

Oct. 19, 2009

12 Questions on Wade 1-68

1. What is your understanding of “race”?
2. What was scientific racism? What components of this “-ism” remain today?
3. Give three examples of racist ideologies in practice, either in history or at present. Compare them, noting the similarities and the differences.
4. What do you think are useful features of the concept of “race,” if any?
5. If you do not believe there are any useful features of the concept of “race,” what are our alternatives for discussing biological variability among groups of people?
6. What features of the concept of “race” are not useful, if any?
7. Describe Wade’s critique of “race” as a scientific notion.
8. How has the notion of “race” changed over time in the West?
9. Wade says that “race” is a social/historical construction. Defend this argument. Oppose it.
10. Discuss the differences between the word “racist” and the word “racial.”
11. “Now, if anthropologists know one thing, it is that conceptions of ‘nature’ are not self-evident” (p. 9). What does “nature” mean to you?
12. Racism “is an ideological construct which refers to a real social process of labeling and discrimination.” (p. 17) Discuss.
13. Wade, discussing essentialism, asks, “what is an essence”? What is your understanding of essentialism? Is it “biology”?
14. Outline Hirschfield’s argument on pp. 32-33. Argue in favor of it. Critique it.
15. Part of the force of racism “lies in the ambiguous move between ideas of indelibility and ideas of malleability.” (p. 38). Discuss, providing one example of indelibility and one of malleability.
16. Are male and female absolutely clearly distinct? Argue in favor. Opposed.

17. The historian Laqueur wrote *Making Sex*, in which he shows how the idea of sex (meaning the male/female distinction) developed. What was the earlier “one-sex model”?
18. “It is human nature to supersede nature.” (p. 44) Does your notion of human nature contain this paradox? Discuss.
19. Describe the eugenics movement. Do we have anything like it today?

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