Racism

in Mind

EDITED BY MICHAEL P. LEVINE / TAMAS PATAKI

3 : WHAT DO ACCOUNTS
OF "RACISM" DO?

Quite extraordinary confusion continues to surround the notion of racism. K. A. Appiah rightly noted in his influential "Racisms" that "we see it everywhere, but rarely does anyone stop to say what it is, or to explain what is wrong with it" (1990: 3). Philosophers and social theorists have subsequently risen to Appiah's challenge, producing several accounts. However, the first part of Appiah's statement does not seem correct. Many people do not see "racism everywhere." In much popular consciousness, racism is something that mostly ended with the civil rights legislation of the 1960s, and with the well-documented decline in whites' belief in the biological inferiority of blacks since the 1950s (Schuman et al. 1997: 156–57). Dinesh D'Souza's 1995 best seller, *The End of Racism,* captures the spirit of this view, and Stephan and Abigail Thernstrom's 1997 *America in Black and White* attempts to document in great detail a decline in racism.

Yet this development renders Appiah's challenge even more acute. Is there in fact such extreme empirical disagreement between those who see racism everywhere and those who think it has largely disappeared? Or do the two sides mean something different by "racism," and so do not really disagree?

The need to gain some clarity about the meaning of "racism" is further reinforced by the generally severe opprobrium attached to it. Outside the avowedly racist right-wing fringe, almost everyone agrees that racism is a very bad thing, and "a racist" an extremely bad thing to be.

At the same time, the terms "racist" and "racism" have come to be our primary, and often the sole, means of naming race-related evils or wrongfulness. This was not always so. It is useful to remember that before the 1920s and 1930s the word "racism" was never used.[1] Outrages perpetrated against blacks and Native populations in the United States, in colonies in Africa, in Latin America, and elsewhere were not called racist. They were condemned in other terms. For example, in 1830 the black abolitionist David Walker drew on an array of moral ter-

1. George Frederickson (2002: 156) dates the first uses of the term "racism" to the 1920s. Scholars have agreed in crediting Magnus Hirschfeld's 1933 book *Rassismus* (published in English in 1938 as *Racism*) as the first book to use the term in its title.

minology to express his outrage at slavery. Colored people under slavery were "wretched, degraded, abject"; white perpetrators of slavery were "ten times more cruel, avaricious, and unmerciful" than the "heathens" they professed to condemn (Walker 2000: 134–35). Lynching and segregation were severely denounced as race-based murder, violation of human dignity, oppression, subordination, the maintenance of unjust and undeserved privilege based on race, and the like. But the word "racism" was not part of that arsenal of moral condemnation.

Indeed, the term "racism" was coined by European social scientists in response to the rise of Nazism, and it was not until the 1960s that it came into general use in the United States in relation to the treatment of blacks. Why is this important? After all, racism could have existed before the term "racism" was coined, just as gravity existed before Sir Isaac Newton named it.

But racism is not analogous to gravity. It was not just that Newton invented the word for gravity; he invented the idea that there was a natural force drawing bodies (entities with mass) toward one another. By contrast, Walker did not lack a full understanding of the moral wrongfulness of slavery as a racial institution. He just did not name that wrongfulness "racism." It is not clear what calling it "racism" adds to the moral understanding that Walker already possessed.

It is useful to recall the prehistory of the term "racism" in order to recognize that we have historically possessed the linguistic resources to condemn many forms of wrongfulness related to race without using the word "racism" and without thereby incurring any diminution of understanding. This is useful because we have become so wedded to the terms "racist" and "racism" that, to many people, it is virtually unintelligible to speak meaningfully of something going wrong in the arena of race without calling it "racism." It seems to many people that this is the *only* way we can condemn racial wrongfulness.

We should, I think, be struck by the irony that a term that was scarcely used before the 1960s and not at all before the 1930s should have come so to dominate the moral vocabulary we use in the domain of race. I will suggest that common contemporary usage of these terms and, to some extent, philosophical accounts of them, have had two deleterious effects on the challenges of moral understanding in the area of race.

First, they have obscured the wide range of different types of moral wrong or ill. That is, these accounts have made it seem that what goes wrong in the area of race is something like one type of thing ("racism") that is morally wrong in its several manifestations always for the same reason. When a plurality of manifestations of racism is explicitly acknowledged (as Garcia, discussed below, does more explicitly than most), the plurality is seen as either directly derivative from or secondary to a core form of racism; the assumption is retained that all significant forms are wrong or bad for the same reason.

Related to this, contemporary understandings of racism also render difficult an adequate understanding of forms of racial ill or wrongfulness—such as fail-

ing, out of thoughtlessness or cultural insensitivity, to take steps to make a workplace culturally comfortable for members of a racial-cultural group (such as Mexican Americans)—that are of relatively lesser moral weight than core forms of (what is generally understood as) racism. These understandings tend to be pushed in either of two unsatisfactory directions. One is to inflate their moral significance by implying that the opprobrium generally attached to unquestioned instances of "racism" applies equally to these lesser racial ills. The second, contrary, effect of contemporary accounts of racism on lesser racial ills is to block them from sight entirely—to imply that, insofar as they do not meet the standard of moral opprobrium appropriate to phenomena rightly called racist, they are unworthy of moral concern at all. No one that I have read ever explicitly draws this conclusion. But insofar as "racism" is taken to encompass the whole of racial forms of moral wrongfulness, if someone regards a lesser wrong as falling outside what she understands "racism" to be, this frequently carries the implication that the lesser wrong is not immoral at all, or is only trivially so. So, for example, one often hears people say, "She wasn't being racist, just ignorant" or (discussed in more detail below) "That may be prejudice, but not racism." In context, such remarks generally imply that ignorance and prejudice cannot be very serious ills; they are not accorded a status as distinct, morally significant, race-related wrongs (even if of somewhat lesser significance than "racism").

We would do well to draw from the historical perspective the lesson that a broader and more varied and nuanced vocabulary for racial ills may well be still available today. We might even go a step further and adopt the guideline that when inclined to condemn something in the racial arena, we attempt first to do so in other terms. This stricture would help to bring this wider vocabulary to the fore and into greater usage.

