

COPYRIGHT NOTICE:

Benjamin Isaac: The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity

is published by Princeton University Press and copyrighted, © 2004, by Princeton University Press. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form by any electronic or mechanical means (including photocopying, recording, or information storage and retrieval) without permission in writing from the publisher, except for reading and browsing via the World Wide Web. Users are not permitted to mount this file on any network servers.

For COURSE PACK and other PERMISSIONS, refer to entry on previous page. For more information, send e-mail to permissions@pupress.princeton.edu

Introduction

LESS THAN A CENTURY AGO nobody would write or wish to read a book about racism. Indeed nobody was aware that such a thing existed, for the word does not appear in the *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)* of 1910.¹ The term *racism* has been around a little longer: It first appeared in print in 1907.² Does this mean that racism did not exist before the twentieth century? In fact there is a consensus that it originated in the nineteenth century and has its intellectual roots in that century, although some scholars give it a somewhat longer history. Most of those who have expressed an opinion on the subject claim that racism, more precisely described as “scientific racism,” was an offshoot of the ideas about evolution that developed in the nineteenth century. Since racism is thought not to be attested earlier, conventional wisdom usually denies that there was any race hatred in the ancient world.³ The prejudices that existed, so it is believed, were ethnic or cultural, not racial. In this book I shall argue that early forms of racism, to be called proto-racism, were common in the Graeco-Roman world. My second point in this connection is that those early forms served as prototype for modern racism which developed in the eighteenth century.

Since racism, ethnic prejudice, and xenophobia are so widespread in our times and have played such a dominant role in recent history, it is obviously important to understand how these phenomena developed, as attitudes of mind and intellectual concepts. Group hatred and bigotry are found in many forms throughout human history, but I shall attempt to show that there is a red thread, or rather, that there are a number of red threads that can be followed from the fifth century B.C. onward. Racism, properly understood, can be claimed to represent sets of ideas, the roots of which may be found in Greek and Roman society. On the other hand, I certainly do not claim that we are dealing here with the specific form of scientific racism which was a product of the nineteenth century.

¹ The current edition has as its first reference: 1936 L. Dennis, *Coming American Fascism*, 109. “If . . . it be assumed that one of our values should be a type of racism which excludes certain races from citizenship, then the plan of execution should provide for the annihilation, deportation, or sterilization of the excluded races.”

² The second reference will strike many of us as sad: 1910 *Westm. Gaz.* 11 Apr. 10/3. What appears to me to be the greatest results of the Botha-Smuts government are the abolition of racialism and the construction of roads.

³ See George M. Fredrickson, *Racism: A Short History* (Princeton, 2002), 17: “It is the dominant view among scholars who have studied conceptions of difference in the ancient world that no concept truly equivalent to that of ‘race’ can be detected in the thought of the Greeks, Romans, and early Christians.” I should add here that this study reached me only days before I had to submit the final version of my own work and I have therefore been unable to take sufficient account of it.

There are several recent, useful studies of ancient ethnicity and of early processes of ethnic integration, topics that attract much attention these days, but this book is not one of those. Here the aim is to offer a systematic study of the forms of proto-racism, ethnic prejudice, and xenophobia that are encountered in the ancient literature in Greece and Rome from the fifth century B.C. till late antiquity. The book analyzes patterns of thinking, intellectual and emotional concepts as well as attitudes towards select specific peoples as encountered in Greek and Latin literature of the period concerned. It focuses on bigotry and social hatred in antiquity. This may not be an appealing subject, but its importance cannot be denied. This work is not concerned with the actual treatment of foreigners in Greece and Rome, but with opinions and concepts encountered in the literature. It traces the history of discriminatory ideas rather than acts, although the next theme traces the impact such ideas may have had in the sphere of action.

The third major theme in this work is the relationship between such ideas and patterns of thinking and ancient imperialism. I shall argue that there is a demonstrable connection between the views Greeks and Romans held of foreign peoples and their ideology of imperial expansion. I do not discuss the mechanisms of ancient imperialism, but, again, the attitudes of mind that created an atmosphere in which wars of expansion were undertaken—or not undertaken. This will lead to the conclusion that decisions about war and peace were determined, at least in part, by commonplaces and vague ideas currently accepted, and to a lesser degree than might seem reasonable by well-informed assessments.

For this study I shall use all the available literary sources in Greek and Latin of the period concerned, while taking due account of the peculiarities of each literary genre. The visual arts undoubtedly might make a contribution, but this type of evidence is so different in kind that it is best reserved for a separate study by an individual with the necessary qualifications.⁴ I have included some illustrations to provide an example of what such material may add to the literary sources that form the basis of this study.

The structure of this book follows from the aims described above. It is divided into two parts. The first discusses general concepts and their development, and the second deals with specific peoples as presented in the literature of the periods considered. I shall discuss opinions about foreign nations, such as Greek ideas of Persia, and opinions about peoples incorporated into the Roman Empire, such as Roman ideas about Greeks. This is all the more necessary because so many foreign nations were incorporated into the Roman Empire at some stage.

Readers may wonder who this book might interest besides, obviously, ancient

⁴ For a brief, general survey: Z. Amishai-Maisels, "The Demonization of the 'Other' in the Visual Arts," in Wistrich (ed.), *Demonizing the Other* (1999), 44–72. For early Greece: W. Raeck, *Zum Barbarenbild in der Kunst Athens im 6. und 5. Jahrhundert v. Chr.* (Bonn, 1981); Beth Cohen (ed.), *Not the Classical Ideal* (Leiden, 2000), a volume of articles which interprets "the Other" in the broadest possible sense; Catherine Morgan, "Ethne, Ethnicity, and Early Greek States, ca. 1200–480 B.C.: An Archaeological Perspective," in Malkin (ed.), *Ancient Perceptions* (2001), 75–112.

historians and classicists. It is my hope that all those who care about the antecedents of the problems we have faced over the past century and are still facing would find it instructive. These, I hope, will include some modern and early modern historians. It is my ambition to advance our understanding of the essence of racism and ethnic prejudice in all periods and societies in some respects. Consequently, I hope the book will also be of use to those interested in contemporary manifestations of discrimination, anti-semitism, and group hatred. The basis for this claim is my contention that racism is a phenomenon that can assume many apparently different shapes and forms while preserving a remarkable element of continuity which is undeniable, once it is traced over the centuries. Racism has been with us for a long time and in various cultures, adopting various different shapes. It continues and will continue to be with us. If we recognize only one variety that belongs to a restricted period, we may fail to recognize it as it emerges in an altered guise.

THE BACKGROUND

Ethnic and racial prejudice and xenophobia are forms of hostility towards strangers and foreigners, at home or abroad. They occur in every society, but in widely differing degrees, social settings, and moral environments. They are the result of the human tendency to generalize and simplify, so that whole nations are treated as a single individual with a single personality. Contemporary western society is marked by a substantial degree of sensitivity to such attitudes, although, at the same time, the symptoms are widespread, even where there is no public or official approval. One of the peculiar legacies of the Greek language and Greek society is the word “barbarian,” still used today in English and other modern languages. This concept has been studied extensively, as it says so much about Greek and Roman culture in general.⁵ However, what has been lacking up to now is a general study aimed at tracing the development of the prevalent negative attitudes towards immigrants and foreigners in Greek and Roman society, and towards other peoples.⁶ The subject is an important one, as

⁵ Out of trivial curiosity, I started counting the number of academic publications on antiquity which contain various forms of the term “barbarian” in their title. I gave up when I reached the number sixty-five—the majority of them deal with the fourth century A.D.

⁶ Note, however, the old monograph by Julius Jüthner, *Hellenen und Barbaren: Aus der Geschichte des Nationalbewusstseins* (Leipzig, 1923), which, in spite of its title, offers a brief survey of the attitudes towards foreigners encountered in Greek, Roman, Hellenistic, Christian, and Byzantine sources. For Greece see Edith Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian: Greek Self-Definition through Tragedy* (Oxford, 1989); Jonathan M. Hall, *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity* (Cambridge, 1997); T. Long, *Barbarians in Greek Comedy* (Carbondale, 1986), esp. chapter 6: “The Barbarian-Hellene Antithesis”; Steven W. Hirsch, *The Friendship of the Barbarians: Xenophon and the Persian Empire* (Hanover, 1985); Cohen (ed.), *Not the Classical Ideal*; Christopher Tuplin, “Greek Racism? Observations on the Character and Limits of Greek Ethnic Prejudice,” in Gocha R. Tsetskhladze (ed.), *Ancient Greeks West and East* (Leiden, 1999), 47–75; for Rome see the survey article by Karl Christ, “Römer und Barbaren in der hohen Kaiserzeit,” *Saeculum* 10 (1959), 273–288 and the

already observed. It is also an extremely delicate topic because of the current sensitivity to all forms of discrimination: any consideration of ancient preconceptions is in danger of hurting modern sensibilities. Moreover, there is a long tradition of seeing Greece and Rome, especially Greece, as the origin of liberty, spiritual and otherwise, and of constitutionalism. A systematic consideration of what we would regard as ancient forms of bigotry may not appeal to some scholars. The study of ancient ethnicity is far more popular at present than that of social hatred, but it is the latter which I have undertaken. In other words, it is not a study of self-definition and self-perception, but of views of others, primarily negative views held by Greek and Roman authors. In this work I shall not use the term “Others” frequently, because “the Other” has in recent decades acquired quite a broad meaning: “Others” include women, slaves, children, the elderly, or disfigured people. It refers to any group that is not part of the establishment, but is placed on the margin or periphery of society, or does not belong to it at all.

This work, then, is concerned with ambivalence and hostility towards foreigners, strangers, and immigrant minorities, rather than internal marginal groups. Such an attempt is as justified as any historical study of racism or social conflict and stress in later periods.⁷ Indeed it is the aim of this work to contribute to an understanding of the intellectual origins of racism and xenophobia. As will be seen, some of the patterns visible in the ancient world continued to exist or have re-appeared and are still with us. Others are not. As has already been

subsequent monographs by A. N. Sherwin-White, *Racial Prejudice in Imperial Rome* (Cambridge, 1967) and J.P.V.D. Balsdon, *Romans & Aliens* (London, 1979); Yves Albert Dauge, *Le Barbare: Recherches sur la conception romaine de la barbarie et de la civilisation* (Brussels, 1981). These three works will be considered below. For the fourth century A.D.: Alain Chauvot, *Opinions romaines face aux barbares au iv^e siècle ap. J.-C.* (Paris, 1998). The necessary parameters for the study of this subject have been clearly set forth in a forthcoming article: Gideon Bohak, “The Ibis and the Jewish Question: Ancient ‘Anti-Semitism’ in Historical Perspective,” in M. Mor and A. Oppenheimer (eds.), *Jewish-Gentile Relations in the Second Temple, Mishnaic and Talmudic Periods* (Jerusalem). Special mention may be made of Aubrey Diller, *Race Mixture among the Greeks Before Alexander* (Urbana, IL, 1937). This is a learned and thoughtful work, submitted as a Ph.D. thesis in 1930. It can perhaps be said that the author was the victim of the follies of his time, for he wrote an almost reasonable book about a misguided topic and his conclusions are nonsense: “the idea (of Greek superiority) was strongly negative. It raised a barrier between the Greeks and their neighbors that was crossed consciously, deliberately and at last wantonly. Without such a barrier there would scarcely have been an organic nation capable of maintaining and advancing a civilization of its own. Greek culture would have been contaminated and dissipated prematurely” (p. 31). “For the historical period before Alexander, therefore, we must conclude that there was not much race mixture in Greece” (p. 160). One is tempted to say that the book represents racism with a human face. It was reprinted without changes in 1971.

⁷ No word of apology is found in Claude Rawson, *God, Gulliver and Genocide: Barbarism and the European Imagination, 1492–1945* (Oxford, 2001), which studies hostility and ambivalence in the attitudes towards others in the literature of the past five centuries, with special emphasis on Montaigne and Swift. “More broadly, this book is about how the European imagination has dealt with the groups which it habitually talks about killing, and never quite kills off, because the task is too difficult or unpleasant, or the victims are needed for their labour, or competing feelings get in the way” (p. viii).

noted, it is usually considered unjustifiable to speak of ancient racism.⁸ None of the works on racism and ethnic prejudice which I have seen and cited assert that it precedes Columbus and European colonialism. This is also the contemporary popular perception.⁹ Obviously, it did not exist in the modern form of a biological determinism which represents a distortion of Darwin's ideas, nor was there systematic persecution of any ethnic group by another. However, I shall argue that it is justified to speak of "proto-racism."¹⁰ Modern racism has, by now, quite a long history of development. In its early stages in the eighteenth century, there was nothing like the state-imposed set of theories and applications developed later in Nazi Germany. There were various authors in search of concepts who did not necessarily agree with one another and developed different and often contradictory ideas. In this stage racism remained a fairly moderate doctrine, based on environmentalism and preoccupied with various evaluations of the relationship between the non-Europeans and their European masters. Yet no recent discussion of racism and xenophobia can ignore the many relevant works written in the period of the Enlightenment, for twentieth-century racism could not have existed without these predecessors. Indeed, many of the ideas published in the eighteenth century became part of later racism. In this connection it has been emphasized, however, that the authors of the Enlightenment constantly employ Graeco-Roman concepts and ideas, as will be discussed below. Thus one of the aims of this book is to show that some essential elements of later racism have their roots in Greek and Roman thinking.

The method applied here must also be somewhat different from the study of ethnicity, a subject which, like the consideration of individual identity, has to take into account self-perception, the views of others of oneself, and the perception of others' views of oneself.¹¹ It will be understood that a consideration of hostility towards, say, Egyptians in Rome, has to leave out many of the positive aspects of Roman attitudes towards Egypt. Similarly, although Greek culture was admired, studied, and imitated in Rome, the present work will concentrate more on the negative or ambivalent attitudes Rome showed towards Greeks and

⁸ F. I. Zeitlin, *Playing the Other: Gender and Society in Classical Greek Literature* (Chicago and London, 1996); Brian Leigh Molyneux, *The Cultural Life of Images: Visual Representation in Archaeology* (London, 1997), esp. B. Sparkes, "Some Greek Images of Others," 130–158; Cohen (ed.), *Not the Classical Ideal*, Introduction.

⁹ See, for instance, Susan Saulny, "And there was light, and it was good?" *New York Times*, Sunday, September 2, 2001, citing various anthropologists. Thus C. Loring Brace of the University of Michigan is quoted as saying: "The concept of race does not appear until the trans-Atlantic voyages of the Renaissance." Naturally, in the United States, those who discuss racism tend to focus on skin color. The article continues: "Another way of thinking about skin color is to ask: When did Europeans start thinking of themselves as white? 'There was no whiteness prior to the 17th century,' said Manning Marable, director of the Institute for Research in African-American Studies at Columbia University." See now Frederickson, *Racism*, cited above, n. 3.

¹⁰ The term "proto-racisme" has been used by Jean Yoyotte for Egypt according to L. Poliakov, *Ni Juif ni Grec: Entretiens sur le racisme* (Paris, The Hague, New York, 1978), preface pp. 7–22, at p. 8. Frederickson, *Racism*, applies it to the later Middle Ages.

¹¹ A seminal study of identity was Erik H. Erikson's *Childhood and Society* (New York, 1950).

Greece, although the former will certainly not be ignored.¹² This will inevitably result in clarifying only part of the spectrum of attitudes, for the work cannot and should not provide all the favorable or neutral judgments made by Greeks and Romans of other peoples.

This study considers how Greeks and Romans thought and wrote about others, more than how they actually behaved towards them, although clearly there is a connection between the two. If we interpret them properly, we can understand what ancient authors meant to convey or conveyed, sometimes without meaning to do so, about other peoples and about foreigners living in their midst. It does not follow that we can deduce from their writings how the Greeks and Romans treated them in practice in day-to-day life. There are several reasons for this. First, and most obviously, the authors are all men belonging to the well-to-do or upper classes, which gives them a specific perspective. Second, it is not their ambition to provide us with insights on how the others saw their position vis-à-vis the Greeks and Romans.¹³ This book, therefore, aims in particular to elucidate the views encountered in Greek and Roman literature. These views pertain to various dimensions and features of social life and culture: religion, occupation, modes of life and conflict, and language. Emphasis and values may change over time, but we are always concerned with the ways one group saw another. It is not my intention to consider the economic, legal, and social realities of those concerned. This is necessarily a limited perspective, but it will be instructive all the same: we know that the Greeks in their classical age failed to build an integrated empire including non-Greeks, and we know that the Roman Empire was a multiethnic structure for centuries. This might have led us to suppose that the attitudes of Greek authors towards foreigners would have been more characterized by prejudice and hostility than the attitudes in Latin literature would have been. This appears not to be the case. It may be seen that there is

¹² Uffe Øystergård, 'What is National and Ethnic Identity?' in Bilde et al., *Ethnicity in Hellenistic Egypt* (1992), 16–38, esp. 35f. also suggests that this might be a useful approach: "We do keep talking as if national stereotypes somehow do exist out there in the 'real' world. Even the most refined scholar who would never dare enter such a word in his or her professional work lapses in or back to 'primitive ethnography' when going abroad and attending learned conferences. . . . So, why not take as a point of departure these very stereotypes and see where they lead us? Such an approach might be entitled the discursive approach." He then refers to F. Barth (ed.), *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Cultural Difference* (Bergen, Oslo, London, 1969). This is a collection of essays by various social anthropologists on a number of specific ethnic groups. For a more recent discussion of ethnicity from an anthropological perspective: J. M. Hall, *Ethnic Identity*, esp. 17–33. I have not been able to consult the latter's recent work: *Hellenicity: Between Ethnicity and Culture* (Chicago, 2002); For ancient Greece, see now I. Malkin (ed.), *Ancient Perceptions of Greek Ethnicity* (Washington, DC and Cambridge, MA, 2001). For Greek culture and identity in the Roman Empire, see the collection of essays: Simon Goldhill (ed.), *Being Greek under Rome: Cultural Identity, the Second Sophistic and the Development of Empire* (Cambridge, 2001). Other recent works which I have been unable to consult are Tim Whitmarsh, *Greek Literature and the Roman Empire: The Politics of Imitation* (Oxford, 2001), and Erik Nils Ostenfeld (ed.), *Greek Romans and Roman Greeks* (Aarhus, 2002).

