

Savage Minds Occasional Papers No. 12

**Boasian Critiques of Race in *The Nation***

By Franz Boas

Melville Herskovits

Edward Sapir

Konrad Bercovici

Hendrik Willem Van Loon

Alexander Goldenweiser

and Harry Elmer Barnes

Edited by Alex Golub and Angela Chen, with an introduction by Richard Handler

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## **Savage Minds Occasional Papers**

1. The Superorganic by Alfred Kroeber, edited and with an introduction by Alex Golub
2. Responses to “The Superorganic”: Texts by Alexander Goldenweiser and Edward Sapir, edited and with an introduction by Alex Golub
3. The History of the Personality of Anthropology by Alfred Kroeber, edited and with an introduction by Alex Golub
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5. Culture, Genuine and Spurious by Edward Sapir, edited and with an introduction by Alex Golub
6. Culture in the Melting-Pot by Edward Sapir, edited and with an introduction by Alex Golub
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12. Boasian Critiques of Race in *The Nation* by Franz Boas, Melville Herskovits, Edward Sapir, Konrad Bercovici, Hendrik Willem Van Loon, Alexander Goldenweiser, and Harry Elmer Barnes, edited by Alex Golub and Angela Chen, with an introduction by Richard Handler

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"What is a Race?" by Franz Boas. *The Nation*, 28 January 1925, pp. 89-91.

"Brains and the Immigrant" by Melville J. Herskovits. *The Nation*, 11 February 1925, pp. 139-141.

"Let Race Alone" by Edward Sapir. *The Nation*, 25 February 1925, pp. 211-213.

"You Nordics!" by Konrad Bercovici. *The Nation* 18 March 1924, pp. 288-290.

"Our Nordic Myth-Makers" by Hendrik Willem Van Loon. *The Nation*, 1 April 1925, pp. 349-350.

"Can There Be a 'Human Race'?" by Alexander Goldenweiser. *The Nation*, 22 April 1925, pp. 462-463.

"The Race Myth Crumbles" by Harry Elmer Barnes. *The Nation*, 6 May 1925, pp. 515-517.

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## **Preface**

by Alex Golub

I'm delighted to feature this, our dozenenth SMOPS, for readers. These papers provide an excellent example of anthropology's long term commitment to social justice, public outreach, and a critique of incorrect folk theories of heredity and race. The real gems of this paper are not Boas or Herskovits or even Sapir, but the sparkling, penetrating papers by Hendrik Willem Van Loon and, especially, Konrad Bercovici. Read them first.

I'm also delighted that this issue of SMOPS is the first to feature an introduction by someone other than me. I'd like to thank Richard Handler, a distinguished historian of anthropology, for providing a brief introduction to this issue.

The pieces here are reproduced in full. Numbers in brackets indicate page breaks in the original. I hope that this paper, like the others in this series, will help present anthropological theory in a form that is accessible to everyone. There is today a tremendous amount of material which is open access, but it is difficult to find, inconvenient to read, and many people do not know where to start looking for it. By curating a selection of important open access work, I hope to make open access resources better known and to raise awareness of the actual history of anthropological theory.

-R August 2014 Honolulu



## **Introduction**

Richard Handler

Department of Anthropology and Program in Global Studies, University of Virginia

This series of seven essays by Franz Boas, his students and those in his circle of liberal New York City intellectuals, appeared in *The Nation* in 1925. Boas had for years been fighting against the rising tide of scientific racism that triumphed with the passage of the Johnson Immigration Bill in April 1924, the second such bill in three years to restrict entrance to the U.S. on the basis of race. But Boas continued his work as a public intellectual, critiquing the “myth” behind the bill and mobilizing his colleagues to do the same. In these essays, Boas and his students—Edward Sapir, Melville Herskovits and Alexander Goldenweiser—rehearsed the main tenets of the Boasian consensus: that race “antagonism” is not instinctive; that American racial categories could not be correlated with fixed biological facts; that “civilization” included “contributions” from all peoples (not just the “Nordics”); that there was no relationship between a people’s cultural achievements and the biology of the group; and that such sciences as eugenics were little more than rationalizations of commonsense prejudices (as Sapir put it, the “heated desire” of racists “subdued to the becoming coolness of a technical vocabulary”). The series is rounded out by the inclusion of essays by the Columbia-trained historian Harry Elmer Barnes (who published several standard textbooks on American and Western civilization), the popular historian Hendrik Willem van Loon (whose children’s book, *The Story of Mankind*, won the first Newbery Medal in 1922), and the journalist and travel writer Konrad Bercovici, whose romantic appreciation of peoples scorned by proponents of the Nordic myth is evident in his contribution.

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## **What is a Race?**

By Franz Boas

The intensity of race consciousness in our country is not entirely due to the presence in large numbers of various non-European races, for even a hasty review of the attitude of many European nations reveals a phenomenal growth of the feeling of racial antagonisms. The belief in organic difference between the European and the Negro or the European and the Chinese has to come to appear as so fundamental that social and political relations are determined by it. We no longer demand any careful examination of the reasons for the feeling of difference, but accept it as an instinctive, unavoidable effect of the contact of different races.

The theory that mental traits are determined by race is old. In earlier times it was not clearly differentiated from the assumption of an immediate influence of environment upon body and mind. In the eighteenth century we hear of the belief that the type represented by the nobility is organically superior to the type represented by the commoners. In the nineteenth century the theory of the racial determination of mental traits made rapid headway. It was a convenient prop for supporting slavery and was, therefore, used as the strongest argument against the aims of the Abolitionists. But aside from this, students of the history of civilization became impressed with the evident differences of mental behavior in large divisions of mankind. Gustav Klemm in his "Allgemeine Kulturgeschichte der Menschheit" discusses at length the aptitudes of different racial types. Carus tried to explain the history of nations on the basis of their organic character, but the whole problem received its principal impetus by the publication of Comte de Gobineau's "L'Inégalité des Races Humaines." In the course of time the arguments by which he tried to prove the superiority of the blond North European type over all other European groups made a deep impression, and since that time the conviction has grown apace that fundamental, organically determined psychical differences exist between human races and even between closely allied groups. It is only necessary to mention books like Stewart Houston Chamberlain's "Foundations of Nineteenth Century Civilization" or those of Woltmann, Lapouge, or Hans Günther, and in our own country the much-read propaganda by Madison Grant, "The Passing of the Great Race," to indicate the general character of the growth of this movement.

On the other hand an equally voluminous literature has developed, intended to maintain the irrelevancy of racial affiliation in cultural and mental life. Much of this literature is due to an effort to combat the anti-Semitic drift of our times.

Quite aside from this discussion, certain ethnologists have based their work on the assumption of an essential sameness of the mental life of all races. Inquiries into the development of civilization like those of Theodor Waitz, E.B. Tylor, Herbert Spencer, or Adolf Bastian were conducted without any regard to racial affiliations, but dealt with mankind as a whole and emphasize the unity of mental behavior of man.

Whatever the outcome of scientific discussion may be, the existence of racial antagonisms among ourselves cannot be denied. The inquiry should be directed toward an investigation of the conditions under which they have grown up and of the soundness of the arguments supporting racial discrimination.

It is generally assumed that race consciousness and race antagonisms are instinctive, that is to say, organically determined. It is fairly obvious that for individuals this rule does not hold good. The numerous cases of racial mixture between whites and all other races show clearly that there is no fundamental racial antipathy that would prevent the closest and most intimate relations between individuals of the most diverse races. Furthermore it is important to note that race antagonism is not by any means a universal trait of mankind. While it is very pronounced among Anglo-Saxons, it is weak among most of the people of Romance tongue. The present French policy of treating the African Negroes as Frenchmen has for its basis a theoretical denial of essential racial differences and is possible only on account of the lack of a strong, widespread feeling of race antagonism. The weakness of race consciousness among people speaking Romance languages is shown also by the social conditions in many South American countries.

Still more striking is the attitude of Mohammedans, among whom racial affiliations count very little as against religious unity. A convincing proof of this attitude in early times is the description of interracial relations in Arabian literature. A study of the behavior of children shows also that while a consciousness of race difference may be present, it does not include necessarily any feeling of racial antagonism. As the child grows up the dividing line between the races is impressed upon it and in this way the race consciousness develops until it becomes a purely automatic reaction, which evokes the same intensity of feeling as the so-called instinctive reactions. Nevertheless, the two are fundamentally distinct. If racial antagonism were instinctive it would appear among all members of mankind, not necessarily in earliest youth, but certainly at the time of adolescence. If, on the other hand, it is a behavior that is developed as a social pattern it will be present only where this pattern prevails and will become more automatic and therefore emotionally stronger the more pronounced the social pattern. It is also instinctive to see that in the castes of India the same kind of antagonism and feeling of repugnance develops without being everywhere founded on racial differences.

Numerous attempts have been made to give a scientific status to the feeling of racial difference and particularly to the claim of Nordic superiority. In these attempts use is [90] made of historical data, of descriptions of national character and of psychological tests to which individuals of different races have been subjected. In none of these discussions, however, do we find a concise and definite answer to the question of what constitutes a race.

Unfortunately the concept of race is not at all clear. The terminology adopted by our immigration authorities has added greatly to the confusion because they designate people speaking different languages and of different political association as races without any regard to their biological characteristics.

When we speak of innate characteristics of races we mean by the term "race" a group of people descended from a common ancestry and for this reason alike in anatomical form. Likeness does not mean identity. In no species or variety of animals or plants are all individuals strictly of the same form. Differences in size and form are ever present and variability within certain limits is one of the prime characteristics of organic culture. Individuals of the same variety are not identical and a variety derived from the same ancestry will always embrace many distinctive individual forms. A whole racial group can never be described by a few descriptive

terms, because there will always be many individuals of deviating types. It is our impression that the Swede is blond, blue eyed, tall, and long headed; but many Swedes do not conform to this description.

