

Chapter Title: Origins of a Prejudice: The Roots of Racial Discrimination

Book Title: The Colours of the Empire

Book Subtitle: Racialized Representations during Portuguese Colonialism

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Published by: Berghahn Books

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt9qd0x0.7>

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Origins of a Prejudice

The Roots of Racial Discrimination

The discovery of human variety: early formulations

According to some authors,¹ racial exclusion cannot be seen as an operative concept in the structure of ancient Greek society. Since no racial conception of the individual seems to have existed in this period, no term existed to designate it (Goldberg 2002). The same holds for medieval society, although in a more complex sense. The word ‘race’ occasionally appears in translations of classical and medieval texts as a rendering of ‘species’, and what it designates is typically ‘populations’ or humankind in general. Ancient Greek society *did* practise discrimination and exclusion, but neither seems to have been based on racial factors. In Herodotus (fifth century BC), for example, we can observe a discourse which excludes ‘barbarians’ from Greek society on ideological grounds – but an interest in ‘scientifically’² describing those excluded, determining to what extent they were or were not ‘barbarians’, is equally evident. Ancient authors also mentioned ‘anthropophagites’ or ‘man-eaters’, later known as ‘cannibals’.³ And in the Hippocratic Corpus (fourth century BC) we find an attempt to explain the physical and mental differences between the inhabitants of Europe and Asia in terms of environmental influence. So while the Greek texts do contain instances of ethnocentric

1. The authors cited in this chapter are those who most frequently appear in the literature published in Portugal in the early twentieth century or who had the greatest influence on an international level.

2. The case of the Pygmies, for example, as reported in Herodotus (Jahoda, 1999: 1).

3. ‘Cannibalism’ is also one of the ‘key symbols’ by which we recognize ‘savagery’ (Jahoda 1999).

and xenophobic discrimination and claims of cultural superiority, these differences do not seem to have been based on biological factors.

Just as Antiquity referred to them in cultural terms, 'modern' discourse has located racial differences in 'nature'. But if racial prejudice did not exist in Antiquity, how do we explain the emergence of the idea of White superiority during the Enlightenment? There are, after all, European texts (written by Greeks) which discuss the parity of Europeans and Blacks in terms of beauty, culture and intellectual capacity. Why then did the Renaissance exclude statues of Black people from its supposed revival of classical aesthetic ideals? It would seem that in ancient Greece and Rome statues of Black Africans, with the bodily proportions and physical characteristics proper to them, were marginal to cultural life. The presence of Blacks was tolerated, sometimes even venerated, but not in association with ideals of beauty.

In medieval European thought, individuals were conceived as subject to theological categories. Classification and discrimination operated from a different perspective. Discourse on the 'other' was principally informed by the distinction between Christians and non-Christians. However, the artistic depictions found in medieval literature include strange and exotic beings which are a mixture of human and animal elements. Many of these show the influence of the mythological figures of Antiquity, but others are based on accounts of human beings who were different, were from remote places or had physical defects (Jahoda 1999). In these representations it is common for the devil to be depicted as a Black person or dressed in black. On the level of language, Western discourse is full of dichotomies in which white represents purity and virginity and black represents impurity, evil and, therefore, inferiority. One work containing representations similar to those described above and influential in the medieval period was the *Natural History* of Pliny the Elder (AD 23?–79?), with its accounts of strange, exotic and frightening humanoid creatures of all shapes and sizes. Pliny's catalogue drew largely on Greek sources. In the Middle Ages, individuals who were exotic or in any way different were designated 'monsters', and the birth of a baby with physical defects was seen as a portent of celestial and terrestrial calamity. Generally speaking, these beings elicited disgust, and their only chance of salvation lay in baptism, whereby they could become rational creatures endowed with souls. This definition of humanity in relation to its rationality predates the modern emphasis on rational capacity, which was seen as differing across different racial groups (Goldberg 2002: 285). And yet, the Middle Ages still lacked a specific category for designating 'race' or racial differentiation. By the late Middle Ages, however, there was increased contact between peoples

of diverse geographic origins and with physical and cultural differences. The classical ideas of Pliny and Strabo (60 BC–AD 25?)⁴ considering the equatorial regions to be unfit for human habitation were proven wrong. Western Africa was conquered and exploited, its populations enslaved by the Spanish and Portuguese, in a process which had its parallels across the ocean in the New World. Although an explorer such as Christopher Columbus might have expected to encounter the monstrous beings described in Antiquity, this was not what he found. As Pliny's categories grew increasingly ill-defined, the monster of the popular imagination was supplanted by the 'savage' – a human being similar to a monkey, naked, hirsute but lacking facial hair, carrying a club or even a tree trunk. This caricature bears comparison with later depictions of the 'caveman'. The 'savage' as thus depicted represented violence, indiscipline, wantonness, absence of civilization, sin, irrationality and immorality (Jahoda 1999). At the same time, the concept of 'race' began to emerge as part of the European social consciousness. From the fifteenth century onwards, non-European Christians were gradually excluded from the domain of Christendom. In papal documents of this period we find Europe described as a collective 'we'; the term 'race' was to emerge shortly afterwards. *Race* as we use it in English is believed to derive from a French word which originally designated the royal families which ruled France in the Middle Ages (Augstein 1996).

By the sixteenth century, the cultural centre of gravity had shifted from Jerusalem to Europe. Under the influence of mercantile capitalism and advances in technology, race began to be defined in relation to 'others' – Africans, Native Americans, Asians – who were held to be inferior. Over the course of four centuries of conquest and colonial exploitation, the West imposed its dominion over non-European societies. By the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries we begin to see value judgements in the accounts of travellers and European *conquistadores*. Cortés described Aztec societies as most agreeable, and said that their qualities revealed what was best in America. For Cortés, the New World seemed to lie somewhere between two Old Worlds: one was White, Christian Europe, and the other was Africa, which was neither Christian nor White. For the Dominican friar Bartolomé de las Casas,⁵ the 'Indians' of the New World were docile and fit to receive the holy Catholic faith; but

4. At a time when Africa was still confused with Asia, Strabo attempted to describe a number of population groups, although he had no firsthand experience of them, on the basis of the accounts brought home by travellers. See *The Geography of Strabo*, 1932, in Jahoda (1999).

5. Bartolomé de las Casas was born in Seville in 1470. He studied in Salamanca and first travelled to the Americas as a counsellor in 1502. Here he was deeply struck by the

their 'physical weakness' and 'scant inclination for heavy work' placed them in opposition to the 'physical vigour of the Africans' – reflections which made Bartolomé de las Casas hit on the idea of 'exporting the Blacks to America' to relieve the Indians (Mazzoleni 1992: 60). In the famous letter of Pêro Vaz de Caminha to Manuel I of Portugal on the 'finding' of Brazil, written in Porto Seguro de Vera Cruz on 1 May 1500, we can clearly detect the curiosity and sense of enchantment elicited by the 'Natives',⁶ who are described in minute detail. Pêro Vaz de Caminha emphasizes their nudity, which seems to have been the source of some discomfiture:

The men of the land are young and well built ... In complexion they are *pardo*,⁷ with a reddish tinge, with fine, well made faces and good noses. They go around naked with no covering, and think nothing either of covering or showing their modesties. And this they do with as much innocence as they show their faces ... Also there were plenty of comely young women, with long black hair over their shoulders, and their modesties so high, so tight and so hairless.

The poet Luís Vaz de Camões (1524?–1580) worked in the service of the Portuguese empire from 1553, the year of his arrival in Goa, until 1570, when he returned to Lisbon. Camões's descriptions of the peoples he meets on his travels reveal fascination, revulsion and estrangement. In his references to Africans in his epic poem *The Lusíads*, Camões uses expressions such as 'peoples denied the colour of day by the son of Clymene', 'strange people', 'Black people', 'strange black-skinned being', 'naked and the colour of darkest night' (Canto V). They inhabited an Africa that was 'ignorant and full to brimming with ugliness'; the Africans were, in essence, a 'lawless', 'wild', 'Black and naked' people (Canto X).

In the languages of early sixteenth-century Europe, the word 'race' designated 'lineage', i.e. a group of people descending from a common ancestor believed to have endowed them with identical characteristics. This remained the predominant acceptance of 'race' until around 1800 (Banton [1987] 1998). In the 'lineage' conception of 'race', physical ap-

ill-treatment of the Indian slaves, and crossed the Atlantic on several occasions to solicit the Spanish king on their behalf.

