

Blackness Visible

Essays on Philosophy and Race

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5 Revisionist Ontologies

Theorizing White Supremacy

For mainstream First World political philosophy, race barely exists. What accounts for this silence? Why shouldn't such issues be incorporable into a history of modern political philosophy course along with Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Kant, Mill, and Marx, or a contemporary thematic course that looks at contractarianism and communitarianism, welfare liberalism and laissez-faire libertarianism, at Rawls, Nozick, Walzer, Sandel? Why this ghettoization of race and the Third World, as if nonwhites were on a separate planet rather than very much a part of one world interconnected with and foundationally shaped by the very region studied by First World theory? What exactly is it about the way political philosophy has developed that encourages this kind of intellectual segregation?

The problem in part seems to involve a kind of exclusionary theoretical dynamic, in that the presuppositions of the world of mainstream theory offer no ready point of ingress, no conceptual entrée, for the issues of race, culture, and identity that typically preoccupy much of black and Third World theory. (The issues of Third World poverty and economic underdevelopment *can* be handled, if the will exists, within the framework of discussions of international justice, through an expansion of moral concern beyond the boundaries of First World nation-states.) The assumptions are so different that one may seem to be caught between two heterogeneous intellectual universes, with no ready way of transporting the concerns of the one across the boundary of the other. And when racism in European thought is mentioned, the discussion is usually limited to the writings of marginal theorists such as Arthur de Gobineau; the biases in the views of the central figures in the pantheon are not examined.¹

Typically, what one gets (insofar as any effort is made at all) is an attempt to piggyback the problem of race onto the body of respectable theory. One looks at racism as a *violation* of the ideals of liberal individualist ideology, for example, or one *explains* race and racism within a Marxist paradigm. But race is still really an afterthought in such deployments. That is, one starts from a preexisting conceptual framework—an overall characterization of the system (“constitutionalist liberal democracy,” “capitalism”), a set of large-scale and small-scale theories about how this system works or should work, and an array of corresponding concepts—and then tries to articulate race to this framework.

Unsurprisingly, then, these efforts are usually unsatisfactory. I want to propose an alternative approach as an innovation in political philosophy. Suppose we place race at center stage rather than in the wings of theory. The idea is to follow the example of those feminists of the 1970s once characterized as radical (as against liberal or Marxist), who, inspired by the U.S. black liberation movement, decided to put gender at the center of their theorizing and appropriated the term *patriarchy* to describe a system of male domination.² So rather than starting with some other theory and then smuggling in gender, one begins with the fact of gender subordination.

Of course, some crucial disanalogies need to be noted. For one thing, gender as a system of power has been seen as practically universal, and it dates back, if not to the origin of the species, at least to an age thousands of years before ours, whereas white domination is clearly a product of the modern period. Moreover, many radical feminists appeal to varieties of biological determinism to explain patriarchy and regard it as the source of all other oppressions—claims I would certainly not make for race. But with these and other caveats registered, it still seems that one may fruitfully consider race as a political system. We would treat this system as a particular mode of domination, with its special norms for allocating benefits and burdens, rights and duties; its own ideology; and an internal, at least semi-autonomous logic that influences law, culture, and consciousness.

As I suggested in Chapter 4, I use the term *white supremacy* to conceptualize this system.³ But I intend a latitudinarian conception, one that encompasses de facto as well as de jure white privilege and refers more broadly to the European domination of the planet that has left us with the racialized distributions of economic, political, and cultural power that we have today. We could call it global white supremacy.⁴ And the idea would then be to locate both oppositional black/Third World theory and establishment white/First World theory in the conceptual space of this expanded political universe. From this perspective, we would be able to appreciate that black and

Third World theory have characteristically been concerned to map the *whole* of this system, whereas mainstream theory has preeminently focused on a very limited section of it, either ignoring the rest of the world or squeezing it awkwardly into the categories developed for this restricted mapping.

Global White Supremacy as a Political System: Replies to Objections

This idea of global white supremacy as a political system may seem problematic, so I want to address some objections that might be raised to it.

First, there might be the friendly amendment that we already *have* a politico-economic term with the same approximate referent, in the form, say, of *imperialism* or *colonial capitalism*.

But in the first place, of course, this isn't true, because these terms aren't usually taken to apply (apart from upholders of variants of the "internal colonialism" thesis) to the *internal* politics of white settler states such as the United States and Australia, or the Iberian colonies in the Americas, which became independent at a relatively early stage. Moreover, colonial capitalism is by definition restricted to the period of formal colonial rule, whereas I contend that in a weaker sense, white supremacy continues to exist today.

In the second place, and perhaps more important, these terms are, for my purposes, not sufficiently focused on the *racial* dimension of European domination. Both in the standard liberal and the standard Marxist analyses of imperialism there has been an economism that fails to do theoretical justice to race, with race being seen as irrelevant to the ontology of the liberal individual or the class membership of workers and capitalists. But the racial nature of the system is precisely what I want to highlight. As Walter Rodney points out, imperialism has to be seen as bringing into existence a "White Power" that is international in character and that became global by the time of World War I: "At that point, everywhere in the world, white people held power in all its aspects — political, economic, military, and even-cultural. . . . The essence of White Power is that it is exercised over [nonwhite] peoples — whether or not they are minority or majority, whether it was a country belonging originally to whites or to [nonwhites]."⁵

Still in the spirit of a friendly amendment, it might then be argued that, in that case, *racism* or *white racism* is the term appropriate to the conceptual task.

My response here is, first of all, that after decades of divergent use and sometimes abuse, the term has become so fuzzy and has acquired such a se-

mantic penumbra of unwelcome associations that unless a formal definition is given, no clear reference can be readily attached to it.

Second, one of the crucial ambiguities in its usage is precisely that between racism as a complex of ideas, values, and attitudes and racism as an institutionalized politico-economic structure for which the ideas are an ideological accompaniment. If the term *white racism* were consistently employed in the latter sense, we might not need another locution, but this is not at all the case. On the contrary, the *ideational* sense is usually intended. And this has the theoretical disadvantage of making it possible for everybody to be “racist,” in a Hobbesian scenario of equipowerful atomic individuals with bad attitudes, thereby deflecting attention from the massive power differentials actually obtaining in the real world between nonwhite individuals with bigoted ideas and institutionalized white power. *White supremacy* and *global white supremacy*, in contrast, have the semantic virtues of clearly signaling reference to a system, a particular kind of polity, so structured as to advantage whites.

A more hostile objection might be that to speak of white supremacy as a political system necessarily implies its complete autonomy and explanatory independence from other variables. But I don’t see why this follows. The origins of white racism as an elaborated complex of ideas (as against a spontaneous set of naive prejudices) continue to be debated by scholars, with various rival theories—ethnocentrism on a grand scale, religioculturalist predispositions, the ideology of expansionist colonial capitalism, the rationalizations of psychosexual aversions, calculated rational-choice power politics—contending for eminence. We don’t need to make a commitment to the truth of any of these theories; we can just be agnostic on the question, bracketing the issue and leaving open the question which explanation or complementary set of explanations turns out to be most adequate. All that is required is that, whatever the origins of racism and the politico-economic system of white supremacy, they are conceded to have attained at least a partial, relative autonomy, so that they are not immediately reducible to something else.

