



Philosophy and Racial Paradigms

NAOMI ZACK

*Department of Philosophy, Humanities 257, State University of New York at Albany,
NY 12222, USA*

1. Introduction

In a sufficiently comprehensive cultural context, such as contemporary American society, the ways in which people think and behave concerning race constitute a paradigm.¹ The ideational part of a paradigm of race generates social constructions that are part of social reality.² Viewing sets of related ideas and practices concerning race as paradigms makes it possible to consider the sets in their appropriate historical contexts without anachronism, and to criticize ideas and practices from paradigms other than our own, without semantic confusion.

Since the eighteenth century, there have been two paradigms of race, an Old Paradigm that was oppressive and racist, and a New Paradigm that is liberatory and nonracist. Outside of both paradigms, empirical research in the human biological sciences yields the insight that race does not exist. That insight might turn out to be the main component of The Last Paradigm of Race, or it might continue to be ignored.³

I will use “racial paradigm” to refer to a set of ranges of beliefs about issues. Everyone holding some belief on each issue shares a general core belief on that issue, although not everyone thinking within a paradigm has to have the same beliefs on any given issue. Also, it is not necessary that everyone thinking within the paradigm have a belief on every issue within the paradigm.

The issues in a racial paradigm are applied to human behavior, social situations, and events, so that the paradigm as a whole is a mechanism, and its ideational content a theory that provides explanations, predictions, and normative claims. The ability of a racial paradigm to generate normative statements results from the normative nature of some of the core beliefs and variable beliefs within the paradigm. The normative statements may be moral judgments or rules that are socially or legally enforced. In this normative dimension, a racial paradigm may function as an ideology.

Racial paradigms also function as critical theories. The explanations generated from critical theories may not be recognizable or acceptable to people, acting individually or as members of groups, to whom a critical theory is applied.⁴ Similarly, explanations and normative statements generated from a racial paradigm may be unrecognizable or unacceptable to people to whom the paradigm is applied.

It will clarify matters to stipulate distinctions between paradigms, and conceptual schemes and theories. A conceptual scheme is made up of symbols that are related through their meanings. A theory is a conceptual scheme that is primarily used for explanation and prediction, although it may be of epistemic or aesthetic value as a description in its own right. The correct use and appreciation of theories tends to be restricted to specialists in professional fields of inquiry, even though many theories have been popularized for specialists in other fields, amateurs and the lay public. Both conceptual schemes and theories are linguistic-ideational entities.

However, a paradigm, in the sense at issue, includes not just linguistic-ideational entities but their applications to persons, things, and events that exist independently of language and ideas. When Thomas Kuhn included scientific practice and research programs in his definition of paradigms, he seems to have had something like this in mind. But, Kuhn's usage of "paradigm" was restricted to scientific communities, whereas racial paradigms operate in political discussion and everyday life, as well as science.⁵ The political and daily scope of a racial paradigm means that it is an unplanned, dynamic system that may contain contradictory beliefs on some issues, even though there are shared core beliefs. Politicians and their public do not go out of their way to resolve contradictions, and neither are they perplexed that anything at all may be logically implied by a contradiction. Therefore, a paradigm that spans both science and common sense can be expected to be messy and with the mess comes instability and the probability of change.

The advantage of viewing an entire cultural system of beliefs and behavior pertaining to race as a paradigm is that it fits several different kinds of facts about race and allows for a wide variety of explanations. Also, philosophers and others in the humanities and sciences are already familiar with the ways in which paradigms operate, and cease to operate when they are supplanted by other paradigms. We also know how what Kuhn called the "incommensurability" of paradigms may preclude rational, empirically-based argument between agents from competing paradigms.⁶ What we do not know is what external and internal factors are required before one racial paradigm can be supplanted by another, to what extent the factors are psychological, intellectual, economic, or demographic, or what their critical masses are. We also do not know the extent to which liberatory laws can correct oppressive custom. Thus, in a representative

democracy where public policy is largely determined by majority interests and corporate business interests, official commitments to universal human rights may at times be taken seriously and at other times reduced to mere ceremonial rhetoric.

2. Comparison of the Old and New Paradigms of Race

The core ideational components of the Old and New Paradigms of race can be summarized as follows. Each component is also an issue that has a range of more specific beliefs.

Old

- 1_o. There exist distinct human races, constituted by hereditary traits.
- 2_o. The white race is naturally culturally superior, its members aesthetically, intellectually and morally superior, to other races.
- 3_o. Racial mixture is biologically common but unnatural; it is and should be illegal.
- 4_o. Racial difference can be scientifically studied on an empirical, physical level. It may be part of the divine order of things.
- 5_o. Human racial difference has appropriate moral and political consequences. Laws and government action should support natural inequalities based on race, especially when they exist in society, based on custom.
- 6_o. All knowledge and policy concerning racial difference does and should come from whites.

New

- 1_n. There exist distinct human races, constituted by hereditary traits
- 2_n. The white race is economically and politically advantaged over all others based partly on a history of oppression of non-white races.
- 3_n. Racial mixture is biologically common but socially odd; it is and should be legal.
- 4_n. Cultural racial difference can be scientifically studied but it is the result of environmental differences, alone, especially in education and opportunity.
- 5_n. Human racial difference has appropriate moral and political consequences. Laws and government action should have a liberatory effect on non-whites. Inequality based on race is a social and legal problem.
- 6_n. Non-whites as well as whites can and should contribute to the construction of knowledge and policy based on racial difference.

