Against Race Taboos

Srdjan Vucetic

Chapter prepared for *Race and Racism in International Relations: Confronting the Global Colour Line*, edited by A Anievas, N Manchanda and R Shilliam. London, Routledge, 2014.

Introduction

As the editors explain in the introduction, the roles played by race and racism belong to some of the least-explored topics in International Relations (IR), in spite of having profound implications for the understanding of the field's origins, research questions, concepts and theories as well as ethical considerations. The term global colour line, inaugurated a century ago by W.E.B. Du Bois, is a case in point. Even as a mere trope, it recasts almost everything IR has said through its mainstream theories and other dominant semiotic codes. How, indeed, did the lines that groups of people draw between themselves become both 'global' and 'coloured' – attributed to humans and their bodies in a way that qualitatively differs from virtually all other ideas and practices of the inside/outside difference? This question, like virtually all questions involving race and racism, falls outside the mainstream IR discourse; it is ignored in equal measure by introductory textbooks as well as leading journals. At a superficial reading, this is puzzling. If IR's scholarly production revolves around the study of all lines that bind human beings to the global and/or the international, then the discipline ought to have dealt with the causes and effects of historical and contemporary colour lines head-on. Errol Henderson's chapter argues that IR's silence on race is a function of past and present disciplinary cultures, especially the culture of white privilege. This culture tends to elide all race-talk, and in turn efface the problem of the global colour line. By way of a hypothesis, one could suggest that this elision is a conscious, as well as philosophically and politically legitimate, reaction to the racist crimes of the not-too-distant yesteryear. But this argument would be self-serving. Reflecting on the Brixton uprisings of 1981 in *International Affairs*, R.J. Vincent, one of the key 'English School' figures, wrote this:

> Like sex in Victorian England, it has been said, race is a taboo subject in contemporary polite society. Conflicts or attitudes that to the simpleminded might appear to be self-evidently racial are explained away as class-based, or as difficulties attending immigration, or as responses to special local circumstances. Certainly, race relations are not an area in which political reputations are easily made, and outspokenness on the subject seems to be

the preserve of those who have little to lose, their having either departed the scene or not yet arrived at it.

Yet beneath this wish to talk about something else, and perhaps in part explaining it, lurk the largest of claims for the factor of race in politics, and the direst of forebodings about the future of race relations. As early as 1903 W. E.B. Du Bois was already expressing the problem of the twentieth century as the problem of 'the colour-line', and this has been a theme of pan-African congresses to the present day (Vincent 1982, 658).

He then went on to reclaim the concept of race over class, ethnicity and nation ('The difficulty with the rejection of the concept of race is that it would afford us no purchase on the popular notion of race as part of everyday belief and experience, and therefore a piece of political data whether we like it or not') and suggest, citing Frantz Fanon, K.M. Pannikar, Edward Said and Ali Mazrui that race *must* be used in the analysis of hierarchies in worlds politics ('rich white states are said to exploit poor non-white ones, or, beyond the state, a white bourgeoisie is said to exploit a black proletarian'), especially in IR textbooks ('it may be said that textbooks tend to be written by those near the top rather than the bottom of the world hierarchy, and that they are for that reason less sensitive to the factor of race than if they were written from underneath looking up'). Accounts of the role of race in international life, Vincent concluded, are important because they can help the fight for global justice.

Vincent's reflections are as relevant today as they were three decades ago. The race taboo makes it difficult to deal with the enduring lived experience of racism everywhere. What I would like to add is that these difficulties might in fact be compounded within a post-colonial, anti-racist, and post-racial structure such as IR. While this structure must be defended—how can a humanistic scholarly field be against full equality for all? – one must also recognise that any tabooisation of race works against these ideals because it solidifies the position of those who have benefited from the historical distribution of power and authority, both in world politics and in the academic study thereof. Indeed, if this volume is anything to go by, what distinguishes IR from both humanistic and social scientific fields of which it is part is a systematic and persistent inability and unwillingness to dilute its dominant whiteness – here used to refer to all those socio-intellectual structures that privilege and protect people of (principally) European descent at the expense of everyone else. There are good reasons why exchanges about what it is that scholars should be studying are passionate, but in this case I believe there is a major political and moral argument to be made on why IR cannot

treat the problem of the global colour line as a historical issue or, worse, an issue that has been resolved in a post-racial era.

Mainstream ideas on the role of race in international life have long been contested, starting with Du Bois, and often very effectively. As the introduction to this volume suggests, nothing destabilises mainstream approaches to world politics like analyses of the conditions under which the pursuit of state sovereignty relies on racist definitions of political membership or histories of phenomena like 'race war', 'race alliance', and 'race suicide'. But even as many IR-ists have made significant inroads into the problems of race and racism in world politics, their efforts remain relatively peripheral in the field and, no less important, sparsely connected within and across their putative peripheries. One problem that hobbles the scholarship of the global colour line – and I do not claim it is *the* problem – is conceptualisation; more specifically, how best to situate the concept of race vis-à-vis a broader philosophical discourse, or what in the IR context is sometimes known as meta-theory.

