on intelligence has been quite well-summarized in a recent book: Helmut Nyborg, *The Scientific Study of General Intelligence* (London 2003).

The heritability of intelligence, i.e., the share of inter-individual variations of intelligence that can be attributed to genetic factors — or, if one prefers, the share of the phenotypical variance that can be attributed to genotypic variance — is the subject of increasingly concordant evaluations. This heritability remains, however, relative to a given environment (by definition, if there is no difference in environment, the heritability of the variance is established automatically at 100%).

In addition, the quantification of a quality — and intelligence is primarily a quality — never allows us to completely grasp its nature. This is why I find it much more interesting to know which mental differences can exist between individuals with the same IQ, rather than to know which one has the higher IQ. Lastly, the very concept of a test is a Western concept; this is why, in my opinion, even so-called “culture-free” tests can never be completely successful.

Thus my reservations are not because of the London school's definition of intelligence or the validity of IQ tests, but rather because of the overvaluation of intelligence as the criterion of human value. Indeed, being intelligent does not at all guarantee that one is right: the falsest ideologies are the creations of highly intelligent men, sometimes geniuses. (Marx was not less intelligent than Heidegger, and Richard C. Lewontin is certainly not less intelligent than Arthur R. Jensen.) Besides, if intelligence were always advantageous, it would have always been selected by the natural selection, which was not the case.

This overvaluation of intelligence is quite typical of modern societies. It was foreign to the European mentality throughout most of our history. The Homeric hero, the medieval knight, the French *gentilhomme*, the English gentleman, or the Spanish *caballero*, represent as many ideal types (in Max Weber's sense) which never gave a central place to cognitive capacities, but rather to character traits: courage, a sense of honor, disinterestedness, generosity, fidelity to one's word, will, decisiveness, sensitivity, creativity, etc., all qualities that have nothing to do with intelligence *per se*.

I appreciate intelligence of course: all things being equal, it is more pleasant to deal with intelligent people than with idiots. But I do not make intelligence the sole criterion of human value. I myself joined MENSA around 20 years ago. I left it very quickly, since the extremely intelligent people I met there were also mediocre. We live in a time which, for the first time of in history, tends to privilege cognitive capacities alone. This climate facilitates the access of intelligent people who lack character to decision-making jobs. In the long run, it will make us dependent on machines (which already have, in many fields, cognitive powers greater than man's).

Ludwig Klages represented all of European history as a slow rise of the prerogatives of the intellect (*der Geist*) to the detriment of those of sensibility and "heart" (*die Seele*). This critique of the intellect, which is found in continental Europe in a great number of "right wing" authors, contains at least a share of truth. Georg Simmel, for his part, indeed showed how the diffusion of the money economy supported the prevalence of the strictly intellectual and cognitive functions over the emotive functions and solidarity. Such a description helps to understand the passage from the holist model of *community* ("culture") to the individualistic model of *society* ("civilization"). It also helps us criticize the latter. Since Plato one ought to know that scholars should be especially distrusted in positions of power. Today we need strong spines more than big brains.

The implementation of positive eugenics encounters other obvious difficulties as well. The biological law of regression to the mean (the most intelligent tend statistically to have children less intelligent than they are, and the less intelligent tend to have children more intelligent than them) contradicts one of the principal postulates of the eugenic doctrine. Moreover, men in general react more to the beauty of women than to their intelligence.

The inevitable intervention of public authorities is also problematic. Simple incentives can only have a limited effectiveness; more authoritative measures entail social engineering, to which I am completely opposed.

We will see what happens with the Chinese eugenics program. Their ultra-K strategy implemented in a coercive way by the authorities frequently results in the selective abortion of

girls and will lead in twenty years to a serious imbalance in the ratio between the two sexes. For now, I would prefer to live in Sicily, where people in general have character, rather than in Singapore, a true air-conditioned hell!

In his book [Race, Evolution, and Behavior: A Life History Perspective](#) (2000), J. Philippe Rushton drew up a list of a whole series of significant statistical differences between blacks, whites, and Asians, which reveals a continuum in which whites regularly occupy an intermediate position between Asians and blacks.

