Richard Lewontin

Richard Lewontin is the Alexander Agassiz Research Professor at Harvard University, a position he took in 2003 after serving for over 20 years as the Alexander Agassiz Professor of Zoology and Professor of Biology at Harvard. He earned his Ph.D. at Columbia University and lectured at numerous universities before joining the Harvard faculty in 1973. Lewontin was a key figure in forming the “Modern Synthesis” which was the merging of evolutionary theory with techniques from molecular biology to bring evolutionary biology into the realm of modern quantitative sciences. His own research has specifically focused on developing a mathematical basis for the study of population genetics. He has also been a leading critic, along with the late Stephen J. Gould, of the “Adaptationist Program,” authoring many articles and books warning of its oversimplification of the description of evolved behaviors through adaptation and natural selection.

Professor Lewontin has won many prestigious awards and fellowships including the Fulbright Fellowship (1961), the National Science Foundation’s Postdoctoral Fellowship (1961), the Sewel Wright Awards for the American Society of Naturalists (1994) and he is a former member of the National Academy of Sciences.