Correspondingly, I am not claiming that white supremacy as a political system exhausts the political universe. The idea is not that white supremacy must now *replace* previous political categorizations but that it should *supplement* them. In other words, it is possible to have overlapping, interlocking, and intersecting systems of domination. The concept of white supremacy focuses attention on the dimension of racial oppression in these systems; it is not being claimed that this is the *only* dimension. In some contexts, the focus on race will be illuminating; in other contexts it will not.

The idea is to correct the characteristic methodological omissions of past and present, not to prescribe an exclusivist theoretical attention to this one aspect of the polity.

Nor does use of the term imply that white supremacy is either synchronically uniform or diachronically static. White supremacy will take different forms in different parts of the world—expropriation and enclosure on reservations here, slavery and colonial rule there, formal segregation and antimiscegenation laws in one place, mixing and intermarriage in another. The privileging of whites is compatible with a wide variety of political and institutional structures: this privileging is the key element. Similarly, the status of nonwhites within the system can vary tremendously—from exterminable savage to colonial ward to second-class citizen—without threatening the crucial premise of nonwhite inferiority.

Moreover, white supremacy evolves over time, in part precisely because of the other systems to which it is articulated, in part because of nonwhites' political struggles against it. In a detailed treatment, one would need to develop a periodization of different forms, with one obvious line of temporal demarcation being drawn between the epoch of *formal* white supremacy (paradigmatically represented by the legality of European colonialism and African slavery) and the present epoch of *de facto* white supremacy (the aftermath of slavery and decolonization, with formal juridical equality guaranteed for whites and nonwhites). The basic point, then, is that it would be a mistake to identify one particular form of white supremacy (e.g., slavery, juridical segregation) with white supremacy as a family of forms and then argue from the nonexistence of *this* form that white supremacy no longer exists. The changing nature of the system implies that different racial organizations of labor, dominant cultural representations, and evolving legal standings are to be expected.

This argument would also preempt the objection that if global white supremacy ever existed, it is clearly long past now, since—especially with the demise of apartheid in South Africa—we live in a world where yellows, browns, and blacks rule their own countries, and nonwhites in First World “white” nations are no longer formally subjugated. The answers would be as follows.

First, even if global white supremacy were completely a thing of the past, it would still be a political system of historical interest.

Second, even if whites agreed on the desirability of abolishing this system in complete good faith, the recency of its *formal* demise (slavery in the Americas ended little more than a century ago, and global decolonization and U.S. desegregation are essentially postwar phenomena) would ensure

that it would continue to affect the new world for a long time to come simply through institutional momentum and unconscious attitudinal lag.

Third, it is politically naive to argue from the mere fact of the abolition of de jure racial subordination to the reality of genuine de facto equalization, and to conclusions about the genuine commitment of all or most whites to relinquish their racial privileges. An objective look at the world reveals that independent Third World nations are part of a global economy dominated by white capital and white international lending institutions, that the planet as a whole is dominated by the cultural products of the white West, that many First World nations have experienced a resurgence of racism, including biologically determinist ideas once thought to have been definitively discredited with the collapse of Nazi Germany, and that in general the dark-skinned races of the world, particularly blacks and indigenous peoples, continue to be at or near the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder in both metropolitan and Third World polities.

So a case can easily be made that white supremacy continues to exist in a different form, no longer backed by law but maintained through inherited patterns of discrimination, exclusionary racial bonding, cultural stereotyping, and differential white power deriving from consolidated economic privilege.⁶ Kimberlé Crenshaw emphasizes (with specific reference to the United States, though the point is more generally valid) the importance of distinguishing between “the mere rejection of white supremacy as a normative vision” and “a societal commitment to the eradication of the substantive conditions of Black subordination.” She notes that “a society once expressly organized around white supremacist principles does not cease to be a white supremacist society simply by formally rejecting those principles. The society remains white supremacist in its maintenance of the actual distribution of goods and resources, status, and prestige.”⁷

A different kind of objection might be not to the principle of the notion of race as a political system but to the details; that is, to the *white* in *global white supremacy*. The racial rules in the United States basically dichotomize the polity according to the one-drop principle, but in the Caribbean and in Central and South America the ladder has many rungs rather than just two. Moreover, in the postcolonial period, there is at least a partial transition in which “browns” come to rule rather than just whites. The response here would have to be as follows.

The color and shade hierarchies in many Latin American countries have been established by global white supremacy, in that ascent up the ladder is strongly correlated with a greater degree of white ancestry and a greater degree of assimilation to European culture, so that these systems are essen-

tially derivative and still need to be related to it. And—it needs to be underlined, against the widespread myth of Latin “racial democracy”—they *are* hierarchies. Though differently structured than the bipolar northern model, they privilege the lighter-skinned, with the official ideology of a race-transcendent *mestizaje*, race mixture, being undercut in practice by the ideal of *blanqueamiento*, whitening.⁸

Moreover, even if in many of these countries “browns” govern, economic power often continues to be controlled by a white corporate elite, whose presence and interests constrain the dimensions of the political space in which browns can operate, thus delimiting the real possibilities for independent action and the democratizing of racial access to socioeconomic opportunities.

In addition, the larger world—the global economy, the international financial institutions—is dominated by First World powers, which (except for Japan) are themselves white and are linked by various political, economic, and cultural ties to local whites, thus differentially privileging them.

Another objection might be to the imagined theoretical presuppositions of such a notion. The invocation of “race” as explanatory in politics has historically been most strongly associated with discourses (nineteenth- and twentieth-century imperialism; Nazism) explicitly predicated on biologically determinist assumptions (social Darwinism; *Rassenwissenschaft*, or race science). These doctrines were, of course, officially (though never completely or thoroughly) discredited with the collapse of the Third Reich and postwar decolonization. The widespread employment of a racialized discourse in oppositional popular black and Third World theory may then be assimilated by hostile critics to racist theorizing of this kind, even if the charge is sometimes softened by prefatory references to “reverse racism” or “antiracist racism.”

But this preemptive rejection of race as a respectable theoretical category is illegitimate, because the dichotomy between a mainstream methodology (liberal or radical) that is largely insensitive to race and a racial determinism with ludicrous pseudoscientific assumptions (whites as evil “ice people” driven to dominate the planet) does not exhaust the actual alternatives. A growing body of literature in critical race theory is beginning to recognize both the reality (causal significance, theoretical centrality) and the politicality (socially constructed nature) of race.⁹ It is not the case, in other words, that a focus on race, white supremacy, and corresponding “white” psychology necessarily commits one to racist assumptions about whites, though admittedly lay thought does not always make these distinctions. So although I said earlier that I wanted to bracket and suspend the question of

theoretical explanations for racism, I am at least theoretically committed (as detailed in Chapter 3) to the extent of seeing race in constructivist rather than biologicistic terms.

