

# Introduction

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The tug of the familiar and the pull of the unfamiliar have fired the imagination and fashioned the conduct of wo'man over untold generations. In the familiar there is reassurance; in the unfamiliar there is uneasiness. In their familiarity and unfamiliarity, race, ethnicity, and nationality both reassure and unsettle. "We" don't mix with "them," for "they" stick with "their kind" and we stick with "our kind." "They" are different from "us," and "we" are not like "them." "We" go "our" way, and "they" go "their" way. The antinomies here are largely a function of what B. F. Skinner calls "contingencies of reinforcement" which shape the personalities and mold the characters of individuals. Stern have been the societal fault lines occasioned by contingencies of reinforcement regarding nationality, ethnicity, and race. Concerning race specifically, the following example, though anecdotal, is most instructive.

I recall vividly my Dad, George Wilton Van Horne, now deceased, telling me more than forty years ago, that a friend of the owner (FF) of the thirty-two hundred acre estate where he worked as an overseer told him that one evening just before dinner at the local country club FF remarked aloud: "How good it is to look around and don't [sic] see a black face." Ironically, all of the faces that served dinner were black (in the American usage of the term); all the faces of those who were served were white; and, excluding the family of FF, the faces of all of those who lived and worked on FF's estate were black. I know that the anecdote just presented has no standing as legal testimony, yet it is ever so poignant. Assuming that FF's friend did not lie to my Dad, who, in turn, did not mislead his son, one cannot but be struck by the full force of we/us versus they/them. We employ them, and they work for us. In a very real sense, for FF that evening, and who knows how many other evenings and mornings, black faces were simply invisible. They were seen but not beheld; observed

but not discerned; apprehended but not comprehended. Or as Ralph Ellison, the great twentieth-century American novelist, puts it:

I am an invisible man. No, I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allan Poe; nor am I one of your Hollywood-movie ectoplasms. I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids—and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me. . . . When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination—indeed, everything and anything except me.

Nor is my invisibility exactly a matter of a biochemical accident to my epidermis. That invisibility to which I refer occurs because of a peculiar disposition of the eyes of those with whom I come in contact. A matter of the construction of their inner eyes, those eyes with which they look through their physical eyes upon reality.<sup>2</sup>

And so, though they serve us dinner, speak the same language as we do, attend the same church as ourselves, and generally vote for the same political party as we do (all of which, incidentally, were true in relation to these who lived and worked on FF's estate), they nonetheless are not like us. In the case of FF, as well as the numberless ones that it represents, what set "them" apart from "us"?—race.

## I

Race and its cognate racism are among the most malodorous and disgusting concepts with wide currency at the end of the twentieth century, just as was true of them at the end of the fifteenth, sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, especially in the West. But race did not have its origin in the fifteenth century. As Martin Bernal points out, a concept of race, in the sense of varieties of colors of wo'man, did obtain in the ancient world prior to 500 BCE. Yet it did not ground feelings of superiority and inferiority. It expressed an aesthetic—one in which, for example, "[t]he beautiful and erotic lover in the *Song of Songs* is called in both the Hebrew and Greek texts as 'black and beautiful'."

Sentiments concerning race in the ancient world do change starting around 500 BCE, according to Bernal, so that by the time of the *New Testament* "the description of the heroine . . . in the Latin Vulgate translation of the *Song of Songs* is changed to 'black but beautiful'." Black and beautiful gave way to black but beautiful as black, unlike heretofore, became "the color and complexion of evil and white that of purity and goodness," says Bernal. Racial prejudice, in the sense of preference based on somatic or physical norms, was now observable. Still, malodorous racism, grounded in putative racial superiority and racial inferiority, had not yet fully reared its monstrous head.

By the seventeenth century, however, armed with Christianity, capitalism and muskets, Europeans in ships that bore such names as *John the Baptist*, *Gift of God*, *Jesus*, *Brotherhood*, and *Liberty*<sup>3</sup> set sail and pillaged with utter rapacity the indigenous peoples of the Americas and West Africa, among others. As the greed, fraud, and profit that Karl Marx diagnosed as intrinsic attributes of capitalism conjoined with the proselytizing religiosity of Christianity, many peoples were trampled upon and reduced either to slaves or colonial subjects. Indeed, if Bernal is to be believed, modern racism, not simply racial prejudice as it was known in the ancient world, “has its origins in the European need to justify their inhuman behavior in the genocide, colonialism, and slavery inflicted upon peoples of other continents by dehumanizing them and turning their victims into devils or animals.” And although Brian Porter does not address directly the origin of modern racism in the way that Bernal does, he too notes that “a strong racial . . . prejudice . . . exists at a deep level in many European societies.” But racism never has been, nor is it now, the exclusive province of Europeans and their societies, even though over the past five centuries they have constructed the most elaborate and tortured explanations of, and justifications for, racist behaviors. What grounds racism, the sheer racial arrogance that continues to overspread the planet? The false belief that race is a biological phenomenon; that “we” are more aesthetically attractive and intellectually endowed than “they” are; that “we” are “their” betters; and that “us” and “them” are never equals, either by nature or by society when it is properly constituted. Given the persistent noxiousness of racism, and the deep fault lines that are drawn racially all over the planet, it is well to pause for a moment on the phenomenon of race.

In her chapter that leads off this book, Linda Vigilant reinforces what already is known concerning race as a putative biological phenomenon. She writes: “There is a great longing for uniqueness [us/them, we/they] lurking in the members of the human species. People seem to want to believe in uniqueness, if not superiority. . . . However, evidence of intrinsic, biological superiority is sorely lacking. . . . In fact, the entire concept of race as applied to the human species is not scientifically justifiable. The sorting of individuals into discrete categories ignores the genetic similarity of all humans and is biologically, and socially, inappropriate. . . . [Accordingly, r]ace is by definition a biological entity yet it has no true justification in biology.” Regarding a supposed biological foundation for race, Vigilant thus tells the world at the end of the twentieth century precisely what the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (hereinafter UNESCO) had told it at mid-century through its statements on race of 1950 and 1951. The “Statement of 1950” reads in part:

1. Scientists have reached general agreement in recognizing that mankind is one: that all men belong to the same species, *Homo sapiens*. It is further generally agreed among scientists that all men are probably derived from the same common stock; and that such differences as exist

between different groups of mankind are due to the operation of evolutionary factors or differentiation such as isolation, the drift and random fixation of the material particles which control heredity (the genes), changes in the structure of these particles, hybridization, and natural selection. In these ways groups have arisen of varying stability and degree of differentiation which have been classified in different ways for different purposes.