6. Until then, the only ethnic groups known to the Portuguese were Arabs, Africans, Jews and Asians. Africans began arriving in Portugal in the fifteenth century as slaves, disembarking in the Algarve, the Sado and later Lisbon. They later began to be sent to Brazil. The price of an African slave varied depending on sex, age and health. Africans also appeared in the theatre and dances, or were employed as court jesters. In the eighteenth century they are known to have taken part in bullfights (Tinhorão 1988).

7. Light brown.

pearance was not the fundamental index of difference. In the eighteenth century, ‘race’ appeared in translations as one of the many renderings of the Latin *gens* (‘clan’) and *genus* (‘kind’); other synonyms were ‘stock’, ‘tribe’, ‘family’ and ‘nation’. From now on, social differentiation acquired a more specifically racial dimension.

Human variety was also addressed in political and philosophical treatises. In his *First Treatise on Government* (1689), John Locke⁸ (1632–1704) argued against slavery. For this influential British empiricist, all human beings were free, with equal rational capacities. However, some commentators on Locke’s work argue that he contradicted his own principle not only in his comments on slavery in the *Second Treatise*, but also in his conduct as a colonial administrator and secretary to the Lords Proprietor of South Carolina. Generally speaking, empiricism encouraged the tabulation of perceptible human differences, from which it then deduced ‘natural’ differences. Rationalism, meanwhile, posited innate, and especially mental, differences⁹ in its explanation of behavioural differences. As Goldberg (2002: 289) wrote, this ‘contrast between Lockean empiricism and Leibnizean¹⁰ rationalism on the nature of racialized subjectivity and the implications for the domain of the moral stand as prototype of the contrast between two great philosophical representatives of the Enlightenment, Hume and Kant’.

The emergence of ‘modern’ racism

For some authors, ‘modernity’ can be associated with ‘a time period and with an initial geographical location’ (Giddens [1990] 1998: 1). For others, it is a period of ‘movement, of flux, of change and of unpredictability’ (Lash and Friedman 1992: 1). The rhetoric and discourse

8. Locke’s key work, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), proposed a systematic analysis of the origin, essence and certainty of human knowledge. According to Marvin Harris, the period elapsing between the publication of this work and the French Revolution marks the limits of the Enlightenment, during which anthropological theory began to develop ([1968] 1981: 1).

9. According to this theory, a form of rationalism which we find in Descartes and his follower Leibniz, certain categories of knowledge are innate to us, deriving not from experience but from the structures inherent to reason. Leibniz argued in favour of innate ideas, and of our innate ability to formulate certain concepts independently of experience (Hessen [1926] 1980).

10. In his posthumously published *Nouveaux essais sur l’entendement humain* (1765), Leibniz rebutted the epistemological point of view supported by Locke. George Berkeley’s *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* (1710) and David Hume’s *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739–40) and *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748) further developed Locke’s views (Hessen [1926] 1980).

of modernity are generally characterized in terms of rupture, ongoing quest and innovation. Its logic appears to be rooted in three major phenomena and their respective constructs: production, organization and power (Balandier 1988: 10–20, 148–49). Owing to a whole series of favourable factors, ranging from climate to politics, the rise of the West had begun with the Neolithic Revolution. This development continued through the period of the maritime discoveries and the Renaissance. Transformations in the mechanisms and technologies of power began to emerge in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Foucault [1975–76] 1992). In the nineteenth century came the ‘subjection of Nature’s forces to man: machinery, the application of chemistry in industry and agriculture, steam navigation, railways, electric telegraphs, clearing of whole continents for cultivation, canalization of rivers’ (Marx and Engels 1848: 12). One century later, we can add to that list automobiles, electronics, nuclear energy, cybernetics and the increasing presence of information technology in everyday life, air travel, genetics, biotechnology and major breakthroughs in medicine. However, what makes these changes distinctively ‘modern’ is not their invention per se, but rather a process of investigation, discovery and innovation allied with the determination to transform theory into practice and use knowledge to change the world (Berman 1992: 35). But modernity can also be described in terms of a rupture in the passage of time. This rupture comes about as a consequence of the reification of the opposition between an obsolete past and a heroic, triumphant present. For the ‘moderns’, to speak of progress and the accumulation of knowledge was to speak of a past which investigated without systematically arranging, and of a present and future which investigate, classify, and systemize, which devise methods and look for solutions to problems. ‘Modern’ science therefore construed nature as something which had to be appropriated (Escobar 1994: 213) and (re)ordered if progress was to be made. According to Latour ([1991] 1997), however, if the success of modernity depends on its ability to produce ontologies which ensure nature does not interfere with culture, and vice versa, such a task of purification lies well beyond the scope of modernity, for there are many situations in which ‘hybrids’ persist; which is to say, they have not been subjected to purification and therefore cannot be represented in ‘modern’ terms. Similarly, the difficulty of representing these hybrids, of giving them a place in a system which establishes a clear separation of nature from culture, made them figures of suspicion. And so the difficulty of representing *Mestiços* – individuals who cannot be assigned a given ‘type’ – led some scientists to consider them as a threat. For those who sought to isolate the primary essences of the world, the hybrid should not exist. Yet ‘modern’

anthropological practice found it difficult to separate Black from White, Western from non-Western, and failed to prevent the propagation of the *Mestiço* person, the embodiment of the hybridism which supposedly threatened to bring humanity to degeneracy.

The invention of the norms and ideals of beauty

The Enlightenment was a dual revolution: in aesthetic and intellectual conventions on the one hand, and against Christianity and its old superstitions on the other. Racial categorization at this time was to be found not only in political and philosophical debate but also in art. The structure and language of the 'modern' discourse typically employed in describing what we see as 'beautiful', 'important', 'reasonable' and 'valuable' were influenced by the idea of White superiority (Mosse 1992). One idea never brought into the epistemological field of this discourse was the idea of the equality of Black people in terms of beauty, culture and intellectual capacity. This was an act of discursive exclusion whereby the idea is effectively silenced. It is more than a reflection of the fact that at this time Blacks were not associated with power; it also reveals that through the late seventeenth century and for most of the eighteenth century – i.e. the period we designate the Enlightenment – 'modern' discourse was structured in a way which promoted the idea of 'white supremacy' (West 2002). Attitudes such as differentiating, comparing, hierarchizing and excluding were adopted with reference to a 'norm'. But the 'power of the norm' only operates 'within a system of formal equality, since within a homogeneity that is the rule, the norm introduces, as a useful imperative and as a result of measurement, all the shading of individual differences' (Foucault 1977: 184). In other words, only within a relatively uniform complex can we encounter a 'norm' which serves as the benchmark from which we can compile an inventory of the differences existing within this complex. Applying this formula to human groups, it is only because they are similar to one another that we can make comparisons and identify differences between them. The 'norm' against which human differences were thrown into relief was the European body; and the discrepancies between White and non-White bodies supposedly evidenced 'racial' differences.

Knowledge in the Enlightenment was a means of wielding power, and power itself was also constructed by knowledge. 'Modern' discourse therefore incorporates concepts, metaphors and norms which shape the understanding of those who evaluate and formulate value judgements. The norms incorporated in 'modern' discourse shaped these formulations, while the language used denoted what was valued, in opposition to what was not valued and was therefore omitted. The Scientific Revo-

lution,¹¹ whose principal origins lie in the pre-Enlightenment intellectual watersheds of the seventeenth century, was important because it heralded a new age in which the authority of science was paramount. More than that, it made two fundamental concepts central to its worldview: 'observation' and 'evidence'. Descartes played a key role in this process, in associating the scientific urge to explain the world with the philosophical urge to portray and represent it. When 'modern' science emerged, it was already primed with this urge to represent, re-represent and expound everything that exists. As Mosse (1992) noted, science and aesthetics exerted a mutual influence on one another. Science, influenced by 'modern' philosophical discourse, promoted and stimulated the observation, comparison and ordering of the physical characteristics of bodies, and in each of these activities the cultural and aesthetic norms of the classical world were the benchmark. Behind these norms, then, was an ideal against which observations could be ordered and compared – an ideal informed by the aesthetic values of beauty and the proportions of the human form, and of classical cultural models of equilibrium, self-control and harmony. When combined with the need to justify practices of domination, 'modern' discourse helped unleash 'modern' racism.

