4: PHILOSOPHY AND RACISM

The future which the dream shows us is not the one which will occur but the one which we should like to occur. The popular mind is behaving here as it usually does: what it wishes, it believes.—Freud, On Dreams

I shall argue that a causal account of racism, in particular one that involves a psychological or psychoanalytic underpinning, is necessary to understanding what racism is and what is morally wrong with it. It is also necessary to formulating strategies for addressing racism. An adequate analysis of racism—there are actually many varieties of racism—will also show why, along with other long-standing prejudices like sexism and homophobia, it has proven so intractable. I also discuss the bizarre character of racism. It seems odd after all—inexplicable—that someone should be hated merely because of his race or color. It turns out that race and color have little to do with racism.

While there is undoubtedly a plethora of issues concerning racism that should be addressed by philosophers, including various relationships between philosophy and racism, two interrelated questions are primary. First, what is racism? And second, what are the causes of racism? “Causes” should be taken broadly as referring to the nature of racism—those conditions without which racism in its various forms would not exist. Thus, it is something of a surprise that in the collection of essays edited by Susan Babbitt and Sue Campbell, Racism and Philosophy, neither of these questions is regarded as a focus for the volume as a whole or for any of the essays individually. What then is the focus? The editors write:

The contributors to this volume attempt to identify and clarify important structures of meaning through which Western philosophy has both evaded acknowledgement of racism, and has at the same time, offered influential conceptual schemes that have helped produce the destructive rationalizations of contemporary society. . . . [T]his volume suggests that acknowledging the importance of racism can effectively inform development in all areas of philosophy. . . . [T]he authors draw on empirical, historical, and sociological in-

My thanks to Damian Cox, Susan Datz, Marguerite La Caze, and Tamas Pataki.

1. Elisabeth Young-Bruehl (1996) convincingly argues that prejudices come in a multitude of forms and that racism itself has many different forms. It is an obfuscating oversimplification to talk about prejudice rather than prejudices, racism rather than racisms.
vestigation, and on the work of both activists and theorists, while undertaking the task of identifying and explicating the central philosophical issues involved in or emerging from these investigations. ... The first part of this volume ... addresses questions about the implications of racism for the practice of philosophy. ... Part 2 ... addresses questions about the nature of both U.S. and colonial systemic racism and about what is involved in understanding and taking responsibility for it. ... [T]he last part ... involve[s] consideration of how we relate to each other through structures of ethnicized and racialized difference in ways that keeps racism intact ... [and] focus[es] on the development of identities adequate to antiracist commitments. (Babbitt and Campbell 1999: 1–5)

All well and good, and yet it is impossible to imagine any of these tasks undertaken apart from prior assumptions, explicitly or implicitly argued or presupposed, about the nature and causes of racism. In fact, some of the essays in Babbitt and Campbell 1999 do obliquely address these questions. They would have to.

Moral, social, and political philosophers have contributed remarkably little to understanding the causes of racism or the nature of various other prejudices. Some even claim that causal, especially psychological, accounts of racism are peripheral to understanding it. Despite their ability to draw fine distinctions and attend to moral principles, philosophers have been beating around the bush. For example, questions are raised, not only by philosophers, about whether, scientifically speaking, there really are races and what the implications of such a question are for racism, whether people of color can themselves be racist, who is a racist, and whether racism is institutionalized. These are neither very interesting nor illuminating questions, but any adequate answer to them must be given in terms of an analysis of the nature of racism. Rooted in philosophers' inability to explain racism is the related fact that moral philosophers have been unable to adequately explain what is morally wrong with racism in its various guises or with other prejudices. A more interesting but nevertheless secondary set of questions relates to what policies are racist.

One would expect that moral philosophy would have something distinctive and significant to say about how to understand racism and why it is morally reprehensible. Instead, what one often gets is an account of racism's immorality in terms of a general moral theory or principle. For example, we are told racism is bad because such discrimination fails to treat people as ends in themselves or because it denies basic human rights. If it is the case that racial prejudice always involves these or other pat moral failings, then it does constitute a reason for supposing racism, in thought or action, to be immoral. But such an account goes little or no distance toward explaining the nature of the various prejudices or in giving any distinctive set of reasons as to why they are immoral. It gives the same
reasons for the immorality of prejudice in general as it does for murder, theft, or assault.

J. L. A. Garcia (1996: 9), for instance, says that the immorality in racism "stems from its being opposed to the virtues of benevolence and justice" and that "racism is a form of morally insufficient . . . concern or respect for some others." Both assertions are true, and yet it may be false that the immorality of racism resides in them in any distinctive way. For one thing, it is possible to oppose benevolence and injustice, and to have insufficient concern for others in ways and for reasons that have nothing to do with racism. Racism may be immoral for reasons that make other things immoral as well. But when people talk about the immorality of racism, I take it that they mean something more. They want to tie its immorality to something specific about the nature of racism. To say, for example, as Garcia does (1996: 9), that it "tries to injure people assigned to a racial group because of their racial identity" does not explain the specific nature of its immorality or how it is connected to perceptions of racial identity. To explain these things racism must first be understood in a (deeper) way that keeps it, at least temporarily, separate from moral issues. What needs to be understood is why people hate and try to injure others on the basis of racial or other perceived differences.

