

# **The Influence of Race in History**

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## I.

Historical studies are undergoing in our day a profound transformation: from being almost exclusively literary but a few years ago, they are tending to become almost exclusively scientific today. From the reading room of the litterateur, they are crossing over into the laboratory of the scientist.

It is not only the progress of modern-day archeology that has given new vigor to our learnings and ideas in history. The discoveries realized in the physical and natural sciences have contributed even more; it is thanks to them that the notion of natural causes is becoming imbued more and more in history, and we are getting used to considering historical phenomena as being subject to laws that are just as invariable as the ones that guide the course of the stars or the transformations of the body. The role that all the historians of old has attributed for so long to Providence or to chance is today only attributed to natural laws, as entirely withdrawn from the action of chance as from the will of the gods. Certain of these laws govern chemical combinations and the attraction of matter; likewise, it is other of these laws which govern thoughts, the actions of men, as well as the birth and waning of beliefs and empires. These laws of the mental and moral world, we often disregard them, but we are never able to elude them. "They operate sometimes for us, sometimes against us," justly noted an eminent historian, "but always the same and without taking heed of us: rather, it is we who need to take heed of them."

Above all, though, it is the progress of the natural sciences that is responsible for the ideas that are beginning to be assimilated more and more in history. They are the ones which, having brought to light the totally preponderant influence of the past on the evolution of living beings, show us that it is the past of societies that one ought to first study in order to understand their present state and ascertain their future. Just as the naturalist today discovers the explanation of living beings in the study of their ancestral forms, likewise the philosopher who desires to understand the origin of our ideas, institutions, and beliefs must first study their earlier forms. Envisaged in this way, history, the interest in which will seem very weak when it restricts itself to the enumeration of dynasties and battles, acquires today an immense interest. Of all the sciences it is bound to be the foremost one, because it is the synthesis of all the others. The sciences that we usually devote ourselves to direct us to figure out and decipher a substance, an animal or a plant. By contrast, history

teaches us to decipher humanity and permits us to understand it; indeed, the human spirit cannot propose any higher and more useful pursuit than this.

The method that the modern-day scientist applies today to history is identical to the one that the naturalist employs in his laboratory. A society can be considered like an organism that is undergoing development. There is a social embryology just like there is an animal or plant embryology, and the laws of evolution that regulate them are of the same order. Animal embryology, in going back step by step in time in the ladder of existence, proves that our earliest ancestors are most closely related to lower animals than to ourselves, and allows us to see how each of our organs has emerged by slow transformations, chosen by selection and accumulated by heredity, from a much coarser organ. We know how the fin of the amphibian became the membrane that sustained in the air the pterodactyl, then the wing of the bird, next the paw of the mammal, and finally the hand of man. *Social embryology*, or, to employ a simpler term, the study of civilizations, shows us 1) the series of the progressions in which the marvelous and complicated mechanism of civilized societies makes its way from the savage state where for a long time mankind maintained itself, and 2) how our ideas, sentiments, institutions, and beliefs have their roots in the earliest ages of humanity. Instead of observing how formerly an abyss existed between peoples who ate their aged parents and those who waste their attentions on their old, crying on their tombs, between peoples who regarded women as lower animals belonging to all members of the tribe and those who have enwrapped them in a chivalrous cult, between those who put to death all their deformed children and those who lodge in magnificent asylums the idiots and incurable, I shall focus on the tight bonds which across the ages have united the most different ideas, institutions, and beliefs. We will discover that today's civilizations have sprung from past civilizations, and contain the germ of all civilizations to come. The evolution of ideas, religion, industry and the arts, in a word, of all the elements which enter into the make-up of a civilization, is just as regular and inevitable as the one comprising the diverse forms of an animal series.

## II.

The factors which determine the birth and development of the basic elements of a civilization are just as numerous as those which govern the development of a living being. Their study has hardly begun today; indeed, one will search in vain for the presence of such a study in most history books. It is nevertheless possible to place in evidence the influence of several of these factors.

Among these factors, one of the most important—perhaps the most important because it represents the synthesis of all the others—is race, that is to say, the ensemble of the physical, moral and intellectual qualities which characterize a people. It is exclusively to the study of its influence that this present paper is being dedicated.

At the moment when the races of mankind first appeared in history, they has in general already acquired fairly stable qualities which could only be transformed very slowly afterwards. The oldest Egyptian bas-reliefs, upon which are found reproduced the diverse peoples which the Pharaohs were in touch with, show us that our present-day large classifications of races may already be applicable to the dawn of history.