2. From the biological standpoint, the species *Homo sapiens* is made up of a number of populations, each one of which differs from the others in the frequency of one or more genes. Such genes, responsible for the hereditary differences between men, are always few when compared to the whole genetic constitution of man and to the vast number of genes common to all human beings regardless of the population to which they belong. This means that the likeness among men are far greater than their differences.
3. A race, from the biological standpoint, may therefore be defined as one of the group of populations constituting the species *Homo sapiens*. These populations are capable of interbreeding with one another but, by virtue of the isolating barriers which in the past kept them more or less separated, exhibit certain physical differences as a result of somewhat different biological histories. These represent variations, as it were, on a common theme.
4. In short, the term "race" designates a group or population characterized by some concentrations, relative as to frequency and distribution, of hereditary particles (genes) or physical characters, which appear, fluctuate, and then often disappear in the course of time by reason of geographic and/or cultural isolation. The varying manifestations of these traits in different populations are perceived in different ways by each group. What is *perceived* is largely *preconceived*, so that each group *arbitrarily* tends to misinterpret the variability which occurs as a *fundamental difference* which separates that group from all others.
5. These are the scientific facts. Unfortunately, however, when most people use the term "race" they do not do so in the sense above defined. To most people, a race is any group of people whom they choose to describe as a race. . . .<sup>4</sup> [How powerfully is the last sentence instantiated when Justice Antonin Scalia, in concurring with the Supreme Court's decision in *Adarand Constructors, Inc., v. Federico Peña, et al.*, wrote: "Individuals who have been wronged by unlawful racial discrimination should be made whole, but under our Constitution there can be no such thing as either a creditor or a debtor race. . . . To pursue the concept of racial entitlement even for the most benign of purposes is to reinforce and preserve for future mischief the way of thinking that produced race

slavery, race privilege and race hatred. *In the eyes of government, we are just one race here. It is American*<sup>5</sup>—the American race.]

The “Statement of 1951” reads in part:

1. Scientists are generally agreed that all men living today belong to a single species, *Homo sapiens*, and are derived from a common stock, even though there is some dispute [which continues into the 1990s] to when and how different human groups diverged from this common stock. . . .
4. Broadly speaking, individuals belonging to different major groups of mankind are distinguishable by virtue of their physical characters, but individual members, or small groups, belonging to different races within the same major group are usually not so distinguishable. Even the major groups grade into each other, and the physical traits by which they and the races within them are characterized overlap considerably. With respect to most, if not all, measurable characters, the differences among individuals belonging to the same race are greater than the differences that occur between the observed averages for two or more races within the same major group. [It is well to note here that Vigilant makes this very same point.]
5. . . . It often happens that a national group may appear to be characterized by particular psychological attributes. The superficial view would be that this is due to race. Scientifically, however, we realize that any common psychological attribute is more likely to be due to a common historical and social background, and that such attributes may obscure the fact that, within different populations consisting of many human types, one will find approximately the same range of temperament and intelligence.
6. The scientific material available to us at present does not justify the conclusion that inherited genetic differences are a major factor in producing the differences between the cultures and cultural achievements of different peoples or groups. It does indicate, on the contrary, that a major factor in explaining such differences is the cultural experience which each group has undergone.
7. There is no evidence for the existence of so-called “pure” races. . . . In regard to race mixture, the evidence points to the fact that human hybridization has been going on for an indefinite but considerable period of time.<sup>6</sup>

The UNESCO statements of 1950 and 1951 pertaining to race have been cited at some length for two basic reasons. First, I wanted to make crucial portions of their substance available to the readers of this volume, who, for whatever reason, may be

unable to get their hands on the UNESCO documents. Second, and critically important, I wanted to call out from a source bearing the imprimatur of the international community that the rubbish which is abroad over much of the planet in the 1990s concerning racial superiority and racial inferiority anchored biologically was debunked nearly half a century ago, and nothing of scientific repute—that is, open to critical, rigorous testing and intersubjective corroboration—has since undercut the debunking that was done. Indeed, just the obverse is true.

In the most comprehensive study of human genetic patterns ever published in a single volume, L. Luca Cavalli-Sforza, Paolo Menozzi, and Alberto Piazza in *The History and Geography of Human Genes* observe the following:

The classification into races has proved to be a futile exercise for reasons already clear to Darwin. Human races are still extremely unstable entities in the hands of modern taxonomists, who define from 3 to 60 or more races. . . . To some extent, this latitude depends on the *personal preference* of the taxonomists, who may choose to be “lumpers” or “splitters.” . . . Statistically, genetic variation within clusters is large compared with that between clusters. . . . 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. . . .

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. . . . By means of painstaking multivariate analysis, we can identify “clusters” of populations and order them in a hierarchy that we believe represents the history of fissions in the expansion to the whole world of anatomically modern humans. At no level can clusters be identified with races, since every level of clustering would determine a different partition and there is *no biological reason* to prefer a particular one. The successive levels of clustering follow each other in a regular sequence, and there is no discontinuity that might tempt us to consider a certain level as a reasonable, though arbitrary, threshold for race distinction. . . .

