Race and Anthropology: A Fatal Attraction?

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There is perhaps no question about which such absolute ignorance prevails. . . . as the question of the essence and significance of the idea of "race." (Houston Stewart Chamberlain, Grundlagen des Neunzehnten Jahrhunderts, 1899)

There are many words which have been made to suffer constant misuse; but there is none which suffer more abundantly, or with sadder consequence, than the word Race. (Ernest Barker, *National Character*, 1927)

Among the words that can be all things to all men, the word "race" has a fair claim to being the most common, the most ambiguous, and the most explosive. (Jaques Barzun, *Race: A Study of Superstition*, 1932)

These quotes, among those found on the first page of Hannaford's *Race: The History of an Idea in the West*, were all originally written over a half century ago, before the imposition of the Nuremberg Laws of 1935 and the Holocaust. The authors emphasize the interrelated ignorance, misuse

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and ambiguity that surrounds the idea of race, one of the most fundamental aspects of the Western worldview, and the potential for dire consequence. Where are we now? Are we any closer to understanding the structure of human variation, how we think about human variation, and how we use race?

Item 1. At the 1993 meeting of the American Association of Physical Anthropologists in Toronto a resolution to update the 1964 UNESCO Statement on Race was brought to the floor for discussion and action. After a short and increasingly heated discussion and murmurs about the threat of politicization of our science, it became clear to the session chair that differences of opinion on this key anthropological idea would not be resolved quickly. He ushered the resolution back to committee.

Item 2. As part of the annual meetings of the American Anthropological Association in 1994 in Atlanta, Robert Hahn, a medical anthropologist working at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, and I co-chaired a workshop on "The Use of Race and Ethnicity as a Scientific Category." Participants included anthropologists and epidemiologists. As the Office of Management and Budget had just released notification of a review of its Directive 15, which governs how race and ethnicity data are to be collected in federal statistics, I imagined that we might come up with a combined recommendation. I hoped we could clearly state how what is meant by race in federal statistics is usually more like what anthropologists might consider ethnicity. I thought we might come up with something that more clearly got at the lived experience of race, and even of how race and class intersect.

This never happened. The anthropologists explained how race, as used in health statistics and as census categories, is not a biological category, yet this is often assumed. The epidemiologists who worked for the CDC countered that race has real currency and it is a useful category for tracking change and pattern in health, employment, etc... Anthropologists warned against hidden ideological implications. CDC workers want to do their job. No tangible result emerged.

Item 3. In June 1995 I went to Vienna with other scientists to draft a statement on race that would be submitted to UNESCO. Drafting by group consensus again turned out to be nearly impossible. Some of the invited had a difficult time distinguishing between the denial of the validity of race and the denial of some structure to human variation. Some saw in race the legacy of the Holocaust and others the continued racism of skin color in the United States. The resulting statement has yet to be accepted by UNESCO.

Clearly there is little consensus and great confusion in anthropology and beyond about the meaning and utility of the idea of race. As was evident in Toronto, Atlanta and Vienna, a great deal of uneasiness eventuates when one tries to discuss the fundamental validity of the concept.
Yet, whereas a few years ago there was little discussion of the political and scientific ramifications of race, evidence suggests that this is changing. In the middle to early years of this decade books such as Elazar Barkan’s *The Retreat of Scientific Racism* (1992), Audrey Smedley’s *Race in North America: Origin and Evolution of a Worldview*, (1993) and Roger Gregory and Steven Sanjak’s (eds.) *Race* (1994), among others, made clear how, why and with what consequence race was invented and reified. Faye Harrison (1995) wrote about the "political economy of race" in *The Annual Reviews of Anthropology* and Eric Wolf wrote about the perilous idea of race in *Current Anthropology* (1994). Jonathan Marks’ *Human Biodiversity* (1995) and William Tucker’s *The Science and Politics of Racial Research* (1994) deserve mention for their focus on the use and misuse of race in biological anthropology and psychology.

Outside of anthropology scholars, such as Cornel West (1993), Manning Marable (1995), and Michael Omi and Howard Winant (1994) have elegantly written on the political-economy of race and to paraphrase Henry Lewis Gates, as an anchor of cultural discourse. And of course some quasi-racist, quasi-scientific books have been published, Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray’s *The Bell Curve* (1994) and J. Philippe Ruston’s *Race, Evolution and Behavior* (1995), and these also have alerted many to the continued volatility of the idea of race.