He cites, in particular, cranial capacity, the number of neurons in the brain, the results obtained by IQ tests, cultural achievements, the proportion of monozygotic twins per 1000 births, hormonal levels, sexual organs, the frequency of sexual relations, permissive attitudes, the rate of sexually transmitted diseases, aggressiveness, impulsiveness, self-image, sociability, the gestation period, motor development, the development of teeth and the skeleton, the median age of the first sexual relations, the median age of the first pregnancy, life expectancy, the stability of marriages, the propensity to obey the law, and mental health.

Are you in agreement with Richard J. Herrnstein and Charles Murray, for whom “Rushton’s work is not that of a crackpot or a bigot . . . it is plainly science” ([Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life](#), 1994, p. 643) or do you think, like Cavalli-Sforza and his collaborators, that “the classification of the races appeared a futile exercise for reasons that were already obvious for Darwin” ([The History and Geography of Human Genes](#), 1996)? Could Rushton’s work provide a scientific base to the “differentialist antiracism” of the New Right?

J. Philippe Rushton is certainly not “a crackpot or a bigot,” and those who think he is deserve only contempt. The statistical correlations that he highlights are data that must be discussed calmly. The question is what conclusion to draw. The classification of races is one thing, their hierarchization quite another. For my part, I do not believe for an instant that there exists an overarching criterion that makes possible an absolute hierarchy of races. Any attempt to show that A is inferior to B amounts to saying that A is less B than B itself, which is merely a tautology.

Any criterion rests on a subjective choice. Rushton kept a certain number of criteria and set others aside. He says nothing, for example, about the color of the eyes, skin, and hair, which are the phenotypical traits by which the eye immediately distinguishes between the races. And in these three fields, Europeans are by no means “intermediate” compared to the Asians and the blacks. The same goes for many pathological factors or diseases, for which the “continuum” postulated by Rushton does not appear.

Among the criteria retained by Rushton, some are of a doubtful nature: the age of the onset of puberty or the first sexual relations dropped considerably in Europe during the last decades without its population changing “biologically.” “Sociability” is an extremely fuzzy concept, which does not have the same meaning in Norway and Greece. And the great number of early maternities among English teenagers (white ones) is certainly not explained by their ethnic membership. As for the frequency of multiple births among African women, it is certainly an interesting datum—less interesting, however, in my opinion, than the comparison of the myths relating to twinhood among various cultures.

Rushton is also the author of work on the reproductive differences entailed by the r strategy [high fertility and low parental investment] and the K strategy [low fertility and high parental investment], which he connects with average IQ (the K strategy positively correlates with a higher IQ).

This work can also be disputed if one takes account of the speed with which the birth and fertility rates can change inside a “homogeneous” population. The adoption of the K strategy by European populations is really only a relatively recent phenomenon: for centuries, in these populations as elsewhere, the large family was the rule. To me it seems imprudent to conclude that Europeans of Antiquity or the Middle Ages had a much lower IQ than we do today.

In Quebec, 200 years ago, the fertility rate was one of the highest in the world, whereas today it is one of the lowest. This drop is certainly not explained by the collapse of IQ! In the United States, the white birth rate in 1800 was 55 births per year per 1000 inhabitants, whereas in 1980, it was no more than 14.9 births per annum. Should we think that the first figure expresses a K strategy when it is double the current birth rate of black Americans? Or should we think that American whites 200 years ago were twice as “ r -selected” as black Americans today?

Moreover, if one examines the sexual strategies of males and females—a favorite subject of evolutionary psychology—one notes immediately that women tend to adopt the K strategy whereas men, being more naturally polygamous, tend to adopt the r strategy. If one accepts the reasoning suggested by Rushton, the average IQ of women should thus definitely be higher than that of men. But this is not the case.

Specialists in evolutionary psychology claim that there are important differences between the sexes, and that these were acquired during the evolution of the species. To what does the New Right appeal to support its “differentialist feminism”?