I. "RACISM": THREE COMPETING MEANINGS

Let us proceed, then, to some accounts of racism to see what exactly they are offering us. Jorge Garcia has pressed the point that some accounts of racism fail to say what precisely racism consists in, proceeding instead to various alleged truths about the forms or manifestations of racism. An important strand of contemporary writing about racism, for example, emphasizes that many people operate with a narrow vision of racism and that contemporary developments show that racism can take many forms not contemplated by earlier accounts. David Goldberg, for example, in the preface to his important collection *Anatomy of Racism,* says, "The prevailing critical presupposition of the social scientific attack on racism from its emergence in the 1930s is that racism is unvarying in its

nature. . . . There is a growing recognition now . . . that racist discourse is more chameleonic in its nature" (1990: ix).[2]

Goldberg is pointing to at least two developments. One is that although adherence to the sort of distinctly biologistic ideologies of racial superiority and inferiority prominent in nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century American racial thought, and reaching a particularly hideous pinnacle in Nazism, has definitely waned throughout the world, new ways of talking about the very groups previously alleged to be biologically inferior have been used to exclude these groups or to sustain them in inferior positions. For example, these groups have been claimed to have inferior cultures, or to be wedded to ways of life allegedly inconsistent with some vision of a particular national culture.

This pluralizing discourse regarding conventionally understood "racial" groups is indeed an important feature of the racial scene in Western societies. Garcia is, however, also correct to point out that merely pointing to it does not clinch the issue of whether racism is involved, until one has been provided with an account of what racism actually consists in. Perhaps once a group is viewed primarily as a *cultural* group, even one largely coextensive with what was formerly viewed as a racial group, then insults to its culture are no longer helpfully called "racism." Perhaps such insults are still wrong and ill founded—but not racist.

We must, therefore, distinguish between an account of what racism consists in and an account that claims that racism thus defined possesses other social, psychological, and institutional features.[3] I am less confident than Garcia that these two forms of account can always be kept separate. But we should at least attempt to do so.

On the broadest level, we can distinguish three distinct uses of "racism" on the contemporary scene. (I will leave "racist" aside for the moment.) The first is the original 1930s definition, in which racism is an ideology of biologically grounded superiority and inferiority. This is the definition that Goldberg (rightly in my opinion) thinks fails to capture what most people who use the word "racism" nowadays mean by it. Nevertheless, it, or something like it, not infrequently turns up in official definitions of racism, and I have the impression that many people regard this as somehow its "true" definition.[4] For example,

2. Another example: "Multiple 'racisms' . . . have been articulated and rearticulated, embraced and employed, not only by various parts of the state, but also by other actors such as the working class and intellectuals" (Small 1994: 13).

3. For an example of the sort of quasi-empirical claim I have in mind, consider the following: "The duality of fear and aggression is integral to the structure of all racist practices" (Memmi 2000: 103).

4. Authoritative sources still support this view, though sometimes with slight modifica-

Charles Taylor (1989: 7) says, "Racists have to claim that certain of the crucial moral properties of human beings are genetically determined: that some races are less intelligent, less capable of high moral consciousness, and the like."

The next two usages of "racism" depart radically from the first in encompassing symbols, actions, practices, attitudes, societies, and so on, without requiring an ideology of biological racial superiority to be present or even lurking in the background. The second use connotes anything bad in the racial domain without regard to the severity of moral wrong involved—for example, looking to a black student in one's class for participation when discussing racial issues, or making an unwarranted but not unflattering generalization about a racial group, such as "All Hispanics have close families." The third use refers to a subspecies of the second, encompassing only particularly egregious forms of racial badness or wrongfulness.

Some of the confusion and miscommunication rife in the racial arena stems from conflating the second and third definitions. If Jane uses "racism" to refer to anything that can go wrong, racially speaking, while Lourdes uses it more narrowly for egregious wrongs, Lourdes will feel that Jane is morally overloading behavior, attitudes, and so on that are lesser faults, while Jane will feel that Lourdes is failing to acknowledge racism.[5]

I suggest that many accounts of racism—both in Garcia's strict definitional sense and in the vaguer sense of offering important general truths about racism—should, on the one hand, be regarded as attempts at accounts of the third, narrower sense: however, they fail to distinguish this project from a comprehensive account of all race-related wrongdoing. The result is a failure to appreciate various dimensions of moral and racial plurality among racial ills.

II. THE SOCIAL ACCOUNT OF "RACISM"

Let me consider two prominent examples of accounts of racism to illustrate this failure—racism as a structure of inequality between racially defined groups, and Garcia's view of racism as a form of racial ill will. The first is expressed in

tion. Blackwell's 1993 *Dictionary of Twentieth Century Social Thought* begins its entry on "Racism" thus: "Any set of beliefs which classifies humanity into distinct collectivities, defined in terms of natural *and/or* cultural attributes, and ranks these attributes in a hierarchy of superiority and inferiority, can be described as 'racist'" (emphasis added). See also Michele Moody-Adams's entry on "Racism" in Blackwell's *Companion to Applied Ethics*: "Racism is essentially a distinctive conception of the nature of reality"—a somewhat more sophisticated version of the view stated above.

5. The broader, second usage might be acceptable among persons who recognize that this is how they are using the term. It may not always be necessary to mark out the minimally bad from the appallingly bad.

definitions of racism as "an institutionalized system of power" or "a system of advantage based on race" (Derman-Sparks and Phillips 1997: 10). The purpose of such definitions has frequently been to shift focus from individual manifestations of prejudice and bigotry to larger structures of inequality between racial groups, especially where a history of mistreatment of the disadvantaged groups has provided the foundation for current significantly unequal life prospects. Proponents of these definitions generally wish to claim that these inequalities (for example, that black students lag substantially behind whites and Asians in school achievement) are of greater moral concern than the individual prejudices (for example, the degree of antiblack racial prejudice among the white population). Such definitions are generally also responsive to the widely though not universally accepted notion that the inequalities in question are no longer primarily caused by current prejudicial attitudes.[6]

This account of racism is undoubtedly onto something important. Where deficiencies in the life prospects of a racial group is clearly, at least in part, a product of a history of racial depredations, and where the gap is substantial, it seems perverse to focus all our attention on individual prejudices and stereotyping, neglecting these larger structures and patterns. And yet identifying the relevant race-based inequalities that are to count as racism has not always been given sufficient attention. Bare inequality between racial groups is not, purely in its own right, a source of concern. This is obvious, though perhaps instructive, with regard to *ethnic* groups. Suppose, for example, that, nationally, Japanese Americans have substantially higher incomes than Lithuanian Americans. This is not a cause for concern, as long as (1) there is no suggestion of injustice in the processes that have produced this result, and (2) Lithuanian Americans are not doing badly. The same point holds for racial groups, although here injustice is more likely to be present. The reason that, for example, the school achievement levels and the wealth levels of African Americans are (or should be) a matter of concern is not simply that they are lower than those of white Americans. It is that the levels are, in their own right, unsatisfactory, *and* that they are, at least in part, a product of past discrimination and oppression as well as current discrimination.[7]

6. Glenn Loury (2002: 95–99) has developed in convincing detail the argument that current black disadvantage, constituting a form of racial injustice, is primarily a product of past discrimination and oppression and of current unobjectionable practices such as racial preference in the choice of intimates.