[Accordingly, t]here is no scientific basis to the belief of genetically determined “superiority” of one population over another. None of the genes that we consider has any accepted connection with behavioral traits, the genetic determination of which is extremely difficult to study and presently based on soft evidence. The claims of a genetic basis for a general superiority of one population over another are not supported by any of our findings.<sup>7</sup>

What one learns here from Cavalli-Sforza, Menozzi, and Piazza is what one had learned already from L. C. Dunn, who, writing for the UNESCO volume *Race and Science* cited earlier, observes:

The judgment of biology . . . is clear and unequivocal. The modern view of race, founded upon the known facts and theories of heredity, leaves the old views of fixed and absolute biological differences among the races of man, and the hierarchy of superior and inferior races founded upon this old view, without scientific justification. Biologists now agree that all men everywhere belong to a single species, *Homo sapiens*. As is the case with other species, all men share their essential hereditary characters in common, having received them from common ancestors. . . . [And so, t]he persistence of race prejudice where it exists is a cultural acquisition which . . . finds no justification in biology.<sup>8</sup>

When the UNESCO statements of 1950 and 1951 are conjoined with the observations of Vigilant, Dunn, and Cavalli-Sforza and colleagues, a clear, distinct and incontrovertible pattern emerges concerning race as a biological phenomenon. Race is not a biological phenomenon; it is a social phenomenon transmuted by culture into a biological one. It names a classificatory preference that finds no sound empirical mooring in biology. If racial classifications are largely a function of the “personal preference” of taxonomists, as Cavalli-Sforza and colleagues, believe, or any group of people whom one “choose[s] to describe as a race,” as the UNESCO “Statement of 1950,” calls out, there is indeed “no biological reality to the concept of race.”<sup>9</sup> This truth was announced to the readers of *The Milwaukee Journal* on the evening of February 20, 1995, in a bold headline that read: **Race has no scientific basis in biology, researchers say.** I was both pleased and distressed by the headline. Pleased because a major newspaper made known to its readers a truth that had been well established for nearly half a century; distressed because I asked myself how many times was it necessary to rediscover fire or to reinvent the wheel. The paper cited, among others, C. Loring Brace, an anthropologist at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, who observed that “[r]ace is a result of the human tendency to categorize, but it has no biological basis.”<sup>10</sup>

So there it is: Unless the world were to learn otherwise from the Human Genome Project and the Human Genome Diversity Project that are now underway, in the context of the best objective knowledge<sup>11</sup> that has been extant since the mid-twentieth century, race is not a biological phenomenon—neither is ethnicity nor nationality for that matter. There is no superior race biologically; there is no inferior race biologically. This being so, it would be well were the twentieth century to be remembered as the one in which the biological stake was driven irretrievably through the deformed heart of race, and its malformed but tenacious multicolored body burned, scattered, and forgotten. But alas, this is not likely to be, for all around the world an assumed biology animates the commonplace understanding of race. Put differently, in the commonplace of everyday life concerning race, biological myths all too often overwhelm biological facts, and a sort of mythological biology, if one may so speak, comes to supersede empirical biology.

Interesting, here, is the fact that there are those who claim to believe that race is not grounded in biology yet behave in their daily lives as if it were. In this, the empirical reality of what Charles Stevenson called out as a logical possibility nearly two generations ago comes into play, namely, a clash of belief and attitude. Stevenson wrote: "It is logically possible, at least, that two men should continue to disagree in attitude even though they had all their beliefs in common, and even though neither had made any logical or inductive error, or omitted any relevant evidence. Differences in temperament, or in early training, or in social status, might make the men retain different attitudes even though both were possessed of the complete scientific truth."<sup>12</sup> What Stevenson said concerning two individuals is true also for a single individual. One always has to proceed with the utmost caution when one uses the term "personal knowledge."<sup>13</sup> Still, I do know, of my own personal knowledge, of individuals who have claimed forcefully that they did not believe that race really had a sound biological anchor, yet continually behaved as if it did. In short, "a commonly accepted body of scientific beliefs [does not necessarily] cause us to have a commonly accepted set of attitudes."<sup>14</sup> Dunn thus hits the mark when he writes:

We know now why certain views about race uniformity and purity and the fixity of racial differences were[are] wrong; and why social and political views of race inequality were[are] wrong. Since the former were often used as a justification for the latter, we should as reasonable beings like to believe that, if we get rid of our biological misconceptions, we should thereby cure the social and political ills of injustice and exploitation which appeared to be based upon wrong biology. Eventually we may expect this to happen, but we should not forget that the way in which human beings as individuals and as groups have acted with regard to race differences has more often stemmed from *feelings and from prejudice* than from knowledge.<sup>15</sup>

Racial prejudice, racial hatred, and boorish racism persist in spite of scientific knowledge about the biology of race. They persist because of their social value and social utility. They persist because they are perceived to reinforce the safety, security, and comfort of the familiar in the face of the anxiety, insecurity and discomfort of the unfamiliar. Gordon Allport tells us that "what is familiar tends to *become* a value."<sup>16</sup> Racism bounds that which is familiar, sets it apart from what is unfamiliar, and is a value—albeit an ignoble one. In this regard, Sidney Willhelm touched a raw nerve a generation ago when he wrote that in the United States "racism . . . must now be taken for a dominant, autonomous social value."<sup>17</sup> Mythic biological superiority and mythic biological inferiority undergird racism as a value. How well was Abraham Lincoln cognizant of this value when he made plain that he had "no purpose to introduce political and social equality between the white and the black races," and was "in favor of the race to which [he belonged] having the superior position;" for "[t]here is a physical difference between the two which . . . will prob-



ably forever forbid their living together upon the footing of perfect equality.”<sup>18</sup> In the United States, and elsewhere around the world at the end of the twentieth century, one observes starkly the effects of racism as a social value as those who have been the beneficiaries of what I term *racial inheritance* struggle to maintain what Lincoln understood to be “the superior position.”

