

“WE HOLD THESE TRUTHS
TO BE SELF-EVIDENT...”



AN INTERDISCIPLINARY ANALYSIS OF THE
ROOTS OF RACISM AND SLAVERY IN AMERICA

KENNETH N. ADDISON

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Be Self-Evident . . .”**

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of the Roots of Racism
and Slavery in America**

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Dedicated to

My children Kenijean, Nolan, and Debbie, and
my grandchildren River, Wilkye, and Jessica.

“I am a link in the chain of men and women that will transmit to my
descendants the life I receive from my parents and that I do not own.”

(Africa proverb)

My parents Kendrick and Ella Edwina and my grandparents.

“I stand on the shoulders of my ancestors.” (African Proverb)

My sister Cheryl, “An Indomitable Spirit,”
and my beautiful and talented niece Celeste.

My dear departed friend Taalib-Din Mahdi, “The Spiritual Warrior.”

My dear departed friend Richard Larson, “A True Renaissance Man,” and
his beloved and artistically gifted son Kurt.

Mi cuate y amigo partido, Ilya Adler, “El Maestro y Poeta Latinos.”

My dear friend Georgie Rattan, an unapologetic advocate of social justice.

My homeboys Billy O, Aaron, Mousy, Shorty,
and the “brothers who ain’t here.”

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Preface

In 1857, Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court, Roger Taney, in the infamous Dred Scott case, asked and answered a simple, yet profound, question when rendering the court's opinion:

The question is simply this: Can a negro, whose ancestors were imported into this country, and sold as slaves, become a member of the political community formed and brought into existence by the Constitution of the United States, and as such become entitled to all the rights, and privileges, and immunities, guaranteed by that instrument to the citizen? . . .

We think they are not and . . . were not intended to be included, under the word "citizens" in the Constitution, and can therefore claim none of the rights and privileges which that instrument provides for and secures to citizens of the United States. On the contrary, they were at that time considered as a subordinate and inferior class of beings, who had been subjugated by the dominant race, and, whether emancipated or not, yet remained subject to their authority, and had no rights or privileges but such as those who held the power and Government might choose to grant them. [Dred Scott v. Sandford 60 U.S. (19 How.) 393 (1857)]

Some forty-six years later, in 1903, the great black intellectual W. E. B. Du Bois would ask another equally profound question, one that has been plaguing African-Americans since slavery was first legally sanctioned in the Bay Colony of Massachusetts in 1641: "Why did God make me an outcast and a stranger in mine own house?" African-Americans who first arrived in Jamestown in 1619 were subject to the status of indentured servitude, as were many European-Americans. Initially, it appeared that like their white counterparts they would be able to work free of their indentures, acquire land as

part of their freedom dues, and pursue the “American Dream.” In fact, Freedom and land ownership was realized by many African-Americans, giving hope to those still under indentures, until a terrible transformation in status reduced their lot from servant to that of slave. The purpose of this book is to explore the origins of race thinking and racism in America in order to provide some answers to Du Bois’ plaintive question. Parenthetically, it is interesting to note that in 1903, when Du Bois asked his question, the word “race” appeared in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, but “racism” did not, despite the fact African-Americans found themselves constantly ensnared in the tendrils of that yet-unnamed system of oppression. Most social scientists who have made a point of studying the phenomenon of racism trace its roots back to the eighteenth century and the first attempts of Western science to classify the human species by using race as a biologically based taxonomy. However, it is the opinion of many in this group that modern racism or “scientific racism” did not truly take hold until the nineteenth century with the advent of Darwin’s groundbreaking theory of evolution, a theory that was subsequently commandeered and distorted for imperialist political and economic gain. Yet, despite this opinion, it appears that the twisted vine of race thinking, which eventually bore the poisonous fruit of racism, is actually much older, finding its roots in the soil of Western antiquity.

In order to understand why racism would take hold in the United States, a nation that with its first collective breath declared, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,” one must go beyond America’s history and delve deeply into the religious, philosophical, social, cultural, economic, and political history of Western civilization. Racism in this nation must be subject to this sort of deep scrutiny if there is any hope that a national discourse on race will go beyond simplistic cliché and debates over whether or not “reverse racism” exists. Because it does not directly affect them, many whites argue that race no longer matters. However, for African-Americans who are forced to partake daily of the poisonous fruit of racism, such a statement merely underscores the lack of awareness among whites and the depth of white supremacy and privilege in this society.

The question posed by Du Bois in 1903 will not be answered nor will the problems of racism be resolved until a significant portion of the white population realizes the degree to which racism is woven into the very fabric of this nation and the degree to which they are wrapped in the privilege that racism affords. Without a shared national understanding of the true history and impact that race thinking, racism, and slavery have had on the social, political, economic, and cultural dynamics of this country, the reconciliation of differences between blacks and whites will not be possible.

[The] Dantesque journeys [of the transatlantic slave trade] were the ignoble origins of Western modernity and the criminal foundations of American democracy. They constituted the *night* side of the Age of Enlightenment, the reality left unlit by the torch of natural reason. African slavery sits at the center of the grand epoch of equality, liberty and fraternity, a center often concealed by modern myths of progress and liberation . . .

Like other indescribable evils of the recent past, the centuries-long slave trade forces us to wrestle with levels of unjustified anguish and unmerited pain that are difficult to fathom. Most of us would prefer to turn our heads and hearts from this ghastly past and dream of a better future. Yet the pernicious effects of New World slavery still linger in our perceptions and inform our sensibilities in regard to black people.

—Cornell West, 1999

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Introduction

Black people are the magical faces at the bottom of society's well. Even the poorest whites, those who must live their lives only a few levels above, gain their self-esteem by gazing down on us. Surely, they must know that their deliverance depends on letting down their ropes. Only by working together is escape possible. Over time, many reach out, but most simply watch, mesmerized into maintaining their unspoken commitment to keeping us where we are, at whatever cost to them or to us.

—Derrick Bell, *Faces at the Bottom of the Well*

A wellspring of liberty; a fountainhead of justice; a mighty river flowing ever forward, turning deserts of human despair into lush oases of hope, its sweet waters quenching the parched lips of all who thirst for freedom—such is the mythic narrative of America as drawn from the constructed memory of mainstream history. This epoch, this narrative, this constructed memory of the past is, for most Americans, like a tangible object, a thing that is as plain as the nose on their collective face. America's knowledge of its past is rooted deep in the soil of its popular culture and nourished, like George Washington's cherry tree, by enterprising textbook publishers and movie producers. More importantly, however, is the belief of most Americans that individualism and the acquisition of property—the ontological underpinnings of the United States Constitution—are the sole sources of liberty and the only vehicles for human progress. Tragically, this myth of America as wellspring of liberty reflects only the images of those fortunate enough to be buoyed and carried by the mainstream of its mighty current, and not by those poor dark souls caught in the undertow of its economic expedience. The eyes of the more fortunate have been blinded by the refracted light of America's presumed glory, a shimmering light that draws their attention from the faces at the bottom of the well.

What must foreign observers, especially those of color, think as they peer down this metaphorical well? Do they muse and wonder about America's unresolved moral dilemma? A myriad of questions must flow through their minds, their thoughts awash in the contradictions that are America. How did those faces come to be at the bottom of this well, a well that has sustained so many? Were they cast screaming down its long dark shaft, or did their own inept awkwardness cause them to stumble and fall? And why are they, after all of these years, still at the bottom of this well, this ghetto of anguish and despair, gazing upwards with dark twisted faces? Do the witnesses to this anguish and despair truly not see them? Can they not hear their constant moaning or the high-pitched cries of their children? What would happen if those subjugated by almost 400 years of oppression were allowed to gaze not upwards, but directly into the eyes of their self-appointed betters? Would their "superiors" gaze back, or would they be afraid to witness their own images in the dark eyes of those who dwell at the bottom of the well?

Despite its history of near-genocidal conquest, slavery, and its present-day inequities, America is still viewed by many in the world as a tower of freedom and equality. Perhaps this is due, in part, to the constant and redundant use of the word "liberty" in association with America: the Liberty Bell; the Statue of Liberty; Liberty Savings and Loan; Libertyville, Illinois; "Give me liberty or give me death;" and on and on. It is quite ironic that the Liberty Bell, that traditional symbol of American freedom, is cracked. This bell, with its motto "Proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof," best symbolizes the flawed moral code of the Founding Fathers. This bell, which was first called Liberty in an 1839 abolitionist pamphlet, rests silently in Independence Hall, unable to toll for the countless masses who died, victims of "Manifest Destiny" and forced bondage. If it were to toll for those poor souls, its imperfect union would shatter. Given this literal and metaphorical crack in the Liberty Bell, how can "freedom ring from every hill," as Dr. Martin Luther King eloquently dreamt aloud during the march on Washington? This moving speech, given within visual range of the Capital building, represents another paradox in that this structure was built, in part, by slaves. In *The Debt*, Randall Robinson points out the following little-known fact:

To erect . . . [this symbol of] American democracy, the United States government sent out a request for one hundred slaves . . . In exchange for the slaves' labor, the government agreed to pay their *owners* five dollars per month per slave. Slaves were not only made to labor on the Capital building but also to do much of the work in implementing [French architect] Pierre-Charles L'Enfant's grand design for the whole of the District of Columbia.¹

This cruel incongruity was lost on the original white inhabitants of Washington. Upon its founding, Washington had a total population of 14,103 persons comprised of 10,066 whites, 3,244 slaves, and 793 free blacks. For most of the white population of Washington, the use of slave labor to build the Capital was not ironic. Black inferiority and racial slavery represented the natural order of things; black freedom for whites constituted the true irony. According to Charles Johnson and Patricia Smith, “Washington, D.C., the showplace of American government, was home to one of the most notorious and lucrative slave markets in the country. Every black person in the vicinity of a slave market was in danger of being captured and sold into servitude.”² In fact, the most infamous slave pen was visible from the steps of the Capital building itself.

The ironies associated with liberty, arguably America’s most worn and cherished cliché, continue with the symbolism of the Statue of Liberty. She is, next to the flag, America’s most endearing and enduring symbol, invoking patriotic pride and national piety. With her torch held high “Enlightening the World,” symbolizing freedom, and illuminating hope, she stands 305 feet tall from foundation to her torch. In a sonnet penned in 1883 and inscribed at the base of “the New Colossus,” poet Emma Lazarus proclaims:

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame
 With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
 Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
 A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
 Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
 Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
 Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
 The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame,
 “Keep ancient lands, you storied pomp!” cries she
 With silent lips. “Give me your tired, your poor,
 Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
 The wretched refuse of your teeming shore,
 Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me;
 I lift my lamp beside the golden door.

As she faces east with deep, passive eyes gazing beyond the harbor’s mouth and across the Atlantic expanse towards the “old world” and its “ancient lands,” the morning sun illuminates her majestic face. From the teeming shores of this “new world,” observers witness the blazing aura of her silhouette glowing as she stands watch at the “golden door” of infinite possibilities. Lady Liberty has welcomed over 16 million immigrants to New

York Harbor and Ellis Island, the majority of whom share her European features and heritage. Many non-Europeans were denied entrance to the United States by the xenophobic immigration laws of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882.

During the 42nd Congress in 1866, debate over the maintenance of the “white person” prerequisite for citizenship raged in Congress. Anti-Asian sentiment was a central feature of this debate, as most clearly captured by the remarks of a Senator Cowan. During this debate, the senator, while considering the effects of allowing Asians to become naturalized citizens, mused out loud “whether this door shall now be thrown open to the Asiatic population.” Senator Cowan speculated on what this would mean for the West Coast of the United States. He then warned of “an end to republican government there, because it is very ascertained [i.e., established] that those people have no appreciation of that form of government; it seems to be obnoxious to their very nature; they seem to be incapable either of understanding or carrying it out.”³ The Chinese Exclusion Act remained in effect until 1943, denying Chinese access through that fabled “golden door” of infinite possibilities; meanwhile thousands of Europeans were being welcomed. With an excited, yet anxious face, one Greek immigrant, upon his ship’s arrival in 1919, recounts saying to himself as he viewed the Statue of Liberty, “Lady, you’re beautiful. You opened your arms, and you get all the foreigners here. Give me the chance to prove that I am worth it, to do something, to become someone in America.”⁴ While this immigrant stood at America’s “golden door” of infinite possibilities, there beyond that same portal already in the “promised land” were different faces, desperate faces, the faces of the captured and conquered peoples whose possibilities had long since been stolen by greedy colonialists and slave merchants. As Europeans flocked to their new world, “yearning to breathe free,” Native American Indians, forced to the brink of extinction and exiled in their own land, and former African slaves, cast aside like so much “refuse,” gasped in the toxic air of indifference and racism. Over a century has passed since the Statue of Liberty was inaugurated, yet the cruel contradiction between her symbolic meaning and the reality of racial discrimination continues to be associated with this icon.

However, the fundamental irony associated with Lady Liberty goes beyond the aforementioned contradiction; it lies at the wellspring of her conception, in the motives of the Frenchmen who created and donated her, and in the guise under which America accepted her. Historian James Loewen provides some interesting insight into the nature of monuments:

Every historic site tells two different stories about two different eras in the past. One is its manifest narrative—the event or person heralded in its text or artwork. The other is the story of its erection or preservation. The images on our

monuments and the language on our markers reflect the attitudes and ideas of the time when Americans put them up, often many years after the event. Americans have typically adjusted the visible past on the landscape to make what we remember conform to the needs of the time. To understand a marker or monument we must not only analyze what it says and how it looks but also when it was unveiled. To understand a historic site we need to know when its interpretation—what the guides show and tell—was established. Why was this story told then? What audience was it aimed at? How would the story differ if we were telling it today? . . . Too often our historic sites relate inaccurate and misleading history owing to the ideological demands of the time and the purpose of their erection or preservation.⁵

Who were these Frenchmen who created and donated Lady Liberty, and what were their motives? Did both the French benefactors and American beneficiaries share the symbolic meaning of this monument? Édouard de Laboulaye “was the creator of the Statue of Liberty and developed it into a public monument with the assistance of sculptor [Frédéric] Auguste Bartholdi.”⁶ Laboulaye was born into a noble French family in 1811 and eventually “became France’s leading Americanist following the death of Alexis de Tocqueville in 1857.”⁷ In his early intellectual life, Laboulaye was strongly influenced by the writings of four important liberal scholars: Alexis de Tocqueville, Benjamin Constant, Pierre Paul Royer-Collard, and Alexandre Vinet. These authors helped shape his overall political philosophy, but it was Tocqueville who sparked his interest in American democracy. With the Revolution of 1848 and the toppling of the liberal Orleanist monarchy of King Louis-Philippe, Laboulaye’s interest in the day-to-day political problems of France became more acute. However, it was the overthrow of the second Republic by the Napoleonic coup d’état of 1851 that fueled his interest in modern democratic institutions. “During this period Laboulaye came under the influence of three American writers: William Ellery Channing, Horace Mann, and Benjamin Franklin . . . [However it was] Channing’s views of slavery [that] had a profound effect on Laboulaye, and they prepared him for the role he was to play as an abolitionist and supporter of President Abraham Lincoln and the Union cause during the Civil War.”⁸ Inspired by Channing’s writings and allied with Count Agenor de Gasparin and other liberal intellectuals, Laboulaye would become a powerful voice for the abolition of slavery.⁹

Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi, the sculptor who eventually gave form to Laboulaye’s vision for the Statue of Liberty, was born in 1834 into a family of modest means headed by Jean-Carles and Charlotte Bartholdi. Two years after his birth, Auguste, his older brother, and mother were befallen by the tragic and premature death of father and husband, Jean-Carles. With his passing, the family moved to Paris, where Auguste would eventually begin studying painting and sculpture. As a sculptor, Bartholdi became very successful,

but it was his sculpture *Liberty Enlightening the World* that became his most celebrated work.

Bartholdi met Laboulaye in 1865 when “invited to a dinner party at Laboulaye’s estate at Glatigny, near Versailles. Bartholdi found himself somewhat out of his depth, as such distinguished liberal politicians and intellectuals as Count Charles de Remusat, Count Agenor de Gasparin, and Henri Martin surrounded him. It was then that Laboulaye first discussed the idea of giving a monument to the United States. . . .”¹⁰ Although Bartholdi was somewhat overwhelmed in such heady company, he still managed to impress Laboulaye who almost immediately contracted with him to do a personal sculpture and would later commission him to work on the Statue of Liberty.

Laboulaye began formulating his plan to build a monument to celebrate American independence and the ideals of liberty at this dinner. His desire to build and donate this monument was due, in part, to what he felt was “a genuine sympathetic bond” between France and the United States. However, for Laboulaye, the building of this monument as a celebration of American independence and Franco-American friendship was not the sole *raison d’être*, or reason for this monument’s existence. There was yet another reason, a reason tightly entwined in Laboulaye’s concept of liberty, a reason deeply rooted in his dedication to the abolition of slavery, a dedication that inspired him, along with Count Agenor de Gasparin and other French Liberals, to found *Comité française pour l’émancipation des esclaves*, France’s anti-slavery society. When the Civil War broke out in America, Laboulaye published several articles in *Le Journal des Débats*. In his first article, *La guerre civile aux États-Unis* (the Civil War of the United States), he wrote, “To intervene in this struggle on the side of slavery would be to deny our past. In America, as everywhere else, France can only be allied to liberty.” Barry Moreno, historian and librarian for the Statue of Liberty monument, makes the following connection between the Statue of Liberty and the abolition of slavery:

The Statue of Liberty is intimately connected to [the] social condition [of slavery] through its ties to the past, as well as to its political and philosophical symbolism. The creators of the monument were French liberals anxious to honor, and in a sense revive, ancient Rome’s goddess of liberty in the modern world. As the classical personification of freedom, Libertas was patroness not only to those seeking relief from slavery but also to those seeking to do away with tyrannical governments. The deity’s modern revivers were aware of her symbolic power as an aid in pushing forward their aims. In 1865, Édouard de Laboulaye organized the French Anti-Slavery Society and joined with ordinary citizens in presenting a commemorative medal to Mary Todd Lincoln for “abolishing slavery . . . and not veiling the Statue of Liberty.” Laboulaye’s abiding interest in American institutions and political life, as well as his determination to

promote democracy in his own country, led him to propose presenting the Statue of Liberty to America as a celebration of that nation's one hundred years of independence. To him, the result of the Civil War (abolition of slavery and preservation of the Union) were proof that liberty had found fertile soil in the United States.¹¹

The fact that the French had intended the Statue of Liberty to serve also as a memorial to the end of slavery has, as have the other aforementioned ironies, been lost to the selective memory of the American people. It is interesting that the overwhelming majority of the literature associated with this monument, especially that which was published during its restoration in the eighties, does not mention its connection to the abolition of slavery. This omission occurred despite the fact that "in New York City, Laboulaye was aided in his design by the anti-slavery Union League Club . . . [who also] . . . used their influence to smooth the way for the Statue of Liberty's acceptance."¹² It is naive on its face to assume that this omission was an oversight, especially since the "dedication speeches at the statue's inauguration in 1886 were eloquent in praising the newly unveiled goddess of liberty as a tribute to the Union victory and the abolition of slavery."¹³ During the inaugural ceremony, the French consul, Albert W. Lefaivre, was one of the speakers who made a clear reference to the defeat of the Confederacy and the abolition of slavery when he said the "momentous war which . . . ended in the emancipation of five millions of human brethren. This religious faith [in the goddess *Libertas*] was perfectly justified . . . and . . . it entrusted to Liberty the task of healing the wounds caused by the war."¹⁴

Tragically, Laboulaye and the other French liberals who worked so hard to realize the creation of this monument could not have known that the people whose emancipation they were celebrating would continue to be bound not by chains of slavery but by the racism and bigotry that justified their enslavement in the first place. In a paper on the purpose of monuments, Erica Meiners states, "Memorials or monuments are often created to 'teach' subsequent generations, and the dialogue and debates surrounding their construction and design often produce incredibly useful insights about how a generation or community desires to transmit (and teach) 'memory,' 'testimony,' 'history,' and 'affect.' Debates about memorials highlight larger anxieties about representation."¹⁵ Clearly, the historic and symbolic meaning that the French creators of this monument intended to transmit to the American populace fell prey to "the ideological demands of the times," as have the issues of black liberty and equality ever since the dawn of the republic. Perhaps the most obscure and cruelest irony associated with the symbol of liberty occurred on March 5, 1770, during and after what can arguably be called the flash point of the American Revolution—the Boston Massacre. This irony speaks to the

primary memorializing purpose of the Statue of Liberty—America’s independence from England—and is another example of the ideological demands of the time. During the evening of March 5, according to eyewitnesses to the Boston Massacre, a runaway slave named Crispus Attucks led a group of 20 or more men into a confrontation with British troops in the Customhouse Square. Attucks, like many other black residents of the Boston area, had been emboldened by the white colonists’ cries for liberty. During the ensuing mêlée, Attucks was shot and killed by a British private named Hugh Montgomery, making Crispus Attucks, according to the court of inquiry records, the first martyr of the American Revolution, a martyr in the cause of what was to become a struggle for white liberty and independence. “By a paradoxical act of poetic justice, it was this American—an oppressed American, born in slavery with, it is said, African and Indian genes—who carried the American standard in the prologue that laid the foundation of American freedom.”¹⁶ News of the massacre spread like wildfire through the colonies. However, it was an engraving of the event by Paul Revere that most inflamed the colonial passion for independence. Ironically, in Revere’s recreation of the massacre, he purposefully or inadvertently depicted Crispus Attucks as a white man.¹⁷ About six years later, although he continued to hold and traffic in slaves, Thomas Jefferson penned the following words: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” Patrick Henry, himself a slave owner, argued in his famous speech delivered in March of 1775, “Is life so dear or peace so sweet as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take, but as for me, give me liberty, or give me death!” As previously stated, since the dawn of the republic, issues of black liberty and equality have almost always fallen prey to “the ideological demands” of the broader American populace; witness the Supreme Court’s recent rulings on Civil Rights, Affirmative Action, and a myriad of anti-discrimination legislation.

Even Édouard de Laboulaye’s hero, the “great emancipator” Abraham Lincoln, did not share Laboulaye’s view of liberty and equality. Kenneth Stampp, in his work *The Era of Reconstruction*, states, “If it was Lincoln’s destiny to go down in history as the Great Emancipator, rarely has a man embraced his destiny with greater reluctance than he.”¹⁸ Being the greatest French scholar of American studies since Alexis de Tocqueville, one must wonder how much Laboulaye truly knew about his hero, Lincoln. One must wonder if he was privy to the transcripts of Abraham Lincoln’s senatorial debates with Stephen Douglas where Lincoln made the following references to blacks:

I will say then that I am not, nor ever have been, in favor of bringing about in any way the social and political equality of white and black races—that I am not, nor ever have been, in favor of making voters or jurors of Negroes, nor of qualifying them to hold office, nor to intermarry with white people; and I will say in addition to this that there is a physical difference between the white and black races which I believe will forever forbid the two races living together on terms of social and political equality. And in as much as they cannot so live, while they do remain together there must be the superior and inferior, and I as much as any other man am in favor of having the superior position assigned to the white race.¹⁹

This is not to say that Lincoln was not opposed to slavery, as he was once heard to say, “If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong.” However, his views of black people were racist and his solution for the “race problem” in the United States was to repatriate blacks to Africa. Early in his political life Lincoln stated, “My first impulse would be to free all slaves, and send them to Liberia, to their own native land. But a moment’s reflection would convince me, that whatever high hope (as I think there is) there may be in this, in the long run, its sudden execution would be impossible.”²⁰ Many may excuse this statement as being reflective of a youthful impulsivity; however, Lincoln repeated the same sentiments on August 14, 1862, when he “received [the] first group of blacks to confer with a United States president on a matter of public policy. [During this meeting Lincoln] urged blacks to emigrate to Africa or Central America, [causing him to be] . . . bitterly criticized by Northern blacks.”²¹ Given this reality, how could Laboulaye trust “that Liberty had found fertile soil in the United States?” Clearly, Laboulaye must have been overwhelmed by the eloquent rhetoric of America’s mythic narrative.

As stated earlier in the Loewen quote, “Too often our historic sites relate inaccurate and misleading history owing to the ideological demands of the time and the purpose of their erection.” What are these “ideological demands” that are so powerfully represented by the marble, granite, copper, and steel of America’s monuments? An ideology is defined as “the ideas and objectives that influence a whole group or national culture, shaping especially their political and economic procedures.”²² The “ideological demands” that inform the symbolic and textual narratives of America’s monuments are deeply rooted in the Founding Fathers’ conception of liberty. This was especially true of those influential and wealthy members of colonial Virginia’s planter class, who resented the British imposition of taxes, controls on imports and exports, and general intrusion into their business enterprises. Given their concerns, it would seem that free enterprise and profitability were, as they presently are, central to America’s “ideological demands” and to its conception of liberty.

Audrey Smedley, in her work *Race in North America*, describes America's "ideological demands" as follows:

In their confrontations with England, the plantation owners developed an ideology of republicanism to promote their cause, inspired by John Locke's view of liberty and society. Every man, they argued [with the exception of slaves], had the right to life, liberty, and property. Liberty was construed generally as freedom from government interference in private lives. Property was construed . . . as an inalienable right equivalent in profundity to life itself. Government should exist, the colonists insisted, only to protect people in the exercise of their proprietary rights and from foreign invasions.²³

Of course, one of the "proprietary rights" being referred to here is slavery, which was "the mainspring" that drove the machinery of commerce. One would be hard pressed to find a single colonial or, for that matter, antebellum business enterprise that was not affected in some measure in its profitability by slavery. The presidency for forty-eight of the first seventy-six years of the republic, from 1789 to 1865, was controlled by the South. Of the sixteen presidents from Washington to Lincoln, nine were from the South and all but three were from Virginia, the majority of whom were slave owners. For the majority of those first seventy-six years, the Supreme Court, Congress, and the Electoral College were also dominated by the South. Leonard Richards, in his work *The Slave Power: The Free North and Southern Domination*, provides a clear example of this dominance from the Congressional record of the 35th congress.

On a warm March day in 1858, Senator James Henry Hammond of South Carolina lambasted a speech given the day before by William Seward of New York on the admission of Kansas as a slave state. No two men were farther apart on the issue before the Senate. To Seward, the South Carolinian was a hot-headed, unreasonable, proslavery firebrand. To Hammond, the New Yorker was a "Black Republican." Yet on one matter, the two old war-horses agreed. Neither had any doubt—none whatsoever—who ran the country. The New Yorker lamented the "fact." The South Carolinian was proud of it. Both agreed it was "the slaveholders of the South."²⁴

This fact was preordained by the three-fifths clause of the Constitution, which allowed southern slaveholders to claim three-fifths of their slave population for the sake of representation in Congress and the Electoral College. One cannot help but be struck by the incongruence between Laboulaye's view of liberty and that of the Founding Fathers and the stewards of America's fledgling republic. The true "manifest narrative" of the Statue of Liberty, the story of its erection, and the meaning of liberty for the monument's creators,

by and large remain hidden from the general American populace, as have most of the narratives associated with slavery and racism.

There are many who believe that the legacy of racial slavery and the American dilemma of racism can never be resolved. However, if one is to believe Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., then “the truth shall set us free.” Whose truth is the question that needs to be explored. As Albert Cleage states, “Truth is that which serves the interests of a people. Two groups of people locked in combat cannot be expected to have the same truth.” The battle between blacks and whites is, in part, a battle over the “manifest narrative” of America; on one hand there is the myth of American liberty and equality and on the other is the reality of racism and discrimination. James Loewen makes the following assertion about America’s official memory:

Americans like to remember only the positive things, and communities like to publicize the great things that happened in them. One result is . . . racism. People who put up markers and monuments and preserve historic houses are usually pillars of the white community . . . Americans still live and work in a landscape of white supremacy . . . Whites always wind up in positions of power and action while people of color are passive on the bottom.²⁵

Truth, to a large extent, is governed by perception, and often perceptions are not shared because they are based on the direct or indirect experience and memory of individuals and groups. It is the disparity in the experience of being American that differentiates black from white in the United States. This disparity in experience is rooted in the political and economic inequality caused by racism that gave and continues to give whites power over blacks, a power that allows whites to cast themselves in the light of historic significance while casting blacks in the shadows.

The mythic narrative of America is drawn from the constructed memory of those deemed the most powerful and significant. For example, if one were to read the correspondence between John Adams and his friend Benjamin Rush, this process of constructed memory that provides history with its source narratives would be obvious. In 1807, at the age of 62, John Adams, in a letter to his friend Benjamin Rush, looks back over the course of America’s brief history and engages in some youthful recollections. He writes, “There is nothing . . . more ancient in my memory than the observation that arts, sciences, and empire had always traveled westward. And in conversation it was always added since I was a child that their next leap would be over the Atlantic into America.” Note how Adams’ childhood experience colored his view of the new republic. He had a strong need to construct a memory of national grandeur and nobility. An even clearer example of Adams’ need to create a grand image of himself and the nation is further revealed in subsequent

letters to Rush. At a point in one of his letters, Adams, with much pathos in his tone, asked Rush the seemingly rhetorical question: “How is it that I, poor ignorant I, must stand before Posterity as differing from all the other great Men of the Age?” Here Adams clearly hopes that he is remembered favorably, despite the attacks on his character by his old enemy Alexander Hamilton. Later, in a series of humorous exchanges centered on their experiences building a new republic, Adams and Rush reached some quite interesting conclusions about what the history books should or should not convey about the first three and a half decades of the republic. Again, the most salient feature of Adams’ correspondence is how it highlights the role of constructed memory in history. Joseph Ellis, in his work the *Founding Brothers*, provides cogent insight in the psychological subtext and collusive elements of the correspondence between Adams and Rush.

The insight [of their correspondence] was precocious, anticipating as it did the distinction between history as experienced and history as remembered, most famously depicted in Leo Tolstoy’s *War and Peace*. (The core insight—that all seamless historical narratives are later-day constructions—lies at the center of all postmodern critiques of traditional historical explanations.) Under Rush’s prodding influence and in response to his dreamy inspirations, Adams realized that the act of transforming the American Revolution into history placed a premium on selecting events and heroes that fit neatly into a dramatic formula, thereby distorting the more tangled and incoherent experience that participants actually making the history felt at the time. Jefferson’s drafting of the Declaration of Independence was a perfect example of such dramatic distortion. The Revolution in this romantic rendering because one magical moment of inspiration, leading inexorably to the foregone conclusion of American Independence.”²⁶

In order to more firmly establish the role of constructed memory in history and the strategic choice of narratives by historians, it is useful to juxtapose Adams’ recollections of the colonial experience with those of Olaudah Equiano, an ex-slave whose memoirs were published in 1789. Equiano, the son of Igbo nobility in Benin, was captured at the age of eleven, along with his sister, by a group of raiders from a warring nation and sold into bondage. In his work entitled *The Interesting Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, the African*, Equiano’s recollections go all the way back to his childhood capture.

The first object which saluted my eyes when I arrived at the coast was the sea, and a slave ship, which was then riding at anchor, and waiting for its cargo. These filled me with astonishment, which was soon converted into terror, which

I am yet at a loss to describe, and much more the then feeling of my mind when I was carried on board. I was immediately handled and tossed up to see if I were sound by some of the crew; and I was now persuaded that I had got into a world of bad spirits, and that they were going to kill me. Their complexions too, differing so much from ours, their long hair, and the language they spoke, which was very different from any I had ever heard, united to confirm me in the belief...When I looked round the ship too, and saw a large furnace or copper boiling and a multitude of black people of every description chained together, every one of their countenances expressing dejection and sorrow, I no longer doubted my fate; and, quite overpowered with horror and anguish, I fell motionless on the deck and fainted. When I recovered a little, I found some black people about me, who I believed were some of those who brought me on board . . . I asked them if we were not to be eaten by those white men with horrible looks, red faces, and loose hair.²⁷

Later in his narrative, he recalls being a young slave attempting to comprehend the cruelty of his master.

Mr. D. told me he once cut off a negro-man's leg for running away. I asked him if the man had died in the operation? How he, as a Christian, could answer for the horrid act before God? And he told me, answering was a thing of another world; what he thought and did were policy . . . He then said his scheme had the desired effect—it cured that man and some others of running away.²⁸

As a slave, Equiano later served several British naval officers and traveled extensively. Eventually, he was able to buy his freedom from his master, a sympathetic Quaker merchant in Philadelphia, becoming a free man on July 11, 1776. He continued to travel and eventually settled in Britain, where he married an English woman. In his latter years Equiano, like Adams, wrote his memoirs, reflecting on his experience in America. Unlike Adams, however, Equiano was not looking downward at his own heroic image reflected in the wellspring of American liberty, but instead he was gazing up from the oppressive depths of slavery and despair at images of his past tormenters, as though looking back unnoticed through a one-way mirror. His thoughts were these:

Is not the slave trade entirely at war with the heart of man? And surely that which is begun by breaking down the barriers of virtue, involves in its continuance destruction to every principle, and buries all sentiments in ruin! When you make men slaves, you . . . compel them to live with you in a state of war.²⁹

“We hold these truths to be self-evident . . .” is the primary title of this work, a phrase that even the most casual student of American history can

readily identify, because the full statement is the most recognized portion of the Declaration of Independence:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.

The full text of this historic statement is not used in this work's title because the truth of Olaudah Equiano and the countless slaves who were denied their life, their liberty, and their happiness in the building of this nation was not considered by the Founding Fathers when this document was penned. Clearly, the truth that Thomas Jefferson and the Founding Fathers had declared to be self-evident was not. When something is considered self-evident, that thing carries its "evidence or proof in itself, requiring no proof of its truth." However, for African-Americans the truth of black equality was something that was not self-evident. It was something that they would have to spend their entire history in America trying to prove, a struggle that pitted them against centuries of pseudo-scientific racism, and one that continues today in works such as the *Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life*.

The constructed memories, the canon, the official mainstream narrative that constitutes American history is colored and distorted by race. Classification by race was, and largely still is, the standard by which status in America is determined. "Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century scientific classifications were burdened by the heavy weight of ethnocentrism, or cultural chauvinism, and subjective judgments on the physical features of non-Europeans."³⁰ Tragically, much of the African-American narrative is one of burden, the physical and emotional burden of that racist system of classification. If history represents the constructed memories of its participants at a certain time in space, and if the reconstruction of that history represents the contextual realities of historians at a later time in space, of what use can this subjective exercise in speculation be? One positive societal end that a countervailing exercise in historiography can serve is to provide a post factum dialogue between the diverse narratives of the past to provide contemporary understanding of past and present conflicts between blacks and whites in America.

This book is devoted, in part, to the previously stated end of a post factum dialogue between the diverse narratives of European-Americans and African-Americans; but more specifically, its purpose is to provide some answer to three broad questions:

1. What are the factors that predisposed Western civilization to develop and carry out a 424-year reign of racial slavery that began in 1441 with the

- Portuguese and reached its zenith in the southern plantation system of the United States?
2. How and why did modern racism develop as a system of social oppression and economic exploitation?
 3. What effect has racial slavery and racism had on African-Americans?

Before pursuing the answers to these questions, it is important to address the inference that some may draw from the very asking of these questions. Just because these questions are being raised, it does not imply a naive belief that ethnocentrism, hegemony, conquest, exploitation, and slavery are the exclusive province of Western civilization. These assaults on human dignity and freedom know no cultural or temporal boundaries and continue even into the present day. However, what drives these questions is the glaring contradiction between the Western rhetoric of liberty—with its attending platitudes and self-deception—and the ongoing reality of racial oppression. No civilization has prided itself more on its ethical reasoning, moral principles, respect for human life, and level of personal freedom. Given this hubris, how could slavery be justified and racism continue to flourish in the hallowed soil that nourishes the roots of America's self-proclaimed liberty? Where do these answers lie? Randall Robinson, in his book on reparations entitled *The Debt*, writes:

At the dawn of the twenty-first century African-Americans lag [behind] the American mainstream in virtually every area of statistical measure. Neither blacks nor whites know accurately why. The answer can be found only in the distant past, a past . . . deliberately obscured . . .³¹

Two caveats must be established before continuing with this discussion. There have been and will continue to be many references made in this work to “great” historical figures. This fact is not meant to imply that there is a simple cause and effect relationship between these figures and the course of history. Nor is this fact meant to imply that these figures stand alone, morally and intellectually, as creations of their own will. They are in every way products of their social, historic, and cultural context. People are often too quick to attribute history to “great” men and women, imposing their conscious will on the course of historical events. The English philosopher of the Idealist Movement, Thomas Carlyle, expressed one of the clearest examples of this view of history. In his 1840 series of lectures on the role of heroic figures in history, he asserted that the “Universal History of what man has accomplished in the world is at bottom the History of the Great Men who have worked here.”³² Carlyle goes on to contend that “the life-breath of all society [is no more than] an effluence of Hero-worship, submissive admiration for the truly great. Society is founded on Hero-worship.”³³

Arguably, a more realistic view of history might be that it is an abstract tapestry woven from countless random threads by an ancient artisan known as Inadvertence under the direction of his goddess, Fate. It is a cognitive imperative that human beings have order and see purpose in events and the things around them. Hence, people see butterflies and castles in inkblots. History is like a Rorschach test for the observer. Some people see castles that serve as testimonies to the greatness of their civilization and seek to canonize those they believe to be the patrons and architects of this grandeur; others viewing the same inkblots may witness these castles but only see the toil of their ancestors as they slaved to erect monuments to the vanity of their oppressors. Unbeknownst to both observers is the simple fact that Fate and her loyal servant Inadvertence are the puppet masters of history.

Having said this, however, it is difficult for both dominant and subordinate groups to accept that inadvertence and fate have determined their historical circumstance and hierarchical relationship. Acceptance of such a reality is particularly difficult for many whites and blacks, given how European-American historiography has presented their past as a linear sequence of problems encountered and resolved by “great men.” Implicit in such a supposition is a belief that humans have a certain degree of rational control over the myriad events that determine history. Given this supposition, racial slavery and the continuation of racism would have to be a conscious plan. Such a belief seems to have led many blacks to believe that their subordination reflects the “natural malevolence” of whites, while there are whites who believe their dominance reflected a “natural superiority.” The implicit, yet often unconscious, Eurocentric arrogance of a large number of western historians appears to predispose them to the type of historiography that presents their past as a glorious path of ever-ascending progression towards perfection and world pre-eminence. In fairness, Norm Davies is one of a growing number of exceptions to this rule, as is evidenced in the following comments from his book *Europe: A History*, where he quite astutely summarizes the problem.

European history-writing cannot be accused of Eurocentrism simply for focusing its attention on European affairs, that is, for keeping to the subject. Eurocentrism is a matter of attitude, not content. It refers to the traditional tendency of European authors to regard their civilization as superior and self-contained, and to neglect the need for taking non-European viewpoints into consideration. Nor is it surprising or regrettable to find that European history has mainly been written by Europeans and for Europeans. Everybody feels the urge to discover their roots. Unfortunately, European historians have frequently approached their subject as Narcissus approached the pool, looking only for a reflection of his own beauty. Guizot has had many imitators since he identified European civilization with the wishes of the almighty. “European civilization has entered . . .

into the eternal truth, into the plan of Providence,” he reflected. “It progresses according to the intentions of God.” [*The History of Civilization in Europe*] For him, and for many like him, Europe was the Promised Land and Europeans the chosen people.³⁴

The United States, as the heir apparent to Western civilization, views itself as being comprised of the fairest and most just people in the history of the world, the careful caretakers of democracy, the universal oracles of freedom and equality. It is this overblown self-image, an image not without some merit, that does not allow white America as an aggregate to address the legacy of racial slavery and racism. In order for the mainstream of America, this self-proclaimed wellspring of liberty, to flow pure and free, the toxic hypocrisy of racism and its attending injustice must be eliminated. However, to accomplish this, America must accept collective responsibility for racial slavery and racism, acknowledge the role that slavery played in establishing its present position of world dominance, make some sort of publicly memorialized atonement, and resolve the injustices of racism. This task is a difficult one because the source of the aforementioned hypocrisy runs deep in the psyche of mainstream white America, a population that at once enjoys the ill-gotten fruits of a history of racial injustice, while wrapping itself in the flag of freedom, justice, and equality for all. Norman Davies, in his aforementioned work, summarizes the historical position in which the United States finds itself.

... only in the USA do the true well-springs of “Western civilization” still flow
... the USA is the sole heir of European imperialism, and has inherited many of its attitudes. It may not be an empire of the old sort, but it has been left with “the white man’s burden.” Like imperial Europe before it, the USA struggles to police the world, whilst battling the ethnic and racial conflicts within its own borders. Like Europe today, it is in urgent need of a unifying mystique to outreach the dwindling attractions of mere democracy and consumerism. Unlike Europe, it has not known the lash of war on its own face within living memory.³⁵

Tragically, September 11, 2002, presents a horrific postscript to Davies’ statement that the United States “has not known the lash of war on its own face within living memory” with the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon by vengeful Islamic extremists. Beyond the sheer revulsion over these acts expressed by Americans is a general bewilderment captured by one simple question on the lips of so many: “Why do they hate us? We stand for freedom, justice, and equality?” In an attempt to answer this question, many Americans simply concluded that they covet America’s freedom. Such a conclusion reflects the same ignorance of history that plagues America’s analysis of the history of racism in America. This is not to justify the terrorist acts

of September 11; but to not consider the effects of racism, colonialism, and geopolitical hegemony on middle-eastern relations is pure folly. Henry Louis Gates affirms this conclusion in *Loose Canons: Notes on the Cultural Wars*, when he argues the following:

Ours is a late-twentieth-century world profoundly fissured by nationality, ethnicity, race, class, and gender. And the only way to transcend those divisions—to forge, for once, a civic culture that respects both differences and commonalities—is through education that seeks to comprehend the diversity of human culture. Beyond the hype and high-flown rhetoric is a pretty homely truth: There is no tolerance without respect—and no respect without knowledge. Any human being sufficiently curious and motivated can fully possess another culture, no matter how “alien” it may appear to be.³⁶

This text is divided into two parts, each of which is introduced by a narrative that serves as a conceptual frame for the subsumed chapters. Part One of this text, entitled “The Architecture of Hegemony: Western Ascension, Race, and World Dominance,” focuses on those social, cultural, economic, political, philosophical, and religious elements of Western civilization beginning with the Greeks, who gave rise to their dominance in the world and the role of racism in that dominance. The chapters subsumed in Part One of the text assert that colonialism, racism, and racial slavery were the result of an unintended, yet tragic, confluence of the previously mentioned elements. For, as Audrey Smedley asserts in her work, *Race in North America*, the concept of “race is seen as a part of the natural order of things, and the existence of races is believed to have been confirmed as part of nature by [Western] science.”³⁷ She further elaborates on this point, contending, “Europe evolved its own version of race ideologies, particularly during the nineteenth century . . . which in turn deeply affected race ideology in the United States. Eventually, components of the Anglo-American form of race ideology spread around the world, complicating and transforming ethnic conflicts.”³⁸ This ideology of race, which began as a taxonomic exercise in the classification of the human species, gradually evolved into a secular rationale for the Christians of Europe’s burgeoning entrepreneurial elite to embark on their hegemonic enterprises of colonialism and slavery, and continues as a pretext that justifies European-American domination today. Race thinking has become ubiquitous in the United States, coloring almost every aspect of life, subtly insinuating itself into the daily discourse of America, creating a coded lexicon of race speak, a lexicon that discounts and marginalizes black concerns over issues of equity and respect as “playing the race card,” “not taking responsibility,” or “dwelling in the past.”

This segment of the text also traces race as a construct from its eighteenth-century Western roots as a pseudo-scientific system of human classification through its eugenics phase of the early-twentieth century to America's present-day debate over its existence and significance. American biological determinist and advocate of Mendelism, David B. Davenport, in 1930 provided one of the clearest articulations of the eugenics view of race when he said:

Not only traits, like eye color, skin color, body build and such characteristics as stature, color and form of hair, proportions of facial features and many others are inherited in race-crosses but also mental traits. This is a matter which is often denied, but the application of methods of mental measuring seems to have produced indubitable proof that the general and specific mental capacities have a basis and vary in the different races of mankind. Thus it has been shown, by standard mental tests, that the Negro adolescent gained lower scores than white adolescents, and this when the test is made quite independent of special training or language differences and also when the children tested have a similar amount of schooling.³⁹

The eugenics argument put forth in the thirties by Davenport continues to serve as the mortar holding the cornerstone of race in place as a foundational element of American hierarchy and privilege. No place is this more evident than in Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray's controversial 1994 best-seller *The Bell Curve*. In their work, the portion of the text that focused on African-Americans is based on the assumption that race is a valid biological construct that can be used to differentiate and classify human beings in a hierarchical fashion according to intelligences. They further assume that "IQ tests are not demonstrably biased against social, economic, ethnic, or racial groups . . . [and that] . . . cognitive ability is substantially heritable, apparently no less than 40 percent and no more than 80 percent." Based on this assumption, they contend that "the black mean [IQ score] . . . commonly given as 85, the white mean as 100, and the standard deviation as 15"⁴⁰ is due to racial differences. Herrnstein and Murray conclude by both inference and assertion that the 23.6 percent of the total black population that is subsisting below the poverty line is the result of racial inferiority. Herrnstein couched the logic in the following syllogism:

- If differences in mental abilities are inherited, and
- If success requires those abilities, and
- If earning and prestige depend on success,
- Then social standing (which reflects earnings and prestige) will be based to some extent on inherited differences among people.⁴¹

Particular attention in this segment is also paid to the degenerative process that transformed race as a construct into the modern system of oppressive categorization and exploitation known as racism. Key to this analysis is the exploration of the worldview and system of knowing that serves as the underpinnings of modern hierarchical racial classification. These underpinnings date back to the classical era of the Greeks, continuing forward into modernity and the United States. Although the roots of racism can be traced to the distant past, it is important to realize that the eminent anthropologist Ruth Benedict was correct when she stated:

Racism is a creation of our time. It is a new way of separating the sheep from the goats. The old parable in the New Testament separated mankind as individuals: on the one hand those who had done good, and on the other those who had done evil. The new way divides them by hereditary bodily characteristics—shape of head, skin color, nose form, hair texture, color of eyes—and those who have certain hallmarks are known by these signs to be weaklings and incapable of civilization, and those with the opposite are the hope of the world. Racism is the new Calvinism, which asserts that one group has the stigmata of superiority and the other has those of inferiority . . . For the individual, therefore, racism means that damnation or salvation in this world is determined at conception; an individual's good life cannot tip the balance in his favor and he cannot live a bad life if his physical type is the right sort. By virtue of birth alone each member of the "race" is high caste and rightly claims his place in the sun at the expense of men of other "races."⁴²

Central to this discussion is the etiology of race and racism and the definitions of these terms. This segment of the text closes with an analysis of the social, cultural, political, and economic effects of racism on African-Americans.

Part Two of this text, entitled "A Pyramid of Privilege: The Structure of American Inequality," and its subordinate chapters serve as a metaphor for America's social, economic, and political structure. Like the pharaonic court that built the Great Pyramid of Giza, many of this country's early elite, with the sanction of the Constitution, employed slave labor to construct America's socioeconomic pyramid of privilege. However, most American public school texts and public discourse present slavery as a moral lapse on the part of a few southerners, when in fact slavery was critical to the development of the United States as a preeminent world economic power. Although approximately only seven percent of the southern white population owned slaves, the economic byproducts of slavery floated all boats in both the North and South. Without slavery, it can be argued with much assuredness that America might not have survived as a republic, and if it did, it would surely not rank among the top economic powers of the modern world. Nobel Laureate economist

Robert William Fogel, in his comprehensive book on slavery entitled *Without Consent or Contract: The Rise and Fall of American Slavery*, states that “[i]f we treat the North and South as separate nations and rank them among the countries of the world, the South would stand as the fourth most prosperous nation of the world in 1860. The South was more prosperous than France, Germany, Denmark, or any of the countries of Europe, except England.”⁴³ In addition, the South’s prosperity also benefited the North through the “South’s large purchases of manufactured goods from the North”⁴⁴ The availability of inexpensive slave-produced cotton also sparked the development of the textile industry, which led and to a great extent fueled the Industrial Revolution in the North. Fogel affirms this assertion in the following statement:

The American lunge toward industrialization began during the second decade of the nineteenth century. As late as 1810, the bulk of the cotton and woolen products were manufactured in households rather than in factories. During the next several decades hundreds of relatively large-scale cotton textile mills were constructed in the Northeast, with Massachusetts leading the way These large, and by the standards of the time highly mechanized, factories symbolized the North’s status as a leader of the Industrial Revolution.⁴⁵

A central assertion of this text is that the role of slavery in shaping American society must be confronted by the entire populace, because “the struggle over slavery affected all aspects of politics, not only in America but around the world, producing slogans, ideologies, policies, and alignments that are still active and that deeply influence the politics of our age.”⁴⁶ Racism was consciously and unconsciously developed as the psychosocial and economic justification for slavery, a sort of ideological steward of that most “peculiar institution” of slavery, and although slavery ended over 143 years ago, racism still continues its stewardship by managing the day-to-day lives of African-Americans. Most Americans view slavery as a moral stain on the Constitution that began to fade as slavery failed to prove economically viable, a stain that was ultimately eliminated by the righteousness of Abraham Lincoln and the moral awakening of the Northern populace. However, the facts belie the myth of this narrative; slavery was not a stain on the Constitution, an inadvertent soiling of this hallowed document, it was consciously written into its text, and it did not fade due to its economic inefficiency. It was the expansion of the political battle for dominance that had begun in Colonial America, between the southern aristocrats and northern elite, culminating in the Civil War that ended slavery. This is not to say that the abolitionists did not play a significant role, but they did not represent the will of the general American populace. “Political forces, not economic ones, were the overriding factors in the destruction of slavery. If the foes of slavery had waited for economic forces to do their work for them, America might still be a slave society and democracy

as we know it, might have been a subject only for history books . . . [in short, a speculative exercise].”⁴⁷

Like the Hebrew slaves of the Old Testament, having been exploited in the building of the pyramids and then freed from bondage by “divine intervention,” only to wander the desert seeking the Promised Land, so, too, have the descendants of African slaves been left to wander the oppressive desert of American racism. After over 224 years of bondage, the “divine intervention” of a ruinous Civil War freed African slaves to wander in a land that despised them, searching for the social, political, and economical Promised Land spoken of so eloquently in America’s hallowed foundational documents—the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. African-Americans have resided in North America for 390 years, yet as of the 2002 U.S. Census, the percentage of the total black population subsisting below the poverty line is 24.1 percent, up from 22.7 in 2001, as opposed to the white population with only 8 percent of its population below poverty.⁴⁸ The failure of this nation to live up to its credo when translated into dollars and cents is as clear, metaphorically speaking, as the crack in the Liberty Bell. If one were to compare the overall assets or wealth of black and white American, one would find that the black population has accrued only 10¢ to every \$1.00 accrued by the white population. Looking more closely at this dollars and cents comparison, one would find that middle class blacks have been able to accrue only 23¢ to every \$1.00 acquired by middle class whites, with wealthy blacks not faring much better, having only accumulated 33¢ to every \$1.00 of their wealthier white counterparts.⁴⁹

This entire work concludes with a chapter entitled “Black Observations from the Shadow of the Pyramid.” This chapter presents some reflections from an Africa-American perspective on the contemporary state of race relations in America, its effects on black people, and the unresolved social, political, and economic issues related to race that still confront this country. The purpose of this chapter is to reorient the reader’s eyes from the historical past described in the first portion of this text to the contemporary landscape of America and on toward the horizon with its future issues of freedom, social justice, and racial equality. It would, of course, be extremely presumptuous to assume that this chapter can do anything more than attempt to supply a different and hopefully clearer framework of analysis for the rather muddled issues of race, racism, and social inequality in America.

NOTES

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7. Moreno, *The Statue of Liberty*, 134.
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Part One

**THE ARCHITECTURE
OF HEGEMONY:
WESTERN ASCENSION, RACE,
AND WORLD DOMINANCE**

The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter nose than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much. What redeems it is the idea only. An idea at the back of it; not a sentimental pretense but an idea; and an unselfish belief in the idea—something you can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to

Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*

For the West, the idea to which Conrad so famously refers is empire, a notion so compelling to the Western mind as to capture and bind its imagination to the grandeur of the thing, a cathedral that dominates the pedestrian architecture of those mortals of lesser imagination and servile aspiration. For the West, empire represented a temple within which the new religion of capitalism could flourish. Empire stood as a basilica built to Europe's new deity, the god of dynamic expanding capital and profit, and to its fallen angel, greed. It was profit, the excess of receipts over expenditures, the acquisition of monetary surplus, which would allow the bourgeoisie to accumulate wealth and enable Europe to claw its way out of the abyss that was *Medium Aevum* (the Middle Age). Ultimately, it was this surplus, this wealth that would provide Europe with the necessary resources to fend off and garner respect from its more powerful rivals and former oppressors: the Huns, Magyars, Mongols, and Moors.

During this period, a large portion of the world's population, both European and non-European, "tended to take the existence of empire for granted. . . . Western European sea borne empires coexisted . . . with the great land-based empires of the East. There were the Chinese, Russian, and Ottoman

empires; and there was the Safavid empire in Persia, and the Mughal empire in India: all of which in 1600 were infinitely more formidable powers than England and its adjacent countries, and all of which continued to expand thereafter for different lengths of time, and with different rates of success.”¹ Despite this fact, however, the hegemonic attitude of Europeans was quite pronounced, as reflected by people like Richard Hakluyt, the famous British historian and geographer, who declared in 1587:

Reveal to us the courts of China and the unknown straits which still lie hid: throw back the portals which have been closed since the world’s beginning at the dawn of time. There yet remain for you new lands, ample realms, unknown peoples; they wait yet, I say, to be discovered and subdued, quickly and easily, under the happy auspices of your arms and enterprise, and the scepter of our most serene Elizabeth.²

For the nations of Europe, the building of their various empires took on the zeal of a new crusade that was, in a psychological sense, an unfinished campaign, but one with a new prize as its goal. No longer was this struggle all about the expansion of Christendom, even though elements of the old religious quest still remained; the struggle was now about political, economic, and psychological domination. In many ways, the struggle was all about the expansion of the Western ego.