7. Garcia, whose other views I will discuss below, argues that social structures, practices, and processes cannot themselves be regarded as racially unjust unless they are animated by racial antipathy of some sort. Let me concede briefly at this juncture that it is unlikely that any large-scale racial injustice operates without some historical (or present) antipathy or inferiorizing to animate it. Nevertheless, it seems wholly implausible to think that the inequalities in life chances with regard to education, housing, schooling, and occupational

While the social account of racism is, then, surely correct to point to unjust inequities between racially defined groups with regard to life prospects as of moral concern in their own right, defining "racism" in terms of such structures of inequality has some troubling implications with regard to the moral status of *individual* wrongs in the racial domain. Taken literally, and if combined with the view that what is not "racism" is of little moral concern, the social account implies that individual bigotry, hatred, and antipathy are matters are of little moral concern. Some proponents of the social position might be willing to embrace this result, holding to the view that only systemic racial inequities are of real concern. This implication is brought out explicitly in those who contrast "racism" with (mere) "prejudice," often implicitly belittling the latter as of minor consequence. But most of us will wish our theory of racial ills to provide the resources for criticizing individuals as morally abhorrent for their racial attitudes and behavior.

The social definition can, it is true, be modified or extended in a fairly natural way to encompass individual behavior, belief, and attitude, by saying that individuals are racist to the extent that they engage in behavior that helps to sustain systems of unjust racial inequity (or possess attitudes that would have a similar effect were they to be put into practice). For example, out of distaste for blacks and in opposition to their presence in her neighborhood, a white homeowner planning to sell her house tells a black prospective buyer that the house has already been sold when it has not, thus contributing to the segregation and inequality in housing accommodations from which blacks notoriously suffer in the United States.

However, this tack has some troubling and counterintuitive moral implications. Consider a white homeowner in a largely white neighborhood into which some blacks have recently moved. This homeowner, let us stipulate, has no animosity toward blacks as neighbors, but believes, with some warrant, that property values in her neighborhood are likely to take a significant slide were the neighborhood to become majority blacks. To avoid a greater financial loss to herself in the future, she sells her house to a black prospective buyer, though her action contributes to a sense of "white flight" in the neighborhood that hastens the very result (lower property values) she wishes to avoid in her own case, while also potentially contributing to the creation of a black segregated neighborhood with lower property values for its residents.

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success between whites and blacks or Mexican Americans are due *entirely* to those historical or current forms of individual prejudice or discrimination. Other economic, social, political, and cultural factors must be taken account of as well. The social definition of racism seems to me correct in presuming that the wrongness of the inequities to which it points is not exhausted by the racial prejudices and forms of individual discrimination that may have played a role in the processes leading to these inequities.

The homeowners in both examples contribute to larger structures of unjust racial inequality. But their actions seem morally quite distinct. The first directly discriminates against blacks in her actions, and does so from racial animus. The second homeowner engages in no racial discrimination and does not act from racial animus. Yet the approach being considered will label them both "racist," thereby implying a kind of moral equivalence between the two. Indeed, it would even be plausible on that definition to regard as "racist" a neighbor of the second homeowner who, knowing of her intentions and of their effect, fails to attempt to discourage her from selling her house. All three individuals contribute to housing segregation and its attendant injustices.

Advocates of the social definition might wish to modify the proposed definition of individual racism by saying that individuals are more or less racist to the extent that their actions more or less contribute to structures of racial inequity. But our intuitions about what is more or less morally wrong in the racial area does not, in general, correspond to degrees of causal impact on such structures. For example, the first individual's refusal to sell to a black prospective home buyer might actually contribute to sustaining a racially mixed neighborhood. So despite her discriminating racially against individual black home buyers, her action's impact on the larger structures might be positive, or at least not negative—in contrast to the second homeowner. Yet the racially discriminatory nature of her action, and her racial antipathy, render her more morally blameworthy than the second homeowner.

As this example suggests, we do not normally treat "contribution to structures of racial injustice" as the sole yardstick of individual fault in the racial area, contrary to the implication of the social definition of racism. Though we may think that, in general, racially discriminatory acts are wrong because they *characteristically* do contribute to larger structures of injustice, we also think them wrong *in themselves,* as the example of the first white homeowner illustrates. We especially think them wrong when they are motivated by racial animus, and Jorge Garcia is surely correct when he emphasizes that a powerless, pathetic white bigot possesses a deficiency of character even though she is unable to harm members of the groups who are the target of her bigotry (Garcia 1997a: 13). Her bigotry may, from a societal point of view, not matter very much; it may be of less general concern than a powerful person's racial bigotry. But it is bigotry nonetheless, and it matters in an assessment of her character.

"Individual prejudice or discrimination" and "unjust racial inequality" cannot be ranged on a single scale of moral concern with the latter at the high end and the former at the low end, nor can the moral fault of the former be exhaustively accounted for in terms of its relation to the latter. Individual racial prejudice and hatred is certainly of moral concern, with regard to the character of the persons manifesting those attitudes. Just as it is an important fact about, and (at least ideally) to, Jim that he is a dishonest or callous person, so it is similarly im-

portant whether Jim is racially prejudiced. The importance of individual moral character regarding racial matters stands in its own right; it is not something that needs to be vindicated by reference to its impact on the relation between racially defined groups.

