

diplomats as cultural intermediaries, and he explores the ways in which diplomacy opened, or closed down, spaces for cultural exchange. He implies, for example, that the entente formed between France and Britain in the aftermath of the Treaty of Utrecht was a moment of possibility for greater cultural dialogue—one signaled by the flourishing of British freemasonry on the continent. He suggests, moreover, that later Franco-British struggles for influence in some parts of Europe had a masonic dimension. In Sweden, for example, the British hoped to undermine the dominance of the French-leaning “Hats” by trying to break the hold of French-style freemasonry and by extending the influence of the Grand Lodge of England into the Baltic. Beaurepaire affirms the conventional view that cosmopolitan sensibilities increasingly gave way to national ones in the latter part of the century, a shift initiated by the Seven Years War and advancing under the tense international conditions of the struggle between Great Britain and its American colonies. Emblematic of this nationalization of sensibilities was the campaign of French freemasonry for jurisdictional independence and autonomy from its British counterpart in the 1760s and 1770s.

Experts on Enlightenment culture may not find a great deal in this book that is particularly new or surprising, though at an anecdotal level there is considerable richness here. Nor will it much alter the way diplomatic historians view eighteenth-century Europe (though, in fairness, this is not Beaurepaire’s intention—the bibliography does not reflect an engagement with diplomatic history). But *Le mythe de l’Europe française* offers an insightful overview of the practices that mediated cultural exchange in this period and a portrait of a cosmopolitan European culture before the cosmopolitan ideal gave way to a national one. The one signal flaw of the book is the inclusion of large numbers of very long quotations without adequate analysis or gloss. As much as one-quarter of the entire text appears in the form of such block quotes, most drawn from recent secondary works or widely available published primary sources. A more selective choice of quotations, and a more thorough exposition of their meaning, would have contributed significantly to the value of this work.

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**The Measure of Merit: Talents, Intelligence, and Inequality in the French and American Republics, 1750–1940.** By *John Carson*.

Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006. Pp. xvii + 401. \$39.50.

Much has been written about the history of intelligence testing. John Carson of the University of Michigan takes a very broad view of the subject. He examines such testing within the wider framework of the history of discussions of talents and intelligence initiated during the Enlightenment. Even more daring is his decision to compare developments in the United States and in France. His central argument is that discussions of intelligence represent an attempt to understand human inequality within fundamentally meritocratic societies in which it was widely believed that the privileges of wealth and social background should be replaced by differences based on abilities. It was, Carson contends, part of an attempt to balance equality and difference. Despite the fact that it was invented in France, intelligence testing was not widely accepted in that country during the early decades of the twentieth century. A single quantified measure did not, it was believed, do justice to the multiple forms of intelligence that existed. In the United States, by contrast, intelligence testing became widely popular in the early twentieth century. Its value was never universally recognized, and wide-

spread criticism severely limited its social impact. Nonetheless, Carson suggests that it became an important aspect of American discussions of merit and inequality and an influential reality within American culture more generally.

Many explanations are offered for these national differences, some more plausible than others. Carson is certainly correct to argue that French indifference to intelligence testing was in part a consequence of an educational system based on national examinations. There was no need to invoke anything other than success or failure in these examinations in order to explain why people ended up where they did in the social and professional hierarchy. There were certainly critics of the system. Primary education did not in fact lead to secondary schools, which had their own elementary tracks, but to vocational schools or lower-class jobs (this dual educational system was not seriously challenged until the interwar period). Examinations for the elite, it was frequently argued, stifled creativity and were not always objective; and there was much conflict about the actual content of education for elites. But there was little need for measures of quantified intelligence that would have duplicated existing forms of rankings. Other reasons offered by Carson for French attitudes are less convincing. There is little evidence that the French in general were more attached than other peoples to expert judgment rather than to quantified tests (a thesis first advanced by Theodore Porter) or that doctors managed to resist evaluations of the mentally handicapped by psychologists, who did not in fact exist as a profession in France during the period under consideration. Psychology was a low-ranking research discipline practiced by fewer than a dozen individuals in a few elite institutions. They were thus no threat to doctors because the system of national examinations did not permit new professions like psychology to suddenly arise (more about psychology below).