In the nineteenth century, Arthur de Gobineau and Charles Carroll, among others, constructed frameworks based on the supposed biological superiority of whites and inferiority of nonwhites to justify the social advantages that accrued from white racial inheritance. At the end of the twentieth century, Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray have imitated de Gobineau and Carroll, though they have been less conspicuous in calling attention to their biological assumptions. What all of these men seek is the continued transgenerational, racial inheritance of the superior position—whether the superior position takes the form of control of major institutions in, say, the United States, or northern hegemony in the North-South divide vis-à-vis the global political economy of which Claude Ake makes mention. But “[s]uperiority is a political and socioeconomic concept, tied to events of recent political, military, and economic history and to cultural traditions of countries or groups. This superiority is rapidly transient, as history shows, whereas the average genotype does not change rapidly.”<sup>19</sup> The critical term here is “cultural traditions.”

The superior positions that wo’ men strive for, and seek to maintain, come their way not by dint of their racial superiority biologically, but in virtue of the cultural traditions which support and sustain the biological machinery they obtained at birth. It is thus well to turn to culture to illuminate race, ethnicity and nationalism, which, at the end of the twentieth century, constitute the most explosive societal fault lines on the planet.

## II

Concerning “*The Fate of the Earth*,” a subheading in his chapter entitled “The Biological Consequences of Nuclear War” in *The Cold and the Dark: The World after Nuclear War*, Paul Ehrlich writes:

Plausible war scenarios can be constructed that would result in the dominant atmospheric effects of darkness and cold spreading over virtually the entire planet. Under those circumstances, human survival would be largely restricted to islands and coastal areas of the Southern Hemisphere, and the human population might be reduced to prehistoric levels. . . . [T]here probably would be survivors scattered throughout the Southern Hemisphere and, perhaps, even in a few places in the Northern Hemisphere. . . .

But one has to ask about the long-term persistence of these small groups of people, or of isolated individuals. Human beings are social

animals. They are *very dependent* upon the social structures that they have built. . . . The survivors [of a large-scale nuclear war] will be back in a kind of hunter and gatherer stage. But hunters and gathers in the past always had an enormous *cultural knowledge* of their environments; they knew how to live off the land. But after a nuclear holocaust, people without that kind of cultural background will suddenly be trying to live in an environment that has never been experienced by people anywhere. . . . If the groups are small, there is a possibility of inbreeding. And, of course, social and economic systems will be utterly shattered. The psychological state of the survivors is difficult to imagine.

[In this context,] the possibility that the scattered survivors simply would not be able to rebuild their populations, that they would, over a period of decades or even centuries, fade away [cannot be excluded, nor can] the possibility of a full-scale nuclear war entraining the extinction of *Homo sapiens* [be excluded].<sup>20</sup>

The grim picture painted by Ehrlich calls out most starkly the cultural imperative in relation to the biological survival of *Homo sapiens sapiens*. Cultural extinction and biological extinction are but two sides of a single coin. Culture affords individuals and groups the wherewithal to adapt to their environments. Such adaptation fosters the biological survival of individuals and groups, and of culture itself. As Skinner notes, “[a] person is not only exposed to the contingencies that constitute a culture, he helps to maintain them, and to the extent that the contingencies induce him to do so the culture is self-perpetuating.”<sup>21</sup>

The self-perpetuation of a culture presumes that its members and it, itself, survive. “[A] culture,” says Skinner, “which *for any reason* induces its members to work for its survival, or for the survival of some of its practices, is more likely to survive. Survival is the only value according to which a culture is eventually to be judged, and any practice that furthers survival has survival value by definition.”<sup>22</sup> Moreover, in relation to survival, “[e]ach culture has its own set of goods, and what is good in one culture may not be good in another. To recognize this is to take the position of ‘cultural relativism.’ What is good for the Trobriand Islander is good for the Trobriand Islander, and that is that.”<sup>23</sup> The cultural relativism of which Skinner speaks is most healthy, for it recognizes the authenticity, integrity, and intrinsic value of diverse cultures in terms of the survival of their own members. This tolerance of cultural diversity—a sound term that, regrettably, has been sullied at the end of the twentieth century by much that is pejorative—is the very antithesis of the “missionary zeal [that seeks to convert] all cultures to a single set of ethical, governmental, religious, or economic values.”<sup>24</sup>

Vodun, Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, for example, all serve their believers equally well, just as Danbala Wedo<sup>25</sup> serves with equal facility the ones who believe in him as does Jesus Christ those who worship him. It was rank cultural chauvinism

and imperialism that, in part, impelled European Christians to spread out around the world to impose their version of religion upon presumably less fortunate races. And it was acute cultural myopia that moved the French of the Enlightenment to believe that French-based Enlightenment rationality was the foundation for a world culture. In this regard, Brian Porter writes that “[t]he French were to be the core nation of a universal republic. And the criterion for membership of that republic was to be one’s philosophy of life rather than one’s ethnic origins or racial background. Such a basis for a reorganization of world society might have worked had not the French, in Martin Wight’s words, been ‘sublimely incapable of distinguishing between the universal Rights of Man and French culture.’ Napoleon’s armies entered the surrounding countries of Europe as liberators, but to those being liberated it came increasingly to look like political and cultural imperialism on the grandest scale.”

Grand cultural designs and schemes, then, are all too often repressive and oppressive, as one culture either is unmindful of, or simply elects to ignore, the empirical fact that what is good in one culture may not be good in another. “[W]hat makes so-called universal religions so pernicious,” says Patrick Bellegarde-Smith in his penetrating discussion of Vodun, is that “[t]hey rob the world of its richness and imply cultural and racial hierarchies by establishing bad and good religions. Alienation follows the erosion of one’s spiritual and cultural heritage.”<sup>26</sup> No religion that serves the good of a culture is a bad religion. This is a cardinal truth of cultural relativism. Still, cultural relativism does not mean that all cultures do not share much, indeed very much, in common. “Vodun is the national religion of Haiti,”<sup>27</sup> according to Bellegarde-Smith, and if Christianity is not the national religion of the United States it comes pretty close to being so. Here Christianity is juxtaposed to Vodun to call out what is of singular importance, that is, both are religions, and both serve the good of their respective cultures.

