

On the Ontology of Race
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Is race social or biological? Real or illusory? About these questions we are fundamentally confused. We think race is one thing when it is many; that it is biological when it is social; social when biological; real when illusory; illusory when real. Blind to the plurality of race concepts, we repeatedly confuse one race concept with another. We say that race concepts should be eliminated when they should be preserved, preserved when they should be eliminated. We try to make old race concepts serve where only new ones will do. Such is the depth of our confusion that we will not be in a position to appreciate its full measure until we have taken the first steps toward a clearer view.

If we are to escape from the philosophical morass that is the ontology of race, we need a philosophical account of the territory — a philosophical framework capable of registering the plurality of race concepts and the different senses of ‘social’, ‘biological’, ‘real’ and ‘illusory’ at issue. It must help us distinguish and identify the different race concepts and understand their relation and must do the same for the relevant predicates’. The purpose of this essay is to articulate and defend such a framework.

Stated in a maximally general way, my thesis is that race is not one thing and can be understood as either or both social and biological (and real or illusory) — depending upon the race concept at issue and the sense of the predicates intended. The precise sense (or senses) in which race can be said to be social and biological, real and illusory will be delineated in the detailed exposition of the philosophical framework that follows. In saying that race is social *and* biological and real *and* illusory I do not mean to suggest that race essentially or ineluctably contradictory. Showing that the senses in which race can be said to be “social” are compatible with those in which it can be said to be “biological” and that the senses in which it can be said to be real are compatible with those in which it can be said to be illusory I regard as a condition of adequacy for a philosophical account of race.

The idea that race is both social and biological has been revived in recent times and others have defended the idea that the concept of race need not be racialist.¹ But there is no agreement on the form that an articulation of a non-racialist concept of race should take, nor is the idea that there *could be* a non-racialist concept of *race* generally accepted. Moreover the notion that there is *any* sense in which race (something which can properly be called “race”) can be understood to be biological and real continues to be extremely controversial. It contradicts the “politically correct” view that race is *social-and-not-biological*. It is therefore incumbent upon me to state explicitly and upfront that the position I shall defend is anti-racist. I accept the core anti-racist doctrine that the *racialist* (essentialist and hierarchical) race concept essentially involves false, superstitious and pernicious beliefs — and that *its* use is to be eliminated from our discourse and unrelentingly denounced. But I reject the anti-racist truism that the ordinary concept of race, properly understood, is ineluctably racialist or that the racialist concept of race is *the* concept of race. The anti-racist view I defend is non-standard. Ashley Montagu’s influential interpretative maxim— *always interpret ‘race’ as racialist race*—once served a genuine progressive function.² But that time is past. Largely owing to the work of eliminativists about race (theorists who want to jettison the concept of race), the philosophical discussion of race has reached a point at which it has become possible—and indeed necessary— to adopt a more sophisticated view.³ The once progressive dogma *the concept of race = the concept of racialist race* has become an impediment to the advancement of our understanding. It is high time we free ourselves from this fetter.

I shall argue that, *properly understood*, the ordinary concept of race can be seen to contain an identifiable non-racialist “logical core” that can be distinguished from its familiar racialist articulation (= the ordinary *conception* of race)⁴ and shall defend the controversial notion that there is an unobjectionable but non-trivial sense of ‘biological’ relative to which both the ordinary and the racialist concepts of race can and must be said to be biological. I will also make clear that relative to other, stronger and more interesting senses of ‘biological’ the racialist concept of race is *not* biological. I shall put forth the heterodox view that there is a real, non-racialist biological phenomenon of race picked out by the logical core of the ordinary concept and, further, that there

is a non-racialist scientific concept of race in which the minimalist biological phenomenon of race can find scientific description and explanation. The emphasis given to biological race in this essay is largely an artifact of polemical context; nothing that I say is meant to suggest its primacy. As for the phenomenon of social race, I shall argue that recognition of its existence and character requires the introduction of a novel race concept distinct from the ordinary, racialist, and scientific concepts of race and I shall introduce a concept suited to the sociality of social race.

My account of the ontology of race takes the form of an exposition of four distinct race concepts: (i) the ordinary concept of race, (ii) the racialist concept of race, (iii) the populationist race concept, and (iv) the concept of socialrace. The race concept I am calling *racialist* is the familiar, historically influential, hierarchical and “essentialist” race concept, often (incorrectly) identified as *the* race concept that has been the primary focus of critical attention for some time now. This pernicious notion purports to divide human individuals into sharply defined, hierarchically-arranged groups which differ in humanly important characteristics such as intelligence, morality, and culture on the basis of skin color, nose shape, head form and the like. It is the concept of race that has been traditionally deployed to provide an ideological justification for racial discrimination, inequality, and oppression. It is the race concept whose use ought to be eliminated. I shall propose and defend a concept I shall call the *populationist race concept* as a candidate non-racialist scientific concept of race that is continuous in important respects with the logical core of ordinary concept of race but discontinuous with the specifically racialist elements of the racialist concept of race, a non-racialist scientific concept of race. The race concept I express using the term ‘socialrace’ is a specifically social concept of race, distinct from the three preceding race concepts and different from them in kind. It exemplifies the kind of race concept required to grasp the social phenomenon of race.⁵

I make no claim of exclusiveness or exhaustiveness on behalf of the proposed division of race concepts. It is not my view that every occurrence of the word ‘race’ can be neatly pigeonholed into its categories. Real occurrences of the word ‘race’ rarely come outfitted with markers indicating the specific race concept they express. Many real (and legitimate) uses of the word

'race' are ambiguous. Some of the most sophisticated uses made of it trade essentially on these ambiguities. Some ambiguous uses are simply confused. I harbor no illusions about the possibility of eliminating the conceptual and ontological messiness characteristic of actual racial discourse. But an understanding of all four concepts and their relation is a necessary condition of arriving at a minimally adequate understanding of the ontology of race in my view and I do think my account can help us navigate our way through the murk and ambiguity of actual racial discourse, that it can help us think more clearly about race, and that this can inform our practice..

The body of this article consists of six sections. Section I provides explications of two race concepts, the ordinary concept of race and the racist concept of race. Section II addresses the differential categorical status and cognitive value of these two concepts and discusses the ontological standing of the objects to which they purport to refer. The populationist race concept is articulated in Section III. Its categorical status, cognitive value, and the standing of the objects to which it purports to refer are the subject of Section IV. Section V introduces the concept of socialrace. Its categorical status, cognitive value, and the ontological standing of the objects to which it purports to refer are also addressed in the same section. The discussion concludes with Section VI

I

1. In this section I articulate and defend the controversial view that there is an identifiable, single ordinary concept of race and offer an explication of its content. As I understand it, the *ordinary concept of race* is the concept that corresponds roughly to the meaning of the ordinary word 'race'. I believe it contains a "logical core" that can be distinguished from the racist features that characterize the ordinary conception of race.⁶

The logical core says that to count as a race, a human group must satisfy three conditions:

- (1) it must be distinguished from other groups by *visible physical features*
- (2) its members must be linked by a *common ancestry*

(3) its members must originate from a *distinctive geographic location*.

For mnemonic purposes, I will refer to (1)- (3) as the three basic conditions. Taken together, they specify what it is to think of a group *as a race* in the ordinary sense of the term. Unless a group is thought of (explicitly or implicitly) as satisfying all three conditions, we should not say that it is thought of as a *race*. Putative race concepts that fail to satisfy one or more of the three conditions are to be regarded as degenerate.

The key to understanding the ordinary concept of race lies appreciating in one obvious fact about it. *It, like any other ordinary concept, can be conceived of in different ways*. There are pluralities of *conceptions* of race: that is, pluralities of ways of articulating the ordinary concept's logical core.⁷ Different conceptions of race will differ in their specification of the concept's logical core. According to the conception elaborated here, the logical core itself provides a (or perhaps *the*) minimalist conception of the ordinary concept of race. We can intelligibly regard it as the ordinary concept of race (conceived of in a minimalist way). This conception is minimalist because it does not include the racialist elements of the ordinary *conception* of race, which will be discussed below. The term 'logical core' can be used as shorthand to refer to the ordinary concept conceived of in this minimalist way. I will also use the expression *the ordinary concept of race as specified by the logical core* to refer to the ordinary concept of race thus understood.

Is it possible to articulate the ordinary concept of race? Some have questioned whether it is. It has been correctly observed that "ordinary concepts are notoriously vague; individual conceptions and linguistic usage varies widely."⁸ But none of these points impugns the possibility of articulating the ordinary concept of race. One of the strengths of the present account is that it represents the ordinary concept of race as a vague concept: there are indefinite numbers of ways of specifying conditions (1)-(3); each specification generates a different articulation of the ordinary concept of race. But the ordinary concept of race is not (represented as being) so vague as to have no specifiable content whatsoever. One shows that it has a specifiable content by putting forth and defending an interpretation of what this content is. And

this is what a philosopher can do (as a philosopher) to show that there is *shared, public* ordinary concept of race. Linguistic use of the word ‘race’ does vary widely. My claim is that this variation falls within the parameters specified by conditions (1) – (3). It can be contested in the usual way by adducing counterexamples. Appeal to the variety of individual *conceptions* of race in no way undercuts the claim that there is a single ordinary concept of race either, since the present account is intended as an account of a shared public concept of race that must be distinguished from individual conceptions of what that concept is.

As for the status of my account, it can be said to be “conceptual” in Haslanger’s sense, since it seeks an articulation of our ordinary concept of race.⁹ I don’t think we can sensibly explore what we might want a race concept to be before getting clear about what the (ordinary) concept of race is. My account is also “descriptive” (in her sense) inasmuch as it looks to the *extension* of (idealized) uses of the word ‘race’ to help fix the concept’s content.¹⁰ And it is “analytical” (again in her sense) in that its identification of the logical core of the ordinary concept of race depends upon reflection of the pragmatics of our (actual and possible) talk of race and is guided by the aim of “forging effective tools to accomplish our (legitimate) purposes,”¹¹ that purpose being the articulation of a non-racialist conception of the ordinary concept of race that will make it possible use the (ordinary) concept of race in a full-blooded, scare-quote free way *without thinking racist thoughts*—something that would not be possible if the ordinary concept of race were essentially and ineluctably racialist. The present account improves our conceptual resources by providing the discursive means to isolate (a) the logical core of the ordinary concept of race and (b) the ordinary concept of race as specified by the logical core —from the racialist elements that will prove to be inherent in the racialist concept of race. This in turn makes it possible to talk about (and see that we are talking about) race (*race* and not some structure, who knows what it is, picked out by some philosophical construct, discursively miles and miles away from the ordinary concept) in a non-racist way.

