

RACISM

The doctrine that all of the social-historical manifestations of man and of his values (or disvalues) depend on race and that there exists a superior (“Aryan” or “Nordic”) race destined to rule mankind. The founder of this doctrine was the Frenchman Joseph Arthur Gobineau in his essay *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines* (1853), (*Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races*) which had as its motive the defense of aristocracy against democracy. Toward the beginning of the twentieth century a Germanized Englishman, Houston Stewart Chamberlain spread the myth of Aryanism in Germany (*Die Grundlagen des XIX Jahrhunderts*, 1899 (*The Foundations of the XIXth Century*)) identifying the superior, or master, race with the Germans. Antisemitism was a longstanding phenomenon in Germany; as a consequence, the doctrine of racial determinism and that of the superior race found ready diffusion. These doctrines found support in anti-Jewish prejudice and in the belief that there exists a Jewish conspiracy to conquer and rule the world and that therefore, capitalism and Marxism and, in general, those cultural and political manifestations which weaken the national order are Jewish phenomena. After the first world war, racism appeared to the Germans a consolatory myth, a way of lifting the depression following upon defeat and Hitler made capital of it his move to political power. The doctrine received further elaboration at the hands of Alfred Rosenberg in his book *The Myth of the Twentieth Century*. Rosenberg sustained a rigorous racial determinism. Every cultural manifestation of a people depends on its race. Science, morality, religion and the values these discover and diffuse depend on race and are the manifestation of the vital force of the race. Therefore, even the truth is truth only for a given race. The superior race is the Aryan race, that which, in antiquity spread from the North into Egypt, India, Persia, Greece and Rome and brought forth the civilizations of the ancient world. These civilizations fell into decay because the Aryan became racially mixed with inferior breeds. All of the sciences, the arts and the fundamental institutions of human life were created by this race. Over against this master race stands the parasitic anti-race, the Jews, which created the forces which poison race: democracy, Marxism, capitalism, artistic intellectualism and even the ideals of love, of humility and of equality spread abroad by Christianity which is a Jewish-Roman corruption of the teachings of the Aryan, Jesus. The

whole of this doctrine was explicitly presented by Nazism as a myth, created, diffused and maintained by the vital force of the race itself. This does not mean that an effort was not made to rationalize it, by giving a scientific basis to the concept of race upon which the myth rested. In reality, however, the very use which racism makes of the concept of race makes amply clear the inconsistency of the doctrine from a scientific and philosophical point of view.

The concept of race is today unanimously considered by anthropologists simply as an expedient of classification which helps to construct the zoological scheme within which the various groups of mankind may be situated. Therefore, the term is to be reserved exclusively to those human groups marked by different physical characteristics which can be transmitted by heredity. These characteristics are principally colour of the skin, stature, form of the head and the face, the colour and texture of the hair, the form of the nose and the structure of the body. Traditionally (and conventionally) three great races are distinguished; these are the white, the yellow and the black, or the Caucasian, the mongoloid and the negroid. Therefore, national, religious, geographical, linguistic and cultural groups can by no title be called "races"; neither the Italians, the Germans, nor the English constitute races, any more than did the Latins and the Greek etc. There is no "Aryan" or "Nordic" race. Nor does there exist any proof that the groups, into which mankind can be distinguished, differ in their innate capacity for intellectual and emotional development. On the contrary, historical and sociological studies tend to re enforce the view that genetic differences are insignificant factors in the determination of social and cultural differences among the various groups of men. Vast social movements have taken place without being in any way connected with racial changes. Nor is there any proof that the mixture of the races produces any results which are disadvantageous from the biological point of view. It is very probable that there are not, and never have been, no matter how far back into time one goes, any "pure races". The social results of the mixtures of races, whether good or bad, must be attributed to social factors.

A declaration on race was issued by UNESCO (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization) in Paris in 1951. It was prepared by a commission composed of five geneticists and six anthropologists belonging to six different nations. It

consists of an exposition of the chief points which have been presented above (and on which cf. Ruth Benedict, *Race, Science and Politics*, 1940; and Ralph Linton, *The Science of Man in the World Crisis*, 7a ed. 1952). In reality, racism, wherever it appears and however it is justified, belongs to the range of what Thorstein Veblen called *applied psychiatry*, that is, the art of exploiting an existing prejudice for particular purposes. In the present case, it is a question of an extremely pernicious prejudice, because it contradicts and impedes the moral tendency of humanity toward universal integration and because it makes human values, beginning with truth itself, arbitrary factors which express the vital force of race and therefore have no substance proper to themselves. As a result they become arbitrarily manipulatable for the most violent and debased ends or purposes.

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