One of the new sciences to emerge in the latter half of the eighteenth century was anthropology: the study of humanity and its place in nature, and based in its early days on the observation, measurement and comparison of different groups of men and animals. But these observations, measurements and comparisons were grounded in value judgements themselves based on the aesthetic criteria of Antiquity. This explains, in part, the Enlightenment's enthusiasm for reviving the 'classics' and reinstating the authority of classical authors. For the new science of anthropology, therefore, the nearer an individual approximated to the ideal proportions and profiles of Antiquity, the greater the value assigned to him. And these 'norms' were also embraced by many writers, artists and academics of the Enlightenment. In his *History of Ancient Art*, for instance, J. J. Winckelmann described ancient Greece as a world of beautiful bodies. Taking the Greek world as his inspiration, Winckelmann devised a set of rules for art and aesthetics designed to determine the relative proportions of eyes and eyebrows, shoulder blades, hands and feet, and – especially – noses. These rules could serve as a guide for measuring individuals or whole 'cultures'.¹² For classical aesthetics,

11. Leading names in this revolution included Copernicus and Kepler in astronomy, Galileo and Newton in physics, Descartes and Leibniz in mathematics, and Francis Bacon in philosophy.

12. Mosse (1992) has analyzed the aesthetic strain in 'race' theorists such as Buffon, Camper and Lavater, and the influence of the art historian J. J. Winckelmann on their work.

beauty was a property which the individual possessed, in much the same way as goods are possessed in classical economic theory. On this view, individuals not possessing certain 'natural' qualities were poor; and just as with laissez-faire economics, this was the responsibility of the individual and no one else. Beauty was gauged in terms of characteristics such as fair skin, straight hair, balanced bodily proportions and so on. Thus, just as Locke suggested that economic poverty inevitably drives individuals to work in factories and mines for scant recompense, 'racial poverty' (an expression used by Goldberg [2002]) would justify the inferiorization and subjugation of people who did not conform to the 'norm'.

Theories on the origin of humanity: monogenism and polygenism

As we have seen above, the eighteenth century devoted considerable attention to human variety and the issues this variety raised. One of the dominant models in attempts to explain phenotypical variation in human beings was the Chain of Being, a theory founded on the supposed immutability of the species, which were ranged in a hierarchy rising from the humblest of living beings all the way up to God. It was this theory of creation around which the debate on the origins of human life revolved – a debate which opposed monogenist and polygenist interpretations of human origins and continued from the eighteenth into the nineteenth century. The debate between monogenists and polygenists placed the egalitarian model of the Enlightenment in opposition to racial doctrines. According to the monogenist view, which predominated until the mid-nineteenth century, all humanity had common origins but had been divided by language since the Tower of Babel. It had then undergone physical and cultural degeneration in the following millennia, as it spread into ever more inhospitable regions. This was the doctrine supported by organized religion, which maintained that all human beings descended from Adam and Eve – and that all differences, therefore, were merely superficial (Banton [1987] 1998). The proponents of monogenism vehemently believed in Scripture and saw the progress of humanity as a journey from perfection – the Garden of Eden – to imperfection and ultimate degeneration.¹³ They also maintained that differences were caused by the climate, milieu and living conditions of each population group. For the monogenists, ever since the expulsion from Eden the 'races' had been undergoing a process of degeneration which caused changes on various levels, with 'Whites' having been the least affected by this process of degeneration and 'Blacks' the most (Gould 1983: 36). In addition, the Bible – itself the source of the monogenist

13. Note that evolutionary theory plays no part in this debate, as this was an idea that appeared later.

principle – seemed to indicate that Africans were inferior. In the story of the Curse of Ham (Genesis 9:20–27), Noah¹⁴ puts a curse on his son Ham after the latter ‘saw him’ drunk and naked and reported the incident to his two brothers, Shem and Japheth. When Noah ‘awoke from his wine’ he pronounced a curse on Ham’s son Canaan, making him a servant of his uncles, Ham’s brothers Shem and Japheth: ‘a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren’. One interpretation of this story held that Africans who became slaves were the descendants of Ham. And yet it was largely the social, economic and political conditions in which colonialism, slavery, the exploration of Africa and the conquest of the New World occurred which were decisive in the discrimination and subjugation of the Africans (Smedley 1993).

Polygenism emerged in the mid-nineteenth century as a counterblast to the monogenist doctrine embraced by the church, and as a consequence of advances in the natural sciences. According to the polygenist view, ‘creation’ occurred in several different places, and this explained why human beings were different. The polygenists rejected the influence of the environment on physical appearance. On this view, the emphasis therefore shifted to the examination of the relations between biological data and human behaviour. Disciplines such as phrenology and anthropometrics, which sought to evaluate human capacities on the basis of the size and proportions of the brain, emerged as offshoots of polygenism.

The influence of Enlightenment thought

The thinkers of the eighteenth century played a major role in the formulation of discriminatory ideas. In the one camp were the humanist inheritors of the French Revolution of 1789, whose ideal was the equality of humankind; in the other were thinkers who emphasized not similarities but differences. Humanist literature and philosophy, and Rousseau’s celebration of the unity of humanity, were influential on the one side; as were the ideas of Buffon, with his insistence on essential differences between men, on the other. And it was to the great thinkers of the eighteenth century that the theorists of ‘race’ of the following century so often appealed. In the Enlightenment alone, figures such as Rousseau, Montesquieu and Voltaire in France, Hume and Jefferson in the English-speaking world, and Kant in the German orbit committed racist views to paper, in writings which ultimately conferred authority on the naturalists, anthropologists, physiognomists and phrenologists who sought to give ‘scientific’ legitimacy to such views. In the humanist view, all men had a singular and inherent ability to improve

14. According to the story in the Bible, it is from Shem, Ham and Japheth, all sons of Noah and fellow survivors of the Flood, that all the peoples of the earth descend.

themselves – an idea which was quite different from the view later expounded by the evolutionists of the nineteenth century. The idea that all men are born equal but incomplete is associated with Rousseau's idea of the 'good savage', the 'other' who in Rousseau's view was remote from and morally superior to Western man (Schwarcz 1995: 44–45). Rousseau also devised the notion of the 'primitive man' to designate human beings with desirable, i.e. uncorrupted, characteristics. Yet these notions must be seen as part of Enlightenment discourse on the exotic, not as an overestimation of the 'other'. So how did some Enlightenment philosophers manage to embrace ideas of equality without being inconsistent on the question of racial inferiority? The only way of sidestepping this problem was to deny Blacks their rational faculties and human condition. The categories 'pre-civilized' and 'primitive' designate beings with neither 'reason' nor 'autonomy'; and so they 'cannot be party to the general will and civil society' (Goldberg 2002: 294, 303). Despite the emergence of movements committed to the abolition of slavery based on the 'race' factor and appealing to none other than the universalist doctrines of the Enlightenment, in reality the equality model was applied only to the European, and more generally Western, subject. 'Race' became a natural, intemporal factor, and so discrimination was seen as unavoidable, something to be tolerated. For the polygenist Voltaire, for example, a hierarchy among the different 'races' could be established based on the analysis of their powers of reasoning and their capacities of affirmation and resistance: the 'Black race' was 'a species of men as different to ours as the race of Spaniards is to greyhounds' ([1756] 1963: 305). And in his *Peuple d'Amérique*, Voltaire argued that 'Negroes' (and 'Indians') were different people from Europeans.

Then there was David Hume (1711–76), whose essay *Of National Characters* identified moral and physical determinants of various nations. Physical determinants were climate and environment, i.e. the elements which the monogenists of the eighteenth century believed were responsible for human variations; moral determinants were customs, government, economic conditions and the external influences which affected the minds and habits of a population. According to Hume, the Jews were 'fraudulent', the Arabs 'uncouth and disagreeable', the Greeks 'deceitful, stupid and cowardly' – in contrast with the 'ingenuity, industry and activity' of their ancestors and the 'integrity, gravity and bravery' of their Turkish neighbours (Goldberg 2002: 292). For Hume, the English were superior to all others,¹⁵ in large part because they 'benefited from

15. Bacon and Berkeley had earlier assigned inferiority to the inhabitants of the far North and of the tropics, by contrast with those living in the temperate zones (Goldberg 2002: 292).

their governmental mixture of monarchy, aristocracy and bourgeois democracy' (Goldberg 2002: 292). As for 'non-whites', and 'negroes' especially, these were 'naturally inferior' (Wade 1997: 9; Goldberg 2002: 293). Hume's argument was an empirical one: 'only whites had produced anything notable and ingenious in the arts and sciences, and even the most lowly of white peoples ... had something to commend them.' But the 'negroes', 'even those living in Europe, had no accomplishments they could cite' (Goldberg 2002: 293). Like Locke before him, Hume thought there must be 'natural' differences between the descendants of these groups, a difference which justified their relative superiority and inferiority. Jefferson came to similar conclusions in *Notes on the State of Virginia*, where he maintained that the intellectual capacity of the 'black' was inferior to that of the 'white'. Hume's contemporary Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) was driven by the same curiosity when he adduced national characteristics in justification of racial differences. For Kant ([1764] 1953), the Germans were the exemplar of superiority to all others. He saw in them a 'synthesis of the English intuition for the sublime and the French feeling for the beautiful' (Goldberg 2002: 293). Kant ranked the peoples of the Orient (also designated the 'Mongolian race') variously. The Arabs were 'hospitable, generous and truthful', but were 'troubled by an "inflamed imagination" that tends to distort'; the Japanese were 'resolute but stubborn'; and the Indians and Chinese were 'dominated in their taste by the grotesque and monstrous' (Goldberg 2002: 293). On the lowest level of civilization, among the 'savages' bereft of 'moral understanding', came the Blacks, whom Kant described as 'stupid'. Slightly less savage were the Native Americans, described by Kant as 'honourable' and 'honest'. Basing his analysis partly on the arguments of Hume, Kant drew a distinction between the Native Americans, who were capable of being civilized, and the Africans, who were not.