Having perceived a recent increase in books on race, I tested this hypothesis by searching by year for books in English on “race and anthropology” under “FirstSearch.” The years 1993 to 1996 yielded from fourteen to seventeen books per year (mean of 15.25), whereas the previous decade yielded from two to seven books per year (mean of 4.5). What is interesting is that a rather steady state of around five books per year suddenly tripled in 1993. One common explanation, responses to *The Bell Curve*, is not valid as this book was not published until the later half of 1994. *The Bell Curve* may be part of the response to growing issues around race and racism.

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The four books reviewed here are parts of this welcome stream of intellectual output on the subject of race. They provide somewhat more than a random sample and somewhat less than a firm statement on the range of recent writing on race. Two of these books, Hoberman’s and Hanaford’s, were found in a search on the term “race” but not “race and anthropology.” In fact, only about 10–12% of all books on race also use anthropology in the title or as a key word. Whereas anthropology may have been key to inventing the idea of race, it no longer has an exclusive hold on the concept. The genie of race that anthropologists did so much to invent is very much alive in the world. She will not go back into the bottle without a fight.
Like many books on race today, the terrain covered in all of these books entails a great deal of history. Ivan Hannaford’s 400 + page _Race: the History of an Idea in the West_ and Vernon Williams’ much shorter _Rethinking Race_ would probably be found in a bookstore’s history section. Hannaford’s effort is the broadest; the title of the book is a true indicator of its scope. To do justice to this broad topic seems impossible. However, Hannaford developed a workable method: he focuses on writings that are political in a broad sense; in fact, his focus is almost entirely on what might well be considered a selection of the “canons” of Western literature. Thus, four pages and lots of mentions are devoted to Herodotus and six pages and lots of mentions to Thomas Hobbes. Conversely, key anthropologists such as Ashley Montagu, Franz Boas, and Carleton Coon have short sections, and others such as Earnest Hooton and Aleš Hrdlička, the founders of physical anthropology in the U.S., are never mentioned.

Williams’ book, far more bounded in scope, is concerned with anthropological and sociological writings on race from the earlier part of this century, specifically how Franz Boas influenced the development of sociology and particularly W. E. B. Du Bois and other African American intellectuals and activists. Williams, thus, provides great detail on the important Boasian development of antiracism in academia, that is secondary detail to Hannaford’s broader project.

Wolpoff and Caspari’s _Race and Human Evolution_ reviews how human evolution has historically been studied and theorized in the light of current ideas and data on human variation. Hoberman’s _Darwin’s Athletes_ reviews the historical development of beliefs in an innate and natural black advantage in athletic performance. Both are important books for anyone who teaches courses in physical anthropology. Wolpoff and Caspari’s book is one of a small handful of extended discussions on the key connections between ideas about human variation and human evolution, and it may be the best. The topic of Hoberman’s book, race and athletics in the US and elsewhere, has been covered frequently by journalists and sociologists of sport. But nobody thus far matches Hoberman’s breadth of scholarship and depth of insight.

**RETHINKING RACE**

According to the dust jacket of this short and focused book, the author, Vernon J. Williams, is a professor in the Department of History and the Program in American Studies at Purdue University. Williams explores contradictions in Boas’ work and his influences on “his contemporaries,” mainly eminent African American intellectuals, including Du Bois,
Booker T. Washington, George W. Ellis, and also Robert E. Park, the founder of the Chicago school of sociology and of the sociology of race relations. The book is an interesting intellectual history in that it provides a sense of how Boas' writing and mode of combating scientific racism influenced key players in sociology and key African American intellectuals. The main text, only about 100 pages and bracketed by brief introductory and concluding chapters, includes a chapter on the development of Boas' ideas on race, and chapters focusing on Washington, Du Bois and Ellis together, and finally on Robert Park.

Williams first considers why Boas was so concerned with racism against African Americans. While Boas may have been sympathetic to antiracism because he had been a target of antisemitism, Williams believes that Boas had a real concern for African Americans; his work was more than a screen against antisemitism. In support of this view Williams notes Boas' warm relationship with African American scholars such as Du Bois and Zora Neele Hurston. Also, Boas often worked behind the scenes writing letters of reference and support to secure positions, scholar-ships, admission to programs, and financial support for African Americans.

Booker T. Washington and Du Bois, arguably the most influential African Americans of the first half of this century, had many differences between them. Washington came from more humble beginnings, thought less of African American achievement and potential, and focused on the slow but tangible uplift of “the race.” Du Bois’ experience was “Northern”, he was more intellectualizing, and saw greater African American potential. According to Williams, Boas influenced both greatly.