A cognitive approach to racism—one that sees racism as rooted in false beliefs or other cognitive defects is, for example, going to suggest a different account of the immorality of racism than an affectively based one like Garcia's. But dividing accounts of racism along cognitive and affective lines lacks the requisite nuances and is too superficial to capture any intrinsic connection between racism and its immorality. Psychoanalytic accounts of racism, as we will see, reject the split as mistaken and misleading. But even aside from psychoanalysis, the split must be rejected. On philosophical grounds alone contemporary analyses of emotion have shown affect to be connected to cognition and belief in ways that undermine any approach to racism along the lines of such an archaic and artificial dichotomy. 2

Thus, for moral philosophy to engage with prejudice, explain its immorality, and offer correctives, it must take into account the nature of prejudice. That this should include an understanding of its causes may seem uncontroversial (it does to me), and yet some philosophers, remarkably, deny this. This is part of what Ruth Benedict means when she says "in order to understand race persecution, we do not need to investigate race; we need to investigate persecution" (1999: 38). But there is not much reason to suppose that Benedict understood the nature of persecution or its cure. She saw democracy as the antidote to racism even though it is apparent that racism, along with a multitude of other injustices, can thrive

2. See, for example, Oakley 1993.
in a democracy. She appears to conceive of genuine democracy as incompatible with or at least inhospitable to racism. Although this is not necessarily the case, it is at least arguable that democracy, as opposed to certain other forms of government, does not lend itself to the kind of social, political, and cultural milieu in which gross injustices, perhaps even prejudices such as racism, can easily thrive over (very) long periods of time. Yet given Young-Bruehl’s (1996) account of racism even this seems rather optimistic. Let me illustrate the contentions above.

Rhetorically, Lawrence Blum (1999: 81) asks, “Well, what then is racism?” His answer is instructive. “I do not want to give a general definition but to indicate two distinct forms that individual racism takes. . . . the first is racial hatred, animosity, or bigotry—hating blacks or Jews, or Croats or Hutus3 because they are blacks, Jews, Croats, and Hutus. The second form . . . involves seeing another group as humanly inferior . . . the ways Westerners have seen blacks.” Despite his reluctance to attempt a general definition of racism, it seems that Blum means to give an ostensive definition. But his examples do not tell us, ostensibly or otherwise, what racism is, and they are misleading if they are meant to illustrate what it is.

Is his account meant to be a causal one? Does one hate blacks because they are blacks? Is the hatred caused by their blackness? This seems to be what he is suggesting, and if so it is an unintelligible account. To understand what racism is you have to understand why racism takes the forms Blum cites as examples. What is the explanation for it? Why would one hate blacks as blacks—unless perhaps one had some color phobia? Racism cannot be explained merely as racial hatred or seeing another group as humanly inferior. These are just examples. Until one understands what it is that motivates such hatreds and attitudes, why they come about and in what circumstances, where the circumstances are part of the explanation—it is impossible to understand what racism is.

To put the matter contentiously, if I am right, and if we can generalize somewhat from the case of Blum and Garcia, then contemporary analytic moral philosophers often address the problem of racism without understanding what racism is—or at least what it is apart from or in addition to its immorality. Thus, in discussing various aspects of what is morally wrong with racism, and in addressing related questions such as who is racist and what counts as racism, moral philosophers may not really be talking about racism or what is wrong with it; or they may be doing so without an adequate account of racist prejudices. They are talking instead about what is wrong with the ways in which some people act to-

3. Blum has this wrong. It was the Hutus that committed genocide against the Tutsis.
ward others. This is within the purview of what moral philosophers do and should do, but it is not distinctively about racism or intrinsically tied to racism in any particular way. The mistake is not just a kind of intentional fallacy or failure of recognition—talking about something under a different name. They are not talking about racism at all—confusing the symptoms or signs of racism with racism itself. My claim is not that they have an account of racism that others may disagree with, but rather that they have no account of racism: or less contentiously, they mistake superficial surface phenomenological characteristics or symptoms of racism for racism itself.

To some extent one may be able to recognize racism though its signs ("racist behavior") just as one recognizes measles through spots. But to say that one recognizes racism through racist behavior is circular in a way that recognizing measles via measles spots is not. For what one terms "racist behavior" will in fact be racist behavior in the relevant sense if it stems from racism, and this cannot be ascertained from the behavior alone. Measles spots are, however, a sure sign of measles. Of course one can be racist and not outwardly behave in racist ways (generally). But the relevant point here is that someone can behave in racist ways and still not be racist even though they will likely taken for one.

The above points can better be illustrated if a genuine account of racism, of what it is, is given. Elisabeth Young-Bruehl says, "We can define prejudices by saying that they are the reflections in attitudes towards groups (and individuals as members of groups) of characteristic modes (usually complex modes) of defense" (1996: 209).\(^4\) She goes on to give a detailed account of those defenses in which she relies on psychological and especially psychoanalytic concepts, theories, and data. If one accepts her account of what prejudices are or something like it, then it will not be possible to explain the immorality of racism or its broader moral significance on personal, social, or political levels alone. How, for example, can one endeavor to answer the question as to whether the subjects of racisms (e.g., people of color and Jews) can themselves be racist (of course they can) if one does not know what racism is or the forms that it can take? In Young-Bruehl's account, the nature of racism is not to be explained in terms of (some inexplicable) hatred toward some race, but rather in terms of the nature and sources of the various prejudices—an account of hatred itself. Whether or not her particular accounts are correct, or to what extent they are correct, is not really the issue here.\(^5\) The point is that this is what an account of racism must do.

Psychological or psychoanalytic accounts of racism do not split theories of

\(^4\) See also the chapters in this volume by Young-Bruehl and Pataki.

\(^5\) I have chosen Young-Bruehl’s account because it is monumental in its depth and scope. It is a classic work on understanding the nature of prejudices, and I know of no work on the prejudices, including racism, that is more significant.
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It is questionable whether "most studies of prejudice derive from ego psychology and the social sciences." Many historical studies appear to derive from neither. And even if true, the alleged connection between this derivation and "the limitations of behavioral theory" are questionable. However, it is true that many studies of prejudice, including historical, social scientific, and philosophical/moral studies, assume that racism "derives largely from ignorance and false consciousness." Racism, the story goes, stems from a cognitive defect of sorts. It is a matter of false beliefs personally and socially engendered for various reasons.