The Enlightenment's most widely cited reason for human variety was climate – an idea first found in the Hippocratic Corpus. In *De l'esprit des lois* (1748), Montesquieu drew parallels between climatic variations and levels of civilization. The farther south we travelled, according to Montesquieu, the more defects and fewer virtues we encountered in men. Building on Montesquieu's foundations, Adam Smith, Adam Ferguson and William Robertson considered levels of civilization to be related to means of subsistence. This idea that milieu explained physical differences prevailed right to the end of the eighteenth century. Some of the views of the most radical 'environmentalists' of the period also demonstrate how the restrictive power of 'modern' discourse delimited the theoretical alternatives and options with regard to the idea of 'White supremacy'. Samuel Stanhope Smith, for example, opposed the idea of

hierarchies of 'race' and argued in favour of intermarriage in the United States; humanity, for Stanhope Smith, was a single species and human diversity was due to natural, environmental causes. Swayed by the ideals of classical aesthetics, however, he also affirmed in his *Essays* (1787) that physical variations were degenerations relative to an ideal state as embodied by the civilized White.

For the Scottish philosopher Henry Home, Lord Kames (1696–1782), humankind derived from not one but several sources.¹⁶ Kames combined polygenism with climatic factors, but did not view the latter as decisive in the development of civilization. Indeed, the polygenists generally insisted on the inefficacy of the environment for altering human constitutions, arguing that the 'races', since they were adapted to one milieu, could not adjust to another. They contended, therefore, that the different 'races' in fact constituted different species¹⁷ and that, as in the animal world, one species could not breed with another. One of the major figures in this debate was Georges Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon (1707–88), author of the 44-volume *Histoire naturelle* published between 1749 and 1804. For Foucault (1966), Buffon's work constituted the beginnings of a 'general science of man'. This work centred on the evolution of physical characteristics such as skin colour and stature. Like the eighteenth-century naturalist Linnaeus (1707–78), Buffon saw the 'races' as random variations; but 'white' was the 'real and natural colour of man', with the 'Blacks' and other 'races' examples of variations on the original. According to Buffon, the darkest 'Blacks' were to be found in the hottest regions of the planet. In addition, a 'savage' transported to Europe would gradually become not only 'civilized', but also White. Although an opponent of slavery, Buffon affirmed that 'Blacks' were lacking in intellect. His definition of species was based 'not on the criterion of resemblance but ... that of lineage' (Augstein 1996: xvi): all animals that could procreate among themselves belonged to the same species, and, since all the human 'races' were capable of reproducing among each other, they therefore all belonged to the same species. The example of horses showed that 'it was necessary to cross breeds in order

16. Not an entirely new idea: in 1520 Paracelsus had argued that 'Blacks' and 'primitives' had separate origins from Europeans. In 1591, Giordano Bruno made a similar claim, this time with regard to the Jews and Ethiopians. His fellow Italian Lucilio Vanini maintained that the Ethiopians were descended from monkeys and had formerly gone around on all fours. These arguments in favour of the separate origins of humanity went against the position of the church, and Bruno and Vanini were among many heretics condemned to burn at the stake (West 2002).

17. The number varied from author to author – for some there were two, for others, dozens (Stocking 1988: 6).

to maintain the quality of the parent generation' (Augstein 1996: xvi). For the German physician Franz Joseph Gall (1758–1828), the intellectual faculties were 'impressed' upon each individual while still in the fetal state, and could therefore be read in the shape of the head. Taking this physiological premise as their starting point, Gall and his collaborator Johann Caspar Spurzheim (1776–1832) set about establishing phrenology¹⁸ as a science. To do so, they visited 'learned institutions ... in order to convince their scientific peers that the conformation of the skull was indicative of individual character and abilities' – or defects – of its owner (Augstein 1996: xix–xx; Baroja [1987] 1995: 205).

Another product of eighteenth-century thought was the discipline of physiognomical character studies. One major name in this field was Johann Caspar Lavater (1740–1801). For Lavater, painting was the 'mother' of the new discipline of physiognomy, and Greek statues embodied the ideals of beauty. Unlike the naturalists, Lavater did not advance a set of 'ideal' measurements. Instead, he argued that certain combinations of elements were apt to cause awestruck admiration, and that our first visual impression of a person was always the most accurate. A Protestant pastor from Zürich and a profoundly religious man, Lavater maintained that the facial appearances of living creatures indicated their internal, moral configuration and denoted the influence of the divine on man (Augstein 1996; Baroja 1995). For Kant, our appraisal of physical appearances was always subjective. In his observations on the Greek ideal of beauty, Kant revealed a knowledge of the comparative studies of Camper and Blumenbach,¹⁹ the precursors of modern 'physical anthropology', or anthropometrics as it is now better known. For Kant, physiognomic studies designated the identification of the internal characteristics of man by the examination of external, involuntary features (Kant 1935: 195–96). The two most civilized peoples on earth in terms of their innate characters, according to Kant, were the English and the French.²⁰

Finally, a word about the contribution of philology to the debate. In the 1780s, William Jones (1746–94), a judge in Calcutta, discovered a

18. Phrenology or craniology attracted criticism from the anatomist Cuvier, and from theologians. It was taken up with much enthusiasm in Britain and the United States, however. And it gained a new lease of life with the systemization of racist ideology in the nineteenth century, thanks not only to Spurzheim but to other theorists such as Anders Retzius and Carl Gustav Carus.

19. Kant knew these natural historians personally. Camper's conclusions were based on the examination of only eight skulls; Blumenbach's, on 245. The latter's work was a precursor of 'ethnic craniology'.

20. Kant's classification did not include the Germans – as a German himself, Kant perhaps wished to avoid charges of vanity.

genealogical link between ancient Sanskrit and the modern European languages. Jones believed that a comparative study of these languages could yield valuable data on the origins of humanity. For Jones and other authors, languages were 'living' organisms whose history shadowed the history of mankind. This connection legitimized philology as a science, placing it on a level with other historical sciences like geology and comparative anatomy (Augstein 1996).

Natural history, classifications and the emergence of 'race' as a category

To understand how the concept of 'race' operates, it is important first to examine the contexts in which the concept functions as an element in a system of classification. Until the end of the eighteenth century, natural history was essentially a static discipline. Investigation centred not on the history or evolution of phenomena, but instead on their classification and relations. The criteria of classification were based not so much on anatomical and physiological knowledge as on external observation. This method took its cue from the Chain of Being model mentioned above, which viewed creation as a continuous, interlinking series, arranged hierarchically, from the celestial creatures down to the human, animal, vegetable and mineral worlds. The principal objective of natural history was to observe, compare, measure and order animal and human bodies on the basis of the visible (particularly physical) characteristics whereby living beings could be identified and differentiated in classifications, taxonomies, tables, indexes and inventories. Or as Foucault put it, 'natural history is no more than the naming of the visible' (1966: 178). However, as the sheer variety of taxonomies shows, one thing that this approach failed to deliver was consensus. In the pre-Darwinian context, the species were considered as unchanging, and the members of each species as holders of an essence which distinguished them from all other species. In connection with this view there emerged notions such as 'racial purity',²¹ according to which miscegenation would be disastrous, as it would contaminate that same 'essence' which – since it was presumed to exist – ought to be preserved. Of all the taxonomies devised, the one proposed by Linnaeus gained the widest acceptance.²² Like other contemporary biologists, Linnaeus believed that the species

21. The concept of 'purity of blood' enjoyed much currency in the sixteenth century as justification of discrimination against the Jews and people of Jewish descent. But it died out over time, and should not be viewed as a precedent of what occurred in Europe in the twentieth century (Mosse 1992).