Human races, or—to speak in a perhaps more scientific language—the diverse human species which live on the surface of the globe, took shape over the hundreds of thousands of years that have preceded historical times. They undoubtedly formed themselves like all animal species, by means of slow changes produced by natural selection, hereditary accumulations, and the variability of the environment and habitat. But, if we understand the general laws of this slow evolution, we only know the details, a matter which we shall not, moreover, occupy ourselves with here. Taking the wholly formed races, my aim in this paper is to demonstrate the immense importance that the moral and intellectual qualities of the races under the sway of a civilization play in its development. In order to understand the history of peoples, the genesis of their institutions, their morality and beliefs, it is their mental constitution that it is necessary for one to first study.

It is in vain for us to ask of anatomical characteristics, as we have done for a long time, the means to differentiate races. The color of the skin or hair, as well as the shape or volume of the skull, only provide us very rough divisions. Psychology alone permits us to clearly specify the differences that exist between diverse races. It shows us that peoples whose mental constitution is similar will have similar destinies when they are placed in analogous circumstances, even though they might differ very much by their exterior aspect. It is thus that we rightly are able to compare the modern-day English to the ancient Romans. Indeed, there exists an obvious relationship in the mental constitution of these two peoples: same indomitable energy of character, same respect of their institutions (and same disposition to change them slowly and unjoltingly), and same ability to conquer peoples and maintain colonies. From the point of view of the exterior type, there is on the other hand a complete dissimilarity between the Roman with his stocky, robust shape, vigorous and

short profile, bronze skin, dark eyes and hair, and the Anglo-Saxon with his tall, elongated figure, white skin, light-colored eyes and blond hair.

In waiting for the era, probably far into the future, where the progress of the study of the brain will have revealed to us the cerebral differences corresponding to the diverse modes of feeling and thinking, we ought to restrict ourselves to differentiating peoples only by their psychological qualities.

The two fundamental psychological elements that it is always necessary to study in a people are character and intelligence. From the standpoint of the success of a race in the world, character possesses an infinitely greater importance than that of intelligence. Ancient Rome in its decline most assuredly possessed more superior minds than the Rome of the early ages of the republic; brilliant artists, eloquent orators, clever writers appeared here by the hundreds. But, what it did not have were men of virile and energetic character, undoubtedly little mindful of the refinements of the mind, but who were very mindful of the city whose grandeur they had established. When its citizens lost these qualities, Rome was obliged to cede its place to much less intelligent, though much more energetic, peoples. The conquest of the old Greco-Latin world, refined and lettered, by semi-barbaric Arab tribes constitutes another example of the same kind. History, moreover, is full of such examples, and the future no doubt will present others.

From the point of view of the historical development of a people, its character plays a superior role to that of its intelligence. From the point of view of the level of the civilization, it is on the contrary intelligence which is the predominant factor. However, the action of this latter only exercises itself on the condition that it is not merely assimilative, but rather is creative. Peoples who are only endowed with an assimilative intelligence, such as the Phoenicians of old, the Moguls much later, and the Russians of our day, may more or less appropriate for themselves a foreign civilization, but cannot make it progress. It is to the peoples endowed with creative intelligence, such as the Greeks of antiquity and the Arabs of the Middle Ages, that we owe all the general progress that the whole of mankind has profited from, even though the warlike conquests have little benefited but a single people.

It is, in fact, solely to the development of creative intelligence, that is to say, to associate ideas, to perceive their remote analogies and differences, that we owe all the significant discoveries that have been made. It was this faculty that permitted Newton to discover that the falling down to the ground of an apple was a phenomenon of the same kind as the gravitation of a celestial body,

as well as Franklin to recognize the analogy between and electric spark and lightning.

The most superficial observation demonstrates very quickly that the diverse individuals who make up a race differ one from the other by their physical aspect as well as by their moral and intellectual constitution; but, a little more attentive observation soon shows that under these apparent diversities lurk an ensemble of characteristics common to all the individuals of this race, characteristics as stable as the vertebrae in the vertebrates, the ensemble of which constitutes what justly can be called the national character of a people. Whenever we speak of an Englishman, Japanese, or a Negro, we immediately attribute to him—and most often without being mistaken very much—an ensemble of general traits that are precisely a kind of condensation of the characteristics of his race. In acting in this manner, we unconsciously proceed like the naturalist who describes an animal species. If it is a question of a dog or a horse, for example, the characteristics chosen by him will be sufficiently general in order to be applicable to all the possible breeds of dogs or horses, whether it's a matter of a bulldog or a mongrel, a fine racehorse or a heavy plowhorse.