The methodology behind my account draws on the view of meaning articulated by Tyler Burge.¹² I employ it because of its intrinsic general plausibility and suitability for application to the special

case of the ordinary concept of race. Following Burge, I conceive the meaning of an ordinary term (in general) as an idealization of ordinary usage. The process of arriving at the meaning of ordinary terms is essential *reflective*. The requisite reflection contains both empirical and apriori elements. Meanings of ordinary empirical terms are fixed by what “ideally reflective speakers” (ideally reflective versions of ourselves) would articulate under suitable conditions. The process involves the search for an equilibrium between the characterization of the term’s meaning and the characterization of the entities to which the term purports to apply. Conceptual explication takes the form of a succession of attempts to arrive at correct empirical understanding of the (putative) extension of the terms in question. In our case the process is specifically geared toward the production of the best possible (most coherent, plausible, and empirically well-grounded) specification of the ordinary concept of race.

If the fruits of this process—the proposed account of the ordinary concept of race—differ(s) in various respects from accounts provided by others, this is only to be expected. Other accounts may be guided by other purposes. Many characterizations of the ordinary concept of race found in the literature are best understood as examples of the sort of off-the-cuff characterization one might give *before* considering possible counterexamples.¹³ These crude characterizations fail to meet the test of reflective acceptability. To be reckoned worthy of consideration an account of the ordinary concept of race must be the product of a more thoroughgoing process of reflection.

The project of explicating the ordinary concept of race must be distinguished from (a) the enterprise of providing a full explication of the conditions of race membership and (b) the enterprise of articulating particular commonsense schemes of racial classification.¹⁴ The ordinary concept of race is the concept of a set of human groups that can be classified in accordance with its contents, but it is not itself a classification. It is rather a framework within which different conceptions of the principles of racial identification and schemes of racial classification can be specified. Failure to appreciate the ordinary concept of race’s inherent generality remains a persistent source of misunderstanding in the literature.

Returning to the ordinary concept itself, we are now in a position to consider each of its three basic conditions. Condition (1) specifies that race is a matter of skin-color, where ‘skin-color’ is to be taken as shorthand for the range of visible physical features associated with race (for example: hair texture, eye shape, body and facial morphology). Different racial groups (groups traditionally identified as races or plausibly identified as races using the logical core) exhibit recognizably different clusters of visible physical features.

In asserting the final sentence of the last paragraph I am NOT denying that (i) individual members of different racial groups might be visually indistinguishable; (ii) that the visible physical features exhibited by different members of a single racial group will vary in many respects; (iii) that similarities between the visible physical features of members of different racial groups exist; and (iv) that the variation in some visible physical features across different races are continuous. Nor am I saying that the visible physical features of race can be identified *simply by opening one’s eyes and looking*.

In addition the logical core does not say (or deny) that racial groups differ in *humanly important characteristics*—features that have or are thought to have (or confer) inherent normative standing (for example, intelligence, moral character, cultural capacities).¹⁵ It makes no reference to such characteristics at all. *A fortiori* it does not say (or deny) that humanly important differences are correlated with superficial differences in visible physical features. It is also worth noting that the logical core makes no reference to behavioral proclivities.¹⁶

If other philosophers have thought these features essential to the ordinary concept of race, perhaps this is because they failed to distinguish the ordinary *concept* of race from the ordinary *conception*.¹⁷ We will see that a proper explication of the latter will represent it as including these racialist elements. The relative narrowness of our characterization of the ordinary concept of race can be seen as the welcome result of a general interpretive strategy that seeks to arrive at a factually correct characterization of the entities to which ordinary concepts purport to apply.

Condition 2 says: there is more to race than skin-color. It specifies that race is also a matter of common ancestry. The concept of race is historical. Races are lineages. Different conceptions of the ordinary concept of race differ in their articulation of the conditions an individual must satisfy to be a member of race R. One point of commonality that unites them is the view that the offspring of two Rs (R a race) count as an R. The tendency in the literature to distinguish ancestral grouping from racial grouping and argue for the legitimacy of the former at the expense of the latter overlooks the fact (made clear by our account of condition 2) that racial groupings are a species of ancestral groupings.¹⁸ Conditions 1 and 2 find their synthesis in the idea that races (as specified by the ordinary concept of race in its logical core) are *morphologically marked ancestral groups*.

Recognition of the concept/ classification distinction mentioned earlier makes it possible to respond to the objection that the plurality of available commonsense classifications of race (which provide different specifications of what it is to be an individual member of R) shows that there cannot be a single ordinary concept of race. Commonsense schemes of racial classifications are legion and they do differ in more or less significant ways. They also evolve, fluctuate, and conflict—and vary from place to place.¹⁹ But these different classifications are precisely different and competing ways of articulating one and the same ordinary concept of race, which embraces them all. So there is no conflict between the fact of their plurality and the singularity of the ordinary concept of race.

Condition 3 brings in the idea of geography. Different racial groups originate from different geographical locations. The fact that two distinct racial groups originated from two different geographical locations is part of what makes them two distinct *racial* groups. The prototypical aboriginal home of racial lineages is the continent.²⁰ Condition 3 provides us with a good reason to reject the tendency in the literature to draw a sharp distinction between grouping by geographic origins (which is thought to be okay) and grouping by race (which is not) and the former legitimate and the former illegitimate.²¹ It makes clear is that grouping by race is a species of grouping by geographic origin.

The ordinary concept of race is widely thought to be essentialist.²² We have seen that its logical core is not. The logical core does *not* state (or deny) that there is a set of essential properties common and peculiar to every “normal” member of a given race. This claim represents the most salient and important respect in which my account of the ordinary concept of race is revisionary. The received view is that the ordinary concept of race is essentially essentialist. We can think of it as being motivated by the conjunction of a correct apprehension of the ordinary conception of race and a failure to distinguish the ordinary concept of race from it. We will see presently that the ordinary *conception* of race is essentialist. The ordinary conception of race represents *a* way (arguably the historically most influential way) of representing the ordinary concept of race (its logical core) that has mistakenly been thought to constitute the only way of representing the ordinary concept of race.

If the proposition that the ordinary race concept is not essentialist seems surprising, it may lose some of this quality upon consideration of the closely related but much less loaded example of the ordinary concept of species, which may for present purposes be regarded as the ordinary race concept’s discursive cousin. There is no infelicity in referring to populationist species as *species*. Such species are defined as being “composed of unique features and can be described collectively only in statistical terms” (Mayr), that is, as lacking essences.²³

Prior to Darwin, it was widely, though not universally, thought that species had essences. It might well have been reasonable then to suppose that the ordinary concept of species was essentially essentialist. But with the publication of the *Origin of the Species* (or if not then, after the appearance Mayr’s account of the impact of that landmark text) we learned that species (the populations they had previously referred to as species) lack essences. This discovery together with the correlative development of biological principles that provide an alternative account of the unity of species (population thinking) made it possible to see that the *ordinary* concept of species was not essentialist after all.²⁴ This is an example of the way in which scientific advances

can improve conceptual understanding. The parallel point applies to the ordinary concept of race.

2. When authors such as Ashley Montagu, Anthony Appiah and Naomi Zack speak of *the* concept of race, the *racialist* concept of race is the race concept they have in mind. It may be the concept most people have in mind when they think of the concept of race. *The racialist concept of race* is the familiar hierarchical, essentialist concept. It can be represented in a conceptually perspicuous way by starting with the basic conditions of the ordinary concept of race's logical core (1)-(3) and affixing to them four additional conditions.²⁵

To count as a *racialist* race, a group must, in addition to satisfying conditions (1) -(3):

(4) exhibit a fixed set of fundamental, "heritable" physical, moral, intellectual and cultural characteristics common and peculiar to it;

(5) display a "strict" correlation between its distinctive visible physical features and the constellation of moral, intellectual, and cultural characteristics common and peculiar to it;

(6) possess a hidden or underlying biological structure—a biological "essence."

It is also part of the racialist concept of race as traditionally understood that

(7) Races can be hierarchically ordered on the basis of the moral, intellectual, and cultural characteristics of their members.

Conditions (4) – (7) constitute the specifically *racialist* features of the ordinary conception of race. Conditions (4)-(6) make the conception essentialist. Condition (4) introduces the idea of humanly important characteristics; condition (7), the idea of stratification. Consideration of conditions (4)-(7) make clear is that the logical core allows of "racialization". Nothing in its "logic"

precludes racist articulation. One might think this a defect, regarding racialization immunity as a desideratum in an account of the concept of race. But if the discursive structure is to count as the logical core of the *ordinary concept of race*, it must allow of racialization. This is an essential feature of the ordinary concept of race. What our account has shown is that the logical core and with it the ordinary concept taken in its logical core *need not* be racialized.

I have spoken of the discursive structure fixed by conditions (1)-(7) as both the racist concept of race and the ordinary conception of race. This may be especially puzzling especially given the emphasis placed on the concept/conception distinction. The racist concept of race *is* the logical core of the ordinary concept of race as specified by the (racist) ordinary conception of race. Our calling it the racist *concept* of race reflects the fact that it can be and has been taken as a *concept* (i.e. a discursive susceptible of articulation according to different conceptions). One can think of it functioning as the kind of thought constituent we call concepts. The ordinary *conception* of race is the name for that conception of the ordinary concept of race that counts conditions (4) – (7) among its essential constituents. In some instances the concept/conception distinction is context relative: the same discursive structure which is properly called a concept in one context is properly called a conception in another. But no discursive structure that abstracts from any of the elements (1)-(3) can properly be called the ordinary *concept* of race. The important thing for present purposes is that the ordinary concept of race not be identified with either (what we can refer to as) the racist concept of race or (what we can call) the ordinary conception of race.

We are now in a position to explain precisely why the logical core the ordinary concept of race is *not* racist. The answer is: it lacks features (4)-(7). From the fact that the logical core of the ordinary concept of race is not racist, it follows that the anti-racist truism

the racist concept of race = the ordinary concept of race

is false. The ordinary concept of race is not identical to the racist concept of race. It is not essentially racist.

This claim inevitably produces much resistance. It is sometimes claimed against this point that it is impossible for individuals (at least those raised in racist societies) to use the (logical core of) ordinary concept of race without simultaneously “racializing” it (conceptualizing it in the manner prescribed by the racist ordinary conception of race). The view seems to be that there is an irresistible impulse that prevents us from stopping with condition 3 of the logical core of the ordinary concept of race and forces us to go on to condition 4 and through condition 7. Now IF this claim is taken as asserting the impossibility (or in any case the difficulty) of (a) always (no matter what the context) refraining from going from condition 3 on through to condition 7 or (b) keeping the racist elements of the racist conception quarantined over indefinitely long periods of time or in all possible contexts— it has some plausibility. But should something like be what is meant, the impossibility (or difficulty) in question is a contingent matter of psychology. The point at issue however is conceptual not psychological. It has the form: concept A is distinct from concept B. The psychological difficulties of isolating concept A are neither here nor there. Moreover the fact it is possible to follow the preceding discussion (in which the logical core is isolated from the racist concept of race) shows that it *is* psychologically possible — at least in certain favored circumstances—to isolate the logical core.

