

## Race Theory

**Race theory** involves (a) the definition of race, (b) the determination of policies in response to the definitions at hand, and (c) the viability of thought and justifications for the reasoning dominating race definitions and policies. In more prosaic language, this involves answering the questions: What is race? What is the proper response or policies that should be set with regard to race? And, as Paul C. Taylor has characterized these matters in **Race: A Philosophical Introduction**, what is involved in and what is justifiable or not justifiable in and about race thinking? Echoing a turn in modern thought that focuses on conditions of possibility, this last question also takes the form: How is race possible? These three (and not exclusive) concerns of race theory connect with a variety of other theoretical concerns in modern thought, such as the articulation of human subjects, the directions to which human societies should aim or that for which human societies struggle, and the metatheoretical problem of reflective justification.

### Definition of Race

The definition of race has a history that is prototypical and then a full-fledged history or what Taylor calls "self-conscious" race thinking. The prototypical history refers to theories of human difference from ancient to the end of medieval times. The ancient versions in Africa, Asia, and Europe were not explicitly *race* thinking because the concept was not yet developed, but familiar tropes of a centered group of human beings counting as truly human versus those who were not fully human were evident in ancient writings. These accounts of human difference were premised on teleological conceptions of nature, in which the centered group exemplified the direction or purpose of achieved humanness. Although there was variation in the models offered, the ancient Greeks generally thought in terms of a species-form of human achievement. For Plato, these concerns transcended the organic features of embodied human beings, but for Aristotle, the organic fusion of form and matter made concrete the manifestations of human potential in the centered group. This implied a natural limitation on the outside groups that, as he argued in his *Politics*, included barbarians, women, and slaves.

The emergence of Christendom transformed the centered group into one legitimated by a theological naturalism, which framed the outsiders at first as those who rejected the Christianity. In the Iberian Peninsula, this framework took the form of *raza*, which referred to breeds of dogs and horses, and, when referring to human populations, Moors and Jews. As Muslims from North Africa, the Moors, along with the Jews, represented a deviation from Christian normativity. The defeat of the Moors in Iberia was followed by the Inquisition to assess the authenticity of the remaining populations of Moors and Jews who had converted to Christianity, a process that led to demands for demonstrations of "purity of blood" (*limpieza de sangre*), best exemplified by individuals whose origins were purely Christian. Because all that was natural emanated from the theological center, these groups stood as a prototypical formulation of the anthropology that took a path through *razza* (Italian) to the modern term *race*, as used by Francois Bernier in his 1684 account, *A New Division of the Earth*. The initial period of the expansion of Christendom in the late fifteenth century had led to Christian encounters with populations of people who were neither Moor nor Jew, although there were efforts to interpret them in such terms, as conquistadors had at first thought they were encountering strange mosques and synagogues (when the populations were presumed to have been lost Hebrew tribes) in the New

World. The enslavement and near genocide of the native populations of the Americas led to Bartolomé de Las Casas's efforts to save them through appeals to the papal authority and his famous debate with Juan Gines de Sepúlveda on the status and suitability of the native populations for slavery. The Atlantic slave trade emerged in this context.

The emerging secular explanations that developed by the end of the sixteenth century were in no small terms a consequence of meeting people, animals, and fauna not accounted for in the Bible, in addition to the changing worldviews from the emerging new science inaugurated by Nicolaus Copernicus, Galileo Galilei, Johannes Kepler, and Francis Bacon, to name a few. As Ernst Cassirer observed in *An Essay on Man*, this new science demanded explanations without theological causality. The search for causation appealed to the human organism as part of a nexus rooted in nature itself. As David Hume observed in his *Treatise of Human Nature*, his goal was to articulate for man what Newton had achieved in his explanation of the physical world. Of interest in the history of naturalistic accounts of race in this regard was the work of Carolus Linnaeus and Johann Friedrich Blumenbach. Linnaeus's *Systema Naturae* (1735) offered a classificatory system, premised on hierarchies of being, sometimes referred to as "the great chain of Being," which serves as the basis of classifying living things to this day. Blumenbach devoted his classification interests to divisions within the human species, racial divisions that were correlated with the continents of Europe, Asia, Africa, and America, as they tend to be known today. He coined the term *Caucasians* to refer to Europeans. In the nineteenth century, the explanation that eclipsed all discussions up to that point, at least with regard to the understanding of the human being in nature and the development of human differences, was Charles Darwin's theory of natural selection. With regard to the human being and differences in the social world, the theoretical framework that set the stage for the eventual critique of Darwinism was the materialist sociology of Karl Marx. By the end of the nineteenth century, Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytical modes of explaining the psychic meaning behind ascriptions of human difference began to make their mark.