Empires had risen and fallen in the past, but no society had even approached the European degree of control over the whole world. By the end of the 1800s, Western power had defeated virtually every other contestant on the field of battle, even the Chinese Empire, although they held back from formal annexation of China, and a scattering of other territories.³

The source of much of this power came through the barrel of the gun; in fact, the history of Western empire, to a large extent, is the history of the gun. In *The World and the West: The European Challenge and the Overseas Response in the Age of Empire*, P.D. Curtain writes:

About the middle of the 1800s, a weapons gap between European and non-European armies began to appear, and this advantage gave the Europeans the military lead that lasted through the age of imperialism. . . . [T]he standard weapon for most European armies was the flintlock muzzle-loader with a smooth bore, first introduced during the 1690s. A soldier rammed powder and ball down the barrel and fired with flint and steel through a touchhole. These guns were so much more reliable than previous firearms that they allowed infantrymen to substitute the bayonet for the variety of pikes, lances, and swords they had previously carried. Though a good infantryman could load and fire a musket only

about once a minute, disciplined infantrymen firing by ranks could maintain a steady fire.⁴

Those civilizations not possessing the gun fell like spring wheat under a sharp-edged sickle. Ultimately, for nations such as England, the “possession of the Empire buttressed the self-esteem of the ruling class at a time when political and economic crises were beginning to sap its morale. The fact that Britain (and a handful of other largely white nations) now ruled the globe appears to confirm a sense of inherent superiority.”⁵

It was Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, arguably the most influential Western philosopher of the nineteenth century, who gave voice to the rapidly expanding ego of the West, codifying its worldview in a grand, romantic narrative that bridged the chasm between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As a child of the Romantic Age, Hegel had an early fascination with mysticism. This fascination later developed into a belief in a *Göttlicher Ordnung* or *Grund* (Divine Order or Reason), from which came his sense that God, or the “Spirit,” to use his term, had taken form in history.⁶ Within Hegel’s philosophical scheme, the political state represented the highest level of perfection attained by the Spirit, or Divine Idea, as it moved through time and space in the form of history. “Hegel held that the national bourgeois states of nineteenth-century Europe in general and the Prussian state in particular had arrived near the last stage of the unfolding of the Divine Idea . . .”⁷ Hegel was not unique in this belief, for such a belief had been emerging for well over a century. It was Hegel who merely gave a more nuanced and complex voice to this belief. As a result, the secular national bourgeois states of Europe became imbued by Hegel with a sacred purpose, a purpose that challenged the traditional religious order and elevated Europeans to the status of the new chosen people.

As the three “isms” of nationalism, capitalism, and imperialism began to gain quasi-religious status in the West, money, the obsession of all three of these systems, gained a religious-like reverence among Europeans. This shift in the primary concern of Europeans away from the sacred to the secular is quite poignantly represented in the words of a slave dealer named Nicholas Owen who in 1758 wrote in his journal:

I have found no place where I can enlarge my fortune so soon as where I now live, wherefore I intend to stay in order to enlarge my fortune by honest mains. . . . I have sold three slaves, but have not received all my goods yet upon account of the bad surf. . . . In this manner, we spend the prime of youth among Negroes, scraping the world for money, the universal god of mankind, until death overtakes us.⁸

Money, profit, and wealth had become Europe's new Holy Trinity, faith in which Europeans hoped would bring them salvation on earth. Through the Middle Ages and the Black Plague, faith in the Catholic church began to falter as millions died. At the dawn of modernity, as the sacred began to give way to the secular, the Protestant Reformation opened the way for capitalism to expand. The Calvinists removed the religious stigma from the practice of collecting interest and profit taking. It was from this period on that the West would religiously pursue profit, pledging itself to the new quest of unlimited wealth. From *Religions of the World*, edited by Robert Forman:

The ancient Romans used the Latin word *religio* to refer to the binding quality of the relationship between human beings and the gods. This relationship usually implied that the humans should perform the gods' rituals dependably. (The popular expression "doing something religiously" derives from this usage.) When the deities accepted gifts, the worshipers in turn expected the deities to return favors such as protection, sanction of the social order, economic or health benefits, or favorable weather. Thus Roman religion, like all religions, bound together needs and their sacred satisfactions.⁹

In much the same way, the West, in particular Northern Europe with its "Protestant work ethic," toiled religiously, performing all of the entrepreneurial rituals required by the god of profit. Obediently, these rituals were performed with the reverent hope of gaining economic advantage and protective sanction for the new world order of capitalism. For the West, capitalism had become a quasi-religion with empire serving as its church, a sacred structure within which true believers could bow down while offering those who were of "a different complexion or slightly flatter nose" as sacrifices to profit. Paul Tillich, one of the most significant Christian theologians of the twentieth century, stated in a 1961 lecture at Columbia University:

Religion is the state of being grasped by an ultimate concern, a concern which qualifies all other concern as preliminary and which itself contains the answer to the question of the meaning of our life. Therefore, this concern is unconditionally serious and shows a willingness to sacrifice any finite concern which is in conflict with it. The predominant religious name for the content of such concern is God—a god or gods. In non-theistic religions, divine qualities are ascribed to a sacred object or all-pervading power or a highest principle such as Brahma, or the One. In secular quasi-religions, the ultimate concern is directed towards objects like nation, science, a particular form or stage, or highest ideal of humanity, which are then considered divine.¹⁰

For the West, capitalism had emerged as a sacred system, which, through aggressive proselytizing—often at the barrel of a gun—would begin to

eclipse nationalism as the most powerful form of secular worship in the world.

Empire as conceived by the various nations of Europe in many ways resembled the Catholic church in its construction. It was a sociopolitical hierarchy that was economically supported by a foundation of parish-like colonies, held together by the religious loyalty of a governing core of colonial ecclesiastics and the proletariat fear of the imperial military wrath. Michael Doyle defines empire as “a relationship, formal or informal, in which one state controls the effective political sovereignty of another political society.” According to Doyle, this relationship “can be achieved by force, by political collaboration, by economic, social, or cultural dependence.”¹¹ In many ways, this is an apt description of the Catholic hierarchy. However, unlike the Catholic church, where canonical control and order supposedly flow from an ethereal plan, imperial control and order is grounded in the laws of economics, such as supply and demand, and profit and loss.

There are non-European historians who argue that the West accrued the wealth needed to fuel the Industrial Revolution and its ascent to world dominance from the slave trade, colonial plantations economics, and raw materials gained from imperial holdings. This argument is countered by mainstream Western historians, who assert that the Industrial Age is too complex to be explained in such a linear, cause-specific fashion. However, those who make this point, if pressed, would be hard put to mount a convincing argument that the West would enjoy its position of preeminence in the world without imperialism and slavery.

Although economic greed served as the primary energizing force behind the rise of Western imperialism, its architectural structure was supported by a set of assumptions that have nothing to do with the laws of economics or the accumulation of wealth. These were assumptions about the place of Western “man” in the world. As the brilliant scholar and esthetician Edward W. Said puts it:

Neither imperialism nor colonialism is a simple act of accumulation and acquisition. Both are supported and perhaps even impelled by impressive ideological formations that include notions that certain territories and people *require* and beseech domination, as well as forms of knowledge affiliated with domination: the vocabulary of classic nineteenth-century [and for that matter eighteenth-century] imperial culture is plentiful with words and concepts like “inferior” or “subject races,” “subordinate peoples,” “dependency,” “expansion,” and “authority.” Out of the imperial experiences, notions about culture were clarified, reinforced, criticized, or rejected.¹²

In Said’s statement lies an epistemological distinction between the world and the West. For him, this distinction goes beyond the study of truth in the

epistemological sense, it goes to the essential character of being itself; it is ontological in nature. In his view, the West has historically established an almost impenetrable barrier between itself and the rest of the world. Said argues the following:

Throughout the exchange between Europeans and their “others” that began systematically half a millennium ago, the one idea that has scarcely varied is that there is an “us” and a “them,” each quite settled, clear, unassailably self-evident. As I discuss it in *Orientalism*, the division goes back to Greek thought about barbarians, but, whoever originated this kind of “identity” thought, by the nineteenth century, it had become the hallmark of imperialist cultures as well as those cultures trying to resist the encroachments of Europe.¹³

Herein lays the cultural medium within which modern racism took root. For the West, the world was divided between “us” and “them,” those unknown peoples waiting, as Hakluyt put it, “to be discovered and subdued.”

This latent sense of Western superiority and ethnocentric smugness of which Edward Said speaks was reinforced by conquest and rationalized by the supposed objectivity of the Western science and its system of racial ranking. Even as the sunset on the age of empire, the supremacist attitude of the Western mind could still be witnessed in the 1910 utterances of a colonial advocate named Jules Harmand:

It is necessary, then, to accept as a principle and point of departure the fact that there is a hierarchy of races and civilizations, and that we belong to the superior race and civilization, still recognizing that, while superiority confers rights, it imposes strict obligations in return. The basic legitimation of conquest over native peoples is the conviction of our superiority, not merely our mechanical, economic, and military superiority, but our moral superiority. Our dignity rests on that quality, and it underlies our right to direct the rest of humanity. Material power is nothing but a means to that end.¹⁴

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Chapter One

Philosophy: Western Culture's Rosetta Stone

To understand an age or a nation we must understand its philosophy, and to understand its philosophy we must ourselves be in some degree philosophers. There is here a reciprocal causation: the circumstances of men's [and women's] lives do much to determine their philosophy, but conversely, their philosophy does much to determine their circumstances.

—Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy*

Queries into the etiological beginnings of racism in Western civilization and racial slavery in the United States can only be conducted by delving deep into the origins of Western civilization itself. Such an undertaking requires excavating the social and cultural strata of thousands of years of European ascension in order to expose the historical and philosophical foundation of Western civilization, and the sociocultural scaffolding that underpins its racist narrative. In order for archaeologists to unlock the secrets of ancient Egypt, they needed a linguistic key to decipher Egyptian hieroglyphics. The discovery of the Rosetta stone in 1799 with its translation of two forms of hieroglyphics into Greek provided the key to unlocking the secrets of Egypt's past. Similarly, any attempt to interpret Western civilization requires a Rosetta Stone to unlock the inner working of the Western mind, especially that portion that authorizes and legitimizes its world view and actions. Philosophy, along with its spiritual counterpart, religion, present an illuminating window onto the complex, contradictory, and often dark workings of the Western mind—a mind whose psyche is at once enlightened by noble thoughts of liberty, equality, and justice for all of humanity, while being mired in a despotic and exploitative greed that would eventually give rise to colonialism and entrepreneurial slavery. To be specific, philosophy provides the intellectual tools necessary to

deconstruct the logical scaffolding employed by the Western elite to bridge, by way of justification, the chasm between their rhetoric of liberty, equality, and justice, and the reality of racism, slavery, and colonial exploitation. For, as the revered German philosopher Immanuel Kant once stated, “The business of philosophy is not to give rules, but to analyze the private judgments of common reason.”¹ Western philosophy provides that Rosetta stone, that cipher so essential to ascertaining the etiological basis of the social, cultural, religious, political, and economic movements of the West. “Philosophy is an activity [that] attempt[s] to understand the general principles and ideas that lie behind various aspects of life . . . [and as such can be divided] . . . into the various subject areas—philosophy of mind, of religion, of science, of politics. . . . [P]hilosophy aims at clarification of thoughts, concepts and the meaning of language. To philosophise is to think clearly and accurately.”² By examining how social, religious, political, and economic philosophers both influence and reflect Western civilization, a clearer understanding of specific historical events, trends, and contemporary realities can be realized, and in the process hopefully a clearer understanding of racism and racial slavery can be achieved. Likewise, these same philosophical tools can be employed to gain an understanding of the reactions of non-western peoples to Western intrusion and dominance.

In order to establish a common frame of reference, it is important to briefly focus some attention on terminology—not out of a presumption of ignorance on the part of the reader, but instead out of a desire to avoid semantic confusion. Philosophy, metaphysics, cosmology, theology, epistemology, and ontology are terms frequently used in this work and, in the interest of clarity, intent, and efficiency, these terms are defined as they are being used in this work, especially given their varied definitions in popular culture. Philosophy draws its meaning from the Greek word *philosophia*, the roots of which are derived in turn from two other Greek words: *philos*, meaning “love,” and *sophia*, meaning “knowledge” or “wisdom.” Hence, philosophy means lover of knowledge or wisdom, which speaks to the central role of reason in Greek society, a role that would gain preeminence over emotion and the other form of knowing, intuition. This form of knowing has been embraced, expanded upon, and used by the West as a means of classifying and judging the worth of not only individuals, but whole societies. The two overarching concerns of philosophy are the nature of existence and knowledge. “It is the development of these two [concerns] over the centuries—and of all the subsidiary questions that arise out of them—that constitute the mainstream of philosophy’s history. Into this mainstream flow all the important tributaries such as moral and political philosophy, philosophy of science, aesthetics, philosophy of religion, and the rest.”³ Unfortunately, there are those who believe that factual

knowledge is enough, associating wisdom, not with the power of true and right discernment, but instead with a folk definition that encompasses the enigmatic analogies and stories told to children by their elders. As Will Durant states in *The Story of Philosophy*, "Science gives us knowledge, but only philosophy gives us wisdom."⁴

Metaphysics and cosmology are used somewhat interchangeably within the context of this work, and are defined as "the study of the most general, persistent, and pervasive characteristics of the universe: existence, change, time, cause-and-effect relationships, space, substance, identity, uniqueness, difference, unity, variety, sameness, and oneness."⁵ They also refer to "the study of a transcendent reality that is the cause (source) of all existence . . . making metaphysics [and cosmology in many ways] synonymous with theology."⁶ Theology in this case is being defined as "the study of the relation of the divine (or ideal, or eternal unchanging) world to the physical world."⁷ Then there is epistemology, which for many philosophers serves as a midwife for metaphysical understanding, in that epistemology can be employed to deliver the "truths" of the universe to those who are willing and able to engage in its disciplined form of analysis. Epistemology, for the purpose of this text, is defined as a "theory of knowledge" that involves "the study of . . . the origins, the presumptions, the nature, the extent, and veracity (truth, reliability, validity) of knowledge."⁸ The following types of questions fall into the realm of epistemological analysis: "What is knowledge? Is sense experience necessary for all types of knowledge? What part does reason play in knowledge? Is there a knowledge only derived from reason? What are the differences among concepts such as: belief, knowledge, opinion, fact, reality, error, imagining, conceptualizing, idea, truth, possibility, certainty?"⁹ Ontology is that "branch of philosophy that deals with the order and structure of reality in the broadest sense possible, using categories such as being/becoming, actuality/potentiality, real/apparent . . . existence/nonexistence . . ."¹⁰ These terms are used in this work not only as tools of description but also of analysis. The intent is to use these analytical tools to sift through various strata of Western history in order to unearth the etiological basis of Western racism in general and racial slavery in the United States in particular.

The building blocks that make up the foundation of Western civilization were quarried from the richly diverse cultural deposits of Europe's various ethnic and tribal groups. In *Europe*, Norman Davies states:

In the beginning, there was no Europe. All there was, for five million years, was a long, sinuous peninsula with no name, set like the figurehead of a ship on the prow of the world's largest land mass. To the west lay the ocean [later known as the Atlantic], which no one had crossed. To the south lay two enclosed and

interlinked seas [later known as the Mediterranean Sea and the Black Sea], sprinkled with islands, inlets, and peninsulas of their own. To the north lay the great polar icecap, expanding and contracting across the ages like some monstrous, freezing jellyfish. To the east lay the land bridge to the rest of the world, from whence all people and civilizations were to come.¹¹

Europe's geography formed a natural cul-de-sac that created a cultural spawning ground for what would come to be known as Western civilization. Within this cul-de-sac, a confluence of Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian traditions tinged with Moorish influences mixed with the preexisting agrarian and nomadic cultures of western, central, and northern Europe as the result of the ebbing and flowing of conquest and empire. It would be through the Pyrenees Mountains that the Moorish influence would seep, originating in the preexisting "Andalusian synthesis" of the Iberian Peninsula that had resulted from the subordination and assimilation of the ancient Celts and Iberians by the Moorish invaders. "Spain had traditionally been, from the cultural standpoint, not so much a part of Europe as a separate subcontinent, hanging midway between civilizations that swept into it . . . from the north [and] . . . from the south, to form a unique ingathering of peoples and religions. Even the primordial encounter between Celts and Iberians from which was distilled the first Spanish populations to enter the light of history had been a meeting of Europe and Africa."¹² The Middle Eastern and North African spice of Moorish culture that would come to characterize and differentiate Spain from much of Europe would also become the source of the Moorish tinge that would eventually have such a significant influence on Europe's newly emerging cultural identity.

Like a tidal pool, Europe was fed by the tidewaters of economic and cultural commerce that originated in the East and the classical civilizations of the Mediterranean. Eventually, with the passage of centuries, Europe began to harbor and nurture its own common but still varied cultural phylum as a result of the inevitable commingling of tribes and the absorption of common external cultural influences from the Mediterranean, the East, and North Africa. Prior to the ninth century, a clear distinction could be made between the classical civilizations of the Mediterranean and tribal Europe. Asia, North Africa, and the adjacent parts of Europe constituted what the Greeks referred to as the *oikoumene*, meaning "the inhabited world." However, for the Greeks and later the Romans, Europe was a vast wilderness of broad plains and dark forests inhabited by savage men and wild beasts, while Asia and North Africa represented civilization. The word "Mediterranean" comes from the Latin, meaning "the sea in the middle of the world," and for the Greeks, Phoenicians, Egyptians, Romans, and Carthaginians, the world beyond the desert to the south and east, and the mountains to the north, was wilderness. Historian

Fernando Braudel characterized the Mediterranean as “above all a sea surrounded by mountains,”¹³ obviously referring to Europe’s “majestic chain of mountains which curve in two elegant arcs from the Maritime Alps in Provence to the Carpathian Alps in Transylvania.”¹⁴ These mountains separated the sea from the great European plain that runs from the Urals to the Atlantic and served as a rampart, protecting the people of the Mediterranean from the nomadic tribes of Europe. With only three gaps in this entire chain of mountains, nature provided a fortress that allowed the classical civilizations of the Mediterranean to evolve. In order to protect themselves, all the Greeks and Romans had to do was defend the gaps between the mountains and maintain watch over the Mediterranean, which served as a protective moat. The great Greek philosopher Socrates is alleged to have said, with a clear implication of vulnerability, “We live around a sea like frogs around a pond,”¹⁵ a pond that over the century would nurture the inhabitants who lived on its shores. As Norman Davies writes:

The Mediterranean, that marvelously secluded sea which laps Europe’s southern coastline, forms the basis of a self-contained geographical unit. Its sea-lanes provide a ready channel for cultural, economic, and political contact. It supplied the cradle for the classical world. Under the Caesars it became in effect a Roman lake. . . . Yet significantly, since the decline of Roman power, the Mediterranean has never been politically united. Sea power has never been sufficient to overcome the land-based empires which established themselves on its perimeter. Indeed, once the Muslim states took root in the Levant [the eastern shore of the Mediterranean] and in Africa, the Mediterranean became an area of permanent Political division.¹⁶

One of the legends central to Greek mythology tells of the discovery of the Oracle at Delphi. In this legend Zeus, desiring to determine the exact center of the earth, released two eagles, one from the west and another from the east, commanding them to fly to the most central point on the earth’s surface. That point at which they settled became known as Delphi, the site of the oracle of legend. Delphi, resting in the shadow of Parnassus, became central to Greek civilization and myth, and the home to both Apollo’s oracle and Castalia, the sacred spring from whence the Cephissus River followed like a metaphor for the future. The legend of the Delphic Oracle is also central to the tale of how Europe was lost and found. During the classical age, when children queried their elders about the origins of humankind, “they were told about the creation of the world by an unidentified *opifex rerum* or ‘divine maker.’ They were told about the flood, and about Europa . . . the subject of one of the most venerable legends of the classical world. Europa was the mother of Minos, lord of Crete, and hence the progenitrix of the most ancient branch of

Mediterranean civilization.”¹⁷ She was immortalized in verse by Homer, Moschus, and Ovid as the innocent Phoenician princess who was betrothed to Zeus, the Father of the Greek gods. Legend would have it that Europa, who dwelled in the land now known as Lebanon, was beguiled and seduced by Zeus who, in the guise of a snow-white bull, spirited her off to Crete. Edith Hamilton retells the legend in her work *Mythology*.

Up in heaven one spring morning as he idly watched the earth, Zeus suddenly saw a charming spectacle. Europa had waked early, troubled . . . by a dream . . . not of a god who loved her but of two Continents who each in the shape of a woman tried to possess her, Asia saying that she had given her birth and therefore owned her, and the other, as yet nameless, declaring that Zeus would give the maiden to her. . . . Europa, the daughter of the King of Sidon . . . was exceedingly fortunate . . . [e]xcept for a few moments of terror when she found herself crossing the deep sea on the back of a bull. . . . [Europa thought] no bull could this be, but most certainly a god. . . . He was Zeus, greatest of gods, and all he was doing was from love of her. He was taking her to Crete, his own island . . . and there she would bear him ‘Glorious sons whose scepters shall hold sway over all men on earth. . . .’ When Europa was carried away by the bull, her father sent her brothers to search for her. One of them, Cadmus, instead of looking vaguely here and there, went very sensibly to Delphi to ask Apollo where she was.¹⁸

Modern philosophers and historians have by in large dismissed mythology as a viable source of historical and cultural insight, labeling it as childish fiction created by “primitive pre-rational people.” However, it is shortsighted to reject out of hand all mythology. Unfortunately, modernists are trapped by the metaphorical lexicon of their time, a time dominated by digital machines and logical positivism, a time where people live far from nature, as opposed to ancient times when people “lived in close companionship with nature. . . . When the world was young and people had connection to the earth, with trees and seas and flowers and hills, unlike anything [modern men or women] can feel.”¹⁹

If one analyzes the legend of Europa from a more ancient metaphorical perspective, it becomes obvious that this myth is rife with possibilities that challenge the historical orthodoxy of modernism. Norman Davies, in *Europe: A History*, identifies some important connotations from the legend of Europa. In particular, there are two that are important to this work, the first being the origins of Greek culture and the second being the restless energy of the Greeks. Davies interprets and summarizes the legend of Europa as follows:

The legend of Europa has many connotations. But in carrying the princess to Crete from the shore of Phoenicia (now south Lebanon) Zeus was surely transferring the fruits of the older Asian civilization of the East to the new island

colonies of the Aegean. Phoenicia belonged to the orbit of the Pharaohs. Europa's ride provides the mythical link between Ancient Egypt and Ancient Greece. Europa's brother Cadmus, who roamed the world in search of her, *orbe pererrato*, was credited with bringing the art of writing to Greece.

Europa's ride also captures the essential restlessness of those who followed in her footsteps. Unlike the great river valley civilizations of the Nile, of the Indus, of Mesopotamia, and of China, which were long in duration but lethargic in their geographical and intellectual development, the civilization of the Mediterranean Sea was stimulated by constant movement. Movement caused uncertainty and insecurity. Uncertainty fed a constant ferment of ideas. Insecurity prompted energetic activity. Minos was famed for his ships. Crete was the first naval power. The ships carried people and goods and culture, fostering exchanges of all kinds with the lands to which they sailed. Like the vestments of Europa, the minds of those ancient mariners were constantly left "fluttering in the breeze"—*tremulae sinuantur flamine vestes*.²⁰

Unfortunately, most modernists reject the legend of Europa because of its implication that the civilization of ancient Greece owed its origins to the ancient Egyptians and Phoenicians, not the Aryan invaders of the north.

The world view and intellectual underpinnings of the West would, to a large extent, come to be based on the philosophy begun by the Greeks, extended by the Romans, and, to a great degree, preserved by the Muslims. It was the Muslims who "assimilated the legacy of classical Greek civilization to such a degree that many classical Greek books are now known . . . only through Arabic copies . . ." ²¹ Ultimately, the juxtaposition and intertwining of classical philosophical reasoning and Christian faith, as represented by the theology of the Catholic Church, would set in motion a tension between the sacred and secular worlds of Europe that would eventually give rise to the Renaissance, Reformation, Enlightenment, and Modernity.

Spearheaded by the acts of Germanic tribes that had been displaced by the invading Huns of central Eurasia, Northern Europe would eventually gain preeminence over and assimilate much of the classical culture of Rome, a culture that had been acquired through Rome's subordination of Greece. After centuries of Germanic invasion and the almost complete decimation of Rome's army, the leaders of the western portion of the empire attempted to dissipate and defend against these attacks by hiring some of these same German warlords and enlisting their armies as mercenaries. Eventually, the pretense of Roman authority gave way to the power of what had come to be an occupying army. The conquest of the western portion of the Roman Empire by these tribes led to an amalgamation of the Roman citizenry and their German conquerors. This blending of the conquered peoples of Rome and the several Germanic tribes that overran the empire resulted in the creation of six new kingdoms: the Franks and Burgundians in France, the Ostrogoths in Italy,

the Visigoths in Spain, the Vandals in North Africa, and the Anglo Saxons in Britain. The Franks would ultimately rule much of the old Roman Empire of the west and reassert, in a significantly diminished form, what was once classical Rome. In an attempt to adopt major aspects of Roman culture, the Frankish tribes of Europe officially converted en masse to Christianity.

Christian missionaries of Rome had initiated this process of conversion much earlier when they attempted to spread Christianity to the Germanic and Celtic tribes of the north and to the Persians, Arabs, and Africans of Ethiopia and Nubia to the south and west. Rome had converted to Christianity much earlier under Emperor Constantine, who had become emperor of the west by defeating his rival, General Maxentius, in 312. It is alleged that before the battle a vision of a heavenly cross with the inscription *in hoc signo vinces*, meaning, “You will conquer in this sign,” appeared to Constantine. After his victory, Constantine became emperor of the west and, in conjunction with his counterpart Licinius, emperor of the east—and under the joint Edict of Milan—ended the persecution of the Christians and restored their freedom of worship. Constantine embraced Christianity as his personal faith, and when he eventually became the sole emperor of Rome, Christianity grew to be the favored religion of the land, with thousands of Romans of all stations converting to the faith.

Because of these conversions, the Franks, once they assumed power, made Christianity a focal point of Frankish culture, which later resulted in the establishment of the Holy Roman Empire. With the empire firmly established, the dream of Christendom that had eluded the faithful for so long was finally realized on Christmas Day in the year 800, when Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne as the “Emperor of the West,” symbolizing his rule under the authority of the church.

However, Europe’s evolutionary path would suffer a major setback, becoming, upon the death of Charlemagne, all but stagnated for another 536 years. With this setback came fragmentation and increased cultural, economic, and political isolation. Norman Davies describes the aftermath of Charlemagne’s death as follows:

Charlemagne’s lifeblood had been the cement of the realm. His inheritance was immediately disputed by his son and grandsons. Repeated partitions ensured its early disintegration . . . The feuding of the Carolingians . . . created an opportunity which the Vikings were quick to exploit. The summer of 841 saw them sailing up the Seine to plunder Rouen. In 843–4, following the Treaty of Verdun, they wintered on the island of Noirmoutier. In 854 the new city of Hamburg was burned, and Paris was sacked . . .²²

Ultimately, it was Christianity that would provide a common metaphysical grounding for Europe’s emerging culture, while its geography, with the At-

lantic Ocean to the west, the Baltic to the north, the Mediterranean to the south, and a land bridge to Asia in the east, would impose a set of common physical and economic restraints on its development. These geographical constraints “determined that the two main currents of trade should run from east to west and north to south, and the most progressive economic life of the age should cluster in the regions from which these currents started and where they met”²³ With these currents of trade came not only the economic means that allowed intellectual and physical exploration of the world, but many of the conceptual paradigms needed to carry out such exploration.

Under Charlemagne's leadership, the Holy Roman Empire had expanded, unifying “the two halves of his forebears' realm, Neustria and Austrasia, in a vast territory from . . . the Netherlands to Provence . . . [subsuming] . . . the Kingdom of the Lombards south of the Alps (773–4); to Saxony (775–804); Bavaria (788), and Carinthia (799); to . . . Brittany (786); and . . . across the Pyrenees [into Spain] (795–7) . . . [which severed as a rampart] . . . against Muslim incursions The Frankish position was strengthened by allies among the Christian princes who clung tenaciously to the coastland of northern Iberia. . . .”²⁴ The ongoing battle that would ensue between Charlemagne's Holy Roman Empire and the Umayyad Dynasty of Damascus, known by the faithful as the Abode of Islam, is often characterized as purely a religious war. This tendency to characterize the battle between Islam and Christianity as “purely religious” is due, in part, to the fact that in ancient civilizations religion “was made an affair of tribe or state. With few exceptions, deity was identified with the interests of political groups and the duties toward Him were identical with the all-embracing duties towards the later.”²⁵ As the authors of the text, *Religions of the World*, point out:

In the Islamic empire and medieval-Christendom we see a synthesis of religious and administrative elements . . . [where] . . . the ruling elite ran the state on the basis of their religious values In the medieval Christian structure, the popes and their representatives were Europe's primary juridical (legal) arbiters. Their judgments were based on the principles and traditions they traced back to their scriptures. The medieval Muslim empire's standards were thought to be grounded ultimately in the word of Allah, as found in the Qur'an, and in Muhammad's behavior, as documented in Hadith literature [based on supposed eyewitness accounts]. The directions were largely determined by the priestly men responsible for the law and the Hadith. Often the ruling group saw itself as a distinct social group, uniquely qualified to interpret the scriptures. It is also noteworthy that this same group—frequently the society's only literate members—often wrote down its religion's texts. In so doing, whether consciously or not, the elite often oriented the texts' teachings to reflect their own beliefs and values.²⁶

In Western philosophy, the analysis of these questions of origin, purpose, destiny, and divinity run along a philosophical continuum from thinkers such as Descartes to Sartre. Descartes, in his *Discourse on Method*, inquires, among other things, into his own existence and concludes, “Je pense, donc je suis” (“I think therefore I am.”)²⁷ In concert with his self-reflective queries, Descartes pondered the existence of God, concluding that he could not have received the notion of a perfect being from nothing. Specifically, Descartes concludes, “to receive it [the notion of perfection] from nothing was a thing manifestly impossible . . . it was equally impossible that I could hold it from myself: accordingly it but remained that it had been placed in me by a nature which was in reality more perfect than mine, and which even possessed within itself all perfections of which I could form any idea; that is to say in a single word, which was God.”²⁸ On the other hand, Sartre, an atheistic existentialist, asserts in works such as *Being and Nothingness*, that individuals alone create whatever meaning there is in life. For Sartre, what is important is accepting the fundamental truth that the freedom to act with integrity and responsibly is the greatest good, despite the specter of existential meaninglessness and death.

Religious belief also varies in its focus along a continuum “between two poles; [at one end is the] total reference to supernaturalism (religion is the belief in and worship of a divine transcended reality that creates and controls all things without deviation from its will) [and on the other] total reference to humanistic ideals (religion is any attempt to construct ideals and values toward which one can enthusiastically strive and with which one can regulate one’s conduct).”²⁹ In the case of humanism, it is believed that reason serves as the regulator of one’s conduct, a belief that is predicated on the assumption that human beings are intrinsically good. However, all three of the great monotheistic religions, and for that matter the majority of all religions at their fundamentalist margins, have, to varying degrees, a history of resisting modernity and challenging the doubt created by reason and secularism. Ironically, the secular nature of Western philosophy has its roots in Greek religion with its “combination of mathematics and theology, which began with Pythagoras; [and it was this combination that would] characterize religious philosophy in Greece, the Middle Ages, and in modern times down to Kant.”³⁰ Eventually, it would be this Greek religious tradition of combining the reasoning of mathematics with theology that would serve as one of the intellectual catalysts for the Reformation, making Christians less resistant to secularism and modernity.

At first, Greek religion embarked on a mystical path similar to that of the great religions of the East. However, it was the fascination of Greek philosophers for a bifurcated universe—as presented in dualism, where spirit and

matter were distinct and separate entities—and their belief in the secular reasoning of science that helped them dissuade the Greek populace from pursuing a mystical religious path. This belief in dualism is probably most evident in Plato's early dialogues, such as *Phaedo*, where Socrates is alleged to have argued his belief in the immortality of the soul, and in his well-read dialogue, *The Republic*, where he describes the nature of the soul. In *Phaedo*, Plato recounts the following assertion allegedly advanced by Socrates:

For if it is not possible to have pure knowledge of anything so long as we are with body, then one of two things must be true: either it is no where possible to acquire knowledge, or only after death—for then, but not till then, the soul will be independent, free from body. So long as we are alive, it seems likely that we shall come nearest to having knowledge if we do our utmost to have no contact or association with the body except in so far as is absolutely necessary, and do not infect ourselves of its nature, but purify ourselves of it, until God himself gives us final release; and if we are thus purified and freed from the foolishness of the body, we shall probably be in the company of the pure, and through our very selves come to have knowledge of all that is unsullied—that is, I suppose to truth; for it is, perhaps, not lawful for the impure to attain to that which is pure.³¹

Within Plato's ontology, to be human meant to have a twofold nature—physical and spiritual—as manifested in the body and soul. However, for Plato the soul was not truly separate from the body, it was a prisoner of the body, existing in a contiguous and interactive existential state. From birth the soul finds itself a prisoner of the body, condemned to that sullied impure dungeon for crimes yet committed. Although the soul was a separate entity, it was locked in a constant struggle to break free from the body—that sullied, impure dungeon. For Plato, the soul represented the human mind, the essence of which is separated into reason, spirit (also known as emotion), and desire. In *The Republic*, Plato uses the following analogy to explain the relationship of these elements when he has Socrates say, “Or is the soul like the city: just as three classes held it together, the moneymakers, the state-assistants, and the counselors, so this high-spirited part in the soul is also a third, which naturally assists the reasoning part . . .”³² Interestingly, the Greek concept of dualism was later embraced by perhaps the greatest Jewish thinker of Greece, Philo of Alexandria (20 BC to 50 AD). “Accepting the Greek dualism of body and spirit, Philo believed that the human body, with its sinful passion, lured human beings to the material world. However, the human soul, or reason, enabled them to aspire to illumination by God. The final goal was the liberation from bondage, together with the soul's reascension to its divine abode. . . . Philo's attempt to reconcile biblical truth with Greek philosophy became a

model for Christian church fathers.”³³ For non-western cultures, which generally do not make such a clear ontological distinction between the body and the immortal soul, Western dualism seems to present too much of an either/or cosmology. However, when imposed on these cultures by Western colonialism, dualism creates an oppressive metaphysical structure of subordination. “Science and technology, for example, are often seen as ‘Western.’ The correlative of this attitude in the realm of theory is to assume that all theory is ‘Western’ . . . a view that projects the West as ‘mind’ and theoretical refinement and the non-West as ‘body’ and unrefined raw material.”³⁴

The reality conveyed in the previously cited analogy, in concert with the missionary zeal of Christianity, served as the philosophical and theological underpinnings that justified the economic and political enterprises of colonialism and slavery. “The metamorphosis of Europeans in Africa from explorers and missionaries to colonizers [and slave traders] meant a transition from an attitude of diplomacy to an attitude of domination. Explorers had to act with tact, missionaries were still vulnerable but already less tolerant. . . . In the sequence of explorer to missionary to colonizer, the European image-formation of Africa shows a distinct decline. To a significant degree, the missionaries were responsible for the transition. . . . Terrifying tales about heathen ritual, idolatry, and human sacrifice traditionally play an important role in missionary image-building about the non-western world.”³⁵ A clear example of the influence of missionary image-building on Western perceptions of Africa can be seen in Hegel’s work *The Philosophy of History*, in which he states:

The Negro . . . exhibits the natural man in his completely wild and untamed state. We must lay aside all thought of reverence and morality all that we call feeling—if we would rightly comprehend him: there is nothing harmonious with humanity to be found in this type of character the copious and circumstantial accounts of missionaries completely confirm this. . . .³⁶

Missionaries were not only spiritual agencies, but also political agencies of the West. On one hand, they were saving the black heathen souls of Africans from their “base instincts” and the “corruption of their corporal lust,” while on the other, they were bringing the rational order of the Western mind to Africa and the management of its continental body, i.e., its unrefined resources. “There were often close ties between the church and the colonial state. In the home country, there were family connections between the officer corps [of the military] and the church. . . . The missionaries were often passionate advocates of an expansionist policy. For the church, just as for colonial enterprises, it meant the opening up of new territory.”³⁷

There is an old saying in Africa, first expressed by the Mau Mau rebels in Kenya, which struck a deep cord, resonating across the various ethnic groups and geopolitical borders of Africa: "Formerly we owned the land and the whites had the Gospel. Then the missionaries came; they taught us to pray and close our eyes, and in the meantime the whites took our land. Now we have the Gospel and they have the land."³⁸

The dualism that had such a profound impact on the sacred world of Western theology had an equally profound effect on its secular world, giving impetus to the scientific revolution in the West. In his work *Early Greek Philosophers*, John Burnet asserts, "It is usual to say that the Greeks were saved from a religion of the Oriental type by their having no priesthood; but this is to mistake the effect for the cause . . . It was not so much the absence of a priesthood as the existence of the scientific schools that saved Greece."³⁹ Greek dualism had a profound influence on the theology of Judaism and Christianity in that it gave philosophical support to the separate existence of a spirit apart from the human body. It also liberated the natural world from the supernatural, thus paving the way for people like René Descartes, who gave Western science its legitimacy and independence. Descartes' philosophical dualism "enabled him to separate scientific inquiry from religious thought and treat the world of nature as a mechanical one, operating strictly according to mathematical laws."⁴⁰ As a result, the physical and social sciences have risen to challenge Western religious faith and in some quarters replaced religious cosmology with empiricism. Paul Tillich, one of the most eminent theologians of the twentieth century, focused considerable thought on the meaning of religion. His work in the field of comparative religions, with its variety of religious constructs, forced him to grapple with questions such as "what is the nature of religion" and "are there secular institutions that serve the function of religion?" In a lecture entitled *A View of the Present Situation: Religions, Quasi-Religions, and their Encounters*, Tillich states:

. . . the term religion is open both to limiting and enlarging definitions, depending on the theological or philosophical position of him who defines. One can narrow the meaning of religion to the *cultus deorum* (the cult of the gods), [or broaden it to secular quasi-religions]. In secular quasi-religions the ultimate concern is directed towards objects like nations, science, a particular form or stage of society, or a highest ideal of humanity, which are considered divine . . . "[Q]asi" indicates a genuine similarity, not intended, but based on points of identity.⁴¹

Parenthetically, the pseudo-biological science of race has become so ubiquitous and such an obsession in the West, particularly in the United States,

that one could argue that it has become a quasi-religion due to the depth of belief it engenders. The concept of race and the process of racial classification gained in popularity throughout the eighteenth century and by the nineteenth century formed a commonplace belief system of racial superiority among European and American whites. In 1850, a famous anatomist named Dr. Robert Knox proclaimed that “race is everything, is simply a fact, the most remarkable, the most comprehensive, which philosophy has ever announced. Race is everything: literature, science, art—in a word, civilization depends on it.”⁴² There are several white supremacist organizations in the United States dating back to the nineteenth century that are founded on racist theology. For example, the Ku Klux Klan claims its moral authority from a white supremacist theology and, in addition, there are hundreds of Aryan Churches presently preaching racist theology in America. Simply put, their belief is that God and Jesus are white and the “mud people” that constitute all other races are children of the devil. This view seems to reflect the eighteenth-century view of the polygenists, who believed that each race was a different biological species having descended from a different Adam and Eve. One of the most beloved and admired figures in the history of philosophy, David Hume—known as *le bon David* (the good David) in France and “Saint David” in England—was a great supporter of the polygenists’ view. Hume states, “I am apt to suspect the Negroes and in general all other species of men (for there are four or five different kinds) to be naturally inferior to the white.”⁴³

Returning to the previous discussion on dualism, it was the cosmological view of dualism that created the tension between religion and science that continues to cause a strain in the relationship of the sacred and secular realms of Western civilization, a tension that over the millennia has and will most likely continue to erupt periodically in conflict. The Greeks had attempted, with varying degrees of success, to resolve this tension in their own society in much the same way as a mathematician balances an equation. “The Greeks believed that their mathematical theorems were expressions of eternal and exact truths about the real world, and that geometrical shapes were manifestations of absolute beauty [or perfection].”⁴⁴ This is why Plato declared, God is the “Eternal Geometer;”⁴⁵ in other words, God is pure reason and perfection. It was the belief that “man,” the reasoning being, the mathematician, could understand the mind of God. This assumption is what has driven Western science and, in part, has instilled the belief that progress is inherently good because it will lead to human perfection. Much of the hegemonic drive and presumptuousness of the West is tied to the belief that the Western mind is the most evolved, ergo its civilization is the most perfected and hence its “Manifest Destiny,” its divine right, is to impose “progress and order” on the rest

of the world. This belief was asserted by an Englishman in 1802 in the *Edinburgh Review* where he stated, "Europe is the light of the world, and the ark of knowledge: upon the welfare of Europe, hangs the destiny of the most remote and savage people."⁴⁶

Philosophy and religion, despite their differences, are used by individuals and groups to satisfy needs and give meaning to actions. However, those who employ philosophy to satisfy their needs often drape themselves in the mantle of supposed objectivity and reason when, in point of fact, they are actually employing a veiled subjective and self-serving logic as an ethical basis for justifying their action. Such is the case of John Locke, an elder of the Enlightenment, the "Philosopher of Liberty," and the intellectual hero of Thomas Jefferson. Locke inspired much of Jefferson's belief in Natural Law and liberty. In fact, Locke's *Essay on Civil Government* provided much of the philosophical foundation for the Constitution of the United States. Locke, in his *Second Treatise of Government*, declares:

The state of Nature has a law of Nature to govern it, which obliges every one, and reason, which is that law, teaches all mankind who will but consult it, that being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty, or possessions.⁴⁷

Having said all of this, Locke himself would violate, in the name of profit, a major axiom of early seventeenth-century English political thought: The "basic assumptions of possessive individualism [which states] that man is free and human by virtue of his sole proprietorship of his own person . . ." ⁴⁸ More succinctly put, a person has a proprietary right to his or her body, labor, and potentiality. Locke, in his *First Treatise*, powerfully makes this point in the opening sentence of this work, where he rails against slavery, proclaiming, "Slavery is so vile and miserable an estate of man, and so directly opposite to the generous temper and courage of our nation, that it is hardly to be conceived that an Englishman, much less a gentleman, should plead for it."⁴⁹ Yet, in spite of all of this impassioned rhetoric, Locke made a mockery of these principles when he became a charter member of the Royal African Company (RAC), which initially held the English monopoly on the African slave trade. What makes this so poignant is the fact that Locke served as a secretary to the Lords Proprietor of Carolina and later to the Counsel of Trade and Plantations, which meant that he was keenly aware of the impact of slavery on its African victims. Locke's involvement began with the purchase of a £400 share of RAC stock to be followed by another £200 purchase in 1675. Given this blatant hypocrisy, one is forced to wonder how Locke rationalized his actions, given his philosophy. In the same set of treatises on government,

he presents a rather sophomoric and transparent political and philosophical rationale for the enterprise of slavery, arguing that it is a “state of war continued between a lawful conqueror and captive.”⁵⁰ Despite all of Locke’s rhetoric about freedom and his argument that liberty does not provide one with a free license “to harm another in his life, health, or possessions,” it appears that his belief in his right to “life, liberty, and estate”—in the form of profit—took preeminence over his belief in equality; either that, or his racism blinded him to the humanity of the African slaves he profited from.

As previously stated, religion is frequently viewed, particularly by the pious, as a means of satisfying worldly needs and desires and is often used to justify actions taken in pursuit of perceived needs and desires. For example, both Christians and Muslims have used their holy text to justify their own hegemonic needs and desires for expansion under the guise of doing God’s will by spreading the faith. Historically, the Christians have used Matthew 28:18–20 as their justification for the expansion of Christendom.

And Jesus came and said to them, “all authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey every thing that I have commanded you. And, remember I am with you always, to the end of the age.”⁵¹

It was this exhortation in Matthew and its subsequent theological rejection by the Prophet Muhammad, as witnessed in his revelations in the Qur’an, which served as justification for the clash of these great religions. Incited by their countervailing religious visions, Muslims “surrendered” themselves to Muhammad’s revelations, while the Christians justified their clash with Islam by simply invoking Matthew and proclaiming “*deus vult!*” (God wills it!) Christians were driven to proselytize the faith wherever there existed non-believers. This drive was a “combination of missionary zeal [and] a sense of cultural superiority, backed by the use of force, [which became so] striking a feature [not only in] early medieval Christian Europe [but in other regions].”⁵² This missionary zeal would be turned to rage when, in 638, Caliph Omar captured Jerusalem from Christians, placing the city under Islamic authority. Jerusalem was not only a holy city for the Jews, but also for the Christians and the Muslims. Jerusalem was the capital of Judah; it was the city in which the passion narrative of Jesus began; and it was at the temple of Solomon where the Prophet Muhammad is said to have ascended into heaven.

The Islamic rejection of Christianity was based on Muhammad’s assertion that the Christian belief in the Holy trinity was blasphemous. “In the orthodox Muslim view, it is blasphemy to speak of any finite being, including Jesus, as God incarnate, although it is legitimate—indeed, required—to recog-

nize Muhammad as the ideal human response to God. Muhammad's life exemplified how people should conduct themselves when they surrender to the divine claim and his example provides an authoritative commentary on and supplement to the Qur'an."⁵³ However, Muhammad was not to be deified, as Islam believes that the Christians did with Jesus. The Qur'an states:

O People of the Scripture! Do not exaggerate in your religion nor utter aught concerning Allah save the truth. The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was only a messenger of Allah, and His word, which He conveyed unto Mary, and a spirit from Him. So believe in Allah and His messengers, and say not "Three." Cease! (it is) better for you! Allah is only one God. Far is it removed from His transcendent majesty that he should have a son. His is all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth. And Allah is sufficient as Defender (Surah 4, Ayat 171).⁵⁴

The faithful can find justification for the expansion of Islam in the Qur'an, using the following revelations:

If you encounter (in war) those who disbelieve, you may strike the necks. If you take them as captives, you may set them free or ransom them, until the war ends. Had Allah willed, He could have granted you victory without war. But He thus tests you by one another. As for those who get killed in the cause of Allah, He will never put their sacrifice to waste (Surah 47, Ayat 4).⁵⁵

Then we sent our messengers one after another. Whenever its messenger came unto a nation they denied him; so we caused them to follow one another (to disaster) and we made them bywords [examples]. A far removal for folks who believe not (Surah 23, Ayat 44).⁵⁶

So they routed them by Allah's leave and David slew Goliath; and Allah gave him the kingdom and wisdom, and taught him of which He willeth. and Allah had not repelled some men by others the earth would have been corrupted. But Allah is a Lord of Kindness to (His) creatures. (Surah 2, Ayat 251).⁵⁷

The struggles between Christians and Muslims over religious orthodoxy and land continued to escalate, with the fires of religious and ethnic hatred further fanned by the Islamic conquest of the Holy Land. Flames of religious animus and ethnocentrism smoldered long after Charlemagne's death and were reignited in 1095 when Pope Urban II declared a holy war to recapture Palestine and the Holy City of Jerusalem from the Islamic "infidels." Jerusalem, a city that served as the spiritual center for the three great monotheistic religions of the world, would become the object of a 200-year crusade on the part of Christendom.

"Christianity's rivalry with Islam raised moral and psychological problems . . . Both Christians and Muslims were taught to regard the other as the infidel. Their misunderstanding, antagonisms, and negative stereotypes were

endless.”⁵⁸ The religious, cultural, and physical differences between these opposing groups ignited the spark of race consciousness, which burned brighter as the aforementioned religious rivalry intensified with the Moorish invasion of Europe. Differences in skin color emerged as a central feature of this rivalry as the Moors, a swarthy-complexioned ethnic group of mixed Arab and Sudanese lineage, successfully crossed “the Pillars of Hercules by Al-Tariq—henceforth called Jebel al-Tariq, or Gibraltar—[bringing] the Muslims into Europe, overwhelming Visigothic Spain and breaching the Pyrenees. In 732, on the centenary of Muhammad’s death, they reached Tours on the Loire, a few days’ ride from Paris, in the heart of the Frankish kingdom.”⁵⁹ However, it was on the Iberian Peninsula where, fanned by the flames of competition and trapped in a cauldron of conflict, religious piety, ethnocentrism, political ambition, and phenotypic differences would boil into a pungent brew of racial hatred—a hatred that would spill over and poison humanity for centuries to come. As Ronald Sanders states in his work *Lost Tribes and Promised Lands: The Origins of American Racism*:

The idea of race was, for better or for worse, only a dim and sporadic one to most Europeans during the Middle Ages; its outlines did not begin growing distinct until the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. But when the dawning finally occurred, it shone with a particular fury upon the Iberian Peninsula, which discovered itself in that light to contain the most racially varied society in western Europe. The results were soon to be revolutionary: “Antagonism which had before been almost purely religious,” writes the historian Henry Charles Lea, “became racial, while religious antagonism became heightened, and Spain, which through the earlier Middle Ages had been the most tolerant land in Christendom, became, as the fifteenth century advanced, the most fanatically intolerant.” For some two or three hundred years thereafter a large part of the history of the Iberian peoples was to be dominated by this development, in the Old World and then in the New, where they opened the way to a still more varied racial experience than they hitherto had known. They thus became the pioneers of our modern racial history in the West just as surely as they became the pioneers of European overseas colonization; indeed, after a brief prelude of racism in the Old World alone, the two roles [racist and colonizer] often went hand in hand.⁶⁰

Despite their racial and religious animosity and their cultural differences, both Muslims and Christians share the enterprise of slavery. Prime among the victims of this enterprise were sub-Saharan Africans. Ironically, Muslim and Christian alike also shared the same religious justification for enslaving black Africans, as they both used the Hebrew scriptures as part of their religious narrative. “Some Arab authors found sanction for the advancement of Black slavery in Noah’s outburst against his son Ham, when he said: ‘Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.’ This only singles

out one of Ham's sons, but many Arabs—and later, many Christians, too—held that it condemned all of them to slavery. Indeed, one Arab tradition maintained that blackness itself had been inflicted upon Ham's descendants by a curse from Noah."⁶¹

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, any attempt to unearth the etiological roots of racism and racial slavery in the West requires an analysis of many of the fundamental elements of Western history and certain critical areas of Western philosophy. It is true that over the centuries, philosophy has deteriorated in the eyes of the general populace from being the epistemological foundation of the sciences to the status of speculative discourse that is often based on mere opinion and cliché. However, despite having fallen into disfavor, when it comes to questions about the nature and relationship of concepts such as "freedom," "equality," and "justice," philosophy remains on "the front trench of truth."⁶² The truth being sought in this work is the truth of race-based slavery, the truth of modern scientific racism, the truth of their historical origins, the truth of their justification and acceptance within an Enlightenment framework of freedom, equality, and justice, the truth of how they came to be entwined in the tangled vines of Western ascension and pre-eminence. Much of what has occurred in the West can be ultimately understood by analyzing the philosophical trends of the period being queried. For it is philosophy, be it formally or informally expressed, that provides the conceptual frameworks that give order and interpretive meaning to the decisions and actions that drive historical events; in turn, it is history that is used to justify present actions and future plans. Philosophies spring from the civilizations in which they are grounded; like the various grains grown since antiquity, they instead provide nourishment for the mind, are cultivated, and often cross-pollinate with other philosophical strains to provide "new food for thought." By studying the philosophies of a given civilization, as an agronomist studies various species of plants, one can trace the origins of certain contemporary strains back to their historical roots, even gaining insight into the societal milieu that gave them life. Whole philosophies seldom survive intact, however; like genes, ideas are incorporated into a civilization's cultural DNA, influencing its evolution.

The notion of race and the process of racial classification raise fundamental philosophical questions about the nature of human existence, identity, and difference. Perhaps the most visceral and fundamental challenge to one's existence occurs when confronted by beings that exemplify the "different other." In that moment of juxtaposition with the unimaginable "alien," one is forced to call into question the centrality of one's own existence and all that one knows about what constitutes normality and abnormality. Such encounters place one on "the front trench of truth" in a "no man's land" defined by the two overarching concerns of philosophy, existence, and knowledge. It is

difficult enough for one to cope with the unique individual differences exhibited by those with whom one shares obvious commonalities in physical appearance, language, values, lifestyle, etcetera. However, to come face to face for the first time with someone who does not present a comfortable familiarity is disconcerting to say the least. The manner in which such encounters are handled is determined less by the supposed universals of “human nature” and more by the cultural cosmology or metaphysics into which one has been born and socialized.

Although issues related to existence, identity, difference, variety, sameness, aesthetics, unity, oneness, and knowledge represent the universal fodder of human rumination, these issues are always pondered and resolved, or at least addressed, within a sociocultural context. It is the world view that results from the philosophical pondering of these issues and the questions they raise that is central to determining the nature of cross-cultural encounters. Will these encounters result in curiosity and mutual exploration, fear and bilateral conflict, or hegemony and unilateral exploitation? The answers to these questions hinge on how the cosmologies or metaphysics of the encountering parties influence the interpretation of their juxtaposed existences and what epistemological frameworks they use to support their interpretations. Depending on the nature of the interpretation, that “different other” could be perceived as a god or demon according to the cultural myths used as a reference. For example, some of the indigenous peoples of the Americas viewed the Europeans as gods because their mythologies foretold of the arrival of pale-skinned gods.