Theorists who continue to insist on the unavoidability of identifying the ordinary concept of race with the racist concept of race find themselves in the odd position of trying in effect to *preserve* the racist concept of race as *the* model for understanding the ordinary concept of race. A more thoroughgoing eliminativism concerning the racist concept of race, however, would require the dismissal of the racist concept of race from that discursively important position. Having fired the racist concept of race, one could go on to make the logical core the model for understanding the ordinary concept of race. But having done *that* one would have abandoned eliminativism about race in favor of something that might be called deflationism.

All this being said, it is essential to recall a point urged by the eliminativists: the historical dominance of the racist ordinary conception of race. In real life contexts the ordinary concept of race is almost always found in its racialized form. No wonder then that the ordinary conception

of race is commonly mistaken for the ordinary concept of race. The ordinary conception of race (or racist race concept) *appears* to be the ordinary concept. What *appears* to be the ordinary concept is the ordinary conception (or racist concept) of race. In racist societies, isolating the logical core of the ordinary concept of race requires an act of logical abstraction. Recognition of this point should not lead us to doubt the non-racist character of the ordinary concept of race's logical core. The ordinary concept's being racist is a *semblance* (a false appearance) characteristic of racist societies. Contrary to what is widely thought the logical core of the ordinary concept does not itself contain a mystical impulse to essentialize itself. Racist societies exert tremendous ideological pressure upon individuals to to essentialize the ordinary concept of race's logical core. Such is the strength of this pressure that it would be misleading to say flat *out* that the ordinary concept of race is not racist. One can say: "the ordinary concept of race is not racist" (period) —and speak the truth, but the likelihood of inadvertently conveying thereby an idea that is false (e.g. that the *racist* concept of race is not racist) is exceedingly high in most contexts. This is why "The ordinary concept of race *in its logical core* is not racist" is the preferred locution for conveying this point.

II

This section examines the status of the ordinary and racist concepts of race, respectively, and investigates the ontological standing of the objects to which they purport to refer.

A. With respect to *status*, we can ask of each of the two race concepts: Is it biological? And: (logically separate question) is it social?

1. *Is it biological?* can be divided into three subquestions.

- (a) Is the intended race concept biological in the "basic" sense?²⁶
- (b) Is the intended race concept "biologically respectable"?
- (c) Is the intended race concept is "biologically significant"?²⁷

(a) A concept will be said to be biological in the “basic” sense if it purports to be about *things biological*. Let us say that things are “biological” if they fall within the domain of life and the living organism as standardly understood. To see that the ordinary and racist concepts are biological in this sense, it suffices to note that skin-color is biological.

This last point *should* be uncontroversial. As everybody knows, skin color is a property of *skin*. Biologists tell us that skin color is the biological product of melanin, carotene (two biologically produced pigments), and the blood underlying the skin.

Now it is perfectly true that skin color isn’t *just* biological. Much work on race has been devoted to articulating skin color’s myriad cultural meanings and semiotic properties. Some would argue it is psychologically impossible for us to perceive skin color without automatically *also* attributing these invidious meanings and pejorative properties. Others would argue that we are unable to perceive such physical differences without simultaneously classifying the individuals who exhibit them into invidious, socially sanctioned “racial” groupings that are called races. But neither point contradicts the plain fact that skin color is (also) biological.

Some would argue that the notion that the ordinary and racist concepts of race are biological in the basic sense is trivial. “Who would deny *that*?” But some writers do come very close to doing so and many are reluctant to acknowledge it.²⁸ This by itself renders the point non-trivial. A further respect in which the fact that the two concepts are biological in the basic sense is important will become clearer when we come to the concept of socialrace. A rhetorical observation: if something’s biological *in the basic sense*, it’s *biological*. So we can say: the ordinary concept of race and the racist concept of race are biological *sans phrase*.

Because of the astonishing degree of resistance this claim (without or without the qualification “in the basic sense”) typically meets, it is worth underscoring just how unexceptional the *biological in the basic sense claim* (BBSC) is. The BBSC is a *descriptive* assertion about the *manifest* content of the ordinary and racist concepts of race — nothing more.²⁹ One can say that a

concept is biological in the basic sense *without* saying that it is biological in some stronger sense. One can in particular say that it is biological *without* saying that it is *essentialist*.³⁰ One can say that it is a biological without saying that it is scientific. Furthermore one can say that a concept is biological in the basic sense *without* saying that it refers. The concept unicorn is biological in the basic sense and vacuous. It is clear upon reflection, then, that acknowledging that the ordinary concept of race and the racist concepts of race are biological (in the basic sense) then does not get us into trouble.

(b) A concept will be said to be *biologically respectable* if it is

(i) biological in the basic sense

and

(ii) consistent with the principles and findings of contemporary biology.

We have already clarified (i). A pair of examples will suffice to convey what is meant by (ii). The concept homunculus is not biologically respectable. The concept tree is.³¹ There is no place in modern biology for homunculi; there is a place for trees. The racist concept of race is more like the concept homunculus than it is like the concept tree. It lacks biological respectability because it violates (ii) even though it satisfies (i).

The conflicts between the racist concept of race conflicts with the principles and findings of contemporary biology are legion, well documented, and deep. Let me briefly mention three.

(1) The racist concept of race rests on an idea of a biological essence that is supposed to explain the (putative) correlation between the visible physical features of race and other humanly important characteristics.³² The Neo-Darwinian Synthesis, however, dispenses with biological essences, holding that there is no non-arbitrary way of picking out a phenotypic or genotypic character as essential to a population³³.

(2) There is no good evidence showing the sort of correlation between visible physical features and humanly important features the racialist concept of race requires.³⁴

(3) The racialist concept of race predicts that the degree of overall genetic variation in the species found *between* populations will exceed the genetic variation *within* populations. A growing body of evidence however, shows that the opposite is true. Thus, for example, (Rosenberg 2002) adduces evidence indicating that 93% - 95% of the average proportion of human genetic variation is found within populations and that 5% -7% of this variation is found among populations.³⁵

The upshot of these considerations is that racialist concept of race is antithetical to our current biological understanding. It stands in biological *disrepute*.

The concept of biological respectability provide a notion of "biologicity" (ugly word) with respect to which it is true to say of the racialist concept of race that it is *not biological*. It is not biological in just the same way that the concept homunculus is not biological.

When it comes to the biologicity of the ordinary concept of race in its logical core, things are different. None of its constituent elements conflict with the principles and findings of contemporary biology. The core does not posit the existence of a biological essence, require a correlation between the visible physical features of race and humanly important characteristics, or demand that the genetic variation between races exceed the genetic variation within races. It is utterly free of the scientifically disresponsible features essential to the racialist concept of race. Biologists (and others) who object to the use of the ordinary word 'race' on biological grounds usually have the *racialist* concept of race in mind. The logical core is biologically respectable. In this respect it is like the concept tree. The isolation of the logical core makes it possible to say that contemporary biology has no objection to the objection to the ordinary concept of race *taken it in its logical core*. This point is important. If the logical core lacked biological respectability, that

would provide a reason for eliminating it. The fact that it is biologically respectable provides an argument for its retention.

Because the logical core of the ordinary concept of race is biologically respectable and because of what we know about human populations (their phenotypes, the lineages to which they belong, and the geographic location of their ancestors in 1492) it seems plausible to suppose that there are human groups (not worrying for the moment about which) that satisfy the ordinary concept of race in its logical core. So it seems plausible to suppose that there are human races (in the sense specified by the ordinary concept of race's logical core)³⁶

(c) 'Biologically significant' means *important from the biological point of view*. Two senses of 'biological significance' can be distinguished.

- (i) biological significance in the weak sense
- (ii) biological significance in the strong sense

(i) A concept will be said to be biologically significant *in the weak sense* if it is

(α) biologically respectable

but

(β) not well-integrated or integrateable into an entrenched ongoing or established form of scientific biological inquiry

although

(γ) "backed by" a single scientific term that is well integrated or integrateable into an entrenched ongoing or established form of biological inquiry.

'Biological significance *in the weak sense*' marks an epistemic status higher than either 'biological in the basic sense' or 'biological respectability'. Since the concept tree is biological in the basic sense and its biological respectability is unimpeachable, it may come as a surprise that it lacks biological significance in the weak sense. But if Dupré's contention that the concept plays no systematic role in biology is true and if his claim that there is no single scientific term that

corresponds to it is correct, it follows that the tree is not biologically significant in the weak sense³⁷

For an example of an empirical concept that *is* biologically significant in the weak sense, consider the ordinary concept human being. The concept is biologically respectable, so it satisfies condition (α). Biologists do sometimes employ the ordinary word 'human being' in scientific writing, but when they do, they are typically using it to express the specifically scientific concept *Homo sapiens*. Since the *ordinary concept* human being is not well integrated into an entrenched ongoing or established form of scientific biological inquiry, it satisfies condition β. Because there is a scientific concept that corresponds to the ordinary concept human being (*Homo sapiens*) it also satisfies condition (γ).

Obviously the racist concept of race is not biologically significant even in the weak sense: it lacks scientific respectability for the reasons we have seen. As for the logical core of the ordinary concept of race, whether it counts as biologically significant in the weak sense depends on an issue we have not yet addressed: whether there is a scientific term (i.e. a single term that is well integrated or integrateable into an entrenched ongoing or established form of biological inquiry) that corresponds to it. I will postpone discussion of whether the logical core is scientifically significant in the weak sense until we reach the discussion of this further issue (Section V).

(ii) A concept that is biologically significant *in the strong sense* can be said to be a *scientific concept*. To say that a concept is biologically significant in the strong sense is not to say that the properties associated with it are timeless or immutable. Nor does biological significance in the strong sense involve the idea of "primordial similitude."³⁸ Arguments to the effect that the concept of race is not biological because it does not ascribe timeless or immutable properties or posit some sort of primordial similitude miss their mark and muddy the waters.

A concept will be said to be biologically significant *in the strong sense* if it is

(α) biologically respectable

and

(β) well-integrated or integrateable into an ongoing or established form of biological inquiry.

Neither the racist nor the ordinary concept of race enjoys this honorific status. The racist concept of race obviously fails to meet either of its conditions. Since it is notorious for its claim to have scientific standing, this failure is an embarrassment for it. The logical core satisfies (α) but fails to meet (β). It fails to meet (β) because *inter alia* it is not formulated in scientific language and far too vague for scientific use. So it too lacks the credentials that would warrant wearing the laurels of biological significance in the strong sense. But because it has no scientific pretensions, there is no shame in this failure.

One additional way of interpreting the question "Is X biological?" deserves our attention. In affirming (or denying) that a concept is biological, biologists and philosophers sometimes mean to say that the concept has (or lacks) explanatory power. Let us say:

A concept is biological *in the explanatory sense* if and only if it possesses significant explanatory power in biological theory.