¹³ There are a few important exceptions: Greek authors, such as Galen or Lucian of the second sophistic, who write about their experiences in the city of Rome, for instance.

not necessarily always a direct correspondence between social tensions, bigotry, or even hatred and the actual treatment of minorities as may be illustrated easily by a modern parallel. The Jews in mid-nineteenth-century Germany were more fully emancipated than those of any other European nation. Yet there was fierce anti-semitism at the time. Again, there was no sense then that this would lead where we now know it to have led. The existence of racism in the United States did not prevent the abolition of slavery and the gradual emancipation of the blacks in that country. I assume therefore that it is illuminating to study ideas and attitudes in their own right.

Here we touch upon a further major aim of this work. It is assumed here that an understanding of negative attitudes towards other peoples will clarify part of the underlying assumptions and attitudes of ancient imperialism. This should be true, first of all, for the stage where one nation or empire sets out to subjugate and annex or incorporate—"enslave" is the simple ancient term—another people or nation. It should clarify the Greek conquest of Persia by Alexander if we understand how fourth-century Greeks viewed Persians. The same should be true, *ceteris paribus*, for the Roman subjugation of Asia Minor. Furthermore, it is conceivable that we will be able to understand the functioning or disintegration of ancient empires better if we understand attitudes towards incorporated peoples. It is important to realize that the Roman Empire managed to become an integrated whole, in spite of Roman ambivalence towards the Greeks, and it is at least as interesting to see how it then split into two parts, a Latin- and a Greek-speaking empire, where westerners and easterners could exhibit fierce animosity towards one another. Again, the assumption is that Greek and Roman texts will convey mentalities and ideology. It is also assumed that the study of imperial attitudes towards the various peoples who inhabit an Empire will help in clarifying the underlying feelings, ambitions, and fears of those who maintain, expand, or lose an empire.

It is therefore not the intention of this book to provide an analysis of the aims and mechanisms of ancient imperialism in practice, nor of imperial strategy and military policy. I do not pretend to explain imperialism in any systematic manner, for imperialism is not only a policy, but also and even more so, an attitude of mind. It has been my aim to verify whether certain attitudes towards foreign peoples encountered in ancient literature go together with imperialist behavior. It is not my claim that attitudes steer policy, drive conquest, or even determine the treatment of subject peoples, their integration, or suppression. Considering them may help in clarifying an aspect of warfare that tends to be somewhat neglected, at least in ancient history. This may be illustrated with a recent parallel. Both France under Napoleon and Germany under Hitler invaded Russia. For both these nations these campaigns ended in the loss, not just of a battle or campaign, but of their entire wars of expansion, wars that had been successful before they attacked Russia. Whatever their aims and methods, they did so only because they were convinced that they would succeed. This means that there was an extraordinary discrepancy between their image of Russia as a country and reality. It is therefore useful in itself to consider the views of other peoples held by countries at war and their self-perception. When Alexander and his

army attacked Persia successfully, he did so with the image of that country that had developed among the Greeks ever since the early fifth century. It is therefore instructive to trace what kind of image this was and how it developed. The same is true, *mutatis mutandis*, for the failed Roman attacks on Parthia in the first century B.C. Thus, besides tracing the early history of group- and ethnic prejudice this study has for its second aim to consider the interrelation between ethnic stereotypes and relations, particularly hostile relations between states. It is a truism that morale is a key factor in warfare and morale is determined in large part by the views both sides have of the other and themselves. Such views may be formed by good intelligence work and cautious evaluation, but sets of stereotypes inevitably play an important role, which is one of the explanations for disastrous failures, such as Crassus at Carrhae and the Russian invasions already mentioned.

A further and significant contribution to be made by such an examination is a better insight why certain attempts were not made. After Germanicus's campaigns in Germany the only serious war effort made there was by Domitian. We may compare this with the long series of Parthian and Sassanian expeditions down to the seventh century. The difference is remarkable and can only be explained by the difference in expected gains and expected effort to be expended. Although the Germans were regarded as fierce fighters, there was no expectation of considerable profit if they were subjugated, so the conquest of Germany never became a first priority after the reign of Augustus. Even though this is obvious in principle, it will be useful to consider the image of the Germans in Roman sources in this light.

Since we are dealing not only with peoples at war but also with integrated empires, there is a related topic that may profitably be studied. When peoples were conquered, incorporated into provinces and, in due course of time, became part of an integrated empire, this entailed a process of ethnic disintegration or decomposition. This is the essence of "Romanization." The Nabataeans, the Idumaeans, and the Commageneans in the east, the Allobroges in the west, all disappeared as ethnic entities. How this happened and what was the result is not the topic of this book, but it will be useful to see how observers at the center of the empire related to such peoples during the various stages of this development. The descendants of those vanished peoples who had become inhabitants of integrated provinces were regarded in various ways which it will be interesting to trace. How did Roman aristocrats view Greeks, Syrians, or Gauls in the second century A.D.? How much regard, disrespect, or even contempt was there for those peoples who had undergone a successful process of ethnic dissolution and imperial integration? What kind of tensions did this process engender over time?

ANCIENT INFLUENCE ON EARLY MODERN AUTHORS

Because it is one of the aims of this work to trace the ancient roots of early modern racism, it will be useful here to give a few examples which illustrate

the statement made above about the conceptual links between modern racism and the ancient world. An early form of racism has been recognized in the “theory of degeneration” of Georges-Louis Buffon (1707–1788), through his work *La dégénération des animaux*, which was very influential in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.¹⁴ This is essentially an application of the environmental theory: Buffon writes that the white man, meaning the normal man, who truly represents humanity, has grown progressively blacker in a tropical climate and can recover his original, normal color by returning to the temperate zone. Buffon suggested an experiment whereby a number of blacks would be transported from Senegal to Denmark and kept there in isolation and under observation. It would then become clear how long it would take for such people to turn white, blonde, and blue-eyed. The opposite experiment, of transporting Danes to Senegal, was not considered although the expectation that they would turn black was exactly the premise of the theory, white being considered the norm and black a form of degeneration.¹⁵ Buffon, it has been observed, was probably the first to employ the term “race” in something approaching its modern sense. He defines races as varieties of the species whose characters have become hereditary as a result of the continuous actions of the same causes that produce individual differences, but he was not very consistent in his usage.¹⁶ Note that this represents a combination of external influence (climate) and heredity. It has even been suggested that racial theoretical thinking is found fully developed in Buffon’s writings.¹⁷ Buffon writes that donkeys are degenerate

¹⁴ Buffon’s output and popularity was remarkable; see Jean Pivetau (ed.), *Oeuvres philosophiques de Buffon* (Paris, 1954), 527f. for titles and editions. For his ideas about *physiognomics* see below.

¹⁵ Georges-Louis Leclerc de Buffon, *Histoire naturelle générale et particulière avec la Description du Cabinet du Roy*, vol. 4 (published in 1766), “De la dégénération des animaux,” 311–374, esp. 311–313. It was the sort of experiment which the eighteenth century found fascinating. One of the best known of these is the plan, never carried out, to raise a number of children in full isolation from birth onward; cf. Roger Shattuck, *The Forbidden Experiment: the Story of the Wild Boy of Aveyron* (New York, 1980). The second part of this title refers to the famous case of a wild boy, discovered in southern France in 1800. He was studied as representing the perfect specimen of a natural man. It is worth noting that the idea of raising infants in total isolation in order to gain essential information goes back to classical antiquity. Herodotus 2.2 tells of an experiment carried out by the Egyptian Pharaoh Psammetichus who ordered two infants to be raised in isolation. In due course of time they spontaneously started using the Phrygian word for bread, which proved to the satisfaction of the Egyptians that not they, but the Phrygians, were the most ancient people on earth. The idea was revived in the twentieth century by the behavioral psychologist B. F. Skinner, who developed the “Air-Crib,” a large, soundproof, germ-free, air-conditioned box designed to house infants during the first two years of life and supposed to provide a labor-saving and optimal environment during this stage. Skinner’s own daughter spent most of her first two years in such a device. According to the author, the infant seemed healthy and happy and had been free of colds and other infection; cf. B. F. Skinner, “Baby in a box; the mechanical baby-tender,” *Ladies’ Home Journal* 62 (1945) 62: 30–31, 135–136, 138.

¹⁶ Gustav Jahoda, *Images of Savages: Ancient Roots of Modern Prejudice in Western Culture* (London and New York, 1999), 44.

¹⁷ Tzvetan Todorov, *Nous et les autres: La Réflexion française sur la diversité humaine* (Paris, 1989), translated into English as *On Human Diversity: Nationalism, Racism, and Exoticism in French Thought* (Cambridge, MA, 1993), 96–106, esp. 103: “We are now in a position to note that

horses, apes degenerate men. The Negro is to man what the donkey is to the horse. The Negro is man, not animal, only because white and black can procreate together. Buffon formulates his view on the influence of climate on the characteristics of man as follows: “Ever since man began to settle under different skies and to move out of one climate into another, his nature has undergone changes . . . these changes became so great and so evident that one might think that the Negro, the Laplander, and the White are different species, were it not that on the one hand we are told that originally only one man was created, while on the other we know that the White Man or Laplander or Negro, however dissimilar, are able to unite and propagate. . . .” He furthermore considers those living in the temperate climate of his own part of the world to be the most beautiful people possible. Buffon has an obsession with the aesthetics of humanity common to other racial theorists of his times, whereby ideas of beauty and ugliness are narrowly ethnocentric and dictated largely by skin color.¹⁸ In principle Buffon believed in monogenesis, in the unity of mankind. This had been the traditional starting point for all those who accepted the truth of the Bible. Buffon was not religious, but accepted the fact that all human beings can procreate together and must therefore belong to the same species. However, there is, in his view, a definite hierarchy of subspecies in which some peoples are closer to animals and others further removed from them.

As shown in part 1, the environmental theory, central to the work of Buffon and accepted by many or most people up to the second half of the nineteenth century, originated in the Graeco-Roman world. It was widely accepted from the fifth century B.C. until late antiquity.¹⁹ Furthermore, ancient literature is also full of claims that people degenerated by moving from one region to another. The ancient environmental theory was Buffon’s point of reference, although this does not imply that his ideas were generally accepted in his own time. There is another element in Buffon’s hierarchy of humanity which, as we shall see, is prominent in ancient literature, namely the criterion of sociability. The essence

the racialist theory in its entirety is found in Buffon’s writings.” This is not to say that Buffon was the first to write a racist treatise in the narrow, biological sense of the term. Several authors are candidates for primacy in this respect: Henri de Boulainvilliers (d.1722); Lord Kames (Henry Homes, 1696–1782); cf. M. Banton, *Race Relations* (London, 1967), 28; Anthony J. Barker, *The African Link: British Attitudes to the Negro in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1550–1807* (London, 1978), 53, 61f. Kames was a prolific author; see his *Sketches of the History of Man* (Edinburgh, 2d ed. 1778; Dublin, 3rd ed. 1779, repr. of the second ed., London, 1993). He was a man who wanted to have his cake and eat it. He based his racist ideas on a polygenist (see below) approach, which he reconciled with Old Testament authority, claiming that human differentiation was due to divine intervention at the time of the Tower of Babel. He also sought to explain the compatibility of his strictly racial ideas with the environmental theory which was generally accepted at the time.

¹⁸ See the quotations by Todorov, *On Human Diversity*, 104.

¹⁹ For the history of the idea of environmental determinism: Franklin Thomas, *The Environmental Basis of Society: A Study in the History of Sociological Theory* (New York and London, 1925). James William Johnson, *The Formation of English Neo-Classical Thought* (Princeton, 1967), 46–48, shows how climatic determinism as found in Greek and Latin literature directly influenced the English authors of the Enlightenment from the seventeenth century onward.

of civilized people is their social adaptation; lack of this is typical of barbarians. “A people who live without the restraint of fixed laws, or of a regular government, can only be considered as a tumultuous assemblage of barbarous and independent individuals, who obey no laws but those of passion and caprice.”²⁰ This approach echoes that of the ancient texts: the treatise *Airs, Waters, Places* and the works of Aristotle and Strabo, among others.

Buffon’s contemporary David Hume (1711–1776) expressed the view (1748) that “the Negroes, and in general all the other species of men (for there are four or five different kinds) [are] naturally inferior to the whites.” Later he repeats again that “nature made an original distinction between these breeds of men.”²¹ He does not seem to have expressed views on how nature achieved this. Voltaire, however, seeks to show that climate could *not* account for race differences, since “Negro men and Negro women, transported to the coldest countries, still produce there animals [*sic*] of their own species.”²² Unlike Buffon, Voltaire believed in polygenesis. Being an unbeliever and ignorant of the biological evidence available in his time, he had no difficulty in rejecting the unity of mankind. The different races which he distinguished therefore did not have a common origin, in his view. His ideas were adopted by many later racists, especially those who refused to admit the principle of evolution.

Kant combined two approaches in his theory about the origin of races: “. . . it is clear that the reason for it (i.e., blackness) is the hot climate. However, it is certain that a great number of generations has been needed for it to become part of the species and hereditary.”²³ This shows that Kant, like Buffon, assumed without further consideration that racial characteristics are determined by external influences (climate) and then, after many generations become hereditary (i.e., acquired characters became hereditary). This combination of environmentalism and a belief in the inheritance of acquired characters became quite popular in the nineteenth century.²⁴ Once again, this is an extremely common approach in antiquity. Kant observes that “The Negroes of Africa have by

²⁰ Buffon, *Histoire naturelle générale*, vol. 3, English translation (London, 1817), p. 412; cf. Todorov, *On Human Diversity*, 98: “It is clear that for Buffon the term ‘barbarous’ is correlated with ‘independent’—that is, asocial.”

²¹ Cited in full, below, in chapter 1. Hume, like some other authors of the second half of the eighteenth century such as Dr. Johnson, put less credence in climatic causation: Johnson *Formation*, p. 48.

²² Voltaire, *Essai sur les mœurs et l’esprit des nations* 1 [1756] (Paris 1963), 6; English translation: Robert Bernasconi and Tommy L. Lott, *The Idea of Race* (Indianapolis, IN, 2000), 5–7. Cf. Todorov, *On Human Diversity*, 100f. Voltaire assumes that the animality of the blacks may be due to the hot climates in which apes may have ravished girls. For other authors of the Enlightenment, notably Rousseau, who were confused as regards the distinction between blacks and apes: Shulamit Volkov, “Exploring the Other: The Enlightenment’s Search for the Boundaries of Humanity,” in Wistrich (ed.), *Demonizing the Other*, 148–167, esp. 153f.

²³ *Physical Geography* in vols. 2 and 8 of Kant’s *Gesammelte Schriften* (Berlin, 1900–66), English trans. by E. C. Eze, *Race and the Enlightenment* (Oxford, 1997), 60.

²⁴ For its influence in England, see Ruth Schwartz Cowan, *Sir Francis Galton and the Study of Heredity in the Nineteenth Century* (New York and London, 1985), 15–19.

nature no feeling that rises above the trifling.”²⁵ He cites David Hume in asserting that blacks transported elsewhere and set free have still not produced a single person who has “presented anything great in art or science or any other praiseworthy quality . . .” Kant thus definitely considers the differences between races, as he sees them, to have been determined *by nature*. Obviously, the concept *by nature* derives directly from Greek ethnography and philosophy. “So fundamental is the difference between these two races of man, and it appears to be as great in regard to mental capacities as in colour.” Finally, Kant asserts that “The tallest and most beautiful people on dry land are on the parallel and the degrees which run through Germany.”²⁶ This follows the ancient Greek and Roman tradition of considering their own peoples the best in the world as determined by geography and climate. Thus Kant’s aesthetics are defined more narrowly and nationalistically than those of Buffon, who was willing to regard all of those living in the temperate climates he knew of as the most beautiful.²⁷ Some nineteenth-century racists still allowed for the environment to play a decisive role in the formation of race, as well as hereditary factors.²⁸ This is not to suggest that all early modern thinkers were racists. It is the aim of this work to trace particular forms of stereotypical thinking and this necessarily ignores many authors who resisted such patterns, for instance the remarkable and courageous philosopher Helvétius (1715–1771), who firmly denies any correlation between physical and mental characteristics.²⁹

²⁵ Immanuel Kant, *Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen* (Königsberg, 1764), reprinted in *Gesammelte Schriften* ii, translated as *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* (1764), by J. T. Goldthwait (Berkeley, CA, 1960); “On National Characteristics,” 110f.

²⁶ Eze, 59. For Kant’s racism: Allen W. Wood, *Kant’s Ethical Thought* (Cambridge, 1999), 3f., 206, references on 339; Eze, *Race and the Enlightenment*, 103–140; Robert B. Loudon, *Kant’s Impure Ethics: From Rational Beings to Human Beings* (Oxford and New York, 2000), 93–100. It is generally acknowledged that Kant cherished racist theories, but there are shades and differences of interpretation and emphasis in the evaluation of his views.

²⁷ There is no point in recapitulating the history of modern racism, which is the subject of many major works cited in the footnotes here. The only early racist theorists mentioned here are those who demonstrably passed on Graeco-Roman ideas and made them an integral part of their theories. There is therefore no reason to describe the views of authors such as Renan, Le Bon, Taine, and Gobineau (all discussed, for instance, in Todorov, *On Human Diversity*).

²⁸ E.g., Ernest Renan, *L’Avenir de la science* (published in 1890, based on his thoughts of 1848, I refer to the edition published in Paris, 1995), 214: “Les races et les climats produisent simultanément dans l’humanité les mêmes différences que le temps a montrées successives dans la suite des développements.” The introduction to this edition, by Annie Petit, pp.7–45, fails to note this aspect of Renan’s thinking, while asserting (p. 45) that “*l’Avenir de la science* est à la fois aux commencements et à la fin de l’oeuvre renanienne, et l’a constamment nourrie. Et c’est un ouvrage-bilan doublement.”

²⁹ Claude-Adrien Helvétius, *de l’esprit* (Paris 1758), ed. Moutaux (Paris 1988), 404: “Il seroit cependant facile d’appercevoir que la différence extérieure qu’on remarque, par exemple, dans la physionomie du Chinois et du Suédois, ne peut avoir aucune influence sur leur esprit . . .” For Helvétius, see Albert Keim, *Helvétius, sa vie et son œuvre: d’après ses ouvrages, des écrits divers et des documents inédits* (Paris 1907); Mordecai Grossman, *The Philosophy of Helvétius with special emphasis on the educational implications of sensationalism* (New York, 1926); on the resistance to his ideas: D.W. Smith, *Helvétius: a Study in Persecution* (Oxford, 1965).

