MYTHS AND MEASUREMENTS OF RACIAL SUPERIORITY

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For more than half of a century anthropologists, sociologists, philosophers, travelers, explorers, missionaries, and, more recently, journalists have been discussing the question of race differences and their significance. They have brought forth much data to support more or less preconceived notions of racial superiority. Anthropologists and other students of races generally agree that the various races of man present evident and measurable physical differences. They are not in agreement, however, on the interpretation of these observable differences. On the one hand there are those that correlate them with variations in mental and moral endowments of an hereditary nature. They say, for example, that the capacity for intellectual attainment is as much determined by heredity as is the capacity for height, and that this capacity varies with races as well as individuals. Races, they assert, may change their religions, their forms of government, their mode of industry, and their language, but underneath all these changes they continue the physical, mental, and moral capacities and incapacities of their hereditary endowment.¹ On the other hand there are those among anthropologists and ethnologists who hold a dissenting view. Franz Boas, the outstanding members of this group, denies any correlation between anatomical differences and mental capacities.² He holds that the human mind is essentially the same everywhere, and that the differences manifested by races are those of degree and not of kind, and are due to cultural and environmental differences.³

The problem of the significance of racial differentiation becomes important when we consider the conse-

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¹ Wm. McDougall Is America Safe for Democracy, 1921, p. 52.
² Franz Boas The Mind of Primitive Man, 1911, p. 245.
quences which a definite point of view may produce. Of those who accept the theorizing of the first group the "imperialists" stand out. The attitude they have towards the indigenous population of colonial possessions is often translated into activities which may be justly summed up in the word "exploitation." The imperialists usually maintain, and sincerely too, that they bring a worthier and superior civilization to the so-called backward and inferior races who inhabit the territory possessed. Their rationalization of conquest, military or otherwise, is based on the assumption that the conqueror's "great mission" is to spread a superior civilization and a higher culture to other parts of the world, and if necessary to force it upon less fortunate and weaker peoples.

The doctrine of racial superiority which the imperialists use as a justification of territorial aggrandizement in unexploited areas is also invoked by elements within a nation in the settlement of domestic problems such as race, citizenship, and immigration. The policy, for example, of the education of the two major races in the United States is to a large extent dependent upon the attitude, scientific or otherwise, regarding their racial differences. In order to justify further the 1924 quota basis of immigration our legislative halls in Washington rang loud with the cry "We must not let the hordes of inferior stocks from South European countries swamp us." Our newspapers and periodicals at the same time were full of the doctrine of the superiority of the Nordic over the Alpine and Mediterranean stocks.

Now it can rightly be said that there has never been a race, people, nation, tribe, or clan, however large or small, that did not assume an inherent and unquestionable superiority. An exaggerated "ethnocentrism," as Sumner calls it in his "Folkways," is a human characteristic. 4 The

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4 "Ethnocentrism is the technical name for this view of things in which one's own group is the center of everything, and all others are scaled and rated with reference to it. ... Each group nourishes its own pride and vanity, boasts itself superior, exalts its own divinities, and looks with contempt on outsiders. ... the most important fact is that ethnocentrism leads a people to exaggerate and intensify everything in their own folkways which is peculiar and
idea of a "chosen people" has never been completely monopolized by any one group. Many have directly or indirectly laid claim to it. The claims of the ancient Hebrews are of long standing, while those of France, England, Germany, and of every other country were in evidence before the World War and considerably more so during the War.

In order to substantiate their claims of superiority various race myths have been conveniently and oft unwittingly supplied by poets and novelists as well as by learned scholars in the field of philology and anthropology. In Europe the most important, because it later became the basis of subsequent race theories, was the Aryan myth. It was a by-product of the philologist's search for common root words in the languages of mankind. As it happened, in 1788 Sir William Jones advanced the contention that Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, German, and Celtic all sprang from one common parent language. His contention went no farther. But later philologists and scholars assumed that a primitive unity of speech implied also a primitive unity of race. It is questionable whether this notion would have had the consequences it did had it not been taken up by the famous German philologist, Professor Max Müller. In a "Lecture on the Science of Language," delivered in London in 1861, he not only spoke of an "Aryan race" and an "Aryan family," but also gave them a definite place in the world both in time and space. They were, he said, "a small clan of Aryans settled probably on the highest elevation of Central Asia, speaking a language not yet Sanskrit or Greek or German but containing the dialectical germs of all." Historically he assigned them a time "before the ancestors of the Indians and Persians started for the south, and the leaders of the Greek, Roman, Celtic, Teutonic, and Slavonic colonies marched towards the shores of Europe."\(^5\)