## **Race Theory as Race Policy**

The policy aspects of race theory are connected to an important distinction between race theory and theories of racism. Racism involves the set of commitments and practices averring racial hierarchies. There, the notions of racial superiority and inferiority come to the fore. For some theorists, race and racism are sufficiently independent for the possibility of having the former without the latter. For others, the relationship is so strong that the assertion of the distinction between the two becomes negligible. And for others, the two are necessary consequences of each other: Where there is racism, there is race; where there is race, there is racism. And there are others who argue for different sets of criteria of assessing the legitimacy of either. For instance, one could argue that racism could be consistently rejected while accepting the existence of race, and even more radically understood, one could even reject racism while believing in the notion of racial inequality. The ethics of how to treat supposedly "undeveloped people," for instance, could require the rejection of many racist practices. For those who argue that certain notions cannot be separated, however, the racism may exist in the concepts themselves, in the very notion of undeveloped people, as Sylvia Wynter, among others, has argued. In the main, the definitional question of racism is such that it is possible to offer a theory of racism without defining race, because racism is fundamentally about what is done to races and how, in social terms, various races are perceived, interpreted, and judged.

## **Modern Meta-Race Theory**

The metatheoretical problem brings race and racism together in the critical question of what is involved in race thinking and race theorizing. The origins of this aspect of race theory are in the work of Anton Wilhelm Amo, an African philosopher and professor at the University of Halle in the eighteenth century. Amo wrote critically on the inequality of the blacks in Europe, on Cartesian psychology, and on problems of proper

reasoning. The last consideration included his engagement with the philosophy of Christian Wolff, who brought the possibility of reason into focus in his political thought. Amo's questioning of the conditions of reason was later taken up ironically by a critic who dismissed the legitimacy of his thought on the basis of his race: Immanuel Kant. Kant, who was also influenced by Wolff but who inaugurated his influential turn in philosophy through his response to David Hume, offered a comprehensive treatment of the conditions of possibility argument. He later referred to his form of transcendental argumentation as critical philosophy. For Kant, the crucial question to ask about the reasoning that supports theory regarded its conditions of possibility. Subsequent philosophers and theorists in the human sciences were critical of Kant's answers but became his genealogical descendants through in turn offering transcendental conditions of their own. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, for instance, brought up the importance of history, as did Marx with the added element of materiality. Still others offered physical determinism, linguistic considerations, semiotic questions of signs and symbols of meaning and, more recently, those of culture. The legacy of this form of argumentation in race theory is found among those who ask: How is race possible?

### **The Foundational Works of Anténor Firmin and W. E. B. Du Bois**

In the main, race theories examine how race is possible through discussion of *when* the concept emerged. As we have already seen, that period seems to have been in the transition from its prototypical religious beginnings to its modern naturalistic moorings in the sixteenth century. That period should, however, be understood more as the development of race and racist theory than the theory about that development. For the latter, Anténor Firmin and W. E. B. Du Bois, two intellectuals of the African diaspora, offered the foundational works, although it is their white successors who dominated that area of thought until the late twentieth century.