A second way to bring individual racism in to the social definition of racism is familiar in the literature, and that is to define racism as "prejudice plus power" (Barndt 1991: 28).[8] That is, an individual is racist if she is prejudiced and has the power to give effect to these prejudices. This move differs from the previous in requiring racially problematic intentionality on the agent's part. But, like that definition, it falls afoul of the purely individual dimension of what is plausibly called "racism." The powerless can be racially bigoted; indeed entirely socially powerless white people can be found among the ranks of virulently bigoted persons.[9] It does indeed matter morally whether one realizes one's racial prejudices in harmful action; but individual members of socially powerless groups can do so (e.g., in personal violence).[10] Further, whether one's racial attitudes issue in harmful action is not the only thing that matters morally about individual prejudice and bigotry.

In sum, then, proponents of the "social" definition of racism are onto something morally important; (unjust) social, economic, and political inequalities among racial groups are of moral importance. The social definition of racism is meant to call attention to these inequalities. Given current understandings of "racism," this definition accomplishes this shift of attention because, to the extent that racism is understood as a grave racial wrong, what comes to be understood as racism will be seen as a grave racial wrong. But this worthy moral accomplishment comes at a high price. It provides no plausible way of talking about racial wrongs committed by individuals, nor of faults of individual moral character related to race.

We do best to recognize the plural nature of wrongfulness in the moral domain. There can be societal forms of wrongfulness as well as individual forms, without either of these being derivable from the other. Were the social definition to confine its aspirations to articulating *one form* of racial wrongfulness—al-

8. See also Derman-Sparks and Phillips 1997: 10 (recounting the views of "many antiracist educators"). This definition is generally allied with the further claim that only white persons can be racist. I argue elsewhere (Blum 2002: 33–42) that the proffered definition does not have this implication, and also that, independent of this argument, it is not plausible to claim that only white people can be racist.

9. I argue (Blum 2002: 42–52) that the power someone has to give effect to her prejudices, as well as the power relations among racial groups, can be pertinent to the degree of moral concern appropriate to an instance of racial hatred or prejudice—but not to its existence.

10. See Blum 2002, chap. 2, for an extended discussion of the role of personal and social power in the moral assessment of instances of racism.

lowing for the existence of other forms not captured thereby—it would be on stronger grounds, subject to the qualifications mentioned above concerning the specific forms of inequality that are the appropriate targets of moral criticism.

Yet a different shortcoming of the social definition is that it can be read as implying that all racial disparities (especially with regard to the groups mentioned above) are themselves *caused by* manifestations of individual racial prejudice or animus, contempt, or other individual attitudes. This may seem to contradict the very point of the social definition, which is to shift attention away from such individual attitudes to larger systemic or structural inequities. However, an argument can be made that the common understanding of "racism" contains an ineradicable implication of individual wrongfulness; if so, then in practice the social definition will tend to drag this understanding along with it, in the form of an implication that the social wrongfulness arises from individual wrongfulness. In this case, the social definition will, in practice, be quite misleading about the character of racial wrongs, even independent of any of the arguments above.

III. GARCIA'S ACCOUNT

Let us turn then to Garcia's very different approach to an account of racism,[11] although, like the social definition just considered, the point of Garcia's account seems to be to elucidate what is morally of greatest concern in the racial domain (Garcia 1997a: 6). Garcia says that the label "racist" "is today thoroughly moralized. To call a person, institution, policy, action, project, or wish racist is to present it as vicious and abhorrent" (7). An account of racism, Garcia says, should make it clear why it is always immoral, without making this true by definition. By contrast, advocates of the social definition do not generally tend to make explicit the moral import of their definition, notwithstanding that their definition is indeed "thoroughly moralized"; it concerns what is (regarded as) the worst thing that happens in the racial domain (i.e., inequalities of power or life chances).

Garcia is particularly convincing in arguing that many contemporary manifestations of what most thoughtful persons are inclined to call racism have tenuous, if any, links to the beliefs in biological inferiority central to the earliest definitions of racism (and, as we have seen, retained in some contemporary definitions as well). Raul need not have any beliefs about Xavier's racial inferiority in order to hate Xavier because of his race; yet to do so is a vice, and has a strong

11. I will be discussing four of Garcia's articles: Garcia 1996, 1997a, 1999, and 2001b. I understand that the point of view of Garcia's essay in this volume generally follows that of these earlier pieces, especially the last one.

claim to be called racism under contemporary understandings.[12] Garcia is surely also correct to argue, as I have above, that a failure to possess social, economic, or political power does not prevent racial hatred from being a blot on someone's moral character (1997a: 11, 13).

Garcia sees racism as manifesting two distinct but related forms—race-based ill will or hatred, and "racially based or racially informed disregard" (1997a: 13; 1996: 6). Racism is morally bad because it is a type of vice, a vice that Garcia often describes in terms of its being the opposite of, or offending against, certain virtues (especially benevolence and justice) (1999: 13), but also describes as malevolence.

Garcia's account possesses many strengths. No other account with which I am familiar is as careful to clarify the grounds on which the account is offered; to relate its definition to such a wide range of alternative accounts of racism;[13] to attempt to show what is valuable in those alternative accounts but also what falls short; to recognize that an account of racism must show how a plurality of distinct categories—practices, societies, actions, motives, fears, desires, beliefs—can instantiate racism; to have so clearly brought out a dimension of racial wrongfulness (racial ill will) that many contemporary accounts fail adequately to articulate; and, finally, to have recognized so clearly that the contemporary understanding of racism is, at its core, moral and so must be analyzed as a moral notion.

I wish, however, to note several shortcomings of Garcia's account. All of these, I will suggest, stem from a failure adequately to recognize, or to elucidate, the *plurality* of forms of race-related disvalue, or adequately to account for what is in fact wrong with or bad about some of the forms that his own account encompasses. I will suggest that, though Garcia does well to turn to the virtue tradition to elucidate racism, he does not cast his virtuist net wide enough to encompass the full range of value and disvalue in the domain of race.

RELATION BETWEEN RACIAL ILL WILL AND RACE-BASED DISREGARD

First, the relation between Garcia's two different forms of racism—ill will and race-based insufficient regard for others' well-being—is not clear. Garcia describes it differently in different places. Sometimes he implies that the two forms are not so different, and that they are both morally bad for the *same* reason— that they involve vicious attitudes toward persons because of their race (1996: 11).

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12. Garcia's argument that racial ill will is more fundamental than racial ideology in some central forms of what most persons think of as racism is particularly effective against K. A. Appiah's belief-centered account in "Racisms" (Appiah 1990). See Garcia 1997a: 14–20

13. Garcia discusses alternative accounts offered by Manning Marable, Thomas Schmid, Lewis Gordon, Michael Omi and Howard Winant, Robert Miles, Dinesh D'Souza, Judith Lichtenberg, David Goldberg, Michael Philips, K. Anthony Appiah, and others.