When these variations are sufficiently pronounced we are very much inclined to consider the extreme variants as types of which the population is composed and believe that the rather indifferent but frequent middle group originates from an intermixture of the two extreme types. When practical questions are involved this view is useful. The physician who distinguishes between the asthenic and eusthenic type or between other constitutional types is confronted by a practical problem. His classification of types does not imply that the individuals of different constitution are distinct types which intermingled and from which the middle type of indifferent constitution developed. In the same way the occurrence of long heads and short heads in Sweden does not prove by itself that we must have a mixture of two fundamental types. The extreme forms may as well be interpreted as variants of a single ancestral type.

On the other hand, extensive migrations have occurred since very early times the world over and mixtures of distinct types have been common. The period of isolation in which the differentiation of local types developed must lie in a very remote time. The present conditions show gradual transitions between types inhabiting adjoining areas, due largely to intermixture. Local types exhibit everywhere similar degrees of variability, so that it is difficult if not impossible to determine the characteristics of the earlier, purer types that developed by isolation.

Unless the component races are fundamentally distinct, the attempt to isolate in an old stable population distinctive racial types determined by descriptive characteristics is, therefore, an almost insoluble task. We cannot assign one individual to one race, another to another, because we do not know the degree of variability found in the ancestral isolated race, and on account of the long-continued mixture the characteristics of the parental races will appear in varying combinations in each individual. All attempts to establish among members of the same social group correlations between mental character and bodily form have failed.

When we speak of racial heredity, we mean certain characteristics in which all members of a race partake. The white skin-color of the European and the dark skin-color of the Negro are racial hereditary traits, because they belong to all the members of each race. On account of the great variability of forms fundamental differences between various races are not always found. Size and complexity of the brain, stature, head form, physiological functions and mental reactions vary enormously in each race, and many features that are found in one race are also found among individuals belonging to other races. Thus it happens that to judge by the size of his brain or by his physiological or mental functions an individual may as well belong to one race as to another. In such cases it is obviously impossible to speak of hereditary racial characteristics because the traits characterizing any individual occur in a number of human races.

The importance of this observation becomes still clearer when we consider the individuals not only as members of a race as a whole but as descendants of a certain ancestral group. The racial type is what is called by biologists a phenotype, that is to say, an assembly of individuals that belong to quite distinctive lines of descent. The phenotype, however, may be subdivided into a number of genotypes, or groups of individuals having a common ancestry. In other words, we

must consider the whole race as constituted of a large number of family lines. When we have a population that has been inbred for a very long time, such as certain village communities in Europe or small isolated tribes of primitive people, the whole community may represent, more or less strictly speaking, one genotype, because they are all descended from the same ancestral group and every family line existing at the present time goes back to the same ancestry. We may note that even in these cases, so far as they have been investigated, the family lines are not by any means identical in type, but that considerable differences among them are found. Even long inbreeding does not produce an identity of family lines. Purity of type would entail a great similarity between different family lines and at the same time a great similarity between the brothers and sisters belonging to each family. As a matter of fact, great uniformity in either respect does not exist among any known group. Similarity of family strains is characteristic of inbred populations no matter what their ancestral composition may be, while great disparity of family lines is found in new populations of mixed origin such as are found in our modern cities or in countries with immigration drawn from a large area. Great similarity among brothers and sisters in each family is dependent upon the uniformity of the ancestry, but it is not necessarily connected with long-continued inbreeding. To give an example, the mulatto population of South Africa, descendants of Negroes and Dutch settlers, has developed largely by inbreeding. Therefore the family lines are alike, while the children of each family vary very much among themselves and exhibit a mixture of Negro and white traits.

A more detailed study of the constitution of a single race shows that its family lines vary considerably in anatomical and functional characteristics. The pigmentation of one family line may be quite distinct from that of another. Pathological traits appear in some strains of the population. Mental traits characteristic of certain family lines will not be shared by others.

When comparing different races it is found that the variability of the genotypes comprising each race is so great that a family line might find its proper place in several [91] races. In other words, many hereditary characteristics are not racial in character, but must be assigned to genotypical lines, to family strains.

If this is true, it is clear that any generalized characterization of a race must be misleading. It may be possible to characterize family lines, but the assumption of general racial characteristics, anatomical, physiological, or mental, excepting those that belong to the race as a whole, is arbitrarily made.

The actual problem, therefore, from an objective standpoint, resolves itself into the question [of] whether any characteristics, aside from purely anatomical ones, can be found that differentiate races so that they are common characteristics by which the racial position of all individuals and all family lines may be determined.

There is no doubt that social groups show essential differences in their appearance and their behavior, but this does not imply that these characteristics are hereditarily determined. Individuals of quite distinctive anatomical build adopt the same functional habits with great ease. We find among people speaking the same language the most diverse forms of articulating organs; but the mode of pronunciation depends upon anatomical conditions only in extreme cases. It is determined by the social environment in which the individual grows up. The characteristic motor

tendencies of large divisions of mankind are also not determined by the special form of the skeleton and of the muscular system, but by historically determined motor habits. An example of this is the distribution of different methods of the use of bow and arrow, which is characteristic of enormously wide areas. Proof of the socially determined character of mental reactions is also found in the difference in the behavior of a people in different periods. The descent of the Elizabethan English and the modern English is practically the same. Nevertheless the early free and easygoing life contrasts strongly with the social restrictions and prudery of the middle of the past century. So as I can see, no convincing proof has ever been given of the hereditary character of complex functions that are found prevailing among a given people at the present time. We rather see that all racial strains, when subjected to the same social environment, develop the same functional tendencies. The plasticity of function is so great that it may overcome to a great extent the difference in organic form.

Nevertheless individual differences in function and family characteristics of function may very well exist and be recognized, but the variability of the family lines constituting each race will be found so great that in this case also we have no right to speak of racial hereditary traits.

The occurrence of hereditary mental traits that belong to a particular race has never been proved. The available evidence makes it much more likely that the same mental traits appear in varying distribution among the principal racial groups. The behavior of an individual is therefore not determined by his racial affiliation, but by the character of his ancestry and his cultural environment. We may judge of the mental characteristics of families and individuals, but not of races.

## **Brains and the Immigrant**

By Melville J. Herskovits

The sea was rough, and there were few people in the dining-room. The chief officer, tall, blond, blue-eyed, stalwart American, was talking about it. "What do you expect from those Germans? They're so dumb they don't know enough to keep from eating dill pickles and salami when they're seasick, I tell you," and he grew reminiscent, "you'd be thankful, too, that they passed those restriction laws for immigrants if you could have run back and forth between Europe and America since the war like I have. Those Polacks! You see 'em looking around after 'em as if wondering where the mud of the barnyard is on the ship. And they're dumb, just dumb. They don't know how to act, or to talk, or to eat..." And then, a few days later, the immigration officials came aboard at Quarantine. There was an intelligent German on the ship — a non-citizen — who had made his home for some years in the Middle West. He had to wait in line at the pleasure of the doctor and the inspector — American citizens had finished long since and were looking at the Statue of Liberty — and he remarked as he came out on deck, "Yes, they make you feel that you're an alien, all right."

That the psychology of superiority — and particularly of the superiority of the white race and that part of it that comes from Northern Europe — is rampant in the country today is obvious to the most casual observer. The books and articles from the pens of prolific writers such as Professor MacDougall, Dr. C. C. Josey, Mr. Madison Grant, Mr. Ernest Cox, and Lothrop Stoddard, and the works of Dr. Brigham and other psychologists, plus deductions drawn from the psychological tests given in the army during the war, all lend sanction to official actions such as the recent immigration legislation which changed quotas so as to favor North European stock. In addition to this, other laws are advocated enforcing the study of English, or making the requirements for citizenship more and more difficult, and we have the folklore current about the lack of ability and low intelligence of the large Negro section of the population. This phenomenon is a growing thing; we find the identical works that are produced here published in England and seriously discussed; a controversy about the value of race raging in Germany, and a large institute for the study of race-biology in Sweden maintained by the state under a director who believes that the salvation of his country lies in the maintenance of racial purity.

A part of the theories which are accepted as almost axiomatic by those who urge the superiority of the North European type — the "Teutonic race," as it was called in pre-war times, more widely known today as the "Nordic" — is based on a lack of understanding of the criteria which determine race, and a false correlation between physical form and cultural achievement. Underlying all this, and perhaps fundamental to it, is an attitude which is as old as the ages, rationalized with the help of the earlier anthropologists and the psychologists. This is the widespread dislike of what is different. All of us are used to doing things in the way we have always seen them done, hearing the syllables and seeing the gestures we have always heard and seen, and the person who speaks our language with an accent, or contravenes some of the ways of action to which we are accustomed, excites in us an emotion out of all proportion to the action which has aroused the feeling in us. Even this, however, may be set aside if the pattern of the society calls for it, thus, in Europe, the mispronunciation of a word by a foreigners does not

excite the ridicule which this act occasions in the United States; however, people do become irritated when inbred patterns of behavior are not adhered to.

The early rationalization of this irritation followed the studies on head-form which announced the existence of the Teutonic race. This race was supposed to be the flower of mankind, and to have developed civilization to its highest point. The inability to see that cultural difference does not necessarily imply cultural inferiority, and that time perspective is essential in the determination of even such values as may be compared and weighed, was the reason why Teutonic superiority seemed so plausible. Then came the work of Binet and Simon, with their tests to determine the relative standing of school children, and the adaptation of these tests for American use by Dr. Terman and others. As they were given in the schools, it became apparent that the children of immigrants of Polish and Italian origin, and of Negroes, did not do as well as children of other stocks, and it was soon concluded, first, that these tests determine native intelligence, and second, that those racial groups from the North of Europe may be considered as having the greatest intelligence.