As modern racism has been shaped by its eighteenth-century roots, so the Enlightenment adopted ideas and modes of thinking developed and accepted in the ancient world. It will be argued here that this continuity is sufficient to allow us to speak of Graeco-Roman forms of proto-racism. It should be noted that the examples cited here from the early modern authors are much concerned with skin color, a topic not systematically discussed in this book. Skin color was important to the authors of the Enlightenment and they applied to it the ideas taken from ancient authors in connection with other groups. One of the tenets of this study is that racists adapt prototypes of stereotypical thinking to the objects of their preoccupation.

The first part of the book will discuss the development of negative or hostile ideas about groups of others in antiquity, as well as ideas of the superiority of one's own group, in a more or less systematic manner. Where appropriate, it will indicate continuity by referring to later authors who adopt the ancient concepts. Unavoidably, there are interesting, related phenomena which cannot be included in this discussion. To give just one example: Aristotle assumes that all creatures which are biologically perfect reproduce themselves.³⁰ Those which he classifies as imperfect, such as insects and some of the reptiles, are generated spontaneously from the earth, like plants, or are the product of the fusion of rotting matter. These ideas were taken over and extended to some groups of human beings by Paracelsus in the fifteenth century and by Andrea Cesalpino, Gerolamo Cardano, and Giordano Bruno in the sixteenth. The claim was that beings such as pygmies or the American Indians had no soul and descended from another, second Adam or were generated spontaneously from the earth.³¹ They were *similitudines hominis* rather than real men.

These theories raised opposition from the church as being blasphemous and heretical, but they nevertheless enjoyed popularity well into the seventeenth century.³² They might be discussed here, because they basically deny groups of people their humanity and reduce them to the status of a kind of animal. And indeed the denial of human status to groups of human beings is relevant to any discussion of racism and will be included in this book. However, the ideas just described do not represent anything like Aristotle's original ideas, for although Aristotle may consider some foreigners bestial or brutish, and approximate

³⁰ Aristotle, *De generatione animalium* 762a 10ff.; *Meteorologica*, 381b 10. Note, however, that there was an old and traditional belief that early man was "earthborn": Empedocles, in Diels-Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (Berlin, 6th ed. 1951), fr.6; M. R. Wright, *Empedocles: The Extant Fragments* (New Haven, 1981), no. 53, comments on pp. 215–217; Plato, *Politicus* 269B; Aristotle, *De generatione animalium* 762b; see also Herodotus 8.55: Erechtheus is said to have been γηγενής.

³¹ Lewis Hanke, *Aristotle and the American Indians: a study in race prejudice in the modern world* (Bloomington, IN, 1959); Anthony Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology* (Cambridge, 1982), 22f. and references in notes 37 and 38.

³² Frederickson, *Racism*, 40–42, observes that "sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spain is critical to the history of Western racism because its attitudes and practices served as a kind of segue between the religious intolerance of the Middle Ages and the naturalistic racism of the modern era."

slaves to animals, he does not claim that they actually are animals. Moreover, the preoccupation with the soul and the origins of primitive man, so urgent in the sixteenth century, was neither part of the intellectual interest of Graeco-Roman antiquity, nor of later racism. There is therefore no justification in tracing such theories in a work that considers ancient ideas about foreigners and minorities, and which attempts to trace direct dependence of early modern ideas on the Graeco-Roman world. It seems clear, however, that eighteenth- and nineteenth-century western thought has many concepts in common with Greek and Roman group prejudices.

CHRONOLOGY AND SUBJECT MATTER

At this point we need to clarify the chronological limits of this study and our terminology. As for the former, the starting point is not problematic. This should be the beginning of Greek prose, notably historical prose, and therefore we can safely begin systematic analysis with Herodotus, although we may have recourse to earlier sources as needed. Herodotus is the first author to devote extensive discussion to the relationship between Greeks and non-Greeks and this must therefore be our first major point of reference. It is far harder to determine where to stop. Ideally all of antiquity should be taken into account, even though this book is rather long as it is. Lack of space is a feeble excuse which a serious author should never use, just as lack of time never is a proper reason to pass over a truly relevant topic in a lecture.³³ Clearly the Roman imperial period should be covered systematically. Fourth-century pagan literature will be included, although in a less systematic manner.³⁴ It was my impression that it would not be profitable to do more than that, because the essentials of the patterns analyzed in this study do not change thereafter. The next decision then was whether to include non-pagan texts of the Christian Roman Empire. Or rather: the major decision to be taken was the inclusion or exclusion of Christian literature. There is no question that this would be important and interesting. Such treatment then should also include non-patristic texts of the Christian Empire, such as legal material. Finally, it is clear that, once such sources are included, they should cover the field systematically from the beginning till late antiquity and perhaps beyond. Christian attitudes, it seems, were partly similar and partly different from the start. Paul writes: "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring,

³³ A lecturer who is fortunate enough to get the undivided attention during fifty minutes of an audience, whatever the size, consisting of colleagues, students, and perhaps others who are interested, should not imply that those people ought to listen to him for a hundred minutes. The average lecturer himself does not want to listen to anybody else for more than fifty minutes.

³⁴ Chauvot, *Opinions romaines face aux Barbares* (1998).

heirs according to promise.”³⁵ Whatever the interpretation of such words over the centuries and whatever the practice, it is a different starting point, a different approach that deserves attention in its own right and should not be included as a secondary issue in this study. The chronological limits therefore cover fifth-century Greece and will include Rome down to the third century with occasional forays into the fourth century. Christian texts are not considered in any systematic manner, nor are Jewish sources whatever the language because the Jews never became part of mainstream Greek and Roman society.

It is not my aim to compare the Graeco-Roman world with contemporary and non-Western societies. The literature on these subjects is massive and anyone interested in broad theoretical frameworks of racism can find them there. Related work in social science will be considered from time to time for the sake of clarification. I do not have the expertise—and it may not be possible for those who do—to describe manifestations of group hatred in antiquity in terms of mental illnesses. What would be considered delusional or paranoid in one culture may be something quite different in another. The aim here is to trace ideas and attitudes in antiquity as they developed over time, while keeping in mind the impact they may have had in more recent times. No such treatment has yet been undertaken and there is therefore no need to justify the attempt. The term “proto-racism” will be used to describe patterns of thought in antiquity, as it will be argued that ancient views of other people and the groups to which they belonged took forms that were adopted by early modern racists. It will be argued that the definitions adopted below amply justify the application of the term proto-racism to describe attitudes towards others which were widespread in antiquity.

CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS

The definition of terminology will serve two purposes. First, we need clearly defined terminology to apply to ancient phenomena and, second, we need to clarify our own approach. If we want to determine whether there were indeed early forms of racial prejudice and racism in Greece or Rome, it must be clearly understood what we mean by the terms *race*, *racism*, *racialism*, and *racial prejudice*.³⁶ Other terms which require precise definitions are *ethnic groups*,

³⁵ *Galatians* 3.27–9: ὅσοι γὰρ εἰς Χριστὸν ἐβαπτίσθητε, Χριστὸν ἐνεδύσασθε· οὐκ ἐν Ἰουδαίῳ οὐδὲ Ἑλληνίῳ, οὐκ ἐν δούλῳ οὐδὲ ἐλεύθερῳ, οὐκ ἐν ἄρσεν καὶ θήλυ· πάντες γὰρ ὑμεῖς εἰς ἓστε ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. εἰ δὲ ὑμεῖς Χριστοῦ, ἄρα τοῦ Ἀβραάμ σπέρμα ἐστέ, κατ' ἐπαγγελίαν κληρονόμοι.

³⁶ Works consulted (a tiny selection only of the existing literature): R. Benedict, *Race and Racism* (London, 1942). While attacking racism, Benedict accepted the existence of races. Yet, Benedict largely followed the opinions of her teacher, Franz Boas, who, certainly no racist, in *The Mind of Primitive Man* (1911) argued for the precedence of culture over race. Yet he too was ambivalent: the German translation of Boas' work, *Kultur und Rasse* (Leipzig, 1914), 236f. ends with a call for racial hygiene. For a collection of his work: George W. Stocking (ed.), *The Shaping of American*

group prejudice, and *xenophobia*. Nobody would want to claim that the Elder Cato cherished an unreserved affection for his contemporary Greeks, but we can only decide if his dislike should be considered racial prejudice or another form of prejudice, or no prejudice at all, if we first decide exactly what we mean by prejudice in general, and racial prejudice in particular. Since this is a historical study the methods, the available material, and the questions asked will be essentially and conceptually different from those found in the works of social scientists or psychologists. In establishing my definitions I will follow an order of priorities which is slightly different from that of many historical studies. This book aims to explore early forms of racism. It is not concerned with race and I will therefore define *racism* before discussing *race*. As will be seen below, I have good reasons for this: I want to understand racism and this means I have to work with the concept of race as devised by racists. I accept the opinion of those who assert that “race” in the sense in which it is used by the racist does not exist. If, however, I adopt a definition of race which seems more or less reasonable or rational, then it is impossible to trace patterns of racism, which are by definition irrational.³⁷

Anthropology, 1883–1911: A Franz Boas Reader (Chicago, 1974); for a brief and representative statement: “Instability of Human Types” in Bernasconi and Lott (eds.), *The Idea of Race*, 84–88. Influential works that appeared after World War II: M. Banton, *Race Relations; The Idea of Race* (London, 1977); *Racial Theories* (Cambridge, 1987). Banton’s works certainly do not ignore history, but they represent social science and are therefore different in outlook and method from this book. See also: P. Mason, *Race Relations* (London, 1970); Robert Miles, *White Man’s Country: Racism in British Politics* (London, 1984). For sociological studies of the acceptance and rejection of the concept of race: Leonard Lieberman, “The Debate Over Race: A Study in the Sociology of Knowledge,” *Phylon* (1968), 127–141; Leonard Lieberman and Larry T. Reynolds, “The Debate Over Race Revisited: An Empirical Investigation,” *Phylon* (1978), 333–43; L. T. Reynolds, “A Retrospective on ‘Race’: The Career of a Concept,” *Sociological Focus* 25 (1992), 1–14. These papers trace the reception of the concept in the various branches of the social sciences and other sciences and offer ideas about the social position of the academics involved. It should be noted that the references are exclusively to the bibliography in English and the sociological data taken only from the United States. More relevant for the present study are works about racism. For the history of racism: Léon Poliakov, *Le mythe aryen: essai sur les sources du racisme et des nationalismes* (Paris, 1971); translation: *The Aryan Myth* (New York, 1996); *Le Racisme* (Paris, 1976); *The History of Antisemitism*, 4 vols. (London, 1974–1986); George L. Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution: A History of European Racism* (London, 1978); Maurice Olender (ed.), *Pour Léon Poliakov, le racisme: mythes et sciences* (Paris, 1981); Albert Memmi, *Le racisme. Description, définition, traitement* (Paris, 1982), which was available to me only in the German translation: *Rassismus* (Frankfurt/Main, 1987); Todorov, *Nous et les autres*; Jahoda, cited above; Berel Lang (ed.), *Race and Racism in Theory and Practice* (Lanham, MD, 1999); S. E. Babbitt and S. Campbell, *Racism and Philosophy* (Ithaca and London, 1999). P. Salmon, “Racisme ou refus de la différence dans le monde gréco-romain,” *DHA* 10 (1984), 75–98. Note also the recent readers: Martin Bulmer and John Solomos (eds.), *Racism* (Oxford, 1999); Bernasconi and Lott, *The Idea of Race*.

³⁷ Bernard Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East: An Historical Enquiry* (New York and Oxford, 1990), chapter 2, at p. 17, accepts for “race” what he describes as “current American usage.” This, he says, exclusively denotes “such major divisions as white, black, Mongolian and the like.” In itself this is unsatisfactory, as will be argued below. No less important, these divisions are irrelevant if we consider Graeco-Roman antiquity, and if I were to adopt this usage, it would follow automatically that there was no racism at the time. That, of course, would not worry classicists and

RACISM AND RACIALISM

It is essential to adopt a proper definition of racism. The adoption of a definition that is too narrow and too specific will result in a failure to recognize manifestations of racism for what they are, because they do not correspond precisely with the strict criteria imposed by the definition. A definition that is too broad and too vague makes it possible to describe virtually every form of discrimination as racism. Both phenomena occur frequently and are harmful for intellectual and moral clarity. There are numerous definitions of racism, varying from a narrow to a broad interpretation. A British sociologist who has published widely on racism, Michael Banton, defines racism and prejudice as follows: "By racism is meant the doctrine that a man's behaviour is determined by stable inherited characters deriving from separate racial stocks having distinctive attributes and usually considered to stand to one another in relations of superiority and inferiority." Prejudice, although related to racism, is somewhat different: it has been defined as "a generalization existing prior to the situation in which it is invoked, directed toward people, groups, or social institutions, which is accepted and defended as a guide to action in spite of its discrepancies with the objective facts."³⁸ This definition of racism is very precise and clearly refers to the form encountered in modern Europe.³⁹ However, it ignores a number of features usually included in racism: it only refers to judgments of the behavior of man and not to his moral qualities, inborn gifts, or physical appearance. These are almost always the subject of racist views. Thus it would deny the qualification of racism to claims that a certain people has a distinctive smell or an ugly skull, for instance, since these are not forms of behavior. Moreover,

historians who deny there was such racism, but it will indeed bother those who study, for instance, the Nürnberger race laws. The Nazis were obsessed with groups of people who do not fit current American usage as defined by Lewis. I should add that this is no attempt to criticize Professor Lewis's fascinating analysis of the history of prejudice and slavery in the Middle East.

³⁸ Banton, *Race Relations*, 8, referring also to W. Vickery and M. Opler, "A Redefinition of Prejudice for Purposes of Social Science Research," *Human Relations* 1 (1948), 419–428. For discussion of Banton and Van den Berghe's definitions: see Robert Miles, "Theories of Racism," in Bulmer and Solomos, *Racism* (1999), 348f., reprinted from Miles, *Racism* (London, 1989). Cf. the following definition in an anthropological textbook: Marvin Harris, *The Rise of Anthropological Theory* (New York, 1968), 81: "According to the doctrine of scientific racism, the significant socio-cultural differences and similarities among human populations are the dependent variables of group-restricted hereditary drives and attitudes. Racist explanations thus depend on the correlation of hereditary endowment and group behavioral specialties." This definition is concerned only with "scientific racism," but even so I cannot find it fully satisfactory. The focus is solely on behavior, besides ignoring the element of value judgment which is an essential feature of racism. The definition is taken from a chapter on the rise of racial determinism (pp. 80–107) which describes the irrationality of the theory very well.

³⁹ Similarly, Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York, 1983), 149–151, who sees racism as having its origin in European ideologies of *class*, rather than in those of nation. Racism, he says, is a national phenomenon which does not extend beyond the border and outside Europe it belongs to colonialism. As will be clear from this Introduction, I think this approach is unduly restrictive and restricted.

it describes racism as a way of looking at others and does not relate to forms of aggression or the actual behavior of the racist. Furthermore, it implies, but does not clarify explicitly, that racism is an attitude which denies the individuality of human beings. It regards them exclusively in terms of a collective and does not allow for individual differences. In any case, this definition does not in fact allow for the existence of nonwestern or ancient racism, for the phrase “stable inherited characters deriving from separate racial stocks” clearly suggests the biological determinism which characterizes modern racism.

A topic which it will not be possible to treat here is the work of fascist and national-socialist ancient historians from the 1920s till the end of World War II. Although interesting, this is not immediately relevant here. Ancient historians, such as Helmut Berve, who supported the German Nazi or Italian fascist regime and accepted their ideologies, did not trace ancient predecessors of the racist, nationalist and imperialist ideas that they supported. They tended to write about the topics favored in the classical studies of those times with a contemporary ideological slant.⁴⁰ They were racist, but did not consider the nature of Greek and Roman imperialism or the development of racist ideas in antiquity. At another level, I have not joined in the debate about Martin Bernal’s *Black Athena*. Although it touches on some of my current themes, I am convinced to do so would only confuse the main issues of this study without contributing anything to the discussion of Bernal’s topics.⁴¹

Pierre L. Van den Berghe, an American anthropologist, also gives a narrow description of racism: “It is important to stress that racism, unlike ethnocentrism, is not a universal phenomenon. Members of all human societies have a fairly good opinion of themselves, compared with members of other societies, but the good opinion is frequently based on his own creations. Only a few human groups have deemed themselves superior because of the contents of their gonads.”⁴² This concept of racism has clearly been determined by its use in recent history, in the 1930s and 1940s, and Banton and Van den Berghe have formulated their definition to make it fit this particular historical situation. Their approach would make it futile to look for racism anywhere but in modern,

⁴⁰ For Berve, see the interesting article by Stefan Rebenich, “Der Fall Helmut Berve,” *Chiron* 31 (2000), 457–496. Berve’s writing about Alexander and Caesar were colored by and adapted to the Führerkult; his view of ancient society was racist and followed the demands of National Socialism, but he did not study racism in antiquity. See further the recent issue of *The Classical Bulletin* 76 (2000) with papers by E. Christian Kopff, “Italian Fascism and the Roman Empire,” pp.109–115; Peter Aicher, “Mussolini’s Forum and the Myth of Augustan Rome,” pp.117–140; John T. Quinn, “The Ancient Rome of Adolf Hitler,” pp.141–156; Richard F. Thomas, “Goebbels’ *Georgics*,” pp.157–168. The other papers are concerned with matters of racism and ideology in the United States.

⁴¹ Martin Bernal, *Black Athena: the Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization*, 2 vols. (New Brunswick, NJ, 1987–1991); Mary R. Lefkowitz and Guy MacLean Rogers (eds.), *Black Athena Revisited* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1996); Wim M. J. van Binsbergen (ed.), *Black Athena: Ten Years After* (Leiden, 1996); Bernal, *Black Athena Writes Back: Martin Bernal Responds to His Critics* (Durham, NC, 2002).

⁴² Pierre L. Van den Berghe, *Race and Racism* (New York, 1967), 12.

western civilization. It assumes that there are forms of chauvinism, prejudice, and discrimination everywhere among humanity, but the term racism is here applied only to discrimination on the basis of presumed biological differences.