These national characteristics, created in homogeneous peoples by the long-time continuous influence of the same milieu, same institutions, and same beliefs, plays an entirely fundamental role, although invisible, in the life of peoples. They represent the past of an entire race, the result of the experiences and actions of a whole long series of ancestors. Each individual who comes to light brings this heritage with him. During his entire existence, the past life of his ancestors, like a formidable weight, lies heavily upon all his actions. His character, that is to say, the ensemble of sentiments which guides him in life, is in reality the voice of his ancestors. This voice of the dead is all-powerful, and whenever it finds itself in opposition with the voice of Reason, it is the former which invariably triumphs. The part played by the Past is infinitely large, whereas that of the milieu operating over a short duration of one's existence is infinitely small, as is well said in the following by the poet Daniel Lesueur:

*For the Past in man in his Present subsists,  
And the deep voice which rises up from the tombs  
Dictates an implacable order, which no one resists.*

There are human races that are like animal species; some present many varieties while others, on the other hand, offer very few. The fewer varieties a race presents or, if one prefers, the fewer varieties it has that deviate from an

average type, the more the race is homogeneous. Such is the present-day English, a blend of the ancient Breton, Saxon, and Norman who effaced themselves in forming an absolutely new and completely determined type. If, on the other hand, groups are juxtaposed without having been sufficiently interbred, the race remains heterogeneous, and the average type becomes more difficult to establish because the common traits that comprise it are less numerous. In France, for example, the Provençal is quite different from the Picard, as is the Auvergnat from the Burgundian. However, if there does not exist yet an average type in France, there at least exist average types of certain regions. Unfortunately, these types are very distinct by character and the ideas they hold; consequently, it is difficult to find institutions which are able to suit them all. Our profound divergences of beliefs and sentiments, and the political upheavals that are the consequences, owe themselves mainly to existing differences in mental constitution that only the future will perhaps be able to erase.

It is easy to understand that the more a race is homogeneous, the more it will possess common ideas and sentiments; and consequently, the more it will be energetic and called upon to march rapidly on the road of progress. On the other hand, where the ideas, traditions, beliefs, and interests remain distinct, dissensions will be frequent, and progress will always be very slow, if not completely impeded. No other idea is more fantastical than the one of bringing under the same governmental yoke extremely different races. Even when chains are used on such peoples, the government will only succeed for an instant in imposing its rule. The history of great empires formed by dissimilar peoples will always be identical. The ones of Alexander and Charlemagne, for example, came apart when the powerful hand of their founder had ceased holding together the pieces. Among the modern nations, only the Dutch and the English have succeeded in imposing their rule over Asiatic peoples very different from them. Moreover, they have succeeded only because they are wise enough to respect the customs, morals, and laws of these peoples, leaving them in reality to administer themselves, and limit their role to touching one part of the taxes, engaging in commerce and maintaining the peace.

One sees, by what has preceded, how it is important to study the composition of a people in order to explain its history. One also sees that the word "people" cannot in any case be regarded as being synonymous with "race." An empire, people, or State: this is a more or less considerable number of persons brought together by the same political and geographical necessities, and subject to the same institutions and laws. These persons may belong to the same race, but they may also belong to very different races. If these races are

very dissimilar, no blending is possible. They may, in an extremely strict sense, live side by side, like the Hindus in India, who are subject to the Europeans; but, one should not dream of providing them common institutions.

All great empires that unite dissimilar peoples can only be created by force and are condemned to perish by violence. The only ones that are able to last a long time are those that are formed slowly, by the gradual mixing of little differing races—races which constantly crossbreed amongst themselves, live on the same soil, submit to the action of the same climate, and possess the same institutions and beliefs. These diverse races may then, at the end of several centuries, form a new entirely homogeneous race.<sup>1</sup>

As mankind grows older, races become more and more stable and their transformations by way of intermixing become more and more rare. In prehistoric times, when man had a shorter hereditary past and possessed neither fixed institutions nor very certain conditions of existence, the environment had a much more profound action on him than it does today. Civilization has permitted man in large part to escape from the influence of the environment, but not to that of the past. The more humanity ages, the heavier the weight of heredity becomes. It is such today, that heredity alone can struggle against heredity. It can in reality only dissociate, by repeated crossbreedings, the fixed characteristics in a race by placing in opposition to it contrary characteristics.

In order that in the intermixing of two races heredity is able to act, it is first necessary that one of them is not too numerically smaller to the other; it is then necessary that these two races do not possess a much different mental or physical constitution.

The first of these two conditions is totally fundamental. Whenever two different races come face to face, the more numerous rapidly absorb the other. For example, living in the midst of a black population, some white families will disappear in a few generations without leaving any traces. This fate has been the one of all conquerors who were strong in weaponry, but weak in number. The only ones who have escaped this rapid disappearance, like the Aryans of old India and English today also in India, established a rigid caste system that

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<sup>1</sup> The mechanism of this fusion of diverse elements of a race is quite rare to observe. I have nevertheless verified it during one of my trips abroad, in a population of out-of-the-way mountain people inhabiting a corner of Galicia, at the foot of the Tatra Mountains. I have consigned my observations in a paper entitled "On the Present Formation of a Race in the Tatra Mountains," which appeared in the March 18, 1882 issue of *Revue Scientifique*.