When we consider some of the figures in the case, we might be led to agree that there is a real superiority in favor of the Teutonic group. In the army tests, for example, we find the following mean standing for persons of the countries indicated, in terms of the “combined scale,” which consolidated the results of the various tests used:

Canada	13.74
British Isles	13.37
Scandinavia	13.30
Germany, Austria	13.17
Greece	11.90
Russia	11.16
Italy	11.04

These figures are impressive particularly when to them are added such results from school-testing as those of Arlitt, in which Italian children were found to be far below those of American birth as to I. Q. (Intelligence Quotient) or of Preston, who found Latins to stand consistently below non-Latins and others. But they bear, perhaps, further examination, and the consideration of certain other data and results which are too often left out of account. To return to the army tests, when we look at the median scores of foreign-born recruits arranged according to years of residence in this country, we find the following:

0-5 years in the U.S.	11.29
6-10 years in the U.S.	11.70
11-15 years in the U.S.	12.53
16-20 years in the U.S.	13.50
over 20 years in the U.S.	13.73

[140]

These figures, when taken with the first set, throw the whole matter of conclusions into a somewhat new light. The first observation, when looking only at the data arranged according to countries of origin of foreigners taking the tests, is that there is a progression from high standing in countries populated by the Teutonic race to low for those from the so-called “Alpine” and “Mediterranean” races. However, it will be noticed, as Dorothy Hallowell has said in an unpublished survey of all the data on racial tests to date, that “roughly it seems that the nationality groups having the highest mental ages are from the countries where the educational advantages are good, and vice versa, and the English-speaking countries highest of all.” This conclusion is reinforced when we turn to the second set of figures, where the data are arranged according to the length of residence of the foreign born in this country. For with increased residence comes, apparently, increasing intelligence. There are two conclusions, which may be drawn from these results. One is assumed and maintained by Brigham, and is to the effect that since the immigration has changed in the past twenty years from the North to the South of Europe, the difference in racial stock may account for the increased scores for persons of longer residence in this country. A more obvious interpretation, it would seem, would be simply that with greater understanding of the customs of the country, longer experience in dealing with typically American situations, and more knowledge of the language, all of which come with longer residence, and only with this, the persons taking the tests were the better able to cope with the problems presented and to meet the situations described in them. Indeed, Brigham himself may perhaps be coming to this view, since in a recent symposium on the tests he stated that what the tests show is not innate ability, but what he termed “scholapitude” — the relation between a given test score and a criterion based on a school product.

This opens up the whole question of how the tests are constructed, and how they work. They are empirically determined, usually by a trial-and-error process, and the questions are usually only inserted after the tentative test has been tried out on a large number of persons so that ambiguities, too large a number of extremely difficult questions, and the like may be eliminated. What is finally presented to the subject is a standardized test, usually with the time element involved, which is scored in a rigid way so as to eliminate the personality of the score to the largest degree possible. The tests, however (and this has to do, of course, with the tests that involve language difficulties, although the criticism is applicable to a certain extent to those which are non-language), are printed and must be read. There are specified directions, which must be announced by the tester. There are answers to be written or marks made according to printed directions. Now, it is not hard to see that the language difficulty is a real one for persons who are of foreign birth. This has been made the subject of a study by Margaret Mead, who conducted extensive researches on the children of a small New Jersey town, some of American parentage and others of Italian, of comparable social background, during the last year. Her conclusions are well worth stating here in full:

1. The Italians are definitely inferior to the Americans judged by test showing alone. Therefore, if grading and promotion were to be governed by test results the Italians would be placed clearly at a disadvantage in competing with the American children in these schools.

2. The scores of the Italians have been shown to be influenced by the factors of language, as demonstrated by the classification according to language spoken at home; by the length of time the parent has been in this country, this factor being somewhat interwoven with the language factor; and by the social status of the parent.

3. This study would indicate that[:] Intelligence-test scores of foreign children, particularly group tests involving the use of language, are subject to vitiation by the above-mentioned factors.

Classification of foreign children, in schools where they have to compete with American children, on the basis of group intelligence test findings alone, is not a just evaluation of the child's innate capacity.

Special attention is called to the second conclusion, especially the part which refers to the language spoken in the homes of the children tested. Miss Mead divides the Italian children studied into four groups, according to the language spoken mostly at home—those whose parents speak all Italian, those in whose homes Italian and some English are spoken, those who live where English and some Italian are spoken, and those whose parent speak only English. The results are striking—the figures given are for the averages of the groups arranged according to the “Index of Brightness”:

<i>Language</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Index of Brightness</i>
Italian	82	65.00
Italian and some English	100	70.00
English and some Italian	64	73.90
English	23	72.93

The importance of the language factor comes out clearly in this table, although the average of the last group loses its significance because of the small number of cases in it. It is even a question whether children who are bilingual are not at a disadvantage in the tests. A study made not so long ago by Saer in England on children speaking Welsh and English seems to show that the handicap is on the side of those who learn a second language before they know the first completely, when compared with others who have learned only one thoroughly.

Thus there is the difficult of language in giving the tests. How, then, to test immigrants? Shall we give them tests in their own languages? We already have literacy tests for immigrants — might it not be possible to give those wishing to settle here intelligence tests which would avoid the language factor and thus admit only those with the highest standings? Here is another difficulty in the way, which is far from a minor one, and which is recognized by most psychologists. It is the difference in cultural background. Test are made out of the experience a cultural background of the maker. And it is too often the case that this background is totally different from that of the persons it is desired to test. Thus, in Army Beta, or the non-language test, there were pictures in which something was to be checked as missing, or misplaced, or with which something else was wrong. One of these showed a tennis court, with two men playing, but

without any net. Is it to be wondered that the Hungarian steelworker from Pittsburgh or the plantation Negro from Alabama was completely at a loss when it came to checking the element missing? Such a test with the example, often seen of a house in which the chimney runs only to the height of the roof and not above it, would certainly have been failed in by Plato and Aristotle, to put the case grotesquely; while, coming a bit [141] nearer, there are many eminent Europeans who have declared that they feel that they could not possibly pass such a test. Of course not! After all, the American scene is typical, and, to a very large degree, peculiar. And the experiences of the persons who live in it are not those of the persons who live in other lands. And just because the immigrant shows bewilderment when he is catapulted into our throbbing civilization, does not mean that he is without ability to learn to get about in it if he is given the chance.

But let us suppose that the tests were constructed with an eye to allowing for past differential experiences, and attempts were made to incorporate in them forms which might not be too foreign to the persons taking them. In most tests there are several forms constructed comparable, after thorough preliminary statistical analysis. These may be given out to different groups, or to the same one if it is to take the test more than once. But how to make comparisons across the barrier of cultural differences? How to compare the value, as an indication of intelligence, of a knowledge of the proverbs of different lands? Or the types of buildings? Or the manners? It is a nice problem, and one which will have to be solved before such tests can be given.

Of course, it must not be assumed that there is no field for psychological tests. When they attempt to do definite things, such as showing which persons of a given group are most likely to make the best stenographers, or the best bookkeepers, or the best soldiers, there can be little quarrel with their use. But when these tests, devised for definite purposes, are translated into terms of general intelligence, one must refuse to go along with those who draw conclusions. An irreparable harm has been done by reasoning of this type—the immigration laws, the rise of the Nordic mania, and the belief in the Nordic's innate superiority are mainly the result of such deductions. The army tests were constructed to find out, in the shortest and most efficient manner possible, the types of men who, because of previous training and reaction to given situations, would make the best officers, non-commissioned officers, and enlisted men, or those who were fit only for work in labor battalions and the like. It was a time of emergency, and emergency measures were employed, and successfully. But when the tests were translated into terms of absolute intelligence, and then norms for racial groups developed and the assumption made that this represented the differences in the innate ability of the races to which the men tested belonged, scientific sanction was given to a dogma which was growing in popularity.

The question of the restriction of immigration is not a racial one. In no group are there results to be seen which cannot be accounted for from the personal background, inherited and learned, of the individuals tested, rather than from the fact of the racial origin of the group to which the individual belongs. Take the Negro, for example, since the Negro element in our population is perhaps the most widely differentiated racially in our population. The low standing of the Negro in psychological tests is notorious, although a recent Los Angeles study casts grave doubts on the general applicability of the previous findings. But even granting their correctness, when one considers the fact that a large portion of the Negro population of the United States has had little education, that the persons we call Negro are the result of much racial mixture with whites, and

too often of a crossing between the less competent element of both racial groups, added to the diffidence which must be a part of the training of every Negro because of the ever-present prejudice he must meet, one does not have to have recourse to the racial hypothesis. The very term "Negro" is social rather than racial. Negro, in the United States, means, really, "not-all-white." If we were to imagine a situation where white were to mean "any-portion-white," we can easily see what a difference it would make in the situation of the vast majority of our Negro population. Gone would be the restrictions as to opportunity and the feeling of diffidence that is ground into the Negro almost from the moment of birth; gone would be the insistence on a Negro quarter and the reluctance of the blonder portions of the population to associate with their darker fellows; and we might then have a group comparable to the white group as it is constituted at present. But to speak of typical Negro characteristics and intelligence, when conclusions are based on studies of a group mixed as largely with whites as the American Negro is mixed, is sheer folly.

How much greater folly, then, is the assumption that there are differences in innate intelligence between the so-called "racial" groups of Europe, which are so much more closely affiliated than Negro and white. We do not distinguish in our official policies between north and south Germans, between the Norman Breton and the Mediterranean south Frenchman, between the blond and dark-haired Scandinavian. Yet we speak as though all Italians were small and dark, and all Germans were tall and blond, and the discrimination becomes one of nationality rather than of race. And the national distinction, it must be admitted, has no meaning at all from any racial point of view. The Alpine may be a peasant type, but the Alpine is not refused admittance unless he happens to be a Polish or Russian Alpine, while the Mediterranean, if he happens to be a Frenchman, is admitted readily along with his northern fellow countryman. The myth of the Nordic is founded on the rationalization that because we are an English-speaking people we are of Northern European blood, and it is being bolstered by rash conclusions drawn from what is often carefully suspended scientific research.

The problem of the selection of the type of person who is to come to this country to live is not one of race, but of individual fitness. And the determination of this fitness is not within our power. One agrees heartily with the statement made by Professor Woodworth some years ago:

"Wisdom would dictate that the nation which is in process of formation should exert some selective influence on its own account, but from all the facts in hand, the part of wisdom would be to select the best individuals available from every source, rather than, trusting to the illusory appearance of great racial differences in mental and moral traits, to make the selection in terms of races and nations."

