

that our cultural and political systems dictate”.

The original IQ tests, developed by Binet in 1904, had the express and limited purpose “... of identifying children whose poor performance indicated a need for special education ... And the aim of his scale was to identify in order to help and improve, not to label in order to limit” (Gould, 1981). Binet presumed that intelligence could be augmented by education designed to cater to the specific needs of the child. His three principles for using his tests were:

1. The scores are a practical device; they do not buttress any theory of intellect. They do not define anything innate or permanent. We may not designate what they measure as “intelligence” or any other reified entity.
2. The scale is a rough, empirical guide for identifying mildly retarded and learning-disabled children who need special help. It is not a device for ranking normal children.
3. Whatever the cause of difficulty in children identified for help, emphasis shall be placed upon improvement through special training. Low scores shall not be used to mark children as innately incapable. (Gould, 1981)

These principles were disregarded as the use of IQ and other standardized testing became popular over the next eighty years. Since Binet’s time, IQ and other standardized testing has been used to exclude children from regular classes, to place them in restricted environments, to deny them jobs, to sterilize them, to prevent their immigration, and to place many other restrictions on their social and economic participation.

Legitimizing the value of intelligence (and education — an achieved rather than an ascribed characteristic) has made it possible to attach notions of merit to social order. Meritocracy is simply a process by which society gives out its rewards to those who have merit.

The critical question is: who or what is worthy of merit?