To appreciate the multiplicity of parallel and occasionally competing conceptual and theoretical approaches on race and racism, many of which are yet to be fully integrated into IR discourse, and their relationship to meta-theory, consider the following list of questions. If race is known to be scientifically illegitimate, why does it keep mobilising public power so well in so many contexts? What is the relationship between real and illusory orders of superordination and subordination? Is, to borrow from Du Bois, the 'relation of the darker to the lighter men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea' produced by institutional allocation of economic resources, or is primarily about discourses and practices that force individuals and groups into acting subjects? What role does human psychology play, if any? Can race even be treated separately from class, ethnicity, gender and other social forces that give rise to social orders? Can individual societies transgress the boundaries of race, or will various colour lines always arise from larger, more enduring and possibly 'hidden' structures upon which the modern international society rests? Assuming that these dichotomies are false, should we then bring all these parts back into a single explanatory whole and, if so, how? In short, how can we conceptually grapple with the ways in which ideas, discourses, institutions and practices come together to colour so many social divisions at a global scale? The way I see it, we cannot help but access each of these questions by means of philosophy.

Once again, there are many next steps in the project to make IR 'less white'. But while we fight to remedy the status quo – getting at least some textbook writings to admit that

Du Bois made legitimate and insightful points about world politics would constitute a major victory – we should also keep unpacking the conceptual and theoretical relationships that have made and continue make the study of the global colour line at once possible and impossible. In this chapter, I consider *some* dimensions of these long-standing questions through the lenses of two debates in the philosophy of race: the 'onto-semantic' debate on the meaning of race, and whether it is real; and the 'normative' debate on how race serves political and moral purposes, and whether we should conserve or eliminate it from our discourse.

I should like to say at the outset that my overview of philosophy compresses a number of distinct debates and nuanced arguments, while putting aside others (epistemology, for example). This is because own work lies in IR, not philosophy. But while there is room for consideration of interpretations other than the one offered here, I believe that that this exercise follows the general purpose of this volume, which is to encourage reflection and critical self-awareness about the multi-layered nature of the research agenda on the global colour line. Put another way: 'they' (philosophers) can help 'us' (IR-ists) think harder about the principal assumptions and conceptual relationships we use to understand the processes of inclusion/exclusion that affect millions of people.

This proposition is subject to an important caveat. Not so long ago Charles W. Mills described philosophy as 'one of the very 'whitest' of the humanities' (Mills 1998, 13). I am not sure what Mills would say about philosophy today, but I do wish to note that his field is now richer for a new subfield called the philosophy of race. Indeed, it is this body of scholarship that most clearly points out distinctions among different approaches to race, while also identifying options and opportunities that have not yet been realised in the IR scholarship.

What is Race?

In the first instance, this is a semantic question. It foregrounds the relationship between the concept and the linguistics forms used to transmit it, and can therefore be rewritten as 'What do we mean by race?'. Because of the concept's uneasy presence in the public domain, the definition of the concept of race cannot just 'follow' the desiderata of research puzzles or theoretical frameworks; indeed, it is simply next to impossible to write about race without at least implicitly engaging the political questions concerning development, multiculturalism, affirmative action, colour blindness and many other aspects of contemporary politics and

social justice. (In the case of IR, this issue is compounded by the long shadow that the concept casts on the discipline's history and its relationship to public power).

This dimension of race has led philosophers to pay close attention to ordinary language reasoning and popular intuitions on the concept. Following a pattern established in the philosophy of language, two camps have emerged, 'neo-descriptivism' and the 'emergence' school. Where these two schools meet is in the idea that the ordinary language approach can be helpful in identifying the 'parameters' of race-talk within a linguistic community, as in the broad question of whether race-talk refers to a natural biological or social kind. In the words of Joshua Glasgow, '[i]t is hard to overstate the importance of this question . . ..once we know what race is *supposed* to be, we can figure out whether there is, in fact, any such thing' (Glasgow 2009, 6–7, italics in the original). Another meeting point is this: everyone agrees that race is supposed to be a social kind. This point takes us into 'onto-semantics', a coinage that is meant to underscore the dialectical nature of the concept.

In ordinary usage, racism refers to a belief that some races are in some sense inferior to others. A series of great twentieth-century transformations – the war against Nazism, decolonisation, second wave feminism, various scientific advances, civil rights and human rights movements, and other forces – have delegitimised this type of thinking and acting. Scholarly definitions of racism, however, often go beyond expressed beliefs and examine assorted 'social realities' of racism, its discourse and ideologies, choices and interactions, behaviours and outcomes, institutions and institutionalised orders, practices and habits and so on. I will discuss metaphysical matters below, but the simple point here is that, while race-talk may or may not lead to racism, it is almost certain that racism need not be related to talk.

The contention that race is (or is supposed to be) a social kind suggests that at some point in history people did not see race. From this perspective, 'What made race possible?' genealogies are especially important in the study of the global colour line because many groups commonly identified as races in contemporary ordinary language were once regarded as actual races at different stages of development. Among historians, the emergent consensus holds that race and racism are products of European/Western modernity; the practice of assigning properties of the human body onto 'character', which began with the seventeenth-century European travellers, paved the way for the later emergence of race as a biological fact and a social problem. Pre-modern peoples also engaged in colonialism, but this type of colonialism did not produce, and was not produced by, race-based hierarchies. So while the ancient Aztecs, Athenians and Azande were sexist, slave-holding and xenophobic in matters of citizenship, religion and language, they were probably not racist in either the ordinary or

scholarly sense of the term. In contrast, modern-era Europeans, whose expanding empires moved to establish boundaries between the superior whites and the inferior non-whites, were certainly racist because they purposefully ordered and re-ordered people on the basis of assorted physical (biological) traits such as skin colour, hair and nose.