Cultural relativism notwithstanding, all cultures share in common at least seven attributes. These are: species life, species being, language, religion, literature-art-science-technology, institutions, and transgenerational memory.

Species life is a unique organic property which only nature itself produces and reproduces, and without which there is no culture. In this sense, species life is prior to culture, but without culture, as Ehrlich makes plain, species life may survive for a while but it is unlikely to persist. Species being entails the ontological and cosmological percepts and precepts around which species life is organized. Species being ascribes value and worth to species life. The value and worth that it ascribes to any life are contingent on the place of that life in the order that it creates. The more the species life of individuals or groups is valued in the order of species being, the greater is the likelihood that the ones who lead those lives will adapt well to the contingencies of their environment. The sorts of interaction that obtain between species being and species life thus structure the possibilities for wo’men to grow, develop, adapt, create, and reproduce themselves in their work and their progeny.

Over historical time, competing, conflicting, contradictory, and asymmetrical conceptions and constructions of species being have occasioned profound variations in the valuation of species life and its products. The value and worth of the species life of the West African and his descent, both in Africa and in the Diaspora, over the past five hundred years have been nominal in European constructions of species being. This opened wide the path to slavery, colonialism, and Jim Crowism in both its *de jure* and *de facto* forms. If Africans were “slavish by nature,” they could indeed be “bought and sold, and treated as . . . ordinary article[s] of merchandise and traffic, whenever a profit could be made by it.”<sup>28</sup> Bernal is most powerful here, as he discusses racism’s degradation of the species being not only of Africans, but also of others who were to suffer the anguish of European cultural arrogance.

The deformation of the species being of individuals and groups affords justification for all sorts of conduct that distort, distract and corrode their species life. Thus, for example, in spite of its empirical falsity, were policymakers in the United States to agree with William Schockley—twice a Nobel laureate in physics, and now deceased—that “the major cause of the American Negro’s intellectual and social deficits is hereditary and racially genetic in origin, and thus not remedial to a major degree by practical improvements in [the] environment,”<sup>29</sup> all sorts of what Skinner calls “aversive consequences”<sup>30</sup> could come to bedevil the species life of African-Americans.

As one gazes back over the twentieth century from the vantage point of the 1990s, one cannot but be struck by the expansiveness of cultural aggression in the deformation of the species being of “them” by “us.” One of its most nefarious and rapacious manifestations, “ethnic cleansing,” has reemerged with a vengeance in the 1990s. Marianne Elliott observes that in Northern Ireland “[t]he IRA’s border attacks were seen as ‘ethnic cleansing’” by the Protestants. Robin Remington makes mention of Dr. Ante Pavelic’s “SS [which] set out on a campaign of ‘ethnic cleansing’” when the Nazis controlled Yugoslavia, as well as the “rising body counts, untold numbers of wounded, and the 2–3 million refugees created by war and deliberate policies of ethnic cleansing” that accompanied the disintegration of Yugoslavia in the 1990s. Furthermore, in Rwanda, in three short months between April and July of 1994, the United Nations estimated that half-a-million to one million persons were killed and roughly three and a half million made refugees, in a country of approximately eight million people. Most of those who were killed were Tutsis, at the hands of Hutus. (The Tutsis won the civil war.) This is without a doubt one of the greatest holocausts of the twentieth century, yet it has passed as merely one manifestation of what I heard a former U.S. ambassador call “nasty bits of disorder.” A million lives lost to human hands in three months was but a nasty bit of disorder. Thus the inevitable questions arise: Is racial cleansing to be next?—in spite of what has been said pertaining to the biology of race. Given the longanimity of the world community in relation to the evil of “ethnic cleansing,” would like forbearance obtain were racial cleansing to occur? I am not sanguine concerning the answer to either of these questions.

One of the means through which the deformation of species being occurs is the use of language. Language may be used to exalt or to diminish. In the texture of their language is the species being of a people woven. It is a well-known adage but worth repeating: Language is a people's mirror. They see themselves in it; they see others through it. Images of a people are conveyed to the world through the language by which they are made known. These images cover quite a spectrum. They may be sharp or blurred, simple or complex, coarse or refined, solicitous or provocative, accurate or distorted, and so on. What is critical is that they impress themselves upon the mind and leave impressions that incline, guide, and/or occasion conduct. How well does the African intellectual and spiritual father of the Catholic Church, Saint Augustine of Hippo, whom Bernal mentions in relation to the African mind in European religion, understand this when he writes:

After the state or city comes the world, the third circle of human society—the first being the house, and the second the city. And the world, as it is larger, so it is fuller of dangers, as the greater sea is the more dangerous. And here, in the first place, man is *separated* from man by the *difference of languages*. For if two men, each ignorant of the other's language, meet, and are not compelled to pass, but, on the contrary, to remain in company, dumb animals, though of different species, would more easily hold intercourse than they, human beings though they be. For their common nature is no help to friendliness when they are prevented by diversity of language from conveying their sentiments to one another; so that a man would more readily hold intercourse with his dog than with a foreigner. But the imperial city has endeavored to impose on subject nations not only her yoke, *but her language, as a bond of peace*, so that interpreters, far from being scarce, are numberless.<sup>31</sup>

Why did the imperial city strive to impose on subject nations not only her yoke but also her language? To make her dictates readily comprehensible. But even more important, so that the many would discern, understand, and internalize the customs, traditions, norms, mores, and ethos that animated Roman civilization. Rome sought to lighten the weight of her yoke through the spread and acceptance of her language. Through her language and her laws, she endeavored to make those whom she had conquered participants in her culture—to bind, as it were, their spirits with her language and their bodies with her laws. European colonial overlords imitated Rome in imposing their languages on those whom they colonized and enslaved. But they never learned well the art of the imperial city in making “them” truly as part of “us.”