Firmin was a lawyer, anthropologist, historian, and philosopher from Haiti. While serving as ambassador to France, he became a member of the French Ethnological Society. Appalled at the influence of Joseph-Arthur, comte de Gobineau, the influential proponent of modern racist theory, Firmin responded by writing *The Equality of the Human Races* (1885), where he proceeded not only to present counterarguments to Gobineau's misrepresentations of African and Asian peoples but also to point out the methodological flaws in the work offered by the conceptions of anthropology in the thought of Gobineau, his supporters, and their predecessors. He argued, for instance, that Kant and Hegel offered geographical theories more than anthropological ones in their appeals to climates and continents for a determinism of physicality and cultural *value* and, anticipating some of the ideas of Du Bois and much later Michel Foucault, that the study of human beings must take seriously the normative and disciplinary presumptions behind the determinations of human difference. Explanations of racial difference were being formulated and then forced onto people instead of being generated from how people actually were. A republican in his political preferences, Firmin's efforts were designed to shift the civilization arguments from notions embedded in skin color and racial differences to the potential of each group or race of human beings to forge nonarbitrary laws. This latter demonstration required an understanding of history and culture based on actual study, which Firmin referred to as *positivism*, informed by theoretical models devoid of prejudice and circular reasoning. For instance, most notions of the inferiority of blacks at the time were supposedly "proved" by virtue of their not being white.

Firmin's work did not gain influence in European circles, where theoretical work on race for the most part took the form of seeing evidence for models of racial hierarchies of whites at the top with gradations of "yellow," "red," and "brown" in the middle to "black" at the bottom, or by then presumed the most primitive level. His influence, however, grew among Francophone black intellectuals, and, with the translation of his work into English near the end of the twentieth century, his ideas have achieved renewed influence through contemporary African diasporic race theory.

The situation for Du Bois was markedly different from that of Firmin. Although there were many efforts to

marginalize Du Bois, which included limiting his ability to teach in universities in various stages of his career and even incarcerating him as a threat to American national security during the mid-twentieth-century hysteria against Communism, Du Bois's prodigious body of works left a legacy that, among other areas of thought, arguably made him the father of American sociology and race theory. Many of his articles are canonical texts for the study of race. In "The Study of the Negro Problems" (1897), he outlined several major challenges in the study of race. There is at first the presumption that race functions as a descriptive anthropological classification. Du Bois showed, however, that there were normative presuppositions of white normality versus gradations of colored abnormality that dominated the field. Implicit in the study of "Negro problems" was the notion of "Negroes as problems" and, as a correlate, "problem Negroes," instead of "people facing problems." Research on such populations was thus affected in advance by a priori claims about them. Du Bois further argued that there was an absence of social scientific rigor because of the abandoning of basic social scientific practices of theorizing from a shared social world, on one hand, and a failure to interrogate the methodological presuppositions of applicability on the other. As the sociologist Paget Henry recently argued, the social scientific study of populations at the time presupposed the legitimacy of Herbert Spencer's social Darwinian biosociology, where human populations were placed on a hierarchy of "fitness" according to who dominated and who was dominated. In the European context, different schemas had emerged, such as the class analysis of Karl Marx, the typification models of social rationalization offered by Max Weber, and the examination of sacred symbols and social meaning in the work of Émile Durkheim. By way of methods, the expectation of positivism, from the thought of Auguste Comte and the general environment of the expected advancement of natural science, suggested that the scientific method offered much for the development of sociology and, as the followers of Spencer believed, the overall grounding of the study and classification of human populations according to the prevailing scientific models. After Darwin, as Ernst Cassirer observed in his "Essay on Man" (1994), the dominating scientific influence was biology. Among Du Bois's many contributions, Henry argues, was his recognition of how race was central for the formation of American sociology, even though the American scientific communities sought legitimacy through the European models. The result was one in which, although race was nearly a ubiquitous object of concern, its importance was denied in universalistic claims. To study race, in other words, was treated as indulgence in the particular at the expense of studying the universal "man." The prejudices, however, centered the categories of universal man in terms of particularities that excluded racialized people and related ethnic typographies with the result that a particular kind of man became the presumption of *man*. The continued relevance of Du Bois's sociological work, which has outlived the Spencerians of his day, is because of the centrality accorded to race, which is a continued sociological theme and "problem," not only of American social life but across much of the globe. Contemporary studies of global racism attest to the validity of his prophetic claim that the twentieth century was going to be governed by the problem of the color line. Finally, a crucial dimension of Du Bois's early reflections on sociological theory was his bringing the problem of formulating *social problems* to the fore. That task required understanding the role of social institutions, social concepts, and what later structural anthropologists would call "symbols" by which race is understood.

