

**Francisco Bethencourt, *Racisms. From the Crusades to the Twentieth Century*, Princeton University Press, Princeton/Oxford 2013, 444 S., geb., 39,50 \$.**

“Theory without empirical research is empty,  
empirical research without theory is blind”.  
(Pierre Bourdieu)<sup>1</sup>

Symphonically treated, Francisco Bethencourt begins his study of racism, spanning from the crusades to the present (at least in the score), with even two drumbeats at once. He claims that his “book represents a departure from the largely consensual view that the theory of races preceded racism” and declares that his work “also challenges recent revisionist scholarship, which traces the invention of racism back to classical antiquity. It rejects the idea of racism as an innate phenomenon shared by all humankind” (p. 1).<sup>2</sup> However, what sounds like a fulminant opening is partly due to a suppression of previous references to race as “a child of racism”<sup>3</sup> and partly to the assumption that studies of longstanding racism had to rest on the notion of its primordialism.

In actual fact, however, the analysis of persistent social inequalities does not necessarily need to go along with socio-biological assumptions – as is shown by the history of sexism as well as classism. One of the most famous phrases from this context reads: “the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles”.<sup>4</sup> But this statement is far from insinuating the perpetuity of social inequali-

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<sup>1</sup> *Pierre Bourdieu*, *Vive la Crise! For Heterodoxy in Social Science*, in: *Theory and Society* 17, 1988, pp. 773–787, here: p. 774f. Bourdieu wrongly coquets “to plagiarise Kant’s famous dictum”. Kant’s dictum “Gedanken ohne Inhalt sind leer, Anschauungen ohne Begriffe sind blind” [“Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concept are blind”] deals with ultimate epistemological questions and the entirety of knowledge (cf. i.a. *Robert Hanna*, *Kant and Nonconceptual Content*, in: *European Journal of Philosophy* 13, 2005, pp. 247–290). Bourdieu, Bethencourt (and we) are merely concerned with the relations of historical research and social-scientific theorising. But in this context, too, quite a bit is at stake.

<sup>2</sup> Correspondingly, the book has already been well received by a larger range of prominent reviewers – cf. *David Armitage*, *Western Weed*, in: *Times Literary Supplement*, 25.7.2014; *Joanna Bourke*, *The Long Roots of Racial Prejudice and American Colonialism*, in: *New Statesman*, 23.1.2014; *Shu Cao*, *Racisms: From the Crusades to the Twentieth Century*, in: *International Affairs* 90, 2014; *Ekow Eshun*, *Racisms: From the Crusades to the Twentieth Century*, in: *The Independent*, 17.1.2014; *Guy Lancaster*, *Racisms: From the Crusades to the Twentieth Century*, in: *Journal of History and Cultures* 4, 2014; *David Nirenberg*, *Hell is Other Peoples. Racisms: From the Crusades to the Twentieth Century*, by Francisco Bethencourt, in: *Literary Review*, February 2014; *Panikos Panayi*, *Racisms: From the Crusades to the Twentieth Century*, in: *Reviews in History*, URL: <<http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/1670>> [23.2.2015]; *Philippe-Andre Rodriguez*, *Racism is Inherently Plural*, in: *The Oxonian Review* 24, 2014, No. 5. Since the book’s merits have already been emphasised there, we forego their further repetition and devote ourselves to an engagement with the problematic dimensions of the text.

<sup>3</sup> *Antonia Darder*, *Rodolfo D. Torres*, *After Race. Racism After Multiculturalism*, New York 2004, p. 100. Suggestions that racism is older than the races can be found, amongst others, in *Etienne Balibar*, *Is There a ‘Neo-Racism’*, in: *idem/Immanuel Wallerstein*, *Race, Nation, Class. Ambiguous Identities*, London/New York 1991, pp. 17–28, here: p. 23, or *John Solomos*, *Making Sense of Racism. Aktuelle Debatten und politische Realitäten*, in: *Alex Demirović/Manuela Bojadžijev* (eds.), *Konjunkturen des Rassismus*, Münster 2002, pp. 157–172, here: p. 160.

<sup>4</sup> *Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels*, *The Communist Manifesto. A Modern Edition*. Introduction by Eric Hobsbawm, London/New York 2012, p. 34.

ty. Instead, it emphasises the necessity of a historical study and the distinction of different classisms, their various historical manifestations and characteristics.<sup>5</sup>

This perspective intersects (methodically at least) with that of Bethencourt, who argues “that particular configurations of racism can only be explained by research into historical conjunctures, which need to be compared and studied in the long term” (p. 1). But his proposal is organised along a fuzzy guideline based on a deficient definition of racism as “prejudice concerning ethnic descent coupled with discriminatory actions” (p. 1).<sup>6</sup> This brings about an inadequate theoretical understanding of historical conditions and frequently results in its mere eclectic and summarising presentation. The book thus turns into an involuntary evidence of Pierre Bourdieu’s bon mot concerning the barrenness of speculative theorising and the delusion originating from rampant agglomerations of empirical material.

Bethencourt has assessed copious sources and studies, making his book as helpful as instructive. It simultaneously underscores the necessity and fruitfulness of historical racism analysis and elucidates that its reduction to modern European contributions falls short. At the same time, however, his abridged definition of racism refers to the significance of an intimate entanglement of theory and empiricism. What is required is an interdisciplinary perspective – such as Bourdieu has demanded in his pleading for the conjunction of historical research and social-scientific theory building. For him, “the separation of sociology and history is a disastrous division and one totally devoid of epistemological justification: all sociology should be historical and all history sociological”.<sup>7</sup>

In Bethencourt, this connection remains superficial because he initially determines his definition of racism purely psychologically (“prejudice”) and then charges it politologically (“action”). Furthermore, he gets caught in the race trap when he starts from the premise that “[r]acism attributes a single set of real or imaginary physical and/or mental features to precise ethnic groups” (pp. 7f). In this, he understands “ethnicity” to be a denomination of “groups that identified themselves by common descent” – and, in passing, refers to the origin of the word “from the Greek designation of people, *ethnos* (nation or race)” (p. 7). Here, in one respect, the terms “ethnic” and “racial” are underhandedly being short-circuited and, in another, Bethencourt’s very own definition of racism is circumvented by relating the prejudice of the ones to the self-identification of the others.

The Greeks already knew better, but the author does not concern himself with them because they do not fit one of his crucial criteria for proper racism. As Bethencourt admits, they were not wanting “prejudices concerning collective descent”, but these were not connected with “consistent and systematic discriminatory action” (p. 3). This is a staggering allegation which on the evidence of the extensive slavery sorts itself out. Indeed, its legitimation by Aristotle provides one of the first eloquent examples of racist reasoning.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, his writings are an object lesson, both for the affliction of racist representation and for the pitfalls of racism analysis.