For “whiteness” is not natural; rather, infants of a certain genealogy or phenotype growing up in a racist society have to learn to be white. Correspondingly, there have always been principled and morally praiseworthy whites who have thrown off their socialization and challenged white supremacy, whether in the form of imperialism, slavery, segregation, or apartheid, in the name of a color-blind humanity.¹⁰ They could be described as whites who have rejected “whiteness.” The important point—as “race men” have always appreciated—is that a racial perspective on society can provide insights to be found in neither a white liberalism nor a white Marxism, and when suitably modified and reconstructed, such a perspective need not imply biological generalizations about whites or commit the obvious moral error of holding people responsible for something (genealogy, phenotype) they cannot help.

A specifically left objection, correspondingly, might be that to see race as theoretically central implies a return to a pre-Marxist conception of the social order and ignores class.

To begin with, of course, in today’s largely postcommunist world, Marxism’s explanatory credentials are hardly unchallengeable. But in any case, the constructivist conception of race presupposed does leave open the possibility that a convincing historical materialist account of the creation of global white supremacy can be developed. To make race central is not to make it foundational; it is simply to take seriously the idea of an at least partially autonomous racial political system. (For those with left sympathies, the traditional explanatory route will be through the European Conquest, the imposition of regimes of superexploitation on indigenous and imported populations, and the differential motivation and cultural/ideational power of local and metropolitan ruling classes to ensure that race crystallizes as an overriding social identity stabilizing the resultant system.)¹¹

Nor does the idea of white supremacy imply that there are no class differences within the white and nonwhite populations or that all whites are materially better off than all nonwhites. The implication is rather that whites are differentially privileged *as a group*, that whites have significantly better life chances. This implication is compatible with the existence of poor whites and rich nonwhites. It also leaves the way open for the Marxist case to be made that in the long term, white supremacy is of greater political and economic benefit to the white elite than to the white working class, and that though by the baseline of existing white-supremacist capitalism,

white workers are better off than nonwhites, they are poorer than they would be in a nonracial order. Since white supremacy is not being put forward as denoting a comprehensive political system, it does not, as earlier emphasized, preclude the existence of other systems of domination (based on class or gender, for example).

Finally, it might be objected that the concept of global white supremacy is pitched at a level of abstraction too high to be useful. But one has to differentiate appropriate realms of investigation. "Capitalism" as a concept has obviously been found useful by many generations of thinkers, both lay and academic, as a general way of categorizing a certain kind of economic system with a core of characteristic traits, despite the vast differences between the capitalism of a century ago and the capitalism of today, and among the capitalist systems of Japan, the United States, and Jamaica. For detailed case studies, one must descend empirically to the investigative level of the political scientist, the economist, the sociologist. But for the purposes of supplementing the conceptual apparatus of the political philosopher, this distance from empirical detail does not seem to me to be problematic. At this level, one is concerned with the general logic of the abstract system, the overarching commonalities of racial subordination between, say, colonial Kenya and independent Australia, slave Brazil and the postbellum United States, which warrant the subsumption of these radically different polities under a general category. "White supremacy" captures these usually ignored racial realities, and on this basis it should take its rightful place in the official vocabulary of political theory, along with such other political abstractions as absolutism, democracy, socialism, fascism, and patriarchy.

Having considered all these objections, I should point out that the great virtue of this account is that race is no longer residual, a concern to be awkwardly shoehorned into the structure of a theory preoccupied with other realities, but central, so that any comprehensive mapping of the polity must register this feature. And by virtue of its social-systemic rather than ideational focus, this analysis directs attention to the important thing, which is how racial membership privileges or disadvantages individuals *independently* of the particular ideas they happen to have. (In that qualified sense, race is objective. Even so-called white renegades need to acknowledge that, no matter what their racial politics, they are privileged by their social classification.) The attitudinal and atomistic, individualist focus of at least some varieties of liberalism reduces the issue to bigotry, which needs to be purged through moral exhortation; the class-reductivist focus of some varieties of Marxism reduces the issue to a variant of ruling-class ideology, which needs to be purged through recognition of class identity. In neither

case is the system's racial character adequately registered: that it has its own dynamism and autonomy, its own peculiar social ontology.

Moreover, whereas Marxism's claims about the intrinsically exploitive character of capitalism and the viability and attractiveness of socialism as a solution have always been—and are now more than ever—highly controversial, all good liberals should oppose racism and should want to eradicate its legacy. If, as many now argue, the events since 1989 have conclusively demonstrated that capitalism is the only feasible option for humanity, then what one wants is a capitalism that lives up to its advertising. Liberals as well as radicals should therefore enthusiastically *endorse* rather than object to the exposure of global white supremacy as a political system, since it clearly contravenes the ideal of a color-neutral, racially accessible market society. The Marxist anticapitalist goal is currently of severely limited appeal, but in theory at least one would like to think that all people of goodwill would support the critique and ultimate elimination of white supremacy, including the whites privileged by it. Doubtless, then, the project will be broadly supported, insofar as it is consonant with the proclaimed values of the liberal ideology that is now triumphant across most of the globe.

The Politics of Personhood

Suppose, then, that this concept is accepted as a useful one that needs to be taken account of in orthodox political philosophy. How then, would mainstream theory have to be transformed to include race—that is, global white supremacy—in conventional discourses? What would it mean for the standard terminology, scenarios, frames of reference, characteristic terms, and favorite preoccupations of Western political philosophy? What new phenomena would come into theoretical view, and what old phenomena would have to be transformed?

Obviously, there are many ways to approach these questions. Here my focus is on an issue that, as I argued in Chapter 4, is central to these concerns—the issue of *personhood*. As Kant states most eloquently, persons are rational self-directing entities whose rights must be respected and who must be treated as ends in themselves rather than merely instrumentally.¹² Kant is the philosophical spokesman for the Enlightenment moral and political egalitarianism that ushered in the modern epoch. Thus in the eighteenth-century revolutions, American and French, which resonated around the world, it was classically stated, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.” By contrast with ancient and medieval hier-

archies, the starting point is the freedom and equality of “all men.” (Feminist theorists have long since demonstrated that the “men” in these theories are indeed male rather than gender-neutral “persons.”)¹³

The social contract tradition that dominates political theory over the period (1650–1800: Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Kant) begins from a social ontology of the equality of (those counted as) persons. Though contractarianism then disappeared for a century and a half (to be surprisingly revived by Rawls’s *A Theory of Justice* [1971]),¹⁴ this equality is henceforth installed as the normative ground floor of the edifice of Western political philosophy. All humans within the scope of the theory are persons, and the preoccupations of First World theory then center on different theories of justice, competing constitutional models, and rival economic arrangements for this population.

