A PHILOSOPHICAL COLOUR LINE:

RACISM AND POLITICAL THEORY

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Declaration

I certify that the thesis I have presented for examination for the PhD degree of the London School of Economics and Political Science is solely my own work other than where I have clearly indicated that it is the work of others (in which case the extent of any work carried out jointly by me and any other person is clearly identified in it).

I declare that my thesis consists of 76,142 words.

Abstract

When examining the problem racism poses for philosophy, it is typically understood in one of two ways. On the one hand, the interpretive approach takes the racist statements of canonical philosophers like Hume, Voltaire, or Kant and subjects them to critical scrutiny to determine whether they have implications for their otherwise distinctly philosophical insights. On the other hand, the institutional approach locates racism in the institutional features and structures of academic philosophy, noting for instance the lack of diversity amongst both philosophy faculty and philosophy curricula. In my thesis, I argue that, although both approaches point out something useful about racism in philosophy, neither is adequate to fully capture the scope of philosophical racism; that is, the problem racism poses for the discipline. Interpretive approaches, I suggest, retain an individualist focus that unduly narrows the scope of inquiry, while institutional approaches neglect the conceptual dimensions to racism by focusing exclusively on institutional reform.

Instead, I draw on recent developments in the philosophical literature to suggest that we should think of racism as being ideological in the pejorative sense. To make my case, I begin by bringing W.E.B. Du Bois' reflections on racism into conversation with contemporary practice-first accounts of ideology. My aim here is to articulate a Du Boisian account of ideology that can accurately track its historicised, functionalist, and interpretivist dimensions. I then pair this account with the methodological reflections of disciplinary historians, who understand academic disciplines not only in terms of the theoretical contributions scholars make, but also in terms of the academic practices that are enacted within a wider institutional nexus. The result is a theoretical framework that can analyse philosophical racism, by showing how a racist ideology can come to be embedded in the institutions of academic philosophy. This broadens the site of analysis of philosophical racism to include both conceptual and institutional dimensions, which I suggest can adequately capture the nature and scope of the problem.

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Introduction

"To free the slave is discovered to be tolerable only in so far as it freed his master".
W.E.B. Du Bois[1]

What does it mean to say that philosophy has a race problem? Some scholars interpret this in an *institutional* manner, pointing to the chronic lack of diversity in academic philosophy. It is, after all, an unfortunate truth that, at the level of both university curricula and departmental faculty, non-white and non-European theorists and philosophical traditions are significantly underrepresented – to the extent that philosophy lags behind neighbouring disciplines.[2] Others understand this question as an *interpretivist* one, concerning how we ought to interpret or understand the written racist remarks of various canonical theorists.[3] Consider for example the following three remarks taken from a range of influential European philosophers:

1. Montesquieu:

   "The negroes prefer a glass necklace to that gold which polite nations so highly value. Can there be *a greater proof of their wanting common sense*? It is impossible for us to *suppose these creatures to be men*, because, allowing them to be men, *a suspicion would follow that we ourselves are not Christians*".[4]

2. Hume:

   "I am apt to suspect *the negroes to be naturally inferior to the whites*. There scarcely ever was a civilized nation *of that complexion*, nor even any individual eminent either in action or speculation. No ingenious manufactures amongst them, *no arts, no sciences*. On the other hand, the most rude and barbarous of the whites, such as the ancient Germans, the present Tartars, have still something eminent about them … Such a uniform and constant difference could not happen, in so many countries and ages, *if nature had not made an original distinction between these breeds of men*".[5]

3. Kant:

   "There might be something here worth considering, except for the fact that this scoundrel was *completely black from head to foot, a distinct proof that what he said was stupid*".[6]

[1] Du Bois, "Darkwater," 498.
[2] See e.g. Botts et al., "What Is the State of Blacks in Philosophy?"; Mills, "Decolonizing Western Political Philosophy"; Van Norden, *Taking Back Philosophy*.
[3] See e.g. Bernasconi, "Locke's Almost Random Talk of Man"; Bernasconi, "Will the Real Kant Please Stand Up"; Eze, "The Color of Reason"; Mills, "Kant's Untermenschen."
[4] Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, 264, my emphasis.
[5] Hume, "Of National Characters," 208, my emphasis.
[6] Kant, "Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime", (2:224-25), my emphasis.

This is merely an indicative list; we can find racist remarks of this kind in the writings of other leading philosophers, such as Voltaire, Hegel, Marx, and Mill. As leading theorists of the Enlightenment, they all advanced strong defences of freedom that continue to influence contemporary debates in political philosophy. The key problem, then, is whether these philosophers should be understood as slipping into personal prejudice that has no bearing on their philosophical systems, or whether their philosophical writings – taken in isolation from one another – are parasitic on the racist conceptions of human difference they endorse. If the latter, it gives rise to a further question: how can we amend their philosophical ideas such that they *no longer* have racist implications?

Thinking about racism in philosophy has gone in either of these two directions, creating a vast literature that advances a diverse range of philosophical positions. On the institutional reading, the literature is unanimous in advocating for the construction of more inclusive philosophy departments and curricula, thereby directly confronting what Charles Mills calls the "overwhelming whiteness" of philosophy.[7] On the interpretive reading, a consensus exists only in the *kinds of questions that are asked* rather than in the positions that are articulated and defended. That is, scholars *agree* that the problem of racism in philosophy, if it exists, should be understood as determining whether, say, Kant or Hume *were racist* and, if so, why this matters for their philosophical systems – even as there is widespread *disagreement* as to whether Kant or Hume were *in fact* racist and, if so, whether their racism matters for thinking with their philosophical frameworks. Although these readings have yielded beneficial insights, my worry is whether both ways of framing the question of racism have unduly constrained the kind of inquiry that can be pursued. To use one example, consider Hume's racist remark I quoted above. It is tempting to read this as a lapse into personal prejudice, given its baseless claims of racial inferiority, that has no bearing on his wider philosophical writings. This may in fact be true. Yet, Hume's racism – despite its baselessness – comes to be cited as *evidence for* the natural inferiority of blacks by a range of different theorists, from the racist slave owner Edward Long to Immanuel Kant, and thereby acts as a justification for oppressive political and economic practices like slavery.[8] In short, Hume's status as an eminent philosopher was sufficient for a prejudicial claim to be taken *as knowledge* by later generations.

[7] Mills, "Racial Justice," 83.
[8] See Park, "Why It Makes Sense to Talk of Decolonizing the Philosophy Department"; Popkin, "Hume's Racism."

This insight, I want to suggest, cannot be captured on either the institutional or interpretivist reading of philosophy's race problem because it concerns neither the interpretation of Hume's racism nor the institutions of academic philosophy in our present. As this example hopefully illustrates, whether Hume's racism matters for understanding *his wider philosophical framework* seems to be asking the wrong question. This is because it elides an examination of how a racist idea comes to be transformed into a legitimate starting point for academic inquiry that, in turn, helps justify a series of oppressive practices that continue to exist long after the theorist's time. As John Harfouch makes the point: "rather than asking, for instance, 'was [Hume] racist' and then measuring his statements against an anachronistic definition [of racism], one asks, 'what contemporary experiences of racism or manifestations of oppression are indebted to [Hume], or other philosophical heroes?'".[9] I want to suggest that this sheds light on what I will call, following Katrin Flikschuh, the problem of *philosophical racism*: the idea that racism poses a distinctive problem *for philosophical thinking* by, for example, informing our "unstated background assumptions about which contexts and domains of human experience are or are not worth of philosophical reflection".[10] My contention, then, is that the discipline of philosophy is shaped by a series of racially inflected assumptions and ways of thinking that continue to influence how scholars today think about and engage with philosophical texts. The scope of my analysis is therefore the problem of racism *within and for* philosophy – without examining how articulations of racism inside the discipline may have created and enabled a series of oppressive practices in society more generally.

The core claim of my thesis is that there is a historical tradition of philosophical racism within the discipline that continues to shape the key assumptions of what counts as a philosophical contribution in the present – even as scholars explicitly repudiate the explicit racism of their intellectual forebears. This broadens the scope of the problem of racism within philosophy, moving beyond a question of whether the racism of *individual philosophers* impacted their insightful philosophical contributions, or why there is a persistent lack of diversity within philosophy curricula at universities, to asking whether and to what extent the implicit presuppositions and preconceptions of the discipline have been shaped by racism in ways that present scholars may not necessarily be aware. In short, I am attempting to answer two questions: how should we think about the problem of philosophical racism, and how has

[9] Harfouch, *Another Mind-Body Problem*, xxix. In the original quotation, Harfouch references both Kant and Leibniz rather than Hume, since he focuses on these two philosophers in his book.
[10] Flikschuh, "Philosophical Racism," 103.

philosophical racism come to be so entrenched in the discipline? In answering them, I articulate an ideological conception of racism, which is becoming increasingly prominent in the philosophical literature on the social problems of race, and pair this with insights from intellectual history regarding the nature, object, and methods of writing disciplinary histories.[11] Here, I am using ideology in the pejorative sense to denote a worldview that enables or perpetuates injustice.[12] An ideological conception of racism, I want to suggest, can help to capture how racist ideas have *conceptual* effects, insofar as they shape the prevailing assumptions and ways of thinking about philosophy, as well as *institutional* effects, where they embed themselves in the academic institutions of philosophy such that a particular – and racially inflected – vision of the discipline continues to be perpetuated, thereby enabling a range of different epistemic injustices.[13]

The upshot of my argument is therefore a novel way to think about racism in philosophy that links the conceptual discussion of the potential influence of racism on philosophical debates and ideas with an examination of the role of institutions in privileging and entrenching specific viewpoints over others. Put simply, my goal is to provide a conceptual framework for both intellectual historians and philosophers interested in the question of philosophical racism that can better capture the nature and scope of the problem for the discipline in the present. My goal, however, is not to use philosophical racism to argue that philosophy as an academic discipline should be scrapped *because* it retains a set of widely held assumptions about its purpose that are inflected by racism. Instead, using an ideological conception of philosophical racism can help illuminate the connections between, on the one hand, the foundational assumptions about the discipline that are taken for granted and, on the other, the way these assumptions legitimate a series of epistemic injustices, such as the creation of a hostile working environment for diverse scholars.[14] To be clear, my point is not that the hostile environment of academic philosophy is entirely reducible to philosophical racism, but that it can help explain

[11] For recent literature on ideological conceptions of racism, see e.g. Shelby, "Ideology, Racism, and Critical Social Theory"; Haslanger, "Racism, Ideology, and Social Movements"; Wirts, "What Does It Mean to Say 'The Criminal Justice System Is Racist'?" On the methods of disciplinary history writing in the social sciences, see Bell, "Writing the World (Remix)"; Guilhot, "Imperial Realism"; Isaac, "Tangled Loops"; *Working Knowledge*.

[12] For the differences between pejorative and non-pejorative accounts of ideology, see Geuss, *The Idea of a Critical Theory*, 4–22; Haslanger, *Ideology in Practice*, 10–13.

[13] Although the term 'epistemic injustice' was coined by Miranda Fricker, it has since been used in a variety of ways to capture different epistemic wrongs. For some useful contributions to the epistemic injustice literature, see Dotson, "Conceptualizing Epistemic Oppression"; Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*; Mitova, "Decolonising Knowledge Here and Now"; Pohlhaus, "Epistemic Agency Under Oppression."

[14] See e.g. Dotson, "How Is This Paper Philosophy?"; Yancy, "Situated Black Women's Voices in/on the Profession of Philosophy."

some of the reasons why diverse scholars experience hostility towards their research from mainstream theorists. This has led to the impoverishment of philosophy; for instance, one consequence of the hostile environment of academic philosophy is that diverse theoretical traditions and philosophical problems have been examined in neighbouring disciplines, such as area studies or ethnic studies. Although this has benefitted these academic areas, to my mind this division of academic labour has contributed towards a lack of reflection concerning what philosophy can be or should do to remain relevant in an increasingly interconnected world.

We can see this for example in the strong tendency to rehabilitate European theorists, whose arguments may not be as well known, over the desire to expand our horizons to examine how differentially situated philosophers come to think about and conceptualise social and political problems.[15] While it is easy to identify a series of practical problems, such as language barriers, that inhibit the possibility of these interactions, it is striking that we do not even *try to engage with* scholars based in and working on traditions of philosophy from the Global South.[16] Further, I am not sure that this lack of engagement is entirely reducible to the practical difficulties in communicating and engaging with different philosophical traditions. There is a history of denying the status of philosophical contributions from outside Europe, with for example East Asian traditions of thought being conceptualised as *wisdom* or *sagely pronouncements* rather than as *philosophy*.[17] This tendency can be traced back to the writings of David Hume and Christoph Meiners, with the latter in particular using racist anthropological evidence to *write out* the non-European world from the history of philosophy.[18] While this racist history may have been forgotten, that contemporary textbooks continue to adhere to a conception of philosophy that has been shaped by race should be a cause for concern for us, as present-day philosophers. An ideological conception of philosophical racism can help make sense of why an idea rooted in a racist 18th century debate has come to be the status quo position for the discipline, as well as providing a conceptual framework to help us diagnose – or at least think about – the problem of racism for the discipline more generally. By taking philosophy as the object of my analysis, and separating it from attempts to trace the rise of racist ideas in

[15] For a compelling, if polemic, critique of this tendency, see Goto-Jones, "The Kyoto School, the Cambridge School, and the History of Political Philosophy in Wartime Japan."
[16] See e.g. Flikschuh, "The Idea of Philosophical Fieldwork."
[17] For an example of this kind of sweeping dismissal of non-Western philosophy, see Tampio, "Not All Things Wise and Good Are Philosophy"; Van Norden, *Taking Back Philosophy*, 11–18.
[18] Park, *Africa, Asia, and the History of Philosophy*. For the potential influence of Hume on Meiners' thesis, see Flory, "Race, History, and Affect"; Park, "Why It Makes Sense to Talk of Decolonizing the Philosophy Department."

society more generally, I hope to be able to better articulate the challenge philosophical racism poses and turn the critical tools of philosophy onto the discipline itself.

Four Questions: Clarifying Philosophical Racism

Before doing so, it is worth clarifying some of the presuppositions that drive my inquiry. At this juncture, I think there are four questions one could plausibly ask. First, what notion of race, and by extension racism, am I employing throughout the thesis? Although I have suggested that we can think of racism as ideological, this entails a series of ontological commitments with respect to the idea of race that are worth clarifying in advance. Second, what do I mean by philosophical *racism*? In common parlance, racism carries with it an expression of strong moral condemnation; thus, to say that something is racist is to say that it is a serious moral failing. Yet, this does not sit easily with an understanding of racism as ideology, which is often unconsciously held by individuals such that they are not necessarily aware that they are in the grip of an ideology. What, then, is the scope of racism on my account? Third, I have suggested that the focus of my inquiry is philosophy, construed as a discipline, and I have argued that my goal is not to marginalise philosophy but use a conception of philosophical racism to justify reforming the discipline – possibly in radical and profound ways. This, however, implies that philosophy is something *valuable*; as such, one can ask what, on my account, is philosophy and why should we think of it as having value? Finally, the preceding discussion seems to move quickly from discussions of race to discussions of the exclusion of non-Western traditions of philosophy. Yet, why should we think that exclusions of the latter kind are the product of *racism* rather than, for instance, *Eurocentrism*? That is, one might worry that I might be making a category error by using the term philosophical *racism* rather than, say, philosophical Eurocentrism. In what follows, I provide answers to each of these questions and, in so doing, clarify the foundational assumptions of my project.

Defining Race and Racism: Some Historical Considerations

The history of race, and by extension racism, is difficult to trace, largely because there is significant disagreement as to what *exactly* makes a remark racial and potentially racist rather than simply proto-racial or proto-racist. There is a somewhat stable scholarly consensus that

racism and racial thinking are inextricably linked with Western modernity.[19] For some intellectual historians, proto-racist thinking can be traced back to the 15th century, where it emerges "simultaneously (and not coincidentally) with the Spanish conquest of the Americas".[20] On these views, racist ways of thinking first emerge during the Spanish Inquisition, where both non-Christians and *converted* Christians – as well as their descendants – were thought to have something 'in their blood' that marked them as associates of Satan.[21] These ways of thinking were then transposed to the New World to account for human difference. It is worth stressing that, at this time, racial designations were not grounded in colour, but in something more akin to religious difference; as such, humanity was not *yet* divided into specific racial groups on the basis of heritable biological features like skin colour.[22] For this reason, other historians take the emergence of racism to be much more recent. Vanita Seth, for instance, argues that race only emerges in the nineteenth century, due to two key epistemological shifts: "the elevation of man as the sole bearer of knowledge and agency and the transformation of the body into a transparent and immutable object available for human representation".[23] In short, the increasing prominence of the natural sciences that made the world *knowable* to humans, coupled with the naturalisation of the body and the development of instruments to measure physiological differences, allowed for the emergence of racial thinking. For Seth, then, it is a mistake to talk about proto-racism in the absence of these epistemological conditions; it would amount to "imposing a modern form of reasoning … on pre-modern and early modern traditions of thought".[24]

While these seem to be mutually incompatible positions, I am sympathetic to features of both. In what follows, I attempt to carve a path through the tensions present in the literature to develop an account of race and racism that resonates with this historical record.[25] At the time

[19] I say Western modernity for two reasons: first, to avoid the suggestion that modernity is an exclusively Western phenomenon, with no input from the non-West. Second, to make clear that I am after the history of Western racism, rather than racism more generally; the scope of my analysis is thus the role of racism in the Western philosophical tradition, rather than in the world more generally. For an account that problematises the traditional narrative of modernity as a product of the West, see Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*; Hobson, *The Eastern Origins of Western Civilisation*. For an overview of Han Chinese racism, as one example of a non-Western conception of racist thinking, see Mullaney et al., *Critical Han Studies*.
[20] Bell, *Dreamworlds of Race*, 26; see also Fredrickson, *Racism: A Short History*. For an attempt to trace the origin of racism to the Ancient world, see Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity*.
[21] Fredrickson, *Racism: A Short History*, 20–23; Popkin, "The Philosophical Bases of Modern Racism," 79–80.
[22] Stuurman, "François Bernier and the Invention of Racial Classification," 2.
[23] Seth, *Europe's Indians*, 4.
[24] Ibid.
[25] My comments are largely inspired by Justin Smith's account of the history of race and racism in philosophy – see his *Nature, Human Nature, and Human Difference*.

of the Spanish Inquisition, the world was not divided up into clearly defined racial groups. Even in the years immediately after the colonial encounter, while colour descriptions may have been used to denote visible features of different humans, this does not entail the existence of a system of racial classification. In short, colour differences can pick out a wide variety of different human features without necessarily having a strictly racial designation. The key theoretical question is therefore what makes an ascription of human difference *racial* if it is not simply the observation of colour differences between individual humans? One answer is the use of human difference to posit unbridgeable divides between human groups. Thus, in the case of the Inquisition, 'blood purity laws' enacted by various local governments and church authorities banned non-Christians and, crucially, converted Christians from taking on certain kinds of public office because of their *impure blood*.[26] What made this racist is that it "originates from a mind-set that regards 'them' as different from 'us' in ways that are permanent and unbridgeable".[27] Racial categories, on these accounts, are therefore those that mark the boundaries between human groupings such that there is no way for members of one group to become members of the other.

This reflects a tendency in historical scholarship to distinguish between what Richard Popkin calls liberal racism and modern racism. The ascription of permanent and necessary inferiority to some racial groups over others is characteristic of the latter kind of racism, whereas the former leaves room for the possibility of redemption for inferior groups – so long as they become *more like* the dominant group.[28] One implication is that liberal racism "is not racism in the fullest sense, since in order to be so qualified a view of human diversity must hold that one group is necessarily, irreparably inferior to another group, rather than simply inferior due to contingent, cultural disadvantages" – or due to contingent features in climate and lifestyle.[29] As such, the distinction between modern and liberal racism encompasses the later distinction between biological and cultural forms of racism, in which the former grounds racial difference in permanent biological features whereas the latter locates it in contingent features of culture. Hence, culturally racist views are more 'liberal' in that they allow, at least theoretically, for members of culturally inferior groups to overcome their inferior position through a process of assimilation. We are therefore left with a more complicated picture of what makes something

[26] Fredrickson, *Racism: A Short History*, 32–34; Popkin, "The Philosophical Bases of Modern Racism," 79–80.
[27] Fredrickson, *Racism: A Short History*, 9.
[28] Popkin, "The Philosophical Bases of Modern Racism," 89.
[29] Smith, *Nature, Human Nature, and Human Difference*, 33.

a racial designation: accepting liberal racism as a *type* of racism, though perhaps not an ideal or 'full' type, leaves us with a conception of race as picking out different human groups in the world such that individuals from a purportedly inferior group must undergo a period of sustained and comprehensive transformation to be seen as equals to the dominant group.

Here, two points are worth stressing. First, there is a slippage from a notion or category of race to the ascription of differences of inferiority between racial groups (i.e. racism). This is difficult to avoid: the history of race is fundamentally interlinked with the history of racism such that racial categories became prominent just as the transatlantic slave trade reached its peak. As such, the economic foundations of racial categories are inevitably part of the story about the prevalence of race as a principle for understanding and identifying human difference.[30] This is not, however, to reduce the history of racism to a purely economic picture, where racial theories emerge *a posteriori*, as a way to justify being complicit in a brutal and oppressive economic picture. The racial categories we employ in the present to conceptualise human difference are undoubtedly a legacy of the slave trade; yet these categories are themselves parasitic on broader ways of thinking that rendered them intelligible in the first place. As Justin Smith makes the point, "modern racial thinking could not have taken the form it did if it had not been able to piggyback, so to speak, on conceptual innovations in the way science was beginning to approach the diversity of the natural world, and in particular the living world".[31] This has clear points of overlap with Seth's conception of race as the product of the naturalisation of the world such that it comes to be *knowable* through the application of novel methods in the natural sciences and in natural philosophy, which took as its main concern diversity in the natural world.[32] Indeed, it seems that both would agree that the prominence of race is partly due to the waning influence of religion in accounting for human diversity.

Second, the distinction between liberal and modern racism, and its corollary distinction between cultural and biological conceptions of racism, risks creating a false dichotomy such that racist accounts are *either* grounded in biology *or* grounded in culture. This suffers from two distinct problems: on the one hand, it is too coarse-grained to account for the ways purported *biological* inferiority explained, justified, or was reflected in *cultural* inferiority. At

[30] On the importance of economic foundations for the emergence of racial categories, see Hall, "Race, Articulation and Societies Structured in Dominance"; Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race*, xxv–xxviii.
[31] Smith, *Nature, Human Nature, and Human Difference*, 9.
[32] For a useful discussion of the outlook of the natural philosopher, see Smith, *The Philosopher*, chap. 1.

worst, culture was seen as a proxy for a biological conception of race, or, at best, the potential for cultural uplift was bounded by the immutable features of biology. This is reflected in the various ways race came to be understood; in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, for instance, there was an attempt by various prominent businessmen and political figures, such as Andrew Carnegie and Cecil Rhodes, to call for the reunification of the British Empire with the United States.[33] While the political vision of this union varied, its goal was a white supremacist vision of the world order predicated on preserving the superiority of the *Anglo-Saxon race*, defined in both cultural and biological terms. Thus, as Duncan Bell succinctly puts it, "not all whites were Anglo-Saxon, but all Anglo-Saxons were white".[34] This speaks to competing conceptions of race that draw on both biology and culture in reifying an unbridgeable difference between specific racial groups. On the other hand, the modern/liberal distinction with respect to racism places undue importance on the modern racists in the development of racist thinking. Most theorists of race, however, were liberal racists: they denied that human classificatory systems picked out anything 'real' in the world, even as they developed typological categories to differentiate between human groups and created novel methods for justifying racial differences.[35] Simply put, suggesting that racism in its fullest form must be modern in Popkin's sense ignores the contributions of liberal racists in making this kind of racism thinkable in the first place.

With these historical considerations in mind, we can set out the conception of race I employ throughout the thesis. I follow Bell in defining race as a "biocultural assemblage, a hybrid compound of 'cultural' and 'biological' claims about human evolutionary history, individual and collective character, comportment, physiognomy and mental capacity".[36] In short, by race I mean a form of classifying humans into specific subgroups on the basis of a combination of perceived biological and cultural differences. Further, I agree with Seth and Smith in suggesting that this notion of race only emerges out of an increasingly naturalistic vision of the world, though I differ from Seth in locating this in the 18th century rather than the 19th century. This coincides with the peak of the slave trade as well as scientific tools to classify natural differences more accurately. Indeed, the 18th century saw the creation of Linnaeus' taxonomic system to classify the natural world, which influenced the development of racial taxonomies to

[33] For the history of this racist white supremacist vision of global order, see Bell, *Dreamworlds of Race*.
[34] Bell, "Beyond the Sovereign State," 420.
[35] For a useful discussion of this point, see Smith, *Nature, Human Nature, and Human Difference*, 32–38.
[36] Bell, "Beyond the Sovereign State," 420; *Dreamworlds of Race*, 88–90.

catalogue human difference, as well as Blumenbach's method of craniometry – the measurement of skull size – to provide a purportedly biological foundation for racial groupings.[37] This does not deny the existence of pre-existing forms of proto-racist thinking; the shift to a more naturalistic conception of the world was a slow process and emerged out of the inadequacies of scriptural explanations to account for a greater range of phenomena. Therefore, and again contra Seth, to say that proto-racist thinking requires the imposition of a distinctly modern way of thinking onto a pre-modern way of seeing the world fails to see how the foundations of this modern conception of race can be found in the tensions within theological attempts to grapple with the problem of human difference.[38] Framed this way, we can make sense of the fact that "even though the ascendancy of modern racism came about only in the eighteenth century … its origins can be firmly located in the intellectual world of the late seventeenth century", when the transition from scriptural to naturalistic explanations started to gain steam.[39]

Further, given that the history of race is intertwined with the history of racism, we can ask what implications this has for thinking about *racism*. One important consequence is that, contra Popkin and others, distinguishing between liberal and modern racism is ultimately not possible, insofar as this distinction is itself grounded in a false binary between biological and cultural understandings of race. That said, and as I alluded to above, I think this more accurately tracks the historical record: most theorists of race and racism expressed the theoretical possibility of future equality between the races, even if they in practice did not treat non-whites as racial equals or even developed methodological tools and frameworks that would enable more overt and illiberal forms of racism.[40] Therefore, when speaking of philosophical racism I do not

[37] See Smith, *Nature, Human Nature, and Human Difference*, chap. 9.
[38] This is most evident in the debate between polygenesis and monogenesis – that is whether mankind had a single origin in Adam and Eve or multiple different origins (i.e. multiple *different* Adams and Eves). For Popkin, polygenesis is what enables modern racism, since it ascribes *different origins* to human groups. It also had an influence on the Mortonites, who argued for the separate origins of racial groups using biological methods like craniometry. In contrast, I follow Smith in suggesting that polygenetic accounts were primarily about grappling with the apparent contradiction between biblical accounts of the origin of humans and the observed reality that humans occupied different areas of the world and retained a different conception of their origin. The implication for racism and racist thinking is that, in attempting to refute polygenetic accounts, theorists turned away from *religious* explanations and towards *naturalistic* accounts for the spread of the human species, thereby contributing towards the naturalistic vision of race that would become prominent in the 18th century. For their respective arguments on the influence of polygenesis on racism, see Popkin, "Pre-Adamism in 19th Century American Thought"; *Isaac La Peyrère (1596-1676)*, chap. 10; Smith, *Nature, Human Nature, and Human Difference*, chap. 4.
[39] Stuurman, "François Bernier and the Invention of Racial Classification," 3.
[40] This reflects the idea that liberal racism entails a "practical contradiction" – see Smith, *Nature, Human Nature, and Human Difference*, 32–38.

explicitly distinguish between the racist views that essentialise race such that racial difference is deemed to be permanent and unbridgeable, and those racist views that suggest there is a *present inequality* between the races that can nevertheless be surmounted by periods of assimilation. I am not convinced that one demonstrates a purer or lesser form of racism than the other, and I find that the references to culture allow for theorists to claim the *theoretical* possibility of some equal world in the future while *in practice* continuing to uphold the view that uplift is bounded by the colour line.

I also want to reject the prevailing notion that racism is predicated on believing in a clear racial hierarchy where some groups are deemed to be *bioculturally inferior*. That is, for many scholars, racism necessitates the existence of a racial hierarchy such that different racial groups are ranked in terms of how much they "approximate whiteness".[41] While it is tempting to think of racism in these terms, this need not be the case: "an assumption of racialised *differences*" is sufficient to underwrite racism.[42] Although some theorists did put forward racial hierarchies in order to justify the exploitation and oppression of non-white races, it does not follow from this that one must believe in such hierarchies *to be racist*.[43] For one, the ascription of biocultural difference can mean that certain individuals are better suited to certain tasks; as Huaping Lu-Adler makes the point in reference to Kant's writings on gender "of the two sexes, neither is superior to the other; it is just that nature, for the sake of humanity, intends them to be different – the woman 'beautiful' and the man 'sublime', in intellectual and aesthetic qualities".[44] My point, then, is just to say that the ascription and legitimation of human difference is sufficient to render intelligible racist thinking, even in the absence of an explicit hierarchy of race that deems certain groups to be superior to others.

The Scope of Philosophical Racism

Thus far, I have established that race is a biocultural assemblage. This has implications for how we think about racism; for one, it dissolves the distinction between liberal and modern racism, insofar as these are grounded in cultural and biological differences respectively. I also

[41] Eze, "The Color of Reason." For other accounts of racism that understand it in hierarchical terms, see Kleingeld, "Kant's Second Thoughts on Race"; Mills, "Kant's Untermenschen."
[42] Lu-Adler, *Kant, Race, and Racism*, 81.
[43] For instance, Edward Long, a planter and slave owner who defended slavery in his book *The History of Jamaica*, seems to argue for the existence of a racial hierarchy in justifying why blacks can only be slaves. For a discussion of this point, see Park, "Why It Makes Sense to Talk of Decolonizing the Philosophy Department," 68–70.
[44] Lu-Adler, *Kant, Race, and Racism*, 81, note 6.

suggested that we should not think of racism *exclusively* in hierarchical terms: the drawing of racial distinctions is sufficient to underwrite racism. This does not, however, mean that I am equating race and racial categories with racism, as if they are one and the same. To see this, and as I noted above, I am employing an ideological conception of racism in the pejorative sense, where racism – as an ideology – enables and perpetuates a variety of injustices and oppressive practices. Hence, what makes something racist is not the racial category *per se* but the *social function* that racial categories are used for. If the existence of unjust and oppressive practices are justified in terms of racial difference, then this makes them racist even in the absence of an explicit racial hierarchy. As we will see in Chapter 3, I articulate a conception of ideology inspired by W.E.B. Du Bois' reflections on the experience of racism, one aspect of which is functionalist. For now, it is worth differentiating my ideological conception of racism from other prominent accounts that conceptualise racism differently. I see an ideological conception of racism as being a *wide-scope* and *nonmoralistic* account of racism that understands racism as referring to a wide range of race-related ills and rejects the view that, for something to be racist, it must be immoral.[45] In what follows, I explain my reasoning by drawing a contrast with, first, narrow-scope accounts of racism, and, second, moralised accounts of racism.

The difference between narrow- and wide-scope accounts of racism are terminological rather than substantive: they refer to what racism *refers to*. On narrow-scope accounts, the term racism should be restricted such that it *only* refers to *serious moral wrongs*. One reason for this might be the way the terms 'racism' and 'racist' are used in everyday conversations as terms of moral censure. Thus, for Lawrence Blum, the moral force of 'racism' is beneficial for productive conversations on race and can only be preserved by narrowly restricting its scope: if it becomes too broad, it will lose its strong moral meaning.[46] To be clear, this does not mean that narrow-scope conceptions of racism think that there are no weaker forms of race-related wrongs; we might think of, for instance, "racial insensitivity and racial ignorance" as "race-related ills" that "do not characteristically seem to merit the strong moral condemnation implied by 'racist' and 'racism'".[47] The point is that, on these views, it is important to preserve racism as a small category such that it only refers to the most serious race-related failings. This

[45] I borrow the distinction between wide-scope and narrow-scope conceptions, as well as moralised and nonmoralised conceptions, of racism from Shelby, "Racism, Moralism, and Social Criticism," 60–61.
[46] Blum, *I'm Not a Racist, But ...*
[47] Matthew, "Racial Injustice, Racial Discrimination, and Racism," 886.

is to maintain the notion that, by saying someone (e.g. a person or group) or something (e.g. an action or policy) *is racist*, one is strongly and on moral grounds condemning that person, action, or policy as *fundamentally wrong*.

In contrast, *wide-scope* conceptions of racism take the term to refer to a wide range of race-related ills that can, but *need not*, be moral failings on the part of individual agents. Again, this is a disagreement about the scope of the term racism: narrow-scope conceptions restrict the term to serious moral failings, whereas wide-scope accounts use racism to refer to all race-related ills – even those that do not involve moral considerations. The latter resonates more closely with my approach, since I am concerned with the way racially inflected assumptions work to perpetuate epistemic injustices within philosophy, which mandates a structural approach above the moral failings of individual philosophers. Further, I find it more plausible to think of these structural exclusions as philosophical *racism*, rather than alternative conceptual terms such as philosophical *racial disregard*, especially since the ordinary use of racism is multifaceted such that it is not always clear that it is expressing strong moral condemnation.[48] Thus, on my wide-scope reading, calling something or someone 'philosophically racist' does *not* express moral censure: it identifies philosophical racism as problematic *on functionalist grounds* without suggesting that each instance of philosophical racism is "a culpable failure of some individual or group to endorse or comply with a valid moral principle".[49]

Turning to the second difference, my ideological conception of racism rejects a moralised conception of racism itself. This reflects a substantive difference in how we understand what racism *is* as opposed to what the term should refer to. For proponents of moralised conceptions of racism, such as Jorge Garcia, what makes something racist is "a vicious kind of racially based disregard" or a kind of "ill will directed against a person or persons on account of their assigned race".[50] On these views, all race-related ills are *by definition* immoral and are located in the volitional attitudes of individual agents (i.e. their 'will'). This also helps to explain what makes racism morally wrong, which proponents of moralised accounts suggest is a virtue of their approach. In short, to be a racist, it is not sufficient to merely hold racist beliefs, such as that certain groups are inferior to others; rather, what makes someone a racist is the presence

[48] See e.g. Shelby, "Is Racism in the 'Heart'?," 412.
[49] Shelby, "Racism, Moralism, and Social Criticism," 65.
[50] Garcia, "The Heart of Racism," 6.

of an underlying *racist attitude* that is rooted in disregard to racial others, which in turn leads to the emergence of racist beliefs.[51] The unit of analysis is therefore neither beliefs nor institutional structures, but the moral attitudes of individual agents. Indeed, proponents of moralised conceptions of racism argue that institutional racism can be explained in terms of the racist attitudes of individual agents working in specific institutions, thereby shaping policy outcomes such that they contribute towards racial oppression.[52]

Despite its prominence in the literature, there are several compelling reasons to reject moralised conceptions of racism.[53] For my purposes, I will focus on two in particular: first, they seem to be pursuing the wrong kind of inquiry. That is, moralised conceptions of racism fail to distinguish between descriptive and normative inquiries into racism, resulting in the moral dimensions acting "as a filter to determine what phenomena are examined in the first place".[54] Hence, rather than deploying moral judgements to evaluate specific instances of racism, appeals to morality come to be located within the concept of racism itself, which in turn has significant implications for what counts as a case of racism or not. While this may be acceptable when the concept under scrutiny is something clear, the vague and often incoherent ways in which racism is understood undermines this approach since it already prejudges what should count as a genuine or 'true' case of racism.[55] Second, a moralised conception of racism presupposes a kind of methodological individualism, since racism is ultimately located in the moral attitudes of individual agents. This, however, elides an examination of the way institutional structures can – above and beyond the actions of individual agents – reinforce practices of social oppression in ways that are not reducible to the 'ill will' of individuals.[56] In the case of philosophical racism, both these reasons serve to unduly limit the scope of inquiry: the problem of philosophical racism is reduced to the question of determining whether a specific philosopher *was racist or not* and whether their racism matters for their wider philosophical systems. A moralised conception of racism thus works to exonerate philosophers from the charge of racism by attempting to determine whether they possessed the relevant

[51] Schmid, "The Definition of Racism," 35–38.
[52] For a defence of this view, see Matthew, "Against 'Institutional Racism.'" For a compelling criticism of attempts to use a moralised conception of racism to theorise institutional racism, see Wirts, "What Does It Mean to Say 'The Criminal Justice System Is Racist'?," 344–47.
[53] For some compelling criticisms of moralised conceptions of racism, see Mills, "'Heart' Attack"; Shelby, "Is Racism in the 'Heart'?"; "Racism, Moralism, and Social Criticism"; Urquidez, *(Re-)Defining Racism*.
[54] Mills, "'Heart' Attack," 61.
[55] Shelby, "Is Racism in the 'Heart'?," 411–13.
[56] For a compelling articulation and example of these kind of structural injustices, see Young, "Responsibility and Global Justice."

underlying moral attitudes, which fails to examine how the racism of canonical scholars influenced and shaped the outlook of future generations of philosophers.[57]

What's Philosophical in Philosophical Racism?

Having outlined a wide-scope and nonmoralised conception of racism as ideology, I now turn to providing a definition of what I mean by philosophy. I want to suggest that philosophy acts as both a descriptive term, to pick something out in the world, and an evaluative term, as imbuing its referent with a set of desirable criteria. Although the idea of *philosophising* as a verb can have negative connotations, to describe a "pompous, posturing, or spurious kind of reasoning", philosophy in its noun form has largely been immune to these associations and is instead thought of as being an indicator of 'high civilisation'.[58] As we will see, Bertrand Russell uses this positive sense of the term when remarking that the Ancient Greeks invented philosophy.[59] Equally, to say that certain human societies and civilisations *lack philosophy* is to make a pejorative remark about the relevant abilities about these human beings rather than to merely describe a state of affairs. Whether this is desirable is not a question I pursue here; I am simply making the point that understanding philosophy requires making sense of its dual role as both a descriptive and evaluative term. As such, when I talk about philosophical racism, I am using it in both the descriptive sense to denote a specific sphere of inquiry, and in the evaluative sense to denote a valuable sphere of human activity. This should not be too controversial; attempts to define philosophy as a unique discipline have attempted to identify its distinctive value as a way of differentiating it from neighbouring disciplines that, presumably, lack this positive value (though they may have other positive values). While I am not sure that the value of philosophy is distinctive, I nevertheless think that it *does* have value. In what follows, I outline how I think about philosophy in both descriptive and evaluative terms.

Starting with the former, when I speak of philosophical racism my unit of analysis is an institutional conception of philosophy as an academic discipline. On a purely descriptive level, then, I am referring to the different ways that philosophy has been constituted as an academic

[57] For a useful discussion of this point, see Harfouch, *Another Mind-Body Problem*, xxvii–xxxi. I also return to this point in Chapter 1, where I provide an argument for rejecting an individualist approach to thinking about philosophical racism.
[58] On the negative associations of philosophy and philosophising, see Smith, *The Philosopher*, 6–7.
[59] Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy*, 25.

discipline: a field of learning in which budding scholars undergo some period of training that, once completed, sees them *become philosophers*. This bounds the scope of my analysis to the development of the modern university system, which started to be crystallised in the academic institutions of 18th century Germany. As we will see in Chapter 4, I draw on the methodologies of disciplinary history writing to provide a more concrete understanding of what disciplines are. For now, it is sufficient to note that the descriptive sense of philosophical racism refers to a combination of the academic institutions of philosophy – such as university departments, disciplinary journals, the distribution of academic titles to denote expertise (e.g. professor) – as well as the academic practices that are housed within these institutions. Here, by academic practices I have in mind not only forms of social coordination for the production and distribution of knowledge, such as peer review or academic lectures, but also the construction of a canon of thinkers whose writings embody the discipline itself as well as the articulation and recognition of certain frameworks as philosophical. After all, it is clear from attempts to define philosophy that, while there is significant difficulty in determining the core and unique features of philosophy, it is easy to identify a set of figures who are indisputably *philosophers*. There may be little agreement between the writings of Plato, Descartes, and Marx, yet they are all united as emblematic figures within the canon of philosophy.

My decision to separate the descriptive sense of philosophy from its evaluative sense is to avoid problems that come from attempting to define philosophy in terms of its unique value. This is the approach Graham Priest takes for example in defining philosophy in terms of its unique methodological *spirit*: "unbridled criticism".[60] For Priest, what makes philosophy distinctive is not the practice of criticism *per se* but the willingness to subject *any and all* presumptions, ideas, or theoretical commitments to this critical scrutiny. Where for instance theology may have certain commitments that lie beyond the scope of critical engagement, such as a belief in the existence of God, philosophy on Priest's view lacks any such commitments. Yet, criticism in philosophy is not undertaken for its own sake; instead, it is linked to what makes philosophy epistemically valuable. Though he never makes this explicit, Priest seems to endorse a vision of philosophy as a truth-seeking enterprise.[61] As such, we can interpret Priest as arguing that

[60] Priest, "What Is Philosophy?," 207.

[61] Priest criticises the accounts of both Wittgenstein and Rorty for their rejection of the idea that philosophy aims at truth. For this reason, he seems to endorse the view that philosophy is a truth-seeking discipline. Further, it would be strange if critique were the purpose of the discipline, since this would seem to encourage critique *for its own sake* rather than for some greater purpose. For Wittgenstein's and Rorty's respective accounts of philosophy, see Rorty, "Philosophy as a Kind of Writing"; Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*. For Priest's criticisms, see Priest, "What Is Philosophy?," 189–200.

the spirit of unbridled criticism helps philosophy fulfil its truth-seeking mission, due to the negative and positive dimensions central to the practice of criticism itself. On the negative side, criticism helps identify the flaws and inconsistencies of a prevailing theoretical viewpoint, which limits its ability to find truth. At the same time, criticism has a positive *constructive dimension* since it can help develop better alternatives by embedding these criticisms in a rival theory that can transcend the limitations of the status quo. Hence, the purpose of critique is not to simply 'knock-down' a dominant framework, but rather to articulate a novel conception that illuminates hitherto unseen limitations of our current frameworks of knowledge. As Priest argues, "criticism is therefore at its most powerful only when it has the backing of some rival theory".[62]

Priest's conception of philosophy speaks to the intuitive understanding philosophers have about their own discipline. As a *definition* of philosophy, however, it leaves something to be desired since it does not help us in identifying the boundary of philosophy from neighbouring discipline. This is partly due to the vagueness of Priest's central claim: "unbridled criticism" is not the subject matter, the method, or even the purpose of philosophy, which is the quest for truth. In fact, if it were any of these things, Priest's account would be rendered implausible because, as he himself recognises, philosophy does not have a monopoly over the practice of critique. This is why Priest appeals to the distinctive *spirit* of philosophy. This however comes at the expense of conceptual clarity. What, after all, constitutes the 'spirit' of the discipline? Is it the attitude of its practitioners? If so, what features of a theorist's writings or background must we pay attention to in order to determine whether they are animated by the right kind of critical 'spirit' to make them philosophical? There are other reasons, beyond vagueness, for rejecting Priest's account, though I do not explore them here.[63] My sense, however, is that his account suffers from the thorny problem of attempting to identify a set of necessary and sufficient conditions that are not only *unique* to philosophy, thereby capturing the descriptive sense of the term, but also shed light on what makes philosophy *valuable*. Attempting to do both at the same time, as if to defend the unique value of philosophy, is a tall order and I am not sure whether a plausible version of this view can be articulated.

[62] Priest, "What Is Philosophy?," 204.

[63] An additional concern may be whether Priest is projecting a presentist conception backwards in time to differentiate philosophy from neighbouring disciplines. Thus, while critique may be how we *today* think about philosophy, this does not necessarily mean that philosophers throughout history have thought of their inquiry in this way. For a useful overview of the different ways philosophy has been understood in different times and places, see Smith, *The Philosopher*.

This does not mean that the only option is to articulate a deflationary account of that rejects philosophy as an evaluative term. To be clear, this is not because such views are undesirable; for one Richard Rorty articulates a plausible view of philosophy as a literary genre, identifiable by kind of writing that makes conscious inter-textual connections and references to other writings that are themselves also considered philosophical.[64] Thus, for Rorty, the definition of philosophy is co-extensive with the traditional canon. Yet, what I find troubling about deflationary accounts like Rorty's is that they imply we are all misguided in thinking that philosophy, just like any other academic field of inquiry, has epistemic value. This is not a criticism of the relativist foundations of Rorty's position, though that argument can be made.[65] Instead, my worry is that it cannot adequately capture the historical understandings of concepts like philosophy. As Ian Hacking suggests, "concepts are not constants, free-standing ideas that are just there, timelessly"; rather they are "structures whose roles and power have been determined by specific histories".[66] Our present understanding of philosophy is tied to a history in which it has been imbued with a series of evaluative considerations that take it as a valuable enterprise – irrespective whether that value takes the form of truth-seeking or something else entirely. The difficulty with philosophy is that its value is universally accepted yet unarticulated: "we are deeply attached to philosophy; we are proud of it and indebted to it, but all this without conclusive argument".[67] Simply asserting that philosophy lacks epistemic value fails to capture these associations of philosophy in both the ordinary usage of the term, and in how philosophers today see themselves and their discipline.

To bring the preceding conversation together, I understand philosophy in the descriptive sense as a set of institutions, practices, canons, and theoretical frameworks that come to be labelled as *philosophy*. Underpinning this is an evaluative sense of the term, where it is implicitly assumed that philosophy *has value* – even if the precise nature of this value is not articulated. As such, when speaking of philosophical racism, I accept the implicit value of philosophy largely because of its specific history of being used evaluatively, though I do recognise that, whatever value it has, it is probably not unique to the discipline as such. It is important to

[64] See e.g. Rorty, "Philosophy as a Kind of Writing."
[65] Hilary Putnam, for instance, criticises Rorty's relativism, despite recognising multiple points of agreement with his wider pragmatist commitments. For Putnam's critique, see Putnam, *Realism with a Human Face*. Whether Rorty considers himself a relativist is also open for debate; for a response to Putnam, see Rorty, "Putnam and the Relativist Menace."
[66] Hacking, *Historical Ontology*, 8; 53.
[67] Defoort, "Is There Such a Thing as Chinese Philosophy?," 409.

recognise the evaluative sense of philosophy, because it illuminates how the notion of philosophy has been used to perpetuate a range of racist exclusions. For instance, drawing a contrast between Western *philosophy* and Chinese *wisdom* is a pejorative slight to the latter, since it suggests that Chinese traditions of thinking lack the relevant epistemic qualities – whatever they may be – of the former.[68] My goal in articulating a framework for thinking about philosophical racism is to highlight these exclusionary practices and work towards undermining them, even if this involves radically rethinking the institutional self-conception of philosophy. As we will see in Chapter 5, it is these foundational yet unarticulated commitments about what counts as philosophy that play a central role in denying and marginalising diverse philosophical traditions from the discipline. In short, what we need is a critical evaluation of the central and implicit presuppositions about philosophy to create a discipline that is more sensitive to the diverse theoretical challenges that exist in the world today.

Eurocentrism or Racism?