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<sup>5</sup> Bethencourt legitimately rejects the idea of “racism as part of the human condition”, since it “is based on neither scientific ground nor historical evidence” (p. 5), but he sometimes subverts his own historicising method. Accordingly, he illustrates his impression that “[r]acism is not exclusive to the Western World”, noting that “the idea of descent was already present in African notions of lineage and kinship” (p. 372), and by this comes precariously close to socio-biological arguments. Similar problems arise from his remark that the “exclusion of Romanies (or Gypsies)” constitutes a special type of racism, since the “persecution of this nomadic minority expressed fears from settled communities against other ways of life” (p. 365). Besides the fact that there is no truth in this assumption, it locates the origin of racist discrimination in the living conditions of the persecuted and the archaic reactions of the oppressors.

<sup>6</sup> *Nirenberg*, *Hell is Other Peoples*, rightly notices, that with this definition “Bethencourt has evaded the difficulty, not confronted it”.

<sup>7</sup> *Pierre Bourdieu*, in: *Loïc Wacquant*, *Towards a Reflexive Sociology. A Workshop with Pierre Bourdieu*, in: *Sociological Theory* 7, 1989, pp. 26–63, here: p. 37.

<sup>8</sup> This is at least an assumption from which a couple of authors proceed, who, with the exception of Isaac, are not mentioned by Bethencourt – cf. i.a. *Christian Delacampagne*, *Die Geschichte des Rassismus*, Düsseldorf 2005, pp. 20f.; *Immanuel Geiss*, *Geschichte des Rassismus*, Frankfurt 1988, pp. 54ff.; *Wulf D. Hund*, *Negative Vergesellschaftung. Dimensionen der Rassismusanalyse*, Münster 2006, pp. 19ff.; *Benjamin Isaac*, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity*, Princeton 2004, pp. 170ff. and passim; *Susan Lape*, *Race and Citizen Identity in the Classical Athenian Democracy*, Cambridge 2010, p. 32f.; *Ian Law*, *Racism and Ethnicity. Global Debates, Dilemmas, Directions*, Harlow 2010, p. 4; *Denise Eileen McCoskey*, *Race. Antiquity and its Legacy*, London 2012, p. 54.

Aristotle dismisses the body as a racist marker. He attests to nature making every effort in shaping the bodies of the free and the slaves in different ways. But this went awry so frequently that it could by no means constitute a reliable marker of distinction. Furthermore, he considered skin colour to be merely an accidental criterion which did not justify a difference in species. Instead, he relied on the differences of the mind. Slaves by nature, that is all barbarians, were lacking the basic requirement for the *conditio humana*: they were irrational.<sup>9</sup> Barbarians, however, could belong to all kinds of ethnicities. Neither their attribution to a particular people nor their own ethnic identity, and much less their complexion, played any part in their enslavement. Nonetheless, scholars have already for a long time referred to and explained “racism” as “a logical consequence” of slavery. The construction of the contradistinction between free Greeks and slavish barbarians has been identified as “undoubtedly” representing “racism”.<sup>10</sup>

The racism mentioned here has not much to do with Bethencourt’s definition. Basically, it is explicitly not about ethnic prejudice, but about the creation, preservation and legitimation of material social relations which substratified the social disparity of ancient class societies and, with that, led to the social death<sup>11</sup> of the slaves, as well as contributing to social self-enhancement, particularly of the lower strata of society. This dimension of racist discrimination by no means slipped Bethencourt’s attention. In the context of the Spanish politics of blood purity, he noted that it “contributed to raising the lower strata” to “a status of superior descent” (p. 150). Even though this was supposed to have played a role at other times (such as in the US Southern States or in South Africa, pp. 365f.), no further theoretical consequences are considered. Hence, comparable patterns in other contexts (such as the struggle for wages of whiteness in the Northern States of the US or Australia or the discrimination of Jews in the German political antisemitism before and after 1900)<sup>12</sup> are not similarly investigated.

It is not surprising, therefore, that a short hint at Max Weber remains superficial and without consequence (pp. 5f.). Weber did not have any doubts concerning the existence of “racial factors” of “common descent” which generated “quite different races”; but he only assumed those racial affiliations to be sociologically relevant that were “subjectively perceived as a common trait”. These gave

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. *Aristotle*, *Politics*, 1254b, 25ff. (“body”), 1254b, 20ff. (“slaves by nature”), 1252b, 5ff. (“barbarian” = “slave”), and *Aristotle*, *Metaphysics*, 1058b, 1–15 (“skin colour”).

<sup>10</sup> Cf. *Moses I. Finley*, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology*, London 1980, p. 119 (“consequence”), and *Guisepppe Cambiano*, *Aristotle and the Anonymous Opponents of Slavery*, in: *Moses I. Finley* (ed.), *Classical Slavery*, London 1987, pp. 42–52, here: p. 42 (“undoubtedly”). Since Bethencourt ignores this connection, the term “barbarian” is not discussed pertaining to its racist content. Even though the term can indeed be found in his investigation in two very different contexts: in the classification of humans by José de Acosta, who, in the 16th century, differentiated all non-Christian peoples into varying degrees of barbarism (pp. 78ff.); but also in the world view of the old Chinese who, some centuries before the Greeks, had developed the contradistinction between the cultivated and the barbarians (pp. 352f.). While the first case would have provided an opportunity to discuss the superposition of old (“barbarians”) and new (“heathens”, “savages”) categories of exclusion, the second case could have given occasion for a comparative cultural (Greece, China) as well as diachronic (“barbarians in different periods of Chinese history”) analysis.