What difference does taking race seriously intrude into this picture? Basically, it directs our attention to what is happening *beneath* the normative ground floor, in (so to speak) the moral/political basement. My claim is essentially that for most of Enlightenment First World political theory, what seems like a neutral starting point, which begs no questions, is actually *already* normatively loaded, in that the population of persons has been overtly or covertly defined so as to be coextensive with the white male population. They are the respectable occupants of the building. So in the period of de jure global white supremacy (European colonial rule, African slavery), the scope of European normative theories usually extended just to Europeans at home and abroad. That is, theories about the rights, liberties, and privileges of “all men” were really intended to apply only to all white men, nonwhites being in a moral basement covered by a different set of rules.

The present period of de facto global white supremacy is characterized by a more complicated normative arrangement, an abstract/formal extension of previously color-coded principles to the nonwhite population. But genuine equality is preempted by lack of mechanisms and resources to enforce antidiscrimination law; by the evasion of juridical proscriptions by legal maneuverings;¹⁵ and by the continuing educational, cultural, and financial handicaps suffered by nonwhites disadvantaged by the race and class concentrations of economic power established under the previous system, which in a capitalist economy violate no laws. Thus, even though such an extension is a real normative advance, by no means to be despised, it does not constitute a genuine challenge to white supremacy unless and until the means to correct for the effects of past racial subordination are included in the rewriting. And this requires, inter alia, a formal recognition of the white-supremacist nature of the polity.

To take Rawls as an example: even if Rawls declares (as he would) that race is morally irrelevant to personhood, and that knowledge of it is accordingly stripped from us by the veil of ignorance, policies prescribed on this basis will not be sufficient in the real-life, nonideal polity of the United States to redress past inequities.¹⁶ Failure to pay theoretical attention to this history will then just reproduce past domination, since the repercussions of white supremacy for the functioning of the state, the dominant interpretations of the Constitution, the racial distribution of wealth and opportunities, as well as white moral psychology, conceptions of self-respect, willingness to sacrifice, and notions of entitlement, are not examined. One is then beginning from a starting point whose structural influences are untheorized, thereby guaranteeing that the corrective measures objectively necessary to overcome these obstacles and achieve genuine equality will not become theoretically visible. (Compare Susan Moller Okin on the illusory, merely “terminological” gender neutrality of most contemporary political theory, such as Rawls’s, and the need to develop concepts sensitized to the specific situation of women in the nonideal family, for example, to reflect the ways in which women are made “vulnerable by marriage.”)¹⁷ In other words, one does not confront a history of racial domination by ignoring it, since to ignore it is just to incorporate it, through silence, into the conceptual apparatus, whose genealogy will typically ensure that it is structured so as to take the white experience as normative.

A more realistic starting point, one that registers the history of white supremacy, would be the “dark ontology” of *Herrenvolk* Kantianism discussed in Chapter 4. Here the political population is explicitly characterized as it was originally conceived, as a two-tiered, morally partitioned population divided between white persons and nonwhite subpersons.¹⁸ (See Fig. 2, p. 71.)

From this cognitively advantaged perspective—the view from the basement—First World political theory can be seen for what it is: primarily the limited theorizing of the privileged “person” subset of the population about itself. For those in this tier, personhood is not in contention in any way; personhood is taken for granted, so that in the internal dialogue between members of this population, the real-life second tier can generally drop out of the picture. Abstract, raceless, colorless persons—who are concrete, raced, white persons—will then, in their egalitarian moral/political theories, such as Kant’s, relate to one another with reciprocal respect as moral equals. Because of their representation of this system—because the basement second tier is usually presupposed as invisible—they will think of this respect and this personhood as disconnected from everything but rationality; race, color, history, culture will generally play no role in the overt

theory, not because they play no role overall—they are in fact crucial to the architecture of the two tiers—but because their commonality to the white population means they can be eliminated as a factor.

One can appreciate, then, why this conceptual terrain is so apparently inhospitable to the concerns of Third World theory. For if race is not even acknowledged to make a difference, how can these two discourses be located in the same universe? The way to bring them together, accordingly, is to point out the illusory character of abstract Kantianism and to recognize the actual *Herrenvolk* moral theory appropriate for a white-supremacist polity, in which the difference race makes is to demarcate persons from subpersons. Individuals are raced or colored bearers of a certain history and culture, and this is what indicates their location in the racial polity. And if paradigmatically in the Kantian normative framework, persons are not to be treated merely instrumentally, as means to others' ends, then subpersons (Native Americans, blacks) can be regarded as precisely those for whom such treatment is morally appropriate.

It should be noted that this equation has always been recognized by black and Third World theory—antislavery, antisegregationist, anticolonial. Thus in the introduction to his classic *Black Skin, White Masks*, Frantz Fanon says bluntly, "At the risk of arousing the resentment of my colored brothers, I will say that the black is not a man."¹⁹ As he points out elsewhere, the colonial world is "a Manichean world," "a world cut in two," "divided into compartments . . . inhabited by two different species," and "it is evident that what parcels out the world is to begin with the fact of belonging to or not belonging to a given race, a given species"—on the one hand the "governing race"; on the other, inferior creatures to be described in "zoological terms."²⁰

Correspondingly, from the other side, so to speak, a white Alabaman addressing a northern audience in 1860 describes with admirable clarity the founding principles of the United States: "Your fathers and my fathers built this government on two ideas; the first is that the white race is the citizen and the master race, and the white man is the equal of every other white man. The second idea is that the Negro is the inferior race."²¹ And this, of course, far from being an idiosyncratic perception, is accurately reflected in the *Dred Scott* decision, that blacks "had for more than a century before been regarded as beings of an inferior order, and altogether unfit to associate with the white race, either in social or political relations; and so far inferior, that they had no rights which the white man was bound to respect."²²

So I am not making any claims to theoretical discovery here; I am arguing for the formal recognition of these realities within the framework of an

orthodox theory that generally ignores them. Race has been a problematic “deviation” for both liberal individualist and Marxist class-centered mappings of this system, because both have failed to take seriously the objective partitioning in the social ontology produced by global white supremacy. Bill Lawson points out that a “lexical gap” in mainstream liberal moral/political discourse obfuscates the distinctive history of black Americans. By simply assimilating them to the general category of citizens, it conceptually blurs the legacy of slavery, so that there is an inadequate “semantic basis” for “the framing of policies for implementing programs to bring about true citizenship for blacks.”²³ More generally, the danger of the universalist and colorless language of personhood is that it too easily slips over from the normative to the descriptive, thus covertly representing as an already achieved reality what is at present only an ideal, and failing to register the embedded structures of differentiated treatment and dichotomized moral psychology that “subpersonhood” captures. An ideal is realized through recognizing and dealing with the obstacles that block its attainment, not through pretending they are not there.