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It was this one picturesque paragraph which caused so much mischief, distorted facts, and permitted erroneous conclusions. Also, it was very unfortunate that it should have been uttered by a great scholar whose high reputation was responsible, in the main, for the tremendous impression made by these crude assumptions. In vain did he try in his later work, "Biographies of Words and the Home of the Aryans" written in 1888, to repudiate his earlier public utterance. In vain did he insist that he uses the word "Aryan" as a general term for the speakers of such languages. "Aryans are those who speak Aryan languages, whatever their color, whatever their blood. In calling them Aryans we predict nothing of them except that the grammar of their language is Aryan." . . . "I have declared again and again that if I say Aryans, I mean neither blood nor bones, nor brain nor skull; I mean simply those who speak an Aryan language. The same applies to Hindus, Greeks, Roman, Celts, and Slavs. When I speak of them I commit myself to no anatomical characteristics. . . . To me an ethnologist who speaks of Aryan race, Aryan blood, Aryan eyes and hair, is as great a sinner as a linguist who speaks of a dolichocephalic dictionary or a brachycephalic grammar." 6

The repudiation of his early erroneous assumptions did not in any way retard the growth of numerous nationalistic "race" theories which had an Aryan basis. His notion of an original Aryan race came at a time when it was of peculiar significance to be of the Aryan race. It was about that time that the Comte de Gobineau's essay on the "Inequality of Human Races" was being used by the various European nations to bolster up their claims to the hegemony of Europe. This was an essay to conjure with. Briefly, the basic notion of Gobineau's theory postulates a hierarchy of races—the white, the yellow and the black. Each differs from the other two in strength, beauty, and intelligence. The only characteristics in which the white race is inferior to the other two is in the baser

physical passions. The white peoples "are gifted with reflective energy, or rather with an energetic intelligence. They have a feeling for utility, but in a sense far wider and higher, more courageous and ideal than the yellow races; a perseverance that takes account of obstacles and ultimately finds a means of overcoming them; a greater physical power, an extraordinary instinct for order, not merely a guarantee of peace and tranquility, but as an indispensable means of self-preservation. At the same time, they have a remarkable, and even extreme, love of liberty, and are openly hostile to the formalism under which the Chinese are glad to vegetate, as well as to the strict despotism which is the only way to govern the Negro.

"The white races are, further, distinguished by an extraordinary attachment to life. They know better how to use it, and so, as it would seem, set a great price on it; both in their own persons and those of others they are more sparing of life... At the same time, they have discovered reasons why they should surrender this busy life of theirs, that is so precious to them. The principal motive is honour, which under various names has played an enormous part in the ideas of the race from the beginning. I need hardly add that the word honour, together with all the civilizing influences connoted by it, is unknown to both the yellow and the black man." 7 Gobineau preached the inherent supremacy of the white race. His claim being that history "shows us that all civilizations derive from the white race; that none can exist without its help, and that a society is great and brilliant only so far as it preserves the blood of the noble group that created it, provided that this group itself belongs to the most illustrious branch of the species," 8 the most illustrious branch of the white race being none other than the Aryan. According to Gobineau, civilization without the Aryan element is not to be thought of as even possible.

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Gobineau lists "ten civilizations" that have existed in the world and the peoples that have created them. This list summarises his book:

I. The Indian civilization, which reached its highest point around the Indian Ocean, and in the north and east of the Indian Continent, south-east of the Brahmaputra. It arose from a branch of the white people, the Aryans.

II. The Egyptians, round whom collected the Ethiopians, the Nubians, and a few smaller peoples to the west of the oasis of Ammon. This society was created by an Aryan colony from India, that settled in the upper valley of the Nile.

III. The Assyrians, with whom may be classed the Jews, the Phoenicians, the Lydians, the Carthaginians, and the Hymiarites. They owed their civilizing qualities to the great white invasions which may be grouped under the name of the descendants of Shem and Ham. The Zoroastrian Iranians who ruled part of Central Asia under the names of Medes, Persians, and Bactrians, were a branch of the Aryan family.

IV. The Greeks, who came from the same Aryan stock, as modified by Semitic elements.

V. The Chinese civilization, arising from a cause similar to that operating in Egypt. An Aryan colony from India brought the light of civilization to China also. Instead however of becoming mixed with black peoples, as on the Nile, the colony became absorbed in Malay and yellow races, and was reinforced, from the northwest, by a fair number of white elements, equally Aryan but no longer Hindu.