Having clarified my conception of philosophical racism, the final question I need to settle is whether I am making a category mistake by conflating Eurocentrism with racism. This is illustrated by my discussion of Chinese philosophy in the preceding section: suggesting that Chinese philosophy is merely wisdom rather than *philosophy* could be seen as Eurocentric, especially since the etymology of 'philosophy' is Greek. After all, it seems plausible to ask whether it it is *in fact* racist to say that Chinese traditions of thinking are *not philosophical*? Or, phrased less strongly, is it racist to say that Chinese traditions of thinking should be taught in religious studies or ethnic studies departments rather than in philosophy departments, which should instead focus on the tradition of thinking that began in Greece? To be clear, I am not suggesting that either of these questions are *unproblematic*: my question is simply whether these utterances are racist or whether they are Eurocentric instead. For one, it is not clear how the notion of race plays a role. What seems to be at stake is the special privilege being granted to the products of *European thinking*, since it is only this tradition of philosophy that on these views should be taught in philosophy departments. It does not follow from this, however, that these questions are *racist*. My goal in this section is thus to provide a rationale as to why these judgements involve racist considerations, while simultaneously recognising that Eurocentrism and racism are separate concepts that ought to be disambiguated.

[68] See Ibid., 396–401; Garfield, "Foreword," xvi–xix.

Before proceeding, it is worth noting that I employ a wide-scope and non-moralised conception of racism, where racial categories are understood as biocultural assemblages. This has two important implications for thinking about the relationship between Eurocentrism and racism. First, on a wide-scope reading, racism refers to all manner of race-related ills; as such, racism can take a wide variety of different forms, not all of which may be obvious. Second, because I see race as a biocultural assemblage, the absence of an explicit reference to biology does not automatically mean that these utterances are not racist: the cultural differences between, in this case, Chinese and European philosophy may in fact be racially inflected, thereby making these judgements racist rather than Eurocentric. Equally, the special privilege assigned to European traditions of thinking may be grounded in a racist presupposition concerning the cognitive abilities of different racial groups. Given my foundational assumptions, what is clear is that the precise relationship between Eurocentrism and racism is complex – something that is not always recognised in attempts to theorise the differences between the two. For instance, John M. Hobson draws a distinction between Eurocentrism and scientific racism, where the former is grounded in purely cultural considerations whereas the latter is grounded in biology.[69] Conceptually speaking, this is a very clear distinction: Eurocentrism and racism are delineated as separate concepts with no relation between the two. Yet, as I argued earlier, conceptual clarity comes at the expense of historical accuracy, given that many racists used *biocultural* constructions to distinguish between human groups.

The rationale for Hobson's argument is what he takes to be an inadequacy in Edward Said's conception of Orientalism. Said argues that Orientalist tropes, for instance "Oriental character, Oriental despotism, Oriental sensuality, and the like", were constructed out of the *European* experience such that they were understood as a "system of truths" by every European in the 19th century, making it "therefore correct to say that every European, in what he could say about the Orient, was consequently a racist, an imperialist, and almost totally ethnocentric".[70] On Hobson's view, however, this conception of Orientalism is *doubly reductive*: it reduces Orientalism to, first, racism, and, second, imperialism.[71] Although one might be able to criticise Said's conception of Orientalism as imprecise or too reductive, one advantage is that it implicitly recognises how tropes about the Orient have multiple different valences. References

[69] Hobson, *The Eurocentric Conception of World Politics*, 4–6.
[70] Said, *Orientalism*, 203–4.
[71] For his critique of Said, see Hobson, *The Eurocentric Conception of World Politics*, 1–6.

to Oriental despotism, for instance, implicitly rely on the construction of the *Oriental* as an ethnic, racial, or cultural other who lacks the relevant qualities or abilities for the emergence of democratic rule. Are claims like this *purely* cultural, ethnic, or racial? Or, as I want to suggest is more likely, do they combine elements and features of all three into an interwoven discourse that is difficult to parse? The problem with Hobson's distinction between a *cultural* Eurocentrism and a *biological* racism is therefore that it elides an examination of the ways both these ideas come to be intertwined, as we saw with the case of the Anglo-Saxon race. Indeed, Said seems to recognise this point in his analysis of the Oriental as a *kind of person*; claims about "Oriental backwardness, degeneracy and inequality with the West most easily associated themselves … with ideas about the biological bases of racial inequality".[72]

The key point is that each of these supposedly inferior qualities retains a distinctly cultural component that is then grounded in a claim about biology. Thus, in Said's argument, the Oriental is constructed as a biocultural other whose cultural 'backwardness' is explainable in terms of biological difference. My contention is that a similar dynamic is present in cases of philosophical racism, where judgements about philosophy – a cultural product – are grounded in an underlying racist conception of human difference, thereby justifying the exclusion of non-European philosophical traditions from the scope of the discipline. As we will see at various points in the thesis, the assumption that philosophy begins in Ancient Greece, what I call the Hellenistic origins thesis, has the status of a disciplinary truism such that it can be articulated without defence. Yet, it is a recent invention, the product of an 18th century philosophical debate concerning the nature and scope of philosophy itself that was fundamentally shaped by the racism of its central figures.[73] What is striking is that there are eerie resonances between purportedly non-racist contemporary justifications for the exclusion of non-European traditions of thinking from philosophy, and explicitly racist defences for the same position in the 18th century writings of Christoph Meiners, Kant, Hegel, and other leading figures involved in constructing philosophy as an exclusively white European enterprise. Therefore, and as I argue in Chapter 5, these exclusions are best thought of as the product of a racist ideology that comes to be embedded in the institutions and academic practices of philosophy itself (i.e. philosophical racism). This does not mean that Eurocentrism plays *no* role in this explanation;

[72] Said, *Orientalism*, 206. I borrow the term 'kind of person' from Ian Hacking – see Hacking, "Making Up People."
[73] See Park, *Africa, Asia, and the History of Philosophy*.

instead, my point is that in this context it is interwoven with racism to such an extent that I do not attempt to distinguish between the two.

Chapter Overview

As I stated earlier, my thesis attempts to answer the following two questions. First, how should we think about the problem of philosophical racism? Second, how has philosophical racism come to be so entrenched in the discipline? My contention is that prevailing approaches to the problem of racism in philosophy are inadequate and fail to capture how the conceptual dimensions of racism come to shape the institutional features of academic philosophy such that the same racist exclusions continue to be perpetuated. Thus, to answer both questions, I argue that we should think of philosophical racism as an underlying racist ideology that comes to shape the foundational presuppositions of philosophers today. In short, the assumptions about the nature and scope of philosophy, as well as what we understand as a legitimate philosophical contribution, are the product of an ideology that has been inherited through the academic institutions and practices of the discipline over time. In defending this claim, my argument has two components: a negative argument that highlights the limitations of prevailing approaches (Chapters 1-2), and a positive argument that articulates a novel ideological framework that is better suited to capturing the multi-layered and complex nature of philosophical racism (Chapters 3-5). The outcome is a meaningful contribution to the growing literature on the legacy of racism in philosophy today, by providing a way of thinking about the problem that can guide both philosophers and historians in their inquiries into the continued influence of racism on the discipline.[74]

I begin my negative argument in Chapter 1, where I examine the limitations of interpretive approaches to the problem of philosophical racism. On these views, the problem of philosophical racism is understood as an interpretive task to determine whether the racism of specific canonical theorists matters when understanding their wider philosophical systems. I examine two popular interpretive methodologies – rational reconstruction and contextualist analysis – that have been applied to analyse the legacy of racism in philosophy. After clarifying their underlying theoretical commitments, I argue that both are inadequate to capture the nature

[74] For philosophical and historical approaches that explicitly examine the legacy of racism on the discipline in the present, see Flikschuh, "Philosophical Racism"; Harfouch, *Another Mind-Body Problem*; Lu-Adler, *Kant, Race, and Racism*; Ramsauer, "Kant's Racism as a Philosophical Problem."

of philosophical racism. On the one hand, I revisit Robert Bernasconi's influential criticism of rational reconstruction to show how it whitewashes racism from the discipline by excising the aspects of a theorist's writings that are deemed to be undesirable from the perspective of the present. On the other hand, I argue that defenders of contextualism, including Bernasconi himself, are committed to a series of individualist assumptions that place individual canonical theorists in separate silos from one another. The outcome is an inability to determine how dialogues between theorists can lead to racist prejudice being transformed into credible starting points for academic inquiry. In making my argument, I introduce the Hellenistic origins thesis as a useful example to demonstrate how racist ideas can extend beyond the prejudice of individual philosophers and shape the starting assumptions of the next generation of philosophical thinkers.

In Chapter 2, I shift my focus to examining institutional approaches to philosophical racism. These approaches locate the problem at the level of philosophical institutions, such as the curricula and departmental cultures of philosophy departments, that work to marginalise the contributions of diverse scholars in multiple different ways, through for instance the persistent refusal to include courses on non-European traditions of philosophy or the undue justificatory burden faced by diverse scholars to prove that their paper *is philosophy*.[75] I provide a sympathetic reconstruction of the arguments of Bryan van Norden and Jay Garfield, as well as Kristie Dotson, to plausibly identify the target of their critique as the disciplinary narratives of academic philosophy that work to legitimise the boundary between the philosophical and the non-philosophical. That said, while the turn to institutions is welcome, these approaches continue to mislocate the problem of philosophical racism by failing to ask how these prevailing disciplinary narratives have shaped an underlying conceptual *way of thinking* about philosophy. This is evident in the attempts by van Norden and Garfield in particular to argue for reforms to make philosophy more inclusive, which demonstrate how philosophy's disciplinary narratives *equally apply* to the arguments and writings of central figures from non-European philosophical traditions who have therefore been unjustly excluded. While I share their overall ambition, I argue that the focus on institutional reform is insufficient since it leaves intact a set of conceptual foundations that have been shaped by racism, thereby resulting in racist patterns of thinking being preserved in the academic institutions of philosophy even as the discipline attempts to become more diverse.

[75] Dotson, "How Is This Paper Philosophy?"

In Chapter 3, I begin the transition to my positive argument by outlining the ideological conception of racism I draw on in my analysis of philosophical racism. To do so, I bring recent attempts to theorise racism in ideological terms into conversation with W.E.B. Du Bois' writings on race and racism, with the aim of not only highlighting the limitations of prominent contemporary accounts of racism as ideological, but also to explore whether it might be possible to read Du Bois as a theorist of ideology. Drawing on Du Bois' articulation of double consciousness and the feeling of being a problem, I first show how doxastic accounts of ideology, which locate ideologies at the level of beliefs, are unable to make sense of these experiences of racism since they cannot capture how ideologies provide us with the conceptual resources to make sense of the world around us. I then highlight the numerous similarities between Du Bois' later writings on racism and Sally Haslanger's influential practice-first account of ideology, which locates it at the level of the shared social meanings we unconsciously draw on when navigating our social world. Despite these similarities, I suggest that Haslanger's exclusive focus on the functionalist dimensions of ideologies – the oppressive practices they enable in the world – unduly limits the scope of her inquiry. To make my case, I examine Du Bois' use of autobiographical narrative to demonstrate the importance of history to our understanding of race, before illuminating an implicit dimension of racism in Du Bois' writings as a prejudicial interpretive framework or gaze that structures how one conceptualises their social milieu. In bringing these different strands together, I close the chapter by articulating a Du Boisian conception of ideology as having historicised, functionalist, and interpretivist dimensions, which in turn underpins my understanding of philosophical racism.

In Chapter 4, I return to the question of philosophical racism by articulating how an ideological conception of racism can influence academic scholarship at multiple different levels. I start by providing an account of academic disciplines using the insights from scholarship on writing disciplinary histories. In particular, I draw on Duncan Bell's distinction between a knowledge-practice, which refers to both the theoretical claims of valid knowledge and the various academic practices and processes of self-discipline that are created as part of the production of knowledge, and a knowledge-complex, which refers to the wider institutional structures in which "knowledge is fertilised, rendered intelligible, and disseminated".[76] Thinking of academic disciplines like philosophy as being constituted by the relationship between

[76] Bell, "Writing the World," 12.

knowledge-practices and knowledge-complexes can help to understand not only how racism can shape theoretical contributions in philosophy, but also how a racist ideology can come to be embedded within and be perpetuated by the academic institutions of the discipline. To illustrate this idea, I analysed Du Bois' criticisms of white propaganda using my framework to show how historical scholarship on the Reconstruction era was predicated on a foundational commitment to the inferiority of non-whites. That is, using the distinction between knowledge-practices and knowledge-complexes, I demonstrated how the three dimensions of my Du Boisian conception of ideology can be used to show how a racist presupposition that blacks were sub-human came to be articulated *as knowledge*, thereby becoming a legitimate starting point for academic scholarship in American history. This is epitomised by Du Bois' criticism of the Dunning School, which illuminated how scholarly agreement on a set of racist premises can reshape how later generations of Americans understand and relate to the history of their nation.

In Chapter 5, I bring all the preceding insights together to analyse how we might think of the Hellenistic origins thesis as an example of philosophical racism. Throughout the chapter, I use Du Bois' criticism of the Dunning School in particular, and white propaganda more generally, as a useful analogy for thinking about the different dimensions of philosophical racism. My central claim is that we should think of the Hellenistic origins thesis as the product of a racist ideology that, in turn, becomes an ideology with historicised, functionalist, and interpretivist dimensions. I start by tracing the history of the Hellenistic origins thesis to argue that it is best understood as a historicised knowledge-practice rooted in 18th century debates about human difference. Put differently, the Hellenistic origins thesis is not a mere claim about the origins of philosophy; rather, it should be understood as a set of assumptions, concepts, narrative practices, and foundational assumptions with a particular history such that it comes to be inextricably linked to a racist conception of human difference. Consequently, the Hellenistic origins thesis enables a series of narrative practices that construct the boundary of philosophy at the fringes of the European tradition, thereby legitimating a series of epistemic injustices – including the distribution of undue justificatory burdens that make diverse scholars demonstrate that their writings are philosophical. This gestures towards the interpretivist dimensions of the Hellenistic origins thesis, where it attains the status of a disciplinary truism that shapes how philosophers think about the discipline itself. Drawing on a range of examples, I demonstrate that the Hellenistic origins thesis structures how philosophers conceptualise their discipline such that the philosophical merit of non-white theorists and traditions continue to be

denied even as the discipline clamours to be more inclusive. The key insight is therefore that overcoming philosophical racism requires more than institutional reform, and instead mandates subjecting our foundational assumptions about philosophy to critical scrutiny.

Chapter 1: Racism in the History of Philosophy: Reconceptualising the Problem

The focus of my thesis is *philosophical racism*: the idea that racism *also* constitutes a distinct problem for philosophical thinking.[77] I specify the philosophical dimensions to racism to avoid conflating these concerns with the vast literature on racism as a *social problem*, in which the focus is on conceptualising, understanding, explaining, and attempting to resolve the pressing problem of racial injustice. Thus, the important and valuable debates concerning the nature or location of racism (i.e. is racism a matter of beliefs, attitudes, behaviours), whether the term 'racism' is one of moral opprobrium or something broader, or debates concerning how best to rectify the history of racial justice are not the primary concern of my inquiry here.[78] While some of the arguments I make over the course of the thesis may have implications for these debates, I am instead concerned with a different problem, one that mostly (but not exclusively) affects the discipline of philosophy.[79] In short, I am concerned with examining the legacy of the racist remarks made by canonical philosophers, and to assess what implications – if any – they have for present theorising. That these remarks exist is uncontroversial: as we saw earlier, the writings of Montesquieu, Hume, and Kant, to name just three, run the gamut of racist prejudice, ranging from offhand and unfounded comments about the superiority of the white race to thoroughgoing racist theoretical frameworks that attempt to provide a scientific basis for the differences in ability between racial groups. What generates controversy is the extent to which these remarks *matter* for us as present-day theorists who engage with the philosophical systems of *our* canonical thinkers.

The central contention of my thesis is that the racism of canonical theorists matters significantly. These racist asides, utterances, and frameworks contributed to the legitimation of academic inquiry into racial difference in the name of science, thereby transforming prejudice into something that purported to have rational warrant. We see this along two different, but interrelated, dimensions that simultaneously affect one another: on the institutional level, the formation of the political philosophy canon, as well as the institutional

[77] I borrow the term from Katrin Flikschuh, see "Philosophical Racism," 92.
[78] For a selection of important texts that make contributions to these various debates, see Blum, *I'm Not a Racist, But ...*; Garcia, "The Heart of Racism"; Haslanger, "Racism, Ideology, and Social Movements"; Lebron, *The Color of Our Shame*; Matthew, "Against 'Institutional Racism'"; Mills, *Black Rights/White Wrongs*; Shelby, "Ideology, Racism, and Critical Social Theory."
[79] I say 'mostly but not exclusively' to leave open the idea that canonical figures in philosophy may have played a role in influencing or shaping general racist worldviews within society more generally. For Kant's role in creating and shaping a racist ideology, see Lu-Adler, *Kant, Race, and Racism*, chap. 2.

narratives and disciplinary cultures that are distinctive of academic philosophy, reflect the racism of these canonical theorists – even if they perhaps do not share the same intention. Why, for instance, do we accept the disciplinary narrative that John Rawls single-handedly revived political philosophy, when *A Theory of Justice* was published after the theoretical contributions of a range of anti-colonial and anti-racist theorists like W.E.B. Du Bois or Kwame Nkrumah?[80] What made the former a timeless work of philosophy and the writings of the latter something else, something political perhaps but something that was decidedly *not* philosophy? Similarly, why is there an undue justificatory burden on scholars working on issues of racism or racial justice to justify that *their paper* is a work of academic philosophy?[81] These institutional features are problematic and are undoubtedly a contributing factor to what Charles Mills terms the "overwhelming whiteness" of academic philosophy'.[82] They do, however, sit atop a deeper kind of racial exclusion, one that operates at the conceptual level and influences *how we think* about the kinds of problems or questions that are deemed to be within the scope of philosophical thinking.

We can see the interaction between the conceptual and institutional domains through the following example. Some historians argue that Voltaire's writings transformed the figure of the African in the 18th century European imagination "from a barbaric heathen (a moral and religious category) who could be redeemed through slavery, to a sub-human (racial category) for whom bondage seemed the logical but regrettable extension of the race's many shortcomings".[83] Similar points can be made about Kant: his "position in a nexus of power relations and meaning makers" gave credence to his raciology such that it played a role in "assisting – intentionally or not – the nascent formation of modern racist ideology".[84] In both cases, the theorists in question are not constructing narratives *about* the discipline of philosophy. Instead, they are contributing towards a *conceptual shift* in the European imaginary with respect to race. In short, they are articulating a novel perspective with respect to race that would reshape the *way individuals think about race*, going away from a religious category of redeemability and towards a biological category of hereditary characteristics that may not be changeable.[85] Further, this conceptual shift is made possible by the social position of the

[80] Mills, "Decolonizing Western Political Philosophy," 6.
[81] Dotson, "How Is This Paper Philosophy?," 5.
[82] Mills, "Racial Justice," 83.
[83] Curran, *The Anatomy of Blackness*, 148.
[84] Lu-Adler, *Kant, Race, and Racism*, 78.
[85] For some informative historical scholarship that attempts to track aspects of this conceptual shift, see Seth, *Europe's Indians*; Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race*; Smith, *Nature, Human Nature, and Human Difference*.

theorists in question. That these theoretical contributions about race came from leading intellectual lights *of their day* rather than from fringe figures from that era makes a difference in the communicative reach of their writings. Thus, institutional power works hand-in-hand with conceptual arguments and frameworks to shape, legitimise, and perpetuate racial prejudice. It is both these dimensions, working in tandem or separately, that constitute philosophical racism, and which I propose to analyse over the course of my thesis. My goal is to develop an analytic framework that can better conceptualise the many aspects of philosophical racism.

To do so, I start by motivating the problem in more detail. Although there is a philosophical literature that attempts to examine the legacy of racist thinking within the discipline, it tends to frame racism as an *individualist problem* affecting the writings of specific canonical thinkers.[86] That is, the prevailing literature adopts an *interpretive approach* where philosophical racism is understood as determining whether or to what extent the racist remarks of a given theorist had some bearing on their philosophical insights. This is largely due to the underlying methodologies employed to investigate the racism of canonical theorists, which can be classified in two camps: rational reconstruction and contextualism. While they are typically taken to be rival approaches, they both take the *philosophical contributions* as their primary or exclusive focus and attempt to *reconstruct* a version of the theorist's argument that best satisfies their prior methodological commitments.[87] As such, they are best understood as reconstructive exercises – albeit of *different kinds*. After clarifying the distinctions between rational reconstruction and contextualism, I show why they have limitations when examining the legacy of racism within philosophy. Against the use of rational reconstruction, I draw on Robert Bernasconi's influential critique that sees it as whitewashing racism from the discipline. I then turn to Bernasconi's contextualist approach, before showing that it fails to adequately capture the legacy of racism within the discipline. By focusing on the philosophical contributions of individual canonical theorists, contextualism cannot capture the way racism can enter philosophical dialogues *between theorists* and thereby inflect concepts that are then

[86] In her recent book on the influence and legacy of Kant's racism, Huaping Lu-Adler provides a similar critique of the individualist assumption that characterises much research into the legacy of racism within philosophy. Lu-Adler does not, however, explicitly tie this to a methodological point about the *way* contemporary theorists explore these questions. As such, the argument provided here can be seen as supplementing the critique she makes. For her argument, see Lu-Adler, *Kant, Race, and Racism*, chap. 2.

[87] I say 'philosophical contributions' rather than 'philosophical texts', since these methods can in principle be used to informatively analyse non-text-based forms of philosophy, such as the oral tradition within African philosophy. Specifying that such methods focus on *texts* would suggest that there is something intrinsic to these methods that foreclose this possibility, which I do not think is the case.

– perhaps unwittingly – inherited by future generations of scholars. I illustrate this using the Hellenistic origins thesis: the commonly held view that philosophy began in Ancient Greece. I conclude by highlighting the importance of a structural approach that is sensitive to the institutional and conceptual dimensions of philosophical racism.

Racism and Philosophy: A Reconstructive Approach

Why might we think that racism constitutes a problem *for philosophy*? One way of interpreting this question is to ask what role the racist remarks of individual canonical theorists should play in our interpretation of their philosophical writings. While the impact may vary between individual theorists, it is nevertheless the case that the history of Euro-American philosophy played a significant role in developing and legitimising racist prejudice through its examination of the question of human difference. In short, we might say that philosophical understandings of human difference emerged alongside, and further reinforced, racialised thinking about humanity.[88] In our present, where racial inequalities are finally being highlighted, this renewed attention calls into question aspects of our intellectual heritage. How might we begin to work through this? Although there are a wide variety of historical approaches, I focus on two that have been most influential in debates on race and racism: rational reconstruction and contextualism. Typically practiced by analytic historians of philosophy, rational reconstruction is characterised by its proponents as providing 'philosophical insights', since the focus is on *the ideas* of a philosophical text, rather than on deciphering what the philosopher in question was trying to say. Hence, rational reconstruction involves treating historical figures like Kant or Hume as if they were our contemporaries, with our role as interpreters being simply to develop the most plausible and coherent account of their philosophical systems even if they themselves could never have thought the claims we attribute to them.

Contextualists reject this approach on grounds that it is both ahistorical and anachronistic. That is, if we attribute thoughts from the present to the great minds of the thinkers in the canon, we risk falling into various mythologies that *mischaracterise* what they are trying to do, such as by "mistaking some scattered or incidental remarks by one of the classic theorists for their 'doctrine' on one of the themes which the historian is *set* to expect".[89] This, however, may not

[88] e.g. Smith, *Nature, Human Nature, and Human Difference*.
[89] Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," 64. Throughout the essay, Skinner identifies further mythologies that risk affecting the interpretations of texts in the past – such as the mythology of coherence.

be what they are *actually doing*; as such, we misinterpret their aims and ambitions by seeing them as speaking to our concerns in the present. Instead, contextualists argue that interpreters ought to focus on what the original author *intended to say* in their writings.[90] Otherwise, we risk misunderstanding and misrepresenting their philosophical insights. Framing the disagreement in this way, however, risks painting an unhelpful distinction between rational reconstruction as uncovering *philosophical knowledge* and contextualism as providing *historical knowledge*, since the focus is on uncovering what the theorist in question was *trying to say*.[91] But it is not clear whether this distinction has merit; after all, developing a clearer answer as to what Rousseau *really meant* by the social contract or trying to understand whether Aristotle's arguments – by his own lights – contain contradictions are not straightforwardly *historical questions*.[92] Insofar as they assess the merits of an argument or idea, they should equally be seen as *philosophical questions* that help present day theorists better understand the intricacies of the philosophical system in question. This is because, in, say, determining whether two strands of a theorist's writings cohere, the interpreter is already making philosophical judgements about the apparent unity of a specific system.

Although they seem incompatible with one another, a better way to understand the difference between rational reconstruction and contextualism is to see them as being part of a more general reconstructive exercise. After all, as Adrian Blau notes, we all engage in reconstructive exercises – albeit to different degrees. This is because we cannot ever 'get inside' a given theorist's head; the best we can do is reconstruct what we take them to believe from their writings as well as from their wider socio-historical context. Following Blau, we can distinguish between the following three types of reconstruction:

1. "Empirical reconstruction – trying to work out what authors meant;
2. Systematic reconstruction – linking authors' ideas, making implicit distinctions explicit, assessing consistency and so on, whether or not authors themselves saw these things;
3. Adaptive reconstruction – altering what authors wrote and perhaps what they intended".[93]

[90] Ibid., 86–87.
[91] For examples of framing the disagreement in these terms, see Rorty, "The Historiography of Philosophy: Four Genres," 49–50; Russell, *A Critical Exposition of the Philosophy of Leibniz*, v–vi.
[92] Blau, "How Should We Categorize Approaches to the History of Political Thought?," 98.
[93] Blau, "Interpreting Texts," 251.

Although it is tempting to see these three types of reconstruction as incommensurable, this would be a mistake. For Blau, "*these are not alternatives*. We almost always do all three simultaneously, to greater or lesser extents".[94] Thus, when interpreting texts, precisely because we do not know what the author themselves thought, we approach them with some preconceptions of what *we think* the authors in question may have meant. As such, even on the most limited reconstructive exercise – empirical reconstruction – we may still be attributing a greater degree of coherence to the author, which they themselves may not have realised. To see this, I elaborate slightly on each type of reconstruction before showing how this can inform the distinction between rational reconstruction and contextualism. Starting with the first, empirical reconstruction attempts to uncover what the author "could in practice have intended to communicate by issuing their given utterances".[95] For instance, if there are two equally plausible yet mutually incompatible interpretations of a given theorist's canonical writings, engaging in empirical reconstruction would require the interpreter to turn to archival evidence – such as draft versions of the work in question – to determine which of these interpretations more closely matches authorial intent. This is, however, difficult to do without making judgments that reflect the views of the *interpreter* rather than the writings of the theorist under consideration. As such, in trying to determine what the author intended to say, the interpreter invariably will make judgements about how the ideas in a given text connect to one another, or whether the remarks made in one part of a text are consistent with the author's theoretical system more generally. Doing so, however, is to already move to a systematic reconstruction of the system in question, since the interpreter is attributing ideas to the author that they may not have meant or intended.

Adaptive reconstructions go one step further: they attempt to make various modifications to the theorist's philosophical system. The goals of adaptive reconstructions can differ markedly; certain adaptive reconstructions make substantial revisions to strengthen the theorist's original argument without departing too far from their core assumptions. The point is then to develop a better version of the original argument, which the theorists themselves could plausibly have accepted. Other adaptive reconstructions are less concerned with staying faithful to authorial intention; for instance, adaptive reconstructions can also 'update' a theoretical framework so that it can speak to the sensibilities of the present. For example, neo-republican conceptions of

[94] Ibid., 251.
[95] Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," 87.

freedom as non-domination 'update' traditional republican accounts by excising its gendered dimensions, such as the restriction of this kind of freedom to "propertied males", which were foundational to these older accounts.[96] This allows neo-republicans to make informative interventions into contemporary debates on freedom by positing a rival account that challenges certain features of the prevailing liberal approach.

With these three kinds of reconstruction in mind, we are now in position to better characterise the distinctions between contextualism and rational reconstruction. In short, rational reconstructors prioritise systematic and adaptive reconstructions whereas contextualists prioritise empirical and systematic reconstructive exercises. This change in emphasis has implications for how interpreters treat and view the canonical texts they engage with. For proponents of rational reconstruction, the written text is the sole focus of their inquiry: interpreters work with and through the difficult language and attempt to determine how its central arguments *best fit* together. By contrast, contextualists, in stressing the importance of empirical reconstruction, see the text and the context in which it was written as having equal importance for the purposes of interpretation. This is not to say that the text is secondary; rather, the appeal to wider context is used as a way of *better reconstructing* the intentions of the original author. Further, they may also perform the tasks in *different ways*. In defending against the charge of anachronism, proponents of rational reconstruction say that their approach treats the ideas and philosophical systems within canonical texts as having *continued relevance*. As such, there is an inherent presentism in the approach, which amends and alters the written text to suit the interests and needs of the current milieu. This structures how interpreters perform, for instance, adaptive reconstructions. Where contextualists make changes that attempt to cohere with authorial intention, rational reconstructors are happy to make far-reaching or sweeping change if this makes the author's argument *more plausible* for the present.

I am not here interested in settling the methodological dispute between these rival positions. Indeed, there are numerous criticisms that can be levelled at both positions.[97] Instead, my aim is to clarify the methodological commitments of both rational reconstruction and contextualism by seeing them as performing different reconstructive exercises. In short, using the ideas of

[96] Blau, "How (Not) to Use the History of Political Thought for Contemporary Purposes," 361; Pettit, *Republicanism*, 96.
[97] For criticisms of rational reconstruction, see Skinner "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas." For a defence, see Glock "Analytic Philosophy and History."

empirical, systematic, and adaptive reconstruction can help shed light on the underlying assumptions interpreters hold when engaging with canonical texts from the past. Because rational reconstruction prioritises adaptive over empirical reconstruction, there is an inherent presentism in the method that removes many restrictions over how a text can be interpreted. In other words, rational reconstruction is interested in what a text *can be made to say*, whereas contextualism – because it prioritises empirical reconstruction – is limited by its attempt to determine what the text *is trying to say*. We are now able to show how an application of each method to the problem of racism in philosophy results in conflicting prescriptions. When faced with the racist writings of figures like Kant or Voltaire, rational reconstruction gives us licence to *write-out* these remarks *since they could not feature* in the best interpretation of these texts. That is, because racism is abhorrent and illegitimate, making these theorists speak to present debates requires interpreters to 'update' their texts by writing out the parts that do not cohere with prevailing conceptions of human equality. Contextualists, by contrast, in attempting to determine authorial intention, treat these remarks as something that *warrants explanation*: either, these remarks are made coherent with their philosophical system, which casts their writings in a new light. Or, their racism can be explained away as inconsistent with their wider writings, thereby allowing us to entirely disregard their racist statements.[98]

The Limits of Rational Reconstruction: Robert Bernasconi and the Contextual Critique

If what I have said thus far is accepted, there is a presentism inherent in rational reconstruction that inflects how interpreters read, engage with, and reconstruct canonical texts. It is this presentism, I argue, that allows rational reconstructors to excise the negative aspects of a given philosophical text on the grounds that they are no longer consistent with current viewpoints. While some historians may balk at this methodological approach, it does have some intuitive force: consider again the neorepublican idea of freedom as non-domination. It has been informatively applied to show how, in some cases, being *dependent* on other more powerful figures can violate individual freedom. Further, these cases are not captured on liberal accounts of negative freedom since there is no constraint on individual action. Thus, republican freedom has been used to illuminate different gender and race-based injustices, especially pertaining to

[98] For instance, Pauline Kleingeld and Sankar Muthu offer systematic reconstructions of Kant that see his racism as inconsistent with his philosophical writings. See Kleingeld, "Kant's Second Thoughts on Race"; Muthu, *Enlightenment against Empire*, 181–84.

colonial relations of power, that are often sidelined on liberal viewpoints.[99] Yet, as noted above, this is only made possible by a willingness to 'update' classic republican accounts by removing their problematic conceptions of gender.[100] We can thus imagine an application of rational reconstruction that acknowledges the racism of a canonical theorist like Kant, while nevertheless insisting that his philosophy can be 'saved' by reading the racism out of his theoretical insights. Again, this is because performing this exercise is how we make the ideas of past philosophers relevant to present debates in philosophy.

My aim in this section is to reject this rationale in the case of race, on the grounds that it whitewashes racism from the discipline. That is, when faced with the racist writings of canonical theorists, employing rational reconstruction to excise these undesirable aspects of a theorist's writings impoverishes our understanding of the way racism operates in philosophy. To be clear, this is a modest claim: I am neither rejecting the method of rational reconstruction, nor am I presuming that the racism of canonical theorists has some bearing on their philosophical writings. My argument, if successful, *may* give us reason to be wary of employing rational reconstruction in wider contexts, but this is not sufficient to undermine the method as such. Similarly, the success of my argument is not dependent on the prior connection of a given theorist's racism and their philosophical thinking. It could turn out that every racist remark made by a canonical theorist is purely incidental to their philosophy, but this would not undermine my critique of the logic inherent in the method of rational reconstruction. Drawing on the work of Robert Bernasconi, I clarify and expand on his criticisms to raise two challenges to the use of rational reconstruction to theorise racism. First, it reconstructs a version of these theorists that corresponds more closely to the sentiments of the present than to a faithful interpretation of what the theorist in question did in fact say. Second, rational reconstruction underplays race by inhibiting our understanding of the ways emancipatory ideas can be – and have been – made consistent with a pernicious racism. This helps philosophy sanitise its complicity in the history of racial discourse and paint itself as a prescient discipline perpetually on the 'right side' of history.

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[99] See Laborde and Ronzoni, "What Is a Free State?"; Leipold, Nabulsi, and White, *Radical Republicanism Recovering the Tradition's Popular Heritage*.

[100] One could argue that this surface-level updating does not address some of the deeper philosophical issues that come from this exclusion. For instance, contemporary neo-republicans have been critiqued for not paying sufficient attention to different kinds of slavery: chattel slavery and political slavery. Where they restrict their attention to the former, there is a rich tradition in Africana political philosophy that uses the language of non-domination to diagnose and critique the latter practice in the 19th century – see e.g. Rogers, "David Walker and the Political Power of the Appeal"; Rogers, *The Darkened Light of Faith*, chap. 3. As we will see in Chapter 5, I am sympathetic to this line of critique.

As noted previously, the emphasis on adaptive over empirical reconstruction implies that a faithful reconstruction of what the theorist – in their particular context – *really meant* is secondary to determining what *they could have meant*, given prevailing views in the present. As Bernasconi frames it:

> "There is a widespread tendency within contemporary studies in the history of philosophy to focus on reconstructing and reformulating the so-called central arguments employed by major philosophers to the exclusion of all else. If a position is no longer attractive to current sensibilities … it is enough to show that the central arguments do not rely on them and they can in effect be written out of the work. 'Kant' is no longer the name of a historical thinker, nor is it shorthand for his written works, even the main works. The proper name 'Kant' becomes a choice of what each generation regards as essential".[101]

This tendency to create and re-create the essential 'Kant' or the real 'Kant' underplays race precisely because it writes racism out of philosophical thinking *in advance*. Put differently, in employing the method of rational reconstruction, present-day interpreters reconstitute what *they* take to be the central arguments of canonical figures like Kant or Locke. Yet, these central arguments are inflected by the contingencies of the present; thus, the undesirable aspects of a given theorist are *assumed to be peripheral* to their overall project. In the case of racism, because it has been rightfully discredited in the present, we teach these canonical figures in a sanitised manner: we teach them with all the 'bad' parts excised such that their complicity in creating and shaping the development of scientific racism goes unacknowledged. By doing so, however, 'Kant' and 'Locke' become these "benign, farsighted, liberal" figures whose intellectual legacy we are proud to inherit.[102]

The problem for Bernasconi, then, is that these adaptive reconstructions do not represent the 'real' Kant or Locke precisely because they assume away the difficult questions and potential contradictions that exist in their thinking. That is, rational reconstruction *presupposes* that the racism of canonical theorists is entirely irrelevant to their wider philosophical writings and therefore can be excised simply because it no longer coheres with how we think in the present.

[101] Bernasconi, "Kant as an Unfamiliar Source of Racism," 160.
[102] Bernasconi, "Will the Real Kant Please Stand Up," 14.

Bernasconi, however, thinks that this is to miss the deeper philosophical issue that their racism might pose: placing Kant or Locke's racism within their philosophical system gives rise to questions about the limits of their conceptions of cosmopolitanism or freedom, which are worth engaging with.[103] Given the influence of these racist canonical theorists – ranging from Locke and Kant to Hegel and Mill – we have a duty to make sure our interpretations accurately track their racism, so that we avoid replicating their racist assumptions within our own thinking.[104] Therefore, we cannot assume from the beginning that a given theorist's racism has no bearing on their philosophical system.[105] Instead, our task as interpreters is to work through the implications their racism *may* have for their philosophical thinking, in order to determine whether it does limit some of their theoretical insights. Even if – after doing this work – their racism turns out to have no impact on their philosophy, this does not undermine Bernasconi's line of critique, which is that the assumption of irrelevance downplays racism by failing to treat it as meriting serious consideration.

Second, Bernasconi argues rational reconstruction downplays race by inhibiting our understanding of the ways racism operates within philosophical texts. Again, this operates in two different ways: on the one hand, rational reconstructions make us lose out on a better understanding of how anti-racist and emancipatory ideas can be made consistent – usually by their proponents – with a pernicious and horrific racism. On the other, rational reconstruction whitewashes philosophy from its complicity in the development of the concept of race and racism. To illustrate the first element of this critique, consider the contradiction between the American Declaration of Independence, with its proclamation of human equality, and the ongoing system of chattel slavery at the time it was published. While the Declaration can be read as in some way implying the future emancipation of slaves, the document can *also* be read as limiting its equality to *humans*, with black slaves falling out of its scope due to their

[103] In stressing this point, Bernasconi draws an analogy with gender. He cites the work of Pauline Kleingeld, who argues that Kant's gendered language gives rise to questions regarding the position of women within his philosophical system. Yet, rather than ignore it or re-write Kant's philosophy using non-gendered terms, Kleingeld's point is that we ought to reconstruct Kant's ideas while preserving this tension that animates his work. For her argument, see Kleingeld, "The Problematic Status of Gender-Neutral Language in the History of Philosophy."

[104] This idea is made clear by Inder Marwah in his examination of Mill and Kant, though I think the same idea can be ascribed to Bernasconi – even if he never explicitly endorses this view. See Marwah, *Liberalism, Diversity and Domination*, 10.

[105] Lu-Adler makes a similar point in her discussion of Kant's racism, though grounds the argument differently she critiques "the tendency to marginalise Kant's raciology and dismiss (or minimise) its philosophical significance … *in advance*", whereas I suggest that this tendency is built into the method of rational reconstruction. See Lu-Adler, *Kant, Race, and Racism*, 88 n.15.

purported *non-human* or *sub-human* status.[106] Understood in this second way, the Declaration becomes a call "for both a universalism and a more explicit racism than had hitherto existed".[107] For Bernasconi, then, gaining a better sense of how emancipatory ideas can simultaneously justify racist exclusions can help inform our contemporary practice, by making us more aware of the pitfalls of our own thinking. In short, it can help us in avoiding the mistakes of our intellectual forebears.

Therefore, in excising the racism of canonical theorists from their writings, philosophers in the present fail to see the complicity of the discipline in developing a rational grounding for racist beliefs. While it is tempting to lay the blame for racist thinking with the growth of the natural sciences, this fails to acknowledge that for most of human history the sciences were inextricably linked to philosophy. Indeed, the natural world was of enormous interest and significance for various schools of philosophical thought. Thus, to separate philosophy from the natural sciences is not only anachronistic, but also shears philosophy from its complicity in developing a concept of race. Emmanuel Eze, for example, argues that Kant's racist anthropological writings were much more central to Kant's corpus than many contemporary scholars believe. As he sees it, Kant's anthropology transformed "in lively and entertaining lectures meant to delight both the students and the public, hearsay, fables, and travel lore into instant academic science", thereby imbuing prejudicial and racist ideas with the rational warrant given to scientific inquiry – something that they had hitherto lacked.[108] Indeed, Kant's motivation to write "Determination of the Concept of a Human Race"[109] was precisely to clear up the conceptual confusions he felt were present in the field of race studies *because of the increase in the number of explorations to the New World*.[110] Further, this is not just true of Kant; the question of human difference straddled the present divide between philosophy and natural science such that racialised thinking emerged at the same time as novel attempts to reconceptualise the nature of the human.[111] Hence, writing philosophy out of this history is not

[106] Bernasconi, "Will the Real Kant Please Stand Up," 18.
[107] Ibid.
[108] Eze, "The Color of Reason," 230. For a much more recent account of the transformation of prejudicial discourse into acceptable knowledge, Murad Idris persuasively shows how the sources John Rawls drew on in constructing Kazanistan formed part of a politically fraught and Islamophobic debate regarding the compatibility of Islam and democracy. Thus, given his place in the field, Rawls – by drawing on these sources – legitimised racist assumptions about Muslims and Muslim societies, which in turn has significant implications for his conception of global justice. See Idris, "The Kazanistan Papers."
[109] "Bestimmung des Begriffs einer Menschenrace"
[110] Eze, "The Color of Reason," 231.
[111] Smith, *Nature, Human Nature, and Human Difference*, 10–17.

only inaccurate, it also actively prevents sustained attempts at critical self-reflection, since there is a presumption that the blame for the development of racist thinking lies somewhere beyond the discipline.

I find Bernasconi's criticisms persuasive. He clearly showcases the limitations of rational reconstruction in addressing the challenge racism poses to the discipline: in excising it from the history of philosophy, rational reconstruction downplays the significance of racism and ignores the continued relevance it may have for the present. This forecloses an examination as to whether racism in the history of philosophy is deeply rooted in the conceptual foundations of the discipline and inhibits the ability of current philosophers to learn from the mistakes in their intellectual heritage. To circumvent these problems, Bernasconi favours a contextual approach to reading canonical texts. This is best seen in the three non-exhaustive tasks he suggests philosophers ought to pursue when tackling the racism of a given theorist. First, to research and acknowledge the racist statements of eminent theorists, and – *where possible* – address them "philosophically" such that the racism of a given theorist can be understood in relation to their wider philosophical system.[112] Second, to situate a theorist's racist remarks within the wider political and philosophical debates of that time, in order to gain a better understanding of the range of views that were expressed and held by prominent philosophers of the time in question. Finally, and relatedly, to inquire into the sources a theorist drew on in expressing their views. The point of this is to determine whether there were alternative accounts these theorists could have drawn on when developing their views on race.

These three tasks are therefore supposed to inform the way interpreters read the racism of canonical theorists. Indeed, pursuing these tasks will see the interpreter ask questions of the text that parallel the empirical and systematic reconstructions employed by proponents of the contextualist approach. Further, it tackles the problem of racism in a completely different way to more analytic reconstructions: by confronting the racist remarks of a particular theorist head-on, it avoids the risk of whitewashing since it understands racism as something that warrants an *explanation* rather than as something that can be ignored. However, while I am sympathetic to Bernasconi's positive project, I do not think it goes far in enough in tackling the challenge racism poses to philosophy. This is because it continues to uphold an individualist framework to tackling racism; that is, the inherent logic of his contextualist approach is to locate racism at

[112] Bernasconi, "Will the Real Kant Please Stand Up," 13–14.

the level of individual influential philosophers, whose works have undoubtedly shaped the direction and substantive content of political theory. Yet, by privileging this individual perspective, it continues to treat racism as a problem of individual prejudice instead of a structural problem that afflicts the discipline across multiple generations of scholars and into the present. In short, I argue that racism needs to be understood as a tradition of thinking, where individual philosophers "[draw] on and [sustain] each other in philosophical beliefs about race, where those beliefs as passed on from one generation to the next more or less unthinkingly".[113] In the next section, I expand on my critique of Bernasconi, before showing how a structural approach can illuminate our understanding of race through an exploration of the Hellenistic origins thesis.

The Limits of Contextualist Approaches: Towards a Structural Account of Racism?

Thus far, I have argued that the difference between rational reconstruction and contextualism is best understood as an emphasis on different kinds of reconstructive activity. Where the former tends to pursue adaptive and systematic reconstruction, the latter prioritises empirical and systematic reconstruction. Further these differences in priority have implications for the way we engage with and interpret canonical texts. For one, it underpins the presentism inherent in the method of rational reconstruction, which sees a faithful reconstruction of what the theorist *intended to say or think* as being of secondary importance. Drawing on Bernasconi's writings, I then showed how this presentism whitewashes racism from the discipline, since it does not see racism as an issue that requires serious reflection. The core problem, then, is that – by not engaging with the racist writings of canonical theorists – we may risk adopting certain views that continue to exclude along racial lines, even in the absence of racist language. This is why Bernasconi stresses the importance of determining what the theorists in question did think, since the tensions that animated their philosophical systems may continue to inflect our present constructions in ways we may not be aware. Analytic approaches, in advocating a certain kind of adaptive reading, lack the tools to engage in this critical reflection, since 'updating' the writings of our canonical theorists presupposes that our present is free from the same racist ideas that imbue their writings. Simply put, we have faith in contemporary notions of equality and fail to interrogate whether these, in turn, may continue to have features that can exclude on the basis of race.

[113] Flikschuh, "Philosophical Racism," 98.

If, however, the concern is that *our present reconstructions* may continue to be inflected by the racism of canonical theorists, then the contextual approach Bernasconi subscribes to – though an improvement – is insufficient to adequately mitigate this worry. This is because Bernasconi's approach focuses on the written racist remarks of *individual theorists*; the goal is to reconstruct their raciology empirically and systematically and thereby determine what implications, if any, it had for their philosophical thinking. Framed this way, racism is cast as an individual prejudice that may have crept into a given theorist's philosophical writings: determining its influence is thus a matter of zooming in on individual canonical thinkers and working out whether their racist statements had an influence on their philosophical writings. But is this the only way that racism can affect or influence the present? Put differently, given the stature of theorists like Kant, Hume, or Locke, can we plausibly claim that the influence of their racism on the discipline is limited to its effect on *their own writings*? My contention is that this unduly limits the scope of the inquiry. The racism of these canonical theorists provided some kind of rational warrant for racial prejudice, or at the very least laid the foundations for treating race as a legitimate object of academic study. In short, their racism opened avenues for the study of race science and allowed for racist prejudice to constitute the legitimate starting point for academic inquiry, which was taken up by many of their contemporaries. This is *not* to lay the blame for racism in the discipline with their writings; rather, I am suggesting that their racism can have an effect on philosophical thinking even if their own writings were spared.

We can put this challenge more forcefully. While I credit the approach of Bernasconi, Eze, and others with introducing the possibility of racism as a philosophical problem within the circles of analytic philosophy, I want to suggest that engaging in an empirical reconstruction of, say, Kant's racism can distract from an engagement with the implications such racist remarks have for present philosophical thinking. This is because these contextual approaches draw our attention to individual canonical theorists and places these figures into individual silos without exploring the interconnections that exist between them. Even when Bernasconi goes beyond the writings of an individual philosopher, as when he tasks interpreters to examine the sources a given philosopher drew on, the purpose is to get greater clarification on the intention of the *philosopher in question*. That is, interpreters are expected to investigate these sources to determine what this says about the views or theoretical commitments of the philosopher under scrutiny. The goal, then, is to find evidence showing that a given theorist was either a

committed racist, potentially giving rise to internal contradictions or tensions within their philosophical systems, or not, in which case these remarks can possibly be ignored. Fulfilling this task, however, distracts and deflects from an examination of the structural effects of their racism, such as how it influenced later theorists or how it continues to operate implicitly in some of the presuppositions we as present-day theorists take for granted when doing philosophy.[114] Put another way, by transforming racism into a 'legitimate' starting point of philosophical inquiry, these views can bleed into and inflect debates around a range of issues within the discipline that are then, perhaps unwittingly, inherited by future generations of scholars.