Du Bois and Boas wrote often and seemed to have a political affinity for each other. Both worked to counter the intellectual hegemony of beliefs in the low abilities of African Americans. Boas lectured at Du Bois’ Atlanta University, and his views on African history sparked Du Bois’ interest.

All of this is well documented. What is the subject of some debate is Williams’ notion that the intellectual influence was almost singularly in the direction from Boas to Du Bois, rather than a two-way street. In his paper on “The Location of Franz Boas Within the African-American Struggle,” Lee Baker (1994) views this relationship more dynamically. Whereas we may never completely disentangle who influenced whom the most, a sense of what was obviously a dynamic exchange of ideas between these two intellectual giants seems more probable to me, and an exploration of the bi-directional exchange of ideas would have made for a livelier text.

Williams also gives Boas a key role in the genesis of Booker T. Washington’s later conversion to a more positive view of the potential of his
people in the United States, in part through familiarity with their accomplishments in Africa. Initially Washington was extremely pessimistic even about the utility of an African American going on to graduate school in the social sciences. Both Williams and Baker (1994) recount how Boas wrote to Washington in support of admitting an African American student to Columbia graduate school and Washington’s response that it would be a mistake—one with “no practical bearing on the needs of the race.” However, Washington began to liberalize in his later years, and this liberalization may have been nurtured through contact with Boas. Lastly, similar influences are drawn from Boas to Robert E. Park and the Chicago school of sociology.

Williams attempts to explore modes of thought regarding how Boas and his contemporaries tried to turn around the racist dogma of the time. Williams identifies three strategies: (1) generate and bring to light new facts upon which to base antiracist claims, (2) use scientific reasoning to question racist explanations of existing “facts,” and (3) remove racial markers by relabeling or recontextualizing purported racial traits as universal human traits (p. 3). Although somewhat successful, Williams suggests that Boas had a conflict between his scientism (physical anthropological studies of head size and shape, etc.) and his philosophical egalitarianism. I admit to not being entirely sure what Williams means by this, but it appears to be something akin to Boas’ heart telling him one thing and his science not being able to oblige.

Indeed, at this time the science of human variation focused on questions of stability of types/races and the relationship between measurable characteristics such as head size and shape and intellectual capacity. Boas was a scientist: he collected his own data to show the instability of types, a main linchpin of ideas about race and ranked ability. While he did not question the association of head size and shape to intelligence, he did his best to show how his data displayed great overlap among purported races. He read the data differently than would someone who was out to prove inherent differences in intellectual performance.

Certainly Boas was in a bind, but it really is not a bind of science (or reality) versus philosophy so much as the fact that the scientific tool was not developed to join the philosophy. Knowing that cranial capacity was a poor measure of intelligence would have helped. Had he been able to think about human variation in a nonracial way, would have helped him even more.

In summary, this is a useful book for individuals who are interested in the genesis of African American intellectual traditions and others who want to gain a sense of Boas and his intellectual struggles and paradoxes. These may seem like narrow concerns, but they are not; they are key to shaping the next century of intellectual positions. In particular the intel-
lectual work of Boas and Du Bois was never completed, and the results of this incomplete revolution in thought are very much with us today.

RACE: THE HISTORY OF AN IDEA IN THE WEST

Ivan Hannaford had retired in 1991 as an assistant director for academic affairs at Kingston University, England; his opus was published posthumously. In Bernard Crick's warmhearted forward, he notes that Hannaford worked for over twenty years in his spare time on this history. Time and effort were well spent.

Race is majestic in scope and simple in focus. The scope—the history of thought on race in the West—is laid out in chapters starting with the Greeks (especially Plato and Aristotle) and marching through time to the Romans, Jews, Christians and Moors, to the Middle Ages, the Renaissance and the Age of Discovery, to the emergence of anthropology, the invention of antisemitism, the Holocaust, and 20th century "reactions and reconfigurations." Hannaford discusses one or more fundamental texts of a given writer to try to capture the essence of his views. (Yes, his view. With the exception of Hannah Arendt, all extended discussions are of men's writings) This technique makes the book a useful and easy reference. If one wishes to research the ideas of a famous writer on race—from Aristotle to Houston Steward Chamberlain to Martin Bernal—this is an excellent place to start the search. It is even easier to search by the title of a text. An unavoidable weakness, however, is that the much of the interstitial substance—what went on between writers, such as is documented in Rethinking Race, what goes on in their real lives, what influenced them and how their influence spread—is left out. The focus is sharply at one level, the level of the text at face value.