The main differences between the two paradigms are the issues of racial hierarchy and racial equality as stated in issues 2_o and 2_n, and 5_o and 5_n. While these issues appear to be solely matters of evaluation that are *about* race, they are instead closely related to how race is objectively defined during the historical period of each paradigm. The definitions facilitate social constructions of race that are characteristic of their paradigm.

The ideational part of the Old Paradigm of Race was formulated in Europe during the late eighteenth century; it reigned in America from then until the Civil Rights legislation of the 1960s, after which the New Paradigm of Race supplanted it. These dates are of course imprecise because some members of society subscribed to elements of the New Paradigm in the eighteenth century and some still operate within the Old Paradigm today. For instance, Thomas Jefferson, although otherwise living and thinking within the Old Paradigm, thought that slavery was a major social problem, as did nineteenth-century abolitionists.⁷ Also, not everyone before the 1960s thought that blacks were culturally inferior by heredity. At present, some racist scientists continue to search for physical proof of hereditary white cultural superiority, and ideological white supremacists explicitly adhere to the components of the Old Paradigm.

What is still needed is more careful work within intellectual history to track the conceptual connections between eighteenth and nineteenth, and nineteenth and twentieth, century theories of racial difference.⁸ Such tracking would lead from the intellectual content of the Old to the New Paradigm, and it might also yield clues about what is coming next. It is probably easier to track the intellectual construction of both racial paradigms than to chart their demolition. The evidence of intellectual construction lies in the published record, whereas demolition is largely the result of lack of interest to the point where certain ideas no longer find authoritative fora in speech or print. This is not to say that there is only one intellectual path that can be traced to the complete development of either paradigm, one mental story that can be told. I like a philosophical story but, as we shall see, this is far easier to come by for the construction of the Old, than New Paradigm.

Hume and Kant between them settled contemporary disagreements to the concluding effect that there existed human races with hereditary differences that were both cultural and physical. No eighteenth-century thinkers of comparable rank were recognized as having refuted them and Hume's opinion was widely cited by defenders of slavery, and accepted as a major obstacle by abolitionists.⁹ All of the eighteenth-century writers on race considered so-called black skin color to be the determining racial difference between Europeans and Africans, but early on in the racial project, there was speculation that dark skin color was the result of

environment and therefore not permanently hereditary.¹⁰ George Louis-Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, wrote in 1748: "Thus it appears that the existence of Negroes is confined to those parts of the earth where all the necessary circumstances concur in producing a constant and an excessive heat."¹¹ Buffon speculated that black skin color would be gradually lightened over eight to twelve generations in a cold climate.

Hume objected, in what was received as a refutation of Buffon, that while climate had a powerful influence on the natures of all plants and animals, human beings developed culturally through custom and imitation. He disclosed, in an infamous footnote, that he was "apt to suspect the negroes and in general all other species of men (for there are four or five different kinds) to be naturally inferior to the whites."¹² Hume went on to claim that the constant differences between whites and others would not exist, "if nature had not made an original distinction between these breeds of men."¹³

James Beattie challenged the sweep of Hume's generalization on several grounds: Europeans had been uncivilized two-thousand years earlier; the civilizations of all Negroes were unknown to Hume; there were many counter-examples to Hume's sweeping claims that non-whites were uniformly inferior in civilized achievement.¹⁴ Hume's response was to change "There never was a civilized nation of any other complexion than white" to "There scarcely ever was a civilized nation of that [Negro] complexion."¹⁵

Hume does not seem to care whether he is talking about species or breeds, but it is safe to assume that he intends both terms to be synonymous with "race." He accepts skin color as a sign of racial difference, even though he acknowledges that skin color could be an effect of climate. He then associates cultural differences, which are much more important than skin color differences, with the different races of mankind. He also posits the cultural differences as the effect of an original racial distinction.

Hume's argument is incomplete. If skin color is the relatively superficial effect of climate, then it cannot be the basis of racial difference. If racial difference is responsible for cultural difference, then it cannot be the same thing as cultural difference. What, then, is racial difference, or, what is race? Hume seems unaware that this question can be posed and that he has not answered it.

Kant, who cited Hume as an authority on the subject of race, does seem to address the question of what race is. He begins with a claim that all human beings must belong to the same genus in order to be comprehensible under a system of natural laws. He reasons that within the genus there are hereditary variations, in the form of resemblances and deviations from the "stem genus" of humanity, which cannot be restored.¹⁶ Then, he seems to define race on an empirical basis:

Among the deviations – i.e., the hereditary differences of animals belonging to a single stock – those which, when transplanted (displaced to other areas), maintain themselves over protracted generation, and which also generate hybrid young whenever they interbreed with other deviations of the same stock, are called *races*. . . . In this way Negroes and Whites are not different species of humans (for they belong presumably to one stock) but they are different *races* for each perpetuates itself in every area, and they generate between them children that are necessarily hybrid or blendings (mulattoes).¹⁷

Kant's reasoning here appears to be that if there are races, then interbreeding will result in hybrids. There are hybrids. Therefore, there must be races. On the face of his reasoning, Kant has not made a case for the existence of races. First, logically, he affirms the consequent in claiming that if there are races, there are hybrids, and, there are hybrids, so therefore there are races. Second, and more important, his suggestion that hybridity is evidence for the existence of races is undermined by the fact that "hybridity" is itself defined as racial mixture, so its existence, and the perception of its existence, presupposes the prior existence of pure races, and our ability to identify them.