<sup>11</sup> This category has been developed by *Claude Meillassoux* (ed.), *L’esclavage en Afrique précoloniale*, Paris 1975, and *Orlando Patterson*, *Slavery and Social Death. A Comparative Study*, Cambridge 1982, and has been applied and modified several times in the analysis of racism – cf. primarily *Theodore W. Allen*, *The Invention of the White Race*, 2 Vol., London/New York 1994 and 1997; see further i.a. *Vincent Brown*, *Social Death and Political Life in the Study of Slavery*, in: *American Historical Review* 114, 2009, pp. 1231–1249; *Lisa Marie Cacho*, *Social Death. Racialised Rightlessness and the Criminalisation of the Unprotected*, New York 2012; *William David Hart*, *Dead Black Man, Just Walking*, in: *George Yancy/Janine Jones* (eds.), *Pursuing Trayvon Martin. Historical Contexts and Contemporary Manifestations of Racial Dynamics*, Lanham 2013, pp. 91–101; *Michael P. Jeffries*, *Thug Life. Race, Gender, and the Meaning of Hip-Hop*, Chicago 2011, esp. pp. 77–111; *Marion A. Kaplan*, *Between Dignity and Despair. Jewish Life in Nazi Germany*, New York 1998; *John Edwin Mason*, *Social Death and Resurrection. Slavery and Emancipation in South Africa*, Charlottesville 2003; *Barbara Omolade*, *The Unbroken Circle. A Historical Study of Black Single Mothers and Their Families*, in: *Martha Albertson Fineman/Nancy Sweet Thomadsn* (eds.), *At the Boundaries of Law. Feminism and Legal Theory*, New York 1991, pp. 171–187; see also *Wulf D. Hund*, [lemma] *Rassismus*, in: *Hans Jörg Sandkühler* (ed.), *Enzyklopädie Philosophie*, 3 Vol., Hamburg 2010, pp. 2191–2200.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *David Roediger*, *The Wages of Whiteness. Race and the Making of the American Working Class*, rev. ed., London 1999; *Stefanie Affeldt*, *Consuming Whiteness. Australian Racism and the ‘White Sugar’ Campaign*, Berlin 2014; *Peter G. J. Pulzer*, *Die Entstehung des politischen Antisemitismus in Deutschland und Österreich 1867–1914*, new edition with a research report of the author, Göttingen 2004; *Massimo Ferrari Zumbini*, *Die Wurzeln des Bösen. Gründerjahre des Antisemitismus. Von der Bismarckzeit zu Hitler*, Frankfurt 2003.

rise to a “community” whose “shared action is generally outright negative”. To expound this, Weber addressed the relations of class and race: the “belief in common ethnicity” results in “the belief in a specific [‘ethnic] honor’” as an “honor of the masses”, “for it is accessible to anybody who belongs to the subjectively believed community of descent”. As an example, he refers to the “poor white trash” of the US American South, “because the social honor of the ‘poor whites’ was dependent upon the social déclassement of the \*blacks”.<sup>13</sup>

A similar analysis of racist discrimination was at the same time formulated by black sociologists. William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, for example, writes that “the present hegemony of the white races [...] attempts to make the slums of white society in all cases and under all circumstances the superior of any colored group, no matter what its ability or culture”.<sup>14</sup> Against this theoretical backdrop, Theodore W. Allen has suggested, using the history of anti-Irish racism as an example, a definition of racism that does not understand racism as merely a prejudice but as a social relation. It is considered the “social death” of those who are subjected to racist discrimination and characterised by the notion that it “reduced all members of the oppressed group to one undifferentiated social status, a status beneath that of any member of any social class within the [...] population” of the oppressors.<sup>15</sup>

The relationship between classism and racism is addressed by Bethencourt but is not theoretically dealt with. And yet, the category “class racism” is not only part and parcel of the current racism discussion<sup>16</sup>, the term “race”, from which the naming of racism derives, also had its first extensive application in the context of class racism and had, from there, entered the discussion of ethnic differences. In Spain, “race” had already in the 15th century served as a designation for good (“buena rraça”) and bad (“vil rraça”) ancestry and connected this to the notion that children from varying social classes, when they are taken from their parents and are raised under the same conditions, nonetheless develop the noble or common characteristics of their ancestry.<sup>17</sup> In France, a polysemantic usage of “race” emerged in the 16th century: “Le mot race peut [...] signifier lignée, ou espèce, ou les deux à la fois”: a “gentilhomme” has “race et généalogie”, human kind can be called the “race humaine” but can also be discerned into the “races” of Italians, Jews and others.<sup>18</sup> Later, the term “race” served the characterisation of feudal class antagonisms, and the reference to Henri de Boulainvilliers’ construction of an aristocratic race became constitutive for the first disputes about the newly named “racism”.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, ed. by Guenther Roth/Claus Wittich, Los Angeles 1978, pp. 385f., 387 and 390f. – the last \*word is corrected: Weber writes “Deklassierung der Schwarzen”, the translation uses the N-word; cf. Wulf D. Hund, *Racism in White Sociology. From Adam Smith to Max Weber*, in: *idem/Alana Lentin* (eds.), *Racism and Sociology*, Wien 2014, pp. 23–67.

<sup>14</sup> William E. Burghardt Du Bois, *Evolution of the Race Problem*, in: *Proceedings of the National Negro Conference*, New York 1909, pp. 142–158, here: p. 153.

<sup>15</sup> Theodore W. Allen, *The Invention of the White Race*, Vol. 1, p. 32; the levelling of social differentiation addressed here and the associated degradation below all other and even below the lowest social layer of the perpetrator society are what is done on a regular basis by racist discrimination to the persons affected by it. In this context, see also Karl Marx, *The International Workingmen’s Association*, 1870, Confidential Communication on Bakunin, URL: <<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1870/03/28.htm>> [23.2.2015], who, in regard to the Irish question, had recorded: “The average English worker hates the Irish worker [...]. He feels national and religious antipathies for him. He regards him practically in the same way the poor whites in the southern states of North America regard the black slaves”.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. i.a. the chapters “Class Racism” in: Balibar/Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class*, pp. 204–216, or “The Racism of Intelligence” in: Pierre Bourdieu, *Sociology in Question*, London 1993, pp. 177–180; Kenan Malik, *The Meaning of Race. Race, History and Culture in Western Society*, Basingstoke 1996, p. 82 and passim, has reasoned regarding modern racism: “The sense of racial superiority that European élite classes felt over non-European society cannot be understood outside of the sense of inferiority imposed at the masses at home”.

<sup>17</sup> Quoted in: Max Sebastián Hering Torres, *Rassismus in der Vormoderne. Die ‘Reinheit des Blutes’ im Spanien der frühen Neuzeit*, Frankfurt 2006, p. 219; see also David Nirenberg, *Race and the Middle Ages. The Case of Spain and Its Jews*, in: Margaret R. Greer/Walter D. Mignolo/Maureen Quilligan (eds.), *Rereading the Black Legend. The Discourses of Religious and Racial Difference in the Renaissance Empires*, Chicago 2007, pp. 71–87, here: p. 78.

<sup>18</sup> All quotes from Arlette Jouanna, *L’idée de race en France au XVIème siècle et au début du XVIIème siècle (1498–1614)*, 3 Vol., Lille 1976, pp. 1323, 1319 and 1322f.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Ruth Benedict, *Race. Science and Politics*, New York 1940, pp. 174ff.; Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, New York 1951, pp. 161ff.