Thus, by overly focusing on interpretive questions, we limit our understanding about the way racism operates in the discipline. This is epitomised by the reception of Bernasconi's paper, which spawned a vast literature that attempted to definitively prove whether Kant was a racist *philosophical* thinker.[115] The ensuing debates were often technical and rigorous in their treatment of Kant, yet in their single-minded focus on his writings they failed to interrogate the way Kant's views influenced several of his contemporaries who incorporated them into their own philosophical reflections. What was obscured by these debates, then, is the way racism enters the discipline and becomes entrenched in particular concepts through the dialogues *between* various philosophers. Therefore, rather than seeing it as a product of individual prejudice, we need to begin seeing racism as a *tradition of thinking* that is developed and sustained *through the interactions between individual philosophers*. That is, seeing racism as an individualist problem encourages the assumption that it constitutes an *aberration* in thinking, something reducible to the personal prejudicial flaws of certain theorists in the canon. Treating it as a tradition, however, prevents this, and instead recognises that the racism of canonical theorists constituted, first, a philosophical rumination on the question of human difference, and, second, a discussion that could be furthered by the next generation of scholars. In short, much as we talk about a tradition of materialism, idealism, or intuitionism, that specific thinkers belong to or furthered in significant ways, we should *also* talk about a tradition of racism that found its strongest articulation in the writings of central theorists in the canon. This can be true *even if it had no bearing on their philosophical systems*.

[114] For a criticism of this approach along similar lines, see Harfouch, *Another Mind-Body Problem*, xxvii–xxxi.
[115] e.g. Bernasconi, "Kant's Third Thoughts on Race"; Kleingeld, "Kant's Second Thoughts on Race"; McCarthy, *Race, Empire, and the Idea of Human Development*; Mills, "Kant's Untermenschen"; Muthu, *Enlightenment against Empire*.

This should not be *too* controversial: at its most basic, it suggests that there are a group of scholars who either saw themselves as, or are treated by later generations of scholars as, engaging with a similar set of questions while drawing on each other's writings to do so. We find this occurring with respect to questions of race. Kant agreed with and built on the racism he found in Hume's writings, while Kant's racism influenced a slew of his contemporaries who explicitly drew on his racial hierarchy to justify their own prejudices.[116] Seeing racism as a tradition of thinking has the added benefit of recognising that it *could have* influenced various paradigms of thinking in the present, and thus provides reason to more critically examine our current philosophical thinking. As Katrin Flikschuh and Lea Ypi argue "the racisms of Hume, Kant, Hegel, and Mill tend not to be appreciated as summing to a tradition of philosophical prejudice. Indeed, the single-minded scapegoating of an individual representative of one's philosophical past can encourage exoneration of the present".[117] Therefore, rather than assuming the existence of a racist-free status quo, this more structural approach acknowledges that racism can be "embedded deep within inherited structures of thought and language" and as a result passed down almost unwittingly between generations of scholars.[118] To be clear, this is not to say that the present consciously or explicitly endorses racist views, in the same sense as they would endorse, say, materialist views. Rather, the point is that racism could have shaped the positions we hold in the present, even in the presence of an explicit disavowal of racist thinking. I will now motivate this through a compelling example: the belief in the Ancient Greek origins of philosophy, which I call the Hellenistic origins thesis.

It is hopefully uncontroversial to say that this view is commonly held. Numerous contemporary textbooks endorse this picture, either by identifying Thales as the world's first philosopher (which implicitly suggests that the Greeks are the progenitors of philosophical thinking) or by explicitly locating the foundational moment of the discipline within Greek society more generally.[119] Introductory courses in philosophy often start with key figures from the Ancient Greek world, such as Plato or Aristotle, which provides implicit support for this view by

[116] Compare Hume, "Of National Characters"; with Kant, "Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime" (2:253). On the influence of Kant's racism, see Park *Africa, Asia, and the History of Philosophy*, chaps. 1 & 4..
[117] Flikschuh and Ypi, "Kant on Colonialism - Apologist or Critic?," 2.
[118] Flikschuh, "Philosophical Racism," 92.
[119] In her paper, Lea Cantor cites the following histories of philosophy as promoting the view that Thales was the first philosopher: Garvey and Stangroom *The Story of Philosophy*; Gottlieb, *The Dream of Reason*; and Grayling, *The History of Philosophy*.

conveying the assumption that philosophy began there. Even leading philosophers from both sides of the analytic/continental divide continue to uphold this view: Heidegger and Derrida endorsed a version of this hypothesis, with each thinker explicitly rejecting the possibility that philosophy could exist outside Europe in their respective writings.[120] Similarly, Bertrand Russell's *History of Western Philosophy* states that "philosophy begins with Thales", clarifying that – while Mesopotamia and Egypt had elements of civilisation – it was the Greeks who "invented mathematics and science and philosophy".[121] Indeed, for all these theorists, the view that philosophy is Greek seems to be a truism; a philosophical commonplace that they feel comfortable asserting regardless whether it is, in fact, true. Yet, there is little evidence to suggest that the Ancient Greeks considered either Thales in particular – or themselves in general – to be the founder(s) of philosophy. Instead, many prominent figures in Ancient Greece locate the origins of philosophy in the non-Greek world, among the "earliest of peoples" to inhabit the Earth, with the one notable exception being Diogenes Laertius.[122]

Now, it might be objected that this may be due to some kind of intellectual or epistemic humility. Perhaps the status of having founded some field or discipline can *only* be ascribed retrospectively, by, say, later generations of scholars who see themselves as continuing to engage with the same questions that exercised those thinkers who came before. Even granting this objection, however, does little to undermine Cantor's point: Diogenes aside, several anthologies documenting the history of philosophy up until the 18th century *started with* a survey of 'barbarian philosophy', comprising the thought of the "Chaldeans, Persians, Indians, ancient Arabs" amongst others, before turning to an examination of Ancient Greek philosophy, corroborating the view that philosophy began in the pre-Hellenistic world.[123] For most of human history, then, the standard assumption was that philosophy began *outside Greece*; as Peter Park argues "that philosophy's origins are Greek was, in the eighteenth century, the opinion of an *extreme minority* of historians".[124] The first references to a Greek origin for philosophy only emerge in the post-Kantian German academic environment, where debates concerning the proper subject matter of *philosophy* rose to prominence. In this context, a group of Kant's contemporaries argued for a new method of writing the history of philosophy, one

[120] Derrida, cited in Van Norden, *Taking Back Philosophy*, 25; Heidegger, *What Is Philosophy?*, 29–31.
[121] Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy*, 25.
[122] Cantor, "Thales – the 'First Philosopher'?," 12–16.
[123] Park, *Africa, Asia, and the History of Philosophy*, 70–72.
[124] Ibid., 76, my emphasis.

that adopted a *scientific* approach grounded in reason.[125] This contrasted with the prevailing approach, which included biographical details about each philosopher in reconstructing the discipline's history.[126] However, this appeal to reason provided an entry point for racist thinking, especially since reason was the basis for pseudoscientific racial typologies that sought to categorise human beings. In these racist frameworks, reason was reserved for white Europeans, with all other races lacking the rational faculty for critical thinking.

Indeed, the first prominent *defence* of the Hellenistic origins of philosophy appears in Christoph Meiners' 1786 volume on the history of philosophy.[127] There, Meiners denied that the non-Greek 'barbarian' world developed *philosophy*, on the grounds that this was a science and no Ancient Greek thinker attributed the development of the sciences to figures outside their civilisation.[128] Yet, this was influenced by Meiners' racist anthropological writings, where he divided humanity into 'lighter' and 'darker' races such that only the former possessed the necessary faculties to pursue scientific inquiry.[129] Thus, by his own lights, it is *ontologically impossible* for the origins of philosophy to emerge in the non-European world. Although he may be a marginalised figure in the present, Meiners' published works in the history of philosophy were of some influence: two later anthologies in the history of philosophy, published by adherents to the Kantian school of thought, attempted to provide more evidence for Meiners' claim that philosophy had Greek origins and either explicitly or implicitly endorsed his racist anthropological views to support their claim.[130] If this is accepted, it follows that the dominant conception of philosophy is the product of racist 18th century debates concerning the proper nature of philosophical activity. That is, the racist origins of our prevailing view of philosophy have been whitewashed and sublimated into a historical 'fact' that continues to be put forward by philosophers today – even as they disavow the racism that motivated the initial claim that philosophy has Greek origins. In a sense, we can say that racism becomes embedded in the conceptual realm and survives its own explicit repudiation, retaining

[125] Ibid., 14–17.
[126] Ibid., 12.
[127] Although Christoph Meiners is the first to explicitly *defend* the Hellenistic origins thesis, using both racist anthropological evidence and questionable interpretations of Ancient Greek texts, it is worth noting that David Hume is the first to *articulate* the Hellenistic origins thesis in Europe since Diogenes Laertius. The difference is important because Hume's argument is much more speculative. On the potential influence of Hume on Meiners, see Flory, "Race, History, and Affect," 53; Park, "Why It Makes Sense to Talk of Decolonizing the Philosophy Department," 67–70.
[128] Cantor, "Thales – the 'First Philosopher'?," 17.
[129] Ibid., 18; Park, *Africa, Asia, and the History of Philosophy*, 81.
[130] Cantor, "Thales – the 'First Philosopher'?," 18–19; Park, *Africa, Asia, and the History of Philosophy*, 82.

a latent form that we see being deployed to, for instance, prevent the inclusion of non-European philosophical traditions into the discipline.

We can draw two conclusions from the discussion of the above example. First, it is insufficient to focus exclusively on Meiners' role in reshaping the origin story of philosophy, as if he is *solely* to blame for writing out the non-European world from the history of the discipline. For Park, Meiners and Kant constructed a "kind of racist feedback loop" where each theorist's writings on race invariably influenced the other.[131] This is true even though they were bitter rivals and strident critics of each other's writings. As such, it is likely that what one theorist perceived as a limitation or oversight in the writings of the other led them to contribute to debates concerning race and human difference.[132] What is clear, however, is that the act of engaging in this dialogical exercise – especially by two theorists of some renown – contributed to racism developing a perceived legitimacy, and undoubtedly shaped how later generations of scholars would understand the question of human difference. Equally, their writings must be situated within a wider tradition of academic reflections on the notion of race: as noted previously, Kant's views on race were shaped by the inadequacies he perceived in previous scholarship on the question of human difference.[133] Second, it points to a more expansive conception of the legacy of racism within philosophy, which cannot be captured on an individualist approach. That the currently prevailing conception of philosophy *as Greek* first emerged out of a racially inflected discourse is concerning and goes far beyond interpretive questions as to whether the racism of Locke or Kant shaped their philosophical positions. Instead, it suggests that the way we *think* about philosophy, and the way we teach it to new generations of students, continues to be coloured by racist presuppositions, even as we continue to disavow racism in the present.

Concluding Remarks

[131] *Africa, Asia, and the History of Philosophy*, 94.
[132] Flory, "Race, History, and Affect," 52–53. That said, it is worth noting that Meiners explicitly adopted Kant's definition of race in his anthropological writings, and Kant shared Meiners' conclusions about the racial inferiority of non-white groups – even if he never acknowledged Meiners' influence. See Park, *Africa, Asia, and the History of Philosophy*, 94–95.
[133] Eze, "The Color of Reason," 231; Lu-Adler, *Kant, Race, and Racism*, 169–71. Two theorists in particular Lu-Adler mentions in her analysis are Linnaeus and Buffon, both of whom developed racial typologies that attempted to classify the human race.

The goal of this chapter was to motivate the problem of philosophical racism, the idea that racism might *also* constitute a problem for philosophical thinking, by identifying the limitations present in prevailing attempts to theorise the legacy of racism within philosophy. Typically, the problem of racism is framed as an *interpretive question* that asks how the racism of canonical theorists can be reconciled with their otherwise insightful philosophical writings. Thus, the concern of these interpretive approaches is primarily with determining how the racism of a given thinker affects our understanding or interpretation of their wider philosophical system. In response, we can either rationally reconstruct the best interpretation of a given text by *writing out* the racism of a canonical theorist, or we can attempt to *explain* the relationship between these racist statements and the wider theoretical system of a given theorist. I argued that, rather than seeing these as two rival approaches, rational reconstruction and contextualism are best understood as engaging in a reconstructive exercise – albeit of different kinds. Doing this allows us to better understand the inherent theoretical commitments of each approach and see how advocates of both methods understand their relationship to the past. Hence, proponents of rational reconstruction are more focused on making the writings of canonical theorists *speak to* present debates whereas contextualists attempt to understand what the theorist *themselves* could possibly have thought and use contemporary devices or opinions if this can assist in making a theorist's arguments clearer.

While I did not aim to settle this methodological disagreement, I argued that both approaches are nevertheless limited in their ability to adequately theorise the problem racism poses for present philosophical thinking. On the one hand, by prioritising adaptive reconstruction, rational reconstruction whitewashes racism from the discipline and impoverishes our understanding of how racism operates in philosophical texts. This is because it reconstructs a version of a given theorist in accordance with the views of the present moment, and thus elides an examination of the potential contradictions that could arise between a purportedly universal philosophical system and an explicit racism that limits the scope of the system to white Europeans. It also downplays the role of philosophy in developing and furthering concepts of race and racism, thereby presenting the discipline as a perpetual source of enlightened critique. On the other hand, while approaches that prioritise empirical and systematic reconstruction appear better equipped to tackle the problem of racism, contextualism retains an individualist conception of racism that undermines its ability to track how racist thinking can continue to exert its influence on the present. In retaining a narrow focus on the written racist remarks of a specific theorist, contextual approaches like Bernasconi's fail to see how racism emerges out

of the dialogues *between* philosophical thinkers. It is only by reconstructing these debates and tracing their influence on later generations of scholars that we can see how influential philosophers shaped and re-shaped a broader racist worldview that, in turn, provided racial prejudice with a rational warrant.

This is epitomised by the purportedly Hellenistic origins of philosophy. Far from being a self-evident truth, a conception of philosophy as Greek is a relatively recent phenomenon rooted in 18th century racist debates that attempted to establish the superiority of white Europeans. What is striking is that this view continued to have significant influence across both the 20th and 21st centuries, even as most, if not all, of its proponents would reject the racist worldview that underpinned its initial rationale. That it still plays the same exclusionary role, as a justification to exclude non-Western philosophical traditions from university curricula, is testament to the continued presence of racism on our thinking.[134] This example, I want to suggest, demonstrates that racism exists above and beyond the philosophical systems of canonical theorists like Kant or Mill, who we continue to draw on today despite their voluminous writings on race. Thus, asking whether Kant or Mill's racism affected their philosophical thinking is to place limitations on our understanding of how racism operates in the discipline. The continued popularity of the view that philosophy originated in Greece hopefully provides a compelling case for the presence of racism at deeper levels within our thinking. In short, as Katrin Flikschuh argues, it suggests that racism is "embedded deep within inherited structures of thought and language" rather than superficially present in our decisions to invoke the theoretical systems of racist canonical theorists.[135]

Therefore, it is imperative that we move away from an individualist conception of racism to adequately track its deeper influences on our thinking. Doing so, I suggested briefly, requires us to think of racism as a *tradition of thinking* within the discipline, one that develops and unfolds as scholars engage with each other over questions of human difference. In doing so, these canonical theorists created classificatory systems to conceptualise human difference, which in turn provided a rational grounding for the racist prejudicial beliefs in society more generally. Yet, this is only made possible by understanding these canonical theorists as operating within a *network of institutional connections* that disseminated and legitimated their

[134] e.g. Van Norden, *Taking Back Philosophy*.
[135] Flikschuh, "Philosophical Racism," 92.

theoretical contributions on the question of race. In this vein, Huaping Lu-Adler argues that we should not just focus on the influence of Kant's *writings* on race, which assesses his legacy as a scholar, but we should also examine his role as an *educator* sharing his views on race in several lectures on philosophical anthropology.[136] Similarly, as I suggested above, Voltaire's defence of polygenesis – the notion that mankind had multiple different origins – in his popular writings helped to usher in a transformation of the figure of the African within the European popular imagination. Again, this is only possible by examining Voltaire as a *public intellectual*, whose writings on race were part of his attempt to critique religious orthodoxy within general society. Hence, separating the figure of authors like Kant or Voltaire from their institutional standing as leading educators or intellectuals obscures the role of intellectual institutions like universities or publishing houses in popularising deeply prejudiced views of human races. In short, what is required is a novel framework to theorise the role of institutions and individuals in introducing or shaping the legacy of racism with the discipline of philosophy.

[136] Lu-Adler, *Kant, Race, and Racism*, 7–8. As mentioned earlier, Eze alludes to a similar point in assessing the role of Kant's lectures in transforming the speculations of travel writers into "instant academic science" – see "The Color of Reason," 230.

Chapter 2: The Limitations of Institutional Approaches to Theorising Racism

In the previous chapter, I demonstrated how the individualist and presentist assumptions built into the interpretive approach unduly limit the scope of inquiry into philosophical racism. In short, by framing the problem of philosophical racism in terms of how to best reconcile the racism of canonical theorists with their otherwise highly respected philosophical writings, the interpretive approach fails to capture the continued influence of racism on our thinking in the present. I illustrated this through the widely held assumption that philosophy began in Ancient Greece, which I termed the Hellenistic origins thesis. Thus, what is taken in the present to be a disciplinary truism is, in fact, the product of a metaphilosophical debate in the post-Kantian academic environment that, in turn, was inflected by the racism of its central proponents. In my conclusion, I stressed the importance of adopting a new approach that is sensitive to these dimensions. Indeed, adequately addressing philosophical racism requires a willingness to reshape the present philosophical landscape in *potentially* radical ways. For example, Bryan van Norden and Jay Garfield have argued that university curricula and departmental hiring practices within philosophy need to be overhauled to promote diverse philosophical traditions. To put it more provocatively, van Norden and Garfield suggest that – *until philosophy departments are diversified* – they should be renamed "Departments of European and American Philosophy" rather than Departments of Philosophy *simpliciter*.[137] Otherwise, it risks conveying "the impression – whether intentionally or not – that [non-Western philosophy] is of less value than the philosophy produced in European culture, or worse, … that no other culture was capable of philosophical thought".[138]

In a similar vein, Kristie Dotson has suggested that the hostility experienced by "diverse practitioners of philosophy", defined as encompassing *both* scholars from under-represented backgrounds *and* scholars who study marginalised philosophical traditions or thinkers, is the result of a disciplinary culture that attempts to demarcate a clear boundary between 'proper philosophy' and 'something else'.[139] Thus, for Dotson, diverse practitioners of philosophy face an undue justificatory burden to prove why their paper *is philosophy*. We can plausibly see van Norden and Garfield, and Dotson as identifying further dimensions to the problem of

[137] Garfield and Van Norden, "If Philosophy Won't Diversify, Let's Call It What It Really Is"; Van Norden, *Taking Back Philosophy*, 8–9.
[138] Garfield, "Foreword," xix–xx.
[139] Dotson, "How Is This Paper Philosophy?," 5.

philosophical racism: all are drawing attention to the ways philosophical contributions are being marginalised in accordance with racial lines. Unlike the work of Robert Bernasconi, however, they are not conceptualising racism as an *interpretive problem* to be resolved by a better or more accurate reading of a given philosopher's writings. Instead, they take aim at the *institutions of philosophy*: the university curricula – and by extension the canon of political philosophy – that limit the exposure of students to works produced in the Euro-American hemisphere, as well as the disciplinary culture and disciplinary narratives that bolster the silent and implicit presupposition that non-Western traditions of philosophy are *not* philosophical in any meaningful sense.

While the turn to institutions and – especially – institutional narratives is welcome, I want to suggest that it *also* suffers from a series of limitations that undermine its critical scope. My contention is that these *institutional approaches* continue to misplace the location of philosophical racism. That is, these approaches identify features of institutions and disciplinary narratives that work to unjustly exclude the non-white non-Western world from the discipline without questioning how these same exclusionary features have shaped a dominant *way of thinking* about philosophy. Consequently, their focus on institutional reform to make philosophy more diverse, although worth pursuing, leaves intact a set of conceptual foundations, patterns of thinking, or theoretical frameworks that are racially inflected and continue to unfairly justify the exclusion of philosophical traditions from outside the Euro-American hemisphere. That this can be true alongside attempts to make philosophy more diverse illustrates how racism "gains its power from its ability to pick out and utilise ideas and values from other sets of ideas and beliefs in specific socio-historical contexts".[140] Therefore, rather than being constant and unchanging, racist ideas undergo perpetual redescription such that they are rearticulated using the dominant cultural frames within society at a particular time. This is, in a sense, borne out by the Hellenistic origins thesis: an explicitly racist view that asserted the ontological impossibility of philosophy in the non-white non-Western world evolved into a cultural and methodological argument that restricted the scope of philosophy to the Euro-American hemisphere. Though the explicit racism is disavowed, ignored, or bracketed, the same exclusions nonetheless remain.

[140] Fredrickson, *Racism: A Short History*, 8–9.

My goal in this chapter is to continue the negative project of my thesis by problematising the institutional approach to theorising philosophical racism. I argue that this approach cannot trace the *conceptual dimensions* to philosophical racism, which limits the potential of the reforms to the discipline that its proponents advocate. In this case, attempts to make philosophy more diverse are blunted by the absence of an underlying conceptual shift, thereby resulting in the *same kinds of exclusions* being perpetuated in an ostensibly more inclusive environment. My argument proceeds as follows: I start by reconstructing the central theoretical commitments of the institutional approach, highlighting its emphasis on curriculum reform, more diverse hiring practices, and demonstrating the inaccuracies of prevailing disciplinary narratives. I briefly outline the benefits of this sensitivity to institutional features, before outlining my two objections that demonstrate the limitations of the institutional approach in both theorising and tackling philosophical racism. First, I argue that, by demonstrating the inaccuracies – factual or otherwise – of dominant disciplinary narratives, institutional approaches leave their core assumptions largely intact and instead seek to include non-white non-Western philosophical traditions within them. Second, in calling for the inclusion of more diverse theorists into philosophy curricula, institutional approaches fail to interrogate the terms under which this inclusion occurs. The result, I suggest, is an inability to identify the way institutions and disciplinary narratives have shaped, and continue to influence, prevailing ways of thinking about philosophy that *will persist* despite well-intentioned institutional reforms to make philosophy more diverse. To show this, I bring institutional approaches into conversation with key debates in African philosophy to showcase their limitations, before concluding by laying the foundations for an alternative framework that, I want to suggest, can better theorise philosophical racism.

Institutional Approaches to Theorising Philosophical Racism

In contrast to interpretive approaches, institutional attempts to theorise philosophical racism begin from a different starting point: the "overwhelming whiteness" of the discipline.[141] As it stands, most introductory courses teach thinkers exclusively from the canon of political theory, itself constituted by white, male theorists. Indeed, in a study examining one foundational political theory module at every UK university, 70% contained no or minor references to non-

[141] Mills, "Racial Justice," 83.

white theorists.[142] When limited to modules where the full reading list could be accessed, the percentage of courses with no or minor references to non-white theorists decreased to 55%. This is staggering given that, in this study, a minor reference is simply the *mere mention* of a non-white theorist on a reading list, in *either* the primary *or* secondary reading.[143] Similarly, major collections of political philosophy, such as the *Blackwell Companion to Political Philosophy* or the *Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought*, contain no works by non-white authors.[144] A similar pattern can be found in both the demographic makeup and teaching specialisms of philosophy departments; in the US in 2014, only 1.32% of all individuals affiliated to a US philosophy department were black – the same percentage as in the 1990s.[145] Furthermore, only 6 of the top 50 philosophy departments have a regular faculty member who can teach Chinese philosophy, and – out of *all* philosophy departments in the US – less than 10 have specialisms in either Indian philosophy, African philosophy, or the philosophies of the indigenous peoples of the Americas.[146]

Of course, these statistics do not paint a full picture; they do, however, demonstrate that philosophy departments in the Anglo-American hemisphere suffer from a lack of diversity. For proponents of institutional approaches, the demographic imbalance of philosophy departments and the corresponding narrowness of philosophy curricula is symptomatic of a deeper problem within the discipline that requires fixing: the prevalence of structural racism that contributes towards or even enables a hostile environment for diverse practitioners of philosophy. While this may sound like a harsh or overly critical claim, there is significant anecdotal evidence to suggest that it may be true.[147] I will limit myself to considering two accounts that capture the essence of this deeper problem of racism. In an interview about her relationship with philosophy, Anita Allen makes the following remark:

> "With all due respect, what does philosophy have to offer to Black women? It's not obvious to me that philosophy has *anything* special to offer Black women today. I make this provocative claim to shift the burden to the discipline to explain why it is good

[142] Choat, "Decolonising the Political Theory Curriculum," 409.
[143] Ibid., 410.
[144] Mills, "Decolonizing Western Political Philosophy," 7–8.
[145] Botts et al., "What Is the State of Blacks in Philosophy?," 237; Mills, *Black Rights/White Wrongs*, 185.
[146] Van Norden, *Taking Back Philosophy*, 2–3.
[147] Mentioning all the relevant anecdotes that speak to this concern would not be possible, but for a wider selection – in addition to the two that I mention here – see Haslanger, "Changing the Ideology and Culture of Philosophy"; Marcano, "The Difference That Difference Makes"; Nye, "It's Not Philosophy"; Park, "Why I Left Academia"; Salamon, "Justification and Queer Method, or Leaving Philosophy"; Solomon, ""What Is Philosophy?"

> enough for us … Why bother with philosophy when there's so many other fields of endeavour where one can do better, more easily?".[148]

Here, Allen is discussing the challenges she faced as a black woman attempting to pursue a career in philosophy; indeed, though she preferred philosophy, she was "much, much happier" as a law professor precisely because the environment was more welcoming.[149] Similarly, Kristie Dotson recounts a conversation between her younger sister and a guidance counsellor, in which the counsellor dismissed Dotson's sister's interest in pursuing a career in philosophy by saying "that's a white man's game".[150] That this comment provoked outrage *and* relief in Dotson indicates that there may be a hostile environment in professional philosophy for diverse practitioners. It would be easy to say that these problems are either isolated incidents or general issues that plague the academic sector. But notice that both anecdotes point to something central in *philosophy* that makes it unwelcoming and unattractive to those from racial minorities. Given the "overwhelming whiteness" of the discipline, it is almost as if the research interests of non-white philosophers – insofar as they do not cohere with the aims and assumptions of mainstream theory – are treated with suspicion, as if they must meet a justificatory burden to show *why* what they are doing counts as 'philosophy'.

It is this suspicion, I want to suggest, that illustrates not only the hostile environment of philosophy but also the kind of structural racism the institutional approach seeks to tackle. In his writings, van Norden follows Peter Park in locating the *origin* of this sceptical attitude towards non-Western philosophy in the post-Kantian German academic environment, where, Kant, Meiners, and others made a "decision" to write-out the extra-European world from the history of philosophy.[151] As we saw in the previous chapter, this was inflected by their racist views: the racial typologies developed by both Kant and Meiners made it *ontologically impossible* for non-white peoples to have a tradition of philosophical thinking. As Huaping Lu-Adler argues, *from their perspective*, it "*seemed reasonable*" to suggest that philosophy was an exclusively European activity.[152] In the present however, where racism and racial science have been rightfully disavowed, this conception of philosophy is *no longer reasonable* yet

[148] Yancy, *African-American Philosophers*, 172 original emphasis.
[149] Yancy, "Situated Black Women's Voices in/on the Profession of Philosophy," 172.
[150] Dotson, "How Is This Paper Philosophy?," 3–4.
[151] Van Norden, *Taking Back Philosophy*, 21. This glosses over the potential role of other figures, such as David Hume, in influencing the racism of Kant and Meiners. For an informative discussion of this point, see Flory, "Race, History, and Affect"; Park, "Why It Makes Sense to Talk of Decolonizing the Philosophy Department."
[152] Lu-Adler, *Kant, Race, and Racism*, 324.

continues to be upheld. Thus, insofar as universities continue to uphold this exclusive conception of philosophy in both their curricula and their hiring practices, van Norden and Garfield suggest that contemporary universities are structurally racist – or at the very least are upholding structurally racist policies that, in turn, perpetuate the suspicion that non-Western philosophy is somehow *not* philosophical. On their view, refusing to be more inclusive is both epistemically and morally reprehensible because it "requires us to ignore arguments, positions, and perspectives … that we have good reason to believe are valuable" on the basis that they are "written by people inhabiting cultures different from our own".[153]

It is worth stressing that, in levelling the charge of racism, Garfield and van Norden are explicitly talking about *structural* racism. As such, they are not suggesting that philosophers in American philosophy departments harbour or act upon racist views. Rather, their point is that the academic institutions and structures present-day philosophers participate in convey the assumption, through their teaching and hiring practices, that non-European traditions of philosophy are less valuable, less desirable, and less worthy of engagement. This can be true even in the absence of individual theorists harbouring racist views. The emphasis on 'structures' thus points towards an institutional explanation for the continued demographic imbalance in the makeup of both philosophy departments and philosophy curricula. That said, this structural emphasis is in tension with van Norden's claim that the exclusion of the non-European world is the product of a "decision". This is because a focus on the "decision" overplays the role of individual agency and underplays *the very structures they seem to take issue with* in perpetuating a racially inflected conception of philosophy. After all, it seems too strong to say that the prevailing conception we hold today, repeated by philosophers as diverse as Bertrand Russell and Jacques Derrida, is due to the *decision* of a selection of philosophers in 18th century Prussia. Can we really say that a decision has so much power that it continues to be felt in the hiring practices and curriculum designs of departments that continue to exist over 200 years later?

Perhaps this is a small quibble, one that is likely to be the result of a book that is aimed at a general audience and thus – as van Norden himself admits – contains arguments that are "less guarded and less detailed than … in a work intended solely for fellow scholars".[154] In any case,

[153] Garfield, "Foreword," xix.
[154] Van Norden, *Taking Back Philosophy*, xiii.

what it points to is a lack of clarity concerning *the kinds of structures* van Norden and Garfield have in mind when identifying the prevalence of racism in the discipline today. While there is a continuity between the racist conception of philosophy articulated by Meiners and others in the 18th century and the prevailing conception we hold in the present, given that they both locate the origins of philosophy in Ancient Greece and exclude the non-European world from its scope, it is *not clear* on their account how or why this continuity exists in the first place. For this reason, my goal here is to strengthen their position by providing a compelling causal mechanism that can help clarify the racist institutional features they identify in the discipline. This improves the plausibility of their account, but, as we will see in the next section, I argue that it nevertheless continues to be inadequate for theorising philosophical racism.

Although they do not use this term, I suggest that we can read van Norden and Garfield as identifying a set of *disciplinary narratives* or *mythologies* that serve to legitimate the boundary between philosophy and other neighbouring disciplines. These narratives – the stories "scholars routinely tell ... to each other and to themselves about how their discipline or specialism emerged, how it evolved over time and how they fit into this account" – are *structural*.[155] This is because they are an example of the "collective rules and resources that structure behaviour".[156] That is, disciplinary narratives provide a set of collective interpretive resources that identify how an academic discipline has unfolded, demarcate the boundaries of the discipline, and shape the way scholars understand themselves and their place in the discipline. Such narratives need not be factually accurate; instead, they are "easily intelligible and transmissible, and help to constitute or bolster particular visions of self, society, and world".[157] We can think of, for instance, the origin story of analytic philosophy as one kind of disciplinary mythology, in which Russell and G.E. Moore's infamous break with British Idealism at the turn of the 20th century ushered in a new way of thinking about or even *doing* philosophy. In reality, the term 'analytic philosophy' would only come into existence in the 1930s as 'analytic philosophers' attempted to retrospectively identify their distinct method and key concerns.[158] These narratives or mythologies are therefore part of the cultural resources of academic philosophy that drive how individual philosophers make sense of their scholarly writings and,

[155] Bell, "Writing the World," 5.
[156] Porpora, "Four Concepts of Social Structure," 195; 200–203. In his paper, Porpora distinguishes between 4 different accounts of social structure; the one I reference here is attributed to Anthony Giddens. For his account, see Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory*.
[157] Bell, "Writing the World," 5.
[158] For a useful history of the emergence and development of analytic philosophy, see Glock, *What Is Analytic Philosophy?*, esp. chap. 2.

crucially, shape what they consider to be meaningful contributions to the discipline. Furthermore, these narratives are *institutional*, given that they are replicated and disseminated by academic institutions such as university departments or academic journals.

Framed this way, I want to suggest that we can better understand van Norden and Garfield's charge of structural racism by seeing them as criticising the legitimating narratives within philosophy that play a significant role in shaping the perception of what counts as *sufficiently philosophical*. Therefore, when these narratives perpetuate the unsubstantiated views and presumptions that nothing outside the Euro-American sphere has philosophical status, the narratives can be considered *structurally racist*. My reading resonates with some of the points van Norden and Garfield raise regarding the way non-Western philosophical traditions are typically received by mainstream scholars in the discipline. For instance, van Norden argues that some "common mistake[s]" of Anglophone philosophy are, on the one hand, to "pretend that all philosophical arguments … are in tight syllogisms or are transparent at first glance", and, on the other, to "overemphasise argumentation, as if that were the only thing that philosophers do in dialogue".[159] These are mistakes for two reasons. First, they are historically inaccurate – after all, several of Plato's central arguments are neither syllogistic in form nor easily transparent (e.g. the Cave analogy), and argument is not the only method through which philosophers have communicated their ideas. Second, these mistakes work to *deny philosophical status to texts from the non-European world*. For van Norden, there is a willingness amongst Western philosophers to put the effort in to *work through* the difficulties in the writings of Plato or Kant, whereas the same is *not* given to the writings of, say, Confucius. Instead, appeals to syllogisms or the centrality of argumentation are used as the yardstick to demonstrate the non-philosophical status of these non-European thinkers, without recognising that central figures in the Western canon may equally not make the cut.

Understood this way, there are significant similarities with Dotson's argument that the culture of academic philosophy is hostile to diverse practitioners. For her, the problem lies with the prevalent *culture of justification* in philosophy, where scholars working *outside* the traditional canon are expected to provide a justification as to why their work ought to be considered philosophical. As she puts it:

[159] Van Norden, *Taking Back Philosophy*, 148.

> "Typified in the question, 'how is this paper philosophy', is a presumption of a set of commonly held, univocally relevant, historical precedents that one could and should use to evaluate answers to the question. By relying upon a, presumably, commonly held set of normative, historical precedents, the question of how a given paper is philosophy betrays a value placed on performances and/or narratives of legitimation".[160]

For Dotson, then, these "commonly held, univocally relevant, historical precedents" are an underlying set of presuppositions held by present-day philosophers and which structure their understanding of what *counts as philosophy*. To say that academic philosophy has a culture of justification is thus to suggest that professional philosophers must make their projects, research, ideas, and writings cohere with this underlying conception of what philosophy *is*. Put differently, dominant presuppositions of what philosophy *is* or *ought to be* function as a kind of legitimation narrative, which confers philosophical status to contributions that cohere with these implicit standards. This can play an important role in, for example, demarcating disciplinary boundaries. If, however, these legitimation narratives are shaped by racism, then they can also enable a series of unwarranted exclusions from the discipline.

In her paper, Dotson identifies at least two ways in which legitimation narratives perform these exclusionary functions. On the one hand, they can help to sustain a kind of *exceptionalism*, in which the notion of philosophy is interchangeable with the Euro-American canon. Thus, while various non-European theorists might fulfil the implicit criteria to merit being considered as philosophers, they are nevertheless *prima facie* excluded given their historical lack of engagement with the traditional canon. This resonates closely with the frustrations van Norden documents, in which the first sign of ambiguity is taken to be emblematic of an unphilosophical disposition, whereas the ambiguities in Plato or Aristotle are deemed to be worthy challenges to work through. On the other hand, legitimation narratives produce a sense of *incongruence* amongst diverse practitioners, who reject or question the validity of some (if not all) of the presuppositions that undergird what counts as philosophy. For example, many diverse scholars begin their theorising from a *situated standpoint*: they start from the lived experiences that members from marginalised groups experience and use this to make theoretical claims that problematise abstract theorising about, say, justice or freedom.[161] The problem, however, is

[160] Dotson, "How Is This Paper Philosophy?," 5.
[161] Ibid., 11–16.

that the adoption of an abstract vantage point, something akin to a 'view from nowhere', has been a dominant identifier for what constitutes the proper method or approach of philosophy. Any approach that fails to adopt this standard will be considered outside the scope of the discipline. Therefore, diverse scholars face a sense of incongruence between their self-identification as philosophers and the disciplinary norms or narratives that are incompatible with their research. For Dotson, the exceptionalism and incongruence sustained by legitimation narratives contribute to the creation of a hostile environment for diverse practitioners within philosophy.

Although it might be suggested that Dotson's focus is ultimately on the hostile environment within academic philosophy, her arguments nevertheless have implications for identifying the structurally racist features of the discipline. Drawing on some of my own anecdotal evidence, I have seen how the prevailing presuppositions structuring philosophy can limit the engagement with diverse philosophical traditions. As a graduate teaching assistant in a module on contemporary political theory, I taught a text on environmental political theory by Kyle Powys Whyte, an indigenous philosopher. There, Whyte advanced a conception of water as having "a responsibility to attend to the conditions that plants, animals, and humans require to perform all the responsibilities they may have to one another".[162] For Whyte, this is not a thin sense of responsibility: he suggests that water and humans have *reciprocal relationships* to one another, such that – just as humans have responsibilities to one another and the natural environment they find themselves in – water has the same relationship to the plants it waters, and the animals and humans whose thirst it quenches. Whether or not one agrees, such a view runs against dominant strands of thinking *about responsibility*, in which the notion of reciprocal relationships is predicated on some conception of mutual recognition where both parties can recognise the duties they owe to the other. In the case of water, however, this is impossible: water lacks the conscious awareness of its responsibilities towards others. What struck me when teaching this text is that – rather than attempting to work through this unintuitive conception of responsibility – some colleagues and students both reacted by immediately rejecting its plausibility. In short, it was immediately taken as an example of, at best, bad philosophy or, at worst, not philosophy at all.

[162] Whyte, "Indigenous Environmental Movements and the Function of Governance Institutions," 571.

Similar arguments can, I think, be made about African philosophy, in which living ancestors and witches are both taken to be real ontological categories. Many moral, metaphysical, or political claims in African philosophy are made with the background assumption that terms like 'witch' and 'ancestor' pick out real things in the world.[163] Such views are, however, largely incompatible with the ontology of Western philosophy and are therefore likely to be cast as belonging to the realm of *superstition* rather than rational philosophy. Now, there will be some who, when reading this, might think: 'so what?'. For them, it may be a good thing that traditions of thinking which posit such entities are excluded from philosophy. We could go further and suggest that including these traditions would ultimately amount to relativism, in which the very notion of truth becomes diluted and meaningless.[164] For now, I bracket this concern, though I will briefly return to it in the conclusion of this chapter. Essentially, my point is just that the institutional approach articulated by van Norden, Garfield, and Dotson draws our attention to the ways disciplinary narratives make the racist exclusion of non-European traditions from the discipline *seem justified*.

Indeed, the disciplinary myth that philosophy begins in Ancient Greece can and has played this role; in response to van Norden and Garfield's tongue-in-cheek suggestion to rename philosophy departments to 'Departments of Western Philosophy', they were inundated with replies accusing them of "political correctness" and an "ooshy gooshy need to pretend that all cultures are equally advanced".[165] In one notable but well-intentioned response, Nicholas Tampio argued that the writings of prominent non-Western theorists, Confucius and Candrakīrti, can at best be considered "wisdom" rather than "philosophy".[166] To be clear, Tampio is not suggesting that they do not have philosophical merit, in the sense that philosophers should not engage with their writings; rather, he is denying them the status of being *philosophers*. For Tampio, philosophy begins in Ancient Greece as a "restless pursuit for truth through contentious dialogue" and "requires the fearless use of reason even in the face of established traditions or religious commitments".[167] Notice that Tampio is drawing on features typically associated with the Ancient Greeks to show how these *do not apply* in the cases of non-European theorists. Thus, that Confucius seems to endorse a notion of filial piety is

[163] For an analysis of the presence and importance of witchcraft in African philosophy, see Ikuenobe, "Cognitive Relativism, African Philosophy, and the Phenomenon of Witchcraft."
[164] For a response to this line of criticism, see Mitova, "How to Decolonise Knowledge without Too Much Relativism."
[165] Quoted in Van Norden, *Taking Back Philosophy*, 12.
[166] Tampio, "Not All Things Wise and Good Are Philosophy."
[167] Ibid.

sufficient to disqualify him from philosophical status, since this goes against the very spirit of the Ancient Greek attempts to *philosophise* about the world. Equally – and more concerningly – Tampio states that philosophy is an activity that "takes place among ordinary human beings in cities, not sages and disciples on mountaintops".[168] Now, Tampio does not specify any specific theorist in this passage, but given that he fails to recognise the philosophical status of theorists like Confucius and Candrakīrti, it seems to suggest that they belong in the latter category. This, however, is *factually inaccurate*: both Confucius and Candrakīrti were members of an urban intellectual elite.

Tampio's response shows that scholars can present uninformed views about non-Western traditions *as facts* without attempting to verify their claims; as van Norden and Garfield put it "European scholars don't have that burden to bear".[169] To bring the preceding discussion together, my suggestion is that these disciplinary mythologies – as narratives that legitimate disciplinary boundaries – enable the simple dismissal of entire traditions of thought as belonging to the non-philosophical realm. This is not to say that those traditions lack intellectual merit; rather, the point is that they are better thought of as belonging to other academic fields – be it area studies, ethnic studies, religion, anthropology, and so on. For van Norden and Garfield, this is problematic because, as noted previously, it "convey[s] the impression … that no other culture was capable of philosophical thought".[170] Given that these disciplinary narratives are created and sustained by academic institutions, they represent part of the cultural resources of academic philosophy; as such, they are both institutional and structural. The positive feature of institutional approaches is therefore that, by focusing on these disciplinary narratives, they locate a further dimension to the problem racism poses for philosophy, one that goes *beyond* the written text of canonical theorists. In short, institutional approaches make a compelling case that the way philosophers *understand and conceptualise their own academic discipline* can be structurally racist. As van Norden, Garfield, and Dotson argue in different ways, these narratives inform the implicit presuppositions in the discipline that, in turn, enable sweeping dismissals of non-Western traditions of thought. Therefore, by

[168] Ibid.
[169] Garfield, "Foreword," xv.
[170] Ibid., xix–xx. It is worth stressing that van Norden and Garfield assume that philosophy is a valuable enterprise, something that all cultures have the capacity to do. After all, if philosophy had *no* value, it would not be so bad that it *only* emerged in Europe. As we saw in the introduction, I share this assumption; after all, my motivation to better theorise philosophical racism stems from a desire to make the discipline reflect the various ways in which different cultures and racial groups have come to theorise the world. Doing so is valuable precisely because it forces us to challenge the presumptions that we hold and almost never acknowledge. For a useful discussion of whether philosophy has value, see Defoort, "Is There Such a Thing as Chinese Philosophy?"

showing how diverse traditions of philosophy meet the criteria within the narratives of the discipline, van Norden and Garfield demonstrate that their exclusion is the product of prejudice masquerading as argument.

That institutional approaches shed light on the way knowledge institutions like university departments reinforce racist views, even unintentionally, is an important insight. Notice, however, that the focus of their arguments is *not* on undermining the narratives in question, but rather on demonstrating the *falsity* of these narratives when applied to non-Western philosophers and traditions of philosophy. In their response to Tampio's prejudicial remarks, for instance, van Norden and Garfield dismiss the "condescending romanticism" that underpins "the presupposition that non-European intellectuals spend their time on mountaintops" and show it to be a figment of Tampio's imagination.[171] Beyond their criticism, they do *not* question the claim, other than noting the oddness that the environment in which one theorises can play a role in determining whether that figure is a philosopher or a mere 'sage'. Yet, what I find striking about Tampio's claim is that he draws a *specific inference* about how philosophers 'think and live', which is (or rather is assumed to be) *primarily European*, and applies this to deny philosophical status to figures from outside that tradition. To put my point bluntly, where does this leave those figures who think of themselves as philosophers but who do not, or have never, lived in an urban environment? This gives rise to a worry that I think is latent in institutional approaches: because they focus on the *narratives themselves*, rather than the conceptual foundations that underpin them, these approaches demonstrate that the boundaries drawn by disciplinary mythologies are unjustified. What they do not do, however, is challenge the *way these narratives shape prevailing assumptions about what philosophy is or should be*.

This explains why the solution for institutional approaches is limited to surface-level reform, like for instance diversifying the curriculum. Consequently, while they identify structurally racist features of academic philosophy, institutional approaches nevertheless do not capture the scope of philosophical racism since they leave these same narratives largely intact, arguing instead that the disciplinary boundary must be drawn *elsewhere*. To their credit, they are not clear about where this boundary should be, largely out of a spirit and desire to be inclusive, but all the theorists I have cast under this approach nevertheless stop short of defending a full-scale reconceptualization of the foundational assumptions of the discipline. This is problematic

[171] Garfield, "Foreword," xv–xvi.

because the same ideas can be used to continue unfairly excluding various traditions of philosophy even as the discipline purportedly becomes more inclusive. If, for instance, the role of argument or the use of distinctions is thought to be of fundamental importance *to be philosophical*, where does this leave some traditional forms of African philosophy where, because the medium of communication is *oral*, these features are present *in different ways*.[172] What I am trying to suggest is that, while the reforms advocated for by proponents of the institutional approach are noble and worth implementing, reducing the problem of racism to purely institutional terms ignores the way racism can – and historically has – been redescribed in the language of new cultural or conceptual paradigms as they have become dominant.[173] To make this case, I start with a brief summary of the reforms proposed by van Norden, Garfield, and Dotson, before raising two problems that go undiagnosed on an institutional approach.

The Limitations of Institutional Approaches

If my interpretation of institutional approaches is accepted, we can plausibly see van Norden, Garfield, and Dotson as locating racism at the level of institutional narratives in philosophy. Indeed, van Norden and Garfield's criticisms of the way presumptions of the nature of philosophy, such as the importance of argumentation, have been used to unjustly exclude non-European traditions of philosophy and Dotson's suggestion that legitimation narratives place undue justificatory burdens on diverse scholars can both be read as taking aim at the disciplinary mythologies underpinning academic philosophy. Although they propose different solutions to tackling the problem, they are nevertheless united by a focus on institutional reform, which they argue will enable the construction of a more inclusive scholarly environment. To be clear, I am in support of these changes, and I have no doubt that they will make an important difference to diversifying the discipline of philosophy. I just do not think that, by themselves, these reforms are sufficient to either conceptualise or overcome the problem of philosophical racism. At best, this may be because we are interested in different questions: Dotson, for one, is explicit that her focus is on creating a better working environment for diverse scholars, whereas my focus is on examining whether some of the prevailing presuppositions within philosophy are racially inflected. They do, however, have a clear point of overlap, insofar as institutions – as proponents of the institutional approach have aptly shown

[172] On the differences between oral and written forms of reasoning, see Goody, *The Interface between the Written and the Oral*.
[173] Fredrickson, *Racism: A Short History*; Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution*.