Kant may not have intended to use hybridity to confirm the existence of race, either logically or empirically, but to explicate a taxonomy of human species and races, of which hybridity is a part. If this is so, he still does not have an independent empirical foundation for the existence of races but merely applies a pre-existing taxonomy of species, races, and hybridity to what he identifies as instantiating instances.

Kant posited four races from which he claimed to be able to derive all observed human differences. But, after brief descriptions of the Hunnic and Hindu races, he asserts, "The reason for assuming the Negroes and Whites to be fundamental races is self-evident."¹⁸

Kant's assumption that races exist was consistent with his *a priori* answer to the question, What is race? He posited unseen formative causes of races, namely, "germs and dispositions."¹⁹ He asserted that from these causes, together with geographical differences, "national characteristics," resulted, the differences among them depending on "the distinct feeling of the beautiful and sublime."²⁰ On the subject of this feeling, Kant made subtle distinctions among the French, Germans, and English. However, in his description of Africans, he merely took a short step back to Hume, saying:

The Negroes of Africa have by nature no feeling that rises above the trifling. Mr Hume challenges anyone to cite a single example in which a Negro has shown talents, and asserts that among the hundreds of

thousands of blacks who are transported elsewhere from their countries, although many of them have even been set free, still not a single one was ever found who presented anything great in art or science or any other praise-worthy quality, even though among the whites some continually rise aloft from the lowest rabble, and through superior gifts earn respect in the world. So fundamental is the difference between these two races of man, and it appears to be as great in regard to mental capacities as in color.²¹

As stated, Hume and Kant between them settled the question of race, and racial difference, in the eighteenth century. By 1797, Georges Léopold Cuvier could definitively set out the entire human racial taxonomy based on the thought of Hume and Kant. This was Cuvier's classification in *Animal Kingdom*:

Although the promiscuous intercourse of the human species, which produces individuals capable of propagation, would seem to demonstrate its unity, certain hereditary peculiarities of conformation are observed which constitute what are termed *races*.

Three of them in particular appear very distinct: the *Caucasian* or white, the *Mongolian* or yellow, and *Ethiopian* or negro.

The Caucasian, to which we belong, is distinguished by the beauty of the oval formed by its head, varying in complexion and the colour of the hair. To this variety, the most highly civilized nations, and those which have generally held all others in subjection, are indebted for their origin.

The Mongolian is known by his high cheek bones, flat visage, narrow and oblique eyes, straight black hair, scanty beard and olive complexion. Great empires have been established by this race in China and Japan, and their conquests have been extended to this side of the Great Desert. In civilization, however, it has always remained stationary.

The Negro race is confined to the south of Mount Atlas; it is marked by a black complexion, crisped or woolly hair, compressed cranium, and a flat nose. The projection of the lower parts of the face, and the thick lips, evidently approximate it to the monkey tribe; the hordes of which it consists have always remained in the most complete state of utter barbarism.²²

Except for Hegel's thesis that Africa stands outside of the civilizing and legalizing progress of human history, the Old Paradigm philosophical story about race ended with Kant.²³ The nineteenth-century development of the conceptual components of the Old Paradigm of Race consisted of attempts to provide an empirical basis for the hierarchical taxonomy: measurements

of skull size, and limb proportion; speculations about different kinds of blood, because blood was believed to be the hereditary medium of race. Stephen Jay Gould and Nancy Leys Stepan have well chronicled the circular and metaphorical reasoning behind those attempts to develop an empirical foundation for race. Gould explains how the empirical data were reported inaccurately and sometimes even fraudulently; Stepan analyzes how metaphors for black race were used to explain female gender inferiority and how female gender metaphors were used to explain black racial inferiority.²⁴ I will not retrace that ground here. Suffice it to say that by 1900, no racial essences had been discovered, and it was known within the sciences of human biology that differences in human blood do not correspond to racial differences.²⁵

Despite widespread miscegenation among American Negroes, a mythology about the physical and mental debilities of mixed-race people and their inability to reproduce successfully, continued to define “hybridity” during the nineteenth and much of the twentieth century.²⁶ Interracial marriage was illegal in most American states after emancipation.²⁷ By the early 1900s the so-called one drop rule was used as a legal definition of whiteness: a white person was someone with no known black ancestors; a black person was someone with some known black ancestors.²⁸ As in the eighteenth century, the Old Paradigm of Race needed cases of mixed race to prove the value of racial purity or the existence of the white race. A stated ideal of Thomas Jefferson was thus fulfilled: slavery had been abolished but racial mixture was unacceptable.²⁹

When the U.S. Supreme Court struck down the remaining anti-miscegenation laws in *Loving v. Virginia*, 1967, the appellee’s arguments rested on the desirability of what they considered to be racial integrity. Chief Justice Warren based the Court’s decision on the argument that because marriage is a basic social liberty, states are not entitled to prohibit and punish marriage on the invidious basis of racial difference alone. Warren argued that such regulation violated the equal protection clause of the fourteenth amendment and that it was designed to maintain “White Supremacy.”³⁰

By the 1930s, cross-cultural investigations in anthropology had been interpreted by Franz Boas and Claude Lévi-Strauss as proof that cultural traits were not biologically inherited.³¹ It was assumed that Euro-American cultural attainments were universally desirable, and by the 1950s, educated emancipatory thinkers developed critical theories and public policy toward the goal of achieving civic and social equality between blacks and whites.