First to history. From the beginning, in Europe women were never considered mere objects. Male domination, on the other hand, has long been legitimated by Christian theology which, especially in the first centuries, presented women as defective beings and a “place of sin.” From the 19th century on, bourgeois society has constantly repressed feminine values. This is what justifies the demands of women.

But there are two forms of feminism: egalitarian feminism and identitarian feminism. The first thinks that the best means of ensuring the promotion of women is to work to gradually blur the distinction between masculine and feminine social roles. Women must be able to do “everything that men do,” but in this case it the male social role is implicitly taken as the model. The second, by contrast, holds that one can assert the equality of women only on the basis of their distinctness. The New Right supports the second tendency, represented in particular by Luce Irigaray, rather than the first, represented in particular by Simone de Beauvoir or Elisabeth Badinter.

For its part, evolutionary psychology shows that the differences between men and women go well beyond their sexual organs. In mankind, the brain itself is sexually dimorphic. Thus sex is not reduced to “gender,” to a social construction (as claimed in “gender studies,” which are characterized above all by their sterility and their extraordinary monotony). Sex is a biological reality on which multiple social constructions are grafted. Feminism is thus completely

legitimate when it demands the recognition of the equal *value* of what is *distinctly* female and what is *distinctly* male. But equal value does not mean indistinctness.

In [IQ and the Wealth of Nations](#) (2002), Richard Lynn and Tatu Vanhanen in a way answered Jared Diamond ([Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies](#), 1999). To the famous question of Yali: “Why do you whites have so much cargo and have come as far as New Guinea, while we blacks have so little cargo?” Lynn and Vanhanen could have answered, in substance: “Well, Yali, after having reviewed the results of IQ tests and economic indicators from some 81 countries around the world, we concluded that the intelligence of the population constitutes the principal factor determining national differences in economic development. We believe that intelligence is partly determined by environment, but that genetic differences actually explain most of the variation. The environmental factor that most influences the intelligence is the quality of food that fetuses and children receive from their mothers” (cf. Richard Lynn and Tatu Vanhanen “National IQ and Economic Development: A Study of Eighty-One Nations,” *The Mankind Quarterly*, Summer 2000, 415–35). How would you answer Yali?

The “elites” are by definition always powerful in any political system. In the Soviet Union, they were in the service of the Communist party. In the regime of liberal globalization, they are in the service of capitalism. Thus it is not difficult today to establish a correlation between IQ and development. This correlation says nothing about the intrinsic desirability of the capitalist system or of the value of “development.”

The bond between intelligence, social prestige, and the accumulation of riches is not valid, however, for all societies: in many traditional societies, social position is evaluated by the volume of wealth that can be redistributed or destroyed.

Furthermore, the correlations established by Lynn and Vanhanen have the disadvantage of being rather static. Viewed from a historical and dynamic point of view, they become less convincing.

To take only one example, if Argentina today is an economic basket case, whereas in the 1930s it was one of the world’s top five economic powers, it is certainly not because the Argentinean IQ abruptly crumbled, but because their country suffered from the liberal policies adopted by their governments under the pressure of the World Bank and the IMF.

Conversely, if China is experiencing extraordinary economic growth today whereas for centuries she was not at all concerned about “development,” it is not because Chinese IQ has made a sudden leap.

Today, the 225 richest people in the world together have the equivalent of the annual income of the 2.5 billion poorest. The owners of the largest American firms take on average 475 times the average wages their employees, against 11 to 24 times for European owners. I doubt that IQ can justify such discrepancies or such positions.

What would I say to Yali? I would initially try to explain to him that the “cargo civilization,” which is rich in material things but is spiritually increasingly vacuous, does not make those who live there happy and is not necessarily an example to be followed. After that, I would ask him to teach me what he knows. I would ask him about his language, the origin of his people, their customs and traditions, their beliefs and myths, the way they conceive the world and their names for the stars. I would try to learn from him rather than give him lessons.