How does a racial worldview develop? Does it really come from the spins on events provided by famous writers, or does it come from evolving political-economy and lay ideas? Is it somewhat inexorable, as seems to be laid out in this history, or chaotic and random? Whereas the evolution of a racial worldview might come about from all of these things, this book focuses only on the spinal threads as written in the canons of Western thought.

Hannaford's "simple" proposition is that race is a Western invention, and a rather late one, too. There was no racial or even quasi-racial perspectives until well into this millennium. Hannaford is clear about what he means by this. Among six properties of the idea of race (p. 58) perhaps the most salient is that until quite recently there was no sense that there were distinct human types that could be hierarchically arranged. That race is a
relatively recent invention is not a new idea. What distinguishes Hannaford is his focus on political writings. For the Greeks and Romans, polités are built from social cooperation and civility. This does not imply that all individuals were thought to be alike; there are castes and classes, men of civilizations and barbarians. A key difference is that the divisions are not biologized. As Frank M. Snowden, Jr. (1983) and Clyde Kluckhohn (1961) have previously suggested, references to Ethiopians, for example, are not references to “a race” and there is no associating of the glories of civilization with inherent biological superiorities of a people. Race was not an organizing principle.

Hannaford asserts that the generally held notions that “race is everywhere,” is “for all time,” and is a self-evident “fact” are all incorrect. His book shows this to be true. Race, in fact, was nowhere; it had to be invented. As Crick remarks in his forward, Hannaford turns the negative assertion that race was not part of the worldview of the Greeks and Romans into a positive assertion that “racial conditioning is not part of the human condition” (p. xiii).

“Race” entered Western languages sometime between the expulsion of the Jews and Moors from Spain at the end of the fifteenth century and the arrival of the first enslaved African in the North American colonies in 1619. The word came into Western dictionaries, but the meaning of race remained vague; floating about as a sort of essence. There was no science to back it up, to make sense of it.

Race as a scientific idea took shape in the 18th century in the well-known classifications and natural histories of Blumenbach, Buffon, and Linnaeus, supported by the more social and political writings of René Descartes, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Immanuel Kant, and others. For the first time a natural order was proposed for human types, and it was the scientists’ job to discover and confirm what was, what God had made.

From this emergent idea, race began to be everything by the middle of the 19th century. Race became territory and environment. Each race had its homeland, its place. Race became time and history. Race became state and nation, blood, class, and a sign of the degeneration of society. For Count Arthur de Gobineau, in his influential Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races (1853–55), race combined history, homeland, and blood into a theory of degenerative biology. Race was the “master key to the enigma” (p. 265). For Thomas Hobbes, race became the right of conquest. Race become a “historical chemistry,” the biologized and preferred idea for whatever ails.

From Hannaford’s European perspective the history of racialism is more closely tied to the rise of antisemitism than it is to justification for the enslavement of Africans. In his chapters on the end of the 19th century, “The Rise of the Race-state and the Invention of Antisemitism,” and “Race is
All, 1890–1939," he presents the history of ideas that led to "the final solution." Race became an explanation for the historical rise and fall of states, for the evolution and devolution of culture. Maintaining economy and culture depended on purity of racial types. Restrictions on immigration and interracial marriage laws developed in the United States and Germany. The solution in Germany was to exorcise all non-Aryan influence.

What chillingly stays is the sense of a racialist ping-pong match across the Atlantic in which the development of craniometry in Europe by Retzius, Campers, and Broca was applied by Samuel Morton to polygenist theories and in defense of slavery in the United States. Work on European racial types by Joseph Denniker and William Z. Ripley at the turn of the century presaged Carleton Coon's *The Races of Europe* (1939). European and North American writers swap historical essays on the demise of civilization with the introduction of peoples of color. Barthold Niebour's portrayal of history as a history of blood and races led to Madison Grant's *The Passing of the Great Race* (1916). Herbert Spencer's ideas on survival of the fittest became an ad hoc justification for the extermination of Native Americans. Eugenic ideas in England developed by Francis Galton and Karl Pearson influenced Charles Davenport and led to immigration restriction and miscegenation laws in the US, and in Germany to the "Law for the Protection of the German Race and Honor" the Nuremberg Law of 1935. Reading this history reminds one that the Holocaust was the unique result of this developed political idea, yet it was not isolated. The rumbles from both sides of the Atlantic had became louder and louder; the echoes remain.