The encounter between Europeans and Africans is perhaps one of history’s most powerful examples of a confrontation between “different others.” For the Europeans, the initial encounter with black Africans was through second-hand images found on ancient Egyptian murals. “The oldest representations of black Africans, dating from 2500 BC, show them well integrated into society and intermarrying. They indicate also that black beauty is appreciated. Black as a colour is valued positively in Egyptian culture, as the colour of fertility (dark as the silt of the Nile).”⁶³ In ancient Egyptian cosmology, or metaphysics, blackness was positive and affirming. In philosophy, cosmology and metaphysics are “often used to refer to that branch of science, specifically a section of astronomy, which attempts to hypothesize about the origin, structure, characteristics, and development of the physical universe . . . [they may also be expressed in the form of myths].”⁶⁴ Black represented fertility because symbolically it was linked to the cycle of creation caused by the annual flooding of the Nile and the astrological cycle of the heavenly bodies that controlled the seasonal flooding. “Generally the world of antiquity not only in North Africa but also, for example, in Minoan Crete, was a mixed culture and one in which differences in skin colour did not play a significant role, or rather, in which black carried a positive meaning.”⁶⁵ Blackness as a positive

image and symbol continued through Greco-Roman Civilization. French Scholar Alain Bourgeois, relying not on speculation but written evidence, states:

It is clear that the Greeks of the Homeric times and the classical times, even of the Alexandrine times—poets, historians, moralists—knew Negroes far and near, appreciated them not with the curiosity of dilettantes and without the least racial prejudice, on the contrary with the most favorable feeling and in the most flattering terms [Translation by author].⁶⁶

In fact, when the Ethiopians, which in Greek means “burnt-skinned people,” were described by Herodotus in *The Histories*, he states “The Ethiopians to whom this embassy was sent, are said to be the tallest and handsomest men in the whole world.”⁶⁷

With the advent of Christianity, a significant shift occurred in Western metaphysics and cosmology. Before going further, it is important to reiterate the power that religion possesses to alter the view of an entire culture. Religion addresses the same basic metaphysical and cosmological questions of origin, purpose, good, evil, death, the immortality of the soul, and the existence God that are broached in philosophy, but with an assurance that is more comforting and requires less intellectual rigor. As cited in an earlier quote by Bryan Magee, “In religion, reasons are appealed to sometimes, but also faith, revelation, ritual, and obedience have indispensable roles, and reason can never take a person the whole way.” This is why religion can sweep through the heart and burn away all the existential doubt caused by reason if one only has faith. Saint Augustine, in his often-cited maxim, speaks to the primacy of faith over reason when he states, “credo ut intelligam”⁶⁸ (I believe in order to understand). His belief in the primacy of faith over reason is most clearly articulated in the following statement:

Faith precedes reason; it cleans the heart that it may bear the light of greater reason. Therefore, it is reasonably said by the prophet, “unless you believe, you will not understand” (Isaiah 7:9). In discerning these two, he meant that we may be able to understand that which we believe.⁶⁹

The shift in Western metaphysics and cosmology caused by Christianity had a profound impact on the symbolism of good and evil, an impact that would also affect how Europeans viewed the darker-skinned peoples of the world. As Pieterse writes:

In the writings of several of the church fathers of Western Christendom (not Byzantium), the colour black began to acquire negative connotations as the colour of sin and darkness. The symbolism of light and darkness was probably

derived from astrology, alchemy, Gnosticism, and forms of Manichaeism; in itself it had nothing to do with skin colour, but in the course of time it did acquire that connotation. Black became the colour of the devil and demons. Later, in confrontation with Islam, it came to form part of the enemy image of Muslims: the symbolism of the “black demon” was transferred to Muslims—in early medieval painting black Saracens, black tormentors, and black henchmen tortured Christ during the Passion. This is the tradition of the devil as the Black Man . . . ⁷⁰

Europeans generalized the image of the black demon, which they had originally applied to Muslims of Moorish descent, to sub-Saharan Africans with whom they had little contact. This symbolic transference was psychological in nature and based purely on skin color. “What is striking in all this is that . . . [the] . . . drastic changes and differentiations in European images of Africa . . . were related mainly to changes which took place in Europe.”⁷¹ There was a brief period during which the negative European view of black Africans was assuaged by the spread of the legend of Prester John:

Prester John (John Presbyter, Prêtre Jean, Pape Jan), alleged to be the king of a Christian kingdom in Ethiopia, on the far side of the lands of Islam [during the latter half of the tenth century]. Prester John, so the legend had it, was the guardian of the gates of paradise, but he was also a prince who really existed and the descendant of one of the three kings who came to worship the child Jesus [according to an apocryphal letter disseminated in around 1165]. . . . This was the occasion for Christian Ethiopianism—a love for black Africans and a pre-occupation with a fabulous prince somewhere in Africa.⁷²

Later, Christian Ethiopia would become an important ally of the Europeans in the Crusades. For a brief period of history, Europeans believed that they shared a common cosmology with black Africans as a result of a shared theological conception of the world.

However, despite this shared cosmology between Europeans and Ethiopians, the positive view of black Africans would wane as Portuguese navigators sailed southward along the African coast in search of riches and a possible passage eastward to the Indies. The further south these voyages took the Portuguese, the deeper they would plunge “into the terrifying dark recesses of the Iberian collective unconscious . . . [and] . . . the more the benign black image of Prester John became obscured under the frightening and then contemptible ones of the Moor at Ceuta [in Morocco] and the Guinea slave. But there was substantial compensation for this in gold and . . . in the glory of the unique, southward-directed Crusade that Portugal could claim as her own God-given mission.”⁷³ Their haunting experiences in North Africa in part caused the Portuguese to abandon their attempts to invade Africa from the north to secure the lucrative trans-Sahara gold trade from their long-time nemesis, the Moors. One of the

last of these experiences, perhaps the one that convinced the Portuguese to ultimately circumvent North Africa by sea, happened in August 1578 when “a few score Portuguese soldiers got narrowly away from the bloody Moroccan battlefield of al-Ksar al-Kabir, leaving behind 25,000 dead . . . not for another three centuries would Europe repeat the effort. . . .”⁷⁴ However, for the Portuguese and the other Europeans who followed, it was this possibility of wealth and glory that drove them past their fear of the “dark unknown.”

Any discussion of the encounter between Europeans and Africans is clearly not complete without viewing this encounter from the African perspective. Obviously, there is much more written from the European vantage point when it comes to any analysis of said encounter because of the relative dearth of written accounts from the African point of view. Besides, there is the old adage that states “to the victor goes the spoils,” one of the spoils being the historical definition of the encounter between the victor and the vanquished. It is alleged that many Africans viewed whites as bad spirits or ghosts because the sight of pale-skinned people was so amazing. Such accounts are part of the undifferentiated anecdotal folklore of West Africa. Robin Horton provides an example of such folklore. Specifically, he recounts a reported sighting of a white man by the Kalabari people of the Niger Delta in or about 1500. He summarizes the encounter as follows:

The first white man, it is said, was seen by a fisherman who had gone down to the mouth of the estuary in his canoe. Panic-stricken, he raced home and told his people what he had seen: whereupon he and the rest of the town set out to purify themselves—that is to say, rid themselves of the influence of the strange and monstrous thing that had intruded into their world.⁷⁵

Despite the overall lack of written accounts of European-African encounters from Africans themselves, one such narrative is so compelling that it warrants a citation. The encounter is revealed in the autobiography of an ex-slave named Olaudah Equiano, an Igbo from northeastern Nigeria. Slave traders from an enemy tribe kidnapped the then eleven-year-old Equiano along with his younger sister in or about 1756. Equiano was eventually able to buy his freedom after a decade and some years of being sold first to a master in Barbados then to a South Carolina planter and finally to a benevolent British naval officer from whom he purchased his freedom. Ultimately, he settled in England, where he married an English woman and became a powerful voice in the English abolitionist movement. Equiano describes his first encounter with white men as follows:

The first object that saluted my eyes when I arrived on the coast was the sea, and a slave ship, which was then riding at anchor, and waiting for its cargo. These

filled me with astonishment, that was soon converted into terror, which I am yet at a loss to describe, and much more then the feeling of my mind when I was carried on board. I was immediately handled and tossed up to see if I was sound, by some of the crew; and I was now persuaded that I had got into a world of bad spirits, and that they were going to kill me. Their complexion too, differing, so much from ours, their long hair, and the language they spoke, which was very different from any I had ever heard, united to confirm me in the belief . . . When I looked round the ship too, and saw a large furnace or copper boiling and a multitude of black people, of every description, chained. Together every one of their countenances expressing dejection and sorrow, I no longer doubted my fate; and quite overpowered with horror and anguish, I fell motionless on the deck, and fainted. When I recovered a little, I found some black people about me . . . [and] . . . asked them if we were not to be eaten by those white men with horrible looks. . . .⁷⁶

The initial encounters between Europeans and Africans were distorted and obscured by the metaphysical fog of their countervailing cosmologies, with the Europeans viewing the Africans as “black demons” and the Africans perceiving the Europeans as “bad spirits.”

Earlier in this chapter, an analogy was drawn between the Rosetta Stone and philosophy, because they both in their own ways provide a deciphering function. The Rosetta Stone fulfilled this function by providing archeologists with a cipher for decoding ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs, while philosophy served and continues to serve a similar function by providing insight into the thought processes of the Western mind. Interestingly enough, the Greeks fulfilled an important role in both the creation of a linguistic cipher for Egyptian hieroglyphics and a philosophic cipher for Western thought. The Greeks not only provided the West with this speculative form of inquiry called philosophy, they also endowed it with powerful intellectual tools of analysis. Western historians and philosophers speak with unabashed pride of “the Greek miracle,” a phrase pregnant with innuendo. For them, the awakening of Greece represented “the new birth of the world,” an assertion that of course some non-western civilizations might view as a bit presumptuous. In fact, they might easily argue with legitimacy that the “many achievements of the Egyptians and the Mesopotamians were inherited and assimilated by the Greeks and the Hebrews, the spiritual ancestors of Western Civilization.”⁷⁷ Nevertheless, due to the extreme ethnocentrism of Western civilization, it is all-too-often assumed that “ancient Greeks” were the first to reason and speculate about the world, the first to exchange and criticize each other’s thoughts. However, the ancient Greeks knew better:

Even at the height of the classical ages, teachers such as Plato and Aristotle still remembered that their traditions of learning were heavily indebted to what they

called "Asia," which, to them, included Egypt. The extent of their debt to Egypt has got confused in recent and current debate with the problem of how far Egyptian civilization was "African" and Athena, by extension, "black" . . . [H]owever . . . nothing in Greek civilization can be understood without admitting . . . that Greece was a land open to the eastern Mediterranean and Greek culture was fashioned by influences from all around the sea's rim.⁷⁸

Scholars do, however, unanimously acknowledge that the city-states, collectively known as Greece, represent the first great civilization of the West, despite their frequent disunity. Of course, any discussion of the Greeks and their contribution to Western Civilization must, by necessity, include the Hellenic Age and Socrates—the first of the most studied thinkers of the great philosophical trinity, which includes Plato and Aristotle—who is often credited as exemplifying the intellectual imagination that was welling up in Greek society, just as any discussion of the Judeo-Christian tradition of the West must also begin with Moses, God's right hand, the great emancipator and law-bringer of the Jewish people. Socrates was central to the foundation of Western philosophy and his presence continues to be felt. Like Moses, who brought the laws of God down from Mount Sinai, thus establishing much of the foundation of Western theology, Socrates served the same role for Western philosophy.

After Moses allegedly "received his divine commission" from God and led his people out of Egypt, he presented them with God's Ten Commandments. With these commandments came a fundamental shift in the Jewish faith; it became "more concerned with defining how Jews ought to act than with what they should believe."⁷⁹ The operative word here is "ought," not "must," which implies a choice between following God's commandments and not following them. Many biblical scholars assert that the Hebrews originated the idea of moral autonomy that was inherited by Christianity, which subsequently became central to the Western moral and ethical tradition.⁸⁰ Judaism "advances an ethical monotheism that focuses on the exclusive worship of God"⁸¹ while also establishing firm moral and ethical standards for everyday life. As Cicero, the great Roman politician and orator, once proclaimed, Socrates "brought down philosophy from the heavens." By this Cicero meant that Socrates changed the emphasis of philosophy from cosmology, the speculative study of form, origin, and the universe, to the practical though often pedestrian concerns of day-to-day life. Socrates viewed the education of the general Greek populous as his mission in life. By focusing philosophical discourse on the ethical issues of Greek society, Socrates hoped to replace superstition with reason as the basis for the citizenry to develop their personal rules for living.

Plato, the second in the trinity of ennobled Greek philosophers, was the most destined to succeed of that "motley crowd [of] youths who flocked

about [Socrates] and helped him to create European philosophy.” Plato “relished [Socrates’] satirical analysis of Athenian democracy . . .”⁸² When one reads Plato’s writings, it is quite evident “that Socrates’ life and thoughts served as the inspiration and foundation for Plato’s philosophy.”⁸³ In fact, the world must rely almost exclusively on Plato’s writings to gain insight into the philosophy of Socrates, for he himself was a peripatetic sage who never penned his thoughts for posterity. Of course, the rhetorical question that must be asked is to what extent are the words and thoughts that Plato attributes to Socrates truly those of Socrates as opposed to those of a student who was attempting to add gravity and import to his own ideas. Was Socrates merely a stalking horse for Plato? Was Plato faithfully conveying the philosophy of his teacher? Or had the Socratic dialogues between the master and his student created something new? It is safe to assume that Plato and Socrates were allies in their belief in reason over intuition and emotion. It also appears that they both questioned the efficient and effectiveness of democracy as a form of government. After all, it was the Athenian democracy that gave Socrates the option of exile or suicide as punishment for corrupting the minds of Greek youth with unfounded religious and moral precepts and for turning them against the legitimate democratic government of Athens. As history would have it, he chose suicide, becoming, according to the French Enlightenment philosopher Marquis de Condorcet, the “first martyr” in a legion of philosophers to die in the war between reason and superstition,⁸⁴ a war that would rage well into modernity.

Western civilization owes much to the metaphysical and epistemological legacies of classical Greek philosophy; however, the majority of people are unaware of possibly the most obscure, yet powerful and ubiquitous legacies to be passed on to Western civilization by Plato. If questioned about Plato’s most noteworthy legacy, most people would probably cite his “Allegory of the Cave” found in *The Republic*. In fact, the eminent historian Norman Davies contends, “Nothing in intellectual history is more powerful than Plato’s metaphor of the cave, which suggests that we can only perceive the world indirectly, seeing reality only by means of its fire-lit shadows on the wall.”⁸⁵ This allegory has been taught in Western philosophy courses for centuries.

However, a strong case can be made for the legacies of biological determinism and the exaltation of oligarchic hierarchy represented in the “Myth of the Metals,” which can also be found in *The Republic*. In this work, Plato has Socrates argue that children, before they become citizens, should be educated and assigned to one of three classes according to their inherent capacities: rulers, auxiliaries, or craftsmen. In one of the dialogues, Glaucon, Plato’s half-brother, asks Socrates how he would convince the people of the

state to accept this approach; Socrates was unable to pose a logical justification for his argument. Then, with some considerable embarrassment, Socrates fabricates the "Myth of the Metals," in which he and Glaucon discuss the following:

"... although I don't know how I shall dare, or what words to use. Well, I will try first to convince the rulers themselves and the soldiers, then the rest of the city; and this is the story. The training and education we were giving them was all a dream, and they only imagined all this was happening to them and around them; but in truth they were being moulded and trained down inside the earth. . . ."

"I am not surprised," [Glaucon] said, "that you were shy of telling that lie!"

"There was a good reason for it," [Socrates] said, "but never mind, listen to the rest of the fable. 'So you are all brothers in the city,' we shall tell them in our fable, but while God moulded you, he mingled gold in the generation of some, and those are the ones fit to rule, who are therefore the most precious; he mingled silver in the assistants [the guardian soldiers or second class of guardians]; and iron and brass in farmers and other craftsmen. Then because of being all akin you would beget your likes for the most part, but sometimes a silver child may be born from a golden or a golden from a silver, and so with all the rest breeding amongst each other. The rulers are commanded by God first and foremost that they be good guardians of no person so much as of their own children, and to watch nothing else so carefully as which of these things is mingled in their souls. If any child of theirs has a touch of brass or iron, they will not be merciful to him on any account, but they will give him the value proper to his nature, and push him away among the craftsmen or the farmers; if again one of them has the gold or silver in his nature, they will honour him and lift him among the guardians or assistants, since there is an oracle that the city will be destroyed when brass and iron shall guard it. Now have you any device to make them believe this fable?"

"No, these people themselves will never believe it; but I see a way to make their sons believe it, and those who come after them, and the rest of mankind."⁸⁶

In *The Mismeasure of Man*, Stephen Jay Gould, in a cogent analysis of the influence of racism on the intellectual ranking of the people, points out a clear epistemological line of Western philosophical and social reasoning from Plato's *Republic* with its "Myth of the Metals" to modern racial ranking and racism. In his commentary on Plato's *Republic*, Gould argues, "Metals have ceded to genes (though we retain an etymological vestige of Plato's tale in speaking of people's worthiness as their 'mettle'). But the basic argument has not changed: that social and economic roles accurately reflect the innate construction of a people. One aspect of the intellectual strategy has altered, however. Socrates knew that he was telling a lie."⁸⁷ Gould's statement raises an interesting question as to whether or not Francis Galton, who coined the term

“eugenics” in 1883, or the legions of white social scientists who followed him, picking up the banner of biological determinism, were aware that they were perpetuating Plato’s lie. Of course, if a lie is told enough it often becomes mistaken for the truth. Witness the 1969 article by Arthur Jensen, which puts forward “the supposed innateness of group differences in IQ (with emphasis on disparity between whites and blacks in America).”⁸⁸ Or the 1994 publication of *The Bell Curve* by Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray, a work that purports to affirm that old Platonic argument that social inequality is dictated by biology.

The above type of thinking provided a rationale for three hundred years of anti-miscegenation laws in America that forbade interracial marriage in both the colonies and the republic and advanced this country’s eugenic movement, a movement that resulted in the sterilization of hundreds of poor people deemed mentally unfit. It is hard to believe that all of these social scientists had a conscious agenda; it is more palatable to believe that they had fallen prey to the ubiquitous biological determinist assumptions of Plato’s lie. All of this is not to say that Western civilization is the only civilization that is guilty of promulgating and perpetuating a system of social inequality based on a caste-like hierarchy of physical appearance. However, the West is the first to shroud such a system in the cloak of reason and supposed scientific objectivity. Aristotle, the third member of the trinity of great Greek philosophers, was sent to Plato’s Academy in Athens at the age of seventeen, where he studied and taught under Plato from 367 to Plato’s death in 347 BC.⁸⁹ Despite the fact that Aristotle challenged many of Plato’s philosophical assertions, he remained true to his mentor’s belief in dualism and functional hierarchies in nature and society based on innate characteristics. Aristotle’s belief in both of these philosophical assertions is clearly evidenced in Book I of *Politics*, where he discusses slavery and the ideal structure of the state. During this discussion, Aristotle poses a declamatory question about the legitimacy of slavery when he asks “is there any one . . . intended by nature to be a slave, and for whom such a condition is expedient and right, or rather is not all slavery a violation of nature?”⁹⁰ He then pivots on this rhetorical query and parries by proclaiming, “There is no difficulty in answering this question, on a grounds both of reason and fact. For that some should rule and others be ruled is a thing, not only necessary, but expedient; from the hour of their birth, some are marked out for subjection, other for rule.”⁹¹ Aristotle goes on to state, “In all things which form a composite whole and which are made up of parts, whether continuous or discrete, a distinction between the ruling and the subject element comes to light. Such duality exists in living creatures, but not in them only; it originates in the universe...”⁹² Aristotle’s metaphysics thus allows him to proclaim, “The use made of slaves and of tamed animals is not

very different; for both with their bodies minister to the needs of life."⁹³ With reference to the nature and relationship of the vast varieties of peoples in the world, one to another, Aristotle also agrees with Plato's assertion that there is an innate hierarchy amongst individuals and groups determined by their essential nature and function. In regards to this hierarchy and the question of who should constitute the governing classes in society, Aristotle states:

The ruling class should be the owners of property, for they are citizens, and the citizens of a state should be in good circumstances; whereas mechanics or any other classes [such as craftsmen] whose art excludes the art of virtue [meaning, according to Plato, those who do not possess as part of their character or station in life "justice, temperance, prudence, and fortitude"] have no share in the state. . . . And clearly property should be in their hands [the virtuous, that is], since the husbandmen [farmers] will of necessity be slaves or barbarians. . . .⁹⁴

Stewardship of the torch of Western philosophical illumination, first ignited by sages such Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, was wrested from Greek control upon their conquest by Rome. Yet, despite this defeat, the spirit of Greek philosophy continued to burn brightly under the auspices of the Romans for another six or more centuries before all but burning out with the fall of Rome. "It was not the fault of the Greeks [or Romans], but of events further west, in the Europe of the Dark Ages, that [the bequest to the West] was forgotten after a few centuries, only to be recalled in later mediaeval times. What mediaevals failed to appreciate in this legacy, the men of the Renaissance and Enlightenment did not."⁹⁵

With the resurrection of classical thought came a rediscovery of Plato's "Myth of the Metals," which provided Renaissance thinkers with a philosophical justification for the capture, trafficking, and use of African slaves. In 1460, Friar Martín Alfonso de Córdoba, a member of the Catholic order of Augustine, wrote *Un jardin de las doncellas* (A Garden of Noble Maidens), in which he offered a classicalist justification for slavery. Córdoba, being a member of the Augustine order, most surely was well schooled in the classics, given that Augustine was not only a great theologian, but one of the foremost scholars of classical philosophy. In *A Garden of Noble Maidens*, Córdoba based his philosophical justification for slavery on Platonic and Aristotelian metaphysics and epistemology. He argued that the barbarians "are those who live without the law; the Latins, those who have law; for it is the law of nations that men who live and are ruled by law shall be lords of those who have no law, because they are by nature the slaves of the wise..."⁹⁶ Interestingly enough, Queen Isabel of Spain, when she was a young girl, read this virtuous directive for young women, which had been originally commissioned by her

mother Isabella of Portugal. One could argue with confidence that her attitudes towards enslaving Moors and black Africans, in addition to being affected by the struggle between Spain and the Moors, were strongly influenced by the Augustine friar's words:

The Renaissance in Europe had no humanitarian pretensions. Its "hard, gem-like flame" reburnished the ideas and practices of antiquity, the institution of slavery among them. It was entirely logical that the discovery of the New World should be attended by a rebirth of the idea of forced labor. A Flemish diplomat, Ogier-Ghislain de Busbecq, en route for Constantinople, in the mid-sixteenth century, even regretted the shortage of slaves in his day: "We can never achieve the magnificence of the works of antiquity," he sighed, "and the reason is that we lack the necessary hands, that is, slaves."⁹⁷

Looking back over the history of Western ascension, one could easily argue, with an assurance backed by countless scholars, that the legacy of classical Greek civilization gave impetus to the rise of Western civilization. However, one could also make the equivalent, though less popular, argument that the arrogance, divisiveness, and opportunism that has become a hallmark of Western hegemony was in large part due to the Greeks. Specifically, it was due to the melding of Platonic and to some extent Aristotelian metaphysics and epistemology with the Greek zest for individualism and critical rationalism. This is not to say that arrogance, divisiveness, and opportunism were central features of Greek civilization, although Greek ethnocentrism and hegemony are a matter of historical record. "They were peculiarly gripped by the passion to understand, to penetrate the uncertain flux of phenomena, and grasp a deeper truth."⁹⁸ This passion, over time, did devolve into arrogance, divisiveness, and opportunism, especially once the philosophical legacy of Greece was inherited by Europe. Unfortunately, as is the case for much that is inherited, the heirs often become arrogant, using their inheritance in a divisive and opportunistic fashion. Plato's "Myth of the Metals" and his conception of ideal forms continued as a metaphysical and epistemological refrain throughout Western history, finding further expression in colonialism, slavery, the eugenics movement, racial segregation, and present-day cultural and economic imperialism.

At the bedrock of Western metaphysics is the Greeks' view of the cosmos, a cosmos that represents:

. . . an ordered expression of certain primordial essences or transcendent first principles, variously conceived as Forms, Ideas, universals, changeless absolutes, immortal deities, divine *archai*, and archetypes. . . . These archetypal principals included the mathematical forms of geometry and arithmetic; [dual-

ism in the form of] cosmic opposites such light and dark, male and female, love and hate, unity and multiplicity; the forms of man (anthrōpos) and other creatures; and the Ideas of the Good, the Beautiful, the Just, and other absolute moral and aesthetic values. . . . [This] archetypal perspective [forwarded by the Greeks] . . . would become the single most important foundation for the evolution of the Western mind . . .⁹⁹

Of course, given Eurocentrism, it was easy for the heirs of Greek civilization to believe that the Western mind was the archetype of the human intellect, which therefore meant that it could comprehend the cosmic order of things. Much of the intellectual arrogance of the West grew out of the Hellenic belief “that the universe possesses and is governed according to a comprehensive regulating intelligence and that this same intelligence is reflected in the human mind, rendering it capable of knowing the cosmic order. . . .”¹⁰⁰ This is why Hegel states:

Divine wisdom, i.e., Reason, is one and the same in the great as in the little; and we must not imagine God to be too weak to exercise his wisdom on the grand scale. Our intellectual striving aims at realizing the conviction that what was *intended* by eternal wisdom, is actually *accomplished* in the domain of existent, active Spirit, as well as in that of mere nature.¹⁰¹

Hegel believed that God or, as he states, the Spirit, was moving through history on an ever-ascending path to perfection—the Divine Idea. “The State,” he explains, “is the Divine Idea as it exists on earth”¹⁰² and “that the national bourgeois states of nineteenth-century Europe in general, and the Prussian State in particular, had arrived near the last stage of the unfolding of the Divine Idea. . . .”¹⁰³ Interestingly enough, he believed that America was the land of the future, implying that God possibly would realize perfection on earth in America.¹⁰⁴ The Scottish philosopher, David Hume, provided another example of the arrogance and divisiveness that has come to characterize the West when he declared, “There never was a civilized nation of any other complexion than white, nor even any individual eminent either in action or speculation.”¹⁰⁵

The concept of Ideal Form, first advanced by Pythagoras, when applied through geometry to the world of measurement and space relations is, at least on the surface, devoid of positive or negative implications for the measurement of human worth. Its implications are essentially benign and utilitarian. A case in point that is often given as an example is the potter who aspires to throw or create a perfectly round pot, but falls short of perfection due to human limitations. It seems that no matter how many times the pottery wheel is turned, attempts fall short of perfection. For the potter, roundness exists as an

abstract Ideal Form to be strived for as an artisan. However, it is another matter when one attempts to identify Ideal Forms outside of mathematics in the realm of human nature and interaction. For example, how does one avoid egocentric measures, or for that matter, how does society avoid ethnocentric measures when determining what constitutes the ideal human in aesthetic form, character, and intellect? Or the ideal state in terms of political, economic, and judicial form? Even more importantly, how are people to know the “truth” in its broadest sense and, for those who are humble enough to admit they are not in possession of such omnipotent insight, who will protect them from those who are arrogant enough to believe they do? Is society to be divided into two groups as Plato envisioned, with slaves serving as the body of the state and masters as the soul or mind of the state?¹⁰⁶ Or is it to be divided into the wealthy and the poor with the wealthy ruling, as was suggested by Aristotle? One has to but causally read history and be moderately aware of current events to realize that the West claims to possess the “truth.” Western hubris can be witnessed in the projection of its ideals onto the world through the application of its economic and military power. For example, it is through the economic control of the visual media that the West manipulates the most essential aspects of human life right down to such things as the Ideal Form of beauty, which is projected as being Caucasian. The West, through its economic and military might, also imposes its world vision of the Ideal Form of government, the capitalist republic. Witness the toppling of duly elected progressive and socialist governments in South America and the continual decades-long push by the United States to install free-market reforms in the collectively oriented societies of Africa. Having said all of this, the intent is not to take the ethical relativist position that says each culture is right unto itself, nor is it to take the ethical absolutist position that asserts a single set of moral truths by which all cultures and individual are to be judged. However, it is important that any ethical absolutes, and there are admittedly some, that are held up for world adoption be the results of a genuine cross-cultural consensus, not the imposition of a nation that is a hegemonic superpower. “Might makes right” is not an ethical absolute that the powerless would readily agree upon.

Individualism is another archetypal principle embraced by the West as being an innate universal characteristic of the human species. Individualism is a term “used to characterize a range of ideas, philosophies, and doctrines [that focus on the] importance of the individual and individual interest”¹⁰⁷ in every sphere of life. Rooted deeply in the soil of Greece, individualism, like the ancient olive trees at the base of Mount Olympus, casts a broad shadow across the social and cultural landscape of Western civilization.

The oracle at Delphi famously commanded “Know thyself!”, and Heraclitus explained his philosophical endeavors as “searching for myself”. The sentiment implied by such remarks—the urge towards self-sufficient individual understanding—is not one found among the Greeks’ neighbors, nor even among the sages of India or China [who counsel their followers to be selfless, for as the Buddha stated, humans are not isolated beings, they are one with all life in a cycle of interdependent arising].¹⁰⁸

Although the seeds of Western individualism were first planted eons ago in the ancient soil of Greek consciousness, well over two millennia would have to pass before that which was sowed by the likes of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle would be transplanted into the rich humus of English entrepreneurial capitalism and reach fruition under the husbandry of Puritan reformers. James Block, in *A Nation of Agents*, sums up this fact as follows:

The culture of modern individualism emerged most prominently and pervasively in England in the century leading to the English Revolution. It began with the rise of a Puritan opposition in the 1560s, a popular movement which evolved far beyond its elite and intellectual origins to capture Parliament along with broad sections of the church and society. Its constituents were the product of profound changes in the English economy. During that century, the privatization of agricultural holdings and the emergence of a national market had stimulated widespread commercialization with incentives for specialized production, technological improvements, and a consolidation of holdings. The increasing role of individual incentives, business acumen, and responsibility for success in this new market economy generated a rising group of enterprising rural gentry, yeomen, and artisans . . . The dependence of fortune on an individual’s own actions increased the reliance on personal judgment and initiative.¹⁰⁹

Capitalism, this newly emerging economic system that transformed England and Europe, “offering opportunities of speculative gain on a scale unknown before,” was “swept forward by an immense expansion of commerce and finance” that fostered the rise of intense competition and individualism in the West.¹¹⁰

The Western belief in individualism is further reinforced by the “Enlightenment assumption of a common human nature that nurture and society [could] do little or nothing to alter [because it was rooted in] the basic structure of human aspirations and fulfillment. Different societies may channel those aspirations in different ways, but a society is essentially a collection of individuals with pre-formed desires who come together in order more efficiently to satisfy those desires.”¹¹¹ Although empiricist philosophers of this era contended it was experience, not nature, that formed the human mind,

their references to people of color being “naturally inferior to the whites,” as cited in an earlier quote by David Hume, contradicts their assertion of the primacy of nurture over nature. Much of social science, particularly psychology, is based on the assumption of a universal human nature. Unfortunately, for the non-western world, the standard for what constitutes human nature is the Western psyche. Hence, other ways of being are judged as primitive, deviant, or at best uninformed. This is not to say that other cultures are devoid of ethnocentrism; however, they do not have the power to impose their world view on the West and are powerless to resist its cultural imperialism. The West, with its arrogant assumptions, has made the “fundamental attribution error” by attributing too much power to the individual and not enough to the social structure within which the individual functions. “Individualism is often charged with dissociating the ‘free’ individual from the matrix of social relations and norms that in fact make agency, freedom, and even self-consciousness possible.”¹¹² It is interesting how this history of individualism has allowed whites in the West to reject collective responsibility for colonialism, genocide, slavery, racism, and the continued economic exploitation of non-western people of color while holding those same people collectively responsible for their own plight. In addition, when those who have been exploited and oppressed react, the West tends to respond with military might and economic sanctions.

In *World Philosophies*, David Cooper suggests that Western philosophers, particularly those of the Enlightenment, viewed individualism “as a plea for independence from an ‘immature’ reliance on inherited ways of thinking.”¹¹³ Such a position was not problematic when taken by Western philosophers in reaction to the restrictive orthodoxy of Europe’s Middle Age. However, it becomes the height of arrogance and presumptuousness when it is used to judge the non-western world; witness Hegel’s remarks about Africans:

The peculiarly African character is difficult to comprehend, for the very reason that in reference to it, we must quite give up the principle which naturally accompanies all our ideas—the category of Universality. In Negro life, the characteristic point is the fact that consciousness has not yet attained to the realization of any substantial objective existence—as for example, God, or Law—in which the interest of man’s volition is involved and in which he realizes his own being. This distinction between himself as an individual and the universality of his essential being, the African in the uniform, undeveloped oneness of his existence has not yet attained . . . ¹¹⁴

Driven by this same arrogance and presumptuousness witnessed in Hegel’s remarks, the West embarked on a crusade to forcibly impose individualism on the inhabitants of the non-western world under the guise of lib-

erating them from the “immaturity” of their collective ways of thinking. Evidence of this drive is captured in an earlier citation from an 1802 edition of the *Edinburgh Review*, which states, “Europe is the light of the world, and the ark of knowledge: upon the welfare of Europe hangs the destiny of the most remote and savage people.” Tragically, these so-called “remote and savage people” who were to be rescued “from an ‘immature’ reliance on inherited ways of thinking” were, in fact, subjected to the exploitive collective will of the West in the form of colonialism, racism, and slavery—not to mention the eventual contemporary effects of neo-colonialism in the form of corporate internationalism. Interestingly enough, contemporary Western capitalists who make billions of dollars through the neo-colonial exploitation of non-Western people shield themselves as individuals from worker claims of abuse and injury by invoking the collective strategy of limited corporate liability, a strategy used against workers in the United States almost since the nation’s inception.

Edwin Nichols, former chief of the staff college of the National Institute of Mental Health, in a paper entitled *The Philosophical Aspects of Cultural Difference*, presents an axiological analysis of African and European cultures. Nichols found when he compared the core values of Western and African cultures that, for European and mainstream American cultures, “the highest value lies in the object or in the acquisition of the object,” as opposed to African cultures, where “the highest value lies in the interpersonal relationship between men.”¹¹⁵ Individualism and individual property, as stated earlier, are central to identity, social relationships, and status in the West; whereas for Africans, identity and social status are determined by a person’s ability to build social relationships, a skill that is more collective and collaborative than individualistic in nature. In addition, the African axiology does not present an either/or proposition that pits the individual against the group, but instead presents a both/and proposition that places the individual as a unique being in the context of the group.¹¹⁶

Of all the nations of Europe, however, England most firmly embraced individualism. Alan Macfarlane, the author of *The Origins of English Individualism*, found in his research on English culture and history that medieval travelers from mainland Europe perceived the English to be extremely individualistic. In his summary of the remarks made by these foreign travelers, Macfarlane states, “Combined with their self-confidence and arrogance went a mutual suspiciousness: each individual was out for himself and trusted no one else.”¹¹⁷ Only their rebellious offspring, the Americans, would carry individualism to even more extremes of self-absorption and individual freedom. In fact, the desire for “individual freedom and unimpeded property rights were bound together in the American mind . . .”¹¹⁸

Joel Kovel, in his work entitled *White Racism: A Psychohistory*, defines property within a psychological context as “some portion of the external world that a man’s self may call its own. Property means, therefore, that a man’s self—the inner idea of his personage—is united with and enlarged by part of the ‘thing’-world.”¹¹⁹ It was this linkage between individual freedom and unimpeded property rights that became the source of European- and Anglo-American greed, as manifested in the appropriation of Native American land and the economic enterprise of slavery. One British economist described the enterprise of slavery as “the first principle and foundation of all the rest, the mainspring of the machine which sets every wheel in motion.”¹²⁰ Kovel describes the degrading process of slavery and how the unimpeded property rights of the West transformed that institution into an even more dehumanizing economic enterprise than it had been in antiquity. He states:

Nothing so demonstrates the oddity of the West’s attitude toward property as the manner in which Western man enslaved black Africans. We noted earlier that property rationally begins and ends with the possession of one’s own body, [a principle that is enshrined in the Fourth and Fifth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution]. It was precisely this limit that the West breached with its slavery. For the American slaver did not simply own the *body* of his black slave—although even that may have been more extreme than some earlier variants of slavery, where the slave’s freedom was but limited and only his work owned. The American slaver went one step further in cultural development: he first reduced the human self of his black slave to a body and then reduced the body to a *thing*; he dehumanized his slave, made him quantifiable, and thereby absorbed him into a rising world market of productive exchange.¹²¹

The final archetypal principal is reason, the crown jewel in the coronet of Western civilization, a symbol of nobility that establishes the West as preeminent among peoples of the world. To reason, “to think logically, to obtain inferences or conclusions from known or presumed facts,” is central to the critical rationalism of Greek philosophy. For the West, reason represents the fountainhead, the sacred spring of Castalia at the base of Apollo’s oracle from whence all that was civilized flowed. The Greeks believed that Delphi, the site of Apollo’s oracle, was the center of the world, as did those Europeans who claimed the wisdom that flowed down the Cephissus River from the spring at Castalia. The Greek word for thought or reason is *lógos*, which, when used in conjunction with science, referred to “the principles and methods used to explain phenomena in a particular discipline.” Interestingly, however, in ancient Greek religion, *lógos* referred to the divine word of god that provided spiritual inspiration, wisdom, and guidance.¹²² The other Greek word that stands for reason is *nôus*. “In Plato, *nôus* is the quality enabling one

to apprehend the [changeless absolutes known as] Forms.”¹²³ *Nôus* is used in some philosophies “to indicate God as the cosmic or world mind.”¹²⁴ This is what Hegel was referring to when he spoke of the “Divine Wisdom” or the Spirit moving through and defining history. Of course, it was Hegel who said of the Africans that they were emotional beings that, from the standpoint of humanity, were “mere sensuous volition with energy of will; since universal spiritual laws (for example, that of the morality of the Family) cannot be recognized. . . . Universality exists only as arbitrary subjective choice. . . . From these various traits, it is manifest that want of self-control distinguishes the character of the Negroes. This condition is capable of no development or culture . . . The only essential connection that has existed and continued between the Negro and European is that of slavery. . . .”¹²⁵ In other words, the African is an emotional child driven by desire and incapable of the reasoning necessary to fathom abstract universals. Ultimately, such arrogance would lead Western civilization to conclude that reason was the primary, though not necessarily the exclusive, domain of the “white man.” Lucius Outlaw, in his work *On Race and Philosophy*, affirms this supposition when he says:

. . . [the] projected (self-)image . . . of the Greco-Roman/European [is that of] “rational man.” This was a self-image that was made a paradigm through the efforts of dominant figures in Western philosophy to identify the human essence (the construction of a “philosophical anthropology”). The construction of this self-image has sources in the works of Plato and Aristotle, was revised and continued by Descartes, Kant, and others. . . . They also appointed themselves the sole custodians of this self-image. (For example, note the role and responsibility reserved for the philosopher-king by Plato in his *Republic*. Others after Plato would share in the belief that philosophy was the queen of the sciences, and philosophers consequently were the royal authorities among intellectuals.”¹²⁶

Western civilization's fascination with its own self-image is reminiscent of the legend of Narcissus made famous by Greek mythology. Narcissus, who after scornfully rejecting all of his suitors, was at last castigated by the gods, who had answered the prayers of one such suitor with a curse: “May he who loves not others love himself.” It was the goddess Nemesis, whose name means righteous anger, who brought this about:

As Narcissus bent over a clear pool for a drink and saw there his own reflection, on the moment he fell in love with *it*. “Now I know,” he cried, “what others have suffered from me, for I burn with love of my own self—and yet how can I reach that loveliness I see mirrored in the water? But I cannot leave it. Only death can set me free.” And so it happened . . . when dying, he called to his image, “farewell—farewell . . .”¹²⁷

Western civilization has historically rejected all others as equals in the affairs of state and ultimately its isolation and self-absorption will prove to be its nemesis.

Peter Gay characterizes the Enlightenment in his same-titled book as a “prelude to modernity.” It was a “rediscovery of nerve,” a resurgence of a kind of cultural courage “as educated Europeans awoke to a new sense of life. They experienced an expansive sense of power over nature and themselves: the pitiless cycle of epidemics, famines, risky life and early death, devastating war and uneasy peace—the treadmill of human existence—seemed to be yielding at last to the application of critical intelligence.”¹²⁸ Dispassionate objectivity is heralded as a cornerstone of this “period of European thought which is equated with a emphasis on reason, experience, skepticism of religious and traditional authority, and a gradual emergence of the ideals of secular, liberal, and democratic societies.”¹²⁹ Despite the expanding insight into the nature of the physical and social universe, and the emergence of liberal civil society, colonialism and slavery continued to flourish in the dark shadow of reason’s bright luminescence, for its radiant energy was drawn from the subjugation of non-western lands and peoples.

“The great wave of ideas and emotions, known in France, and [to] those [in Europe] who followed her, as the Enlightenment, was (in contrast to the Renaissance) hostile to slavery, though not even the most powerful intellects knew what to do about the matter in practice.”¹³⁰ Part of what impeded the effectiveness of their efforts was their own racism and, in some cases, their own complicity in the trade itself. For example, Voltaire, “hailed as the greatest French champion of the Enlightenment and his generation’s most courageous spokesman for freedom and toleration,”¹³¹ though against slavery, believed that Africans were a different species that mated with orangutans.¹³² Voltaire, like Locke and many other Enlightenment thinkers who were against slavery, still chose greed over principle. “Voltaire, more than most of the Enlightenment writers, was an ‘establishment’ man. He lived in England for several years and became an admirer of English laws and concepts of property and their linkage to freedom. He also invested heavily in commerce and trade, which he saw as the lifeblood of a free society. He thus had vested interest in maintaining the colonial system and the slave trade.”¹³³ In fact, when Jean-Gabriel of Nantes, the leading *négrier* (trader of blacks) for the region, offered to name one of his ships after Voltaire, the philosopher accepted the honor with some delight.¹³⁴

This type of racism and economic opportunism also pervaded the thoughts and actions of many English Enlightenment thinkers. As previously stated, John Locke, the “philosopher of liberty,” was in the vanguard of the British slave trade as a charter member of and shareholder in the Royal African Company, the company that had the British monopoly on the slave trade. David Hume, or “Saint David” as he was known, expressed some of the most racist attitudes of any of the Enlightenment thinkers when he penned this earlier-

cited line, "I am apt to suspect that the Negroes and, in general, all other species of men (for there are four or five different kinds) to be naturally inferior to whites."¹³⁵ "Their influence—and that of the new European explorers of other continents—was important at the University of Göttingen, founded in 1734 by George II, Elector of Hannover and King of England, and [in] forming a cultural bridge between Britain and Germany. It is not surprising, therefore, that the first 'academic' work on human racial classification—which naturally put whites or 'Caucasians,' at the head of the hierarchy—was written by Johann Fredrich Blumenbach, a professor at Göttingen."¹³⁶

Hume's views of the "negro" were also shared by Immanuel Kant, the man who "is commonly regarded by devotees of philosophy as the most outstanding figure to have emerged in the subject [of philosophy] since the ancient Greeks."¹³⁷ It is not surprising that Kant would agree with Hume's views, given Kant's admiration of Hume, as evidenced in his famous remarks made in 1783 in the *Prologomena to any future metaphysics*, where he says, in essence, "Hume awoke him from his dogmatic slumbers."¹³⁸ Kant said the following about Hume's characterization of the "negro":

The Negroes of Africa have, by nature, no feeling that rises above the trifling. Mr. Hume challenges anyone to cite a single example in which a Negro has shown talents, and asserts that among the hundreds of thousands of blacks who are transported elsewhere from their countries, although many of them have even been set free, still not a single one was ever found who presented anything greater in art or science or any other praiseworthy quality, even though among the whites some continually rise aloft from the lowest rabble, and through superior gifts earn respect in the world. So fundamental is the difference between these two races of man, and it appears to be as great in regard to mental capacity as in color.¹³⁹

These words are quite discouraging, given the fact that they were uttered by a man who, according to philosopher Martha Nussbaum, "holds that even a man in whose heart nature has placed little sympathy for others can still be expected to be absolutely committed to their good."¹⁴⁰ Again, the hypocrisy of many of the Enlightenment thinkers is obvious. Where was Kant's commitment to the good of the countless African slaves that served as "the main-spring of the machine which set every wheel in motion," driving the juggernaut European imperialism.

The comments by Hume and Kant, which were not atypical for the period, are particularly disconcerting because they deny facts that were already in the historical record and available for review by intellectuals of that period. European leaders and intellectuals were quite aware of the great sub-Saharan kingdoms of Africa, but their attitudes towards Africa changed with their

hegemonic designs on the riches of the African continent. Historian Felipe Fernández-Armesto, in *Millennium: A History of the Last Thousand Years*, says the following about the empires of Sub-Saharan Africa:

The king most noted for his riches, in the opinion of a Majorcan [Spanish] map-maker of the late-fourteenth century, was to be found neither in Europe nor Asia. None of the long-established civilizations which had dominated the first third of the millennium could compete for reputed wealth with the recently arisen empire of Mali, where, deep in the African interior, across the glare of the Sahara and against the darkness of the jungle, between the grasslands of the Savannah and the scrub of the Sahel, the glint of gold began in the 1320s to attract the admiration and cupidity of the Mediterranean world.¹⁴¹

Jan Nederveen Pieterse, in *White on Black*, states, “From antiquity to the early Middle Ages the dominant image [of Africa] changed from positive to negative, while the early to late Middle Ages saw the transformation of the black from an infernal demon to the highly honoured representative of a remote [Ethiopian] Christendom—Europe’s redeemer and help in distress.”¹⁴² This altered view was not due as much to a change in Africa as it was to a shift in Europe’s hegemonic aspirations.

Despite Kant’s influence on the mainland of Europe, “The English-speaking world proceeded in almost complete ignorance of Kant. His masterpiece, *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), was not even translated into English until 1854, a full half-century after his death; and few educated English people, then as now, were able to read German. Consequently, little progress beyond Hume was made in metaphysics and theory of knowledge.”¹⁴³ After Hume, it was not until the emergence of the Utilitarian philosopher Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832) that the lasting influence of an English language philosopher was felt in Europe. He is best known as the philosophical radical who “took a maxim that had been enunciated early in the eighteenth century by a Scots-Irish philosopher called Francis Hutcheson: ‘that action is best which procures the greatest happiness for the greatest number.’ Bentham evolved this into a moral philosophy which held that the rightness or wrongness of an action was to be judged entirely in terms of its consequences (so that motives, for instance, were irrelevant), that good consequences were those that gave pleasure to someone, while bad consequences were those that gave pain to someone; therefore that in any situation the right course of action to pursue was the one that would maximize the excess of pleasure over pain, or else minimize the excess of pain over pleasure.”¹⁴⁴ The question to be asked here is whose pleasure and whose pain is to be considered in the application of the maxim of “greatest good?” If one follows Aristotelian logic, then the question would be moot, for as Aristotle stated in Book I of *Politics*, “The use made of

slaves and tamed animals is not very different: for both with their bodies minister to the needs of life.”

Interestingly, Bentham's ideas were being articulated at about the same time that Britain was governing, under colonial rule, almost a quarter of the world's population, and Liverpool was realizing between £100,000 and £300,000 a year in export trade, with approximately a third of this business going to Africa in exchange for slaves.¹⁴⁵ These facts would have undoubtedly disturbed Francis Hutcheson who, as earlier stated, had “coined the phrase made famous by Bentham concerning the desirability of ensuring the ‘greatest happiness of the greatest.’” Hutcheson was disturbed because the “originality of his work with regard to slavery lay in his conclusion that ‘all men [without exception] have strong desire of liberty and property,’ and that ‘no damage done or crime committed can change a rational creature into a piece of goods void of all rights.’”¹⁴⁶ It appears, however, that though Bentham based his principles for public policy on Hutcheson's maxim of the “greatest good,” in his own personal life slavery did not affect him as strongly as it did Hutcheson. For example, as the abolition of slavery gained currency in England, Jeremy Bentham, while sailing from Izmir to Constantinople in 1785, reports in a blasé fashion, “Our crew consists of 15 men besides the captain . . . [and] . . . 18 young negresses (slaves) under the hatch.”¹⁴⁷

Fortunately, the Enlightenment views of abolitionists in England prevailed with the English Parliament's abolition of slavery on January 1, 1807.

[The] influences of Enlightenment writers [also] provided nourishment for the growth of liberal ideologies in the colonies. By emphasizing that people were rational beings who should be free to make choices and decisions about their destiny, by raising questions about democratic reforms and human rights, and awakening intellectual thought to new possibilities, they fostered bold and novel ideas of political and social reforms. Consistent with their progressive social philosophies, most Enlightenment writers were generally opposed to slavery. Yet . . . some were ambivalent on the question of equality and expressed doubts that blacks were the equal of whites. Many also promoted the value of property rights, which inherently contradicted according human rights to slaves. Opposition to slavery was not necessarily predicated on beliefs in the natural equality of all humankind.¹⁴⁸

It is interesting that political and intellectual leaders like Thomas Jefferson, who was an ardent reader of Enlightenment philosophy and acutely aware of the impact of such writings on the European continent, were not profoundly affected in their views of slavery with all of its counter-Enlightenment injustice and oppression. “As a young man still in his twenties, Jefferson had purchased a three-volume French edition of Montesquieu's *De l'Esprit des Lois*,

and he was in Paris on the eve of the French Revolution. He was much affected by the ideas of Enlightenment thinkers, especially their condemnation of the abuses of authority and the evils of injustice and oppression. He was also aware of the growing abolitionist movement in England..."¹⁴⁹ In fact, it was Charles de Secondat, Baron de la Brède et de Montesquieu's idea of "separation of powers" that became the structural foundation for the United States Constitution.

Parenthetically, it is interesting that "Montesquieu acquired an intense admiration of the English revolution of 1688, and the associated ideals, voiced particularly, in Locke, of toleration, freedom, and government by constitution. In his version, however, this means a strengthening of the ancient privilege of the aristocracy against the encroaching power of the French monarchy. Montesquieu's own life, which included a marriage apparently for fortune, social climbing, and a rather unaristocratic avarice, somewhat echoes the self-serving appearance of this doctrine."¹⁵⁰ That same self-serving doctrine imbued with avarice can be witnessed in Article I, sections 2 and 9 of the United States Constitution, with its transparent legitimization of slavery. Although the Enlightenment emphasized that people were rational beings, unfortunately, rational beings also have an infinite capacity to rationalize their actions in the name of self-interest, and so the Founding Fathers used their racism to justify slavery just as Socrates had fabricated the "Myth of the Metals" as a rationalization for structural inequality in society. One can only speculate, in addition, but with a fair degree of confidence, that Montesquieu's position concerning the strengthening of the aristocracy, coupled with the admiration of continental lifestyle of the European elite held by Jefferson and the southern planter class, influenced their view of society and the "common man."

Slavery was able to thrive in the unkempt wasteland between property rights and human rights where crimes against humanity were and still are justified by profits and racism. This wasteland exists like the frontier region between two sovereign enemies, beyond decency and the law, a battleground of ideology, politics, and economics, where the innocent are the primary casualties. Entrepreneur slavery was able to flourish because of one of the most fundamental flaws of Western civilization, an axiology that prizes the relationship between the individual and property more than the relationship amongst people. This conflict between property rights and human rights was present in ancient Greece; again witness the words of Aristotle in Book I of *Politics*, where he states:

The slave is a piece of property which is animate, and useful for action rather than for production. Slavery is natural; in every department of the natural universe, we find the relation of ruler and subject. There are human beings who,

without possessing reason, understand it. These are natural slaves. But we find persons in slavery who are not natural slaves. Hence slavery itself is condemned by some; but they are wrong. The natural slave benefits by subjection to a master.¹⁵¹

John Locke elaborated on the importance of the relationship between the individual and property when he declares that the purpose of government was to be the facilitation of individual property acquisition and the protection of individual property rights. Locke's philosophy would become enshrined in the U.S. Constitution, which included the right to hold another person as property in direct contradiction of the principle of "possessive individualism" that asserts the most fundamental human right to be the right to control one's own body.

This contradiction of the principle of "possessive individualism" is understandable if assessed within the economic and political context of the times. For example:

On the question of slavery, Jefferson shared with his fellow planters the anguishing realization that it was an entire lifestyle that was at stake. Jefferson knew as well as anyone the overpowering dependence of white planters on slave labor. It was their belief that without the slaves there could not have been the critical commerce on which the new nation depended, or the great wealth that was accruing in both North and South. More than 80 percent of the nation's overseas trade was in products produced by slaves: tobacco, rice, cotton, sugar, and indigo. Manufacturing, transport, banking, shipbuilding, and road construction were stimulated by and benefited from the profits of slavery. More than that, white workers and small-farm owners had come to view the hierarchy of racial ranking as natural and redounding to their benefit.¹⁵²

As stated in the beginning of this chapter, one must delve back in Western history to the Greeks in order to unearth the roots of racism and racial slavery. "The Athenians were the first to seek a reason for discussing, as well as explaining, the institution of slavery (as of most other matters)."¹⁵³ Western civilization still relies on the ancient Greeks for guidance in most matters, particularly those related to governance, as Greece is viewed as the well-spring of Western philosophy. Although the Greek city-states, Athens in particular, are heralded as the headwaters for the political current of democracy in the world, those same city-states are the source of a countervailing current of political philosophy and oligarchy, the chief proponents of whom were Socrates and Plato. Contrary to popular belief, however, "there was not much democracy . . . [in Athens], for of the 400,000 inhabitants of Athens 250,000 were slaves, without political rights of any kind . . . [not to mention the absence of women's suffrage and the fact that adult males had to possess a

certain amount of wealth and had to have served in the military]. Yet what democracy they had was as thorough as never since, the general assembly was the supreme power; and the highest official body, the *Dikasteria*, or supreme court, consisted of over a thousand members (to make bribery expensive), selected by alphabetical rote from the roll of all the citizens."¹⁵⁴

Interestingly enough, Athens, during the great age of Pericles, was in many respects comparable to Victorian England in that it "was rich and powerful . . . and possessed of a democratic constitution administered by aristocrats."¹⁵⁵ In fact, a strong political, social, and economic parallel can be drawn between Athens and America during the colonial era and the first third of its history as a republic. Like Athens, there were parts of colonial America where slaves outnumbered whites; by 1721, the population of South Carolina was 18,000, which included 12,000 blacks, with approximately 1,000 African slaves arriving each year until the bloody Stono Rebellion of 1739, one of the earliest known slave rebellions.¹⁵⁶ By 1800, the overall population of the United States was 5,308,483 and of that figure, 18.9 percent, or 1,002,037, were black; over 90 percent of who were slaves.¹⁵⁷ Looking back on that era, the United States was much like Athens in another way; there was not much democracy in the republic and only white men with property were allowed to vote until the poll tax began to replace this requirement in the 1820s. Women, Native Americans, free blacks, and slaves were denied suffrage under any circumstance. Ironically, the nation's capital, Washington, D.C., with its Greco-Roman architecture, had a slave population of about 23 percent. "By the first part of the nineteenth century, the money invested in slaves was the largest concentration of capital in America. Much of the resulting wealth was distributed among the planter class and mercantile and shipping elite of the north, families whose bloodlines stretched back to the early years of the American colonies."¹⁵⁸ This newly emerging aristocracy, "in common with most Greek philosophers, took the view that leisure is essential to wisdom, which will therefore not be found among those who have to work for their living, but only among those who have independent means. . . ."¹⁵⁹ Slavery afforded the planter class and mercantile and shipping elite of the north "lives of leisure and travel . . . [providing them with] . . . the time and wealth to dabble in politics, read the classics, send their children to school in Europe, and emulate European aristocracy."¹⁶⁰

Members of this "new world" aristocracy, such as "Thomas Jefferson, ardently championed progress through science" and had voracious appetites for books pertaining to history and philosophy. The powerful influence of classical Greek and Roman history, metaphysics, ethics, and political philosophy can be detected in the writings of Jefferson. One very clear example of his passion for antiquity was a letter he penned on August 19, 1785, to his fa-

vorite nephew, Peter Carr, in which he advised him on a course of personal development.