– play a role in shaping and perpetuating these presuppositions. My point is that there is more to the problem of philosophical racism than institutional failure. Insofar as proponents of the institutional approach are interested in addressing the underlying conceptual problems in philosophy, then their way of framing the problem is inadequate.

As I read them, van Norden and Garfield are interested in the project of both illuminating and overcoming what they see as the structurally racist features of academic philosophy. To that end, most of my criticisms are focused on their writings. That said, I also engage with Dotson, insofar as her framework can be used to defend an institutional approach to theorising racism in the discipline. I will turn to briefly outlining the kinds of institutional reform they argue for, before outlining two limitations these approaches have when tackling philosophical racism. As we will hopefully see, while our aims are aligned, the disagreements that exist between us are substantive. Starting with van Norden and Garfield, they call for greater dialogue with less commonly taught philosophical traditions, by incorporating them into university curricula and changing hiring practices to ensure that philosophy departments at universities are more representative.[174] Though this is not explicit, they may even support additional reforms to graduate and doctoral programs in philosophy, such as training opportunities to learn foreign languages in order to read non-European texts in their original languages.[175] Other areas to explore could be the expansion of academic networks to scholars based in the Global South, who may be more likely to specialise in non-European traditions of philosophy, as well as the provision of additional funding for exchange programmes that enable students of all levels to experience a more diverse philosophy education.

The purpose of all these reforms is aimed at challenging the various disciplinary narratives that unfairly exclude the non-European world. As we have seen, one such narrative is the Hellenistic origins thesis, which van Norden, Garfield, and I have argued is both racially inflected and often appealed to as a justification for the exclusion of the non-European world from the scope of the discipline. Reading van Norden and Garfield as attempting to undermine

[174] Garfield, "Foreword," xix.
[175] Van Norden discusses language requirements as one potential barrier to increasing diversity within philosophy, though ultimately thinks this is often used as an excuse to refrain from making departments more inclusive. After all, there are already plenty of scholars specialising in non-European philosophy who could be hired, and there are plenty of marginalised philosophers who either write in English (e.g. Martin Luther King Jr.) or who write in Latin-based languages that are not too difficult to learn. Given his awareness of the potential problem of languages, I think van Norden would be sympathetic to this area of reform. For his brief discussion of languages, see Van Norden, *Taking Back Philosophy*, 33–34.

the racially inflected disciplinary narratives of philosophy therefore implies that, by calling for canon expansion and more diverse hiring practices, these narratives become much harder to sustain in a more inclusive and tolerant scholarly environment. In *this* respect, we can see Dotson as defending a similar conclusion, in her argument that philosophy requires *cultural change*. Rather than changing or amending the legitimation narratives within philosophy to make them more inclusive, she advocates for transforming the culture of academic philosophy from a culture of justification to a *culture of praxis* that contains at least the following components:

> "(1) Value placed on seeking issues and circumstances pertinent to our living, where one maintains a healthy appreciation for the differing issues that will emerge as pertinent among different populations, and
> (2) Recognition and encouragement of multiple canons and multiple ways of understanding disciplinary validation".[176]

For Dotson, it is not about replacing the prevailing legitimating norms. Instead, building a more inclusive academic environment requires a shift in the way scholars make judgments about the work of their colleagues, which is sensitive to the different concerns that arise when individuals have different philosophical or personal backgrounds. This suggestion is grounded in a distinction between legitimation and validation, where the former – as we have seen – involves the use of a set of widely held underlying presuppositions to determine whether a particular contribution merits philosophical status or not.[177] The latter, however, refers to more general standards of evaluation that can, say, help to judge the soundness or validity of a given contribution, presumably relative to the debates the contribution sees itself as engaging with or responding to. Rather than changing the criteria by which scholars assess whether a contribution is *philosophical*, they instead accept that there are fundamental differences in what constitutes philosophy. Judging a contribution thus becomes a question of how *good* the contribution is to the debates it seeks to influence.

To help illustrate this point, Dotson draws an analogy with creative writing. While there are many creative writers who will not be able to sustain themselves as writers, and while there is a significant volume of bad creative writing, neither of these factors make their contributions *something other than* creative writing.[178] In other words, a satirical political poem and a

[176] Dotson, "How Is This Paper Philosophy?," 17.
[177] Ibid., 17–18.
[178] Ibid., 19.

fantasy-romance novel in a steampunk universe may share *nothing* in form or content, yet they are both understood as contributions within creative writing. This gestures towards a vision of the discipline where multiple different *ways of doing philosophy* can co-exist such that their philosophical credentials are not subject to perpetual scrutiny or justification.[179] Again, for Dotson, this does not amount to changing legitimating narratives since – despite their significant differences – a satirical poem and a steampunk novel are both unambiguously treated as contributions to creative writing. Whether they are *good contributions* therefore becomes the key question, which is assessed in accordance with more general standards of evaluation that may or may not be relativised to the debate in question.[180] Framed this way, van Norden, Garfield, and Dotson are all attentive to the ways that disciplinary narratives can perform a legitimating function that, in turn, works to perpetuate a racially inflected conception of philosophy. Indeed, as I noted earlier, this is one of the benefits of the institutional approach, insofar as it identifies how features of the knowledge institutions within philosophy play an important role in the development of philosophical racism.

For all these thinkers, the answer lies in some kind of reform, be it to diversify the institutions of philosophy to make these exclusionary narratives harder to sustain or to dispense with the legitimating features of institutional narratives entirely. If the latter, the goal is then to replace legitimation narratives with more general evaluative standards that can determine whether philosophical contributions are valid, sound, and so on. Hence, the emphasis is less on determining whether a contribution is indeed *philosophical* and instead aims to provide some standards, which may not be universally held, to help adjudicate whether a given contribution is an example of 'good' philosophy. In any case, neither approach attempts to *change* or *undermine* the disciplinary narratives of philosophy. At best, these theorists seem to suggest that the unjustly excluded traditions of philosophy will be subsumed into the prevailing legitimation narratives, especially given the lengths van Norden and Garfield in particular go

[179] This echoes the distinction made by Justin Smith in his history of philosophy, where he asks whether philosophy is an activity more like *ballet* (i.e. a specific tradition originating in a particular place) or more like *dance* (i.e. a universal human activity). To think of philosophy as more like creative writing is thus to think of philosophy as more like dance – namely something that everyone does or can do. For an outline of his distinction, see Smith, *The Philosopher*, chap. 2.

[180] It is not altogether clear whether Dotson thinks that there are standards that apply across the discipline or whether they are more localised to the sub-debates within the discipline. I am also not sure this move helps to get out of the problem of philosophical racism, since the evaluative standards – even if they are more general – may themselves be shaped by a racially inflected history of what counts as 'good philosophy'. Indeed, and as we will see, if we apply standards like 'strong coherent argument', this equally works to exclude certain traditions of philosophy whose arguments – in virtue of their medium – may look different.

in showing that these narratives *do* apply to traditions outside Europe. In fact, the only thinker to recognise the possibility of narrative change is Dotson, who ultimately rejects this approach on the grounds that it once again imposes additional and unjust burdens on diverse scholars to drive this process.[181] After all, if their lived experience of academic philosophy is hostile, why should they *also* bear the burden of driving change?

While I think there is much to be admired from these institutional approaches, I nevertheless disagree with their rejection of narrative change. My contention, which I aim to defend in subsequent chapters, is that institutional reform must go hand-in-hand with a critical examination of the conceptual foundations that underpin these narratives. Otherwise, these racially-inflected narratives will continue to be redescribed wherever the boundary of philosophy ends up being drawn. This is due to the nature of philosophical racism: if what is at stake is the way disciplinary narratives reinforce and perpetuate various presuppositions about philosophy that are racially inflected, then it seems difficult to rid ourselves of philosophical racism unless we critically examine these presuppositions. In short, if philosophical racism is about *how we think*, then we need to explicitly challenge our ways of thinking. This is particularly evident, I want to suggest, in van Norden and Garfield's writings, where they seem to take existing categories or notions of philosophy for granted when calling for the inclusion of "less commonly taught philosophies" within university curricula. While they diagnose the role of disciplinary narratives in fostering the unjustified exclusion of non-European thinkers like Confucius, their approach is concerned with demonstrating the *unjustified nature* of this exclusion rather than using, say, Confucius to challenge the very terms under which this exclusion occurs. Therefore, the presuppositions that underscore a view like 'philosophy begins in Ancient Greece' are left untouched, which has significant implications for attempts to make philosophy more inclusive.

In short, the commitments of the institutional approach focus on the use of institutional reform to *expose* the unjust exclusion of non-European traditions of philosophy, thereby making *some* of the legitimating narratives of philosophy, for instance the Hellenistic origins thesis, harder

[181] Dotson's claim is that imposing this burden "is *not a liveable option*" for diverse practitioners since there exist alternative avenues where they can pursue their life goals without the unfair treatment endemic to academic philosophy – see "How Is This Paper Philosophy?," 15–16. I largely agree with Dotson that the burden should not fall on diverse practitioners, but equally hold that changing these narratives is an important task that is worth pursuing. Taking on these challenges, however, must also be the focus of scholars working in the mainstream or who have more stability than diverse practitioners.

to sustain. However, what goes unexamined are the conceptual foundations of these narratives. The Hellenistic origins thesis is *more than* just a claim about the origins of philosophy; it implicitly includes *some* conception of what constitutes the activity of philosophising. Consequently, by ignoring these implicit presuppositions, institutional narratives may rectify some unjust surface-level racist exclusions, including, for example, thinking of Confucius as a "sage on a mountaintop" rather than as a *philosopher*, while nevertheless leaving other deeper exclusions intact. Although the Hellenistic origins thesis may become harder to sustain upon the inclusion of, say, traditions of Indian philosophy that predate Thales, the implicit presuppositions governing the kind of activity philosophy is deemed to be can nevertheless continue to play an exclusionary role by shaping *which figures* are included, or by *justifying their inclusion through a comparison with central figures within Western philosophy*. In either case, the European tradition of philosophy continues to preserve its status as the implicit yardstick that other philosophical traditions must be compared to. In what follows, I illustrate this dynamic in two different cases, which I suggest represent two different limitations of the institutional approach in general. While there may be other examples that I do not consider, these two cases represent general instances of the central problem of the institutional approach – namely that it does not consider the conceptual foundations underpinning the disciplinary mythologies of academic philosophy.

First, recall van Norden and Garfield's suggestion that the importance of argumentation is used to *wrongly justify* the exclusion of philosophers from outside the Euro-American tradition. In short, the problem is with the way the idea of argument *has been used* to police the boundary between the philosophical and the non-philosophical. Thus, insofar as various figures in non-European philosophical traditions provide arguments, they ought to be considered philosophers – even if the form these arguments take are more allegorical than, for instance, rigid and clear syllogisms. What goes unquestioned, however, is the presupposition that arguments *must* constitute an aspect of philosophy, which we might speculate is the result of the influence of *our perception* of Greco-Roman philosophy. Indeed, the discipline of philosophy seems to strongly self-identify itself as continuing the Socratic method of critique through dialogue: philosophy classes are founded on this premise, and criticism has even been described as the "life-blood of the discipline".[182] If this is the case, then it seems as if the figures and traditions outside Europe must possess some degree of argumentation to even merit inclusion within the

[182] Priest, "What Is Philosophy?," 203 note 9.

discipline. But why should we unquestionably accept this presupposition? To be clear, I am not suggesting that this *is* the case, or that we must dispense with the notion of argument altogether as a prerequisite for the creation of an inclusive environment for philosophy. My claim is much more modest: if it is the case that the reconceptualization of philosophy as Greek was inflected by racism, and if it is the case that the prevailing emphasis on argument stems from this reconceptualization, then we as present-day philosophers ought *not* to take this presupposition for granted as an uncontroversial feature of philosophy.

I will try to illustrate this point by examining one of the central debates in African philosophy: how to determine the relationship between a modern *written* tradition of philosophy and an earlier *oral* tradition of philosophical thinking.[183] Given their oral medium, the older traditions of African philosophy are largely comprised of "communal proverbs, maxims, tales, myths, lyrics, poetry, art motifs and the like".[184] This may be because of the restrictions imposed by an oral tradition; after all, if thoughts cannot be preserved *as they are* in writing and must instead be passed down through the memories of successive generations, this has an effect on the ways philosophical ideas are expressed. Hence, traditional African philosophy takes the form of "single statements or sets … of relatively brief pieces of discourse as opposed to the lengthy exercises in assertion, explanation, and justification that are so characteristic of developed traditions of written philosophy".[185] What I am trying to suggest is simply that the *form of communication* influences *the way things are and can be expressed*, which should be uncontroversial.[186] This is not, however, to say that oral traditions are by their nature theoretically thin or consist in an unreflective repository of communal knowledge: various African philosophers have defended the "profound conceptions about reality and human

[183] Outlining the central premises of this debate is beyond the scope of this chapter. For an overview of various positions in the literature see Gyekye, *An Essay on African Philosophical Thought*; Hountondji, *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality*; Oruka, "Sagacity in African Philosophy"; Wiredu, *Philosophy and an African Culture*.
[184] Wiredu, *Cultural Universals and Particulars*, 114.
[185] Ibid.
[186] This is a relatively weak claim that notes how the particularities of a given medium, in this case orality, shape the way thoughts are expressed. The leading anthropologist, Jack Goody, has argued for a stronger version of this view, in which literacy enables different cognitive skills and ways of thinking to emerge. Thus, these anthropologists argue that logical syllogisms are only possible as a way of thinking following the invention of writing. This stronger thesis is more controversial, but, if true, it would only serve to strengthen the point I make in this discussion of the oral traditions of African philosophy. For proponents of the stronger view, see Goody and Watt, "The Consequences of Literacy"; Goody, *The Interface between the Written and the Oral*. For one influential critique of this approach, see Halverson, "Goody and the Implosion of the Literacy Thesis." For a contemporary defence of Goody's claim, see Olson, *The Mind on Paper*.

experience" that can be found in "some of the folk sayings of African societies".[187] Similarly, there have been attempts to distinguish between those sages of traditional African societies who merely repeat and maintain the belief systems of their societies and those sages who possess a philosophical disposition, which sees them critically reflect on and evaluate the belief systems that have been passed down orally.[188]

What I want to suggest is that the nature of an oral tradition problematises the importance of argument as being *necessary for* philosophy. For one, precisely because nothing is written, taking seriously the idea of an oral *tradition* of philosophy will necessitate the compilation and reconstruction of those oral statements, myths, poems, etc. that contain philosophical profundity. This task is philosophical, insofar as it involves reflection on whether a statement is 'philosophically profound' or not, as well as examining how best to interpret the statement in question. Beyond a purely reconstructive exercise, engaging with the kinds of statements and ideas within the oral tradition of African philosophy may require a different approach, given that the myths and poems that comprise it are not readily understandable as arguments for a specific position. In fact, reading them *as arguments* may result in the insights from traditional African philosophy being dismissed on the grounds that these statements are 'bad' or 'strange'. Hence, what may be at issue are the standards of evaluation that are being applied to judge a tradition of philosophy that is rooted in a fundamentally different medium. Even considering the remarks of those *philosophical* sages in African philosophy, rather than sages more generally, does not necessarily entail the presence of argument. For example, following colonialism and the conversion to Christianity, some philosophical sages attempted to retain some of their traditional beliefs considering their acceptance of somewhat incompatible Western religious notions. In remarking on the process, Kwasi Wiredu writes that "African and Western influences are fused and transmuted by means of a *personal dialectic* in a manner which deserves … a cultural as well as a philosophical analysis".[189] While this personal dialectic clearly employs some rational standard like consistency or coherence, what is less clear is whether – given its personal nature – the form is one of argument and counter-argument.

[187] Wiredu, *Cultural Universals and Particulars*, 114. For a specific example, see Gbadegesin, "An Outline of a Theory of Destiny."
[188] Oruka, "Sagacity in African Philosophy," 50–53.
[189] Wiredu, *Cultural Universals and Particulars*, 117, my emphasis.

At this point, it might be argued that I am being too harsh. After all, van Norden and Garfield seem to recognise that argument – while an important feature of philosophy – is not a *defining* feature of philosophical thinking. In fact, they provide two other goals or features, in addition to argumentation: to clarify and classify alternative positions, and to provide "substantially new perspectives or answers to questions".[190] Further, these three features are not definitional criteria; presumably van Norden and Garfield are open to the inclusion of other features of philosophical dialogue that may not be as present (or present at all) in *either* the dominant Euro-American tradition *or* the tradition of Chinese philosophy they specialise in. To my mind, however, this inclusive approach works to avoid the problem: their commendable desire to be inclusive seems to elide an examination of cases where different conceptions of philosophy may conflict or be in tension with one another. Equally, the dominant tradition of philosophy continues to be implicit in the way van Norden and Garfield attempt to articulate alternative features of philosophical dialogue. After all, what does it mean to provide a "substantially new perspective" and whose "questions" need answering? Are non-European traditions of philosophy *automatically* new perspectives because they are less commonly taught in Euro-American universities? Further, are the insights of non-European philosophy included when they ask different questions or seem to have different answers, thereby prioritising the examination of difference over the identification of commonalities?

The first limitation of institutional approaches is therefore that they lack the conceptual resources to theorise the racist inflections in inherited *ways of thinking* about philosophy. This has significant implications because these presuppositions continue to underwrite attempts to reform philosophy to make it more diverse, which can lead to the dual problem of *selection* and *misinterpretation*. I will briefly examine each of these in turn. Starting with the former, if the presuppositions of Euro-American philosophy go unchallenged, then the choice of *who gets to be included* is itself shaped by these racially inflected presuppositions that help set the boundaries between the philosophical and the non-philosophical. In the case considered above, if argument is taken as a central aspect of philosophy, then it is only those figures who seem to advance arguments that are taken to be philosophers. Hence, the drive to be more inclusive is

[190] Van Norden, *Taking Back Philosophy*, 148. Personally, I think this third feature – the provision of new perspectives – is the product of a book aimed at a general audience, given that it is either vague or trivially true. In a sense, *any* contribution constitutes a 'substantially new perspective' regarding a particular question, since being a contribution at minimum requires that it be something that has not been articulated in precisely these terms. Alternatively, one might attempt to provide an account of what it means for a perspective to be 'substantially new', which is a vague term (and not what van Norden tries to do).

being shaped by a *specific* conception of philosophy that we assume is free from racist inflection. Even adopting a capacious view of what constitutes an argument, as van Norden favours, does little to forestall this potential problem, since it may well be the case that debates within alternative traditions of thinking move forward or seem to be resolved in forms other than the providing of reasons. In the problem of misinterpretation, the desire to be more inclusive may result in attempts to interpret philosophers from non-European traditions as *providing reasons or arguments* when they may be attempting to do something else. As such, their philosophical merit comes from *misreading* these traditions as doing the same thing 'our' tradition does, which again demonstrates a refusal to engage with the very narratives that constitute what it means to do philosophy or be philosophical.

Turning to my second line of criticism, institutional approaches are limited by their inability to critically evaluate the terms under which inclusion occurs. That is, by calling for the inclusion of diverse theorists within the auspices of philosophy – something that, to be clear, we should undoubtedly pursue – these approaches subordinate questions about the manner through which we include diverse figures. Consequently, inclusionary initiatives may only serve to replicate the conditions of philosophical racism by allowing diverse theorists to speak within clearly defined roles, themselves determined by the prevailing omissions and oversights of the dominant Euro-American tradition. As Murad Idris frames it:

> "The terms on which historical works and thinkers attain disciplinary sanction, the specific roles they are made to perform, and the historiographic discourses that structure their reception must always be subject to scrutiny; such terms and representations reflect broader operations of power".[191]

What I take Idris to be identifying are the politics of inclusion. While the greater institutional demand for diversity has led to the emergence of hitherto marginalised voices that have undoubtedly enriched the discipline, the way in which these theorists have been represented within the discipline has largely been ignored. If we take philosophical racism to be a problem concerning the way we as philosophers *think about the discipline*, then the way in which diverse figures are perceived at the moment of their inclusion can continue to bear the marks of this racism – albeit in a different form. To motivate this point, we can think about the prevailing responses to good faith attempts by universities to decolonise (some of) their

[191] Idris, "The Location of Anticolonialism," 338.

curricula[192]: the syllabus to an introductory course may be amended to include an anti-colonial theorist like Frantz Fanon or a course on examining the problems of philosophy may add a section on race and racism that engages with Charles Mills' challenge to Rawlsian liberalism. What is evident is that a "handful of figures (e.g. Du Bois, Fanon, Gandhi)" are becoming "synecdochical for anticolonial thought" such that they come "to be constituted as another archive of 'great thinkers'" whose writings need to be covered in a university setting.[193] Therefore, the complexity found within the writings of any of these theorists is being elided or ignored in favour of their inclusion *as anti-colonial or anti-racist thinkers*.

To put this more provocatively, if the terms of including non-white philosophers is that they provide unique anticolonial perspectives, then that does little to alter the perspective that – for most areas of philosophy – the non-white non-European world has very little to offer. It also affects who we include in the first place; we might privilege theorists like W.E.B. Du Bois and Kwame Nkrumah, insofar as they offer incisive critiques of colonial policy, at the expense of theorists like Anton Wilhelm Amo, who may not. Further, reducing these figures to their anticolonialism or anti-racism elides an examination of how their reflections can connect to deep-seated philosophical questions beyond the domain of race and colonialism. To what extent, for example, can Du Bois' reflections on the biases that inflect academic research help reform scientific practice for the better?[194] How might Kwasi Wiredu's formalisation of notions of truth in Akan languages alter prevailing ways we understand categories like 'true' or 'false'?[195] Similar questions can be raised about a whole range of anti-racist and anticolonial thinkers from C.L.R. James and Sylvia Wynter to Chen Kuan-Hsing and Linda Tuhiwai Smith.[196] The key point is that taking these theorists as complex philosophers in their own right

[192] I say good-faith attempts to deliberately exclude instances where, as van Norden notes, someone "of non-European descent" is asked to put together a course on a diverse tradition of philosophy – see *Taking Back Philosophy*, 34.
[193] Idris, "The Location of Anticolonialism," 338.
[194] Du Bois wrote extensively on the biases that existed in histories of the American Civil War, where they were silent on the role of African Americans. These two aspects of his work are of course related, but they can nevertheless speak to debates *beyond* the question of race. For some of his essays on this topic, see Du Bois, "Worlds of Color"; "Criteria of Negro Art"; "The Propaganda of History." For a recent attempt to defend a conception of a value-free science using Du Bois' writings, see Bright, "Du Bois' Democratic Defence of the Value Free Ideal."
[195] Wiredu's formalisation of Akan schemes is intrinsically tied to his politically motivated ambitions to write philosophy *for an African audience* and in response *to African concerns*. Doing so is an attempt to decentre the concerns and issues of Euro-American traditions of philosophy, which may not overlap with African concerns. My point here is to say that *broadening* the debate around the idea of truth by drawing on Wiredu's writings can be useful, even in the absence of the anticolonial point he is trying to make. For his writings on this topic, see especially Wiredu, *Cultural Universals and Particulars*, pt. 3.
[196] For a brief collection of their various writings, see Chen, *Asia as Method*; James, *The Black Jacobins*; Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*; Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom."

requires us to avoid reducing their writings to the advancement of one particular theme or social goal. After all, we would never imagine reading someone like Kant as purely a *moral* philosopher or Mill as *just* a utilitarian. To do so would be to ignore, downplay, or misread their wider writings on politics and epistemology through the lens of one aspect of their rich philosophical output. It also has the added problem of typecasting *all non-white philosophers* as working on questions of race and racism, thereby again reducing the complexity of individual thinkers to their racial identity.

The second limitation of institutional approaches is therefore that they push questions concerning how inclusion should occur to the practical and personal decisions of individuals who attempt to diversify the courses they offer in a university setting. That is, once the boundaries of the discipline have been redrawn *elsewhere*, it seems as if these approaches think that the issues concerning how or who we include are simply discretionary questions related to the personal preference of the course convenor or the departmental hiring process. Yet this obscures how an uncritical acceptance of the terms of inclusion can serve to perpetuate philosophical racism, even in the presence of, say, substantial changes to the composition of the typical philosophy canon or to the modules offered by a specific philosophy department. As we have seen, the importance of including diverse voices has worked to canonise a set of non-white theorists as anti-racist and anti-colonial, which reduces the complexity of their philosophical oeuvre and typecasts them as *necessarily* being interested in the question of race. To be clear, this does not mean that diversifying the curricula should not be pursued; it might even be a necessary first step to overcoming philosophical racism. My point is simply that institutional reform *cannot* be the end-goal of overcoming philosophical racism, since this drastically misunderstands the nature and scope of the problem.

This brings me to an additional worrisome implication: that the division between philosophy and non-philosophy becomes reinscribed within the discipline to differentiate between a good or rigorous theoretical philosophy, and a bad or less rigorous applied philosophy. One way to see this is to return to a distinction, initially put forward by John Rawls, between ideal and non-ideal theory. For Rawls, ideal theory is an approach to political theorising that abstracts from present realities to imagine what an ideally just society might look like, whereas non-ideal

theory involves theorising *from our present moment* with its inequalities and injustice intact.[197] The history of analytic political philosophy, largely following Rawls, has been focused on doing ideal theory, by for instance specifying the principles of justice that can then be used to informatively think through injustice in our present. One implication of this tendency, however, has been the marginalisation of non-ideal questions, such as *how to respond to racial injustice*, on the grounds that these are not "philosophical problems [but] 'implementation' ones".[198] These questions, the argument goes, are resolvable through an *application* of the principles of justice, and therefore do not require sustained philosophical reflection.

If questions of racial justice are reduced to problems of implementing a set of principles determined by ideal theory, then the inclusion of diverse voices serves only to broaden the domain to which the principles of ideal theory are applied. The terms of engagement, then, are such that diverse theorists can only contribute to the identification of new applications for ideal principles rather than challenging the substantive content of the principles themselves.[199] Framed this way, the ostensible act of inclusion does little to subvert or unsettle the pre-existing racially inflected division between philosophy and non-philosophy: it is instead reinscribed using a new set of terms that come to be dominant within a given era (i.e. it is a "scavenger ideology").[200] Hence, the language of ideal and non-ideal theory once again works to justify the marginalisation of non-white theorists, *insofar as they work on questions of race or other non-ideal considerations*, in ways that would not necessarily be combatted by the implementation of institutional reforms to create more diverse university curricula. In fact, that the dominance of ideal theory is waning is largely due to the writings of scholars like Charles Mills, who explicitly challenged the conceptual foundations of ideal theory as being ill-equipped to serve the goals of racial justice. What this points to, then, are the limitations of institutional approaches to the question of racism. By preserving the narratives of the

[197] This is a useful short-hand, though I recognise that many philosophers employing this distinction – including Rawls himself – are not wholly consistent in their use of the term ideal theory. Laura Valentini for instance distinguishes between three senses of ideal theory, ranging from the assumption of full compliance (where all participants follow the principles of justice) to the vision of an end-state of justice that can guide reform. I think it is in this last sense that my argument is at its strongest, though I am open to the idea that it may also apply to other senses of ideal theory. For an overview of the three senses of ideal theory, see Valentini, "Ideal vs. Non-Ideal Theory."

[198] Forrester, *In the Shadow of Justice*, 41. Forrester makes this remark about the relationship between Rawls' theory and desegregation in the aftermath of the Civil Rights Movement, which provides further evidence for my point that questions of racism and racial injustice are deemed non-philosophical or less philosophically interesting.

[199] I am indebted to Emmalon Davis, who made this point in her paper "Building (Conceptual) Bridges", which was presented as part of a MANCEPT workshop that I co-organised on the work of Charles Mills in September 2023.

[200] Fredrickson, *Racism: A Short History*, 8–9.

discipline, these approaches risk perpetuating philosophical racism – even amidst academic environments that at least appear to be more inclusive. A commitment to eradicating philosophical racism must therefore go further than institutional approaches make possible – namely by radically reshaping our ways of thinking about philosophy.

Before concluding, it is worth briefly considering one final objection. My core argument against institutional approaches is that showing how non-European traditions of philosophy *actually satisfy* the prevailing legitimation narratives of the discipline is inadequate because it risks preserving a racially inflected conception of philosophy. If, however, we were to follow Dotson in *dispensing with* legitimation narratives entirely, then it seems that neither of my criticisms apply. Thus, if we were to think of, for instance, African philosophy as just another way of doing philosophy in the same way that steampunk is just another way of doing creative writing, the problems I am diagnosing seem to disappear. I am not fully persuaded by this line of criticism largely because I think Dotson's argument is underspecified. Consider her creative writing analogy once again. While it is true that there are several ways of doing creative writing, it does not necessarily entail the removal of all legitimation narratives: a steampunk novel is not *necessarily* a political satire, unless some additional unspecified criteria are met. Although both are undoubtedly instances of creative writing, what distinguishes one from the other are a set of legitimation narratives that allow the differentiation of steampunk not only from political satire but also from other forms of fantasy writing. My worry is therefore that legitimation narratives come to be redescribed at a subdisciplinary level, which results in the same kinds of problem that I diagnose in van Norden and Garfield's writings. This, however, may not be how Dotson conceptualises creative writing; indeed, I may think of it too much like literature, where there are several genres of writing with fuzzy boundaries between them. If Dotson has something broader in mind, then successfully enacting the cultural change she argues for will require a fundamental reassessment of the nature of philosophy rather than removing the legitimation narratives that exist. Yet, framed this way, Dotson's position becomes very similar to mine, since cultural change will require a shift in the prevailing *ways we think* about philosophy.

Concluding Remarks

If my argument thus far is accepted, prevailing approaches to theorising the problem of racism in philosophy fall short of fully capturing the scope of the problem. We saw in the last chapter

that interpretive approaches home in on one particular theorist, which narrows the scope of the inquiry and fails to track the ways that racist ideas can take shape in dialogues between theorists. On this score, institutional approaches seem to fare better given that their unit of analysis is not a specific theorist but rather the underlying legitimation narratives of academic philosophy. These narratives, I suggested, not only shape how scholars see how their research fits within the discipline, but also help to define a boundary between the philosophical and the non-philosophical. On my reconstruction of van Norden and Garfield's argument, the 'overwhelming whiteness' of philosophy is the product of a structurally racist set of disciplinary narratives that unjustly exclude non-European traditions of philosophy from the discipline. As I noted earlier, we can think of these narratives as structures since they encompass a set of collective interpretive resources that influence behaviour, while they can plausibly be thought of as racist because they draw on a racially inflected view of philosophy: the Hellenistic origins thesis. Consequently, we can read van Norden and Garfield as undermining the underlying assumptions that are enabled by these narratives, for instance that non-European traditions of philosophy lack clear arguments, without necessarily challenging the conceptual foundations of these narratives in the first place. This has resonances with Dotson's view that disciplinary narratives legitimate a specific vision of philosophy that does not reflect the interests of diverse scholars. As such, these scholars face an undue justificatory burden to prove that their arguments and ideas *are philosophical*.

Framed this way, the advantage of institutional approaches is that they identify how the structures of academic philosophy help to create and sustain an exclusionary environment where non-European traditions of thinking are assumed to belong to other disciplines, such as area studies, religious studies, or anthropology. This is important because it captures something that interpretive approaches miss, namely that adequately capturing the scope of the problem racism poses for the discipline extends beyond the *writings* of canonical theorists and necessitates an examination of the institutional features of academic philosophy. The limitation with institutional approaches, however, is that they seem to reduce philosophical racism to the unfair boundary drawn by these narratives rather than the conceptual foundations that sustain these narratives in the first place. That is, the issue is one of *where to draw the boundary*, with van Norden and Garfield compellingly demonstrating that – under the prevailing conceptions of philosophy – non-European traditions should be included since they *do* possess, for instance, clear and systematic arguments for a specific position. This is why all three theorists call for some kind of institutional reform, be it the inclusion of more diverse thinkers on university

curricula, changes to hiring practices to cultivate a broader research environment, or the removal of all legitimation narratives so that *all research agendas* can coexist without the burden of justifying their inclusion. To be clear, I am in support of these inclusionary reforms, I just do not think they get at the heart of the problem. This is because, while they all agree that the boundary must be drawn *elsewhere*, what goes unquestioned is the *way we think about* the boundary. Why, for instance, must we think that philosophy is about arguments, the drawing of distinctions, or any other features that are associated with either the Hellenistic origins thesis or the evolution of philosophy in Europe?

I attempted to show in both my criticisms that this is more than a marginal disagreement; rather, it reflects two different conceptions of philosophical racism. For van Norden and Garfield in particular, it seems as if the act of including more diverse theorists will make these disciplinary narratives harder to sustain. The upshot is, presumably, that the structurally racist features of the discipline will have either been tackled or removed. As I argued, however, because these narratives are grounded in a conception of philosophy that is racially inflected, my worry is that the same kinds of exclusions will reappear even in the presence of good faith attempts to make the discipline more inclusive. We can see this problem in two different ways: on the one hand, if specific features like argument continue to be seen as central to the discipline, then these racially inflected features continue to inform which thinkers and traditions from outside Europe come to be included. This is particularly evident when examining debates in African philosophy, where the presence of an older *oral* tradition is in tension with prevailing presuppositions of what philosophy *is* due to the different medium of communication. Attempting to include oral traditions therefore run into a dilemma where they are either excluded because they do not meet the criteria, or included by misinterpreting what figures in the oral tradition see *themselves* as doing. On the other hand, the institutional approach lacks the conceptual resources to examine the terms under which inclusion occurs. This can typecast diverse figures as providing novel insights in precisely those areas where Western philosophy is thought to have elisions. In both cases, the European tradition of philosophy continues to set the agenda such that non-European traditions have to somehow ‘fit in’ the discursive space, at risk of being excluded, typecast, or misunderstood.

If my argument is accepted, then there is a need to move beyond unquestioningly accepting the prevailing narratives of the discipline and begin questioning their underlying conceptual foundations. After all, why should it come as a surprise that opening a conversation with

different traditions will result in a re-evaluation of the central commitments of the Western tradition? One reason to resist this conclusion may be the relativist concern I briefly addressed earlier. If engaging with diverse traditions requires the acceptance of implausible or irrational ontological commitments, such as the existence of witches or living ancestors, then perhaps it is good that this engagement *does not* occur. Otherwise, the very idea of philosophy as a truth-seeking enterprise comes into question. Perhaps it should, though I recognise this may be controversial. Nevertheless, there is a more moderate answer to offer, which questions the assumption that the idea of witchcraft or living ancestors is *irrational*. The worry seems to be that, by positing entities like witchcraft that are scientifically dubious, taking it seriously will also enable the positing of *all kinds* of questionable entities with limited evidence. But, as Polycarp Ikuenobe argues, "people may be scientifically in error in believing in witchcraft, but they obviously may not be philosophically or epistemologically in error, nor are they irrational".[201] As I read him, Ikuenobe is suggesting that, while these entities may not exist *scientifically*, in the sense that they are not things that can be tested empirically, they can nevertheless serve a fundamentally different explanatory purpose. In the belief systems of traditional African philosophy, entities like witches are not stipulated as if they were the product of mere superstition, but rather they are "rationally held, questioned, and revised within the context of the general belief system and conceptual scheme".[202]

The response to the relativist concern, then, is to say that invoking entities like witches does not *necessarily* collapse into the proliferation of ontologically questionable things. If anything, there is an unjustified presumption buried in this objection that sees witches as automatically belonging to the realm of superstition rather than a rationally held set of beliefs grounded in a different ontological foundation. This perhaps best encapsulates what I take to be the limitations of institutional approaches: their focus on showing how diverse traditions fit the prevailing narratives fails to examine how the conceptual underpinnings of these narratives continue to enable the dismissal of entire bodies of thought as irrational, superstitious, and – crucially – non-philosophical. If my arguments thus far are accepted, it suggests that we need an alternative framework to theorise philosophical racism, one that can recognise the important contributions of both interpretive and institutional approaches while nevertheless moving beyond them to grapple with the conceptual foundations of the discipline. To do so, I argue

[201] Ikuenobe, "Cognitive Relativism, African Philosophy, and the Phenomenon of Witchcraft," 146.
[202] Ibid.

that we should think of racism as being at least partly *ideological* in the pejorative sense. That is, racism produces distortions in the ways we conceptualise the world. In the case of witchcraft, there is a prevailing assumption that these entities cannot *rationally* exist; they are simply the product of superstition and possibly even tribal ritual. Yet, as Ikuenobe argues, traditional African philosophy provides a rational grounding for these beliefs. Why, then, is the default presumption that Ikuenobe is mistaken rather than an attempt to engage in a productive dialogue to understand these beliefs 'from the inside'? My strong contention is that these prevailing attitudes constitute a racist ideology that denigrates these insights as inevitably non-philosophical. In the subsequent three chapters, I turn to defending this claim, showing how an ideological framework can help us adequately capture the scope of philosophical racism.

Chapter 3: Racism as Ideology: A Du Boisian Account

In the last two chapters, I demonstrated the limitations of prevailing attempts to tackle the problem of racism within the discipline of philosophy. On the one hand, interpretive approaches that adopt a single-minded focus on the writings of individual canonical thinkers unduly narrow the scope of inquiry by ignoring the structural features of racism. That is, the emphasis on determining whether the racism of Hume or Hegel affected their philosophical thinking places these thinkers in separate silos and fails to examine how the dialogues *between influential theorists* contributed to the legitimation of racist views as having philosophical credence. On the other hand, institutional approaches – despite recognising the importance of institutional features in perpetuating racism in the discipline – reduce the problem of philosophical racism to an institutional one that can be resolved through the creation of more diverse departments and curricula, or through widespread cultural change. Although this will have a positive effect in helping to make academic philosophy a more welcoming environment for diverse scholars, it does little to address the underlying conceptual dimensions that underpin prevailing justifications that exclude the non-white non-European world from the scope of philosophy. Indeed, by failing to tackle these conceptual dimensions, institutional approaches risk perpetuating racism in the discipline even as they call for greater diversity and inclusivity, by for instance ignoring those figures or traditions that do not fall under dominant conceptions of philosophy or by retaining the view that non-European philosophy can only be relevant if it can be shown to match onto a figure or tradition that is indisputably philosophical.

Given the limitations of both interpretive and institutional approaches, I now turn to articulating my preferred alternative over the subsequent two chapters. This will proceed in two stages: here, I draw on recent developments in the literature to articulate an account of racism as *ideological*, before pairing this with the methodological insights of disciplinary history writing in the next chapter.[203] The upshot will be a theoretical framework to theorise philosophical racism, which can illuminate how a racist ideology comes to influence the dominant understanding of what constitutes the proper intellectual orientation, subject matter, and methodology of the discipline. Bridging both chapters is the figure of W.E.B. Du Bois, who is among the few theorists to straddle the divide between the social and philosophical problems of race. Alongside a rich and nuanced account of the impact racism has on American society,

[203] For prominent contemporary accounts that argue for an ideological dimension to racism, see Haslanger, "Racism, Ideology, and Social Movements"; Shelby, "Ideology, Racism, and Critical Social Theory."

Du Bois critiqued the ways dominant frameworks and leading theorists elided or obscured the question of race. For him, several facets of academic inquiry were inflected by racist presuppositions or assumptions, causing theorists to ask the *wrong questions* that, in turn, omitted the salience of race from their analysis. Underpinning Du Bois' arguments is his notion of the colour line: the idea that parsing humanity into 'lighter' and 'darker' races is *analytically useful* because it demonstrates the salience of race in understanding not only inequalities in resources, wealth, and power, but also in shaping how individuals from different racial groups interact with one another. For Du Bois, the colour line draws our attention to the role of race and racism in explaining the disproportionate power and wealth held by whites *globally* as well as explaining the underlying tensions and perceptions that structure how white and black Americans see themselves and, crucially, *each other*.

What I am suggesting, then, is that Du Bois' conception of the colour line has a wide range of epistemic dimensions that are both *produced by* and *help reinforce* the unequal distribution of wealth and power along racial lines. Indeed, Du Bois frequently stresses the mental dimensions to the colour line; as he puts it "we may decry the colour prejudice of the South, yet it remains a heavy fact. Such *curious kinks of the human mind* exist and must be reckoned with soberly".[204] It is these 'kinks', these twists or flaws in our thinking, that affect the way individuals see or understand the world and produce outcomes that preserve the racially structured order in both American society and the international sphere. Framed this way, it seems that Du Bois is advancing a conception of racism as at least partly involving some kind of mental state that works to entrench unjust social relations, which has *resonances with* Marx's conception of ideology. That there are Marxist influences on Du Bois is not a surprise: his later writings take on a more materialist bent and he explicitly mentions his admiration for Marx in various places.[205] However, Du Bois neither explicitly theorises racism in ideological terms, nor does he advance a theory of ideology more generally. As such, reading Du Bois as a proponent of an ideological conception of racism risks anachronism in the form of the mythology of doctrines: "the danger of converting some scattered or quite incidental remarks by a classic theorist into his 'doctrine' on one of the mandatory themes".[206] Additionally, it

[204] Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 64, my emphasis.
[205] For instance, in *Dusk of Dawn* (published in 1940), Du Bois writes "I believed and still believe that Karl Marx was one of the greatest men of modern times and that he put his finger squarely upon our difficulties when he said that economic foundations … are the determining factors in the development of civilisation … and this conviction I had to express or spiritually die" – see *Dusk of Dawn*, 302–3. Further, there is a scholarly debate concerning the extent to which Marxist ideas influenced Du Bois' earlier work – see Saman, "Du Bois and Marx."
[206] Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," 60.

invites the assumption that Du Bois' philosophy is the product of a *European* philosophical tradition, which problematically marginalises the aspects of his thought that lie firmly within the black radical tradition.[207]

Despite these concerns, I wonder whether we could interpret Du Bois as a theorist of ideology – or, more accurately, as articulating an ideological conception of racism that, in turn, may have implications for notions of ideology more generally. In this chapter, my goal is to explore this question by bringing Du Bois into conversation with contemporary attempts to theorise racism as ideological. I argue that the conceptual and methodological foundations of Du Bois' reflections on the lived experience of racism demonstrate the inadequacies of both Tommie Shelby's doxastic view of ideology, which locates ideology at the level of beliefs, and Sally Haslanger's practice-first account that takes shared social meanings as the locus of ideology. Against Shelby, I demonstrate that a doxastic conception cannot make sense of Du Bois' account of double consciousness and the feeling of being a problem since it is unable to capture the generative dimensions of ideology. While Haslanger's account fares better on this score, perhaps due to its similarities with Du Bois' writings on racism, she frames ideology in *exclusively* functionalist terms, where what makes something *ideological* is the oppressive practices it enables in the world. This however fails to account for other important dimensions of racism: that it is both a historicised concept that has been used to justify several and often contradictory forms of oppression, and that it is a *way of seeing the world* such that it renders intelligible a set of representational schemes that function to legitimise oppression.[208] I close by articulating a Du Boisian conception of racism as ideological, which I see as having historicised, functionalist, and interpretivist dimensions. This conception will underpin my analysis of philosophical racism. The broader significance of my argument is a novel contribution to contemporary debates in analytic political philosophy, where ideology is enjoying a resurgence.[209]

What is Ideology? The Limitations of Doxastic Accounts

[207] For arguments against reading Du Bois as furthering or contributing to European philosophical debates, see Curry, "Empirical or Imperial?"; Reed, *W. E. B. Du Bois and American Political Thought*.
[208] The historicised aspect of my argument is significantly influenced by Robert Gooding-Williams' Nietzschean reading of Du Bois – see "Autobiography, Political Hope, Racial Justice," 165–69.
[209] Kirun Sankaran has noted the recent popularity of ideology within analytic political philosophy, driven largely by the work of Haslanger and Robin Celikates amongst others. That said, Sankaran is critical of these approaches, arguing that what he calls the "New Ideology Critics" offer an inadequate model to theorise *both* the prevalence of social injustice *and* the necessary steps to overcome it. For his critique, see Sankaran, "What's New in the New Ideology Critique?," 1442. For a compelling response, see Barrett, "Ideology Critique and Game Theory."

In the Marxist tradition, the notion of ideology is often used to explain the 'stability', "the absence of overt and serious conflict between social classes", of class-divided societies, such as capitalist societies.[210] Very roughly, prevailing ideas within society – what Antonio Gramsci termed "common sense" – are not only widely-held but also work to the advantage of dominant socio-economic groups, by for instance masking or misrepresenting the injustices experienced by marginalised social classes.[211] While informative, this standard narrative obscures *different* or *purportedly rival* ways that ideology has historically been understood. As is clear from this standard Marxist narrative, the conception of ideology being employed is *pejorative*; it refers to a form of social consciousness, such as a worldview or a doctrine, that is distortive and *through this distortion* enables, justifies, or perpetuates social oppression.[212] Thus, on standard Marxist views, ideologies are problematic features of the world that *necessarily* need to be dismantled before justice can be achieved. Further, on this pejorative conception, ideologies are not a random assortment of beliefs, desires, predilections, and other mental states; rather, they form a coherent system of thought that, in turn, shapes the social institutions that exist as well as the way individuals interact with one another in the world (i.e. their 'practical orientation').[213] In short, a pejorative conception of ideology holds that coherent worldviews or doctrines *are or become* ideological when they enable, justify, naturalise, or perpetuate institutions and forms of social interaction that are unjust.

We can contrast this pejorative conception with a non-pejorative or neutral conception that understands ideology as the "images, concepts, and premises which provide the frameworks through which we represent, interpret, understand, and 'make sense' of some aspect of social existence".[214] Like the pejorative conception, the non-pejorative understanding sees ideologies as coherent sets of beliefs that operate like a worldview or a doctrine, one that provides individuals with a sense of meaning and identity.[215] However, it departs from the pejorative conception by being non-evaluative; on this view, ideologies are *not necessarily* problematic, though they can be. Hence, non-pejorative conceptions are much more inclusive than their

[210] Leopold, "Marxism and Ideology," 22.
[211] Gramsci, "The Philosophy of Praxis"; see also Leopold, "Marxism and Ideology," 22–23.
[212] Geuss, *The Idea of a Critical Theory*, 12–22; Leopold, "Marxism and Ideology," 22–25; Shelby, "Ideology, Racism, and Critical Social Theory," 177–80; Shelby, "Racism, Moralism, and Social Criticism," 66.
[213] Haslanger, "Racism, Ideology, and Social Movements," 16; Shelby, "Ideology, Racism, and Critical Social Theory," 158–62.
[214] Hall, "The Whites of Their Eyes: Racist Ideologies and the Media," 180.
[215] Geuss, *The Idea of a Critical Theory*, 9–11; Leopold, "Marxism and Ideology," 22; Shelby, "Ideology, Racism, and Critical Social Theory," 156.

pejorative counterparts, given that they are interested in a broader phenomenon. The main disagreement between these rival conceptions, then, is essentially an epistemological claim about whether a conception of ideology presupposes a position of epistemic privilege or not. That is, pejorative conceptions claim that certain forms of social consciousness are *distortive*, which seems to imply that there is a 'true' or 'undistorted' position from which we can understand the world.[216] The goal of overcoming ideologies is to reach this unmediated standpoint. For proponents of the neutral conception, however, this implication is implausible; we do not understand the world from an unmediated standpoint, but rather our understanding of the world is *itself* constructed. That is, we are all subject to some kind of ideology that determines how we understand the world; as Stuart Hall puts it "ideologies are not the product of individual consciousness or intention. Rather we formulate our intentions *within ideology*".[217] On a non-pejorative conception, we can therefore "speak of bourgeois ideology and proletarian ideology, liberal ideology and nationalist ideology without necessarily wanting to establish or prejudge their adequacy or truth".[218]

As I understand it, the difference between the two conceptions is ultimately about whether it makes analytic sense to distinguish forms of social consciousness that enable injustice from those that do not. I am not wholly sure that the pejorative conception is committed to the view that there is an unmediated 'true' picture of the world; it seems sufficient to say that, while our understanding of the world is mediated through a form of social consciousness, some of these are nevertheless problematic and need to be dismantled. Framed this way, I am not sure that they are contradictory in an important sense: perhaps they are best understood as different *concepts* of ideology.[219] Given that I am seeking to provide an account of racism as ideological, I favour a pejorative conception of ideology because it underlines the importance of dismantling racism to achieve a more just world in a way that is not necessarily true of a neutral conception. As such, I use ideology exclusively in the pejorative sense and use the term 'form of social consciousness' to refer to the positive conception.[220] If the difference between ideologies and forms of social consciousness concern whether they – through their distortive effects – enable social oppression, we can now ask what the relevant unit of analysis is. That

[216] For a useful overview of the criticisms against pejorative conceptions of ideology, see Humphrey, "(De)Contesting Ideology," 227–31.
[217] Hall, "The Whites of Their Eyes: Racist Ideologies and the Media," 180.
[218] Larrain, "Stuart Hall and the Marxist Concept of Ideology," 53.
[219] For a compelling argument on these lines, see Humphrey, "(De)Contesting Ideology."
[220] I borrow the terminological distinction between 'ideology' and form of 'social consciousness' from Shelby, "Ideology, Racism, and Critical Social Theory," 160.

is, what are ideologies made up of? For Tommie Shelby, "an ideology is a widely held set of loosely associated beliefs and implicit judgments that misrepresent significant social realities and that function, through this distortion, to bring about or perpetuate unjust social relations".[221] That they are widely held is significant because it stresses that ideologies are somehow held collectively; if an individual *by themselves* held a set of idiosyncratic loosely held beliefs that blinded them to oppressive practices in their society, this picture would say that they are mistaken rather than that they are in the grip of an ideology.