It is striking how public perspective of the essence of racism has shifted even during the past fifty years. During the second half of the nineteenth- and the first half of the twentieth century, racist attitudes, at least in Europe, focused on groups that were physically largely undistinguishable from the majority. This was true for the Jews and for other minorities. Although much was made of presumed physical differences, it remained a fact that many or most Jews looked like their non-Jewish neighbors. Nobody would deny that the prejudices against Jews, Gypsies, and other groups constituted a form of racism. The racists themselves were convinced that these groups belonged to another race: thus the Semitic race was invented. Many Nazi Germans with family names ending in -ovits were firmly convinced that the speakers of Slavic languages belonged to a different and inferior race. After World War II, however, the emancipation of the dark-skinned population in the United States attracted particular attention, both in the United States and in Europe. Here racism had a group for its object that looked different from the majority. Such variations affect both racists and their critics. The external appearance of the body received more attention over the past decades, and people tend to forget that racism could exist just as well where physical differences are insignificant. A lucid definition of racism should take more than one variation of it into account. One can go further: racism can be understood properly only if it is recognized that it assumes many different forms, depending on the subject and target groups.⁴³ Sometimes it focuses on groups showing real physical and imaginary mental differences and sometimes on differences imaginary in both spheres. It is essential to adopt an understanding and definition of racism that is broad enough to encompass its varying manifestations over time, while recognizing its essential features. A failure to do so has serious consequences: it encourages people to ignore racism if it does not fit a narrow definition or it may lead to the opposite result, frequently encountered in our times. Racism then becomes a vague form of imprecation directed at a hated enemy or power.

Racism therefore should be given a broader and yet precise meaning. The sociologist Albert Memmi has carefully considered the matter of definitions. At one stage he proposed the following: "Racism is the valuation, generalized and definitive, of biological differences, real or imaginary, to the advantage of the accuser and the disadvantage of his victim, in order to justify aggression."⁴⁴ This is a definition in the narrower sense, since all racism is held to be focused on biological differences. Memmi later revised his definition: "Racism is the valuation, generalized and definitive, of differences, real or imaginary, to the

⁴³ Frederickson's *Racism* presents the development of various brands of racism while focusing on Europe, the colonies, and America.

⁴⁴ Albert Memmi, "Le racisme est la valorisation, généralisée et définitive, de différences biologiques, réelles ou imaginaires, au profit de l'accusateur et au détriment de sa victime, afin de justifier un aggression," in "Essai de définition du racisme," *La Nef* 19–20 (1964), 41–47.

advantage of the accuser and the disadvantage of his victim, in order to justify his privileges or aggression.”⁴⁵ This definition is broader because it drops the narrow focus on merely biological differences and includes all differences. Furthermore, it does not require active aggression to be part of racist behavior, but proposes that such behavior may have the purpose of justifying existing inequality. Memmi argues that it is possible to use either definition, as long as we recognize that racism always entails the interaction of two components: fear and aggression. This is clearly an advance, since it makes it possible for us to recognize racism as a significant phenomenon outside the recent European context. A difficulty of this definition, however, is that it leaves hardly any difference between racism and ethnic prejudice. To be specific: it does not explain why it is racism to say that members of a group suffer from inborn mental inferiority, whereas it is ethnic prejudice to claim that they have bad manners. More recently it has been argued that racism cannot be identified exclusively as an ideology with a specific biological content or reference. It is thus described as “any argument which suggests that the human species is composed of discrete groups in order to legitimate inequality between those groups of people.”⁴⁶ This definition has the same advantages and the same problems as Memmi’s later one.

Again, both definitions, like that of Banton, only imply but do not specify the implications of such an attitude for the position of an individual. The essence of racism, and, to a lesser extent, of group prejudice, is that individuals are exclusively regarded as representatives of the group to which they belong. They are assumed to have all the characteristics usually ascribed to the group.

In any case, reducing the emphasis on the biological ingredient of racism makes it feasible to look for it, or something related to it, in nonwestern and earlier cultures. Philip Mason, a British anthropologist, describes how a broader definition allows us to use the concept of racism in analyzing nonwestern cultures:

In a small tribe, the ruler was usually the personal choice of his subjects, from among those qualified by birth; there is a consensus of opinion in his favour so long as he governs within certain limits of custom and consultation. But where the state becomes larger, he and his officials or nobles need an impersonal sanction [. . .] surprisingly often, the rulers have hit on the same device. They have applied the sanction of religion to the social system and succeeded in establishing myths which stated or implied that the division of society into separate categories and descent was divinely ordained [. . .] These are early forms of relationships between groups

⁴⁵ Albert Memmi, *Le racisme* (1982), German translation: *Rassismus* (1987), II: Definitionen, esp. 103; 151; 164–177. See also W. J. Wilson, *Power, Racism and Privilege* (New York, 1972), cited by Bulmer and Solomos, *Racism*, 4: “racism is an ideology of racial domination based on (i) beliefs that a designated racial group is either biologically or culturally inferior and (ii) the use of such beliefs to rationalize or prescribe the racial group’s treatment in society, as well as to explain its social position and accomplishment.”

⁴⁶ R. Miles in Bulmer and Solomos, 350f. with reference to John Rex, *Race Relations in Sociological Theory* (London, 1970), 159.

who are really divided but the fact is that they are at different stages of development. But to the rulers, it seems—and they encourage the belief—that the differences are inherent and due to their descent. This is the beginning of race relations.⁴⁷

Mason asserts that inequality or oppression of certain groups is often justified by the myth of a distinct lineage in the cadre of an order imposed by a divine will. According to Mason, such myths arise in many cases following the conquest of one ethnic unit by another (he gives the example of the Tutsi and the Hutu). In citing this I do not mean to imply, of course, that Graeco-Roman antiquity is not “western.” It is western, but it is not modern. If it can be shown that there are forms of racism in nonwestern culture, it follows that it may also have existed in earlier stages of western society. In fact it is not hard to find Greek and Roman parallels for the phenomena described by Mason.

At this point it may be useful to add some definitions given by a number of standard works of reference, as representing commonly accepted thinking and usage. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* defines *racism* as “the theory or idea that there is a causal link between inherited physical traits and certain traits of personality, intellect, or culture and, combined with it, the notion that some races are inherently superior to others.” Here the applicability of the term racism depends on the factor of heredity. Quite clearly the concept of heredity is important in considering this subject and will have to be taken into account. However, as observed above, some of those who have written on the subject take an even wider view. In this view, presumed physical and personality traits are seen as generally immutable and stable, but not necessarily biologically determined. The essence of racism in this case is that groups are regarded as having characteristics over which they have no control of their own and which are determined by other factors, such as climate, geography, or hereditary factors that cannot be influenced by men themselves. In other words, biological determinism should not be regarded as *the* essential ingredient of racist attitudes. Environmental determinism can just as well be a key to racism, or indeed any other form of determinism, such as astrology, which ignores individuality, personal characteristics, and free will in the shaping of humanity.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* of 1910 contained no reference to the word racism, which shows what a recent concept it is. In the second edition, racism is defined as “a. The theory that distinctive human characteristics and abilities are determined by race. b. = Racialism.” *Racialism*, an unfortunate word,⁴⁸ is then defined in *Oxford's* second edition as follows: “Belief in the superiority of a particular race leading to prejudice and antagonism towards people of other races, especially those in close proximity who may be felt as a threat to one’s

⁴⁷ P. Mason, *Race Relations* 72f.

⁴⁸ H. W. Fowler and F. G. Fowler, *The King's English* (Oxford, 3rd ed. 1931), 51: “The ugly words *racial* and *coastal* themselves might well be avoided except in the rare cases where *race* and *coast* used adjectivally will not do the work . . . ; and they should not be made precedents for new formations. If *language* is better than *linguistic*, much more *race* than *racial*; . . .” The new formations appeared in spite of the Fowlers’ warning and thus we are stuck with “racialism,” an ugly word for an ugly phenomenon.

cultural and racial integrity or economic well-being.” A slightly different definition tries to clarify the difference between racism and racialism: “*Racialism* does not refer so much to the doctrine (sc. of racism) as to the practice of it, though it is often loosely used to refer to activities that serve the interests of a particular racial group.”⁴⁹ Since the opposite view also exists, using racialism for the theory and racism for the practice,⁵⁰ it would be preferable to stop using racialism and to use racism, properly defined, in both senses. In some versions, the definitions of racism and racialism depend on the definition of race, and we should turn our attention to this concept also. First, however, it is appropriate to observe that no single definition will ever satisfy everybody, for racism is not a scientific theory or concept, but a complex of ideas, attitudes, and forms of behavior which are themselves by definition irrational.

Racism is never based on solid facts, objectively analyzed; it changes over time and between peoples, depending on a multitude of factors. It mixes up inherited features with cultural phenomena and confuses reality and fantasy, language and religion, real and nonexistent differences. In its interpretation it always distorts the facts for its own purposes, for its aim is always to prove that the other group is inferior and the racist superior, and that these qualities are permanent and cannot be changed.⁵¹ Hence it claims that the attributed characteristics are not subject to control by those so characterized. They come from the inside, that is, from essential traits of the body, or from the outside, from climate and geography.⁵² Moreover, they are collective and override any individual differences that may be the result of education, personal circumstances or a human will. Thus racism denies reality and is therefore almost impossible to describe objectively in realistic terms to everybody’s satisfaction. It is interesting to see that the definition of “racial discrimination” in British law works

⁴⁹ Banton, loc. cit.

⁵⁰ Todorov, *On Human Diversity*, 90: “The word ‘racism’ in its usual sense, actually designates two very different things. On the one hand, it is a matter of *behavior*, . . . ; on the other hand, it is a matter of *ideology*, a doctrine concerning human races. . . . In order to keep these two separate, I shall adopt the distinction that sometimes obtains between ‘racism’, a term designating behavior, and ‘racialism’, a term reserved for doctrines.”

⁵¹ Thus Ernest Renan asserts: “Les phénomènes, par exemple, qui signalèrent l’éveil de la conscience se retracent dans l’éternelle enfance de ces races non perfectibles, restées comme des témoins de ce qui se passa aux premiers jours de l’homme.” See Ernest Renan, *L’avenir de la science* (Paris, 1890, edited in 1995), 214. Cf. G. Jahoda, *Images of Savages*, part 3: “The Image of the savage as child-like,” esp. 132–134: “Savagery as the infancy of humanity.”

⁵² For an example we may cite the racist author Gustave Le Bon, *Lois psychologiques de l’évolution des peuples* (Paris, 1894), translated as *The Psychology of Peoples* (1924, repr. New York, 1974), 37: “A negro or a Japanese may easily take a university degree or become a lawyer; the sort of varnish he thus acquires is however quite superficial, and has no influence on his mental constitution. What no education can give him, because they are created by heredity alone are the forms of thought, the logic, and above all the character of the Western man.” Note that the reprint, published by Arno Press in their series “Perspectives in Social Inquiry,” contains no word of explanation by the advisory editors of the series about the nature of this book, the aim of which is “to describe the psychological characteristics which constitute the soul of races, and to show how the history of a people and its civilisation are determined by these characteristics” (p. xvii).

well in practice thanks to the broad interpretation of “racial group” accepted in the *Race Relations Act*, which will be cited more extensively below.

A description that comes close to my views of the essence of racism was recently offered by G. M. Frederickson: “[Racism] originates from a mindset that regards “them” as different from “us” in ways that are permanent and unbridgeable. This sense of difference provides a motive or rationale for using our power advantage to treat the ethnoracial Other in ways that we would regard as cruel or unjust if applied to members of our own group.”⁵³

I would define racism as follows: “an attitude towards individuals and groups of peoples which posits a direct and linear connection between physical and mental qualities. It therefore attributes to those individuals and groups of peoples collective traits, physical, mental, and moral, which are constant and unalterable by human will, because they are caused by hereditary factors or external influences, such as climate or geography.” The essence of racism is that it regards individuals as superior or inferior because they are believed to share imagined physical, mental, and moral attributes with the group to which they are deemed to belong, and it is assumed that they cannot change these traits individually. This is held to be impossible, because these traits are determined by their physical makeup.

ETHNIC PREJUDICE

Rien en général de plus ridicule et de plus faux que
les portraits qu'on fait du caractère des Peuples divers.

—*Helvétius*⁵⁴

Helvétius found it obvious that one cannot characterize entire peoples over time as if they were a single individual at a specific moment. “It has been said that the French are cheerful; this is repeated forever. People fail to notice that our present adversity has forced the rulers to impose considerable taxes on the land and that the French nation therefore cannot be cheerful; since the class of the farmers constitutes by itself two thirds of the people, it is needy and the needy cannot be cheerful.” Or, more succinctly: “The geographical position of Greece is always the same: why are the Greeks of today different from the Greeks of the past?”⁵⁵ The eighteenth-century French philosopher was rare in his firm and consistent rejection of collective stereotypes. He had few predecessors and few

⁵³ Frederickson, *Racism*, 9.

⁵⁴ Helvétius, *de l'esprit*, 409, note a.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 409. This is echoed by Paul-Henri Dietrich d'Holbach, *Le Système social: Principes naturels de la morale et de la politique, avec un examen de l'influence du gouvernement sur les mœurs* (Paris, 1773), part 3, chapter 1, which contains criticism of environmental determinism and indeed of all forms of determinism, criticizing Montesquieu in particular. He ascribes the cause of corruption and degeneracy—which is his topic in this chapter—to the form of government of nations. See Pierre Naville, *D'Holbach et la philosophie scientifique au xviii^e siècle* (Paris 2d ed. 1967), “le système de la Nature,” pp. 227–310.

followers. A few words must therefore be said about ethnic prejudice. This study gives pride of place among the prejudices to what I call “proto-racism.” I am well aware that, in doing so, I am influenced by the fact that racism is the kind of prejudice our generations are best acquainted with. Both in Europe and in the United States the twentieth century concentrated on presumed racial differences more than on any other distinctions. It is therefore interesting in itself to trace what might be the ancient origins of racist attitudes. However, this should not lead us to ignore other forms of prejudice. Nowadays many European countries have movements hostile to immigrant minorities, who deny that they are racist. Indeed, when they demand that the immigrants conform to the traditional cultural and social values of the host country this cannot properly be called racism, since it allows for the possibility of such change. We have to describe them as intolerant and xenophobic, rather than racist.⁵⁶

Even if this study succeeds in showing that proto-racism was a significant phenomenon in antiquity, it may well be the case that the distinction between various forms of prejudice is more important to us than it was to Greeks and Romans. It is therefore essential to give other prejudices their due, even though particular attention has to be paid to proto-racism in order to demonstrate the relevance of this concept. There should be no disagreement as to the existence of ethnic prejudice or xenophobia in antiquity, even though there may be marked differences in the evaluation of these phenomena, but the existence of proto-racism is not obvious.

First, it is important to note that one should not only consider ethnic prejudice, but also other forms of group prejudice. Whatever can be said about ethnic prejudice may also be true of prejudices regarding members of a certain religion, the inhabitants of a specific region of a country, or any other group of people assumed to have something in common. The major difference between racism and ethnic and other group prejudices is that such prejudices do not deny the possibility of change at an individual or collective level in principle. In these other forms of prejudice, the presumed group characteristics are not by definition held to be stable, unalterable, or imposed from the outside through physical factors: biology, climate, or geography. It is, of course, possible to think in racist terms without using the word “race”; another term, such as “difference,” may do just as well.⁵⁷ Both racist attitudes and ethnic prejudice treat a whole nation or other group as a single individual with a single personality. The varied individuality of the members of such groups is ignored in both cases, but

⁵⁶ It is easy to see how such distinctions may become blurred, for instance in the following pronouncement by Pim Fortuyn, the assassinated founder of a Dutch anti-immigrant party: “Christian inhabitants of the Netherlands, like those on the Veluwe, morally have more rights than Islamic immigrants, because Christians have contributed for centuries to building our country” (statement made on March 2, 2002, which I translated and cited from the party’s Website: www.pim-fortuyn.nl, s.v. ‘Uitspraken’). Here we see that religion, curiously combined with regionalism, is regarded as the vehicle that should endow privileges to a specific group because of presumed inherited merit.

⁵⁷ Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Race et Histoire* (Paris, 1952), notes that racism focuses on imaginary characteristics of biological races and then focuses on the manner in which cultural differences tend to be perceived. This, to some extent, blurs the difference between racism and ethnic prejudice.

ethnic prejudice, as distinct from racism, maintains some flexibility towards the individual.

We should also be clear about the use of *prejudice*. I accept the following definition: “In its broad etymological sense, prejudice—prejudgment—is a term applied to categorical generalizations based on inadequate data and without sufficient regard for individual differences. . . . The stereotype is distinguished from the prejudgment only by a greater degree of rigidity. Prejudgment occurs where facts are not available. But stereotyping is a process which shows little concern for facts even when they are available.”⁵⁸

Whether our definition of racism is accepted or not, at this stage it will suffice to note that some of the other definitions are also broad enough to include forms of prejudice that are not western and not recent in date. They would certainly justify considering the existence of something called proto-racism in Graeco-Roman antiquity. After considering racism and racialism, it is now appropriate to consider whether a useful definition of race, in a sense relevant to the present study, is available.

RACE

Not all meanings of the term *race* will concern us here.⁵⁹ It may also be observed that all the authors who write about racism are careful to give a precise definition of racism as they see it, but race is less often defined in these works.⁶⁰ A particular difficulty is that the usage of the term race has changed considerably over time.⁶¹ What these meanings have in common, however, is that they refer to a common descent or origin. The term race is therefore no longer used in the sense of “a tribe” or “a people,” as is common in some of the older literature,⁶² for we no longer accept the idea that a nation or people can be seen

⁵⁸ Nathan W. Ackerman and Marie Jahoda, *Anti-Semitism and Emotional Disorder: A Psychoanalytic Interpretation* (New York, 1950), 3f.

⁵⁹ According to the *OED Online* (2000), the term “race” occurs first in English between 1500 and 1520 in a poem *The Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins* by William Dunbar, *Poems* 26.50. Among those who followed the sin of Envy he lists: “And flatteris in to menis facis; | And bakbyttaris of sindry racis, | To ley that had delyte.” It is used here in the sense of “a set or class of persons.” In French it is first used in its modern sense by François Bernier in 1684; see “A New Division of Earth” published in the *Journal des Savants*, April, 1684, English trans. in R. Bernasconi and T. L. Lott, *The Idea of Race* 1–4. It appears in this sense in the sixth edition of the *Dictionnaire de L’Académie française* (1835): “Race, se dit, par extension, d’une multitude d’hommes qui sont originaires du même pays, et se ressemblent par les traits du visage, par la conformation extérieure. La race caucasienne. La race mongole. La race malaise. Les habitants de ce royaume, de cette province sont une belle race d’hommes.” Note the characteristic insistence on aesthetics in this example.