I advise you to begin a course of ancient history, reading everything in the original and not in translations. First read Goldsmith's history of Greece. This will give you a digested view of that view of that field. Then take up ancient history in the detail, reading the following books, in this following order: Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophontis Anabasis, Arrian, Quintus Curtius, Diodorus Siculus, Justin. This shall form the first stage of your historical reading, and is all I need mention to you now. The next will be of Roman history [Livy, Sallust, Caesar, Cicero's epistles, Suetonius, Tacitus, Gibbon] . . . In morality, read Epictetus, Xenophontis Memorabilia, Plato's Socratic dialogues, Cicero's philosophies, Antoninus, and Seneca.¹⁶¹

Given this type of passion for antiquity, it is not hard to believe that this "new world" aristocracy might see themselves as the *nouveaux intellectuals* of Western civilization, the new Athenians. An earlier quote from one of John Adams' letters bears testimony to this perception, when he wrote, "There is nothing . . . more ancient in my memory . . . than the observation that arts, sciences, and empire always traveled westward . . . [and] . . . that their next leap would be over the Atlantic into America." As with the ancient Athenians, however, this glory would be built on the backs of slaves. The Athenians themselves "identified the enslavement of foreign captives as a turning point that ushered in freedom and prosperity for their citizens and permitted science and technology to flourish."¹⁶² However, Jefferson and his aristocratic peers were unable to or refused to acknowledge these negative parallels between Athens and the United States, not to mention the contradiction between the foundational documents of the republic and the practice of slavery. In a letter written on October 31, 1823, to Monsieur A. Coray, a Greek doctor and translator of ancient Greek text, Jefferson compares Athens to the United States and it is here where the inability or unwillingness to acknowledge the more negative aspects of this parallel is most obvious.

The government of Athens . . . was that of the people of one city making laws for the whole country subjected to them. That of Lacedaemon was the rule of military monks over the laboring class of the people, reduced to abject slavery. These are not the doctrines of the present age. The equal rights of man, and the happiness of every individual, are now acknowledged to be the only legitimate objects of government.¹⁶³

It is interesting to speculate how Jefferson, given that he was an avid reader of the classics, reconciled, if at all, the overt anti-democratic and pro-oligarchy stance of Plato and Socrates. This anti-democratic attitude is most

clearly stated in Plato's *Republic*, a work considered by Thomas Jefferson as essential reading, and one that is probably the most widely assigned philosophical treatise in colleges across America. It is curious, however, that not much, if any, attention is paid to the strong anti-democratic principles expressed in the *Republic*. In all fairness, Plato's perception of government was colored by the corruption and chaos of the time, and in response, he was attempting to create a philosophical framework for an ideal state that could transcend said corruption and chaos. However, in doing so, he presents a world ruled by a benevolent intellectual elite. Thomas Jefferson appears to have had a similar view of the newly formed republic when he spoke of "a national aristocracy of talent." In a letter penned to John Adams on October 26, 1813, Jefferson states:

. . . I agree with you that there is a natural aristocracy among men. The grounds of this are virtue and talents . . . There is also an artificial aristocracy, founded on wealth and birth, without either virtue or talents; for with these it would belong to the first class. The natural aristocracy I consider as the most precious gift of nature, for the instruction, the trusts, and government of society. And indeed, it would have been inconsistent in creation to have formed man for the social state, and not to have provided virtue and wisdom . . .¹⁶⁴

The central question that needs to be asked here is how realistic was Jefferson's belief that this aristocracy of talent could develop from other than ". . . an artificial aristocracy, founded on wealth and birth . . ."? The answer should have been obvious to him since the wealthy were the only class who had the time and means to dabble in philosophy, science, and politics. After all, Jefferson himself was born into a family that owned the most important tobacco plantations in the Virginia upcountry, was able to attend college at William and Mary, and studied law for five years. In fact, if he had not dropped his law practice and established his own plantation at Monticello, he probably would not have been able to dabble in philosophy, travel extensively, and pursue his political career for being bogged down in the world of litigation. Of course the previously posed question about Jefferson's belief in America's "artificial aristocracy" is rhetorical; its supposition, for people like Jefferson were born into an environment that was elitist, restrictive, and privileged. As the authors of the text, *Enduring Vision: A History of American People*, point out:

. . . legal requirements barred 80 percent of white men from running for assembly, most often specifying that a candidate must own a minimum of a thousand acres. (Farms then averaged 180 acres in the south and 120 acres in the middle colonies.) . . . Colonial gentlemen not only monopolized wealth but also domi-

nated politics. Governors invariably appointed members of the greater gentry to sit on their councils and as judges on the highest courts. Most representatives elected to the legislatures' lower houses (assemblies) also ranked among the wealthiest two percent.¹⁶⁵

The Greek metaphysical framework of dualism, with its juxtaposing of issues, pitted property rights against human rights, individual freedom against collective equality, reason against emotion, and either/or thinking against both/and thinking. Over the course of millennia, these issues have not been truly resolved by the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, or Western democracy, and continue in one form or another to plague the West as contending dichotomies. Despite Aristotle's assertion in his *Doctrine of Mean* that temperance, moderation, and avoidance of extremes is the best policy, the elite of the Western merchant class have not heeded his advice in their drive for power. Bertrand Russell, in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech, said, "Since power over human beings is shown in making them do what they would rather not do, the man who is actuated by love of power is more apt to inflict pain than to permit pleasure."¹⁶⁶ This principle seems to have been and continues to be at play in the United States as property rights continue to trump human rights; oligarchy masquerades as democracy, with the wealthy lobbying to control and buy government; individual freedom flies in the face of collective equality as the greed of the rich is pitted against the public interest of the majority; compassionless rationalizations are pressed forward as reasoned alternatives to empathy and advocacy for the poor; either/or thinking creates an uncompromising world of black and white extremes; and the "Myth of the Metals" continues to order people into racial hierarchies of inequality. Unfortunately, these trends are globally imposed as a part of the "new world order" by the remaining "superpower," the United States, and the capitalist republics that are its subservient allies. Tragically, the United States has not learned one of history's major axioms, "Power tends to corrupt; absolute power corrupts absolutely."¹⁶⁷

The safest general characterization of European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato.

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Chapter Two

Eurocentrism: The Metaphysics of Western Hegemony

Metaphysics—the white mythology which resembles and reflects the culture of the West: the white man takes his own mythology, Indo-European mythology, his own logos, that is, the mythos of his idiom, for the universal form of that he must still wish to call reason.

—*Jacques Derrida*, founder of Deconstructivism

The mythic narrative of America, that core ethos alluded to in this work's introduction, represents the extension of a long history of Eurocentric ascension and dominance, a history to which the Founding Fathers felt they were the heirs. Some argue that Eurocentrism has little consequence for historiography or contemporary event; at worst, it is no more than an exaggerated sense of Western pride, a manifest braggadocio that merely provokes jealousy in cultures that feel diminished in comparison. Many of the same people also contend that Eurocentrism is no more than a simple case of what William G. Sumner coined as "ethnocentrism." Sumner, in his seminal work *Folkways*, published in 1940, defines ethnocentrism as that "view of things in which one's own group is the center of everything, and all others are scaled and rated with reference to it."¹ In essence, ethnocentrism represents the metaphysics of a culture, embodying, as in the definition of metaphysics, "the most general persistent and pervasive characteristics of the universe"² as perceived by that culture. According to British historian Norman Davies, "Eurocentrism is a matter of attitude, not content. It refers to the traditional tendency of European authors to regard their civilization as superior and self-contained, and to neglect the need for taking non-European viewpoints into consideration."³ It is as if Western civilization emerged like the universe from the self-contained nothingness of a "singularity" in one big bang. This

Eurocentric attitude “first emerged as a discursive rationale for colonialism, the process by which the European powers reached positions of hegemony [i.e. dominance and control] in much of the world.”⁴

For ardent Eurocentrists, the preordained ascension to supremacy and the eternal reign of Western civilization is not presumption, but a fact that is as obvious as the rising and setting of the sun. Eurocentrists believe in the centrality of Western civilization to human history, a belief that for them warrants the same conviction expressed by the Italian philosopher, mathematician, and astronomer Galileo Galilei, when he declared—for point of fact, not Copernican speculation—that the planets revolved around the sun. To challenge either conviction is to court obvious folly, for the planets do revolve around the sun and Western civilization has been the central force in world history for the greater portion of modernity. As the sun owes its energetic luminescence to internal processes that are based on the laws of hydrostatic equilibrium and fusion, similarly Eurocentrists believe that Western civilization owes its manifest enlightenment and preeminence to what they would contend are equivalent Western philosophical and sociological “axioms.” It is the admixture of Hegelian Dialectics and Social Darwinist theory that appear to inform and fortify Eurocentrists in their assertion that the West is moving along an ever-ascending path to perfection and eternal supremacy. Historically, Eurocentrists have shown little concern for the fact that colonialism and slavery served as the primary vehicles of Western ascension. Although, the ideas of Hegel and Social Darwinist theory have waned in credibility among philosophers and sociologists, the essence of these schools of thought has become insinuated into Western culture and continues to inform social, political, and economic policy. These seemingly antiquated views of the world have, over the centuries, seeped like heavy metals into the groundwater of the collective Western unconscious, dulling almost all sense of empathy for the plight of those colonized and enslaved in the interest of empire, and blinding the citizenry to the impact of their civilization’s unfettered hegemonic striving. Anyone with a modicum of sensitivity has to be “startled by the degree of ‘otherness’ projected onto [the colonized and enslaved] societies by nearly all [of those in the Western world] who had something to say about humankind or human nature.”⁵

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel is considered to be the most influential Western philosopher of the nineteenth century, in part because he gave “historians a new agenda—not merely to record the unusual event set against the basically unchanging human and natural order . . . but to attempt to comprehend the entire evolution of human thought and society, being ever on the alert to detect new potentialities as they emerge in the course of time.”⁶ In addition, Hegel gave voice to an expanding Western ego, codified its psyche,

and bridged the intellectual gulf between eighteenth- and twentieth-century Western thought. For one to truly understand the metaphysical underpinning of Western hegemony, one must contend with Hegel. Scholar Edgar Knoebel is even more emphatic in his view of Hegel's importance, asserting that "almost all great Western philosophies—whether idealist or materialist, pragmatic or existentialist, radical or conservative—have had to come to terms with Hegel's ideas."⁷ So powerful were Hegel's ideas that Bertrand Russell, in his comprehensive work *A History of Western Philosophy*, states, "At the end of the nineteenth century, the leading academic philosophers [not only in Germany, but] in America and in Great Britain, were largely Hegelians."⁸ According to Russell, Hegel was "a child of the Romantic Age" who "was much attracted to mysticism, and his later views may be regarded, to some extent, as an intellectualizing of what had first appeared to him as mystic insight."⁹ With his mystical and religious leanings, Hegel rejected "the abstract, mechanical rationalism of the Enlightenment [in favor of a] . . . philosophical idealism . . . [constructed of] . . . many elements of romanticism."¹⁰ From his early fascination with mysticism and his belief in a *Göttliche Ordnung oder Grund* (Divine Order or Reason) came a sense of history in which God, or, to use his term, the "Spirit," had taken the form of history.¹¹ All of this is not to say that Hegel's philosophy was devoid of all elements of rationalism; quite the contrary was the case, as is evident in his conception of dialectics; yet his belief in a "world Spirit" moving through history clearly establishes Hegel as a romantic. For Hegel there was no conflict between God and reason, for God was the source of Divine Order and the conduit for reason. Specifically, Hegel states that "Divine Wisdom, i.e., Reason, is one and the same in the great as in the little and we must not imagine God to be too weak to exercise his wisdom on the grand scale. Our intellectual striving aims at realizing the conviction that what was *intended* by eternal wisdom, is actually *accomplished* in the domain of existent, active Spirit, as well as in that of mere nature."¹² If Hegel had been a contemporary of Socrates, he would have risen to Socrates' defense against the Athenian court that demanded he choose God over reason or be martyred for his heresy. For Hegel, God is reason and reason is God or, as Socrates' student Plato once declared, "God is a geometer."¹³

Hegel, in his series of lectures on the *Philosophy of History*, drew on the dualism of Socrates and Plato when he defined spirit as separate from matter. Hegel defined his notion of spirit as being a "self-contained existence" that "has its center in itself," hence making it free to appreciate its own nature and actualizing that nature through the process of time and the venue of history. Hegel maintained that matter, unlike spirit, is a slave to gravity, that force that draws discrete elements of existence towards a central point. The material world is made manifest and ruled by the law of gravity as it pulls subatomic particles together to form atoms, then molecules, and finally discernible ob-

jects of that material world. According to Hegel, matter “seeks its Unity and therefore exhibits itself as self-destructive, as verging towards its opposite [an indivisible being].” If it were possible for matter to attain its goal of unity, in Hegel’s cosmology, it would perish, becoming an idealized form or archetypal idea. For Hegel, matter is dependent on gravity to exist, meaning that it is not independent, and hence is not free; whereas Spirit exists in a free state because it is dependent upon itself, like thought or dreams. Spirit is free of the constraints of gravity and the limits of time and space. “This self-contained existence of Spirit,” Hegel states, “is none other than self-consciousness.”¹⁴ For Hegel, it is this consciousness of being that allows the spirit to know itself, to appreciate “its own nature, as . . . an energy enabling it to realize itself; to make itself *actually* that which it is *potentially*. According to this abstract definition, it may be said of Universal History, that it is the exhibition of Spirit in the process of working out the knowledge of that which it is potentially.” Hegel goes on to provide the following explanatory analogy: “as the germ [or seed] bears in itself the whole nature of the tree, and the taste and form of its fruits, so do the first traces of Spirit virtually contain the whole of history.”¹⁵

Hegel theorized that the dialectical process serves as the means of transmutation by which the spirit became the inexorable force that determines all historical events. Implicit in Hegel’s concept of history is a developmental process where “a latent germ of being—a capacity or potentiality strives to realize itself.”¹⁶ “This development,” Hegel contends, “implies a gradation—a series of increasingly adequate expressions or manifestations of Freedom, which results from its idea. The logical, and—as still more prominent—the *dialectical* nature of the Idea in general, viz. [namely], that it is self-determined—that it assumes successive forms which it successively transcends; and by this very process of transcending its earlier stages, gains an affirmative, and, in fact, a richer and more concrete shape. . . .”¹⁷ Edgar Knoebel summarizes Hegel’s rather turgid prose as follows:

[Hegel maintained that world development] has been a creative clash between two opposites, thesis and antithesis, out of which emerges a synthesis (containing elements of the former thesis and antithesis). Each synthesis becomes, in turn, a new thesis, calling forth its own antitheses; and this “dialectical” process is repeated, each time on a higher level, endlessly. Thus, world development is not to be understood as simple and unopposed growth, but as unwilling labor against itself, that is, struggle by which the Spirit, or Idea, may more completely realize itself.¹⁸

Ontological differences between spirit and matter in Hegel’s cosmology are also revealed in his epistemological explanation of change or development.

In Hegel's duality of spirit and matter, it is only spirit that is free to seek its own potential and it is through human activity, struggle, and conflict that the spirit, in the form of history, is able to develop, change, and to actualize. For Hegel, the potentiality of the spirit could not be actualized without the driving force of "will—the activity of man in the widest sense."¹⁹ On the other hand, Hegel believed that matter is trapped in a redundant cycle of growth and decay, consolidation and disintegration. Hegel characterizes the developmental course of world history as follows:

The mutations which history presents have been long characterized in the general, as an advance to something better, more perfect. The changes that take place in Nature—how infinitely manifold soever they may be—exhibit only a perpetually self-repeating cycle; in Nature there happens "nothing new under the sun," and the multiform play of its phenomenon so far induces a feeling of *ennui*; only in those changes which take place in the region of Spirit does anything new arise. This peculiarity in the world of mind has indicated in the case of man an altogether different destiny from that of merely natural objects—in which we find always one and the same stable character, to which all change reverts;—namely a *real* capacity for change, and that for the better,—an impulse of perfectibility.²⁰

In Hegel's cosmology, the state represented the highest level of perfection attained by the spirit or divine idea up until his time. "The State," he explains, "is the Divine Idea as it exists on earth"²¹ and "the external manifestation of human will and its freedom."²² "Hegel held that the national bourgeois states of nineteenth-century Europe in general, and the Prussian State in particular, had arrived near the last stage of the unfolding of the Divine Idea. . . ."²³ Given Hegel's rather exalted view of Germany, "one might expect to find it the final embodiment of the Absolute Idea, beyond which no further development would be possible. But this is not Hegel's view. On the contrary, he says that America is the land of the future . . ."²⁴ At this point, it is important to clarify what Hegel means by freedom because of how the word is defined within the lexicon of contemporary Western-style democracies. Bertrand Russell explains that Hegel's concept of freedom "does not mean that you will be able to keep out of a concentration camp. It does not imply democracy, or free press, or any of the usual Liberal watchwords, which Hegel rejects with contempt . . . [W]hen the monarch imprisons a liberal-minded subject [however unjustly], that is still Spirit freely determining itself."²⁵

In order to understand the metaphysics of Western hegemony, as previously stated, one must contend with Hegel's ideas. Hegel's notion of history provided eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Western imperialists with a justification for colonialism and the slave trade, for after all, these acts, however

perceived by the victims, were preordained manifestations of God's will. As pointed out earlier, Hegel drew an ontological distinction between spirit and matter, with spirit having "a real capacity for change and . . . perfectibility," while matter, that stuff of nature, exhibits "only a perpetually self-destructive cycle." In his previously cited work, *The Philosophy of History*, Hegel proclaimed the African to be the stuff of nature, existing beyond the pale of civilized society, trapped in a self-repeating cycle, incapable of the sensitivity required to actualize the potentiality of the spirit in history, and hence doomed never to develop. In a manner and tone that captures Hegel's obvious racism, he wrote, "The negro . . . exhibits the natural man in his completely wild and untamed state. We must lay aside all thought of reverence and morality—all that we call feeling—if we would rightly comprehend him; there is nothing harmonious with humanity to be found in this type of character."²⁶ With a crassness that rivaled the pejorative language of the white slavers that plied the coastal waters of West Africa, Hegel went on to make clear his view of Africa, in this lengthy but revealing quote:

Turning our attention . . . to the category of *political constitution*, we shall see that the entire nature of this race is such as to preclude the existence of any such arrangement. The standpoint of humanity at this grade is mere sensuous volition with energy of will; since universal spiritual laws (for example, that of the morality of the Family) cannot be recognized here. Universality exists only as arbitrary subjective choice. The political bond can therefore not possess such a character, as the free laws should unite the community. There is absolutely no bond, no restraint upon the arbitrary volition. Nothing but external force can hold the State together for a moment. A ruler stands at the head, for sensuous barbarism can only be restrained by despotic power . . .

From these various traits, it is manifest that want of self-control distinguishes the character of the Negroes. This condition is capable of no development or culture, and as we see them at this day, such have they always been. The only essential connection that has existed and continued between the Negroes and the Europeans is that of slavery. . . .

At this point, we leave Africa, not to mention it again. For it is no historical part of the World; it has no movement or development to exhibit. Historical movements in it—that is in its northern part [Egypt]—belong to the Asiatic or European World . . . not . . . to the African Spirit. What we properly understand by Africa, is the Unhistorical, Undeveloped Spirit, still involved in the conditions of mere nature, and which had to be presented here only as on the threshold of the World's History.²⁷

The ethnocentric bias and racism of Hegel's characterization of Africa was predicated on the belief that Europeans were of a higher order and, as such,

privity to a “transcendental wisdom” that allowed them to fathom the truth, and even perhaps to comprehend the divine purpose—a presumption still held to a large degree by Eurocentrists. This assumption, in great measure, served and continues to serve Western civilization as a metaphysical justification for its hegemonic acts in the non-Western world, be they supposedly altruistic or exploitive in nature. European colonists and slave traders believed that the divine will of God, moving through their endeavors, sanctioned their conquest of the “Unhistorical, Undeveloped” Africans whose “sensuous barbarism [had to] . . . be restrained by despotic power.” Philosophically, Hegel legitimized this mindset when he said:

The very essence of Spirit is activity; it realizes its potentiality—makes itself its own deed, its own work—and thus it becomes an object to itself. . . . Thus is it with the Spirit of a people: it is a Spirit having strictly defined characteristics, which erects itself into an objective world, that exists and persists in a particular religious forms of worship, customs, constitutions, and political laws—in the whole complex of its institutions—in the events and transactions that make up its history. That is its work—that is what this particular Nation *is*. Nations are what their deeds are. Every Englishman will say: We are the men who navigate the ocean, and have the commerce of the world; to whom the East Indies belong and their riches . . .²⁸

He goes on to say:

Of America and its grade of civilization, especially in Mexico and Peru, we have information, but it imports nothing more than that this culture was an entirely national one, which must expire as soon as Spirit [manifested in European colonization] approached it. . . . For the aborigines, after the landing of the Europeans in America, gradually vanished at the breath of European activity. In the United States of North America all the citizens are of European descent, with whom the old inhabitants could not amalgamate, but were driven back.²⁹

Hegel later wrote in his *Philosophy of Right and Law* that the “civilized nation is conscious that the rights of barbarians are unequal to its own and treats their autonomy as only a formality.”³⁰

As previously mentioned, Social Darwinist theory, in concert with Hegelian Dialectics, inform and fortify the metaphysics of Western hegemony. However, it was Social Darwinism in particular that provided a philosophical and a theoretical bulwark for slavery, and continues as a present-day justification for racial and socioeconomic stratification in America. This theory of social evolution is quasi-philosophical and sociological in nature, with its central premise being that individuals, groups, societies, and races are subject to Darwin’s laws of natural selection. According to Social Darwinism, the

world of human existence is a struggle for survival, pitting the strong against the weak, with more powerful individuals, groups, societies, and races vanquishing the weak.

Although there were other Social Darwinists of note, such as Walter Bagehot in England and William Graham Sumner in America, Herbert Spencer is most clearly associated with the theory and is often credited as being its originator. In order to truly understand the relationship between Social Darwinism and Western hegemony, one must first understand Spencer and contend with his ideas about the nature of evolution and human social psychology. Spencer was born on April 27, 1820, in the Midlands of England in the city of Derby, located in the dark recesses of Britain's industrial belt. He was born to George and Harriet Spencer, a couple of modest means, and was the oldest and only survivor of nine children, an ironic feat for the man that would coin the phrase "survival of the fittest." Being born into a family of highly individualistic dissidents, Spencer developed an aggressively independent interpersonal and intellectual style. Unlike the well-educated Hegel, Spencer was initially home schooled by his father and later by his uncle, who was a cleric. Although his uncle offered to pay for his higher education at Cambridge, Spencer declined, feeling that he was not properly suited for university life. Instead, he embarked on an autodidactic course of self-study. His chief interests were in the natural sciences; shying away from Latin and Greek, he failed to develop any proficiency in languages.

Due to Spencer's association with Social Darwinism, it is natural for most people to assume that he derived his theory of evolution from Darwin, when in fact he was contemplating these ideas before Darwin published *The Origin of Species* in 1859. In actuality, Spencer first presented his thoughts on the subject two years before Darwin, in an 1857 article entitled "Progress: Its Law and Causes," published in *The Westminster Review*. Spencer and Darwin were, of course, great rivals, having competing theories of evolution. Spencer, on one hand, believed that inheritance provided the sole mechanism for evolutionary change while Darwin, on the other hand, believed that it was natural selection. Eventually, Darwin's more robust, empirically based theory, with natural selection being the engine of evolutionary change, prevailed over Spencer's theory, causing him ultimately to accept and incorporate Darwin's theory of natural selection into his own theory. One could conjecture that Spencer's self-education, fierce independence, and lack of scientific discipline left him with a less tenable theory. For, unlike his rival, Darwin, he was not a good observer, nor did he read deeply or systematically in any field, leaving him often to rely on private speculation as a basis of his social and psychological theories. "Spencer collected data from a wide range of sources and recruited many people to assist him. But because of his lack of formal

training, he could not assess evidence or data with a critical eye, which led him to accept all kinds of extreme, mistaken, or distorted ideas and beliefs . . .”³¹

After accepting and incorporating Darwin’s theory of natural selection into his own social theory, Spencer forged ahead to become the leading advocate for what came to be known as “Social Darwinism.” However, in all fairness to Darwin, people too often confuse his “theory of natural selection, which relates only to reproductive success, [with] Spencer’s ideas, [which refer] specifically to the exploitation of the poor and the weak by the wealthy and powerful.”³² Although Social Darwinism gained much popularity in England, it was most thoroughly embraced in America by southern slaveholders and exploitive northern industrialists. Spencer clearly benefited from Darwin’s success, for there is no doubt that Spencer’s ideas received major notoriety because of Darwin’s groundbreaking treatise.

Assessing the breadth of Spencer’s work, he “is notable for his large-scale exploration of one leading idea rather than for any detailed analysis. [Despite this limitation and his obvious Victorian bias] . . . the fact remains that he was one of the representative members of the nineteenth century. Hence, he cannot be passed in silence.”³³ A case in point is Spencer’s 1853 publication *The Principles of Psychology*, which had a profound effect on the field of psychology, especially his definition of mental phenomena as “incidents of the correspondence between the organism and its environment.”³⁴ In addition, his explanatory description of the mind had a major impact on pragmatic philosophy and functional psychology. Pragmatist William James, while describing the psychological construct of the mind, commented that “few recent formulas have done more real service of a rough sort in psychology than the Spencerian one that the essence of mental life and bodily life are one, namely, ‘the adjustment of inner to outer relations.’”³⁵ In a later work, James further acknowledges Spencer for making the argument “since mind and its environment have evolved together, they must be studied together.”³⁶

It was, however, Spencer’s concept of the “survival of the fittest,” with all that this phrase portends, that had the most far-reaching impact on the world. Spencer, in his work *Social Statistics*, described what he believed to be the “beneficent workings of the survival of the fittest”:

Note further, that [the] carnivorous enemies [of the lower forms of creation] not only remove from herbivorous herds individuals past their prime, but also weed out the sickly, the malformed, and the least fleet and powerful. By the aid of which purifying process, as well as by the fighting so universal in the pairing season, all vitiation of the race through the multiplication of its inferior sample is prevented, and the maintenance of a constitution completely adapted to surrounding conditions, and therefore most productive of happiness, is ensured.

The development of the higher creation is a progress toward a form of being capable of a happiness undiminished by these drawbacks. It is in the human race that the consummation is to be accomplished. Civilization is the last stage of its accomplishment. And the ideal man is the man in whom all the conditions of that accomplishment are fulfilled. Meanwhile, the well-being of existing humanity, and the unfolding of it into this ultimate perfection, are both secured by that same beneficent, though severe discipline, to which the animate creation at large is subject: a discipline which is pitiless in the working out of good: a felicity-pursuing law which never swerves for the avoidance of partial and temporary suffering. The poverty of the incapable, the distresses that come upon the imprudent, the starvation of the idle, and those shoulderings aside of the weak by the strong, which leave so many "in shallows and in miseries," are the decrees of a large, far-seeking benevolence.³⁷

Such thinking was and still is used by many conservatives to justify imperialist enterprise, laissez-faire capitalism, and racial and socioeconomic stratification. Premised upon the concept of *natural inequality*, Social Darwinist theory supports the notion that dominant individuals, groups, societies, and races are more successful because of inherited traits such as intelligence, industriousness, and frugality. Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray, in their 1994 bestselling work *The Bell Curve*, presented one of the clearest contemporary articulations of Social Darwinism. According to Herrnstein and Murray, the following are true:

1. There is such a thing as a general factor aptitude of cognitive ability on which human beings differ.
2. All standardized tests of academic aptitude or achievement measure this general factor to some degree, but IQ tests expressly designed for that purpose measure it most accurately.
3. IQ scores match, to a first degree, whatever it is that people mean when they use the word *intelligent* or *smart* in ordinary language.
4. IQ scores are stable, although not perfectly so, over much of a person's life.
5. Properly administered IQ tests are not demonstrably biased against social, economic, ethnic, or racial groups.
6. Cognitive ability is substantially heritable, apparently no less than forty percent and no more than eighty percent.³⁸

Herrnstein later argues that if the above conclusions are correct, "Then social standing (which reflects earnings and prestige) will be based to some extent on inherited differences among people."³⁹ The authors also make a point

of indicating that the black mean IQ score is 85, the white mean is 100, and that the standard deviation is 15.⁴⁰ Given that 23.6 percent of the black population in America is subsisting below the poverty line, and following the implicit logic of Herrnstein and Murray's thesis, one is forced to conclude that these statistics are largely the result of black racial inferiority and not 388-years of racial oppression. It is quite interesting that Herrnstein and Murray's book proved to be very popular amongst middle- and upper-income whites, with approximately 40,000 copies printed within three months of its publication and with the first printing selling out mere weeks after its initial release. This is not only a testimony to the endurance of Social Darwinist theory, but also to its power to assuage guilt and justify inequality.

Spencer's theory employed a biological model to explain the social evolution of society, in which he theorizes that organisms and societies develop from simple homogeneous states to complex differentiated ones. Human development begins with an ovum that progresses through an embryonic stage on to a fetus, infant, child, adolescent, and adult; or, in the case of society, development generally begins with small family groups that merge into more complex clans, tribes, ethnic groups, nation states, and so on. In Spencer's 1857 article entitled, *Progress: Its Law and Cause*, he states:

Now, we propose in the first place to show that this law of organic progress is the law of all progress. Whether it be in the development of the Earth, in the development of life upon its surface, the development of Society, of Government, of Manufactures, of Commerce, of Language, Literature, Science, Art, the same evolution of the simple into the complex through the process of continuous differentiation holds throughout. From the earliest traceable cosmological changes down to the latest results of civilization, we shall find that the transformation of homogenous into heterogeneous is that which progress essentially consist. . . .⁴¹

As organic and social structures become more and more complex, a progressive differentiation of structure and function occurs. With the increased size of societies comes increased structural diversity and complexity, which in turn produces divisions of labor and power among societal members. Spencer theorizes that in the beginning, societies are militaristic in that they force members to conform and cooperate, but then some societies evolve into industrial ones, in which their members voluntarily cooperate. Finally, there emerges, according to Spencer, the Ethical State, a perfect society organized in such a way as to advance and perfect the individual. "Thus he was an extreme exponent of laissez-faire capitalism, a defender of the right of private property, and of imperialism (with some limits). He opposed labor unions, child labor laws, taxation, and even sanitation laws."⁴² It was Spencer's belief "that a society which embodies the principles of individual liberty pos-

sesses a greater survival value than societies which do not embody the principle. . . . But it seems obvious . . . at any rate that Spencer considers the first type of society to be more deserving of survival because of its greater intrinsic value.”⁴³ For Spencer, the purpose of society was to increase the freedom of the individual, which required, as John Locke, “the Philosopher of Liberty,” had argued almost two centuries earlier, that government interference in the social and political lives of its citizenry be held to a minimum. After all, to interfere with the competitive process would be to disrupt the natural order of things, which was the “survival of the fittest.”

Having said all of this, it is not the intent of this work to argue against individual liberty, or freedom, but to caution against either/or propositions and to advocate for a balance between the individual and group, competition and cooperation, freedom and equality.

Spencer, like Hegel, was drawn to the personification of nature and to the drive for freedom expressed in Romanticism. He was particularly taken with Jean-Baptiste Lamarck, the French naturalist who coined the word *biologie* and who was a “forerunner of evolution.” Charles Darwin had also been influenced by Lamarck, writing in 1861, “Lamarck was the first man whose conclusions on the subject [of evolution] excited much attention.” Spencer’s view of social evolution resembled Hegel’s notion of history. As previously stated, Hegel believed that the spirit was realizing its potentiality for perfection through the progress of human history. Although Spencer was an agnostic, he believed in a higher power, that power being the “scientific law” governing evolution. Spencer’s agnosticism is evident in his doctrine of the “unknowable,” where he “seems to have been genuinely convinced that the world of science is the manifestation of a reality which transcends knowledge.”⁴⁴ It appears as far as Spencer was concerned, he “sincerely believed that the vague consciousness of an Absolute or Unconditioned is an uneliminable feature of human thought, and that it is, as it were, the heart of religion, the permanent element which survives the succession of different creeds and different metaphysical systems.”⁴⁵ Although Spencer and Hegel both believed that Western society was progressing towards perfection, they differed in their conceptions of perfection. For Spencer, the perfect society was one that maximized individual freedom through laissez-faire political and economic structures, whereas for Hegel, the perfect society was the manifestation of God’s will on earth, a sort of divine order brought about by the law. As previously stated, Hegel was not concerned with freedom in a libertarian sense, like a John Locke who viewed freedom as the right to make unfettered choices from an array of alternative courses of action with minimum restriction by authority. What Spencer viewed as a perfect society was more of an extreme form of libertarianism than even Locke would have advocated, a sort of chaotic

gladiatorial combat for individual supremacy, which would have also displeased Hegel with his sense of divine order.

However, like his contemporaries and his predecessor, Hegel, Spencer “held firmly to a racial interpretation of all human institutions. Primitive people had primitive cultures because they had the least-developed minds. . . . With their limited intelligence, he believed they communicated through snarls, gestures, and facial contortions; their languages were so poorly developed that they could not understand one another in the dark . . . ”⁴⁶ In *The Principles of Sociology*, Spencer summarized his view of those so-called primitive peoples when he said, “The intellectual traits of the uncivilized . . . are traits recurring in the children of the civilized.”⁴⁷

Because of Britain’s long involvement in the slave trade and its extensive colonizing effort in Africa, it is safe to assume that many if not the majority of these comments referred to Africans. Clearly, Spencer was misinformed, relying on myth, rumors, distorted ideas, and beliefs spread by untrained observers. Historical and anthropological evidence, much of which was available during Spencer’s day, disputes his assertions and confirms the existence of several great sub-Saharan African civilizations. Black civilizations were prospering all over Africa. There was Ghana, known by the Arabs as the “Kingdom of Gold,” which was at least three hundred years old in 800 AD; then there was Mali, one of the greatest kingdoms of the medieval world; and the most advanced of these kingdoms, Songhay, which reached its apex in 1493, was larger than all of Europe. Songhay had a large standing army, a sophisticated banking and credit system, and a major intellectual center in Timbuktu, where the University of Sankoré was located. Students from all over the Muslim world came to Timbuktu to study with black scholars such as Es Sadi, who had a personal library of over sixteen hundred books.⁴⁸ Dorothy Hammond and Alta Jablow, in *The Africa That Never Was*, analyzed four centuries of British writings about Africa and found “the Africa that emerges from the British tradition is a myth and, as such, has a place and function in the society that created it . . . ” In addition, they found “[t]here existed a dependent correlation between the image of Africans and that of the British, . . . the Africans represent the pejorative negation of all the good traits of the British, . . . the African is lewd, savage, instinctual, thoughtless, in short, the ‘bestly savage’ . . . ”⁴⁹

Spencer, in keeping with theories he first put forth in his work *Progress: Its Law and Cause*, believed “evolution and progress had come about because certain groups (races) had, in the struggle for existence, achieved higher levels of fitness and perfection. . . . Those who lacked fitness would be extinguished, just as the American Indian tribes had been and just as other “savage” tribes would suffer in the future.”⁵⁰ Parenthetically, it appears that the

psychological and ethnic identity of the British, and for that matter the Europeans, was in great measure based on the need for dominance.

Nowhere was Europe's need for dominance more evident than in its hegemonic relationship to Africa, as manifested in the slave trade and the colonial domination of the African continent. As Dwight McBride so aptly points out in his work *Impossible Witnesses*, "Theories such as Hegel's description of Africa in *The Philosophy of History* as the 'unhistorical, undeveloped spirit' or 'merely isolated sensual existence' and the popular climatological theories disseminated throughout the eighteenth century, along with the obsession of nineteenth-century anthropologists (fueled by the theory of evolution) with the measurement of race differences, are examples of racial thinking that circulated widely in an effort to prove that Africans were fundamentally inferior to Europeans and were, therefore, especially fitted for slavery. Such ideas also served as moral justification for much of the treatment of Africans under slavery [by not only Europeans, but also Americans]." ⁵¹

Precisely with the aforementioned thinking in mind, this work contends that Hegel and Spencer's ideas are central to the understanding of Eurocentrism and Western hegemony, as manifested in slavery and colonialism. This is not to say that there is a direct causal relationship between their ideas, the course of European history, and Western dominance. But more to the point, as best stated in the previously cited quote from Bertrand Russell, "There is here a reciprocal causation: the circumstances of men's lives do much to determine their philosophy, but conversely, their philosophy does much to determine their circumstances."⁵² Hegel and Spencer's ideas give intellectual direction to and were simultaneously influenced by the eras in which they resided. Long after the eras of their primacy had passed, their ideas continued to influence and give voice to Europe and America by providing an explanatory rationale for Western dominance, and a powerful psychological defense against Judeo-Christian guilt. Baron de Montesquieu, the philosopher who, with the exception of John Locke, has had the most profound impact on the American Constitution, stated in his *The Spirit of the Laws*, with obvious sarcasm intended, "It is impossible for us to assume that these people [Africans] are men because if we assumed they were, one would begin to believe that we ourselves were not Christians."⁵³ Hegel and Spencer's conception of history and human development foreshadowed the American concept of Manifest Destiny, a term that was credited to the editor of the *Democratic Review*, John L. O'Sullivan, but that was actually coined in 1845 by journalist Jane Cazneau, also known as Jane Storm. According to an article written by Storm, but attributed to O'Sullivan, Manifest Destiny refers to the supposed right of America "to overspread and possess the whole of the continent which Providence has given . . . for the development of the great experiment of liberty."⁵⁴

Cazneau was a nationalist who advocated expansionist policies such as the annexation of Texas and Cuba, the economic exploitation of the Dominican Republic, the conquest of Nicaragua, and the control of transportation routes across Mexico. Although hampered by the sexism of the era, she was a woman of great influence in the councils of power, having advised “presidents from James K. Polk to U.S. Grant, and cabinet members in the Polk, Taylor, Pierce, Buchanan, Lincoln, Johnson, and Grant administrations.”⁵⁵ There are those who argue that Manifest Destiny constitutes the metaphysical underpinnings of American hegemony, evidenced by the seizure of California and much of the southwest in a government-provoked war with Mexico in 1846, engineered by President James Polk.

In direct opposition to the aforementioned Hegelian and Social Darwinist-inspired position of the Eurocentrists, which argues the West is on an ever-ascending path to perfection, are the anti-Eurocentrists. Those who rally under the oppositional standard of the anti-Eurocentrists contend that this supposed path to perfection is a delusion, born of a Machiavellian ethic that justifies hegemony as a means to a materialistic end. In the landmark work *Escape from Freedom*, Erich Fromm states:

In capitalism economic activity, success, material gains, become ends in themselves. It becomes man’s fate to contribute to the growth of the economic system, to amass capital, not for purposes of his own happiness or salvation, but as an end in itself. Man became a cog in the vast economic machine—an important one if he had much capital and insignificant one if he had none—but always a cog to serve a purpose outside of himself.⁵⁶

At this point, it is perhaps important to identify those who are being called anti-Eurocentrists. Historian Norman Davies has delineated four main sources of opposition to Eurocentrism, which are as follows:

1. In North America it has emerged from that part of the Black community, and their political sympathizers, who are rebelling against an educational system allegedly dominated by “white supremacists values,” in other words by the glorification of European culture . . . In the most militant form, it aims to replace Eurocentrism with Afrocentricity . . .
2. In the world of Islam, . . . similar opposition is mounted by religious fundamentalists, who see “the West” as the domain of Satan.
3. [I]n the Third World [i.e., the non-Western world], [opposition] is espoused by intellectuals, often of a Marxian complexion, who regard Eurocentric views a part and parcel of capitalist ideology.
4. In Europe, it is widespread, though not always well articulated, in a generation which, when they paused to think, have been thoroughly ashamed of many of their elder’s attitudes.⁵⁷

The majority of those who challenge the Eurocentric position would agree that at the core of Western metaphysics lies an assumption that there is an ipso facto relationship between wealth and freedom, and further that a perfect society affords the greatest opportunity for the acquisition of unlimited wealth and hence “infinite” freedom. For as Christopher Columbus declared in a 1503 communiqué to the king and queen of Spain, “Gold is most excellent; gold constitutes treasure; and he who has it does all he wants in the world, and can even lift souls up to paradise.”⁵⁸ A century and a half later, it was John Locke who asserted that “life, liberty, and estate” were equivalent and inextricably bound together. Since the Enlightenment, Locke’s assertion has provided European and American capitalists with a philosophical alternative to pure avarice as a justification for the pursuit of unlimited wealth by linking the “natural right” of freedom to wealth. As previously stated, the role of government for Locke and ultimately for most Western-styled capitalists is twofold; first to provide individuals with a vehicle for the realization of freedom through the unlimited acquisition of property, and second, to protect the property rights of those individuals who have acquired said property. The obvious logic here is that wealth generates power in a materialistic society and with power comes the freedom to assert and impose one’s will on the physical and social environment. However, property is finite and freedom unchecked leads to hegemony. Inequality and subjugation are all but inevitable for those without the power to resist the free will of powerful individuals and groups.

However, having said all of this, it is not the significance of Western civilization in the scheme of human history that should be questioned, it is the implicit subtext of its Eurocentric self-exaltation that should be challenged, particularly for its veiled allusion to the white ethnic as *übermensch* (overman) or superman. The author of this concept, Friedrich Nietzsche, who is considered one of the most original thinkers in German philosophy, argued that the purpose of civilization is to enable “human beings to emerge from the animal state . . . [by] . . . the perpetual elimination of the weak by the strong, the incompetent by the competent, the stupid by the clever.”⁵⁹ Nietzsche, in his 1871 work *The Birth of Tragedy and the Genealogy of Morals*, quixotically refers to his *heimat* (homeland) in the following manner:

The noble races have everywhere left in their wake the catchword “barbarian.” And even their highest culture shows an awareness of this trait and a certain pride in it (as we see, for example, in [the legendary Athenian general and statesmen] Pericles’ famous funeral oration, when he tells the Athenians: “Our boldness has gained us access to every land and sea, and erected monuments to itself for both good and evil.”) This “boldness” of noble races, so headstrong, absurd, incalculable, sudden, improbable (Pericles commends the Athenians especially for their *rathumia* [relaxed nonchalant air]), their utter indifference to

safety and comfort, their terrible pleasure in destruction, their taste for cruelty — all these traits are embodied by their victims in the image of the “barbarian,” the “evil enemy,” the Goth or the Vandal. The profound and icy suspicion which the German arouses as soon as he assumes power (we see it happening again today) hark back to persistent horror with which Europe for many centuries witnessed the raging of the blond Teutonic beast . . . ⁶⁰

This subtext presumes that those of European descent were, by their very Aryan nature, destined to ascend to supremacy. This is not to imply that Nietzsche was a German nationalist, for, as Bertrand Russell points out, “Nietzsche is not a nationalist, and shows no excessive admiration for Germany. He wants an international ruling race, who are to be the lords of the earth: ‘a new vast aristocracy based upon the most severe self-discipline, in which the will of philosophical men of power and artist-tyrants will be stamped upon thousands of years.’”⁶¹ Ironically, some 46 years after Nietzsche wrote his *The Birth of Tragedy and the Genealogy of Morals*, a failed artist and ex-military corporal name Adolph Hitler attempted to realize Nietzsche’s vision of a ruling race, who would to be the lords of the earth for one thousand years.

For the foes of Eurocentrism, the consequences of its promulgation far outweighed the supposedly benign effects of its ethnocentric boast. The cultural chauvinism of the traditional Western narratives continues to diminish the humanity and significance of a large portion of the non-Western world. Ella Shohat and Robert Stam in *Unthinking Eurocentrism* identify some of the negative consequences of Eurocentrism and its impact on historiography in the following assertions:

- Eurocentric discourse projects a linear historical trajectory leading from classical Greece (constructed as “pure,” “Western,” and “democratic”) to imperial Rome and then to the metropolitan capitals of Europe and the US. It renders history as a sequence of empires: Pax Romana, Pax Hispanica, Pax Britannica, Pax Americana. In all cases, Europe, alone and unaided, is seen as the “motor” for progressive historical change . . .
- Eurocentrism attributes to the “West” an inherent progress towards democratic institutions (Torquemada, Mussolini, and Hitler must be seen as aberrations within the logic of historical amnesia and selective legitimation) . . .
- Eurocentrism minimizes the West’s oppressive practices by regarding them as contingent, accidental, exceptional. Colonialism, slave-trading, and imperialism are not seen as fundamental catalysts of the West’s disproportionate power.
- Eurocentrism elides non-European democratic traditions, while obscuring the manipulations embedded in Western formal democracy and masking the West’s part in subverting democracies abroad.

- Eurocentrism appropriates the cultural and material production of non-Europeans while denying both their achievements and its own appropriation, thus consolidating its sense of self and glorifying its own cultural anthropophagy.⁶²

With few exceptions, there can be little debate that the majority of social studies and Western civilization textbooks used in American schools are Eurocentric in their orientation and forward an ethnocentric curricula regime. As historian James Loewen states in his work *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, “American history textbooks promote the belief that most important developments in world history are traceable to Europe. To grant too much human potential to pre-Columbian Africans [or, for that matter, any non-Western civilization] might jar European-American sensibilities.”⁶³ This is not to say that ethnocentrism is uniquely Western, but that the ethnocentrism of Europe and the United States, with their centuries of economic and military dominance, has had a greater impact on the direction of human history than any other civilization in recorded time.

Ethnocentrism is predicated on the assumption that the perceptions, values, moral standards, behaviors, and institutions of one’s own culture are normative and natural, hence superior to all dissimilar cultures. As previously stated, Ethnocentrism represents a culture’s metaphysical characterization of the universe and everything and everyone that falls within it. This characterization of the universe represents a culture’s construction of normality, and this construct in turn is projected as the standard by which all other cultures are to be judged. The Eurocentric characterization of normality “bifurcates the world into the ‘West and the Rest’ and organizes everyday language into binaristic hierarchies implicitly flattering to Europe: our ‘nation,’ their ‘tribes’; our ‘religions,’ their ‘superstitions’; our ‘culture,’ their ‘folklore’; our ‘demonstrations,’ their ‘riots’; our ‘defense,’ their ‘terrorism’.”⁶⁴

It is the consensus among most lay observers that encounters between ethnocentric cultures will ipso facto lead to interethnic conflict. However, those who hold this belief are in error when they assume that hostility and interethnic conflicts are determinative by-products of any such ethnocentric encounters. In actuality, other factors must be present for ethnocentrism to fuel the flames of interethnic conflict.

Ethnocentrism truly becomes a volatile accelerant when the encountering ethnic groups are thrust, by the necessities of survival, into competition over scarce resources, or when one or more groups have hegemony as a core cultural value. If either of these factors is present, then conflict is all but inevitable. However, of the two, it is hegemony, in concert with greed, which provides the engine that drives empire. Hegemony within the context of

historical materialism “refers to the ideal representation of the interests of the ruling-class [or nation] as universal interest. The cumulative nature of the universalization of ideas not only broadens the scope of each ruling-class [or national] hegemony but at the same time sharpens the conflict between it and each subsequent ascendant class [or nation]. . . .”⁶⁵ In a situation where one of the cultures harbors hegemonic aspirations, conflict more often results from avaricious desire than from need, as the more dominant and aggressive culture struggles to wrest the land and its resources from its inhabitants—as occurred during Europe’s colonial era. Or, conflict may erupt because the labor of the less aggressive and dominant culture becomes the real object of competition as the more aggressive and dominant culture attempts to enslave the other.⁶⁶

In addition to physically controlling the land and its people, Western hegemony imposes a Eurocentric metaphysic on the world as though it is universally applicable to the whole of humanity. Strategically, this has to be and must continue to be the goal of hegemonic propaganda if imperialism is to work. Hegemony requires a sort of “reality imperialism” that supplants the values, interests, and needs of the subordinate group with those of the dominant one. In the black community there is an oft-heard saying attributed to the black scholar Dr. Maulana Karenga that states, “He who controls the mind, controls the body, and he who controls the body has nothing to fear.” Tragically, in such cases of control, the oppressed often become a hollow caricature of the oppressor and carry out the will of the oppressing group even in its absence. The quintessential example of hegemony is colonialism: “The establishment by more developed [or powerful] countries of formal political authority over areas of Asia, Africa, Australasia, and Latin America.”⁶⁷ A distinction is being made here between developed and powerful, because a nation or people may not be very developed as far as the quality of its social relationships and civil society, but very powerful militarily. A case in point can be found in the collapse of the Bronze Age Mycenaean civilization when “the Dorians who [in] about the year 1100 BC . . . came with their iron weapons down from the north in hordes and carried all before them . . . The Dorians were a barbarous and virile race, and it took them a long time to learn civilized ways . . .”⁶⁸ The victory in this conflict was not determined by the relative levels of development in Mycenaean and Dorian civil societies, but by metallurgy—iron versus bronze. Military supremacy should not be mistaken for the quality of civil society, ergo, Athens as compared to Sparta.

The hegemonic inclinations of Western civilization can be witnessed in the symbolism of Cesare Rippe’s 1593 edition of the standard encyclopedia of personification entitled *Iconologia*, where he wrote:

Europe was represented as a queen with crown and scepter, flanked by a Horse [and her subjects]; Asia as a woman in fine garments adorned with gold, pearls, and other precious stones, carrying spices, herbs, and fragrant incense, accompanied by a camel; Africa as a black woman with loose and curly hair, almost naked, who wears a coral necklace and earrings, has an elephant's trunk on her head, and is holding a scorpion in her right hand and a cornucopia containing ears of corn in her left. On one side of her is a ferocious lion and on the other are vipers and venomous serpents. The cornucopia is a reference to the time of Hadrian, when Carthage was one of Rome's bread baskets; the scorpion and lion refer to classical sources as well . . . Seventeenth-century allegories of the continents followed Ripa's handbook and this iconographic matrix remained intact well into the nineteenth century.⁶⁹

The above image of the non-western world and its inhabitants of color is one of inferiority and subjugation. In the minds of the Western imperialists, the people portrayed in Ripa's iconograph were so ignorant and backward that they did not deserve the lands on which they resided and were good for nothing more than servitude. Eurocentrism served as the banner under which Western imperialism spread across the continents of the world with a hegemonic zeal that was cloaked in a mantle of Christian compassion and enlightenment. Emboldened by the presumptuousness of what would come to be known centuries later as Manifest Destiny, the "tribes" of Europe unleashed themselves on the world like the Mongol hordes that had twice laid siege to Europe. However, unlike the nomadic slash-and-burn tactics of the Mongols, who descended like locusts on Europe, raping, pillaging, and then ultimately withdrawing, the "tribes" of Europe sought not only to conquer and exploit but also to colonize and render the world in their own images. Embroidered on their battle standards and painted on their maps was a world image with a likeness that resembled the aforementioned Cesare Ripa's iconograph, in which "the continents were personified as female and were represented along with their products as stylized characters upon a stage dominated and defined by Europe."⁷⁰ Charles Larson characterized this European presumptuousness as "heroic ethnocentrism."⁷¹ Renowned British geographer and historian Richard Hakluyt, whose accounts of the various British trade expeditions are chronicled in his monumental treatise entitled *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation* and his lesser known *Discourse of Western Planting*, exemplifies Larson's concept of "heroic ethnocentrism" when in 1587 he declared:

Reveal to us the courts of China and the unknown straits which still lie hid: throw back the portals which have been closed since the world's beginning at

the dawn of time. There yet remain for you new lands, ample realms, unknown peoples; they wait yet, I say, to be discovered and subdued, quickly and easily, under the happy auspices of your arms and enterprise, and the scepter of our most serene Elizabeth.⁷²

Hakluyt's hegemonic declaration is overflowing and ripe with hubris, turned foul by an insolent sense of entitlement, a trait quite typical of European imperialists of that era. It is fascinating, however, that a continent of people who had "dwelled in the valley of darkness" for a better part of a millennium could mount such arrogant rhetoric, especially after having traversed the Dante-like abyss of economic depression, religious bigotry, social despair, and barbarism that was the better part of *Medium Aevum* (the Middle Age.) The early Middle Ages were such a dire time that, as Francis Oakley states in *The Medieval Experience*, ". . . the grave finds from the period . . . yielded skeletons whose deformed bones witness to the inroads of diseases of malnutrition of the type still found in parts of the undeveloped world—a type of indicator lacking in most of the graves that can be dated with any degree of confidence to the Roman era."⁷³ This economic, intellectual, and cultural bog that had mired Europe for so long in ignorance and apprehension was brought on by the fall of the Western Roman Empire and the subsequent chaos and disarray resulting from the following series of destabilizing events: the Muslim conquest of Spain; the rise and fall of the Carolingian state; the Viking, Magyar, and Mongol raids; the subjugation of England by William the Conqueror; the Hundred Years' War between England and France; the "Black Plague;" and the fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Empire. For almost six hundred years, until the "agricultural revolution" of the eleventh century made possible the reassurance of commercial life, Europe was resigned to the back pages of human history.

By the beginning of the fourteenth century, Europe still found itself struggling to break free from the relative inertia of the first half of the medieval era and recover from setbacks brought on by the Black Death. In 1300, if "anyone . . . had tried to suggest . . . that white people were the world's dominant race [they] would have been laughed into silence."⁷⁴ By the beginning of the fourteenth century, much of the world would have passed Europe scientifically and technologically, viewing it as inhabited by a backward, ignorant, and inferior people. Even sub-Saharan Africa, that part of the world that Hegel and other Europeans would come to hold in such low regard, was flourishing, unbeknownst to most Europeans, with empires such as Mali blossoming, under the rule of Mansa Musa, into one of the greatest kingdoms of the medieval era. It was not until the mid-fifteenth century that European expeditions, principally those of the Portuguese, would make their way into the interior of Africa, arriving long after Mali had been devastated by a civil war of

succession. Historian Felipe Fernández-Armesto, in his work *Civilizations: Culture, Ambition, and the Transformation of Nature*, states that:

The stroke of fortune which deprived European interlopers of the opportunity of seeing a great black empire at the height of its glory seems, in retrospect, one of the most tragic ironies of history. Though known only by report[s] [of Arab travelers such as Ibn Battuta, the most traveled person in the Muslim world], Mali had projected a splendid image. In Majorcan maps from the 1320s, and most lavishly in the *Catalan Atlas* of about 1375–85 [made by Jewish cartographer, Abraham Cresques], the *mansa* [king] was portrayed like a Latin monarch, save only for his black face. Bearded, crowned, and throned, with a panoply of orb and scepter, he was perceived and presented as a sophisticate, not a savage: a sovereign equal in standing to any Christian prince.⁷⁵

While Mali was flourishing, the Europeans had been cringing and quaking in particular fear of the Vikings, Muslims, and Mongols for a better part of the fourteenth century.