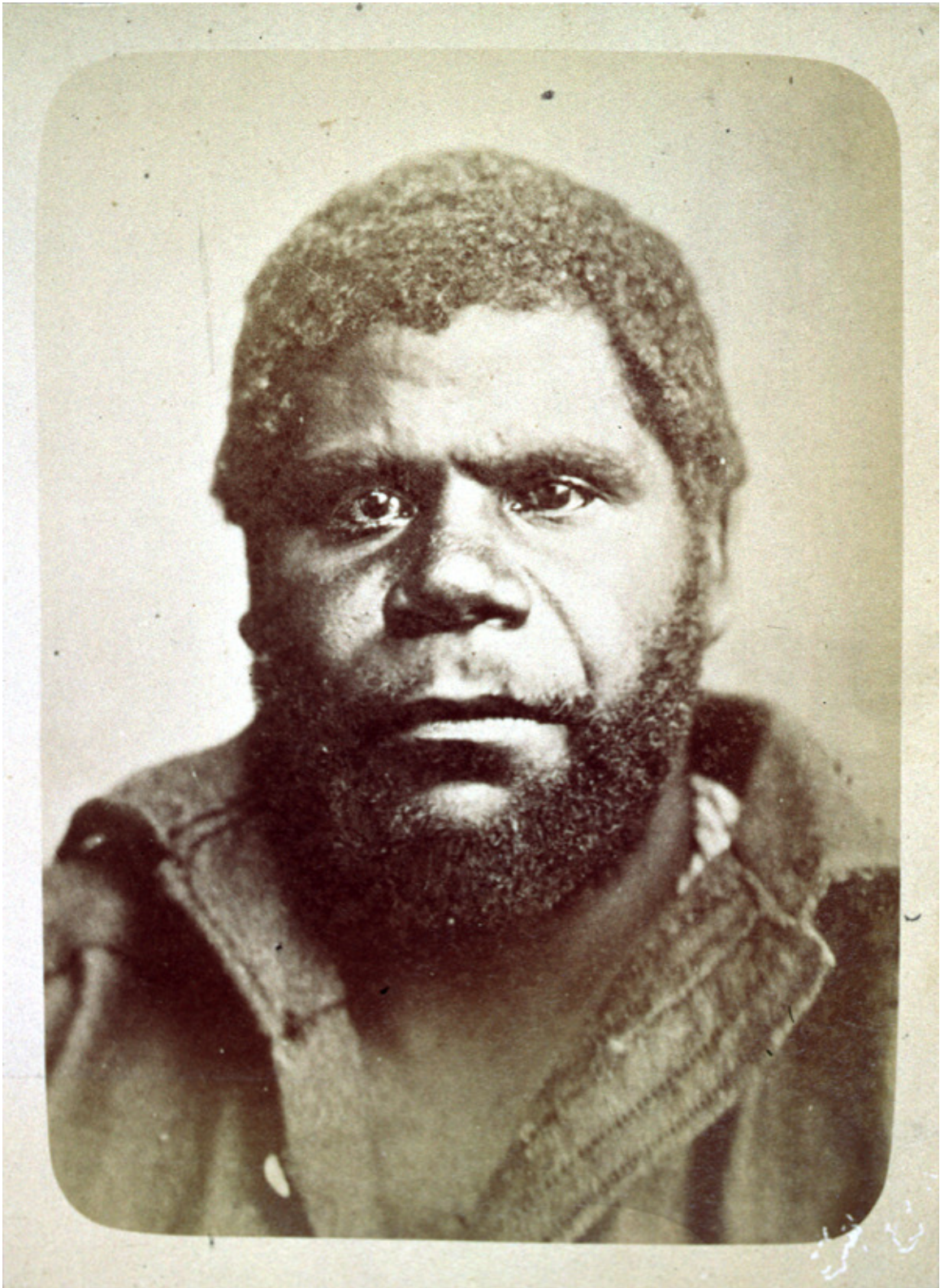


prevented the crossbreeding of the vanquishers with the vanquished. The caste system having been the exception, the general rule one observes is that with the passage of a small number of generations, the conquering people are absorbed by the conquered people. It will not disappear, though, without having left civilizing traces behind. For example, Egypt, conquered by the Arabs, absorbed very rapidly its conquerors; but, the latter left behind them the most important elements of a civilization: the religion, language, and arts. An analogous phenomenon has happened in Europe among the peoples called Latins. The French, Italians, and Spaniards do not have, in reality, any trace of Latin blood in their veins; but, the institutions of the Romans were so strong, their organization so powerful, and civilizing influence so great that the countries occupied by them over several centuries have remained Latin by the language, institutions, and spirit which to them is especially suitable.