The racist concept of race is not biological in the explanatory sense. The ordinary concept of race's logical core isn't biological in this sense either. This is an embarrassment for the grandiose racist concept of race, not for the humble logical core.

2. Is the ordinary concept of race *social*? How about the racist concept of race? We can capture the force of these questions by asking of each of the two race concepts whether it is "socially constructed" and whether it is "ideological."

To clarify the notion of social construction I draw on Sally Haslanger's account of the concept and Raymond Geuss' related account of the concept of ideology, freely adapting the features of their accounts to serve present purposes.³⁹

We can say that a concept is socially constructed *in the (weak) pragmatic sense* if and only if social factors play a role in its use. It comes as no surprise that the ordinary and the racist concepts of race are both socially constructed in this sense. Language is a social factor that plays a role in the use of virtually every concept. Social construction in this sense is perfectly benign and absolutely boring.

We can say that a concept is socially constructed *in the pernicious sense* if and only if it

(a) fails to represent accurately any "fact of the **matter**"

and

(b) supports and legitimizes domination.⁴⁰

This notion of social construction has critical bite. Clause (a) is epistemological. Clause (b) is political; it connects the notion of social construction to the notion of ideology. A concept that supports and legitimizes domination will be said to be *ideological in the pejorative sense*.⁴¹ More specifically, it can be said to be pejoratively ideological *in the functional sense*.⁴²

The notion of ideology can be defined by reference to the notion of domination (*Herrschaft*)⁴³ Domination is a relation (or rather a family of relations) between social groups in which one group exercises power, control, or rule over one or more other group. Some of the better-known arenas for the exercise of domination are class and gender. The specific form (or family of forms) of domination at issue here is *racial* domination. Looking ahead we can say that the institution of socialrace constitutes the arena for racial domination. Racial domination consists in the domination of one or more racially identified social group over another. It has taken many forms and been embodied in a broad range of social relations. It is not monolithic. Nothing in the abstract concept of racial domination picks out white domination—the hegemony exercised by

Europeans and their descendants over the indigenous populations of other continents—as especially salient. Other forms of racial domination exist. But white domination is the form of racial domination that is historically and still socially most salient. It constitutes the prototype for racial domination.

The racialist concept of race is socially constructed in the pernicious sense. Since there are no racialist races, there is no fact of the matter that it accurately represents. So it satisfies (a) The racialist concept of race supports and legitimizes racial domination. So it satisfies (b). The racialist concept of race represents the social hierarchy of race as “natural” (in a value-conferring sense) and as the “natural” (socially unmediated and inevitable) expression of the merit of the individuals who stand on its rungs. It further suggests that the social hierarchy of race is “natural” in the sense of being fixed, inalterable, and independent of human will. It thereby conveys the idea that no alternative arrangement of social institutions could possibly result in racial equality and hence that political attempts to engage in collective action in the hopes of ending the social hierarchy of race are futile. For these reasons the racialist concept of race is also pejoratively ideological in the functional sense.

The ordinary concept of race’s logical core, on the other hand, is neither socially constructed in the pernicious sense nor pejoratively ideological in the functional sense. The indigenous populations of Sub-Saharan Africa; Europe, North Africa, and central Asia; East Asia, and the Americas arguably exhibit the relevant sort of distinctive patterns of visible physical characteristics and belong to lineages that originated from geographically distinct locations. So there is, arguably, a fact of the matter the logical core represents. At the same time the logical core lacks the nasty features that make the racialist race concept especially well suited to supporting and legitimizing racial domination. So it is not pejoratively ideological in the functional sense.

B. The question concerning the ontological standing of the objects to which the ordinary and racialist concepts of race purport to refer turns on the distinct ontological notions of constitution and causal origin. I will discuss each in turn.

1. Constitution

(a) A race is *socially constituted* iff in characterizing it as a race we must make reference to social factors.

(b) A race is *biologically constituted* iff in characterizing it as a race we must make reference to biological factors.

Social constitution can be called a literal form of social construction. Biological constitution is the biological counterpart of constitutive social construction. A glance at the specifications of the logical core of the ordinary concept of race and the racist concept of race show that the terms characterizing the logical core of the ordinary concept of race and the racist concept of race are exclusively biological. So the objects to which they purport to apply are biologically constituted. Because the notions of social and biological constitution are framed in terms of the way in which in which the objects to which the concepts purport to apply are characterized, the notions lack existential force. To say that X is socially constituted or that Y is biologically constituted is not (yet) to say that X (or Y) exists.

2. Construction

(a) A race is *causally constructed by social factors* if social factors play a role in bringing it into existence, or —to some substantial extent — in its being the way it is.⁴⁴

(b) A race is *biologically engendered* if biological factors play a role in bringing it into existence — or to some substantial extent — in its being the way it is.

The notions of causal construction by social factors and biological engenderment are dynamic. Each expresses an idea of bringing-into-being. The term 'biologically engender' expresses the biological counterpart of the idea of causal construction by social factors. Both concepts have

existential force. A thing has to exist (or come to exist) to be causally constituted or biologically engendered. Racist races do not count as causally constructed by social factors or biologically engendered for the simple reason that there are no such entities. If, as we are supposing, there are groups that satisfy the logical core of the ordinary concept of race, they are causally constructed by social factors *and* biologically engendered. They are biologically engendered because they are the product of evolution—the quintessentially biological process. But since social factors—such as collective decisions to migrate to new areas—presumably also played a role in the origin of such groups, they can be said to be causally constructed by social factors, too.⁴⁵

III

The populationist concept of race (PRC) is a candidate scientific race concept distinct from the ordinary and racist concept of race.⁴⁶ A refinement of Phillip Kitcher's biological concept of race,⁴⁷ this concept is meant to provide a specification of what-is-to-be a race based on sound science.

The PRC specifies that

A “race” is a subdivision of *Homo sapiens* — a group of populations that exhibits a visibly distinctive statistical pattern of genetically transmitted phenotypic characters and belong to a biological lineage initiated by a geographically separated and reproductively isolated founding population.

The PRC is based on Mayr's celebrated biological species concept (BSC). Like the latter, it is populationist. “Population thinking,” touched upon above, represents species and races as populations in a strong sense — as collections of unique individuals rather than types. Races satisfying the PRC (PRC races) are subpopulations of the populations that are species. Just as the BSC specifies that BSC species have no essences, so the PRC specifies that PRC races have no essences. Like BSC species, PRC races are distinguished from one another at the level of genotype and phenotype by the statistical frequency at which characters appear. There are no characteristics, phenotypic or genotypic, all members of a PRC race (or BSC species) must share.

There are no specifically racial traits “fixed in the population.” Nor are there (intrinsic) diagnostic properties by which an individual can be conclusively identified as a member of a particular racial group.

Recent empirical research shows that the degree of total genetic variation dividing PRC races (human populations that arguably fall under the PRC definition) is extremely small (3-5%).⁴⁸ The degree of genetic variation falling within members of the same PRC race is very large (93-95%).⁴⁹ PRC races do not exhibit clear phenotypic boundaries. Differences in human skin color vary continuously across races. Most racial differences are clinal. None of these facts however count against the idea that PRC races are really races since once the idea that races must have the sort of features that distinctively characterize racialist races is abandoned; there is no antecedent reason to think that the amount of genetic variation between races should be very small or that the degree of genetic homogeneity within races should be high.

Like the BSC, the PRC is partly defined in terms of a generic notion of *reproductive isolation*.⁵⁰ Species members tend to mate with one another and not with members of other species. *Mutatis mutandis* members of a race.

It is commonly said that human populations have never been reproductively isolated, but what this means (insofar as it is true) is that they have not been subject to the kind of reproductive isolation *peculiar to species*. Reproductive isolation in race is different from reproductive isolation in species. It has a different kind of isolating mechanism. Mayr represents the prototypical isolating mechanisms in species as “internal.” They are biological properties of individuals (for example configuration of genitals, gamete mortality, hybrid inviability).⁵¹ The isolating mechanisms in races by contrast are “external.” Prototypical examples are features of geography (oceans, mountains, deserts). Members of different species tend not to interbreed when placed in geographical contact. Their biology keeps them apart. Members of different races have a positive tendency to interbreed when brought into geographical (and social) contact. Their common specieshood pulls them together. The isolating mechanisms in race may be social (attitudes,

practices, laws prohibiting or discouraging miscegenation). Social factors became the dominant mechanism of isolation between PRC races after 1492. The sociality of these latter mechanisms does not, however, remove them from the domain of biology altogether. Since Mayr specifically includes “ethological isolation” in his list of biological isolating mechanisms these social mechanisms could also be classified as biological. Recognizing this point does not force acceptance of the idea that they are “natural” in the sense of being unchangeable and independent of the human will. The social factors responsible for the continuing existence of PRC races are the product of the human choice and decision.

The PRC is distinguished from the BSC by its possession of an essential morphological component. PRC races are partly defined in terms of visibly distinctive patterns of phenotypic characters (configurations of skin color, hair form, head shape, and the like). The BSC contains no morphological elements. A race retains its identity as a distinct race only so long as its pattern remain distinct. This fact does not however make the PRC a morphological race concept (a sobriquet properly applied to the racialist race concept) since the PRC is also defined in terms of reproductive isolation and genetic transmission of visible phenotypic characters.

The PRC also differs from the BSC in being historical. Mayr calls the BSC “non-dimensional.” It is defined for populations occupying the same place at the same time.⁵² The PRC is historical in that race membership is determined through *descent*. It specifies that the offspring of two Rs is an R. The logic of the PRC does not require that each individual be assigned a determinate racial identity. PRC races are a kind of population not a kind of individual. Different specifications of the PRC will offer different ways of determining the racial identity of the offspring of members of different races. Just as the BSC provides a scientific framework within which competing species classifications can be advanced so the PRC provides a scientific framework within which competing racial classifications can be advanced

The PRC is *continuous* with the logical core of the ordinary concept of race in a number of important respects. It captures the idea that race involves visible physical differences in its notion

that a race is a population that exhibits a distinctive pattern of phenotypic characters —without associating those differences with humanly important characteristics. It takes up the idea that race involves common ancestry in its notion that a race is a population that belongs to a biological lineage. It incorporates the idea that races originate from distinctive geographical locations in its notion that the founding populations of PRC races were geographically isolated.

The PRC is, however, discontinuous with the ordinary *conception* of race in other, no less important respects since it is non-essentialist, non-hierarchical and makes no reference to humanly important characteristics. The idea that a scientific concept of race must break radically with the ordinary concept of race to enjoy scientific standing is a mistake. What is necessary is that a candidate concept be utterly free of racist elements. The PRC satisfies this latter condition.

IV

Let us examine the status of the PRC and the ontological standing of the objects to which it purports to refer.