In contrast to the positive image of Mali conveyed by the Arab traveler Ibn Battuta, the Muslim scholar Sa'id al-Andalusi said of the Europeans: "Their temperaments are frigid, their humors raw . . . they lack keenness of understanding and clarity of intelligence, and are overcome by ignorance and dullness . . ."⁷⁶ This attitude toward Europeans was the result of several hostile encounters between Muslims and Europeans. It was in 711 AD that the Moorish armies invaded Europe, extending the "Abode of Islam," as the empire was known to the faithful, into Spain, where they controlled the lion's share of the Iberian Peninsula for approximately seven centuries. Adding to the Muslim's sense of superiority was the fact that they had driven the European crusaders out of the Holy Land in 1291 with their technologically superior forces. "The expertise at distillation that medieval Islamic alchemists developed to produce alcohols and perfumes also let them distill petroleum into fractions, some of which proved to be . . . powerful incendiaries. Delivered in grenades, rockets, and torpedoes, those incendiaries played a key role in Islam's eventual defeat of the Crusaders."⁷⁷ Further exacerbating the plight of Europeans were the Viking raids between 787 and 1066 that threatened the British Isles, the coastal regions of France and Spain, the Baltic Sea, and Russia. In addition, there was the Mongol conquest of Russia and Central Europe "between 1237 and 1242. [Where the Mongols] . . . grew rich selling their white subjects to Muslim slave traders."⁷⁸ Depressed by the social, economic, and political uncertainty of the Middle Ages, and in fear of the constant Viking and Mongol invasions and Muslim threats, many Europeans simply gave into their plight and acquiesced to the lower status imposed on them by their conquerors. "The [Mongols]," one Russian wrote, "learn warfare from their youth. Therefore, they are stern, fearless, and fierce towards us. . . . We

cannot oppose them, but humiliate ourselves before them, as Jacob did before Esau.”⁷⁹

Given the aforementioned near litany of destabilizing events, how could the level of hubris represented in the declaration of Richard Hakluyt ever have been uttered? Such hegemonic declarations, it can be argued, are a subconscious reaction to a sense of inferiority born of Northern Europe’s barbarous past and the social disorganization and despair of the Dark Ages, compounded by the humiliation experienced at the hands of Viking, Muslim, and Mongol invaders. However, despite this traumatic history, European resistance to Viking, Muslim, and Mongol invasions would eventually stiffen as the various tribes and nation-states of Europe became more unified in their defense and as they assimilated more foreign technology. In particular, it was the advent of what would come to be known as gunpowder—a mixture of charcoal, sulfur, and saltpeter first discovered by the Chinese—that would change the plight of the hapless Europeans. “An Islamic chemical treatise from AD 1100 describes seven gunpowder recipes, while a treatise from AD 1280 gives more than 70 recipes that had proved suitable for diverse purposes (one for rockets one for canons).”⁸⁰ But it was not until this powerful mixture could be harnessed and placed in the hands of the individual soldier that the quantum leap in lethality necessary to truly revolutionize warfare could be achieved. “Surprisingly, it began with what ought to have been a military breakthrough for the Muslims. Arab craftsmen, not Europeans, succeeded in making the first gun, in 1304. Yet, it turned out to be Europeans, some hundred years later, who put this new invention to work most effectively on the battlefield.”⁸¹ In many ways, from that moment forth, the history of Western ascension is the “history of the gun,” in that the gun allowed the West to realize its hegemonic inclinations.

Innovations in technology flowed from China westward, for “China was much more innovative and advanced than Europe, even more so than medieval Islam. The long lists of Chinese inventions includes canal lock gates, cast iron, deep drilling, efficient animal harnesses, gunpowder, kites, magnetic compasses, movable type, paper, printing (except for the Phaistos disk), sternpost rudders, and wheelbarrows.”⁸² Many of such innovations in turn flowed to the Islamic Empire and on into Europe. As a result of the assimilation of Chinese and Muslim technology, “Europe’s rise to world supremacy followed with breathtaking speed. With it came a new self-image for Europeans. Gone were the days when white people bowed low before Asian and Muslim rulers. Now, it was the brown, black, red, and yellow people of the world who bowed before them.”⁸³ An overblown sense of self-confidence filled and continues to fill the Western psyche because of that initial infusion of new non-western technology, with its attending power to dominate. The hegemonic arrogance of Richard Hakluyt’s declaration in 1587 became worse

as Europeans became intoxicated by their newfound power; and, like a drunk with amnesia, they could not remember the personal failures and misery that preoccupied their mind the day before their drunken binge. As the centuries of dominance progressed, power-drunk delusions of omnipotence had laid claim to Europe's perception of itself, giving legitimacy to the Eurocentrism that plagued and oppressed people of color around the world. Hakluyt's Eurocentrism was even more powerfully reinforced by the scientific racism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, where terms such as the "lower races," "inferior races," "superannuated races," "backward races," and "mongrel races" were part of the standard anthropological and popular lexicon. Witness the highly representative words of Karl Pearson, the renowned and prolific British scientist and advocate of Spencer's "survival of the fittest" doctrine, who wrote in his 1892 work *The Grammar of Science*:

'The whole earth is mine, and no one shall rob me of any corner of it,' is the cry of civilized man. No nation can go its own way and deprive the rest of mankind of its soil and its mineral wealth or physical resources—without detriment to civilization at large in its struggle with organic and inorganic nature. It is not a matter of indifference to other nations that the intellect of any people shall lie fallow or that any folk should not take its part in the labour of research. It cannot be indifferent to mankind as a whole whether the occupants of a country leave fields untried and its natural resources undeveloped. It is a false view of human solidarity, and a weak humanitarianism, which regrets that a capable and stalwart race of white men should replace a dark-skinned tribe which neither utilizes its land to the full benefit of mankind, nor contributes its quota to the common stock of human knowledge.⁸⁴

Interestingly enough, the same kind of attitude was expressed towards Europeans during the Middle Ages by the Muslims, Chinese, and Mongols. The primary difference, however, being that the West, in pursuit of empire, engaged in colonialism, genocide, and slavery while claiming to stand for freedom, democracy, and national sovereignty.

Metaphysics is the finding of bad reasons for what we believe upon instinct; but to find these reasons is no less an instinct.

—F.H. Bradley, *Appearance and Reality* (1893)

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Chapter Three

Imperialism: A Teleological Analysis of Western Ascension

The Europeans, having exterminated the peoples of the Americas, have had to enslave those of Africa, in order to ensure the clearance of a great deal of land. Sugar would be too expensive if one could not get slaves to produce it. . . . One cannot put oneself into the frame of mind in which God, who is a very wise being, took it upon himself to put a soul, and a very good soul at that, into such an entirely black body. . . . [I]t is impossible for us to suppose these creatures are men because if one were to allow them to be so, a suspicion would follow that we are not ourselves Christians.

—Charles-Louis de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu

The above quote from Enlightenment philosopher and social commentator, Charles-Louis de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu, is apt to leave readers confused about his position on slavery, especially given the antagonism generally held for slavery by the majority of philosophers during the Enlightenment. Montesquieu was France's best-known satirist; however, his sarcasm and the use of irony in his writing, if not taken in context, can appear ambiguous. In all fairness, it should be mentioned that he began this quote by saying, "If I were to try and justify our right to make slaves of blacks, this is what I would say. . . ." ¹ Montesquieu did, in fact, take the position that slavery was bad and mocked it at every turn. There was, however, very little ambiguity when it came to his view of the African, for his tongue-in-cheek satire betrays his racist disregard for the humanity of the victims not only of slavery, but also of those indigenous peoples of the non-Western world who fell prey to Europe's imperialist drive. As stated in the previous chapter, such racist disregard was quite indicative of the Enlightenment despite its general anti-slavery stance. Again, as in the last chapter, it is important to point out

that the Enlightenment's failure to deal with the contradiction between the ideal of liberty and the oppressive reality of colonialism and slavery was, in part, due to the racism of the period. According to Joel Kovel:

Racism arises . . . when domination comes to be wrought by one group . . . over others who happen to include among their number peoples of different cultures. . . . Racism can only be fully elaborated in a society of a special kind, in which state formation has taken place, and where an aggressive expansion has drawn peoples of different ethnicities under the aegis of the dominant power. In sum, we might say that racism is an aspect of imperialism. It is the subjective reflex of imperialism, the fate of primary tendencies of alienation under the domination of the imperial state.²

The teleology, or purpose, of imperialism is not only the "domination of the economies of colonies by their [foreign] rulers,"³ but also the assuagement of the imperialist's deep sense of inadequacy by diminishing and controlling others. This is why racism, imperialism, and slavery in the West were inextricably linked, as so clearly demonstrated in Montesquieu's quip. Racism served and continues to serve as a justification for exploitation. However, the purpose of this exploitation is more than mere economic greed, it is also psychosocial in that it serves the need of the imperialist to bully and dominate.

An example of one of the many significant Enlightenment figures who fostered the racism that justified imperialism and slavery was David Hume, a philosopher cited in the previous chapter. Interestingly enough, Hume was greatly influenced by Montesquieu's political philosophy,⁴ as were the framers of the United States Constitution, who incorporated his concept of "separation of powers" into that document. However, it was Hume, despite having been influenced by Montesquieu, who, without a hint of Montesquieu's sarcasm, stated, "There scarcely ever was a civilized nation of any complexion [than white], nor even any individual eminent in action or speculation. No ingenious manufactures amongst them, no art, no sciences. On the other hand, the most rude and barbarous of whites, such as ancient Germans, the present Tartars, have still something eminent about them, their valour, form of government, or some other particulars. Such a uniform and constant difference could not happen, in so many countries and ages, if nature had not made an original distinction betwixt these breeds of men."⁵ David Hume's words are indicative of that era's ethnocentric narrative of racial superiority, a narrative that swept across the world's oceans like the trade winds that drove the ships of Western imperialism. Hume's words rung out like a triumphant self-aggrandizing anthem, celebrating Europe's newly constructed self-image and its a priori right to empire.

Although greed, as exhibited in the exuberant extremes of mercantilist and capitalist enterprise, is most often cited as the reason for Western imperialism, it is merely the most obvious manifestation of a deeper psychosocial dynamic. The drive for money and power are what social psychologists refer to as “secondary reinforcers,” a reinforcer being any circumstance that a person finds pleasurable or satisfying. Money serves as a classical example of a secondary reinforcer because the pleasure and satisfaction engendered by money are due to its association with primary reinforcers such as food, water, shelter, and sex. This association between money as a secondary reinforcer and the primary reinforcers of food, water, shelter, and sex are learned through a process of contiguity, or the constant pairing of primary and secondary reinforcers. If one has money, then food, water, shelter, and sex are much more available. Food, water, shelter, and sex have reinforcing properties because they are naturally linked to the intrinsic needs and characteristics of the human species. Money translates into power, which equals control over objects, events, and people in what Kurt Lewin refers to as one’s “life space.” Such control allows an individual or a group to satisfy basic human needs. Historic and protracted deprivation can trigger the drive to expand an individual’s or group’s life space, allowing the acquisition and control of objects and people in that newly attained space, which in turn results in an increasing differential distribution of power. As Max Weber argues, a differential distribution of power creates a situation where “life-chances” are also differentially distributed. Hence, the ability to obtain food, water, shelter, and sex are differentially distributed because access to economic, social, and political resources is unequally distributed. In other words, the root cause of empire resides deep in the psychosocial needs of the conqueror. Having said all of this, it becomes important to seek out the underlying psychosocial factors, beyond the obvious economic ones, that drove Western imperialism. In addition, it is important to determine the means by which the West was able to mount such a global assault on the non-western world and, at the height of its imperialism, control the majority of the continents of the world.

Again, the assertion made here is that the hegemonic hubris displayed at the dawn of modernity by Western imperialists was born of a deep psychosocial need for power and control. At its base, this hegemonic hubris can be classified, in part, as a type of sociocultural *reaction formation*, generated by deprivation and a sense of fear, anxiety, and inferiority, rooted in the chaotic history of medieval Europe, and a western cultural predisposition to discount, repress, and control emotions. In the *Dictionary of Psychology*, Arthur Reber defines a *reaction formation* as “the process through which unacceptable feelings or impulses are controlled by the establishing of behavior patterns which are directly opposed to them.”⁶ By way of example, James Coleman, in his

text *Abnormal Psychology and Modern Life*, states: “In everyday behavior a reaction formation may take the form of developing a ‘don’t care’ attitude to conceal feelings of rejection and a craving for affection, of assuming an air of bravado when we are fearful, of developing a puritanical attitude towards sexual and other pleasures, of being excessively polite to persons we don’t like—so much so that we make him [or her] uncomfortable.”⁷ A limited exposure to and a cursory knowledge of British history and culture is all one needs to recognize the aforementioned behaviors as very English and, for that matter, somewhat German. The operational mechanisms for the psychodynamic process of a *reaction formation* are denial and repression; denial being the defense mechanism that protects the ego from unpleasant aspects of reality by refusing to perceive them, while repression blocks intolerable memories and desires from the consciousness.⁸ Both denial and repression are very much a part of the English and German cultures, which is not surprising given that the English and German peoples are cultural cousins. In the Western taxonomy of socially acceptable behavior, going back as far as the ancient Greeks, those individuals who are perceived to be unduly influenced by emotion are dubbed as immature at best and, at worst, characterized as fools. Those societies that embrace emotional expression as a core value are generally not taken very seriously or are discounted as being backward and primitive. Whereas, the opposite is held for those that disdain or at least discount emotion, for they are deemed as civilized and are afforded more respect.

In addition to the need for ego defenses, there are the psychological needs for order and meaning, adequacy and competence, security, social approval, self-worth, and personal growth. Order and meaning are central to human existence. All “people develop explanations for lightning, thunder, [and] death. . . . Accurate or not, explanations provide order and meaning and a sense of potential prediction and control.”⁹ One thing that is all but axiomatic is the fact that “[h]uman beings do not like ambiguity, lack of structuring, chaos, or events which seem beyond their understanding and control and which place them at the mercy of alien forces.”¹⁰ To cope with the strife and stress of life, it is critical that individuals, groups, and entire societies develop the requisite emotional, social, intellectual, and physical competencies to achieve and maintain a sense of adequacy and security.¹¹ “The preceding needs represent the basic core of psychological requirements which emerge through normal interaction with the physical and sociocultural world and which contribute heavily to the direction of [human] behavior.”¹² In order to appreciate why and how Western civilization rose to its present position of world dominance, one must not only understand the causative environmental, technological, and economic factors behind this rise, but also the underlying psychological needs that emerged as effects of these causative factors. Erich Fromm, in the

forward to his classic work *Escape from Freedom*, says, "Pointing out the significance of psychological considerations in relation to the present [or past] . . . does not imply . . . an overestimation of psychology. The basic entity of the social process is the individual, his desires and fears, his passions and reasons, his propensities for good and for evil."¹³

As alluded to in the previous chapter, "the Middle Age represented a descent into barbarism, parochiality, [and] religious bigotry"¹⁴ on such a profound scale as to have scarred the European psyche for centuries, wreaking havoc on the political order and forever transforming Western culture. "From the eighth century onwards, faltering thoughts about a new political order were stimulated by continuing depredations from beyond the fringe of Christendom. The foundation of the Empire of Charlemagne in 800, of the Holy Roman Empire from 962, and eventually of the Tsardom of Moscow can only be understood in conjunction with the activities of the Vikings, the Magyars, the Mongols, and the [Muslim-era] Turks."¹⁵

With the fall of classical Rome and the disintegration of the Carolingian Empire, Europe lay vulnerable to the whims of chaos as its various traditional ethnic and tribal alliances began to fracture. "Charlemagne's lifeblood had been the cement of the realm. [Upon his death, Charlemagne's] inheritance was immediately disputed by his son and grandsons. Repeated partitions ensured its early disintegration. . . . The feuding of the Carolingians . . . created an opportunity which the Vikings were quick to exploit. The summer of 841 saw them sailing up the Seine to plunder Rouen . . . In 854 the new city of Hamburg was burned, and Paris was sacked . . ."¹⁶

In the Near East, the Muslims had experienced similar disunity with the death of their great prophet and spiritual leader Mohammed in 632 AD. However, unlike the Franks, whose Germanic cultural tradition required that Charlemagne's empire be divided amongst his heirs, the Muslims "solved the problem practically, rather than theoretically, by recognizing as caliph (successor) one of Mohammed's earliest converts and closest companions, Abu Bakr."¹⁷ Some semblance of internal cohesion within the Muslim Empire was maintained by engaging in constant wars of Islamic expansion. However, even with the cohesion fostered by common foes, rival sects assassinated several caliphs; the chief among these sects were the Sunni and Shi'ite. "Indeed, continued success in war was vital to the survival of what was only a precarious confederation of tribes, whose ancient quarrels were still remembered. Only a steady inflow of booty, together with the *élan* and discipline of regular campaigning in the field, could forestall renewal of intertribal feuds. . . ."¹⁸ Muslim armies swept out of the Arabian Peninsula like the raging sandstorms that routinely engulfed the Middle East and North Africa, sweeping all before them in a series of stunning victories, with Syria falling in 636, Iraq in 637,

Jerusalem in 638, Mesopotamia in 641, Egypt in 642, and Iran in 651. Finally, in 711, militant Islam carried forward by Moorish invaders “swept up through most of the [Iberian] peninsula and pushed back the remains of [Germanic] Visigothic rule nearly into the Bay of Biscay.”¹⁹ Through the middle of the thirteenth century, the lion’s share of the Iberian Peninsula remained in “Moorish hands: the kingdom of Granada was not to be eliminated until 1492 . . .”²⁰

Of all the conquests wrought by the Muslims, that which caused the most damage to the psyche of Europe was the capture of Christendom’s spiritual wellspring, Jerusalem and its holy surrounds, which the Muslims occupied for approximately half of a millennium. In 1095, Pope Urban II, in an address to the French clergy and nobles, declared a Holy War against the “infidels” to free Jerusalem; in addition, he promised any man who took part in this glorious quest immediate remission of all confessed sins. Obsessed with the re-taking of the Holy Land, Europe militarized as nobles levied huge taxes against their subjects and mounted no less than seven major armies between 1095 and 1291, during what became known as the Crusades. For the papacy and the nobility of Europe, their quest was a matter of duty because *Deus vult* (“God wills it”). The goals of the crusades were threefold: 1) to wrest the Holy Land from the Muslims, 2) to reunite Christendom by bringing the Catholic and Orthodox churches back together, and 3) to provide a glorious quest that would afford salvation to those men who directly fought the “infidel,” and indulgences to those nobles who funded men to fight in their stead. To these ends, Europe would heavily tax its subjects and squander their lives over the course of 200 years in this religious enterprise, an enterprise that would foreshadow, give impetus to, and in part justify Europe’s eventual hegemonic drive to colonize the non-Western world. In addition to the loss of Christian lives, the anti-Semitism of the crusaders cost up to 8,000 Jewish lives in 1096 alone as Christian armies progressed through the Rhineland, sacking and looting Jewish enclaves on their way to the Holy Land. The crusaders were so anti-Semitic that many Jews fled in fear of their lives, seeking refuge amongst the Muslims, who during that period were much more accepting of Judaism.

At first, the crusaders were victorious, capturing Jerusalem in 1099; but the Muslims recaptured the city in 1187. After this defeat, the crusades by and large degenerated into a series of looting parties, with crusades even being mounted against other Christians, most notably the use of the Fourth Crusade to depose the Byzantine Emperor. Perhaps the lowest point in this 200-year endeavor was the so-called “children’s crusade” endorsed by a church that believed “that the power of innocence would succeed where armed might had not. . . . [However, after they set sail, a] great storm sank their ships; many of the children drowned, and the survivors were captured and sold into slav-

ery.”²¹ Such an act of desperation as the children’s crusade speaks to a deeper desolation. Norman Davies, in his analysis of the period, provides some very astute insights into the psychology of the European crusaders when he says:

[T]he horrors along the crusaders’ road often mask the deeper causes of their motivation. Religious fervour was mixed with the resentments of a society suffering from waves of famine, plague, and overpopulation. Crusading was a means to sublimate the pains of an indigent existence. In this, the well-fed knight with his well-shod retinue was far outnumbered by the hordes of paupers who followed in his wake. The “People’s Crusades” and “Shepherds’ Crusades” continued long after the major expeditions. For them, Jerusalem was the visionary city of Revelation, where Christ beckoned. The crusades were “an armed pilgrimage,” “a collective *imitatio Christi*, a mass sacrifice which was to be rewarded by a mass apotheosis at Jerusalem,” the inspiration of “the messianism of the poor.”²²

Parenthetically, it should be noted that the despair and depravity of the Middle Ages were magnified for the most vulnerable of society, the children, who died by the thousands from all manner of illness, not to mention the abuse of hard labor and the brutal punishments that often befell them. Although children were viewed as being more innocent than adults were, the cosmological belief in original sin was also applied to children. As John Santrock states in his text *Child Development*: “In the original sin view, especially advocated during the Middle Ages, children were perceived as basically bad, being born into the world as evil beings. The goal of childrearing was to provide salvation, to remove sin from the child’s life,”²³ which often entailed beating the hell out of them and making sure that their hands were not idle long enough to do the devil’s work. During this period, children were often worked as hard as adults were because of economic necessity and because it supposedly built character.

While the Muslims and their adversaries, the Christian crusaders, squandered and dissipated their energies on each other in a protracted war for God’s approval, the Mongol armies set upon the unattended houses of both Christendom and the Abode of Islam. Genghis Khan and his Mongol hordes “swept out of the Asian steppes like a whirlwind, first in 1207, when Juji, son of Genghis, subjugated southern Siberia, and then in 1223, when they ravaged Transcaucasia and destroyed a Kievan army on the Kalka River.”²⁴ During 1256 and 1257, the Mongols wreaked havoc on the principalities of Ryzan and Vladimir, razed Moscow in 1291, attacked Galicia, and destroyed Cracow. “As proof of their victory [over Henry the Bearded and the Polish princes under his command] the Mongols were said to have collected nine sackfuls of right ears from the bodies of the slain.”²⁵ During the course of

their rampage, the Mongols broke the will and spirit of the Slavs and Russians, summoning them “at regular intervals to the camp of the khan . . . [where] they were obliged to walk between blazing bonfires, to stoop beneath the proffered yoke, and to prostrate themselves before their master . . . [in] a ritual humiliation whose purpose was not forgotten.”²⁶ Meanwhile, to the south during roughly the same time, approximately 1218 to 1336, the Mongols attacked the Muslims, and in turn conquered Turkestan, Iran, Mesopotamia, Anatolia, and Syria. In addition, during this same period, 1258 to be exact, in a karmic twist of fate, the then spiritual and cultural capital of Islam, Baghdad, was attacked and sacked by the Mongols in much the same way that the Muslims had attacked Jerusalem, the spiritual capital of Christendom. However, Islam would resist and subsequently survive the physical and economic destruction wrought by the Mongol hordes through military action and by winning Mongol converts to Islam. Ultimately, the scars inflicted by the Mongols would have a much more lasting effect on the West than the Near East. This was due, in part, to the fact that the Mongol incursions created so much dislocation in Europe, a fact that only served to exacerbate the ills caused by the social, economic, and political trauma of the Middle Ages. In addition, Europe had to contend with attacks by not only the Muslims and Mongols, but also the Vikings and the Magyars. The resulting flood of misery, chaos, and despair that swept Europe from within and without was of such biblical proportions that it created a crisis of social, political, economic, and cultural confidences among the populous.

Compounding the pain and humiliation caused by almost never-ending waves of foreign invaders was the structure of medieval society itself with its “feudal ladder,” which offered little or no escape from the grinding poverty that affected those at its lowest rung. The citizenry of most of medieval Europe found themselves hopelessly trapped in societies “built on a confused mass of conflicting dependencies and loyalties, riddled with exceptions and exemptions, where the once-clear lines of service were fouled up by generations of contested privileges, disputed rights, and half-forgotten obligations. It was certainly hierarchical, but it was anything but neat and regular.”²⁷ The “feudal pyramid,” as it has often been described, served as a near perfect metaphor for medieval Europe, as it rested squarely on the backs of the poor, crushing their bodies, minds, and spirits under its broad and ponderous base. Norman Davies quite aptly describes the general feeling of powerlessness created by the social and political structure of medieval Europe when he states:

Almost everyone was conditioned by their position in the social order, hemmed in by their legal and emotional ties of dependence. Those ties gave them a measure of security, and an unquestioned framework of identity; but they also made

individuals vulnerable to exploitation, repression, and involuntary ignorance. . . . One might also assume that a feeling of powerlessness over their personal lives added to medieval people's preoccupation with religion—in particular to their strong belief in the afterlife, and their morbid cult of death.²⁸

It must be noted, however, that this particular form of “[f]eudalism, rooted in the Carolingian debacle, remained essentially a Western phenomenon.”²⁹ Neither were the Byzantine Empire of the east, nor the sub-Saharan empires of Africa plagued with the same degree of internal structural chaos and confusion.

This feeling of powerlessness, of which Davies speaks, deepened as the apocalyptic era of the Black Death slithered like a poisonous viper, trailing the plague-infested vermin that spread pestilence and death along the caravan routes from the Far East into Europe. Steadily, unrelentingly, and without mercy, death and its black knight the plague spared few as they moved west. By 1345, the plague had reached the lower Volga River, moving on to Constantinople and Sicily by 1347, then on to Marseilles, Paris, and England by 1348, finally arriving in Eastern Europe in 1350. Approximately one-third of the European population died, with the death toll in cities like Florence and Venice reaching as high as sixty percent. As a result of the death toll, the agricultural revolution and subsequent economic growth and recovery that marked the latter part of Europe's Middle Ages was brought to a crashing halt; farms and businesses lay idle for lack of laborers and banks and creditors faced financial ruin as loans went uncollected. In the countryside, thousands of homes and farms stood silently like mausoleums as whole towns died out. London cleric William Langland, in the spiritual epic *Piers Plowman*, describes the Black Death as follows:

*So Nature killed many through corruptions,
Death came driving after her and dashed all to dust,
Kings and knights, emperors and popes;
He left no man standing, whether learned or ignorant;
Whatever he hit stirred never afterwards.
Many a lovely lady and their lover-knights
Swooned and died in sorrow of Death's blow . . .
For God is deaf nowadays and will not hear us,
And for our guilt, he grinds good men to dust.³⁰*

Panic spread even more rapidly than the plague itself as the shock wave of psychological distress and social dislocation caused by the unprecedented suffering and death came crashing down on the general population of Europe. Fear had turned to panic, which in turn often erupted into civil disobedience, violence, and, in some places, open rebellion. No class was spared as peasants,

nobles, clerics, and even a pope were felled by the Grim Reaper's blade. "The psychological trauma ran deep. Though the Church as an institution was weakened, popular religiosity increased. . . . Intense piety came into fashion: people felt that God's wrath must be placated."³¹ Underlying the piety of the people was an apocalyptic consciousness for "they viewed life on earth as a battle between God and Satan that would end in a cataclysm. . . ."³² It could be argued that the extreme fascination with the afterlife and the intense preoccupation with a "cult of death" that emerged during this period was a manifestation of a deep, general depression. It was as though a morbid malaise had descended upon the populous like a dark, suffocating shroud. According to Francis Oakley's book *The Medieval Experience*, "The economic situation, along with much else that was troubling fourteenth-century Europe, was much exacerbated by the appalling disaster of the Black Death . . . [as] . . . it dislocated the lives of the survivors, created a labor shortage, spawned a good deal of religious fanaticism and social unrest, and, along with its repeated secondary outbreaks, understandably sponsored the profound pessimism that is one of the distinguishing features of the later Middle Ages."³³

This pessimism, this disposition to take a gloomy view of life, hung ubiquitously over the medieval landscape like a depressing fog, a translucent ether that robbed almost everyone of the will to be. Clinical depression can be defined as an emotional state of dejection accompanied by gloomy ruminations, feelings of worthlessness, shame, guilt, and apprehension.³⁴ Martin Seligman, a clinician and mental health researcher, suggests "that depression in humans could be caused by the repeated experience of being unable to act in such a way as to achieve a desired outcome or avoid emotional trauma."³⁵ At the beginning of this new millennium, one can see the same symptomatology in places like Bosnia, Kosovo, Chechnya, Somalia, Rwanda, Palestine, Afghanistan, and Iraq—and the list goes on, littered with nations in chaos and despair. This same despair and emotional trauma was present but at an even more intense level during the medieval era; witness late-fourteenth- and early-fifteenth-century art with its macabre topics and images. One of the clearest examples of such art is the style referred to as *la danse macabre* (the horrible dance) or *la danse de la mort* (the dance of death) in which the artist depicted common daily scenes with skeletons mingling amongst the living.

Like a grand uncharted river of raging rapids and cataclysmic falls, punctuated by stagnant dark ponds and dizzying backwater eddies, the millennium known as the medieval era swept its victims powerlessly along through wars of succession, famine, invasions, religious strife, emerging hegemonic nationalism, plague, and economic depression. If ever in recorded history a time could be classified as an epoch of doom and depression, it was this era. For those who lived through it, particularly the peasantry, feelings of dejection,

worthlessness, and apprehension had to have been experienced as normal states of being. Even those in the aristocracy must have experienced these extremes as they themselves were besieged by the vicissitudes of the *Medium Aevum*. "Above all, it has been suggested [by most accounts of this period] that medieval people lived in a psychological environment of fear and insecurity that inhibited bold and independent thought. Exposure to the forces of nature, incessant warfare, widespread banditry, raids by Vikings, nomads, and infidels, plague, famine and anarchy—all contributed to the conviction that man was feeble and God was great. Only in the asylum of a monastery could a forceful mind follow its own genius."³⁶ With intense fear, anger, and frustration as constant companions, day-to-day survival surely required extraordinary levels of psychological denial and repression, levels that must have exacerbated and deepened the already existing depression of the citizenry. Extreme protracted depression typically triggers feelings of self-loathing, a condition that was probably quite widespread during this period; a sort of collective inferiority complex most likely dominated the medieval psyche of Europe, especially when the citizenry compared themselves with some of their more advanced tormentors from the "Far East" and "Middle East."

Quite obviously, the level of angst and depression was determined, in part, by one's position on the "feudal ladders," for the aristocrats and wealthy had ready access to the spiritual comfort of the sacrament of penance and were able to purchase papal indulgences that pardoned them for their sins and supposedly gave them access to heaven. Undoubtedly, the privilege of position and faith in papal indulgences reduced their level of fear and anxiety, but surely did little to relieve their sense of powerlessness in the face of overwhelming forces beyond their control, a position that those used to power must have resented. For the poor, their earthly misery and sense of self-loathing was compounded by their limited access to the sacrament and their fear of dying in a state of mortal sin, which would condemn them to the eternal fires of hell. It is widely accepted in psychology that feelings of self-loathing and inferiority develop because of an inability to fend off abuse; in essence, one begins to feel ashamed of one's own impotence, and withdraws psychologically from the abusive reality since physical escape is not an option or is believed to be impossible. This phenomenon can be witnessed among battered and abused women and children. In the case of the medieval peasantry, their impotence in the face of the relentless oppression of their betters in the feudal hierarchy had to have fostered a profound sense of inferiority. This is not to say that this period was devoid of joy and celebration; after all, human beings have been known to find joy and celebrate even when struggling under the yoke of imposed inferiority while laboring in the bowels of slavery. Jacques Barzun seems to confirm this assessment of the emotional

disposition of the populous during this period, stating, “The mood portrayed in much of the popular literature of the Middle Ages is jollity; continual dangers can lift the spirits and energize actions.”³⁷ It is questionable to what extent this literature is a true reflection of the spirit of the age, or if it merely represents an exercise in escapism. Given the desperation of the times, one could argue that the emotional highs portrayed in some of that period’s literature represented an occasional reaction to the ongoing misery experienced by the populous. However, it can be stated with a high degree of certainty that these were emotionally turbulent times, as witnessed in the artistic extremes of the *la danse Macabre* on one hand and the jolly nature of the literature described by Jacques Barzun on the other.

Renowned psychologist Alfred Adler, a disaffected student of Sigmund Freud, who, in 1911, parted with his teacher to develop his own school of individual psychology, offers a theoretical model that provides insight into the psychodynamic processes underlying the inferiority complex. Adler is considered by many to be the father of modern social psychology because his personality theory places the development of the self within the interactive context of the social system that serves as the primary unit of socialization for the individual, be that unit the family or an alternative system of caretaking, such as an orphanage or foster home. Adler contends that the framework of beliefs that constitute the core of one’s personality is shaped by that individual’s struggle to belong and to create a place amongst those in that individual’s primary unit of socialization. It is Adler’s position that individuals approach and interpret each social system and experience using that core framework of beliefs developed in their primary unit of socialization. In many ways, Adler can be considered a systems theorist. For this reason, Adler’s theoretical model lends itself not only to analysis on the micro level of the individual, but also on the macro level of society. James Coleman provides an excellent précis of Adler’s theoretical framework in the following quote:

[Adler’s theoretical model] . . . holds that man is inherently a social being and that his most basic motivation is to belong to and participate in the most basic motivation is to group. Adler did not submerge the individual in the group, however; on the contrary, he emphasized an active, creative “self” that plays a central role in the individual’s attempts to organize his experiences and fulfill himself as a human being. The individual personality is unique and each person develops a “style of life” which reflects his basic patterns of motives, values, and action patterns. Inferiority feelings arise whenever the individual feels a sense of incompleteness or a lack of fulfillment in any life area. Such inferiority feelings are normal driving forces, which push him toward improvement and superiority. Inferiority feelings, however, may be exaggerated into an *inferiority complex*, which leads to unhealthy compensation. Thus, the neurotic person may

strive for power and self-aggrandizement in order to compensate for underlying feelings of inadequacy and inferiority.³⁸

Although, Adler believes that underlying feelings of inferiority may lead to overcompensation and a striving for dominance and superiority, he also believes that in other cases such feelings of inferiority may lead to avoidance of competition.

If one views nations in the same way that Adler views individuals—that is, as social entities with a basic motivational need to belong, participate, and establish a place amongst other like entities, i.e., a world community—then one can extrapolate Adler’s personality model from the micro level of the individual to the macro level of nation states. Within such a conceptualization, the hegemonic rogue nation is like the neurotic person who strives for power and self-aggrandizement in order to compensate for underlying feelings of inadequacy and inferiority. Conversely, the powerless nation that is easily bullied, overrun, and subordinated is like a neurotic person who is risk adverse, conflict avoidant, and who suffers from the lack of personal agency.

Given this analogy, the psychological dimension of imperialism can easily be defined as a *reaction formation* that manifests itself in a neurotic striving for power and dominance. For a further understanding of the psychodynamics of the neurosis associated with the striving for power and the *reaction formation*, one need only review the work of the eminent psychiatrist Rollo May. In May’s classic work *Love and Will*, he states, “The great stress of ‘will power’ [is] a frantic ‘reaction formation,’ a desperate endeavor to compensate for the symptoms of [one’s] unfulfilled infantile needs, a strategy of living on despite these painful early longings. It is not surprising—such is the irony and ‘balance’ of the complex processes of human consciousness—that [one’s] symptoms are of the compulsive, drive type. This is precisely will gone awry. . . .”³⁹ On an individual or national level, “will gone awry” may manifest itself in one of two ways, self-destruction or power seeking in the form of individual bullying or a national policy of imperialism.

Given the untold number of children who were subjected to the draconian socialization practices during the Middle Ages and who died under the cruel yoke of medieval deprivation, one can only speculate as to the depth of the impact of such unfulfilled infantile and childhood needs. The impact of such despair on the consciousness of those who survived to adulthood must have been immense. It could be easily argued that a sizeable number of those children who survived to adulthood would fall prey to a *reaction formation* and find themselves driven to overcompensate for feelings of deprivation, fear, depression, and powerlessness.

Another central feature of Adler's model, as previously cited, is his belief that "each person develops a 'style of life' [or life style as it is often called], which reflects his basic pattern of motives, values, and action patterns." An individual's life is like a stream flowing towards an infinite unknowable sea; yet life, like a stream, has a pattern and an existential direction that is knowable if one is willing to reflect. For one's "style of life" is an "act of creation" that involves the setting of goals, the acquisition of values, the development of skills, and the realization of aspirations within the topographical landscape of one's social, emotional, and physical experience. In order to understand an individual's "style of life," that life must be examined from its source to its present point in time and space. This "style of life" or *modus vivendi* represents an individual's purpose in life, or reason for existence. In a similar fashion, a nation-state develops an overall perceived purpose that serves as the wellspring for its existence and identity and, as such, manifests itself in a sort of collective "style of life." It is the gathering of many streams into a mighty river of humanity, flowing through a grand geopolitical landscape of ethnic experience, which constitutes a nation's collective "style of life." Thomas Jefferson articulated this nation's purpose when he wrote the Declaration of Independence in which he asserted the right to "Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness," a phrase that was borrowed from John Locke, who spoke of the natural right to "Life, Liberty, and Estate." Jefferson's assertion was made in keeping with the philosophy put forth by Locke, who held that estate or property was a requisite for liberty, for without property, he argued, one could not truly be free; hence, free-market capitalism became central to America's "style of life."

In keeping with the philosophy of Locke, the Founding Fathers initially restricted suffrage in the United States to white males with property. "Despite their preference for vesting power in popularly elected legislatures, Revolutionary leaders described themselves as republicans rather than democrats. Although used interchangeably today, these words had different connotations in the eighteenth century. At worst, democracy suggested mob rule [as in ancient Athens]; at best, it implied the concentration of power in the hands of an uneducated multitude. In contrast, republicanism presumed that government would be entrusted to capable leaders, elected for their superior talents and wisdom The state governments that America constructed during the revolution reflected a struggle between more radical, democratic elements and the [republican] elites who would minimize popular participation."⁴⁰

W. Gordon East, in his work *The Geography Behind History*, offers an excellent bridge between the notion of purpose at the individual and the national levels by providing a macro or societal level equivalent to Adler's concept of a "style of life." East refers to the work of a central figure in the advancement

of political geography, Friedrich Ratzel, who developed the concept of the “state-idea,” which East describes as follows:

Certainly there is a fundamental philosophical difference of view as to the importance of the individual within the state community, notably as between, for example, the Anglo-Saxon and Russo-Chinese worlds. But states are comprised only of individuals organized as communities, the decisions and actions of which are necessarily taken by individuals, those in whose hands the duty and power of government lie. Since each state is a unique entity, with characteristics of its own, it is helpful to try to discover what has been called its ‘state-idea’ or *raison d’être*. This concept . . . refers to the idea for which a state exists, as comprehended by its citizens, and as symbolizing their loyalty. Clearly, the degree to which the state-idea is grasped and accepted by the citizens of a state provides a useful index of its social cohesion and political unity.⁴¹

Hegel, in his *Philosophy of History*, alludes to a concept similar to Ratzel’s notion of the “state-idea,” albeit essentialist in its perspective, when he declares, “[t]he State is the Divine Idea as it exists on Earth.” He then precedes to state some pages later, “Thus is it with the Spirit of a people: it is a Spirit having strictly defined characteristics, which erects itself into an objective world, that exists and persists in a particular religious form of worship, customs, constitution, and political laws, in the whole complex of its institutions, in the events and transactions that make up its history. That is its work, that is what this particular nation is. Nations are what their deeds are.”⁴²

In this same work, Hegel goes on to identify the *grund für sein*, *raison d’être*, or reason for being of Germany, England, and the United States. When speaking of Germany’s *grund für sein*, he states, “The German spirit is the Spirit of the New World. Its aim is the realization of absolute truth as the unlimited self-determination of freedom . . .”⁴³ Over a century later, Germany’s reason for being is manifested in the proclamation, “*Deutschland aller Überschuß in prachtvollen tausend Jahren regieren*” (Germany over all in a glorious thousand-year reign). As far as the English, Hegel states, “Every Englishman will say: We are the men who navigate the ocean, and have the commerce of the world; to whom the East Indies belong and their riches; who have a parliament, juries, [etc.],”⁴⁴ which was later captured in these simple declarations, “The sun never sets on the British Empire,” or “Rule Britannia, Britannia rules the waves.” And with regards to the United States, Hegel states, “America is . . . the land of the future, where, in the ages that lie before us, the burden of the World’s History shall reveal itself It is a land of desire for all who are weary of the historical lumber-room of old Europe.”⁴⁵ The “state-idea” of the United States is captured in the declaration inscribed on the Great Seal of the United States, which appears on the one dollar

bill, *Novus Ordo Seclorum* (New Order of the Ages), and in the nineteenth-century phrase “Manifest Destiny,” which “describes a foreign policy of territorial and commercial expansion.”⁴⁶

It is important to reiterate the aforementioned analogy drawn between Adler’s psychological concept of “style of life” and Ratzel’s political concept of “state-idea,” because it is critical to this work’s analysis of the nature of Eurocentrism and the hegemony of Western imperialism. As stated earlier, Adler’s personality theory is grounded on the belief that each individual’s self-concept revolves around a psychological construct he refers to as “style of life.” Similarly, the central ethos of a nation, according to Ratzel’s theory, is grounded in that nation’s “state-idea.” If this analogy is accepted, then the argument can be made that the feelings of incompleteness and inadequacy that often affect the “style of life” of an individual can have equally as profound an affect on the “state-idea” of a nation. According to Adler, feelings of inferiority arise whenever a protracted sense of incompleteness and inadequacy occurs. As stated in a previous quote from James Coleman, “Such inferiority feelings are normal driving forces which push [individuals and for the purposes of this discussion nations] toward improvement and superiority. Inferiority feelings, however, may become exaggerated into an *inferiority complex*, which in turn may leads to unhealthy compensation. Thus the neurotic [individual or nation] may strive for power and self-aggrandizement in order to compensate for underlying feelings of inadequacy and inferiority.”

If the historical circumstances of a nation engender in that nation a sense of collective inferiority, this might lead to a sort of neurotic striving for power and national aggrandizement, which in turn could affect that nation’s “state-idea.” Again, the examples cited are Nazi Germany’s proclamation, “*Deutschland aller Überschluß in prachtvollen tausend Jahren regieren*,” England’s slogan, “The sun never sets on the British Empire,” and America’s declaration “*Novus Ordo Seclorum*,” or “Manifest Destiny. These same feelings of collective national inferiority may also manifest themselves in an ethos characterized by a sense of impuissance and *weltschmerz*, meaning world pain or world-weariness. After the Middle Ages, during the period of intense European strife and national realignment and political consolidations, there were countless principalities, kingdoms, and duchies that suffered from a debilitating sense of impotence, where hope was deferred, and the yoke of external and internal oppression became an ethnic icon. More contemporary examples of such powerlessness and despair would be Bosnia, Afghanistan, or Somalia.

Adler describes four strategies for dealing with feelings of inferiority: positive compensation, avoidance, overcompensation, and the false assertion of supremacy, more commonly referred to as a “superiority complex.”

Positive compensation, for Adler, represents the healthiest response to feelings of inferiority, because it is a pro-social strategy, meaning that it forwards what he believes to be one of the most important human values, cooperation. Adler believes it is within a cooperative context that people realize personal improvement and gain self-fulfillment by contributing to the common welfare; in addition, he believes there is a resulting experience of positive regard from others. If Adler's theories were distilled down to one seminal idea, it would be the concept of the Social Human, inextricably interconnected with others and all of nature. The need to belong is universal in Adler's cosmology; for him, "social feeling is so universal that no one is able to begin any activity without first being justified by it. The need for justifying each act and thought originates in our unconscious sense of social unity."⁴⁷ Avoidance represents the least assertive response to feelings of inferiority and is the least damaging to others because the individual avoids comparison and competition. In extreme cases, the individual "may withdraw in various psychological ways—such as admitting defeat, reducing . . . ego involvement in [a competitive] situation, lowering . . . aspirations, restricting the situations with which . . . [one] . . . attempts to cope, curtailing energy and effort, or becoming apathetic."⁴⁸ This form of compensation has the potential to be the most self-destructive of all the strategies because avoidance is often perceived as weakness and may result in an individual being taken advantage of, manipulated, or controlled. Such a reaction could also prove deadly for a nation's political sovereignty, subjecting it to the imperial advances of other nations.

Overcompensation represents another unhealthy reaction to feelings of inferiority, because at the core of its teleology is an egocentric and often narcissistic goal of individual achievement and exaltation. Overcompensation is driven by a somewhat neurotic striving, rather than cooperative goals that celebrate collaboration. Ultimately, this strategy is unproductive for both the individual and the society. Achievement for achievement's sake cannot alleviate feelings of personal inferiority, especially when there is an absence of social acceptance and positive regard from others; nor can individualistic striving on the part of a citizenry strengthen the social fabric of a nation if there is no concern for the greater good of society. Finally, Adler characterizes the delusional assertion of supremacy manifested in the superiority complex as merely a means to mask inferior feelings behind a veil of bravado, rather than an attempt to positively overcome these feelings of inadequacy and inferiority with pro-social action. The individual or nation with a superiority complex is like a masked desperado whose power is diminished as soon as the mask is removed; the most powerful example of such an unmasking is the old Soviet Union.

Although most of Europe, with the exception of Scandinavia, suffered the external and internal ravishes of the Medieval era, individual nations varied somewhat in their responses to the agonizing vicissitudes of the period. Most nations responded by engaging in strategies of overcompensation and supremacist assertion, as represented in post-medieval imperialist expansionism. However, there were nations that avoided such expansionist efforts, most likely because they were too weak to engage in geopolitical struggles for dominance. Instead, they sought to survive by embracing neutrality or by trying to establish protective alliances with more powerful nations. Such attempts were by and large futile and, as a result, these nations were devoured by stronger and more aggressive nations.

As previously stated in this chapter, it appears that the root causes of Western hegemony and imperialism, beyond those rooted in economics, reside deep in the psychosocial recesses of the Western mind. Again, the psychosocial cause of Western hegemony and imperialism represents a reaction to the trauma of the Middle Ages and the need to overcome feelings of inferiority resulting from centuries of being dominated by more powerful neighbors to the north, south, and east. The question that remains unanswered, however, is how the West was able rise from the social, political, and cultural abyss of the Middle Ages and mount a successful global assault on the sovereignty of the majority of the non-Western world. Jared Diamond, in his award-winning text *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, identifies the most commonly held but, in his estimation, false explanation for Western world dominance. Diamond states the following:

In the centuries after A.D. 1500, as European explorers became aware of the wide differences among the world's peoples in technology and political organization, they assumed that those differences arose from differences in innate ability. With the rise of Darwinian theory, explanations were recast in terms of natural selection and of evolutionary descent. Technologically primitive [or pre-industrial] peoples were considered evolutionary vestiges of human descent from apelike ancestors. The displacement of such peoples by colonists from industrialized societies exemplified the survival of the fittest. With the later rise of genetics, the explanations were recast once again, in genetic terms. Europeans became considered genetically more intelligent than Africans, and especially more so than Aboriginal Australians.

Today, segments of Western society publicly repudiate racism. Yet many (perhaps most!) Westerners continue to accept racist explanations privately or subconsciously. . . .

The objection to such racist explanations is not just that they are loathsome, but that they are wrong. Sound evidence for the existence of human differences in intelligence that parallel human differences in technology is lacking. In fact . . . modern "Stone Age" peoples are on the average probably more intelligent, not less intelligent, than industrialized peoples.⁴⁹

Some might find Diamond's assertion that "modern 'Stone Age' peoples are on the average probably more intelligent, not less intelligent, than industrialized peoples" a bit difficult to believe. However, if one applies the standard definition of intelligence to both peoples, while also considering their relative environmental context, his assertions appear to be quite credible. The standard definition of intelligence put forth by psychologists who specialize in learning is that intelligence represents "the ability . . . to acquire, remember, retrieve, and use knowledge to solve problems, and adapt to the world."⁵⁰ For example, consider how indigenous peoples of the Amazon rainforest acquire, remember, retrieve, and use a vast store of knowledge about the complex and dangerous ecological system within which they dwell in order to solve problems, and to adapt and survive. Or consider the fascinating story of Boston physician Dr. Zabdiel Boylston who, in 1721, happened upon a technique for inoculating the citizenry of his city against an outbreak of smallpox. Dr. Boylston found himself at his wit's end with the fear that his two sons would be consumed by this "speckled monster," as had so many other children, and that he would be helpless despite all of his skill. It was about then, as he stood watching his sons, that he noticed a letter that he had received from a Mr. Cotton Mathers. In his letter, Mr. Mathers described a technique for inoculating people against smallpox. Mathers stated:

. . . that among the Guramantees [or Coromatee, the West Indian term for the Akan peoples of Africa's Gold Coast] 'tis no rare thing for a whole company, of a dozen together, to go to a person sick of the small pox, and prick his pustules, and inoculate the humour, even no more than the back of one hand, and go home, and be a little ill, and have a few, and be safe all the rest of their days. Of this I have in my neighborhood a competent number of living witnesses.⁵¹

Mr. Mathers informed Dr. Boylston that he had learned this technique from his Coromatee servant and had the origin or the technique later confirmed by numerous Africans.

People mistakenly believe that the level of a society's technology is the result of one of or a combination of two factors: 1) the average intelligence of a society, ergo the more intelligent a society the more technologically advanced, and/or 2) the existence of a few heroic geniuses and a society receptive to their innovation. Underlying both of these factors is an assumption that is best captured by the old saw "necessity is the mother of invention." In other words:

Inventions supposedly arise when a society has an unfulfilled need. . . . [Of course] [q]uite a few inventions do conform to this commonsense view of necessity as invention's mother. . . . [However,] these familiar examples deceive [people] into assuming that other major inventions were also responses to perceived needs. In fact, many or most inventions were developed by people driven

by curiosity or by a love of tinkering, in the absence of any initial demand for the product they had in mind. Once a device had been invented, the inventor then had to find an application for it. Only after it had been in use for a considerable time did consumers come to feel that they “needed” it.⁵²

This leads to one of the key factors in the proliferation of technology in the West, which is profit. Capitalism demands a continuous stream of new technology, not necessarily to meet an unfulfilled societal need, though that is often the case, but more importantly to provide products for a marketplace economy. A whole series of institutional mechanisms—advertising, marketing, and investment banking—have been developed to maintain and expand the development of capitalism by creating a societal illusion of need to drive consumption—and hence profit. Collectively oriented pre-industrial societies are not driven to create an artificial need for technology for profit’s sake. This absence of need or desire for technology is a trait that those in the West typically use to diminish intelligence of pre-industrial societies.

The proliferation of technology is also due to the fact “that technology develops cumulatively, rather than in isolated heroic acts.”⁵³ The West provides an excellent example of a civilization that profited from the cumulative technological advances of various non-western civilizations. Much of the technology that launched the West on its imperialist rise to preeminence was gained from the Far East, Near East, and North Africa. In fact, the history of the West’s most devastatingly efficient tool of conquest, the gun, provides a perfect example of a cumulative technology that found its most powerful use long after it was invented.

Initially, “black powder,” or gunpowder as it came to be known, was developed by the Chinese around 1000 AD. The historical record shows that the Muslims improved on the Chinese invention, as evidence by a chemical treatise authored in 1100 A.D, which described seven recipes for gunpowder. Later, in 1280 AD, another Muslim treatise was authored, which gave “more than 70 recipes that ...proved suitable for diverse purposes (one for rockets, another for cannons).”⁵⁴ Then in 1304, an Arab artisan made the first gun—some 100 years before Europeans would “put this invention to work effectively on the battlefield.”⁵⁵ It is important to note that the Chinese used this explosive black power for entertainment before it was used in firearms. An interesting aside is the fact that black powder returned to the Far East as gunpowder in 1543 AD, when firearms first arrived in Japan. “[T]he Japanese were so impressed by the new weapon that they commenced indigenous gun production, greatly improved gun technology, and by AD 1600 owned more and better guns than any other country in the world.”⁵⁶ However, the Japanese eventually abandoned the gun because it went against their code of honor and style of battle. “Japanese warfare had previously involved single combats

between samurai swordsmen, who stood in the open, made ritual speeches, and then took pride in fighting gracefully. Such behavior became lethal in the presence of peasant soldiers ungracefully blasting away with guns.”⁵⁷ During this time, Japan was a feudal hierarchy with the samurai occupying the same status that knights had in Europe, which meant that they were able to banish guns from warfare. Ultimately, it would be in the hands of European imperialists that the gun would find its true purpose, conquest. Once the West got the upper hand in the perfection and production of black powder-based military technology, the key element in the world’s first weapons of mass destruction, the non-western world would find itself scrambling to match the lethality of European aggressiveness.

During our present era of “political correctness,” the belief that such advanced technology, both military and nonmilitary, is due to the genetic superiority of whites is not often articulated, but still seems to be a commonly held private belief amongst a large portion of the white population. What they fail to realize, however, is that “[i]t was Muslims and Mongols, not Europeans, who held the upper hand in 1304. European Crusaders had been driven from the Holy Land in 1291. Moorish sultans from Africa continued to rule parts of Spain, just as they had since 712. The Mongols held Russia, which they had conquered—along with much of Central Europe—between 1237 and 1242 . . . [and] . . . grew rich selling their white subjects to Muslim slave traders. During the Middle Ages, Russians and Slavic peoples became the primary source of slaves for the Mediterranean world The very word *Slav* came to mean ‘slave’ in English and other languages.”⁵⁸ However, as fate would have it, the Europeans benefited from the confluence of geopolitical events and the acquisition of foreign technology. William McNeill, in his work *The Rise of the West*, poses the question put forth earlier in the chapter, which was how did the West rise from the abyss of the Middle Ages to the height of world preeminence? McNeill answers this question by stating the following:

In view of the revolutionary role that European civilization played in the world after 1500, it is worth asking how medieval Europe differed from its contemporaries elsewhere. Two observations suggest themselves.

First, from the eleventh century onward, Western Europeans entered upon the inheritance of classical, Moslem, and Byzantine worlds relatively uninhibited by their own past. The ease and eagerness with which they appropriated these alien inheritances has perhaps no equal in civilized history, unless it is the Greek assimilation of Oriental civilization in the sixth century BC. The speed and single-mindedness with which Europeans learned what more anciently civilized neighbors had to teach them perhaps permitted the European novices to carry further than their Asian contemporaries the effort rationalization of human

effort—an effort toward which their share in the Greek inheritance predisposed them. Roman law, Greek science and philosophy, and the ecclesiastical encouragement of reasoning about doctrine and the world all forwarded this development. . . .