22. However, as early as 1684 the French doctor François Bernier had used 'race' as a differentiating category in the classification of individuals of different skin colours – in Bernier's case, Europeans, Africans, Orientals and Lapps.

were indivisible units created by God at the beginning of the world, and that variations within species were due to imperfections in the reproduction of the original 'type'. In his *Systema Naturae*, published in 1735, Linnaeus classified all living organisms by genus and species, laying the foundations for later taxonomies. Linnaeus organized the various species – each an immutable prototype – by number and kind (variations found within a single species, e.g. 'race'). All members of a given species were capable of generating fertile offspring by reproducing with fellow members of their species. For Linnaeus, there were four human 'races' – *Homo europaeus*, *Homo asiaticus*, *Homo afer* and *Homo americanus*. He also presented considerations on the subdivisions within the *Homo* genus, and classed humans with monkeys.

Some authors argue that Linnaeus merely organized living organisms into one great chain, but without arranging them in hierarchical order. Yet the classification criteria he applied to humans were not restricted to the physical sphere – they also included evaluatory aspects we would now call sociocultural, psychological and temperamental. For example, he drew a distinction between the civilized *Homo sapiens* – European – and *Homo afer* – African. And while Linnaeus devoted special attention to the African woman, he had nothing to say of her European, American or Asian counterparts. In Linnaeus's taxonomy the 'Yellow' man was described as vainglorious, greedy, stern and melancholic, the 'Black' man as slothful, lazy and negligent, the American as stubborn and timid and the 'White' as lively and inventive.²³ But advances in anatomical studies were to prove Linnaeus wrong in many aspects. It wasn't just his thesis that humanity was one animal species among many that was contentious.²⁴ The evidence of human variety posed a number of questions: If all the groups of humanity descended from Noah and his offspring, why did people look so different? Why did some groups seem to be more advanced than others? This brings us to another major figure in this period. Georges Cuvier (1769–1832) was a French anatomist who introduced into the specialist literature of the early nineteenth century the term 'race' and the idea of the inheritance of physical characteristics among the various human groups (Stocking 1968). Cuvier showed that comparative anatomy could be useful for the study of the past, and suggested that there were differences between the physiological types of

23. The distinctions Linnaeus draws between the European (sanguine), American (choleric), Asian (melancholic) and African (phlegmatic) are styled on the Galenic theory of humours (Stocking 1988).

24. Aristotle included man in the animal kingdom, but distinguished him from other animals by virtue of his physical and cultural characteristics.

'savages' and Europeans. Perhaps because he was a devout Protestant, Cuvier did not follow through on this idea (Augstein 1996).

'Modern' discourse thus played an important role in the development of classificatory schemes which used 'race' as a category of natural history.²⁵ Since 'race' was held to be 'natural', it could be used as a tool for making social, moral and cultural distinctions between individuals. The origins of the racial theories of the nineteenth century must therefore be understood in the context of the eighteenth-century vision of humanity. As Augstein (1996) noted, no single philosophy, movement or author can be considered the sole precursor of these theories. Instead, we have to look to a confluence of different phenomena: the formation of a liberal, secular and antimonarchical politics; the emergence of what would come to be known as the nation-state; the increase in biological and zoological research; phrenological and physiognomical research; political imperatives and the need to scientifically justify slavery; and philology and the study of language as a mirror of national character.

Racialism: the racial theories of the nineteenth century

In the nineteenth century, one trend of thought upheld the place of Blacks as members of humanity, while another (the evolutionist view) maintained that the Blacks were somewhere between the animal and human state. The nineteenth century has been called the 'age of scientific racism', and it was in this century that the emphasis on the differences between human individuals gained the ascendancy, with links and correlations being established between genetic data, intellectual capacity and moral behaviour.²⁶ According to some naturalists, the basis for these correlations could be physical features such as the skull, chin or nose. As variation was a phenomenon of no importance for the early taxonomists, organisms were classified into 'types', or predetermined categories, in accordance with their correspondence with the 'type' by which the species

25. Ashley Montagu was one of the authors who argued that the genealogy of racism in the 'modern' West is inseparable from the emergence of 'race' as a category of classification in natural history (Montagu 1974).

26. The correlation – or the attempt to establish a correlation – between body and behaviour, between bone structure and other physical features such as the appearance of the hair or colour of the skin, is examined in *Bones, Bodies, Behavior* (Stocking 1988). On the attempts to correlate morphological characteristics with behavioural patterns in the North American and French traditions in the nineteenth century, see Stocking (1968), Stepan (1982) and Gould (1983); on similar attempts in Brazil, see Correia (1982) and Schwarcz (1995).

had been defined. In the mid-nineteenth century, this practice extended to subspecies and to geographic 'race'. Mayr (1963) designated this particular manifestation of essentialism as 'typological thinking'. The naturalists of the nineteenth century sought to order, organize and classify existing facts and new discoveries as they emerged. The concept of 'type' was borrowed from botany and zoology, and based on the assumption that each 'race' was a permanent type with certain innate characteristics which passed from one generation to the next.²⁷ The racial 'types' were ordered hierarchically, just as racial 'lineages' had been previously; but the reasons for establishing the hierarchy were now given as innate, biological differences, as Lamarck (1744–1829) proposed in 1802 (Mayr 1982: 108). And if 'natural' differences were 'biological' (Wade 1997: 10), then individuals conforming to, for example, the Native American 'type' might be encountered anywhere in the world, on any continent – it was enough for them to have phenotypical characteristics in common with the Indigenous people of the Americas. Once the racial types had been established, they could be used as a template by which the behaviours and cognitive capacities of the different groups could be read. Together with other determinants such as climate and geography, the taxonomy of bodies could, it was believed, explain social and cultural differences. One idea to emerge from this methodology in the nineteenth century was that northern Europeans were 'superior races' who enjoyed the 'ideal climate'. Thus, the darker races and tropical climates would never be capable of producing civilizations as evolved as those of northern Europe (Skidmore [1974] 1989: 44). And yet these 'tropical climates' belonged to the very same places Europe had been appropriating for itself since the fifteenth century – Africa and Latin America.

The earliest studies in craniology were conducted by Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752–1840), a professor of medicine at the University of Göttingen. Blumenbach's findings led him to question the views on hybridism held by Buffon, whose work had inspired Blumenbach's own research. But since, like Buffon, he was a monogenist, Blumenbach looked for other ways of proving the unity of the species (Augstein 1996). For Blumenbach, physical variations were due to circumstances of climate. Like Linnaeus and Buffon before him, he maintained that 'races' were merely variations. Blumenbach's work was also influenced by the aesthetic and cultural ideals of ancient Greece. Following the monogenist model, he saw 'original' man – the 'Caucasian' – as having

27. The polygenists preferred the concept of 'type' to 'species' or even 'race', as it allowed them to counter the monogenist argument that variations within a given group were sometimes greater than the variations observed between one group and another.

degenerated in two different directions, in both cases driven by climatic influences: to the American and thence to the Mongol, and to the Malayan and thence to the Ethiopian. He also maintained that the more moderate the climate, the prettier the face. As they lived in latitudes far removed from a temperate climate, therefore, Blacks were necessarily less handsome (Mosse 1992; Stocking 1988). Blumenbach's division of humanity into five varieties – Caucasian, Mongolian, Ethiopian, American and Malayan – dates from 1781 (Augstein 1996). It was based on such criteria as skull size and the shape of the chin and nose, and it was to prove highly influential in the following century.

The Dutch anatomist Pieter Camper (1722–89) devised a system of cranial measurement based on 'facial angle', i.e. the degree of facial prognatism. For Camper, the 'ideal' facial angle was 100 degrees, as found in the statues of the ancient Greeks. This standard squared with Winckelmann's classical ideal of beauty, on which Camper's belief that the Greek proportions exemplified beauty and embodied perfection was based. Using this technique, Camper claimed that the facial angle of Europeans was approximately 97 degrees, while that of Blacks was between 60 and 70 degrees, i.e. closer to the measurements recorded for apes and dogs. Some anthropologists later appropriated Camper's 'facial angle' technique as a scientific method, although Camper himself claimed his main objective in devising it had been to stimulate an interest in classical Antiquity among young artists. Like other theorists of 'race', Camper actually had a background in the visual arts (Mosse 1992).

Another metric, the cephalic index, was devised by the Swiss anthropologist Anders Retzius (1796–1860) in the mid-nineteenth century. An expression of the ratio of head width to length, the cephalic index classified human heads into three categories – dolichocephalic, mesocephalic, and brachycephalic – in quantitative studies on variations in brain size and shape. With this index, each element, isolated from its original context, could be classified and assigned its level on a scale of evolution.