How, where and when the social contract became what Mills (1997) calls the 'racial contract' remains to be more fully examined, but most historians would probably agree that racial thought reached a peak in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, when colonial empires were the order of the day and when few self-identified whites questioned social Darwinian, Galtonian, Spencerian or Lamarckian ideas of race as a permanent or semi-permanent category that determined the worth and potential of everyone everywhere. In this 'racialist' discourse, human collectives were coded by geography and/or physiognomy and these codes signalled the presence of heritable psychological, cultural and behavioural traits. It was racialism that authorised the racist management of allegedly backward peoples through enslavements, genocide, ghettos, land-grabs and apartheid.

The majority of contemporary state and nonstate actors in the world are officially post-colonial and anti-racist, yet they are also 'racial' because they continue to rely on race in order to articulate representations of difference and manage cultural and political diversity (Omi and Winant 1986). In fact, it is often argued that it is the mainstreaming of anti-racism in both state and nonstate institutions, policies and decisions that have (seemingly paradoxically) kept racial exclusions alive, albeit in non-supremacist, separate-but-equal terms. These observations have moved a number of scholars to call for an analytical shift away from 'protoracism' and towards a more critical study of 'culture' (Balibar 1991; Goldberg 1993) and (again, seemingly paradoxical) 'new racism' (Barker 1981) phenomena such as 'racism and its doubles' (Taguieff 2001 [1988]), 'racism without racists' (Bonilla-Silva 2006, 1–4), 'racism without races' (Balibar 1991, 21) and even 'racism without racism' (Goldberg 2009, 361).

Arguably, each of these perspectives to various degrees owes something to Michel Foucault's teachings on political modernity, including his notion of 'state racism' – 'a racism that society will direct against itself, against its own elements and its own products' (Foucault 2003 [1975–1976], 62). 'State racism' is a loose term, but one implication is that modern states are both 'racial' and 'racist' in the sense that they function by 'purifying' their populations by identifying, and subsequently isolating, the poor, the deviant, the criminal and other 'degenerate' elements (Foucault 2003 [1975–1976], 62; see also 81, 254–255). Crudely interpreting Foucault's scattered writings on race further, we could also say that his own

genealogy would conclude that racial representations of difference became meaningful only once European colonialism coalesced with anthropology, biology and other modern regimes of truth. This reading of history also accords with Foucauldian categories like biopolitics and governmentality, which together motivate the analysis of race and racism as one set of relations among subjects, bodies and the state which became contractually established in modern times. (Whether Foucault was as interested in the global colour line as in racialised Europe remains a matter of some debate).

All of these new ways of talking about race and the varieties of racisms clearly go beyond 'mere' semantics: what processes created folk theories of race for the first time? Under what conditions can they and do they change? In what ways do they vary in history and geography? And so on. According to Glasgow, this line of reasoning is precisely what gives unity to the philosophy of race as a field (Glasgow 2009, 124–125). What we mean by the word 'race' depends on how we think about it in ontological terms, namely, whether we believe that race is real or illusory. If one is to judge by ordinary language practices, affirmative action policies, national census questionnaires, forensic DNA assessments or personalised genetic genealogies, race clearly exists. The same goes for the lived experience of those, to go back to Vincent, at the 'bottom of the world hierarchy'. But if we were to ask natural scientists whether race existed most of them would answer in the negative – and in sharp contrast to their nineteenth-century counterparts. The idea that phenotypes and genotypes – for example, body hair gene – are indicative of some biological or genetic fixity has been proven to be wrong.

The failure of science to find evidence of the natural (biological) foundations of the idea of human races paved the way for the rise of 'constructivist' or 'constructionist' (sometimes prefaced with the adjectives 'social' or 'political') explanations of race. Here, race is a social kind – constructed, contingent and contestable, but '*nonetheless real*' (Mills 1997, 126, italics in the original). For philosophers like Ron Mallon (2006), this view constitutes an 'ontological consensus'. One could amass citations, but it would be pointless: entire research programmes in political science, sociology, anthropology, cultural studies and so on are today devoted to the study of how race articulates and legitimises intragroup unity and intergroup incommensurability, while influencing the differentiated distributions of wealth, worth, resources, entitlement and opportunity in broader social systems that social scientists study under the rubrics the 'sovereign state', 'freedom of movement' or 'division of labour'. Indeed, constructivists tend to treat race as an explanandum, not explanans, or at least primarily as an explanandum, meaning that in this ontology 'blacks', 'Caucasian

majority', 'Chadians', or 'visible minorities' do not exist independently of the acts of categorisation in specific contexts.

While there are many constructivist conceptualisations of race, current trends seem to favour 'racialization' or 'racialised identity'. Introduced since late 1970s into English in different contexts and via different conceptual histories by sociologists Michael Banton, Robert Miles and Michael Omi and Howard Winant, 'racialization' refers to a social and political *process* by which race is inscribed and projected onto the human body. Philosopher Sally Haslanger has provided the most precise definition of the term yet:

> A group is *racialized* (in context C) if and only if (by definition) its members are (or would be) socially positioned as subordinate or privileged along some dimension (economic, political, legal, social, etc.) (in C), and the group is 'marked' as a target for this treatment by observed or imagined bodily features presumed to be evidence of ancestral links to a certain geographical region (Haslanger 2008, 65; also see 2000, 44, italics in the original).

As a category of analysis, racialisation applies to objects and situations, but its focus is on agency, subjects, and identity formation. In turn, racialisation is closely tied to different theories and analyses of power within modern societies. In my reading, Haslanger's definition accords even with the notion of Foucauldian power, according to which the very process by which race is inscribed and projected onto the human body constitutes an exercise of power, rather than a reflection of some pre-existing social hierarchy. In addition to foregrounding power analysis, the concept of racialisation invites researchers to explore the differential processes of race-making in relation to one another, across multiple sites. What this means, considering the previous point, is that actors authorised to draw and re-draw colour lines must be regarded as at once an effect of a global system of racialised power and agents of that power at the regional, national or local level.