Moreover, class racism has a long and ongoing history which eventually led to the eugenic suspicions against a part of the lower classes. The latter were characterised as an impractical and dangerous residuum of the social body, and liberal eugenics demanded their sterilisation or even extermination. This was explicitly shown in the eugenic objectives of the Fabian Society. Harold J. Laski, who in the 20th century was to become one of the masterminds of the Fabian Society, feared that “the different rates of fertility in the sound and pathological stocks” had as a consequence “a future swamping of the better by the worse” and warned: “As a nation, we are faced by race suicide”.<sup>20</sup> After a lecture by George Bernhard Shaw, who from the beginning contributed decisively to the dissemination of Fabian ideas, the Daily News ran the headline: “Lethal Chambers essential to Eugenics”. Following a report in the Daily Express, Shaw was said to have speculated that “eugenic politics would finally land us in an extensive use of the lethal chamber. A great many people would have to be put out of existence simply because it wastes other people’s time to look after them”.<sup>21</sup>

An examination of this dimension of racism is missing in Bethencourt’s book. This holds true both for the long history of eugenic thought and for the only superficially addressed eugenics of German fascism. And yet, there are good reasons for the incorporation of exterminationist thinking against parts of the own population into the definition of racism. Based on this perspective, cases have been made for designations like “disability racism” or “age racism”.<sup>22</sup> Racist aggressions are precisely not only directed outwards, but also against the imperilment by humans on the inside who are labelled useless or dangerous. The racist entitlement to outwardly directed disdain thus reverts as a persistent threat potential to the inside of society.

The same holds true for the relation of sexism and racism, which also remains largely omitted in Bethencourt.<sup>23</sup> In this, it is not only a matter of the very intersectionality discussed in the truism of the “Big Three of race, class, gender” for quite some time.<sup>24</sup> It is also a question of whether, and to what extent, sexism can turn into racism. The term “gender racism” has so far been comparatively rarely used, and if it has been, it was usually interpreted as “gendered racism”.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, history signposts enough examples that suggest differentiating sexism and gender racism – to the effect that one category expresses the intrasocial oppression of women, and the other denotes their exclusion from society. In the extreme, the latter can come down to gendercide, which, like genocide, should be discussed in connection with racism.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Harold J. Laski, *The Scope of Eugenics*, in: *Westminster Review* 174, 1910, pp. 25–34, here: p. 34.

<sup>21</sup> Quoted in: *Dan Stone: Breeding Superman. Nietzsche, Race and Eugenics in Edwardian and Interwar Britain*, Liverpool 2002, pp. 127f.; regarding Shaw’s later sympathy for the eugenics of the Nazis cf. *Matthew Yde, Bernard Shaw and Totalitarianism. Longing for Utopia*, Basingstoke 2013.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. *Henry Friedlander, The Origins of Nazi Genocide. From Euthanasia to the Final Solution*, Chapel Hill 1995; see further *Wolfgang Jantzen, Rassismus*, in: *Markus Dederich/Wolfgang Jantzen (eds.), Behinderung und Anerkennung. Enzyklopädisches Handbuch der Behindertenpädagogik*, 2 Vol., Stuttgart 2009, pp. 227–233, here: p. 232 (“disability racism”), and *Frank Schirrmacher, Das Methusalem-Komplott*, München 2004, pp. 27 and 198 (“ageism”, “age racism”).

<sup>23</sup> Another superimposition, that of nationalism and racism, is indeed addressed. But the question “How did European nationalism integrate notions of race that had previously focused on the peoples of the world?” makes obvious that this context, too, is not being theoretically permeated. Indications on the “races of Europe” are therefore not dealt with in the chapter “Nationalism”. They partly remain unsystematic and scattered, like those on William Z. Ripley (pp. 289 and 304), whose successor Carleton S. Coon is not mentioned at all, or they content themselves with one-sided explanation, as in the case of Robert Knox, asserting “that preparations for the new stage of European imperialism [...] had unleashed an internal, Eurocentric dispute over which were the most capable races” (p. 275).

<sup>24</sup> *Jan Nederveen Pieterse, [lemma] Other*, in: *Ellis Cashmore (ed.), Encyclopedia of Race and Ethnic Studies*, London 2004, pp. 206f.

<sup>25</sup> *Marie L. Miville, Agela D. Ferguson, Intersections of Race-Ethnicity and Gender on Identity Development and Social Roles*, in: *idem (ed.), Handbook of Race-Ethnicity and Gender in Psychology*, New York 2014, pp. 3–21, here: p. 10.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. *Ben Kiernan, Blood and Soil. A World History of Genocide and Extermination from Sparta to Darfur*, New Haven 2007, pp. 12f. and 21ff.; in this context, violence can be directed against men and women in differing forms. In the first historical report, which is consistently mentioned in present-day histories of genocide, Thucydides chronicles that “the Melians surrendered [...] to the Athens, who put to death all the men of military age [...] and sold the women and children as slaves” (quoted in *Frank Chalk/Kurt Jonassohn (eds.), The History and Sociology of Genocide. Analyses and Case Studies*, New Haven 1990, p. 73).

Apart from that, a substantial part of Bethencourt's deliberations are devoted to the topics of "miscegenation" and "mixed-people". That sexism and classism feature largely in this is obvious. Additionally, the chapter on the genre of "casta paintings" (pp. 163–172) points out that different modes of racist discrimination are melded here. It is a matter of drafting "a hierarchy of purity of blood" (p. 163) whose symbolisation combines social status, gender roles, skin colours and varying descent of the parents. Even though the author maintains that "the casta system [...] does not clearly prefigure or anticipate theories of race" (p. 172), its representations draw a different picture. Regularly, they proclaim that the mixture of Indian and Spanish partners means a progressive brightening of the respective children and, after the third generation, leads back to a Spaniard. The mixture of Spanish or Indians with African partners, by contrast, shows a brightening of the skin only during the first three generations, thereafter this would prove an illusion and would yield a child that is more dark-skinned than its parents.<sup>27</sup>

Evidently, this was a matter of one of those transformational processes in which several forms of racist discrimination were amalgamated and newly formed. They regularly encompassed far-reaching historical consequences. In the case of Mexican casta paintings, they extended to a tainted praise of the *mestizaje*.<sup>28</sup> However, this is not addressed by Bethencourt. On the contrary, it is said about José Vasconcelos that he "was the first to voice pride about being of mixed race" (p. 347). In actual fact, Vasconcelos had constructed his "raza cósmica" as an arbitrary melange which, even in the 20th century, revealed the influence of the casta ideology. The "cosmic race" was shaped by a racism of inclusion that propagated a "eugénica misteriosa del gusto estético", by which within the scope of racial mixture superior ability and outstanding beauty could be read out. This was said to have led to the "formación de un tipo infinitamente superior". The lower types of the species would be absorbed by this superior type and unsightly variants would, by voluntary self-extermination, give way to the more beautiful. In the end, the blacks would have disappeared: "en una cuantas décadas de eugenesia estética podría desaparecer el negro".<sup>29</sup>