Looking around the world, one observes society after society where language, rather than being “a bond of peace,” is actually a wedge of discord. Language is especially a wedge of ethnic and national discord as it separates individuals and groups, many of whom, if one might borrow from Saint Augustine, would rather hold intercourse with their dogs than with “them,” whoever they might be. As one

reads the chapters in this volume by Elliott, Muhammad Hallaj, George Harris, Mark Beissinger, Alfred Senn, Marc Levine, Kosaku Yoshino, and David Buck, one observes language both as a bond of peace and a wedge of discord.

Hallaj makes known that once the PLO accepted “the legitimacy of [a] Jewish presence in Palestine . . . [and] adopted the democratic-secular state idea, PLO schools began to teach Hebrew to Palestinian children to prepare them for the eventuality of coexistence with a Jewish community in Palestine.” What was the purpose of this? It was not merely that Palestinian children would know the vocabulary and grammar of Hebrew, important though this was. It was, rather, that Palestinian children and Jewish children of today, who would be the adults of tomorrow and the ancestors of the day after, would come to share a common language. “A common language is not intrinsically one official or unofficial natural language, but the capacity and ability of large numbers of persons to make common sense of a given phenomenon or range of phenomena and share like sentiments pertaining to it. This is so regardless of whether one, two or more natural languages are used in the emergence of such common sense and [shared] sentiments.”<sup>32</sup> In having its youngsters learn Hebrew, just as many Jewish youngsters learn Arabic, the PLO realized that if a bond of peace were to obtain between Palestinians and Jews instead of merely tolerable order, it was essential that a common language bridge the Jewish community and the Palestinian community. The bridge of a common language would not necessarily conflate the two communities, but it would most assuredly make less likely the many irritations, vexations, torments, vulgarities, brutalities, and horrors that separated them. Policies and conduct that foster the development and spread of a common language among peoples thus have much to commend them.

The PLO sought the evolution of a common language in a land where more than one natural language is a commonplace. In Northern Ireland, English, a natural language, serves as a linguistic bridge between the Catholic and Protestant communities, yet by and large no common language obtains between them. How compellingly is this point instantiated by Elliott, who observes: “The kind of mutual incomprehension of the other community’s core values that has been outlined [in Elliott’s chapter] owes not a little to the way in which they are expressed. ‘The talks failed for lack of language,’ wrote Professor Edna Longley of the breakdown of interparty talks on the future of Northern Ireland in November 1992.” The talks failed not for the lack of a mutually understood natural language but for the absence of a shared common language. A common language may be conflated into many natural languages, yet one natural language may not bear a common language for all of those who make use of it in a given society.

This very point resonates in Yoshino, who notes that

[t]he *nihonjinron* and their popularized cross-cultural manuals offer abundant examples to suggest that Japanese patterns of behavior and use of

language are so peculiar that one has to be born a Japanese to be able to grasp the intricacy of the Japanese language and the delicacy of the Japanese mode of thinking. For example, one writer observes that, though he knows of some Europeans whose Japanese is accurate and quite fluent, and though some Korean residents in Japan have won literary awards for their prose or fiction in Japanese, he knows of no foreigner who can compose good *waka* (or thirty-one syllable Japanese poetry). This sort of remark may be taken as suggesting that the Japanese language “belongs exclusively” to the Japanese, in the sense that it can truly be appreciated only by the Japanese.

This assessment of Japanese as a natural language precludes those who are not born Japanese from participating in a common language through its use. In this sense, though a Korean resident of Japan acquires Japanese in his childhood, or a European lives his whole life in Japan speaking flawless Japanese, neither is ever a full participant in the common language of the society, and thus is never wholly familiar to the Japanese. In this regard, Porter points out that Japan is “the notable exception of . . . the modern industrial state,” insofar as it has not “sought to distance itself from its ethnicity.” The conflation of natural language and common language in Japanese as “the exclusive property of the Japanese people,” to use Yoshino’s terms, oftentimes serves to drive a wedge between the Japanese and those who may well speak the natural language but are perceived to lack a sound understanding of its common language. Accordingly, a bond of peace among the Japanese themselves becomes a potential wedge of discord between the Japanese and their resident aliens, as well as foreigners.<sup>33</sup>

The value of a common language was not lost to the men of the Kremlin who ruled the former Soviet Empire, and Russian was used as an instrument for constructing it. But just as the spread of Latin did not bring peace to the Roman empire, the spread of Russian did not bring peace to the former Soviet Union. Rome succeeded more than perhaps any other empire in making “them” a part of “us”; still, for most her language, like her arms, was a weapon of order, an instrument to promote the tranquility of the empire. As was true of Rome, the former Soviet Union did succeed in imposing upon those who fell within its imperial bounds a measure of tranquility and order, but failed to occasion true peace. This it could not impose.

It could impose its language, and this it did. It could impose its laws, and this it also did. It could wield its arms, and this too it did. But it could not impose its peace, that well-ordered concord that binds wo’man to wo’man both near and far, opening wide the gates to shared symbols, myths, values, beliefs, and attitudes concerning the organization of political society, as well as the bounds of right, fitting, and proper conduct. The language it strived to impose was in reality no bond of peace but a wedge of discord, which was to be of no little import in its undoing. This point emerges most forcefully in the chapters by Beissinger and Senn. Moreover, one

cannot but be intrigued by the fact that problems attending language that so harassed the former Soviet Union continue to bedevil the new states that emerged from it.

Senn observes that

[i]n the 1980s Soviet nationalities' policy focused on the concept of *sliianie* (merging), an effort to do away with the differences between nationalities by the general acceptance of the Russian language. Soviet educators advocated "bilingualism," providing children with better instruction in Russian than in their mother tongues. Teachers of Russian, moreover, received higher pay than did teachers of the local language. . . . Those who specialized in the use of language reacted first to bilingualism. . . . Within the cultural elites of the various nationalities many saw in bilingualism the decline and even destruction of their basic vehicles of communication.