In IR studies of race, broadly constructivist viewpoints can be found in the 1970s and even earlier, but a more-or-less unified constructivist research agenda is of more recent vintage or only just being put together. As other chapters in this volume demonstrate, apart from carefully scrutinising their discipline's richly racist past, constructivist IR theorists – originally labelled 'poststructuralist', 'critical' and 'postcolonial' – have so far interrogated the making and breaking of racialised identities in North–South relations, the US-led Global War on Terror, immigration controls, the management of cultural diversity and the like. This line of research has a distinct record, but it has so far struggled to come up with a framework or frameworks for theorising the global – or at least the international – from the perspective

of race. States, nations, social movements and other 'units' are all said to operate within a racialised global system, but what remains to be analysed is how this macro-structural feature affects patterns of privilege, protection, control and inequality among them.

An important exception is the Marxist tradition (Wallerstein, 1991), which in IR often positions itself against constructivist and poststructuralist approaches in explicitly ontological terms. Instructive is a recent argument by Branwen Gruffydd Jones (2008). When analysing the (re)production of race and various racisms, poststructuralists typically use the bracketed '(re)' to emphasise the fluidity of racialised subjects that are (re)produced by discourses and practices that emerge from the constructed, contingent and contestable background knowledge of what constitutes social and political reality. Here, racial power is about (re)producing racialised subjects that appear to possess fixed materiality. For Gruffydd Jones, accounts of this type are 'vital but incomplete' (Gruffydd Jones 2008, 911). For her, racial power is material in the sense that it is routinely reproduced – note no bracketed '(re)' – through the relations structuring societal interaction with nature; specifically, through the regulation of nature as private property within the development of global capitalism, which carries the legacies of imperial conquest and colonial dispossession of non-European, non-white peoples (Gruffydd Jones 2008, 917–922).

Thus viewed, a more complete understanding of racial power requires a new social ontology, namely critical realism's preference for the so-called 'depth ontology'. A review of this position is not needed since, as far as IR is concerned, the 2000s can be regarded as a 'critical realism awareness decade'. For the purposes of this chapter, the most important part of the critical realist position concerns the existence of a mind-independent external reality. At the risk of oversimplifying matters, it can be said that critical realism assumes that social phenomena operate at multiple levels or layers of reality. At deeper levels, entities exist regardless of our knowledge claims about them; at the 'empirical' level, however, we can directly observe them thanks to their 'causal effects' (powers, mechanisms, properties, etc). Here, causation is broadly conceptualised to describe a reality as an open system in which 'racialised oppression' emerges as a consequence of a deeper and prior interaction of the 'enabling/constraining' entities and mechanisms such as 'human rights/wrongs', 'collective entitlements/obligations' or 'private/public property'. In other words, we cannot understand race as a meaningful social category without first understanding how capitalist society (or some functional 'deeper' equivalent) structures human beings into specific roles and ranks. Suffice it say, this line of argumentation unsettles poststructuralists because it appears to minimise their contribution to the study of racialised structures of oppression. Can one

accept that the experience of being assigned or 'ascribed' to categories such as whiteness *causes* people to think and act as if they are white – that is, individual persons who share a privileged and protected collective identity – without also accepting that racialised identities cannot exist outside certain material hierarchies?

Like many other IR debates, this debate on the nature of racialised reality has followed paths blazed by others, this time by Marxist methodologists. One of the questions they examined was the extent to which critical realism emerged as Marxism by stealth and a way to continue to study how, for example, race serves to the convince the poor that they are a certain colour and that defending their relatively privileged status within a broader global order is in their best interest. Arguably, one of the ways in which critical realism harmonises Marxist politics is by fostering research centred on the concept of class and, in turn, facilitating politically engaged critiques of poverty, exploitation and other unjust manifestations of social power, many of which are often dismissed in contemporary academia as antiquarian 'Marxian' or 'Marxoid' topics. Related, and equally relevant to IR, is the debate between (cultural) sociologists and (cultural) anthropologists on what comes first, 'social structure' or 'culture'. As I will show in the next section, the question that has kept moral and political philosophers (among others) awake at night is whether the category of race is 'empty' or at the very least 'derivative' of some other category such as class politics.

There are two bodies of research that complicate the standard discursive-materialist dichotomies. The first goes under the rubric 'racial habits', which begins with an observation that racialised outcomes are not necessarily contingent on conscious racists. The goal of this line of research – which draws inspiration from Freudian, Deweyan, Bourdiean and other social-theoretical frameworks as well as, increasingly, from social neuroscience – is to demonstrate how individuals and groups become racialised through embodied habits, which can be defined as preconscious or unconscious engines of action co-constituted with culture and social structures already dominant in society. For example, the habitualised aesthetics of appropriating Native or African American spiritual traditions as an antidote to consumerist and materialist conformities in the contemporary US has less to do with engaged history and more to do with subconscious desires of people designated as white to continue to pursue their privileges and protections. If race-making indeed occurs through a plethora of informal, illicit and, importantly, implicit practices, then there is little wonder that communities can be at once antiracist and ethnocentric (Alcoff 2006, chapters 7 and 8). This insight applies to 'Obamerica' (Bonilla- Silva 2010, chapter 9) as much as it applies to academic fields like IR (Hobson 2012).