⁶⁰ Ashley Montagu, *The Idea of Race* (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1965), 7, observes that the term is of recent and obscure origin and that concepts of race are unsatisfactory and meaningless.

⁶¹ Bulmer and Solomos, *Racism*, 7–9.

⁶² There are similar difficulties in understanding the Greek terms ἔθνος and γένος; cf. C. P. Jones, “ἔθνος and γένος in Herodotus,” *Classical Quarterly* 46 (1996), 315–320.

to have a common ancestor.⁶³ The same goes for the traditional use of race for “a group of several tribes or peoples, regarded as forming a distinct ethnical stock.” Even if it was common in antiquity to think of peoples and tribes in terms of common descent, we should avoid doing so ourselves. This book will not, therefore, use the term race to refer to a “people” or a “tribe,” because it suggests common descent, sometimes with the connotation of purity of lineage. I will thus take the liberty to insert “people” instead of “race” where appropriate, even when I cite translations of ancient texts made by others. In this connection I shall also avoid the term “race-hatred” or “racial hatred.” This may be seen as purist, but it suggests that human races exist, which they do not, as will be observed below. The term racist hatred better indicates that this is an irrational hatred of something that does not exist in reality.

In order to cover various approaches to the problem it might be useful to consider legal definitions in various countries. The British *Race Relations Act* provides the following: “. . . ‘Racial group’ means a group of persons defined by reference to colour, race, nationality or ethnic or national origins, and references to a person’s racial group refer to any racial group into which he falls.”⁶⁴ Thus, racial group is a broader concept than race and includes categories which are not conceptually problematic, such as nationality and national origins. The problematic concept of race has been interpreted here as indicating “group descent, a group of geographical origin and a group history.” Thus the members of a race should share a common color, and a common physique based on common ancestors, and they are to be distinguished from other inhabitants of the same region.⁶⁵ As already observed above, this definition is intended to be used in cases of racial discrimination brought before the court. As such it serves a practical purpose and may well serve the legal profession and the courts satisfactorily in spite of the fact that biologists and most social scientists would not accept it as reflecting reality. This was made clear in the verdict in an appeal in 1972, for instance, where it was noted: “within the human race, there are very few, if any, distinctions which are scientifically recognized as racial.”⁶⁶

⁶³ Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East*, note 1 on p. 109f. relates that in 1940 the British Army recognized the relevance for its recruits of “four and only four races—English, Scottish Welsh, and Irish.”

⁶⁴ *Race Relations Act 1976, ss 1(1) (b), 3(1)*, cited in [1983] 1 *All England Law Reports* 1062–1072 at 1065, appeal of Mandla and another v. Dowell Lee and another before the House of Lords. This concerns the case of a Headmaster who refused to admit a Sikh boy to school unless he removed his turban and cut his hair. The appeal, which was allowed, claimed that this represented discrimination against the Sikhs as a “racial group.”

⁶⁵ Speech of Lord Templeman in the case cited above, p.1072.

⁶⁶ Lord Fraser of Tullybelton, *op. cit.*, p. 1066, citing with approval the view of Lord Simon in an earlier case (*London Borough Ealing Council v Race Relations Board* [1972] AC 342, [1972] 1 All ER 105, HL): “Moreover, ‘racial’ is not a term of art, either legal or, I surmise, scientific. I apprehend that anthropologists would dispute how far the word ‘race’ is biologically at all relevant to the species amusingly called homo sapiens.” This is entirely appropriate, except that it is not just the anthropologists, but also, and even more so, the biologists who dispute the biological relevance of the word “race.”

This illustrates very well how complex and slippery the idea of race continues to be. In the words of Lord Simon: “This is rubbery and elusive language—understandably when the draftsman is dealing with so unprecise a concept as ‘race’ in its popular sense and endeavouring to leave no loophole for evasion.”⁶⁷

These problems are again illustrated very well by a later case against the licensee of a public house, the Cat and Mutton, in London, who refused to serve gypsies, putting up a sign saying “Sorry, no travellers”⁶⁸ (travellers being a term often used for gypsies). In this case it had therefore to be shown that the gypsies are a “racial group” according to the law, meaning that they were regarded as a community recognizable as an ethnic group within the meaning of the Race Relations Act. The point was made: “No doubt, after all the centuries which have passed since the first gypsies left the Punjab, gypsies are no longer derived from what in biological terms is a common racial stock, but that of itself does not prevent them from being a racial group as widely defined in the 1976 Act.”⁶⁹ It should, perhaps, worry us that an English Court of Appeal in 1988 was capable of assuming that the gypsies at some stage in the past “derived from a common racial stock” even though Lord Simon, in 1972, had been lucid on the imprecision of the concept of “race.” Furthermore, it is a paradox that the legal protection of a group of people against discrimination requires them to be defined as a racial group, even if it is generally recognized that there is no such thing in the proper sense of the term. A difficulty raised in this case may be cited here: “Gypsies prefer to be called ‘travellers’ as they think that term is less derogatory. This might suggest a wish to lose their separate distinctive identity so far as the general public is concerned. Half or more of them now live in houses, like most other people. Have gypsies now lost their separate, group identity so that they are no longer a community recognisable by ethnic groups within the meaning of the Act?”⁷⁰ The Commission for Racial Equality duly produced expert witnesses who claimed that the gypsies were a group of persons defined by reference to ethnic origins. Their arguments were rejected by the County Court on grounds rejected in turn by the Court of Appeal. This shows that the law will protect someone against discrimination against a racial group only if he belongs to a group recognized as such. It may be useful to remember that many German Jews in the 1930s were baptized, and regarded themselves as German Christians, while the Nazi race laws regarded them as Jews. Communal identity is not necessarily a matter of consensus. To

⁶⁷ Lord Simon, cited by Lord Fraser, *ibid.* Lord Fraser then turns to the definition of “racial” in the *OED*, Supp. 1 (1972) which he considers too loose and vague to be accepted as it stands. There is no reason to cite this here, since it has been replaced in the new edition of the *OED*. Similarly, the Israel Supreme Court, in an opinion given by Justice Eliahu Mazza in a criminal appeal, *ha-Rav Ido Albeh v State of Israel*, 1831/95, accepted a broad and flexible interpretation of the concept “racism.” The court explicitly rejects an interpretation of “racism” as referring exclusively to biological differences between groups.

⁶⁸ *Commission for Racial Equality v Dutton* [1989] 1 All ER 306–320.

⁶⁹ Nicholls LJ, at 313.

⁷⁰ *loc. cit.*

take an extreme example: modern legislation may not have the equipment to protect persons regarded as witches or sorcerers against discrimination, because witches and sorcerers are not a group defined by reference to ethnic origins.

Any modern society that wants to protect its members against racial discrimination feels a need to clarify what is meant by this and this in turn invites clarification of what is race. Once we know what race is, it is easier to define racial discrimination.⁷¹ Thus the very need to combat racism invites precision which itself is misguided and which threatens to reinforce the idea of race where it should be discredited.⁷² Ideally the law should distinguish between racism and other forms of collective discrimination of members of ethnic, national, and other groups. In practice, of course, the courts have to use existing legislation to protect individuals against abuse. For the present study, however, the consequence is that legal definitions do not help in gaining clarity and precision. It might have been more instructive if the jurists had attempted to define racism instead of race.

For our purposes the following use of race, as defined in the *OED*, is relevant—and also the one most compromised in modern history: “One of the great divisions of mankind, having certain physical peculiarities in common.” It adds the following comment: “the term is often used imprecisely: there is no generally accepted classification or terminology even among anthropologists. It is first attested in this sense in 1774.”⁷³ In theory a race is a geographically separate and genetically somewhat distinctive population within a species. Thus it has a straightforward meaning in evolutionary biology, but with regard to human beings it is emotionally charged and imprecise in popular usage. The element of descent or common origin must be considered essential in any use of the word race.

It was believed possible to classify human beings on the basis of physiological traits, on the assumption that certain groups possess hereditary traits that are sufficiently constant to characterize them as distinct human types. In practice no

⁷¹ Racial discrimination is defined in the *Act s 1(1)* as follows: “A person discriminates against another in any circumstances relevant for the purposes of any provision of this Act if—(a) on racial grounds he treats that other less favourably than he treats or would treat other persons; or (b) he applies to that other a requirement or condition which he applies or would apply equally to persons not of the same racial group as that other but—(i) which is such that the proportion of persons of the same racial group as that other who can comply with it is considerably smaller than the proportion of persons not of that racial group who can comply with it” and (ii) which he cannot show to be justifiable irrespective of the colour, race, nationality or ethnic or national origins of the person to whom it is applied; and (iii) which is to the detriment of that other because he cannot comply with it.” (*ibid.*, p. 1065).

⁷² For the conceptual complexity of the current debate in the United States: Frederickson, *Racism*, 151.

⁷³ The following example may be cited here: “From the U.N.E.S.C.O. statement we can define ‘race’ as ‘a division of man, the members of which, though individually varying, are characterized as a group by certain inherited physical features as having a common origin’ (*New Biol.* 29 [1959], 69).” For the UNESCO statement, see below. Cf. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*: “Race: a biological grouping within the human species possessing genetically transmitted traits that are sufficient to characterise it as a distinct human type.”

classification has proved satisfactory. The concept becomes even less acceptable when subdivisions are taken as the basis for an evaluation of a moral or mental hierarchy. This idea has too often been used in combination with the view that some races are inherently superior to others, the superior race being one's own. Since the basis for a classification of humanity into races is one of descent, this is naturally a biological and physiological concept.

The idea of race in its recent form is a by-product of Darwin's work.⁷⁴ Darwin's criterion for a species is that, in principle, it cannot produce fertile offspring when crossed with a representative of another species, according to his definition.⁷⁵ Another criterion is "constancy of character." "Whenever it can be shown or rendered probable, that the forms in question have remained distinct for a long period, this becomes an argument of much weight in favour of treating them as a species."⁷⁶ Obviously mankind does not include a series of species. Attempts were therefore made to recognize subdivisions of the human species, called subspecies or, simply, "races."⁷⁷ The term "subspecies" as used by Darwin is commonly used in zoology, but has not become popular among racial theorists. However, this is another definition of race, or subspecies, which rests on physiological traits: skin color, eye color and eye form, hair color and hair form, shape of the nose, stature and cephalic index. Racial differentiation is usually assumed to depend on certain combinations of these anatomical charac-

⁷⁴ Darwin's own ideas about the social evolution of man have been discussed in numerous studies and are the subject of remarkable disagreement with some scholars describing him as a racist, others as a social evolutionist. See the following studies containing bibliographies: Marvin Harris, *The Rise of Anthropological Theory: A History of Theories of Culture* (London, 1968); Thomas F. Glick (ed.), *The Comparative Reception of Darwinism* (Austin, TX, 1972); Derek Freeman, "The Evolutionary Theories of Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer," *Current Anthropology* 15 (1974), 211–237, with fifteen commentaries and a reply by Freeman; John L. Greene, "Darwin as a Social Evolutionist," *Journal of the History of Biology* 10 (1977), 1–27. Greene has used Darwin's annotations of books and articles to review his discussion of social evolution. The following conclusions are relevant: there is no doubt as to the centrality of race formation in Darwin's concept of human evolution (Greene, p. 5). Like most or many of his contemporaries he cautiously believed in the heritability of acquired mental and moral capacities and dispositions (pp. 6, 9), an assertion rejected by some Darwin scholars. He seems to have approved of a form of environmental determinism (8) and was impressed by Galton's discussion of the deleterious effects of negative selection in civilized nations (11).

⁷⁵ See chapter 8 of *The Origin of Species* on Hybridism.

⁷⁶ Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man, Selection in Relation to Sex* (London, 1877) reprinted as volume 21 of *The Works of Charles Darwin*, ed. Paul H. Barrett and R. B. Freeman (London, 1989), chapter 8, "On the Races of Man," pp.166–199 of the original publication, pp. 172–205 of the 1989 edition.

⁷⁷ Darwin, op. cit. (1877), 175 [(1989), 181]. He nowhere gives a precise definition of "race" or "subspecies," but says man "has diverged into distinct races, or as they may be more fitly called, subspecies." He concludes that "some of these [races] are so distinct that . . . they would have been considered as good and true species." However, all the races, he says, "agree in so many unimportant details of structure and in so many mental peculiarities, that these can be accounted for only by inheritance from a common progenitor." This attitude, it must be admitted, is virtually the same as Buffon's, cited above, and Buffon has been called one of the first genuine racists by some historians. As noted, Darwin's own place in the debate has been the subject of much debate, mainly because he is ambiguous on the issue in *The Descent of Man*.

teristics. In fact such combinations are never found to represent large groups. In these theories a race represents a population which reproduces without any significant addition of genes belonging to other populations. This, however, is a construct; the phenomenon does not occur on any significant scale. The reason for this is the reality of continuous migration, both individual and large-scale, and the mingling of peoples. No races do in fact exist.⁷⁸ All modern European nations, for instance, show a composite racial history as a result of migrations and mixtures of people. Furthermore, by definition, any such classification should be based exclusively on physiological characteristics.

Paradoxically, the advances of science in recent decades have made it possible to detect common physiological features among some population groups through the use of blood-typing and DNA analysis. This is a confusing development, since it might lead to claims that the old belief in the reality of race and of ethnic blood relationships was after all a scientific fact. However, even if it can be shown that there are common biological features that can be discerned in certain regions or among some peoples, this will not salvage the concept of race, for there is no connection between these and other biological features or other characteristics in the sphere of culture, language, or society, let alone of moral qualities. In other words, if it is shown that a given group of people are statistically more susceptible to a certain illness, this does not mean these people form a race, for this susceptibility is only one out of all the possible characteristics that people may have in common.⁷⁹ If no other form of proof were at hand, then it would still suffice to observe that no two scholars who wrote about race agree on the number of human races: they range from two or three or four, five, six to ten, eleven, thirteen, fifteen, sixteen, twenty-two, thirty-two, thirty-four up to sixty-three.⁸⁰ Race, then, does not exist, but it is extremely difficult to

⁷⁸ This is not a recent discovery. Long ago some authors were entirely lucid on these matters. Count Heinrich Coudenhove-Kalergi, *Anti-semitism throughout the Ages* (London, 1935); originally published in German: *Das Wesen des Antisemitismus* (Vienna, 1901), reprinted many times, in the Nazi period, and as recently as 1992, 31–6, argued that the term “Semitic” refers to a group of languages, not to kinship of any kind. On p. 36 he states: ‘I maintain and substantiate my assertion that whether on grounds of the shape of the skull, of colour, growth of hair or of geographical settlement, it is practically impossible to establish an exact and strictly scientific classification and separation of the Semites’; see also 59–61. For the anti-antisemitic author Coudenhove-Kalergi (1859–1906), see Ritchie Robertson, *The ‘Jewish Question’ in German Literature 1749–1939: Emancipation and its Discontents* (Oxford, 1999), 198f., 261f. Jacques Barzun, *Race: A Study in Superstition* (first published in 1937; revised edition New York, 1965), ix: “This book is coming back into print because the idea it treats of, although repeatedly killed, is nevertheless undying.” For the development of the debate about race among American anthropologists and sociologists, see the articles by Lieberman and Reynolds, cited above, n. 36.

⁷⁹ Blackburn, “Why Race is not a Biological Concept,” 7, observes: “If racial differences were confined to less apparent features such as blood proteins and genes, no one outside of a few academic disciplines would be likely to use the concept of race.”

⁸⁰ This point was raised already by Darwin himself, *The Descent of Man* (1877), 174; (1989), 180f.: “there is the greatest possible diversity among capable judges whether he should be classed as a single species or race, or as two (Viery), as three (Jacquinot), as four (Kant), five (Blumenbach), six (Buffon), seven (Hunter), eight (Agassiz), eleven (Pickering), fifteen (Bory St Vincent),

combat the acceptance of something that does not exist and yet is widely believed to exist.⁸¹

Ideas about race and racism are often hopelessly confused in basic sources of reference. Even in the Subject Index of the Library of Congress Catalog “race” is an officially recognized subject to which reference is made. That may be justified by the claim that there are books about race. However, the same cannot be said of “race awareness” which has as narrower terms “race identity of blacks” and “race identity of whites.” This implies the existence of white and black races. There are subject headings “race relations” and “ethnic relations,” used at random for books on ethnic relations.⁸² The subject “race relations” has subheadings: “Mexican Americans” and “East Indians” which implies that Mexicans and East Indians are races. Worse, there is an official heading “race identity” with a narrower term “black nationalism.” By the usual definitions this can only mean that there exists a movement on the part of the black race in favor of national independence. The Library of Congress is followed as authoritative by libraries in many countries all over the world. Indeed the same con-

sixteen (Desmoulins), twenty-two (Morton), sixty (Crawford), or as sixty-three, according to Burke.” Cf. Blackburn, p. 4f. and table 1.1. L. L. Cavalli-Sforza, Paolo Menozzi, and Alberto Piazza, *The History and Geography of Human Genes* (Princeton, 1994), note that “there are clearly no objective reasons for stopping at any particular level of taxonomic splitting. . . . All populations or population clusters overlap when single genes are considered, and in almost all populations, all alleles are present but in different frequencies. No single gene is therefore sufficient for classifying human populations into systematic categories,” and they conclude that “from a scientific point of view, the concept of race has failed to obtain any consensus; none is likely, given the gradual variation in existence.” See now Joseph L. Graves, *The Emperor’s New Clothes: Biological Theories of Race at the Millennium* (New Brunswick, NJ, 2001), which argues once again that the concept of race is invalid, not as a statement of political correctness, but on the basis of scientific reality. This is entirely convincing, but his discussion of the history of the idea of race seems too much determined by conditions in North America. As observed in Kenan Malik’s review, *TLS* of Jan. 11, 2002, p. 6f.: “It is a pity that such books remain necessary.” Current advances in genetics offer new dangers of regression. See, for instance, Neil Risch et al., “Categorization of Humans in Biomedical Research: Genes, Race and Disease,” *Genome Biology* 2002, 3(7):2007.1–2007.12. Risch and his colleagues take issue with two publications: R. S. Schwartz, “Racial Profiling in Medical Research,” *New England Journal of Medicine* 344/18 (2001), 1392f., and J. F. Wilson et al., “Population Genetic Structure of Variable Drug Response,” *Nature Genetics* 29 (2001), 239f. and an editorial in the same journal: “Genes, Drugs and Race,” *Nature Genetics* 97–98 (2000), all of which deny the biological relevance of race. Rice and his co-authors disagree and “strongly support the continued use of self-identified race and ethnicity,” although they do recognize that a value system attached to such findings is not scientific. The claims of this study immediately reached the press: the *International Herald Tribune* of August 1, 2002, p. 7: “A geneticist argues for the idea of race.” Risch and his colleagues do not intend to encourage racism; they want to improve medical care. Yet the effect of their publication can only be harmful.