Lane contrasts this "ignorance and false consciousness" view of racism with one that he presumably endorses and claims is at least complementary. Referring to his edited volume, Lane says, "What this collection of essays argues, additionally, is that psychic issues complicate our chances of achieving and sustaining egalitarianism" (1998: 32 n. 3). However, a harsher and more accurate contrast than Lane's can be drawn between the "ignorance" and "psychic issues" views. This harsher contrast claims that the "ignorance" view is fundamentally false and utterly different from psychological, mainly psychoanalytic, theories that seek to explain racism and racist beliefs themselves on psychological rather than cognitive grounds. Psychological, and specifically psychoanalytic, accounts of racism see themselves as subsuming cognitive accounts partly by explaining the origin of racist beliefs in desire and wish fulfillment. Furthermore, Lane's typology is skewed. The "ignorance view" should not be linked to a false-consciousness view but differentiated from it. The latter is clearly within the purview of "psychic issues" views. False consciousness is a matter of a special kind of ignorance that "psychic issue" views, such as psychoanalytic accounts, seek to explain.

Lane nevertheless illustrates the significance of a psychoanalytic view for understanding why people are racist and for attempting to contain racism. He says that the "ignorance and false consciousness" approaches to racism
share... an assumption that knowledge enhances cultural understanding while diminishing inter- and intragroup hostility. This emphasis often betrays a foundational hope that humankind, freed from alienation and political strife, would be wholly communitarian... these approaches argue that a person’s beliefs and assumptions, though determined by his or her class and racial background, can be altered simply by raised consciousness. Studies that aim to resolve urban strife and ethnic warfare often reproduce these assumptions: They anticipate that people locked in conflict want an end to struggle in order to secure the material gains they can achieve only in times of peace. To this perspective, psychoanalysis adds a difficult truth: When people and groups are locked in conflict, they are—beyond their immediate interest in securing sovereignty over another land or people—already experiencing intangible gains... a group’s “gain” might consist in depleting another’s freedom... if we ignore these psychic issues, we promulgate fables about human nature, maintaining idealist assumptions while unexamined psychic factors fuel acrimony, resentment, and hatred.6 (1998: 5)

Trying to understand racism and other prejudices, along with certain kinds of seemingly inexplicable violence (September 11, 2001), independently of a psychoanalytic approach is like trying to understand motion without physics or how a car runs with no mention of its engine. Trying to morally assess the horrific attacks of September 11 with recourse merely to just war theory, or any consequentialist or deontological normative theory—focusing on that horror out of context (historical, political, psychological, personal) and by itself—is hopelessly narrow. There is no vacuum quite like a philosophical vacuum.

Lane makes two specific criticisms of Young-Bruehl’s approach. He claims (1998: 10) there is an “irony that Young-Bruehl, using the psychic categories of hysteria, narcissism, and obsessional neuroses, makes prejudice more monolithic and universal than [Gordon] Allport.” Young-Bruehl does see prejudices as more universal than Allport, partly because she recognizes that there are a variety of kinds of prejudices related to an array of causes. But it is hard to understand Lane’s claim that her account is more monolithic since her primary thesis, argued for in various ways throughout her book of over six hundred pages, is

6. See Lane’s discussion (1998: 5–7) of a major source of these ideas in Freud’s Civilization and Its Discontents. People experience their neighbors, says Freud (1961a: 111), not only as a “potential helper or sexual object, but also someone who tempts them to satisfy their aggressiveness on him, to exploit his capacity for work without compensation, to use him sexually without his consent, to seize his possessions, to humiliate him, to cause him pain, to torture and to kill him.”

7. Young-Bruehl critiques Allport (1954) for failing to see that there are a variety of prejudices.
that prejudice is not a monolithic phenomenon in its causes or manifestations. It is Allport's account that sees racism as stemming from a single type of authoritarian personality, not Young-Bruehl's.

Lane's second criticism of Young-Bruehl is similarly unfounded but more peculiar. He says, "While I appreciate Young-Bruehl's frustration with 'universal' statements about how prejudice functions, it seems to me not only conceptually mistaken but profoundly antipsychoanalytic to assume that valuable diagnoses can be made of the prejudices affecting specific groups" (1998: 10). It is no small part of Young-Bruehl's thesis that such diagnoses can be properly made and that the specific characteristics of certain political systems, national characteristics, and cultural milieus are conducive to specific forms of prejudice. Lane does not explain why he thinks it is antipsychoanalytic. Why is this any more antipsychoanalytic than generalizing (usefully) about certain groups of children in certain kinds of situations, or indeed certain character types on the basis of clinical data? Why is any such generalizing antipsychoanalytic? Freud certainly extrapolated from individuals to types and groups. Indeed, apart from the kinds of diagnoses about prejudices affecting specific groups that Young-Bruehl makes, there are only individual accounts of prejudice that cannot be used to explain anything at all about the prejudicial nature of larger social and cultural networks. It is unclear how Lane can, on the one hand, claim that social science is virtually stymied in its effort to understand racism apart from psychoanalysis, and yet, on the other hand, see Young-Bruehl as antipsychoanalytic in her assumption that "valuable diagnoses can be made of the prejudices affecting specific groups." I take it that she would deny it is an assumption rather than a well-established fact supported by clinical data, social and historical facts, and psychoanalytic and other theory. 8

III

Some think that a cursory definition or account of racism is all one needs for an analysis of what makes it morally wrong. They assume that it is obvious what racism is. It is unlikely that what is morally wrong with racism pertains to racism alone—that there is something morally wrong with racism that pertains to it alone. Nevertheless, suppose, for example, one wants to move away from a generalization such as "racism is morally wrong because racists fail to treat humans as ends in themselves" (an irony coming from Kant, who arguably was a racist) to something more specific. If one seeks to find the immorality as more specifi-

8. Lane's view might be that the psychoanalytic account that one needs must necessarily be general. But even if this is the case, a psychoanalytic account of racism can be, as Marguerite La Caze has pointed out (in correspondence), general in one sense and specific in another.
cally or intrinsically connected to racism, then it must be located in the nature of racism itself. It could be that even when one does understand the nature and causes of racism, the racist’s moral reprehensibility may be no different than the kind stemming from less invidious and better-understood sources. This, however, is not the case. The immorality of racism and other prejudices is intrinsically and extrinsically tied to the specifics of an account like Young-Bruehl’s in important ways.