Racialism and racism were "not the sole invention of the Nazis" (p. 326). Racism evolved from Enlightenment and 19th century thought and was as much the preserve of Americans, French, English, and even the Jews, as it was of German-speaking peoples. Thankfully, Hannaford reminds us of this; he summarizes that his book is an exploration of the events that led to race being used as an intellectual explanation for human ignorance (p. 13).

Hannaford's last chapter focuses mostly on reactions to the developing racial worldview from 1920 to the present. Here is where most of the anthropologists come in. The section on Boas is less than a page and focuses more on his anti-eugenic ideas than on his deconstruction of the connection between biology (read race) and culture. Williams' *Rethinking Race* could fill in the picture. Longer sections outline the contribution of Julian Huxley and A. C. Haddon and their *We Europeans* (1936), Jacques Barzun's *Race: A Study in Superstition* (1932), Ashley Montagu and Ruth Benedict, as well the contributions of lesser acknowledged "anti-racialists" such as Ludwig Fleck, Eric Erickson, and Ralph Bunche, the first African American section head in the US State Department.
Hannaford ends by noting that his scholarship does not support the notion that ethnic tension—so evident today—is the inevitable result of some remnant, premodern (genetic) consummation. Rather race, and even ethnicity, are ideas introduced in modern times that are held in opposition to civility. What Hannaford never answers is how one might have ethnicity (or multiculturalism) and civility. Perhaps if he were still alive his answer would reflect Martin Luther King’s “judge each man by the content of his character.” But, Hannaford also seems to know—and his book makes us chillingly aware—that while race is a new idea, it is oh so deeply embedded.

ATHLETIC PERFORMANCE AS RACIAL DRAMA

The next two books are testaments to how hard it is to see human geographic variation in non-racial terms. In fact, the authors’ acquiescing to a racial worldview is for me the greatest limitation of this pair of otherwise superior discussions.

John Hoberman, professor of Germanic languages at the University of Texas, Austin, has a long record of accomplished writings on the intersections among athletics, culture, and politics. This background serves him well in Darwin's Athletes, a masterful extension of this analysis to the dynamics of race, particularly the black-white dichotomy. Darwin's Athletes is witty, provocative, insightful, and important.

Hoberman's thesis is first that sport has been transformed into a racial drama and that there is little doubt that African Americans are winning this racialized contest. This is recognized by Whites, who seem to give up, and by Blacks who exalt in the athletic triumph of African Americans—from Jack Johnson to Joe Lewis to Jackie Robinson to Michael Jordan. (This book, too, is all about men.) Hoberman's second point is that there is a great cost in this victory. Athletic triumph occurs within an arena of amateur Darwinism, in which evolutionary theories tend to explain black physicality on the one hand and black intellectual inferiority on the other hand. Hoberman's warning is that the worship of the black athlete—shared by white kids who want to "be like Mike" to leading African American intellectuals—is inextricably linked to ideas of black intellectual inferiority. Support for the inevitability of black athletic superiority plays into the idea that race is real (it racializes human performance), and because of the historical mix of politics and power, bites back by bolstering the myth of black intellectual inferiority.

A means to debunk myths of the present is to show that they are recent. Things were not always as they are now. Hoberman takes his readers back
just a century ago to a time when images of black physiological excellence where not so commonplace. At this time the dominant ideology was that the freed formerly enslaved Africans would not survive the rigors of civilization. In his infamous Race Traits and Tendencies of the American Negro, Frederick Hoffman (1896) laid out the demise of the free blacks because of increased susceptibility to tuberculosis and other "diseases of civilization." Shorter life expectancies were seen to be the result of weaker constitutions, not intolerable environmental conditions. While there has always been some admiration for the remarkable accomplishments of select members of "colored races," the dominant questions of this time were more a matter of which of the European races/nations produced the finest and fittest men.

A half century later the myth of European athletic superiority began to crumble. Jesse Owens and other African Americans dominated track events at the 1936 Berlin Olympics. Joe Lewis defeated Max Schmeling in boxing in 1938. After the Second World War blacks began to be "allowed to complete" with whites in professional sports in the United States. Fast forward to the 1990s. Blacks are the numerical majority of professional football players and dominate professional basketball. Everybody seems to take as a truism that "white men can't jump," glorified as the title of a popular movie. A cover story in Runner's World was titled "White Men Can't Run" (Burfoot, 1992). Black triumph? A sign of justice? Certainly the opening up of professional sports and the achievement of African Americans has been a source of pride. But, Hoberman asks, at what cost?