It is not, moreover, because it is the strongest that a people imposes its civilization on another; very often it is the vanquished who impose its own on the conqueror. The Franks ended up overcoming Gallo-Roman society, but they were soon morally conquered by it. They were physically conquered before long as well, because they plunged themselves in the midst of a population much more numerous than them. This conquest of the vanquishers by the vanquished can also be observed to a much higher degree again in the Moslem peoples. It was precisely at the time that the political powers of the Arabs had completely disappeared that their religion, language, and arts spread out more and more. There are 50 million Moslems today in India, 20 million in China; and, in a slow but sure way they will end up being in Africa the civilizers of the large mysterious continent.

Whenever races placed face to face by the happenstance of an invasion or conquest are too dissimilar, there will not be, as I have earlier pointed out, any bondage able to blend them. The only result that can occur is the extermination of the weaker race. Conquered for centuries, Ireland has never been submissive, and its population decreases each day. For entirely inferior peoples, the destruction is much more rapid yet. There are races, such as the Tasmanians, where one is unaware of more than a single representative; and it will soon be the same with the American Indians. All inferior people placed in constant contact with a superior people are condemned to perish.

It is always by means of systematic and bloody extermination that an inferior people will disappear upon contact with a superior people; the simple action of *presence*—in order to employ a chemical term—is sufficient to bring about the destruction. As soon as the superior people establishes itself in a



King Billy (1835-1869), the last full-blooded male Tasmanian Aboriginal

barbarous land, with its complicated mode of existence and its numerous means of subsistence, it will monopolize and subdue all the living forces of the country with much more rapidity and ease than the former occupants. These latter, formerly masters of all the land's resources, end up being reduced to laboriously grubbing up the tiny leavings of the conquerors, and they find themselves in such conditions of inferiority that they die of hunger if they are not decimated by sword or the vices that the Europeans brought them—vices which constitute nearly all that they are able to borrow from complicated civilizations which the abyss of heredity separates them from.

The methodical massacres of Indians had pretty near ceased in North America, and yet the Redskins continued to recede and diminish before the white race. Submissive to hereditary influences that had grown too heavy to allow them to transform themselves, they only knew and wished to live for hunting; now, their old hunting grounds, secured, cleared and cultivated by the Anglo-Saxons, no longer offered them the resources they formerly did. In vain fields and houses were given to them; for they lodged their horses inside the houses while they themselves continued to live in their tents, as had their fathers, and allowed themselves to die rather than put on the plow the hand that only knew how to wield weapons.

Whenever, in spite of a great inequality of culture, two very different races happen to be brought together, the result is not disastrous for the inferior race; but, it is quite the contrary for the superior race. It soon, in fact, will disappear in order to put in place an intermediate race which, from the intellectual point of view, may represent a sort of average between the two parent races, but which, morally, is always inferior to both. The past having been dissociated by heredity, the individual floats between two different moralities and generally does not practice any. Most often what he plunges into and assumes from the races he emerged from are their vices, in other words, this morally base essence of barbarity that is met with in all peoples, whatever be their level of civilization. The products of the crossbreeding of the Hindu and the European, without speaking of the even more miserable ones resulting from the crossing of the Negro and the white, clearly show the sad results that are the consequence of such *mélanges*. At no time whatever have half-breeds made a society progress; the only role that they can fill is to degrade, by lowering to their level, the civilizations which by chance come to inherit them. We have an example which still remains in the present-day Hispano-American populations. The crossbreeding of the fiery and ardent Spanish race of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century with inferior races has given birth to degenerate populations, without energy or prospects, and completely incapable of supplying the slightest contribution to the progress of civilization.

The totally disastrous results that can be produced by a superior race intermixing with inferior races had been fully perceived by the most ancient civilized peoples. This was undoubtedly the origin of the caste system which prevents any union between peoples of different races, and which we find still in place in many old societies. Without mankind would perhaps have never gone beyond the dawn of civilization. Thanks to this system powerfully sanctioned by religious law, the ancient Aryans, when they penetrated into India, at the time inhabited by savage hordes with dark skin, guarded themselves against any crossbreeding and, consequently, degradation and the final absorption that menaced them. Without the caste system, the brilliant civilization that they founded on the banks of the Ganges would never have taken root, and history would not have occupied itself with them. This system therefore played, in fact, an immense role in the history of the early civilizations; if, with our modern ideas, we find it unjust, the fact is that, fortified by long-time traditions, it has outlived in many peoples the necessities that called it into existence.