And "equitable tests of the distinctly intellectual processes are hard to devise, since much depends on the familiarity of the material used." The insidious comparison, between races as between individuals, is always odious, and it is to be hoped that the present craze for the Nordic myth will go the way of all crazes. The problem of who is to settle in this country is a real one; our need is to put it on the economic and social basis where it belongs, and to leave out of it vague hypotheses concerning racial intelligence.

## Let Race Alone

Edward Sapir

We live in an age not so much of science as of scientific application. We are not so much possessed of a philosophic criticism that may be supposed to be born of scientific research as we are urged on by a restless faith in the pronouncements of science. We have made it a religion. It tyrannizes over every moment of our conscious lives and gives us but the most narrow and uncomfortable of margins for the exercise of deeper-lying, intuitive capacities. No sooner do our scientific stokers and manipulators demonstrate the possibility of a certain kind and speed of locomotion than it becomes our religious duty to sanctify the possibility into a solemn, interminable line of automobiles. No sacred procession leading its victim to the stake was ever moved by compulsions more austere than those which dictate to us our pleasures and our griefs.

But the "scientific" spirit leads to more serious ailments than such sacrificial tropisms as these. Man is not so constituted as to be either willing or able to submit his dearest problems to the uninspired decisions of science. One wearies of standing in line in its age-long waiting list. And too often, when patience has been rewarded by a hurried consultation at the oracular wicket, the answer is dim, cryptic, even meaningless. It is doubtful if Delphic maid was ever more discreet than science. What happens when we cannot or will not submit our case to this deity of ours and are yet persuaded that it is the voice of science that we should carry away with us is precisely what happens today, a thousand times over. We answer *for* science, we take the echo of our prejudice for its own unprompted opinion, drop out of the waiting list, and come away exultant with our happy confirmations. No age has been free from prejudice, no society, primitive or sophisticated, can do without it, but it is perhaps more particularly our civilized society of today that systematically directs its thinking to the scientific justification of its prejudices. We have neither the firm but pallid courage of science, with its slender retinue of opinions, nor the robust courage of prejudice, but a mixed behavior which affects the serenity of the one and indulges in the antics of the other.

The current wave of race prejudice, which is nowhere more virulent, more systematic, and more dangerous than in certain scientific circles, both real and supposed, is as good an example as we could wish of heated desire subdued to the becoming coolness of technical vocabulary. Race prejudice is no new thing, but it has been reserved for nineteenth- and twentieth-century thinkers, if the word may be applied to the Gobineaus, Houston Chamberlains, and their contemporary like, to smuggle this variety of prejudice into the cathedral service of science and to serve it up with a vigorous Nordic hymnology.

There used to be a time when a Nordic was a rather undistinguished type of barbarian. His strenuous virtues were of some literary value to a Tacitus in need of a cudgel with which to punctuate his moral ideals, but there is no especial reason why we should feel more anxiously impressed by those faraway metaphors and nostalgias than by Chateaubriand's exercises in praise of the noble Red Man. Today the Nordic stands in no need of Tacitus's condescending voucher. To explain fully why so many of us do honestly think that a dolichocephalic Protestant of the Ozark Mountains has greater cultural and biological stuff in him than a dolichocephalic Catholic from the barbarous shores of Sicily, pestered as they are by the ruins of his ancestors'

civilization, would be a task for a cultural historian, a psychologist (with a psychiatric squint), a sociologist, a philosophic biologist, and humorist rolled into one. The tale is much too long and complex for the summarizing. May we modestly suggest instead that the fact of Nordic superiority (“Anglo-Saxon” version) is one of the afterthoughts bred in reflective minds by a chain of events that was set going by the defeat of the Spanish Armada and culminated in the growth of English-speaking America and the development of sea-power and industrialism in England? (Not that the English and their colonial derivatives can be fairly said to represent the Nordic race with measurable purity. This does not greatly matter, for it is essential to the peace of the latter-day scientific conscience to square, with what approximate accuracy it may, a unit born of collective pride, say “Anglo-Saxondom,” with a scientific unit suggested by the measuring rod, say the “Nordic race.”) The scientific of the “fact” of Nordic superiority would seem to lie in the inferential application to selected chapters of history of certain technical ideas on the nature of biological heredity. These were given form by researches on the crossbreeding of different varieties of peas under taken by Abbe Mendel, an Austrian Catholic, it is true, and presumably a member the somewhat inferior “Alpine” race - but one can always learn from one’s inferiors.

Let us, for a perilous moment, overlook the fact of Nordic racial superiority and content ourselves with the mere concept, or whim, of racial superiority in the abstract. What does this concept rest on? On the obvious fact that there are physically contrasting groups of people (the races and sub-races of man), on the presumption that their physical differences are more or less closely associated with significant mental differences, on the observation that certain groups of people (classes, nationalities, or even whole races) have a more highly evolved culture than others, and on the inference that these differences of culture are but expressions of the presumed innate differences in mentality which go with the physical differences. Thus, we observe that a Chinaman is appreciably different in his physical constitution from an Englishman. It is therefore hard to believe that he has essentially the same innate mental endowment as the latter. Moreover, we see, as a matter of fact, that he behaves quite differently from a sensible Englishman. He is not nearly so clever in handling machinery, he has absurd beliefs about his ancestors and rather unappetizing food habits, he has not the right ideas about God, and his music can be called such only by courtesy. Who can doubt that his conduct, both as an individual [212] and as one of a group, stamps him the inferior of the Englishman? And is there any particular reason to doubt that the chromosomes, endocrine glands, and other biological things to swear by that are responsible for his yellowish skin and oblique eyes are also to blame for his un-English and un-American behavior? Books on race do not often present this line of argument quite so baldly or childishly, but I cannot see that I have essentially misrepresented the typical argument for racial inferiorities.

Let us see what happens when substantially the same notions are applied to individuals within a supposedly homogeneous group, say to A and B, both residents of one of our more expensive suburbs, both, in fact, of pure Mayflower stock. A is rather short of stature, has a shortish head (mesocephalic, we will say, with a dangerous leaning toward mere brachycephaly), and has brown eyes which are habitually animated by a shrewd twinkle; as for his cultural attainments there is little to say except that his chief recreation is poker and the telling of obscene jokes, that he believes the Kaiser caused the great war, and that he is useful to society because he

sells hats. B is very different in both anatomical and cultural respects. He is a fine example of a six-footer, has a head that any physical anthropologist would spot at once as dolichocephalic (index 70), and his eyes are as blue as the sky. He seldom smiles—whether because his ideas are too weighty or because, as his friends suggest, he cannot bring them into action quickly enough to see the point of a joke. He is very cultured, reads only literature above the level of the Saturday Post, and, if the truth must be told, teaches one of the “ologies” at a major university. A and B rarely speak to each other, though the bosom of each swells to the same pride of nationality.

Now for method. It is easy to see that these individuals belong to utterly distinct types of humanity. Dare we call them “races”? Why not? A belongs to a short, brachycephalic, brown-eyed “race,” the technical name of which is left to the reader’s imagination. This “race” is rather poorly endowed, not merely because we can hardly believe that any brachycephal is capable of prolonged mental concentration but because the proof of the pudding is in the eating. Any man that wastes his time on poker has patently childish notions about the mainsprings of contemporary political action, and gets no higher in the world than selling hats (we forgot to mention that A sells hats on a moderate scale) is distinctly inferior to professor who plays chess, who knows that the Kaiser was not the only one responsible for the war, and who confines his reading to the very best that this weary world produced. A’s “race” is inferior to B’s. If observation is worth anything it tends to prove that short, brown-eyed brachycephals (even mesocephals) cannot expect to rise above the poker-playing, hat-selling stage, while dizzier heights are reserved for tall, blue-eyed doliocephals. If eugenists had their way we fear that they would not hear of A’s children marrying B’s.

And now A’s friends and the higher critics of the philosophy of race rush to the rescue and let loose a furious volley of destructive remarks. It is not possible to set down all of these remarks, but here are some of them. A is as good a man as B; in fact, his is the keener intellect by nature. There are plenty of brachycephalic professors and any number of dolichocephals who sell hats. The attempt to associate A’s and B’s physical appearances with their respective innate mental endowments and these in turn with their cultural tastes and habits is all rubbish. The human gamut of moron to genius can be recruited equally well from the totality of sellers of hats and from the totality of professors, or does this gamut fail to appear when the principle of selection is dolichocephals or brachycephals or tall or short people or blue-eyed or brown-eyed people or any combination of these physical traits. Furthermore, we are told that A sells hats and plays poker not because he was born wrong but merely because his breeding was not as well-baked an undertaking as B’s. It is the old story of cultural setting as the all-important factor in the external development of the individual; and the equally old story, less often remembered, of the irrelevance of the external cultural behavior of an individual for close inferences as to his inherited mental endowment. On due reflection we find ourselves moved by the arguments of the higher critics. We are so much drawn to them, in fact, that we forthwith declare the following principles to be sound and, so too speak, self-evident. First, that it is vain to look for correlations between the major physical characteristics of man (such, in fact, as are being habitually used to define “race”) and mental endowment; second, that any selection of individuals on normal physical grounds will include samplings of all grades of innate ability; third, that what is

ordinarily called “culture” is the result of historical and environmental factors that are in essence independent of race, in its proper biological sense, and that it does not proceed, in any intelligible fashion, from inherited mental qualities as such.

At this point some of the higher critics take alarm and raise protests. It is all very well, they maintain, to pooh-pooh the physical and cultural differences between A and B, but you can't be so generous when you are talking about a Negro or a Chinaman. There the physical differences do count and the cultural ones too. But why? What difference does it make to Nature and the machinery of chromosomes if we pull A under cover of the “Nordic race,” say, and announce that he is merely at the tail-end of a distribution curve and not really a racial alien to B at all, but deny that statistical privilege to an “Alpine” from southern Germany or a Jew Hindu or Chinaman or Negro? There are greater and less differences in physical and cultural respects between individuals and groups of individuals, but if the kind of leap that is typified by the passage from A to B is declared non-significant for inferences as to natural endowment, then I cannot see that the greater leap from the group that includes both A and B to the mass of individuals known as Jews or Chinamen does justify such inferences. To find that Nature makes racial correlations (as to physical appearance, mental endowment, and culture) but that it refuses to make closely parallel subracial correlations after a certain point can hardly be explained otherwise than on the principle of the “projection” in nature of what has formulated itself in the observing mind and desiring heart.