VI. The ancient civilization of the Italian peninsula, the cradle of Roman culture. This was produced by a mixture of Celts, Iberians, Aryans, and Semites.

VII. The Germanic races, which in the fifth century transformed the Western mind. These were Aryans.

VIII-X. The three civilizations of America, the Alleghanian, the Mexican, the Peruvian.
Of the first seven civilizations, which are those of the Old World, six belong, at least in part, to the Aryan race, and the seventh, that of Assyria, owes to this race the Iranian Renaissance, which is, historically, its best title to fame. Almost the whole of the Continent of Europe is inhabited at the present time by groups of which the basis is white, but in which the non-Aryan elements are the most numerous. There is no true civilization, among the European peoples, where the Aryan branch is not predominant.

In the above list no Negro race is seen as the initiator of a civilization. Only when it is mixed with some other can it even be initiated into one.

Similarly, no spontaneous civilization is to be found among the yellow races; and when the Aryan blood is exhausted stagnation supervenes. (pp. 211-212.)

The exaggerated and ill-balanced picture drawn by Gobineau was taken indifferently at first even by those predisposed in his favor. The anthropologists of his time did not take him seriously. Nevertheless, though he was not held in high regard in France, the country of his nativity, his fame spread, largely through the efforts of his German friends. With Wagner, Schemann, Ammon, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Houston Chamberlin for admirers, it is not at all surprising that Gobineau achieved so great a fame across the Rhine. He became in their eyes a prophet and the first man to annex on behalf of the Aryan race the discoveries of Sir William Jones and others in the field of Indology and philology. With the growth of his fame came his tremendous influence upon the nationalistic “race” theorists of Germany, England, France, and every other country in Europe. From the Aryan myth sprang offshoots like the Teutonic myth in Germany, the Anglo-Saxon myth in England and America, and more recently the Nordic myth, especially in the United States.

From Gobineau’s notion that the Aryans were a superior race and natural rulers of the earth it became a matter of vital concern to ascertain who really composed
this "chosen race." Hence arose a great controversy, each
nation on the European continent claiming for itself a
monopoly of Aryan blood. The ground in Germany was
already well prepared for the fruitful sowing of the
fertile imaginings of Count de Gobineau. A metaphysical
conception of the state and a mystical philosophy of
historical development were already well established in
German thought. The state was looked upon as an instru-
ment for the expression of divine purposes, while patri-
otism was elevated to a religion. Fichte found in the
pages of history "the German nation the only one capable
of true patriotism and true religion and hence endowed
with a special divine mission in the revelation of the soul
and purposes of God to humanity."\(^9\)

Thus German intellectuals were well prepared for
the acceptance of the Gobineau conception of an original
Aryan race which alone possessed the genius for civil-
ization and a destiny to rule the world. Instead of be-
coming a purely Aryan cult, however, in Germany
Gobinism developed into a Teutonic cult. The most
vigorou and complete expression of the Teutonic myth
is found in the works of Houston-Stewart Chamberlin,
poet-musician-philosopher, Germanized-Englishman, son-
in-law of Richard Wagner, and ardent admirer of
Gobineau. In his "Foundations of the Nineteenth Cen-
tury," by far his most influential book, published in 1899,
he starts out fully imbued with the doctrine of Gobineau
and equally well convinced of its validity. His argument
was that since the Aryans are superior to all other races
and that since the Germans are the only true Aryans, it
logically follows that the Germans must be the superior
people.\(^10\) At that time it was necessary to have as many
justifications as possible for the great urge to acquire
colonies, to partition Africa, and for imperialistic pene-
tration into the Near and Far East. Not that these

\(^10\) Two German scholars, Theodore Posche, in 1878, and Karl
Penka, in 1888, declared that only the tall, blue-eyed, fair-skinned
German race with abundant beard and dolichocephalic skull were
genuine Aryans in blood.
notions were the direct causes of any overt act of imperialism. They were secondary rationalizations designed to justify actions. The conviction of racial and national superiority was one means of justification, and Germany was not the only nation in Europe to use it. The consciousness of inherent superiority and the awareness of existence of a "divine mission" to spread the fruit of this superiority to the rest of the world when once aroused in a people is a sufficient cloak to cover cruelty and inhumanity, territorial aggrandizement, and military as well as economic conquest of other peoples. Justice is not only blind, but deaf, dumb, and altogether helpless when once this consciousness is awakened.