Du Bois's efforts crystallized into the three tropes found throughout race theory, as mentioned at the outset: (1) the meaning of racial concepts, (2) the policy considerations that can be drawn from them, and (3) the critical reflective theoretical tools by which the first two considerations can be assessed. It was clear to Du Bois that discussions of all three were infused with political significance. The policy concerns of Du Bois were resolutely devoted to expanding institutions by which freedom could be made manifest. Because racial hierarchy also resulted in categories of people who went from a condition of being property to that of struggling for equality and respect as human beings, the political focus for Du Bois eventually took the form of examining the impact of political economy on human classification. In *Black Reconstruction* (1935), for instance, he argued that the thwarted potential of reconstruction after the U.S. Civil War resulted in new forms of servitude rationalized by a system of racial segregation.

## Race Theory's Critique of Social Biology

Another pivotal moment in race theory emerged in the work of Franz Boas through an additional conflict with the misreading of Darwinism exemplified by the social Darwinists and sociobiological theories of Herbert Spencer. What the social Darwinists misunderstood about Darwin, Boas claimed, was that he was not arguing that human beings evolved out of chimpanzees, but that from the standpoint of natural selection both species were equally evolved. In other words, every species sharing a particular moment in history has evolved by virtue of the coordination with their environment that enables their survival. They can, in principle, be unsuitable for another environmental development. The misreading of Darwin presumed that there was an inherent progress to evolution, which meant that some groups within a species could be interpreted as living at an earlier stage of development, while another was at a later stage. Thus, the appeal to racial hierarchies took the form of asserting the primitiveness (earlier stage) of one group versus the more developed stage of another racial group. In addition, Boas argued that culture, which the social Darwinists treated as exemplifying an isomorphic relation to biology, was independent of biology. In other words, any human being could be raised in another cultural context in which he or she would acquire the language and other exemplars of the material conditions of that culture. Boas's work, in addition to those of other anthropologists, both physical and cultural, played a central role in the eventual development of the genetic disputation of race as expressed in the *UNESCO Statement on Race* authored by the famed geneticist and anthropologist Ashley Montagu. A revised and embellished version of the UNESCO document was adopted and published in 1996 as an official position of the American Association of Physical Anthropologists under the title "AAPA Statement on Biological Aspects of **Race**."

A result of the undermining of biological bases for the concept of race has been the domination of the social sciences and humanities as the main sites of work in race theory. This is not to say that research has not continued in the life sciences, such as medicine and genetics, nor is it to suggest that institutions of research closed down. However, it is to say that the main sites of debate, especially those affecting developments in political theory, have been in the more social-oriented and humanistic sciences.