A. The PRC is a biological concept. It is biological *in the basic sense* because the objects to which it refers (populations, phenotypic characters, genes) are biological. It is *biologically respectable* because it is biological in the basic sense and consistent with population thinking, the tenets of the Neo-Darwinian Synthesis, and recent findings in population genetics. It is *biologically significant in the strong sense* because it is integrateable into ongoing, established forms of biological inquiry (population genetics and biomedical research). Since it is biologically significant in the strong sense it is not biologically meaningless. Since concepts that are biologically significant in the strong sense are scientific concepts, the PRC is a scientific concept. So there is a scientific concept of race. In light of this fact, the tendency in the literature to identify the racist concept of race as “*the biological view of race*” reveals itself to be most unfortunate.

Does the PRC deserve to be called 'biological' in the explanatory sense? Its epistemic modesty might incline one to say no. It does not make the sort extraordinary explanatory promises characteristic of the racialist concept of race. It does not purport to explain or justify social phenomena (e.g. the existence of social hierarchies of race). Nor does it purport to explain a broad range of biological phenomena. Nor again does it purport to provide the key to the study of human biological variation as such. Compared to the epistemic aspirations of the racialist concept of race the PRC epistemic ambitions are boring. But this is hardly a reasonable standard for assessing its claim to be biological in the explanatory sense. There is at least one biological phenomenon with respect to which the PRC does play a significant explanatory role: the existence of morphologically marked differences of continental ancestry. Call this the biological phenomenon of race *minimalistically understood*. These differences exist and deserve scientific explanation. Not only interesting from a social and historical point of view, they command scientifically attention because they constitute a salient, distinct dimension of human biological diversity. In this *specific abstract respect* morphological diversity associated with race is on a par with morphological diversity associated with gender or age. Because race related biological features figure centrally in the explanation of how human populations acquired the ability to survive in the novel climatic conditions of the geographical regions into which they migrated, they cannot be said to be trivial from an ecological point of view. Consequently they are non-trivial from a biological point of view, full stop. Some features of PRC race played a significant role in the natural history of the species (how it expanded across the globe). This fact too confers biological importance. In my judgment the fact that the PRC makes it possible to explain the morphological differences associated with differences of continental ancestry as the outcome of adaptations to the geographical locations in which founding populations found themselves is sufficiently significant to call it biological in the explanatory sense.

We are now in a position to return to the question whether the logical core of the ordinary concept of race is biological in the weak sense. The answer is yes. The PRC provides the logical core with the scientific backing it needs to count as biologically significant in this sense. Because it is scientifically significant in the weak sense, the logical core is *not* biologically meaningless.

The PRC provides a scientifically legitimate description of the items specified in the logical core of the ordinary concept of race and places them in a scientific framework (population thinking). The fact that the PRC has the power to characterize and explain the biological phenomenon picked out by the logical core (the biological phenomenon of race minimalistically understood) shows that this phenomenon can be called biological from a scientific point of view. The fact that the logical core is biologically significant in the weak sense provides a further reason for rejecting the demand that it be eliminated and a further argument for its retention. The biological phenomenon picked out by the ordinary concept of race's logical core and the biological phenomenon picked out by the PRC are one and the same. The logical core provides a commonsense characterization of this phenomenon, the PRC a scientific characterization of the same.

We need to consider whether the PRC is social. It is socially constructed in the benign sense. This fact in no way threatens its scientific standing. It is not socially constructed in the pernicious sense. It accurately represents the existence of populations, exhibiting visibly distinctive patterns of genetically transmitted phenotypic characters, which populations belong to biological lineages, initiated by geographically separated and reproductive isolated founding populations. The indigenous populations of Sub-Saharan Africa, Eurasia and East Asia, Oceania, and America appear to be examples. The PRC does not support or legitimize racial domination. The framework in which it is cast, population thinking, is antithetical to racialism — the conception of race most congenial to racism. It is not pejoratively ideological in the functional sense.

More however needs to be said. It is easy to imagine racists trying to use the claim that PRC is a scientific concept of race to further their nefarious ends. It is critical that we acknowledge the polemical costs incurred by accepting the PRC. Doing so means abandoning the rhetorical simplicity of the saying *race is not a scientific concept* full stop. But this does not prevent us from saying truthfully that the *racialist* concept of race is not a scientific concept. The value of the clarity gained by using the word 'racialist concept of race' (rather than 'race') when *racialist* race is what is meant cannot be overestimated. The admission of the PRC into our conceptual vocabulary does

not prevent from using *race is not a not a scientific concept* as a slogan in polemical contexts in which it is clear that racist race is the concept of race at issue or in which philosophical clarification would be unwelcome. Nor does saying that the PRC is a scientific race concept prevent us from saying that the traditional (racist) ways of thinking about race are based on profound illusions. This indeed is a direct consequence of the biological framework of which the PRC is a part. Adopting the PRC has the further advantage of putting us in a position to say that traditional racist thinking is based on profound illusions about *race*. It makes it possible to (a) acknowledge the existence of morphologically marked differences of continental ancestry, (b) acknowledge that these differences are properly characterized as racial, and (c) say that racialism fundamentally misunderstands them. The proper response to racist attempts to co-opt the PRC — or the general idea that there is a legitimate scientific concept of race—is to criticize them wherever they appear.

B. Let us turn to the ontological standing of the objects to which the PRC purports to apply. PRC races count as *biologically constituted* because the factors that figure essentially in their characterization are exclusively biological. PRC races are not socially constituted. PRC races are biologically engendered because they are the product of evolutionary adaptation. Since their formation is also traceable to human social choices, PRC races can also be said to be causally constructed by social factors. But this in no way undermines their biologicity.

The question whether the *phenomenon* of race is biological is sometimes glossed as the question whether it is “genetic.” The PRC race is not biological in the exceedingly narrow sense of the term that requires the existence of a race gene. There is no race gene. But this provides a poor reason for saying that the concept of race is not biological. The PRC makes it possible to say that races are biological *even in the absence* of a race gene.⁵³ Since the concept is defined *inter alia* in terms of patterns of differences of genetically transmitted phenotypes, there is a (limited) sense in which PRC race *can* be said to be genetic. Few, however, would be willing to call PRC race biological simply in virtue of this fact. The relevant question is whether PRC race is genetic in a sense that *goes beyond* the alleles for skin color, hair form, and the like. An aforementioned study (Rosenberg 2002) can be interpreted as indicating that the answer to this question is ‘yes.’ It found

that the average proportion of genetic differences between individuals from different “major geographic regions” (sub-Saharan Africa, Eurasia, East Asia, Oceania and the Americas) exceeds the average proportion of genetic differences between unrelated individuals from a single population.⁵⁴ Rosenberg takes no stand on the question whether the populations studied are races. But IF they are PRC races (a point which requires independent argument), the study shows that there are genetic differences (located on autosomal microsatellite loci thought to be selectively neutral) between (some) races that are *independent* of differences in visible physical features.⁵⁵ If this is correct then there is a non-trivial sense in which PRC can be said to be genetic which suggests that there is (weak) genetic sense in which the PRC can be said to biological.

There is another, philosophically deeper, sense in which the PRC can be classified as biological. As we have seen, the notion of reproductive isolation figures essentially in its characterization. Following Kitcher, we can say that reproductive isolation is biological in a theoretically interesting sense because it involves something of central importance of biology, the reproduction of organisms.⁵⁶ Elaborating on this point, we can say that PRC races can be count as biological units because their principle of organization (reproductive isolation) is biological. For these reasons it seems sensible to regard PRC races as biologically real. If BSC species are to be counted as biologically real, PRC races should be counted as biologically real. The less significant biologically than PSC species, but they are no less biologically real.

V.

The concept of socialrace (closed compound) is a concept of race as a social group. It is an analytical concept, distinct from the ordinary concept of race, introduced to explicate the social character of race.

Now the *bare idea* of race-as-social-group is not new. Theorists have *implicitly* used some such concept for some time. Thus for example when Omi and Winant say “we should think of race as an element of social structure rather than an irregularity within it,” they are best interpreted as

using the word 'race' to express the concept socialrace and as using this concept (or associated sense of 'race') to refer the phenomenon of socialrace. Some writers use the word "race" (that is the word 'race' flanked on each side by scare quotes) to express an analytical concept that we can identify as the concept of socialrace.⁵⁷ Other writers use the word 'race' without quotation marks to express the concept we should identify as the concept of socialrace. Root presumably does this when he says, "race is ... a social status."⁵⁸ Some writers introduce technical terms to express the concept of socialrace or some other concept of the same genus. Blum's concept of a "racialized group" is an example.⁵⁹ Sociologists often speak of "social races" to much the same effect.⁶⁰

So the concept of socialrace is very much in the air. It would be a mistake however to adopt a hohum attitude toward discussion of this concept. Despite the fact that the *phenomenon* of socialrace has long been a central object of inquiry in theoretical work on race, the *concept* of socialrace (that is, the specific concept I am expressing using the term 'socialrace') has not for the most part been explicitly grasped (or deployed) *as the specific concept it is*. It has not been generally recognized that socialrace is a *sui generis* race concept—not only distinct from the ordinary concept of race and the racist concept of race but also different in kind. Nor has it been generally recognized that grasping the phenomenon of socialrace as the specifically social phenomenon it is requires the introduction of a race concept distinct and different in kind from the ordinary and racist concepts of race. The concept of socialrace is distinct from the ordinary and racist concepts of race because it, unlike them (a) does not purport to be about things biological and (b) does purport to be about things social. For the same reason it is different from them in kind. The same features that distinguish it from the ordinary and racist concepts of race makes it especially well suited to grasping the social phenomenon of race as a social phenomenon.

I do not want to exaggerate the novelty of the concept of socialrace. Even if theorists have not used the term 'socialrace' to express the concept, they have long made implicit use of it. On the other hand, the concept of socialrace is best understood as a concept that is recognized as being distinct from the ordinary and racist concepts of race. It is so to speak a *reflective* concept of

social race. It is a concept that figuratively *grasps its own sociality*. Considered in this light the concept of socialrace can be said to introduce something new.

Philosophers are inclined to say that what matters is concepts and not words. But in the case of socialrace the word matters too. The name ‘socialrace’ enables the concept of socialrace to wear its sociality on its sleeve. It clearly signals the kind of race concept the concept is (social) just as it indicates the ontological character of the phenomenon to which it refers (socialrace is a social phenomenon). Its peculiar orthography (its being written as a closed compound) serves as a standing reminder of the distinctiveness of the concept it expresses.