At best we know tantalizingly little about human heredity. The selection of particular traits, both physical and, especially, mental, as “desirable” is hopelessly subjective. The attempt to make of such “desirable” traits a matrix for the development of a culture prejudged as “desirable” is unphilosophic and uninformed by the facts of history. In dealing with nature we are always arguing without our host; in dealing with culture, scarcely less so. [213] If human culture has shifted its geographical center so frequently without serious loss to mankind as a whole and if the physical history of man is crowded with, indeed consists of, wholesale amalgamations of varying types, we would seem to be needlessly alarmed about the racial and cultural future. It cannot have been such a bad regime that for a few hundreds of thousands of years has managed to bring intact to us of today both man the animal and his steadily evolving culture. Why should we try utterly new methods because a number of well-meaning and patriotic scientists are in the habit of philosophically misinterpreting the larger bearing of some Mendelian experiments?

A little learning is a dangerous thing. The reasonable man will feel about all the race talk that it is an exceedingly muddled affair. He will adopt for his practical policy the maxim, “Let race alone.” That is, he will try to act as though, for cultural purposes, race did not exist. He will do his level best to act courteously to individuals of all races and he will pay them all the compliment of assuming that they are essentially similar in potentiality to himself and his like. A healthy instinct will tell him that whatever be the alleged facts about race, it is ethically debilitating to raise it as an issue, because in so doing he shifts the emphasis from the individual to collective chimeras of one kind or another. If he is in some measure mistaken about the matter, he will be robust enough to prefer to go wrong with the classical and outmoded thinkers of the Age of Enlightenment than further wrong with the truculent and romantic race-mongers of today.

And if the worst comes to the worst, he can always fall back on those childhood prejudices, which, he may be sure, he has never wholly eradicated and which, if he is an unmarried Nordic, will probably prevent him from dragging the first Negro woman he meets to the hymeneal altar. Even the reasonable man is irrational enough to hang on to what stores of prejudice he possesses under cover of philosophic innocence. Only, being reasonable, he much prefers his prejudice “straight.” He does not like the adulterated scientific variety.

## **You Nordics!**

By Konrad Bercovici

It is unfair to divide the world into Nordics and non-Nordics. It has never occurred to Jews, Gipsies, Ethiopians, Latins, Chinese, Indians, and a hundred other nations, or races to band themselves together and proclaim their superiority. The Nordics made this division.

What entitles them to the cry of “better than thou”? The God the Nordics believe in is not one of their own creation. He is the modified Yahveh of the Hebrews. The prophet the Nordics believe in is not born from their midst. They may paint Jesus of Nazareth with blue eyes and reddish blond beard, but He and Joseph and Mother Mary were not of Nordic origin. Christianity was brought to the Nordics on a silver platter, after the non-Nordics had proclaimed it and suffered for it.

In the hands of the Nordics Christianity has been robbed of its beauty and mysticism, and become transformed into a financial and social institution of oppression and censure. It hardly bears any resemblance to the religion of Paul and Peter and the martyrs of Alexandria and Rome. Should the Savior now drive the merchants from in and around His temple the churches would be as empty as the caverns of the catacombs. We non-Nordics have given the Nordics their God, their prophet and their religion.

Unable to create a God and formulate a religion of their own, have they laid the foundation of the sciences? Astronomy is based on the observations of the shepherds of Arabia and Mesopotamia. Chemistry and physics have the same non-Nordic origin. Mathematics, geometry, the division of weeks and months and years have the same non-Nordic origin as God, religion, and the prophets.

The Phoenicians were the finest architects and laid the foundations of navigation. Explosives were invented by the Chinese. Steel was discovered by the Damascene. [289] Cannon were first used by Mohammed. Had it not been for the Egyptians and the Greeks, we would still call for the Shaman when ill. And because the secret died with the Egyptians we do not begin to know their varied embalming processes. Religion and science rest on foundations laid down by non-Nordics. One of the virtues claimed by the Nordics is a talent for good government — not only ability to organize a people but a faculty for allowing themselves to be organized into compact groups. What they call good government has its immediate origin in Rome. Roman roads and Roman laws are the models on which all is patterned, and Rome learned much from the conquered Egyptians and Greeks.

Civilization means, presumably, greater happiness. I am yet to be convinced that Nordics are happier than other races and nations. Their life is legislated and their pleasures are decreed and interfered with to a degree unknown by other peoples. Good government has become compulsion and the suppression of the individual.

I have traveled with gipsy folk, the most downtrodden and persecuted race in the world. They are the least affected by Nordic civilization; the least affected by Nordic standards, Nordic morality; the least affected by the Nordic way of life and cultural values. It is because the Gipsies

are so little affected by all these artificial values that they are the happiest and healthiest and most fecund of races.

Wherever we happened to be we were like a laughing red flame against the grayness and the coldness of our surroundings. The laughter and gaiety in one small group of a hundred Gipsies could not be equaled by groups a thousand times their number of Nordic origin.

If civilization is to be measured in terms of happiness then the Gipsies are the most civilized human beings. They do not pride themselves on good government, nor are they pliant to organized drills as the Nordics are.

They are not good citizens. They are not obedient workers. They are happy, healthy, and fecund. What healthy man or woman does not secretly admire their freedom! It is they who have brought lay music, orchestral music, to Europe. That one gift to the world outweighs all those of our Nordic friends. The Nordics have done to music what they have done to religion: they have professionalized it—as they have professionalized love and laughter, by marriage and comedies.

Nordics have established their supremacy over the world by no spiritual quality that they possess, but by ruthlessness and force. Ruthlessness and force are perpetuated by ruthlessness and force. Spiritual qualities perpetuate themselves by themselves. Like begets like.

No order established by force has outlived the beauty of the bas-reliefs on Egyptian monuments, of Greek sculpture, of the Bible, of the Veda, of the Song of Solomon, of the Sermon on the Mount, of the Iliad and the Philipics, the plays of Sophocles and the wisdom of Euripides.

The American Nordics speak of assimilation. But what they mean by assimilation is other than what they want us to believe. The Nordic maniac considers a people civilized in the measure in which it has imitated his external way of life. Imitation of Anglo-Saxon life, masqueradery instead of cultural contributions, is what they want of all the peoples. They clamor that we bury our past, deny our present, and kill our future; and, bending our necks, promise henceforth to attempt to be as good as they are, that we may in a few thousand years reach their level of culture and accomplishment.

The most injurious and mendacious insult to the different populations of the United States are the tests of intelligence from which conclusions are drawn by those who want to legislate out of the country on the ground of unassimilability all non-Nordic elements.

Hundreds of thousands of Italians in this country were imported by contractors years ago, when pick-and-shovel men were needed to build the roads and lay the tracks from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from east to west and north to south. The contractors and the steamship agencies who induced these laborers to leave their land and home deliberately and purposely sought out only the lowest cultural element from Italy. Not only were they not anxious to get intelligent people, literate people, to come to this country; but the stupid and the illiterate were considered more valuable for the purpose. Then similar types were brought in from Poland and Hungary.

Ohio and Pennsylvania, the Mesabi ranges, West Virginia, are populated with tens of thousands of these people, drawn from the least intelligent class of their population, are known here as “hunks.” They were once considered a wonderful lot of “best” people, a great asset to this

country, because they worked hard for low wages and gave no trouble. Now our Nordics try to deduce from tests of the intelligence of people brought here because of their lack of intelligence the intelligence of the nation and race they belong to.

I remember what happened to me when I came to this country. The boat was full of illiterate immigrants from every part of the world. When the immigration officers looked over the shipload, they passed them one after the other without much ado. Their horny hands and broad shoulders were their passports. When my hands and my shoulders failed to pass such examination I was brought before a board of inquiry, questioned and questioned again for several days before they decided to let me in.

There were two other friends of mine on the same boat. One has since become known as one of the foremost writers of his country. The other is a great sculptor. They were both rejected at Ellis Island. They had fine heads and longish hair, and their fingernails were neatly trimmed. They looked too smart. They did not fit for pick-and-shovel work. I wonder whether they might not have proved as valuable to this country as all the laborers who had been shoved in so easily.

In the many years I have lived here I have mingled with people of almost every race and nation in this country. I have traveled through almost every State of the Union, and have mixed with people of the “inferior,” “Alpine” type. These non-Nordic elements have added untold wealth to the country. In Massachusetts the Poles and the Italians are reclaiming abandoned farms, formerly owned by Nordic farmers, that have lain abandoned for years. Where everything seemed dead and decayed a few years ago it is now flourishing and bearing fruit. Where the underbrush had invaded fallow fields until they looked like forests of dwarf growth, children of Italian and Polish parents are now plowing and seeding. In Michigan the “Alpines” have reclaimed tens of thousands of acres of cutover land which was formerly not only unproductive but a great danger, because of forest [290] fires. In New Jersey and in Connecticut, in Arkansas and in Texas, in California and Arizona and New Mexico the non-Nordic element has reclaimed millions of acres of land.

Farming as conducted in this country is based on the labor of the children. It could never have been put on a paying basis unless the children of the families had worked as hard as they do. The Nordics abandoned the farms because they limited the number of children in their families. The non-Nordic elements can exist on the farm only because their children work; just as the previous generations of Germans and Anglo-Saxons existed on the farm because their children worked.

The farm may be the proper place for children and the proper place for grown-ups, but while work on the farm develops the body it does not develop the cultured intelligence. Farm life does not contribute to better education. The foreign farm element in this country has been drawn from the same class of people that were imported as laborers. The children born of them, living with them, in isolated communities in which the elders are uneducated, have neither incentive nor opportunity for education.

But is education a measure of intelligence? Is not fitness for the particular task one has set himself to do a better measure? When one can see that the net is missing in a picture of a tennis court does that prove one can do anything else with one's mind? I wonder how many people who

could answer satisfactorily the Binet-test questions would be able to tell how tomatoes grow. How many of them would know the difference between hay and straw?