Second, popular participation in economic, cultural, and political life was far greater in Western Europe than other civilizations of the world. The staples of European commerce were not luxury goods designed for the wealthy few, as tended to be the case in the Asian civilizations, but such common items as grain and herring, wool and coarse cloth, metals and timber—all destined for a wider class of consumers. Culturally, the aspirations of a wide variety of social groups—clergy, nobility, burghers, and to some degree peasants—found literary expression in medieval European society, whereas only passing crises in other Eurasian civilizations brought anything comparable to the surface. . . . The result was to mobilize greater human resources within European society than was possible within more rigidly hierarchical societies of the other civilized lands.⁵⁹

It was “[t]he Bronze Age barbarian roots of European pugnacity and Medieval survival of military habits among the merchant classes of Western Europe, as well as among aristocrats and territorial lords of less exalted degree”⁶⁰ that allowed the West to take advantage of these sociocultural and technological resources. Hardened by the ordeal of the Middle Ages, driven to overcompensate for centuries of denigration under the yoke of successive waves of invaders, and fueled by an insatiable greed born of protracted and painful need, Europe charged on to the world stage with reckless abandon. “The barbarian inheritance—both from the remote Bronze Age invasions of the second millennium BC and from the more immediate Germanic, Scandinavian, and steppe invasions of the first millennium AD—made European society more thoroughly warlike than any other civilized society on the globe, excepting the Japanese.”⁶¹

Europeans readily incorporated innovations that flowed from the Far East to the Near East and on to the West. China developed “the earliest cast-iron production in the world, around 500 BC. The following 1500 years saw the outpouring of Chinese technological inventions . . . that included paper, the compass, the wheelbarrow, and gunpowder.”⁶² Medieval Islam served as the conduit through which Far East technology flowed, technology that would trickle through to Europe, exciting the minds and stimulating the curiosity and imaginations of medieval Europeans scholars and scientists. The Muslims were “technologically advanced and open to innovation. [They] achieved far higher literacy rates than contemporary Europe; [they] assimilated the legacy of classical Greek civilization. . . . [They] invented or elaborated windmills, tidal mills, trigonometry, and lateen sails; [they] made major advances in metallurgy, mechanical and chemical engineering, and irrigation

methods; and [they] adopted paper and gunpowder from China and transmitted them to Europe."⁶³ It would be sailing technology, the compass, and the weapons derived from gunpowder, that would turn the tide of European misfortune and humiliation. This sharp turn of fortune began, as previously stated:

. . . with what ought to have been a military breakthrough for the Muslim. Arab craftsmen, not Europeans, succeeded in making the first gun, in 1304. Yet, it turned out to be Europeans, some hundred years later, who put this new invention to work most effectively on the battlefield. By the time Henry the Navigator sent his first caravels down the African coast in the 1430s, his explorers went heavily armed with cannon and muskets.

Europe's rise to world supremacy followed with breathtaking speed. With it came a new self-image for Europeans. Gone were the days when white people bowed low before Asian and Muslim rulers. Now it was the brown, black, red, and yellow people of the world who bowed before them. A new idea arose in European minds. While the Greeks and Romans had claimed superiority only for their fellow Mediterraneans, the New Europeans declared that all white people—northerners and southerners alike—shared a common superiority over nonwhites."⁶⁴

Of all the imperialist nations of Europe, the primary focus of this work is on Germany and England because of their obvious cultural influence on the United States. England established the thirteen colonies in North America that would eventually emerge as the United States and the Germans constituted approximately thirty-nine percent of the population. At its foundation, the United States was philosophically, religiously, socially, politically, and economically an Anglo-Germanic nation in its orientation. With this fact in mind, it is essential that the legacy to the United States of these two nations be examined.

The hyper-nationalism of Germany under the leadership of Bismarck and Hitler, the extreme ethnocentrism of England as it forged its empire, and the historic drive by the United States for respect, equal status, and a position of world preeminence, provide good cases in point of overcompensation turned into a hegemonic quest for supremacy. The drive for supremacy in all three cases—Germany, England, and the United States—manifests itself in a *reaction formation*, which translates into a kind of ethnic superiority complex. Over time, this delusional assertion of supremacy became manifest reality because of the reinforcing power of myth, historiography, propaganda, and education. In varying forms, this sense of ethnic superiority became imbued in the belief system, values, ideology, ethos, and institutions of each of these societies. Ultimately, this drive to overcompensate, this "will to power," became

a political fact, if not a psychological reality, as each of these nations ascended, at various points in time, to world dominance. The first of these three peoples to succumb to the drive for supremacy were the Germans, a people caught for centuries in the abyss of fractious tribalism. Hegel, when comparing the development of Greece and Rome to that of Germany, states:

History shows that the process of development among the peoples now under consideration was an altogether different one. The Greeks and Romans had reached maturity within ere they directed their energies outwards. The Germans, on the contrary, began with self-diffusion—deluging the world, and overpowering in their course the inwardly rotten, hollow political fabrics of the civilized nations. Only then did their *development* begin, kindled by a foreign culture, a foreign religion, polity, and legislation. The process of culture they underwent consisted in taking foreign elements and reductively amalgamating them with their own national life. Thus, their history presents an introversion—the attraction of alien forms of life and the bringing these to bear upon their own. [This process foreshadowed the developmental path of European ascension].⁶⁵

The Teutonic tribes that came to be known as the German people inhabited what are now German, Hungary, and Romania. They were a widely dispersed people who, nevertheless, shared a common Indo-European linguistic etymology, semi-nomadic lifestyle, tribal political structure, and a social system dominated by a militaristic aristocracy. It would take the percussive triphammer effect of continuous invasions by the Huns to drive the various German tribes like crude nails against the once-hardened but deteriorating Roman Imperial frontier until it completely collapsed in 410 AD. Despite what is often characterized as a collective victory over the Romans, the German tribes remained disunited. Unity would only be realized as a result of the acculturating effects of their cohabitation with their defeated but more sophisticated Roman captives and their conversion to Christianity. Out of this cultural union emerged five kingdoms, which eventually would be reduced through warfare during the sixth and seventh centuries to three kingdoms. The most enduring and prosperous of the Germanic tribes were the Franks, who were united under the powerful warlord Clovis (481–511). Descendants of Clovis continued to expand the kingdom, conquering all of France, then on to Germany where for three centuries this preeminent Germano-Roman state would rule. As Hegel's analysis so aptly states, "Only then [after overpowering Rome] did their development begin, kindled by foreign culture, a foreign religion, polity, and legislation;" their culture became an almost perfect amalgam of Germanic, Roman, and Christian civilizations.

Under Charlemagne, this Frankish kingdom would eventually move to create a broader unity and stave off the Muslim invaders from North Africa and

Arabia. Charlemagne ruled from 772 to 814, and by 800 would be recognized as a world leader equal to the Byzantine emperor and Muslim caliphs of Baghdad. Finally, this drive to overcome the “self-diffusion” of tribalism that Hegel had described was realized and Germany reigned supreme in Europe. However, this unity would not outlive its king, as the German people stumbled back into the abyss of fractious tribalism upon Charlemagne’s death in 814 AD. As a result, the German people found themselves once again engaged in a *suche nach nationaler Einheit und Identität* (a quest for national unity and identity) as the Carolingian Empire fell into disarray. German cultural tradition dictated that the empire be divided equally among Charlemagne’s sons, who in turn further divided the empire among their sons, triggering centuries of dynastic struggle, occasioned by wars over rights of succession. Through these divisive conflicts, the once-powerful empire regressed back to the tribal chaos from whence it had risen. Charlemagne’s accomplishments, however, should not be forgotten or understated, for despite the fact that he was illiterate “the intellectual and political activity [of the Carolingian Empire] during . . . the eighth and early ninth [centuries] had been remarkable. But this burst of genius was limited to his court, and then swamped by a fresh wave of Germanic invaders—Franks, Vandals, and Goths of all stripes; while from the south Arabs and Berbers, lumped under the name Saracens, attacked and though repulsed were not eliminated.”⁶⁶ There were, as history has shown, intermittent periods of unity caused by the galvanizing effects of foreign wars of resistance and conquest, but these effects dissipated almost as quickly as the echoing cries of German victory.

During the centuries between the decline of the Carolingian Empire and the wars of unification waged by the “Iron Chancellor,” Otto von Bismarck, in 1864, 1866, and 1870, Germany was at constant odds with its tribal tendencies, having, in 1648, at the end of the Thirty Years’ War, disintegrated into 2,000 distinct units. As Napoleon once commented, as he proceeded to conquer and subjugate the German people, Germany was always in the process of “becoming, not being.”⁶⁷ Again, faced with an “enemy abroad,” the Germans united to challenge Napoleon’s occupation and, as a result, gained the *Disziplin und der Wille* (discipline and will) to build a unified state. Jacques Barzun describes this process of unification as follows:

From a people universally derided as dreamers and private philosophers, they ultimately became a nation of self-assertive leaders in war, government, education, science, and philosophy itself. Harnessed by Prussia at first, they helped to defeat Napoleon in 1815, learning in the process disciplines that became cultural traits—*practical* order and system and respect for rules that served to promote national unity and strength. Two hundred years of humiliation as the playground of dynastic wars needed to be avenged. By the end of the nineteenth century, the

rest of Europe began to think of the Germans as born in uniform and helmet and possessed of traits mostly unpleasant and probably racial.⁶⁸

Bismarck, in his effort to unify Germany, not only used external enemies as a galvanizing force, he also employed—with Machiavellian political intent, though tempered by personal ambivalence—the white-hot flames of anti-Semitism and racism to forge Germany’s newly emerging accord. Hitler would use that same anti-Semitic and racist ploy some forty-three years later to forge German unity yet again, but with an unprecedented ferocity that would become an icon of modern barbarism. Amos Elton, in his power work *The Pity of It All: A Portrait of the German-Jewish Epoch, 1743-1933*, describes the precursor to the tragedy that was Nazi Germany as follows:

Before Hitler rose to power [and for that matter before and during Bismarck’s era as chancellor], other Europeans often feared, admired, envied, and ridiculed the Germans; only Jews seemed actually to have *loved* them. The link—and the tensions—between Jews and Germans were sometimes described as stemming from an alleged family resemblance. . . . [On the positive side of the resemblance] Gordon A. Craig, the prominent American historian of Germany, has alleged a “striking resemblance” between nineteenth-century Germans and Jews, evidenced by their industry, thrift, and common proclivity for abstract speculation. . . . Less positively, Jews and Germans stand accused of a similar combination of arrogance and self-loathing, tactlessness and hypersensitivity. Even when such generalizations contain a grain of truth, they do not explain the one-sided love or the one-sided hatred or what happened in the end.⁶⁹

This confusing relationship was no more apparent than in the case of Bismarck, who “depended on his [Jewish] banker [Gerson von Bleichröder] and on the Jewish parliamentarians for their liberal credentials, their connections, and their financial acumen, yet when they came to [Bismarck’s postwar headquarters at] Versailles, he denigrated them. According to [Fritz] Stern [Bleichröder’s biographer], there was an insistent, harsh, anti-Semitic tone at Versailles: at no other time in his life did Bismarck speak so often, so freely, so scathingly of the rootlessness of Jews, of their hustling, of their omnipresence.”⁷⁰ After having “already conquered and subjugated vast territories that were once independent, fusing them into a new German Reich [Bismarck used] anti-Semitism to manipulate the laboring masses into a pliable, reactionary group.”⁷¹

It took a stock market crash in 1873 to increase the anti-Semitic ire of Germany as thousands of middle-class and aristocratic families who lost everything chose to scapegoat Jews for their misfortunes. “The crash provoked a wave of anti-Semitic agitation unlike anything Germany—or France—had seen since the Crusades or the Black Death. Jews were said to be ‘inferior’

and ‘immoral;’ their successes over the preceding two or three decades were due entirely to devious, even criminal manipulations. It was not an accident that so many stockbrokers happened to be Jews.”⁷² Bismarck indirectly facilitated this new anti-Semitism. “As incriminations against Jews mounted, he maintained an icy silence. He had his reasons. He was not a Jew hater or racist. . . . [If confronted on this scorn, Bismarck would probably cite his long dependence on and alliance with Bleichröder and Bamberger, after all he would claim to have had Jews as part of his inner circle.] He was [however] a cynic, a misanthrope, a man of fathomless cunning. His silence was politically convenient. Clearly, he saw it as a means to deflect the liberal block—once his mainstay but now at odds with his authoritarianism and protectionist economic policies.”⁷³ So, when it came to German Jews, Bismarck’s Machiavellian intent, though tinged with ambivalence, was to sacrifice the Jewish community—along with Jews who had supported him—like lambs on the altar of German unity.

Along with German unification came a patriotic zeal that drove nationalists, both in and out of government, to seek what they believed to be their *rechtmäßiger platz der nation* (nation’s rightful place) amongst the powers of Europe by seizing shares of the colonial spoils and imperial status being accrued by other European nations. Blocked from access to Asia and the Pacific Rim because of the already established colonial outposts of Great Britain, France, the Netherlands, and the United States, Germany set its sights on Africa, where the most rapid European colonial expansion was occurring. Prior to the 1870s, the great powers of Europe, in their lust for land and subjects, showed little interest in colonizing Africa’s complex and difficult interior, focusing instead on the coastal regions. “As late as 1880, European nations ruled just a tenth of the continent. Only three decades later, by 1914, Europeans had claimed all of Africa except Liberia (a small territory of freed slaves from the United States) and Ethiopia, which had successfully held off Italian invaders at Adowa in 1896. [It was] the activities of Leopold II, the king of Belgium [that] spurred expansion. In 1876, as a private entrepreneur, he formed the International Association for the Exploration and Civilization of Central Africa,”⁷⁴ in effect, establishing a colony in the Congo. As other European Nations began to realize the riches in rubber and ivory that were being brought out of the Congo by Belgium, their interest in establishing colonies in Africa increased immensely.

It should be noted that “King Leopold II of Belgium [was] a ruler much admired throughout Europe as a ‘philanthropic’ monarch . . . [who] . . . welcomed Christian missionaries to his new colony . . . [allegedly] fought and defeated local slave-traders . . . and for more than a decade European newspapers . . . praised him for investing his personal fortune in public works

to benefit the Africans.”⁷⁵ However, there was a sinister unseen side of this story, an evil side that was discovered by Edmund Dene Morel, a trusted employee of a Liverpool shipping line, who was sent to Belgium to supervise the loading and unloading of company ships to and from the Congo. While overseeing his company’s ships arriving at the big port of Antwerp, he noticed that the ships were loaded to the gunwales with a “king’s ransom” of rubber and ivory, at which point he began to realize that there was something wrong. Author Adam Hochschild describes the scene:

[W]hen they cast off their hawsers to steam back to the Congo, while military bands play on the pier and eager young men in uniform line the ships rails, what they carry is mostly army officers, fire arms, and ammunition. There is no trade going on here. Little or nothing is being exchanged for rubber and ivory. As Morel watches these riches streaming to Europe with almost no goods being sent to Africa to pay for them, he realizes that there can be only one explanation to their source: slave labor.⁷⁶

Morel’s discovery foreshadowed the evil that would befall Africa, an evil that would be invoked in the name of Christianity, civilization, and exploration as Europe continued the rape and pillage of the continent and its people that began in 1441 with the Portuguese slavers. Hochschild describes this unfolding pattern of European colonial abuse as follows:

In France’s equatorial African territories, where the region’s history is best documented, the amount of rubber-bearing land was less than what Leopold controlled, but the rape was just as brutal. Almost all exploitable land was divided among concession companies. Forced labor, hostages, slave chains, starving porters, burned villages, paramilitary company “sentries,” and the *chicotte* [whips with a short wooden handle] were the order of the day. Thousands of refugees who had fled across the Congo River to escape Leopold’s regime eventually fled back to escape the French. The population loss in the rubber-rich equatorial rainforest owned by France is estimated, just as in Leopold’s Congo, at roughly 50 percent. And, as in Leopold’s colony, both the French territories and the German Cameroons were wracked by long, fierce rebellions against the rubber regime. The French scholar Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch has published a chilling graph showing how, at one French Congo post, Salanga, between 1904 and 1907, the month-by-month rise and fall in rubber production correlated almost exactly to the rise and fall in the number of bullets used up by company “sentries”—nearly four hundred in a busy month.

During this period a scandal erupted in France when white men were put on trial for a particularly gruesome set of murders in the French Congo; to celebrate Bastille Day, one had exploded a stick of dynamite in a black prisoner’s rec-tum.⁷⁷

The irony of this gruesome set of murders was that they were perpetrated in celebration of the French Revolution, the main symbol of which was the storming and destruction of the infamous state prison in Paris in 1789. It is tragic how quickly the cries of “*vers le bas avec tyranny, vers le haut d’avec la liberté*” (down with tyranny, up with liberty) shouted by the French peasantry were drowned out by the grinding gear of capitalism. It is curious how hastily the hunger for freedom is forgotten by those dining at the table of excess and greed.

Like hungry jackals downwind of wounded prey, the nations of Europe nipped at each other’s flanks while in hot pursuit of their quarry, Africa. Belgium was at the head of the pack, but King Leopold was sensing pressure from rival states, so he attempted to lay claim to as much of the African continent as possible. However, of all his rivals, “Leopold found that the hardest nut to crack was Chancellor Bismarck . . . At first, the King’s greed got him in trouble. Besides the Congo basin, he wrote to Bismarck, he was claiming vaguely defined areas abandoned by Egypt, where the slave trade continue[d] to flourish. . . . Bismarck, no fool, scribbled a comment in the margin beside this message: ‘Swindle’ . . . In the end, though, Leopold outsmarted even the Iron Chancellor . . . by working through the perfect intermediary. Gerson Bleichröder, Bismarck’s banker, the financier of the St. Gotthard Tunnel under the alps and many other projects, was a man of much behind-the-scenes influence.”⁷⁸

As the lust for African land and cheap labor increased, the nations of Europe needed a way to settle the conflicting claims. In response to the need to apportion the felled carcass that was the African continent, “Bismarck and Jules Ferry, the premier of France, called an international conference of the Great Powers in Berlin in 1884 to lay some ground rules for the development of Africa south of the Sahara. The Berlin conference established the rule that a European country had to occupy territory in order to claim it. This led to a mad race to the interior of Africa; it was a field day for explorers and soldiers. As Europe rushed to claim territory, they ignored both national and cultural frontiers. Even today, the map of Africa reveals many straight (and thus artificial) boundary lines, rather than the irregular lines of natural boundaries, such as rivers and mountains.”⁷⁹ By ignoring the traditional boundaries and forcing unrelated ethnic groups to live together, pitting them against each other to maintain control, Europe sowed the seeds of the present-day chaos and instability that plagues the African continent. In effect, the warfare and competition between the “tribes” of Europe are responsible for the ongoing “tribal” wars of Africa.

England and France grabbed the lion’s share of Africa with the remains devoured in almost equal portions by the Belgians, Portuguese, and Germans.

However, the “Germans could take little heart from their African acquisitions—Southwest Africa (Namibia), East Africa (Tanzania, but not Zanzibar, which was British), the Cameroons, and Togo (part of Ghana today). The German colonies were the most efficiently governed (critics said the most ruthlessly controlled), but they yielded few benefits other than pride of ownership, because they were costly to govern.”⁸⁰

Colonies in Africa were costly for all of the colonial powers of Europe with the people of Africa not yielding easily under the yoke of oppression. All across the continent there were numerous revolts; the most devastating was against the Italians in Ethiopia. Of all of the revolts in Africa, the Italians suffered the most humiliating defeat at Adowa, when they were driven out of Ethiopia. Not wanting to experience the same humiliation that the Italians had at the hands of the Ethiopians, Germany, when confronted in 1904 by rebellious Hereros in Southwest Africa, issued a *vernichtungsbefehl* (an order of extermination). “Of an estimated eighty thousand Hereros who lived in the territory in 1903, fewer than twenty thousand landless refugees remained in 1906. The others had been driven [by an act of racist cruelty] into the desert to die of thirst (the Germans poisoned the waterholes), were shot, or—to economize on bullets—bayoneted or clubbed to death with rifle stocks.”⁸¹ It was as if they were preparing and desensitizing themselves in anticipation of their ultimate act of anti-Semitism, the extermination of the Jews some thirty-three years later under Adolph Hitler.

In 1914, some twenty-four years after Otto von Bismarck’s nineteen-year reign as chancellor, Germany’s hegemonic drive lured it into the first of two major world wars. “Attracted by Social Darwinism and militarist doctrines . . . Germany sought to become the foremost economic and political power in Europe and to play a far greater role in world politics; to achieve this goal, it was willing to go to war. . . . [Despite the fact that Germany has traditionally borne sole responsibility for the First World War, when taken] . . . in the broad perspective of European history, . . . war marked a culmination of dangerous forces in European life: glorification of power, the fascination with violence and the nonrational, the general dissatisfaction with bourgeois society, and above all, . . . explosive nationalism.”⁸² In 1914, the First World War erupted, marking four of the bloodiest years in human history. By 1918, Germany was spent, realizing defeat at the hands of the Allied Forces, which unknowingly sowed the seeds of the Second World War by exacting their retribution at the Treaty of Versailles, placing massive indemnities on the German people. This, along with the deficits incurred by the war, was enough to push Germany into an economic crisis. Broken and dispirited, the German people once more lost confidence as they found themselves again brought to heal by Europe.

As Germany's economy collapsed and its citizenry slipped deeper into the abyss of starvation, social disorganization, and desperation, the flames of anti-Semitism and racism were again used to ignite Aryan pride and forge a national unity. The *Gesellschaft für Rassenhygiene* (Society for Racial Hygiene), which had been founded in 1904, quickly grew in popularity and membership. This rapid growth was accelerated by the deplorable conditions that existed in Germany after its defeat in the First World War. Reacting to the massive indemnities placed on Germany by the rest of Europe and the humiliation of defeat, the German population in large measure again gathered around the flames of anti-Semitism and its white-hot symbolism of national unity. Pat Shipman, in her comprehensive work *The Evolution of Racism: Human Differences and the Use and Abuse of Science*, describes the initial focus of the Society for Racial Hygiene as follows:

The first issue of the [society's] journal [had been] dedicated to two scientists whose work underlay the theory of *Rassenhygiene*: Ernst Haeckel, who brought Darwinism to Germany, and August Weismann, who provided the mechanism for Darwinian evolution by proposing that special germ cells in the body carry and transmit the genetic information. . . . The journal was a major vehicle for the dissemination of the eugenics ideas of Haeckel and his followers, and after the rise of the Nazi Party to power in the early 1930s, the journal provided a respectable scientific showcase for Nazi views, which differed little from the content of the journals of previous years.⁸³

The journal, along with the general Nazi propaganda of the period, fueled anti-Semitic racism, which eventually fired the crematoriums of Germany's "final solution."

An interesting aside related to the Eugenics Movement worth noting at this point is the fact that this movement did not first take root in Germany, but in the United States, even though the term was actually coined in France in 1883 by Francis Galton, the cousin of Charles Darwin and the creator of the first intelligence test. The word "eugenics" is taken from a Greek root meaning "well born," and well born "was Charles Davenport who brought eugenics to the people of America. A Harvard-trained biologist with an unusually strong—for the time—background in mathematics, Davenport was an archetypal East Coast Anglo-Saxon Protestant. He was born to a large and well-to-do family that was dominated by a rigidly authoritarian father."⁸⁴ Davenport convinced the Carnegie Institute to fund his research in animal genetics. This research would eventually be focused "on human heredity with the support of the American Breeder's Association and wealthy individuals such as Mrs. E. H. Harriman. In 1910, with her help, he established the Eugenics Records Office, which became the center for all of the work and publications of the eugenics movement."⁸⁵

Beyond research, the political agenda of Davenport and the Eugenics Movement was to encourage the “well born” or fit to have more children and actively discourage the breeding of the less fit in order to stem what was viewed as a cascading deterioration of America’s genetic pool. In the minds of those in the Eugenics Movement, this deterioration was caused by the crossbreeding and interbreeding of criminals and those judged to be “mentally defective,” as well as the high birthrates among blacks, Indians, Mexicans, southern and eastern Europeans, and Jews of all ethnic backgrounds. The Eugenics Movement, for the most part, was focused on refining and improving the white “race” by culling out the “defective elements” and encouraging the “more fit” to reproduce. However, “two works warned white Americans . . . of the desperate need to use eugenic measures to improve the nation [by managing the colored population]: Madison Grant’s *The Passing of the Great Race* (1916) and Lothrop Stoddard’s *The Rising Tide of Color against White Supremacy*.”⁸⁶ “Davenport believed that it was both justifiable and sound to sterilize those carrying ‘defective protoplasm’ when they could be identified. In general, however, he thought sexual segregation of the unfit was a less expensive course. . . . Between 1907 and 1917, sterilization laws were enacted in sixteen states, starting with Indiana. These laws made it legal to sterilize criminals in particular categories as well as . . . epileptics, the insane, drug addicted, idiots, and—in Iowa—white slavers.”⁸⁷ The United States was so supportive of the eugenics policy that the Supreme Court in *Buck v. Bent* in 1927 upheld Virginia’s sterilization laws. By 1937, “[s]ixty-three percent of Americans endorsed the compulsory sterilization of habitual criminals and . . . sixty-six percent were in favor of sterilizing mental defectives.”⁸⁸ Eventually, thirty states would adopt sterilization laws for the “mentally defective” and by 1968, some sixty-five thousand people in the United States would be sterilized against their will.⁸⁹ Of course, these laws primarily affected the poor and minorities, because “[e]ugenics enthusiasts in the United States . . . were largely middle to upper-middle class, white Anglo-Saxons, predominantly protestant, and educated,”⁹⁰ while the victims of sterilization were powerless and often disenfranchised.

It would be Germany, however, where eugenics would find its most favorable audience among those who had become enthralled by Hegel’s vision of Germany’s place in history, swept up in Nietzsche’s militaristic rhetoric, and convinced by the Aryan myth of German superiority. For as Joseph DeJarnette, a prominent member of the Virginia Sterilization Movement, wrote in the February 27 edition of the 1940 *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, “The Germans are beating us at our own game.”⁹¹ DeJarnette was referring to the fact that by 1936, a mere three years after having passed the Eugenics Sterilization Law, Germany had sterilized 225,000 people. This law mandated the

compulsory sterilization of those afflicted by mental retardation, schizophrenia, epilepsy, blindness, and physical deformities, as well as those addicted to drugs and alcohol. Eugenics, sterilization, and genocide were all made to fit into Germany's "state-idea" of dominance by the skillful use of propaganda on the part of Hitler and his head of the Ministry of Popular Enlightenment, Joseph Goebbels. "Nazi propaganda sought to condition the mind to revere the Fuehrer [leader] and to obey the new regime. Its intent was to deprive individuals of their capacity for independent thought. By concentrating on the myth of race and the infallibility of the fuehrer, Nazi propaganda tried to disorient the rational mind and give the individual new standards to believe in and obey."⁹² It was Hitler's goal to weld the German people into one unified racial community through Aryan propaganda, lifting them above their feelings of inferiority and desperation by convincing them of their *stolzes Schicksal als Deutsche* (proud destiny as Germans).

The philosophy of Hegel was clearly instrumental in the creation of Germany's "state-idea," an idea that put forward the belief that the German state was the realization of the *Göttlicher Geist* (Divine Spirit.) According to historian Norman Davies:

Two of Hegel's favourite ideas were to prove specially fertile. One of these was the Dialectic, the productive clash of opposites. The other was *Geist* or 'Spirit,' the essence of pure identity, which in his *Philosophy of History* he assigns to every political state and to each stage of developing civilization. The Dialectic, which Hegel confined to the realm of pure ideas, turned out to have many further applications which endowed the whole concept with a dynamic and universal explanation. It seemed to make sense out of turmoil, to promise that good could emerge from conflict. The historical Spirit, on the other hand, which Hegel used for the glorification of the state, turned out to be a weapon in the hands of national movements struggling against the powers of the day. Hegel's views were intensely Germanocentric, and would seem to rationalize the Protestant and Prussian supremacy that was coming to the fore in his own lifetime. He praised war and military heroes, and gave the leading role in modern civilization to the Germans.⁹³

For Hegel, the state represented the highest form of human association, the manifestation of ultimate reason on earth and the evolving handiwork of the divine spirit. In Hegel's metaphysical framework, "[t]he state joins fragmented individuals together into a community and substitutes rule of justice for rule of instinct. It permits individuals to live the ethical life and develop their human potential. An individual cannot achieve these goals in isolation. Hegel's thought reveals a powerful undercurrent of statism: the exaltation of the state and the subordination of the individual to it."⁹⁴ Both Bismarck and

Hitler seized on this notion that the individual should subordinate self to the will of the state and used this political philosophy as a clarion call for unity, but a unity based on the *Realpolitik* of Machiavellian ethics and a community of Aryan nationalism, not one based on universal justice and certainly not one based on human equality.

In addition to Hegel, the philosophy of Nietzsche gave rise to the notion of the German as *übermensch* (superman). Although the blonde superman presented a perfect iconic image of alleged Aryan superiority, it must be said in all fairness to Nietzsche that “the three wars by which Bismarck made an empire corresponded in no way to [the intent of] Nietzsche’s military figures of speech; he was disgusted by the vainglorious mood after the defeats of Denmark, Austria, and France. . . .”⁹⁵ Unfortunately, for any aspirations for peace, “many young people, attracted to [the extreme militaristic rhetoric of] Nietzsche, welcomed World War I; they viewed it as an esthetic experience and thought that it would clear a path to a new heroic age. They took Nietzsche’s words literally: ‘A society that definitely and *instinctively* gives up war and conquest is in decline.’”⁹⁶ What attracted these young people were Nietzsche’s statements about power and dominance, such as the following:

There is nothing very odd about lambs disliking birds of prey, but this is no reason for holding it against large birds of prey that they carry off lambs. And when the lambs whisper among themselves, “These birds of prey are evil, and does not this give us a right to say that whatever is the opposite of a bird of prey must be good?” there is nothing intrinsically wrong with such an argument—though the birds of prey will look somewhat quizzically and say, “We have nothing against these good lambs; in fact, we love them; nothing tastes better than tender lambs.”—To expect that strength will not manifest itself as strength, as the desire to overcome, to appropriate, to have enemies, obstacles, and triumphs, is every bit as absurd as to expect that weakness will manifest itself as strength.

One can see how young German nationalists could become aroused by Nietzsche’s words as he goes on to describe the weak, stating that the lambs:

. . . in fact espouse no belief more ardently than that it is within the discretion of the strong to be weak, of the bird of prey to be a lamb. Thus they assume the right of calling the bird of prey to account for being a bird of prey. We can hear the oppressed, downtrodden, violated whispering among themselves with the wily vengefulness of the impotent, “Let us be unlike those evil ones. Let us be good. And the good shall be he who does not do violence, does not attack or retaliate, who leaves vengeance to God, who, like us, lives hidden, who shuns all that is evil, and altogether asks very little of life—like us, the patient, the humble, the just ones.” Read in cold blood, this means nothing more than “We weak ones are, in fact weak. It is a good thing that we do nothing for which we are not strong enough.”⁹⁷

The misinterpretation of Nietzsche was due to an endemic hegemonic propensity in German society, coupled with the fact that “Nietzsche’s writings are not systematic treatises but collections of aphorisms, often containing internal contradictions,”⁹⁸ which resulted in words such as “superman,” and phrases such as “blonde beast of prey” being misunderstood by “the casually educated mind.”⁹⁹ Much of this misunderstanding was the result of “the bowdlerized version of his philosophy peddled by his sister, Elizabeth Nietzsche-Foerster (1846–1935), who led a party of ‘Aryan’ settlers to the colony of Nueva Germania in Paraguay in 1886, nursed her dying brother, and appropriated his ideas. She befriended both Wagner and Mussolini, idolized the Nazis, and linked the name of Nietzsche with racism and anti-Semitism. A tearful führer would attend her funeral.”¹⁰⁰ In actuality, Nietzsche scoffed at the idea of German racial superiority and derided German nationalism and militarism. Despite this fact, “Nazi theorists tried to make Nietzsche a forerunner of their movement. They sought from him a philosophical sanction for their own thirst for power, contempt for the weak, ruthlessness, and glorification of action. They also wanted this sanction for their cult of the heroic and their Social Darwinist revulsion of human equality. Recasting Nietzsche in their own image, the Nazis viewed themselves as Nietzsche’s supermen: members of a master race who, by force of will, would conquer all obstacles to their self-created values.”¹⁰¹

Nietzsche’s rather incendiary and provocative language undoubtedly appealed more to Hitler’s propagandistic ends than Hegel’s turgid grandiloquent prose, despite its grand Germanocentric theme, for “propaganda must be aimed principally at the emotions. The masses are not moved by scientific ideas or by objective and abstract knowledge, but by primitive feelings, terror, force, and discipline. Propaganda must reduce everything to simple slogans incessantly repeated and must concentrate on one enemy.”¹⁰² Hegel’s conception of a divine spirit moving through history and finding near perfection in the modern German state provided the Nazi elite with an intellectual justification for German supremacy, but was too esoteric for mass propaganda.

Germany’s arrogance and nationalistic zeal was manifested in its most menacing form in the *Volksgedanke Bewegung* (Folk Thought Movement), in which the “German Volkish thinkers sought to bind the German people together through a deep love of their language, traditions, and fatherland. These thinkers felt that Germans were animated by a higher spirit than that found in other peoples. To Volkish thinkers, the Enlightenment and parliamentary democracy were foreign ideas that corrupted the pure German spirit.”¹⁰³ *Volksgedanke Bewegung* glorified Germany’s tribal past, a simpler past, an epic past marked by relentless Teutonic courage and the conquest of Rome, a seductive past that “attracted Germans frightened by all the complexities of the

modern age—industrialization, urbanization, materialism, class conflicts, and alienation.”¹⁰⁴ This movement’s rhetoric energized the brown-shirted thugs who terrorized Jews and those opposed to the Third Reich.

The metaphysical narrative of Hegel and Nietzsche in many ways gave voice to the German aspirations for unity and dominance. Hegel’s belief that the state represented the divine manifestation of the spirit’s will on earth, more explicitly his belief that “the German spirit [was] the Spirit of the new World,”¹⁰⁵ undoubtedly inspired Bismarck as he turned Germany into a great power. Surely, Nietzsche’s image of the German “superman” helped fuel Hitler’s obsession with world dominance. As argued earlier, Germany’s *arroganz und nationalistischer eifer* (arrogance and nationalistic zeal) are clearly a “reaction formation,” a railing against historical tribal tendencies toward disunity and a visceral response to having been ridiculed for being a rudderless ship of rabble adrift in the backwaters of European politics for the better part of the eighteenth century. Eventually, it would be Germany, with its failure to find “a place in the sun,” that would reduce the whole edifice that was Europe to ruins¹⁰⁶ by triggering two world wars, both of which would begin and end in defeat in Berlin.

The English were the next of the three peoples discussed to succumb to the drive for supremacy. Like a bull terrier overcompensating for its size, England set out to mark and control as much territory as possible. Compounding this tendency for overcompensation is the extreme ethnocentrism that was and still is a hallmark of English culture. England’s extreme ethnocentrism presented itself as a kind of collective superiority complex that afflicted culture with a need for dominance that would result in the subjugation of a major portion of the non-white world. By employing its naval prowess, the strategy of divide and conquer, and by imposing indirect rule, England became the foremost imperial power of the era. This need for dominance was most clearly manifested at the apex of the British Empire, an empire that would total upwards of 140 territories, colonies, and possessions over the course of several centuries, beginning with Ireland in 1171. Linda Colley, in her book *Captive: The Story of Britain’s pursuit of empire and how its soldiers and civilians were held captive by the dream of global supremacy*, supports the earlier assertion of this chapter that the psychological engine that powered the quest for empire, particularly in the case of the British, was a sense of inferiority. Colley says of Britain that it was “[s]elf-consciously small, increasingly rich, and confronted with European enemies that were often bigger and militarily more formidable than themselves; the British were frequently on the edge, constantly fearful themselves of being invaded, necessarily alert and ready for a fight. A sense of inferiority, suggested Alfred Adler in regard to troubled individuals, breeds aggression and above all an urge to compensate. So arguably it proved with the British as a people.”¹⁰⁷

As Winthrop Jordan so aptly observed, “While Englishmen distinguished themselves from other peoples, they also distinguished among those different people who failed to be English. It seems almost as if Englishmen possessed a view of other peoples which placed the English nation at the center of widening concentric circles, each of which contained a people more alien than the one inside it.”¹⁰⁸ The concentric circles of ethnocentrism of which Jordan refers coincide with the British Empire’s sphere of influence and control, beginning with the “Inner Empire” of Ireland, Wales, and Scotland, then extending overseas to the “Outer Empire” of the North America, the Caribbean, Africa, East Asia, India, the South Pacific, and Australia. Cartography provides one of the richest sources of insight into the imperialist mind. Linda Colley provides one of the clearest depictions of English ethnocentrism in the introduction to her work, where she presents a copy of an 1893 map displaying the British global empire. Colley points out that this piece of cartography represents one of the world’s most famous maps, going on to state:

It shows Britain and Ireland [the Inner Empire] situated close to the centre of the displayed world and coloured red or pink. Around the outer circle of the map are a succession of land masses—Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the Indian subcontinent, large swathes of Africa, assorted Caribbean islands and more [representing the Outer Empire]—all coloured an identical red or pink to Britain itself. Some late nineteenth- and twentieth-century versions of this map also include the shipping routes and telegraph lines operating between Britain and these various overseas territories, marked out in black or again in red. The visual effect is rather like spokes jutting erratically from the hub of a wheel, or a scarlet spider at the centre of a massive, global web. Britain is made to appear physically connected to the distant lands it claims as its own and that literally takes their colour from it.¹⁰⁹

Colley explains that although “[t]his map has long since disappeared from the atlases, along with the empire it depicted . . . it remains a standard feature of history books and school texts. It is a part of our mental furniture even now.”¹¹⁰ Such is the case with English ethnocentrism. Although this ethnocentrism permeated almost every aspect of the English culture during the “glory days” of empire, it continues to do so to this day, albeit in much more humbled a fashion. Today England has to content itself with its heritage; no longer shining, it glows like the setting autumn moon, gaining its reflective light from the rising sun of America’s glory. America, Britain’s former colonial protégé turned rebel and now its ally, is heir to its hegemonic rule.

Given “the fact that the English developed the most racist attitudes towards the natives wherever they expanded or established overseas colonies,”¹¹¹ and given the significant historical and cultural relationship between England and America, it is important to devote some space to the discussion to England’s

ethnocentrism and hegemony. This is a particularly critical discussion when considering the fact that the English “idea of innate Anglo-Saxon superiority was nurtured by, and became an integral part of, American racial ideologies of the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.”¹¹²

Before going any further with this discussion, it is important to pose three essential questions, the answers to which, in part, reveal the source of the ethnocentrism and hegemonic drive of these island dwellers who had limited power and were of little significance prior to the eleventh century. Of course, this is a historical fact that would eventually change as the British Isles consolidated into a united kingdom, and moved abroad to establish the colonial foundation of the “Outer Empire,” from which it would shape much of the geopolitics of modernity. The English imperial drive would continue until their colonial subjects began to rebel in the 1930s. Ultimately, the Second World War would sound the death knell for the British Empire. Of the three questions that need to be asked, the first but not so obvious question is this: What made their island home so geologically and historically significant? The second, and more important question, although it is seldom asked by the general populous, is: From whence did the inhabitants of these islands originate? And finally, the most important question for the purpose of this discussion relates to their self-proclaimed ethnic identity: Who are the English, or “British,” as some prefer, and what makes them assume such an air of self-important ethnocentrism, a self-importance that at points has become a caricature of itself?

It was around 6500 BC, as the last ice age ended, that the sea levels rose; fed by the meltwater of the great glaciers, the sea’s surplus flowed into the waiting gulf between Europe and the highlands to the west. This major geological event formed the archipelago off the western coast of Europe, which would eventually become home to the English, Scottish, Welsh, and Irish peoples. Although the British Isles are fairly far north, “the Gulf Stream coming from the Caribbean made the climate much milder than comparable latitudes in North America or the interior of the continent.”¹¹³ As a result of this fortunate confluence of geographical location and oceanographic dynamics, the Paleolithic inhabitants of these isles “no longer hunted the ice-flows and tundra but became Mesolithic forest hunters like the northern Amerindians. . . .”¹¹⁴ No one knows the names the Paleolithic or subsequent Mesolithic people who first inhabited these isles used or the names used to identify the land masses upon which they resided. Herodotus in the fifth century BC appears to have been the first outsider to record, if not name, these islands, calling them the Kassiterides (Tin Islands) because of the islands’ tin mining and export trade of the then Neolithic inhabitants. Later in the fourth century BC, the Greek sailor Pytheas of Massila made note of the names given to these is-

lands by their then Celtic inhabitants—Pretaniké for the islands in their entirety, Ierne for the smaller western island, and Nesos Albionon for the larger eastern island.¹¹⁵ The flooding of the lowlands between Europe and the large precipices to the west fashioned the islands that would come to be known as Britain and Ireland, a geological event that would place these islands on a separate yet parallel and interconnected path with Europe and each other.

British historian William Camden, when penning his opus *Britannia* at the end of and during the afterglow of the glory days of Elizabeth I, “saw no reason to be coy. His country was, as everyone knew, ‘the most famous island without comparison of the whole world.’ And what made it especially enviable, he also knew, was its weather. Britain was, he rejoiced, ‘seated as well for aires as soile in a right fruitful and mild place. The aire so kinde and temperate that not only Summers be not excessive hot by reason of continual gentle winds that abate their heat . . . but the winters are also passing mild.’ It was this sweet fertility, Camden thought, that had made Britain so irresistible to the ancients. . . . Thus blessed, the historian Tacitus conferred on Britain the best compliment that could occur to any Roman: that it was *pretium victoriae* (worth the conquest).”¹¹⁶

With time, these isles became more defined as the channels between Europe and what would come to be known as Britain and Ireland gained their maximum widths, placing in relative isolation the small budding homo sapiens population, which had arrived in approximately 40,000 BC, before the isles even formed. Bathed in the moderate climate generated by the Gulf Stream, the prehistoric population of the isles flourished independently of Europe, but not without contact. From most informed estimates, “the primitive Mesolithic canoes could have made the channel passage and the Atlantic sea routes from Brittany and Ireland . . . but [still this land] . . . was now a world of its own.”¹¹⁷ Although the British Isles, to borrow historian Simon Schama’s description, represented “the end of the world,” its Mesolithic inhabitants would, over the millennia, be met by successive waves of immigrants and invaders from Europe, the Mediterranean, and the Middle East, all of whom were attracted to this “fruitful and mild place.”¹¹⁸ Despite the arrival of this rich admixture of peoples, the lifestyle of the Mesolithic and subsequent Neolithic peoples of Britain remained quite rudimentary compared to the civilization beginning to develop in places like Egypt and Iraq. The Neolithic population of Britain, however, was not devoid of cultural accomplishments, which included “the largest prehistoric artificial mounds in western Europe.” Chief among these accomplishments were “the vast stone circle of huge upright undressed sarsen stones at Avebury”¹¹⁹ and the masterpiece of Neolithic and Bronze Age origin, Stonehenge, which was completed, at the latest, around 2250 BC.

Stonehenge is a testimony to the sophistication of Bronze Age Britain and the power of that island's first aristocracy, who transformed a late Neolithic temple into one of the wonders of prehistory, making it "the grandest of many expressions of the earliest wealth in Britain."¹²⁰ The climax of this monumental endeavor represents "the first industrial enterprise on the island—the exploitation of copper and tin deposits to make bronze and export it to the continent."¹²¹ The exporting of bronze to the European continent and beyond "depended upon a far-flung sea borne commerce from the Black Sea round the Iberian Peninsula and Brittany up to the Orkneys and Baltic; landwise across the continent to Bohemia, northern Germany, and France, and through the Loire Valley."¹²² This commerce, in addition to bringing wealth, helped lay the keel upon which British maritime prowess would eventually be built. Of equal importance to British history, this commerce would further expose these relatively isolated isles to the rest of the known world. With word of its moderate climate, rich soil, and vast reserves of tin and copper spreading with each voyage, Britain became even more irresistible to the ancients. By means of both migration and invasion, the Celts, Romans, Germanic tribes of the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes, and finally the Normans would colonize and conquer these isles.

The Celts came in three successive waves beginning in approximately 600 or 650 BC. The Romans settled in 43 AD, after two earlier reconnaissance missions and a brief incursion by Julius Caesar and his expeditionary forces between 55 and 54 BC. Rome would eventually conquer and maintain control of Britain until the decline of its empire in 410 AD. Next came the Germanic Anglo-Saxon tribes, as they are popularly known, arriving in the late fifth and sixth centuries, "start[ing] off as mercenaries [invited by the Romano-British townships to fend off the Picts and Scottish plunderers] and [as] prospectors in what was still a relatively rich country; they ended as colonizers and settlers. They were in part pushed . . . [off of the continent] . . . into Britain by the Franks, now a power in Gaul."¹²³ Unlike the Franks, Goths, and Burgundians, who lived under tribal kings, the Anglo-Saxons lived under war-leaders who owed their authority to the sword." However, the "Anglo-Saxons were not only disunited, they were of diverse geographical origin. Bede [the venerable and later canonized English scholar, historian, and theologian], in one of his most famous passages, categorized them as comprising three peoples—the Angles, from present-day Schleswig, the Saxons from Saxony, and the Jutes from Jutland. These people settled in England piecemeal and established separate kingdoms. There were no administrative or institutional ties holding them together."¹²⁴ As their numbers increased, so did the competition over land, which quickly degenerated into conflict and open warfare. By the mid-fifth century, "they began to settle into the whole eastern

side of the island from the Scottish Lowlands down to Kent . . . ”¹²⁵ At last, after much warfare and chaos had resulted in the near collapse of British civil society, the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes were pacified after converting to the dominant religion of Britain—Christianity—which had been introduced in approximately 200 AD. Christianity had become the official religion of Britain when Theodosius the Great declared it the religion of the Roman Empire. With this conversion and pacification, a merger began between the Germanic tribes and the descendents of the Romano-British communities, which had developed earlier during the centuries-long occupation by the Romans. Added to this emerging ethnic amalgam were the Danish in the ninth century. And finally came the ‘Northmen’ or Normans—the Vikings who had settled in northwestern France would conquer England in 1066.

It is not known how all of these various cultures became one consolidated ethnic group known as the Angles or English for, as Norman Davies argues in his comprehensive analysis of British history, *The Isles*, “Most British historian could not actually say with any certainty what British was [or for that matter is].”¹²⁶ It is known, however, that Pope Gregory I “in the 590s . . . was talking about ‘the English people’—*gens Anglorum*; and the phrase so appealed to [scholar, historian, and theologian,] the Venerable Bede that in 730 he immortalized it in his *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*. It is not quite clear how Gregory came by the notion—he is commonly believed to have invented it . . . ”¹²⁷ However, “[i]t can hardly be coincidental that before Gregory’s time the Germanic invaders of Britain were generally known as Saxons but afterwards almost universally as ‘Angli’—English.”¹²⁸

Despite this newly emerging sense of “Englishness” during the eight and ninth centuries, Britain “was still politically fragmented and loyalties were still personal and local.”¹²⁹ It was not until the late ninth and early tenth centuries, as the occasional Viking invasions became more frequent and intense, that the people of Britain began to coalesce to resist their common “enemy abroad.” Alfred the Great, King of Wessex, was the first to be able to truly capitalize on the presence of this common threat to Britain in 871 when “the Vikings turned their attacks against Wessex . . . penetrating deep into the kingdom.”¹³⁰ Using the foreign threat, Alfred rallied the fragmented and dispirited tribes around a unifying concept of “Englishness.” Although the Vikings initially had the upper hand, Alfred was able to defeat them at Edington and Guthran and in the following decades managed to take the offensive recapture of London, the old Roman provincial center, consolidating much of the Midlands by his death in 890. Ultimately, it was his grandson, Athelstan, who extended the kingdom that Alfred had built into the north, an accomplishment that in the minds of many establishes Athelstan as the first true king of England in its entirety.¹³¹ Initially, there was much resistance to

this goal of English unity championed by Alfred and his heirs. The various ethnic and tribal groups dispersed throughout Britain in their own territories during the ninth and early tenth centuries did not trust the ambition of the West Saxon dynasty and were reluctant to abandon allegiance to their own individual kingdoms and supplant that allegiance with a commitment to a unified England under West Saxon dynastic rule. As Nigel Saul points out in his chronicling of medieval English history:

The aspirations of Alfred and his successors are reflected in their cultivation of an “English” self-image. From towards the end of 880s Alfred styled himself “Rex Anglorum (et) Saxonum”. In the prologue to the treaty with Guthrum, he spoke of his advisers as “councillors of all the English race”. In his preface to the translation of Pope Gregory’s *Cura Pastoralis*, he repeatedly refers to “Englishkind” and the “English” (*Angelcynn and Englisc*). But all the while, this emphasis on Englishness was coupled with continued recognition of the Wessex roots of the monarchy: the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, which was compiled under his influence, is a hymn of praise to his forebears’ achievements. Alfred was never less than an old-fashioned dynast. But it was clear to him that if he was to fashion a united front against the Vikings he needed to stimulate a broadly national or “English” feeling. He did this by fostering in his subjects a belief in themselves as a chosen race.”¹³²

Alfred thus planted the seed of English ethnicity, a seed that would eventually grow in its ethnocentrism into a mighty arboreal empire spreading forth its almost limitless bows like the grand oaks that adorned the English landscape; and, like these oaks, the British Empire would, in the coming centuries, cast its hegemonic shadow across most of the earth’s landscape.

Almost three centuries would pass before this newly emerging empire would become firmly rooted, controlling the entire British Isles. Alfred’s dream of a united kingdom of England would ultimately be realized, in part, through the efforts of his son, Edward the Elder, and his grandson, Athelstan, but not without a series of crises and a break in Alfred’s dynastic succession. “In 1016 the line of Wessex kings was interrupted by the succession of Cnut of Denmark; while in 1066 the last English king, Harold of Wessex, was killed at Hastings [by William the Conqueror, Duke of Normandy] and the highly distinctive state that he ruled [was] extinguished.”¹³³ Under William, English society was transformed from an Anglo-Saxon to an Anglo-Norman culture, with English being replaced by French as the language of the nobles and Latin as the language of government and the courts. Eventually, however, the Normans repeated an earlier pattern of their Viking ancestors, who had colonized northwestern France and had created the independent duchy of Normandy. The “Northmen,” Normans as they would come to be known, as-

simulated into the French feudal system, becoming French in almost every way. Now a new “process of assimilation began. . . . The process of the merging of cultures was greatly aided by the growing interest that the Normans took in the country’s past. Whether because they were insecure or as a part of the process of settling down the Normans quickly appropriated the English past to their own.”¹³⁴ Ironically, the Normans had appropriated the cultural tree that had sprouted from that *Englisc* seed planted earlier by Alfred. Over the centuries, the Norman monarchy would tend the fictitious roots of Alfred’s Anglican oak like a dutiful royal gardener until the United Kingdom of England’s arboreal foundation could support its flourishing new empire.

William the Conqueror died in 1087, leaving three sons, Robert the Eldest, who would become the duke of Normandy, William, who would assume his father’s crown as King of England, and Henry, the youngest, who would gain a hefty inheritance but no land. With a Norman presence on both sides of the English Channel, England would continue to be deeply embroiled and an influential part of European history for another five centuries. During this period, particularly between 1154 and 1399, the Norman monarchy, through a patronymic of English sovereigns, would continue to grow more centralized and powerful. Under the hegemonic drive of the English kings, Ireland fell to conquest in 1171, Wales in 1172, and Scotland in 1173, thus securing the “Inner Empire” of England, which encompassed the entire British Isles. According to Saul:

By the middle of the twelfth century, it is evident that a homogeneous nation was once again being forged . . . [with the] . . . growing willingness to identify with England on the part of people of all backgrounds. As so often in history, this sense of nationhood was defined, in its early stages at least, negatively. The English saw themselves as different from other peoples. . . . John of Salisbury, writing in the 1150s, said that Welsh were ‘rude and untamed; they live like beasts and although they nominally profess Christ, they deny him in their life and ways’. Gerald de Barri was equally scathing in his comments about the Irish. ‘They are so barbarous that they cannot be said to have any culture . . . They are a wild people, living like beasts, who have not progressed at all from the primitive habits of pastoral farming.’¹³⁵

This sense of being different, of being superior, reinforced the posture, and the smug baring that many perceive to be characteristic of the British.

Parenthetically, it should be noted that there are some strong similarities between England and the United States when it comes to dealing with diverse populations. England’s long history of insecurity and its struggle to forge a unified Anglican identity out of its diverse ethnic populations, both old and contemporary, has, for centuries, been hidden behind a smug mask of

ethnocentric superiority. Like its English founder, America finds itself hiding behind that same tattered mask of smug ethnocentrism and superiority as it struggles to forge a unified identity using the WASP (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant) heritage of England as the solder to weld a national identity out of one of the world's most diverse nations.

Once England secured its "Inner Empire," its attention was focused with a singular purpose on continental Europe and the reunification of the English and French crowns. The English, with the intent of conquest, set out for France, crossing the channel, which from that point forward would serve as the moat that would thwart any future attempts at revenge or conquest of their fortress island. England and France would become locked in an intermittent struggle that would come to be known as the Hundred Years' War. Ultimately, England would gain the upper hand over its beleaguered and demoralized adversary, seizing Paris and the lion's share of northern France up to the Loire Line. Through this protracted battle, England became more unified and "finally emerged as a country that was recognizably English in the modern sense."¹³⁶ However, despite having the upper hand, England's royal ambitions were swept away by a French tide of faith and bloody struggle set in motion by a young girl of seventeen from Domrémy[-la-Pucelle] in Lorraine, Jeanne d'Arc. Although captured and burned at the stake, "the martyred maid of Orleans became the symbol of French resurgence." After several stunning victories using new military strategies and tactics, a "triumphant French army recaptured Bordeaux after three hundred years of English rule."¹³⁷

Defeated in France, England turned its quest for empire away from what it believed would be the dawn of a powerful new presence on the continent towards the western horizon, off into where the Spaniards, Portuguese, Dutch, and French had already ventured, that dark horizon where even the sun on its heavenly journey became lost. Belatedly, but with much excitement, the English set sail into that "undiscovered country" of famous Shakespearian verse, to that arcane place beyond their wildest imagination, that ancient land with its timeless peoples, that land dubbed the "new world" by Columbus's first chronicler, Peter Martyr d'Anghera. Jealously, the English had followed "Columbus's epoch-making voyages [as they] were adapting themselves to oceanic opportunities that would dwarf all their previous enterprises. They would come late to this exploitation, far behind the Portuguese and Spaniards, the Dutch and the French; but eventually their oceanic trade and colonial empire would surpass all others."¹³⁸ Coveting this "new world" and fascinated by the exploits of Columbus who, in his early reports, stated, "I reached the Indian sea where I discovered many islands, thickly peopled, of which I took possession without resistance in the name of our most illustrious monarch, by public proclamation and with unfurled banners."¹³⁹ Encouraged by commu-

niqués from the “new world” that described a vast continent of unbounded resources, spanning two hemispheres and populated by people who easily succumbed to the yoke of exploitation, the English vowed to have their share. Setting their gaze with steely resolve on this new land, they at first satisfied their lust for imperial spoils by scavenging like jackals around the fringes of the Spanish colonies and shipping lanes. Privateers such as Sir Francis Drake and Sir John Hawkins, the son of William Hawkins, who established the English slave trade, waged an undeclared war of piracy against Spain under the clandestine auspices of her majesty, Queen Elizabeth I. Eventually, England would establish a colonial presence in North America at Jamestown, Virginia. America—that continent mistaken for India by the miscalculations of Columbus and named by a German mapmaker who believed that Amerigo Vespucci bested Columbus by arriving first—would become the tragic stage upon which its indigenous peoples would find themselves declared American Indians, enslaved until replaced by Africans, pronounced foreigners in their own land, and hunted to near extinction by the hegemonic zeal of European imperialism.