Unless one has a race term reserved for the purpose of expressing the concept of socialrace, it is extremely difficult to make claims about the phenomenon of socialrace without having a race term reserved for this purpose. Thus for example, when Root says “[f]or many years, race was taken to be biological race,”⁶¹ he presumably means something like: “for many years the phenomenon of socialrace was mistakenly taken to be a biological phenomenon.” This is perfectly correct. On the other hand the unmarked use of the word race suggests that Root is or might be saying that once upon a time we *mistakenly* thought that the ordinary concept of race (taken in its logical core) was biological in the basic sense or biologically respectable, or biologically significant in the weak sense — and now know better. But *this* would be a mistake. Taken in its logical core, the ordinary concept of race *is* biological in the basic sense, biologically respectable, and biologically respectable in the weak sense. So we haven’t learned that the ordinary concept of race’s logical core is not biological in any of these senses. What we have learned rather is that there is a specifically social phenomenon of race—socialrace—and that we have mistakenly taken this social phenomenon to be biological.

Failure to use a separate term to express the concept of socialrace can lead to a failure recognize the distinctive character of the concept and this can mislead one into misconstruing the basic character of the race concepts from which it is distinguished. One might come to think (or say, imply, or insinuate) that the ordinary and racist concepts of race are social in the sense of

purporting to be about things social, when obviously they are not. One might say incorrectly of the ordinary concept of race that it is an “ideological analysis of social relationships.”⁶² One might also come to misrepresent the phenomenon picked out by the ordinary concept of race. Socialrace (the phenomenon picked out by the concept socialrace) is a social status. But the phenomenon picked out by the logical core of the ordinary concept of race—morphological differences associated with differences of continental ancestry—is not. These real (if trivial) biological differences may be used as markers of social status (socialrace) just as they may be (erroneously) taken to be diagnostic of sharp biological divisions not found in nature (the imaginary sharp lines of separation associated with the racialist concept of race) and their categorization will inevitably be socially mediated in sundry ways. But the differences themselves are biological-not-social. Having the separate term socialrace makes it possible to represent the sociality of socialrace without distorting the character of the logical core of the ordinary concept of race, or the status of the phenomenon it represents, or the character of the race concepts with which the concept of socialrace contrasts.

Given the degree of interest in the *phenomenon* of social race, the fact that the special character of the concept of socialrace gone largely unrecognized calls out for explanation. How could it be that others have failed to see this point? The failure may be due in part to difficulty that theorists may have had in grasping the respects in which the ordinary and racialist concepts of race are biological. Attention to the fact that the racialist concept of race lacks biological significance in both the strong and weak sense and lacks biological respectability together with fear of saying anything that might suggest otherwise may have made it difficult to recognize or acknowledge that the ordinary and racialist concepts of race are biological in the basic sense. This difficulty may have been exacerbated by fixation on the fact that the racialist concept of race is socially constructed in the pernicious sense and pejoratively ideological in the functional sense.

Recognition of the fact that the racialist concept of race is social in these senses combined with a vivid sense of the sociality of the phenomenon of socialrace may have made the temptation of thinking that the ordinary concept of race is social in the sense of purporting to be about things social almost irresistible. Consequently theorists may have ended up thinking *of* the ordinary

concept of race *that* it has features unique to the concept of socialrace. This together with the fact that it is possible to use the unmarked word 'race' to express the concept of socialrace may have led some to overlook just how spectacularly unsuited the ordinary concept of race is to doing the job of the concept of socialrace. *This* may have obscured the necessity of introduction of a novel race concept or from seeing that they were already implicitly working with a race concept that is novel. So much for preliminaries.

What then is a socialrace? We can start by saying that

a socialrace is a human social group that is taken to be a race.

Socialraces are *social* (not biological) groups. They are, more specifically, *social* groups that are *taken* to be biological groups of a certain kind. Should we wish to identify the socialraces in a particular society, we can start by locating the social groups it contains and ask which of them are taken to be races. Those that are, are socialraces. One can say that the term 'social race' tracks social kinds inasmuch as social groups are social kinds. But this would be an odd way to describe its function. It would be better to say that it tracks a kind of social position.

The concept of socialrace can be contrasted with the better-known notion of ethnicity. Unlike the latter, the social race concept does not purport to be about things cultural. Its specification makes no reference to culture, language, nationality or religion. In short, it is not a cultural concept. One might for various reasons wish to introduce a culture-linked concept of race (culture-race?), but that would be yet another race concept. The job of the concept socialrace is to capture the idea of *race as social position*. Having a race concept that is not culturally freighted makes it possible to express the possibility (conceptual, social, practical) that person's socialrace might not be reflected in his or her mode of expression, movement, language, musical tastes, etc.⁶³

Another respect in which the concept of socialrace differs from the concept of ethnicity is that it essentially involves the idea of visible differences of physical appearance. Conceptions of ethnicity *may* make invoke the idea of biological difference. Members of a particular ethnicity may be thought to be racially different from members of other ethnicities. Some ethnicities are

marked as racially “other.” But the basic contrast remains. Take away the idea of biological difference from the concept of socialrace and one has lost the concept. The same is not true of the concept of ethnicity.

But we need to be careful. The concept of socialrace is not biological. It does not purport to be about things biological. It purports to be about *social* things that are *taken to be biological*. It does not *refer* to things biological except incidentally (e.g. the individual bearers of a socialrace identity are members of the species *Homo sapiens*). Its application does not require or involve the direct ascription of any biological concept. The concept ascribes an “act” of applying a biological concept (race) to a third party (society).

The concept of socialrace is not the concept of a social status *built around biological differences*. It is a concept of social status built around the *ascription* of biological differences. Socialrace is a social status that is taken to be biological. This feature distinguishes its structure as a concept from the concept of gender, taken as an analytic category. Gender “seems to have first appeared among American feminists who wanted to insist on the fundamentally social quality of distinctions based on sex.”⁶⁴ The concept of socialrace does not presuppose that there are real biological differences between the social groups that are taken to be racialist races that await social interpretation. It is built in such a way that it can accommodate the existence of morphological differences that reflect differences in continental ancestry but it does not require the existence of such differences. Theorists who deny that such differences exist or deny that they are properly classified as “racial” can accept the concept of socialrace.

Our specification of the *phenomenon* of socialrace revealed that it contains an essential intensional element. A socialrace is a social group that is viewed *as* a race. It is precisely in being viewed in this way—in taken to be racialist races—that groups are “racialized.” Racialization can be understood as the process of *taking* groups, individuals, properties etc to be racial in some essentialist sense. Being viewed *as a race* is part of *what it is* for a social group to *be* a socialrace. It is part of what *makes* a social group a race. The sociality of socialraces is essentially hidden.

Because being viewed in a certain way is an essential part of what it is to be a socialrace, the phenomenon of socialrace is *inter alia* an *ideological* phenomenon (ideological in the descriptive sense).⁶⁵

Socialraces are *social* groups because they are defined in terms of the *social* relation of *social* recognition. They are recognized as races *by society*. A “society” can be said to view a social group X as F (F the name of a racialist race) when (a) a substantial portion of its members take X to be an F and (b) the widespread belief that X is an F figures essentially in the explanation of the society’s continued operation. Individuals count as members of socialraces in virtue of being taken to be members of a race by society. Members of a particular social race do not share a single biological racial essence but they do necessarily have something in common. They necessarily share the very real *social* property of being regarded as members of the same biological group.

The specific *kind of races* that social groups are taken to be under the concept of socialrace needs to be specified more precisely. Socialraces are social groups that are taken to be *racialist* races. Members of a particular socialrace are taken to be members of the same racialist race. They are thought to share the same biological essence because of their common membership in a racialist race.

The idea of socialrace as social position naturally extends itself to the idea of socialrace as a system of social positions. This makes it possible to speak of social race as an *institution*. The institution of socialrace is essentially hierarchical and relations of socialrace are essentially characterized by domination. The point of this institution is to enable members of one social group to dominate members of other social groups. This is why it is an essential feature of the institution of socialrace that social groups be taken to be *racialist* races. They must be taken to be such if the institution of socialrace is to serve its ideological function of securing the domination of members of the dominant socialrace. The (putative) fact that members of a particular racialist race have a particular set of humanly important characteristics associated with their membership

in a racialist race provides an ideological rationale for their assignment to the social positions corresponding to their socialrace. The illusory “natural” hierarchy of racialist race provides the ideological rationale for the all too real social hierarchy of socialrace.

Socialraces *appear* to be racialist races. This basic fact about societies containing socialrace is not explained by the subjective peculiarities of individual members of racist societies. It is not a *subjective* illusion. It is instead the kind of deceptive appearance members of the Frankfurt School call an *objective illusion*⁶⁶ and explained by reference to a structural requirement of the institution of socialrace. A very large percentage of the members of a racist society must take the society’s socialraces to be racialist races if its structures of racial domination are to be maintained and reproduced. The social relations constitutive of socialrace are essentially mediated by the biological illusions of racialist race.

It is important not to interpret the idea that being a member of a particular socialrace is a matter of being taken to be something too idealistically. Being a member of a particular socialrace isn’t just a matter of being believed to be a member of a racialist race. It is also — and equally—a matter of occupying the determinate objective social position corresponding to the racialist race to which one has been socially assigned. The phenomenon of socialrace is thus no less structural than ideological.

Assignment to a particular socialrace has practical consequences. It determines (or constrains) the nature of the practical relations in which one can stand to other members of society.

Individuals or groups may resist these constraints, more or less successfully, but their objective situation is one of being faced with a set of externally imposed social constraints. Socialrace fixes a set of objective parameters within which personal interactions take place distinct from, albeit and complexly related to the objective parameters of class and gender. What socialrace one is assigned to has a profound influence on one’s life prospects. These considerations help to explain why socialrace matters.

VI

Our final task is to consider the status of the concept of socialrace and the ontological standing of the objects to which it purports to refer.

A. We have already noted that the concept of socialrace is social. It is social in what might be called “the basic sense.” The objects to which it purports to refer — social groups—are *ex hypothesi* understood to be social. The ordinary concept of race is not social in this sense.

The concept of socialrace can be said to be *socially respectable* because it does not conflict with the principles or findings of progressive political thinking. It can be said to be *socially significant in the strong sense* because it has an important place in the critical theory of society. We can—we *must*—appeal to the fact of socialrace in explaining why it is that members of a given socialrace are (or are not) subject to certain forms of racial discrimination, stigmatization, and hostility; why its members do or do not suffer from various forms of race-related social and economic disadvantages. If we are to explain why it is that certain individuals occupy the rung in the social hierarchy of race they do or why they have (or lack) certain kinds of power *vis à vis* other social groups, we must deploy the concept of socialrace. The concept of socialrace has real explanatory power. It counts as social in the explanation-related sense

The concept of socialrace is especially valuable in part because it makes it possible to recognize the reality of the entities to which it applies—socialraces— without suggesting that *racialist* race is real. It can be used to address the fear that the acknowledgment of the reality of any kind of race will inevitably support the idea of the reality of racialist race. Far from funding the illusions of racialist race, the concept of socialrace presupposes—and, more important for our purposes, *exposes*—the irreality of racialist race. The concept is also valuable because it makes it possible to appeal to *race*—i.e. socialrace—as a genuine explanatory factor in social theory without the slightest hint of a suggestion that social differences of race have a biological explanation.