Carson argues that the American proclivity for intelligence testing reflected changes in a traditional social system that lacked centralized credentials to define talent; once systematic approaches to identifying and promoting talent began to seem necessary, tests that could be applied in decentralized settings and applied quickly to large masses of individuals seemed attractive. He adds that the centrality of race in the United States, as well as massive immigration and the fears of “degeneration” that such immigration provoked, created the need to explain group-level differences and disparities of access to opportunity and privilege, thus providing further stimuli to the spread of intelligence testing. Consequently in the United States, “intelligence proved to be an attractive concept with which to unify the democratic and meritocratic, to help regulate the increasing demand for limited educational resources and occupational opportunities in ways that could appear objective and fair” (5).

Although each of his chapters is on its own very good and teaches us about a great many subjects, Carson’s narrative does not in the end seem to me to support his central argument. For the most part, the chapters that are not about theoretical discussions of talent and/or intelligence tell stories about how experts tried to find quick and cheap ways to solve specific technical problems; they have little to do with reconciling inequality and democracy. One such problem was deciding who was feebleminded and thus did not belong in the same classes as so-called normally intelligent students. Another was how to quickly assign jobs to the millions of soldiers drafted during World War I in a way that would result in the effective implementation of military tasks (the French did not have this problem, according to Carson, because they already had universal military service, which provided military authorities with some familiarity of many of those drafted). One of the best chapters in this book tells the story about how the American military utilized intelligence testing to evaluate soldiers before and after the war and in the process created a cadre of professionals who were

capable of doing testing in postwar civilian life. Significantly, all this testing was devoted to the lower echelons and not to officers.

Carson talks about adoption of intelligence testing in the United States as only a partial success and spends a good deal of his last chapter on American critics of a simple linear approach to intelligence. But my own reading of this material suggests that testing was even less than a partial success; it did not count in anything but the most marginal ways during this period and did little to reconcile inequality and merit. Did white Americans during the 1930s, for instance, really need IQ tests to confirm their belief that Afro-Americans were less intelligent than whites? Did eugenicists fear the low intelligence of certain immigrant groups because of test scores? Did the Ivy League college graduates who went on to run corporate America really justify their professional success by citing high IQ scores? And when nearly all elite universities imposed quotas on Jewish students during this period, did IQ tests or even the widely acknowledged intelligence of Jews make the slightest bit of difference? For that matter, was the widespread exclusion of women from such schools dependent on IQ? It seems to me that if Carson's argument applies at all, it applies to the late 1950s and 1960s when the civil rights movement made reflexive assumptions about the inferiority of certain groups or the clear link between social success and merit highly problematical for American society as a whole and not just for marginal groups of political radicals.

If I am correct, how can we explain the American embrace, partial though it was, of intelligence testing during the first decades of the twentieth century? Specialists in the field will undoubtedly have their own answers. But to this nonexpert reviewer, two obvious possibilities come immediately to mind. First, such testing can be seen as part of the American Progressive movement's embrace of modernity and efficiency. Much like Taylorism in industry, IQ testing was seen as a way to organize schools, armies, and the like in a rational way with individuals assigned the part they were most competent to play. Second, testing may have been associated with and central to the rise of the profession of psychology, a profession that did not yet exist in France. Not only did World War I create a cadre of American psychological testers, but unlike the centralized French system of higher education, American universities could relatively easily create new degree programs capable of producing new occupations. Intelligence testing provided this new profession with a concrete and unique "scientific" function.

John Carson has written an ambitious, stimulating, and provocative book that is not afraid to advance big ideas. It is elegantly written and a pleasure to read. It will stimulate much discussion and argument among historians of American and French science.

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**Capitals of Capital: A History of International Financial Centres, 1780–2005.**

By *Youssef Cassis*. Translated by *Jacqueline Collier*.

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. Pp. xiv+385. \$40.00.

Youssef Cassis has written a brilliant work of synthesis that aims at telling not only the story of major financial centers, in particular Amsterdam, Paris, London, and New York (in the order that they dominated the international financial system), but also that of some of the smaller players, especially in Belgium and Switzerland. The book deals with capital flows and globalization but is fundamentally more interested in the history of institutions and even of the personalities behind important financial innovations.