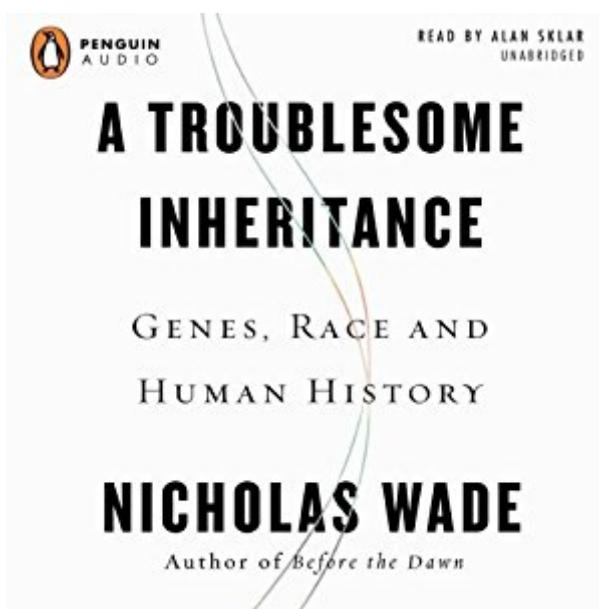


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# A Troublesome Inheritance: Genes, Race, And Human History



## Synopsis

Drawing on startling new evidence from the mapping of the genome, an explosive new account of the genetic basis of race and its role in the human story. Fewer ideas have been more toxic or harmful than the idea of the biological reality of race, and with it the idea that humans of different races are biologically different from one another. For this understandable reason, the idea has been banished from polite academic conversation. Arguing that race is more than just a social construct can get a scholar run out of town, or at least off campus, on a rail. Human evolution, the consensus view insists, ended in prehistory. Inconveniently, as Nicholas Wade argues in *A Troublesome Inheritance*, the consensus view cannot be right. And in fact, we know that populations have changed in the past few thousand years - to be lactose tolerant, for example, and to survive at high altitudes. Race is not a bright-line distinction; by definition it means that the more human populations are kept apart, the more they evolve their own distinct traits under the selective pressure known as Darwinian evolution. For many thousands of years, most human populations stayed where they were and grew distinct, not just in outward appearance but in deeper senses as well. Wade, the longtime journalist covering genetic advances for *The New York Times*, draws widely on the work of scientists who have made crucial breakthroughs in establishing the reality of recent human evolution. The most provocative claims in this book involve the genetic basis of human social habits. What we might call middle-class social traits - thrift, docility, nonviolence - have been slowly but surely inculcated genetically within agrarian societies, Wade argues. These "values" obviously had a strong cultural component, but Wade points to evidence that agrarian societies evolved away from hunter-gatherer societies in some crucial respects. Also controversial are his findings regarding the genetic basis of traits we associate with intelligence, such as literacy and numeracy, in certain ethnic populations, including the Chinese and Ashkenazi Jews. Wade believes deeply in the fundamental equality of all human peoples. He also believes that science is best served by pursuing the truth without fear, and if his mission to arrive at a coherent summa of what the new genetic science does and does not tell us about race and human history leads straight into a minefield, then so be it. This will not be the last word on the subject, but it will begin a powerful and overdue conversation.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

We can see changes in the human genome during historical times in things like susceptibility to disease, cancer, etc. Why do we fail to consider that the brain may also be changing? In particular, language, socialization, adaptability, acceptance of authority, tolerance of "the other", etc? If the brain's make up is also evolving, what does that mean for society and civilization?

It is an important read for anyone that is open minded and wants to really understand race and race relations. He knows his subject and cites references diligently. Most importantly he is courageous: In this age of political correctness no one in academia or public position can even mention racial differences without being vilified. The book is not dangerous, it is evenhanded and factual. We have social & cultural problems that revolve around the issue of race, and until we understand some of the root causes, we have no chance of solving the problems and healing society.