How might the immorality of racism differ from the immorality of theft or murder? From a Kantian perspective, one thing that is wrong with theft and murder is that they involve a failure to treat human beings as ends in themselves. As such, the immorality of such practices is something they share with other kinds of actions or institutions—including racism. Perhaps then it is a mistake to look for something intrinsic to racism that makes it immoral. What makes it immoral is the same kind(s) of things that make many other things immoral. But if this is the case, then perhaps philosophy’s contribution in regard to racism is not so much analyzing its moral aspects, indicating how and why it is immoral, as it is understanding its nature and causes, along with its social, political, and personal implications. The philosophical task in regard to racism would then be (surprisingly?) not fundamentally moral but rather explanatory—or epistemological.

However, if understanding racism involves, as it must, understanding racism’s personal, social, and political manifestations and implications, then moral philosophy’s task in regard to racism should be seen as a central part of any philosophical effort to understand racism. Thus, a moral philosopher’s account of the immorality of racism will, or should be, intrinsically connected to a particular account of racism. Most moral analyses are not so connected because they lack the requisite understanding. Given a fundamentally flawed account of racism, you can no more explain what is morally wrong with it than you can explain the significance of love given a wildly aberrant view of human nature.

Having discussed racism and its immorality in general terms let us return to Garcia’s account. Garcia conceives of racism as

fundamentally a vicious kind of racially based disregard for the welfare of certain people. In its central and most vicious form, it is a hatred, ill-will, directed against a person or persons on account of their assigned race. In a derivative form, one is a racist when one either does not care at all or does not care enough (i.e., as much as morality requires) or does not care in the right ways about people assigned to a certain racial group, where this regard is based on racial classification.

He continues.

Racism, then, is something that essentially involves not our beliefs and their rationality or irrationality, but our wants, intentions, likes and dislikes and
their distance from the moral virtues. Such a view helps explain racism's conceptual ties to various forms of hatred and contempt. (1996: 6–7)

The confusing aspect of Garcia's account is how he gets from the first conception to the second, and the false dichotomy he sets up between them. What is the connection between racism as being "fundamentally a vicious kind of racially based disregard for the welfare of certain people" and its involving "not our beliefs and their rationality or irrationality, but our wants, intentions, likes and dislikes"? Racially based disregard obviously involves beliefs as well as likes and dislikes. Elsewhere Garcia recognizes this and correctly emphasizes the primacy of affective over doxastic accounts. 9

This, however, is not the main problem with the account. Despite its seeming to capture what, at first glance, many would agree racism is, it conflates what he alleges to be the nature of racism with what he sees as immoral about it.

Garcia's account is first and foremost an account of what is morally wrong with racism—not, as he claims, an account of what racism is. But except for the fact that he explicitly invokes the notion of race, his account of the moral wrongness of racism relies solely on what is morally wrong in treating or regarding people in a certain (immoral) manner. There is nothing distinctive about race in his account except that race is what evokes the moral wrongness. He says that his conception of racism "helps explain racism's conceptual ties to various forms of hatred and contempt," but it does not. Where is the explanation? Instead, it defines racially based hatred and contempt as essential to racism. What we have is a viciously circular definition rather than an explanation—not an account of racism but a redecoration of it. Garcia believes he has captured both the heart of racism and the essence of what is morally wrong with it. But in failing to distinguish between the two he misses crucial aspects of both.

Although Garcia and Blum give very little account of how and why racial hatred comes about, some such account is crucial to understanding racial hatred and its immorality. It is insufficient to note that it is a "vicious kind of racially based disregard for the welfare of certain people." A discussion of the immorality of racism must take into account racism's causes, what a person is responsible for, a person's character, the extent to which persons can control their desires, and other fundamental issues in moral philosophy. And it must do this in relation to a specific theory of racism—of what it is.

There is a tendency for moral philosophers to give a psychologically superficial causal account of racism and to claim, in varying degrees, that such causal accounts are either otiose or relatively neutral with regard to an explanation of the immorality of racism or the nature of racism. This approach is mistaken. In-depth causal accounts of racism are essential for both tasks. It is also necessary,

and this seems obvious, for any strategy to curtail racism. It is perhaps less clear, but nonetheless the case, that any historical causal account of racism that gestures toward completeness must likewise include a complex psychological account as the key ingredient.

Garcia misunderstands the significance of causal accounts of prejudices. He says (1996: 39 n. 15), “We should label haters of Jews or black people anti-Semites and racists even if we know their hatred had different causes”—that is, causes other than the ones the prejudices are allegedly causally rooted in. That may be. But the point of giving a causal account is to explain the nature and source of the prejudice as it in fact is. It is not about labeling. If, in fact, antiblack racism does require a particular causal story (or closely related stories), then, in the absence of such a story, there may be good grounds, in certain circumstances—like those in which we are trying to understand the nature of racism—for claiming that an individual is mislabeled, that is, misunderstood, as an antiblack racist.

