Bouchard Prize: Background

I have named this the Bouchard prize for three reasons. The first has its origin in an episode when Tom and I were walking back to Elliott Hall at the University of Minnesota after a class in which I was his TA. At the time, Leon Kamin or Richard Lewontin (I forget which one, so I’ll just say Kamin to keep the English simple), had hit the popular news with a criticism of research on genes and IQ. (I also do not recall the specific issues). I had asked Tom what he thought about one issue and he replied (my paraphrase), “Kamin is arguing in words and this is something mathematical. If you want to argue the point, you have to use math.”

I have made some provocative statements about the “common environment” and “unique environment,” but all of these are based on logic and math. If we want to hold our critics to formal standards, then we should hold ourselves to those same standards. Hence, take Tom’s advice. Do not argue with me in words. Use math.

The second reason for the name of this prize is my little contribution to honor Tom’s scholarship. He was a very important, fertile, (and provocative) spring that watered my own intellectual development.

Finally, at the very end of his festschrift when he commented on the papers, Tom blurted out, “I’ll bet a year’s salary that ….” He later mentioned to me that at a CIBA conference, he bet his house. With such moxy, how could I ever name the prize anything else.