The views of non-whites on their own identity and liberation, based on racial difference, are recognized in the New Paradigm.⁶ⁿ Non-white traditions of liberation have been in basic accord with goals and policies for racial equality that have been formulated by whites, except when non-

white projects of identity affirmation have cultural content in conflict with white ideals. For instance, indigenous advocates in the United States, and throughout the world, have tried to retain land-based social values that are not recognized within the Western technological project.³²

A core issue, 4_n, of the New Paradigm of Race is that human cultural traits and individual aptitudes are not variably inherited within distinct racial categories. As a result, there is a general presumption, based on the equal protection clause of the fourteenth amendment to the United States Constitution, that different treatment in non-racial legal and civic matters cannot be based on racial difference alone. This is evident in the Civil Rights Act of 1964, The Voter Registration Act of 1965, and the Immigration Act of 1965. Nonetheless, this legislation does not so much affirm equality among racial groups as it prohibits discrimination against individuals, on the basis of race.³³

Logically, the implementation of equal protection under the law depends on prior identification based on race. If people were not presumed to be racially different, there would be no basis on which to insist that they be treated equally, regardless of that racial difference. Different criteria for racial discrimination, as well as appropriate policies for correcting racial discrimination have been formulated in varied ways, within issue 5_n, of the New Paradigm. However, belief in the existence of race is a core issue of the New Paradigm of Race, as it was of the Old, 1_o and 1_n. Almost everyone in American society assumes that people are divided into natural groups with common physical traits that can be studied in the biological sciences, and that the groups are the referents of racial terms. The subject of serious difference within the New Paradigm is how members of the different racial groups have, do, and ought to relate to one another, based on racial difference, or in spite of it.

In both paradigms, racial difference is associated with cultural difference that includes varied kinds of human character, skills, and behavior, which are all subject to evaluation. In the Old Paradigm, race is defined as hereditary biology and hereditary culture. But, in the New Paradigm, race is defined as hereditary biology only, and assumptions or explicit statements that cultural differences associated with racial difference are inherited are defined as racist by educated thinkers holding beliefs in the range on issue 4_n. Within the Old Paradigm, charges of racism according to the New Paradigm either do not make sense or appear to be changing natural differences into political and moral ones.

Let us assume that adherents of both paradigms assume that justice consists in treating equals equally, and that they are willing to process empirical information about the connection between human biological racial difference and culture. On that assumption, some instances of racism within the New Paradigm may not have constituted injustice within the

Old Paradigm, because relevant information was not available. Nonetheless, there is an important residue of psychological and moral illwill toward people of different races, which is not fully captured by this semantic, paradigmatic analysis of racism as based on available empirical information. Kwame Anthony Appiah and others, have tried to identify exactly where race-based ill will intersects with factual ignorance.³⁴ Without doubt, some of the ill will is moral and psychological in ways that overflow the ideational content of either paradigm. Even without such ill will, racial matters in society go far beyond ideation, into social reality.

3. The Social Construction of Race

John Searle's analysis in *The Construction of Social Reality* can be applied to racial paradigms to clarify the connection between the ideational and social aspects of race. Searle observes that human beings live in realities made of physical facts that can be studied in the natural sciences, and social facts that are about physical facts and other social facts. Broadly speaking, social facts are related to physical facts through language. Much of the language used in social reality contains words that are presumed ultimately to refer to physical facts. However, there are levels and meta-levels within social reality, so that on each level, constructions from less abstract levels can be given new meanings. The new meanings regulate objects on the new level of social reality and to some extent constitute them as social objects on that level. This process of regulating and constituting is the construction of social reality.³⁵

Searle's primary example of a construction within social reality is money. Originally, money, as a store of value and medium of exchange meant, because it was, precious objects. That *M*, a general term, was instantiated by a precious object, was a physical fact. That the precious object was money was a social fact. In time, money came to be non-precious objects that represented precious objects, such as paper that was backed up by gold or silver held in vaults in central banks. Eventually, money came to be pieces of paper and notations that are not backed up by any object of value and have no significant value in themselves.³⁶

Searle's general formula for social construction is *X counts as Y in C*, where the following conditions obtain. First, *X* is some object; *Y* is some object, reason for action, or symbol; *C* is a social context. Second, the term "counts as" means that *X* is assigned a new status or function in *C*, which it could not fulfill before, outside of *C*, as just *X*. This assignment constitutes and regulates *Y* at the same time. Third, and as an important correlative of the second condition, although *X* and *Y* may refer to the same object outside of *C*, which may be either a physical object or a social

construction in C_{1-n} , sentences containing X cannot be substituted for sentences containing Y with preservation of the same truth value. Sentences containing X and Y are intensional with respect to substitutability. For example, if an electronic blip, E , counts as B , a \$100 bill, in C , then the truth of a sentence about E may not be preserved if " B ," the name for B , is substituted for " E ," the name for E , in that sentence.³⁷