This, once again, refers to the central weakness of the present study. Though Bethencourt does conclusively emphasise that "[r]acism preceded theories of race" (p. 368), he does at no point theoretically problematise and discuss in detail the modalities or differences of non-racial racisms. Admittedly, he elucidates that criteria as varying as culture, capability, religion, purity, and class play a role in the processes of racist discrimination. His deliberations, however, do not go beyond mere hints at such a complexity. The question of the social and logical correlation of the associated patterns of disparagement, and the consequent impact on the conceptual determination of "racism", remains undiscussed. This can be shown in a couple of contexts which are dealt with (in varying detail) by Bethencourt but are only related to his superficial initial stipulation of racist prejudices. As a matter of fact, they are, as the spheres of *purity*, *religion* and *race* show, complex social relations. These, in turn, form correlations between hegemonically differentiated groups, which, together with varying (incidentally often overlapping) forms of discrimination, are ideologically founded and materially rigidified in several social dimensions. They do so by constructing others as an (inferior and/or threatening) counter-world consistent of barbarians, inferiors, impures, primitives, castaways or coloureds.<sup>30</sup>

*Purity*, implemented as antagonism of *purity and impurity* in the context of racist discrimination, is extensively addressed by Bethencourt but without being systematically further analysed. This is even

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. the numerous figures in *Ilona Katzew, Casta Painting. Images of Race in Eighteenth-Century Mexico*, New Haven 2004; the ludicrous nomenclature for these mixtures is not entirely consistent, but commonly mentions: a) Español/a+India/o= Mestiza/o, Mestiza/o+Español/a=Castiza/o, Castiza/o+Español/a=Español/a; b) Español/a+Negra/o=Mulatta/o, Mulatta/o+Español/a=Morisca/o, Morisca/o+Español/a=Albina/o, Albina/o+Español/a=Negra/o torna atrás; c) India/o+Negra/o=Lobo, Lobo+India/o=Zambaiga/o, Zambaiga/o+India/o=Chamiza/o, Chamiza/o+India/o=Cambuja.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. *Taunya Lovell-Banks, Mestizaje and the Mexican Mestizo Self. No Hay Sangre Negra, so there is no Blackness*, in: *Southern California Interdisciplinary Law Journal* 15, 2006, pp. 199–233.

<sup>29</sup> *José Vasconcelos, The Cosmic Race. A Bilingual Edition*, Baltimore 1997, pp. 70 ("eugénica misteriosa"), 71 ("formación") and 72 ("décadas de eugenesia estética"); cf. *Wulf D. Hund, Negative Vergesellschaftung*, pp. 77f.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. *Wulf D. Hund, Rassismus, Bielefeld* 2007; see also *idem, Negative Societalisation. Racism and the Constitution of Race*, in: *idem/Jeremy Krikler/David Roediger* (eds.), *Wages of Whiteness & Racist Symbolic Capital*, Berlin 2010, pp. 57–96.

more staggering as he himself notices that “the existence of segregated untouchables [...] raises the issue of how old classifications and prejudices that are close to racial constructs are perpetuated”, and adds: “This is an interesting case study from a theoretical point of view because it forces us to reflect further on the concepts of racism and race” (p. 360). In fact, he deals with neither the history of discriminatory contexts nor the discussions on the question of a contaminatory racism.

This becomes clear when the pertinent deliberations are, on the one hand, only implying the long duration of said relationship and, on the other hand, also disregard present-day discussions about the relationship between “caste” and “race”<sup>31</sup> which has been an issue during the history of modern race theories and is also being discussed comparatively in current analyses. Gail Omvedt is not the only one who has asserted in this context, that “while caste has nothing to do with ‘race’, the justifications of caste discrimination have a lot to do with the social phenomenon of ‘racism’”.<sup>32</sup> Casteism can be discussed as one of the historical, as well as systematic, variants of racism, insofar that it substratified a specific form of class society with the so-called “untouchables”, against which the members of the hierarchically structured society could be declared “equals”.

For the history of Europe, too, the supposed endangerment through possible contamination has been described as an element of racist discrimination from antiquity to modernity. As for the (proto-)racism of antiquity, Benjamin Isaac has shown, that he, amongst other things, targeted “autochthony and pure lineage” and warned of “decline and degeneration through displacement and contamination”. By the same token, Michel Foucault alleged that “racism is born at the point when the theme of racial purity replaces that of race struggle”.<sup>33</sup> This provision bypasses the history of racism, but at least refers to the intertwining of thinking in terms of purity and racial nomenclature, which determined the national-socialist persecution of the Jews.

Admittedly, the Nazis fully relied on the exclusionist potential of racial antisemitism, but their persecution of the Jews was intensively co-determined by other racisms. This pertained to the religious-cultural dimension of the question who was to be included with Judaism – which was not to be answered by means of the so-called racial sciences and was thus decided upon based on religious affiliation. This led, on the one hand, to ludicrous juridical constructions and, on the other, to absurd ideological imputations expressing the logic of “contaminatory racism”.

The commentators of the racial laws considered how to deal with the case of a “German-blooded woman”, who married a Jew and with that converted to Judaism, was subsequently left a widow, then returned to Christianity and married a “German-blooded man” with whom she had children and then grandchildren from them. The latter would have to be considered “hybrids” because she had once belonged to the Jewish religion. Behind this argumentation stood, on one side, the practical impossibility of biological determination of race. On the other, it also reflected narrations like that of the blond, “Aryan” couple which had a dark-skinned child with curly hair because the wife had been seduced in her adolescence by a Jew, who had converted to Christianity, and was thus once and for all racially tainted.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. *Peter Robb* (ed.), *The Concept of Race in South Asia*, New Delhi 1997; *Frank Dikötter* (ed.), *The Construction of Racial Identities in China and Japan*, London 1997.

<sup>32</sup> *Gail Omvedt*, *The UN, Racism and Caste*, in: *Sukhadeo Thorat/Umakan* (eds.), *Caste, Race and Discrimination. Discourses in International Context*, Jaipur 2004, pp. 187–193, here: 190f.; cf. the chapters “Race, Caste, and Class” in: *Richard H. King*, *Race, Culture, and the Intellectuals, 1940–1970*, Baltimore 2004, pp. 21–48, and “Folk, Peasant, and Caste” in: *James B. McKee*, *Sociology and the Race Problem. The Failure of a Perspective*, Urbana 1993, pp. 145–180; see further *Gyanendra Pandey*, *A History of Prejudice. Race, Caste, and Difference in India and the United States*, Cambridge 2013.

<sup>33</sup> *Benjamin Isaac*, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity*, Princeton 2004, p. 514; *Michel Foucault*, *Society Must be Defended*, London 2003, p. 81 (this imputation is not only nonsensical in historical terms but also because it falls into line with a ‘white’ concept of racism that exonerates the colonial European past – cf. *Barnor Hesse*, *Racism’s Alterity. The After-Life of Black Sociology*, in: *Hund/Lentin*, *Racism and Sociology*, pp. 141–174).