Garcia’s argument for the irrelevancy of the psychological causes of racism to an adequate account of racism, including its irrelevancy to his account, is unsound.\(^\text{10}\) He argues as follows (1996: 29):

Suppose that [Cornel] West and Young-Bruehl are right to think that most of the white racists around today (or in history) were driven to their racism through fear of black male sexuality. Even if this claim about the psychological causes of racism is true, it leaves unaffected our claim about what white racism consists in. It is implausible to think such insecurity essential to (a necessary condition for) racism, even for white racism, because if we came across someone who hated black people, thought us inherently inferior, worked to maintain structures of white domination over us, and so on, but came to all this for reasons other than sexual insecurity, we would and should still classify her attitude as racism. Nor is this hypothesis a near impossibility; we may come across such people quite often, especially, when we consider other forms of racism—hostility against Asians for example. “Psychocultural explana-

\(^{10}\) Garcia says, “Elisabeth Young-Bruehl and Cornel West have recently articulated the common view that white male sexual insecurity is at the heart of white racism. ‘White fear of black sexuality is a basic ingredient of white racism.’” To say that “white fear of black sexuality is a basic ingredient of white racism” is quite different from saying, as Garcia does (1996: 29), that such fear “is at the heart of white racism.” Young-Bruehl (1996) argues that various prejudices have different and varied sources. There is not just one cause of racism and not one form racism takes. White fear of black sexuality is one among many causes, albeit a principal one, of antiblack racism. It may not even be part of the story in some cases. It depends upon the psyche of individual racists. Her principal thesis is that the whole story of racism as one among many prejudices is vastly more complicated both causally and in terms of prejudicial outcomes.
racial racism. It is perhaps less clear, but even less unusual, to account for racism that results from a complex psychological accu-

These are, of course, typical accounts of prejudices. He is a black person, he is a black man, or he is a black person who is a jew, or he is a black person who is a jew who is anti-Semitic—"that is, causes of his racism are caused by his race, his sex, and his religion. That may be, in some cases, the nature of racism for claiming to be, as an antiblack racist. Racism, for our purposes, as an antiblack racist, does not deny that racism against Asians, although having quite a different causal history than antiblack racism, is racism nevertheless. She affirms and explains this. 11 Racism in its various forms has various sources according to Young-Bruehl—not just one.

Garcia relies too heavily on intuition in claiming that "even if this claim about the psychological causes of racism is true, it leaves unaffected our claim about what white racism consists in." Suppose one discovers a substance that is just like water in every way except that its chemical makeup is other than H₂O. Is it water nevertheless? Well, that depends upon one's views of the semantics of various kind terms. It is one of the preeminent metaphysical and modal questions in recent years. 12

Young-Bruehl intends her account of the actual causal conditions of racism to refer to this world. Hypothetically, she need not deny that in some other possible world we may wish to say that racism or racist behavior may occur for causal reasons other than the ones she cites. Martians no doubt would have their own set of psychological problems to deal with. Supposing that Martians lacked envy would be insufficient reason for thinking they could not be racist. I think, however, that the case of racism is clearer than that of H₂O. Once one understands the causal history of, for example, antiblack racism, where that story is rooted in some perceived inadequacy of the racist herself, as Cornel West and Young-Bruehl suggest it is; then it is not at all clear that, as Garcia claims, "we would and should still classify her attitude [that is, the attitude of someone who hated black people] as racism" in the absence of its associated causal conditions. We might still call it racism, but we would understand it as importantly different from the real thing. Except in cases where the specific causal history of a prejudice is more or less intact, it will not be clear when we are dealing with "racism" rather than with something similar in behavioral terms—perhaps a historical descendent of real racism. The reason that the racism case is clearer than that of H₂O is that in the latter case the concept is itself tied to the periodic table and a certain chemical understanding. One is, as it were, pulled both ways between the scientific and commonsense understanding of H₂O. Nothing similar occurs in


12. Hilary Putnam (1975) claimed that natural kind terms pick out kinds that we typically interact with rather than things that fit stereotypical descriptions. This is usually described as a form of semantic externalism. Putnam would probably not agree that racism is a natural kind term in his sense. Nevertheless, whether or not racism is a natural kind, I am claiming an externalist semantics for "racism" and its cognates. My thanks to Damian Cox.
the case of racism. If one understands racism to be rooted in some underlying psychological structure, then while what is ordinarily called racist behavior may well be indicative of such an underlying structure, it need not be.

Garcia is able to draw the conclusion that he does—that the causal history of racist behavior is irrelevant to regarding it as racist—only because he has peremptorily divorced the conceptual content of the term “racism” from any causal history, choosing to define it solely in behavioral terms. Garcia may be right in claiming that “psychocultural explanation” is unlikely to reveal (logically) necessary truths about the nature of racism.” But Young-Bruehl would not wish to press any such claim. Her claim, and presumably West’s, is that there is an intrinsic connection between certain forms of racism and what causes it. Although they would not put it in these terms, perhaps the connection might be seen as an empirically necessary one. The claim that the connection is intrinsic means that behavior that appears racist but has no racist etiology is not—could not be—a form of racism.

Coercion can suppress the manifestations of racism, but no amount of external coercion is going to change the racist mind very much. On my view, coercion will not suppress racism because I equate racism proper with the racist mind and not with its manifestations. It may be convenient to call “racist behavior” that is not intrinsically connected to the racist mind “racist.” However, on my account, which regards the etiology of the behavior as essential, it will not actually be racist unless rooted casually in the racist mind. Tamas Pataki sees racism, at an abstract level, as a relation—or a set of relations (e.g., hatred, derogation), or a complex with a relation—linking racist minds, and other things, to their targets. I see racism as psychological structures or mental states—as identical to such structures—where such structures will, sooner or later, lead to racist

13. Following Kripke (1980), an empirical necessity is not a different order of necessity from logical necessity. If it is necessarily the case that water is H₂O, then there is no possible world in which water is something other than H₂O. XYZ just never is water; in any possible world—period. As Kripkeans put it, the term “water” rigidly designates the stuff H₂O. My thanks to Damian Cox for this.