Chamberlin won a wide reading public in Germany with his theory that "true history begins from the moment when the German with a mighty hand seizes the inheritance of antiquity." The genius of the earth he claims to be German. Dante's face strikes him "as characteristically German." And St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians he considers a "document in which one fancies one hears a German speaking who was exceptionally gifted for the understanding of deepest mysteries." He does not definitely decide whether Christ was a German or not, but he is so sure that the founder of Christianity is not a Jew that he is willing to call anyone who may differ from him in this consideration, as either ignorant or dishonest.¹¹ Kaiser Wilhelm was so pleased with Chamberlin's book that he appropriated 10,000 marks to further its distribution.¹²

Just as in Germany scholars, men of letters, and historians played an important rôle in the development of the Teutonic myth, so in England men in the same professions played a like part in creating the Anglo-Saxon legend. From Kremble's "The Saxon in England" (1849) down to Homer Lea's "The Day of the Saxon" (1912), the imperialism of Rudyard Kipling, and "The Origins and Destiny of Imperial Britain" by Professor J. A.

Cramb (1900 and 1915) the materials are accumulated for the building up of a "belief in the transcendental doctrine of a special Anglo-Saxon mission in the world."\textsuperscript{13} The advocates of the Anglo-Saxon myth accept the general doctrine of the Teutonic notion that the highest type of civilization rests primarily upon a Germanic basis and that the Teutons, distinctly superior to the Celtic, Latin, and other races, were destined to rule the world. It differed only in that it assumed the English people to be composed of pure Anglo-Saxon stock, which is more purely Teutonic in race and institutions than any other people.\textsuperscript{14} The English scholars, while admitting the superiority of the Teutonic people and their essentially Aryan descent, claimed for themselves the purest form of Teutonic blood—Anglo-Saxon.

A most absurd yet interesting theory has been advanced that the British people in the United Kingdom, its colonies, and the United States, are the racial descendants of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel. This theory, known as the Anglo-Israelite Theory, is fully set forth in a book called "Philo-Israel." The connection is made through Scythians and Saxons, a premise which is deemed by careful students to be utterly unsound. M. L. Streator in his book "The Anglo-Alliance in Prophecy; or The Promise to the Fathers"\textsuperscript{15} attempts a defense of this theory which is, however, destitute of scientific value. Nevertheless, the theory is still flourishing in the United States and England. This is evidenced by "a newspaper item of July 2, 1925, announcing the call by Reverend George McGuinnis . . . of a convention of all Anglo-Saxons who believe themselves descendents of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel. This convention met at Waunita Springs, Colorado, August 15-18. It was announced that there was a similar federation in England with 2,000,000

\textsuperscript{13} F. H. Hankins, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 160-161.
\textsuperscript{14} Charles A. Beard, in \textit{The Rise of American Civilization}, Vol. 1, 1927, p. 17, has an interesting comment to make on this particular assumption.
\textsuperscript{15} M. L. Streator, \textit{The Anglo-Alliance in Prophecy; or the Promise to the Fathers}, New Haven, 1900.
members with Lord Gisborough as president and Princess Alice, a cousin of the King, as chief patron. The Announcement also stated: ‘The Anglo-Saxon federation will have for its object the federation of orthodox Christians of all denominations who believe the Bible to be the inspired word of God, to promulgate the belief that Anglo-Saxons are the descendants of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel; to prove that this race was chosen of God to rule land and sea; to restore the sanctity of the Christian faith, the observance of the Sabbath and reverence for the word of God, and to demonstrate to Anglo-Saxon people the privileges and responsibilities attached to them by reason of their descent from Israel.’” 16 In other words, we have here a complete steal from the Jews of the old Hebraic notion of a “chosen people of God” fantastically linked with the notion of Anglo-Saxon supremacy.

The old but still serviceable Aryan myth plus parts of the Teutonic and much of the Anglo-Saxon doctrine has been combined into the very latest and in this country the most fashionable myth under a brand new title. The Nordic myth which gained prominence in the United States in the past decade confuses a term which anthropologists used in order to describe an ideal type of European stock (based on the combination of several traits such as stature, hair- and eye-color, and head shape) with the notion of a separate and distinct race having a physical basis, a historical past, and a destined future of greatness entirely its own. The chief exponent of the Nordic idea in this country is Madison Grant, a New York lawyer, who, with the warp of Gobineau’s doctrine and the woof of Chamberlin’s racial mysticism, wove the Saga of Nordicity into a book “The Passing of the Great Race or the Racial Basis of European History.” 17 His followers, Lothrop Stoddard in “Rising Tide of Color” and “Racial Realities of Europe,” Charles W. Gould in “America, A Family Matter,” Clinton