<sup>34</sup> Cf. *Saul Friedländer*, *Das Dritte Reich und die Juden. Vol. 1: Die Jahre der Verfolgung 1933–1939*, München 1998, p. 169 (“commentators”); *Claudia Witte*, *Artur Dinter. Die Karriere eines professionellen Antisemiten*, in: *Barbara Danckwortt/Thorsten Querg/Claudia Schöningh* (eds.), *Historische Rassismusforschung. Ideologen – Täter – Opfer*, Hamburg 1995, pp. 113–151, here: p. 124 (“couple”).

Similar bizarre suspicions and policies emerged in the context of the Spanish policy of purity of blood – which is where Bethencourt’s theoretical reticence becomes especially obvious. He concludes that “purity of blood was simultaneously a natural and cultural notion” which “contributed to raising the lower strata of Old Christians to and confirming them in a status of superior descent” and, in this context, talks about “clear cases of racism” (pp. 150f.). But he draws no theoretical conclusions from these substantial deliberations. These, to start with, included the contouring of the epithet “natural”. This could not pertain to “blood-based” descent of (formerly Jewish or Muslim) ancestors since a non-Christian origin remained without any problems in the case of former heathens or their descendants. Crucial was not the descent but the construction of it as being once and for all tainted by a religious counter-world.

*Religion*, in racist discriminations presented as a dichotomy of *chosenness and damnation*, is included in the policy of pure blood. Above all, it refers to the issue that racism has historically operated with religious patterns of disparagement long before the development of the term “race” (and until this day reverts to it). Besides the long duration of antisemitism and antiislamism, this was not least exemplified by the religious legitimation of slavery. The myth of Ham developed in this context remains totally unexposed in Bethencourt’s book (p. 232). And yet, it had already come to light in the 10th century in the “Akhbar az-Zaman” of “Ali b. al-Husayn al-Mas’udi” and in the 15th century in the “Crónica dos feitos de Guiné” of Gomes Eanes de Zurara and had thus been stressed by both Christians and Muslims until the 19th century.<sup>35</sup> Given the scientific imponderabilities of racial theories, and the doubt about the creation story contained in their polygenetic variation, the slaveholders of the US Southern States relied on the, in their eyes, trusted and divinely legitimated racism rather than on the message of the new scientific racism of races.

The story of antisemitism shows a similar picture. In its long course, discriminations against Jews were predominantly culturalistically and religiously formulated. In this, different patterns were overlapping – like the ascription of impurity (i.a. linked from the church fathers to the Enlightenment, to an allegedly specific Jewish odour) or the assumption of feminisation (i.a. expressed in the allegation that Jewish men were menstruating or, as a substitute, were prone to nose bleeding).

Even though Bethencourt mentions numerous of these elements, he does not query his findings in terms of a theory-oriented approach. This is surprising, if only for the reason that the first part of his book is headed “The Crusades” (pp. 11–61) and deals with religiously motivated submission and exclusion and, at least for the Spanish example, comes to the conclusion that the “notion of the purity of blood [...] was the crucial case of racism” (p. 61). However, the significance of this diagnosis for the numerous different conflicts and persecutions in a timeframe of a good 400 years remains in the dark. This holds true for the (only briefly addressed) pogroms during the first crusade, when in Germany the masses were going north instead of south and annihilated the Jewish communities of several cities (pp. 30f.), or for the (not mentioned but) distinctive imputation of well poisoning in France, in which Muslims, Jews and lepers were purported to have been involved.<sup>36</sup> Both and other examples could have been a cause to investigate into the racist potential of religious discrimination based on the social and ideological effects of unification (of Christians from all classes on one side and heretic or stigmatised worshippers of the devil on the other).

Above all, in this context, current religious-based racisms could have been discussed. They argue that “racial” inequality conforms to the will of god and do find sole expression in the notion “that 11 a.m. on Sunday morning is the most segregated hour in America”.<sup>37</sup> Most notably, they can do without the

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. *Chouki El Hamel*, *Black Morocco. A History of Slavery, Race, and Islam*, Cambridge 2013, pp. 68f. (al-Mas’udi); *Jerome C. Branche*, *Colonialism and Race in Luso-Hispanic Literature*, Columbia 2006, p. 43 (Zurara); for the 19th century see *Stephen R. Haynes*, *Noah’s Curse. The Biblical Justification of American Slavery*, Oxford 2002, *passim*; *Benjamin Claude Brower*, *A Desert Named Peace. The Violence of France’s Empire in the Algerian Sahara, 1844–1902*, New York 2009, p. 154.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. *Der Erste Kreuzzug 1096 und seine Folgen. Die Verfolgung der Juden im Rheinland*, ed. by Evangelische Kirche im Rheinland, Düsseldorf 1996 (Germany); *David Nirenberg*, *Communities of Violence. Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages*, Princeton 1996, pp. 93ff. (France).

<sup>37</sup> *Thomas Powell*, *The Persistence of Racism in America*, Lanham 1992, p. 115 (“God”); *Jesse A. Brinson/Shannon D. Smith*, *Racialised Schools. Understanding and Addressing Racism in Schools*, New York 2014, p. 43 (“11 a.m.”).

category “race” altogether, as they did before the development of racial thinking. Their form of discrimination should, therefore, not be described as in the subtitle of a pertinent essay, as “racialising religion”<sup>38</sup>, but rather be understood as religious racism. The “others” are not degraded because they belong to a different “race”; instead, they are considered members of a spiritual counter-world which is being labelled, with several cultural patterns, as backward in development, misogynist, conspired, fanatic, violent, and so forth. Had they previously been thought of as partisans of the devil, they were now – if they had not already been associated with the camp of evil – said to be the opponents of western Christian-humanistic values.<sup>39</sup> Such racisms cannot be discussed by using the category “race” without risking clandestine essentialisation.

*Race*, constituted in colonial contexts as *racial social relations*, and subsequently justified by *racial theories*, is essential for Bethencourt’s contestation of modern accounts of racism (which still frequently take the classification of races as a starting point for their research). Consequently, the analysis of European rationalisations of racism would require a profound study of both the respective sources and the relevant secondary literature. However, the present study falls short in both regards, as Bethencourt’s reading of contemporary racial theories remains superficial, and critical interpretations are largely absent.

Thus, Bethencourt’s compilation of the Enlightenment and subsequent race theorists appears as merely an additive lecture in intellectual history, neither asking for the contemporary complex interactions of early racial science with the simultaneous social relations of the then so-called “races” nor integrating them in a theoretical discussion about the mechanisms of racism. This problem is partly mirrored by the structure of the book. Chronologically and geographically arranged, it tries to identify important strands in the development of racist discrimination and thereby, in the case of Enlightenment’s racial hierarchies, counterfactually divides the emergence of racist regimes in colonial societies from concomitant rationalisations of racism in European scientific discourses.