But the category "vicious" when it means "manifesting a vice" does not possess that kind of moral unity. In contrast, a more colloquial meaning implies something like a particular degree of moral opprobrium. "Teresa isn't just insensitive or even mean; she's really vicious." For example, laziness and cruelty are both vices; but it is much worse to be cruel than lazy. (If it is replied that "laziness" is not a moral vice, "inconsiderate" will serve the same purpose; it is worse to be cruel than inconsiderate. "Joan might be inconsiderate; but she isn't cruel.")

At other points Garcia appears to recognize that different unsatisfactory race-based attitudes have quite distinct moral valences. It is worse to *hate* someone because of her race than to *fail to have adequate regard for her welfare* on this basis. Thus, Garcia says that racial ill will manifests the vice of malevolence while racially differential regard instantiates the vice of disregard (1997a: 29).

At another point, Garcia speaks of the ill will form of racism as primary, and the disregard form as "derivative" (1996: 6). It is not clear whether Garcia means this primacy in a historical, psychological, or conceptual sense. That is, was racial malevolence historically or psychologically primary, with racial indifference flowing from it? Or is racial ill will a more paradigmatic sense of "racism," with racial disregard less so, although still falling within the concept? Yet in his most recent piece (of the ones I am considering), Garcia appears to reverse the earlier claim of the "core" form of racism: "My own view is that racism, in its core, consists in racial disregard, or, more gravely, in ill will" (2001b: 134).[14]

I suggest that Garcia may be unclear on this point because, on the one hand, he thinks of "racism" as naming a single distinct vice, like cowardice or dishonesty, and as having a single, distinct moral valence; and because, on the other hand, he recognizes that there are quite distinctive forms of racially bad attitudes or sentiments with quite *different* moral valences. It may be less elegant and theoretically less satisfying to countenance multiple (or even just two) irreducibly distinct forms of what one thinks of as "racism," yet doing so may be more in line with the moral phenomenological strand in Garcia's thinking. Malevolence is not the same as a mere absence of benevolence; they are two distinct vices, even if they can usefully be seen as ranged along a single spectrum. Other vices with distinct moral valences cannot be so ranged.

THE ROLE OF RACE

Even if Garcia were to embrace this moral plurality within the concept of racism, he would still not have given an adequate account of the moral valence of what he himself encompasses within that concept. Garcia generally implies that the reason race-based malevolence is bad is simply that it instantiates the vice of malevolence. Malevolence is a vice in its own right, independent of

14. In another essay (Garcia 1999: 13) racial disregard is said to be the "root" of racism, while hate and ill will is its "core."

whether race is involved as the basis for the malevolence. Garcia's implication is that if I hate Andres and wish him ill out of jealousy, this is as bad—because equally a form of malevolence—as if I hate him because he is black.

Unwarranted hatred and malevolence is indeed a vice, and is so whether it is based on race or not. Nevertheless, I do not think we ordinarily regard all forms of ill will as of *equal* moral import. In particular, we tend to think that race-based ill will is a *worse* form of ill will than many others. The concept of a "hate crime" is a legal analogue to this moral intuition. The idea behind a hate crime is that a crime, such as assault, committed out of hatred of someone grounded in certain group-based characteristics—such as race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and the like—is worse, and deserving of more severe punishment, than the same crime committed for a different reason. (Indeed, the term "hate crime" is somewhat misleading, since it is not hatred as such that warrants the more severe punishment, but only hatred targeting certain group-based characteristics of the victim.)

Why might it be worse to hate someone because of her race than to hate her for purely personal reasons, such as envy or jealousy? One reason is purely consequentialist. When someone is targeted for hatred because of her race, other members of the same race may feel anxious or fearful, or suffer some other form of psychic harm, either because they think that they could have been the victim (or could be in the future), since all that mattered was membership in the racial group in question, or because they personally identify with the victim.

I do not think this consequentialist reason is the whole story, and want to suggest that the full opprobrium attached to race-related manifestations of hatred or ill will derives from the severe forms of discrimination, oppression, degradation, dehumanization, and violence perpetrated historically in the name of race—derives, that is, from the embeddedness of individual forms of racial wrongfulness in wider patterns, historical and sometimes contemporary, of comparable racial wrongfulness.[15] I am not taking a stand here on whether there are group characteristics *other than* race that ground a moral valence comparable to race and that are distinct from the same forms of wrong or evil lacking such characteristics.

My argument has not, to this point, been that Garcia's view that racism is a type of race-based malevolence is false. It is that Garcia's understanding of how this constitutes a virtuist account is incomplete or insufficient. For he implies that what is distinctively vicious about racism is simply that it involves ill will. But I have argued that "ill will" comes in some morally distinct subvarieties, one form of which depends on the different targets of the ill will. (There might be other crosscutting subdivisions of ill will.) Race-based ill will is bad not only because it involves ill will, but because the ill will is based on race. One might put

15. This view is defended, though not entirely adequately, in Blum 2002, chap. 1.

this point by saying that "racism" understood in the way Garcia does involves a *different vice* from, say, ill will based on personal jealousy. Or at least one might regard it as a morally distinct subvariety of the vice "malevolence," where subvarieties are distinguishable at least by the forms of and degree of moral opprobrium attached to them.

ANTIPATHY AND INFERIORIZATION

I have argued that one problem with Garcia's account of racism is his failure to provide an adequate account of how the two vices with which he associates racism—ill will and disregard—are related to one another as forms of racism. I suggested that one source of this difficulty is an attempt, which Garcia often resists but sometimes capitulates to, to see "racism" as naming a single type of racial viciousness, one with a particular, seriously negative valence. A different, but related, problem with his account is his imposing an artificial unity on the items that he sees as *either* ill will *or* disregard. Garcia recognizes in several of his articles that two apparently distinct families of phenomena have been encompassed in contemporary meanings of racism. One is racial ill will. The other is a viewing of the racial other[16] as inferior in some humanly important respect, or attitudes that manifest such a view (such as disrespect, disdain, and contempt). I will refer to this as the "inferiorizing" form of race-related wrong.

