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Intelligence: Time for Open Debate

In the 25th anniversary issue of *The Psychologist* (January, 2013), the status of intelligence research was raised by Paul Devonshire, who called for a BPS-wide discussion of its applications and implications for society. Coincidentally, in the same issue, there was a collection of articles on British individual differences research which included one by Ian Deary and John Maltby that amply attested to the reality and relevance of intelligence, and the important insights it is yielding in the field of cognitive epidemiology. In a letter in the March issue, Mike Anderson takes up this topic, stating (perhaps a tad uncharitably) that ‘too many of my most intellectually brilliant colleagues...seem to have frittered their talents on largely trivial pursuits instead of focusing on the core question of ‘What is intelligence?’ The fact is that far too little is known about intelligence research and testing among psychology students, academics and practitioners – although, this fact, does not discourage, often strongly held, opinions on this topic.

As committed Marxists, we note that the mere mention of ‘intelligence’ evokes in some people a reaction that reminds us of the great Groucho’s definition of politics: ‘...the art of looking for trouble, finding it everywhere, diagnosing it incorrectly and applying the wrong remedies’. It is about time that, in the UK, we fostered an open academic debate about the strengths *and* limitations of the concept of intelligence – as well as other important individual differences factors. To this end, we co-founded the *British Society for the Psychology of Individual Differences* (BSPID) which provides a forum for research and debate in an open and inclusive fashion. As Hans Eysenck noted many years ago, people do differ and this fact should matter to psychology more than it does currently.

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