The United States represents the last and most important of the three countries discussed to fall prey to the ethos of ethnic supremacy and the drive for international dominance, especially given the fact that it stands as the most powerful nation in human history. For the United States, the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were marked by a national need for respect and acknowledgement by the more powerful nations of Europe. This need ultimately manifested itself in a drive for world preeminence that could be likened to the maturational need of a child driven to overcome feelings of inferiority and powerlessness in an adult world. This analogy seems quite apropos to this discussion, as many historians are fond of commenting on the relative youth of the United States. Simone de Beauvoir, in *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, attributes much of the initial existential angst of adulthood to the confusion of childhood experiences. The child struggles through the medium of playful practice to comprehend the adult world, but is developmentally incapable of realizing that desire, while the adult is not capable of remembering the confusion and fear of childhood inexperience. Hence, adults and children are rendered metaphysically incapable of truly apprehending and comprehending each other’s worlds. Beauvoir references Descartes when she describes the dilemma of childhood:

Man’s unhappiness, says Descartes, is due to his having first been a child. And indeed the unfortunate choices, which most men make, can only be explained by the fact that they have taken place on the basis of childhood. The child’s situation is characterized by his finding himself cast into a universe which he has

not helped to establish, which has been fashioned without him, and which appears to him as an absolute to which he can only submit. . . . This means that the world in which he lives is a serious world, since the characteristic of the spirit of seriousness is to consider values as ready-made things. That does not mean that the child himself is serious. On the contrary, he is allowed to play, to expend his existence freely. In his child's circle he feels that he can passionately pursue and joyfully attain goals, which he has set up for himself. But if he fulfills this experience in all tranquility, it is precisely because the domain open to his subjectivity seems insignificant and puerile in his own eyes. . . . The real world is that of adults where he is allowed only to respect and obey. The naive victim of the mirage of for-others, he believes in the *being* of his parents and teachers. He takes them for the divinities which they vainly try to be and whose appearance they like to borrow before his ingenuous eyes. Rewards, punishments, prizes, words of praise or blame instill in him the conviction that there exist good and an evil, which like a sun and moon exist as ends in themselves. In his universe of definite and substantial things, beneath the sovereign eyes of grown-up persons, he thinks that he too has being in a definite and substantial way. He is a good little boy or a scamp; he enjoys being it. If something deep inside him believes his conviction, he conceals this imperfection. He consoles himself for an inconsistency which he attributes to his young age by pinning his hopes on the future. Later on he too will become a big imposing statue. While waiting, he plays at being, at being a saint, a hero, a guttersnipe. He feels himself like those models whose images are sketched out in his books in broad, unequivocal strokes: explorer, brigand, sister of charity. This game of being serious can take on such an importance in the child's life that he himself actually becomes serious. We know such children who are caricatures of adults.¹⁴⁰

British colonial America served as an unsupervised boarding school for England, a place where her headstrong and wayward children were able to practice the discourse of adult civil society, the game of politics, and dream of one day being able to stand shoulder to shoulder as adults with their contemporaries in Europe. From portraits that survived the colonial era, one can witness from these images the demeanor that America's aristocracy and local elite attempted to project. "Sometimes they posed theatrically, self-consciously, with somewhat painfully contrived elegance heightened by the painters' ambitions."¹⁴¹ Like forlorn children sent off to boarding school, men like William Byrd II of Virginia longed for the comfort of his motherland. In letters written to confidants in England, he referred to eighteenth-century America as:

. . . a "silent country," in which at times he felt he was "being buried alive." Though surrounded by "my flocks and herds," he wrote back to England, "my bond-men and bond-women, and every sort of trade amongst my own servants," he was lonely. There was no one to respond to his wit, his satire; no one to ac-

knowledge his intellectual achievements, no way to establish his worth as a man of letters, as a man of the world. [Like a child alone in his room he] practiced his languages—everyday some Greek and Latin and a bit of Hebrew—reading diligently, remorselessly, in several European languages, built up his library into a formidable collection of over three thousand titles, and continued to write, for his own satisfaction, while pouring out to his diary his longing for a greater world.¹⁴²

As was the case with many educated men of his era, he sat alone in his room, practicing for an adult world of international sophistication and political adroitness, a world in which he would only marginally participate in, if at all. Even the giants of American history like Jefferson and Franklin, who, though they were able to travel extensively, shared a sense of provincial self-consciousness. Jefferson, while visiting France, “wrote so famously from Paris that ‘no American should come to Europe under thirty years of age.’ For in Europe, he warned, an American acquires a fondness for luxury and dissipation and a contempt for the simplicity of his own country...”¹⁴³ Even Benjamin Franklin, who “floated easily in French salon society . . . [was] . . . keenly aware of his provincial origins, [but] shrewdly overcame its stigma in France by flaunting it [like a child prodigy amongst adults, he] cleverly established his cosmopolitan credentials by exaggerating, caricaturing, hence implicitly denying, his provincialism.”¹⁴⁴

The brilliant French statesman and student of American society, Alexis de Tocqueville, also likened the development of a nation to the maturation of an individual moving through childhood, then adolescence, and on to adulthood. He contends that one needs “to understand the point of departure of a nation in order to appreciate its social condition and laws.”¹⁴⁵ Tocqueville, in his enduring work *Democracy in America* expands on this analogy:

Go back; look at the baby in his mother’s arms; see how the outside world is first reflected in the still-hazy mirror of his mind; consider the first examples that strike his attention; listen to the first words which awaken his dormant powers of thought; and finally take notice which of the first struggles he has endured. Only then will you understand the origin of prejudices, habits, and passions, which are to dominate his life. The whole man is there, if one may put it so, in the cradle.

Something analogous happens with nations. People always bear some marks of their origin. Circumstances of birth and growth affect all the rest of their careers.

If we could go right back to the elements of societies and examine the very first records of their histories, I have no doubt that we should there find the first cause of their prejudices, habits, dominating passions, and all that comes to be called the national character [or “state-idea”].¹⁴⁶

Colonial America could be classified developmentally as being on the threshold of adolescence. Led mostly by young men of the *nouveau* aristocracy and local elite, the colonies would struggle to establish an identity independent from its motherland. In the psychology literature, “[i]dentity refers to the organization of the individual’s drives, abilities, beliefs, and history into a consistent image of self.”¹⁴⁷ This psychological definition of identity also serves as an accurate analogy for the social, psychological, and political struggle that the founders were going through during the Revolution era and the years immediately leading up to that period. During this era, colonial America was engaged in a process of individuation, which in social psychology refers to the breaking down of social ties and the emergence of individuals lacking in or with a reduced sense of loyalty to previous reference groups. This process of individuation is quite representative of the breakdown in social ties between the thirteen colonies and England, during which loyalty and allegiance to the motherland began to deteriorate as a new independent national identity began to emerge.

In order to understand America’s “national character,” or, as Ratzel puts it, America’s “state-idea,” one must first look to the original colonists who settled the thirteen colonies. In the South, “a large proportion of the new colonists were unruly children of good family whose parents sent them off to escape from ignominy at home; for the rest, there were dismissed servants, fraudulent bankrupts, debauchers, and others of the sort; people more apt to pillage and destroy than to consolidate the settlement. Seditious leader easily enticed this band into every kind of extravagance and excess.”¹⁴⁸ Eventually, farm laborers and craftsmen would arrive, and in doing so would temper the more ruckus nature of colonies such as Jamestown. “They were quieter folk with better morals, but there were hardly any respects in which they rose above the level of the English lower class. No noble thought or conception above [personal] gain presided over the foundation of the new settlements.”¹⁴⁹ This would eventually change with the arrival of royalist refugees from the south of England.

The colonies in the Northeast, collectively known as New England, presented an exception to the pattern of immigration found in the South. According to Tocqueville:

[Initially,] all the immigrants who came to settle on the shores of New England belonged to the well-to-do classes at home. From the start, when they came together on American soil, they presented the unusual phenomenon of a society in which there were no great lords, no common people, and, one may almost say, no rich or poor. In proportion to their numbers, these men had a greater share of accomplishments than could be found in any European nation. . . . All, perhaps without a single exception, had received a fairly advanced education, and several had made a European reputation by their talents and their knowledge.¹⁵⁰

This initial group of immigrants who came to reside in the northeastern colonies was not forced to leave England, although religious intolerance exerted considerable pressure. Unlike those who immigrated to the South, the majority of those who settled in the northern colonies did not indenture themselves to escape penury in England, they were not rejected by their motherland for misconduct, nor did they leave for want of wealth; they left for purely intellectual and religious reasons. Tocqueville points out the following:

They hoped for the triumph of an idea. The immigrants, or as they so well named themselves, the Pilgrims, belonged to that English sect [of Calvinism] whose austere principles had led them to be called Puritans. Puritanism was not just a religious doctrine; in many respects, it shared the most absolute democratic and republican theories. That was the element which had aroused its most dangerous adversaries. Persecuted by home government, and with their strict principles offended by the everyday ways of the society in which they lived, the Puritans sought a land [that in their ethnocentric opinion was] so barbarous and neglected by the world that there at last they might be able to live in their own way and pray to God in freedom.¹⁵¹

As things became more stable, waves of immigrants began to flow into the American colonies. Contrary to popular belief and folk legend, the original English settlers were not a homogenous lot. They were from distinct subgroups, which settled in different colonies along the eastern seaboard of North America. Although each of these subgroups had many of their own discrete characteristics, over time they would become melded together to form the foundation of America's "national character," or "state-idea." In *Albion's Seed*, David Hackett Fischer attests to this fact in the following quote:

During the very long period from 1629 to 1775, the present area of the United States was settled by at least four large waves of English-speaking immigrants. The first was an exodus of Puritans from the east of England to Massachusetts during a period of eleven years from 1629 to 1640. The second was the migration of a small royalist elite and large numbers of indentured servants from the south of England to Virginia (ca. 1642–75). The third was a movement from the North Midlands of England and Wales to the Delaware Valley (ca. 1675–1725). The fourth was a flow of English-speaking people from the borders of North Britain and northern Ireland to Appalachian backcountry mostly during the half-century from 1718 to 1775.

These four groups shared many qualities in common. All of them spoke the English language. Nearly all were British Protestants. Most lived under British laws and took pride in possessing British liberties. At the same time, they also differed from one another in many ways: in their religious denominations, social ranks, historical generations, and also in the British regions from whence they came. They carried across the Atlantic four different sets of British folkways which became the basis of regional cultures in the New World. . . . Most

important the political history of the United States, they also had four different conceptions of order, power and freedom which became the cornerstones of a voluntary society in British America.¹⁵²

Of the four waves of English immigrants to settle in colonial America, the two focused on in this work are the Puritans, as the English Calvinists were called, and the royalists or cavaliers. The Puritans and royalists are the primary focus because of the powerful and enduring influence that these groups had on the social, cultural, and political history of the colonies and later the republic itself.

Between 1629 and 1640, some 21,000 Puritans immigrated to the colonies during the period known as the “Eleven Years’ Tyranny,” a time when the Parliament was rendered impotent by Charles I, and Puritans were purged from the Anglican Church by the Archbishop of Canterbury for their radical theological and social views. According to Fischer:

The emigrants who came to Massachusetts in the great migration became the breeding stock for America’s Yankee population. They multiplied at a rapid rate, doubling every generation for two centuries. Their numbers increased to 100,000 by 1700, to at least one million by 1800, six million by 1900, and more than sixteen million by 1988—all descended from the 21,000 English emigrants who came to Massachusetts in the period from 1629 to 1640.

The children of the great migration moved rapidly beyond the borders of Massachusetts. They occupied much of southern New England, eastern New Jersey, and northern New York. In the nineteenth century, their descendants migrated east to Maine and Nova Scotia, north to Canada, and west to the Pacific.¹⁵³

Thus, the Puritans laid down the sociocultural foundation for much of what has come to be known as mainstream American culture, which has historically served as the benchmark or standard of cultural assimilation.

The leaders of the Puritan faith provide a quintessential example of the “spiritual striving” of this disciplined and stoic sect. Men like John Winthrop, “a pious East Anglian lawyer [who] became governor of Massachusetts. His son, John Winthrop Junior . . . was governor of Connecticut, [and an] entrepreneur, and scientist. . . . Sir Richard Saltonstall . . . founded Watertown and colonized Connecticut. . . .”¹⁵⁴ As exemplars of the Puritan faith, they embodied those core elements of the religion that formed much of the foundation for New England culture, a culture that “might be summarized in five words: depravity, covenant, election, grace, and love.”¹⁵⁵ *Depravity* symbolized the Puritans’ deep and abiding belief in “original sin.” From the Puritan perspective, the world was an evil place where the forces of darkness and light were at constant war, a belief rooted in Greek dualism and medieval the-

ology. "They believed as an article of faith that there was no horror which mortal man was incapable of committing. The dark thread of this doctrine ran through the fabric of New England's culture for many generations."¹⁵⁶ *Covenant* represented the adhesive that held the Puritan community together. "They thought of their relationship with God (and one another) as a web of contracts."¹⁵⁷ *Election* for the Puritans meant "that only a few were admitted to the covenant [with God, because] . . . of limited atonement, which taught that Christ died only for the elect—not for all humanity. The iron of this Calvinistic creed entered deep into the soul of New England."¹⁵⁸ *Grace* was "God's gift to the elect, and the instrument of their salvation . . . [which] . . . [t]hey thought . . . came to each of them directly, and once given would never be taken. . . . It gave Puritans a soaring sense of spiritual freedom which they called 'soul liberty.'"¹⁵⁹ Finally, there was *love*, a divine love given by God, "for they believed that natural man was so unworthy that salvation came only from God's infinite love and mercy. Further, the Puritans believed that they were bound to love one another in a Godly way. . . . This Puritan love was a version of the Christian *Caritas* in which people were asked to 'lovingly give, as well as lovingly take, admonitions.'"¹⁶⁰

If taken separately, these doctrines, although stern, were not necessarily problematic; but taken together, they produced quite a theology conundrum. "Puritan theology became a set of insoluble logic problems about how to reconcile human responsibility with God's omnipotence, how to find enlightenment in a universe of darkness, how to live virtuously in a world of evil, and how to reconcile the liberty of a believing Christian with the absolute authority of the world."¹⁶¹ It was difficult for the Puritans to reconcile the conflict between the worldly obligations of the covenant and the freedom from these obligations afforded by the irrevocable gift of grace. Equally perplexing was the conflict caused by the vision of a dark world of depravity on one hand and on the other the glimmer of hope offered by the possibility of *election* to a preordained grace. All of this marked a radical departure from and rejection of Catholic theology. Within Catholic theology, the believer has church sacraments such as baptism, the Eucharist, and penance as a liturgical vehicle by which God's grace could be obtained. For example, through the sacrament of penance the forgiveness of one's sins is divided into three "components: contrition (feeling sorry for sin), confession (naming sins before a priest), and satisfaction (doing good acts as a sign of contrition and in payment for sins.)"¹⁶² After the theological upheaval caused by the Protestant Reformation, Christians who embraced the various emerging Protestant sects no longer believed the Catholic sacraments could save them from the fire of eternal damnation. Without these sacraments, Puritans believed that humanity was standing perpetually on the threshold of hell with no recourse but to hope

that by living a life devoted to Christ they would possibly be chosen for salvation by God. “For many generations these problems were compressed like coiled springs into the culture of New England. Long after Puritans had become Yankees, and Yankee Trinitarians had become New England Unitarians . . . the long shadow of Puritan belief still lingered over the folkways of [this] American region.”¹⁶³ The psychological tension captured in New England’s culture created a social dynamic that drove Yankee enterprise, energized the broader American culture, powered the economy, and fostered America’s hegemonic desires. Joel Kovel described the theological force that drove Yankee enterprise as follows:

For the Calvinists, men were damned in God’s eyes, irretrievably foul in their bodily aspects, and clung to God only through their abstract spirit. This spirit had to *prove* itself to God, had to negate its corporeal handicap. It could not enjoy the filthy world, but could attempt to bring order to it, to clean it up as much as could be humanly possible. The logical outcome was clear: make, produce, work over the given world, control both it and the body, and you will have virtue, you will be revealed as part of the elect and will receive heavenly reward. Here on earth, however, virtue—moral perfection—was the sole reward. The sensuous enjoyment of reality was confined to pure activity—the cold efficiency of work for itself, gain for itself. What is gained cannot be enjoyed; it should not even be seen, but must instead be progressively abstracted until the only things that ‘matter’ are money and moral purity—the former being the abstraction of a deadened filthy world, and the latter, the abstracted quality of a deadened, clean self. To be sure, there was no satisfaction intended by this system. All that “counted” was movement, striving for and endless goal that became ever more remote precisely through the process of striving.¹⁶⁴

The theological drive to “make, produce, work over the given world, control both it and the body . . . [to] progressively abstract [all gains] until the only things that ‘matter’ are money and moral purity” allowed the Calvinists and their British sectarian counterparts, the Puritans, to come to terms with capitalism. For, as Tawney points out in *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, “the suspicion of economic motives had been one of the earliest social teaching[s] of the Church and was to survive till Calvinism endowed the life of economic enterprise with a new sanctification. In medieval philosophy, the ascetic tradition, which condemned all commerce as the sphere of iniquity, was softened by a recognition of practical necessities, but it was not obliterated; and if reluctant to condemn, it was insistent to warn. . . . [the] one who holds a wolf by the ears.”¹⁶⁵ For, as has been proven time and time again by history, the wolf that is capitalism is an amoral predator with no conscience, just a drive to survive, to satiate its hunger, and to protect its entrepreneurial offspring. Capitalism, like the wolf, is always wild despite all efforts to do-

mesticate it and, like the wolf, capitalism must be muzzled, leashed, and trained. All morality must be imposed, for it is not in the nature of the beast to consider morality or broader societal needs when it comes to its basic instincts. William Greider confirms this assertion in *The Soul of Capitalism: Opening Paths to a Moral Economy* when he argues, “As a matter of principle, [capitalism] cannot take society’s interests into account. The company’s balance sheet has no way to recognize costs that are not its own, no reason or method to calculate the future liabilities it causes but that someone else will have to pay. The incentives, in fact, run hard in the opposite direction.”¹⁶⁶

Because the Calvinists had already made peace with capitalism in Europe prior to the great migration, this also meant that the English Calvinists, or so-called Puritans, were free to pursue capitalism without reservation, turning the New England colony into an omniscient economic engine of “free enterprise.” Calvinists no longer viewed “the whole world of economic motives as alien to the life of the spirit, or distrust[ed] the capitalist as one who [had] necessarily grown rich on the misfortunes of his neighbor, or regard[ed] poverty in itself meritorious. . . . [Calvinism] is perhaps the first systematic body of religious teaching which can be said to recognize and applaud the economic virtues. Its enemy is not the accumulation of riches, but their misuse for purpose of self-indulgence and ostentation. Its ideal is a society which seeks wealth with the sober gravity of men who are conscious at once of disciplining their own characters by patient labor, and devoting themselves to a service acceptable to God.”¹⁶⁷

However, this ideal society that the Calvinists and their Puritan cousins envisioned placed them on a slippery moral slope by creating a justification for capitalism that relied on a theological doctrine, which blinded them to the actual ethical consequences of many of their capitalist enterprises. Eventually, this slippery slope would lead them slowly into a quagmire that would sully their hands with the blood of Native American Indians, whose land they would forcibly seize for colonial expansion, and Africans, whom they would trade into slavery for profit. It is quite ironic that a people so desirous of freedom and with such strong religious convictions would mount a ruinous war against the very same people that had saved them that first winter at Plymouth and who would be the first colonists to legalize slavery in 1641. By abstracting the process of capitalism to the point that the only thing that mattered was money, the Puritans allowed immoral means of monetary acquisition, such as slavery, to become overshadowed by the capitalist ends of profitability, a dilemma that continues to plague contemporary capitalist enterprises. For, as in the contemporary world of business, moral issues are more often than not pushed aside in favor of bottom line considerations of profit. This is done “by pushing the negative consequences off on someone else: the neighbors who

live downstream from a factory's industrial pollution or its own workers, who lose job security and pension rights, or the community left with an empty factory, shattered lives, a ruined environment."¹⁶⁸ However, when the ugly consequences of these actions come to light, those true believers hold even more closely to those doctrines first espoused by the Calvinists. This is why the eminent theologian, Paul Tillich, refers to capitalism as the quasi-religion. Joel Kovel, in *White Racism*, explains the capitalist dynamic and dilemma as follows:

Gradually the material objects of the striving began to assume a fantastical aspect. Ever more desired, ever less desirable in themselves, they became ever more valued, and ever more hated. The only solace was moral perfection, the freedom from a guilt that was increasingly generated in the impulses toward freedom. The only recourse was further abstraction—splitting up the self and the world into separate, abstracted quantities by which the insensate dilemma could be, if not resolved, at least kept out of sight. . . . American history supplies endless examples of the dilemma. In the process of tearing Indians off their land, of enslaving and dehumanizing blacks, of exploiting great numbers of human beings besides Negroes and Indians, of raping the land itself—through this whole destructive process, a proud civilization has been built, replete with the highest ideals and cultural achievements.¹⁶⁹

The second English immigrant group focused on in this work is the so-called “distressed cavaliers” and their indentured servants. They were referred to as distressed cavaliers because they were of the royalist elite who, during the decade of the 1650s, began to leave in great numbers “when a Puritan oligarchy gained the upper hand in England and tried to impose its beliefs by force upon an unwilling people. Virginia royalist immigrants were refugees from oppression, just as New England’s Puritans themselves had been. Many had fought for Charles I in England’s Civil War. Some continued to serve him until his armies were broken by Parliament and the king himself was killed in 1649. Others rallied to the future King Charles II, and in 1651 fought at his side on the field of Worcester, where they were beaten once again.”¹⁷⁰ Virginia, England’s first colony in North America, had been settled in 1607, some forty-three years before the distressed cavaliers arrived. These first settlers were sent to Virginia in search of gold and as gold-seekers they were single “men without wealth or standards whose restless, turbulent temper endangered the infant colony and made its progress vacillating.”¹⁷¹ When Sir William Berkeley, a royalist in the highest standing, reached Virginia in February 1642, carrying the king’s commission as the new governor, the colony was “a sickly settlement of barely 8,000 souls. The colony had earned an evil reputation ‘that none but those of the meanest quality and corruptest

lives went there.’ The quality of life in early Virginia was more like a modern military outpost or lumber camp than a permanent society. Its leaders were rough, violent, hard-drinking men.”¹⁷²

During the first two and a half decades of Virginia’s existence, it stood, unlike its New England counterpart, as a disorderly house where amoral hooligans and ruffians threatened wrack and ruin on the entire colony despite the strong religious timber of its founders. In the establishment of the English colonies of North America, there were two models for inhabiting the new colonies. There was the New England model, where entire families and even communities were brought from England. Then there was the Virginia model, which “capitalize[d] on the desperation of the lower classes in England, [where the] skilled and unskilled laborers . . . imagined that redemption awaited them in the New World. Promised access to an early paradise, those people became indentured servants, contracted to work an average of four to seven years. . . . There were no moral or physical qualifications for the [supposed] honor of being bound to servitude in Virginia. Criminals escaped the gallows by signing up.”¹⁷³ Men, women, and even children were seized, absconded with, and forced into indentured servitude. “Adults were plied with alcohol . . . [and] . . . children offered sweets.”¹⁷⁴ However, “[i]n the thirty-five years of Sir William Berkeley’s tenure, Virginia was transformed”¹⁷⁵ from a disorderly house to an orderly yet still unequal bastion for wealthy royalist families.

As governor, Sir William Berkeley had many projects, but his most important and transformative gubernatorial act “was his recruitment of royalist elite for Virginia. . . . When they arrived, he promoted them to high office, granted them large estates, and created the ruling oligarchy that ran the colony for many generations.”¹⁷⁶ These royalists or “distressed cavaliers” formed the basis of the Virginia planter aristocracy that would have such a powerful influence on the politics of the Revolution and the new republic. Fischer characterizes Sir Berkeley’s efforts as following:

Sir William Berkeley’s recruiting campaign was highly successful. Nearly all of Virginia’s ruling families were founded by younger sons of eminent English families during his governorship. Berkeley himself was a younger son with no hope of inheriting an estate in England. This “younger son syndrome,” as one historian has called it, became a factor of high importance in the culture of Virginia. The founders of Virginia’s first families tried to reconstruct from American materials a cultural system from which they had been excluded at home.¹⁷⁷

Like the children alluded to earlier in this chapter, these colonists were left to their own devices in a distant boarding school, where they attempted to reconstruct the adult world of their motherland in their new Virginian home. It

is important to note that of the “152 Virginians who held top offices in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, at least sixteen were connected to aristocratic families, and 101 were sons of baronets, knights, and the rural gentry of England.”¹⁷⁸

Order was a central element of the southern and western agrarian countryside where the Virginia royalists originated and it was this sense of continuity and stability that they wanted to preserve. “In seventeenth-century Virginia, order was fundamentally a hierarchical concept. . . . The hierarchical idea of order had its antithesis in ‘confusion’ . . . [or as] . . . the royalist writer George Alsop defined, order as the opposite of confusion; and confusion as ‘ranging in contrary and improper spheres.’ [The difference between order and confusion metaphorically is like the difference between heaven and hell.] The ordering institutions of Virginia were as hierarchical as the idea of order itself.”¹⁷⁹ In the following quote, Fischer describes the harsh life and brutality that those who resided on the lower rungs of Virginia’s neo-feudalistic hierarchy endured.

The same hierarchical ideas also appeared in treatment of the disorderly. Convicted felons in Virginia received very different punishments according to their rank. For all but the most serious crimes, literate criminals could plead “benefit of clergy.” By reading aloud the “neck verse” from the Bible [“Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness; according unto the multitude of mercies blot out my transgression.”], they escaped a hanging, and were sentenced to be branded with a ‘cold iron,’ which left no mark that might destroy their honor. But the poor and illiterate went to the gallows.

The death penalty was very common in Virginia. As in the mother country, hundreds of felonies were capital crimes—which was not the case in the Puritan colonies. In a sample of forty-seven Virginia court sessions from 1737 and 1772, 164 people were convicted of a felony and not allowed to plead benefit of clergy, of that number, 125 were actually executed.”¹⁸⁰

In addition, the royalists, in their attempt to reconstruct the original cultural system from their motherland, replicated its hierarchical nature in an even more rigid fashion than that which had already existed in England. They attempted to recreate the social hierarchy of their old region of England by first using low-income European immigrants as indentured servants. It would be the enslaving of Africans that would eventually enable them to succeed in constructing the caste-like system that they desired. Of course, slavery was not new to the English, for they had reduced a significant portion of the Irish population to “involuntary laborers” and had enslaved large numbers of their own population. “During the early middle ages, slavery had existed on a large scale throughout Mercia, Wessex, and Sussex, and had lasted longer there

than in other parts of England. . . . This was not merely domestic bondage, but slavery on a large scale. During the eighth and ninth centuries, the size of major slave holdings in the south of England reached levels comparable to large plantations in the American South. . . . Serfdom also had been exceptionally strong in this region. . . . By the time of American colonization, both slavery and serfdom were long gone from this region. But other forms of social obligation remained very strong in the seventeenth century.”¹⁸¹ It was the inheritance of this cultural system of hierarchy, order, and tyranny masked by an unctuous civility that characterized Virginia society.

Colonial attitudes towards Native Americans, Africans, and the poor, especially those of Virginian royalists, were deeply rooted in the aristocratic traditions and culture of the English elite. While delving into the history behind these attitudes, the author of *Race in North America*, Audrey Smedley, found that:

Some Englishmen [during the 1500s] argued what was to become a familiar strain in European attitudes toward Native Americans and Africans in the New World . . . [and that was] . . . that the Irish were better off becoming slaves of the English than retaining the brutish customs of their traditional culture. When confiscating Irish lands, many English military leaders, some of whom were later to be involved in the colonization of New England and Virginia, regularly killed women and children, which has prompted some historians to accuse the English of genocide.¹⁸²

Many scholars of American history level the same accusations against past governmental administrations of the United States with regards to the near eradication of Native Americans. Then as Fischer points out there is the issue of slavery in Virginia and in the country as a whole, which:

. . . cannot be explained simply by an economic imperative. A system of plantation agriculture resting upon slave labor was not the only road to riches for Virginia’s royalist elite. With a little imagination, one may discern a road not taken in southern history. In purely material terms, Virginia might have flourished, as did her northern neighbor, solely by complex speculations in land and trade, and by an expansive system of freehold farming. But Virginia’s ruling elite had other aims in mind. For its social purposes, it required an underclass that would remain firmly fixed in its condition of subordination. The culture of the English countryside could not be reproduced in the New World without their rural proletariat. In short, slavery in Virginia had a cultural imperative.¹⁸³

Despite being at odds with their motherland over issues of power, authority, and independence, the Virginian royalists, like most adolescents, discovered that their core identity and value system essentially remained that of their parents.

As the Virginians struggled with various social, political, and economic options, they found themselves in a situation not unlike that of an adolescent confronted for the first time with major life-altering choices. Developmental psychologist James Marcia suggests:

. . . that there are four alternatives for adolescents as they confront themselves and their choices. The first is *identity achievement*. This means that after considering the realistic options, the individual has made choices and is pursuing them. . . . It appears that few . . . achieve this status . . . [immediately]. Most are not firm in their choice for several . . . years. . . . *Identity foreclosure* describes the situations of adolescents who do not experiment with different identities or consider a range of options but simply commit themselves to the goals, values, and life-style of their parents or other significant authority figures. *Identity diffusion* . . . occurs when individuals reach no conclusions about who they are or what they want to do with their lives; they have no firm direction. Adolescents experiencing *identity diffusion* may have struggled unsuccessfully to make choices, or they may have avoided thinking seriously about issues at all. Finally, adolescents in the midst of struggling with choices are experiencing a *moratorium*. This is what is really meant . . . [by] . . . an identity crisis."¹⁸⁴

At various points during the history of America beginning in the years leading up to, during, and after the Revolution, each of the four alternatives for adolescent identity development seem to apply to this nation's history. In the case of Virginia, it is clear that they chose not to "experiment with different identities, or consider a range of options." The Virginians provided a good example of *identity foreclosure* in their replication of the culture of the royalist elite of the English countryside. This was not the case, however, in the New England colonies, where there was a greater level of literacy, less hierarchy, and, according to Tocqueville, a Puritan theology that "in many respects . . . shared [and encouraged] the most absolute democratic and republican theories." The colonies of New England, unlike those in Virginia, were developmentally in the first stages of *identity achievement* in that they had begun to explore and select cultural and political options as opposed to replicating the social, cultural, and political order of England. The sociocultural and political differences between the colonies of the northeast and those of the south, such as Virginia, would first cause tension during the drafting of the Constitution as the south struggled to have slavery legalized, a tension that would later erupt in the Civil War.

Given the previous assertion that Virginia's elites were trapped in a state of *identity foreclosure*, as evidenced by their attempt to reconstruct the socio-economic hierarchy of the rural English aristocracy, one might ask how Virginia could have assumed such a pivotal role in the American Revolution.

Historian Woody Holton, in his work *Forced Founders*, provides some insight into this question in the following statement:

Men like George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Patrick Henry live in the American memory as the proud exemplars of a supremely confident gentry class. Historians have long assumed it was that very confidence that emboldened Virginia gentlemen to lead their colony—and twelve of her sisters—out of the British Empire.

The gentry's self-assurance, we are told, rested on a firm foundation: gentlemen such as Washington and Jefferson "exercised almost unchallenged hegemony" over other classes in the province [such as smallholders, poor whites, and African slaves]. They had established authority over the poorest 40 percent of Virginians by enslaving them. Native Americans might slow, but they could not halt, the colony's westward advance. Even the gentry's relationship with British merchants, about which Jefferson and others frequently complained, has been presented in modern scholarship as more beneficial to gentlemen than they were willing to admit. Their British "friends"—for such they called them in their correspondence—marketed their tobacco, filled their invoices by making the rounds of the London tradesmen, and even loaned them money. . . .

Some historians found that the gentry's confidence was laced with anxiety. Others have shown that, although the old image of gentlemen exerting enormous influence over those groups was not false, none of them was the gentry's puppet. In fact, each had its own ability to pull strings. One arena in which they powerfully influenced gentlemen was [British] imperial politics. In complex ways and without intending to, Indians, merchants, and slaves helped drive gentlemen . . . and smallholders . . . into the rebellion against the British. In addition, small farmers exerted direct and deliberate pro-Independence pressure upon gentlemen.¹⁸⁵

So, it appears that in great measure the Virginian gentry, such as Washington, Jefferson, and Henry, were forced by small land holders and poor whites to take a more strident stance vis-à-vis the British imperial government, despite the fact that such a stance did not serve their best economic interest. Small landholders and poor whites pressed independence from England because "they expected . . . [a sovereign government] to be much more amenable to their influence."¹⁸⁶ This is not to diminish the role of British provocation in the struggle for independence. Although the colonists did not suffer much control from the motherland in their day-to-day lives, trade was highly regulated under the British mercantilist system. In *Great Issues in American History* author Richard Hofstadter states that because of the British mercantilist:

. . . some of the inconvenient regulations, notably those on trade with the French West Indies, had been regularly evaded by smugglers; [however, in the past]

British officials had dealt very indulgently with violators of the law. Parliament had never taxed the colonists for the sake of revenue. Taxes, in the form of duties, had been imposed in the course of regulating trade, but these taxes were not passed to raise money, and it was understood that they were only incidental to regulation.¹⁸⁷

However, according to the author of *Forced Founders*, Woody Holton:

. . . many . . . [Virginians] . . . were convinced that the British merchant class had persuaded Parliament to adopt commercial, monetary, and immigration policies that favored the mercantile interest at their expense. They believed that Parliament's commitment to mercantilism cost them hundreds of thousands of pounds sterling every year and trapped them in debt to the merchants.

Virginians felt that the most important result of the British merchants' influence on Parliament was the Navigation Acts, the parliamentary legislation that gave the British a monopoly of their trade, restricted their manufacturing, and shaped Virginia's bitter response to taxes imposed by British ministers in the 1760s. Conflict between Virginia colonists and British mercantilism was also fueled by the government's policy of favoring British merchant-creditors over Virginia debtors and by the futile efforts of the House of Burgesses to reduce or end the forced immigration of African and West Indian slaves to Virginia.¹⁸⁸

The Yankee entrepreneurial class of New England became equally enraged by these regulations, albeit for somewhat different reasons, causing them to ally themselves with the southern gentry.

Of course, the English government's view on these regulations was decidedly different from the colonists. "After 1763, the successive ministries that set policy in London felt that England could no longer afford to be as easy-going as in the past. The empire was expensive . . . [and] . . . [f]rom the British point of view, much of the outlay had been made in the interest of the colonies and the home government felt it to be only just that the colonists should share in the immense tax burden borne by British subjects and home."¹⁸⁹ Like rebellious adolescents, many of the colonists began to resist the authority of the motherland and, in turn, England acted like a punitive parent. As the colonists became more insubordinate, England became stricter in its attempt to keep the colonists in line, which in turn generated more resistance as more and more colonists began to demand increased involvement in the management of their own affairs, in much, the same way adolescents do while attempting to individuate and establish separate identities. The broadening of the struggle between the motherland and her wayward, misbehaving children seems to mark the first step in the process of what James Marcia calls *identity achievement*. Provoked by Britain and succumbing to increasing pressure from the small landholders and poor whites, the Virginia gentry, if they were to main-

tain their palace at the apex of the socioeconomic hierarchy, had to seize the reins of control over this mounting resistance that had become a stampeding stallion on the path to independence or possible ruin. During the process of *identity achievement*, the adolescent, after pondering the realistic options, makes choices and pursues them, much as the founder began to do in 1774. After many twists and turns along that path of rebellion, independence was realized. However, the circumstance of those at the bottom of the Virginia hierarchy changed little in the first century of this new republic. The social landscape of the south would bare a remarkable resemblance to the old hierarchy of royalist privilege that existed in the south of England. The southern elite imprinted the stain of hierarchy and caste in the Constitution of this new republic, guaranteeing that the freedom of some would depend on the bondage of others. As is often the case with rebellious adolescents, they typically continue the values of those whom they are rebelling against.

With newfound independence, the United States attempted to gain world recognition and status by embarking on its own course of imperialism. Initially, this course would be a landlocked quest for empire as the government and its citizenry pushed westward, conquering the sovereign nations of the indigenous peoples of North America. According to Holt:

During the winter of 1768–1769, Thomas Jefferson set about obtaining government patents for seven thousand acres of land to the west of the Appalachian Mountains. Jefferson actually had no plans to move west. . . . By 1769, frontier families were already moving west of the Appalachians. Jefferson knew that, as soon as he could obtain his land patents and divide them into farmsteads of about two hundred acres each, he would find numerous customers for them.

Jefferson's hunger for western wealth was shared by other Virginia gentlemen. George Washington recognized that "the greatest Estates we have in this colony were made . . . by taking up and purchasing at very low rates the rich back Lands we possess."¹⁹⁰

The United States established an "Inner Empire" in much the same way that the English had when they conquered the Welch, the Scots, and the Irish. However, it would be the Cherokee, Iroquois, Shawnee, Chickasaw, Seminole, Creek, Choctaw, Lakota, Apache, Navajo, Hopi, and other such sovereign nations that would constitute this "Inner Empire." Jefferson, at the time he was acquiring land in the west, believed that it would take at least fourteen generations for America to span from sea to shining sea, but in reality it would only take about two generations.

"The annexing of Texas was a symptom of a larger frenzy that was sweeping through America like a nineteenth-century version of lotto fever. In 1845, this fervor was christened. In an expansionist magazine the *United States and*

Democratic Review, John L. O'Sullivan wrote of 'the fulfillment of our manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions.'¹⁹¹ Most people credit O'Sullivan with the phrase Manifest Destiny, "but in actuality it can be attributed to a journalist named Jean Cazneau, who wrote under the *nom de plume* of Cora Montgomery. "The central theme of her life and work was the 'Manifest Destiny' of the United States—a phrase she coined that described a foreign policy of territorial and commercial expansion."¹⁹² Cazneau was an authority on Mexican, Central American, and Caribbean affairs and a tireless advocate of westward expansion and United States dominance of the Caribbean and Central and South America. During her life, she "advised presidents from James K. Polk to U.S. Grant and cabinet members in Polk, Taylor, Pierce, Buchanan, Lincoln, Johnson, and Grant administrations."¹⁹³ There are people who claim that Jean Cazneau encouraged President James K. Polk's hegemonic adventurism.

The United States consolidated its "Inner Empire" with its war on Mexico. "For the first time in America's short history, the nation didn't go to war with a foreign power over independence, foreign provocation, or global politics. The war with Mexico was a war fought unapologetically for territorial expansion. One young officer who fought in Mexico later called this war one of the most unjust ever waged by a stronger against a weaker nation.' The war with Mexico was the centerpiece of the administration of James K. Polk. . . ."¹⁹⁴ In 1848, Mexico went down in defeat. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo officially ended the war and, according to "its terms, the United States receive[d] more than 500,000 square miles of Mexican territory, including the future states of California, Nevada, Utah, most of New Mexico and Arizona, and parts of Wyoming and Colorado, as well as Texas."¹⁹⁵ An added bonus in addition to the new territory were the rich deposits of minerals ranging from gold, silver, and copper to fossil fuels. Historian George Bancroft, after an illuminating discussion with James C. Frémont, the famous explorer of the Rocky Mountains, summarized the spirit of America's expansionist movement, writing, "I had no idea that there were so many ranges of mountains, or so beautifully picturesque and inviting a region; destined you may be sure to be filled by Yankees."¹⁹⁶

According to Walter LaFeber, the author of *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860-1898*, the United States then turned to establish an Outer Empire:

United States interest in . . . extracontinental areas intensified after 1850 with the completion of the continental empire and the maturation of the American industrial economy [which was financed in great measure by the slave-produced cotton in the south and the textile mills in the north]. Between 1850 and 1900

this industrial complex rapidly developed into one of the two greatest economic forces in the world. [In fact, by 1850 the America South boasted the fourth most powerful economy in the world]. During the same half a century the United States battled with other industrial nations for control of Latin-America, Asia and African markets.¹⁹⁷

Finally, the wayward adolescent of mother England could stand shoulder to shoulder as an adult with its European counterparts. However, it is interesting how much like its parent nation the rebellious former colony had become.

It is again important to restate one of the main assertions of this work, which is that there can be an analogy drawn between Adler's contention that each individual's identity is based on a unique psychological "style of life" and Ratzel's proposition that each nation possesses a unique political identity based on a "state-idea." Further, this work asserts, in keeping with this analogy, that the feelings of incompleteness and inadequacy that often affect an individual's "style of life" can have equally as profound an affect on the "state-idea" of a nation. Feelings of inferiority, according to Adler, arise whenever there is a protracted sense of incompleteness and inadequacy. What is argued here is that such feelings of incompleteness and inadequacy give rise to a sense of inferiority that tends to drive both individuals and nations to overcompensation for these feelings. In order to truly understand Western imperialism and its biological determinist justification, race, one must delve beyond the obvious economic incentives for empire into the dark recess of the Western mind for the demons that drive its hegemonic desires.

Would not one say, on seeing what takes place in the world, that the European is to men of other races what man himself is to the animals? He makes them serve his use, and when he cannot bend them, he destroys them.

—Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 1835

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Chapter Four

Racism: A Cornerstone of American Privilege

Desire for slave labor encouraged European settlers in North America to view, first, Native Americans and, later, African Americans as racially inferior people suited “by nature” for the humiliating subordination of involuntary servitude. The long history of the possessive investment in whiteness stems in no small measure from the fact that all subsequent immigrants to North America have come to an already racialized society. From the start, European settlers in North America established structures encouraging a possessive investment in whiteness. The colonial and early national legal systems authorized attacks on Native Americans and encouraged the appropriation of their lands. They legitimized racialized chattel slavery, limited naturalized citizenship to “white” immigrants, identified Asian immigrants as expressly unwelcome . . . and provided pretexts for restricting the voting, exploiting the labor, and seizing the property of Asian Americans, Mexican Americans, Native Americans, and African Americans.

—George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness*

According to historian Basil Davidson, the racialization of American society described above by George Lipsitz was not “a mistake, a misunderstanding, or a grievous deviation from the proper norms of behavior.”¹ It was, as stated in previous chapters, the natural outgrowth of a confluence of historical, religious, philosophical, socioeconomic, cultural, and political forces that first began to emerge in Europe during the Classical Age. With the passing of the centuries, these forces continued to reinforce each other, manifesting themselves in an increasingly Eurocentric metaphysic that gave rise to a supremacist worldview, a view that ultimately became articulated in the concept of race and racial hierarchy. While it is also true that some of these forces ulti-

mately fostered the development of liberal democracy for white males in America, it was, unfortunately, at the expense of blacks, who provided the servile economic foundation of slavery upon which the freedom and prosperity of the nouveaux aristocracy and the bourgeoisie was based.

“The division of human beings into biological groups known as races is an idea in history dating from the late seventeenth century European colonial expansion into Africa and the Americas. Of course, differences based on religion, family ancestry, and geographical origins divided people in many ways for hundreds and even thousands of years before then. But the kinds of differences associated with race in a combined biological and cultural sense are unique to the modern period in the West.”² Prior to the seventeenth century, the term “race” was used to describe groups who had or were assumed to have common characteristics, such as norms, mores, language, social and political organization, religion, etcetera. Race was more of an ethnic and/or cultural descriptor, rather than a purely biological one. For example, people during this period spoke of the English and Germans as races. The system of racial classification based purely on phenotypic differences between groups is a product largely of the scientific revolution in the West. However, it is clear that the twisted vine of race thinking in the purely biological sense would not have borne its poisonous fruit of racism without the husbandry of Western imperialists. It should be noted that although the emergence of Western science can generally be cited as a catalyst for race thinking, it actually finds its roots in the soil of Western antiquity, where it was nurtured by the prototypical biological determinist beliefs of Plato. Centuries later, nurtured by ancient biological determinist beliefs, buttressed by the sociopolitical ladder of European feudal hierarchy, and further sustained by the intellectual scaffolding of the Enlightenment, the twisted vine of race thinking would reach conceptual fruition in the racism of Anglo America.

With Martin Luther’s letter to Archbishop Albrecht, which challenged papal indulgences, and the posting of his 95 theses in 1517, the Protestant Reformation swept across Europe like a crisp March wind blowing aside old, settled dogma, making way for a spring of new orthodoxy. As the Reformation gained momentum, it challenged the very name and status of the Catholic Church; no longer was it the Universal Church, as the meaning of its name so roundly proclaimed. It was now merely one of an expanding number of Christian sects. With such momentous change in the wind, the intelligentsia of Europe emerged from beneath the ecclesiastic cloud that had shrouded inquiry under scriptural precepts for centuries. European thinkers had been transfixed by the cosmology of the Catholic Church in much the same way that worshipers were enraptured by the clouds and supernatural figures drifting across the frescoed ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. Increasingly free, European

thinkers began to focus their attention not only on their relationship to God, but also on their relationship to the physical universe, as the ancient Greeks had once done. Great minds such as that of Nicolaus Copernicus looked beyond heaven as a religious metaphor to the actual celestial bodies that constituted the heavens, publishing his famous work *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium* (On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres), which challenged the Catholic Church's assertion that the Sun revolved around the Earth. Then there was Johannes Kepler with his three laws of planetary motion, followed by Galileo Galilei's published observations confirming Copernicus' speculation, a confirmation that was subsequently banned by the Catholic Church in 1633. As time progressed, the list of intellectual secularists expanded as the scientific revolution gained velocity and energy from the religious storm that was the Protestant Reformation. It is, however, ironic that during this period of scientific awakening and liberal idea formation, race thinking would bear its poisonous fruit, racism.

Despite the fact that the ancient Greeks had no concept of race, it was Plato's classical work, *The Republic*, which presented perhaps history's first biological determinist argument in the form of his "Myth of the Metals," where he has Socrates declare to Glaucon in Book III:

"So you are brothers in the city,' we shall tell them in our fable, 'but while God moulded you, he mingled gold in the generation of some, and those are the ones fit to rule, who are therefore the most precious; he mingled silver in the assistants [the guardian soldiers of the second class]; and iron and brass in farmers and the other craftsmen. . . . The rulers are commanded by God first and foremost that they be good guardians of no person so much as of their own children, and to watch nothing else so carefully as which of these things is mingled in their souls. If any child of theirs has a touch of brass or iron, they will not be merciful to him on any account, but they will give him the value proper to his nature, and push him away among the craftsmen or the farmers; if again one of them has the gold or silver in his nature, they will honour him and lift him among the guardians or the assistants, since there is an oracle that the city will be destroyed when the brass or the iron shall guard it.' Now have you any device to make them believe this fable?"

"No, these people themselves will never believe it; but I see a way to make their sons believe it, and those who come after them, and the rest of mankind."³

Later in Book V of *The Republic*, Plato has Socrates further reinforce the "Myth of the Metals" with the following eugenics style of argument:

It follows from what we agreed that the best men must mingle most often with the best women, but the opposite, the worst with the worst, least often; and the children of the best must be brought up but not the others, if the flock is to be

tiptop. And none must know this to be going on except the rulers alone, if the herd of guardians is also to be as free as possible from quarrels.⁴

Two millennia later, in the early 1900s, the director of the Eugenics Section of The American Breeders Association, Charles Benedict Davenport, would echo the biological determinist notions put forward in Plato's "Myth of the Metals," declaring in his eugenics creed:

I believe in striving to raise the human race and, more particularly, our nation and community to the highest place of social organization, of cooperative work, and of effective endeavor. . . . I believe that I am the trustee of the germ plasm [genes] that I carry . . . and that I betray the trust if (the germ plasm being good) I so act as to jeopardize it. . . . I believe that, having made our choice in marriage carefully, we, the married pair, should seek to have four children. . . . I believe in such a selection of immigrants as shall not tend to adulterate our national germ plasm with socially unfit traits. . . . I believe in doing it for the race.⁵

In 1913, Davenport focused his attention on people of African descent, describing them as having "a strong sex instinct, without corresponding self-control . . . [and] a premature cessation of intellectual development."⁶ Davenport almost mirrors Plato's statement "the best men must mingle most often with the best women, but the opposite, the worst with the worst, least often" when he sets forth the following racist argument:

No person having one-half part or more Negro blood shall be permitted to take a white person as a spouse [and] any person having less than one-half, but not less than one-eighth part Negro blood shall not be given a license to marry a white person without a certificate from the State Eugenics Board.⁷

The Eugenicists position on race mixing ultimately gave a pseudoscientific justification for the anti-miscegenation laws first enacted earlier in 1664 in the colony of Maryland, which banned marriage of blacks and whites. With the support of such thinking, these laws would remain on the books in approximately twenty states until they were overturned in *Loving v. Virginia*, a case brought before the Supreme Court in 1967.

Modern racism is based in a biological determinist position that shares the same essentialist metaphysical assumptions about the nature of the human species that Plato puts forth in the "Myth of the Metals." In *The Mismeasure of Man*, Stephen Jay Gould argues that Plato's concept of a stable society is very similar to the biological determinist notions that underlie the modern essentialist ideologies of racism, classism, and sexism. In Gould's opinion, both Platonism and biological determinism argue "that shared behavioral norms, and the social and economic differences between human groups—primarily

races, classes, and sexes—arise from inherited, inborn distinctions and that society, in this sense, is an accurate reflection of biology.”⁸ In addition to the biological determinist notions found in the texts of Plato’s writings, there is the extreme ethnocentric and xenophobic discourse generally manifested in ancient Greek culture. Ultimately, “[t]he primary objects of Greek discrimination and exclusion were slaves and barbarians . . . [which were one and the same with barbarians constituting virtually all of the slave population of Athens]. As a general category of discriminatory sociolegal exclusion, barbarianism was the invention of fifth-century Hellenism. A barbarian was one of emphatically different, even strange, language, conduct, and culture and lacking the cardinal virtues of wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice.”⁹

This biological determinist argument, along with its attending theoretical tendrils of preevolutionary scientific racism, and the post-evolutionary theories of Social Darwinism, Eugenics, and Psychometrics, over time became so intertwined in the social, cultural, political, and economic latticework of Western society, especially in the United States, that they have formed an almost impenetrable thicket of inequality. Back in the mid-1800s, it was the “American School” of anthropology, with its two most famous theorists, Louis Agassiz and Samuel G. Moron, which advanced the polygenist argument that African Americans and Native American Indians were of separate and inferior species to whites. Prior to the development of the theory of polygenism was monogenism, which served as “preevolutionary justificatio[n] for racial ranking. . . . [This view] upheld the scriptural unity of all peoples in the single creation of Adam and Eve. . . . Human races are [according to monogenist theory] a product of degeneration from Eden’s perfection. [In other words,] [r]aces have declined to different degrees, whites least and blacks most.”¹⁰

Some seventy or so years earlier, Thomas Jefferson declared, “all men are created equal”; at the same time, he advanced a preevolutionary rationale supporting the inferior ranking of blacks with a theory that, depending on one interpretation, could be seen as being either monogenic or polygenic in nature. Jefferson declared:

I advance it, therefore, as a suspicion only, that the blacks, whether originally a distinct race, or made distinct by time and circumstance, are inferior to whites in the endowment both of body and of mind.¹¹

In all fairness to Jefferson, it is not entirely clear whether his statement reflects a monogenic or polygenic view of blacks. The difficulty in reconciling the discrepancy between his declaration that “all men are created equal” and his position that blacks are inferior is the result of not knowing whether Jefferson assumed that black inferiority was due to blacks being a separate infe-

rior species, or an assumption that blacks had degenerated to an inferior subspecies due to time and circumstance. If one reads his pseudoscientific description of blacks in his book, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, it is clear how one could be led to infer that he viewed blacks as a subspecies at best or a separate species at worst. Jefferson describes his slaves as follows:

The first difference which strikes us is that of color. Whether the black of the negro resides in the reticular membrane between the skin and scarf-skin, or in the scarf-skin itself; whether it proceeds from the color of the blood, the color of the bile, or from that of some other secretion, the difference is fixed in nature. . . . And is this difference of no importance? Is it not the foundation of a greater or less share of beauty in the two races? Are not the fine mixture of red and white, the expressions of every passion by greater or less suffusions of color in the one, preferable to that eternal monotony, which reigns in the countenances, the immovable veil of black which covers the emotions of the other race? Add to these, flowing hair, a more elegant symmetry of form, their judgment in favor of the whites, declared by their preference of them, as uniformly as is the preference of the Oran-utan for the black woman over those of his own species. . . . The improvement of the blacks in body and mind, in the first instance of their mixture with the whites, has been observed by every one, and proves that their inferiority is not the effect merely of their condition of life.¹²

Of course, the issue of whether or not Jefferson was a monogenist or a polygenist is pure speculation, but his view that blacks were innately inferior leaves no doubt. In addition, because Jefferson was viewed as such a towering intellect in American history, there can be little doubt that his writings had a significant effect on the later racist theorizing of the “American School” of anthropology.