The focus, then, is on cognitive states, with a particular emphasis on beliefs (perhaps because beliefs seem to be the most concrete kind of mental state). Even when caveats are made, examples of ideologies are almost always thought of in terms of beliefs. Thus, Shelby suggests that "treating racial ideology as the paradigmatic form of racism does not preclude regarding things other than beliefs as racist" and notes that "someone who is disposed to act on racist assumptions" is racist, yet he understands a *belief* in the biological existence of races as the best example of racist ideology.[222] It is worth asking, however, whether *doxastic epistemic states* (i.e. beliefs), and cognitive states more generally, can perform the epistemic role required to warrant being classed as *ideological*. After all, for something to be ideological, it needs to be misleading or distortive such that it blinds the individual or group to the oppressive practices that occur in their society. Further, ideologies are *entrenched*: they are particularly difficult to overcome, partly because they are widely held (and therefore difficult to revise *across society*) but also partly because they form a central aspect of someone's sense of self and society.[223] It is hard, however, to think of individual beliefs as having this kind of status. At best, it is more likely that, by beliefs, theorists of ideology are talking about worldviews or "loosely associated beliefs" that have these distortive effects. For instance, though we might think a belief that 'God exists' is central to the self-conception of a religious person, this belief contains several presuppositions and assumptions about God himself that it is more accurate to class it as a cluster of beliefs and assumptions. We can thus imagine that certain individual beliefs can be revised or altered without changing the ideological nature of the worldview taken *as a whole*.

[221] Shelby, "Racism, Moralism, and Social Criticism," 66.
[222] Shelby, *Dark Ghettos*, 23–24.
[223] Bremner and Canson, "Ideology as Relativized a Priori," 14; Geuss, *The Idea of a Critical Theory*, 10; Shelby, "Ideology, Racism, and Critical Social Theory," 159.

To bolster this line of criticism, we can turn to the writings of W.E.B. Du Bois. As I noted earlier, while he does not explicitly attempt to articulate a theory of ideology, let alone a conception of racism as ideological, his reflections on the nature and experience of racism resonate with Marxist accounts of ideology. It is therefore plausible to ask whether we can read Du Bois as a theorist of ideology, especially in his later writings, which, as we will see below, have several resonances with contemporary accounts of ideology. The idea that racism is partly ideological should not be too controversial; there is a vast literature attempting to trace the development of racist thinking in ideological terms, even if there is disagreement concerning what makes racism ideological or the origins of racial ideology within society.[224] My goal in this chapter, then, is to use Du Bois' writings on racism as a way of illuminating the tensions or limitations found within various contemporary attempts to theorise racism as ideological. These criticisms act as a precursor to articulating a Du Boisian conception of racism as ideology. Bringing Du Bois into critical dialogue with contemporary attempts to theorise ideology therefore has a dual function: on the one hand, to highlight the limitations of prevailing conceptions of ideology and, on the other, to help illuminate various features of Du Bois' own understanding of racism. Indeed, as we will see, some contemporary accounts can help provide key concepts or framing devices that can help untangle and clarify some of Du Bois' remarks on the location of racism in society.

At the first Pan-African Congress in 1900, Du Bois declared that "the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the colour line", understood as "the question as to how far differences of race … are going to be made, hereafter, the basis of denying to over half the world the right of sharing … the opportunities and privileges of modern civilisation".[225] For Du Bois, racial terms, such as 'white', 'light', and 'dark', pick out identifiable groups in ways that are analytically useful: they help us adequately explain *why* inequalities in wealth, resources, and power exist in the ways they do. The colour line therefore stresses the importance of race in political explanations, with its evocative power lying in its ability to visually emphasise why race ought to feature in the best explanation for the prevailing relationship of subjugation and

[224] For various articles that either draw on or attempt to articulate an ideological conception of racism, see Fredrickson, *Racism: A Short History*; Hall, "Race, Articulation and Societies Structured in Dominance"; Haslanger, "Racism, Ideology, and Social Movements"; Lu-Adler, *Kant, Race, and Racism*; Shelby, "Ideology, Racism, and Critical Social Theory"; Wirts, "What Does It Mean to Say 'The Criminal Justice System Is Racist'?"
[225] Du Bois, "To the Nations of the World," 625.

exploitation between the white and non-white worlds.[226] Adopting the perspective of the colour line makes evident that the world is divided along racial lines, between whites, who possess the trappings of modern civilisation, and non-whites, whose bodies, lands, and resources are exploited in the interests of the former. Hence, thinking with the colour line forces us to examine global material inequalities as the product of unjust, racist, and violent interactions between white Euro-American empires and their non-white colonies in the periphery. Yet, although global in scope, the colour line can also be used to zoom in on more localised instances of racial division and conflict. The American Civil War, for instance, was caused by a "phase of the [colour line]" and its effects can be felt at the micro-level, in the everyday interactions between members of the same polity.[227]

This is exemplified by a story Du Bois recounts from his childhood, when "something put it into the boys' and girls' heads to buy gorgeous visiting-cards" that were then exchanged between the schoolchildren. Though the exchange started off as "merry", he recalls that "one girl, a tall newcomer, refused my card – refused it peremptorily, with a glance".[228] This marked the moment Du Bois realised he "was different from the others"; the moment he recognised the feeling of being "shut out from their world by a vast veil", where opportunities and privileges are hoarded on one side and kept out of reach from those on the other.[229] Here, the idea of the 'veil' is a metaphorical representation of the colour line, one that locates its contours in the heart of American society as something that afflicts the ways in which white and black Americans see both themselves and each other. Indeed, the 'newcomer' who refused Du Bois' card failed to treat him as a fellow equal, believing that his skin colour or other phenotypical features provided the purported justification to *treat him differently*, in a derogatory manner. The colour line thus does more than mark the difference in opportunities and wealth between racial groups; it structures the interactions between members of different racial groups and inflects how they perceive the world around them. That is, it is also a "thought thing": something "tenuous [and] intangible" that underpins the terms of engagement between members of different racial groups.[230]

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[226] This has resonances with Charles Mills' later claim that the Racial Contract intended to introduce 'race' as a "critical theoretical term that must be incorporated into the vocabulary of an adequate sociopolitical theory". See Mills, *The Racial Contract*, 126.
[227] Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 15.
[228] Ibid., 8.
[229] Ibid.
[230] Du Bois, "Darkwater," 607.

In stressing the epistemic dimensions of the colour line, Du Bois is demonstrating the ways that racism shapes the mental states of individual agents, thereby influencing their actions, behaviours, and interactions with members from different racial groups. This has implications for attempts to theorise racism as ideological, given that ideologies are claims about the widely held cognitive or doxastic states that members of a given group or society hold. It is therefore legitimate to ask whether doxastic accounts of ideology like Shelby's can adequately capture these experiences of racism, or whether something is lost by framing these interactions in doxastic terms. Put differently, if we consider the "tall girl" who refused Du Bois visiting-card on racist grounds, does it make sense to cast her brusque, immediate, "peremptory" refusal as the product of a consciously held *belief* in the inferiority of different racial groups? If so, it would seem to suggest that undermining the epistemic status of this belief, by providing evidence to show its falsehood, would *in theory* be sufficient for the "tall girl" – assuming her status as a rational agent – to alter *both her belief and her subsequent action*, thereby freeing her from the grip of a racist ideology. I say 'in theory' to allow for some added complexity: it may be difficult to change an individual's belief, or the individual may hold the belief for non-epistemic reasons, which would change the task of ideology critique from demonstrating a belief's falsehood to demonstrating its non-epistemic status to the agent in question.[231] Nevertheless, the central point is still that individuals are in the grip of false or misleading *beliefs*, and freeing individuals from ideology requires the demonstration of these beliefs *as false*.

While this is a plausible analysis of Du Bois' childhood experience, I am not sure it is the most compelling. Indeed, in his later writings, Du Bois seems to *disagree* with this conception of racism. He suggests, for instance, that the racism widespread in American society is "the result of *inherited customs* and of those *irrational and partly subconscious actions of men* which control so large a proportion of their deeds".[232] Likewise, when reflecting on the goal of realising racial equality, Du Bois writes:

> "There is no way in which the American Negro can force this nation to treat him as equal until *the unconscious cerebration and folkways of the nation*, as well as its rational deliberate thought among the majority of whites, are willing to grant equality".[233]

[231] For a useful discussion of the various ways an ideology can be false or misleading, see Geuss, *The Idea of a Critical Theory*, 12–22; Leopold, "Marxism and Ideology," 23–25.
[232] Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, 194.
[233] Ibid. Note 'cerebration' means the workings of the brain, processes of thinking, and so on.

Notice the emphasis, on the one hand, of "inherited customs and folkways", which implies the presence of racism in the culture of society, as well as – on the other – those unconscious (or subconscious) patterns of thinking individuals are wont to fall into when attempting to understand the world. Both suggest that racism is partly located at the sub-doxastic level, as something individuals within racially unequal or divided societies are socialised into thinking. To my mind, this seems to more accurately capture the cases of racism Du Bois discusses when theorising the colour line: the "tall girl" who rejected his card more likely did so based on a set of background assumptions she was socialised into rather than a belief or worldview that informs how she saw the world. But if this is the case, then it *also* suggests that ideology operates at a deeper level to the loosely associated beliefs or worldviews that are widely held in a given society. We thus return to the question: what are ideologies made up of?

Du Bois and Ideology: Double Consciousness and the Feeling of Being "A Problem"

Bringing Du Bois into conversation with Shelby thus problematises the doxastic features of Shelby's account. After all, if *beliefs*, such as the belief in the existence of racial groups, are the paradigmatic case of racial ideologies, then it limits both the nature and scope of ideology critique. As Du Bois notes, it is those inherited patterns of thinking and acting in the world that continue to sustain racial inequalities across a variety of domains. Simply put, the colour line distorts those subconscious and unconscious dimensions to an agent's reasoning, thereby leading individuals to interpret the same observable evidence in fundamentally different ways on the basis of race. At this point, it might be argued that my treatment of Shelby is too harsh; as I noted above, he leaves open the possibility that things *other than beliefs* might fall under the remit of ideology. Furthermore, in a later article, he also clarifies that "the locus of ideology is common sense, that reservoir of background assumptions that agents draw on spontaneously as they navigate the complexities of social life and the demands of human existence".[234] This seems to locate ideology at the sub-doxastic level, at those assumptions we perhaps unwittingly draw on when navigating our interactions with our fellow citizens. Framed this way, Shelby can be read as suggesting that an agent's subconscious assumptions – what an individual might take for granted in a given social situation – can be inflected by ideology, thereby opening the door to a broader understanding of the ideological dimensions of racism.

[234] Shelby, "Racism, Moralism, and Social Criticism," 67.

Indeed, it does seem to resonate with what Du Bois referred to as "the unconscious cerebration and folkways of the nation", that is those subconscious patterns of thinking and inherited customs or traditions that shape or inflect how an individual comes to understand the world. However, while Shelby may seem to be open to a sub-doxastic conception of ideology, the use of common sense seems to raise more questions than it answers. Although this is a clear nod to Gramsci, it is not altogether clear where, for Shelby, common sense comes from. Put differently, what processes determine the content of common sense and how might these processes be inflected by a racial ideology? To illustrate, consider Du Bois story of the "tall girl" once again: why might her notion of common sense differ sufficiently from Du Bois' to justify the terms under which their interaction occurred? It seems then that common sense might be an alternative formulation of dominant assumptions, which are either derived from or can be built back up into the prevailing worldview. Additionally, and more significantly, the use of common sense suggests that ideology is something *fixed*: that is, ideology is something that exists and can be uncovered (or discovered) within a given society. This, however, fails to see ideology as something *generative*. As Sally Haslanger frames it:

> "First, ideologies don't just consist of shared beliefs, or shared 'cognitive defects'. This can be seen more clearly once we attend to a particular role of ideology as a source of beliefs. Second, an epistemic critique of ideology can't just be a matter of pointing out that a belief (or set of beliefs) lack rational credentials, because ideology is part of what gives people their tools of reasoning in the first place".[235]

For Haslanger, doxastic accounts of ideology miss out on its generative aspects: they fail to see how ideology *provides* the beliefs, concepts, assumptions, and attitudes we use to think about the world around us. Put differently, doxastic accounts suggest that the beliefs we hold may be distorted or misleading in some capacity. What this misses, however, is how ideology shapes our processes of reasoning, providing us with a set of beliefs that seem normal, natural, or self-evident when they are entirely contingent on certain features of our social life. In short, "ideology is located deep in the base or background of cognition, in a way that gives rise to the more surface-level, foregrounded parts of cognition".[236] Put another way, we can say that, if forms of social consciousness "constitute our relation to the world and thus determine the horizons of our interpretation of the world, or the framework in which we understand both

[235] Haslanger, "Racism, Ideology, and Social Movements," 7.
[236] Bremner and Canson, "Ideology as Relativized a Priori," 5.

ourselves and the social conditions, and also the way we operate within these conditions", ideologies *distort* these processes and make some injustices seem like a necessary or natural part of our social world.[237]

Thus, ideologies are a problem of interpretation; they influence the way we understand the world around us and our position in them. Yet, they also provide us with the terms we use, the concepts we draw on, and the beliefs we hold to interpret the world around us. We might say that the role of ideology "is *hermeneutic*".[238] The point, then, is that an accurate characterisation of ideology needs to be sensitive to these deeper dimensions, which are largely omitted on Shelby's account.[239] This is because, rather than being akin to a social cue, ideologies distort the way individual agents perceive or interpret the world around them, providing not only the 'tools' of their reasoning but also shaping what is perceived to be *salient* in a given situation. As Mark Jerng puts it in his analysis of racism "we are taught when, where, and how race is something to notice. Noticing race in some contexts and not others shapes how we organise situations, forms of reasoning, and expectations about what is going to happen".[240] That race becomes evident, salient, or noticeable in specific situations, and that it is obscured, misrepresented, or absent in others, is at least partly the result of ideology.[241] Equally, the racial identity of a particular agent also determines *whether* race is noticed or made salient in the first place; while many whites may *not* be aware of the ways their racial identity shapes their social interactions with others, the same is not necessarily true for non-whites, whose racial identity forms a central part of their lived experience. For members of non-white racial groups, then, learning 'when, where, and how' their race *will be noticed* helps to navigate an oppressive social environment.

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[237] Jaeggi, "Rethinking Ideology," 64.
[238] Bremner and Canson, "Ideology as Relativized a Priori," 6.
[239] My contention here is twofold: I am not sure that Shelby means these deeper dimensions when he suggests that ideology exists at the level of 'common sense'. Even if he does, then the use of the term 'common sense' is too vague to be analytically useful. This is, however, not to say that Shelby would *disagree* with the analysis provided here: it is plausible that he may be in favour of this kind of view on ideology, despite not articulating it in this way in his writings.
[240] Jerng, *Racial Worldmaking*, 2. While Jerng does not use the term ideology, his analysis of racism has many similarities with attempts to articulate a sub-doxastic account of ideology.
[241] I say 'partly' to avoid reducing *all* explanations of racism to ideology; clearly they are just one factor in explaining the prevalence and emergence of racism within society. By this token, then, that we are 'taught' to notice race in some circumstances, but not others, may be the result of non-ideological factors, too. For a useful discussion of the limits of ideological explanations, see Haslanger, "Racism, Ideology, and Social Movements," 17–18.

We can find support for these ideas in Du Bois' writings, who describes the "daily reminder" of being "a coloured man in a white world" as a constraint on his freedom and sense of self. He notes that these everyday experiences "made me limited in physical movement and provincial in thought and dream. I could not stir, I could not act, I could not live, without taking into careful daily account the reaction of my white environing world".[242] In a world profoundly shaped by the colour line, the interpretive resources one draws on to make sense of the world are shaped by the salience of race. For Du Bois, this manifests in an inability to interact with the world *without considering how his every movement will be perceived by white Americans*. To be clear, this is not *only* due to the codification of prejudice in legislation, such as the segregation laws in the Jim Crow South that impose significant restrictions on individual freedom for black Americans. Rather, the experience of being treated as an inferior is *also* perpetuated through the attitudes, beliefs, and expectations of white Americans in every interaction with black Americans. When, for example, a friend of Du Bois' was mistaken for a waiter by a white lady in a dining car, this was not an honest mistake but rather the product of a set of interpretive resources or 'tools' of reasoning that see blacks – especially in a setting where one expects to be served – not as equal customers but as members of staff. As Du Bois puts it, while the incident in question is relatively trivial, "a joke to be chuckled over", it nevertheless represents an "unending inescapable sign of slavery".[243]

We might say, then, that the colour line generates a series of presuppositions concerning the roles whites and non-whites are expected to play in given social circumstances that, in turn, act as interpretive resources for individuals to understand the world around them. This is epitomised by Du Bois' powerful question "How does it feel to be a problem?".[244] Though the question is never explicitly asked, perhaps due to "feelings of delicacy" or the "difficulty of rightly framing it", it is nevertheless *always* present, revealing its existence in statements like "I know an excellent coloured man in my town; or, I fought at Mechanicsville; or, Do not these Southern outrages make your blood boil?".[245] Here, Du Bois is recounting statements put to him by white Americans who are visibly uncomfortable in his presence: as he tells it, "they approach me in a half-hesitant sort of way, eye me curiously or compassionately" before going on to make one of these statements that not only mark him as different *to them*, but also enforce

[242] Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, 135–36.
[243] Ibid., 136–37.
[244] Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 7.
[245] Ibid. Note: Mechanicsville was a significant battle site in the American Civil War.

or perpetuate that feeling of otherness or exclusion. In context, this remark is an illustration of *double consciousness*: the idea that black Americans see themselves through the eyes of their white counterparts and thereby measure themselves or their successes through the lens of a dominant racial group that "looks on in amused contempt and pity".[246] Du Bois is thus articulating a subjective element of the African-American experience that affects not only how they are *seen by* white society but also how they *see themselves*. The point is that a racially unequal world extends beyond the material and into the epistemic domain (i.e. consciousness), generating the terms through which individual agents interpret their social circumstances.

Therefore, white Americans who approach Du Bois with trepidation reduce his identity and humanity to being a member of a racial group, thereby casting him as "a problem" in multiple different senses. Equally, however, the way in which black Americans see themselves is refracted through the same lens, shaping their sense of self as being in constant tension with how they are seen by white America. My contention is that the dimensions to racism that Du Bois is grappling with has resonances with deeper conceptions of ideology that locate its focus on the interpretive resources we use to understand the world around us. Indeed, we might even say that an adequate conception of racism as ideological *must* be able to make sense of the way it shapes the interpretive resources agents draw on in their interactions with others. It is only at these deeper levels that the "curious kinks of the human mind" come into play, shaping or inflecting our interpretive resources to make race and racial identity *salient* in particular social circumstances. Hence, the statements made by white Americans to Du Bois may not be the product of a conscious belief, but rather an interpretive frame that sees these utterances as *unproblematic statements in social interactions with non-whites*. If we want to theorise racism as at least partly the result of ideology, we therefore need to develop an account that can explain *why* and *how* statements like these are *rendered intelligible* or are *made to seem legitimate* without reverting to a doxastic conception of ideology. After all, we have already seen that accounts that understand ideology in terms of belief are inadequate. If not beliefs, what could plausibly be the locus at which ideology operates?

Towards A Historicised Concept of Race

[246] Ibid., 8.

If my argument thus far is accepted, then we have reason to reject theories of ideology that articulate its unit of analysis in doxastic terms, as beliefs consciously held by individual agents. This is because it cannot account for the ways ideology affects broad swathes of social life. To my mind, this is epitomised by Du Bois' notion of double consciousness: that an agent's sense of self is refracted through how she is perceived by a dominant racial group will have an effect not only on the beliefs she consciously holds about herself but *also* on the subconscious or unconscious processes of reasoning that structure her behaviour across a variety of contexts. Furthermore, doxastic accounts seem unable to capture the way that ideologies can be overcome. If ideologies are understood as false beliefs, then the purpose of ideology critique is to demonstrate the falsity of these beliefs such that they no longer determine the behaviour of a given agent. But in the case of something like double consciousness, it is not clear which false beliefs need correcting or how one might go about correcting them. The problem is instead with the very resources an agent can draw on to make sense of her social world; that is, the hermeneutic tools individuals consciously and subconsciously draw on to make their actions – as well as the actions of others – intelligible to them. Therefore, for an account of ideology to have some critical purchase, it must not only operate at the level of these hermeneutic resources, but must also provide a plausible explanation for the source of these tools in the first place.

Currently, the most prominent accounts of ideology that claim to fulfil this desideratum unknowingly take their cue from Du Bois in locating ideology – as he does racism – in the "unconscious cerebration and folkways of the nation".[247] In more contemporary terms, we might say that ideology can be found in the *shared social meanings* and *social practices* of a given group, community, or society.[248] On these "practice-first" accounts, ideology operates at the level of "public mental representations", or the "common ground", that, in turn, explain the presence and persistence of unjust social structures.[249] There are resonances, then, in the fundamental unit of analysis of ideologies; rather than beliefs, we see ideologies as shaping, in Du Bois' terms, "conditioned reflexes", "long-followed habits", and "subconscious trains of reasoning" – all of which plausibly fall under the public mental representations that contemporary practice-first accounts take as their focus.[250] I want to suggest that we can

[247] Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, 194.
[248] I take this formulation from Sally Haslanger's account of ideology, which she elaborates over a series of different articles. For the most comprehensive expression of her overall view, see Haslanger, *Ideology in Practice*.
[249] Táíwò, "The Empire Has No Clothes," 307–8.
[250] Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, 172.

informatively read Du Bois alongside these practice-first accounts, since they provide a richer theoretical framework to understand how racism might affect the unconscious and subconscious ways people reason. Thus, I highlight the key features of Haslanger's account of ideology, which I take to be the best version of a practice-first account of ideology, to help illuminate what Du Bois means by suggesting racism is "the result of inherited customs and of those irrational and partly subconscious actions of men".[251] I then highlight a key point of difference between Du Bois and Haslanger, which points to a potential limitation of her account of ideology, before briefly articulating what I take to be a Du Boisian conception of ideology.

The Limitations of Practice-First Accounts

What, then, is the difference between a social meaning and a social practice? As noted above, practice-first views take ideologies as shaping public mental representations, which we can understand as the "terms of coordination" of a group or community.[252] Phrased formally, we might say that on these views ideology operates at the level of a *convention*, "an equilibrium solution to a coordination problem", in which agents unilaterally converge on one arbitrary solution because the costs of acting otherwise are too high.[253] While the paradigm example of a convention is which side of the road to drive on, we can also see languages and even shared social meanings as examples of conventions that attempt to "solve the coordination problem of mutual intelligibility".[254] The central claim of these accounts is that our understanding of the social world is mediated through the public social meanings we learn through the process of socialisation. Thus, social meanings "provide tools for coordination within a group", where a "tool" is understood *not* as something intentional or coherent, but rather as something that "we take advantage of … as an instrument for us" to explain, interpret, understand, and coordinate actions with others – even if we do not intentionally create these "tools" or "instruments" in the first place.[255] To illustrate this idea, consider the following two examples. First, in Budapest (at least in the 1990s), wearing a seatbelt in a taxi was allegedly taken to be insulting to the driver, since it indicated a lack of faith in their ability to be safe on the road.[256] Second, explaining why I am cooking pasta at 7pm will depend on a range of factors (e.g. cooking skills

[251] Ibid., 194.
[252] Haslanger, "Racism, Ideology, and Social Movements," 16–19.
[253] Sankaran, "What's New in the New Ideology Critique?," 1446–47.
[254] Ibid., 1446. For a classic account of understanding language as a convention, see Lewis, "Languages and Language."
[255] Haslanger, "Cognition as a Social Skill," 8.
[256] Lessig, "The Regulation of Social Meaning," 952.

or household budget), one of which will be semiotic – namely "I am cooking *dinner*, and *pasta* is an acceptable dinner food for those in my culture".[257]

The point is that, above the description and definition of an object or action, there are a set of social meanings that imbue these actions and objects with meaning. Put differently, that 'putting on a seatbelt' comes to be seen as 'insulting', or that we come to see 'pasta' as 'dinner food', is the product of a set of shared social meanings that provide a background for us to interpret and make sense of one another's actions. Crucially, we take this background *for granted*; that is, we do not consciously hold these beliefs in our head when interacting with others. Rather, in much the same way that we take for granted that other drivers will follow the rules of the road, we assume that those we interact with will act in accordance with the social meanings that we both share. Therefore, social meanings are the bedrock for human coordination; we use them in their myriad forms to make sense of the world, and we come to 'learn' these social meanings through socialisation. Becoming a 'fluent participant' in the social domain requires us to unthinkingly understand what is expected of us in a wide variety of social situations, from mundane experiences like eating at a restaurant to more complex or specialised interactions in, for instance, specific professional settings.[258] In each of these areas, the terms of coordination are mediated by social meanings, which can range from the meanings attached to objects and actions to more complex "narratives, patterns of inference, and other cultural memes that one might not normally consider 'meanings' in a narrow sense".[259] Hence, social meanings are those interpretive resources we draw on to determine not only what counts as 'dinner food' but also those narratives that help to codify certain behaviours as desirable or 'normal' – for instance that hard work is desirable and will be fairly rewarded.

Thus far, I have been describing a normal process of coordination: individual agents subconsciously or unconsciously draw on shared social meanings to determine what is expected in a given social setting and adapt their behaviour accordingly. What makes these shared social meanings *ideological* for Haslanger is that they enable or enact *unjust social practices*. Phrased formally, we might say that, while a coordination problem has a wide range

[257] Haslanger, "What Is a Social Practice?," 239.
[258] Haslanger, "Racism, Ideology, and Social Movements," 7; "Cognition as a Social Skill," 9. One helpful example of this are self-help books that attempt to help academics leverage their university experience to transition into the private sector, where certain social interactions within universities – such as raising critical questions to help improve a paper or talk – will not necessarily be welcome in non-academic settings. See for instance Caterine, *Leaving Academia*.
[259] Haslanger, "Cognition as a Social Skill," 7, note 7. See also Haslanger, "Studying While Black," 124.

of equilibrium solutions (i.e. conventions) that could be adopted, ideologies are just those conventions that stabilise or perpetuate suboptimal social arrangements.[260] Here, we can follow Haslanger in understanding social practices as being on a spectrum, ranging from, at one end, an activity defined by a set of rules that are *prior to* the activity itself, to, on the other end, regular patterns of behaviour that are mediated by a shared social meaning.[261] Thus, a social practice can refer to a game like football, in which actions like dribbling or shooting are rendered intelligible (or made possible) by the rules of the game, an activity like promising, whose significance is determined by the meaning of the practice despite the absence of formal rules, and informal regularities in behaviour driven by a shared social meaning, such as going to the pub to socialise after work because pubs are collectively understood to be social venues. Therefore, a shared social meaning that sees, for instance, women as more nurturing than men, is ideological insofar as it enables an oppressive set of social practices, such as the distribution of caring responsibilities to women.[262]

There is much to like about Haslanger's account of ideology; she provides a compelling account of how sub-doxastic mental states – the public mental representations that constitute the terms of coordination between humans in a group, community, or society – can perform an ideological function. This is useful in understanding how individuals can unwittingly and unintentionally participate in unjust structures. If social meanings are like conventions, then we do not consciously hold them as beliefs when we interact with others: we simply take them for granted or assume them to be true as we navigate social interactions. Further, the idea of social meanings and the practices they enable provide a plausible way of capturing how Du Bois sees racism as existing in "unconscious cerebrations" and "inherited customs". After all, social meanings are in a sense inherited, given that they are taken up through the process of socialisation, and they are sub- or unconscious features of our minds, since they are things we simply take for granted when coordinating with others. We can see this in the story Du Bois tells of his friend who was mistaken for a waiter, which recall represented an "unending

[260] Barrett, "Ideology Critique and Game Theory," 714; Sankaran, "What's New in the New Ideology Critique?," 1448.
[261] Haslanger, "What Is a Social Practice?," 235. See also Rawls, "Two Concepts of Rules," 25.
[262] It is important to clarify that there may be an additional set of reasons, in addition to ideological ones, that cause this distribution of caring roles to come about. After all, complex social phenomena are likely to have multiple causes. Therefore, the claim is not that ideological features *exclusively* cause these unjust practices, but that if these unjust practices have an ideological dimension then *this part* will be caused by the relationship between a social meaning and a social practice. For a useful discussion of this point, see Haslanger, "Racism, Ideology, and Social Movements," 17–18.

inescapable sign of slavery".[263] On a Haslangerian analysis, this *misidentification* is not the result of error or personal prejudice, but rather the product of a social meaning that associates black phenotypic features with a social role of waiting on those with white phenotypic features. This helps to make sense of the hermeneutic character of ideologies, given that it inflects the collective interpretive resources individuals draw on to make sense of their social world.

It also helps to explain the complicated relationship ideology has with truth; after all, if ideologies are *distortions* in the way individuals see the world, how can they also seemingly "make real what they purport to describe"?[264] Again, for Haslanger, the existence of shared social meanings enables patterns of behaviour that unwittingly work to *reproduce* the social world where that social meaning has salience, thereby making it seem 'more true'. That is, ideologies shape *both* our interpretation and behaviour in the world *and* the very social world that we participate in. Hence, just as social meanings provide the tools through which we interpret the world, so too do our social practices shift the social meanings we use to understand them.[265] As Haslanger helpfully puts it "we interpret and respond to a world as meaningful and then interact with it in ways that reinforce that interpretation and response among others".[266] To use the story of Du Bois' friend being mistaken for a waiter once again, the association of blackness with service works to shape a world where this might be true, in the sense that it may result in the construction of a social world where African Americans find it easier to find reliable employment *as waiters*. Therefore, there is a bidirectional relationship between widely shared or public mental representations and the world that these representations seek to explain. My key claim is thus that, by bringing Du Bois into conversation with Haslanger, we gain a significant insight into the way Du Bois in his later writings envisages the workings of racism. Hence, if we want to read Du Bois as a theorist of ideology, it is imperative to pay attention to the way that racism is reinforced and perpetuated by the shared social meanings that exist in society.

This is not, however, to make the stronger claim that Du Bois' conception of racism is reducible to Haslanger's. While there is a strong case to say that they agree over the importance of social

[263] Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, 136–37.
[264] I take this phrase from Haslanger, "Racism, Ideology, and Social Movements," 6.
[265] This is essentially the idea of a 'looping effect' in which the act of classifying human kinds (e.g. alcoholic, blonde, or white) results in radical changes in the behaviours or actions of individuals who come to be so classified. For an informative account, see Hacking, "The Looping Effects of Human Kinds."
[266] Haslanger, "What Is a Social Practice?," 247.

meanings in conceptualising ideology, I contend that they differ regarding *how* or *why* social meanings matter for understanding ideology. Recall that, for Haslanger, ideologies are constituted by the *conjunction* of a set of social meanings *and* the unjust social practices that they enable. Put differently, Haslanger differentiates between forms of social consciousness and ideologies at the level of social practice. This is because both forms of social consciousness and ideologies involve a shared set of social meanings, since it is through these meanings that humans coordinate with one another in societies. Thus, what makes a form of social consciousness *ideological* is that it provides reasons for individuals to engage in *unjust practices*. In short, Haslanger articulates a *functionalist* account of ideology in which what makes something ideological is what it *does* in the world.[267] Indeed, Haslanger argues that racism "is constituted by an interconnected web of unjust social practices that unjustly disadvantage certain groups, such as residential segregation, police brutality, biased hiring and wage inequity, and educational disadvantage", where these practices are not "random" but rather "connected by a racist [set of social meanings]".[268] The focus of ideology is therefore not on the *content* of the social meanings, but on what they *enable* or *do*. Whether we think of racism in biological terms, where phenotypic features are purportedly indicative of a difference in ability, or in religious terms, where black skin is thought to be the mark of the 'curse of Ham', is thus incidental for Haslanger.[269] All that matters is what practices these social meanings enable.

What this misses, however, is precisely that racism is both a set of unjust practices and a particular vision of the world with a long and storied history. That, for example, racists attempt to demonstrate differences in cognitive abilities between racial groups is not incidental or random but the product of a specific history in which racial features *were* thought to be a marker of cognitive difference. Reading Haslanger on the construction of race at times feels as if the social meanings she identifies emerge out of a vacuum rather than out of a particular way of thinking about race. There might be a good reason for this ahistoricism: racist tropes and assumptions are closely linked to the theories of race science, which are often the explicit

[267] This is perhaps best expressed in the subtitle of her Aquinas lecture, delivered at Marquette University in 2021: "What does ideology do?".
[268] Haslanger, "Racism, Ideology, and Social Movements," 16–17. Note, in the original quotation Haslanger uses the term "racist technē", where technē refers to a set of shared social meanings. I find this choice of terminology confusing; as such, I prefer the construction 'set of social meanings', which I have been using throughout the chapter.
[269] On the prevalence of both biblical and scientific explanations of racism in the United States, see Popkin, "Pre-Adamism in 19th Century American Thought."

articulation and rationalisation of racist prejudice.[270] As such, suggesting that there is a historical reason for thinking the way we do may invite the assumption that the target of ideology critique are these historically determined patterns of thinking, epitomised by the most explicit articulation of racist prejudice – for instance in the form of racist scientific theories. As Haslanger argues, however, criticising these theories is ineffective in tackling ideologies because they "are not an essential part of what enables or motivates the practice".[271] Consequently, undermining the scientific basis for race fails to adequately promote social change and leaves intact everyday practices of racist prejudice. I think Haslanger gets something right here; while it may be tempting to focus on undermining the basis for the most explicitly articulated racial theories, doing so will have little influence over ordinary practices of racist prejudice. In fact, thinking that it can amounts to an elite-driven and overly intellectual conception of social change, one where the power of argument will inevitably lead to the development of collective consciousness.

This is clearly a naïve picture, and not one that I endorse. However, there is a middle ground between accepting the importance of the historical development of racist thinking and rejecting the idea that ideology critique – and therefore social change – must be done by way of criticising the most explicit formulation of a historical idea. I contend that we can find this position in Du Bois, which I suggest provides the foundation for a historicised conception of ideology (or at the very least a historicised ideological conception of racism). In articulating this more historicised understanding of ideology, I focus my remarks on *Dusk of Dawn* (henceforth *Dusk*), an autobiography published in 1940 when Du Bois was in his seventies.[272] This is deliberate because *Dusk* is published at a time when Du Bois wrote in a more Marxist register, and, crucially for my purposes, it takes as its central focus the concept of race. In brief, I read Du Bois as using narrative as a method for articulating the contours of an ideological conception of racism, which in turn emerges in the social meanings individual agents use to coordinate with one another. Crucially, however, this notion of racism is *also* not equivalent to

[270] This is not to say that scientific theories of race are simply the explicit formulation of prejudicial ideas already held in society, though it is plausible that sometimes they can be. My point here is more to say that there is often a connection between racist prejudice and racist theories such that they both influence one another. For a discussion of this point, see Shelby, "Ideology, Racism, and Critical Social Theory," 161–62.
[271] Haslanger, "Racism, Ideology, and Social Movements," 16.
[272] Although *Black Reconstruction in America* is often taken to be Du Bois' most explicitly Marxist text, its focus is on undermining the racist mythologies and narratives that emerged after the American Civil War, in which the agency of African Americans and the role of slavery in instigating and driving the war were whitewashed. In contrast, *Dusk of Dawn*, published 5 years later, examines the different ways in which race came to be understood at various points in his life.

the amalgamation of social meanings. Rather, it is broader and constitutes something more akin to an interpretive lens such that whites cannot see non-whites in general, and blacks in particular, as their fellow equals. It is this interpretive gaze, which becomes embedded in political institutions as well as in the "conditioned reflexes", unconscious reasoning, etc. of white individuals, that I think best explains how Du Bois understands racism and forms the key component of my construction of a Du Boisian conception of ideology.

Reading Ideology in Du Bois' Dusk of Dawn

To start with an obvious question, if what I am after is an interpretive way of seeing the world, how and why can this be historicised? That is, why is history important for Du Bois when it is not for accounts like Haslanger's? The answer lies in the method through which Du Bois articulates the problem of racism in society. This is most evident in *Dusk's* subtitle, "An Essay Toward an Autobiography of a Race Concept", which juxtaposes two ideas that seem contradictory. After all, how can we explain a *concept* through *biographical features* of an individual's life?[273] Du Bois explains his reasoning as follows:

> "My discussions of the concept of race, and of the white and coloured worlds, are not to be regarded as digressions from the history of my life; rather *my autobiography is a digressive illustration and exemplification of what race has meant in the world in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries*. It is for this reason that I have named and tried to make this book an autobiography of race rather than merely a personal reminiscence, with the idea that peculiar racial situation and problems could best be explained in the life history of one who has lived them".[274]

Although there is significant debate concerning the meaning and importance of Du Bois' turn to autobiography, what unites all these interpretations is the view that Du Bois uses personal narrative *as method*.[275] That is, the stories and experiences of racism Du Bois recounts are woven into an autobiographical narrative that traces the different ways in which race comes to be understood at various points in his life. There is therefore a relationship between the history of what Du Bois calls 'the race concept' and the history of his life, which *through this relationship* is taken to convey something broader than his personal *individual* struggle against

[273] See Gooding-Williams, "Autobiography, Political Hope, Racial Justice," 166.
[274] Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, 221, my emphasis.
[275] For some of the different ways Du Bois' use of autobiography has been interpreted, see Balfour, *Democracy's Reconstruction*, chap. 4; Chandler, *X-- the Problem of the Negro as a Problem for Thought*, chap. 2; Gooding-Williams, "Autobiography, Political Hope, Racial Justice," 165–69.

racial injustice. Simply put, his personal struggle against racism is not *just* intended to shed light on how he understands the problem, but rather as an exemplar of how racism and the race idea identify, shape, influence, and dominate African Americans more generally.[276]

All these processes are evident at various points in the chapter entitled "The Concept of Race", which appears at roughly the halfway point of the book. There, Du Bois recounts the transformation of his thinking *about race*, which begins with the recognition that differences of colour picked out something in the world; as he puts it "just as I was born a member of a coloured family, so too I was born a member of the coloured race".[277] This reflects the recognition that, by the nineteenth century when Du Bois was born, colour differences "had emerged as the more or less stable set of phenomena undergirding the concept of race".[278] Yet, while colour may have been the lens through which racial groups were identified, *what* colour differences represented and *how* they were understood were subject to multiple different and often contradictory interpretations. Thus, Du Bois retells the changes in *his* thinking about race as a way of tracing these manifold interpretations that existed in his lifetime, which began with a concept of heredity, moved to a hybrid concept of cultural and physical traits, before culminating in a notion of race grounded in the common history of a group. Even in this final stage colour plays a role in his thinking, where the phenotypic features individuals possess are nothing more than a "badge" that indicates membership in a group whose "real essence … is its social heritage of slavery; the discrimination and insult", which in turn "binds together not simply the children of Africa, but extends through yellow Asia and into the South Seas".[279]

This is a very brief overview of the changes in Du Bois' thinking about race, and a fuller examination of the role of ideology in *Dusk* would require a more elaborate reconstruction of the relationship between Du Bois' understanding of both race and racism than I can perform here. There are, however, two points that are worth stressing for my purposes. First, by bringing together the non-white populations of the globe through the notion of a shared history of oppression, Du Bois seems to implicitly invoke the image of the colour line albeit in a more historicised manner. As we saw earlier, its initial formulation was *forward-looking*: it

[276] The use of autobiography to examine the problem of racism situates Du Bois in a tradition of African-American literature where personal experiences are understood as the gateway to challenging race. For a brief discussion of the features of this tradition, and for an assessment of the positives and negatives of the autobiographical method, see Balfour, *Democracy's Reconstruction*, 76–78.
[277] Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, 100.
[278] Gooding-Williams, "Autobiography, Political Hope, Racial Justice," 166.
[279] Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, 117.

suggested that the defining problem of the upcoming twentieth century would be grounded in the exploitation of non-white races and the lands they occupied. Here, however, the colour line is taken to be historically determined, the result of a long process of discrimination against groups whose skin was coloured differently. In short, it suggests that the history of race and racial difference is fundamentally interlinked with the history of oppression, such that the latter shaped the dominant understanding of the former. Second, and relatedly, if racial difference is linked to the common history of discrimination and oppression, then the concept of race is predicated on a specific conceptualisation of non-whites *as others* to whom the rights and protections typically afforded to people do not apply. If we are to find an account of ideology in Du Bois' writings, I argue it is in this conceptualisation of the world through the colour line, in which the 'darker races' are seen as others who do not deserve equality, freedom, and other democratic values for a host of inconsistent, irrational, and even contradictory reasons.

This implies that understanding race in *our* present world requires an understanding of the history of the different ways that those with specific phenotypical features have been identified, categorised, and conceptualised *as others* in order to enable, justify, or naturalise their oppression. Framed this way, Du Bois seems to suggest that the *historical interpretations* of racial difference, which in turn continue to influence the present, are ideological. This is supported by his remarks towards the end of "The Concept of Race", where he writes:

> "The fact that even in the minds of the most dogmatic supporters of race theories and believers in the inferiority of coloured folk to white, there was a conscious or unconscious determination to increase their incomes by taking full advantage of this belief. And then gradually this thought was metamorphosed into a realization that the income-bearing value of race prejudice was the cause and not the result of theories of race inferiority".[280]

While there are clear Marxist resonances in Du Bois' thinking in this passage, given that the emergence of racial theories is given an economic motive or foundation, it is important not to reduce Du Bois' nuanced analysis of racism to a purely economic one. As I read him, what may have driven initial attempts to frame non-white others as inferiors is the "income-bearing value of race prejudice", but what followed from this motive are "those unconscious acts and

[280] Ibid., 129.

irrational reactions, unpierced by reason, *whose current form* depended on *the long history of relation and contact between thought and idea*".[281] That the unconscious and subconscious mental states of individuals continue to replicate and perpetuate racism is thus not the result of economic motives, but rather the way in which the 'income-bearing value' of racism has been rationalised and interpreted throughout history.

This provides a different understanding of ideology from Haslanger's practice-first account, since the social meanings we do hold are conceptualised as the individual manifestations of an overarching race idea or concept that, in turn, has a particular history. This is not to say that the race concept is coherently developed by a set of individuals before being applied to society: such a view is clearly implausible. Further, it does not mean that the race concept is coherent and free from contradictions. As Du Bois observes, the race concept has "all sorts of illogical trends and irreconcilable tendencies. Perhaps it is wrong to speak of it at all as a 'concept' rather than as a group of contradictory forces, facts, and tendencies".[282] Nevertheless, these contradictions and illogical tendencies do not make race any less real. What this suggests, I argue, is something broader than a set of shared social meanings, though it is difficult to precisely outline what Du Bois may mean. I am sympathetic to Robert Gooding-Williams' analysis, which understands the concept of race in a Nietzschean sense; thus, Du Bois' autobiography is interpreted as a type of genealogy aimed at "unpacking the dense, synthesis of meanings … that, over time, have been wilfully interpreted into and forcibly imposed on specific procedures" of *racial domination*.[283] Racism is therefore understood as the historicised domination of non-white groups, where 'domination' is conceptualised as the arbitrary exertion of power over individuals.[284] Thus, Gooding-Williams suggests that the "disposition [among whites] to regard blacks as their inferiors" is of fundamental importance in "perpetuating and reinforcing" a social world in which whites have the power to "arbitrarily determine the nature and scope" of what blacks *can do*.[285]

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[281] Ibid., 6, my emphasis.
[282] Ibid., 133.
[283] Gooding-Williams, "Autobiography, Political Hope, Racial Justice," 166.
[284] It is tempting to read this in terms of the neo-republican conception of domination. However, it is worth stressing that there is a long history in both African and Africana traditions of philosophy that examines the idea of freedom through the language of domination, which is largely ignored by the neo-republican tradition. On the elisions of African and Africana concepts of freedom as non-domination, see Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire*, chap. 1; Rogers, *The Darkened Light of Faith*, chap. 3. For the classic initial formulation of the neo-republican conception of freedom, see Pettit, *Republicanism*.
[285] Gooding-Williams, "Autobiography, Political Hope, Racial Justice," 168. On the same page, Gooding-Williams analyses the constraining power of racism on Du Bois in terms of the capacity for whites to "constrain his actions at their discretion", which again invokes ideas of arbitrary interference.