Meanwhile, the rivalry between monogenists and polygenists continued, with the appearance of learned societies such as the Société d'Anthropologie de Paris, founded in 1859 by the anatomist, craniologist and polygenist Paul Broca (1824–80). A disciple of William Frederic Edwards (1777–1842) early in his career, Broca took the skull as his primary object of study, on the basis of which he sought to establish a correlation between physical and mental inferiority. This method, Broca believed, would enable the reconstitution of 'types' or 'pure races' – hybridization was to be condemned, as it could cause sterility (Schwarcz 1995: 54). Broca maintained that 'in general, the brain is larger in men than in women, in eminent men than in men of mediocre talent, and in

the superior races than in the inferior' (Gould 1986: 168). A polygenist like Gall and Topinard, Broca insisted on the 'immutability of races' – going so far as to link the infertility of the mule with sterility in the Mulatto (Broca 1864). Both Broca (1861) and Haeckel some time later (1900) classified the 'races' on a scale ranging from the most to the least evolved, with the White European or 'Caucasian' at the top of the scale (Coon²⁸ 1962). Another polygenist and a follower of L. Agassiz, Samuel George Morton (1799–1851) drew physical and moral comparisons between the populations of the United States and Egypt on the basis of their skull measurements. The findings of this research were published in *Crania Americana* (1839) and *Crania Aegyptiaca* (1844). Morton believed his method would enable comparisons between the human 'races', and between these and the animal kingdom.

As craniology became increasingly refined over the course of the nineteenth century with the development of craniometry, attempts were now made to confirm earlier theories on racial variation. Armand de Quatrefages (1810–92), a professor of anthropology at the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle in Paris, refined a number of cranial and facial metrics in his belief in the accuracy of anthropometric data. Similarly, for Topinard the 'measurement method' stood in opposition to the 'sentiment method' (Dias 1996: 31–33).

The earliest comprehensive expositions of racial theory were advanced by the anatomist Robert Knox (1793–1863) in Britain and by Joseph Arthur, Comte de Gobineau (1816–82), in France. In 1850, Knox published *Races of Men*, in which he asserted that 'race is everything'. In addition to refloating 'race' as a biological concept, Knox argued (against the views of the nineteenth-century naturalists) that the 'races' should not mix, for a 'Mixed race' was doomed to perish. Knox also rejected the idea that 'race' was influenced by the environment. Like Gobineau, he drew on the theories of the German author Gustav Klemm, who made a distinction between 'active races' and 'passive races'.

Polygenism thus came to reject the idea of equality in variety, and denied Rousseau's 'noble savage' any hope of improvement. The polygenists explained human variety in terms of racial theory, and in so doing provided a justification for inequality. Once legitimized in this way, inequality led to discrimination and various forms of social domination. Generally speaking, racial inferiority meant the inferiority of Blacks, outsiders and criminals. Classifications were used as the foundations of theories which, at bottom, legitimized imbalances of power. In other words, racial theories were racist not only because they upheld the exist-

28. Carleton S. Coon (1904–81) was a US physical anthropologist whose racial theory was based on his research on hominoid fossils.

tence of different 'races', but also because they ordered them according to a hierarchy. Based on the idea that, like animals, humans were divided into 'races', each with its own biological equipment, these theories were advanced as the explanation for differences in social development. The 'Whites', as conquerors and bringers of civilization, must be biologically superior. They were followed by the 'Yellows', then by the Native Americans, and then, in last place, by the African Blacks. The latter were considered to be incapable of initiative or any creative act, and therefore closer to the animal state. The anthropological method which legitimized these theories appealed to facts and numbers, which were to be allowed to speak for themselves without the intervention of the scientist and his subjectivity. The supposed objectivity of its methodology was designed to invest 'physical anthropology' with scientific legitimacy. But this way of conceiving science in terms of quantifiable data – and the use of instruments to obtain the data – was not exclusive to anthropology; it was common to all disciplines with aspirations to scientific status. And by the second half of the nineteenth century, 'race' (regardless of whether it was interpreted in monogenist or polygenist terms) was already being used as an ideological weapon in social and political debate.

Racial theories also made their presence felt outside the scientific sphere. The 'physiognomy of the peoples' was a recurrent theme in nineteenth-century art publications. One example, published in German and French in 1835 (see Baroja 1995: 223), was a picture album with accompanying text. Its author, Godefroy Schadow, was an artist with intellectual pretensions. His book contained drawings by travellers and artists of the racial physiognomic features of the peoples they had encountered. Schadow's work included reproductions of the skulls of different peoples, portraits of individuals in full face and profile, physiognomies of individuals supposedly representative of the 'Yellow' and Mongolian 'races', Oceania and 'Black Africa', Native Americans, Hindus, Jews, Spanish, French, Italians (these taken from classical portraits) and Germans, along with profiles of the faces of Spaniards and Russians, etc. On a more scientific level, Darwin (1809–82) attempted during his journeys to analyze the facial expressions of various peoples from supposedly different 'races'. Darwin arrived at the conclusion that facial expressions are the same in all people, regardless of racial variations (Baroja 1995: 223–30). Attempts at interpreting physiognomy continued, however. As late as the twentieth century the Portuguese anthropologist Mendes Correia could still claim that

[t]here are, in truth, simian features in the physiognomy of some degenerates and some inferior populations. But simian features are [also] found in mentally and morally superior individuals. The correspondence

between the physical and the moral exists. Some faces cannot fool us (M. Correia 1932: 1).

Race in theory and slavery in practice

Interestingly, racial theory reached its height just when slavery²⁹ and the slave trade were being abolished. As John Rex noted, in colonial societies the slave occupied the lowliest social position, and in extreme cases was considered not a man but property, a mere tool ([1986] 1988: 81). Those who defended slavery considered Africans to belong to the lowest echelons of the great Chain of Being, alongside the orangutang, for example. They saw darkness of skin as a degenerative variation of what had been the original colour of man's skin – white. Therefore, they argued, Blacks should serve White people, who were superior in beauty and intelligence. Some racial theorists opposed slavery; but as abolitionism began to gain momentum in Europe, theories began to emerge according to which Blacks, like the Native Americans and Asians, were innately and permanently inferior to Whites.

The division between the proslavery and abolitionist lobbies of the nineteenth century was not always as clear-cut as we might imagine. For the former, forced labour was the destiny of an inferior species – the Africans. Yet some abolitionists called for an end to slavery not because they felt pity for the Blacks, but because they desired the extinction of the 'less capable' (Spencer, 1820–93) – an evolutionist idea – and considered that slavery merely ensured the survival of 'Blacks'. It was on these grounds that the anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan (1818–1881) came to support abolitionism after 1850. An end to slavery would bring an end to the Black 'race'. The doctor James Cowles Prichard (1786–1848) was another author who put his knowledge in natural history at the service of his abolitionist stance. In his *Researches into the Physical History of Man* (1813), Prichard 'attempted to prove that the story of Genesis was correct and that all human tribes had, indeed, descended from one original couple' (Augstein 1996: xxiii).

In the first decade of the nineteenth century, some Portuguese abolitionists³⁰ called for European immigration to Brazil as an alternative to

29. Slavery had its beginnings in the civilizations of the Fertile Crescent. The practice later spread to Egypt, Syrio-Palestine and the eastern Mediterranean, Greece and the Roman empire. There were probably slaves in Portugal before it even existed as a nation. On slavery in Portugal, see Carreira (1979), UNESCO (1979), Tinhorão (1988), Rodrigues (1999) and Marques (1999).

30. Valentim Alexandre (1993) locates the emergence of abolitionism in Portugal between 1817 and 1820. For João Marques (1999), the abolitionist cause emerged a little earlier, in 1815.

African slave trafficking.³¹ At issue was the fact that the 'colour' of the Blacks was considered an obstacle to their assimilation. There was, then, a link between abolitionism and hostility towards Black people. While some among the proslavery contingent saw trafficking in Black people as having a civilizing and integrative function, there were abolitionists who favoured immigration by the 'White man' on the grounds that it would even out the Brazilian racial spectrum: miscegenation between Brazilians and European immigrants would lead to the dilution of 'Negroid' characteristics in just a few generations. Of similar persuasion in this respect were the lieutenant António de Oliva, who proposed offering incentives for 'White' men to marry 'Black' or 'Indigenous' women, and the doctor Soares Franco,³² who suggested barring unmarried men from working or receiving pay (Marques 1999: 130–35).