⁸¹ As I found out myself in the case of the term “limes” in Roman history.

⁸² A few illustrations will suffice: under the heading “ethnic relations” we find Rodolfo D. Torres et al., *Race, Identity and Citizenship* (1999). Under the heading “race relations” we find: Jerry Boucher et al., *Ethnic Conflict: International Perspectives* (Newbury Park, CA, 1987); B. Crawford and R. D. Lipschutz, eds., *The Myth of “Ethnic Conflict”: Politics, Economics, and “Cultural” Violence* (Berkeley, 1998); I. Svanberg and M. Tydén, *Multicultural Studies in Uppsala* (Uppsala, 1988). Hundreds of books are classified without any lucid criteria.

fused subject headings regarding race may be found in the catalogues of major libraries in many countries.⁸³ It is quite clear that the responsible librarians at the Library of Congress have no doubt that race exists and confuse it with forms of social grouping that do exist. This is the message they help spread through their influence.

A major, but misguided effort was made to define and explain race in nonracist terms by the UNESCO in its “statement on race.”⁸⁴ It is misguided because its basic assumption is the existence of races.⁸⁵ Numerous modern authors do not believe in the reality of race themselves, but they still proceed from the assumption that race exists for racists, in the sense that racists are believed to respond to real physical traits of the targets of racism.⁸⁶ Here we are back to the

⁸³ Let me give two absurd examples of erroneous cataloguing: Richard Walther Darré’s *Neuadel aus Blut und Boden* (Munich, 1930), is a Nazi pamphlet arguing for racial purity, eugenics, and the conservation of the traditional tie of the German farmer with the soil. In the Library of Congress Catalog, followed by other catalogs of major libraries in various countries, the first subject heading for this work is “Nobility—Germany.” Darré, who was Reichsminister of agriculture in the Nazi years, wrote about racial purity and farmers, his own idea of an elite, not about hereditary aristocracy. Hans F. K. Günther, *Führeradel durch Sippenpflege* (Munich, 1936), which argues also for racial purity and for family values, is again listed with “nobility” for its subject. The only reasonable heading for such works is “racist” with possible subheadings. These librarians confuse nobility in the generally valid sense of the term with a racist distortion of it.

⁸⁴ Ashley Montagu, *Statement on Race* (New York, 1951). The UNESCO statement contains an attempt to define “race” very carefully and explain why the concept is so often misused. It still proceeds from the assumption that mankind is divided into races (Mongoloid, Negroid, Caucasoid).

⁸⁵ See the UNESCO statement, paragraph 3, cited by Montagu, p. 48. The Statement regards race as a scientific fact, which, however, is misused by many people in practice; cf. paragraph 5, p. 60. Note, however, Montagu’s best-known work *Man’s Most Dangerous Myth* (1942) and see his important paper: “The Concept of Race in the Human Species in the Light of Genetics,” reprinted in Bernasconi and Lott, *The Idea of Race*, 100–107.

⁸⁶ Colette Guillaumin, *L’idéologie raciste: genèse et langage actuel* (Paris and The Hague, 1972), 62; see also Guillaumin, “The Changing Face of ‘Race,’” in Bulmer and Solomos, *Racism*, 355–362, reprinted from Guillaumin, *Racism, Sexism, Power and Ideology* (London, 1995). For a similar observation: Gavin Langmuir, in L. Poliakov (ed.), *Ni Juif ni Grec, entretiens sur le racisme* (Paris and The Hague, 1975), 18. For authors who rejected the applicability of the term “race” at an early stage, see Robert Miles, “Racism as a Concept,” cited in Bulmer and Solomos, *Racism*, 344–347; Guillaumin, *ibid.*, 358f. On the other hand, even modern works of reference can be remarkably assertive in their presentation of the old approach, e.g., *Brockhaus Enzyklopädie: siebzehnte Auflage* (Wiesbaden, 1971), 12. Band, s.v. “Menschenrassen,” pp. 406–410, includes four pages of photographs of 64 presumed races and refers, on p. 406, to works such as Egon Freiherr von Eickstedt, *Rassenkunde und Rassengeschichte der Menschheit* (Stuttgart, 1934, 2d ed. 1937); H. Weinert, *Die Rassen der Menschheit* (2d ed. 1939). For Eickstedt, see C. Zentner and F. Bedürftig (eds.), *Das grosse Lexikon des dritten Reiches* (Munich, 1985), 141: He developed a formula to establish people’s race, supported by citations from Hitler and Rosenberg, with special attention to the correlation between race and character. His work ends with a call for eugenics, to fight the battle for the superior nordic races against the backward southern stock. For recent discussions: Montagu, *Man’s Most Dangerous Myth*; A. Memmi, *Rassismus* (1987), 11–28; Robert Miles in Bulmer and Solomos, *op. cit.*; Blackburn, “Why Race is not a Biological Concept,” 3–26. For a good summary of the genetic argument: Cavalli-Sforza et al., *The History and Geography of Human Genes*, chapter 1.5: “Classical attempts to distinguish human ‘races,’” pp. 16–18; 1.6: “Scientific failure of the concept of human races,” pp. 19f.

serious consequences of an insufficiently lucid understanding of the essence of racism. I repeat once more, although it should be superfluous to say so, that racism is never caused by the physical characteristics of the other.⁸⁷

RACE DOES NOT EXIST, RACISM DOES

Since the concept of race as such is merely theoretical, since it is a quasi-biological construct invented to establish a hierarchy of human groups and to delineate differences between them, and since it does not work in practice, attempts have been made from the beginning to incorporate other features which are not physiological. The designation “race” in the sense of subspecies cannot be applied by definition to language groups (the Aryan race), national groups (the English race), religious groups (the Christian or Jewish race), groups with one or more physical features in common, such as skin color, or the entire species of humans (the human race): such usages are biologically and scientifically meaningless.⁸⁸ Similarly, culture and race have been confused. Culture clearly may change from one generation to the next. Again, those who contribute to the same culture may not have common ancestors, and people with common ancestors do not necessarily participate in a single culture. Culture therefore is not a function of what would be termed race according to any definition.

Of course, it is not meaningless that certain groups of peoples feel they belong together. This, however, is a sociological fact, not a biological one, just as it is a fact of linguistics that people speak the same language, or a fact of religion when they share a common faith, organized or not. Furthermore, it is sociologically significant when people imagine that they themselves, or another

⁸⁷ Consequently I disagree as a matter of principle with the approach of Christopher Tuplin, “Greek Racism?” in Tsatskhelidze (ed.), *Ancient Greeks West and East* (1999), 47–75, at 47. Tuplin cites two definitions of racism which he rejects and asserts: “. . . and I think ordinary English usage still associates ‘racism’ with cases where there are relatively clear physical or genetic differences between two sets of people.” He then argues that there was no Greek racism in this sense. Thus racism always is a response to real, demonstrable differences. The implication is that ordinary English usage regards white hatred of blacks as racism, but not anti-semitism for the Jews because they are not physically distinct enough from the peoples among which they live. Another disagreement with this article is the fact that Tuplin accepts the existence of race, as shown, for instance, on p. 69, where he speaks of “our idea of major racial distinctions.” This, as I argue in this Introduction, precludes a proper analysis of racism. Tuplin, however, insists on the presence of strongly held ethnic prejudices among the Greeks.

⁸⁸ Poliakov, *Le Racisme*, 22: “La race dont il nous parle—qu’il s’agisse de la sienne ou de celle des autres—n’est nullement une race: dans sa bouche, ce terme désigne un groupe social donné, identifiable par des traits culturels, linguistiques, religieux, historiques, etc.—mais jamais par des traits exclusivement physiques.” Cf. Guillaumin, in Bulmer and Solomos, 356–359, who cites Jean Hiernaux as one of the first to make this observation: “Race is not a fact, but a concept.” Guillaumin gives a brief and lucid description of the development of the concept. In French it meant, in the sixteenth century, “family” or “family relationship” and was applied only to important dynasties. It later was applied to much wider groups.

group, share a common origin and if they attribute presumed physical or mental characteristics to this common origin. It may therefore be concluded that race is merely one of the ways in which people are popularly classified. Through the influence of modern science and biology, this clarification has taken a quasi-biological form. In recent centuries this presumed biological content has been gradually combined with other traits which have nothing to do with biology, such as language (Indo-European, Semitic), religion, social and cultural characteristics. If human races do not exist, is there a point in adopting a working definition for present purposes? The same question might have been asked if we were considering fear of ghosts, devils, or witches. We know that the ghosts and devils do not exist in reality, whereas witches are ordinary women thought to have evil magic powers and therefore, as a category, they do not exist either. Yet people are afraid of them. Is there then a point in defining ghosts, devils, or witches? The answer seems obvious. Since they exist in the minds of many people it is still necessary to define what is meant by the idea or what people think they mean.

Ashley Montagu, while recognizing that human races do not occur in reality, defines the concept as follows: races are “groups of human beings which exist in nature and are comprised of individuals each of whom possesses a certain aggregate of characters which individually and collectively serve to distinguish them from the individuals in all other groups.”⁸⁹ More recently social scientists who recognize that race is not a biological reality, but also see that it is a relevant concept in social interaction, have argued that it has no fixed meaning. Instead, they suggest, it is constructed and transformed sociohistorically. They therefore propose the following definition: “Race is a concept which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies.”⁹⁰ This definition may work well for those who attempt to understand social interaction in the modern United States, but it is less satisfactory for anyone considering, for example, Renan’s hostile ramblings about all the peoples of the Near East (the “Semitic race”) or Nazi anti-semitism. It will not work either for a study like the present one, which attempts to trace the development of ideas about race over time, for these ideas do not focus exclusively on the body, but on the interconnection between physical and mental, moral and spiritual characteristics. So, paradoxically, a social study which has the aim of understanding racist group dynamics should focus on joint patterns of interaction in various societies, while minimizing the importance of continuity over time in the conceptual content of racist ideas. A historical study, however, which traces the long-term development of racist intellectual concepts, will look for the continuity in the mechanisms of racist thinking.

For the present study I shall define race as “a group of people who are believed to share imagined common characteristics, physical and mental or

⁸⁹ Ashley Montagu, “The Concept of Race” in Bernasconi and Lott, *The Idea of Race*, 103.

⁹⁰ Michael Omi and Howard Winant, “Racial Formation in the United States,” in Bernasconi and Lott, *The Idea of Race*, 181–212, esp. 183.

moral which cannot be changed by human will, because they are thought to be determined by unalterable, stable physical factors: hereditary, or external, such as climate or geography.” A belief in the reality of race in itself is always misguided, but it is not necessarily racism. It becomes racism if the ensuing differences between peoples are the basis for the division of individuals into superior and inferior racial groups.

It is less difficult to adopt a definition of “ethnic group” which will satisfy most readers. For convenience we may refer to one that appears in the legal document, cited above: For a group to constitute an ethnic group it is essential that it should have: “(1) a long shared history, of which the group is conscious as distinguishing it from other groups, and the memory of which it keeps alive; (2) a cultural tradition of its own, including family and social customs and manners, often but not necessarily associated with religious observance.”⁹¹ Lord Fraser approved the following passage from the judgment of Richardson J sitting in the New Zealand Court of Appeal in *King-Ansell v Police*

[a] group is identifiable in terms of its ethnic origins if it is a segment of the population distinguished from others by a sufficient combination of shared customs, beliefs, traditions and characteristics derived from a common or presumed common past, even if not drawn from what in biological terms is a common racial stock. It is that combination which gives them an historically determined social identity in their own eyes and in the eyes of those outside the group. They have a distinct social identity based not simply on group cohesion and solidarity but also on their belief as to their historical antecedents.⁹²

Thus the essence of racism is that it tries to establish a hierarchy of groups of human beings, basing itself on an imagined concept: race, that is, on illusory common characteristics which override individual differentiation. Since it is based on prejudice, it is marked by an emotional and rigid attitude which it is difficult or impossible to modify by rational argument or practical experience. Racist theory has expended great effort to show that some races are superior and others inferior, based on physiological, psychological, and historical considerations. Basing itself on a distorted form of evolutionary theory, modern racism assumes that man’s physical development proceeds in a straight line from his prehuman progenitors up to the highest form attained which was, of course, European man. Following this reasoning, other races represent earlier, less developed stages of this evolution and should therefore be considered of lower quality. This is an untenable construct, just as it is untenable to maintain

⁹¹ Lord Fraser in [1983] 1 All ER 1062 at 1066f. In addition to those two essential characteristics, the following are considered relevant: “(3) either a common geographical origin, or descent from a small number of common ancestors; (4) a common language not necessarily peculiar to the group; (5) a common literature peculiar to the group; (6) a common religion different from that of neighbouring groups or from the general community surrounding it; (7) being a minority or being an oppressed or a dominant group within a larger community, for example a conquered people (say, the inhabitants of England shortly after the Norman conquest) and their conquerors might both be ethnic groups.”

⁹² [1979] 2 NZLR 531 at 543.

that size of the brain cavity of more intelligent people is greater than that of others. However, this complex of ideas led to the theory of “the great man,” a notion that mankind is evolving into a superior, further advanced race and that some such individuals may already exist among us. However, this last set of ideas on linear progress and increasing superiority belongs to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁹³ It should therefore not be part of a study of the ancient world.

It is, however, also clear that modern racism was not invented at one stroke.⁹⁴ It developed gradually from its beginnings in the eighteenth century, when heredity was not yet central to thinking about human development. For this earlier period the more flexible definition of racism may be applied, which speaks of “differences” in general, rather than “biological differences.” The essence of early racism, as distinct from most other forms of hostility towards others, is that it seeks the cause for the differences between groups of peoples in either physiological or genetic determinism. This means that the presumed collective characteristics are unalterable by human will. They are claimed to be constant and to derive from factors over which people have no control, be it from the outside (climate and geography) or from the inside (genetic or physiological). Since many of the tenets of early racism are found in Graeco-Roman literature, it will be useful to consider whether antiquity knew comparable attitudes, which, for the sake of convenience, might be called proto-racism.⁹⁵

It is clearly essential to distinguish between ethnic and other group prejudices and proto-racial prejudice. Although it is true that traditional English usage commonly confuses race and people, this is no longer acceptable in our times. As cited above, group prejudice constitutes “a generalisation existing prior to the situation in which it is invoked, directed toward people, groups, or social institutions, which is accepted and defended as a guide to action in spite of its discrepancies with the objective facts.” An alternative definition that is also acceptable: “a belief about people that is 1) wholly derived from membership in a special group; 2) disregards the variability within the group; 3) is accompanied and sustained by negative affect.”⁹⁶ This means that prejudice, although it is a form of frequently hostile generalization, does not invoke the idea that change is impossible. The traits attributed to the other are not believed to be rooted in his essential and stable physical makeup. One can change nationality,

⁹³ R. Benedict, *Race and Racism* passim.

⁹⁴ Note, however, Cavalli-Sforza et al., *The History and Geography of Human Genes*, 19: “Racism has existed from time immemorial but only in the nineteenth century were there attempts to justify it on the basis of scientific arguments.”

⁹⁵ As noted above, note 10, I have not invented the term, but neither is it commonly used.

⁹⁶ Yaacov Schul and Henri Zukier, “Why do Stereotypes Stick?” in Wistrich, *Demonizing the Other*, 31–32, esp. 33. A serious difficulty in this definition is that it requires a negative affect. I cannot see that the example from the *Guide to Venice*, cited below, shows a negative affect. Yet it is clearly stereotypical as described under (1) and (2). Moreover, the definition, but not the accompanying explanations, ignores the important fact that stereotypical belief often, or even usually, leads to corresponding action. Note the influential older study: B. Bettelheim and M. Janowitz, *The Dynamic of Prejudice* (New York, 1950).

language, religion, and culture, but not one's inherited characteristics. Religion is a special factor. In many countries religious groups are subgroups, and prejudices against them may be fierce, but in many or most countries one can leave one religious community to join another. Nationality is a broad concept. One can be an African American, a Native American—that is, belonging to specific subgroups by birth—or a former immigrant to the United States, having received citizenship and so on. All such groups may be the target of ethnic prejudice. It is essential, however, to distinguish between prejudice regarding presumed common characteristics that are changeable at a personal or collective level and those that are considered unalterable, based as they are on factors beyond human control. Thus claims that certain peoples have no manners, cannot drive, or have a fine sense of humor are instances of group prejudice. They still allow for the possibility that individuals may be taught manners and driving, or lack a sense of humor. On the other hand, the claim that a certain people has an appalling cuisine because their sense of smell is deficient would be an example of racism. By implication, such a people will never be able to cook properly, for a sense of smell cannot be acquired. The present work will trace these sorts of patterns and attitudes in ancient sources.

It may be useful to note once again what we should and should not be looking for in Greece and Rome. Greek and Roman antiquity did not know the sort of racism that western civilization developed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, since they had no concept of biological determinism. There was no nationalism in the modern sense in the Graeco-Roman world, nor was there any concept that a specific ethnic group should live within defined borders. What the ancient world did have was a range of prejudices, phobias, and hostilities towards specific groups of foreigners and it is the aim of this part of the work to understand these better than has been attempted so far. Clearly, racism is not a way of looking at people based on genuine scientific observation of their physical and mental qualities. It is a construct of ungrounded theories and discriminatory commonplaces elaborated with the specific aim of establishing the superiority of one group over another, based on presumed physiological characteristics.