We can view a racial designation in the Old or New Paradigm as an instantiation of X , and view some treatment based on that X as an instantiation of Y , where C is American society. Searle's formula, *X counts as Y in C* can thus be used to describe the American social realities of race. The advantage of applying Searle's analysis in this way, is that we may describe social practices relating to racial difference, without speaking as though the subjects of racial designation are the same as what they count for in society. We thus have a simple way in which to separate race from how people behave on the basis of race. For example, under the Old Paradigm, "black" counts as "being a slave," "being subject to Jim Crow regulations," or "being prohibited from marrying a white person." Under the New Paradigm, what is presently described as institutionalized racism, becomes instances in which "black" counts as "being poor," "being unlikely to be hired or promoted to top management," or "being likely to have grown up in an inner-city ghetto." If "white" is an instantiation of X , it may count as "being respectable," "being a likely candidate for President," or "being likely to have grown up in an affluent suburb." Everything that can be understood to be a social result of prior biological racial designation, including derogatory stereotypes and liberatory identities, are instantiations of some Y in C .

To repeat, we now have a neutral language for drawing lines between facts about racial difference, and social constructions based on the facts, in any given context. The paradigmatic assumption up to now has been that there is some factual X about race, on the basis of which X can count as something else, as Y . Often, Y has been whatever else those with power and authority to regulate and constitute Y have decided. In the Old Paradigm, X was presumed to be instantiated by hereditary biology and culture, in the New Paradigm, by hereditary biology only.

There are empirical grounds for arguing that in the next, Last Paradigm of Race, there will be no physical fact believed capable of instantiating X . The grounds are the kinds of evidence which rational, empirically-minded, people, who currently adhere to the New Paradigm of Race, are otherwise likely to consider: there are no physical racial essences; there are no general genes for black, white, Asian, or any other race; there is greater physical variation within any race than between any two races; the genes for traits that have been designated as racial in American society do not automatically get inherited together but, like other physical traits, are

subject to dispersal and recombination at conception. Furthermore, there is no evidence that mixed-race individuals have any physical or mental debilities, including reproductive difficulties, or that they are even an anomaly over the history of humankind. There is a pretense in the media that racial identity can be detected by DNA testing but in fact DNA differences correlate with racial differences only if race has already been picked out according to social criteria that include family relation.³⁸

Searle's distinction between intrinsic and observer-relative facts about objects is relevant to the distinction between the existence of race in the Old and New Paradigms, and its non-existence according to realist criteria that have been applied to other entities by many people who have believed in the existence of race. Consider Searle's example of a stone paperweight. That the object is a stone is an intrinsic fact about it, but its being a paperweight is an observer-relative fact.³⁹ Observer-relative facts depend on common intentions in cultural contexts, and on complex systems of rules, actions, functions, and conscious, as well as potentially-conscious, beliefs. They are the stuff of both subjective and objective social reality, just as intrinsic facts are the stuff of objective, physical reality.⁴⁰ Applying Searle's distinction, we can say that for a long time a person being black, white, or Asian was believed to be an intrinsic fact about that person and that it is now clear that being black, white or Asian is an observer-relative fact. As an observer-relative fact, racial identification exists as a result of collective intentions or beliefs that are held in large part because it is believed that others hold them. If the majority of educated Americans came to believe that the majority of educated Americans had come to believe that there are no physical facts capable of instantiating any racial *X* in the formula *X counts as Y in C*, the first core issue of the Last Paradigm of Race would be:

- 1₁. There is no evidence that there are distinct human races constituted by hereditary traits of any kind.

There are objections to the kind of naive realism or belief in objective external reality that seems to motivate taking the trouble to articulate 1₁. Searle's presumption is that ultimately, all of the *X*'s that can count as *Y*'s in *C*'s can be instantiated by physical facts that exist independently of social reality. However, his own example of money in the contemporary world, falsifies the presumption. Insofar as all money is fiat money, with nothing of value backing it up, all of the referents of money are dependent on social reality. The electronic and numerical notations, paper money, and coin are physical things, but they are not as such objects of value that form a factual base for money, in any of its socially constructed forms. All of

the different forms of money are no more than symbols of the very social constructions that rest on them.

Given the ultimate symbolic nature of money, combined with its ability to drive and do so much in contemporary society, someone today could claim that physical race is really nothing more than dark skin hues. Dark skin hues already function as symbols that ground all of the other social constructions of race.⁴¹ Therefore, someone today may ask, "Why should it matter if people suddenly realize that what they thought was a general biological difference is merely a particular symbolic difference, as long as they believe that the symbol continues to have the same meaning in society that it has had thus far?"