Stoddard Burr in "America's Racial Heritage" have done equally well in combining fact, fiction, and fancy to arrive at conclusions that fit their predilections. They all have accepted the Gobineau doctrine that the white race is the superior race, and that only one stock of the white race has kept its pristine purity and that this stock possesses all the essential qualities that go to make a great civilization. When this stock permits itself to be infiltrated by the blood of less endowed branches of the human family, then its doom is sealed. The doctrine of Gobineau and the elaborations of Houston Chamberlin are accepted in toto, only instead of making this pure and well endowed stock the Aryans or Teutons, the American race theorists make them out to be Nordics. It is the Nordics that founded this country, the Nordics that have created its civilization, and only Nordics can perpetuate the Anglo-Saxon ideals of liberty, liberal institutions, common law, and the principles of democratic self-government. Civilization in Europe and America is safe as long as the blue-eyed, blond, fair-skinned, long-headed, tall Nordic maintains his purity by not mixing with the dark-eyed, dark-complexioned, dark-haired, and short Mediterranean or the short, stocky, blond, hazel-eyed, and round-headed Alpine. We must, therefore, shut our gates to the flow of immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe whence most of the Mediterraneans and Alpines come. The inundation of Nordic America by Mediterranean and Alpine Europe would spell the decay of our great civilization. Thus runs the Nordic refrain. So far has it gone that H. J. Eckenrode in his book “Jefferson Davis—President of the South,” published in 1923, considers the Civil War as a struggle between the Nordics of the South and the Nordics of the North. The Southern Nordics made a heroic effort to keep the whole Nordic race from going under, but it lost. The result of that war is to be deplored, because “the victory of the North meant the predominance of the non-Nordic elements in American

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18 Leif Ericson's discovery of America is given much more weight by devotees of the Nordic cult than are the claims of that Mediterranean, Christopher Columbus.
Life.” That the North became more non-Nordic was due to the numbers of non-Nordic immigrants that settled among them. “The Chief result of the Civil War was the ruin it brought to the Nordic race in America.”\(^{19}\) The failure of Jefferson Davis meant that “with him faded the last hope of the Nordic race.”\(^{20}\)

Of all the hitherto considered notions of racial differentiation and race superiority none are more than the spinnings of “easy-chair” philosophers, poets, journalists, and scholars imbued with a tense nationalistic spirit. As already stated, the idea of an Aryan race of flesh and blood, a pure Anglo-Saxon race, a pure Teutonic race, or pure Slavic or Latin race is highly mythical. In the first place, it has been shown by such students of the subject as Franz Boas, A. A. Goldenweiser, Robert H. Lowie, Frank H. Hankins, Jean Finot, that the myth of the “Aryan race” was a phantasy which grew out of racial prejudice and was based on the study of languages.\(^{21}\) Its

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\(^{19}\) Quoted by F. H. Hankins, *op. cit.*, p. 223.

H. J. Euckenrode *Jefferson Davis—President of the South*, 1923, p. 361.


\(^{21}\) In a criticism of Arthur, the Count of Gobineau, J. M. Hone, writing in the *Contemporary Review* (Vol. 104, 1913), brings to light a point which leads one to consider the motives which may have led Gobineau to write his *Essai*. According to Hone, Gobineau was a race-mystic whose work was the result of the ramifications of the Romantic Movement. It appears that the origins of the Gobineau family, although reputable, were not highly aristocratic. This being the case, young Arthur of Gobineau then set to work, like many another romantic, to produce noble ancestors for himself regardless of cost. In the dim past he finds one Odin, god of a race called Yuglingas, and Ottar Jarl, a son of this race, to be his earliest ancestors. Ottar Jarl, a Norwegian pirate, established himself, sometime in the ninth century, at Bray in Normandy, and founds the feudal house of Gurnay, or Gobineau.

“In a letter to Mme. Wagner, December, 1880, he states that the *Essai* was written in consequence of researches begun on the history of his family and that it was written in part to prove scientifically the superiority of his own race.”—(F. H. Hankins, p. 49.)