The concept of socialrace is not however social in every respect. It is not socially constructed in the pernicious sense. Nor is it functionally ideological in the pejorative sense. To explain: there is a fact of the matter it represents, the fact of socialrace (the fact that socialraces exist). The concept does not support or legitimize racial domination. To see socialraces *as* socialraces is precisely to see that they are *social-rather-than-biological* groups and hence not the kind of groups they are represented as being. The concept of socialrace unmasks the biological irreality of racist race and discloses the underlying social reality of socialrace. It thus undermines the ideological foundations of racist society. It can for this reason be illuminatingly said to be an emancipatory concept.⁶⁷

B. Our final task is to consider the ontological standing of the objects the concept of socialrace purports to represent.

Ontological constitution first. It is plain that socialraces are constituted by social factors. It is equally plain that these social structures are not constituted by biological factors. Biological factors do enter into the characterization of the first-order race concept whose application the concept of socialrace presupposes—the racist race concept—but this is a different matter. As for causal origin, the interesting factors causally responsible for the coming into being of socialrace are social. Socialraces are brought into existence through a sociohistorical process of (social) race formation and remain in existence through patterns of social action.⁶⁸ This is the process Omi and Winant call *racial formation*. Socialraces are not causally engendered by biological factors. The social process of race formation does exploit the existence of certain biological properties (differences in skin color, eye shape, head form) but these properties are relatively trivial and the process is no less social for that.⁶⁹

Although the phenomenon of socialrace can be characterized as *social-rather-than-biological*, placement in a particular socialrace can have significant biological consequences for the individuals involved. These include: differential disease and mortality rates, and differences in overall health profiles—effects which are due to socialrace related disparities in income, health

care, education, nutrition, employment, environmental hazards, stress and so forth. Differences of *socialrace* can be “a cause of impoverishment, ill-health, political disenfranchisement, or poor motivation.”⁷⁰ Some writers draw a contrast between race (meaning *socialrace*) and socioeconomic status. But this is a mistake. *Socialrace* should be understood as a particular kind of socioeconomic status (SES), one that interacts in complicated ways with other social statuses such as class and gender. We can sum up the basic point by paraphrasing Root: *socialrace* can be a biologically salient category even though *socialraces* are not biological groups and there are no racist races. *Socialrace* can mark the risk of a biological condition like diabetes or heart disease even though *socialrace* is not itself a biological condition but a social position.⁷¹

IV

Conclusion

One basic conclusion to be drawn is that *race is not one thing*. Different race concepts pick out different phenomena. Some race concepts pick out no phenomena whatsoever. Speaking of race as if it were one thing is recipe for confusion. When we ask whether *race* is social, biological, real or illusory, we are using the word in a vague undifferentiated sense and the question must be divided into different questions framed in terms of different race concepts before it can be answered. The claim that race is a biological phenomenon and a social phenomenon should not be interpreted as the claim that there is some one thing race that is both social and biological. Getting beyond that shibboleth has been one of the aims of this essay. The claim is rather that there is a social phenomenon race picked out by the concept of *socialrace* and a biological phenomenon race picked out by the logical core of the ordinary concept of race and the populationist concept of race and that there is the concept of racist race, which purports to pick out a biological phenomenon but picks out no real phenomenon at all.

Some of the most important additional lessons we have learned about the ontology of race can be summarized as follows.

1. If we are to understand the ontology of race, it is essential that we distinguish the logical core of the ordinary concept of race from the racist concept of race. Our account of the logical core provides a discursive representation of race — race in the ordinary sense of the term — free of racist commitment. The desirability of a such a concept motivates the philosophical isolation of the logical core from the racist elements of the ordinary conception of race and the decision to take the ordinary concept of race in its logical core. This in turn enables us to refer to the biological phenomenon of race (minimalistically understood) without confusion. The fact that there is a biological phenomenon to be referred to provides a fundamental motivation for retaining the ordinary concept of race. Because the minimalistically understood biological phenomenon of race exists, we can provide a Edmund Hillary type answer to the question *why* we need the logical core of the ordinary concept of race: *because it is there*. We need the ordinary concept of race (taken in its logical core) to get a basic grip on what-race-is (where ‘what-race-is’ is understood broadly to range over the various objects real or not to which different race concepts purport to apply). The logical core is indispensable because it figures centrally in our characterization of the ordinary concept of race, racist concept of race, the populationist race concept of race and the concept of socialrace. The concept of social race cannot be understood without reference to the logical core, since it cannot be understood without reference to the racist concept of race, and since that cannot be understood apart from the logical core. For essentially the same reasons, we need the logical core to understand what the phenomenon socialrace is. More generally we need the logical core to make sense of what we are thinking about when we think about race and we need it to be able to think about *race* in a clear and critical way. This is important for both cognitive and pragmatic reasons. Our entitlement to use the logical core and hence the ordinary concept of race taken in its logical core derives from our entitlement to use the concepts needed to think clearly and critically about race. This latter entitlement is an instance of our general entitlement—recognized and celebrated by the enlightenment—to use whatever concepts we need to *think*.

Reflective use of the logical core or the ordinary concept taken in its logical core will not reinforce racist illusions. On the contrary. Such uses presuppose and reinforce a clear grasp of the

distinction between the logical core and the racist concept of race. The logical core provides a standpoint from which one can see the “racialization” of the concept of race — the addition of racist elements — as a conceptual step that is pernicious, unwarranted, and unnecessary.

This is not to recommend cavaliness in the use of the ordinary term ‘race’. It must always be used with extreme caution. We are always at risk of unwittingly of taking the logical core in the sense specified by the racist conception of race. In racist societies such as ours, the danger of inadvertently sliding from the non-racist logical core of the ordinary concept of race into use of the racist concept of race is ever-present. Even if one is clear in one’s own mind about the specific race concept one is using, the threat of being misunderstood remains. But these dangers, real though they are, do not undercut the utility or negate the indispensability of the ordinary concept taken in its logical core when it comes to dealing—cognitively or practically—with matters of race.

2. To understand the ontology of race, it is also essential to understand that the racist concept of race is vacuous. The truth of the claim that *race* does not exist is that there are no *racist* races. It is also vital that we appreciate that the racist concept of race is biological in the basic sense. Racist race is a non-existent *biological* phenomenon. Unless we understand that the racist concept of race is biological in the basic sense (and that it falsely purports to be biologically significant in the strong sense), we will be unable to understand the role it plays in the legitimation of the structures of socialrace. It is vital that we understand that the racist concept of race is *not* biologically significant in the strong (or weak) sense, *not* biologically respectable, and *not* biological in the explanatory sense. This is the truth of the claim that (the concept of) *race* is not biological. It is no less essential to avoid the error of thinking that there is *no* sense in which the racist concept of race is biological. To understand the role racist race plays in the ontology of race (and more specifically the structure of socialrace) it is also urgent that we grasp that the concept is a social construction in the pernicious sense and functionally ideological in the pejorative sense and that the existence of racist races is an objective illusion. A critical understanding of the racist concept of race is also needed for a rather different reason.

We need to understand what it is in order to arrive at a full understanding of the logical core of the ordinary concept of race and the populationist concepts of race. Unless we have a positive understanding what they are *not*, we cannot fully understand what they are. One must grasp with perfect clarity that they are *not* to be identified with the racialist concept of race.

3. Recognition of the reality of social race is no less important to understanding the ontology of social race than recognition of the irreality of social race. The structures of socialrace are fundamental constituents of social reality. Without the concept of socialrace much of social reality (and world history) would remain opaque. It is essential to avoid the fallacy of inferring the irreality of socialrace from the irreality of racialist racial. Socialrace is not a public fiction.⁷² It is public reality that rests on the public fiction of racialist race. The denial of the reality of socialrace or the ethical appropriateness of using the category of socialrace in legislation or the formation of public policy are invidious forms of colorblindness that undercut our ability to respond to the legacy of slavery and the continuing existence of racism. *Brown v the Board of Topeka Kansas* declared the unconstitutionality of segregation based on racialist race. It did not forbid consideration of socialrace.⁷³

4. If we are to understand the ontology of race, we must reject the dogma that there is no biological phenomenon of race. We must recognize the existence of morphological differences associated with differences of geographical ancestry, the biological phenomenon of race minimalistically understood, grasp that it is racial, and grasp that it is distinct from and independent of both the illusion of racialist race and the reality of social race. The articulation of the PRC makes this possible. The PRC is biological in the basic sense, biologically respectable, biologically significant in the strong sense and biological in the explanation-related sense. It is a scientific concept.

To say that PRC race is a feature of biological reality is not to say that it is as important a feature of biological reality as racialist race was supposed to be or that the role it plays in the biological world is as important as the role socialrace plays in the social world. But it is to say that PRC race

is not an illusion. Pretending that it is illusory will only reinforce the illusion of racialist race. People will think that the denial of the reality of PRC race is politically motivated by an unwillingness to acknowledge the reality of racialist race. Recognition of the reality of PRC race is needed to stabilize recognition of the irreality of racialist race.

The PRC contributes to our understanding of the ontology of race by providing a non-racialist scientific account of the morphologically marked differences associated with differences of continental ancestry picked out the ordinary concept of race in its logical core. It makes it possible for us to see that this phenomenon is both real and radically different from what the racialist concept of race would lead us to expect. It also makes it possible for us to see how morphological marked differences associated with difference in geographical ancestry can be grasped as real—and *racial*—without being essentialized. In this respect the PRC is an instrument of enlightenment. To deny ourselves use of this vital discursive tool in the hope of keeping the fact that there is a scientific concept of race out of the hands of racists would be a grave mistake. Racists will find race concepts to use whatever we do. Abstaining from the use of the PRC will not make morphological differences of continental ancestry go away or make them any less real. Nor will it make the existence of such differences any less evident. The PRC is needed to represent these differences as real, racial, and harmless. To abandon the idea of a non-racialist scientific concept of race means would be tantamount to ceding the conceptualization of the morphological differences associated with race to racialism—an unacceptable result. Given the existence of the biological phenomenon of race minimalistically understood and the obviousness of its existence, it is absolutely essential that we have a scientific description and explanation of this realm that provides an alternative to racialism. I have said we are entitled to make use of the discursive resources we need to think clearly and critically about race. The fact that PRC is such a resource entails that we are entitled to its use.

5. The account I have provided is in many respects commonsensical. And so one might wonder whether all the abstract theorizing and distinction making in the preceding sections are necessary

to arrive at something we already believed. It would however be a mistake to identify the view we have arrived at with which we start out. The amount of theorizing and distinction making we have gone through is a measure of the distance between the view we have arrived at and the view with which we began. The theoretical reflection involved in the construction of this view rests on the application of the results of population genetics and critical theory. Appreciation of population thinking greatly facilitated the isolation of the logical core of the ordinary concept of race. Although it might in principle be possible to arrive at the logical core without consideration of the results of population genetics, one would be left without a way of making biological sense of the biological phenomenon the logical core picks out.