Garcia often recognizes that ill will and inferiorizing are distinct forms of racial ill, in that he says that malevolence can exist without a belief in the inferiority of the racial other. That is certainly correct; it can be directed toward those thought of as superior or those thought of as neither inferior or superior. Some anti-Asian and anti-Jewish racist malevolence views its targets not as inferior to the racist but as in important respects superior.[17] Asians may be seen as "too smart," perhaps, by the Asian hater, but this vague handwaving at a deficiency is not the same as viewing the other as fundamentally inferior.

Garcia, however, in claims that belief in inferiority is generally a rationalization of ill will (1996: 9). Historically this is certainly false. During the slavery and segregation eras in the United States, for example, most whites believed blacks to be inferior, even barely human, but many did not harbor ill will toward them. The inferiorizing of blacks was clearly more fundamental than whatever ill will

16. I agree with Garcia that not all racism is directed toward a racial other; it can be directed toward members of one's own group, or even oneself as a member of that group. This qualification does not affect the argument in the text, which is concerned with different types of racial ill, no matter who its target.

17. Nazi anti-Semitism is distinct from this form (although there are some similarities or continuities) in that the Nazis saw Jews as morally and humanly inferior (or even as not human beings) while still seeing them (inaccurately) as exercising overwhelming power in German society.

might have accompanied it, as this inferiorizing provided the primary rationalization of slavery and segregation. Consider the following words of Jefferson Davis, the president of the Confederacy, from a debate in the Senate in 1860 about slavery: "The condition of slavery with us is, in a word[,] Mr. President, nothing but the form of civil government instituted for a class of people not fit to govern themselves. . . . In their subject and dependent state, they are not the objects of cruelty" (Davis 1860).

Racial hatred was certainly often a part of the mix of attitudes that whites held toward blacks during the slavery and segregation eras (not to speak of the present); yet even then, that hatred was often directed more specifically at blacks who too visibly flouted the rules of behavior that signaled (in the mind of whites) that they regarded themselves as inferior (failing to show "proper deference" to whites, for example) rather than at blacks in general. If there has been a sea change in white attitudes such that, nowadays, inferiorization is *always* driven by and is a rationalization for racial ill will, Garcia has given no reason to think this is so.

Garcia also argues, independently, that belief in the racial others' inferiority *is not itself racist* unless it does in fact stem from racial ill will (1996: 9). This seems mere stipulation—working out a consequence of a definition to which Garcia is already committed. He provides no reason for us to abandon the intuition that treating or regarding someone as a racial inferior is, by itself, racist. In any case, Garcia's more frequent argument concerning the relation between inferiorizing attitudes and racial ill will is yet a third view—quite different, and contrary to this one, and distinct from the rationalization view. It is that the two forms are not really distinct—that inferiorizing is a *form* of ill will or disregard. Garcia imagines a racial paternalist who regards blacks as inferior but, far from harboring ill will or indifference toward them, takes himself to be furthering their interests when he treats them as something like children, as Davis expresses in the passage just mentioned.

Garcia rightly points out that the paternalist is not *in fact* furthering the blacks' interests, all things considered (for example, their interest in autonomy). In an obvious sense, he does not have their real interests at heart. But this does not make the paternalist a type of race hater. The race hater may not regard the racial other as inferior; and the paternalist need not (and generally does not) hate the racial other. Even though in some sense neither one has the interests of the racial other at heart, their ways of being "racist" are morally distinct. Hating someone is wrong for a different reason than regarding her as humanly inferior is wrong.

If one shifts from race hatred to racial indifference or disregard, Garcia's other characterization of racism, the paternalist is not indifferent to the welfare of the racial other. He misconstrues that interest, but he is still concerned about it. Both the racial inferiorizer and the racial disregarder, perhaps, fail to be concerned

about the actual interests of a group; but there is an important moral difference between failing to do so because one views the group as inferior and failing to do so because of race-based indifference (or, a third possibility, because one is simply mistaken in what one takes those interests to be because of false empirical beliefs).

Garcia (1996: 17) sometimes puts his point by saying that the racist is someone who "stand[s] against the advancement of Black people." But one can stand against the interests of black people for a variety of morally distinct reasons—hatred being one, lack of respect for autonomy being another. Indeed, other reasons suggest themselves. Garcia himself mentions persons who engage in racially discriminatory practices, not out of racist motivations but simply to hold on to their jobs, as, for example, employees of the Denny's restaurant chain were compelled to do in a case that came to national attention in the early 1990s.[18] One could do so on a dare, or (another of Garcia's examples) in order to hurt someone toward whom one has animosity but not racial animosity. These are all quite distinct reasons, with distinct moral valences. Of course they are all forms of racial vice or wrong. They involve doing something wrong or vicious in the area of race. But, contrary to Garcia's implication, they do not all instantiate the self-same vice (or only two vices, disregard and ill will).

One of the criteria of adequacy for an account of "racism" that Garcia lists is that it should "have a structure similar to, and be immoral for some of the same reasons as are central forms of anti-Semitism, xenophobia, misogyny, the hostility against homosexuals that is nowadays called 'homophobia,' and other kinds of ethnic, cultural, or religious enmity familiar from history" (1997a: 6). Garcia is right to see his list as all involving a kind of group-based enmity similar to racial ill will; and I agree that some of what is commonly called "racism" takes this form. However, it seems to me to beg the question to restrict "racism" to such forms of enmity. Why not say that racism must have a structure similar to a belief in women's inferiority, or in the inferiority of some cultural groups to others? Laurence Thomas and others have written of the differences between antiblack racism and anti-Semitism, the latter involving hatred of a group seen as in some ways superior and the former disdain or disrespect for a group seen as inferior (Thomas 1992: 94–108, esp. 107–8). Perhaps Thomas understates antiblack antipathy; but it seems arbitrary for Garcia to set enmity as a paradigm for racism, and circular to conclude that racism always takes the form of enmity.

Ironically, despite his attempt to reduce racial inferiorizing to racial enmity, disaffection, or ill will, Garcia more than once speaks of racism as involving "insufficient concern *or respect*" (1996: 9; italics added), as offending against benevolence *and* justice. He says, "Racism can offend against justice, not only benevolence, in the withholding of proper respect and deference" (10). Such

18. On the Denny's case, see Feagin, Vera, and Batur 2001: 76–83.

statements seem to concede that there are indeed distinct forms of racial ill that are not reducible to one another. Justice is not the same as benevolence, and, though Garcia does not quite say this here, one can offend against justice without offending against benevolence, just as one can be benevolent while failing in a form of respect related to justice. These are morally distinct virtues (and corresponding vices).