For once this expanded moral topography has been acknowledged, and not evaded or defined out of existence, it immediately becomes obvious that the transactions in moral and political space are far more complicated, involving many other dimensions, than those sketched in the standard First World cartography. Focusing exclusively on the lateral person-to-person relations of the ideal Kantian population, mainstream theory misses the dense vertical network of person-to-subperson relations and also elides the ways in which even horizontal relations are structured by their positioning with respect to the vertical relations. So political struggles will arise which are, if not invisible, at least not readily detectable by the lenses of orthodox theory’s conceptual apparatus. Or if they are seen, the tendency will be to assimilate them to something else, and their true significance will be missed; it will not be appreciated that they constitute struggles around (affirmations/repudiations of) the *Herrenvolk* ethic, because the existence of this ethic is not formally acknowledged in mainstream philosophy.

Here, then, are some theses on the politics of personhood within the framework of white supremacy.

1. Personhood and subpersonhood are reciprocally defined and are manifested on several planes. In ideal Kantianism (predicated on a population of white individuals), persons can be abstract, raceless, colorless. In *Herrenvolk* Kantianism, the criteria for being a person necessarily have to be developed in contrast to the criteria for being a subperson. There is a dy-

dynamic interrelation between the two. As Richard Drinnon observes about the early colonial settlements in the United States, “Indian-hating identified the dark others that white settlers were not and must not under any circumstances become.”²⁴ Moreover, whereas abstract Kantianism is focused solely on rationality, *Herrenvolk* Kantianism has a richer set of metrics of assessment—cognitive, moral, cultural, somatic—numerous axes along which one can measure up to or fall short of full personhood. The result, in part, is that (white) persons look to (nonwhite) subpersons as an inverted mirror, a reflection of what they should not be, and (nonwhite) subpersons who accept the *Herrenvolk* framework in turn have (white) persons as their (unreachable) ideal, a norm that by definition can never be achieved but can at least be aspired to.

2. Subpersonhood has to be enforced and racial deference from subpersons maintained. Because of its self-sustaining symmetry, ideal Kantianism is inherently stable, since it rests on reciprocal relations between persons of acknowledged equal worth, involving a respect voluntarily given. *Herrenvolk* Kantianism, in contrast, requires that a subset of the human population learn to regard themselves as subpersons and, as such, not fully human, not of equal worth. Thus the system will be potentially unstable, requiring subjugation and ideological conditioning to ensure its ongoing reproduction. Subpersons are not born but are made, and the making is not a once-and-for-all event, like slave-breaking or even the extended process of indoctrination known as education in colonial societies, but an ongoing political operation involving routine daily transactions of various kinds.

Moreover, people’s sense of self-worth will obviously be influenced by the peculiarities of this system. In the ideal Kantian community, self-respect is fortified by reciprocal symmetrical relations of respect from others who are our moral equals. But in this nonideal, racially hierarchical “community,” the self-respect of those designated as full persons will be linked with moral relations on two levels, white peers and nonwhite inferiors. Not merely must one’s fellow persons respect one, but one must also be paid what could be termed *racial deference* from the subperson population. Failure to receive this deference then becomes a threat to one’s sense of self-worth, since self-worth is defined hierarchically in relation to the class of inferior beings. So it is crucial to the maintenance of the system that the moral economy of deference is maintained, with a watchful eye for signs of insubordination in the subperson population. By posture, body language, manner, speech, and gaze, subpersons need constantly to demonstrate that they recognize and accept their subordinate position. In Richard Wright’s

famous characterization of his boyhood in Mississippi, one has to learn “the ethics of living Jim Crow,” or one may not go on living at all.²⁵

3. Resistance to subpersonhood becomes an ongoing subterranean tension within the racial polity. The persons of mainstream philosophy, being ghostly disincorporate individuals, can take their personhood for granted, because they are really *white* persons conceptualized without reference to the nonwhite subperson population. Subpersons, however, have to fight for their personhood (against the opposition of the white population, who, insofar as they maintain their racist beliefs, have a vested material, psychic, and ontological interest in continuing nonwhite subpersonhood). Sometimes this struggle will be overt; at other times, circumstances will make it necessary for resistance to be clandestine, coded. But in all these white supremacist states, it will be a constant presence, a standing threat to the dark ontology of racial hierarchy.

Because the stigmatization of nonwhites is multidimensional, resistance to it has to be correspondingly broad: moral, epistemic, somatic. Morally, one has to learn the basic self-respect that white Kantian persons can casually assume but that subpersons can attain only by repudiating the official metaphysic. Thus, in his analysis of Frederick Douglass’s famous fight with the “slave-breaker” Edward Covey, Bernard Boxill argues that Douglass’s point is that the slave, the enslaved person, “would not be free of mental constraints,” “would not know himself to [be] the moral equal of others, unless he resisted his enslaver.”²⁶ Epistemologically, a cognitive resistance to *Herrenvolk* theory will be necessary, the rejection of white mystification and the sometimes painful and halting development of faith in one’s ability to know the world, and the articulation of different categories, the recovery of vanished or denied histories, the embarking upon projects of racial “vindication.” Somatically, since the physical body has become the vehicle of metaphysical status, since physiology has been taken to recapitulate ontology, resistance may also involve a transformation of the flesh or of one’s attitude toward it. Because of the deviant standing of the flesh of the nonwhite body, the body is experienced as a burden, as the lived weight of subordination. So one gets what could be called a “somatic alienation,” more central to one’s being than any Marxist notion, since what is involved is not the estrangement of the worker from his product but the estrangement of the person from his physical self. The subperson will then not be at home in his or her body, since that body is the physical sign of subpersonhood; one will be haunted by corporeal spirits, the ghost of the white body. Resistance to subpersonhood thus requires an exorcism of this ghost and a corresponding acceptance and celebration of one’s own material being.

Revisionist Ontologies

This model provides a generally useful trope for expanding and transforming traditional political philosophy, extending our conception of what is to count as political. If global white supremacy is conceptualized as a political system, then a wide variety of phenomena can be seen as attempts variously to enforce and to resist this system. In particular, once we recognize that personhood has been overtly or tacitly racially normed, we can appreciate that a central focus of the struggles of the colonial peoples, particularly Native Americans and Africans, has always been the defiant assertion of their personhood, the repudiation and reinvention of the selves imposed by white supremacy (the white man's Negro, the white man's Indian).²⁷ One will be able to see as political the fact that, as Gordon Lewis put it, "the mere act of rebellion required, on the part of the slave-person, the capacity to purge himself of the white bias, and its accompanying slavish deference to everything that the white system stood for; to perceive himself, in his self-image, as equal, or even superior, to the white master-person."²⁸