This question overlooks an important distinction. It is true that people already do everything they do with money in conjunction with the belief that there are no precious objects backing it up. However, this is mainly due to common agreement that everyone benefits from having a functional monetary system. We do not know if people would continue to do everything they now do with race in conjunction with widespread belief that there is nothing to back it up. There is no common agreement that everyone benefits from the existence of a socially-constructed racial taxonomy. Therefore, the fact that there is nothing to instantiate a biological racial *X*, does matter.

Related to the objection to the social-construction analysis of race is a more general idealist skepticism about physical reality that should be addressed. Consider, borrowing from Berkeley, that our idea of a physical reality that exists independently of our idea of it, is no different from our idea of such a reality as existing only because we believe it does. The lack of an independent biological substratum for our idea of race does not mean that there is anything wrong with Old and New Paradigm ideas of race as something physical. Since all we have are our ideas, it does not matter if some ideas that we thought were accompanied by something else, never were. That something else, in this case, a biological substratum, was nothing but another idea, anyway.

The answer to this objection, oddly enough, comes from Berkeley himself.⁴² Our world is organized by the relations among our ideas. In the Old and New Paradigms, it has been assumed that *X* counts as varied *Y*'s in *C* because the general nature of *X* justifies the general *Y* constructions and provides detailed justifications in specific instances. If *X* is not biological in the ways believed, then the *Y* constructions are arbitrary and where they are harmful to the people who were previously believed to instantiate *X*, they should be changed.

4. Implications for Philosophers

The paradigmatic and socially-constructed nature of race has ethical and philosophical implications for future philosophical work on the topic. The ethics include matters of professional ethics.

Race has never been a traditional topic in Western philosophy. The idea of races as general biological categories, abstract general ideas in Berkeley's sense, is a relatively new idea in the West.⁴³ It begins in the eighteenth century at the earliest, and philosophy is an ancient discipline. Furthermore, the social and moral issues raised by racial difference and racism are not sufficiently abstract and universal to interest most philosophers. Therefore, Hume's offhand footnote and Kant's publications in anthropology and geography do not weigh heavily in evaluations by philosophers of their work as philosophers. But, a number of professional philosophers are beginning to write about race at this time and that is why the ethical points are relevant. Race has become a philosophical topic.

If we give race a fraction of the kind of systematic thought reserved for traditional philosophical topics, and begin to sort out some of the current disagreements in the literature with the standing tools of the trade, it is obvious that race is not a burdensome subject. It is not difficult to get the empirical and semantic facts about race right. Even if the full and final theory is elusive, plausible abstract clarity can be brought to the issues. If individuals who are not philosophers find the ontology of race conceptually confusing and emotionally distressing, this does not mean that philosophers, who for the most part do earn a professional reputation of detachment, need be confused and upset.

Philosophers who are concerned about the social reality of race ought to use the tools of their trade on it. For instance, philosophers who otherwise operate in the mainstream of the discipline might set the record straight given everything that the non-philosophical sciences have yielded about race since Hume and Kant wrote. There is little diffidence in the profession in criticizing Hume and Kant, or anyone else in the history of philosophy, about their ideas on topics other than race. Once it is understood that Hume and Kant were addressing race within a paradigm different from the contemporary one, it should be possible to systematically revisit their ideas on this subject, without blame or embarrassment. The way in which nineteenth-century racial investigations were completely taken over by scientists might also be a topic of some historical interest to philosophers. What were the conceptions of philosophy and science that accompanied this shift? Of course, to suggest that a subject might be of interest to philosophers is not the same thing as saying that any particular philosopher is obligated to pursue it.

Given the history of ideas about race and the present knowledge that race does not have the biological foundation that the lay public continues to think it does, philosophers addressing race at this time would seem to have a professional obligation to think through the implications for related topics of the biological non-existence of race. For instance, what are the implications for the content of liberatory public policy? What can we say about the psychological and moral aspects of racism in the absence of the biological foundation?

This situation resembles the position of a philosopher who lacks religious faith and has realized, here, with thanks to Hume, that there is no rational or empirical proof for the existence of God. Does such a philosopher leap into a religious dispute on the side of practitioners who have been persecuted for their religion, taking up their theology and vocabulary in the process? Or, should the philosopher try to explain to all contending religious groups that there is no rational basis for any of their theological claims? It would not be intellectually honest were the philosopher, for political reasons, to downplay the failure of proofs for the existence of God. The philosopher could remain aloof, but is it right to do this if religious tensions cause great social and individual harm? Perhaps the philosopher ought to reformulate secular principles of morality and human identity that will be acceptable to all religious practitioners.

At any rate, philosophers need to consider whether it is possible to construct a professional code about illusion. There could be a parallel in the code of medical doctors regarding disease – they are against it. Philosophers who are against illusion generally, and in favor of social justice in particular, could think about the content of The Last Paradigm of Race. Four issues will have to be resolved, ideationally and socially, before the Last Paradigm of Race can fully develop.