CATEGORIAL PLURALITY

Garcia's partial but inadequate recognition of the plural nature of racial ills within what he wants to call "racism" is mirrored in a failure to give due recognition to another dimension of plurality within racial ills—what one might call "categorial plurality." On one level Garcia does recognize—more so than the social account of racism and other accounts as well (for example, Appiah's cognitive account)—that beliefs, practices, institutions, utterances, propositions, actions, feelings, attitudes, societies, and more can all be racist. An account of racism should explain the sense in which each of these is, or can be, racist. But Garcia's recognition of this plurality at the level of categorial distinctness is abandoned in his account of how each of these categorially distinct items can instantiate racism. On his view, they can be racist only insofar as they manifest racial ill will (or disregard). So Rose's belief in proposition P is racist only if Rose is led to her belief by racial disregard.

But what about the proposition P itself? Is not the proposition "blacks are subhuman" a morally repulsive proposition, independent of what leads anyone to believe it? That is, isn't there something about the content of propositions itself that can make them racially objectionable—that they declare a racial group to be humanly deficient, or inferior in some fundamental way, or, closer to the spirit of Garcia's account, that they portray a racial group as worthy of hate ("Arabs are all terrorists who are attempting to destroy our way of life")?

Isn't the swastika a racist *symbol,* independent of what leads someone to display that symbol? (The displayer may not recognize that it is a racist symbol, be attempting to recover an earlier—pre-Nazi—nonracist meaning of the swastika, or might just be attempting to do what he thinks, for whatever reason, is "cool.") And what about *practices?* Cannot a practice be racist in the sense of perpetuating or constituting a racial injustice, even if the practice is not driven by racial animus or racial inferiorization? Consider, for example, the educational practice of tracking, by which children are assessed according to some alleged measure of ability, then placed in ability-grouped classes that are provided with widely varying levels of stimulating and demanding curricula. In racially integrated schools, this practice is recognized to lead to wide disparities in the education provided for white as opposed to black and Latino children. The ability grouping may in part be driven by racist or racially problematic assumptions about the latter students. But it need not be, certainly not by every-

one who participates in it, who might hold no general beliefs about the abilities of black children, but who simply buy into a range of nonracial assumptions about the character of "intelligence," about the best teaching practices, and other such assumptions. This tracking could exacerbate previous inequalities in performance (not capacity) at an earlier stage of schooling.

Yet it is at least plausible to argue that the practice of ability grouping deprives black and Latino children of equal educational opportunity;[19] and the practice can be condemned on that basis alone, not because of the racial attitudes of those who implement it or who created it. Practices can be racially unjust, and so constitute racial wrongs for a different reason, or in a different way, than attitudes are "racist" and propositions are "racist." What makes a category of item racist, or racially problematic, need not be the same for every category.

I think that Garcia wants to see a single source for everything that he wants to call racism because, although we have seen that he is not consistent in this regard, he wants all racism to be morally bad for the same reason—that it violates a single virtue. Related to this explanation is that he does not want to allow something to count as racist for reasons that smack of consequentialism.[20] He might well resist condemning tracking for this reason, unless he is able to find racial animus in its operation.

RACE-RELATED WRONGS OTHER THAN "RACISM"

My final criticism of Garcia draws in a somewhat different way on the moral diversity within the domain of racial ills. The criticism is that Garcia's account of racism is not clearly situated within a broader category of racial ills, of morally problematic racial phenomena. Garcia does not make it clear that things can go wrong or badly in the area of race without being "racist." This criticism actually applies less to Garcia than to those accounts of racism that appear to be aspiring to a general account of everything that goes wrong (or goes nontrivially wrong)

19. On tracking and equality of opportunity see Oakes 1985.
20. In one passage, Garcia does appear to allow that there can be "racist beliefs" in the sense of racist propositions, the racist character of which is not explained by the racist sentiments that explain adherence to them. He speaks of another philosopher as having provided convincing examples (e.g., the character of Huckleberry Finn) of people who innocently come to hold "racist beliefs," such that doing so does not make them racists (Garcia 1999: 14). This example suggests a possible further reason why Garcia generally strives to see racial disaffection across the wide variety of categories of possible "racism." It is because he generally does not want to count something as a manifestation of racism unless doing so is grounds for regarding some agent in the situation as herself a racist. I think Garcia is correct to think that people are too quick to say that someone is a racist on the basis of having made a certain objectionable remark or engaged in racially problematic behavior on one occasion. However, as Garcia acknowledges in this example, it is possible for a proposition to be unequivocally and fully racist, without the person who holds the proposition being racist.

in the domain of race. As mentioned earlier, the idea that racism is a structure of unjust racial domination is often treated in this fashion; anything not encompassable within this definition (e.g., a powerless racial bigot) is seen both as not racism and as morally trivial.

By contrast, Garcia mentions some racial phenomena that seem clearly problematic but that, in his view, lie outside the range of his definition of racism—stereotyping, or seeing persons too much in terms of groups rather than as individuals (1997a: 21). On the other hand, Garcia's discussions of these phenomena never fully and unequivocally acknowledge that they can be morally bad, not be instances of racism, and be morally bad for reasons other than those that make (what he calls) racism bad. Let me take two examples, both of which are discussed in more than one of Garcia's articles. One is the issue of "black disadvantage." In one of his essays (1996) Garcia takes up the oft cited example of employers hiring through word-of-mouth recruiting. This practice privileges the networks of current employees, who in most workplaces are generally disproportionately white. Taken together with the fact that most people's networks are in large part monoracial, this practice has the effect of making jobs less available to nonwhites, and to blacks in particular.

Although at one point Garcia mentions that this practice is "possibly undesirable and perhaps even unjust" (1996: 25), his main purpose and emphasis is that such practices are not necessarily racist. He rightly notes that factors that disadvantage blacks or "impede black progress" are diverse (1997a: 12). Direct racial discrimination is one, but others may have little relation to race in their intrinsic character (developments in the economy, class-based advantage and disadvantage, seniority protections), or might concern race but not be problematic in their own right. (Garcia cites Glenn Loury's example of endogamous friendship and marriage among racial groups.) Against those who want to say that the causes of black disadvantage do not matter, that only the result—that is, the fact of disadvantage itself—does, Garcia wants to press the point that it is important to disaggregate the different factors, partly (he implies) just to help us understand what is going on, and partly because we ought to make moral distinctions among these factors. Some may have unfortunate results, but not be morally wrong for that. In particular, Garcia wants to say that it is only factors that stem from racial animus or disregard that should count as racist. "Racism is not only presumptively immoral but conclusively immoral, while not everything that disadvantages blacks is conclusively immoral" (1997a: 12).