It's expected that a book about genetics and race will elicit extreme reactions. Just look at all the passionate 1-star reviews. I enjoyed reading them because they make good points. The book has flaws.  
CONS:- I was unconvinced by his arguments that genes set the UK up for leading the Industrial Revolution. Had the Industrial Revolution and general global leadership happened in China, I suspect he would say, "It was obvious that the Industrial Revolution would occur in China because East Asians evolved to have the highest IQ among all the races. It's Chinese genes, which favor high IQ, that ultimately resulted in their race/culture being the winning/dominant one on the planet." - I would have preferred he spend less time talking about Francis Fukuyama and others, and spend more time on the latest genetic research on racial differences. - In the conclusion, he wimps out and gives in to the politically correct orthodoxy which he claims to defy. For example, after

spending much of the book explaining how the West (and to some extent China) have produced superior/stronger civilizations than other races/societies, then he backtracks. He says, "There is no assertion of superiority." (Loc 3761 on Kindle). And later, "All human races are variations on a common theme. There is no basis from an evolutionary perspective for declaring any one variation superior to any other."- Despite being written in 2014, he never uses the word "epigenetics" in the book. This fast-moving field in critical to understanding how quickly evolution can move. It would vastly support his argument (or at least give it another dimension). However, it fails to enter his radar. So why 5 stars? Despite these shortcomings, I admire the courage he has to crack the door of this debate open. As you can see from all the 1-star reviews, people (especially academics) will try to destroy his ideas, largely because they feel it's dangerous to explore them and debate them. You can give this book two or three stars, but one shows that you've got an ax to grind. He states his thesis at the beginning of the new edition: "The new findings from the genome make ever clearer that evolution and history are intertwined, perhaps not intimately but enough to allow genetics at least some small role in the shaping of today's world." Is that really that unreasonable? Granted, the careless reader may think he's arguing that genes play a "big role" and not a "small one" because he devotes a whole book to genes and not to culture and other factors. He's exploring that small role because nobody else is. Again, he states: "Difference between populations undoubtedly exist but they are quite subtle." The book is imperfect, but it's worth reading.

The negative reviews of this book actually encouraged me to buy and to read through it. Afterwards I perused the reviews here on , and my conclusion is that the controversy regarding this book is another episode in the ongoing reaction to new insights developed from recent advances in genetics, from supporters of established social science, linguistic, and historical paradigms. For example, I recall viewing on YouTube last year a presentation called "The Assault on Historical Linguistics" that criticized competing paradigms generated by discoveries in genetics and by the resulting haplogroup mapping of human expansion across the world. I have seen other examples of defensive reactions by proponents of paradigms social science and historical paradigms that were established with the evidence available by the 1970s, this had led to strong attacks trying to discredit new conceptual frameworks driven by new discoveries in genetics. Nicholas Wade in his book states that racism must be opposed on principle, and that politics should not drive science. Perhaps the members of the current academic establishment need to retire so that a newer generation can look a new evidence with new and less prejudiced eyes.

I have been involved with genetics since 1983 and have been closely observing the recent revolution occurring in the technology that sequences genomes. The genetic information revealed in this book has been known for some time, but organizations like the American Anthropological Association proclaim that race is not real (biologically), and actively suppress this information from becoming public. This is a political strategy and not scientific reality. Any forensic anthropologist can identify the race of a skull found at the scene of a crime in a few minutes (Caucasian, Black, Asian/Native American) This is a routine function of crime scene analysis. President Obama and Bill Nye have also stated publicly and in print (Nye) that race is not real. These statements are misleading and serve no more than a political purpose. Millions of people from around the world have had their genomes sequenced by such giants as 23andMe. The information that is being compiled and analyzed is releasing a startling amount of genetic information concerning human evolution. Did you know that Tibetans evolved a genetic variant in their genes that allow them to live at high altitudes? Since 1980, every finalist in the Olympic 100 meter dash has had West African ancestry... want to learn more? This book is must read for everyone who has an interest in the science of evolution. I give the author credit for bringing forth this book and I hope more similar books follow. Genetics will be the driving force of the 21st Century.

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