## Racial Sociogenesis and Social Structure

Frantz Fanon in 1952 outlined many of the contemporary issues of race theory in his classic short book, *Black Skin, White Masks*. There, he first challenged phylogenetic and ontogenetic positions in the study of human difference and pointed to the additional element of social reality that, he argued, as a generator of meaning also generates the identities by and through which people live. He articulated an important distinction between race and ethnic identities, whereby the latter could be chosen and transformed by individuals within a group, but racial identities are a function of an imposition *on* a group. In a later text, *Sociologie d'une révolution: l'an V de la révolution algérienne* (1959), he formulates the difference this way: Whites created the Negro, but it is the Negro who created Négritude. Fanon argued that social reality required human agency for its existence, which means that it could also be transformed by human agency. But transformation required the negotiation of symbolic and material structures of culture, ranging from language, the psychoanalytical organization of power, and constitutional organizations of psychic life. All these fail in the colonial context, which Fanon regarded as quintessential for the construction of racial ordering, in an asymmetrical semiosis of race: The white constructs the black, but the black does not construct the white. The white functions as agent in both accounts, and in similar kind to other categories of color. With regard to blacks, however, the racial designation has an additional effect. The slide from racial difference to *racism* pushed the black into a nether realm of subhumanness that led to a disruption of self-other ethical dialectics. The result was a structural model of whites and some colored categories in a relationship of self and others. Below that schema, however, was another set who were neither the self nor others except in a unique set of differing relations in the subschema. The self-other dialectic functioned between each other from below, but the asymmetry of the relationship meant that those above stood as others in relation to the self from below.

This structure is a semiotic rearticulation of Du Bois's double consciousness thesis. The blacks can see themselves as seen through the eyes of whites, which means the positing of the white perspective as a possibility. The realization that it is not a reciprocal relationship—the white does not see the self as conditioned by the black but as a point of reference looking onto the black looking back onto the white *as a white perspective*. In other words, the black, as a genuine point of view, is eliminated in the relationship. Fanon's conclusions were twofold. First, he insisted that the structures he analyzed were not *complete*, that there were exceptions to these rules by virtue of the contingency of human existence. Second, he argued that the elimination of these skewed relationships called for *political* instead of individual ethical intervention.

Fanon's analysis comes to the fore in a variety of subsequent approaches in race theory. There has been, for instance, the structuralist approach as formulated by Claude Lévi-Strauss in *Structuralist Anthropology* (1963), where the symbolic ordering of mythic life takes dualistic forms that reassert themselves, even at the metatheoretical levels. **Race** theory, from this point of view, attempts to make science or sciencelike thinking supervene over mythic race thinking, but fails to appreciate its own mythic practices. This insight is taken up by poststructuralists such as Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, whose work could be interpreted as bringing the mythic narratives of lawlike determinations into the human sciences, indeed even bringing the human sciences themselves into focus in terms of their investments. These considerations were taken up in literary theory, often through studying the symbolic manifestations of such interests through utilizing the resources of a variety of psychoanalytical approaches.

## **Race and Reason**

Since the 1980s, however, race theory has burgeoned in philosophy and political theory. Although interest in race has been a current of philosophical thought since the dawn of the modern era, it was also often disavowed or denied its due importance at the disciplinary level. This was due in part to the expectation that philosophical work should pertain to universal and abstract phenomena. Kant, for instance, was careful to properly differentiate philosophical matters from anthropological ones. The kinds of arguments offered by Lévi-Strauss and ironically his rival, Jean-Paul Sartre, which focused on the mythic foundations of scientific rationalism in the case of the former and bad faith or self-deceiving conceptions of reason in the case of the latter, opened the door for the kinds of critical work on reason and theoretical work offered by Fanon, Foucault, Derrida, and even the sociological philosopher Pierre Bourdieu, all of whom brought to philosophy the kinds of critique levied against scientific completeness and absoluteness in the study of culture. By the 1970s, a group of philosophers began to write on race armed with the theoretical problematizing of methods offered by the work of Du Bois and Fanon and the metacritique of the human sciences offered by phenomenological, structural, and poststructural accounts of constructed social realities, including that of race.

## **Racial Eliminativism and Conservatism**

The philosophical groups are generally divided into racial eliminativists and racial conservationists, although there is another camp that argues more for analyses of the meaning of racial concepts and practices than for their elimination or preservation. They diverge on the significance of the general scientific dismissal of race. The eliminativists, whose main proponents are K. Anthony Appiah and Naomi Zack, argue that the scientific invalidity of race calls for the rejection of the concept. In addition to its scientific invalidity, Zack also argues that the concept renders mixed race people raceless because of their supposed exclusion from racial binaries. While agreeing with some of the problems posed by racial mixture, Appiah argues that there is sufficient social significance of the concept for it to be used in the effort to eliminate racism, but that the achievement of the latter would imply the elimination of the former. In sociological theory, Paul Gilroy has offered a more radical eliminativist position in *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Color Line* (2000), insisting on the invalidity of the concept even if it were to receive scientific support.