The distinction between the logical core of the ordinary concept of race and the ordinary conception of race that lies at the heart of the present account of the ontology of race is not a commonsense distinction. It is the product of philosophical reflection. Our antecedent commonsense views about race are likely to have been tainted to varying degrees by elements of racialism. Such is the pervasiveness of racialism that none of us starts out free from infection. Such is its virulence that none of us is ever altogether free of infection. The “commonsense” view defended here is the product of a commonsense that has been educated by population genetics and critical theory and purged of essentialism and racialism. It is also informed by the critique of the racist concept of race. Appeals to pre-reflective commonsense play no foundational role in any of the arguments presented below. All appeals to commonsense are made *modulo* approval by critical reason. Salient though the similarities are between the commonsense views with which we are likely to have begun and the commonsensical views at which we have arrived, the position we have reached is not the position with which we began. The commonsense view we arrive at is *enlightened* commonsense.

¹ On race as both biological and social and on the possibility of constructing a non-racialist race concept see Robin O. Andreasen "A New Perspective on the Race Debate", *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 49: 199-225; Race: Biological Reality or Social Construct *Philosophy of Science* 67 (Proceedings) pp. S653-S666. On these points see also Philip Kitcher "Race, Ethnicity, Biology, Culture" in *Racism*, Leonard Harris, ed. (Amherst, New York Humanity Books, 1999) pp. 87-117. For the idea that the *ordinary* concept of race allows of a non-racialist interpretation see Michael Hardimon "The Ordinary Concept of Race," *Journal of Philosophy*, C9, 2003. pp. 437-455.

² Ashley Montagu, "The Concept of Race" *The Concept of Race*. New York: The Free Press, 1964), pp. 12-28.

³ A few of the more influential eliminativist writers include: K. Anthony Appiah, "Race, Culture, Identity: Misunderstood Connections" in K. Anthony Appiah & Amy Gutmann *Color Consciousness*. (Princeton: Princeton, 1996). Montagu, Naomi Zack *Philosophy of Science and Race*; (New York and London Routledge, 2002)

⁴ See Hardimon

⁵ For the sake of maximal perspicuity and brevity, I will forgo detailed discussion of the differences between my position and that of others, concentrating instead on the systematic elaboration of my positive view. Readers interested in the ways in which my view contrasts contrasts with others on offer can look at ----- and -----.

⁶ See Hardimon p. 441

⁷ See Hardimon p.439

⁸ Sally Haslanger "Gender and Race: (What) Are They (What) Do we Want them to Be. *Nous* 34:1. 2000. p. 34

⁹ Haslanger 2000 p. 33

¹⁰ Haslanger 2000 p.33

¹¹ Haslanger 2000p.33

¹² Burge, "Intellectual Norms and Foundations of Mind" *Journal of Philosophy*, LXXXIII, 12, 1986, 697-718, "Concepts, Definitions, and Meaning" *Metaphilosophy*, 24,4,1993, pp. 309-325

¹³ Appiah p.35

¹⁴ Cf. Zack p.1

¹⁵ Cf. Appiah pp. 54, 71; Lawrence A. Hirschfeld *Race in the Making*. (Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 1998). p. 42

¹⁶ Hirschfeld p. 43

¹⁷ The *locus classicus* of the concept/conception distinction is John Rawls *Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1972 p. 5 . The distinction is discussed in Hardimon p. 439-440. See also Burge "Concepts" p.

¹⁸ Root "The Use of Race in Medicine as a Proxy for Genetic Differences" *Philosophy of Science*, 70 2003. p.1179

¹⁹ For a remarkable discussion of the ways in which racial classifications (in particular the classification "white") has varied in the history of the United States see Matthew Fry Jacobson *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, Harvard, 1998).

²⁰ Curiously, the traditional racial group to which this prototype is least well suited is Caucasians, whose aboriginal geographic location is distributed across Europe, northern Africa and western Asia.

²¹ Schwartz *New England Journal of Medicine* p.1393

²² Appiah p.276

²³ "Typological versus Population Thinking" in *Conceptual Issues in Evolutionary Biology*, Elliot Sober ed. Cambridge, MIT, p. 158

²⁴ Sober

²⁵ The representation of the ordinary conception of race presented above does not purport to reflect its actual historical development. It is instead a philosophically perspicuous way of identifying the ordinary concept of race's discursive components and exhibiting their discursive relation

²⁷ This threefold distinction grows out of a conversation with Philip Kitcher

²⁸ Consider the title of David G. Blackburn's essay "Why Race is Not a Biological

Concept" in *Racism and Theory and Practice*. Berel Lang ed. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000

²⁹ I owe this use of "manifest content" to Sally Haslanger "Ontology and Social Construction," *Philosophical Topics*, 23,2, 1995

³⁰ The idea that biological = essentialist is pre-Darwinian and unbiological.

³¹ "The concept tree is unquestionably valid" Mayr ed. *The Species Problem*. (New York, Arno Press, 1974), p. 372.

³² On the conflict between the idea of a biological essence and evolution see Sober, Eliot, "Evolution, Population Thinking, Essentialism," in *From a Biological Point of View* (New York: Cambridge, 1994) pp. 201-231.

³³ Sober, pp. 225-226

³⁴ Kitcher, pp. 87-117.

³⁵ Rosenberg, Noah A, et al, "Genetic Structure of Human Populations," *Science*, vol. 298, 20 December 2002, p. 2381

³⁶ It seems plausible to suppose that we can make the *ontological point* that there are human races without making any *epistemological* suppositions as to how particular races are to be identified or how particular individuals are to be assigned to particular racial groups. I argue that the logical core does not require sharp lines between different races or high degrees of genetic differentiation between members of different race in "On the Idea of a Scientific Concept of Race." The same point can be seen from reflection on the specification of the conditions of the logical core presented in this article.

³⁷ Dupré, John *The Disorder of Things* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993). p. 35

³⁸ Hirschfeld p.51

³⁹ Haslanger, Sally, "Ontology and Social Construction," *Philosophical Topics*, vol. 23, no.2 (1983) p. 100. Geuss, Raymond, *The Idea of Critical Theory*, New York Cambridge (1981).

⁴⁰ Clause (a) is taken from Haslanger's notion of "strong pragmatic construction." p.100. Clause (b) is taken from Geuss's functional notion of ideology, pp. 15-22.

⁴¹ Geuss distinguishes between a descriptive, pejorative, and positive sense of 'ideology' pp. 4-25.

⁴² Geuss. pp. 15-19

⁴³ Hereafter I will use 'ideology' to mean 'ideology in the pejorative sense, except in one case in which the sense of 'ideology' will be marked as "descriptive."

⁴⁴ Haslanger. p. 98.

⁴⁵ Kitcher makes the point that biological races are socially constructed too. p. 107

⁴⁶ This concept is discussed in greater detail in "On the Idea of a Scientific Concept of Race" under submission

⁴⁷ Kitcher. I discuss the differences between his view and my own in "On the Very Idea of a Scientific Concept of Race" under submission.

⁴⁸ Rosenberg does not claim (or deny) that the populations considered in his paper are races.

⁴⁹ Rosenberg. p. 2381.

⁵⁰ Mayr, p. 20-21. Cf. Kitcher pp. 95-96. My use of 'reproductive isolation' is non-standard. The accepted use of the term, which is tailored to fit the case of species, excludes geographical isolation. But if we permit ourselves to use a more general generic notion of reproductive isolation, reproductive isolation in species can be said to be a special case.

⁵¹ Mayr. p. 89-92

⁵² Mayr. p. 17

⁵³ Root, p. 1174 Richard S. Cooper, Jay S. Kaufman, Ryk Ward "Race and Genomics" *New England Journal of Medicine* 348,12. p. 1167

⁵⁴ Rosenberg. p. 2381

⁵⁵ I provide an argument for the claim that the five populations on which Rosenberg focuses can plausibly be regarded as PRC race in "On the Idea of a Scientific Concept of Race."

⁵⁶ Kitcher, p. 101

⁵⁷ Some writers are best read as using the inverted comma (or sneer quote) form of 'race' ("race") for the rather different purpose of indicating that they are mentioning the racist concept of race, disassociating themselves from its racist commitments, and denouncing the concept for its racism. Matters are complicated by the fact that some writers use the inverted comma use of

'race' both (a) to indicate distance from and disdain toward the racialist concept of race and (b) to indicate that they are employing the word 'race' in a non-standard way (namely, to express a concept along the lines of the concept of socialrace.) Matters are further complicated when they use the inverted comma form of 'race' in both ways in the same sentence. They are complicated still more by the fact that some writers use the inverted comma form of 'race' to express the ordinary concept of race and to indicate their suspicion (or what they take to be the fact) that it is racialist.

⁵⁸ Root. p.1175.

⁵⁹ Blum, Lawrence *I'm Not a Racist But...* Ithaca, Cornell University Press (2002).

⁶⁰ Sociologists also use the term 'social race' to refer to commonsense racial categories

⁶¹ Root p.1174

⁶² C. Guillaumin "The Idea of Race and Its Elevation to Autonomous Scientific and Legal Status *Sociological Theories: Race and Colonialism* (UNESCO, 1980)

⁶³ For the sake of brevity I am abstracting from such important matters as the subjective experience of assignment to a socialrace, the ways socialrace members figure in "identity," the way in which social groups can resist the imposition of racialist categorizations and challenge the "meanings" of the socialraces in which they find themselves and the way in which socialrace can be taken as objects of solidarity. My aim in this section is simply to elaborate the concept of socialrace. The elaboration of a full-fledged theory of socialrace would be a different and more ambitious matter. I do not mean by this to suggest that the line between the two projects are sharp.

⁶⁴ Joan Wallach Scott "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis" in *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York, Columbia, 1999), p.

⁶⁵ Geuss. p. 4-12.

⁶⁶ Geuss, pp. 60,71

⁶⁷ I owe this suggestion to Raymond Geuss.

⁶⁸ On social race formation see Omi, Michael and Howard Winant *Racial Formation in the United States* 2nd ed. Routledge (1994)

⁶⁹ A question of some interest is whether the existence of the visible physical differences associated with race is a necessary condition of the social process of race formation.

⁷⁰ Cf. Hirschfeld “racial differences are seldom if ever a cause of impoverishment, ill-health, political disenfranchisement, or poor motivation. p. 1

⁷¹ Root p 1175. The paraphrase takes the form of substituting ‘socialrace’ for occurrences of ‘race’.

⁷² Cf. Jacobson p.11

⁷³ *Parents Involved in Community Schools v Seattle School District et al.*