14. Damian Cox succinctly sums up my position (in correspondence): “So we might say that any instance of racism is one or another member of a cluster of psycho/cultural causes; or that racist behavior/attitudes/etc. is behavior/attitudes/etc. with a racist etiology. Necessarily, if some apparently racist set of behaviors does not have such an etiology, then it is not an instance of racism. And this is a claim about certain necessary features of racism. (Say a previously nonracist person suffers a brain injury that causes them to react with great fear and hostility toward any person with dark skin; necessarily, they are not racist.) It might clarify things to call this an empirical necessity rather than a logical necessity (so that this is not a ‘logical truth’ in the way that modus ponens might be a logical truth), but these two kinds of necessity are distinct only in how they are arrived at, not in what they amount to.”
be rooted in some underlying psychological or behavioral terms. Garcia may be right, but it seems to me that the causal history of racism is to be located in none of these terms. Garcia may be using the term "racism" to designate some sort of "causal mechanism" (not necessarily a psychological process) that leads to behavior that can be described as racist. But Young-Bruehl would not agree. For him, the term "racism" is not a natural kind term, and therefore should not be used to describe behavior that is not also rooted in some underlying causal history. What is the causal history of racism? It is difficult to say, and there is much disagreement among scholars on this point.

One thing we can say is that racism is often described as a kind of prejudice. Prejudice is a mental state, and it is often associated with negative attitudes and behaviors. However, it is not clear whether racism is a mental state itself, or whether it is a kind of prejudice. The distinction between the two is not always clear, and it is often difficult to say whether a particular instance of behavior is racist or not.

Another thing we can say is that racism is often associated with certain social and political structures. For example, racism is often found in systems of education, employment, and housing. These structures can create barriers to equal opportunity and lead to discrimination. However, it is not clear whether these structures are the cause of racism, or whether they are simply consequences of racist behavior.

IV

Some ailments can be treated successfully by addressing symptoms. However, given the truth of a deep psychological account, such as Young-Bruehl's, of prejudices, it is clear that attempting to seriously curtail racism by addressing symptoms such as racist behavior—whether legally, socially, or otherwise—is hopeless. Certain social and economic structures at specific historical periods do exacerbate and are conducive to certain forms of racism. But racism cannot be cured simply by seeking to alter those structures, since the structures are themselves the result of racism. The well-meaning moral exhortations one finds in so much of the philosophical and historical literature on racism is even more insubstantial as a basis for change in this (and most other) areas. This leaves one with the quite pressing and complex question as to just what is the basis of change. (It is a million-dollar question.)

Policies and practices can be unjustly discriminatory without being racist in the primary sense of being rooted in one or more of the psychological ways Young-Bruehl describes. They can, of course, also be unjust or unsatisfactory in ways having little or nothing to do with prejudice. Nevertheless, where such discriminatory practices and policies persist there is bound to be a significant connection at some level—not as far down as some would like to believe—between such policies and genuine first-order racial hatred. Prejudicial and racially discriminatory policies, for example anti-affirmative action policies, are almost always grounded by racial hatred or antipathy. They are not just policy mistakes rooted in ignorance. Policy makers and citizens who extol the virtues of equality and claim affirmative action to be unfair are often either "in denial," mistaken, or both. Their belief in such pseudo-equality, like their being in denial in rela-

15. Arguably, psychiatrists nearly always focus treatment on symptoms. Many would argue that insofar as the causes of mental illness are in fact chemical and biological, then by treating symptoms chemically they are actually treating causes.
tion to their own racism, is itself a function of racial antipathy. As in so many cases, one believes what one wants and needs to believe.

Garcia (1996: 33-34) does not discuss affirmative action in detail, but he links it to his broader discussion of institutional racism and his account of the heart of racism. He points out that not all instances of institutional racism are viciously or fundamentally racist—connected to the heart of racism, even if they have the kinds of results that practices closer to the “heart of racism” also have. That may be, but it misses the more important point. I would emphasize, instead, just how much institutional racism—and it is everywhere—is tied to racism proper and how much “fair play” arguments against affirmative action and “reverse discrimination” are more closely grounded in racial antipathy (not always conscious) than perhaps Garcia, and those with radically different perspectives like George W. Bush, are willing to grant.

Similarly, “right-wing” policies that tend to favor the very well off as opposed to, or arguably at the expense of, less affluent racial minorities, while conceivably grounded in moral, social, and economic policy theory or greed, are likely to have elements of racist bias in them as well. Policy theory and beliefs may result from rationalization.16 The quarrels that racial minorities have with right-wing and not-so-right-wing political parties (in the United States the Republican and Democratic Parties) are not just about economic and social policy; they are often rightfully seen as engendered by underlying racist tendencies and practices. The immigration policy and various policies directed at Australian Aboriginals of the current and past Australian governments are racist.

An account of racism should be able to guide one in answering practical questions in a way that indicates the connection between theory and practice. The kind of fundamentally psychological or psychoanalytic account discussed above can do this. Consider, for example, the person who wants to know if he or she is a racist. This is a question that many people ask themselves from time to time. The account that Young-Bruehl gives suggests that since few are utterly free from the psychologically motivating sources that result in various prejudices, including racism, most people will be prejudicial or racist in varying degrees over different periods of their lives. It turns out that racism, or being prejudicial in some other manner, is not an all-or-nothing thing and is not something one rid oneself of once and for all.