One issue concerns racial historical criticism. Working within the New Paradigm of Race, it is not difficult to find grounds to excoriate the ideas and behavior of people who thought and lived within the Old Paradigm. It can be plausibly argued that, at the least, otherwise liberatory white thinkers in the Enlightenment tradition were guilty of grave omissions. Charles Mills makes this point in a way impossible to answer with moral conviction:

Where is Grotius's magisterial *On Natural Law and the Wrongness of the Conquest of the Indies*, Locke's stirring *Letter Concerning the Treatment of the Indians*, Kant's moving *On the Personhood of Negroes*, Mill's famous condemnatory *Implications of Utilitarianism for English Colonialism*, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels's outraged *Political Economy of Slavery*?⁴⁴

However, before the Enlightenment, the biological concept of race as an hereditary taxonomic system did not exist. As recently as the seventeenth century, distinctions among human groups that divided Europeans from Africans and American Indians, were drawn on the basis of non-hereditary cultural practices such as the use of money and religious behavior.⁴⁵ To interpret such differences as racial differences, because they were drawn to the disadvantage of those who would be designated non-white within the Old and New Paradigms of race, is anachronistic. Furthermore, given the lack of a confirmed biological substratum for race, there is no reliable epistemological basis on which specific racial groups can be identified as subjects of pre-racial oppressive social constructions.⁴⁶ For that matter, the lack of a confirmed biological substratum, in principle casts doubt on the accuracy with which racial groups can be picked out within the periods of the Old and New Paradigms of race. As Appiah has explained in the context of non-white racial identity, if we base racial identification on culture or history, the net is too wide because members of different races may share the same history.⁴⁷ If we rely on biological distinctions, the best we can do is refer to individuals who have been picked out based on the distinctions falsely drawn in specific cultural contexts. Of course, that is all we need in order to address historical oppressions based on race, as long as we realize that we are talking about historical oppressions based on what race was falsely thought to be.

Another issue concerns non-white identity commitments. Some parts of some non-white racial identities presuppose the truth of the Old and New Paradigm core beliefs that there are biological races. Given the lack of evidence for biological race and the racisms that have been perpetrated using biological race as an excuse, care should be taken with liberatory identities so that they do not continue to reproduce false deterministic taxonomies of biological race. One way in which this can be done is through a reconfiguration of race as ethnicity, because ethnicity is known to be cultural. Another way is to reconstruct race as family heredity only, because human families do transmit biological traits and much of the false taxonomy of race has supervened on existent human genealogy. Still, to the extent that non-white liberatory identities are forms of resistance and protest, they have a rhetorical dimension that is based on fictive oppressive attributions. Those attributions have been social constructions that are in themselves real in specific contexts.

Still another issue concerns affirmative action. Much of white American discrimination against non-whites has been based on Old Paradigm core beliefs about the heredity of cultural traits. The Civil Rights legislation of the 1960s, which is based on New Paradigm beliefs that racial difference does not necessarily involve cultural difference, is intended to oppose that

kind of racial discrimination. However, there is a residue of the effects of past discrimination, as well as continued aversion based on perceived racial difference, which laws against discrimination are widely believed not to correct.

Affirmative action policies were initially formulated as correctives of such discriminatory effects and aversions. Whether or not present aversion and effects of past discrimination would subside if it came to be generally believed that there were no biological basis for race, is an empirical question. We do not know if affirmative action would still be considered necessary were such facts broadly known. Amy Gutman, and others, who defend affirmative action with the knowledge that race lacks a biological foundation, ignore the contingent effects of broad education about the biological facts.⁴⁸ The status of affirmative action in a Last Paradigm of Race is presently undetermined.

One more issue concerns mixed-race identity. Mixed-race identification and self-created mixed-race identities are problematic for both the Old and New Paradigms of Race. On the one hand, what Kant called hybridity is necessary to confirm that there are races in the first place. On the other hand, the recognition of mixed-race identity destabilizes racial taxonomy because it interferes with the ability to sort everyone into one or another of a recognizable group of races.⁴⁹ In fact, mixed-race individuals do not fulfill Kantian notions of hybridity by being in some ways biologically defective, or even odd. Since there is no confirmation for the biological existence of race itself, mixed-race has no biological basis. Nevertheless, anyone who persisted in some belief in the existence of races, would have to say on that basis that the vast majority of people has always been racially mixed.

The most vexing present problems with mixed-race appear to be political. There is concern among some African-Americans that if mixed-race Americans, especially those who are black and white, are recognized as such, it will dilute recent legal gains and entitlements that have been race-based according to traditional racial taxonomy. In this sense, mixed-race seems to work against broad goals of liberation. But, the growing population of mixed-race Americans, most of whom are the result of the 1967 Supreme Court legalization of interracial marriage, is the result of at least partial realization of the same broad liberatory goals.⁵⁰

Notes

1. For more on this use of "paradigm" see Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).
2. For more on this use of "social construction" see John Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality* (New York: The Free Press, 1995).