In comparison to his nuanced reading of sources on the emergence of discriminatory politics in the Iberian world and its export to the Americas, Bethencourt restricts the examination of racial theories (pp. 247–306) to a largely summative reproduction of mostly notorious texts. In doing so, Bethencourt fails to analyse their transformation of established racist social relations into theoretical frameworks and overlooks the complex interactions of various authors that did not construct the scientific category of race in one collective effort, but often disagreed and argued about its definition.

Regarding Immanuel Kant, for example, Bethencourt recapitulates his hierarchisation of human races but neither discusses how this was related to other forms of racism in Kant nor which epistemological and political controversies sprang from this concept. Contrary to Bethencourt’s implications, Kant not only “contributed to the reflection on theories of races” (p. 256), but at the same time developed cultural patterns of racism that did not feature in his racial classifications. Thus, he expressed a “position of extreme hostility to Jewish religion” and figured prominently in a form of modern antisemitism that does not rely on the “application of biological theories”.<sup>40</sup> As his likewise derogatory references to so-called “Gypsies” or his orientalist prejudices against Turks, Kant’s antisemitism cannot be explained in terms of the emerging racial thought, but has to be interpreted in context of his philosophy of history, which assumes the common origin of all mankind, but predicts a bright future only for members of its most talented branch: ‘white’ Christian Europeans.<sup>41</sup> In actual fact, a cultural concept of progress

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<sup>38</sup> Cf. Kevin M. Dunn/Natascha Klocker/Tanya Salabay, Contemporary Racism and Islamophobia in Australia. Racialising Religion, in: *Ethnicities* 7, 2007, pp. 564–589.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Chris Allen, *Islamophobia*, Farnham 2010; Iman Attia (ed.), *Orient- und Islam-Bilder. Interdisziplinäre Beiträge zu Orientalismus und antimuslimischem Rassismus*, Münster 2007; John L. Esposito/Ibrahim Kalin (eds.), *Islamophobia. The Challenge of Pluralism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Oxford 2011; Fanny Müller-Uri, *Antimuslimischer Rassismus*, Wien 2014; Stephen Sheehi, *Islamophobia. The Ideological Campaign Against Muslims*, Atlanta 2011.

<sup>40</sup> Paul Lawrence Rose, *Revolutionary Antisemitism in Germany from Kant to Wagner*, Princeton 1990, pp. 93 (“extreme hostility”) and 15 (“biological theories”). See also Michael Mack, *German Idealism and the Jew. The Inner Anti-Semitism of Philosophy and German Jewish Responses*, Chicago 2003.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Wulf D. Hund, ‘It must come from Europe’. The Racisms of Immanuel Kant, in: *idem/Christian Koller/Moshe Zimmermann* (eds.), *Racisms Made in Germany*, Berlin 2011, pp. 69–98.

was also at the heart of racial hierarchy, which he articulated against other representatives of Enlightenment racism.

Georg Forster and Johann Gottfried Herder, namely, rejected the concept of race as applied by Kant.<sup>42</sup> Surprisingly, the former is not even mentioned by Bethencourt, although Kant aimed parts of his writings on race explicitly at Forster.<sup>43</sup> Herder, at least, is referred to, but it is seriously misleading to conclude that he “sowed the seeds for considering different cultures on their own terms, helping to challenge the hierarchies of peoples of the world” (p. 258). More likely, Herder’s idea that “each ethnic group or nation possesses a unique and presumably eternal *Volksg Geist* (or folk soul), laid the foundation for a culture-coded form of racism”.<sup>44</sup> These intellectual debates about race – as the critical examinations of categories, like barbarism, impurity and depravity – could have served to illustrate different patterns of discrimination, even within a racism that was based on the race concept, and thus reveal the scope of Bethencourt’s hypothesis of multiple racisms. But the author omits this dimension of analysis, instead suggesting a differentiation between the racial thought of the Enlightenment’s natural history and later scientific racialism – a division that can be refuted with another reference to late-eighteenth-century race discourses.

Indeed, not only Herder and Forster engaged with Kant’s racial hierarchy, but scientists like Johann Friedrich Blumenbach and Samuel Thomas Soemmerring also contributed to the “German invention of race”. In their attempts to prove human varieties on the basis of ‘hard facts’, they initialised what Bethencourt calls “scientific racialism”.<sup>45</sup> Contrary to Kant, they did not base their classifications on theoretical reflections on the unreliable marker of skin colour, but rather transferred racial differences to the bones, working with unprecedented collections of human skeletons and skulls. However, instead of critically engaging with the emergence of these elements of later racial sciences, the author presents Enlightenment concepts of racial hierarchies as relatively innocent and potentially humanist, whereas, it was only in the mid-nineteenth century that “scientific research on the variety of human beings became much more assertive, ideologically aggressive, and politically engaged” (p. 270).<sup>46</sup>

The scientific notion of “race”, in fact, was not developed in consecutive phases ranging from non-racist Enlightenment attempts in natural history to the evils of nineteenth-century craniometry, but rather was from the outset organised along philosophical and naturalistic discourses. The vagueness of Bethencourt’s approach to this tradition is not least fostered by the structural problem of his study to

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<sup>42</sup> See i.a. *Pauline Kleingeld*, *Kant and Cosmopolitanism. The Philosophical Ideal of World Citizenship*, Cambridge 2012, esp. chapter 4 “Kant and Forster on race, culture, and cosmopolitanism”; *H.[ugh] B. Nisbet*, *Herder and the History of Science*, Leeds 1970, p. 230.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. *Georg Forster*, *Noch etwas über die Menschenraßen*, in: *idem*, *Werke*, ed. by Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften, 8 Vol., Berlin 1974, pp. 130–156, and *Immanuel Kant*, *Über den Gebrauch teleologischer Prinzipien in der Philosophie*, in: *idem*, *Werke*, ed. by *Wilhelm Weischedel*, 5 Vol., Darmstadt 1983, pp. 137–170; see also *Robert Bernasconi*, *Kant’s Third Thoughts on Race*, in: *Stuart Elden/Eduardo Mendieta* (eds.), *Reading Kant’s Geography*, Albany 2011, pp. 291–318; *Jon M. Mikkelsen*, *Translator’s Introduction. Recent Work on Kant’s Race Theory*, in: *idem* (ed.), *Kant and the Concept of Race. Late Eighteenth-Century Writings*, Albany 2013.