Framed this way, Gooding-Williams seems to read Du Bois through a historically grounded functionalist lens, where the concept of race is the admixture of contradictory and illogical ways that phenotypic or cultural difference have throughout time been mobilised to justify oppressive practices. This helps make sense of the *constraining power* of racism; recall for instance Du Bois' struggle against the "daily reminder" of being a "coloured man in a white world", which limited his movement and actions by specifying *where* he could work or sleep, *what* he could write and publish, and *how* he travelled.[286] Hence, race as a "historically formed concept … function[s] as mechanism of power and control", since it enables the arbitrary interference by whites in the everyday actions and movements of black individuals.[287] While this historico-functionalist reading of Du Bois is compelling, I want to close by gesturing towards an aspect of Du Bois' thinking on race that seems to go beyond a functionalist perspective. In reflecting on the "psychological meaning of caste segregation", Du Bois writes the following:

> "It is as though one, looking out from a dark cave in a side of an impending mountain, sees the world passing and speaks to it; speaks courteously and persuasively, showing them how these entombed souls are hindered in their natural movement, expression, and development; and how their loosening from prison would be a matter not simply of courtesy, sympathy, and help to them, but aid to all the world. *One talks on evenly and logically in this way*, but notices that the passing throng does not even turn its head, or if it does, glances curiously and walks on. It gradually penetrates the minds of the prisoners that the people passing do not hear; *that some thick sheet of invisible but horribly tangible plate glass is between them and the world*. They get excited; they talk louder; they gesticulate. Some of the passing world stop in curiosity; these gesticulations seem so pointless; they laugh and pass on. *They still either do not hear at all, or hear but dimly, and even what they hear, they do not understand*."[288]

Is Du Bois here describing the *feeling* of being constrained by racism and racist practices, and likening this experience to being entombed in a cave? If he is simply communicating the experiences of living in a world governed by racism, then we can read this as a vivid

[286] Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, 135–36.
[287] Gooding-Williams, "Autobiography, Political Hope, Racial Justice," 167.
[288] Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, 130–31, my emphasis.

metaphorical illustration of how race comes to dominate Du Bois' life. Another possibility is to suggest that what Du Bois is after is the experience of living as 'a Negro', which in the minds of the white world represents a specific *kind of person* as an inferior or lesser being.[289] That is, the cave allegory conveys a sense of struggle against the concept of 'the Negro' that conceives of black Americans in various ways – be it as an 'inferior', a 'problem', or even as a 'threat' – that they themselves have no say in creating. Thus, in the historical process of identifying a specific group as the target of a myriad set of oppressive practices, ranging from slavery to Jim Crow legislation, a new 'kind of person' was created whose social role it is to be exploited and condemned as inferior or problematic in some capacity.[290] This second reading is still about domination or oppression, albeit of a different kind; it refers to the constraints placed on the way African Americans can – to use a clumsy phrase – *be* in the world.

This provides a plausible alternative reading of Du Bois' famous assertion that "the black man is a person who must ride 'Jim Crow' in Georgia".[291] Rather than simply being about the social construction of race, the above interpretation would seem to imply that Du Bois is drawing attention to the way that the concept of race constructs a *kind of person* – the black man – who is *defined by* having to ride the 'Jim Crow' car. There is simply no other way for the black man to be in this social world. This process, what Ian Hacking calls "making up people", can be summed as follows: "categories of people come into existence at the same time as kinds of people come into being to fit those categories, and there is a two-way interaction between these processes".[292] Again, while this is a normal process of thinking about and interacting with the world, it can become ideological when – functionally – these categories enable injustice, such as social oppression. In this case, the categories used to represent African Americans are constraining in ways that are dominating, since the categories themselves are predicated on an unjust and oppressive set of social circumstances. Thus, to *be* an African American in the context of a world governed by the colour line is to be subject to white domination. This is not to say that it is always the case; these representations can be changed, albeit with difficulty since the object of change is the dominant perspective on the world.

[289] I take this idea and this formulation from Ian Hacking – see "Making Up People."
[290] These remarks are inspired by and refashioned from the brief discussion of the concept 'prostitute' in Srinivasan, "Genealogy, Epistemology and Worldmaking," 145.
[291] Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, 153.
[292] Hacking, *Historical Ontology*, 48.

At this juncture, two different points are worth stressing. First, I think this is a plausible extension of Gooding-Williams' Nietzschean reading of Du Bois, which stresses additional dimensions of oppression to the ones Gooding-Williams thematises. That said, it may be the case that this draws on a social ontology that is incompatible with Du Bois' wider writings. As such, we should think of this not as *Du Bois'* ideological conception of racism, but rather as a view on racism that is inspired by Du Bois' reflections. This then leaves us with an ambiguous answer to the question posed at the beginning, namely whether we can think of Du Bois as a theorist of ideology. As I have hopefully shown, there are clearly ideological dimensions to his thinking about racism, and a fuller exploration of his thinking may be able to synthesise these remarks into a concrete articulation of the race concept *as ideology*. Second, and as I hinted earlier, I think this passage *also* reflects an ideological conception of racism that has non-functionalist dimensions. For those in the cave, the glass divider between them and the outside world works to distort the perspective of those on the outside such that attempts to ask for help come to be seen as something else entirely. This is not necessarily about a *way of being a person* but rather a *way of seeing the world* such that *some feature* present amongst those in the cave – in this case colour – is seen as justifying their separation. We see this most clearly in the the fate of those few individuals who, after breaking through the glass "in blood and disfigurement … find themselves aced by a horrified, implacable, and quite overwhelming mob of people frightened for their own very existence".[293]

What I take Du Bois to be struggling against, then, is an interpretive gaze that sees non-whites through a specific lens that they have had no say in creating, and that they must fight against to change. Thus, in a world structured by the colour line, the prevailing understanding of racial difference is framed through the language of inferiority and exploitation, which in turn structures the way in which whites understand themselves and their relationship to the 'coloured world'. I therefore read Du Bois' reflections on the race concept as gesturing towards this overarching interpretive framework that shapes the way whites and non-whites understand themselves and one another. This, I want to suggest, is a key component of ideology, since it helps to explain why individuals come to participate in and strongly identify with oppressive practices like colonialism and racism.[294] We are therefore left with a multidimensional

[293] Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, 131.
[294] My analysis here may also have resonances with Gooding-Williams' interpretation of Du Bois' criticisms of the way whites come to construct their subjective worldview. That said, I am not altogether clear whether Gooding-Williams is making a general point about white subjectivity or about the subjectivity of *white*

conception of racism as ideological, which is at once *historicised*, *functionalist*, and *interpretivist or epistemic*. It is historicised because it captures how different interpretations of the *significance* of colour have been interweaved into a singular 'race concept' that, while not coherent, is nevertheless embedded in the social meanings and institutions of society. It is functionalist because it looks at how the race concept dominates non-whites, through the justification of oppressive legislation or the construction of *categories of people* whose social roles are predicated on the experience of oppression. Finally, it is *also* interpretivist because the ways of being a person are predicated on a way of seeing the world (or a way of thinking) that renders these categories *intelligible* in the first place. Whether these can be systematised into a singular coherent conception of ideology is a task that must be pursued elsewhere. Instead, in the remaining chapters, I attempt to show how distinguishing between the historical, functionalist, and interpretivist dimensions of ideology can be informatively used to theorise philosophical racism.

Concluding Remarks: Towards a Conception of Philosophical Racism

The question I explored is whether and to what extent we can think of Du Bois as advancing an ideological conception of racism in his writings. This is a reasonable question, given the growing influence of Marxism in Du Bois' later years; as such, it is plausible to think that he was aware of Marx's writings on ideology and may even have seen his writings on racism as contributing towards Marxist debates on ideology.[295] The driving aim of this chapter was thus to provide answers to two problems that arise when thinking about ideology: *what* is it, and *at what level* does it operate. In answering the first, I suggested that ideologies are *pejorative*; they are distortive frameworks that enable injustice in a variety of ways, such as by naturalising the unjust treatment of individuals or by blinding members of dominant groups to the injustices in their society. In answering the second, I brought Du Bois' reflections on racism into conversation with contemporary debates on ideology to highlight the limitations of doxastic accounts that understand ideologies in terms of false beliefs. These accounts, I argued, cannot make sense of either the *generative* dimensions to ideologies, where beliefs are both a *source* and *product* of ideologies, or the ambivalent relationship ideologies have with truth, given that

supremacism in particular, the latter of which is characterised by "ill will" and "malicious character". For his insightful reconstruction of Du Bois' argument, see Gooding-Williams, "Beauty as Propaganda," 17–18.

[295] See Gooding-Williams, "W.E.B. Du Bois," n. 25.

they "make real what they purport to describe".[296] This is epitomised in the experiences of racism Du Bois recounts throughout his life, such as the *feeling* of being 'a problem' that is not adequately captured as a conscious (albeit false) belief in the inferiority of non-whites. Instead, I suggested that ideologies are *hermeneutic*; that is, they involve the tools and methods we use to understand the social world and our place within it.

In articulating a plausible account of the source of these interpretive tools, Du Bois foreshadows a contemporary position on ideology that has become prominent in the literature: practice-first accounts that think of ideology as embedded in the "public mental representations" of a group, community, or society.[297] These are constituted by the shared social meanings that individuals take for granted when attempting to coordinate their actions with others, as for instance drivers do when they follow the rules of the road. Hence, there are surprising and interesting resonances between these practice-first accounts and Du Bois' suggestion that racism is, in part, the product of "inherited customs … and those irrational and partly subconscious actions of men" that stem from their socialisation in a society governed by the colour line.[298] Indeed, one interpretive upshot is that, by bringing Du Bois together with contemporary practice-first accounts of ideology, we can make sense of what it means for racism to become embedded in the unconscious patterns of thought and "conditioned reflexes" of ordinary individuals, even if they consciously reject explicitly racist theories. At the same time, however, Du Bois' analysis of racism can identify prominent limitations in practice-first accounts that conceptualise ideologies as the unjust social practices *enabled by* a set of shared social meanings. This is because Du Bois offers a more historicised understanding of race as an inconsistent and illogical conceptual framework that nevertheless comes to be embedded in social institutions, including those social meanings that enable coordination between individuals.

This is important because it demonstrates that racism and racist thinking is not just the product of a set of unjust social practices, but it is also the product of a distinct way of seeing the world that, itself, has a particular history. Hence, understanding racism is not simply about examining the unjust practices it enables in society *now*, but how it has come to be interpreted through and imposed upon mechanisms of domination towards specific human groups. In this way, as

[296] Haslanger, "Racism, Ideology, and Social Movements," 6.
[297] Táíwò, "The Empire Has No Clothes," 307–8.
[298] Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, 194.

Gooding-Williams argues, Du Bois "echoing Nietzsche … holds that historically formed concepts can function as mechanisms of power and control".[299] This represents a significant contribution to contemporary debates on ideology, insofar as it stresses the importance of preserving the *genetic components* to both ideology and ideology critique. After all, if ideologies are historically formed ways of thinking, then capturing this precise history is not only important for understanding the trenchant power of ideologies but also in providing a direction or angle for critique to destabilise the illusory power of ideologies. This is not to say that ideology critique involves undermining the explicit rationalisation of the race concept; rather, an understanding of the different ways a historicised concept has been understood may help in pointing to various motifs that can be drawn on when engaging in ideology critique. Further, it does so without necessarily undermining the functionalist dimensions of ideologies; as we saw earlier, the race concept is ideological not because it produces *distortions* in thinking, but because it has enabled different ways of subjecting non-white groups to domination.

Yet, at the same time, I suggested that Du Bois is gesturing towards the interpretivist or epistemic dimensions to ideologies. To my mind, the cave analogy is gesturing towards the struggle against an *interpretive gaze* or a dominant way of seeing the world that, in turn, may enable various *kinds of people* to emerge. That is, underpinning the functional dimensions of ideology is an epistemic foundation that renders these classifications and implicit social meanings intelligible in the first place. This constructionist view of facts and knowledge may ultimately not be attributable to Du Bois, although there is some textual evidence to think he may have endorsed certain aspects of this view. For instance, in the opening chapter to *Dusk of Dawn*, he writes "colour had *become* an abiding unchangeable *fact* chiefly because a mass of self-conscious instincts and unconscious prejudices had arranged themselves rank on rank in its defence. Government, work, religion, and education *became based upon and determined by* the colour line".[300] Nevertheless, further research is required to adequately capture and systematise Du Bois' reflections on race to provide a fuller account of an ideological conception of racism that can be found in his writings. If the argument of this chapter is accepted, we not only have reason to plausibly think his account of racism can be reconstructed

[299] Gooding-Williams, "Autobiography, Political Hope, Racial Justice," 167.
[300] Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, 5.

in ideological terms. We also have reason to think that he identifies multiple different dimensions to ideology that are sometimes overlooked in the present debate.[301]

That said, exploring these aspects of Du Bois in more detail is the task of a different project. Although my focus in this chapter is ultimately on the plausibility of an ideological conception of racism more generally, this was done with the aim of elucidating something important about aspects of *philosophical* racism: the problem that racist ideas and assumptions pose for the discipline of philosophy. We can, I want to suggest, use an ideological conception of racism to overcome the limitations of the two rival accounts I identified in the previous two chapters. This is because a tripartite conception of ideologies as historicised, functionalist, and interpretivist can demonstrate how an underlying conceptual framework that shapes how scholars think about philosophy becomes embedded within – and therefore perpetuated by – the institutions of academic philosophy. Hence, an ideological framework can help connect the conceptual dimensions with the institutional dimensions of philosophical racism. To explore this in more detail, I turn to a potentially unusual source in the next chapter: methodological reflections regarding the practice of disciplinary history writing. The reason for this is to gain a more holistic account of the different ways disciplines are constituted, as well as to diagnose with greater precision the various institutional levels at which philosophical racism can exist in the discipline. Thus, by articulating a useful conception of academic disciplines like philosophy, my goal is to articulate a plausible framework that can help scholars analyse the multifaceted nature of philosophical racism.

[301] I say present debate because some of these features are systematised in Geuss' typology of the different senses of ideology. He for instance distinguishes between epistemic, functional, and genetic properties of ideology, with each one of these mandating different lines of critique. It is however not clear whether these are rival accounts or whether they can be systematised under a singular conception of ideology. Equally, given his view of ideologies in terms of false or distorted beliefs, it is also not clear what the epistemic dimension to ideologies amounts to if we accept, as I have suggested here, that ideologies have a complicated relationship with the idea of truth. For his account, see Geuss, *The Idea of a Critical Theory*, 12–22.

Chapter 4: Academic Disciplines, Propaganda, and Racist Ideology

In the last chapter, I articulated the foundations of an ideological conception of racism that, I suggested, could be found in W.E.B. Du Bois' writings. As I characterised his view, Du Bois outlines an ideological conception of racism that recognises its historical, functional, *and epistemic* dimensions. Thus, Du Bois' race concept is a historical synthesis of the myriad and often contradictory ways that phenotypic and cultural difference has been mobilised to construct and identify specific groups *as races* for the purpose of oppression and exploitation. Crucially, however, what enables the historical and functional dimensions to ideology is an underlying interpretive framework or gaze that renders these *functionally oppressive* representations intelligible or possible in the first place. That is, in reflecting on the psychological dimensions of ideology, I argued that Du Bois seemed to be struggling against a dominant racial interpretive gaze predicated on the inferiority of non-whites, which in turn shapes how both whites and non-whites see themselves and one another. Perhaps what is at stake here is the process of subject formation, in which whites come to understand who they are through the perspective of a particular interpretation of the world that frames both their self-understanding and the questions they deem intelligible to ask.[302] While I do not systematise this any further, it suggests that a Du Boisian conception of ideology is more than a synthesis of historical and functional perspectives and includes an epistemic or representational dimension in which ideologies distort how individuals see the world. In short, Du Bois recognises racism as partly a problem of the representational schemes that structure how we interpret and understand the world.

This has affinities with my project of uncovering philosophical racism, which takes aim at the prevailing ways in which scholars come to understand and think about their discipline and their position within it. Indeed, my goal in this chapter is to attempt to ascertain how all three dimensions of ideology I suggested we could find in Du Bois' writings on racism can be helpfully used to theorise the problem of philosophical racism. Recall that the scope of my project is limited: I am not examining the way racism in philosophical debates has come to influence prejudice in the world more generally.[303] Instead, my criticisms are internal to the

[302] This has similarities with Robert Gooding-Williams' interpretation of Du Bois' critique of the historical formation of a white supremacist worldview, in which "individual white subjects have come habitually to disdain blacks and to regard them as subhuman" – see Gooding-Williams, "Beauty as Propaganda," 17–18.
[303] For some excellent historical accounts of racism that examine the development of racism in philosophy and connect it to the uptake of racist prejudice more generally, see Fredrickson, *Racism: A Short History*; Popkin,

discipline itself, as if to say that some of the prevailing ways in which the discipline has been understood are coloured by racist assumptions and presuppositions that exist in the background of understanding. This is, however, an epistemic or interpretive claim; it suggests that the *way we see or think about* philosophy is shaped by the history of racism. To be clear, I think that these underlying ways of thinking enable the emergence of concepts or classifications that create, enable, or justify injustice *within the discipline*. As we saw in Chapter 2, diverse practitioners have described academic philosophy as a hostile environment, in which they face an undue justificatory burden to 'prove' that their research interests and academic contributions *are philosophical*.[304] We might plausibly think of these as different kinds of epistemic injustice enabled by conscious beliefs, as well as unconscious patterns of reasoning and 'conditioned reflexes', that all lead to the denial of philosophical status to thinkers and traditions that are unfamiliar and outside the mainstream.[305]

Yet, I also maintain with Du Bois that ideologies have a distinctly epistemic dimension that renders intelligible particular ways of thinking about or understanding the world. That is, our representational schemes are conditioned on a prior interpretive framework or gaze that makes them *possible* in the first place.[306] My core claim is therefore that there is a philosophical colour line affecting the discipline, which makes possible a self-conception of the discipline as an exclusively European endeavour. Further, this conception comes to be embedded in not only the dominant institutions of the discipline, but also in the unconscious patterns of thinking and learned reflexes of its practitioners, leading to the implicit denial of philosophical status to traditions that have historically been marginalised from the discipline. Making sense of this claim therefore requires a dual analysis that, on the one hand, identifies an underlying *way of thinking* within philosophy that is racially inflected, and, on the other, demonstrates how this foundational interpretive framework came to be embedded in the institutions and common assumptions of philosophy itself. In the final two chapters, I attempt to demonstrate both these

"Pre-Adamism in 19th Century American Thought"; "The Philosophical Bases of Modern Racism"; Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race*; Smith, *Nature, Human Nature, and Human Difference*.

[304] Dotson, "How Is This Paper Philosophy?"

[305] For some useful contributions to the debate on epistemic injustice that may capture the kinds of issue I identify here, see Dotson, "Conceptualizing Epistemic Oppression"; Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*; Pohlhaus, "Epistemic Agency Under Oppression."

[306] This has similarities with Sabina Bremner and Chloe de Canson's account of ideology as operating at the relativised *a priori* dimensions to cognition, which also conceptualises ideologies in terms of *what knowledge* they render possible. I am very sympathetic to their view and I think we reach similar conclusions; however, I am not wholly sure as to whether we retain the same foundational ontological commitments. For their account, see Bremner and Canson, "Ideology as Relativized a Priori."

ideas as follows: I start by articulating the necessary conceptual apparatus that can better theorise the different levels at which a racist ideology can shape the discipline of philosophy. Drawing on the Du Boisian conception of ideology as having historical, functional, and interpretive dimensions, I put forward a framework for thinking about philosophy that illustrates how each of these dimensions can shape the discipline. I then apply this framework in the next chapter to analyse one of the core examples that motivated my project: the Hellenistic origins thesis.

How then should we think about the problem of racism within and for philosophy? I start by articulating a framework to help illustrate the different aspects of academic disciplines, such as philosophy, that need to be captured on an account of philosophical racism. To do so, I draw on Duncan Bell's distinction between a knowledge-practice and a knowledge-complex to show how concepts and theories come to be seen as knowledge contributions to specific disciplines. This also helps illustrate how valid claims to knowledge, like philosophical concepts, are more than just a written argument: they also include sets of social practices that both perpetuate these claims to knowledge as *accepted wisdom* and work to create *specific scholarly kinds* whose form of self-identification is inextricably bound up with particular theoretical frameworks. With this in mind, I return to the question of racism in the second half of the chapter. Specifically, I bring the distinction between knowledge-practices and knowledge-complexes together with the ideological conception of racism I defended in the previous chapter to identify the multiple different ways that a racist ideology can shape academic practice. I make this case in dialogue with Du Bois, by offering a novel interpretation of his critique of white supremacist propaganda in "The Propaganda of History".[307] In short, I show how an ideological conception of racism, coupled with an understanding of disciplines in terms of the interplay between knowledge-practices and knowledge-complexes, can help bring to light the implicit ways Du Bois thinks propagandistic narratives have influenced historical scholarship. The upshot is that Du Bois' examination of white supremacist propaganda *within academic scholarship* acts as an illustrative analogy for understanding why we should think of the Hellenistic origins thesis as an instance of philosophical racism, a position I argue for in more detail in the next chapter.

[307] This is the final chapter of one of Du Bois' most influential texts: *Black Reconstruction in America: 1860-1880*. The version I refer to and cite throughout this chapter was published in a collection of Du Bois' writings, though it is identical to the one in *Black Reconstruction*. For the version I am citing from, see *The Oxford W.E.B. Du Bois Reader*, 438–54.

Ideology and Philosophical Racism: Developing an Analytic Framework

Throughout the thesis, I have been referring to philosophy as a *discipline* rather than as something more nebulous, for instance a field or area of inquiry. This suggests a degree of methodological and conceptual unity amongst those who think of themselves, and in turn are recognised as philosophers. Disciplines have traditions of thinking, canons, and histories in ways that fields of inquiry may not, given that they denote a more general interest in a particular domain of inquiry. As Sally Haslanger suggests, "disciplines are a set of practices that *structure our thinking and interaction*" in order to "develop ways of *seeing, thinking, feeling, and responding* to *relevant phenomena* in coordination with others".[308] Disciplines are constructed by the conscious and unconscious interactions between scholars concerning the best way to resolve problems that arise from a particular way of seeing and thinking about the world. In short, that we intuitively think there is a difference between thinking *philosophically* and thinking, say, *anthropologically* is the result of the emergence of different disciplines, each with a different set of foundational assumptions, central figures, and carefully delineated spheres of inquiry – all of which have been largely reinforced by the contemporary university. This is still true of disciplines that have significant degrees of overlap such as political theory and political philosophy, which has largely become a "conventional" distinction referring to "different styles" of political theorising.[309] Even in such cases, there are still differences to be found in terms of the theorists who are studied and the overarching debates they engage in, which is again inflected by regional variation.[310]

Given her view of social structures as interlocking sets of social practices, it is understandable that Haslanger identifies disciplines in terms of the underlying practices they contain. While I agree with Haslanger's big picture conception of disciplines as structuring the way individuals identify and respond to questions or problems, I am not so sure that this outcome is the result of practices *alone*. For one, the social practices that exist across academia are largely identical: each discipline will distribute knowledge in the form of academic lectures, where a professor

[308] Haslanger, "Racism, Ideology, and Social Movements," 12, my emphasis.
[309] List and Valentini, "The Methodology of Political Theory," 530.
[310] As a senior colleague once remarked "one would never find Judith Shklar or Hannah Arendt in a political philosophy course in the UK". Similarly, Charles Mills notes that, regarding efforts to engage in questions of decolonisation and anti-racism, "much has been done" in political *theory* whereas political *philosophy* "lags significantly and seriously behind". It is likely that Mills has the US in mind with this distinction, though the real target of his charge is the "Anglo-American analytic liberal tradition" rather than a specific discipline – see Mills, "Decolonizing Western Political Philosophy," 1–2. That these comments can be made intelligibly suggests that there is at least presumed to be a meaningful difference between political theory and political philosophy.

will stand at the front of a room and speak to an audience for roughly an hour about the key concepts or histories that they deem important for students to know. This is not to say that the form of a lecture will be the same across disciplines; one can imagine for instance that mathematics and physics lectures may involve more audience participation through joint problem solving, whereas lectures in the humanities tend to be more akin to a 'traditional' conception of the lecture as a monologue by the professor to communicate the key aspects of a given text, methodological debate, historical era, and so on. Both are nevertheless *lectures* that allow for humans to coordinate over the *distribution of knowledge* from an expert to those seeking or eager to learn. That is, a lecture provides an environment in which what a discipline takes to constitute *knowledge* is shared with an audience by an expert in the subject. But, if lectures disseminate what *counts* as knowledge within a given discipline, how do we determine what disciplinary knowledge is in the first place? What determines the evidential standard for warranting inclusion as an instance of *knowledge* in a given discipline?

Of course, we could answer by identifying an additional set of social practices. Peer review, for instance, has many structural similarities to a lecture, insofar as there is a distribution of roles, between a 'reviewer', 'author', and 'editor', that have different responsibilities in submitting, reading, and improving a draft manuscript such that it makes a meaningful contribution to a disciplinary debate. What counts as knowledge in a given discipline might therefore plausibly be thought of as being coextensive with the articles and books that are ultimately published in eminent disciplinary journals or by leading academic presses that may lend themselves towards particular fields of inquiry.[311] Again, however, this seems to just push the problem back by one step; after all, how do the editors make a judgement as to whether a particular manuscript is making a contribution to a specific discipline? Answering this question, I want to suggest, mandates reflection on what disciplines are in ways that go beyond practice-based understandings. The distinction between a field of study and a discipline I drew on earlier can help: fields of study are broad and encompass a variety of different questions, whereas disciplines require that its practitioners undergo a process of *disciplining*. Put differently, disciplines mandate the existence of 'training regimes' that individuals must complete to become scholars in a relevant discipline. In short, to be a philosopher in the present

[311] A practice-based perspective also ignores questions as to why it is the case that some journals are considered more prestigious than others. To use an example, *American Political Science Review* is the gold standard for articles in political science and will be looked very favourably by government departments, whereas *Ethics* or *Analysis* have the same reputation within philosophy. For a political *philosopher*, then, it would be better to published in the latter journals; for a political *theorist*, however, the former would seem more prestigious.

is to be someone who has completed a period of training (i.e. a doctorate) in philosophy, in which one comes to learn not only the broad theoretical contributions of a variety of theorists, but also a general approach to philosophical questions that depend largely on the methods one was exposed to over the course of this training.[312]

This goes beyond social practice and into the more nebulous world of style, traditions, and frameworks that fall within disciplines like philosophy. To use a simplistic but nevertheless illustrative example, analytic philosophers are notoriously hostile to frameworks or methods that claim to *deconstruct* knowledge, or to claims about the effects particular discourses can have in shaping subjectivity. It is likely that concepts such as 'hybridity' or 'mimicry', which have a rich tradition in postcolonial studies, will not be found in a paper in an analytic journal not because they are not insightful but rather because they would not be seen as contributing to the debates within the analytic tradition. This is not because analytic philosophy has no interest in postcolonial questions; it increasingly does, and this has resulted in a welcome surge in debates that, for instance, attempt to uncover the particular wrong of colonialism, or that increasingly attempt to answer how we might rectify the historical injustice of colonialism.[313] Further, this is not to suggest that analytic philosophers *ought* to draw on these debates or to use the ideas of deconstruction in answering the various questions they have deemed to be of fundamental importance. Rather, I make the more modest claim that the analytic tradition will think of deconstruction, or the use of hybridity, as being a *different kind of inquiry* to the ones they intend to pursue. They might still recognise these inquiries as philosophical, but as belonging to a different way of thinking about and doing philosophy.

This should not be too controversial: I am simply suggesting that how an academic contribution is determined cannot be captured by *solely* appealing to the social practices that exist within academia. To be clear, practices are part of the story; academic lectures and disciplinary training are plausibly thought of as social practices that can play a role in instilling a particular *way of seeing* the world amongst a set of students. These practices, however, are housed within

[312] Although this refers more to the practice of teaching in the natural sciences, Thomas Kuhn notes how trainee scientists did not memorise a set of laws but rather learned how to solve particular kinds of problems and then applied these to new contexts where similar, but importantly different problems, arose. That said, it is not implausible to think why the same cannot be true for philosophy and the humanities more generally. For his discussion of this idea, see Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 187–91.

[313] For a selection of influential contributions to this literature, see Lu, *Justice and Reconciliation in World Politics*; Renzo, "Why Colonialism Is Wrong"; Valentini, "On the Distinctive Procedural Wrong of Colonialism"; Ypi, "What's Wrong with Colonialism."

institutional settings that *also* play a role in both the process of knowledge production and distribution. We ought to therefore think, following Bell, of disciplines as constituted by the interaction between *knowledge-practices* and *knowledge-complexes*. On this picture, knowledge-practices are "articulations of thinking, and of claims to valid knowledge" that include "theories arguments, specialised vocabularies, political [worldviews], and policy prescriptions, as well as the multiple ways in which knowledge is constructed and validated, expertise assigned, and intellectual legitimacy distributed".[314] We might therefore think of academic lectures as an instance of a *knowledge-practic*e: it provides a space in which expertise and intellectual legitimacy is assigned to the professor in virtue of their title and position. This knowledge-practice exists, within a wider institutional or structural "ecology": the "institutions, networks, organisational structures, or 'assemblages' of all of these in which knowledge is fertilised, rendered intelligible, and disseminated".[315] It is this 'ecology' that constitutes a *knowledge-complex*, and thus runs the gamut from small-scale localised institutions, such as a lecture hall or a university department, to large-scale institutions like national or international funding bodies. They also include institutions outside the university, like policy think tanks or government departments, which have sought to use cutting-edge research to shape policy outcomes.[316]

The distinction between a knowledge-practice and a knowledge-complex points towards a broader conception of academic practice that goes beyond explicit processes of coordination such as a lecture or peer review. In fact, it emphasises "that forms of thinking always have practical dimensions".[317] That is, the idea of a knowledge-*practice* illustrates that theories are not *only* propositional doctrines that articulate a vision or conception of the world: they are *also* made up of an assortment of social practices like "modes of self-discipline and education as well as techniques of model-building, calculation, and experimentation".[318] On this picture, the ideas, frameworks, and theories developed within a given discipline or area of study are in a sense rendered possible by the underlying practices that constitute them. This expands the scope of analysing theory from *exclusively* examining "arguments in written texts", which will

[314] Bell, "Writing the World," 12. Note, Bell uses the term 'political ideologies' in the non-pejorative sense; as such, and to avoid confusion, I replaced 'ideologies' with 'worldviews' to denote a coherent doctrine (or set of doctrines) that shape how an individual understands politics in their society. On the difference between pejorative and non-pejorative conceptions of ideology, see Geuss, *The Idea of a Critical Theory*, 4–26.
[315] Bell, "Writing the World," 12.
[316] See for instance Isaac, *Working Knowledge*.
[317] Bell, "Writing the World," 12, note 41.
[318] Isaac, *Working Knowledge*, 27.

always be an "essential feature of historical practice", to *also* examining "the ways in which the intellectual and institutional worlds of social scientists are formed [and] how they come to be certain kinds of people".[319] The unit of analysis is thus wider than *just theory*, understood as a particular body of argument or theoretical propositions, and includes, for instance, the disciplinary training of particular institutions as well as methods of self-discipline – all of which create individuals as *particular scholarly kinds*.[320] To illustrate, we can think of "the 'rational' social scientist", who attempts to explain all social problems "through the application of … 'scientific' reasoning", as the product of the university system in the post-war social sciences.[321]

Although it is tempting to think of this framework as solely applicable to the social sciences rather than philosophy, which is often understood as a realm of free-floating intellectuals, this is the reflection of a distorted preconception of what the discipline of philosophy ought to be. After all, philosophy is *neither* a catalogue of reflective truths, *nor* the slow unfolding of reason that culminates in the perfection of humanity within a liberal democratic state. These are all constructions of specific visions of the discipline that come to be embedded at the level of practice and institutional culture. The same is arguably true of theory formation; as Ian Hunter argues:

> "The theoretical vernaculars [i.e. knowledge-practices] that emerged at this time differed significantly, sometimes in accordance with the university faculties where theorists were employed, but also in accordance with divergent (or only partially overlapping) national intellectual contexts [i.e. knowledge-complexes]. The Kant that John Rawls used to reconstruct American "rational choice" political science thus differs markedly from the (post-Husserlian) Kant that Jürgen Habermas used to propel his transformation of German metaphysics into a communicational social theory".[322]

In short, the significance of Rawls' and Habermas' respective theoretical contributions were *recognisable as such* not only because they provided strong arguments in favour of their views, but also because they were able to reconcile different debates that were deemed to be of

[319] Bell, "Writing the World (Remix)," 35.
[320] For a useful discussion of this general theme, see Isaac, "Tangled Loops," 405–7. For an application of this idea to the history of philosophy, see Hunter, "The History of Philosophy and the Persona of the Philosopher."
[321] I take this example from Bell, "Writing the World (Remix)," 38.
[322] Hunter, "The History of Theory," 80.

fundamental importance within the institutions of their intellectual context (i.e. their knowledge-complexes). We might even make the further point that, in the case of Rawls and Habermas, their respective ideas came to be more than simply a theory of justice and democracy, and instead attained the status of a "specialised vocabulary" or even a social practice that coordinated how scholars thought about justice. That is, the Rawlsian and Habermasian conceptions of justice are exemplars of a certain kind of influential intellectual framework that sees groups of scholars coordinating on its own terms to expand and refine these respective systems by, for instance, tackling theoretical questions that were implicit or unclear, or by applying the frameworks to new contexts that were outside their initial scope.

Indeed, in the Anglo-American sphere, new lines of inquiry emerged out of the Rawlsian scheme, such as an emphasis on *distributive justice* or the conviction that the goal of philosophy is to articulate an abstract yet more just future society. Even critics of the Rawlsian scheme ultimately utilised its language and core assumptions to articulate a slightly different vision of a just society; as Katrina Forrester argues, under the Analytical Marxism of G.A. Cohen and others, "Marxian ideas were made to fit the Rawlsian framework".[323] Hence, when Robert Nozick stated that "political philosophers now must either work within Rawls' theory or explain why not", we can interpret him as noting the moment when a Rawlsian framework became a social practice.[324] Crucially, identifying this moment is not just about understanding the *success* or *persuasiveness* of Rawls' arguments: it also requires an analysis of the particular institutional contexts – the knowledge-complexes – that his framework was both articulated within and distributed through. The same is true for particular methods for approaching a problem that exist within the Rawlsian paradigm; why, for instance, was there a significant emphasis on the importance of ideal over non-ideal theory for much of the late twentieth century? Part of this explanation will involve examining the merits of arguments in favour of ideal over non-ideal theorising, but it will also mandate an examination of the various social practices that reinforced the priority of the former over the latter. Would prestigious academic journals privilege an ideal theoretical approach over a non-ideal one, because this is where the editors thought the interesting issues were? Did academic lectures and doctoral programmes reinforce an ideal theoretical approach to questions of justice rather than non-ideal ones? If so, how did they manage to do so?

[323] Forrester, *In the Shadow of Justice*, 216.
[324] Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, 183.

Equally, we can draw attention to the ways these institutional settings shaped methods of self-discipline to create particular *kinds of scholars*. Many academics in political philosophy even today self-identify as Rawlsians, Dworkinians, or possibly even Cohenites. These express more than theoretical affinities or sympathies and instead reflect particular ways of thinking about problems; in the case of Rawlsians, we might even be able to subdivide this into two subcategories of Rawlsian scholarly kinds: those who think that the Rawls of *Theory of Justice* was right, and those who think the Rawls of *Political Liberalism* was right. Thus, in the same way that the 'rational social scientist' comes into existence as a particular kind of scholarly identity, we can think of the Rawlsian in analytic political philosophy as constituting a *kind* or *type* of scholar such that these theoretical frameworks "structur[e] how they see the world and act in it".[325] That Anglophone theorists come to identify more with Rawlsian liberalism than the Habermasian equivalent also speaks to this thought. Why, for example, is it the case that Rawls appears to be more convincing to scholars with certain backgrounds over others? Adequately understanding these tendencies in academic institutions mandates a shift in historical analysis beyond the written text and into the practices, cultures, and wider intellectual contexts of academic institutions. It requires a sensitivity to the relationship between knowledge-practices and knowledge-complexes such that changes in one can influence shifts in the other and vice versa.[326]

Where does this leave us when thinking about philosophical racism? If theories are constituted by more than their articulation in written texts, paying attention to these varying forms of practice is *also* crucial in understanding the scope of philosophical racism. In short, my claim is that adequately capturing the influence of a racist ideology within philosophy mandates going beyond its theoretical dimensions and requires understanding how it affects the practices of theory formation and development within particular institutional contexts. The importance of a more capacious view is reflected in recent contributions to theorising the problem of racism in philosophy. In her analysis of Kant's racism, for example, Huaping Lu-Adler focuses on Kant's role as both an "investigator of nature" and a "worldly educator" who articulated racist

[325] Bell, "Writing the World (Remix)," 38.

[326] A similar analysis could be undertaken regarding the increasing prominence of experimental philosophy. Is the popularity of this way of thinking the product of better arguments? Or does it speak to a more general way of theorising that is becoming increasingly popular in Anglophone universities, and perhaps less so elsewhere? This is not intended as a criticism of experimental philosophy; the point is more that marrying quantitative analysis with philosophical questions would be deemed strange or odd at different institutional settings in a different historical moment.

conceptions of human difference in different registers, depending on his audience.[327] This has resonances with Emmanuel Eze's point that Kant, through his lectures, transformed speculative travel writing and "hearsay" into "instant academic science", thereby providing racial prejudice – and racially prejudiced writings – with the rational warrant of rigorous scholarly activity.[328] The point, then, is that a racist ideology can influence *not only* the theoretical contributions of a particular theorist, but *also* the various *academic practices within philosophy*. This is what has largely been missed by interpretive and institutional accounts respectively: each focuses on one aspect of the problem such that these approaches miss out on the interplay between these respective factors.

My contention is therefore that pairing an understanding of philosophy in terms of its knowledge-practices and knowledge-complexes with an ideological conception of racism can adequately capture the problem of philosophical racism. On the one hand, it moves beyond interpretive approaches by highlighting the importance of knowledge-complexes in the articulation of specific theoretical contributions (i.e. knowledge-practices). On the other hand, it *also* moves beyond purely institutional approaches by noting how academic institutions (i.e. knowledge-complexes) are *themselves* equally shaped by the creation and distribution of knowledge-practices. This has implications for thinking about philosophical racism, since it highlights the different levels at which a racist ideology can come to influence and shape the discipline of philosophy itself. To say, then, that there is a problem of racism in philosophy is to say that the foundational assumptions of specific philosophical theories or frameworks, as well as what *counts* as a philosophical contribution, are and have been shaped by a racist ideology. Again, and as we saw in the previous chapter, this occurs across three dimensions: the historicised, functionalist, and interpretive aspects of ideology. In what follows, I motivate the case for philosophical racism through an analogy with Du Bois' critique of propagandistic narratives of history. Specifically, Du Bois argues that the dominant narrative *in his day* about the American Civil War and, especially, the period of Reconstruction that followed are predicated on a distorted view of history that paints black Americans as lazy and passive subjects in their own history. In short, I want to suggest that we can informatively read these propagandistic narratives through the lens of ideology and, in so doing, uncover an insightful critique of academic practice that can illuminate my account of philosophical racism.

[327] Lu-Adler, *Kant, Race, and Racism*, 98.
[328] Eze, "The Color of Reason," 230.

Du Bois and Propaganda: Lessons for a Conception of Philosophical Racism

Across many of his writings, Du Bois demonstrates a sensitivity to the ways that racism or racist ideas can shape and inflect academic inquiry. Writing in 1925, he remarks that:

> "But, despite our study and good-will, is it not possible that our research is not directed to the right geographical spots and our good-will too often confined to that labour which we see and feel and exercise right around us rather than to the periphery of the vast circle and to the unseen and inarticulate workers within the World Shadow? And may not the continual baffling of our effort and failure of our formula be due to just such mistakes?".[329]

At the time this was written, it is likely that Du Bois still believed the problem of racism to be the product of ignorance, which could be rectified through attempts to convince individuals that their fundamental assumptions were incorrect.[330] As Robert Gooding-Williams argues, we can see a transformation in Du Bois' thinking on racial oppression as moving through three distinct phases: 1) that racial oppression is the product of ignorance; 2) that it is the product of ignorance and "ill will"; 3) that it is the product of "ignorance in tandem with ill will, economic interests, and unconscious motives".[331] As we saw in the previous chapter, it is only in *Dusk of Dawn*, published when Du Bois was in his seventies, that he articulates his more capacious understanding of racial oppression, which I suggested could be read as an instance of ideology. Nevertheless, I want to ask what it might mean to read Du Bois' earlier writings on the relationship between racism and research with his later conception of racism in mind. Doing so would of course move beyond an accurate and faithful reconstruction of his arguments *at the time they were written*. However, the upshot is that it will provide us with greater insight into the ways that racism across all three dimensions can shape academic practice, which, in turn, will helpfully inform my analysis of philosophical racism.

This leads us to ask what, beyond ignorance, may *misdirect* research such that it continues to focus on questions or areas that reflect a dominant perspective rather than capturing something

[329] Du Bois, "Worlds of Color," 423.
[330] I think by ignorance Du Bois means a lack of knowledge, though he may be open to the idea that the reason individuals are ignorant about race has structural components, more akin to what Charles Mills calls an "epistemology of ignorance" – see Mills, *The Racial Contract*, 18–19. For a useful overview of the different ways Mills conceptualises an epistemology of ignorance across his writings, see Alcoff, "'The Roots (and Routes) of the Epistemology of Ignorance.'"
[331] Gooding-Williams, "Beauty as Propaganda," 14.

about how the world really works? Put differently, in a world governed by the colour line, Du Bois invites reflection on the foundational assumptions that guide academic inquiry, leading theorists to focus on aspects of the world that may continue to reflect a dominant perspective that does not *quite* capture those parts of the social world that are obscured from view. My contention is that, framed this way, Du Bois is drawing attention to those shared presumptions about the proper subject matter, orientation, and history of a given field of inquiry that – either implicitly or explicitly – drive the direction of research such that it continues to vindicate the dominant picture of the world. In the case of philosophy, the questions that we take to be philosophical, and the denial of philosophical status to concepts, frameworks, or traditions that do not seem to be doing a similar thing, are the product of a shared set of assumptions about what the discipline is or ought to be that are themselves the product of disciplinary training. If these assumptions are inflected by a racial ideology, then the outcome of the research will continue to bear that distortion; it will continue to focus on what is familiar rather than going into the unknown cast by the "World Shadow". These tensions, I want to suggest, are most apparent in Du Bois' analysis of the way history has been used as a tool of propaganda, particularly in accounts of the American Civil War and the subsequent Reconstruction era, which attempted to tackle the integration of newly freed black Americans into the social and political institutions of the nation.[332]

It is worth stressing that Du Bois' criticism of white propaganda examines how racist academic scholarship can have a general effect on *societal prejudice*, by for instance reshaping the dominant narratives ordinary Americans use to understand their past. As I read him, there are two components to Du Bois' argument: the emergence and acceptance of racist assumptions within historical scholarship, and the secondary effects this racism has on the public. To illustrate this dynamic in Du Bois' writings, we can draw on Edward Said's distinction between a latent and manifest Orientalism in his analysis of the way power comes to shape and determine what one *knows* about the East. For Said, manifest Orientalism constitutes the academic investigations into and theoretical treatments of the Orient such that its products

[332] It is important to clarify that Du Bois uses propaganda in two different ways: first, in the conventional negative sense of projecting falsehoods to deceive the population for political purposes, and second, in an unconventional *positive* sense as a tool to combat the subconsciously held ideas of white supremacy. Given that I am exclusively focusing on his criticism of historical scholarship on the Civil War and Reconstruction, I exclusively employ the negative sense of propaganda as what is at stake is the *misuse of history* to perpetuate a particular myth about American history that serves to further enable or entrench white supremacy. For a helpful discussion on the different uses of propaganda in Du Bois' writings, see Myers, *The Gratifications of Whiteness*, 109–19. On the specifically positive uses of propaganda in Du Bois' writings, see Gooding-Williams, "Beauty as Propaganda"; Ikuta, "'A Matter of Long Centuries and Not Years'"; see also Du Bois, "Criteria of Negro Art."

constitute *knowledge* of the Orient, whereas latent Orientalism by contrast is the underlying ideas, cliches, and essential conceptions of the East that identify it as an area meriting scholarship. Where manifest Orientalism can *change*, latent Orientalism is characterised by "unanimity, stability, and durability".[333] On Said's view, then, there seems to be a unidirectional relationship between latent and manifest Orientalism, where the ideas of the former come to be reproduced, developed, and built upon as *academic knowledge* in the latter. As we will see, Du Bois demonstrates how latent racial prejudice comes to be elevated into academic scholarship that imbues it with some degree of credibility. Yet, Du Bois goes further by also showing how a scholarly narrative can feedback into and transform the underlying notions of racial difference, thereby enabling new forms of racial oppression. While I note these bidirectional effects, given the focus of my thesis, I pay greater attention to the expressions of manifest over latent racism in Du Bois' writings.

The focus of Du Bois' line of critique is therefore the process of history writing and myth making that contributed towards three dominant theses about African Americans, which came to be found in history textbooks in the early twentieth century, several decades after the end of the Reconstruction era. These myths, Du Bois suggests, promote racist tropes of black Americans as lazy, ignorant, and incapable of effective government, and are the product of a series of erasures made by scholars in their examination of American history. For instance, the practice of slavery is treated mechanistically and impartially such that "nobody seems to have done wrong and everybody was right. Slavery appears to have been thrust upon unwilling helpless America, while the South was blameless in becoming its centre".[334] The depiction of slavery as a kind of causal universal law thus detaches the economic practice from its horrors, and makes it seem as if most Americans have nothing to answer for: they were simply caught in the struggle of broader cosmic or universal forces. The outcome is a whitewashed vision of American history, in which the struggles of black Americans against the brutality of their conditions and for the fundamental rights enshrined in the constitution is omitted at the same time as the "fairy tale of a beautiful Southern slave civilisation" is rendered intelligible as part of the popular psyche of the nation.[335] Similar ideas can be expressed in the retelling of the history of Reconstruction, where black Americans seem to have been struck from the historical

[333] For his distinction between latent and manifest Orientalism, see Said, *Orientalism*, 205–7.
[334] Du Bois, "The Propaganda of History," 441.
[335] Ibid., 441–42. For a discussion of the way popular fiction, especially the genre of plantation romance epitomised by *Gone With the Wind* (published in 1936), helped reshape ideas of race and racism in light of Reconstruction, see Jerng, *Racial Worldmaking*, chaps. 3 & 4.

record. In these accounts, whenever "a black head rises to view, it is promptly slain by an adjective – 'shrewd', 'notorious', 'cunning' – or pilloried by a sneer; or put out of view by some quite unproven charge of bad moral character".[336]

What follows is a retelling of American history that preserves the racist stereotypes of black Americans and alleviates the historical burden on white Americans for their role in creating and maintaining a brutally oppressive system of slavery. Indeed, as Du Bois argues, black Americans are either omitted from a significant period in their own history or are cast as morally bankrupt actors who undermined the promises of the Reconstruction era. Driving this historical scholarship is a prior shared assumption about the racial inferiority of black Americans, that comes to be vindicated by the supposedly impartial investigation into American history. Therefore, for Du Bois, the "propaganda against the Negro since emancipation" represents "one of the most stupendous efforts the world ever saw to discredit human beings, an effort involving universities, history, science, social life, and religion".[337] This implicitly draws on precisely the interplay between knowledge-practices and knowledge-complexes, insofar as what drives this propagandistic telling of history is both the articulation of this distorted picture of history within an institutional context that not only grants it legitimacy but also promotes it as a credible viewpoint. Read through the ideological conception of racism I outlined in the previous chapter, one important question becomes how academic scholarship refashions *historically determined* ideas of race such that they *functionally* construct representations of black Americans that work to perpetuate, justify, and entrench their oppression. In short, I take Du Bois to be asking how the knowledge-practices that (partly) constitute the discipline of history, first, come to reflect a specific tradition of thinking about colour differences, and second, how this way of thinking continues to legitimise the domination of black individuals – helped by the knowledge-complexes in which these knowledge-practices were articulated.