Slavery can be explained in economic terms, but not exhaustively so; on an entirely economic paradigm, people would be exploited indiscriminately, not on the basis of a belief in the racial inferiority of some and their 'propensity' for forced labour. Some authors have argued that slavery and racism were driven by utilitarian imperatives:³³ both one and the other were acceptable by virtue of the benefits they brought. This is the attitude found among colonial administrators such as James Mill and his son John Stuart Mill. For James Mill, an employee of the East India Company from 1819, the Indians, like the Chinese, were deceitful, two-faced, treacherous, cowardly, bereft of feeling and dirty. Mill recommended that the Indian government be subjected to the benevolent guidance of the British parliament. His son, John Stuart Mill, was also of the view that India should be governed by a colonial administration, but unlike his father he believed the colony was capable of governing itself once it had acquired civilized societal norms. Both Mills viewed the 'Natives' as children who required the guidance and supervision of rational, capable administrators. These 'Natives' 'ought not to be brutalized ... nor enslaved but directed – administratively, legislatively, pedagogically and socially' (Goldberg 2002: 296). It was in the name

31. The end of the slave trade did not mean the end of slavery. Trafficking was not made illegal until 1831. The effective end of legal slave trafficking came in 1851; but slavery was not actually abolished in Portugal until 1888, when it was also banned in Cuba and Puerto Rico. In the United States, abolition came in 1865 (Wolf 1982; Skidmore [1974] 1989).

32. Appeals such as those made by Oliva and Franco seem to have been rare, and radical, cases in Portugal after 1815, however.

33. The theory of utility insists on treating every individual equally and impartially, and rejects paternalist interpretations. In other words, every individual is responsible for his or her own happiness and success.

of 'the Natives' own happiness, their future good defined in utilitarian terms, that they should have been willing to accept this state of affairs' (Goldberg 2002: 297). This added up to a justification of racialized colonialism, and consolidated it as an institution.

Racialism under attack

In the middle of the nineteenth century, when debate still raged between two opposing views – race as lineage (associated with an ethnological approach, upholding the idea of change and the importance of environmental circumstances) and race as type (associated with an anthropological approach, upholding the view that racial differences had arisen in the remote past, and supporting the idea of 'continuity' based on heredity) – along came Charles Darwin (1809–82), who undermined both theories with a new synthesis which explained both 'change' and 'continuity' (Banton [1987] 1998: 81). Drawing on Malthusian population theory, Darwin posited a process of 'natural selection' among the species. The publication of *The Origin of Species* (1859) rendered the debate between monogenists and polygenists irrelevant; both camps embraced the new evolutionist model. Contrary to popular belief, it was not Darwin who coined the phrase 'survival of the fittest' but Herbert Spencer (Poliakov [1971] 1974: 282). The following paragraphs will nevertheless concentrate on Darwin, who was after all the prime spokesman of evolutionary theory.

Darwinian biology showed that man was the descendant of a number of other animals, to which he did not stand in a superior position. What made Darwinian biology so radically different from earlier theories was that while Darwin sought to identify the differences between all the animals, and thereby determine man's place in the world, the anthropologists and naturalists who were his contemporaries looked for the differences between humans, appealing to the animal world for justification of certain differences they viewed as 'inferior' and therefore not part of the human world. This was to construct the inferiority of the 'other' (Gould 1983). The central thesis of *The Origin of Species* was that natural selection acted to preserve favourable differences and variations, while eliminating harmful ones (Darwin [1859] 1968: 84). It therefore made no sense to talk of permanent racial 'types', since all life, including humanity, adapted over time. Notwithstanding its biological focus, *The Origin of Species* reached a diverse reading public. Various interpretations of it have been applied to other areas of knowledge, including psychology, linguistics, sociology, politics and anthropology. Monog-

enists such as Quatrefages and Agassiz used the evolutionist model to hierarchize the different 'races' and peoples according to their 'mental and moral' qualities. The polygenists, meanwhile, accepted the common ancestor thesis but argued that the 'human species' had gone their own separate ways a long time ago, and now developed along different lines. The polygenists also expressed concern at the question of the mixing of the 'races'. Broca argued that the mixed-blood person, like the mule, was infertile; but Gobineau and Le Bon instead lamented his or her formidable propensity for reproduction, as a throwback to the more negative characteristics of their forebears.

As the nineteenth century ended and the twentieth began, there emerged a pseudo-scientific discourse on the subject of the 'primitive man' – who in a certain sense was the successor to the idea of the 'noble savage'. This discourse is to be found in the texts which were to form the foundations of a new branch of knowledge – ethnology. In their research into the rhythms of sociocultural growth, anthropologists such as Morgan, Tylor and Frazer (the 'social evolutionists') examined cultural development from a comparative perspective. According to social evolutionism, the superior 'races' were those who had shown themselves most successful in their ability to dominate others (Stocking 1968, 1988). Two strands of determinism emerged in parallel with this theory: geographic determinism and 'social Darwinism' (Cashmore [1984] 1996: 348–50), also known as 'race theory'. Advocates of geographic determinism, such as Henry Thomas Buckle (1821–1862) and Friedrich Ratzel (1844–1904), saw the cultural development of a nation as being totally subject to the influence of environment. Social Darwinism, meanwhile, promoted the 'pure type' – unsullied by miscegenation – and condemned mixed-blood reproduction as a phenomenon linked to social and 'racial' degeneracy (Schwarcz 1995: 58).

One movement that emerged concomitantly with evolutionism was eugenics, a political creed whose aim was to improve the physical and moral qualities of future generations. As 'a kind of advanced practical form of social Darwinism' (Schwarcz 1995), eugenics proposed intervention in population dynamics with the aim of subjugating or even eliminating the 'inferior races'. The term 'eugenics' (from the Greek *eu* – well, *genos* – birth) was coined in 1883³⁴ by Francis Galton (1822–1911), a half-cousin of Darwin. In his *Hereditary Genius* (1869), Galton

34. Eugenics was a new term in 1883, but the idea it embodied was far from new. Elimination of the incapacitated was an idea current among the ancient Greeks, as the British eugenicists themselves acknowledged – perhaps to mitigate the impact of the shocking notion that since not all individuals are equally endowed, some should not be allowed to reproduce (see Stepan 1991).

applied statistical and genealogical methods in an attempt to prove that human ability was influenced by heredity, not education, and called for interracial marriages to be prohibited. And he again drew on Darwinism in his *Inquiries into Human Faculty* (1883), in which he formulated his eugenicist theory of 'racial perfection'. In Galton's view, however, the Darwinian process of natural selection was no longer operative under 'civilized' conditions, and therefore active intervention in human development was necessary. In 1907 Galton was appointed the inaugural president of the Eugenics Education Society, the world's first eugenics association. He was succeeded by Leonard Darwin, Charles's son. Eugenics attracted the attention of many scientists and specialists, but this interest has to be seen as the culmination of the process of intellectual and social change which occurred in the nineteenth century, a process whereby human life was increasingly seen in terms of the natural laws of biology (Stepan 1991: 21). New questions began to arise with regard to miscegenation, too: now the risk was that it would trigger uncontrollable combinations. Some theorists argued that miscegenation would favour the 'inferior races' to the detriment of the 'superior', for whom degeneracy awaited. To prevent miscegenation, its opponents called for the segregation of certain groups, the isolation of 'inferiors' and even their extermination. Ultimately, eugenics revealed the incompatibility of cultural evolutionism and social Darwinism. 'Degeneration'³⁵ came gradually to depose 'evolution' as the watchword. For the social evolutionists, mankind was a hierarchy of unequal parts; for the social Darwinists, it was divided into diverse species.

Polygenists such as Gustave Le Bon, E. Renan and Gobineau drew their own conclusions from the social Darwinist view. For Gustave Le Bon (1841–1931), one of the most influential and widely quoted authors in Portuguese racial doctrine, inequalities of 'race', gender and social grouping were innate ([1894] 1910: 6). Le Bon saw 'race' as a fixed quantity that predetermined the evolution of the peoples:

Each people possesses a mental constitution that is as fixed as its anatomical characters are ... Institutions exert an extremely weak influence on the evolution of civilizations, in most cases being effects, and only very rarely causes ... Man is always ... and above all else the representative of his race ([1894] 1910: 9–10, 18).

35. Vice, crime, immigration, female labour and the urban milieu were other commonly cited causes of degeneration. The belief that many of the afflictions associated with the poor – tuberculosis, syphilis, alcoholism and mental illness – were hereditary also fuelled fears of social decadence.

Le Bon did not just associate ‘type’ with ‘race’; he also associated ‘race’ with ‘species’. What he proposed was to identify the characteristics that endured over a prolonged course of time, the factors that constituted ‘race’ and that ‘ended up acquiring great fixity’ in determining ‘the type of each people’ – identifiable via a set of characteristics which remained unchanged over time. Basing his evaluation on behavioural, cultural and psychological criteria, Le Bon divided humanity into four groups: ‘the primitive races, the inferior, the mediocre and the superior’ ([1894] 1910: 23, 31–32). He also drew distinctions between the relative aptitudes of the sexes. Referring to an earlier study,³⁶ Le Bon wrote:

Races in which cranial volume exhibits the greatest individual variations are the highest in civilization ... Among the members of a tribe of savages, all of them dedicated to the same occupations, the difference is ... minimal; between the peasant who only has three hundred words ... and the wise man who has a hundred thousand with the corresponding ideas, the difference is ... enormous [1894] 1910: 48–49).