<sup>44</sup> *George M. Fredrickson*, *Racism. A Short History*, Princeton 2002, p. 70. *Ali Rattansi*, *Racism. A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford 2007, p. 36, assessed that there is only a “short distance between notions of *Volk[s] Geist* and racial character”; *Karin Priester*, *Rassismus. Eine Sozialgeschichte*, Leipzig 2003, p. 85, characterises Herder as one of the “intellectual precursors of the racist thinking of difference” (our translation).

<sup>45</sup> Cf. *Sabine Ritter*, *Natural Equality and Racial Systematics. Selected Aspects of Blumenbach’s Anthropology*, in: *idem/Iris Wigger* (eds.), *Racism and Modernity*, Berlin 2011, pp.102–116 (on Blumenbach); *Sigrid Oehler-Klein*, *Einleitung*, in: *idem* (ed.), *Samuel Thomas Soemmerring, Anthropologie. Über die körperliche Verschiedenheit des Negers vom Europäer* (1785), Stuttgart 1998, pp. 11–142 (on Soemmerring); see also *Sara Eigen/Mark Larrimore* (eds.), *The German Invention of Race*, Albany 2006.

<sup>46</sup> This assessment echoes traditional interpretations of Enlightenment philosophy as incompatible with racism. However, more recent research increasingly emphasises their interactions – cf. *David Allen Harvey*, *The French Enlightenment and Its Others. The Mandarin, the Savage, and the Invention of the Human Sciences*, New York 2012; *Gudrun Hentges*, *Schatten-seiten der Aufklärung. Die Darstellung von Juden und ‘Wilden’ in philosophischen Schriften des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts*, Schwalbach 1999; *Silvia Sebastiani*, *The Scottish Enlightenment. Race, Gender, and the Limits of Progress*, New York 2013; *Andrew Valls* (ed.), *Race and Racism in Modern Philosophy*, Ithaca 2005; *Julie Ward/Tommy Lott* (eds.), *Philosophers on Race. Critical Essays*, Oxford 2002; *Larry Wolff/Marco Cipollini* (eds.), *The Anthropology of the Enlightenment*, Stanford 2007.

establish connections between the rationalisations and the socio-political consequences of racism.<sup>47</sup> Programmatically, he introduces his book by stating that “classification did not precede action” (p. 3), implying that racial classifications only expressed social statuses shaped by older racist practices. In his own assessment of the racial theories of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, however, the author does not account for the circumstances in which European scientists came up with the racial hierarchies that were thereafter applied to justify slavery, colonialism, expulsion and genocide. Rather, his discussion of racial classifications in European science is largely isolated from the discourses they were informed by and from the material conditions that triggered the racialisation of traditional stereotypes.

How close colonial experiences were connected to the development of racial categories can be exemplified by the controversies about the New World, which illustrate not only the flexibility of the early notion of race but also how new political interests and old prejudices inspired its social construction.<sup>48</sup> Bethencourt only briefly hints at the debates about the racial assessment of American space and people when he refers to Benjamin Franklin’s humorous protest against the “idea of the degenerative effect of the New World” (p. 255) by simply comparing the average height of his comparably tall American delegation to the much shorter French guests of a dinner party. However, beyond its anecdotal quality, the American opposition to the degeneration theories by George-Louis de Buffon and others could have shed light on the fundamental complexity of eighteenth-century racial thought.

Indeed, Franklin and, most prominently, Thomas Jefferson advocated not only the equality of European Americans but also portrayed Native Americans as physically equal to ‘whites’, whereas Africans (and African American slaves in particular) were described as naturally inferior to ‘whites’. In applying the notion of race to both cases, however, the respective campaigns represent not only means of defending the New World against the suspicions of European environmentalist, but also illustrate that racial classifications were not necessarily linked to a single marker of difference. Rather, in the course of American nation-building, it was critical that the expulsion-or-assimilation policies towards aboriginal peoples could be based on a cultural concept of race that referred back to traditional ideas of savagism, whereas the institution of slavery could be justified with the natural incompatibility of ‘white’ and ‘black’.<sup>49</sup> Accordingly, “race” could be based on culturalistic as well as naturalistic arguments and even within a single framework could convey different racist meanings with regard to specific groups.

Bethencourt extensively discusses the flexible patterns of discrimination in colonial societies, especially with regard to early modern Latin America, but neglects their importance for the emergence of racial classifications. This points to another deficiency of the study: the systematic avoidance of analytical reflection concerning the concept of racism (let alone the eponymous plural: racisms). For the body of the book (except for the introduction and conclusion), the index lists eleven occurrences of “racism”, of which nine appear in the last chapter dealing with nationalism and the overt racist regimes of the 20th century. Therefore, in the first four parts of the book which amount to a total of about 300 pages, and according to the book’s index, racism is explicitly addressed not more than twice. Even more strikingly, “racisms”, which after all is the title of the study, does not appear at all in the index. Instead, throughout the book, Bethencourt refers to “racial hatred” (pp. 142, 241, 315, 362), “ethnic hatred” (pp. 371f.), “racial discrimination” (p. 348), “ethnic discrimination” (pp. 158, 189, 211) and, frequently, to “racialism” (esp. pp. 271ff.). Even so, he neither discusses the respective terms regarding their racist characteristics nor provides another analytical account of racism.

In view of a study that wants to “chart” racism’s “different forms, continuities, discontinuities, and transformations”, and thereby attempts to challenge contemporary concepts of racism, this lack of

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<sup>47</sup> His approach is generously described as “encyclopedic in its coverage as one thinker follows another” in *Armitage*, *Western Weed*, p. 5.

<sup>48</sup> See *Antonello Gerbi*, *The Dispute of the New World. The History of a Polemic, 1750–1900*, Pittsburgh 1973; *C. Vann Woodward*, *The Old World’s New World*, Oxford 1991, esp. pp. 1–15.

<sup>49</sup> See, for example, *Bruce Dain*, *A Hideous Monster of the Mind. American Race Theory in the Early Republic*, Cambridge 2002; *Paul Finkelman*, *Slavery and the Founders. Race and Liberty in the Age of Jefferson*, New York 2001; *Frank Shuffleton*, *Thomas Jefferson. Race, Culture, and the Failure of Anthropological Method*, in: *idem* (ed.), *A Mixed Race. Ethnicity in Early America*, New York 1993, pp. 257–277; *Gary B. Nash*, *Red, White and Black. The Origins of Racism in Colonial America*, in: *idem/Richard Weiss* (eds.), *The Great Fear. Race in the Mind of America*, New York 1970, pp. 1–26.

explicit references is more than a semantic issue. Rather, it reveals that Bethencourt, at least partly due to his insufficient consideration of racism theory, fails to identify the specific mechanisms that constitute racism as a recurring phenomenon of social exclusion based on different practices of othering. Consequently, his impressive compilation of historical discriminations and ethnic prejudices results in a distorted picture of multiple racisms which are only loosely connected through the common application of prejudices.

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