Separate, but directly relevant to the study of racial habits is the research programme on 'racial cognition', which is an umbrella term that unites studies in cognitive and evolutionary psychology, as well as (and to a lesser extent) in evolutionary anthropology. On the basis of a whole variety of experimental research, social psychologists have now for decades argued that racial prejudice – prejudice related to skin colour and/or body appearance – can be present even among those who consistently reject the existence of races (or believe that there is a single human race) and otherwise hold reliable anti-racist attitudes. That race may be a by-product of evolved cognition of the human brain is a more recent contention. Philosophers Daniel Kelly, Edouard Machery and Ron Mallon (2010, 450) summarise this body of research thus:

> Racial categorization develops early and reliably across cultures; it does not depend entirely on social learning; it is, in some respects, similar to our folk biology. Thus, racial categorization seems to be neither the product of socialization alone nor of the perceptual saliency of skin color. It does not appear to result froma general tendency toward group prejudice, either. Rather, this body of evidence is best explained by the hypothesis that racial categorization results from some species-typical, canalized cognitive system. Because it is species-typical, environmentally canalized, and complex, this supposed cognitive system is plausibly the product of evolution by natural selection. Given the specific properties of racial categorization, this cognitive system is also plausibly domain-specific, treating race differently than other categories (including some other social categories). All this is grist for the mill of evolutionary psychologists.

Viewed from perspective of the 'psy sciences' taken together, race often appears less contingent and contestable than constructivists have intimated. But if evolved cognition is even partly behind folk theory of race, then its academic analogue ought to invite further reflection on the psychological microfoundations of racial categorisation.

Now it is constructivists' turn to feel uneasy. Social and cognitive psychology, experimental and otherwise, is often dismissed for being subjectivist and ahistorical to the point that it approaches a taboo in some circles. The criticism is all too familiar: what constructivists are meant to study instead are cultural and social structures that make race possible in different contexts, not what goes on inside people's heads. For pragmatically minded philosophers, this attitude leads to a lost opportunity. A rapprochement between constructivism and psychological disciplines is desirable because each approach has weaknesses that can potentially be offset through some form of combined and eclectic reasoning. Moves to accommodate psychological insights into constructivist viewpoints does

not necessarily upset the ontological consensus on race; in fact, it might induce constructivist race scholars to further work out their ontological commitments on the mutual constitution of agents and structures, which would be important since the question of how cultural and social structures of race systematically influence individuals is no less pressing than the one of how individuals create and resist those structures.

While it is true the wild variation in meanings of race continues to puzzle evolutionary psychology, it is equally true that constructivism struggles with the apparent pervasiveness of certain forms of racialism. Put aside Mill's 'racial contract' or define racialism broadly and the historical consensus on the origins of race dissipates. The ancients understood human subjectivity differently from the moderns, yet they both sometimes drew rather similarly coloured lines between 'us' and 'them' (Isaac 2004). This possibility warrants pause and reflection: if race is a product of universal evolved cognitive mechanisms, then it might well be that race (or at least race-like) categories delineated human population even in pre-modernity – an idea that of course would run contrary to the teachings of most standard genealogies as well as most historical materialist readings of race. Conversely, why is it that race and its cognates persist in the face of overwhelming evidence that the natural biological concept is false? One answer, to go back to the new racism scholarship, is that race and racism are sufficiently different phenomena such that the elimination of the latter need not eliminate the former. Another answer, coming from the psy sciences, is that the greatest barriers in battling racism may not be legal, social or political, as hitherto understood, but psychological.

At a minimum, these possibilities give philosophers ground from which to criticise the systematic 'disregard' of psychology in constructivist approaches on race (Kelly et al 2010, 468; compare Appiah 2006). This disregard is a problem because it continues to cement the purposive and representational biases of contemporary race theory, which is an ontological issue as well. If race-making is not simply a function of linguistic practices (both ordinary and extraordinary), but also one of the routines of thought, perception and activities in everyday contexts, then the current analysis of the global colour line will remain 'vital, but incomplete' for yet another reason.

Importantly, racial habits are never theorised as 'false' ideas, but as a part of broader reality structured around social institutions and organised relations that are at once 'reproduced' and '(re)produced' because most humans in most contexts indeed do not reflect on their course of action; instead, they automatically act and interact in accordance with the cultures and/or social structures of conduct into which they were socialised or which they

learned implicitly. Along the same lines, virtually all students of race working in psychological disciplines would agree: race and other identities cannot be examined by separating environmental factors from intrapyschic ones. Indeed, both relational psychoanalysts and cognitive-cum-evolutionary psychologists would now agree that the social environment in which cognitive, affective, Freudian or any other mechanisms in the human psyche operate is as important as the structure and function of the mechanisms themselves. This point also accords with a Foucauldian teaching that the privileged and the oppressed cannot change the system of power in which they find themselves, but can only tweak its modalities (Brah 2005; Hook 2007). And so we reach a question implied in Foucault's power/knowledge nexus: what if the scholarship on race, too, constitutes part of the operation of power that makes it difficult to challenge racism?

Should We Do Away with Race?

Every scholar of the global colour line must come to terms with the politics of antiracism: What role, if any, should race play in the pursuit of social justice? Should we abandon racially divided societies and move toward colour blindness? How ought we to approach development or multiculturalism? This inevitability of politics can be stated more broadly. According to Mallon (2006), rather than being about semantics or ontology, the philosophical debate on race is mainly normative. This is to say that the ontological consensus still leaves us with a dissensus regarding moral, practical, prudential and, indeed, political implications of race-talk. The relevance of this debate is self-evident: what concept – or concepts – best suits our anti-racist aims? To paraphrase Mallon, the penultimate question in the philosophy of race is neither 'What do we mean by race?' nor 'Is race an illusion?' but 'What do we want race to be?' (Mallon 2006, 550).