It is in this spirit that I interpret Du Bois' critique of revisionist scholarship about Reconstruction, which takes as its starting point the ideological assumption that black individuals are 'sub-human'. As Du Bois puts it "assuming, therefore, as axiomatic the endless inferiority of the Negro race, these newer historians … who deeply sympathised with the South,

[336] Du Bois, "The Propaganda of History," 447.
[337] Ibid., 452–53.

misinterpreted, distorted, even deliberately ignored any fact that challenged or contradicted this assumption. If the Negro was admittedly sub-human, what need to waste time delving into his Reconstruction history?".[338] As I see it, the "endless inferiority" of blacks is taken as being a knowledge-practice, as a valid claim to being *knowledge*. This scholarship is driven by an ideological assumption that inflects the questions that are asked about Reconstruction, directing these historians towards specific lines of inquiry that come to legitimise the continued domination of black Americans. Indeed, this is precisely what makes these propagandistic narratives *ideological*, or manifestations of Du Bois' overarching 'race concept', that as I argued in the previous chapter has three distinct dimensions. The interpretations of colour differences as signs of inferiority or of sub-human status are the product of a long historical tradition, one that is mired in the oppression of certain racial groups. This historicised understanding of blacks as sub-human enables the construction of the black American subject as a passive agent, one that is perpetually outside the scope of national history. Functionally, then, black Americans come to be conceptualised and understood as problems that require the intervention of white America, either as a people who need the white North to free *them* from slavery or as an inferior people that require repressive policies to keep them out of power, such as the repressive policies of segregation that began to be enacted following the end of Reconstruction.

The result is that, through "a determination unparalleled in science, the mass of American writers have started out so to distort the facts of the greatest critical period of American history as to prove right wrong and wrong right".[339] These historical narratives, because they are *knowledge-practices*, have reshaped the way white Americans reflect on and understand their history by making a racially inflected version of history seem true. Of course, if my argument in the preceding section is accepted, it is not enough to solely focus on claims to valid knowledge that are the product of ideological distortions, like for instance that slavery was a mechanised process or that throughout the Civil War black Americans did not participate in the fight for their freedoms. All these can be understood as knowledge-practices that reflect a historicised perspective on race and work to enable and maintain relations of domination between white and black Americans. As we saw earlier, however, knowledge-practices are not *exclusively* made up of the theoretical contributions to certain debates; they are also constituted

[338] Ibid., 452.
[339] Ibid., 451.

by forms of self-discipline and methodological preferences, which scholars come to be familiar with through the process of disciplinary training. After all, the 'rational social scientist' as a scholarly kind is committed to a certain *methodological* view about how best to investigate questions in the social sciences, which is itself the product of a scholarly education in a university department that valued these approaches over others.

While it is a stretch to read Du Bois as identifying the construction of specific scholarly kinds, he is nevertheless sensitive to the ways that ideologies can influence scholarly output at the level of *practice* rather than theory. In particular, he is critical of the methodological decisions made by "nearly all recent books on Reconstruction" to "discard the government reports" about Reconstruction and instead "substitute selected diaries, letters, and gossip" as the primary sources for their claims about the period.[340] Taking Du Bois at his word, it seems that questions can be asked as to what underpinned this methodological decision to consult some sources over others: was there a prominent historiographical debate that convinced scholars that primary sources like diary entries were better than government reports in history writing, perhaps because they allowed historians to uncover a more personal narrative? Or is it more likely that other largely ideological assumptions foregrounded the wilful disregard of government sources in favour of certain kinds of evidence that may reflect the racial biases of those who wrote them? I recognise that I am going beyond Du Bois' writings in this discussion, especially given that his remarks on the sources used by these revisionist historians do not extend further than the above quotation. Yet, as I noted earlier, I am not engaging in a faithful reconstruction of his argument; I am trying to use the idea of a knowledge-practice to read between the lines and, in so doing, shed light on some themes that Du Bois may have been gesturing towards. In this case, I argue that he can be read as identifying how a racist ideology can inflect academic scholarship beyond the level of a theoretical contribution and into the *methodological practices* underpinning source selection – even if this was not his original intention.

Of course, this discussion of knowledge-practices is incomplete without an examination of the knowledge-complexes in which they are articulated and practiced. Thus, Du Bois stresses the role of "universities" in creating and distributing propaganda about black Americans such that it distorts the role of their ancestors and their communities in the history of the nation. In light of the preceding discussion, it seems we can ask – beyond Du Bois – what *kind of historian*

[340] Ibid., 449.

was being created out of the doctoral programmes at leading universities in the United States? Why were ideologically distorted conceptions of black Americans being articulated *as knowledge* not only by professors in lecture halls, but also in the textbooks that were used to teach American schoolchildren about their history? After all, if in the education of Americans distortion is presented as *knowledge*, this may help explain how ideologies can take root at the heart of American society, in precisely those unconscious patterns of reasoning and conditioned reflexes that Du Bois comes to see as a bastion of racism. This, in turn, provides a different perspective on Du Bois' critique of propagandistic narratives about Reconstruction: rather than exclusively being the product of wilful distortion and misrepresentation, perhaps the way scholars are driven to reject certain pieces of evidence, or the foundational assumptions they hold *as true*, can themselves be shaped by a racist ideology – in precisely those unconscious and subconscious areas of one's mind. The key point, in any case, is that the academic institutions, from universities to publishing houses, are complicit in the recognition of distorted claims *as knowledge* and in legitimising ideologically inflected theories and frameworks as legitimate contributions to academic debates.

To be clear, attributing an ideological foundation to Du Bois' analysis of the propaganda of history is not to remove the role of agency in articulating this distorted picture of history. These newer historians were deliberately reshaping and reinventing how Americans looked back on the period of Reconstruction, even if the foundational assumptions were the product of an ideological distortion. Put differently, scholars are neither programmatically following the dictates of ideology, nor are they free-floating intellectuals who can *decide* a particular way of seeing the world. Rather, ideologies constrain and limit the ways in which individuals come to see and understand the world. The new historians were therefore consciously rationalising and making explicit a particular *way of seeing the world* that shaped the assumptions they made and the questions they asked about their scholarly inquiry, resulting in a distorted narrative about history that is presented as true and came to be widely accepted.[341] Again, and to recapitulate, I have attempted to show how the knowledge-practice/knowledge-complex distinction can help identify the different levels that ideologies can influence. In each of these places, that is at the level of theory creation (i.e. making a contribution to a debate),

[341] Regarding the question of agency, I have in mind how Edward Said thinks about Orientalism as limiting the "imagery, assumptions, and intentions" of both "learned and imaginative writing". This does not deny the possibility of being able to transcend these limits, but it does suggest that there is a "sort of consensus" as to what "types of work have seemed for the Orientalist correct". For his discussion of this point, see Said, *Orientalism*, 201–2.

methodological practice, and institutional contexts – to name just three – a racist ideology can be developed and distributed such that it draws on a history of oppression to *recast* or *reinterpret* colour differences such that they continue to enable the domination of non-white racial groups. In short, adequately understanding propaganda as ideology requires seeing how its historicised and functionalist aspects come to be articulated, developed, and distributed within a set of institutions as both academic theory and academic practice.

This brings me to the interpretive or epistemic dimensions to ideology, which we can recall underpins the functional and historicist dimensions by rendering the racist categories and conceptualisations *intelligible* in the first place. This underlying interpretive framework or gaze, I want to suggest, has two senses that are implicit in Du Bois' critique of propaganda. The first is broader: as we saw with Du Bois' cave analogy in the previous chapter, a society governed by the colour line provides an interpretive lens through which colour is seen as a marker of both *difference* and *inferiority*. That is, racial differences grounded in phenotypic variance come to be seen as a kind of structuring principle such that one comes to understand the world through the lens of race. To help make sense of this, we can think of the distinction I drew earlier between latent and manifest racism; that races and racial categories come to be thought of as having importance as an area of study is the product of an underlying interpretive gaze that not only makes races intelligible to us but also makes us understand particular social phenomena as racially inflected. In brief, the interpretive dimensions of a racist ideology are present in the ways it "construct[s] new ways of seeing, new objects of attention, and new ways of connecting diverse experiences such that one cannot frame the world without instituting racial difference in its composition".[342] This occurs outside the formal attempts to make contributions of knowledge: an underlying ideological framework or gaze is what makes latent racism *itself* possible.

To my mind, Gooding-Williams' analysis of double-consciousness gets at something like this idea; as he reads Du Bois, "the American Negro is driven … by a desire to look beyond a shroud of prejudice that, like a funhouse mirror, keeps him prisoner to an image of himself that never 'merges' with his undistorted reflection".[343] The 'shroud of prejudice', much like an ideological interpretive gaze, is more foundational than beliefs or implicit meanings and shapes

[342] Jerng, *Racial Worldmaking*, 34.
[343] Gooding-Williams, "Evading Narrative Myth, Evading Prophetic Pragmatism," 525.

how black Americans come to understand both themselves and the social world they inhabit. I want to suggest the same idea is implicit in Du Bois' criticism of propaganda. He suggests that the revisionist historians of Reconstruction were mostly Southerners who "had been born and reared in the bitterest period of Southern race hatred, fear, and contempt", whose "instinctive reactions were confirmed and encouraged in the best American universities", and which contributed to their scholarship on the question of black men becoming "deaf, dumb, and blind".[344] In this case, the subject in question is not the victim but the oppressor themselves: they come to understand their social world through the interpretive framework of the race doctrine that takes them to be superior. Again, and to be clear, I am here talking about latent racism, that is, the implicitly held racial ideas within wider society. This is to distinguish this broader interpretivist dimensions from a narrower one that I *also* think is implicit in Du Bois' writings on propaganda. This narrower sense is a more institutional understanding of an interpretive framework, one that appears in the foundational assumptions that shape a specific direction of research.

Put differently, this second and narrower sense of an ideological interpretive gaze refers to a collective framework where the way of *understanding or seeing* a problem is determined, agreed upon, and shared *in advance* by a community of scholars interested in a similar question. In short, the foundational assumptions concerning a specific problem constrain the kinds of answers that can be found, since these assumptions determine "the types of questions asked … the methods which were useful, and the background information taken for granted".[345] In contrast to the broad understanding, this narrower understanding of an interpretive framework is the product of *manifest* rather than latent racism: it concerns how scholars articulate and attempt to resolve a particular problem or question. While it may emerge out of a form of latent racism, its articulation within manifest racism makes the output of a particular line of scholarly inquiry a *knowledge contribution*. We can see Du Bois grasping towards these themes in his criticism of propagandistic historiography; for him, the distortion of truth in the name of historical scholarship "shows that with sufficient *general agreement* and *determination* among the dominant classes, the truth of history may be utterly distorted and contradicted and changed to *any convenient fairy tale that the masters of men wish*".[346] The widespread agreement as to

[344] Du Bois, "The Propaganda of History," 452.
[345] Hacking, "'Language, Truth and Reason' 30 Years Later," 604; see also Fleck, *Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact*.
[346] Du Bois, "The Propaganda of History," 451, my emphasis.

the inferiority of black Americans therefore constituted a purportedly legitimate starting point for academic inquiry, one that guided the future assumptions of these historians in attempting to – from their perspective – uncover an accurate narrative of the Reconstruction era. What Du Bois is uncovering, then, is the process through which racist prejudice comes to have a rational warrant, where an underlying interpretive gaze comes to be supported by the authority of academic scholarship.[347]

This interpretation is reinforced in his criticisms of the Dunning School, the key actors in the historical movement to rewrite the narrative about Reconstruction. Based at Columbia University and named after its main proponent, the professor of history William A. Dunning, the School:

> "issued between 1895 and the present time [1935] sixteen studies of Reconstruction in the Southern States, all based on the same thesis and all done according to the same method: first, endless sympathy with the white South; second, ridicule, contempt or silence for the Negro; third, a judicial attitude towards the North, which concludes that the North under great misapprehension did a grievous wrong, but eventually saw its mistake and retreated".[348]

Again, there is the explicit acceptance of a particular thesis and method that frames the understanding of a particular problem, as well as the best way to resolve the problem in question. Taking the interpretivist dimensions of ideology seriously requires us to not only pay attention to the outcome of this research, which entrenches and perpetuates a particular image of black Americans as passive subjects or – in those occasions where they are seen as having agency – as sinister actors, but also the way in which the research question is itself framed within an institutional setting. Why is it the case, for instance, that the narrative of the Dunning School comes to be published and distributed amongst the general population when other more scholarly works, such as attempts by black Americans to articulate their own history, are ignored and marginalised? How does this retelling of history influence the minds of future generations of Americans who will grow up being taught a distorted version of history as being *true*?

[347] For a discussion that raises similar points, albeit within philosophy, see Flikschuh, "Philosophical Racism," 96–98.
[348] Du Bois, "The Propaganda of History," 445–46.

In a sense, then, propagandistic narratives can be usefully theorised as ideologies by showing how the underlying assumptions and scholarly questions not only enable injustice and oppression against African Americans, but also are the product of a historically formed interpretive or epistemic framework predicated on the inferiority and passivity of black individuals. These scholarly narratives, in turn, come to shape the perspective of future generations of Americans, who inherit in the telling of their history a particular perspective of blacks as lesser subjects who cannot be their equals. After all, if future scholars come to be taught the findings of the Dunning School *as true*, how might their questions and foundational assumptions continue to reflect its biases and omissions? In criticising the propaganda of history, Du Bois is therefore waging a war on multiple fronts, one that attempts to undermine not only the conceptual foundations of historical questions about Reconstruction, but also the institutions of knowledge such as universities, publishing houses, and the scientific enterprise – all of which have been brought in service of articulating, developing, and reinforcing a misguided thesis about black inferiority in the service of a distinctly political purpose. To my mind, this is epitomised by his closing remarks:

> "Instead roars the crash of hell; and after its whirlwind a teacher sits in academic halls, learned in the tradition of its elms and elders. He looks into the upturned face of youth and in him youth sees the gowned shape of wisdom and hears the voice of God. Cynically he sneers at 'chinks' and 'n—s'. He says that the nation 'has changed its views in regard to the political relation of races and has at last virtually accepted the ideas of the South upon that subject' … Immediately in Africa, a black back runs red with the blood of the lash".[349]

The interplay between what constitutes knowledge or a contribution to scholarship is therefore liable to be influenced by ideological features in a variety of ways and at multiple different levels. In this passage alone, we can see how both the historicised and functionalist dimensions to ideology come to be reinforced through the interplay between knowledge-practices and knowledge-complexes: the teacher, drawing on a tradition of learning, comes to reframe these historicised understandings of race as knowledge that, functionally, continues to enable the domination of non-whites across the globe. Furthermore, the assumptions and ideas present within the 'knowledge' espoused by the teacher comes to be preserved due to the knowledge-complexes they are articulated within. In short, the lecture halls of universities and the professors who embody the "gowned shape of wisdom" pass on racist prejudice masquerading as knowledge such that the next generation of students come to inherit a particular way of

[349] Ibid., 453.

thinking about and seeing the world such that, over time, they may come to lose sight of its racist foundations.

If my argument is accepted, we can therefore see propagandistic narratives of Reconstruction as *one example* of the ways that academic scholarship can come to both shape and perpetuate a racist ideology. Although more research must be done on its potential effects beyond the academic community – that is on the way that manifest racism can shape latent racism – I nevertheless want to suggest that Du Bois' writings on propaganda can illuminate some important insights for thinking about philosophical racism. In particular, it shows how racist ideologies can inflect different levels within academia – namely the domains of theory creation, methodological decisions, and academic institutions themselves. At all these levels, an ideological conception of racism can help demonstrate how the ill will of some individual academics is reinforced by academic practices that help perpetuate racist prejudice at different levels within the discipline, which in turn may affect the unconscious patterns of reasoning and learned habits of the next generation of scholars. On a Du Boisian view of ideology as both historical and functionalist, then, thinking about propagandistic narratives *as ideologies* helps us to see how Du Bois is questioning "what practices and forms of life do [historical narratives of Reconstruction] help sustain, what sort of person do they help construct, and whose power do they help entrench?".[350] What I want to suggest is that asking these types of questions with respect to philosophical racism can help us to move beyond the limitations I have suggested are present in both interpretive and institutional approaches. Simply put, pairing an ideological conception of racism with an understanding of disciplines as the interplay between knowledge-practices and knowledge-complexes can help to provide a unified framework for thinking about philosophical racism that can help diagnose its pernicious effects on our present.

Concluding Remarks

My goal in this chapter was to develop a framework for thinking about academic disciplines that can be helpfully used to theorise philosophical racism. As such, I attempted to, first, articulate a way of thinking about disciplines that identified concrete units of analysis in order to more precisely identify the levels at which academic scholarship could be shaped by

[350] I have adapted this quotation from Srinivasan, "Genealogy, Epistemology and Worldmaking," 142.

ideological factors, before demonstrating what this could look like through an analysis of Du Bois' writings on propaganda. Thus, I suggested that his criticisms of propagandistic narratives of Reconstruction act as a useful analogy for philosophical racism, insofar as it helps identify the different ways that racism can inflect academic scholarship, thereby distorting the production of knowledge such that it serves to reinforce an ideological view of the world. Again, this occurs across different levels simultaneously; for Du Bois, ideologies have historical, functional, and interpretive dimensions. Therefore, the classifications and conceptions of race that develop out of academic scholarship are shaped by the contingencies of history: how individuals think about, classify, and identify racial groups is influenced by the different interpretations ascribed to colour that make it significant. In the previous chapter, I suggested with Gooding-Williams that these interpretations are tied to the functionalist features regarding what these representations have *historically done*. In short, the different and contradictory ways that colour has been used to justify racial domination are central to thinking about the race concept.[351] Yet, what makes these representations intelligible in the first place is an underlying interpretive framework that shapes how individuals see the world.

To help parse the different ways that ideologies can influence academic scholarship, I drew on the distinction between a knowledge-practice and a knowledge-complex, initially put forward by Duncan Bell in his reflections on the methodology of disciplinary history. This distinction, I argued, provides a useful way of understanding how disciplines are comprised of the interplay between claims of valid knowledge (i.e. theoretical contributions), practices of self-discipline and methodological training, as well as institutional contexts that privilege certain approaches to academic questions over others. We are thus left with a broader understanding of academic practice that can informatively be used to highlight where and how ideologies can play a role in distorting scholarship. In contrast to both the interpretive and institutional approaches to theorising philosophical racism, understanding disciplines as the interplay between knowledge-practices and knowledge-complexes points to the role of both theory *and method* in constructing a particular vision of the world that then comes to be embedded in academic institutions like universities. This in turn provides racial prejudice with a rational warrant and a degree of credibility that it may have lacked in its latent form. In short, then, my alternative framework not only can encompass some of the insights put forward by proponents of both institutional and interpretive approaches to theorising philosophical racism, it also moves

[351] Gooding-Williams, "Autobiography, Political Hope, Racial Justice," 166.

beyond them by showing how theories and institutional practice mutually influence one another. This creates a kind of feedback loop where a claim to knowledge that has been distorted by a racist ideology comes to be entrenched as a legitimate starting point for academic inquiry that comes to be taken for granted by a later generation of scholars.

As I attempted to show in dialogue with his writings, Du Bois can be read as examining how prejudicial views of the world come to be entrenched through academic scholarship and academic institutions like universities. Indeed, part of his analysis looks at the practices of knowledge distribution that lead to specific points of view coming to be seen as knowledge about the world – for instance in his representation of the lecturer as the "gowned shape of wisdom" who continues to propagate racist views of the world to his students. The more that these ideas come to be distributed, the more likely they are to be taken as the common ground guiding the unconscious social meanings individuals implicitly draw on when navigating the social world. Pairing the distinction between knowledge-complexes and knowledge-practices with an ideological conception of racism can therefore shed light on the deeper nuances of his argument, even if they ultimately do not result in a faithful reconstruction of his original intention at the time he wrote "The Propaganda of History". Nevertheless, what my analysis hopefully makes clear is that Du Bois' criticism of white propaganda goes beyond identifying the ways the Dunning School and other historians wilfully misrepresented the history of Reconstruction. Instead, it shows how a specific narrative about American history comes to be articulated and distributed *as knowledge* such that it comes to be the prevailing way Americans in general come to understand the history of their nation. It also shows how methodological decisions concerning which sources to draw on, and what *kinds of scholar* these academic schools of thought come to create, help to entrench a racist ideological narrative as an accurate retelling of the Reconstruction era.

One upshot of my view is thus that the foundations for Du Bois' conception of racism in *Dusk of Dawn* can be traced back to his reflections on propaganda in *Black Reconstruction*. After all, his analysis does seem to reference how the implicitly held views of some Southern scholars come to shape their academic inquiry such that their scholarship on black Americans is distorted. This in turn paves the way for future analysis to explore the interrelations concerning how racism can come to be entrenched in the unconscious patterns of reasoning and learned habits of Americans as a whole. Beyond the implications for Du Bois scholarship, I want to suggest that my reading of his criticisms of white propaganda can provide a series of insights

for thinking about philosophical racism. This is because, provided my interpretation is accepted, I have shown how propagandistic narratives about Reconstruction reinterpret historical practices of domination *as scholarship* to justify the present and future oppression of black Americans. Additionally, this is enabled by a series of foundational assumptions *within historical scholarship* that govern how historians come to think about the period of Reconstruction in particular and the study of American history more generally. If racist conceptions of black people come to be embedded in the starting points of historical inquiry, how might this impact the telling of critical periods in American history? How might the sources historians look for when making their claims be shaped by a foundational assumption of the status of black individuals as either passive agents who have no influence over history, or as morally pernicious actors who express their agency through violence?

In asking these questions, I am drawing attention to the ways that a racist ideology can inflect, distort, and even constrain the direction of future scholarship. To my mind, this is the most important lesson we can take from Du Bois when thinking about philosophical racism: if we think about race as *also* being a philosophical problem, and philosophical racism as diagnosing the presence of an underlying racist ideology within philosophy, then it is not enough to look at the conceptual history of race within the discipline and the forms of oppression these conceptualisations have enabled. We must additionally look at race as a foundational assumption or as a legitimate starting point that, in turn, has enabled particular lines of inquiry in the history of philosophy. That is, adequately understanding the pernicious effects of philosophical racism requires us to examine how a racist ideology has historically constrained, limited, and directed scholarship in particular directions such that present-day philosophers may no longer be aware of its influence on the frameworks they draw on. It is with this in mind that I turn to examining the example of philosophical racism that I have been grappling with throughout the thesis: the Hellenistic origins thesis. As with the revisionist narratives of Reconstruction, the view that philosophy began in Ancient Greece is a product of questionable scholarship that attempted to re-write the prevailing view of the discipline.[352] In the next chapter, I therefore analyse this example using my theoretical framework to show how a claim

[352] My point about questionable scholarship is not a criticism of Meiners' anthropology on the grounds that it is racist (though it is and can be considered bad for this reason). Rather, Meiners' justification for the Hellenistic origins thesis is grounded in questionable *classical scholarship* that seems to misinterpret and misread the Ancient Greek theorists he cites as supporting his view. For a compelling argument showing the faults with Meiners' scholarship, see Cantor, "Thales – the 'First Philosopher'?". For an overview of the way the Hellenistic origins thesis went from a fringe view to a disciplinary truism, see Park, *Africa, Asia, and the History of Philosophy*.

about the origins of the discipline comes to be understood as a structuring principle for thinking about the nature of philosophy *itself*.

Chapter 5: A Philosophical Colour Line? Revisiting the Hellenistic Origins Thesis

Throughout the thesis, I have attempted to achieve the following two aims: first, to show that the methods we use to think about philosophical racism are inadequate. Second, to articulate a new ideological framework that can better capture the nuances of philosophical racism. As we saw in the first half of the thesis, both interpretive and institutional approaches to theorising philosophical racism are limited. In the case of the former, the underlying individualist assumptions elide an examination of the ways that racism can not only be formed through dialogues between various theorists but also that it can come to be embedded in the academic institutions of philosophy. With respect to the latter, while institutional approaches recognise the role of universities and other academic bodies in shaping philosophical racism, the focus on institutional reform renders it unable to track the underlying conceptual dimensions to philosophical racism, which makes certain narratives about philosophy intelligible in the first place. Moving beyond these limitations, I argued, requires a different way to think about racism in academic disciplines like philosophy. To do so, I paired an ideological conception of racism, grounded in the writings of W.E.B. Du Bois, with a conception of disciplines as the interaction between knowledge-practices and knowledge-complexes. Focusing on this interplay, I suggested, can help identify the different ways ideologies can influence academic scholarship, and demonstrates how each of the dimensions of ideology – its historicised, functionalist, and interpretivist aspects – can be uncovered at different levels of the discipline.

Having laid this groundwork, we are now able to examine the significance of the problem philosophical racism poses for the present. Using Du Bois' writings on white propaganda as an analogous case, I want to turn my attention to examining the presence of ideological narratives within philosophy and assessing what this means for the discipline. As we saw in the previous chapter, I drew a distinction between latent and manifest racism, where the former refers to those unconscious notions of race held amongst the general public while the latter refers to the explicit rationalisations of racist thinking in the realm of scholarship.[353] While there are feedback loops between the two, my focus is largely on manifest racism as I am interested in uncovering a racist ideology *within philosophy*. As such, the questions I am asking examines how racist ideas have been conceptualised in the discipline, and what forms of oppression these racist conceptualisations have functionally enabled. In the case of white

[353] I adapt this distinction from Said, *Orientalism*, 206.

propaganda, revisionist scholarship on the Reconstruction era validated racist conceptions of black Americans and elevated these to the status of *knowledge* such that they came to be embedded in prevailing narratives about American history. At the same time, however, these narratives were predicated on an underlying *interpretivist framework or gaze* that structured how certain problems came to be understood by a community of scholars. This is what moves my focus beyond simply examining the way racist prejudice has come to be explicitly rationalised within the discipline. As we saw in the case of white propaganda, the way particular narratives come to be accepted as truisms within specific disciplines informs the background assumptions of scholars, influencing the questions they deem to be pertinent in their research. Part of my goal is thus to articulate these underlying ideas within philosophy.

My aim in this chapter is to apply my framework to analyse one of the key examples I have repeatedly drawn on: the Hellenistic origins thesis. I take for granted that this view is widely and implicitly held by most philosophers today. As we saw in Chapter 1, most introductory textbooks explicitly state that philosophy is an activity dating back to Ancient Greece, while most introductory courses in philosophy implicitly convey this assumption by starting chronologically with leading Greek theorists such as Plato or Aristotle. Further, as noted previously, there is strong historical evidence to show that the origins of this view are implicated in a racist view of human difference. My goal in this chapter is to demonstrate that the Hellenistic origins thesis is an example of philosophical racism: it is itself both a product and a source of a racist ideology. In short, understanding the Hellenistic origins thesis as an instance of philosophical racism helps explain why it ought to be seen as *more than* an origin claim about philosophy, as well as why it comes to be an intractable part of the way philosophers understand both themselves and their place in the discipline.

To make my case, I draw on existing historical scholarship to help trace the historicised, functionalist, and interpretive dimensions to the Hellenistic origins thesis, and therefore provide a clear illustration of the nature and scope of the problem of philosophical racism.[354] Doing so may also help to forestall those critics who are sceptical of genealogical debunking arguments, where the provenance of a particular claim is used to discredit that claim itself. These critics suggest that appealing to the problematic origins of a given claim is to fall victim

[354] I largely draw on the writings of Lea Cantor and, especially, Peter Park. For their respective arguments, see Cantor, "Thales – the 'First Philosopher'?"; Park, *Africa, Asia, and the History of Philosophy*; "Why It Makes Sense to Talk of Decolonizing the Philosophy Department."

to the genetic fallacy, the supposition that where a theory came from entails something about its truth-value.[355] Interpreting the Hellenistic origins thesis as an ideology can help circumvent this line of criticism by linking a historical claim about the source of this thesis to a functionalist claim about the kinds of unjust exclusions it enables in the present as well as to an interpretivist claim about the way it constrains thinking about the nature and scope of philosophy. Consequently, the problem of philosophical racism is not a claim about problematic origins but rather a claim about the way explicit rationalisations of prejudice come to attain an ideological status within the discipline. This has implications for the task of overcoming philosophical racism. It suggests that a focus on the functionalist dimensions of philosophical racism – the kinds of unfair exclusions or unjust justificatory burdens the Hellenistic origins thesis enables – is insufficient to create a discipline that no longer perpetuates a racist outlook. Overcoming philosophical racism may also require a radical revision of our foundational commitments.

My argument proceeds as follows: I start by demonstrating that the Hellenistic origins thesis is more than *just* a claim about the provenance of philosophy, one that could be the result of a deeper ideological distortion. Instead, by tracing the history of the Hellenistic origins thesis from its first articulation in the writings of David Hume to its resonances in the present, I show how it is itself a historicised way of thinking about the discipline. Framed this way, the Hellenistic origins thesis is best thought of as a historicised *knowledge-practice*, one that encompasses not only the theoretical claim about philosophy's origins but also the methodological decisions to vindicate this claim as well as the narrative practices that help in constructing certain kinds of scholars. Having traced its historicised dimensions, I turn to the functionalist dimensions of the Hellenistic origins thesis, to show how it comes to be embedded in the knowledge-complexes of philosophy, thereby partly shaping the hostile environment within academic philosophy for diverse scholars. In short, a claim about philosophy's origins comes to be entrenched in the identity of individual scholars such that they uncontroversially 'know' that thinkers and traditions from outside Europe must pass a justificatory threshold to be deemed philosophical. This paves the way for an examination of the deeper interpretivist dimensions to the Hellenistic origins thesis, where it seems to implicitly presuppose a particular way of doing philosophy, as well as a particular conception of what areas of inquiry come under its scope. These work to constrain how scholars think about the discipline; overcoming

[355] For an informative discussion about the genetic fallacy, genealogical debunking arguments, and the genealogical method more generally, see Srinivasan, "Genealogy, Epistemology and Worldmaking," 129–31.

philosophical racism therefore mandates a deep-seated conceptual revision to the foundational ways we think about the discipline. I gesture towards these themes in the conclusion of the chapter.

The Historicised Dimensions of the Hellenistic Origins Thesis

There is a tendency amongst analytic philosophers to draw a distinction between a philosophical, but ahistorical, enterprise, one that is concerned with the "genuinely philosophical elements" of a particular work or theorist, and a historical, but by implication non-philosophical, enterprise that – though interesting and useful – does not get to "the philosophical point" of a particular work.[356] As we saw in Chapter 1, this is reflected in the methodological decisions of analytic philosophers, who have an affinity for rational reconstruction over contextualism as a way of interpreting historical texts. From this vantage point, it seems plausible to ask two distinct questions. First, why does a claim about the origins of philosophy matter for the discipline in the present? At its core, the Hellenistic origins thesis states that philosophy begins in Ancient Greece. As such, it is a propositional statement about the world, and thus something that can be tested to determine whether it is true or false. While it may be accepted by most philosophers today, if it turns out that philosophy began *elsewhere*, it seems that we can correct the Hellenistic origins thesis – by for instance specifying the non-Greek origins of philosophy in introductory textbooks and courses – without too much effort. Second, why does the *history* of the Hellenistic origins thesis matter? This resembles the challenge of the genealogical sceptic I considered above: if the thesis is a proposition about philosophy, then it can be tested against the *actual history* of the discipline without mandating a reconstruction of the debate that led to its initial articulation. After all, even if we accept that the thesis emerges out of a *problematic source*, this fact alone does not undermine the epistemic status of the thesis itself.

In responding to both questions, I start with a brief history of the Hellenistic origins thesis. It is first articulated in 1742 by David Hume, who argued that both geographical and political factors, such as a system of free republics and a "happy climate", "favour[ed] the rise of the arts and sciences", including philosophy, in Ancient Greece.[357] This differs from other parts of

[356] Rorty, Schneewind, and Skinner, *Philosophy in History*, 11–12.
[357] Hume, "Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences," 120–21. See also Flory, "Race, History, and Affect," 53. Strictly speaking, the first articulation of the Hellenistic origins thesis comes in the writings of

the world with a similarly long history; Hume compares China with Ancient Greece and, while explicitly acknowledging the organic development of science, notes that Chinese scientific traditions are imperfect and will remain unfinished because China possesses the wrong kind of *political system*.[358] In short, that it is a vast empire precludes the perfection of the sciences because "the authority of any teacher, such as CONFUCIUS, was propagated easily from one corner of the empire to the other. None had courage to resist the torrent of popular opinion".[359] Thus, Hume concludes that the "sciences arose in GREECE; and EUROPE has been hitherto the most constant habitation of them".[360] Although there is no explicit reference to racial characteristics, Hume's arguments are "implicitly racial and prejudicial": a conformist and unquestioning attitude is ascribed to China but not to Europeans, who undeniably possess the right environment for the arts and sciences. What might make these passages racial is the existence of an extensive tradition of proto-racist thinking grounded in climactic and geographic difference: the climate specific human groups lived in partly determined the differences in appearance, culture, and natural ability, as well as the political systems that could (or should) be constructed.[361] Hence, the absence of explicit references to colour is not sufficient to say that these passages are *non-racist*, though of course more research would have to be undertaken to determine whether Hume is drawing on this tradition of thinking about human difference.

There is therefore an ambiguity concerning race at the moment the Hellenistic origins thesis is first articulated. What is clear is that, in Hume's essay, the idea is still speculative; an assertion is made about the right conditions to promote the arts and sciences, and philosophy in particular is not explicitly mentioned as a Greek invention (though reference is made to the major Greek schools of philosophy). This changes with Christoph Meiners' 1786 volume on the history of

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Diogenes Laertius, who explicitly argued that philosophy could not have risen amongst the barbarians. However, despite his influence on later historians of philosophy, it is "remarkably difficult to identify European sources that unambiguously advocate a Greek origin of philosophy until the late eighteenth century". Thus, the consensus view until the height of European modernity was that philosophy began in the Orient – see Cantor, "Thales – the 'First Philosopher'?," 16; Park, *Africa, Asia, and the History of Philosophy*, 69–71.

[358] Hume, "Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences," 122. Interestingly, Hume would go on to "implicitly contradict" this assertion in his infamous racial footnote from "Of National Characters" published in 1753, where he denies the existence of scientific ways of thinking amongst non-white populations across the globe. For a discussion of this point, see Flory, "Race, History, and Affect," 53.

[359] Hume, "Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences," 122.

[360] Ibid., 123.

[361] One way this is idea is developed is the idea that human beings, after spreading throughout the globe, degenerate from an *ideal type* due to the different climates that exist. Of course, the assumption that the white European is the ideal type is unquestioned. For a helpful discussion of the degeneracy thesis and the importance of climate and geography for this view, see Smith, *Nature, Human Nature, and Human Difference*, chap. 5.

philosophy, which affirmed the Hellenistic origins of philosophy by denying the possibility that the non-Greek 'barbarians' developed traditions of philosophical thinking.[362] His core argument was grounded in a conception of philosophy as a *science*, a view that was increasingly prominent in *his* time. In support of this claim, Meiners on the one hand drew on a range of classical sources to purportedly show that even the Ancient Greeks themselves denied the existence of scientific thinking outside their borders.[363] On the other hand, he developed an extensive and racist anthropological framework that divided the world between the 'lighter' and 'darker' races, where only the former possessed the capacities for reason – a necessary condition for the possibility of scientific thinking.[364] It is in the development of his anthropology where we can also see the influence of Kant, who, though a rival of Meiners, frequently sought to correct the latter's writings on race. As such, or perhaps because of this, Meiners adopted Kant's definition of race, while Kant, in turn, drew on and used Meiners' racist anthropological descriptions in his own writings on race.[365] Hence, there was a "racist feedback-loop" between Kant and Meiners despite their mutual dislike of one another, something that can perhaps be characterised as a "noxiously fruitful antagonism".[366]

In any case, in Meiners' writings, the Hellenistic origins thesis – and by extension the denial of the existence of philosophy in the non-European pre-Greek world – is affirmed through a combination of *historical evidence* from Ancient Greek texts and *anthropological evidence* that purportedly demonstrated the absence of the relevant cognitive abilities for scientific thinking amongst non-white racial groups. At this juncture, two points are worth stressing. First, although Meiners' racist anthropology was developed in a separate text, his system of racial classification and his conception of racial difference appears at various points in his history of philosophy. This extends to his treatment of Ancient Greek sources; he selected sources that corroborated his prejudices, ignoring those that did not, and selectively misinterpreted Ancient Greek texts such that they were made to corroborate his underlying racist vision of the world, where non-whites lacked the cognitive capacities to engage in

[362] See Park, *Africa, Asia, and the History of Philosophy*, 76–82.
[363] Cantor, "Thales – the 'First Philosopher'?," 17.
[364] For useful discussions of Meiners' racism, see Park, *Africa, Asia, and the History of Philosophy*, 81–82; Smith, *Nature, Human Nature, and Human Difference*, 238–39.
[365] Park, *Africa, Asia, and the History of Philosophy*, 94–95.
[366] On the relationship between Meiners and Kant on the question of race, see the helpful discussion between Dan Flory and Peter Park in a symposium on Park's book: Flory, "Race, History, and Affect," 52–53; Park, "Why It Makes Sense to Talk of Decolonizing the Philosophy Department," 66–67.

philosophical thinking.[367] In short, in Meiners' writings, a false narrative was not only articulated but was presented as knowledge and defended using evidence that was interpreted through the lens of a racist worldview. Second, in Meiners' lifetime, the Hellenistic origins thesis was a fringe view, the "opinion of an extreme minority of historians".[368] Indeed, most historians believed that the arts and sciences, including philosophy, began in the *Orient* rather than in the Occident. For instance, Jacob Brucker, in his influential volumes on the history of philosophy from the 1740s, recognised the existence of philosophical traditions amongst the "barbarians" who predated the Ancient Greeks, though he did caveat this by suggesting that the "correct manner of philosophising" only emerged with the Greeks themselves.[369] How, then, did a peripheral and inaccurate view attain the status of a disciplinary truism in the present?

After Meiners, the same thesis was defended by two other historians of philosophy, Dietrich Tiedemann, who had a "lifelong friendship" with Meiners, and Wilhelm Tennemann, who "succeeded Tiedemann as chair of philosophy at the University of Marburg".[370] As with Meiners, both these historians sought to defend the Hellenistic origins thesis against the prevailing view that philosophy began in the Orient. It is only following its incorporation in Hegel's historical-philosophical system that the Hellenistic origins thesis is finally shifted from the margins to the mainstream, when "the absence of Africa and Asia from the lecture halls and seminar rooms of philosophy had become normal".[371] While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to trace the different ways the thesis is articulated by each theorist between Meiners and Hegel, in the latter's writings Oriental philosophy is reduced to being a precursor for the *real* and *proper* emergence of philosophy with Thales in particular and the Ancient Greeks more generally.[372] Thus, it is in the mid-nineteenth century, roughly one hundred years after Hume's initial statement of the view, that the Hellenistic origins thesis comes to be accepted as a truism. This is reflected in the various rearticulations of the thesis in the twentieth century when little to no attempt is made to explicitly defend it: the view has come to be accepted such

[367] For Meiners' problematic and prejudicial readings of Ancient Greek texts, see Cantor, "Thales – the 'First Philosopher'?"; Park, *Africa, Asia, and the History of Philosophy*, 77–81.
[368] Park, *Africa, Asia, and the History of Philosophy*, 76.
[369] Ibid., 72.
[370] Cantor, "Thales – the 'First Philosopher'?," 18.
[371] Park, *Africa, Asia, and the History of Philosophy*, 9.
[372] Schuringa, "On the Very Idea of 'Western' Philosophy." For a useful, albeit brief, overview of the different ways the Hellenistic origins thesis is articulated by Tiedemann and Tennemann before Hegel, see Cantor, "Thales – the 'First Philosopher'?," 18–19. For a fuller account of the transformation, see Park, *Africa, Asia, and the History of Philosophy*, 82–95.

that it can now simply be asserted. Hence, Edmund Husserl, in his Vienna lecture of 1935, can seemingly assert without argument that the European stands in direct contrast to the Papuan because, while both possess reason, only the former can reason *philosophically*.[373] Similarly, Bertrand Russell "replicates the structure of Hegel's story in his *History of Western Philosophy*" – despite his "extreme intellectual animosity towards Hegelianism" – by distinguishing the existence of *elements* of civilisation found in Mesopotamia and Egypt from the *true* philosophy of the Greeks.[374]

When faced with this history, it seems clear that the Hellenistic origins thesis is more than simply a propositional claim about when and where philosophy began. This is because it cannot make sense of the way the same idea comes to be rearticulated by different theorists with diverging and incompatible philosophical commitments. In fact, if it were just a propositional claim, the thesis is reduced to a question of personal prejudice, where each theorist from Meiners to Russell is simply understood to be falling back on racist tropes about non-whites. Interpreting the Hellenistic origins thesis in this way, however, is to revert to the individualist assumptions underpinning the interpretive approaches I examined in Chapter 1. Rather than seeing each subsequent theorist as building on or reinforcing what was previously articulated by their intellectual predecessors, each theorist is placed in a silo and an explanation is developed as to why and how their perspective came to be distorted by personal racial prejudice. My contention is that this cannot do justice to the ways in which philosophical ways of thinking come to be ingrained in the discipline. It should be striking that Meiners, a *Popularphilosoph*, Tennemann, a Kantian, and Hegel himself all converged on the Hellenistic origins thesis and utilised the same evidence – largely grounded in Meiners' questionable classical scholarship and racist anthropology – in support of its central claim *despite their irreconcilable foundational philosophical assumptions*.[375] Simply pointing to individual racist prejudice elides an examination of how these theorists constructed a *tradition of thinking* about philosophy such that it came to be universally accepted, thereby enabling the sweeping assertions of philosophy's Greek origins in both the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Put more forcefully, it is hard to imagine that Nicholas Tampio's brusque dismissal of Confucius

[373] Flikschuh, "Philosophical Racism," 98–99; see also Hountondji, "Constructing the Universal." Note that I am citing an unpublished translation of Hountondji's essay; for the original published version in French, see Hountondji, "Construire l'universel."
[374] Schuringa, "On the Very Idea of 'Western' Philosophy." For the relevant passages in Russell's text, see *A History of Western Philosophy*, 25.
[375] See in particular Park, *Africa, Asia, and the History of Philosophy*, chap. 6.

as merely a "possessor" rather than "lover" of wisdom would be intelligible had this intellectual trajectory not already happened.[376]

We are now able to answer the questions I posed at the beginning of the section. In response to the first, concerning why a claim about the origins of philosophy should matter for the present, I have argued that it is because the Hellenistic origins thesis is not just a propositional claim about the provenance of the discipline. Instead, we should think of it as a historicised knowledge-practice: it is a set of assumptions, narratives, concepts, and frameworks that are inextricably linked to racist conceptions of human difference. That is, the Hellenistic origins thesis is a knowledge-practice, consisting in a variety of academic and narrative practices as well as a claim to valid knowledge, that sought to explain the relationship between race and human activity. Further, it is both the product and a source of racist ideology; in other words, it is self-perpetuating. In articulating his racist anthropology, Meiners synthesised and rationalised various historical ways that black people had been conceptualised in folk conceptions of race. In doing so, he transformed racist prejudice into a philosophical thesis, thereby imbuing it with rational warrant. Given that the Hellenistic origins thesis cannot be shorn from its racism, since doing so would undermine a central pillar of Meiners' argument, the result is a racialised conception of philosophy that constitutes an instance of *knowledge*. At the same time, the Hellenistic origins thesis comes to shape how philosophers understand the nature and scope of philosophy itself. In short, by determining what counts as philosophy or not, an origin claim about philosophy comes to play a central role in shaping how philosophers understand both themselves and their discipline.

In articulating the history of the Hellenistic origins thesis, I am therefore *also* identifying its historicised dimensions. That is, if the view that philosophy began in Ancient Greece is ideological, then tracing the different ways it comes to be rearticulated is central to understanding it as an example of philosophical racism. This helps us answer the second question I posed earlier: the history of the Hellenistic origins thesis matters because it demonstrates that the prevailing and self-evident conception of philosophy is instead the product of a specific and contingent history. That Husserl, Rusell, Tampio and many others can simply assert the Greek origins of philosophy is *not* because it is a self-evident truth, but rather because it is the result of a historically contingent ideology that comes to be embedded

[376] See Tampio, "Not All Things Wise and Good Are Philosophy."

in the discipline. Indeed, this is perhaps an illustrative example to show how an ideology *makes itself true*, or "makes real what it purports to describe": a racialised conception of philosophy comes to be universally endorsed such that its racist origins have been entirely forgotten.[377] Hence, simply pointing to its problematic origins is insufficient to undermine its intuitive force, as many philosophers today may reject these reasons for endorsing the Hellenistic origins thesis in the first place. That said, the history of the thesis can also demonstrate how it has come to be used to justify the unjust exclusion of non-white and non-European traditions of philosophy from the scope of the discipline. This corresponds to the functionalist dimensions of ideology; in short, the history of the Hellenistic origins thesis matters because it demonstrates how a conception of philosophy *enables a pattern of injustice in the world*. I now turn to examining these specific injustices *within philosophy* in the subsequent section.

The Functionalist Dimensions of the Hellenistic Origins Thesis

Thus far, I have argued that the Hellenistic origins thesis is best thought of as a historicised knowledge-practice, that is, a combination of assumptions, narratives, concepts, and frameworks along with practices of training and self-discipline that are inextricably linked to the history of racism. This is largely informed by the history of the Hellenistic origins thesis itself. Rather than just being a claim about when and where philosophy began, it contains within it a series of assumptions about the nature and scope of the discipline that continue to shape our understanding of philosophy today. In short, it represents a racialised way of thinking about philosophy, one that has attained the status of a disciplinary truism backed up by the knowledge-complexes of the discipline. Having outlined its historicised dimensions, I now want to examine the functionalist dimensions of the Hellenistic origins thesis. Recall that, on my reading of a Du Bois, a racist ideology has historicised, functionalist, and interpretivist dimensions, where the functionalist aspect refers to what the ideology *does* in the world. Put differently, the functionalist aspect of an ideology asks "what practices and forms of life [does the ideology] help sustain, what sort of person does it help construct, and whose power does it help entrench?".[378] Further, and given that I am using ideology pejoratively, the effects that ideologies have in the world are *oppressive*: they enable injustices of some kind and therefore need to be undermined in order to realise a more just social world.

[377] For a discussion about ideology making itself true, see Bremner and Canson, "Ideology as Relativized a Priori," 12–15; Haslanger, "Racism, Ideology, and Social Movements," 6.
[378] Srinivasan, "Genealogy, Epistemology and Worldmaking," 142.

We saw this in Du Bois' criticism of the "propaganda of history", where historical scholarship on the period of Reconstruction was predicated on the "axiomatic assumption" that black Americans were "sub-human".[379] As we saw in the previous chapter, the problem with propagandistic retellings of history, for Du Bois, was not *just* that they were getting the 'facts' wrong: they were also vindicating racist assumptions of black Americans as *legitimate points of view*. In short, the retelling of a key period in American history was predicated on accepting the assumption that blacks were passive and inferior subjects. The result are representational schemes that *functionally* enable and justify relations of oppression and domination towards blacks. Similarly, though this marks a departure from a faithful interpretation of Du Bois' writings, the disciplinary trainings at university programmes helped to create a *kind of historian* that distrusts sources and textual evidence that demonstrate how black Americans fought for their freedoms. Again, that this kind of scholar was created represents the functional effects of propaganda, here understood as an example of a racist ideology. Using this as an analogous case, my goal in this section is to examine the kinds of injustices that are enabled by the Hellenistic origins thesis – albeit with one important caveat. I have limited my focus to what I have called manifest racism, the way racist ideas come to be articulated as knowledge, within philosophy. As such, I do not examine how philosophical racism enables relations of oppression *beyond the discipline*, though I recognise that this is likely to have happened. Instead, I ask how the Hellenistic origins thesis has come to enable injustice, or relations of oppression, inside the discipline.