Furthermore, such a theory suggests that victims of racial and other preju-

16. If one doubts the strength of self-deception and ensuing rationalization where antiblack racism is involved, or if one wishes to talk of the partial or misguided “truth” of the so-called white-man’s burden, then a walk through South Africa’s black townships graphically belies any such psychologically comforting strategies. One wants to ask: “What could the proponents of apartheid have possibly been thinking?”
of racial antipathy. As in so many other things, it is the heart of racism, even if they believe that the "heart of racism" also have. I would emphasize, instead, the "heart of racism" is tied to racism against affirmative action and "re"-search in racial antipathy (not always with radically different perspectives

favor the very well off as opposed to racial minorities, while some right-wingers are likely to agree with some policies on racism and social policy; they are often with racist tendencies and practices. Directed at Australian Aboriginals they are racist.

One in answering practical questions between theory and practice. The analytic account discussed above who wants to know if he or she is asked themselves from time to time. Since few are utterly free from result in various prejudices, including racism in varying degrees over different times, or being prejudicial in some cases, and is not something one rids oneself of. Victims of racial and other prejudices and ensuing rationalization where another partial or misguided "truth" of the South Africa's black townships graphically. One wants to ask: "What could matter?"

dice will likewise be perpetrators of it as well. Indeed, there is no reason to suppose that victims will be any less inclined to harbor prejudice or racism. There may even be grounds to suppose that they will be more prone to do so. They are, after all, subject over time to the same kinds of prejudicially motivating psychological features as others. Can Jews and people of color be racist (or sexist)? Can homosexuals and lesbians be sexist (or racist)? Of course. Why are some inclined to think they could not be, or less so? Wishful thinking grounded in a need to believe in moral order and at least rough justice is part of the answer. Straightforward prejudice informing one's beliefs is another.

Consider one further practical question. When walking down a quiet street a person may sometimes feel afraid or uncomfortable when in the presence of, for example, black teenagers. And this is a feeling one might not have if the individuals were white. Does this make one a racist? The account of racism outlined is perhaps less clear on this point but helpful nevertheless. The person may well be a racist or have racist tendencies, but if so, crossing the street to avoid the figures perceived as threatening is not necessarily indicative of racism. It can also be indicative of justifiable fear—though the two (fear and racism) are not incompatible. The fear might be generated by racism, but it might not be and, in fact, it seems unlikely that it would be. Racism is generated by fear and also generates it, but not in a way that makes one want to cross the street. A racist's crossing the street will likely have nothing to do with racism.

While it is true that one must more or less understand the causes of racism in order to curtail it, such an understanding indicates why even the prospects for quashing racism are not good. Why they are not good and why we have reason to be pessimistic, albeit not despairing, about it is evident once the causal factors constitutive of the many hearts of the many prejudices and varieties of racism are understood. Racism is not caused by racial hatred. It is racial hatred. Furthermore, such hatred or antipathy, in all its guises, has sources and explanations of both a general and specific nature. In general terms racism is a defensive reaction, related to denial, repression, guilt, self-hatred, narcissism, and sexual frustration and rooted further still in problematic aspects associated with specific character types. As Young-Bruehl (1996: 200–252) argues, all character types have some predominant form of prejudice associated with them. This explains why paternalism and other attitudes and behavior that may not appear overtly racist, or that may even appear beneficial, may be racist nevertheless. Paternalism, for instance, may be a reaction to guilt—like the guilt that white Australians, for example, may feel toward Aboriginals.

There is thus a sense in which racism is not fundamentally about race at all but about psychic defense. Race is, as it were, an excuse for racism. This accounts for the bizarre nature of racism. If you think that it is odd that one would hate other people because of their skin color, you are right. And as it turns out one is
not really hating others because of their skin color, sexual preference, or the like but instead because of how those others are being psychically portrayed. All of the causal factors of prejudice may be exacerbated or quelled to a degree by the particularities of one’s own personal, social, political, cultural, and historical circumstances. Thus, James Baldwin (1967: 19) hits the nail on the head when he says, “White people in this country [the United States] will have quite enough to do in learning how to accept and love themselves and each other, and when they have achieved this . . . the Negro problem will no longer exist, for it will no longer be needed.”

There are two questions that follow on from these considerations. The first has already been touched upon: Given this way of understanding racism, is a different kind of explanation of racism’s immorality in order? It seems that a different kind of explanation is in order from that offered by, say, Garcia, Blum, or Dummett in this volume. It is an explanation that is rooted specifically in the nature of racism rather than with what racism or racist behavior has in common with other immoral behavior. Racism, like other prejudices, is grounded in character defects and a variety of psychological disorders and problems. Thus, an explanation of the immorality of racism would at least include reference to the moral reprehensibility of having such a character, to and one’s responsibility for that character along with associated traits. This is undoubtedly true of other forms of immorality as well. This explanation would also, as previously noted, discuss the extent to which such features were under one’s control and how the issue of control related to moral responsibility.¹⁷ Even if it is hard to change, this does not necessarily give the racist an excuse. But it does help us understand the entire phenomena of racism, morally and otherwise, better.

These considerations considerably complicate the role or significance of a person’s motivation when assessing moral culpability because motivation itself becomes a complex and problematic category. One is motivated on various levels, conscious and unconscious, and in many, often conflicting ways. Extensive self-deception involves considerable effort on the part of the self-deceiver, and such deception is always motivated and intentional. It is also far more prevalent than most realize. These are complex moral issues, yet they must be addressed if one is to explain just what it is that is morally wrong and problematic with racism.

Garcia says, “Output-driven concepts [such as being dangerous or harmful] cannot suffice to ground assigning any moral status, because vice and virtue are by nature tied to the action’s motivation” (1996: 33). But morally assessing an action in relation to an agent’s vice and virtue involves more than merely tying it

¹⁷. These perennial issues have been widely discussed in recent literature in moral psychology especially in relation to the emotions. For an introduction see Schlosberger 1992 and Fischer and Ravizza 1993.
color, sexual preference, or the like being psychically portrayed. All of these may be stated or quelled to a degree by the critical, cultural, and historical circumstances that the nail on the head when he [black people in the United States] will have quite enough to do with one another, and when they no longer exist, it will no longer be relevant.