In lieu of an answer, Mallon urges us to consider the basic normative parameters such as the epistemic and political value of race-talk (whether its meanings could be more effectively subsumed under a different kind, namely ethnicity, and whether it helps in dealing with racism and its legacies) and the degree of entrenchment of race-talk in everyday discourse, both public and private. On these parameters, scholars tend to be divided in two main camps. 'Conservationists' maintain that racial categories should be conserved for the purposes of public policy analysis, social reform and/or identity-based politics (Mills 1997). In contrast, 'eliminativists' – a catchall term that sometimes includes political liberals,

postcolonial theorists and conservative polemicists – contend that race is an illusion laden with disagreeable claims and, as such, should be eliminated from public discourse.

The problem with the eliminativist position from the perspective of the study of the global colour line is that it erases the philosophical and theoretical basis for anti-racist politics that is supposed to motivate scholarship in the first place. This is a major normative argument for conserving race that goes back to Du Bois: critical confrontation with race is the necessary step in the possibilities of overcoming the problem of race. What also needs emphasising is that conservationist race-talk consciously seeks to avoid any reference to nineteenth-century racial meanings or, for that matter, the language emerging from contemporary genomics. The concept of racialisation serves so many philosophers well – think of Lawrence Blum's (2002) racialised groups, Linda Martín Alcoff's (2006) racialised identities, Glasgow's (2009) asterisked race* and even Appiah's (1996) racial identities – precisely because it so clearly emphasises the fact that race is a socially and politically constructed phenomenon. The normative goal here is not to 'conserve' race so much as to 'substitute' it with race-like discourse.

One candidate is class. This substitutionist move has a long pedigree. Robert Miles (1989), for example, has long demanded that race be replaced with racism defined as an ideological struggle within contemporary capitalism. Miles developed his concept of racialisation precisely in order to explain the political conflicts arising from twentieth-century tensions between the capitalist need for massive free movements of labour, on the one hand, and the nationalist need for loyal citizens, on the other. Another candidate is ethnicity. Its prima facie advantage lies in the successful replacement of 'race' in global ordinary language usage concerning certain groups in certain location such as Roma in Europe or Chadians in the Gulf. There are conceptual advantages as well: constructivist definitions of race usually encompass a reference to real or fictive 'ancestral links' as a necessary condition for racialisation. This is of course a standard definition of ethnicity – membership based on (discourses, perceptions, practices, etc) of shared ancestry. Given that the costs of race-talk (intellectual incoherence, essentialism and reification) generally outweigh the potential benefits (for example, enabling group-based social justice claims), argues philosopher J Angelo Corlett (2003), this overlap is an opportune reason to 'replace' the former with the latter.

The problem with the substitutionist strategies is that they erase the fact that race is both more global and more directly enmeshed in power relations. The race-to-class move imposes a high price on theoretical and empirical work because it disregards a world of ideas

and practices that precede – some would say supersede – the modern nation-state (to say nothing of the international labour market). Class relations become much more complex once people see each other not as rich/poor, but as indelibly different from one another on some seemingly natural (biological) dimensions. A vast body of sociological research on access to opportunities in a variety of contexts shows that that, controlling for education and income, non-whites almost always face greater challenges than whites. The same applies to ethnicity. When ethnic differences are tagged onto the body, the hierarchy between ethnic actors is constructed as self-evident and indelible, thus revitalising the racialised structure of oppression.

At stake here is both analysis and ethics: ethnicity not only misses the full gamut of (bio)power relations that made race historically possible, but is also poorly equipped to address the judgments about justice based on colonial and post-colonial struggles along the blackness/whiteness boundary. It can also be argued that the race-to-ethnicity move would in fact go against the semantic teachings on the role of ordinary language and the folk theories of identity. Going back to Mallon (2006, 550), public policies dealing with different inter-generational groups will work best if the communities of language targeted by those policies themselves recognise differences between race and ethnicity in their everyday discourse, both public and private. All being equal, in general conversations and popular intuitions race-talk operates on a higher degree of abstraction than ethnicity-talk. For example, while ethnic meanings typically derive from contextual knowledge claims (and disclaims) regarding the subject's genealogy ('Her ancestors are from X'), race-talk usually requires a broader and more abstract background knowledge about the human body and/or the ways in which identities have been racialised ('Her ancestors are brown' or 'Her ancestors were mistreated because the colour of their skin'). It is also worth pointing out that ordinary language does not recognise 'ethnicism' as a functional equivalent of racism.

Yet another self-consciously normative position against substitutionism arises from intersectionality theory, which is based on the idea that categories of difference such race, class, ethnicity and sexuality always have simultaneous and interacting effects on the social and political world. This perspective, associated with Kimberly Crenshaw, María Lugones, Elizabeth Spelman and other feminist theorists writing in the 1970s and 1980s, is precisely what drives journals with double titles like the venerable *Race & Class* or the newer *Race/Ethnicity*, as well as numerous research programmes in both social sciences and humanities. Here, we do not want race to be either class or ethnicity because any replacement

move ignores the ontological fact that the intersections, interlockings and assemblages of these categories are always greater than the sum of their parts.

Perhaps the latest and related attempt to capture overlap, intersection and interlocking between race and ethnicity – or between racialisation and ethnicisation – is the concept of 'ethnorace'. Building on Goldberg (1993; 2009), Alcoff defines ethnorace as

> pertaining to groups who have both ethnic and racialized characteristics, who are a historical people with customs and conventions developed out of collective agency, but who are also identified and identifiable by bodily morphology that allows for both group affinity as well as group exclusion and denigration (Alcoff 2009, 22).