What we should consider, therefore, is the degree to which antiquity knew such a phenomenon, even if it lacked the biological elements of modern racism. The question to be considered is what are the explanations given in ancient literature for the presumed superiority or inferiority of specific groups. If these consist of theories regarding heredity or unalterable exterior influences, it is possible to speak of proto-racism. If the assumed causes of qualitative differences are human actions or social relations within people's own control, then we should speak of ethnic or group prejudice. In other words, if we find that a people is described as having the mentality of slaves because they are ruled by a king, then this is not racism, but ethnic prejudice. If, however, we read that people are stupid and courageous because they live in a cold climate, then it can be argued that this is a form of proto-racism, since there is an implicit

assumption that these people are stupid through physical factors beyond their control. Their descendants will remain stupid, because the climate of their country will not change and thus their bodies will remain the same. Moreover, each individual belonging to such people will be assumed to have the characteristics ascribed to his group, whether inherited, or caused by the environment. This is to the point because, as we shall see, the distinction between heredity and characteristics acquired through external influences was not considered significant in Graeco-Roman antiquity. According to ancient thinking, external influences could alter physical and mental characteristics—such as the southern sun which turns white people into blacks—and these subsequently became stable and were inherited. Furthermore, if we read that people are superior because they are of pure lineage, then this is an imagined construct aimed at establishing superiority on the basis of heredity. Such theories can be qualified as an early form of racism. The term proto-racism, then, may be used when Greek and Latin sources attribute to groups of people common characteristics considered to be unalterable because they are determined by external factors or heredity.

XENOPHOBIA

One further concept has to be defined before we use it, namely xenophobia, a term not attested in ancient Greek, but, like similar compounds, a construct of recent date.⁹⁷ Although this is less complex than racism, it still needs some clarification since it is a compound used in various ways. The second element is a clinical term for an extreme, irrational fear of a specific object or situation. A phobia is classified as a type of anxiety disorder in psychiatry. Numerous more or less parallel words have been coined to specify the object of fear by prefixing “phobia” with the Greek word for the object feared. In many of these cases, the popular meaning has lost some of its clinical precision. Thus, xenophobia is defined in the *OED* as “a deep antipathy to foreigners.” This definition is accompanied by a large number of examples which clearly show the term to be used commonly for a “strong dislike of foreigners” rather than a pathological fear of them.⁹⁸ The essence of the antipathy is that the objects of xenophobia are seen as people who have come from elsewhere and therefore do not belong to one’s own society. It can relate both to the people themselves or their immediate ancestors. Xenophobia can, in fact, take the form either of ethnic prejudice or of racism, or a combination of the two. For the present study, then, xenophobia will be used as a term for various forms of ethnic prejudice and racism

⁹⁷ E.g., Frederickson, *Racism*, 6: “a term invented by the ancient Greeks . . .”

⁹⁸ As in *The Economist* of June 1, 1963, 908: “The mild xenophobia . . . which informed such *Punch* lines as ‘e’s a stranger: ‘eave ‘arf a brick at ‘im’.”

aimed at those seen as foreigners or immigrants, as they are commonly called today.⁹⁹

DISCUSSION OF THE MODERN LITERATURE ON ANCIENT PREJUDICES

I hope these definitions will contribute to the clarity of this work and assist in the clarification of its conceptual framework. This is all the more important as no general work has been written about the attitudes of Greeks to other nations and peoples in the classical and Hellenistic periods.¹⁰⁰ The relationship between Romans and others, however, has been discussed more often in the modern literature. At this point something should be said about the existing literature we have taken into account and the methods it has employed. Three works must be mentioned at the outset because they involve essential matters of method, and the introduction is the proper place to discuss some aspects of these: A. N. Sherwin-White, *Racial Prejudice in Imperial Rome* (Cambridge, 1967); J.P.V.D. Balsdon, *Romans & Aliens* (London, 1979); and Y.-A. Dauge, *Le Barbare* (Brussels, 1981).¹⁰¹ Sherwin-White's book is a short publication of lectures given in Cambridge.¹⁰² He does not discuss theories, abstract ideas, or methods, but his views are clearly expressed throughout the work. I cannot agree with several aspects of his approach. His work consists of a systematic discussion of what a limited number of authors have to say about various peoples. Thus his historiographic method is significant and must be taken into account. However, the question of what constitutes racial prejudice is not discussed by Sherwin-White at all. He makes no distinction between racial and ethnic prejudice, which is a necessary distinction, as I have argued above. The second point to observe is that Sherwin-White has decided to ignore the commonplaces he encounters in the authors he discusses. For instance: "But in all this Tacitus is not expressing an opinion about the barbarians. He is writing literary history according to the commonplace book. His opinion or his admiration comes out unexpectedly . . ." (p. 44). Sherwin-White then gives examples of Tacitus's expressions of admiration for barbarian leaders. This, however, is not really relevant. There was a long tradition of, admiration for, and special treatment of

⁹⁹ The term should not be applied to hatred of other peoples in general, e.g., the dislike of Greeks and Romans for nomads.

¹⁰⁰ Note, however, Long, *Barbarians in Greek Comedy*; E. Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian*; J. M. Hall, *Ethnic Identity* (1997), and see above, n. 12.

¹⁰¹ See also the brief survey by D. B. Saddington, "Race Relations in the Roman Empire," *ANRW* 2.3 (1975), 112–137 and his earlier paper: "Roman Attitudes to the External Gentes of the North," *Acta Classica* 4 (1961), 90–102.

¹⁰² Unlike Balsdon's book, which was widely criticized, Sherwin-White received many positive reviews, apart from two highly critical discussions by W. den Boer, *CIJ* 65 (1969), 184–186, and by Ramsay MacMullen, *AJP* 90 (1969), 500f. Note also the pertinent criticism of G. W. Bowersock, *Roman Arabia* (Cambridge, MA, 1983), 124, note 4.

enemy leaders. Enemy leaders may be admired and given preferential treatment while their subjects are despised and enslaved or worse.

It is precisely the point of stereotypes and commonplaces that they deny the individuality of members of a group.¹⁰³ “The X-people are thieves” is a statement that denies the certainty that the majority of them are perfectly honest. When we come to consider individuals, the stereotype may lose some of its force: “for someone who grew up among the X, he is surprisingly honest.” I therefore disagree fundamentally with Sherwin-White when he says that commonplaces do not represent opinions, including prejudices. If in our times a group of people are believed to be thieves, then this may be called a commonplace, but it is more correct to describe it as a prejudice. Such prejudices may be voiced by simple people or by famous authors. In fact, there was a period, not long ago, when highly respected social scientists confidently generalized about nations.¹⁰⁴ The result was a serious confusion of research and sweeping generalization. However, even when endowed with academic respectability such observations remain what they are: statements of prejudice. It is essential to interpret prejudices and collective judgments in our sources properly. Thus it is precisely when ancient authors echo common prejudice that they are valuable as an indicator of how foreigners were seen in their time. We need to search for conventional material, for it is there we shall find the ideas that give a better impression of the general views of Roman authors and their readers than the information and analysis that are unique to a specific text. Stereotypes and commonplaces are one form in which generalizations, preconceptions, and prejudices are expressed. Although they are often innocuous and their aggressive intent masked by humor, it is important to see what they are conceptually. This is not, of course, to suggest that a joke about a group is the same as a full-scale physical attack. There are also positive stereotypes. It is important, however, to recognize each statement for what it is. Let me cite a random example, taken from the *Michelin Guide to Venice* (first ed., 1996), “The Venetians”: “To stereotype the flavour of Venice would be detrimental to the magic of the place and offensive to her proud inhabitants” (p. 10). The *Guide* then continues as follows:

The Venetian is born with a **positive**¹⁰⁵ outlook on life that is maintained by an **imperturbable** nature in which emotional involvement is tempered, in a very gentlemanly manner, by a certain indifference to anything that lies beyond the lagoon. This leads to him being noticeably predisposed to being **tolerant**, an innate quality acquired from a knowledge of different peoples distilled over the centuries. The blend of an almost Anglo-saxon [*sic!*] *aplomb* with boundless and all-embracing curiosity renders this personality even more fascinating.

¹⁰³ Lucid remarks about stereotypes in the ancient world: E. Hall, *op. cit.*, 102–104.

¹⁰⁴ Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict and others, who studied “collective identity,” “national character,” and similar topics; see the brief description by Uffe Øystergård, in Per Bilde et al., *Ethnicity in Hellenistic Egypt* (1992), 19–25.

¹⁰⁵ Bold print and italics as in the original text.

This continues for half a page. It is a good example, because the authors are demonstrably unaware that they are spouting stereotypes—which they claim to reject. It is interesting that the rejection of stereotyping in the first sentence itself is justified by a stereotype: to stereotype Venetians would be offensive to those proud people, it is claimed, as if it is legitimate to stereotype the inhabitants of a town without magic, provided its inhabitants are not proud.¹⁰⁶ Venetians are *born* with a positive outlook on life and tend to be tolerant because they dispose of a reservoir of knowledge *accumulated* over the centuries. This betrays confusion between acquired and inherited characters, comparable with what we encounter in many ancient texts. Note further that all these stereotypes are positive.¹⁰⁷ Thus, the present study, unlike Sherwin-White's book, will focus on stereotypes in ancient literature and analyze them for what they show about mentalities.

In this connection something must be said about the use of various genres of literature in this study which is based on a broad variety of texts: historiography, philosophy, medical texts, speeches and more. It is a problem of many historical studies that they have to work with a combination of sources that cannot be described in their context without imposing an intolerable burden on the length and readability of the study. I hope I have been sufficiently cautious in interpreting the texts discussed. A first self-imposed rule in this book is that I have interpreted all the literary sources only as evidence for contemporary ideas and attitudes. Thus, for instance, I have used the historian Livy, who lived in the reign of Augustus, only as an author providing evidence for attitudes in his own times. Even though he writes about the earliest period of the existence of Rome, I have made no attempt to extract from his work evidence about periods earlier than his own. As a consequence I have not much to say about republican Rome before the mid-second century B.C., for there is not much contemporary literature. Something more needs to be said about the interpretation of satire which is especially complex. The satire is a literary form, first developed in Rome, in which prevailing human vices, follies, abuses, or shortcomings are held up to censure by means of ridicule, irony, or related methods.¹⁰⁸ It works by means of attack, entertainment, and preaching in varying respective doses.¹⁰⁹

The genre was established by Lucilius in the second century B.C., developed by Horace and Juvenal, and taken up in Greek by Lucian of Samosata. Horace and Juvenal, however, wrote from quite different perspectives. Horace is moved to laughter and irony rather than to indignation or anger. Juvenal, writing more

¹⁰⁶ It must be admitted that the Venetians are not the only proud people around. One trait all Scandinavians have in common is their national pride, which is deeply rooted in their mentality, or so we read in the *Michelin Guide of Scandinavia and Finland* (1996), p. 31.

¹⁰⁷ The existence of positive stereotypes is excluded in the definition given by Edith Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian* 121: "Stereotypes project on to target groups characteristics which are the opposite of qualities admired in the group creating the stereotypes."

¹⁰⁸ For an ancient definition: Diomedes, *GLK* 1.485 = Kaibel, *Comicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*, 1. 55f.

¹⁰⁹ Niall Rudd, *Themes in Roman Satire* (London, 1986), chapter 1: aims and motives, at p. 1.

than a century later, looks with anger and indignation on the corruptions of his time. Clearly, in interpreting satire for the purpose of this study, one must be aware of the nature of the genre. Satire often exaggerates and always is meant to evoke laughter or anger. It should not be treated as portraying daily life in an accurate manner, or even as representing considered reflections. Satirists have different aims from historians and ethnographers. Satire must, however, be taken seriously as a form of commentary on the opinions of the speaker and, hence, of the current views of many of his readers. As observed by Anderson, “the poet Horace or Juvenal should not be identified totally with the character in the Satires who makes the social commentary. That character or *persona* . . . must be plausible, but he is also subject to criticism by design of the poet.”¹¹⁰ Or we may cite Henderson, more recently: “So these poems figure the traditionalist profile of a ‘typical’ adult-citizen-Roman who is ‘free’ to voice aggressive masculinity in the public eye.”¹¹¹ “We know that, whatever else, Satire satirizes the satirist and satirizes the genre of Satire, turns on itself and on the consciousness of its voice and its readers. Its mark and mask is *self-mockery*.”¹¹² Thus, to take one example, Juvenal complains: “Here in Rome the son of free-born parents has to give the wall to some rich man’s slave.”¹¹³ This is not meant as a literal description of the movements of slaves and free men in Rome, but it definitely expresses a feeling, held by many Romans—but not necessarily a feeling held in that form by the poet himself—that the slaves of the rich humiliate free-born Romans. Again, as observed by Anderson, “in the case of these violently indignant speakers, the poet has deliberately attributed to them objectionable and offensive ways, more or less as a warning to the audience to dissociate itself from their indignation. In other words, sometimes the *persona* created by the satiric poet is so distinct from the poet’s biography that the two are opposites.”¹¹⁴ Juvenal, in any case, would not have written as he did, if he had not confidently expected that this was an effective way of representing a feeling shared by many of his readers. For the present study satire is thus entirely relevant. It is enough for us to observe that many Romans felt humiliated by the position of the slaves of the rich, whatever Juvenal himself may have felt, and whatever a more distant observer might have felt in observing contemporary Rome. Thus, satire may be used as a reliable reflection of contemporary readers’ perception of their social environment. We may take this one step further. It is quite likely that the rulers in Rome were influenced in their policies by such perceptions. In other words, even if they themselves did not share negative feelings towards specific groups of aliens, they may still have adapted their policy to the sympathy or hostility they perceived to be prevalent.

¹¹⁰ William S. Anderson, *Essays on Roman Satire* (Princeton, 1982), viii.

¹¹¹ John Henderson, *Writing down Rome: Satire, Comedy, and other Offences in Latin Poetry* (Oxford, 1999), 194.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 205.

¹¹³ 3. 131: *divitis hic servo claudit latus ingenuorum filius.*

¹¹⁴ Anderson, *Essays*, 9. See also pp. 293–296 on “anger in Juvenal and Seneca.”

A useful discussion might also be devoted to the role of judicial and other rhetoric in promoting stereotyping. Although I use such texts throughout this study, I have decided not to discuss the genre as such for reasons of economy.

Balsdon's book is very substantial and deals with a wide range of subjects. It describes how Romans regarded other peoples and how they regarded themselves, how other peoples regarded the Romans, how they communicated and affected one another. It is based on a great wealth of material and deals with all these topics at a rapid pace. The book never stops for questions or discussion. Throughout, the book sustains a tone of cheerful cynicism, which makes it highly entertaining but sometimes hides the seriousness of the subject matter.¹¹⁵ It is frequently left to the reader to decide whether the author mocks the chauvinism of the sources he cites, or accepts it. There are two major disadvantages to the book. It attempts to study at least four major topics and includes numerous interesting but secondary matters, such as eunuchs and the seven-day week. It tries to do a great deal in one volume and therefore leaves many real questions untouched, insufficiently separating essentials from mere curiosities. Second, it covers the period of the republic from the second century B.C. onward and the principate as well, as if it was one continuum. This occasionally hides major differences that may have occurred over so many years.

I must also briefly mention here Dauge's massive book about Rome and the Barbarian because its conclusions are the opposite of those reached in the present work. Four pages out of a total of 859 set forth the author's conviction that there was a total absence of racism in Rome. His view is that Rome was essentially an open society, which therefore cannot have produced racist views. This is cheerful dogma rather than well-considered analysis. An important point is undoubtedly that Dauge supports an eccentric definition of race.¹¹⁶ It is remarkable that an academic work on ancient history, published in 1981, should use Italian fascist literature for its methodological approach to racism. Yet I have not seen this mentioned in any review of the book, which shows how vague contemporary thinking often is about racism. A third important problem, apart from the extraordinary length of the work, is the way in which sources are presented. As in Balsdon's work, it is frequently unclear whether Dauge is

¹¹⁵ Elsewhere, or perhaps only in earlier years, Balsdon himself was capable of slipping: "Orientals are best impressed by oriental splendour": *The Emperor Gaius (Caligula)* (Oxford, 1934, repr. 1964), 54.

¹¹⁶ Dauge, *Le Barbare*, 525: "Un «race» véritable, d'ailleurs, ne peut être qu'une création volontaire à partir d'éléments divers, par un processus continu de *dissolution* et de *concentration* qui rappelle l'opération «*solue et coagulée*», et par la conjonction des meilleurs, appelés à fusionner pour constituer une communauté sans cesse renouvelée." For this definition the author refers to Julius Evola, *Sintesi di dottrina della razza* (Milano, 1941), who designed his own quite peculiar social philosophy. Evola, (266) happily announces the formation of a race both new and old: it is the race of fascist man, the 'razza dell' uomo di Mussolini." In *Le fascisme vu de droite* (Paris, 1981), 92, Evola proudly relates that Mussolini had read his work, had received him and expressed his unreserved approval of the thesis. Supported by such company Dauge represents a confused attempt not to throw the baby away with the bathwater. He leaves us with an imaginary race, which is, however, not a race according to the definitions of racists.

simply citing Roman authors' negative views of others, or applauding them. Usually the latter seems to be the case. This, again, is a very common feature in modern works dealing with ancient judgments of others.

I have singled out these three books on the subject for discussion in the Introduction because each of them shows significant features which, I maintain, must be reconsidered if we are to attempt to understand these topics. Otherwise the text below will refer to works dealing with relevant topics in the appropriate place.¹¹⁷ However, one remarkable article should be added here, Elias Bickerman's "Origines Gentium,"¹¹⁸ about Greek and Jewish ideas about ethnicity in antiquity. It contains much that is relevant here, particularly the concluding sentences:

The Greek, Hellenocentric, approach failed to solve the problem. But are modern theories much better? The "Cro-Magnon" race of our textbooks or the "Semites" as the substratum of the "Semitic" languages are fictions of a different kind but hardly of a higher value than the Trojan origin of Rome. The remarkable fact remains that Greeks conceived the idea of common inheritance of all peoples, and tried to understand the common past of mankind historically. As so often in Greek science, they failed because they attempted too much.

The present study will consider Greek attitudes towards foreigners from a rather different angle.