Civilization, intelligence, is a capacity for happiness — the amount of laughter, love, and joy in life one is capable of. In capacity for happiness we non-Nordics have it all over the Nordics. We are having a much better time in life. Where does the Nordic go when he wants to amuse himself, when he desires to let go and have some fun in life? To Cairo, to Alexandria, to Paris, to Rome, to Venice, to Constantinople. Where are the treasures of art and the sources of joy to be found — in the Scandinavian countries or in the Latin ones?

And why have the Nordics the world over settled on that part of the globe where there is neither warmth nor sun, where the grape does not hang heavy from the vine?

## **Our Nordic Myth-Makers**

By Hendrik Willem Van Loon

My friend Bill returned from Europe with a noble war record and a game leg. He deserved a holiday and went to his folks in Missouri to recuperate. Six days later he was back. I asked him what the matter was.

“Hell,” said Bill, anticipating “What Price Glory” by four years.

“What was the trouble? Did they want you to tell them about the war?”

“Much worse. They insisted upon telling me all about it.”

“That must have been interesting. And how much did they get straight?”

“Well, they knew that Europe lies due east of the United States. Beyond that, their information was a bit hazy.”

“Why didn’t you tell them?”

“Tell them? I tried to tell them. Tried hard. But the moment I opened my mouth, they called me a liar.”

“How could they when you had been there and they had not?”

“Their minister had read about it in a magazine.”

Then I took Bill tenderly by the hand and conducted him (for this was in the Maryland Free State) to a glass of beer. Neither of us is particularly fond of beer, but three percent of alcohol on such occasions is better than none.

This unfortunate Nordic business is on a par with my friend Bill’s adventures.

It happens that personally I am Exhibit A, the one and original 100 per cent Nordic, and that my people had bowling alleys in this part of the world years and years before the Puritan started his regime of spiritual Schrecklichkeit on the bleak shores of that stretch of water which my esteemed ancestors naively called the North Sea and which later generations call Cape Cod Bay.

If that were not the case, I would probably be requested to go back to the ghetto whence I came. For the dissenter upon the subject of the Nordic theory is the heretic of the year 1924 and “haereticos comburi” is still a favorite sport with many people ardently believe in free speech, provided the opinions expressed by their adversaries do not clash with their own prejudices.

Let me interrupt myself and get one point clear before I proceed to the next.

I have no fault to find with those learned doctors who have presented the world with the strange theory of white superiority. The more clashes of opinion, the merrier. But I will call them all the names Brother Sumner allows us to use in public when they proclaim that their “guess” is an established fact, accepted by all the professors of anthropology, and when they use their own pet prejudice to stir up a general racial war.

It has been my fortunate fate to live in some fourteen countries under a dozen different forms of government. And I have spent the greater part of my waking hours these last forty years trying to discover something about that curious mammal which God, in His almighty mercy, allows to continue on a planet which it has so terribly defiled by its greed and cruelty. But I have come to the conclusion that the world today is quite as much at sea regarding the true nature of race as it was a generation ago. The only conclusion we seem to have reached is this: that without exception every nation (using the expression in the sense of little bits of green and purple and yellow and blue blotches upon a map) is composed of good and bad and indifferent citizens, that good Chinamen and good Danes and good Papuans are good Chinamen and good Danes and good Papuans, and that bad Chinamen and bad Danes and bad Papuans are bad Chinamen and bad Danes and bad Papuans.

In short, it is apparently becoming more and more clear that all generalities about race are misleading and that they will continue to be misleading until we shall know a lot more about the last million years than we do at present. Meanwhile, it is respectfully suggested that we make the best of the unpleasant muddle which has been presented to us and do some watchful waiting at the cradle of humanity.

It is the accursed fate of the "true liberal" to be an object of pity and detestation to both radicals and reactionaries. The Pfefferkorns (look Johann up, my friends, he is worth a little study) who are at the head of Ye Olde Anglo-Saxon Buncombe Shoppe, have by this time cross-indexed me as a German, a Bolshevik, a Turkish, and a Flemish menace. They have omitted reference to my previous state of servitude because they have it on excellent authority that I was forced to "flee from Holland at the tender age of sixteen for participation in a plot to abduct the Princess Juliana." As the poor child was then still fourteen years in abeyance the dates seem a bit vague. But as Paul said to Peter, "What are a few miracles between friends?" Or, what is the truth between patriots? And so we proceed to the next chapter to, wit, the radicals.

They, too, have their grievances. I am not truly one of their number. I only look it because I am addicted to red neckties and profanity. But in my heart of hearts I harbor violent racial prejudices, and I have been heard to say that I feel really most at home when I am with my own color, sort, and variety of people and that I have little faith in the future of those societies which want to arrange indiscriminate Sangerfests for Moors, Eskimos, New Englanders, and Russians. I answer [350] that I have a grievance against both sides, because they are both utterly self-conscious of race and make a terrible fuss over a matter which ought to be very simple. Whatever hopes I may have for the future of the world, I am obliged to live in the present, and for the present (so it seems to me) we shall be best off if we establish our internationalism upon a basis of polite nationalism.

The Middle Ages lived according to that principle and on the whole managed very nicely. You were a Venetian or a Finn or a Cypriot, and you carried your Venetianism or your Finnism or your Cyprioterity with you wherever you went and wore a fez or embroidered slippers or a red silk cape. Then, having established the fact that through the accident of birth and climate and rainfall and diet and religious bringing-up you were different, you forgot about it and enjoyed yourself in

such company as was yours to enjoy the time being. Because you could be openly conscious of your foreignness you need not pretend that you were secretly unconscious of it. And it made the business of living amicably with one's neighbors a great deal easier.

Now all that has been changed and as a result we have the great Nordic myth. It is a godsend to many people. It gives the progeny of beer-drinking peasants a chance to lord it over the progeny of a wine-drinking peasantry in the name of certain racial doxologies which bear the same relation to Truth as the autobiography of a Russian statesman. It flatters the pride of our Babbitteria Rusticana and it incites the village idiots of New England or California to think themselves infinitely superior to their hard-working Japanese and Portuguese neighbors.

Please understand me. I might disapprove of a society which boldly proclaimed "We hate to see fellows with brown skins; we are against citizens with Hittite noses; we shall never accept as our equals those not conceived in original gin but born among the smiling vineyards of the Mediterranean lands." I might disapprove of such an association. I might deeply regret that some of our fellow-citizens were quite as narrow-minded as all that. But this is a free land. Each one of us is entitled to his own opinion provided, therefore, that these good folks did not come and trample upon my private preserves, they could hire every hall in Greater New York for the propagation of their ideas.

But let them be honest and let them explain that they are grinding their own little axes and that they are not engaged in furthering a scientific solution to the world's manifold difficulties. What harm can it do them to speak out openly? The French Government will give them a decoration just the same. The Sulgrave Institute will see to it that they are invited by at least two earls, no matter what they have printed. The Roosevelt family will send them copies of Papa's latest book, regardless of consequences.

I repeat, let them have the courage of their convictions and join the KKK. That excellent organization, with all its mummery, is entirely open and aboveboard. "We want all the business we can get," so it proclaims, "and we don't want to hustle in competition with Niggers and Jews and Catholics."

That, at least, is plain English.

## Can There Be a “Human Race”?

By Alexander Goldenweiser

In the days when the social mind was aglow with the woman suffrage issue I often wondered which side I liked least: the *pro* arguments were boring, the *con* arguments stupid. Even so it is with the race issue today. The vociferations for race inequality are as stupid as those for race equality are boring; sides are taken on the basis of temperament and not of fact and logic. The “arguments” for and against are but thinly disguised rationalizations.

The only justification for this article is an honest intent to face realistically the situation as it confronts us today.

First, then: Who are the races whose fate it will be to share the world in the future? The North American Indian is out of the running. Fragments of the once virile and poetic stock still linger on in a state of degeneration and dejection. But their days are counted. In the words of the Iroquois sage: “Another generation and our customs and beliefs will be memory, still another generation and they will be forgotten.” Will the Indian of South America fare any better? I doubt it. The mechanisms for dismembering the primitive civilization and devitalizing it bit by bit are too busily and powerfully at work.

The natives of Australia, here and there, have preserved enough of their age-long culture to feed endless anthropological controversies, but its life-blood has flowed out. Like the creeks of the Australian desert these cultures have lost their way in the hot sands, never to reach the ocean of world civilization. So it is with the once picturesque and voluptuous cultures of the islands of the South Seas. They have been weaned of the sea that conceived and nurtured them; descendants of the darling Argonauts of yesterday are happy to run the cars of rich Americans in Hawaii, while the ancestral cemeteries lie heavy with their human burden, dead “from lack of interest,” to use the bitter words of the late Rivers. Civilization came to them like a thief in the night; it carried off their arts, their dreams, and their play. It took their freedom, killed their imagination, and gave them work. The children of nature were bored and — died.

The “white man’s burden” has been lightened. Some of our charges, tortured even unto death by the grim tutelage, are no more.

But there are others. The Mongol of Central and Eastern Asia, the natives of India and Arabia of the South and the West, the Negro in Africa and America — these are not dead or dying. More prolific than ever, they seem, on the contrary, to be quickened with new spiritual energy. Henceforth they will be our historic comrades. Shall we accept them as teammates, harnessed with us to the chariot of history, or shall we persist in forcing them to do the pulling while we wield the whip of race pride and domination — perhaps only to be ourselves driven someday?

Such is the issue, and the choice still lies with us.

We are wary and suspicious. Perhaps this is as it should be. When one is about to choose one’s teammates for the historic journey, it may be well to remember the fable of the swan, the lobster, and the fish, who once agreed to pull a chariot together. When the time came to begin the swan soared toward the sky, the fish made for the nearest stream, while the lobster beat a retreat.

What have they done, then, in the past — the Mongol, the Indian, the Arab, the Negro — and what may they be expected to do in the future? And what have we done in comparison and what may we be expected to do?