Like racialisation, ethnorace is unlikely to enter ordinary conversations soon (to say nothing of helping shift people's self-conceptions in them), but it can help theorise the dynamic nature of social divisions based on kinship. In addition to describing pan-ethnic categories or caste orders that in certain contexts can have ideas of race embedded within them (to use contemporary examples: Caucasians in Moscow, Copts in Cairo, Dalits in Punjab, Latinos in the US, etc), the concept of ethnorace might be part of the answer to longstanding research puzzles on how ethnic groups in different contexts become racialised, deracialised or re-racialised.

There is indeed no shortage of reasons why most philosophers of race prefer to 'reconstruct' or 'ameliorate' race-talk rather than outright replacing it with some other discourse (Glasgow 2009, 147–154; compare Alcoff 2006, chapter 10). Once again, the philosophical debates considered in this article are dialectical in the sense that theories on how we ought to talk about the world always depend on theories on what is in the world. The question 'What do we want race to be?' always and by necessity depends on 'What can we want?' and vice versa – the facts regarding human diversity cannot be separated from the political and normative interpretation of that diversity. So while some philosophers might explore how the latest research on the peculiar evolution of human cognition may be relevant for eliminativist, substitionist and reconstructionist desires alike (Kelly et al 2010), IR-ists might investigate what political and normative positions made race such a taboo not only in their discipline in general, but also within their research programs in specific. When Vincent wrote about IR's race taboo in 1982, IR had barely begun to reflect on the role of Eurocentrism in theory-building. Although the situation has improved since (Hobson 2012), the question of how various forms of whiteness are (re)produced in the discipline is yet to

become central to the analysis of practices of power and, in turn, politically engaged critiques of the international/global.

Conclusions

As an object of reflection in IR, race has waxed and waned over time, yet one would be hard-pressed to deny its centrality to the origins of the discipline or its relevance in the development of the modern international. Race is also a mercurial concept: debates over its ontology, epistemological status, and legitimacy are necessary precisely because race is a moving target – its manifestations vary in history and geography. In this chapter, I have addressed some of these debates via a quick tour of the philosophy of race. My main argument is that students of the global colour line should consider using the categories racialisation and racialised identity over the category race.

When it comes to onto-semantics, nearly all philosophers of race agree that race is a social kind as opposed to something that exists in nature. But race is real in the sense that it produces, and is produced by, social structures: Xs become racialised when their perceived ancestral or morphological differences are invested with intersubjective meanings that position them as subordinate to Ys in context C. Embedded into this conceptualisation is an emphasis on the multidimensionality of power. Rather than just coercion, racialisation also refers to diffuse political construction of difference such that the identity X comes to be viewed as indelible and therefore antithetical to the project built and established by Y. The near-universal agreement that racism now has a negative moral quality means that coercive power is less effective in producing racialised oppression than ever before, and claims that some Xs are unassimilable continue to succeed everywhere.

I have also suggested that the concept of racialisation may be well equipped to incorporate the theoretical frameworks on racial habits and racial cognition in addition to assorted social and cultural structures. To use the previous example, the fact that discourses on the degrees of ethnic assimilability and entitlement contain forms of new racism is evidence that racialisation occurs even in the absence of expressed racist purposes or conscious beliefs that X are inferior to Y. This opens up new ontological and theoretical vistas: if race-making is partly (or also) a function of the evolution of human psychology, then we may have an easier task explaining why phenotype and ancestry were built into so many political orders in modern history, including the modern international. IR has good 'foundational' reasons to be reticent about exploring evolutionary explanations of the social

and political world, but reticence should not turn into disregard, much less into a taboo. To the extent that philosophers discussed in this chapter are right, the tensions over what race means, what race is and what do/can we want race to be will prove to be an asset in the transdisciplinary conversations that will take place in the next generation of studies of the global colour line.

Bibliography

Alcoff, Linda. (2006) *Visible Identities: Race, Gender, and the Self* (New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press).

Alcoff, Linda. (2009) Latinos Beyond the Binary. *Southern Journal of Philosophy*. 157 (1). p. 112–128.

Appiah, K Anthony. (1996) Race, Culture, Identity: Misunderstood Connections. In Appiah, K Anthony and Guttman, Amy (eds.). *Color Conscious* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press), p. 30–105.

Appiah, K Anthony. (2006) How to Decide if Races Exist. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*. 106 (3). p. 363–380.

Balibar, Etienne. (1991) Racism and Nationalism. In Balibar, Etienne and Wallerstein, Immanuel (eds.). *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (London: Verso), p. 37–67.

Barker, Martin. (1981) *The New Racism* (London: Junction Books).

Blum, Lawrence. (2002) *'I'm Not a Racist, but . . . ': The Moral Quandary of Race* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press).

Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. (2006) *Racism without Racists: Color-blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States* (New York, N.Y.: Rowman & Littlefield).

Brah, Avtar. (2005) Ambivalent Documents/Fugitive Pieces: Author, Text, Subject. In Murji, Karim and Solomos, John (eds.). *Racialization: Studies in Theory and Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 69–86.

Corlett, J Angelo. (2003) *Race, Racism, and Reparations* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press).

Du Bois, W.E.B. (1901) The Freedmen's Bureau. *The Atlantic Monthly*, March. Available at: http://www. theatlantic.com/past/docs/issues/01mar/dubois.htm., accessed 1 March 2011.