Jean Finot also questions Gobineau’s motives and his qualifications as a scientific inquirer. “For him (Gobineau) indeed it was only a matter of bringing his contributions to the great struggle against equality and the emancipation of the proletariat. Imbued with aristocratic ideas (did he not even impose upon his contemporaries his own genealogical tree, the ramifications of which extended to the first Vikings who invaded France?), he thought it
pseudo-scientific basis came from philology. Community of languages was accepted as evidence of community of race. Nothing could have been more erroneous. The accumulated data of modern ethnology and comparative philology show the utter impossibility of identifying race with language. The fallacy of linking race and language becomes obvious when one considers the historical fact that peoples have at times adopted the language of the conquered and at other times the language imposed by the conqueror. In the second place, a pure race is non-existent. Ripley completely and convincingly proves the hopeless mixture of all the European races.\textsuperscript{22}

Therefore, for a more dispassionate and scientific point of view concerning race differences and their significance we must turn to the facts presented by the anthropologists and the ethnologists of more recent times. In order to judge the comparative worth of the various races, a number of standards or tests of superiority have been set up which roughly may be classified as physical, cultural, and mental. Now what are these tests? How reliable are they as indicators of superiority or inferiority? To take the physical or anatomical test first: it is assumed that if a race in its anatomy is proved to approximate that of the apes, then that race is lower in evolutionary rank and hence is inferior to the other races in physical and mental make-up. But what are the facts? Very contradictory. In one aspect the Negro is more simian, in another the Mongolian, and in still another the Caucasian. For instance, the prognathous jaw, receding forehead, broad and low nose of the Negro is much nearer to the ape than the straightness of jaw and forehead, prominence and narrowness of nose found in the Mongoloids, and to a greater extent among the Caucasians. Therefore, in this particular trait the order of classification would be Ape, Negro, Mongolian, Caucasian. “With ourselves at one end

\textsuperscript{22} W. Z. Ripley \textit{Races of Europe}, 1900.
and the monkey at the other, the scale somehow seems right. It appeals and seems significant. Facts of this sort are therefore readily observed, come to be remembered, and rise spontaneously to mind in an argument on race differences.”

There are other characteristics, however, that conflict with the above arrangement. One of the most conspicuous differences between man and ape is the hirsuteness of body. But of the three major races it is the Caucasian that is the most hairy, while the Mongoloids and Negroids are more smooth-skinned. Thus the Caucasian is to be ranked next to the ape in the evolutionary scale if this one feature is the criterion. Or take the matter of texture of hair. Here there is another order of arrangement. The straight-haired Mongoloid is nearest the apes. The wavy-haired Caucasian comes next. The woolly Negroid least resembles the ape. The length of head hair is another trait in which man differs very definitely from the apes. In this instance the relatively short-haired Negro comes next to the monkeys, followed in order by the Caucasian. The long-haired Mongoloid is farther removed from the simians. This order is reversed when color of lip is the test. “The ape’s lips are thin and grayish; Mongoloid lips come next; then those of the Caucasian; the full, vivid, red lips of the Negro are the most unapelite of all.”

Thus it is evident that the facts do not warrant the classification of human races as superior or inferior in so far as they are measured by the closeness of resemblance to the apes.

Among the cultural tests is the one advanced that the capacity of a race for adoption, adaptation, and improvement of civilization be used as a criterion of racial superiority and inferiority. That is to say that any race which is incapable of civilization is an inferior race. In history there are records of races and peoples that have proved themselves capable of adopting civilization; of

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others that have deteriorated when surrounded by it; and of still others that have perished when they came in contact with it. It is assumed, for example, that the nomadic Teutonic hordes which swept into Central Europe were inherently of a superior type, for when they came into contact with the more advanced civilization of the Romans, they not only adopted it, but even improved upon it. The same conclusion is drawn regarding the Chinese and Japanese. It is only recently that they came in contact with European civilization and their adoption of it is indeed rapid. According to this test they are of a superior race. However, when this criterion is applied to the Negro he is held to be inferior both to the white and the yellow races. It is said that he is, especially in the United States, surrounded by a superior civilization, and that he has not adopted it nor improved upon it, but that only by his highly imitative nature has he been able to adapt himself to it. And if this test be final, the Melanesians, Polynesians, and the Indians of America will have to be set down as of an inferior type. They cannot meet the requirements of civilization. They die out or stagnate in its presence.