Thus did reaction against Russian—as the language of intruders and an occupation regime in the Baltics and elsewhere in the former Soviet Union—drive a wedge between those who saw themselves as being forced to make use of an alien tongue for the sake of their well-being, and ones who perceived the language to be essential to peace, order and tranquility. A measure of order and tranquility did obtain, but not peace in the sense that I have used the term. Russian was "their" language not "ours"; it wedged "them" against "us" both symbolically and substantively; and so it largely failed to forge a sense of oneness out of "we" and "they" that would bond the peace of all. How exquisitely does Senn capture this idea when he makes known that "[i]n 1988, the head of the Lithuanian Writer's Union told [him] of his concern that the Soviet requirement that dissertations be written in Russian would undermine the development of critical thought in the Lithuanian language." Thus "[i]n one republic after another, the local writers' union took the lead in demanding stronger efforts to preserve the national language and culture." With lightning speed did the Soviet Union collapse in 1991. Though its arms were still strong, and its laws made less repressive and oppressive under *glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (restructuring), it could not withstand the assault of those who saw in its language no bond of peace, and for whom there was no common language. With no common language, the Republic fell apart.

There is a truth most old but still very salutary here. The Soviet Union disintegrated, and though language was not the efficient cause, it most assuredly was a significant contributory factor. The people did not share a common language as a bond of peace. Without such a common language, natural languages became wedges of discord—the most prominent, of course, being Russian. Today, a markedly similar state of affairs obtains in many of the new states of the former Soviet Union. In Lithuania, for example, Senn points out that "Poles have . . . demanded that Polish be recognized as an official language in Vilnius and certain other cities of the republic"; and in the Donbass region of Ukraine, Beissinger mentions the miners "who called for the resignation of the Kravchuk government because of excessive



taxes and price rises, [and] advocated as well special autonomous status for the Donets region . . . , largely as a means of protecting economic interests and language rights.” What is being called out here is that insofar as many natural languages are spoken by the people of a given state and/or society; insofar as most of them speak fluently one or at most two natural languages; and insofar as there is no common language that binds them together, absent the strong hand of an imperium, language becomes a centrifugal force that impels toward the emergence of ever smaller units of social organization. How well is this observation borne out by what is being witnessed in the former Soviet Empire in the 1990s. Beissinger and Senn are most helpful here.

The centrifugal potentiality of language in relation to the cohesion of society and the integrity of the state, and the effort of states to counter it, resonate in the chapters by Harris, Levine, and Buck. Mindful of the relation between language and ethnonational identity; aware of the sorts of transgenerational sentiments that are transported through language; sensitive to the costs of inflexible heavy handedness in the suppression of a language; and conscious of the effect that large minority populations can have on the stability of the state, Turkey has played the language of its Kurdish minority like an accordion. Beyond the restrictions already in place, in the 1980s “[l]aws were passed further restricting the use of Kurdish in any of its varieties,” says Harris. But “language is the surest touchstone of Kurdishness,” according to Harris, and so as violence by the Kurds mounted at the outset of the 1990s, “steps were taken [by the regime in Ankara] to acknowledge Kurdish identity and to ease restrictions on the use of the Kurdish language in publications.” In matters of language policy vis-à-vis social cohesion and the integrity of the state, draconian heavy-handedness as well as supine flaccidity are formulae for the full centrifugal potentiality of language to be unleashed. The true integration of those who speak different natural languages into a common language of political society is the surest means for a regime to escape the unforgiving trap of either of these extremes.

Although to date it has sort of “muddled through,” to use Levine’s term, Canada thus far has avoided the regime extremes of Turkey or the state and societal fragmentation of the former Soviet Union. Why has muddling through been possible? I suggest the existence of a common language that draws Canadians together in spite of centrifugal forces, language being the most prominent, that would tear them apart. Levine observes that “by the early 1970s linguistic trends in Montreal seemed to threaten the *cultural survival* of Francophones, . . . [and] by the mid-1970s . . . the most burning policy question in Quebec [was] the issue of language policy.” The outcome of these was the 1976 election of the Parti québécois, and “[f]or the first time in an advanced Western democracy an ethnonationalist separatist party was elected to control a subnational government.” Canada seemed on the verge of splitting apart. Yet it did not. Despite Bill 101 and Bill 178 pertaining to language policy (see Levine), Quebec’s desire to be recognized as a “distinct society,” and persistent dissatisfaction among Quebec Francophones over Canada’s constitutional

misadventures, most especially the Meech Lake Accord, Canada has nonetheless held together thus far, and the integrity of the Canadian state has been preserved.

There is something at work here that transcends the wedge of English and French as natural languages. It is a common language drawn around shared economic interests, political limits, and a liberal democratic tradition. People can only muddle through where there is a willingness to do so. Such willingness emanates from a sense that things will work out, if not optimally, at least in a manner that does as little harm and promotes as much good as is possible within extant constraints. A common language makes this possible. For it does not compel universal agreement, it simply inclines the wills of individuals to will within the limits of mutually acceptable bounds, and induces them to act accordingly. And a common language is precisely what the new Communist government in China aimed for in 1949 when, to cite Buck, it “banned derogatory terminology about minorities in published pronouncements, improved minority peoples’ schools and education in their respective languages, and tolerated the practice of many minority customs and life styles that differed from the Han majority.”

Given my longstanding fascination with comparisons between the United States and Rome, and my current interest in the United States of 1991 (the year of America’s unchallenged supremacy in the world) through 2011 set against Rome of 390 (the year in which the Emperor Theodosius boldly proclaimed Christian times throughout the empire) through 410 CE—the year in which Alaric the Visigoth caused so much psychological pain to the imperial city with so little actual physical damage—I cannot leave the discussion on language without asking: Of what significance is all that has been said for the United States?

