The Races of the Spirit

Julius Evola

1,325 words

Some questions for discussion: Does the concept of “spiritual race” simply amount to types of character? If so, then why speak of spiritual races at all? Why not reserve “race” for the biological realm and speak of character types, which are shaped by culture, habituation, and ideas as well as genes?

We all recognize that people can be racially white but act like Jews or blacks because of culture and upbringing. And we also recognize white character traits in some non-whites. The ideal, of course, should be the preservation of the white race along with a distinctively white culture and character.

Given a choice between the two, however, the most important thing is to preserve the race. Even if all of white civilization were entirely wiped out, as long as our race is preserved, white people can produce appropriate civilizations again. But if our race disappears, it hardly matters to me that the Japanese will still be listening to Debussy.

We have to consider the “solar” race as being superior to and having preceded all other races. The solar, or Olympic-solar race, which corresponds to the Hyperborean tradition and line, has the characteristic of a “natural supernaturality.” The fundamental aspects of this “race of the spirit” are power, domineering calm, and promptness to precise and absolute action, and also of a sense of centrality and steadfastness; the virtue referred to by the ancients as numinous, the kind of superiority which imposes itself directly and irresistibly, simultaneously provoking awe and veneration. Through these characteristics, the solar race is naturally predestined to command.

Ice and fire are fused in this race, as in the symbols of its Nordic origin: ice as transcendence and inaccessibility; fire as the radiant quality of solar beings who give life and bring light, always in a context of sovereign remoteness.

The symbolic designations of “divine” or “celestial” race are to be understood as being applied to men who do not believe themselves to be gods, but who feel that they belong to a terrestrial race only by chance, or by “ignorance” or “sleep.” The two terms of vidya and avidya, from the ancient Indo-Aryan teachings, meaning respectively knowledge (of the Supreme Identity) and ignorance, are to be comprehended exactly in this sense.

The other races of the spirit, to whom our contemporaries belong, presuppose a separation of the two elements of spirituality and virility which are found in the solar race.

We shall start with the “lunar,” or Demetrian, race. While the solar individual is the one who has in himself his own light and principle, the lunar individual receives from others his own light and principle.

Thus in the lunar race the sense of spiritual centrality has been lost, either through degeneration or passive crossing with other races which have degraded its original solar quality.

By extension, the lunar man is priestly as opposed to the regal man; he is the man who, in the face of the spirit, acts like a normal woman in front of a man, e.g., with a sense of submissiveness and dedication.

Another lunar type is the intellectual, the man of “passive reflection.” In the political field, wherever there is a scission between secular and sacerdotal power, inevitably the lunar spirit emerges: lunar is the dominator who receives authority from someone else, from a sacerdotal caste which is not regal, the supreme consecration of his own power.

The third race of the spirit, which can be singled out on the basis of ancient symbolic traditions, is the “telluric,” or titanic, race. It is a way of being which witnesses the adherence to life in all its instinctivity and irrationality.

The telluric race (from Lat. tellus; earth) has an explosive impulsiveness, sudden changeability, and absolute self-identification. This race is as “intensive” as it is gloomy, without however the depth and detachment which are necessary to also be tragic. Sexuality has a considerable part in this race; the sentiment of personality in the telluric man is little developed, it is the collective element that predominates; it is in this sense that blood ties are manifested, and always in a material, atavistic and fatalistic form; this can be recognized in some of the typical aspects of the sentiment of race peculiar to the Jewish people.

The term “telluric” has been used by Keyserling to indicate an indisputable aspect of the so-called contemporary “world revolution.”

The “Dionysian” man has common traits with the titanic one. He is the one who aspires to re-conquer the lost level, capable of partly surmounting the human condition through a radical explosion of all forces connected to the senses; but this explosion does not go further than mere ecstacies, where the sensitive is mixed with the supersensitive, where liberation is obtained only at the cost of betraying the affirmative principle of the personality.

It would not be arbitrary to establish a correlation between Dionysian man and the “romantic” man.

From the racial point of view, we should not be surprised when we discover that the Dionysian man, under the romantic cloak, is rather largely represented in the Nordic races, be they Germanic or Anglo-Saxon.

Thus we have reconfirmation of the necessity of distinguishing the primeval Nordic-Aryan race from the recent Nordic races. Rather significant about the latter is the part played by the feminine element at the beginning of historic times (today still, German is the only language amongst those of Indo-European stock in which the word for “sun” [die Sonne] is of feminine gender, while “moon” [der Mond] is masculine).

A “Demetrian” or lunar race which, in the face of usurpations by titanic or telluric races, does not possess any longer the superior authority peculiar to the solar race, with which to reaffirm itself, will make its own the violent and materialistic forms of its enemy, thus creating a new type, the “Amazonian” man. The Amazonian appears like the woman (an embodiment of lunar spirituality) who, against the abuses of a man (titanic spirituality) will affirm herself by adopting a masculine way of being, thus diverting from her primary nature. The Amazonian man would then be he who in essence remains lunar, but who affirms himself by displaying strength, a material, non-spiritual strength.

Another race of the spirit is the “Aphroditian” one. In it, tellurism assumes the forms of an extreme refinement of material life, often promoting an opulent development, all of which is luxury and sumptuousness in exterior life, thus also promoting the world of arts and the sentiment of aesthetics. But inside, there remains a passivity and inconsistency of a lunar type, compensated by a particular emphasis given to all which refers to the woman, who in turn is led to exercise a certain domination and to ensure herself, silently, a certain preeminence.

The Aphroditian on one side and the telluric on the other, represent the extreme limits of those forms comprised within the Nordic-Aryan cycle, beyond which one enters the domain of the races of nature.

Lastly, one can consider the “race of heroes.” The term hero is here understood not in the common sense, but rather with reference to the mythical traditions described by Hesiod, following which in the cycles of a humanity which was already deviated and materialized, Zeus, e.g., the Olympic principle, would have generated a race capable of re-conquering through action the primordial state, the “Golden” or “solar” state of the first generation of the Hyperborean cycle. Outside the myth is a question of a type in which the “Olympic,” solar quality is no longer a nature, but a duty, to be carried out by means of an internal transformation, an overcoming, often achieved through a “second birth” or initiation, the latter alone being capable of rendering of the present times that which had become latent, and of making it possible to regain what was lost.

Excerpt from part three of Synthesis of a Doctrine of Race (1941). Translator unknown.