Revisionist ontologies can then be taken in one or both of two ways: the necessary formal recognition in political theory of the actual dark ontologies constructed by the *Herrenvolk*, the metaphysical infrastructure of global white supremacy; and the revisionist challenges to these ontologies by the subordinated population contemptuously categorized as subpersons. As Rex Nettleford has pointed out about the Rastafari, "At the heart of his religious system is the notion of his own divinity and the first-person image of self. As if for emphasis the terms 'I-n-I' and 'I-man' are used as a constant reminder of the final transformation of a non-person (as the old slave society and the new Babylon would have it) into a *person*, as is defined by 'Jah Rastafari' and asserted by the Rastaman himself."²⁹

Conceptualizing personhood as a battlefield, a terrain of political contestation, enables us to locate and understand as political an array of phenomena not readily apprehensible as such through either the liberal or Marxist prism. Whatever their other differences, these theories are both predicated on taking personhood for granted. But Native Americans' personhood was in doubt from the time of the first European incursion into the Americas; the controversy over whether they were human culminated in the great 1550–51 debate at Valladolid.³⁰ And throughout the period of African slavery, abolitionists and antiabolitionists continued to ask whether blacks were really equal to whites. So the historical record is clear enough; I am not revealing anything that people don't know. The burden of my claim is that the *philosophical* and *political* significance of these well-known facts has not been appreciated sufficiently. I

am arguing for an explicit reconceptualization of political philosophy that would enable us to situate these struggles appropriately—as defenses and subversions of a political system of global white supremacy that is insufficiently, if at all, discussed within the body of theory within which most of us have been trained and within which we continue to operate intellectually.

I want to conclude by indicating some possible directions of research for political theorists.

Herrenvolk History

The black oppositional tradition in the Americas has always pointed out the significance of what has been called the “bleaching” or “whitewashing” of history. It would be worthwhile to take this as a theoretical object for political philosophy. Thousands of articles have been written in the Marxist tradition on so-called bourgeois ideology and its influence on diverse fields of study. But Third World political theorists need to theorize self-consciously about what could be called “white settler ideology,” “*Herrenvolk* ideology,” and its Eurocentric influence on representations of the European Conquest and accounts of world history (“discovery,” “colonization,” “founding of a new world,” “the civilizing mission,” etc.).³¹

It would be an interesting exercise, for example, to investigate and chart a history of holocaust denial, not the familiar neo-Nazi denial of mass murder of Jews during World War II but white scholars’ depiction of the fate of indigenous peoples, from the response to the original claims of Bartolomé de Las Casas onward through characterizations of the Indian Wars of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. David Stannard’s *American Holocaust*, an important revisionist work timed for the Columbian quincentenary, draws on demographic research that has dramatically increased estimates of the pre-Conquest population of the Americas, so that—with figures ranging possibly as high as 100 million victims—this would be, Stannard says, “far and away, the most massive act of genocide in the history of the world.”³² The historic downplaying and even moral justification of this foundational feat of mass murder would repay study for what it reveals about *Herrenvolk* theory.

Similarly, the distortions about Africa’s past—the “invention of Africa”—need to be contextualized not as contingently racist descriptions by individual bigots but as an organic part of the project of denying African personhood.³³ Correspondingly, we need to research and valorize the long “vindicationist” tradition in the Pan-Africanist movement, locating it as a crucial part of the intellectual political struggle against the system of global white supremacy.³⁴

Language and Culture

Colonization has standardly involved the denigration as barbaric of native cultures and languages, and the demand to assimilate to the practices of the superior race, so that one can achieve whatever fractional personhood is permitted. “The Negro of the Antilles,” explains Fanon, “will be proportionately whiter — that is, he will come closer to being a real human being — in direct ratio to his mastery of the French language.”³⁵ The educational systems imposed have usually overtly sought to suppress indigenous tongues. Moreover, the colonized have often argued that the languages of the mother countries are not neutral but to a significant extent are the carriers of imperial culture. For this reason, the Kenyan writer Ngugi wa Thiong’o no longer writes in English, choosing instead to write in his native Gikūyu.³⁶ In the Caribbean, where creoles of various kinds have developed, part of the resistance to white racism has simply been the affirmation of the worth of these languages, from the work of J. J. Thomas onward.³⁷ But it might also be illuminating to examine them for evidence of conceptual opposition to dominant semantics, alternate categorizations of reality that to a certain extent challenge existing frameworks — an “antilanguage” appropriate for an “antisociety.”³⁸ And if not here, in the creole languages that developed more or less spontaneously, then certainly in the self-consciously created “dread talk” of the Rastafari.³⁹

In the case of the United States, with a white settler population representing themselves as creating a world out of wilderness, the construction of an exclusionary cultural whiteness has required the denial of the actual multiracial heritage of the country, what the black American writer Albert Murray calls its “incontestably mulatto” character.⁴⁰ Whites have appropriated Native American and African technical advances, language use, cultural customs, and artistic innovations without acknowledgment, thereby both reinforcing the image of nonwhites as subpersons incapable of making any worthwhile contribution to global civilization and burnishing the myth of their own monopoly on creativity.⁴¹ Culture has not been central to European political theory because cultural commonality has usually been presupposed. But once cultures are in contestation, hegemonic and oppositional, and linked with personhood, they necessarily acquire a political dimension.

“Raced”/Third World Epistemology

Mainstream liberal political theory has seldom been epistemologically self-conscious, taking for granted the universal perceptiveness of the abstract Enlightenment cognizer. The challenge of Marxism was seen in part as an attempt to develop a radical theory from the putatively epistemically

privileged position (with respect to possibilities for differential experience, alternative conceptualization) of the proletariat.

A plausible case can surely be made, correspondingly, that a racially informed/"black"/"Third World" epistemology can be developed as part of this political project, an epistemology that would self-consciously take the standpoint of those racially subordinated by the system of white supremacy as a source of conceptual inspiration and experiential guidance. Such a project would recognize that there is a "black" experience and perspective on reality while simultaneously, through a social-structural rather than biologicistic conceptualization, repudiating the mystifications of contemporary "melanin theory." In this spirit, Lucius Outlaw, although sympathetic to the task of a cognitive rethinking of dominant "discursive formations" in the light of the history of Euro-American racism, urges a careful critical analysis of the normative claims of Afrocentrism and "Africology," and he is wary of "a restrictive cultural nationalism" that is cavalier about "refined norms for truth, objectivity, and justification."⁴²

The Body

In the racial polity, by contrast with the colorless polity of abstract Western theory, the body necessarily becomes politicized, giving rise to a "body politics." White supremacy subordinates the body as the indicator of diminished personhood, a subordination manifested both in the derogation of the nonwhite body, particularly the black body,⁴³ and, especially during the regime of slavery, the impositions of certain postures, body languages.