One can not estimate achievements without standards, and standards are based on values. What, then, are the values of civilization least affected by time and place and circumstance? Art, craft, skill, imagination, play. Also, common sense, knowledge, wisdom, and creative thought. Also, friendliness, friendship, mercy, love, sincerity, self-restraint, honor, courage, social living together, peace. In the light of history, written and unwritten, tradition and lore, these basic values of humanity and civilization are common to us all. We have recognized these values, and have lived by them; if some of us, at one time or another all of us, have also broken them, who is there to throw the first stone?

But we may go a step further: What contributions have these peoples made to the treasure-trove of human achievement?

Where does the Mongol stand? He has conceived and perfected wonderful art, an art of color, form, movements and spiritual depth, an art sired by the folk and brought forth by individual creators of singular freedom and originality. He has nurtured philosophy of sublime common sense which comes nearer than any of its compeers to purified intellectualized expression of the wisdom of life itself. He has, in ancient China, exalted the ideal of an educated man as the one best fitted to guide the young and [463] steer the state in its arduous course, He knew and taught the art of meditation in the exercise of which man faces nature, life, and his own soul in a spirit of supreme earnestness and humility, unaffected by the currents of prevailing opinion, unmindful of the trivialities of fashion.

Where does the Indian stand? His is the field of family crafts in which skill and love are mated to produce a simple and craftsman-like thing. His also is an architecture not all his own, nor as finished and harmonious as some, but highly elaborated, intricate, and impressive. In one of his great philosophies he has thought of karma, the law of cause and effect in life, which makes man, for once, the master of his fate. He stands alone among those who have wrestled with ultimates, in so far as he has dared to conceive of nirvana, non-existence, not as something to be feared or disguised by fictions but as something to be desired and welcomed, not a disaster but a culmination. He also has exhibited, in precept and act, the highest ideal of spirituality yet attained by man, a state of being in which the mind stands master over the body even to the threshold of annihilation.

And where does the Arab stand? In art he also is the peer of any. In his architecture intricate design and countless colors fuse in matchless decorative splendor. The Arab gave curves to the art of building whose haunting beauty will never fade. His is an architecture and an adornment breathing the life not of the spirit but of the flesh, with all its ardors, cruelties, and exaltations.

But the Arab did more. He bestowed upon mankind the delightful virtuosity of his mind, expressed in fable, proverb, fantastic tale, riddles, and intricate games. Nor may we forget the centuries when Europe, sorely in need of spiritual stimulation, fed upon Arabian poetry, wisdom, and philosophical inventiveness. As to religion, the Arab developed one great system which was not lower than the highest in sagacity, insight, and imaginative appeal.

And the Negro, how does he stand? Here some will be inclined to pause. A new and unfamiliar phase of history seems to lie before us. New colors, in a men and things, strange and less congenial meanings, queer tunes and bewildering rhythms in song and dance and life and thought. But it is only the ignorant who will thus be inclined to pause. Nor is it necessary to take recourse to fantastic and puerile claims. For within the limit set him by past history the Negro has done well by civilization. He has learned to till the soil, to cultivate plants, breed cattle and tend herds; he has developed and elaborated varied industries, wood-carving and basketry, pottery and ivory sculpture. He shared with the natives of Peru and Yucatan the skill of smelting metals, and the bronze castings of Benin belong to the highest ranges of timeless art. Like others, he revels in song and dance, with their festive and ceremonial excrescences, but he stands alone among the “primitives” in the profusion of devices for producing musical sounds by blowing, percussion, and vibrant string. The principle of the sounding board was familiar to him, and he made the first timid advances toward orchestral synthesis. Science, of course, he did not have, but instead, a highly complex theology which, although negligible as an approximation to truth — what religion, Buddhism alone excepted, is not? — is yet admirable as a daring thrust into the realm of the unknown, inexplicable, and awful. The legal and political systems of the African Negro have a strangely modern flavor and — one might perhaps add, seem least attractive where they are most like our own. His elaborate court procedure includes the institution of witnesses, the business of his state is carried on by a bureaucracy of executive and exacting officials, and among his leaders in the arts of war and statecraft there are figures of truly “historic” proportions who would not look out of place in any of our own galleries of great personages.

Where, finally, do we stand? In art, religion, philosophy (apart from its scientific ingredients) we have done as well as some of the others but not better. In the art of social living we have put forward high-sounding claims, but what is the net result of our “progress” in terms of richness of life, human happiness, fairness of social relations? Democracy? Yes, but is it not, historically speaking, but a reaction against despotism and aristocracy grown insufferable? We have conceived it and set it going as an institution but with results so unsatisfactory to date as to be disheartening. Primitive kinship, oligarchy, autocracy, aristocracy have all worked better within their limits and ideals than does democracy. The most that can be said for it is that it may have a future. Surely our claim of superiority cannot rest on this.

But there is another and firmer ground for the claim — science. In this one domain our historic record stands supreme. A tremendous accumulation of knowledge, theoretical and applied, consisting of objective data, classified and categorized, exact measurement, critical method, applications of these to the control of natural forces and to the mechanical aspects of social life, as in medicine, sanitation, industry, means of communication, and so on and on.

In order to see all this in a proper perspective it must, however, be remembered that these achievements are but of yesterday, that invention breeds invention, that the creative work is done by a few and that but a few pass it on and develop it further; that the vast majority are satisfied with a mere shell, the external results, and accept these passively, unreflectingly like other traditional baggage; that, moreover, no new spiritual values are involved, no wondrous quality of the mind unknown elsewhere and in other cultures; and, finally, that science and all that goes with it can be taught, as is amply attested by the Japanese.

The spirituality of the Hindu, the humanity and rationality of the Chinese, the exuberance of the Arab, the colorfulness of the Negro could not strike root so readily in exotic soil.

The credentials are on the table. In this small company, at least, the unity of man in attested capacity cannot be disputed. Shall we accept them as equals—the Mongol, the Indian, the Arab, the Negro—as road-fellows in the adventure of history? Who knows? But who can doubt that we should?

Of all the crimes of the mind, optimism is the least invidious. Let us try to be optimistic, then, and trust that some day these races of today and tomorrow will find themselves in position to accept human brotherhood as an accomplished fact. They will have mated freely, done commerce fairly, lived peacefully, created unselfishly. In a reminiscent moment they will have a good-natured laugh together over the Nordic myth and other human follies, and they might heave a regretful sigh over their brothers who perished by the roadside — the American Indian, the Australian, the South Sea Islander. What splendid fellows they would have made, to live with, to teach, yes — and learn from!

## **The Race Myth Crumbles**

By Harry Elmer Barnes

*More and more we are coming to recognize the fundamental importance of race in human affairs... It is about the liveliest, most practical subject that can engage the attention of thinking men and women today...*

*Especially do we need to regard the racial factor when considering Europe... Whoever begins looking at Europe from the racial angle is astonished at the new light thrown upon its problems, at the apparent mysteries that are explained, at the former riddles that are solved. Europe's seemingly tangled history grows much simpler, while present-day conditions become more understandable*

- Lothrop Stoddard, 1925

### I

The racial phobia of the last three-quarters of a century, which has reappeared with a new virulence since 1916, has based much of its dogmatism upon an appeal to pseudohistory. Hence, it is curious that the critics of this monstrosity have rarely made a systematic appeal to the facts of substantial history to refute the contentions of writers from Gobineau to Chamberlain and Grant. The origins of the race myth must unquestionably be sought in vestiges from the primitive aversion-complex exhibited toward strangers, symbolized by the old phrases of Jew and Gentile, and Greek and Barbarian. In its modern form it first took shape with the theory of the eighteenth-century Romanticists with respect to the reality and the dominating importance of national character as the basis and matrix of the culture and institutions of any country. It was given a particularly forceful statement by Fichte in his famous "Addresses to the German Nation" in 1807-1808, where he stated that perhaps the most precious element in the German heritage and culture lay in the German language or *Ursprache*. The emphasis of Fichte and others the importance of language in national character helped to produce the enthusiasm which created the origins of modern scientific philology in the notable works of the brothers Grimm, Max Müller, and others.

These philological researches stimulated interest in the study of the languages and institutions of Europe and Asia. The establishment of a relationship between the Eur-Asiatic languages was due primarily to the work of Bopp, who published his "Comparative Grammar" in 1835. During the next generation much important work was done in the way of investigating the origins, migration, and affinities of these so-called "Aryan" languages. It soon came to be rather commonly maintained that a primordial Aryan race lay back of these linguistic similarities and identities. In fact, Max Müller himself, though he later repudiated this position, confirmed this popular impression by holding that the Aryan languages were spoken by an Aryan race, hence supporting the current popular view of the identity of language and race. This false assumption of linguistic and racial unity would not by itself, however, have furnished the basis for the racial

psychosis. What was needed was a vigorous statement of the cultural supremacy and historic mission of particular races. This indispensable impetus was supplied in the famous "Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races" by Count Joseph Arthur de Gobineau, published in 1854. He contended that practically all of worthwhile cultures of the human past had been the product of the white race, and that most of these significant civilizations had been specifically the work of the Aryan branch of this [516] superior white group. He also maintained that race mixture was a highly degenerating process. After Gobineau's time, therefore, it came to be regarded as a matter of great pride and significance to prove that one's nation was made up of the worthy Aryans.

At first this gave rise to relatively little nationalistic chauvinism in Europe because it assumed that the broad similarities among the European languages, with the exception of Basque and certain of the Turanian dialects, meant that the overwhelming majority of all Europeans, within whatever national boundary, were thoroughbred Aryans. This benign illusion was, however, soon demolished by a number of Germanic writers, particularly J. G. Cuno (1871), Theodor Pöschke (1878), and Carl Penka (1883). These writers proved convincingly that the assumption of the identity between race and language was highly fallacious. A fairly well-unified race like the American Indians has more than a hundred distinct stock languages, while obviously different races may, due to cultural pressure and historic associations, speak the same language. Hence it was apparent that not all Europeans were necessarily Aryans, and from the eighties onward there was a feverish effort on the part of writers in every state to prove themselves to be the only hundred percent Aryans and their neighbors of inferior non-Aryan clay.