Hoberman shows clearly that African American men are still typed, and their typings leads to stifled intellectual promise, which subsequently limits their economic potential and broader social acceptance. Today there is an athletic type—the positive model. Michael Jordan leads all athletes in endorsement income. John Singleton's Rosewood—the brilliantly told story of the massacre of African Americans from Rosewood, Florida in 1923—was released to US cinemas at the same time Darwin's Athletes was published. To carry his story Singleton invented Mr. Mann, a super-strong and stoic black male, who, among other feats, is able to resist a lynching. This is done with great effect, and Mr. Mann is no different from countless larger-than-life white superheros. But, unlike the white heroes, real or contrived, who combine brain and brawn, Hoberman suggests that the brawn of the black athlete-Mandingo-hero image is closely linked to a darker side—an uncontrollable, hip-hop, rap-talking, gangsta type. Hoberman see links between these two dominant black male types in the media images of Dennis Rodman and O.J. Simpson. The result: a few black boys become wealthy and famous professional athletes. Conversely, to study is seen as a white thing. Totally uncool. The human cost is immense.
Hoberman weaves together a dazzling array of diverse writing. Beliefs about the thickness of black skulls in the 1800s are shown to be reinvented in the 1900s. Arguments over the reaction time of Mohammed Ali are used to bolster arguments about how intelligent he is or is not. Discussions of the selective experience of the Middle Passage and enslavement are part of what is characterized by Hoberman as "anthroporn." Hoberman shows how flexible evolutionary theory may be in explaining what one wants to explain about African American potential. When it comes to this topic Hoberman says "every night is amateur night at the Evolutionary Cafe." Hoberman is an entertaining writer and an excellent word smith. But he also has a deep message.

A couple of issues in Hoberman's analysis concern me. The first is the locus of blame for these ideas that to study is uncool, or conversely, for the fact that so many black boys think they can earn a living from professional sports, despite the clear statistics against this. The second is the means to break out of the "myth of race."

Hoberman places much of the blame on African American politicians and intellectuals. He frequently mentions and gives great weight to glamorizing comments on black athletes by the film maker, Spike Lee, Professor Michael Eric Dyson and other black intellectuals. While he notes that other black intellectuals such as Professor Harry Edwards have spoken out on the costs of African American participation in sports, Hoberman suggests that black intellectuals and leaders have made a great mistake by their overwhelming glorification of blacks athleticism. I agree that this is an issue, but it is one that needs to be located within a larger political economy. It is a position to be located within the economy of selling basketball shoes and similar merchandise. More globally, it is located within a strategy of containment of African Americans.

The dominant idea of Herrnstein and Murray's *The Bell Curve* (1994) is that each ethnic group or race has its strengths and weaknesses and that we ought to capitalize on these. The Germans and Swiss are precise and mechanical—let them be the bankers, watchmakers, and auto mechanics to the world. Others, like all the denizens of the Third World, might just be better off pursuing more manual occupations. The same might go for African Americans, with limited additional outlets in athletics and entertainment.

Hoberman, on the one hand, does a superior job of showing how one stereotype of ethnic aptitude emerged. For this reason alone, he needs to be read. Whereas Herrnstein and Murray see this structure of society as due to a genetic meritocracy, Dinesh D'Souza (1995) blames culture. Somewhat paradoxically, on the other hand, Hoberman comes a bit close to D'Souza in his admonishment of Spike Lee and others. Whereas D'Souza has a myopic view of the consequences of racism, Hoberman clearly knows that racism
runs deep and that to get black children to study will require the support of
black intellectuals (clearly there already) as well as media support, better
schools, and more.

Finally, Hoberman could have gone further in demonstrating the sec-
ond half of his subtitle—how sport has "preserved the myth of race." De-
spite his clear-eyed analysis of the misuses of evolutionary theory and his
exposure of leaps of logic in the analysis of race-based data, Hoberman
ultimately falls into accepting the idea of race (p. 288, footnote 6) and,
along with this, innate black athletic superiority. I had hoped he would
not accept the terms of the argument. By doing so, his message becomes
unavoidably garbled. His book partly damages and partly reaffirms the
myth of race.