But, if the crossbreeding of races who have attained very unequal phases of evolution is always fatal, it is otherwise when these races, each possessing different qualities, are reaching nearly the same period of development; their differing qualities may then complete them very usefully. It is precisely by means of the intermixing of races already culturally elevated, and whose differing qualities are able to make these races complete, that the brilliant republic of the United States has formed a country which is bound to soon surpass all the civilized nations of the Old World. What has contributed, moreover, to the amazing strength of this people is the fact that it consists of, not only the mixture of already very developed elements (English, Irish, French, Germans, etc.), but more importantly of individuals who are themselves the results of a selection operating among the most active and vigorous inhabitants of these diverse nations. Nearly all the emigrants to the United States are bold, adventurous men who find the material horizons of their respective motherlands to be much too restrictive and limited, and also the moral horizons much too restrictive whenever religious persecution impairs the independence of their character. Hardy, ingenious, fearless, and sometimes unscrupulous, they soon ought to form a nation that no other can defeat or force into retreat. This nation's people only lack the artistic sense, which their ancestors also lacked. Indeed, it will not be from among poets, refined persons, artists, or dreamers that one may recruit these valiant adventurers who have proceeded to accomplish the conquest of an unknown world.

The various general laws that I've concisely set forth can by themselves

provide us the explanation of a large number of historical events. They show us, for example, why one such conquest had been the origin of a brilliant civilization, and why another one, on the other hand, had led to the commencement of an era of disorder and anarchy; why the Oriental has always easily imposed his yoke and systems on other Orientals, whose mental constitution approximates his own; why, on the contrary, the battles between Westerners and Orientals have possessed such a fierce quality and invariably conclude with the unmerciful crushing of the vanquished. These laws also tell us why a certain people has been a colonizer and has known, whether naturally, if it is of the race of the conquered, and whether therefore to respect the customs, beliefs, and morals of the vanquished if this race is too foreign to it, in order to maintain its authority over neighboring nations.

### III.

Before laying aside the generalities on this question of race, capital in the history of civilizations, I wish now to say a word on the great problem which consists in knowing whether the progressive development of humanity has as an effect the tendency to equalize races or, on the contrary, to differentiate them more and more. The answer is easy to foresee. The higher level of human culture is ever advancing; but, by this same fact, and since there are always nations who occupy the lower echelon, the abyss between these latter peoples and the superior races is each day becoming deeper. Most certainly, progress expands, even for the most backward human groups. But, the law of this progress is that its march accelerates in proportion as it advances. The superior races are now taking evolutionary steps of giants, whereas the others still require the many centuries that we have already traversed in order to be at the point where we are. And when will these lower races arrive here, where we are? Undoubtedly, much farther into the future than today, if we have not disappeared by then.

It clearly results from the preceding that in proportion as the various human races civilize themselves, far from marching towards equality, they tend to differentiate themselves from each other more and more. The same reasoning, moreover, is applicable to individuals. Civilization cannot have an equal effect on unequal intelligences, and because the most developed are necessarily bound to benefit more than those who are the least, one easily sees that the difference which separates the two groups must considerably increase with each generation. This difference increases in proportion as the division of labor, by condemning the lower ranks of society to a uniform and identical manner of work, tends to destroy in them all intelligence. It is necessary for the engineer

of our day, who contrives a new machine, to possess much more intelligence than the one of a century ago; but, in return, it requires much less intelligence for a modern worker to make a detached piece of a watch that he fabricates during his entire life than was required of his ancestors, who were obliged to fabricate the entire watch.

Progressive differentiation between the races, progressive differentiation between individuals, and progressive differentiation between the sexes: such are the inevitable consequences arising from the progress of civilization. Against such consequences our vain reveries of egalitarian democracy are unable to prevail. Nature pursues its way without concerning itself with our theories, and we need to fully engage ourselves in its laws if we do not wish to be smashed by them.

The preceding considerations are not only based on theoretical reasons; we have tried—for a long time already—to also strengthen them by coming up with anatomical evidence. The study of the skull among the human races shows us that if, in savages, all the skulls of the diverse individuals vary very little in their dimensions, in our civilized societies the skull dimension differences are sizable. Between the higher ranks of a society and its lower ranks, the anatomical abyss is as immense as the psychological abyss, and the progress of civilization deepens and widens more each day.