Resistance to these negative valorizations and somatic inflictions has perhaps most strikingly been manifested in the case of the Jamaican Rastafari: the deliberate transformation of the black body and its revisionist reinscription into an alternative narrative of captive warriors in Babylon. The very fact that the flashing locks of the strutting dread are now a media cliché is a remarkable testimony to the abrogation of the original rules of the somatic space of the white polity.⁴⁴ In addition, popular dance could be scrutinized for signs of reinventions of the postures of the body, micropolitics of assertion, and stiffenings of the spine against the imposed deference required of subpersons.⁴⁵

More generally, of course, Ralph Ellison's famous trope of invisibility, already cited several times, relies on the notion of a peculiar class of bodies that appear only to disappear. Thus within this expanded vision of the subject matter appropriately to be investigated by political philosophy, an evolving phenomenology of the black body would no longer seem out of place, being clearly tied in with the contested flesh of politicized (sub)per-

sonhood. Lewis Gordon employs Sartrean ideas of embodied consciousness to explore how, in an “antiblack world,” the white Other determines that black presence becomes absence, so that one is seen as the unseen: “He is not seen in his individuality. To see him as black is to see enough. Hence to see him as black is not to see *him* at all.”⁴⁶ One’s nonwhite body excludes one from full membership in the white body politic.

Folk Religions

This new framework also implies the explicit political recognition of folk religion—vodun, Santería, obeah, Rastafari, candomblé—as a primary locus of resistance to the ideology and practice of the regime of white supremacy. (Indeed, this recognition is, ironically, more clearly manifested in the suppressive policies of colonial governments toward these religions than in academic intellectual theorizing.) The crucial role black religion historically played in slave uprisings is well known, but even well into the postemancipation period these religions have continued to be important as oppositional sites. The church or the informal meeting place has functioned as an epistemological fortress, a place where the community could freely meet away from the white gaze and collectively synthesize insights to forge a countervailing ideology. It has served as a source of spiritual strength, reinforcing conceptions of self-worth within an alternative narrative, a different cosmology, in defiance of the official status of subpersonhood.⁴⁷ And in some cases, as we have seen, it has arguably contributed through the rituals of song, dance, and spirit possession to the generation of oppositional physicalities, the rebuilding of an alternative self differently related to its material body.

Intersection with Gender

Finally, all of these issues need to be examined in connection with the intersecting system of gender domination, which necessarily shapes both the structures of oppression and the patterns of resistance.⁴⁸ The valorization of precolonial tradition against European erasures, for example, may foster an uncritical embrace of a past remembered less fondly by women assigned to traditional roles, so that a double rethinking may be necessary. The male assertion of personhood in a sexist society becomes the assertion of manhood, a manhood that is likely to be at least partly conceptually conflated with a certain positioning over subordinated women. Sexuality and sexual relations are necessarily racialized in a white-supremacist order and involve the privileging of certain somatotypes in a hierarchy of desirability and prestige.⁴⁹ Thus nonwhite women will in general be engaged in a politics of

both transgender unity and intergender division, fighting on shifting fronts that are both racial and sexual.⁵⁰

The idea, then, is for black philosophers in political theory—or rather all philosophers interested in the elimination of racism and in bringing mainstream philosophy down from its otherworldly empyrean musings—to take global white supremacy as a political system and begin to map its contours. An interdisciplinary approach is obviously called for, in which one moves back and forth across the boundaries of formal philosophy, drawing on work in cultural studies, critical race theory, and socioeconomic research to keep the abstractions in touch with empirical reality. (The problem is not abstraction itself but an idealizing abstraction that abstracts *away* from crucial determinants. No serious theorizing is possible without abstraction.)

There is nothing at all new in the observation that for the past few hundred years, race and racism have been central to the histories of the Americas in particular and the West in general. But the profound implications of this fact for the categories and explanatory schemas of mainstream Western political philosophy have not properly been worked out. In effect, Anglo-American theory needs to catch up with what the racially subordinated in the West have always perceived: that the local intra-European ontology was never the general one, and that the revision in both theory and practice of the actual *Herrenvolk* ontology has always been as worthily “philosophical” an enterprise as any of the preoccupations of orthodox textbook white theory.

69. In his opinion in the 1978 Supreme Court case of *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*, Justice Blackmun made the subsequently oft-quoted observation that “in order to get beyond racism, we must first take into account race.”

70. Onora O’Neill, “Justice, Gender, and International Boundaries,” in *The Quality of Life*, ed. Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), 303–23.

71. Rabbi Alan W. Miller, “Black Anti-Semitism—Jewish Racism,” in Hentoff, *Black Anti-Semitism*, 101.

72. Nat Hentoff, Introduction to *Black Anti-Semitism*, xvii.

5. Revisionist Ontologies: Theorizing White Supremacy

1. Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, ed., *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1997), represents an important start toward remedying this situation.

2. For a discussion, see, for example, Alison M. Jaggar, *Feminist Politics and Human Nature* (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman & Allanheld, 1983).

3. George M. Fredrickson, *White Supremacy: A Comparative Study in American and South African History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981); John W. Cell, *The Highest Stage of White Supremacy: The Origins of Segregation in South Africa and the American South* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

4. V. G. Kiernan, *The Lords of Human Kind: Black Man, Yellow Man, and White Man in an Age of Empire* (1969; New York: Columbia University Press, 1981); Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993).

5. Walter Rodney, “Black Power: A Basic Understanding” (1969), in *I Am Because We Are: Readings in Black Philosophy*, ed. Fred Lee Hord (Mzee Lasana Okpara) and Jonathan Scott Lee (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995), 183.

6. For U.S. data, see, for example, Andrew Hacker, *Two Nations: Black and White, Separate, Hostile, Unequal* (New York: Scribner’s, 1992).

7. Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, “Race, Reform, and Retrenchment: Transformation and Legitimation in Antidiscrimination Law,” *Harvard Law Review* 101 (1988), 1336.

8. Minority Rights Group, *No Longer Invisible: Afro-Latin Americans Today* (London, 1995); Frances Winddance Twine, *Racism in a Racial Democracy: The Maintenance of White Supremacy in Brazil* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1998).

9. See, for example, Richard Delgado, ed., *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995); Kimberlé Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda, Gary Peller, and Kendall Thomas, eds., *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings That Formed the Movement* (New York: New Press, 1995).

10. *Race Traitor: A Journal of the New Abolitionism*; for a collection of articles from it, see *Race Traitor*, ed. Noel Ignatiev and John Garvey (New York: Routledge, 1996).

11. David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York: Verso, 1991); Theodore W. Allen, *The Invention of the White Race*, vol. 1, *Racial Oppression and Social Control* (New York: Verso, 1994).

12. Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. H. J. Paton (1948; New York: Harper & Row, 1964).

13. See, for example, Susan Moller Okin, *Women in Western Political Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), and Lorenne Clark and Lynda Lange, eds., *The Sexism of Social and Political Theory: Women and Reproduction from Plato to Nietzsche* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979).

14. John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971).

15. See, for example, Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), for an account of the mechanisms by which de facto U.S. segregation continues to be maintained many years after the passage of the Fair Housing Act in 1968.