Garcia is correct to note the different moral weight of distinct factors that lead to black disadvantage. But his argument has the effect of not making it clear whether he sees the inequality constituted by black disadvantage as *itself* morally problematic. Although not all disadvantages are unjust or otherwise of moral concern, Garcia provides no theory of social injustice, for example, that would

allow us to see the disproportionate unemployment rate of blacks as a form of injustice. Doing so would allow one to acknowledge that a practice (seniority, for example) may not be morally and racially problematic in its own right, but might nevertheless contribute to a racial injustice and therefore be morally problematic in that respect.[21]

This failure to give a distinct moral standing to a phenomenon that is other than (what Garcia defines as) "racism"—to recognize that something might be morally bad for reasons other than that racial hatred is morally bad—is reinforced by an example Garcia uses to illustrate that not all factors that disadvantage black people should count as "racism." The example is of an alien force that is hostile to Earthlings and that engages in offensive action against the continent of Africa because of its mineral deposits (1996: 26) This action has a disproportionately negative impact on the well-being of black people but clearly is not an instance of racism, nor, Garcia rightly implies, is it any form of race-related wrong on the part of the aliens.

Garcia uses this example to support his view that only the presence of racial disaffection renders a practice racist; but by analogizing this fanciful example to ones in which nonracial factors contribute to black disadvantage in the context of a history of racial wrongs perpetrated against blacks, the example has the effect of pulling him even further from exploring the ways that a practice can involve, constitute, or contribute to racial injustice, even though no racism (in his sense) is involved.[22]

In summary, I have argued that Garcia fails to recognize an existing plurality within what he himself wishes to call racism, a further plurality within what can plausibly regarded as racism outside of Garcia's definition, and a yet further plurality of racial ills beyond what can be regarded as racism.

21. As mentioned, Garcia does suggest that word-of-mouth recruiting might be unjust. But he appears to regard the injustice in question as a *nonracial* injustice—perhaps an unfairness based on a failure to use consistent, qualification-based criteria for hiring, or to provide equal access to all for information about available positions. What his account lacks is a clear recognition of a distinct and diverse range of *race-related wrongs,* with different explanations as to their moral faultiness.

22. I want to mention briefly a further shortcoming of Garcia's moral monism about racism that I am not able to explore in depth. Garcia implies that the identity of the racial group (or members thereof) that is the target of racial animus has no bearing on the moral status of the animus, or the acts flowing from it. But it is at least arguable—and is certainly a belief held by many—that racial animus against racially vulnerable groups such as blacks, Native Americans, and Arabs is of greater moral concern than such animus against whites. I argue for such racial asymmetry in Blum 2002, chap. 2.

IV. SECOND THOUGHTS ON *"I'M NOT A RACIST, BUT . . ."*

In *"I'm Not a Racist, But . . ."* I argued more directly for many of the bases on which I have criticized Garcia's virtuist and the social accounts of racism. On the most general level, I attempted to show that to take adequate account of the range of distinct race-related wrongs and ills, we require a more variegated and nuanced moral vocabulary than we generally operate with. I suggested that racial ignorance, racial insensitivity, racial injustice, unwarranted racial privilege, failure to recognize the importance of someone's racial identity to her, failure to see a member of a different racial group as both an individual and a member of the group, and attributing too much importance to race in one's understanding of what is important to persons constitute examples of this range of nonracist racial ills. I argued that what goes morally wrong in these different cases is by no means one thing, such as racial domination, or racial ill will. Rather, the phenomena embody diverse sources of moral wrongfulness.

I contended in the book that the historical trajectory of the words "racism" and "racist" is part of what has blinded us to this moral and racial diversity. There has been a tendency in ordinary discourse to use these terms so broadly as to encompass virtually everything that goes wrong in the area of race, while at the same time retaining the idea (inconsistent with that usage) that "racism" is a term of severe opprobrium and should be used to refer only to very serious moral ills or forms of wrongfulness in the racial domain. I advocated that we rein in the scope of what we call racism, while simultaneously attempting to avail ourselves of the wider moral resources our language provides for referring to the broader range of racial ills beyond racism. I advocated also that we try to be careful about the category of items to which we apply condemnation in the racial domain— not tacitly assuming, for example, that everyone who makes a racist remark or tells a racist joke is "a racist."

In the book, I offer a reined-in definition of racism. I recognized that this definition would be to some extent stipulative, that the word "racism" has not acquired a sufficiently stable, long-standing, and unified use for one to capture its ordinary-language meaning in a single definition. However, I called the chapter in which I offered this definition "'Racism': Its Core Meaning." I now consider this a misleading way to describe what I offered in that chapter, as if there could be one thing (or, as I argued in the book, two things) that constitute a core of what racism actually is. I have become a good deal less confident than Garcia that one can set as a helpful condition on an account of "racism" that it "conform to everyday discourse about racism, insofar as this is free of confusion," or that his criterion of "accommodating clear cases from history and imagination and exclude cases where racism is clearly absent" (1997a: 6) can be applied without at least some presupposing of an already existing account of racism. I do not think one can with confidence say, as Garcia does, that "there is some one thing in

which racism *now* consists, some single thing that the term means as *we* use it *today*" (9; italics in original).

Perhaps more important, I am now less confident that the major task of those working in the area of philosophy, race, and morality should be to attempt to proffer an account of "racism." While I think that there is a good deal that philosophers can contribute in the way of clearing up confused thinking about race, I am less confident that focusing so exclusively on "racism" is the most constructive way to make that contribution. I would urge, more strongly than I did in my book, that we take our task to be an account of the diversity of racial phenomena that constitute moral ills, and a careful delineation of the moral character of each. Perhaps we might even attempt temporarily to put the words "racism" and "racist" on hold; or, at least, whenever we are tempted to use them, we might try to use different words to express what we mean. Perhaps doing so will lead us to a more comprehensive, yet more nuanced, understanding of what we thought we were trying to do in offering accounts of "racism."