Although acknowledging the scientific invalidation of race, the conservationists argue, echoing Fanon, that race is a socially constructed reality whose logic should be understood in social terms. Social constructions, in other words, function according to their own reality. In other words, for biological science to be supervening would mean the subordination of sociology to the point of a positivistic reductionism. Even Marxian historical materialism recognized the materiality of social phenomena. Proponents here include Lucius T. Outlaw, Cornel West, David Theo Goldberg, as well as sociological theorists such as Michael Omi and Howard Winant, whose racial formation theory took political projects into account. The general argument here is that people live not only as individuals in a society but also as groups. Many facets of social life are organized through groups, without which even certain individual claims would cease to have contexts in which they could make sense. We see here a return of the conditions of possibility argument.

## Phenomenological Race Theory

Constructivist arguments also find support in the phenomenological philosophical tradition, where there is not as radical a divide between the physical and biological on one hand and the social on the other. The phenomenological tradition of race theory takes the body as a site of signification and bodies as the basis of intersubjective social relations on which symbolic orders are built. Racial concepts are also treated as objects of consciousness, as intended constructions of symbolic life. In this regard, Du Bois's theory of double consciousness and lived understanding of race is phenomenological in character, although he was historically associated with pragmatism because of his relationship with William James during his years at Harvard. Such interpreters overlook his time in Germany, where the towering figure of Max Weber and the intellectual impact of Hegel and Marx were unavoidable.

Sartre and Fanon explicitly advanced the phenomenological approach to the study of racial constructions, as we have seen, and their influence was global. In Africa, their thought influenced Steve Bantu Biko, who brought that approach to his formulations of black consciousness in order to propose an explicitly *political* conception of race. Biko regarded black consciousness as emerging from opposition to a state premised on anti-black racism. Such a state, in order to maintain itself, depends on the repression of blacks as political agents. Thus, the assertion of blackness, by people who would not be regarded as such in other conceptions of race and other forms of race theory, such as the biological one, leads to the identity and identification of blackness not only as a chosen identity but, because of the subjugating efforts of the apartheid government, an imposed one. Biko's thought was most recently taken up by Mabogo Percy More in South Africa to argue for an understanding of black solidarity as a theory of constructive political engagement.

In the United States, Linda Martín Alcoff has also taken up the phenomenological account, which she conjoins with hermeneutics or interpretation theory, to explore the relationship between institutional imposition and biophysical visibility and difference, which she refers to as *visible identities*. She, along with other more phenomenologically oriented race theorists, regards the body as a site of multiple identities. Thus, unlike Naomi Zack, who regards mixed race as racelessness, a position criticized by other mixed-race theorists such as, for example, Rainier Spencer, Alcoff regards mixed race as one among other visible identities; many people, for instance, know what a mixed-race person generally looks like. Phenomenologically oriented race theorists have also offered novel approaches to the study of mixture through explorations of creolization. Alexis Nouss, for instance, has argued that algorithms of human identities do not function as those in the physical sciences because a human being can be 100% more than one thing. The negotiation of the relationship between the different identities manifested in a group or individual is a function of a society's normative assumptions and asymmetrical semiotic structures: A mixed individual does not suffer from racelessness under this interpretation but from the fundamental asymmetry and teleological difference between her or his shared identities. Whiteness, for instance, stands as the normative standpoint by which other racial identities are compared. Finally, Sara Ahmed has explored problems of deviation from normative centers and phenomenological accounts in general as peculiarly *queer* efforts whose exemplars are precisely

those people who have to be squeezed into the theoretical models at hand, as Du Bois argued, as problem people.