Foucault, Michel. (2003 [1975–1976]) *Society must be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France 1975–1976* (New York, N.Y.: Picador).

Glasgow, Joshua. (2009) *A Theory of Race* (New York, N.Y.: Routledge).

Goldberg, David Theo. (1993) *Racist Culture: Philosophy and the Politics of Meaning* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell).

Goldberg, David Theo. (2009) *The Threat of Race: Reflections on Racial Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Blackwell).

Gruffydd Jones, Branwen. (2008) Race in the Ontology of International Order. *Political Studies*. 56. p. 907–927.

Haslanger, Sally. (2000) Gender and Race: (What) are they? (What) Do We Want them to Be?. *Nous*. 34 (1). p. 31–55.

Haslanger, Sally. (2005) What are we Talking About? The Semantics and Politics of Social Kinds. *Hypatia*. 20 (4). p. 10–26.

Haslanger, Sally. (2008) A Social Constructionist Analysis of Race. In Koenig, Barbara A. Lee, Sandra Soo-Jin and Richardson, Sarah S. (eds.). *Revisiting Race in a Genomic Age* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press), p. 56–69.

Hobson, John M. (2012) *The Eurocentric Conception of World Politics: Western International Theory, 1760–2010* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Hook, Derek. (2007) *Foucault, Psychology and the Analytics of Power* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan).

Isaac, Benjamin. (2004) *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press).

Kelly, Daniel, Machery, Edouard and Mallon, Ron. (2010) Race and Racial Cognition. In John Doris (ed.). *The Moral Psychology Handbook* (New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press), p. 432–471.

Lewontin, Richard. (1972) The Apportionment of Human Diversity. *Evolutionary Biology*. 6. p. 391–398.

Mallon, Ron. (2004) Passing, Traveling, and Reality: Social Construction and the Metaphysics of Race. *Nous*. 38 (4). p. 644–673.

Mallon, Ron. (2006) 'Race': Normative, Not Metaphysical or Semantic. *Ethics*. 116 (3). p. 525–551.

Marks, Jonathan. (2008) Race: Past, Present, and Future. In Koenig, Barbara A., Lee, Sandra Soo-Jin, and Richardson, Sarah S. (eds.). *Revisiting Race in a Genomic Age* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press), p. 21–38.

Miles, Robert. (1989) *Racism* (New York, N.Y.: Routledge).

Mills, Charles W. (1997) *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca, New York, N.Y.: Cornell University Press).

Mills, Charles W. (1998) The Racial Polity. In Babbitt, Susan and Campbell, Sue (eds.). *Racism and Philosophy* (Malden, M.A.: Blackwell), p. 13–31.

Omi, Michael and Winant, Howard. (1986) *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1980s* (New York, N.Y.: Routledge & Kegan Paul).

Persaud, Randolph and Walker, R. B. J. (2001) Apertura: Race in International Relations. *Alternatives*. 26 (4). p. 373–376.

Rose, Nikolas S. (2007) *The Politics of Life Itself: Biomedicine, Power, and Subjectivity in the Twenty-first Century* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press).

Taguieff, Pierre André. (2001 [1988]) *The Force of Prejudice: Racism and its Doubles*. Hassan Melehy (transl.) (Minneapolis, M.N.: University of Minnesota Press).

Vincent, R.J. (1982) Race in International Relations. *International Affairs*. 4 (1). p. 658–670.

Vitalis, Robert. (2000) The Graceful and Generous Liberal Gesture: Making Racism Invisible in American International Relations. *Millennium*. 29 (2). p. 331–356.

Wallerstein, Immanuel. (1991) The Construction of Peoplehood: Racism, Nationalism, Ethnicity. In Balibar, Etienne and Wallerstein, Immanuel (eds.). *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (London: Verso), p. 71–85.

Zack, Naomi. (2002) *Philosophy of Science and Race* (New York, N.Y.: Routledge).

NOTES

Quotes are from Vincent (1982, 660, 666, 669). This article also offers some antiquated ideas with respect to race. According to Hobson, like so many other post-1945 Eurocentric international theorists Vincent posited that the mainstreaming of decolonial antiracism would be sufficient for achieving racial equality (2012: 310, 319).

On past and current oppressions within IR that condition the lived experience of people identified by themselves and others as non-white, see, *inter alia*, Persaud and Walker (2000), Vitalis (2000) and Hobson (2012).

For effective overviews of key personalities and events that made these ideas possible and pertinent bibliographies, see, *inter alia*, Blum (2002) and Zack (2002).

In this context, 'colour' referred not only to skin tone, but also to facial and in fact most other bodily features that were understood to be naturally constituted in relation to race. Philosophers like to qualify racialism as 'thick racialism', 'biobehavioral essentialism' and 'racial naturalism' (Mallon 2006; Blum 2002; Zack 2002).

Versions of the biology–diversity link remain preserved in some fields, such as genomic medicine in the United States (US) context. There, research appears to be primarily, though not exclusively, driven by new economic opportunities as identified by the powerful pharmaceutical industry. Glasgow (2009, 97–108), Mallon (2006, 543), Marks (2008, 27) and Rose (2007, 155–171).

As far as ordinary language goes, the word racialization has little traction, but it helps to remember that the same quality applied to the concept of gender not so long ago (Haslanger 2005).

For example, Robert Vitalis' book manuscript (forthcoming with Oxford University Press), *The End of Empire in American International Relations*, finds 'broadly constructivist' viewpoints on race and racism in the writings of Merze Tate, Ralph Bunche, Alain Locke, and other members of the 'Howard School of International Relations'.