If, as I have pointed out, persons of the same race tend to greater differentiate themselves the more they become civilized, we are able to conclude that the more a race is civilized, the more considerable will be the intellectual differences that the individuals of this race present. Without a doubt the average level rises also; and anatomy instructs us, in fact, that the average skull capacity of Europeans is a little higher to that of savages. However, it also shows us that the average increases quite slowly, whereas the difference in capacity between the most voluminous and smallest skulls of the same race tends to considerably increase with the progress of civilization. The comparative psychology of peoples confirms these anatomical observations, and, based on the many observations I have made during my travels, I have come to the conclusion that the average social ranks of the Asiatic peoples—Chinese, Hindus, etc.—are not inferior to the corresponding social ranks of Europeans. The real difference that exists between these populations and ourselves is that the former do not possess those superior men (the true incarnation of the powers of a race) to whom we owe the great discoveries which each day elevate the level of civilization. Such minds are met with more and more rarely the further down the ladder of races one descends, and one

never finds persons of extremely high intelligence among savages. It is this number—that is, the number of very highly intelligent persons—that provides the measure of the level of a people.<sup>1</sup>

The study of all civilizations proves that it is, in fact, a very small number elite which is responsible for all the progress accomplished. The masses only benefit from this progress; however, they are hardly fond of exceeding it, and the greatest thinkers and inventors have very often been its martyrs. Nevertheless all generations, the entire past of a race, are elevated by these smart talents who are the marvelous flowers of the old human parent-stock. They are the true glory of a nation, and everyone, including the most humble, should be proud of them. They do not appear by chance or by some miracle, but rather represent the synthesis of a long past. To favor their birth and development is to favor the birth of progress which will benefit all mankind. If we allow ourselves to be too dazzled by our dreams of universal equality, we will be the first victims. It is the obscure and hard-to-accomplish dream of vulgar mediocrities; only the ages of savagery have realized it. In order for equality to reign in the world, it will be necessary to lessen little by little all that makes up the value of a race to the much lower level which it had once occupied. To elevate the intellectual level of the meanest peasants to the genius level of a Lavoisier will require centuries, whereas in order to destroy such mind, only a second and the blade of a guillotine is sufficient.

If, however, the role of superior men is considerable in the development of a civilization, it is not in the meantime totally such as one generally believes. Their action consists, I shall repeat again, of synthesizing all the efforts of a race; their discoveries are always the result of a long series of earlier discoveries; they construct an edifice with stones that others had slowly carved. Historians—whose understanding is generally quite simplistic—have always believed one must fasten before each invention the names of a person; and yet, among the great inventions that have transformed the world, such as the steam

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<sup>1</sup> Most of the ideas contained in this paper, notably the progressive differentiation of races, individuals, and the sexes with the progress of civilization, are the result of my personal researches. The reader who entertains an interest in this subject will find my ideas developed in the following works of mine: *Anatomical and Mathematical Researches into the Laws of the Variations of Brain Volume and their Relation to Intelligence* (*Revue D'Anthropologie*, 1879); *On the Capacity of the Skull of a Certain Number of Celebrated Men* (*Bulletins of the Anthropology Society of Paris*, July 3, 1879); *On the Present Formation of a Race in the Tatra Mountains* (*Revue Scientifique*, March 18, 1882); *Applications of Psychology to the Classification of Races* (*Revue Philosophique*, July, 1886); *Present-day Anthropology and the Study of Races* (*Revue Scientifique*, December 17, 1881).

engine, printing press, telegraph, and gunpowder, there is not a single one that we are able to say has been created by one man alone. When one studies the origin of such discoveries, one always sees that they are born from a long series of preparatory efforts: the final invention is only a crowning. The observation of Galileo respecting the isochronism of the oscillations of a suspended lamp facilitated the invention of extremely accurate chronometers, which produced for the mariner the possibility of his finding a safe route across the ocean. Gunpowder is like Greek fire slowly transformed. The steam engine represents the sum of a series of inventions of which each one has required an immense amount of work to create. An ancient Greek, had he 100 times the genius of Archimedes, would not have been able to conceive in his mind the locomotive. It would not at all have even served him to conceive it because, in order to bring into fruition the idea, it would have been necessary for him to await the machinery realized from the progress that has required 2000 years of effort.