3. See Naomi Zack, *Thinking About Race*, (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 1998), pp. 108–109.
4. Raymond Geuss, *The Idea of a Critical Theory* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 22–25.
5. Kuhn, “Postscript,” in op. cit. pp. 176–177.
6. Ibid. pp. 144–159.
7. Thomas Jefferson, “Manners” from *Notes on the State of Virginia*, ed., W. Peden, University of North Carolina Press, 1955, in Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), p. 97.
8. See Eze, op. cit.; Ivan Hannaford, *Race: The History of an Idea in the West* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).
9. Richard H. Popkin, “Hume’s Racism,” *Philosophical Forum*, vol. 9, No. 2–3.
10. Ibid., pp. 212–213, 223–224.
11. George-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, *A Natural History, General and Particular*, vol. 1, trans. W. Smellie, 1860, in Eze, op. cit., pp. 23–24.
12. David Hume, “Of National Characters,” in *Essays Moral and Political*, rev. ed 1748, in Eze, p. 33.
13. Ibid.
14. James Beattie, *An Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth, in Opposition to Sophistry and Skepticism* (Philadelphia: Solomon Wieatt, 1809), in Eze, op. cit. pp. 34–37. See also Popkin, op. cit. pp. 219–221.
15. Beattie, op. cit. p. 37.
16. Immanuel Kant, “On the Different Races of Man,” in *This is Race*, ed., E.W. Count (New York: Henry Schuman, 1950), in Eze, op. cit. pp. 38–39.
17. Ibid. p. 40.
18. Ibid. p. 42.
19. Ibid.
20. Kant, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*, trans. J.T. Goldthwait (Berkeley, Calif. University of California Press, 1960), in Eze, op. cit. pp. 49–58.
21. Ibid. p. 55.
22. Georges Léopold Cuvier, “Varieties of the Human Species,” in *Animal Kingdom*, trans. H. McMurtie, New York, 1831, in Eze, op. cit. pp. 104–105.
23. G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, trans. H.B. Nisbet (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1975) section, “Africa” in *Geographical Basis of World History*, in Eze, op. cit.
24. See Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1981); Nancy Leys Stepan, *The Idea of Race in Science: Great Britain, 1800–1950* and “Race and Gender: The Role of Analogy in Science,” in David Theo Goldberg, ed., *Anatomy of Racism* (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1990).
25. N.P. Dubinin, “Race and Contemporary Genetics,” in Leo Kuper, ed., *Race, Science and Society*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965).
26. See Naomi Zack, *Race and Mixed Race* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), pp. 112–126.
27. See *Loving v. Virginia* in *United States Reports*, vol. 388, Cases Adjudged in The Supreme Court at October Term, 1966 (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1968).
28. See Naomi Zack, *Thinking About Race*, pp. 5–6.
29. Jefferson, *Notes* in Eze, op. cit. p. 103.
30. *Loving v. Virginia*, in op. cit. pp. 1–13.

31. Franz Boas, *Anthropology and Modern Life* (New York: Norton, 1928); Claude Lévi-Strauss, "Race and History," Leo Kuper, ed., *Race, Science and Society*.
32. Ward Churchill, ed., *Marxism and Native Americans* (Boston: South End Press, 1993); Naomi Zack, "Lockean Money, Indigenism and Globalism," forthcoming, *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 1999 supplementary volume, *Civilization and Oppression*.
33. See Nathan Glazer, "Individual Rights against Group Rights," in Will Kimlicka, ed., *The Rights of Minority Cultures* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); and Michael Walzer, "Pluralism: A Political Perspective," in Kimlicka, op. cit.
34. Kwame Anthony Appiah, "Racisms" in Goldberg, op. cit.
35. Searle, op. cit.
36. Ibid., pp. 48–58, 79–112.
37. Ibid., pp. 18–19.
38. See K. Anthony Appiah, " 'But Would That Still Be Me?': Notes on Gender, 'Race,' Ethnicity, as Sources of 'Identity,' " in Naomi Zack, ed., *RACE/SEX: Their Sameness, Difference and Interplay* (New York: Routledge, 1997); "Race, Culture, Identity: Misunderstood Connections," in K. Anthony Appiah and Amy Gutman, eds., *Color Conscious The Political Morality of Race* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996); Naomi Zack, "Race and Philosophic Meaning," in Zack, ed., *RACE/SEX*.
39. Searle, op. cit. pp. 11–13.
40. Ibid., pp. 177–179.
41. See Kevin Thomas Miles, "Body Badges: Race and Sex" in Zack, ed., *RACE/SEX*.
42. George Berkeley, *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*, ed., Kenneth P. Winkler (Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett, 1982) para. 105, p. 68.
43. Ibid. para. 9–14, pp. 9–15.
44. Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997), p. 94.
45. See: Naomi Zack, *Bachelors of Science: Seventeenth Century Identity, Then and Now* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996) chs. 12 and 14; Hannaford, *Race*, pp. 147–184.
46. Naomi Zack, "The Racial Contract According to Charles Mills," forthcoming in the *Radical Philosophical Review*.
47. Kwame Anthony Appiah, "The Uncompleted Argument: Du Bois and the Illusion of Race," reprinted in Naomi Zack, Laurie Shrage and Crispin Sartwell, eds., *Race, Class, Gender and Sexuality: The Big Questions* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), pp. 28–47.
48. Amy Gutman, "Responding to Racial Injustice," in Appiah and Gutman, eds., *Color Conscious*, pp. 106–137.
49. See Zack, *Thinking about Race*, ch. 3, "Mixed Black and White Race and Public Policy," in Zack, Shrage and Sartwell, *Race, Class, Gender and Sexuality*, pp. 73–84.
50. This paper was presented as my presidential address to the American Society for Value Inquiry on 29 December, 1998, at the American Philosophical Association, Eastern Division meeting in Washington, D.C.