This may strike the reader as odd; after all, what might it mean to enable injustice in an academic discipline? One answer is *epistemic injustice*, which on a *broad conception* refers to "any unjust relation [that] disadvantages someone in her capacity as a knower".[380] The term was coined by Miranda Fricker to capture cases of testimonial injustice, when a speaker is deemed to be less credible due to her identity, and hermeneutical injustice, when a person lacks the necessary conceptual tools to make sense of their experiences.[381] Since then, the term has been used to capture multiple different ways that individuals come to be wronged in their capacity as *knowers*.[382] Consequently, there are a litany of terms, from wilful hermeneutic

[379] See Du Bois, "The Propaganda of History," 452.
[380] Mitova, "Decolonising Knowledge Here and Now," 198. r
[381] See Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*.
[382] For the uses of epistemic injustice beyond Fricker's paradigm cases of testimonial and hermeneutic injustice, see Catala, "Academic Migration, Linguistic Justice, and Epistemic Injustice"; Dotson, "Conceptualizing

ignorance to epistemicide, that are used to capture a myriad range of distinct epistemic injustices, each with varying degrees of severity.[383] Although they are useful, my concern here is with the general form of epistemic injustice rather than with any version in particular; as such, I adopt the broad characterisation when employing the term. Framed this way, my goal in this section is to demonstrate how the Hellenistic origins thesis enables a series of epistemic injustices towards both philosophers and philosophy students when participating in the various institutions and practices of the discipline.

We have already come across one such example: the disciplinary narratives of philosophy I examined in Chapter 2. These narratives "help to mark and police the boundaries of disciplines, as well as the self-understandings of scholars"; thus, they perform "various legitimating functions", including the validation of a set of commonly held presumptions that can help assess whether a given scholarly contribution is *philosophical or not*.[384] If, however, these presumptions are part of a racist ideology, then such narratives enable a series of epistemic injustices towards non-white scholars and students in the discipline. I want to suggest that we can think of the construction of these disciplinary narratives as a kind of *narrative practice* that falls under the scope of the Hellenistic origins thesis. After all, if we think of this thesis as a knowledge-practice, then it includes not only theoretical claims to knowledge, such as the exact moment philosophy begins, but also *academic practices* that work to perpetuate and reinforce its central claims in the discipline. As I argued in the previous chapter, it is more likely that the way revisionist historians of Reconstruction disregarded government sources in favour of private letters, diaries, and gossip reflected an underlying *practice of scholarship* than a theoretical debate justifying the latter as better or more original types of sources. In much the same way, the legitimation narratives that give meaning to the history of philosophy are the product of practices of narration that "present and represent the past for the purposes of the present and the projection of a future".[385] In short, they are not purely theoretical claims but *practical ones* that are used to suit a variety of different purposes, such as to support the idea

Epistemic Oppression"; Pohlhaus, "Relational Knowing and Epistemic Injustice." It is also worth clarifying that, while Fricker coined the term, the underlying conceptual apparatus was developed much earlier, in the writings of various standpoint epistemologists and feminist theorists – see for instance Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*; Harding, *Whose Science?*

[383] For a useful overview of the different terms in the epistemic injustice literature, see Mitova, "Decolonising Knowledge Here and Now."

[384] Bell, "Writing the World (Remix)," 18; see also Dotson, "How Is This Paper Philosophy?"

[385] Linde, *Working the Past*, 3.

that the intractable philosophical debates of our present are the result of a continuous dialogue that begins in Ancient Greece.

To be clear, this is not to say that the Hellenistic origins thesis is *simply* a narrative practice: it rests on a conceptual foundation that shapes how we understand or interpret the discipline of philosophy itself. As such, it *also* plays the role of a foundational assumption that governs our way of understanding the nature and scope of philosophy. In making this point, I am skipping forwards and gesturing towards the interpretivist dimensions of ideologies, where the Hellenistic origins thesis acts as an underlying interpretive framework or gaze that structures our understanding of the world. Hence, I will return to this point in the next section; for now, I am simply suggesting that this underlying perspective enables the construction of narrative practices where individual scholars coordinate over the articulation of a shared understanding of the history of the discipline and their place within it. This narrative of a particular history is, in turn, invoked to "define philosophy … and set its epistemic boundaries" such that it determines the threshold for a thinker or text to be considered philosophical.[386] In so doing, I am trying to parse the foundational assumptions underpinning a given narrative from the narrative practice *itself*; it is the latter that has functional effects, while the former simply renders certain narratives intelligible or possible in the first place. Another way to make sense of this difference is that the foundational assumptions govern what narratives can be constructed, whereas the narrative practices determine the purposes and functions for which specific stories about the discipline are constructed. I have already spoken about legitimation narratives that function to delineate the intellectual authority of one discipline from another. To that we might add the presence of vindicatory narratives that "affirm or legitimise what they explain".[387]

Narrative practices can thus perform a variety of different functions. Yet, they can be ideological when these functions work to legitimise injustices, including a series of epistemic wrongs to individuals in their capacities as knowers. The institutional approaches I examined in Chapter 2 frame this wrong in terms of the unjust exclusion of certain theorists and traditions of thinking from the scope of philosophy. The exclusion of non-white theorists (from

[386] Park, *Africa, Asia, and the History of Philosophy*, 1.
[387] I adapt this slightly from Bernard Williams' use of 'vindicatory genealogy' – see Srinivasan, "Genealogy, Epistemology and Worldmaking," 129; Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 35–37.
historical stories that serve to justify

Confucius and the Vedantic theorists of Ancient India to anti-colonial theorists like Frantz Fanon and Sylvia Wynter) from the canon of philosophy is unfair or unjust because these exclusions imply that their writings have no relevance for philosophical debates. Again, this is because of the functional effects of a canon, which acts as "a reservoir of arguments, an index of historical continuity, and a powerful source of intellectual authority".[388] Insofar as the legitimation narratives that emerge out of the Hellenistic origins thesis help enforce and entrench the composition of the canon, that these figures lie outside its scope amounts to the *prima facie* rejection of their arguments as philosophical and the denial of their writings as sources of relevance for the discipline as a whole. This has wider effects on those scholars who work in these areas: drawing on these figures within the discipline of philosophy creates an undue justificatory burden where scholars engaging with non-canonical thinkers must first answer "how their paper is philosophy" before being taken seriously by the discipline.[389] In contrast, those who draw on canonical theorists, whether Plato or Kant, are not subject to this added test of legitimation; the philosophical status of their contributions is assumed from the beginning.

All of this works to create epistemic barriers that inhibit the ability of diverse scholars to draw on, adapt, and refine the shared epistemic resources within philosophy to participate in the process of knowledge production.[390] It is for this reason best thought of as an epistemic injustice, since it creates relations between scholars where certain contributions are deemed to be less credible or worthwhile on the basis of a racially inflected legitimation narrative. I also agree with Kristie Dotson in suggesting that these undue burdens of justification are partly why there exists a hostile environment within academic philosophy, which creates difficult working conditions for scholars interested in figures outside and beyond the traditional canon.[391] That said, endorsing some of the tenets of the institutional approach does not mean that I am falling back into an understanding of philosophical racism as being exclusively about disciplinary narratives: as I noted earlier, I recognise that such narratives are grounded in a foundational presumption of what the discipline is and should be. Therefore, it is not enough to show how

[388] Bell, "What Is Liberalism?," 66.
[389] See Dotson, "How Is This Paper Philosophy?"
[390] This roughly corresponds to Dotson's definition of epistemic oppression, which she takes to be the "umbrella term" for the ways knowledge production can harm both people and populations. Thus, on Dotson's view, epistemic injustice is a subset of epistemic oppression. I follow Veli Mitova in inverting the terminological relation to see epistemic oppression as a kind of epistemic injustice, largely because I find the term 'epistemic injustice' to be more widely known. For their respective accounts, see Dotson, "Conceptualizing Epistemic Oppression" esp. note 13; Mitova, "Decolonising Knowledge Here and Now," 203–5.
[391] Dotson, "How Is This Paper Philosophy?," 3–6.

these narratives can include non-European philosophers within the scope of the discipline, as proponents of the institutional approach advocate. Instead, these foundational assumptions need to be challenged, undermined, and subjected to critical scrutiny. Indeed, this falls out of an ideological conception of philosophical racism, which foregrounds the necessity of overcoming ideology in order to achieve a more just social world.

In addition, we need to move beyond *solely* examining the Hellenistic origins thesis as a knowledge-practice and look to the knowledge-complexes that recognised and distributed it as an instance of philosophical knowledge. That is, adequately understanding how the Hellenistic origins thesis came to be so widely held is not just the product of its theoretical articulation, but it is also a function of the scholars who endorsed it and the institutions that were moulded in its image. As with the above discussion, paying attention to the knowledge-complexes in which the Hellenistic origins thesis is articulated and defended can have problematic functional outcomes. Indeed, part of the reason that the Hellenistic origins thesis comes to be so pervasive may be the result of its embeddedness in the various knowledge-complexes of academic philosophy. After all, not only do many philosophy textbooks and popular overviews explicitly endorse this thesis, but philosophy degree programmes across the global North – and even some places in the global South – are also structured in accordance with the traditional canon that begins in Ancient Greece and ends in the present day. In the United States in particular, doctoral students are required to write multiple papers in different subject areas, such as philosophy of mind, and periods, such as premodern philosophy, of the European tradition. No such requirements, however, exist for students with respect to non-European traditions of philosophy.[392]

Taken together, the interplay between knowledge-practices and knowledge-complexes legitimised and entrenched an ideology at the heart of philosophy; a philosophical colour line at the centre of the discipline such that what counts as a philosophical contribution is mediated through the racialised presumptions and assumptions that constitute the Hellenistic origins thesis. All of this functions to enable a range of epistemic injustices towards diverse scholars and non-European traditions of philosophy such that their insights are marginalised or burdened with additional justificatory steps to be seen as a contribution to knowledge. This gives rise to a series of questions that I lack the space to answer; for instance, how did academic

[392] On the culture of doctoral programmes in the United States, see Park, "Why I Left Academia."

practice fundamentally change such that an intellectual context where world philosophy was the norm was displaced by one in which philosophy was synonymous with Europe?[393] The historian Peter Park provides a partial answer: "in the nineteenth century, the history of philosophy was one of the subjects most regularly covered in philosophy lectures at German universities" with "courses and handbooks" as well as the "canons of philosophy" all reflecting the Hellenistic origins thesis with its questionable historical claims and its racist anthropology.[394] Yet, if, as Park himself argues, there was scholarship contesting the claim that philosophy began in Greece, why did these controversies not find their way into the courses and textbooks taught at German universities? Further, and most importantly, how did an academic debate in the German-speaking world come to shape the eventual development of the discipline *as a whole*?

Answering these questions takes us beyond the scope of my project and into the realm of historical scholarship that can better uncover the contingent pathways that led to our wholesale acceptance of the Hellenistic origins thesis. Yet, I want to suggest that it can perform a disruptive function; a turn to the past can help unsettle the assumptions we take for granted by demonstrating their contingency. What the interplay between knowledge-practices and knowledge-complexes *also* enables are the elevation of a series of ideas and frameworks to the level of an "unquestionable background assumption" that is "too obvious for words" such that it becomes difficult to displace.[395] Reading Meiners' or Hegel's defence of the Hellenistic origins thesis today, a philosopher might be struck not only by the explicit racism, but also by the lengths that they go to in defending a claim that, from the perspective of the present, just seems *obviously true*. Tracing its history can therefore not only invoke a critical stance towards this particular way of seeing the world, but also help in uncovering potential alternatives to this underlying interpretive framework. After all, for most of human history, "'world philosophy' was the mainstream", a position that today seems unthinkable.[396] In making this claim, I am gesturing towards the underlying interpretive framework or gaze that renders intelligible the representational schemes that have oppressive effects in the world. It is this that makes philosophical racism so pernicious, since it inflects the foundational assumptions and

[393] Kalmanson, "Decolonizing the Department," 63.
[394] Park, *Africa, Asia, and the History of Philosophy*, 151. For a critique of Meiners' classical scholarship, showing that his claims about Ancient Greece were controversial and not always supported by the evidence he himself cites, see Cantor, "Thales – the 'First Philosopher'?"
[395] See Taylor, "Philosophy and Its History," 20–21.
[396] Kalmanson, "Decolonizing the Department," 63.

presuppositions we unconsciously hold about what philosophy is and aims to do. The key point is therefore that overcoming philosophical racism may require a radical shift in the ways we understand and think about philosophy itself. It is to this question that I now turn in my discussion of the interpretivist dimensions of the Hellenistic origins thesis.

The Interpretivist Dimensions of the Hellenistic Origins Thesis

In the preceding sections, I examined the historicised and functionalist dimensions of the Hellenistic origins thesis, demonstrating that a racialised conception of philosophy from the eighteenth century came to be naturalised as the prevailing view of the discipline today such that it enables a series of epistemic injustices towards diverse scholars and philosophical traditions. In this final section, I want to turn to the final dimension of ideologies, the underlying interpretive framework, and identify these aspects in the Hellenistic origins thesis. In so doing, I will also make reference to the other two dimensions I considered above; though I am parsing them for analytic clarity, in reality all three dimensions are interwoven. Nevertheless, my aim is to show how overcoming philosophical racism may require more than a focus on mitigating the unjust epistemic exclusions that it enables. To make my case, I want to again return to Du Bois' critique of white propaganda, which has provided me with an illuminating way to think about the different ways that academic scholarship can be both the product and a source of a racist ideology. As I argued in the previous chapter, we can interpret Du Bois' criticism of the Dunning School as gesturing towards an underlying collective framework where the way of thinking about a specific problem is determined and agreed upon in advance by a community of scholars. In short, it refers to a set of foundational assumptions with respect to a specific question or problem that governs how it is conceptualised, which has implications for the kinds of answers that can be sought. Further, on this narrower understanding, the foundational assumptions are a product of manifest racism: the explicit attempt to theorise race and racism as an element of knowledge.

It is important to specify this because I think it gets at something important about philosophical racism in general, and the Hellenistic origins thesis in particular. In my articulation of a Du Boisian conception of ideology, I suggested that the interpretivist dimensions referred to an underlying interpretive gaze such that whites and blacks could not look at one another as fellow equals unmediated by the distortive effects of the colour line. It is in this spirit that I read Du Bois' image of the cave, where a thick pane of glass separated those hindered inside the cave

from those outside who laughed at their attempts to communicate.[397] Similarly, in his analysis of double consciousness, Robert Gooding-Williams likens it to being trapped "by a shroud of prejudice that, like a funhouse mirror" keeps the black American "prisoner to an image of himself that never 'merges' with his undistorted reflection".[398] To my mind, this "shroud of prejudice" refers to an underlying interpretive gaze that shapes how individuals – both black and white – see themselves and one another. In making these claims, Du Bois is drawing attention to a latent racism, the unconsciously held ideas about race that come to mark biocultural features as essential markers of difference. When these prejudices come to be articulated in the language of scholarship, they become instances of manifest racism; that is, they attain the status of *knowledge*, imbuing them with a degree of validity and rational warrant they may hitherto have lacked. Yet this process also marks the point of transition where racist presuppositions gain credibility as legitimate starting points or foundational assumptions for academic inquiry.

It is this latter point that is evident, I suggested, in Du Bois' criticism of the Dunning School. As I argued in the previous chapter, the founding members of the Dunning School agreed upon a foundational assumption in the conception of black Americans as sub-human passive agents that, in turn, determined the direction of their scholarship into the Reconstruction era. After all, if blacks were understood *as lacking* the necessary agential power to fight for themselves against slavery, then why would these scholars look at historical sources outlining the distinct perspectives of African Americans? As the narrative of the Dunning School came to be widely held, the foundational assumption no longer required defence: it came to be accepted as true, as part of the "intricate jungle of ideas conditioned on unconscious and subconscious reflexes of living things".[399] Further, and crucially, not only did the foundational assumptions of the Dunning School come to be part of the collective unconscious, they also played a structuring role in the sense that they rendered the various *distorted* conceptions of Reconstruction intelligible in the first place – thereby resulting in the proliferation of various oppressive practices. The same, I want to argue, is true of the Hellenistic origins thesis; in the writings of Hume, Meiners, Kant, Tiedemann, Tennemann, and Hegel, the presumption that the Greeks invented philosophy was elevated to the status of a claim to valid knowledge. This, in turn, constrained what could be said about the history of philosophy. For one, neither Confucius nor

[397] For the evocative image, see Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, 130–31.
[398] Gooding-Williams, "Evading Narrative Myth, Evading Prophetic Pragmatism," 525.
[399] Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, viii.

the Vedic texts of Ancient India could be conceived as *philosophical* precisely because they lacked a connection to Ancient Greece, the supposed birthplace of philosophy. In short, their writings started and reinforced the construction of philosophy as a white European activity such that, in the present, we struggle to think beyond these constraints.

This may strike the reader as a strong claim; after all, have there not been greater efforts to recognise various non-European traditions of thinking as philosophical in their own right? While this may be true, scholars continue to feel comfortable dismissing large bodies of thought on the basis of arguments that bear eerie resonances with the explicitly racist justifications articulated by Meiners and others. We have already seen Tampio's dismissal of Confucius as a mere *possessor* rather than lover of wisdom; but to this we could add David Runciman's claim that to engage in contextualist readings of "authors from outside the familiar canon of western ideas" is akin to "following carefully delineated problems through the byways rather than the highways of intellectual history".[400] Of course, Runciman makes no reference to race; yet, the division between the *highway* of the familiar western canon, and the *byways* of those traditions outside it, is in itself rendered possible by the foundational presupposition that philosophy's lineage begins in Ancient Greece. In a similar vein, Christopher Goto-Jones polemically suggests that the increased interest given to Carl Schmitt by philosophers implies that "the discipline is still more comfortable attempting to fill the gaping holes in contemporary thought with the ideas of a dead, white, male Nazi (from Europe) than with attempting to grapple with the ideas of a non-Western text in any form".[401] While we can disagree with the *way* Goto-Jones makes his point, he is nevertheless drawing attention to an unfortunate tendency in philosophy that first looks to Europe in attempting to find answers to the various philosophical problems that arise from aspects of our social world. Again, this reflects a foundational conception of philosophy such that it is primarily thought of as a European activity, where there is an instinct to mine the intellectual heritage of Europe for overlooked insights before turning to some other tradition of philosophy.

My point is that these tendencies are indicative of an unconscious reflex to prioritise the insights of the white European world. The racial dimension is crucial not just because non-

[400] Runciman, "History of Political Thought," 86.
[401] Goto-Jones, "The Kyoto School, the Cambridge School, and the History of Political Philosophy in Wartime Japan," 34. It is worth noting that Goto-Jones is, in this article, advocating for the increased study of the Kyoto School (his area of specialism) in academic mainstream philosophy. Yet, this is ironic, given that the Kyoto School are thought to have a questionable or even somewhat problematic relationship with Japanese imperialism.

white figures from outside have been marginalised, but also non-white figures *within* the Euro-American hemisphere continue to be pushed to the edges of the discipline. While I recognise that this is slowly changing, figures from Africana and Indigenous traditions of philosophy write from within Europe, yet nevertheless continue to be disregarded. Even Islamic philosophers who directly engaged with the European tradition, such as Ibn Rushd (Latinised as Averroes), are overlooked in various ways.[402] This is not only true of university curricula, but also in the way that traditions of thought come to reconstructed and reconstituted in the present. The paradigm example of this kind of erasure is the neo-republican tradition, which seeks to recover a forgotten way of thinking about freedom in terms of non-domination to rival the liberal account of freedom as non-interference. Yet, in tracing the history of freedom as non-domination, neo-republicans look to thinkers like Cicero, Machiavelli, and Thomas Jefferson as its primary proponents, and fashion themselves as kinds of intellectual archaeologists uncovering an idea that has been long forgotten due to a variety of factors, such as "the rise of classical utilitarianism in the eighteenth century" that helped make republicanism's foundational assumptions "appear outdated and even absurd".[403] This selective history, however, ignores the contributions of African American political theorists in the nineteenth century, who drew extensively on multiple aspects of the republican tradition – including the idea of freedom as non-domination – to examine questions of racial oppression.[404] I find it therefore ironic that neo-republicans use the example of the benevolent slave owner to highlight the superiority of their account of freedom while simultaneously ignoring the contributions of black Americans involved in this *very freedom struggle* when outlining the central commitments of the neo-republican tradition.[405]

This omission is especially striking because African American political theorists did not merely apply the central concepts of the republican tradition to better understand their social oppression. Rather, as Melvin Rogers argues, they used "republicanism's concepts (e.g. civic virtue) in a situation or context not otherwise addressed" and even problematised "its central concepts, such as freedom and nondomination, by situating them within a different experiential

[402] Platzky Miller, "From the 'History of Western Philosophy' to Entangled Histories of Philosophy," 1251.
[403] Skinner, *Liberty before Liberalism*, 96–97; see also Pettit, "Introduction: The Republic, Old and New."
[404] Rogers, *The Darkened Light of Faith*, 99–104.
[405] For a discussion of the benevolent or "non-interfering master" in conjunction with republican freedom, see Pettit, *Republicanism*, 22–23. That said, there have been recent attempts to trace the history of *radical republicanism*, that may result in the inclusion of some of these perspectives. See for instance Leipold, Nabulsi, and White, *Radical Republicanism Recovering the Tradition's Popular Heritage*.

context".[406] In so doing, African American philosophers reconfigured the republican tradition to suit their political purposes and thereby made significant theoretical contributions that continue to go unacknowledged. Instead, proponents of the neo-republican tradition continue to look elsewhere, specifically towards Europe, when outlining the foundational aspects of their conception of freedom. The result is a reaffirmation of "the unequal intellectual worth of black thinkers", whose arguments and insights continue to be ignored by philosophers – even when ostensibly belonging to the same tradition that scholars are attempting to revive and reconstruct.[407] To be clear, this is not to suggest that neo-republicans explicitly hold racist beliefs that denigrate the insights of non-white theorists; it is, on one level, correct to say that these exclusions are the product of a conceptual blind spot held by all republican theorists. At the same time, it is *too easy* to dismiss these concerns as simply the product of individual failings rather than a systemic problem grounded in the foundational and often unconscious assumptions philosophers have with respect to their own discipline. The unquestioned logic of the Hellenistic origins thesis again rears its head, guiding scholars to look towards what is familiar and known in their examination of history at the expense of those theorists and traditions that lie – to paraphrase Du Bois – behind the 'World Shadow'.[408]

Thus far, I have attempted to show how the foundational assumption in the Greek origins of the discipline enabled a series of unjustified exclusions – all of which can be understood as a range of epistemic injustices. From the brusque dismissals of various non-Western theorists and traditions of philosophy to the exclusion of non-white authors as contributors to a specific tradition of thinking, the Hellenistic origins thesis renders intelligible conceptual schemes that seem to legitimise these exclusions – either by explicitly validating the non-philosophical status of thinkers like Confucius, or through a kind of 'habit of mind' where philosophical answers are sought by scrutinising the white European past.[409] Looking back to earlier sections, we can also see the interpretivist dimensions of the Hellenistic origins thesis as making the narrative practices of 'Western philosophy' possible in the first place, which come to be reinforced in the minds of later generations of scholars as a result of the embeddedness of the Hellenistic

[406] Rogers, *The Darkened Light of Faith*, 101.
[407] Ibid., 102.
[408] See Du Bois, "Worlds of Color," 423.
[409] My use of habit of mind is deliberate; there are, I want to suggest, strong points of connection between my analysis of the interpretive dimension of a Du Boisian conception of racism as ideology and analyses of Du Bois' conception of racism as a 'habit of thinking' in John Dewey's sense. These interpretations examine the pragmatist elements of Du Bois thinking, over the more Marxist elements I examined in Chapter 3. For these accounts, see MacMullan, *Habits of Whiteness*, especially chapters 3&4; Sullivan, *Revealing Whiteness*.

origins thesis in the knowledge-complexes of academic philosophy. All of this works to entrench a hostile environment within philosophy for diverse scholars, who find themselves having to jump through additional hoops for their scholarly contributions to be taken as meaningful interventions in the discipline. Yet, the problem of philosophical racism is not limited to the unjust exclusion of different thinkers; it has deeper elements that inform the *way we think* about philosophy and what kinds of arguments constitute an example of philosophical knowledge. These aspects, in turn, have implications for the way philosophers seek to engage with texts and thinkers from hitherto marginalised traditions of philosophy.

To see these deeper dimensions, I want to return to Husserl's remark that, while the Papuan and the European both possess reason, only the latter has *philosophical* reason. This, I suggested, is rendered intelligible by taking the Hellenistic origins thesis to be a foundational assumption about what philosophy *is*; as the inheritors of the Greek tradition, it stands to reason, for Husserl, that the Europeans have philosophy whereas the Papuans – as non-Europeans – do not. Suppose, however, that there were a philosophically inclined Papuan. We can legitimately ask on what terms she can engage with philosophy, if the activity itself is *defined in terms of the Hellenistic origins thesis*? Put differently, if the prevailing conception of philosophy rules out the possibility of a Papuan philosophical tradition, how might the Papuan defend her philosophical credentials? After all, to reason using *her* tradition is to, by definition, reason non-philosophically. As such, she must utilise those terms that come to be seen as indisputably philosophical – in short, the terms of the European tradition that cast her as a being incapable of philosophical thought. As Katrin Flikschuh makes the point, the Papuan "must train her mind to think about herself in terms that discredit her humanity – the very thing she set out to defend".[410] The point is essentially the following: the Hellenistic origins thesis, in its capacity as a foundational assumption that determines what philosophy is, fixes the collective understanding about the discipline such that philosophy itself comes to be synonymous with the European tradition. To be philosophical and to do philosophy is therefore to engage in some capacity with and participate in debates that fall out of how white Europeans thought about and conceptualised the world. Under these conditions, how might a Papuan or an African or any other non-white individual engage in philosophy without *also* accepting the

[410] Flikschuh, "Philosophical Racism," 100.

foundational assumption that their concerns and their way of thinking lie outside the scope of the discipline?[411]

I see Du Bois as grasping towards similar sentiments in reflecting on his own scholarship on the Reconstruction era, which from the beginning rejects the foundational assumptions of the Dunning School's approach. As he puts it: "Naturally, as a Negro, I cannot do this writing without believing in their ability to be educated, to do the work of the modern world, to take their place as equal citizens with others. I cannot for a moment subscribe to that bizarre doctrine of race that makes most men inferior to the few".[412] While this may depart from Du Bois' original intentions, I read this excerpt as not simply a rejection of the racist assumptions of the Dunning School but also a recognition that, for Du Bois, *writing about Reconstruction* will be a fundamentally different kind of enterprise. That is, if Du Bois were to write a history of Reconstruction from the starting point of the Dunning School, which as we have seen has been legitimised through a variety of different knowledge-complexes, he would start from the premise of accepting his own inferiority. The terms of discourse therefore constrain what can be said *within the realm of knowledge* about Reconstruction; as such, for Du Bois to articulate the truth of Reconstruction *as historical knowledge* requires a fundamental shift in the foundational assumptions that guide scholarship into American history. By analogy, then, I want to suggest the same is true of the Hellenistic origins thesis: in fixing the foundational assumptions of what philosophy is, it constrains how we think about philosophy, how we identify the hallmarks of 'the philosophical' in a given text or theorist, and how we engage with specific contributions *as philosophy*.

In this way, the racial dimensions of the Hellenistic origins thesis continue to be upheld in spite of the explicit rejection of racist ideas in our present. Indeed, there appears to be a growing acceptance and willingness to recognise a series of non-European theorists, texts, and traditions as *philosophical*. Yet, at the moment of engagement, the same unconscious reflexes or habits of mind structure the terms of that engagement such that the non-European contribution in question continues to be marginalised. To use one hopefully illustrative example, Flikschuh recounts an attempt to engage with her students on the Yoruba conception of destiny, which draws on an *Ifa* allegory to examine its philosophical implications.[413] Over the course of the

[411] For a helpful discussion on this point, see Hope, "Political Philosophy as Practical Philosophy," 459–63.
[412] Du Bois, "The Propaganda of History," 450.
[413] For the text in question, see Gbadegesin, "An Outline of a Theory of Destiny."

classroom discussion, it became apparent that "students struggled to read the allegory as raising potentially universal questions about the extent and limits of personal responsibility; to them, it was an account of what members of traditional Yoruba communities happen to believe about themselves".[414] This is of course not to fault the students for their lack of engagement with a text; my point is that it reflects an underlying preconception of what the proper goal, object, and form of philosophy is, one that inevitably has its roots in the Hellenistic origins thesis given its apparent ubiquity. In short, the Hellenistic origins thesis acts as a philosophical colour line that inflects how scholars think about philosophy such that non-European traditions are either measured up unfavourably or are not even seen as philosophical.

Now, one could at this point object that my claim is too strong: can I really attribute all these epistemic exclusions to the foundational assumption that philosophy began in Greece? I think that the Hellenistic origins thesis is and must be part of the story; as I have hopefully made clear throughout the chapter, attributing a Greek origin to philosophy *also* entails a series of substantive commitments regarding what the discipline is primarily concerned with and how one goes about answering various philosophical questions. It may not, however, *by itself* be sufficient to explain and account for all these instances of philosophical racism I have articulated here. Nevertheless, I have been using the Hellenistic origins thesis as a way of grappling with and illustrating the deeper nuances of philosophical racism, which I think are located in the foundational interpretive frameworks we use to render the disciplinary exclusions both intelligible and justifiable. If these interpretive frameworks involve more than *just* the Hellenistic origins thesis, this does not necessarily undermine my central argument. What the preceding discussion has shown is that the presupposition that philosophy is Greek has not only been widely distributed, but it has also enabled a way of thinking about philosophy that takes the European tradition as paradigmatic of what the discipline is. This has resulted in the construction of a series of narrative practices that legitimise the boundaries of philosophy with the typical Euro-American canon, thereby reinforcing the presumption that texts from outside this tradition are expected to pass additional justificatory steps to merit inclusion in the discipline itself. Furthermore, this way of thinking shapes how scholars understand what philosophy is such that unfamiliar texts from beyond Europe are read *non-philosophically*. These conclusions remain valid, even if they are rooted in an interpretive framework that is not exhausted by the Hellenistic origins thesis *alone*.

[414] Flikschuh, "Philosophical Racism," 107.

This brings me to my final point: overcoming philosophical racism is not simply about mitigating the unjust epistemic exclusions through more inclusive curricula and hiring practices. If it is, at bottom, a problem concerning the way we think about the discipline, then it is these foundational assumptions that need to be unsettled, questioned, and undermined. To equate the European canon with the notion of philosophy *simpliciter* is to accept that claims to valid knowledge – i.e. knowledge-practices – must draw on the conceptual frameworks, methodologies, and even the central debates of this tradition to constitute a legitimate contribution. As Leigh Jenco makes the point:

> "Postcolonial and 'non-Western' societies can be positioned as particularly challenging case studies, offering 'alternative' views of self, culture, and society. However, their rich traditions of historical, political, and literary scholarship can play no role in elaborating methodologies for inquiry or exchange. The most alarming consequence is not simply that the adequacy of Western models and categories is reaffirmed, *but that the capacity to conduct self-sufficient theoretical inquiry in non-Western intellectual or social traditions is implicitly denied*".[415]

What makes philosophical racism so pernicious is precisely its implicit nature. For insights to be recognised as philosophical, they need to be couched in the terms of the prevailing European tradition. Yet, this means not only that this tradition acts as a kind of yardstick to measure against the insights from non-European and non-white traditions of thinking, but it also renders it *impossible* for theoretical contributions from *outside this tradition* to glean general and universalizable insights about politics, morality, metaphysics, and other areas of philosophical concern.[416] Therefore, what goes unquestioned is the unique ability of white European philosophy to produce philosophical knowledge. If we are serious about tackling philosophical racism, then not only do we need to engage in surface-level reform, such as the diversification of the discipline, we also need to rethink our foundational assumptions about the discipline and accept that the European tradition may be, in certain respects, incapable of producing the right kind of philosophical knowledge.

Concluding Remarks

[415] Jenco, "What Does Heaven Ever Say?," 745, my emphasis.
[416] For similar arguments about the particularism of non-European traditions of thinking, see Flikschuh, *What Is Orientation in Global Thinking?*; Jenco, *Chinese Thought as Global Theory*.

In this final chapter, I attempted to bring the preceding arguments to bear on the question of whether we can see the Hellenistic origins thesis as an example of philosophical racism. Hence, by pairing a Du Boisian conception of ideology as having historicised, functionalist, and interpretivist dimensions with a distinction between knowledge-practices and knowledge-complexes, I sought to examine how the Hellenistic origins thesis is both the product and source of a racist ideology that comes to be embedded in the discipline of philosophy. Using this as an example, I attempted to capture how philosophical racism inflects the shared meanings and self-understandings of philosophers such that there are collective 'habits of mind' that help to perpetuate a series of epistemic injustices. These injustices, I suggested, ranged from the illegitimate exclusions of various non-white and non-European traditions of philosophy to the emergence of a hostile environment within academic philosophy for diverse scholars. Although I treaded some familiar ground by showing how the disciplinary narratives of academic philosophy create a set of unfair justificatory burdens for diverse scholars, I nevertheless moved beyond the concerns of the institutional approach by *both* tracing the emergence of these disciplinary narratives *as well as* showing how they are rendered intelligible by an underlying interpretive framework or gaze and come to be sustained by both philosophers and academic institutions. The upshot of my approach is thus not focused on including what has hitherto been excluded in the prevailing narratives of philosophy, but instead using history to question these narratives and rethink the practices of academic philosophy in the present.

In making my case, I separately analysed the historicised, functionalist, and interpretivist dimensions of the Hellenistic origins thesis in the spirit of analytic clarity, before showing how they are interwoven in the final section. To briefly recapitulate my central argument, I demonstrated that, by tracing its history, the Hellenistic origins thesis is best understood as a knowledge-practice containing a series of substantive commitments about the nature and scope of philosophy in general, which are inextricably linked to racist conceptions of human difference. We see this in its functionalist dimensions, where the narrative practices of philosophy come to be rearticulated on the basis that the discipline began in Greece to justify a series of epistemic injustices, including aspects of the hostile environment I explored in Chapter 2. Both, however, are predicated on an underlying interpretivist framework that treats the Hellenistic origins thesis as a foundational assumption about what philosophy *is*. Using Du Bois' critique of the Dunning School as a useful analogy, I argued that the Hellenistic origins thesis was the product of an agreement between a series of philosophers in the eighteenth

century that, over time, attained the status of a background assumption such that its defence was no longer warranted. As an underlying interpretive framework, its central claims not only enabled and perpetuated a series of unjust epistemic exclusions, but it also influenced how scholars think about philosophy in the present. In short, the terms of philosophical discourse reflect the underlying racist assumptions of the Hellenistic origins thesis such that claims to valid knowledge can *only* be made by drawing on the frameworks and methodologies of the white European tradition.

We are left with a systematic disregard for non-white philosophical traditions in any form, even if they are articulated within the geographic construction of Euro-America. As the example of the neo-republican tradition illustrates, scholarship that attempts to uncover and reconstruct the past for the direction of the present is directed *towards* the forgotten arguments of white European philosophers and *away* from the insights of non-white and/or non-European theorists whose writings may have been articulated in a different register.[417] This does not make them less philosophical; it merely reflects a series of background assumptions that govern how the discipline thinks about philosophy, at least some of which are rooted in the more expansive conception of the Hellenistic origins thesis I examine here. Similar arguments can be made concerning our preconceived assumptions about the provenance of a given philosophical contribution. That we can read the analogies of Plato's cave or Descartes' evil demon as expressing deep-seated philosophical ideas of universal importance but fail to do the same with an *Ifa* allegory about personal destiny helps shed light on the structural features underpinning our collective understandings of philosophy.[418] It is (at least partly) because racism exists at these deeper levels, what I have referred to as an interpretive framework or gaze, that we are blinded to the possibility that non-white non-European philosophical traditions can transform theoretical insights into *valid knowledge* – that is, general and universalizable insights about various social phenomena. Instead, their traditions of philosophy are interpreted as the articulation of a set of beliefs of a given community or as better able to address the perceived gaps within European philosophy. The result is that the terms of philosophical discourse continue to reflect the presuppositions of the Hellenistic origins thesis.[419]

[417] One of the leading African American figures who drew on and adapted republican ideas was David Walker, who used the rhetorical power of the appeal to make his philosophical claims. See Rogers, "David Walker and the Political Power of the Appeal"; *The Darkened Light of Faith*, chap. 2.
[418] See Flikschuh, "Philosophical Racism," 107.
[419] For a similar point, see Idris, "The Location of Anticolonialism," 338.

Overcoming philosophical racism therefore requires the recognition that the foundational assumptions within the European tradition may need to be radically revised to disrupt these racist dimensions of our thinking. It is not enough to target the *practices of exclusion*, such as legitimation narratives that work to enforce a boundary between philosophy and neighbouring disciplines, since these are predicated on a set of foundational assumptions that will come to shape whichever new practices are created. As we saw in Chapter 2, the inclusion of diverse thinkers merely because they offer a different perspective does little to challenge the underlying presumption that, for most questions or problems of philosophy, the white European tradition is sufficient. This again acts as a constraint on the kinds of contribution to philosophical knowledge that non-white traditions and theorists can make; rich traditions of thinking from outside the canon with their own methodological and theoretical frameworks risk being elided and marginalised because they lack the relevant qualities that seem useful in filling the omissions of white European philosophy. Using an ideological framework to theorise philosophical racism can therefore help in both conceptualising and overcoming the problem of racism *for philosophy*, since it stresses the importance of undermining and unsettling the foundational assumptions of the discipline. Targeting these background assumptions that come to be taken for granted is crucial as it is the only way to prevent these same preconceptions from inflecting the new institutional practices that are implemented to make the institutions of academic philosophy more inclusive.[420] In short, by not challenging our foundational outlook, we are doomed to recapitulate the prevailing ways of thinking about philosophy that continue to marginalise contributions to the discipline from outside Europe.

[420] For discussions that raise similar points within the literature of epistemic injustice, see Dotson, "Conceptualizing Epistemic Oppression"; Mitova, "Decolonising Knowledge Here and Now"; Pohlhaus, "Epistemic Agency Under Oppression."

Conclusion

In this thesis I have sought to rethink and reconceptualise the problem racism poses for philosophical thinking. Too often, the debate on the influence of racism in philosophy has become embroiled in a series of interpretive questions to concretely determine, first, whether a specific philosopher was racist, and, second, whether their racism impacted their philosophical contributions. Yet, by framing the problem in this way, scholars work from the assumption that the philosophical frameworks of their present no longer bear the marks of a racist past (if one is even diagnosed to begin with). As such, the debates concerning the racism of the European philosophical tradition are separated from the debates concerning how best to resolve the "overwhelming whiteness" of academic philosophy.[421] The result is the lack of a unified theoretical framework to examine both the conceptual and institutional problems of *philosophical racism*: the notion that racism constitutes a significant – and overlooked – problem for philosophy. In attempting to rectify this omission, I have engaged with recent debates on the ideological nature of racism and paired my analysis with methodological approaches from the field of disciplinary history to articulate a framework that can adequately conceptualise and analyse the nuances of philosophical racism. Central to my approach are the writings of W.E.B. Du Bois, whose reflections on both the experience of racism and the ways through which academic scholarship can be twisted to suit a racist political agenda have informed many of the claims I have defended. As such, while my ostensible focus is on diagnosing and articulating a framework for thinking about philosophical racism, my thesis can be read as making a meaningful contribution to broader debates in Du Bois scholarship as well as in recent attempts to revive the pejorative concept of ideology.

My overall project can be helpfully broken down into two components: a negative argument that demonstrates the limitations of prevailing approaches to theorising philosophical racism, and a positive argument that articulates the key components of my alternative ideological framework for theorising philosophical racism. In Chapter 1, I argued that interpretive approaches frame philosophical racism as an *individualist problem* affecting the writings of various canonical philosophers. Thus, they reduce the problem to an issue of *historical interpretation* regarding whether and to what extent the racist statements of a particular thinker affected their otherwise insightful philosophical arguments. The result is an approach to thinking about racism that either whitewashes it from the discipline, by suggesting that it does

[421] See Mills, "Racial Justice," 83.

not matter when reconstructing the *best version* of a canonical philosopher's argument or lacks the resources to examine the way a dialogue *between philosophers* can come to be inflected by racism. Using the Hellenistic origins thesis as an example, I show how this thesis is both the product of a racist conception of human difference and continues to influence the present – thereby pointing towards the structural features of philosophical racism that cannot be captured using the interpretive approach. In Chapter 2, I extend my negative argument to institutional approaches that think of philosophical racism as the result of the lack of diversity within the structures of academic philosophy, which works to create a hostile working environment for diverse scholars. I interpret these approaches as locating philosophical racism in the disciplinary narratives of philosophy, which help to fix the boundaries of philosophy around the European tradition, before showing how these approaches fail to grapple with the underlying conceptual dimensions of philosophical racism that make these narratives intelligible in the first place. The result is an impoverished conception of philosophical racism that fails to see how racist ideas can be reinscribed in practices that ostensibly attempt to make academic philosophy more inclusive.

Turning to my positive argument, in Chapter 3 I articulate the ideological conception of racism that underpins my conception of philosophical racism. Here, I employ ideology in the pejorative sense to stress that racism must be overcome to realise a more just world. Prominent contemporary approaches to theorising racism in ideological terms are *doxastic*: they suggest that ideologies are best understood in terms of collectively held distorted or false *beliefs* that affect how individual agents interact with their social world. Drawing on Du Bois' reflections on the experience of racism, specifically his idea of double consciousness and the feeling of being a problem, I demonstrate the limitations of doxastic accounts by showing how they cannot make sense of the generative aspects of ideology. That is, ideologies provide the beliefs, attitudes, concepts, and assumptions we use to think about the world around us; thus, ideologies inflect a series of sub-doxastic states, such as the unconscious background assumptions we take for granted when interacting with the world around us. Armed with this critique, I then ask whether we can think of Du Bois as a theorist of ideology, especially given the numerous points of overlap between his understanding of racism and contemporary 'practice-first' accounts that locate ideologies at the level of "public mental representations" that are not always consciously held.[422] By bringing Du Bois into conversation with proponents of 'practice-first' accounts, I

[422] Táíwò, "The Empire Has No Clothes," 307–8.

argue that we can glean an ideological conception of racism that is at once historicised, functionalist, and interpretivist – albeit with the caveat that this may be a Du Bois*ian* account of ideology rather than a faithful reconstruction of his intended view.

The upshot is an ideological conception of racism that can be used to theorise the problem of race in philosophy. In Chapter 4, I demonstrate how a racist ideology can come to influence academic scholarship at multiple different levels. To articulate this, I borrow Duncan Bell's distinction between a knowledge-practice, which encompasses both theoretical claims to valid knowledge and the various academic practices and processes of self-discipline that emerge out of a specific theory, and a knowledge-complex, which refers to the institutional structures and networks within which knowledge claims are articulated. Originally intended as a way of specifying the unit of analysis for the writing of disciplinary histories, I argue that this distinction could be usefully employed to understand how racism can not only inflect the theoretical contributions within philosophy but also come to embedded in the institutions of academic philosophy itself. To help illustrate the insights of my framework, I examined Du Bois' writings on white propaganda to show how an ideological conception of racism, paired with a distinction between knowledge-practices and knowledge-complexes, can help illuminate how historical scholarship on the Reconstruction era can be grounded in – and subsequently reinforce – a racist conception of human difference. Specifically, I examine how racist ideas come to be articulated as a valid claim of knowledge, resulting in a racist presupposition becoming a legitimate and credible starting point for academic inquiry. In his criticism of the Dunning School, I therefore read Du Bois as criticising how scholarly agreement on a set of racist foundational presumptions can reshape how later generations of scholars understand and conceptualise the question of race in American history, resulting in the transformation of prejudice into a disciplinary truism that historians simply 'know'.

This informs my analysis in Chapter 5, where I turn my focus to examining the Hellenistic origins thesis as an example of philosophical racism. In short, I argue that the Hellenistic origins thesis is both a product and a source of a racist ideology, which can be analysed in terms of its historicised, functionalist, and interpretivist dimensions. By retracing its history, I show that the Hellenistic origins thesis is best thought of as a historicised knowledge-practice that is rooted in eighteenth century racist debates on human difference such that its central claim about the provenance of philosophy cannot be shorn from the racist anthropological evidence used in its defence. This means that the Hellenistic origins thesis is not a mere claim

about when and where philosophy began; rather, it should be thought of as a set of assumptions, narratives, concepts, and frameworks about the nature and scope of philosophy that, in turn, are inextricably linked to a racist conception of human difference. Turning to its functionalist dimensions, I demonstrate that – as a historicised knowledge-practice – the Hellenistic origins thesis encompasses a series of narrative practices that seek to legitimate the boundaries of the philosophical at the edges of the European tradition. It is this that comes to be embedded in the knowledge-complexes of academic philosophy, thereby entrenching a particular way of understanding philosophy amongst the next generation of budding philosophers. This gestures towards the interpretivist dimensions of the Hellenistic origins thesis, where it is taken as being a foundational assumption that structures how scholars see and understand philosophy *itself*. Drawing on a variety of examples, I show how the racist assumptions of the Hellenistic origins thesis structures how scholars think about philosophy such that the philosophical capability and merit of non-white non-European theorists, texts, and traditions of thinking continue to be implicitly denied – even in a present that tries to be more inclusive.

The core insight of my thesis is therefore that there exists a series of unconsciously held foundational assumptions that work as a kind of interpretive gaze that shapes how philosophers understand the contours of their discipline. This dovetails with recent attempts to identify the structural dimensions to racism in the history of philosophy.[423] Yet, it also goes further by articulating a conceptual framework that can guide future researchers interested in identifying additional dimensions of philosophical racism. The upshot is therefore a way of thinking about philosophical racism that can be used to uncover additional examples of the way racist scholarship can continue to shape the assumptions we hold in the present. My other contribution is to stress the importance of unsettling and undermining the underlying interpretive gaze within philosophy, which structures the way scholars engage with the writings of non-white theorists from a range of philosophical traditions. As I argued in Chapter 5, that scholars come to read texts in, for instance, African philosophy as the anthropological beliefs of a specific community reflects an underlying inability to see non-white theorists as being able to make self-sufficient theoretical contributions to the discipline more generally. The task of future research is therefore to articulate how we may go about challenging the very way we come to see and understand philosophy itself. Doing so is not simply about reading more

[423] For some recent accounts that examine the structural dimensions of racism in philosophy, see Harfouch, *Another Mind-Body Problem*; Lu-Adler, *Kant, Race, and Racism*; Ramsauer, "Kant's Racism as a Philosophical Problem."

widely, though this may help.[424] Instead, we need to redescribe and reconceptualise the core assumptions of European philosophy by taking the categories and concepts of diverse intellectual traditions as making rational claims to valid knowledge – no matter how strange or implausible these concepts may seem *to us*.[425] This opens a point of collaboration between my project and the growing literature on 'worldmaking', which attempts to "transform the world through a transformation of our representational practices".[426] The challenge for future research to resolve is therefore how we can meaningfully transform our representational practices within philosophy, without either *merely redescribing* our existing views or *dismissing our attempted redescriptions* as too far-fetched and implausible.

[424] See e.g. Flikschuh, "The Idea of Philosophical Fieldwork."
[425] See e.g. Kalmanson, "If You Show Me Yours"; Jenco, "Histories of Thought and Comparative Political Theory."
[426] Srinivasan, "Genealogy, Epistemology and Worldmaking," 145.

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