The account of philosophical race theory is not here an exhaustive one, and the eliminativist versus constructivist divide is not as neat as it appears. For instance, many constructivists are ultimately eliminativists because their arguments for the preservation of race usually appeal to its importance for the fight against racism. The question of what is to be done if and when racism disappears challenges the insistence of postracist conservation of race. Some scholars, such as Derrick Bell from the critical legal studies camp of race theory, respond by insisting on the permanence of racism, but such an appeal is an a priori assertion that begs for evidence that could not be supported by *social* criteria because those depend on human projects for their creation and maintenance. Others such as Ahmed appeal to the contingency of human communities: There will always be individuals and groups who are outliers simply because without such possibility, human beings would collapse into a preordained necessity or laws of being human. The objection to the adverb "always" as itself a preordained claim would not work because it would only emphasize the paradox of human existence: The necessity of an absence of necessity.

## **Race Theories of Civil Society**

Theoretical reflection on race in political theory emerged on questions of the suitability of certain groups of people for governing and participation in politics; to that end, the concerns tend to take the form of assessing the membership of some groups in civil society and political life. The political theory branch of race theory thus focuses on the impact of race in and on political thought. The anthropological commitments behind political ones have an impact on how race configures in those approaches. For example, liberalism has had difficulty with race because of presumptions of the liberal subject as a color-blind one in search of ideal rules of governing. For republican approaches, the main focus is on nonarbitrary laws, which means that the particularities of the governed populations could be recognized without jeopardizing republican commitments. But for democratic political orders, the notion of self-government requires greater reflection on what participants are supposed to share instead of their differences. The expectation of sharing universal criteria often led to appeals to an ideal subject, which often meant ignoring race theory as a secondary or even tertiary matter. Conservatism, however, often involved taking traditions seriously as a basis of civic life. This often meant a head-on examination of racial difference. Yet liberalism and conservatism often had the same consequence of a normative centering of the dominating population: For conservatism, difference was articulated from a center that was deemed "traditional"; for liberalism, that center was simply the point of neutrality; in modern historic terms, they were invariably white.

Marxism, left-wing nationalisms, and anarchist movements took for granted that the traditions of conservatism and the ideal centrism of liberalism supported institutions of domination. Thus, they devoted considerable effort to identifying populations dominated by such institutions and the levels of failure implicit even in appeals to ideal, value-neutral models of political organization. This meant, for them, the specification of *inequalities* such as enslavement, class exploitation, racial hierarchies, and sexism. Implicit in these latter approaches is an anthropology of human possibility; that however human beings may be traditionally, that is not how human beings have to be. Although rejected when interpreted as a permanent nature of each group, race is reproduced in this model through identities *in the making*, as exemplified in the concluding line of the anthem "The Internationale": "the working class will be the human race."

## **Race in Ideal and Non-Ideal Political Theory**

Recent race theory in political theory has also challenged ways in which political theory presumes the subjects of theories of justice. The philosopher Charles Mills has argued, for instance, that this leads to a tension between ideal political theory and non-ideal political theory, which he correlates with



contractarianism and contractualism. The former is a sober reflection on non-ideal situations that have led to the current, very non-ideal social and political orders. The latter explores the conditions of consent for a better social reality. A problem with the dominant models of American political theory, argues Mills, exemplified in its most influential form by the work of John Rawls, is that it focuses on ideal theory at the expense of being able to address real social injustices because they cannot be identified in the initial conditions that generate the ideal—in Rawls's case, the thought experiment generated by the veil of ignorance, with "ignorance" exemplifying Mills's point. Mills proposes taking contractualism outside of the framework of ideal theory and wedding it to non-ideal theory, in this case the problems raised by contractarianism, to generate non-ideal contractualism, or, simply put, contractualism in the interest of sexual and racial justice. In this regard, race theory in political theory becomes the lobbying for a fusion of non-ideal and ideal theory, or non-ideal contractualism.

—Lewis R. Gordon

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