A Frenchman, Le Bon did not omit to mention that the skulls of Parisian males were among the ‘largest skulls known’. In excluding not only females but also males living in other French cities – not to mention the nonurbanites – Le Bon revealed his approach to be ethnocentric and classist.

For E. Renan (1823–92) there were three ‘races’ – White, Black and Yellow – each with its own specific origin and development. The ‘Blacks’, ‘Yellows’ and ‘Mixed-breeds’ were inferior not because they were uncivilized, but because they were uncivilizable ([1872] 1961). On the subject of the European nations, Renan denied German superiority by arguing that no pure ‘races’ existed, and that the more ‘noble’ countries such as England, France and Italy were those in which blood was more mixed – with Germany being no exception. But to apply the concept of ‘race’ in this way to any given European group was to make it a totally malleable category, of interest only to students of the history of humankind, with no political application ([1882] 1992: 46–48).

This brings us to Gobineau, the author of *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines* (1853), for whom the value of a ‘race’ was to be judged by its ability to create an original civilization. A novelist, philosopher, historian and would-be anthropologist, Gobineau maintained that the origins of all the Indo-European civilizations, with the exception of Assyria, could ultimately be traced to the Aryan ‘race’, the ethnic group whose languages formed the root of the Indo-European family of languages

36. Le Bon (1879).

and whose blood supposedly ran in the veins of all conquering peoples. For Gobineau, the purest representatives of the Aryan 'race' in his day were the Germanic peoples. Gobineau did not, however, view the Jews as an inferior 'race' (Ruffié 1983: 167–71). The Aryan 'type',³⁷ argued Gobineau, was the result of a process of racial refinement conducive to civilization and progress (Schwarcz 1995: 61–64). Sharing the ideas of the social Darwinists, he introduced the idea of 'racial degeneration' as a result of the crossbreeding of different human 'species'.

New developments emerged with the dawn of the twentieth century. Craniology and methods such as the cephalic index came in for criticism. Anthropology was now drawing on data from the fields of biology and morphology, including stature and length of limbs, eye colour and hair texture. The idea of 'race' and racial 'type' itself began to be questioned, especially in light of the findings of the Austrian botanist and monk Gregor Johann Mendel (1822–84) and his discovery that 'specific traits ... were controlled by specific elements (that is, genes) which were passed from one generation to another as independent components' (Wade 1997: 13); this discovery 'meant that the idea of type, whereby an unchanging bundle of traits was passed down the generations, was untenable' (Wade 1997: 13). Mendel's work was to contribute to the triumph of Darwinism. Another author, W. E. B. du Bois, questioned the idea that 'race' was 'natural' in *The Conservation of Races* (1897) (McGary 2002: 433–36). But the most important contribution in this period came from Franz Boas (1858–1942) and his critiques of Darwinian anthropology and evolutionism in anthropology.³⁸ Although he started by accepting many of the methods, premises and conclusions

37. 'Aryan' was a term first used in nineteenth-century linguistics in reference to the Indo-Iranian language group. The term derives from *arya*, which is classical Sanskrit for 'nobleman' or 'leader'. Perhaps Hitler would not have been so fond of the term if he had considered that the Indians differed far more from the blond, Nordic type than the Jews he hated and condemned to extermination.

38. 'Physical anthropology' developed along different lines in different countries, according to the anthropological traditions of each. It had considerable projection in France and Germany, and in Europe in general, where it was known simply as 'anthropology' – often in opposition to 'ethnology', which was culturally oriented. In the case of Anglo-American anthropology, where the ethnological tradition was more deeply rooted and the evolutionary tradition stronger, 'physical anthropology' – sometimes designated 'somatology' – became one of the four branches of a new 'general anthropology' which also embraced ethnology, linguistics and prehistoric archaeology. With his grounding in ethnology and 'physical anthropology', Boas soon acclimatized himself to the more encompassing American discipline and became one of the few social scientists to make a significant contribution to each of the four branches of anthropology. Other anthropologists rejected evolutionary racialism too, but it was Boas who actually laid out the groundwork for modern anthropological theory on the problem of 'race' vs. 'culture'.

of classical/physical anthropology, Boas leaned towards the monogenist view, and his epistemological and scientific orientation led him to adopt a critical posture with regard to this kind of anthropology. Boas showed that the variations in the dimensions of the same head over the course of a lifetime, or between two consecutive generations, were greater than those found between different 'races'.³⁹ Along with his disciples, like Ashley Montagu, he questioned theories of innate racial differences and heredity, while he also criticized the disciples of Morgan and the advocates of evolutionary theory in general. Boas turned his critical ammunition on evolutionist classifications, emphasizing instead the importance of environmental, regional and geographic factors in the study of human variety. Physical, cultural and linguistic characteristics were all subject to the influence of external processes, and therefore different results would be obtained depending on the template used for the classification – 'race', language or culture. Furthermore, argued Boas, the elements of a 'culture' can spread from one group to another, making reconstruction of a linear evolutionary sequence of cultural development a difficult or even impossible task (Boas [1940] 1982).

The anthropological tradition of Boas and the North American social determinists and culturalists has its foundations in the critiques of racialism and eugenics in the period between the two World Wars. These critiques rejected the concept of 'race' in favour of 'cultural determinism'. For Boas, human variety was to be explained by the geographic and 'cultural' isolation of the 'races'. Lamarck had already argued that evolution occurred not by way of selection but adaptation. As opposed to the Darwinists, and insofar as Lamarckism favoured the influence of environmental circumstances, all Lamarckians had a certain affinity with the supporters of geographic determinism. Boas's initial sources were the ethnographic data he had gathered in the Pacific Northwest and the arguments that Rudolf Virchow advanced against the Darwinists. Boas and his followers rejected evolutionist schemata and the classifications of the natural sciences applied to man. In their view, American anthropology had gone astray with Morgan (Stocking 1968; Kuper 1988). In the 1920s and '30s, a new generation of Boasians developed a theory of cultural determinism designed on the one hand to fill the vacuum left by earlier, discredited theories and on the other to counter the growing influence of eugenics, biological reductionism and behaviourism, which contended that the environment, not genetics, was the key determinant.

39. In *Changes in Bodily Form of Descendants of Immigrants* (1911), Boas showed that the shape of the human head is subject to modification by environmental influence in a relatively short span of time.

With the rise of fascism in Europe and the new impetus it gave to racist theories, at a time when the evolutionary racism of the nineteenth century was so powerful an influence in Nazi Germany that it became state policy, the Boasians now levelled new critiques at an old enemy.

In parallel with social determinism, anthropology promoted the notion of cultural relativism, i.e. the idea that no culture is superior to another but is merely *different*, and must therefore be understood according to its own context. On this view, biological, sociobiological and genetic factors did not determine the social and cultural destiny of human beings. What was specifically human about humans was the cultural nature of their social life, i.e. the attribution of sense and meaning to human actions.

The race debate has endured right through the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. Many authors now point to the inconsistencies in understanding 'race' as a 'natural' concept. Some contend that 'race' is a concept devoid of meaning (Appiah 1992); others that it has significance only when viewed as a social construct (Mills 1997; Outlaw 1996). The idea of 'race' may be suggested by what we might call somatic visibility, i.e. the elements which make up skin colour, texture and colour of hair, facial lineaments, shape of head, and stature; and yet certain formulations derive not from what we see but from the preconceived ideas of the observer, and this is to forget that what we see is also part of a process of construction of social meaning that has been underway throughout the centuries. Discrimination is based not on demonstrable biological facts, but rather on the 'biologization' of social facts. The belief in a biologically underwritten essence led to social exclusion, which has perpetuated the emphasis on phenotypical differences and in turn led to the creation of a 'culture' within which we can meaningfully speak of a 'racial' group. As we can still observe today, somatic differences can be replaced by so-called cultural – or even imaginary – characteristics. This is what happened when phenotypical characteristics were invented to set the Jews apart in European anti-Semitism. When the cultural and physical characteristics of individuals are considered together – when the characteristics we would designate as cultural are seen as natural – we are 'naturalizing' those differences (Wade 1997: 7). The notion of 'race' as applied to humanity may therefore have purposes of a social and political nature that we cannot exclude from our analysis. And in European terms, the colonial situation played a decisive role in the invention of a racial ideology which must be examined with caution.