It has frequently been held that Teutonic writers were the only ones who succumbed to this fanaticism, but such a view is purely a product of modern propaganda. As an actual matter of fact, every state had its group of writers who interpreted national culture on the basis of racial superiority due to the Aryan heritage, England and France quite matching the Teutons in this respect. Such interpretations not only found expression in the obsessed writings of Houston Stewart Chamberlain, Maurice Barr and Rudyard Kipling, and other essayists, but also in the nationalistic historical literature which held a supreme place in historical writing until near the close of the nineteenth century, being represented by such works as those of Droysen, Treitschke, von Sybel, Michelet, Martin, Kemble, Stubbs, Freeman, and other writers who are only slightly less distinguished and widely read.

The Nordic myth is but a later variant of the Aryan myth. There is a direct line of descent from Gobineau to Madison Grant. Many "Gobineau societies" were founded in Germany and elsewhere in the last half of the nineteenth century. One of Gobineau's most enthusiastic disciples was a renegade Scotchman, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, whose "Foundations of the Nineteenth Century" marks the transition from Aryanism to Nordicism in Germany. His work was carried forward enthusiastically by Ludwig Woltmann. This eulogy of the Teutonic or Nordic type was introduced into America on the same level by Alfred P. Schultz, an open admirer of Gobineau, Chamberlain, and Woltmann, who published his "Race or Mongrel" in 1908. Madison Grant's "The Passing of the Great Race," which first appeared in 1916, was based upon the assumptions of the above works, but adopted a far more specific physical conception of the Nordic race, abandoning the rather loose and mystical attitude of Chamberlain. Grant's views have been adopted, debased, and disseminated in such works as Gould's "America: A Family

Problem” and Burr’s “America’s Race Heritage,” until now Mr. H. J. Eckenrode has offered a “serious” interpretation of the American Civil War which is based primarily upon the assumptions of Nordicism.

## II

While this racial obsession was taking its most vigorous form, scientists were patiently assembling the data which were to reveal with pitiless thoroughness the fundamental inaccuracy of all of the assumptions which underlay the racial interpretation. An American student, W.Z. Ripley, built upon the researches of European scholars a comprehensive work on the races of Europe, which demolished the theory that there ever was any such thing as an Aryan. The term Aryan was shown to be applicable, if at all, only to some linguistic traits common to certain peoples of Europe and Asia. Above all, Ripley, Sergi, and others demonstrated beyond any possible doubt that the Teutonic peoples certainly could not have been of Asiatic derivation and could not have been the original bearers of the Aryan languages and culture. If there is any such thing as a definite Aryan language and typical Aryan institutions, it is the consensus of the best anthropological opinion that they must have been brought into Europe by the round-headed Alpine or Eur-Asiatic race. In other words, the Nordics could not have been Aryans. The term “Indo-Germanic,” used as descriptive of a unified race or culture, is thus a scientific absurdity in spite of the fact that it crops out in so recent an historical work as the third volume of “The Cambridge Medieval History.” Indeed, it is still in common usage among many conventional historians, particularly Teutonic and English historians. It may be regarded as roughly accurate to use the term Indo-European as broadly descriptive of the Alpine race. It certainly not be used in any historical or scientific sense as referring to either the Mediterranean, the Nordic groups, and, hence, not as descriptive of all the leading races cultures of ancient India and modern Europe.

When one turns to examine, in the light of the most rudimentary and self-evident facts of human history, the thesis that all the striking cultures and civilizations of the past have been a product of the Nordics, the whole structure of racialism immediately falls to the ground. The fallacies in a Nordic interpretation of the great cultures of antiquity were demonstrated at length in the convincing article of Professor J. J. Smertenko in the Current History Magazine for April, 1924. We here shall content ourselves with passing in review the chief historic civilizations and indicating the essentially non-Nordic basis which underlies almost every one of them.

All the leading civilizations of Oriental antiquity were, for practical purposes, one hundred per cent non-Nordic. The European heritage that came from Egypt and Western Asia, which has recently been so forcibly and clearly described by Professor Breasted, was absolutely devoid of any Nordic foundations. Further, we must revise the ordinary notion that the arena of human civilization has been limited to the area between the Tigris and the Thames. In most respects, aside from science and material culture, the civilizations of China and India may well be held to be more advanced and mature than those of the Occident. That they are of non-Nordic derivation would scarcely need to be pointed out even to Stoddard and Grant. The high civilization of the ancient Aegean was likewise a Mediterranean culture without any Nordic admixture whatever. To pass on to classical times, there was only the merest sprinkling of Nordics in the racial composition of ancient Greece and Italy, as Peake, Sergi, and Guiffrida-Ruggeri have amply

demonstrated. Certainly, the Nordic element in classical [517] culture, if present at all, was sufficiently slight to be almost entirely negligible.

The highest culture of the Middle Ages was not to be found in Western Europe but in the Eastern or Greek Empire and among the Moslems of Northern Africa and Spain. The contrary view has become popular solely because of the grotesquely misleading nature of our conventional textbooks on medieval history, which concentrate their attention, almost without exception, upon the Christian culture of Northwestern Europe during the medieval period. The Moslem culture was, of course, entirely non-Nordic, and there was but a small Nordic minority among the peoples that maintained the Byzantine culture to the final conquest by the Turks in the middle of the fifteenth century. Even the civilization and institutions of medieval Europe in the West, as Jullian, Fustel, and others have proved during the last generation, took their departure, not from the crude and primitive Teutonic institutions of the Goths or Franks, but rather from the Nordic appropriation and assimilation of the Gallo-Romanic culture of Italy and Roman Gaul. Even in apolitical and military sense no strong case can be made for Nordic supremacy during the medieval period. The strongest national monarchies of the Middle Ages were those of France and England, while the Holy Roman Empire remained throughout the medieval era a loose and weak organization. We now know that medieval France was pre-dominantly non-Nordic, and that the non-Nordic element was certainly as large as the Nordic in medieval England, which was not “swept clean” of the Celts during the Germanic invasions.

The facts of history constitute more of an indictment of the political ability of the Nordics than a demonstration of their unusual capacity in this field. The most striking political organizations of early modern Europe were the despotisms of Spain and Bourbon France, while the Central European and Scandinavian countries remained politically backward and loosely organized. The Germanic states continued as the “weak sister” in the political family of Europe down to the period of Bismarck’s statesmanship following 1860. If one were to accept for a minute the thesis of the racial determination politics, European history since the fall of the Roman Empire would constitute about as effective a case as one could hope to erect for the relative political incapacity of these very Nordics, whose unique political force and subtlety has been argued by the whole school of writers from Droysen and the Maurers to Stubbs, Freeman, Fiske, Herbert Baxter Adams, and Burgess. Of course, the sane historian will disregard the racial interpretation of political history as a whole, and understand that, in all probability, the political backwardness of Germany was caused by certain specific historical situations and accidents of an ecclesiastical, geographic, and economic type.

In the case of England and our country the race myth has been that variant of the Nordic obsession known as the “Anglo-Saxon Myth.” It was based essentially upon the contention that most of the unique political virtue of the Nordics migrated from Germany with the Angles, Saxons, Jutes, and Danes, and took up its abode among the Nordic immigrants to the British Isles, who were supposed to have cleared this area of the fickle and decadent Celts. The American version of the Anglo-Saxon myth contended that the best in the Anglo-Saxon political genius likewise left the British Isles during the period of the colonization of America. It came to fruition in the township government of New England and, on a larger scale, in the Federal Republic established in 1787. The researches of physical anthropologists and cultural historians

have demonstrated both the racial and institutional fallacies in this theory. England, after the Germanic conquests, remained certainly as much non-Nordic as Nordic. The United States has been from the colonial period a most mixed population. Finally, most of the institutions which are looked upon as primarily “Anglo-Saxon” were in few cases derived from Germany at all, but have been the result of the interaction of historic forces and situations more or less uniquely English or American.

It is scarcely necessary to call attention to the manner in which the demonstrable racial mixture in the historic nations of Europe rules out as utterly impossible the thesis of the racial determination of European history. Even if we were to grant, for example, that the culture of Germany or the culture of France is unique and the product of a definite racial basis, shall we assign this culture, in the case of France, to the Nordics of the Northeast, the Alpines of the Central portion, or the Mediterraneans of the South; in the case of Germany, is her culture primarily the product of the Nordics in the North or the Alpines in the South? That there is no basis whatever for the assumption of Jewish racial unity or purity to give aid and comfort to either Zionists or anti-Semites was admirably shown by Professor Roland B. Dixon in the article which he contributed a couple of years back to *The Nation's* series on the Jewish problem. Even if we could feel sure, which we certainly cannot, that there is any important relationship between race and culture, the hopeless mixture of European races since the Neolithic period would, then, most assuredly brand as nonsense any attempt at a racial interpretation of the history of the various European states. This fact can probably be driven home by a concrete illustration. There is no better than the following summary by Karl Pearson of the racial heredity of Charles Darwin, long pointed to as physically and mentally a typical Englishman:

[“] He is descended in four different lines from Irish kinglets; he is descended in as many lines from Scottish and Pictish kings. He has Manx blood. He claims descent in at least three lines from Alfred the Great, and so up with Anglo-Saxon blood, but he links up also in several lines with Charlemagne and the Carolingians. He sprang also from the Saxon emperors of Germany, as well from Barbarossa and the Hohenstaufens. He had Norwegian blood and much Norman blood. He had descent from the dukes of Bavaria, of Saxony, of Flanders, the princes of Savoy, and the kings of Italy. He had the blood in his veins of Franks, Alamans, Merovingians, Burgundians, and Longobards. He sprang in direct descent from the Hun rulers of Hungary and the Greek emperors of Constantinople. If I recollect rightly, Ivan the Terrible provides a Russian link. There is probably not one of the races of Europe concerned in folk-wanderings which has not had a share in the ancestry of Charles Darwin. If it has been possible in the case of one Englishman of this kind to show in a considerable number of lines how impure is his race, can we venture to assert that if the like knowledge were possible of attainment, we could expect greater purity of blood in any of his countrymen? [”]