THE ARRANGEMENT OF THIS BOOK

Throughout this work I shall distinguish strictly between (a) those forms of prejudice and preconception which are aimed at strangers, at ethnic, or at other groups; and (b) those views of others which may be called proto-racist, as defined above. The period covered starts with the fifth century B.C. There are two parts: the first discusses a number of general themes while the second deals with specific peoples as presented in the literature of the periods considered. I shall discuss both opinions about foreign nations, for example, Greek ideas of Persia, and opinions about peoples incorporated into the Roman Empire, for example, Roman ideas of Greeks. This is all the more necessary because so many foreign nations became subjects of the Roman Empire at some stage. The study thus covers not just two different cultures, Greece and Rome, but also a very extended period and thus a variety of political and social climates. It is my claim that this is justified because consistent patterns of thinking about foreigners are encountered throughout this period. Specific ideas and attitudes occur from the fifth century B.C. through the Roman imperial period and I shall

¹¹⁷ Such as F. W. Walbank, "Nationality as a Factor in Roman History," *Selected Papers: Studies in Greek and Roman History and Historiography* (Cambridge, 1985), 57–76.

¹¹⁸ E. J. Bickerman, "Origines Gentium," *CPh* 47 (1952), 65–81; reprinted in *Religion and Politics in the Hellenistic and Roman World* (Como, 1985), 399–417.

argue that the political and social climates are responsible for minor variations only.

The first major topic considered in chapter 1 is the environmental theory, that is, the assumption that the physical environment influences or even determines group characteristics. It is essential to understand these ideas properly and to trace their history from their beginnings in Greece in the fifth century B.C. through their development over the centuries, both because they were so influential in antiquity and because of the pervasive effect they had, and still have, on opinions in later periods. From the start they served to separate “inferior” and “superior” peoples and to apportion various weaknesses to different populations. The environmental theory was often, but not always, combined with value judgments. Although authors no doubt felt that the environment decisively influenced human beings, a second factor should now be mentioned, which was also considered significant in determining human nature. It was thought that the characteristics which were acquired from the outside, through climate or other external factors, were transmitted to posterity. The heredity of acquired characters is not now a fashionable idea.¹¹⁹ In antiquity it was, and it was also widely accepted in the eighteenth century. At the same time, however, there also existed an idea that people would change if they moved to another environment, an idea also raised by eighteenth-century authors. In practice, as we shall see, ancient authors believed that this change could only be for the worse. There is never any suggestion in the literature that people improve when they move to a more favorable area, while there is no lack of examples of deterioration. This was still the idea in the Enlightenment: Buffon assumed blacks were degenerated whites, having turned dark because of the activities of the sun. He never assumed whites were bleached blacks, turned white in the northern climate. Hence he proposed the experiment of sending blacks to Denmark, to see how long it would take for them to return to being whites. The development of these concepts in later periods will be traced and we shall see how they were applied in other circumstances. Clearly the environmental theory was of great interest to the Romans, who acquired an empire that extended over a wide variety of climatic zones and geographical regions. In Rome such theories were closely linked with views on the expansion of the empire, and the moral qualities and merits of the various subject peoples. The connection between theories about others and views on the expansion of the empire will be indicated where relevant in the discussion, but will not be the subject of a separate chapter.

A second important concept is considered subsequently in chapter 1, namely the effect of mixed and pure lineage. The emphasis on pure blood and the condemnation of mixed marriages in modern racism makes it unnecessary to argue at length why such a phenomenon should be considered proto-racism in

¹¹⁹ The name of the theory: heredity of acquired characters is somewhat misleading when applied to the more recent version, because it seems to focus on irrelevant features such as mutilations and other nonadaptive changes. Its ancient precursor did precisely that, as will be seen below.

other periods. The idea that pure lineage results in offspring of better quality than offspring of mixed origins appears in Greek thought, notably in fifth-century Athens, and can be traced throughout the ages. The Roman view of descent and lineage is of great interest. Ideas regarding purity of lineage are important, even though the Romans never claimed a pure lineage for themselves. Nevertheless, many authors fully endorse the view that mixed marriages will produce people of inferior quality. I am not aware of the existence of a theoretical framework justifying such views in antiquity, unlike the environmental theory, which is the subject of much discussion in the ancient literature. The merits of pure blood were taken for granted.

Then follows a discussion of ancient physiognomics, an ancient science or pseudoscience, which aims “to examine and recognise the character of the personality from the character of the body.” The assumption of a direct connection between external bodily features and mental traits involves stereotypes and value judgments from the start. Some of these stereotypes are explicitly linked with specific peoples. Moreover, it will be seen that ancient physiognomics tends to focus on group characteristics rather than individual features. It is a significant topic in any discussion of Greek and Roman stereotypical thinking.

Chapter 2 will consider aspects of the interrelationship between attitudes to foreign peoples and imperialist or expansionist ideologies in Greece and Rome. As already observed, this is not a systematic analysis of ancient imperialism. It is an attempt to trace the views held by Greeks and Romans of their enemies and subjects. The assumption is that it is an essential part of the study of peoples at war to understand how they regarded each other and themselves in general terms. For the ancient world, an important concept to be discussed in this connection is the doctrine of natural slavery as developed by Aristotle and widely accepted afterwards.¹²⁰ It is relevant to the discussion of ancient stereotypical thinking because it asserts that slaves are different, physically and mentally, from free men through inherited characteristics. This is applied to foreign peoples collectively and, consequently, was influential in early modern imperialist thinking. The claim that some members of humanity are born to be slaves could be described as the ultimate form of proto-racism. Aristotle’s natural slaves correspond with all the features listed as characteristic of what is believed to be a race. He writes that slaves—and indeed all non-Greeks—share imagined common characteristics—physical, mental, and moral—which cannot be changed by human will, because they are determined by unalterable, stable, hereditary factors. This naturally leads to a brief discussion about the moral aspects of imperialism: conquest has to be justified, even in a period that does not believe in the equal rights of men. Aristotle’s theory forms an attempt to justify both individual slavery and subjugation and enslavement of foreigners. The theory was influential, but Hellenistic and Roman attitudes towards individual slaves and vanquished enemies generally fit into a somewhat different tradition which will be traced in the sequel of chapter 2. It will be seen how

¹²⁰ See Peter Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine* (Cambridge, 1996).

attitudes towards foreign peoples vary over time in tandem with the prevalence of an ideology of imperial expansion. As emphasized above, this is not an attempt systematically to “explain” imperialism, its aims or ideology. It explores the attitudes of expansionist peoples towards others as an aspect of their motivation and morale.

Attempts to dehumanize foreigners, by claiming they are like animals, or are, in fact, animals, are a familiar feature of racist hatred. We shall therefore see to what extent this was common in the ancient world.

These attitudes often justify the means by which subjugation is realized: large-scale killings, various forms of bloodshed or, conversely, clemency and integration. Anyone discussing hatred of foreigners, discrimination, and racism in our times is bound to think of the pathological behavior that marked the nineteenth and, especially, the twentieth century in this respect. Although it is not the aim of this study to trace actual behavior in antiquity, but to clarify the development of ideas, it is yet unavoidable to say something about actual practice even though the conclusions are clear from the start. There was a good deal of bloodshed, mass murder, and cruelty, but no racist society as such or any systematic racist policy leading to mass murder as seen in the twentieth century.

So far all the topics discussed are related to the mechanisms whereby the Graeco-Roman world established differences between peoples and divided them into groups, superior and inferior. It is generally recognized that an integral part of ethnic prejudice and racist hatred tends to be fear of the other, hence the term *xenophobia*. Chapter 3, will therefore consider several themes in this sphere: Greek and, particularly, Roman fears of moral contamination by others, reinforced by increased contact; anxiety that their culture and empire was being undermined by the foreigners they subjected, particularly those living as immigrants or minorities among them (*Vincendo Victi Sumus*). The large-scale presence of aliens and immigrants in the imperial capital and in Italy caused social tension in the local society, familiar from our own times, which is amply reflected in the literature. The fear this influx engendered leads to regular attempts to regulate the foreign presence, through expulsions or restrictive measures. More specifically, a strong tendency to regard contact between peoples as damaging in general can be found both in Greek and in Roman literature and is frequently explicitly stated. Intercourse with foreign peoples through travel, trade, and migration is not usually described as enriching or instructive.¹²¹ On the contrary, it is seen as corrupting, contaminating, or undermining one’s own culture. In a sense this is the moral and spiritual counterpart of the belief in the value of pure lineage.

Thus it will be the aim of part 1 to trace general concepts and approaches towards others in Greece and Rome in a roughly systematic manner. Part 2 represents an attempt to show how these ideas, concepts, and approaches are applied to specific peoples. After the consideration of general themes, the second part

¹²¹ An exception was Solon κατά θεωρίην πρόφασιν ἐκπλώσας at Herodotus 1.29.1. Even if this was a pretext, it still suggests that it was a credible pretext at the time.

of this study is devoted to a survey of Greek and Roman views of selected groups of foreigners, to see how these general themes are represented in Graeco-Roman views of neighbors, minorities, and both friendly and hostile peoples. Topics to be discussed include the views held by the Greeks about Persia after their victory in the fifth century (chapter 4). This is mostly concerned with Herodotus, of course, but not exclusively. Next come the views of Persia and other eastern nations held by fourth-century authors, in particular Plato, Isocrates, and Xenophon. An important theme is the rise of the belief in the opposition of East and West, or Asia and Europe as a distinction between superior and inferior peoples. Throughout this chapter I will trace the association between the transformation of Greek attitudes towards Persia, and Greek ambition to march against Persia. It will be shown that there is a direct connection between the rise of eastward imperialism and attitudes towards Persia in the literature.

It might have seemed obvious that this sort of study should deal extensively with Alexander's attitude towards Persians, for there are numerous passages on his resorting to Persian practices, and they have been widely discussed. However, this material has almost all been preserved by authors of the Roman period, even though it is true that some of those did draw on historians who were contemporary, or near-contemporary, with Alexander. It seems enough of a challenge to analyze attitudes towards Persia in contemporary Greek and Roman sources, without attempting to deal with Roman sources on Alexander as well. We would continuously have to consider whether the attitudes encountered reflect the original sources or the Roman authors who used them. For other reasons little will be said of Hellenistic attitudes towards other peoples, a fascinating subject, which would make this study much longer than it already is. However, this would not really clarify Greek and Roman attitudes. It is true that such a study might involve a different range of attitudes and outlooks from those encountered in the present book, but that may be taken as a reason why it should be a separate work.

Rome, however, is central to the topic of this study. As will be seen, the belief in the opposition of East and West, or Asia and Europe was in Rome replaced, to some extent, or expanded, with the concept of an opposition between North and South. However, the peoples living east of Italy, Greeks, various peoples in Asia Minor, Syrians, Egyptians and others, always played a large role in the Roman perception of their empire because of their high cultural level and their ancient religious and political traditions. Chapter 5 is therefore devoted to Roman imperial attitudes towards the eastern part of the empire and the impact of expansion eastwards on imperial ideology. The discussion includes some thoughts on Cato the Elder and the Elder Pliny on Greeks and their influence on Rome. I will also look at the views of various authors on the effect of the Roman involvement in Asia Minor in the early second century as well as opinions of the inhabitants of this area and their influence on the Roman army and on Rome itself. This part of the discussion will include a consideration of ideas about the generally corrupting influence of Asiatics and their wealth. In connection with this, considerable attention will be paid to the idea that the

successes of the empire bear in themselves the seeds of decline, and the related fear that the vanquished somehow subdue their Roman conquerors. It will be seen throughout this chapter how close the connection is between such ideas and the essence of ancient Roman imperialism. As already mentioned, I have not discussed the Roman republic before the mid-second century B.C., because there is not enough contemporary material.¹²²

This is followed by a consideration of how the Romans responded in practice and at a conceptual level to the presence of Asiatics, Egyptians, and others in their empire in general, and in Rome in particular. It will be seen how there was a tendency to expel such peoples frequently from the city of Rome, even though they seemed to have made their way back fairly quickly. An intellectual response characteristic of both Greece and Rome in times of increasing expansion is the occurrence of frequent doubts as to the desirability of travel overseas, commerce, or indeed any contact between peoples, even though there is a basic idea that civilization is possible only through contact with others. An interesting reaction to the encounter with strangers seen as particularly barbaric is the denial of their humanity. They are described as if they are animals, not metaphorically but in reality.

The following chapters contain a survey of ancient views of specific selected groups of foreigners: first (in chapter 6) Syrians, Phoenicians, and Carthaginians. These are best considered as one group for our purposes. Then follow the Egyptians who occupied a special place among foreign nations from the classical Greek period till the Late Empire (chapter 7). Parthia / Persia must also be considered, because for the Romans it represented the only rival empire (chapter 8). Next I shall deal with the Greeks as seen by the Romans (chapter 9). A short chapter will be devoted to a category of people rather than a specific ethnic group. One of the great social divisions—between men of the mountains and those of the plains—will be examined for its relevance in the present context in chapter 10. Then we move to the western foreigners: Gauls and Germans are discussed in chapters 11 and 12. Obviously, this treatment omits many peoples about whom much has been said in the ancient literature. Much could be said about the Hispani, Britons, Pannonians, Thracians, and others, but this would not be conceptually very different from what is said about the Germans and Gauls. It has been my aim to make a selection which suffices to indicate basic patterns and avoid tedious repetition as much as possible.

An omission that will strike many readers as eccentric is systematic discussion of the attitudes towards black Africans. Ancient ideas about Africans are highly interesting. Much has been said, and may still be said about Blacks in the ancient world, but the present study is not the proper place for it, because they did not form much of an actual presence in the Greek and Roman worlds. Blacks were considered remarkable, but few of them lived among the Greeks and Romans and no country inhabited by blacks was ever part of the Greek and Roman empires. The Ethiopians are mentioned fairly frequently in some

¹²² See in general: Tim Cornell, *The Beginnings of Rome: Italy and Rome from the Bronze Age to the Punic Wars* (London, 1995).

sources, but usually as representatives of peoples living near the edge of the world. They were present in fifth-century Athens, but as a rare and expensive type of slave which enhanced the status of the owner.¹²³ This only confirms the impression that their impact on the social consciousness of the fifth-century Athenians was strictly limited. I have therefore excluded Ethiopians from systematic treatment because for some authors they are clearly mythical and this study deals only with people whom the Greeks and Romans actually experienced. Ancient ideas about—and attitudes towards—Ethiopians (i.e., blacks) will frequently be mentioned and discussed where these are instructive about the manner in which Greeks and Romans thought about the causes of physical differences between peoples. For similar reasons I have decided not to treat the Scythians systematically. Finally, ancient hostility towards the Jews is discussed in chapter 13 as part of these considerations. Jews lived in substantial numbers in the Diaspora and Judaea was part of the Roman Empire from the first century B.C. till the Moslem conquest. Jews are relevant for the present study also because feelings about them were quite strong and it is therefore only natural to compare ancient attitudes towards the Jews with those current in later periods.

The advantage of this general arrangement is that it elucidates the specific attitudes and opinions regarding various peoples, for the treatment in the first part of this chapter, based as it is on thematic analysis, tends to obscure the distinct character of the attitudes towards specific peoples in various parts of the ancient world. Moreover, this will show how various ideas and preconceptions continued through time, from the fifth century B.C. till the Later Roman Empire.

CONCLUSION

The central theme of the present work is the irrational in Greek and Roman ideas about foreigners. It focuses on patterns of bigotry and social hatred in antiquity and attempts to show that some of these are prototypes of the ones familiar to us in modern times.

When the student of a social or historical phenomenon belongs to the culture in which it occurs or occurred, the choice of position is determined by the necessity to take a stand: one is either for it or against or tries to be indifferent. However, even if the student does not belong to the culture that is being studied, the analysis will still bring to it value judgments that are accepted in the student's own culture.

The demand for detachment in such studies, often encountered in the literature, is in any case unsound. It expects of the scholars a split personality which would remove all personal perspective and engagement from their activities as students. This could only result in dull and mechanical and therefore meaning-

¹²³ Margaret C. Miller, *Athens and Persia in the Fifth Century BC: a Study in Cultural Receptivity* (Cambridge, 1997), 212–217: "It appears that in slave-owning societies to have a rare type of slave conferred the same sort of status that ownership of a rare breed of dog gave latter-day aristocrats."

less analysis. In fact, it does not exist in practice. What exists, however, is a pretense at objectivity by students who often ignore the fact that their views are wholly determined and thus distorted by current consensus. Such were my considerations when I published a book about Roman frontier policy and imperialism in the East in 1990. It seemed to me only fair to say something about my personal perspective in thinking about the problems at hand. I thought a candid admission that I was intellectually and emotionally involved in the subject of my studies would show that I was aware of my limitations and tried to use my personal experience to advantage in my ruminations. I must admit that I found it surprising when a few critics, encouraged by this admission, used it against me and accused me of openly acknowledged bias in my views. It seemed to me then, and seems to me true today, that authors who are aware of their perspective have a better chance of delivering lucid analysis, than those who pretend that their experience in life plays no role in their work.

The subject itself of the present study is irrationality and hostility, which makes it even harder to maintain a reasonably dispassionate approach. It cannot be approached by serious thinkers without personal engagement or in isolation of their own social perspective. No person anywhere fails to be touched by prejudice and racism, one's own or that of others, but the manner in which this happens varies and so does one's intellectual outlook on society. Inevitably, someone like me who grew up as a Jew in Amsterdam after World War II has early been made aware of one kind of racism, whereas anyone who grew up in Washington, DC in the 1960s and 1970s has different experiences. To mention merely the most obvious difference: one form of racism focuses on people who are physically indistinguishable from other groups in the same society, the other form concentrates precisely on real physical differences. This has essential consequences for the way in which these phenomena are understood. Those who define racism in recent U.S. publications tend to concentrate on physical aspects, while those who did so in Europe in 1950 tried to understand forms of discrimination that existed in spite of the physical similarity of the discriminated. Let me state it in one sentence: U.S. blacks were never forced to wear the equivalent of a Star of David for the sake of identification. A proper analysis of the history of racism should encompass these various manifestations of it and understand its common roots. This study then represents an attempt to understand broader patterns of group tensions in the past and especially their intellectual roots in Greek and Roman antiquity. It is not a cheerful topic, yet needs to be understood. Whoever writes about it must be involved, emotionally and intellectually, and this involvement may be turned to advantage if it is used for dispassionate analysis.

My own prehistory in the Netherlands made it obvious that these are subjects worth considering. Thirty years at Tel Aviv University made it possible for me to write the book. The two stages together provided a background in which I witnessed forms of social and ethnic tension relevant to many of the topics considered in this study.