PALEOANTHROPOLOGY AS OPERA

Like Hoberman's *Darwin's Athletes*, I greatly enjoyed and highly recom-
mend Milford Wolpoff and Rachel Caspari's *Race and Human Evolution: A
Fatal Attraction. Race and Human Evolution* focuses on a specific and im-
portant theme. In some regards, what Hoberman does for race and athlet-
ics, Wolpoff and Caspari do for race and evolution. Like Hoberman's
book, *Race and Human Evolution* is accessible, an easy read.

The authors are both biological anthropologists, collaborators, and
husband and wife. Wolpoff, the senior author and academic senior too, is
a primary developer of a widely-debated model of human evolution, the
multiregional hypothesis. To crudely summarize for those few who have
not heard of it, the multiregional hypothesis suggests that a key feature of
the process of human evolution over the last million years or more has been
the separate but connected evolution of humans in different regions. The
multiregional hypothesis suggests deeper regional continuity (and genetic
connection) compared to the "Eve Hypothesis," which suggests replace-
ment of populations around 200,000 years ago, thus breaking long-term
genetic continuity.

In addition to the scientific debate over the validity of one versus the
other hypothesis, a shadow debate concerns the larger ideological impli-
cations of these evolutionary scenarios, and specifically how they reflect back
on ideas about the structure of human variation. Because of its emphasis on
temporal depth and continuity within regions, multiregional evolution has
been linked to old polygenist ideas about the separate evolution of races,
and this linkage, which the authors explain is not well-founded, deeply
concerns them. Thus, without great difficulty one can infer two agendas in
writing this book: to explain and advocate for multiregional evolution and
to show the invalidity of linking it to polygenism, typology, and scientific racism.

Two interesting stories provide some insight into the above. In the first Rachel Caspari answers a phone call at home and is shaken by an "admirer" of Wolpoff, a lawyer who wants them to know how much he appreciates Wolpoff's work in showing the separateness of whites. In the second, a colleague turns to Caspari during a talk by Wolpoff in South Africa in 1989 and whispers that "this really sounds like nineteenth-century typology." Clearly, if one's work is considered to be support for racism by a member of the public, and to be typological by a fellow scientist, then there is a massive failure to communicate.

Strengths of this book include excellent historical overview of the evolutionary scenarios of scientists including Louis Agassiz, Carleton Coon, R. Ruggles Gates, Dragutin Gorjanović-Kramberger, Earnest Haeckel, Earnest Hooton, Sir Arthur Keith, Hermann Klaatsch, Gustav Schwalbe, and Franz Weidenreich. For each of these a picture is drawn of how they developed their ideas, their scientific and personal influences, and effects. A particularly thorough job is done of contextualizing and explaining the work of Weidenreich; he is nicely rehabilitated. On the other hand, the Harvard boys—Hooton, W. W. Howells, Gates, and Coon—come off less well. In various ways they all manage to misinterpret or at least oversimplify Weidenreich, and their politics are all somewhat suspect. Wolpoff and Caspari show strong, unavoidable connections between ideas about human variation and human evolution. This has not been much elucidated anywhere, except perhaps in Pat Shipman's The Evolution of Racism (1994), and this effort is infinitely superior.

One treatment that concerns me is what often comes off as a too casual labelling of individuals as racist or not racist. Perhaps the most positive example is their portrait of Weidenreich. Because he is central to the development and (mis)interpretation of Multiregionalism they explain well the contradictions and paradoxes of a German Jew, trying to explain himself in second and third languages. Indeed, his writing seem to be self-contradictory; Wolpoff and Caspari suggest he often used the wrong words, perhaps because he was not writing in his native language. His ideas seem to change, he is partly misinterpreted, and partly responsible for being unclear.

Was Weidenreich a racist? Clearly, as they show for him, such a label fails. What does it take to be a racist? Belief in races and types? Belief in their hierarchical arrangement? Using these beliefs in support of a sociopolitical agenda? Personal animosity to those who are not like you? As their portrait of Weidenreich shows, a simple typology of racism—you are or you are not—does not seem to suffice. There are types and dimensions of racism. My sense is that the authors were trying to
probe the possible political motivations of scholars, but this is difficult, the task requires more depth and space. While I complain about how Wolpoff and Caspari often dichotomize individuals as racist or nonracist, I must add that a real strength of the book is its delving into how people think and how patterns of thought influence how they see and their scientific explanations. They show how, in their words, “data do not speak for themselves” (p. 23). I only wish more individuals received fuller treatment.