Contrary to what most people believe, the political role of great men of State is no less independent from the past than the one of the great inventors. Blinded by the glitter of these powerful movers of men who transform the political existence of peoples, writers such as Hegel, Carlyle, Cousin, etc. have desired to make them into demigods before whom all must bow and whose genius alone modifies the destiny of peoples. Such political leaders may, undoubtedly, destroy a society or disturb its evolution, but it is not given to them the means to alter the course. Indeed, the genius of a Cromwell or a Napoleon does not know how to accomplish such a task. Furthermore, the great conquerors might destroy by fire and the sword cities, people and empires, just like a child might burn down a museum stuffed with art treasures; but, this destructive power ought not to delude us concerning the magnitude of their role. The role of great political leaders is only lasting when, like Caesar or Richelieu, they know how to direct their efforts according to the sense of the needs of the moment; in general, the true cause of their success has already been set in place well before their arrival onto the scene. For example, two or three centuries earlier Caesar would not have been able to bring the great Roman Republic under the rule of a single master, and Richelieu would have been powerless to realize French unity. In politics the truly great leader is the one who has a presentiment of the needs that have arisen, the events that the past has prepared, and shows the way in which he must engage himself. Nobody will perhaps see this way, but the inevitabilities of evolution are bound ere long to drive peoples to the destinies over which the leaders preside. In short, men of State, just like the great inventors, synthesize the results of a long interior labor.

It will not be necessary, however, to extend any further such analogies.



While great inventors play an important role in the evolution of civilization, they don't play any apparent role in the political history of peoples. The superior men to whom are owed, from the plow to the telegraph, the great discoveries that are the common patrimony of mankind, have never possessed the qualities of character necessary for establishing a religion or conquering an empire, that is to say, for changing visibly the face of history. The thinker sees too well the complexity of problems in order to ever possess very deep convictions, and too few political aims seem to him deserving of his efforts to pursue them in any sort of lively manner. While inventors are able to transform a civilization, only fanatics, those with a narrow intelligence but energetic character and strong passions, can establish religions, empires and throw the world into upheaval. Indeed, it was the utterances of a hallucinatory—Mohammed—which created the force necessary to triumph over the old Greco-Roman world; in addition, it was an obscure monk—Luther—who put Europe to fire and the sword. For sure it is not among the masses of mankind that the feeblest echo of the voice of a Galileo or a Newton will ever be heard. Yes, genius inventors can transform a civilization, but it is the fanatics and hallucinated who create history.

For the philosophers History, such as what appears in books, is composed of a long account of the battles sustained by man in order to create an ideal, adore it, and then destroy it. And under the consideration of pure science, do such ideals have any more value than the empty mirages created by the light reflecting off the shifting sands of the desert?

It is nevertheless the great hallucinators, creators of such mirages, who have the most profoundly transformed the world. From the bottom of their tombs, they still weigh down the soul of the masses under the yoke of their ideas. Without being unappreciative of the importance of their role, we must not forget that with respect to the task they have accomplished, they have only succeeded in accomplishing it because they have unconsciously embodied and expressed the dominant ideal of their race and times. Indeed, one can only lead a people who embody one's dreams, as the following examples illustrate. Moses had represented for the Jews their long-held desire for deliverance from enslavement by the Egyptians. Buddha and Jesus were able to comprehend the infinite miseries of their times and conveyed in religion the need for charity and pity which, in periods of universal suffering, begins to force its way through into the world. Mohammed realized by the unity of belief the political unity of a people divided into thousands of rival tribes. The soldier of genius who was Napoleon embodied the ideal of military glory, revolutionary propaganda, and

vanity, which at the time were the characteristics of the people who for fifteen years he marched across Europe in pursuit of the most foolish adventures.

It is after all ideas, and consequently those who embody them, that guide the world. They come into the world at first under vague shapes floating in the air, changing slowly their look up to the day where they suddenly appear in the form of a great man or great event. It matters little, on account of the power of their action, whether they are true or false. History shows us that the most fantastical illusions have always much more fanaticized man than correctly demonstrated verities. It is, in fact, the most presumptuous delusions that are the most apt to flatter the imagination and the sentiments of the general populace. It is the *Mahamaya*, as the Hindus say, the universal and eternal chimera which, under a thousand diverse aspects, floats above the path of mankind, invincibly drawing over its traces.

It is in harmony with these altogether formidable and vain illusions that humanity up to now has lived and will still continue to live. They are vain shadows, but shadows that one must respect, however. Thanks to them, our ancestors have known Hope, and in their heroic and foolish journey they have brought us out of primitive barbarity and have led us to the point where we find ourselves today. Of all the factors that play a role in the development of civilizations, illusions are perhaps the most powerful. It was an illusion that gave rise to the pyramids and for 5,000 years covered Egypt with colossuses of stone. It was a similar illusion which in the Middle Ages had erected our gigantic cathedrals and led the West to hurl itself upon the Moslem lands in the Middle East in order to conquer a tomb. It has been the pursuit of illusions that has led to the establishment of religions that have brought half of mankind under their laws and which have built or destroyed the most redoubtable empires. It has not been the pursuit of the truth, but rather the pursuit of fallacy, which mankind has expended the most effort on. The fantastical aims that he pursues, he will never be able to attain; but, it is by pursuing them that he has brought into being all the progress that he does not seek.