Such a test of racial superiority, however, cannot be perfectly well established. All the factors that enter into it are so complex that it is exceedingly difficult to judge its fairness. For instance, how the various races happened to come in contact with civilization is a matter of no slight importance. The primitive Germanic hordes conquered the Romans and only after a rather long period of time had elapsed did they adopt, and never wholly by any means, the civilization of the vanquished. Conditions might have been entirely otherwise with them had they been the conquered group. The manner, however, in which civilization was brought to the Polynesians, Melanesians, the American Indians, and the Negro was entirely different. Here they were the conquered group, and their first contact was mainly with the evils of civilization. It was imperialistic greed, diseases peculiar to the Europeans, rum, and European weapons that wrought havoc
with them. Besides, they were in most instances enslaved to the demands of their white conquerors for the exploitation of the natural resources found in their habitats. Therefore, to come to any definite and clear cut conclusion regarding the inferiority or superiority of a race on the basis of this test is extremely difficult. The test of adoption, adaptation, and improvement of civilization cannot be considered a final one.

At the basis of much of the discussion of racial differences has been the tacit assumption that those races most advanced in civilization were superior races. And likewise it was assumed that civilization was Western civilization. Those people who possessed culture were people of superior mental worth, and here, too, culture meant Western culture. To avoid this evident bias it is suggested that not Western nor Oriental civilization be considered as a test but civilization conceived as being the ability of man to ascertain, control, and manipulate the forces of nature to his own advantage. This would also include the best utilization of the existing resources, and the power of adaptation to changing environment.

Now what is to be the evidence of this ability? In general the answer is: achievement. But how are the specific achievements of a race to be explained? To what extent are they the result of race, of geographical situation, of environment, of cultural contacts, of historic circumstance? Achievement does not test the inherent capacities, the potentialities of a race. For example, a race living in an environment which is inviting and does not require the use of all ingenuity and great effort to maintain existence would not tax man to his maximum capacity, and hence would allow much of the potentialities for civilization to lie dormant. Similarly in an environment which is at the other extreme, where nature is harsh and niggardly with her gifts, and where man is constantly expending his energies merely to keep body and soul together, the potentialities for an advanced civilization would not be apparent. Or again, a race or a people living in isolation would not benefit so readily from the inter-
change of ideas and the spread of cultural achievement. Those peoples who happened to be living within the path of cultural advance would be the ones to benefit first. On the basis of borrowed elements of culture they could make specific achievements themselves. For the basis of Modern European, especially Western European civilization, we have to go back to the contributions made by the ancient Romans, the Greeks, the Hebrews, the Cretans, the Phoenicians, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Persians, the Chaldeans, the Egyptians, and the earlier peoples with a history beyond tracing. There is no doubt of the debt of Western Europe to the Moors and Arabs who were able to perpetuate much of Greek civilization during the period when Europe lapsed in cultural achievement.

The test of achievement assumes that just because a people is uncivilized today it is an indication that it lacks the potentialities for civilization. That is not necessarily so. The Chinese were a civilized people long before the Europeans, and yet the Europeans who were in a stage of barbarism when China was civilized later proved themselves capable of attaining a stage of advanced civilization. Of course years and years had to elapse in the interim. The ancient Greeks, in the course of a few generations, passed from a state of semi-barbarism to a state of civilization some aspects of which are even yet unsurpassed. "Civilization flourished for some thousands of years in the Near East, and then about the Mediterranean, before it became established with equal vigor and success in Northern Europe. Had Julius Caesar or any one of his contemporaries been asked whether by any sane stretch of phantasy he could imagine the Britons and Germans as inherently the equals of the Romans and Greeks, he would probably have replied that if these northerners possessed the ability of the Mediterraneans they would have long since given vent to it, instead of continuing to live in disorganization, poverty, ignorance, rudeness, and without great men and products of the spirit. . . . . Two thousand years before Christ, a well-
informed Egyptian might reasonably have disposed in the same sweeping way of the possibility of Greeks and Italians being the equal of his own people in capacity. What had the barbarians ever done to lead one to think that they may yet do great things? Today we brush the Negroes and Indians out of the reckoning with the same offhandedness.”

There is no doubt that in the creation of the machine technique and all that goes with it the peoples of Northern and Western Europe have led the world. That is the only aspect of civilization in which they can unquestionably claim supremacy. But this cultural achievement is approximately two centuries old. Against this the peoples of the Mediterranean and Southern Europe have a record of cultural achievement dating back at least six thousand years. It seems evident, then, that it is very necessary to distinguish between actual achievements and the potentialities of a race. At the present time there is no adequate way of knowing to what extent achievement is due to the factor of race, the factor of cultural contacts, or the factor of geographic conditions. All that can be said is that it is the product of all three factors.