The accretion of natural language enclaves in the United States at the end of the twentieth century is not a good thing. Its potential harm both to the state and the society is of great moment. The United States has always been fortunate in having a common language that could sustain it in spite of its many divisions, trials and tribulations. Frederick Douglass summoned it after the *Dred Scott* decision when he said: “The Constitution, as well as the Declaration of Independence, and the sentiments of the founders of the Republic, give us a platform broad enough, and strong enough, to support the most comprehensive plans for the freedom and elevation of all the people of this country, without regard to color, class, or clime.”<sup>34</sup> And Abraham Lincoln invoked it on the evening of June 16, 1858, in the Hall of the House of Representatives in the Illinois State House as he began his campaign for the U.S. Senate, when he declared: “‘A house divided against itself cannot stand.’ I believe this government cannot endure, permanently half *slave* and half *free*. I do not expect the Union to be *dissolved*—I do not expect the house to fall but I *do* expect it will cease to be divided. It will become *all* one thing, or *all* the other.”<sup>35</sup> Lincoln engaged the same common language in defense of liberty in the Republic as Frederick Douglass did. But Stephen Douglas tapped deep into another common language, as he mocked Lincoln in their first debate, concerning the matter of a

divided house. Said he: "Mr. Lincoln . . . says that this government cannot endure permanently in the same condition in which it was made by its framers—divided into free and slave states. . . . Why can it not exist divided into free and slave states? Washington, Jefferson, Franklin, Madison, Hamilton, Jay, and the great men of that day, made this government divided into free states and slave states, and left each state perfectly free to do as it pleased on the subject of slavery. . . . Why can it not exist on the same principle on which our fathers made it?"<sup>36</sup> Here we have it: two common languages struggling for the soul of one Republic.

The common language to which Lincoln and Frederick Douglass appealed emerged triumphant for seven generations—using twenty years for a generation. But at the end of the twentieth century, the language of Stephen Douglas has had a new rebirth, and one can only ponder what it portends for the future of the Republic. On the front cover of *U.S. News & World Report* of July 10, 1995, was a likeness of the Statue of Liberty with the caption: "Divided We Stand: America's New Cultural Landscape." In a story entitled "The New America," the magazine observed that

America has always been a divided nation. *E pluribus unum* may be a national motto and the melting pot a national metaphor, but the reality has been patriots and Tories, free whites and black slaves, Philadelphia bankers and Tennessee woodsmen, Northern abolitionists and Southern slave owners, free silver and hard currency, natives and immigrants, Wall Street and Main Street, Republicans and Democrats, hawks and doves, liberals and conservatives. [Christians and non-Christians could have been added.]

Today America is divided in new and different ways. The South, once solidly Democratic, is fast becoming Republican. . . . African Americans and Hispanics are divided about affirmative action and welfare reform. There is a gulf between women who work outside the home and women who stay at home with their children. . . . "Are we a nation?" are the first words of Michael Lind's *The Next American Nation*. "Social classes speak to themselves in a dialect of their own, inaccessible to outsiders," wrote Christopher Lasch in *The Revolt of the Elites*. Republican analyst William Kristol warns of "the Balkanization of America."

We can see these new divisions every day—living in geographical and cultural enclaves; sitting in walled back yards, not open front porches; listening to our own music and watching our own cable-television channels.<sup>37</sup>

*U.S. News & World Report* is correct in saying that "America has always been a divided nation." But the triumph of the common language shared by Frederick Douglass and Lincoln provided the substratum for a sufficiency of shared purpose which, in spite of grave lacerations upon the body politic, has sustained the Republic over these past seven generations. But at the end of the twentieth century one increasingly observes enclave America replacing access America. Enclaves are not

new social phenomena in the United States. They have always existed. What is new is the doubt that expands ever the more concerning the bridging of these enclaves by a common language. This becomes especially troublesome when differences in natural languages serve to reinforce the enclaves. It has been estimated that in Los Angeles alone more than one hundred and fifty different languages are spoken—a virtual Tower of Babel. To the extent that these languages serve to buttress enclaves, where individuals live in the United States but are at best only marginally steeped in its common language, they open seams in the tapestry of the Republic.

Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas represent two radically different concepts of America. One is grounded in the belief that a house divided against itself cannot stand. The other is anchored in the conviction that it can. Lincoln carried the day—even though he did not win the senate seat that he sought—yet one cannot but wonder at the end of the twentieth century whether Douglas is on the verge of emerging victorious after all. It is this writer's conviction that should Douglas come to supersede Lincoln, Alaric will assuredly visit the American republic sooner rather than later. There is no need for an official natural language in the United States, and a constitutional amendment to make English *the* national language is likely to have the obverse effect of its intended purpose. What is needed are expanded contingencies of reinforcement for the common language that knits together the diverse groupings of the society in a bond of peace.

Just as language may divide or unite the members of a society, so too does religion. In the language of a people is their concept of the divine made known. And in a divine Godhead, whether within wo'man or without her/him, do all religions rest. Both Lincoln and Douglas appeal to the Christian God. "[A]s God has made us separate," says Lincoln, "we can leave one another alone and do one another much good thereby. . . . [L]et us discard all this quibbling about . . . this race and that race and the other race being inferior, and therefore must be placed in an inferior position. . . . Let us discard all these things, and unite as one people throughout the land, until we shall once more stand up declaring that all men are created equal."<sup>38</sup> With equal conviction, Douglas declares: "I do not believe that the Almighty ever intended the negro to be the equal of the white man. . . . He belongs to an inferior race, and must always occupy an inferior position."<sup>39</sup> Here, then, are two radically different concepts of race in American society, both anchored in the same Christian God. The crucial point is that the very same divine Godhead can sustain fundamentally different conceptions of man and the organization of political society. Proslavery and antislavery forces solicited with equal confidence the favor of the same Christian God. Interestingly, on June 20, 1995, one hundred and fifty years after it was formed, "the Southern Baptist Convention, America's largest Protestant denomination and one founded in large part in defense of slavery, voted overwhelmingly in the annual meeting . . . to 'repent of racism of which we have been guilty' and to apologize to and ask forgiveness from 'all African-Americans'."<sup>40</sup>