

Menand on Pinker

1 Menand's arguments

1. The limits set by our genes aren't very interesting. In music, nature gives us nothing more sophisticated than Hot Cross Buns while artifice gives us opera. In math, nature gives us poor intuitive skills but education gives us sophisticated ones.
2. Pinker ignores evidence of social influences. Crime and neighborhoods.
3. Implausible claims about the genetic basis of our society: liberal democracy, equality for women.
4. Bias towards the measurable. The components of OCEAN vs. everything else that children learn from their parents. Contrast: the biological basis of anxiety with how the mind copes with anxiety.
5. Preference for the average over the distinctive.
6. Pinker is appallingly sloppy: didn't read Woolf essay, doesn't know that modernism holds there *is* a human nature, didn't know the painting was satire.¹

2 What's Menand's thesis?

¹ See: <http://www.diacenter.org/km/index.html>