More recently attempts have been made to ascertain the inherent capacities of the different races and peoples by the developing technique of psychological experimentation and mental testing. During the World War mental testing, especially in the army, was introduced on a scale unheard of before. The purpose was to find out whether a given individual was fit or unfit for the execution of the various duties to which he was to be assigned. In other words, the army wanted to know whether the particular individual examined would or would not make a good soldier. Similarly they were used to determine many other occupational fitnesses. These tests did not attempt nor pretend to go into the nature of the causes of the fitness or unfitness of any particular racial or national group. The results of these tests have been widely heralded and diversely interpreted. The army intelligence

26 A. L. Kroeber, *op. cit.*, p. 82.
tests rated the Negro below the white, and of the white race the English and American (native whites) above the Latin and Slavic people. This rating was accepted by many as a definite proof of the superiority not only of the white race but of the Nordic branch in particular. Here was psychological evidence of their inherent mental superiority. Professor Carl C. Brigham was so convinced of it that he wrote a book called "A Study of American Intelligence," based on the findings of the army intelligence tests, which gave support to the pseudo-scientific and romantic claims to Nordic supremacy made by Charles W. Gould in his "America—A Family Matter."  

However, when the army mental tests are analyzed it is found that the ratings vary as much with amount of increased schooling, improved earning capacity, larger opportunity and incentive, in short, with social environment, as they do with race and nationality. For example, the Northern Negro far surpasses the Southern in his showing. The New York Negro rated nearly on a par with the Alabama white among the literates (the Alpha test) and a bit ahead of him among the illiterates (the Betanon-language test). All of which indicates "that bringing up in a certain part of the country has as much to do with intelligence (as measured by the army mental tests), even in the rough, as has Caucasian or colored parentage."  

From the unrefined data at present available it is not possible to determine how much the results of mental testing are a measure of innate racial capacities and how much of the environment and social opportunity. In the Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science for November 1928, Professor M. S. Viteles, of the Department of Psychology at the University of Pennsylvania, surveys the results of a number of studies of racial differences in mentality as measured by psychological tests. He finds that "the results of experimental investigations and of certain of these theoretical consid-

28 A. L. Kroeber, op. cit., p. 78.
operations has led to diverse conclusions concerning the nature, the extent and significance of mental differences between the two races (Negro and White).” The range of differences of opinion is illustrated on the one hand, by such statements as “all results show the Negro decidedly inferior to the white on standard intelligence tests,” (by R. Pintner) and “that the differences between Negro and white discovered by practically all investigators represent a true intellectual difference between a superior and inferior race that cannot be explained in terms of dissimilarities in educational and social opportunities” (by Carl C. Brigham), and on the other hand by such statements as “in the light of all available data on the subject of relative racial capacity, the present scholarly opinion must be stated in negative terms” or “The Negro may be the intellectual inferior to the white racial stock, but to date no one has marshalled in proof of the position any body of evidence that has scientific validity.” (by E. B. Reuter) and “the basic hypothesis of white superiority in general social efficiency and innate intelligence is to be greatly doubted.” (by M. J. Herskovits). Professor Viteles concludes with the following statement: “From among these varied conclusions it is possible for anyone interested in the problem of Negro-white differences to choose the one which best suits his particular bias. The varied character of the findings themselves and the difficulties of interpretation suggest extreme caution in generalizing on differences between the Negro and the white.”

But after all, when the various criteria of race superiority and inferiority are carefully considered, it is exceedingly difficult to arrive at any clear cut and definite conclusions. The test of evolutionary rank based upon anatomical resemblance to the apes cannot be established, because of the numerous contradictions it contains. The test of achievement, if an important one, is by no means final—for there are many factors, such as opportunity and historical background, which enter in to complicate matters. The test of civilization is similarly inadequate,
and the same is true of the test of adaptation, adoption, and improvement of civilization. When the technique of mental testing becomes so refined and so perfected that it will be possible to measure not only the achievements of a race but the inherent potentialities, its capacities for achievement, then perhaps there may be established an adequate criterion of racial superiority and inferiority. Even then the question will arise concerning the methods used to determine what potentialities are best and what achievements are superior. At the present state of our knowledge, however, we can only infer superiority and inferiority from the various assumed standards—inferences which are unwarranted from standards which are by no means final. As Professor Kroeber has so aptly put it "... it is a difficult task to establish any race as either superior or inferior to another, but relatively easy to prove that we entertain a strong prejudice in favor of our own racial superiority." 29

29 A. L. Kroeber, op. cit., p. 85.