Finally, I am haunted by a paradox. Despite all the excellent analysis of how modes of thought influence how one sees and explains, and despite their own experiences of being misrepresented as supporters of racism and of typology, the authors fail to see in their work the need to break out of equating race with human variation. Here is one example. On the second page of the introduction (p. 10), the authors write:

Part and parcel with human evolution is the study of biological histories and relationships of human populations, that is to say, the study of race. To understand the genesis of humanity is to grasp the foundation, history and dynamics of the races of humankind. In this link between human evolution and race lies a danger.

But, but, but. “The study of biological histories and relationship” is not the study of race. Race is only a way to think about biological histories and relationships, as Lieberman and Jackson (1995) argue. “To understand the genesis of humanity” is not to grasp anything about the races of humankind (unless you think that race is the same as human variation). The “link between human evolution and race” is only a danger because of the racializing of human variation.

At the end of the introduction they write: “We reached the conclusion that scientists who deal with issues of race and evolution must recognize the complexity of the interrelationship between them, and these scientists have an obligation to make their thinking as clear and accessible as possible.” (pp. 13–14). I agree. They have done an exceptional job of making these interrelationships clear in everyone’s work but their own. In their careful description of the misrepresentation of Weidenreich lies advice for themselves. The misrepresentation of their own work as support for racism and typology also needs to be heeded.

* * *

RACE AND ANTHROPOLOGY TODAY: STILL ATTRACTION,
STILL FATAL?

... racial theory, if not a sufficient condition for active racism, is a necessary condition (Crick, in the introduction to Hannaford, p. xv).
All these books outline real implications of thinking about human variation in racial terms, as Crick says, a necessary condition for racism. Hannaford’s book is a useful general reference for anyone with an interest in the history of the idea of race. It could be used in a seminar on the development of the idea of race, although I prefer to have students read books such as Barkan’s (1992) or Smedley’s (1993) that focus more on developments within 19th and 20th century anthropology, and keep Hannaford for a reference. Although long, Hannaford provides a unique sweep of history, and his book is one that I keep thinking about. His is the clearest statement on the pervasiveness of the idea of race.

Rethinking Race may appeal to a more advanced and specialized audience, but the terrain is important. Among the books reviewed here it takes a position as a bridge between Hannaford on the one side and Hoberman and Wolpoff/Caspari on the other. The reading of the subsequent books and acknowledgement of the course of history and ideas since the time of Boas ultimately suggests a certain futility to the efforts of Du Bois, Boas, and their contemporaries. During the early part of the century they did not have the necessary perspective, scientific data, and political clout.

As a biological anthropologist, I greatly enjoyed Darwin’s Athletes and Race and Human Evolution. They are both very engaging and well-written books, the type that students will like. Neither is lightweight, however. Hoberman balances the liveliest of styles with the most in-depth of notes and references, more than seventy-five pages worth. Along with the historical sweep of Race and Human Evolution is a great deal of skeletal biology, evolutionary theory and genetics to be digested. But what most recommends both of these books is their unique mining of important issues—how race plays out in particular scientific and everyday arenas. When I next teach a course in “human variation” I will without doubt have both books on the reading list and will use them both to develop class materials.

These two books also share a curious, central characteristic. Each shows brilliantly how the very idea of race has limited analysis in their particular areas, and as a result has had great consequence for real lives. Yet, they come up short of a full critique; neither book develops a radical break from a thoroughly confused idea.

* * *

So, is this how far we have come—from a 19th century confusion wherein race was both everything and nothing to a middle ground, a ground of partly reinventing and partly deconstructing race? If so, is this a tenable position? Hannaford would probably not think so, and I would agree with him. The untenable middle ground is perhaps part of why so much
is now being written about race, and why recent statements on race have been so difficult to craft. In this regard, I hope we are at the start of a long trend, because, as Boas and his contemporaries found, it is too easy for ideas to revert back to the dominant status quo. No matter how modern and populational Wolpoff and Caspari’s definition of race might be, the word still gets interpreted typologically.

The combined critique of race and the development of a nonracial approach to human variation requires a re-merging of the social and biological sciences. This may seem like an unlikely prescription in a time of “science wars.” However, had Wolpoff and Caspari read a level-headed social scientist like Hannaford, they might have further considered the power of their words. Race, or rather a rethinking of the terms and constructs of human variation, may paradoxically be a place where biological and cultural anthropologists might fruitfully come together again. With the initiation of President Clinton’s task force on race in the United States, the time is now. I imagine, too, that Boas would like this.

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