In these considerations, the first of understanding racism, is a difficulty in order. It seems that a difficulty is offered by, say, Garcia, Blum, or in particular racist behavior has, in common for prejudices, is grounded in character traits and problems. Thus, an explanation at least include reference to the mother, to and one's responsibility for this is undoubtedly true of other would also, as previously noted, under one's control and how the others. Even if it is hard to change, this but it does help us understand the otherwise, better.

We have noted the role or significance of a responsibility because motivation itself. One is motivated on various levels—often conflicting ways. Extensive and the part of the self-deceiver, and rational. It is also far more prevalent than we think, yet they must be addressed if morally wrong and problematic with them.

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As used in recent literature in moral psychology an introduction see Schlossberger 1992 to its motivation; and tying it to its motivation is a complex matter. There are often deep psychological motives and conflicting motives and issues of character to consider when one is assessing moral responsibility and a person's vice and virtue. The reason output-driven concepts are, as Garcia says, often useful for moral judgment is because they "can help us to decide whether the action is negligent or malicious or otherwise vicious" (33). Racisms and prejudices are grounded in our natures insofar as we are psychologically constituted as we are: beings who routinely and unavoidably make use of various defense mechanisms, who repress, project, maintain conflicting attitudes and beliefs, and so on.

This leads us to the second question. What are the prospects for whites sorting themselves out in the (unelaborated upon) ways James Baldwin suggests are necessary to overcome antiblack racism in the United States—that is, for whites to rid themselves of those defensive, repressive, projective, narcissistic features that are the sources of racial hatreds? Or to generalize, what are the prospects of altering those features of our psychological selves that are the sources of the plethora of potent prejudices and racisms that continue to have such devastating consequences?

The prospects cannot be good since what appears to be called for is a reconstitution of our psychological selves. This in turn may depend on reconstituting ourselves in various other ways, some known and some not—for example, economically and politically. That getting rid of racism calls for such fundamental, far-reaching, and wide-ranging changes is no surprise and nothing new. After all, some feminists have noted that misogyny and anti-women prejudices likewise call for vast and fundamental alterations in our psychological, social, and political selves.

Given that certain historical, social, and political, conditions help various prejudices thrive while others help thwart them, it may be possible to curtail if not eliminate prejudices like racism by legislating in ways that inhibit their growth. But this is problematic, given that legislation and various forms of institutionalized racism are themselves products of such prejudices. In other words, it is difficult although not impossible to see how meaningful, far-reaching legislation designed to curtail racisms and other prejudices can come from societies that are fundamentally and broadly racist.

Perhaps the prospects are dismal because substantial change requires too much in too many ways—ways that seem to mutually entail one another. It requires that we change fundamental psychological features of ourselves that seem damned near impossible to alter, like envy or jealousy. Indeed, in some cases eliminating racism requires eliminating envy and jealousy. Nevertheless, for one who has achieved a certain level of consciousness and self-awareness, such change appears possible—just possible. Of all the difficulties one may have with oneself—with one's character, personality, sexuality, and psychological makeup, it seems that being a racist need not necessarily be one of them. Given a certain
level of awareness, and some luck, one’s desires, repressions, projections, and denials need not take specifically racist forms. It is not just charity that begins at home, but also the kinds of self-knowledge required to extirpate racism. I think about Martin Luther King’s “I have a dream.” It has all the qualities of a dream.

Although it was not always so, the current Israeli-Palestinian conflict is primarily about “racial” and deep-seated prejudice on both sides. A disturbing feature of it is the way the present Israeli government’s leaders and propagandists hide behind charges of anti-Semitism to masque their own spiraling racist and murderous prejudices. This is odious in part for historical reasons, relying as it does on connections to anti-Semitism for insidious reasons. The past to which Israel refers is one on which they have no moral purchase. Given that they claim to have learned much from anti-Semitism, one wants to ask how they could do such things to a virtually helpless, humiliated, desperate, and oppressed minority. This barbarism is occurring despite the activity of citizens in the peace movements. It is these people who are pro-Israel, rather than those Jews and non-Jews, Israelis, and U.S. citizens, who support Israel’s brutal and politically unwise subjugation of the Palestinians. If the thesis of this essay is right, then Israeli barbarism can be explained, in part, by self-hatred—that is, it is itself a manifestation of anti-Semitism (i.e., anti-Jewish anti-Semitism not anti-Arab). The claim that the conflict is about Israeli security obfuscates and exacerbates the problems—making them seem politically manageable. It is a ploy by the Israeli and U.S. governments and many of their citizens. Silence regarding the actions of Israel is, as they say, deafening. It is a potent reminder that the psychic distance many would draw between themselves and those who stood by while other atrocities were committed is not as great as they feign to believe. Karl Jaspers said in 1946, “We see the feelings of moral superiority and we are frightened: he who feels absolutely safe from danger is already on the way to fall victim to it. The German fate could provide all others with experience, if only they would understand this experience! We are no inferior race. Everywhere people have similar qualities. We may well worry over the victors’ self-certainty” (Jaspers 2000). See also Arendt 1994.

Malcolm Bowie (1993: 20) remarks, Dreams are not prophecies but wish-fulfilments. They provide not advance glimpses of future time, but hallucinatory annulments of such time. Prophets and fortune-tellers talk about future events in naïvely chronometrical and desire-free terms, and imagine the charm of dreams to lie simply in their allowing us earlier access to a later point in a single untroubled temporal succession. Psychoanalysts, on the other hand, know better than to remove the perturbations of desire from the study of human temporality: while wishfully propelled towards the future, the unconscious nevertheless constantly retrieves that future into the present of its representations.