16. Rawls, *Theory of Justice*.

17. Susan Moller Okin, *Justice, Gender, and the Family* (New York: Basic Books, 1989), esp. chaps. 1 and 7.

18. In a more detailed treatment one would, of course, look at internal differentiations within the nonwhite population. My statement here is meant to be programmatic, drawing what I take to be the central line of conceptual demarcation.

19. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (1952; New York: Grove Press, 1967), 8.

20. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (1961; New York: Grove Press, 1968), 38–42.

21. Cited in Fredrickson, *White Supremacy*, 155.

22. “*Dred Scott v. Sanford*, 1857,” in *Race, Class, and Gender in the United States: An Integrated Study*, ed. Paula S. Rothenberg, 3d ed. (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1995), 323.

23. Bill Lawson, “Moral Discourse and Slavery,” in *Between Slavery and Freedom: Philosophy and American Slavery*, by Howard McGary and Bill E. Lawson (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 72–76.

24. Richard Drinnon, *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating and Empire-Building* (New York: Meridian, 1980), xvii–xviii.

25. Richard Wright, “The Ethics of Living Jim Crow: An Autobiographical Sketch” (1937), in *Bearing Witness: Selections from African-American Autobiography in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Henry Louis Gates Jr. (New York: Pantheon, 1991), 39–51.

26. Bernard R. Boxill, “The Fight with Covey,” in *Existence in Black: An Anthology of Black Existential Philosophy*, ed. Lewis R. Gordon (New York: Routledge, 1997), 276.

27. Winthrop D. Jordan, *White over Black: American Attitudes toward the Negro, 1550–1812* (1968; New York: Norton, 1977); Robert Berkhofer Jr., *The White Man’s Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Knopf, 1978).

28. Gordon Lewis, *Main Currents in Caribbean Thought* (Kingston, Jamaica: Heinemann, 1983), 225.

29. Rex Nettleford, Introduction to Joseph Owens, *Dread: The Rastafarians of Jamaica* (Kingston, Jamaica: Sangster’s, 1976), xiv–xv.

30. Lewis Hanke, *Aristotle and the American Indians: A Study in Race Prejudice in the Modern World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1959).

31. Robert Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (London: Routledge, 1990); J. M. Blaut, *The Colonizer's Model of the World: Geographical Diffusionism and Eurocentric History* (New York: Guilford Press, 1993).

32. David E. Stannard, *American Holocaust: The Conquest of the New World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), x.

33. Valentin Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988).

34. Horace Campbell, *Rasta and Resistance: From Marcus Garvey to Walter Rodney* (Trenton, N.J. Africa World Press, 1987).

35. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 18.

36. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (London: James Currey, 1986).

37. John Jacob Thomas, *The Theory and Practice of Creole Grammar* (1869).

38. Mervyn Alleyne, *Roots of Jamaican Culture* (London: Pluto Press, 1988), chap. 6.

39. Velma Pollard, *Dread Talk: The Language of Rastafari* (Kingston, Jamaica: Canoe Press, University of the West Indies, 1994).

40. Albert Murray, *The Omni-Americans: New Perspectives on Black Experience and American Culture* (New York: Outerbridge & Dienstfrey, 1970), cited in Shelley Fisher Fishkin, "Interrogating 'Whiteness,' Complicating 'Blackness': Remapping American Culture," *American Quarterly* 47 (1995), 428–66.

41. In "Interrogating 'Whiteness'" Fishkin provides a valuable overview of research on the remarkable degree of cultural interrelatedness.

42. Lucius Outlaw Jr., "Africology: Normative Theory," in Outlaw, *On Race and Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 97–134.

43. Kathy Russell, Midge Wilson, and Ronald Hall, *The Color Complex: The Politics of Skin Color among African Americans* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992); Jan Nederveen Pieterse, *White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

44. Kobena Mercer, "Black Hair/Style Politics" (1987), in Mercer, *Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 97–128.

45. For example, Sebastian Clarke (drawing on Fanon) argues that in Jamaican rock steady, "the dancer could remain on his spot of earth, shake his shoulders, make pounding motions with his arms and hands (at an invisible enemy, an anonymous force), without recourse to or consciousness of a partner. The internal tension was demonstratively and explosively released": *Jah Music: The Evolution of the Popular Jamaican Song* (London: Heinemann, 1980), 81.

46. Lewis Gordon, *Bad Faith and Antiracist Racism* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1995), 99.

47. See, for example, Joseph M. Murphy, *Working the Spirit: Ceremonies of the African Diaspora* (Boston: Beacon, 1994), and Paget Henry, "African and Afro-Caribbean Existential Philosophies," in Gordon, *Existence in Black*, 13–36.

48. Chandra Mohanty, Ann Russo, and Lourdes Torres, eds., *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991).

49. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*.

50. Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 1991); Joy Ann James, "Black Feminism: Liberation Limbos and Existence in Gray," in Gordon, *Existence in Black*, 215–24.

6. The Racial Polity

1. See, for example, the following works in, respectively, cultural studies, labor history, American literature, film theory, sociology, philosophy, history of science, gender studies, legal theory: Henry Louis Gates Jr., ed., *"Race," Writing, and Difference* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986); David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York: Verso, 1991) and *Towards the Abolition of Whiteness* (New York: Verso, 1994); Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992); Eric J. Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature* (Cambridge: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 1993); Daniel Bernardi, ed., *The Birth of Whiteness: Race and the Emergence of Cinema* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1996); Michelle Fine, Lois Weis, Linda C. Powell, and L. Mun Wong, eds., *Off White: Readings on Race, Power, and Society* (New York: Routledge, 1997); David Theo Goldberg, *Racist Culture: Philosophy and the Politics of Meaning* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1993); Lewis R. Gordon, *Bad Faith and Antiracist Racism* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1995); Lucius T. Outlaw Jr., *On Race and Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 1996); Sandra Harding, ed., *The "Racial" Economy of Science: Toward a Democratic Future* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993); Ruth Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); Ian F. Haney López, *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race* (New York: New York University Press, 1996); Richard Delgado, ed., *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995); Kimberlé Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda, Gary Peller, and Kendall Thomas, eds., *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings That Formed the Movement* (New York: New Press, 1995).

2. But note that the same could be said about feminist theory. "Feminism, like most broad-based philosophical perspectives, accommodates several species under its genus": Rosemarie Tong, *Feminist Thought: A Comprehensive Introduction* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1989), 1.

3. See Delgado, *Critical Race Theory*, and Crenshaw et al., *Critical Race Theory*. Some years ago, the African-American philosopher Lucius Outlaw Jr. called for a "critical theory" of race in "Toward a Critical Theory of 'Race,'" in *Anatomy of Racism*, ed. David Theo Goldberg (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 58–82. The "critical" in "critical race theory" has more than one meaning, signifying both the scare-quotes sense in which "race" is used and also (as in Outlaw) the general notion of a "critical theory" of society that seeks both to understand and transform it. "Critical white studies" can be seen as an offshoot of critical race theory that focuses specifically on whiteness.