

CURRENT QUESTIONS IN ANTHROPOLOGY.*

No idea is more firmly fixed in the mind of the average man than that of monogenesis—*i. e.*, the idea that all mankind sprang from a single pair, and hence came up in a single center. Nor is the prevalence of the idea surprising; engendered by the associations of family life, fostered by honorable regard for worthy ancestors, and nourished by tradition, it grows into a natural intuition; and when intensified by the teachings of biology (whence most modern thinkers derive early lessons), it readily matures in a postulate so simple and so strong that few anthropologists take the trouble to question its validity. Yet once the question is raised, the postulate is seen to be gratuitous; in the present state of knowledge it may not be either affirmed or denied with confidence; but it must be recognized that the intuitive idea of monogenesis is not supported by a single observation in the domain of anthropology, and is opposed by the great body of observations on human development. The first corollary of the monogenetic postulate is that mankind differentiate—that they differentiated in the beginning, that they are differentiating now, or that they differentiated at some intermediate stage, one or all; in any event, that the course of human development is one of progressive differentiation. Of course, if the postulate were a direct inference or a generalization, this mode of statement would be reversed; in that case it would be necessary to say that certain observed facts of differentiation lead to an inference of differentiation in general, and point to a law of monogenesis; but it cannot be too strongly emphasized that the notion of monogenesis in the human realm does not represent observation, generalization, inference or other inductive procedure from

fact to interpretation—it is a pure assumption, imported into anthropology from other realms of thought, introduced as a full-grown foundling, and ever at war with the legitimate offspring of the science of man.

The great fact attested by all observation on human development, and susceptible of verification in every province and people, is that mankind are not differentiating in either physical or psychical aspects, but are converging, integrating, blending, unifying, both as organisms and as superorganic groups. The population of the world is steadily increasing, but the number of races is not; while the number of distinct peoples is progressively decreasing and the racial boundaries are slowly but surely melting away. This present condition is in accord with the past so far as history runs; races have not come up, tribes have not multiplied, but distinct peoples have coalesced, dialects and languages have blent into common tongues, throughout the known world—indeed, the processes of integration have been so characteristic of human progress throughout the historical period that it is now possible to enounce, if not to establish, the proposition that peoples are preeminent in proportion to the complexity of their blood and culture. These salient facts of the present and of the recorded past fall naturally into a generalization of integral or convergent development, which in turn points toward a hypothesis of polygenesis. The major indications are supported by minor ones too numerous for easy counting; and the burden of the testimony is amply sufficient to compel the open-minded anthropologist to tolerate the polygenetic hypothesis, if not to accept it as a working platform alternative with that of the monogenesis so long yet so gratuitously assumed.

Several students, like Keane in recent publications, have, indeed, held that the black, brown, yellow and white races cannot have sprung from common parents;

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yet it may be questioned whether even this position is not merely a stepping-stone toward a more general view of humanization beginning with many varieties of the unknown prototype in different regions, coming up through the multifarious tribes of scientific record, and approaching the dominant types of to-day. Certain it is that when a race or congeries of tribes measurably similar in physical features—*e. g.*, the Amerinds—are considered with respect to the intertribal relations established by record and tradition, their history is found to be one of coalescence, through the growth of stronger groups and the assimilation or elimination of weaker, through the interchange (whether inimical or amical) of artifacts and industrial processes, through more or less frequent intermarriage, through the giving and taking of linguistic elements, through the interchange of custom, faith, ceremony, law and other factors of culture which react on mental and bodily exercise and thus shape development; the interchange and coalescence may be slow and incomplete, as between the Seri and Guayaqui tribes and their respective neighbors, or rapid and comprehensive, as in the Iroquois and Dakota confederacies, yet it is ever-present, and when the lines of development are traced backward they are invariably found to diverge more or less widely and point toward more or less distinctive origins.

What is true of the Amerind tribes in this respect is even more conspicuously true of the African tribes, ranging from the pigmy Akka to the gigantic Zulu and other widely diverse physical and cultural types; most of these tribes, too, have been observed in actual coalescence with their neighbors, while not a single satisfactory indication of differentiation or increasing distinctiveness has ever been detected; so that here, too, the developmental lines traced backward are found to diverge and

multiply up to the very verge of the unknown—the prehistoric, or at least the scriptless, past. And what is true of America and Africa is more or less conspicuously true of other continents and other peoples; everywhere the developmental lines converge forward and diverge backward, just as the lines of biotic development diverge forward and converge backward. How this discrepancy is to be removed is a question whose importance increases with every advance in the science of anthropology.

It seems not too much to say that the leading question before the anthropologist of to-day is that relating to the trend of human development and its bearing on the alternatives (postulate and inference, respectively) of monogenesis and polygenesis; for it is easy to see that most of the other questions are affected by this primary one. The definition of race, the discussion of human antiquity and various civil problems of the day are all involved; and while it is too much to hope for general agreement concerning the fundamental question at any early day, it is none the less desirable to note the trend of multiplying facts and observe their steady set toward the inductive hypothesis of polygenesis rather than toward the deductive assumption of monogenesis.

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THE ASSOCIATION OF OFFICIAL AGRICULTURAL CHEMISTS.

THE eighteenth convention of the Association of Official Agricultural Chemists held its meetings in Columbian University, Washington, D. C., November 14, 15 and 16, 1901, under the presidency of Dr. L. L. Van Slyke, Chemist of the New York Agricultural Experiment Station, at Geneva. The attendance at this meeting was the largest in the history of the Association, reaching 118 members, representing nearly all the States and Territories of the Union.