Eventually, the preevolutionary speculation of the monogenists and polygenists would give way in the aftermath of the paradigm-shifting theoretical assertions in Charles Darwin’s *The Origin of Species*, assertions that would prove to be a double-edged sword, promoting both an increase and a decrease in the understanding of human development. Theorists such as English social philosopher Herbert Spencer and his American counterpart William Graham Sumner would become responsible for causing a decline in this understanding as they quickly misappropriated Darwin’s theory for their own classist and racist ends. Spencer and Sumner used evolutionary theory as a means of explaining and justifying social inequality. However, it would be Spencer who ultimately became the leading proponent of what would come to be known as Social Darwinism. The term Social Darwinism “has often been used as a general term for any evolutionary argument about the biological basis of human differences, but the initial meaning referred to a specific theory of class stratification within industrial societies, particularly to the idea that a

permanently poor underclass consisting of genetically inferior people had precipitated down into their inevitable fate.”¹³ This notion was seized upon in America by southern planters to justify slavery and by northern industrialists to justify class exploitation and poverty.

According to author Steven Selden, the Eugenics Movement, which overlapped and reciprocally reinforced Social Darwinism:

. . . found a rich medium for growth in America [although] the movement was initially an import from Great Britain . . . where Frances Galton developed the term in the early 1880s. [He coined the term “eugenics” from the Greek word meaning “good in birth.” He was also the first to use psychometrics in an attempt to measure levels of intelligence.] Galton . . . had observed that the leaders of British society were far more likely to be related to each other than chance alone might allow. Galton drew a hereditary interpretation. Believing that the superior heredity of the British ruling class preordained its leadership positions, he proposed a program of selective breeding in the 1860s. By the late 1890s, eugenics had crossed the Atlantic and gained popularity with educated Americans who were concerned for what they saw as threats to the “American Stock”. . . . With “influential voices [clamoring] for custodial care, restriction of marriage, sterilization,” eugenics offered a solution consistent with progressivism’s hereditary stand. Eugenics, particularly with a Mendelian turn, would prove to be the catalyst that would fuse these economic, demographic, and psychological anxieties into a “crusade” that would continue from the turn of the century into the 1940s.¹⁴

As far as race is concerned, the previously cited comments of Charles Davenport can leave no doubt as to the eugenicists’ view of African Americans.

The use of psychometric testing to determine intelligence was an attempt to improve on the failed practice known as craniometrics, which involved measuring the size and evaluating the shape of the human skull to determine intelligence. In 1904, Alfred Binet, a French professor of psychology who had dabbled in craniometrics and psychometrics, “was commissioned by the minister of public education to perform a study for a specific, practical purpose: to develop techniques for identifying those children whose lack of success in normal classrooms suggested the need for some form of special education.”¹⁵ Binet was commissioned because he had invented a test and measurement scale to determine an individual’s intelligence quotient (IQ), thus ushering in the era of true psychometric testing. His test sought to separate intelligence from instructional effects. Binet, however, did not believe that intelligence was fixed. It was his contention that students placed in special-education classes because of his test not only increased in knowledge, but also in their intelligence. Binet spoke of the success of special-education classes, stating, “We have increased what constitutes the intelligence of . . . pupil[s]. . . .”¹⁶ He

was primarily concerned with educational intervention, not with ranking students according to their mental capacity in order to determine their future worth, or with determining whether intelligence was inborn. Binet said of his test:

Our purpose is to be able to measure the intellectual capacity of a child who is brought to us in order to know whether he is normal or retarded. We should, therefore, study his condition at the time and that only. We have nothing to do either with his past history or with his future; have consequently we shall neglect his etiology . . .¹⁷

Unfortunately:

American psychologists perverted Binet's intention and invented the hereditarian theory of IQ. They reified Binet's scores, and took them as measures of an entity called intelligence. They assumed that intelligence was largely inherited, and developed a series of specious arguments confusing cultural differences with innate properties. They believed that inherited IQ scores marked people and groups for an inevitable station in life. And they assumed that average differences between groups were largely the products of heredity, despite manifest and profound variation in quality of life.¹⁸

Hence, psychometric measures gave gravitas to the argument that innate intellectual differences do exist between discrete human groups, as claimed by those who espouse Social Darwinism, Eugenics, and racist explanations for societal inequality. Psychometric theory has also provided a justification for the use of tests as a means of sifting and winnowing the "germ plasm" of the general population in an attempt to separate the genetic chaff from the wheat. These theories would find their way into national debate over racial inclusion and exclusion as segregationist and Eugenicist laws dominated the first three quarters of this country's discourse on social equality.

Ultimately, the "discriminatory sociolegal exclusion" that arose from the prototypical biological determinist and ethnocentric view of the Greeks would become a central theme in Western culture throughout the imperial era and on into the twentieth century, as the West defined those whom it would enslave and colonize as savages, in much the same way as the Greeks had defined those whom they had captured and conquered as barbarians. There are, however, historians and social scientists who disagree with the assertion that the modern concept of race, and its nefarious by-product, racism, arose in the West, in part, as a result of the previously enumerated pre-conditions rooted in Western antiquity. Instead, they argue that racism is the sole product of modern socioeconomic factors and that pre-existing Western philosophical and cultural conditions had no real role in the development of racism. For

example, Theodore Allen is one such historian who disagrees with this premise. In *The Invention of the White Race*, Allen delves into the origins of racism and racial slavery in Anglo America, and in doing so, he identifies what he perceives to be two conventional etiological explanations for the perplexing social phenomena of racism and racial slavery. Allen places these explanations and those who advocate them into two opposing epistemological camps that derive their teleological causation for racism and racial slavery from one of two metaphysical frameworks, which he defines as “psychocultural” and “socioeconomic”.¹⁹ Allen contends that historians such as Carl Degler, with his article “Slavery and the Genesis of American Race Prejudice,” and Winthrop Jordan, with his book *White Over Black*, fall into the psychocultural camp. He places Degler and Jordan in this camp because of what, he argues, is their essentialist position on the origin of Anglo-American slavery. The position of Degler and Jordan, according to Allen, is that racism and racial slavery were caused by the natural human tendency to harbor prejudice against those who are different. This position is problematic in Allen’s view because the specter of “natural racism” stands as a rampart, impeding progress toward racial equality, and ultimately thwarting all prospects for resolving the “American Dilemma” of racism, as described by Swedish sociologist Gunnar Myrdal in 1944.

Allen places historians such as Eric Williams, Oscar and Mary Handlin, Edmund S. Morgan, and himself in the socioeconomic camp, which maintains that the “difference in the treatment of African-American and European-American laborers . . . [in the colonies emerged as a result of] . . . deliberately contrived ruling-class policy, rather than as the outcome of some inborn or preconditioned ‘race consciousness.’”²⁰ This position is predicated on the reasoning of historians such as Oscar and Mary Handlin, who “argued that African-American laborers during the first four decades after their arrival [in 1619 in the British colony of Jamestown], that is, up until 1660, were not lifetime hereditary bondmen and bondwomen; rather, their status was essentially the same as that of European-Americans bond-laborers, namely limited-term bond-servitude.”²¹ The basic position of those who fall into the socioeconomic camp is that “racism was derivative of ill-treatment of African-Americans in the form of slavery, [which means that there is hope] that racism could be eliminated from present-day American society by establishing equality for African-Americans.”²² However, this historical interpretation of the role of African-American laborers in the colonies does not prove that prejudice against Africans did not exist prior to their enslavement and that this prejudice was not a major contributing factor in their enslavement.

Interestingly enough, it has only been within the past fifty-five or so years that racial slavery has come to be viewed as having caused racism in the

United States. “The liberating impulses set loose by World War Two, and the United States civil rights movement in particular, brought official society for the first time to acknowledge racism as an evil in itself. . . . It was in [the context of this admission] that racial slavery became the central preoccupation not only of African-American historians, but of American historians in general . . .”²³ Allen contends that prior to the advent of World War II and the civil rights movement, “European-American historians generally dealt with the subject of African-American bond-labor on the basis of an unchallenged assumption of a natural instinct of ‘racial’ domination.”²⁴ However, after the shift in consciousness caused by World War II and the Civil Rights movement, the consensus that emerged in the social sciences was “that the historical roots of racism were traceable to the slave system.”²⁵ Eventually, these juxtaposed points of view triggered a chicken and egg debate over whether slavery caused racism, or racism caused slavery, which is a debate that continues in many quarters today. It is, however, a debate that loses nuance on the conceptual battlefield of either/or thinking.

In his analysis, Allen is quite emphatic in his dismissal of the psychocultural explanation for the origin of racism put forth by Degler and Jordan, advocating instead for what he considers to be the more creditable and rigorous socioeconomic explanation. He rejects Degler’s foundational premise that racial prejudice against African Americans led to the discriminatory practices that established the conditions that made racial slavery a viable political and economic option for inexpensive controllable labor in the colonies. For Allen, Degler’s assertions are problematic, particularly his “three [major] theses: (1) ‘African race prejudice originated in the discriminatory social atmosphere of the early seventeenth century;’ (2) ‘slavery in English colonies was the institutionalization of [pre-existent] race prejudice;’ and (3) ‘from the outset, as far as the evidence tells us, the Negro was treated as inferior to the white man, servant or free.’”²⁶ Allen rejects Degler’s theses because he believes them to be polemical in nature and to lack answers for the two central questions: what is the origin of modern racism, and was racism the byproduct of slavery or a preexistent condition?

Jordan attempts to address the perplexing dilemma of which came first—racism or slavery—with his own hypothesis, a hypothesis that can be classified as a kind of theory of reciprocal causation. In this theory, Jordan posits the following:

Rather than slavery causing “prejudice,” or vice versa, they seem rather to have generated each other. Both were, after all, twin aspects of a general debasement of the Negro. Slavery and “prejudice” may have been equally cause and effect, continuously reacting upon each other, dynamically joining hands to hustle the

Negro down the road to complete degradation. Much more than with the other English colonies, where the enslavement of Negroes was to some extent a borrowed practice, the available evidence for Maryland and Virginia points to less borrowing and to this kind of process: a mutually interactive growth of slavery and unfavorable assessment, with no cause for either which did not cause the other as well. If slavery caused prejudice, then invidious distinctions concerning working in the fields, bearing arms, and sexual union should have appeared *after* slavery's firm establishment. If prejudice caused slavery, then one would expect to find these lesser discriminations preceding the greater discrimination of outright enslavement. Taken as a whole, the evidence reveals a process of debasement of which hereditary lifetime service was an important but not the only part.²⁷

In response to Jordan's notion of reciprocal causation, Allen argues that Jordan "conflate[s] cause and effect, dispos[ing] the dilemma by evoking a parthenogenetic unicorn called 'the general debasement of the negro,'"²⁸ Allen, in essence, argues that Jordan has abandoned the historical "principle of chronological order" in favor of the notion of an instinctive unconscious choice on the part of Anglo Americans to "debase the negro." He further argues that Jordan posited on the English "a psychological compulsion: 'the need of transplanted Englishmen to know who it was they were.' And what they were, he said, was 'white': 'white men had to know who they were if they were to survive.'" As far as Allen is concerned, Jordan's argument represents "the 'old germ theory' of biological determinism applied to American history, decked out in up-to-date psychological trappings: before the Mayflower Compact, before the Petition of Rights, before the Magna Carta, before the German-Saxon Hundred, there was the Word: White over Black, innate, ineradicable—a Calvinism of the genes, a Manifest Destiny of the White Soul."²⁹ Allen almost seems to be implying a sort of "reversed racism" on the part of Jordan.

Advocating for the socioeconomic explanation of Anglo-American racism, Allen firmly rejects the psychocultural argument that the English harbored a natural ingrained prejudice against dark-skinned people, a prejudice that evolved into a series of policies and laws against African Americans that gave rise to institutionalized slavery in the Anglo-American colonies. He further asserts, citing the anthropologist Marvin Harris, that Jordan's description of the English as being hyper-ethnocentric is overstated. Allen goes on to cite historian Lerone Bennett, Jr. as providing supportive evidence for the socioeconomic argument that "racism was derivative of ill-treatment of African-Americans in the form of slavery."³⁰ Bennett, in Allen's opinion, makes the clearest argument for the socioeconomic position, because he is the only historian who "succeeds in placing the argument on three essential bearing points from which it cannot be toppled. First, that racial slavery constituted a

ruling-class response to a problem of labor solidarity. Second, that a system of racial privileges for the propertyless 'whites' was deliberately instituted in order to align them on the side of the plantation bourgeoisie against the African-American bond-laborers. Third, that the consequences was not only ruinous to the interest of the African Americans, but was 'disastrous' for the propertyless 'whites' as well."³¹

In the final analysis, Allen's argument is problematic in that he renders himself a victim of his own logical positivist paradigm. In an attempt to make his point, he becomes trapped in either/or thinking, drafting a select group of historians, like conscripts, into warring camps, rallied around the hypothetical banners of his "psychocultural" and "socioeconomic" paradigms. After drawing mock battle lines, Allen leads his unwitting band of socioeconomic conscripts against the straw men of the psychocultural camp, all the while knowing the outcome of this staged battle. Allen's conceptual victory is a hollow one, with more effort put into setting up his paradigms and staging his mock conceptual battle than was applied to the sociohistoric analysis of Europe's centuries-old relationship with Africa, a relationship that dates back to the ancient Minoans. Without thoroughly analyzing this history, it is impossible to reach any sound conclusions about the pre-colonial view of Africans held by the English and Europeans.

In order to gain a clear understanding of racism and racial slavery in the Anglo-American colonies of North America, one must take a both/and approach, such as that of Jordan in *Black Over White*, but without some of the essentialist overtones to which Allen objects. Such an approach considers both the preexisting English attitudes toward Africans and those Anglo-American attitudes towards Africans that were derivative of the superior/subordinate relationship of master and slave. Allen, in his analysis, reacts to Jordan's *Black Over White* as though Jordan created a fiction when he asserts that an emerging racial prejudice against Africans on the part of Europeans predates the European slave trade. On the contrary, one has only to review the centuries-long relationship between Europe and Africa to realize that the racial prejudice exhibited in the Anglo-American colonies of North America has a complicated history predating the institutionalization of racial slavery. Although the modern concept of race had not fully been constructed by the seventeenth century, color, ethnicity, and religion had been melded together to create the concept of the dangerous dark other.

This long complex relationship between Europe and Africa stretches back just beyond the misty veil of recorded Western history:

Generally, the world of antiquity, not only in North Africa but also for example in Minoan Crete, was a mixed culture and one in which differences in skin colour did not play a significant role, or rather in which black carried a positive

meaning. . . . In Rome, Carthage, and Alexandria, black Africans were no strangers: they formed part of the armies of Ptolemy, Aurelian, and Hannibal. In iconography, they are represented positively, both as a type and as individuals. . . . [However], [i]n the Christian period, a significant break occurred with the views of antiquity. In the writings of several of the church fathers of Western Christendom (not Byzantium), the colour black began to acquire negative connotations, as the colour of sin and darkness. . . . Gnosticism and forms of Manichaeism in itself had nothing to do with skin colour, but in the course of time it did acquire that connotation.”³²

For example, prior to the sixth century AD, the devil was not depicted as being black. In fact, the only reference to Satan’s color was the Revelation of John, where he was described as a red serpent. However, he emerges as being black in the Acts of Thomas from “The Apocryphal New Testament.” This text, published in the sixth century, relates the adventures of the apostle Judas Thomas as he preached an ascetic form of Christianity during his travels to and from India. In Act 6 of this work, there is the following dialogue between a woman and the apostle Thomas about her resurrection from death and her experience in hell:

And the apostle said unto her: Relate unto us where thou hast been. And she answered: Dost thou who wast with me and unto whom I was delivered desire to hear? And she began to say: A man took me who was hateful to look upon, altogether black, and his raiment exceedingly foul, and took me away to a place wherein were many pits, and a great stench and hateful odour issued thence.

Later in Act 7, there is a dialogue between one of Thomas’s disciples and that disciple’s wife about being raped by two devils:

I began therefore to inquire of my wife: What is it that hath befallen thee? And she said to me . . . I saw a black man standing over against me nodding at me with his head, and a boy like unto him standing by him; and I said to my daughter: Look at those two hideous men, whose teeth are like milk and their lips like soot. And we left them and went towards the aqueduct; and when it was sunset and we departed . . . and drew near the aqueduct, my daughter saw them first, and was affrighted and fled towards me; and after her I also beheld them coming against us . . . and they struck us, and cast down both me and my daughter. And when she had told me these things, the devils came upon them again and threw them down. . . . I suffer much, and am distressed: for the devils throw them down wheresoever they find them, and strip them naked.³³

The conquest of the Iberian Peninsula by the Moors in 711 AD served to consolidate the theocratic state of Christendom, in the minds of many Europeans, as juxtaposing and providing a counterweight to the “Abode of Islam”

and the Moorish invaders. In addition, the Moorish conquest of such a significant portion of Europe profoundly influenced the European perception of dark-skinned people, as Spanish Christians and eventually all Christians became locked in “perpetual enmity” with these dark-skinned Muslims of mixed Berber and Arab descent. It was during the seven hundred years of Moorish dominance of Spain that the concept of the Moor as black demon or devil began to gain true ascendance in the psyche of “white” Europeans. Historically:

The very name [Moor] by which the Spanish Christians had always designated the Muslims of the [Iberian] peninsula—*moor*, meaning “men of Mauritania,” which was the Roman name for the region corresponding to present-day Morocco—came from an old Greek word meaning “black.” The Iberians [white Spaniards] were . . . to [eventually] specify *moros negros* for the black men further south, thereby providing the English language with . . . another racial term; although right down through Shakespeare’s time [1564–1616], the word “moor” was to serve often by itself as a synonym for “Blackamoor” or “negro.”³⁴

However, as far back as the mid-sixth century, there are examples of dark skin being associated with evil by men who came from the region later known as the British Isles. One such example is found in the ninth-century *Lives of Saints*, written by an Irish hagiographer, in a passage written about Saint Brendan the Navigator. According to the author, Saint Brendan saw Satan seize bodily control of a monk who was part of his entourage during a voyage in the North Atlantic. The author describes the possession as follows:

After they had fallen asleep, St. Brendan witnessed the machinations of the Evil One. He saw a little Ethiopian [a Greek term meaning burnt skinned used to describe dark-skinned people] boy holding a silver necklace and juggling with it in front of the monk.³⁵

According to this passage, the Devil, in the form of a black boy, had possessed the monk for several hours. Finally, after a protracted exorcism, the monk died, but not before the Evil One was cast back to hell and the monk’s soul was allowed to ascend to heaven. This story emerged at about the same time that the British were venturing for extended voyages into the North Atlantic.

It was not, however, until nearly a thousand years later, after the advent of racial slavery, that another reference to black people would appear in the narrative of the British Isles. In or about 1506 Scottish poet William Dunbar wrote *Of a Black Moor (My ladye with the mekle lippis)*, a poem that described an African female slave who had been put on display at a jousting contest held in honor of King James IV of Scotland. In his poem, he uses the

same grossly stereotyped caricature of African features and traits that was popular in the racist humor of the United States well into the late-twentieth century. Dunbar's poem went as follows:

Lang heff I maed of ladyes quhytt,
 Nou of an blak I will indytt
 That landet furth of the last schippis.
 Quhou fain wald I descryve perfytt,
 My Ladye with the mekle lippis.

(Modern English translation: Long have I made written poetry [about] of ladies white / now of black I will indite / That landed forth of the last ships./ Who I fain would describe perfectly, / My lady with the big lips.)

Quhou schou is tute mowitt lyk ane aep,
 And lyk a gangarall onto graep;
 And quhou hir schort catt nois up skippis,
 And quhou schou schynes lyk ony saep,
 My ladye with the mekle lippis.
 Quhen schou is claid in reche apparrall,
 Schou blinkis als brycht as an tar barrel.
 Quhen schou was born the son tholit clippis,
 The nycht be fain faucht in hir querrell—
 My Lady with the mekle lippis.

(Modern English translation: She who has a protruding mouth like an ape, / And is like a toad in her gape; / And whose short cat's-nose is turned up, / And she who shines like any soap; / My lady with the big lips. / When she is clad in rich apparel, / She looks as bright as a tar barrel. / When she was born the sun was eclipsed, / The night wanted to fight in her defense: / My lady with the big lips.)³⁶ This poem goes on for a couple of more verses with the same denigrating imagery.

During the sixteenth century, however, it was English playwright William Shakespeare who provided the most widely circulated, non-slave related depiction of blacks with the vile Aaron in *Titus Andronicus* and tormented Othello. When one reads Shakespeare's depiction of the Moor, it is difficult to miss the racialized narrative in his prose, unless one is by virtue of background and/or status oblivious to the subtle and not-so-subtle racial symbolism. It should, however, be mentioned at this juncture that Allen, as an advocate of the socioeconomic explanation of racism, does not view Shakespeare's Moorish characters "[a]s evidence of [a] predominant anti-negro attitude in England before the founding of the first Anglo-American colony. . . ." Allen argues, "if one proceeds consistently with this exegesis, it

is possible to find implications quite contrary to those inferred by [those in the psychocultural camp such as Jordan and Degler]."³⁷ Given the reluctance of many Shakespearian scholars to go beyond the metaphorical imagery of black and white, it is not difficult to understand why Allen dismisses the assertion that race and a burgeoning sense of racial superiority among the English was present in the works of Shakespeare. Not many Shakespearian scholars have thought to use *Titus Andronicus* and *Othello* as theatrical attempts to construct an understanding of the "dark other" vis-à-vis the newly emerging concept, whiteness, or as Margo Hendricks states in the introduction to volume 26 of *Shakespeare Studies*:

[D]espite the appropriation of post-structuralist and post-modern theoretical apparatus, critics of early modern English culture have yet to comfortably situate the "problem of race" in an early modern historiography that fully adumbrates the complexity, fluidity, and problematic nature of the discourses of race that prevailed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.³⁸

Often, it is assumed that the English had limited exposure to or knowledge of blacks during Shakespeare's time. This is far from true, for as Peter Fryer attests in *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain* and James Walvin in *Black and White: The Negro and English Society 1555–1945*, black musicians were employed by English monarchs from the reign of Henry VIII forward. In fact, there is a portrait of Elizabeth I, painted around 1577, which depicts her with a group of black dancers and minstrels. Later it is said that James I had a troupe of black minstrels. In addition, the English could not help but have been influenced by the Moorish conquest and domination of Spain from 711 to 1492, when they were driven off the Iberian Peninsula by the final Spanish *Reconquista* (Reconquest). For almost nine hundred years, the Moors and Europeans had been locked in perpetual religious enmity, and it was during this period of struggle that the differences in complexion and physical features became as important as their religious differences. In fact, as late as the end of the sixteenth century, the English anguished over reports of their countrymen and women taken captive by the Turks and the Moors and enslaved under horrible conditions.³⁹ It was during this protracted conflict that the European perception of the dark-skinned Moor as a black demon or devil became concretized, as reflected in Shakespeare's theatrical images of the "Blackamoor."

In Shakespeare's cruelest and perhaps most unsettling play, *Titus Andronicus*, he cast Aaron, a Moor, as arguably his cruelest character. Aaron is presented as the play's "most relentlessly wicked [character], a black devil pure and simple."⁴⁰ He is clearly meant to portray "blackness as a walking, plotting, fornicating symbol of evil."⁴¹ Shakespeare uses the affair between Aaron

and Tamora, Queen of the Goths, in part as a means of drawing a distinction between good and evil. “At the end of this first century of English experience with the Negro, Shakespeare seems eager to explore every possibility of language that the situation contains. In this context the word *foul*, used frequently with reference to Aaron throughout the play, is especially significant. It had originally meant only ‘putrid,’ ‘rotting,’ and, by extension, ‘dirty.’ This latter sense was now taking on a visual connotation and in some contexts actually meant ‘brown’—especially when contrasted with *fair*, which had once meant only ‘beautiful,’ but now also suggested lightness of complexion. The contrast between ‘fair’ and ‘foul’ at this time often was intended as a simple comparison between shades of skin; but the other implications could never have been far behind.”⁴²

Some ten years later, Shakespeare developed a less crass portrait of the Moor in *Othello*, but one that was more nuanced in its racialized symbolism. Shakespeare’s *Othello* is viewed by most as a positive depiction of a tragic hero who happens to be black. Even the Afrocentrist philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah views *Othello* in a positive light because he finds that negative references to race are largely absent in Shakespeare’s works. Here Allen also argues, “Othello’s flaw was not his color but his male ego, made to pass for some part of ‘honor’ and surely [was] calculated to evoke universal sympathy from the English audience.”⁴³ Again, Allen is caught on the horns of his either/or thinking; yes, his male ego passing as honor is his flaw, but for Shakespeare, Othello’s blackness is also symbolic of another flaw—his dark, uncontrollable animal lust.

Jordan counters the position of people like Theodore Allen, arguing, “[I]t is certain that the presumption of heightened sexuality in black men was far from being an incidental or casual association in the minds of Englishmen. How deeply this association operated is obvious in *Othello*.”⁴⁴ It is naive to assume that the English populous had not heard the stories about Moorish harems and the moor’s less repressed orientation to human sexuality, as conveyed by the Spanish and Portuguese, not to mention the stories of their own explorers. When one juxtaposes this orientation to sex with that of protestant England, it is easy to see why the English harbored a view of blacks as hypersexual. Clearly, “Shakespeare was writing both about and to his countrymen’s feelings concerning physical distinctions between kinds of people; [*Othello*] is shot through with the language of blackness and sex.”⁴⁵ The language of Iago is fraught with race and sex. For example, in the soliloquy where he declares, “I hate the moor./ And it is twixt my sheets/He has done my office,”⁴⁶ and in his dialogue with Brabantio, the father of Othello’s wife Desdemona, where he says, “Your daughter and the moor are now making the beast with the two backs,” or later, and more to the point, “an old black ram/

Is tuppung your white ewe.”⁴⁷ As Jordan points out “[t]his was not merely the language of . . . a ‘dirty’ mind: it was the integrated imagery of blackness and whiteness, of Africa, of the sexuality of beasts and the bestiality of sex. And of course Iago was entirely successful in persuading Brabantio, who had initially welcomed Othello into his house, that the marriage was ‘against all rules of nature.’”⁴⁸ And, finally, the murder of Desdemona on stage in full view of the audience, a departure from Shakespeare’s typical practice, affirms the stereotype of the dangerous dark moor who, despite his noble efforts, could not overcome his animal nature. How is this stereotype of the dangerous dark moor, attracted to the light-skinned beauty like a moth drawn to a flame in the black of the night, any different from the image of the black man throughout American history?⁴⁹ Mohamed Hamaludin, in a *Miami Times* article in December of 1995, drew an analogy between America’s fascination with the O. J. Simpson trial and *Othello*, when he begins his article with the following description: “A well-respected, handsome Black man fierce in his field of endeavor, with a white wife whom he suspects of infidelity and kills.” He then proceeds to inform the readers that the man being described was not O. J. Simpson, it was Othello.⁵⁰ Shakespearian scholar Peter Erickson argues that this is not “much to do about nothing,” when he says,

I shall argue that we need to put the whiteness back in *Othello*: that is, we should read it as a play in which the purview of race is not limited to images of blackness but also very much involves the fashioning of a discourse of racial whiteness. The haunting resonance of Othello’s desperate phrase “ocular proof” [visual proof] comes from its double meaning. The phrase refers not only to Desdemona’s sexual betrayal, a delusion for which the imagined proof disintegrates. The ironies run deeper because the play offers a second ocular proof in the form of Othello’s visually evident racial identity. The first proof is false, but the second is upheld. The play demonstrates that Othello’s race is a mainspring of the tragic action: what is dramatized is not the aggression of a man who happens to be black but rather a quite specific version of black male violence against a woman seen explicitly as white. Registering the role of Desdemona’s racial identity is important to the recognition that Othello’s racially infected language involves the interplay of black and white.⁵¹

This preexisting prejudice played a significant role in the institutionalization of racial slavery in the Anglo-American colonies of North America. The Founding Fathers were very literate men, and there is no doubt that they had read Shakespeare and were familiar with the European view of the Blackamoor. In fact, Thomas Jefferson, in a letter from Paris to his favorite nephew, Peter Carr, dated August 19, 1785, suggests the following course of study, “Read also Milton’s ‘Paradise Lost,’ Shakespeare, Ossian, Pope’s and Swift’s

works . . .”⁵² Interestingly enough, *Othello* was also a popular play in Anglo America, but all Othellos were played as though Othello were white and all references to his dark skin color were omitted. What is being argued here is that the racism of Anglo America predates slavery in North America, and that the racism of the English, like that of the rest of Europe, was the result of the previously mentioned confluence of historical, philosophical, religious, social, economic, and political factors.

The influence of the above-mentioned forces on pre-colonial and post-colonial America becomes obvious when one traces the roots of the racism that initially took hold in the British colonies of the Caribbean and North America back to English and European ethnocentrism. In fact, the extreme English ethnocentrism of which Jordan writes can be traced back to at least the sixteenth century, with strong vestiges first becoming obvious when England moved to colonize Ireland in 1171. Reginald Horsman, in his work *Race and Manifest Destiny*, contends that the notion of:

[A] distinct, superior Anglo-Saxon race, with innate endowments enabling it to achieve a perfection of government institutions and world dominance, was a product of the first half of the nineteenth century, [but] the roots of these ideas stretched back at least to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Those Englishmen who settled in America at the beginning of the seventeenth century brought as part of their historical and religious heritage a clearly delineated religious myth of a pure English Anglo-Saxon church, and in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, they shared with their fellow Englishmen an elaborately developed secular myth of the free nature of Anglo-Saxon political institutions. By the time of the American Revolution, Americans were convinced that Anglo-Saxon England before the Norman Conquest had enjoyed freedoms unknown since that date. The emphasis was on institutions rather than race, but since the sixteenth century, both on the European continent and in England, Anglo-Saxons had also been firmly linked to Germanic tribes described by Tacitus.⁵³

It was this belief in the mythology of an ancient Anglo-Saxon greatness and preeminence that served as the foundation of English ethnocentrism, a cultural narcissism that, over time, would degenerate into the kind of race thinking that justified the racialization of slavery and the establishment of race as the cornerstone of American privilege. It was as if the English and their American descendants had become caught up and transfixed like children by the recitation of the Anglo-Saxon epic poem about the eighth-century warrior prince, Beowulf, who slew the monster Grendel, killed a mighty dragon, and eventually became king of the Geats. As the Anglo-American colonists reflected on their place in the world, it was as though they recalled from rote that childhood recitation of Beowulf’s words: “As to kin we are of

the Great nation, [King] Hygelac's hearth-companions. My father was a leader well known among the people: Edgtheow. He stayed many winters before he went away, aged, from court. Every wise man readily remembered him throughout the earth."⁵⁴ They probably viewed the ever-expanding realm of England and its colonies as the fulfillment of this once-obscure poem.

As racism and its pseudoscientific underpinnings spread throughout the West, it provided a moral dispensation for the economic system of entrepreneurial slavery that justified bondage even within a Judeo-Christian ethical framework. Basil Davidson argues that the degrading ideology of race "was conceived as a moral justification—the necessary justification, as it was seen in the white man's world who were neither thieves nor moral monsters—for doing to black people what church and state no longer thought permissible to do to white people: the justification for enslaving black people, that is, when it was no longer permissible to enslave white people."⁵⁵ The inclusion of Davidson's comments should not be viewed as an abandonment of the earlier argument that Europe's sense of superiority and low opinion of African peoples predates slavery. What is being asserted here is that the pseudoscientific hierarchical classification of people into discrete biological groups designated as races served to concretize already existing supremacist assertions about Africa, while justifying the practices of colonization and slavery. "In the European and American traditions . . . ideas of race have had four main components: biological differences among groups, cultural differences among groups, unequal distributions of political and economic power whenever different groups have come together, and believed differences in the value or fundamental human worth of members of different groups."⁵⁶

The pseudoscientific construct of race that serves as the foundation of modern racism is rooted in the white supremacist belief system that has evolved out of European and European-American cultures. There are those who contend "Race classification . . . had its beginnings in scientific inquiry, originating and continuing in serious pursuit of a systematic body of knowledge about man."⁵⁷ Based on this assertion, they argued that racism and racial classification should not be equated with one another, though they do admit to "the fact that the two have become interrelated at times through the course of historical events."⁵⁸ Two of the most notable examples of racial classification put in the service of racist ends are American slavery and the near genocide of the indigenous peoples of the Americas and Australia. European scholars, who were the first to attempt the development of a biological classification for the human species, believed that by applying the scientific method of inquiry employed in biology they could make an objective case for the use of race as a taxonomic system. Despite their self-proclaimed objectivity, these scholars had not transcended their subjective bias. The seed of

bias, like a virus, mutated and corrupted their various systems of racial classification, making these systems subject to racist interpretations and abuse.

One of the most notable examples of a scholar falling prey to his own subjective bias is the German anatomist, Johann F. Blumenbach (1752–1840), whom many consider to be the father of physical anthropology and who, at one point, was the most-honored naturalist of the Enlightenment. Blumenbach established one of the most, if not the most, influential systems of racial classification of the pre-evolutionary period. When Blumenbach's system of classification is analyzed within the context of contemporary science, it appears to be racist on its face. However, when one analyzes Blumenbach's system within the mindset of the era, it is easy to see how the seed of subjective bias could corrupt his taxonomy. Despite the fact that he was one of the most egalitarian and by all measures the least racist naturalist of the Enlightenment, his taxonomy became corrupted by the sociocultural bias of the time. Blumenbach's taxonomy divided the human species into five distinct groups using geography and physical appearance as defining criteria. These groups were labeled as follows: the light-skinned people of Europe, West Asia, and North Africa were labeled as "Caucasian;" the people of East Asia were labeled as "Mongolian;" the dark-skinned inhabitants of sub-Saharan Africa were labeled as "Ethiopian;" the indigenous peoples of the Americas were simply labeled "American;" and the people of Polynesia, Melanesia, and other inhabitants of the known parts of Oceania and the Pacific rim were labeled as "Malaysian." Blumenbach's bias can most clearly be seen in his classification of Europeans as Caucasians, a term that he invented. There are many students of the natural sciences who wonder why Blumenbach would name the most common human phenotype of Europe after a mountain range in Russia. Blumenbach's choice of name was based "on what one might call a poetical motivation, because of the widespread belief that this region harbors the most beautiful people, like the Georgians who live in the southern part of the Caucasus."⁵⁹ In the third edition of his seminal work entitled *De generis humani varietate nativa* (On the Natural Variety of Mankind); Blumenbach specially articulates his bias when he gives his rationale for the use of Caucasian:

I have taken the name of this variety from Mount Caucasus, both because its neighborhood, and especially its southern slope, produces the most beautiful race of men . . . and because . . . in the region, if anywhere, it seems we ought with the greatest probability to place the autochthons [original form] of mankind.⁶⁰

Blumenbach's aesthetic perception of the Georgian people reflects the ethnocentric standards of beauty that all people initially assert about certain

members of their own groups. If one were first to gaze upon Caucasians through the aesthetic eye of non-Europeans, they most likely would not be described as “the most beautiful race of men.” For example, the African slave, Olaudah Equiano, wrote of a different aesthetic view of whites in his memoirs. Equiano recalls his first encounter with whites as he was being placed on board a slave ship, declaring:

I was now persuaded that I had got into a world of bad spirits, and that they were going to kill me. . . . I found some black people about me, I asked them if we were not to be eaten by these white men with horrible looks, red faces, and long hair.⁶¹

Blumenbach’s belief that Mount Caucasus was most likely the site where modern humans originated was strongly influenced by the theories of French naturalist Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, who regarded the skin tone of Europeans as the original color of the human species. Buffon had a profound influence on many naturalists of this period with his forty-four-volume publication, *Histoire naturelle, générale et particulière*, which was one of the earliest accounts of the global history of biology and geology not based on the Bible. Although Buffon was a strong abolitionist, his belief in the inherent superiority of the white race can be witnessed in his following statement:

The most temperate climate lies between the 40th and 50th degree of latitude, and it produces the most handsome and beautiful men. It is from this climate that the ideas of the genuine color of mankind, and of the various degrees of beauty ought to be derived.⁶²

Approximately a century and a half or more after Blumenbach identified Mount Caucasus as the site where he believed the first humans to have originated, his assertion was disproved by researchers laboring in the field of genetics, a branch of study intricately related to physical anthropology, the field of science that he is credited with founding. Stephen Oppenheimer, in his comprehensive work *The Real Eve: Modern Man’s Journey Out of Africa*, summarizes this research as follows:

[N]ew genetic evidence published in 1987, using genes that could be passed down only through our mothers . . . resolved an old argument about the birthplace of modern humans. The new evidence [furnished by geneticist Rebecca Cann and her colleagues] said that we, “the modern human family,” had originated as a single genetic line in Africa within the last 200,000 years, and not as multiple separate evolutionary events in different parts of the world. This single line, which leads back eventually to the ancestor we share with the Neanderthals,

gave rise to half-dozen major maternal clans (or branches) that are, even today, clearly of African origin. . . .

[T]his new genetic approach used only maternally transmitted mitochondrial DNA. Ten years later, a small group of geneticists would use this newly discovered method to identify a single twig from those dozens or more ancestral African maternal genetic branches as forming the sole founding line for the rest of the world. In other words, there was a single common ancestor or “Mitochondrial Eve” for all African female lines and then, much later, came a subsidiary “Out-of-Africa Eve” line whose genetic daughters peopled the rest of world.⁶³

So it came to pass that the mythical Garden of Eden, the metaphorical origin of the human species, was not to be found at the base of Mount Caucasus in Europe but in the Olduvai Riff Valley of East Africa, and the metaphorical mother of the human race, Eve, would prove to be an African. This finding finally put to rest the polygenic argument of multiple human origins and the argument that humans first originated in the Caucasus.

Although, the genetic record has proven beyond a reasonable doubt that the human species originated in Africa, there still remains one assertion that must be dealt with, an assertion that strikes to the heart of the implicit and often explicit European claim of Caucasian racial superiority. At the foundation of the claim of Caucasian racial superiority is the belief that the evolutionary branch that gave rise to the first sentient modern humans occurred after humans had left Africa and it was this sentient group of humans that settled Europe. This remaining assertion revolves around one fundamental question: when and where did modern humans first emerge from Africa? In order to answer this question, two major “out of Africa” theories of human origins must be addressed. These theories identify two separate exit routes out of Africa at different points in time. There is one “out of Africa” theory that argues for an “early northern exodus of modern humans to the Levant [the eastern coast of the Mediterranean ranging from western Greece to western Egypt] form[ing] the nucleus from which Europeans and most Asians evolved.”⁶⁴ Then there is the theory of the southern exodus across the strait at the south end of the Red Sea, an area that periodically was rendered shallow by glacially induced droughts. “Two million years ago, Africa was still joined to Arabia and the strait was dry. A wide range of Eurasian and African mammals were able to cross between Arabia and Africa at both the northern and southern end of the Red Sea. At that time, however, Africa was already moving away from Arabia at a rate of 15 mm per year, gradually opening the isthmus [blocking the Red Sea from the Ocean] and eventually closing the south gate out of Africa.

Recent evidence shows that one of the last mammals to walk out of Africa, before the Gate of Grief finally flooded and closed, was [modern human’s]

second cousin *Homo erectus*, carrying with them a few basic pebble tools. . . . [Homo erectus] spread rapidly eastward through India to East Asia and also up through the Levant, reaching Dmanisi in the Caucasus by 1.8 million years ago.”⁶⁵

With the advent of a series of glacially induced droughts, roughly every 100,000 years over the past two million years, the strait between the Gates of Grief would have gone shallow at least twenty times, allowing several opportunities for increasingly advanced groups of humans to exodus Africa. “[H]umans from Africa could easily make the southern crossing across the mouth of the Red Sea, with the aid perhaps of primitive rafts, island hopping where necessary. . . . Humans may have crossed out of Africa by this southern route at least three times in the past 2 million years.” The same glacially induced droughts that provided a shallow ford across the Gate of Grief out of Africa appears to have provided a means and impetus for exiting Africa as the savanna turned into an inhospitable desert and the aquatic life in the Red Sea began to die out because of increased salt levels caused by evaporation and stagnation. Although, “the main part of the Arabian Peninsula is not a very attractive prospect for emigrants, always being bone dry in the depths of an ice age. There are, however, green refuges in the Yemeni highlands above Aden. The south Arabian coast also benefited from the monsoons.”⁶⁶ In addition, there was and continues to be ample seafood along the coast of the Gulf of Aden and opportunities for beachcombing and foraging. These facts seem to set up a classic “push and pull” scenario that, in part, could explain the migratory patterns of these early humans.

Recent evidence shows that the early northern “out of Africa” theory, which argues that the first humans exited Africa to Europe via the Levant, is seriously flawed. It appears from the archaeological and climatological record that although there was an early attempt by modern humans to exit Africa through a northern route, it ended in the Levant about 90,000 years ago. This attempt, according to Oppenheimer, ended as a result of

. . . a brief but devastating global freeze-up . . . that turned the whole of the Levant to extreme desert. After the freeze, the deserted Levant was soon reoccupied but this time by older residents—[modern human’s] first cousin, the Neanderthals—who were presumably forced southward to the Mediterranean by glaciers advancing from the north. [There is] no further physical evidence of modern humans in the Levant or in Europe for another 45,000 years, until the Cro-Magnon people made their appearance . . . 45,000-50,000 years ago and successfully challenged the Neanderthals for their northern birthright.⁶⁷

This description of events is now accepted by most authorities. It is quite clear “that the first modern humans out of Africa must have died out in the

Levant on the return of the dry glacial conditions that caused North Africa and the Levant to revert to extreme desert. . . . The gap of 50,000 years between the disappearance of the first Levantines and the subsequent invasion of Europe obviously raises serious doubts about the prevailing theory that the northern African exodus gave rise to Europeans.”⁶⁸

Given this evidence, the obvious question that must be asked is why so many European and Euro-American experts have clung to the northern exodus theory? Stephen Oppenheimer, a world-recognized expert in the synthesis of DNA research and archaeology, provides a quite compelling answer to this question in the following comments:

To help us to understand why many European archaeological and anthropological authorities argue that Europeans arose separately from a northern African exodus, we need to acknowledge that there may be a Eurocentric cultural agenda in what the northern exodus tries to explain. Most important is the lingering twentieth-century European conviction that Cro-Magnons who moved into Europe no more than 50,000 years ago defined the beginning of our species as “modern humans” in the fullest intellectual sense. This human epiphany, with its extraordinary flowering of art, manufacturing skills, and culture, is known to archaeologists rather dryly as “the European Upper Paleolithic.” For many of them, it was the creative explosion that heralded our coming of age as a sentient species. The magnificent cave paintings of Chauvet and Lascaux and the voluptuous, finely carved Venus figurines found throughout Europe date back to this culture. [Of course, this assertion ignores the fact that Australians evolved their own singing, dancing, and painting much earlier than the Europeans.]

The argument goes like this: if we ultimately came from Africa, and if this ancient artistic revolution that speaks so evocatively of abstract thought came from the Levant, then it is only a short walk from Egypt. Ergo, “we Westerners” . . . must have come from North Africa.⁶⁹

Despite voluminous amounts of archaeological and climatological evidence dismissing the northern theory, European and Euro-American experts continue “in their attempt to preserve the hallowed northern route for Europe.”⁷⁰ This support for the northern theory represents yet another example of the Eurocentric perspective that gave rise to modern racism, colonialism, and the general hegemonic drive of the West. If one follows the logic of this perspective to its conclusion, it would proceed as follows: if all humans originated in Africa then there must be some explanation for why present-day Europeans are superior to Africans. If one continues with this logic, the reason for the alleged superiority of Europeans can only be found in the northern theory. For it is this theory that supports the assertion that the evolutionary branch which produced Cro-Magnons—supposedly the first truly sentient modern humans—developed in the Levant separately from its African trunk.

The logical inference typically drawn from this reasoning is that the Cro-Magnons left their inferior cousin back in Africa. Such logic allows Europeans to claim that ancient Egypt was a “white” civilization because it was the creation of that branch of the human tree that took the northern route out of Africa and eventually inhabited Europe.

Again, Stephen Oppenheimer counters all of the above assertions and speculation by pointing to what the genetic record says about the northern route theory. Oppenheimer summarizes the genetic research as follows:

From the turn of the century, published work on the European genetic trail by scientists such as Martin Richards, Vincent, Macaulay, and Hans-Jurgen Bandelt has changed [the nature of the debate] and allowed us to examine the first leap out of Africa with a much clearer focus on the timing and location. This work does two things. First, it confirms that the Levantine expedition over 100,000 years ago perished without issue, so that the first doomed exodus of modern humans . . . left no identifiable genetic trace in the Levant. Second, although sub-Saharan Africans have more recently left their genetic mark surviving in one-eighth of modern Berber societies, it reveals no genetic evidence that either Europeans or Levantines came directly from North Africa. . . .

The construction of a precise genetic tree using mitochondrial DNA makes it possible to do more than just identify our common ancestors. [It] shows [that] our mitochondrial tree, starting at the base as many clans in Africa, then sending a single branch out into South Asia (India). [This branch then] became our Asian Out-of-Africa Eve and soon branched many times to populate Arabia and India, then Europe and East Asia. We can date the branches in this tree and, by looking at their geographical distribution, show when and where the founders arose for a particular prehistoric migration. On a grander scale, this method is how the out-of-Africa hypothesis was proved.

Using this approach, we can see that Europe’s oldest branch line . . . , which I have called Europa after Zeus’ lover of the same name, arose from somewhere near India out of [what] I have called Rohani after its Indian location. [This branch], in turn, arose out of [what] I call Nasreen, and which arose from the [original] Out-of-Africa Eve twig. If Europeans were derived from North African aboriginal groups such as the Berbers 45,000 years ago, we would expect to find the oldest North African genetic lines deriving directly from the origin or base of the [out-of-Africa] branch.⁷¹

Once one takes the time to follow the human genetic tree, the evidence is quite clear that Europeans and Levantines “came, not directly from Africa, but from somewhere near India in the south. Their matriarch, Nasreen, was probably the most westerly of Eve’s two Asian daughters to be born along the coastal trail [of the southern exodus route out of Africa.]”⁷²

Despite the genetic evidence, there are still European archaeologists who cling desperately to the presumption that Europeans represent the first truly

anatomically modern humans and that they “were the first to think symbolically and in the abstract, and the first to speak, paint, carve, dress, weave, and exchange goods.”⁷³ In addition to the genetic evidence, there is substantial archaeological evidence that anatomically modern humans first evolved in Africa, not Europe. According to Oppenheimer:

McBrearty and Brooks’ composite picture of the first “Anatomically Modern” Africans shows that by their first appearance, around 140,000 years ago, half of the fourteen important clues to cognitive skills and behavior which underpinned those that eventually took [humans] to the Moon were already present. . . . By 100,000 years ago—just after [that] first [failed] exodus to the Levant—three-quarters of these skills had been invented; the remaining three were in place before the first moderns stepped into Europe. With such a perspective of cumulative increments in culture over the past 300,000 years, the concept of a sudden modern “European Human Revolution” 40,000 years age pops like a bubble.⁷⁴

Ironically, genetics, that branch of science so closely related to the field of physical anthropology that Blumenbach is credited with founding, would come full circle to disprove the supremacist assumptions of both Blumenbach and his guru, Buffon. However, Blumenbach and Buffon, like many scholars of their time, were seduced by the illusion of scientific objectivity and were, as a result, unaware of the deeply subjective perceptual bias established by their own cultures. After all, they “lived in an age when ideas of progress, and of the cultural superiority of European life, dominated the political and social world of [their] contemporaries. Implicit and loosely formulated (or even unconscious) notions of racial ranking fit well with such a world view; almost any other taxonomic scheme would have to be anomalous.”⁷⁵ Given their bias, it should not come as any surprise that they would assume the human species originated in Europe, or that they would believe there are distinct races that formed a hierarchy with Caucasians at the top.

As Richard H. Osborne, the author *The Biological and Social Meaning of Race*, asserts, “There are probably few topics of greater moment than that of race. The subject touches the lives of us all at all levels of education and in all occupations.”⁷⁶ Once the earlier elements of hierarchy were added as a result of the practice of racial ranking, the downward thrust of inequality caused by race thinking would gain so much gravity that it would not only touch but in actuality crush those relegated to its lower ranks. As stated previously, “Race as a hierarchical divider of human beings and a determinant of cultural differences did not [however, truly] emerge until the spread of European colonialism and the development of slavery in the Americas.”⁷⁷ As Europeans swept across the oceans of the world, driven by the winds of curiosity and imperialist desire, they were confronted by a world of staggering diversity in

both habitat and humanity. It was a world that shattered the mirrored reflection that defined normality for European explorers as they found themselves hard put to explain the differences they observed, particularly those in human appearance. However, “[w]ith the rise of Darwinian theory, explanations were recast in terms of natural selection and evolutionary descent. Technologically [less advanced] peoples were considered evolutionary vestiges of human descent from apelike ancestors. The displacement of such people by colonists from industrialized societies exemplified [Spenser’s notion of] the survival of the fittest.”⁷⁸

In order to have a truly informed discussion of racial ranking, one must place this practice in the broader historical context that is framed and delineated by Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution. This is not to say or imply that Darwin engaged in the practice of racial ranking, or that he even had any interest in exploring the relative worth of various groups of people. He, in fact, even questioned the value of classifying humans according to differences in the first place, as evidenced by the following quote: “It is not my intention here to describe the several so-called races of men; but I am about to enquire what is the value of the differences between them under a classificatory point of view . . .”⁷⁹ Darwin, however, was not immune to the racial bias of his European contemporaries, who generally perceived the concept of “human” to mean “like us” in class, culture, and/or ethnicity, rather than just any member of the human species. “It was simply not clear to nineteenth-century [European] thinkers that all humans were in truth a single species.”⁸⁰

As pointed out earlier in this chapter, the practice of racial ranking had a pre-evolutionary and a post-evolutionary period and rationale. Those theorists responsible for the development of racial ranking during the pre-evolutionary period took two distinctively different paths—monogenism and polygenism. Monogenism “upheld the scriptural unity of all people in the single creation of Adam and Eve.”⁸¹ However, for many theorists, monogenism posed a major theoretical problem related to the concept of race. If all people descended from Adam and Eve, then why are there at least three distinct races? This problem was solved by the theory of human degeneration, which argues that the various races “are a product of degeneration from Eden’s perfection.”⁸² Monogenists then went on to rank the various racial groups by their degree of degeneration, with whites being the closest to the perfection of Eden and blacks being the furthest away. Some monogenists believed that the hot tropical climate of the African continent, often referred to as Hades by Europeans, permanently corrupted the African descendants of Adam and Eve, reducing them to ugly, black savages. There were even some monogenists who speculated that the process could be reversed. Stephen J. Gould gives the example of Samuel S. Smith, who thought that the more temperate climate,

which gave rise to Caucasian “sensibilities,” could reverse the corrupting degenerative process of the tropics and turn black Africans white. It is difficult to believe that someone could be so foolish as to put forth such a theory, but Smith, who was at that time president of the College of New Jersey, which eventually became Princeton University, is a perfect example of the state of scientific thought during that period in history.

Polygenist theory, on the other hand, discounted the scriptural account of human origin put forth in the Bible as mere allegory. These theorists instead held that the various human races had distinctly different origins and were, in fact, separate biological species. Based on this contention, it was argued that black Africans, being a separate and more primitive species, were obviously not created equal and were incapable of perfection.

There were monogenists who strongly opposed the polygenist position and argued in support of the perfectibility of the lower-ranked races, condemning those polygenists who attempted to give scientific credence to slavery. Stephen J. Gould cites as an example the famous French anatomist, Étienne Serres, who, in 1860, denounced polygeny as a “savage theory” in his work *Principes d’embryogenie, de zoogenie, et de teratogenie. Memoires de l’Academie des Sciences*. Ironically, however, despite Serres’ condemnation of the polygenist, he himself also had a stage theory for explaining the supposed inferiority of the lower-ranked races. He argued that adult blacks could only achieve the intellectual, psychological, and social maturity of white children, while adult Mongolians, i.e., Asians, could reach the level of maturity of a white adolescent. Of the two theories, polygenism deviated the most from the scriptural account of human origins, and hence was much less popular than monogenism.

The pre-evolutionary explanations for the origin of the human species and its “racial” subdivisions, as put forth by the theory of monogenism, are firmly rooted in Europe; however, polygenism owes its inception to the American School of anthropology. Gould credits Samuel G. Morton, a Philadelphia aristocrat with an extensive medical background, for giving international stature to the American School of anthropology and its theory of polygeny. Morton established himself as the “empiricist” of polygeny, because of his attempt to use statistical measures in his research. Over the course of his work, Morton collected hundreds of human skulls, purportedly representing the various races, and attempted to determine the average brain size for each racial group by measuring the cranial cavities, the assumption being that there was a direct relationship between the size of the human brain and the level of intellectual and moral development. Morton’s research ranked Caucasians as superior, with a cranial capacity of 87 cubic inches; Mongolian or East Asians as next, with a capacity of 83 cubic inches; then American Indians with a ca-

capacity of 82 cubic inches; followed by the Malay or Pacific Islanders, next with a capacity of 81 cubic inches; and finally occupying the most inferior position were the Ethiopians or blacks, with a cranial capacity of 78 cubic inches.⁸³ The sheer number of skulls collected during his career astounded both proponents and opponents of his theory and method. As a result of his research, Morton was acknowledged as the world's primary polygenist and the leader of the American School of anthropology. Samuel G. Morton died in 1851 and was revered by many, at that time, as one of America's greatest scientists. The *New York Tribune* stated in its eulogy to Morton, "Probably no scientific man in America enjoyed a higher reputation among scholars throughout the world, than Dr. Morton."⁸⁴

Upon retrospective analysis, however, it is obvious that Morton's research was flawed in both its general hypothesis that brain size essentially determines intelligence, and in its methodology. Morton's assumption that it is brain size that governs a person's mental capacity is based on simplistic cause and effect reasoning. Gould points out the following flaws in Morton's assumption:

Sizes of brains are related to the sizes of bodies that carry them: big people tend to have larger brains than small people. This fact does not imply that big people are smarter—any more than elephants should be judged more intelligent than humans because their brains are larger. Appropriate corrections must be made for differences in body size. Men tend to be larger than women; consequently, their brains are bigger. When corrections for body size are applied, men and women have brains of approximately equal size. Morton not only failed to correct for differences in sex or body size; he did not even recognize the relationship, though his data proclaimed it loud and clear.⁸⁵

If one accepts Morton's assumption as being correct, then any individual with a gross anatomical structure, i.e., height, weight, and bone structure, larger than another would always be more intelligent. Morton's failure to recognize the relationship between the overall physical size of a person and his or her brain size caused him to mix male and female skulls in each of his racial categories, as well as failing to factor in the relative size of the bodies associated with the skulls that he was comparing. Imagine if Morton compared the male skulls of the tallest people in the world, the Watusi of east central Africa, and those of Italian females. He would obviously have to conclude that blacks had larger brains than whites and were therefore smarter.

Morton's methodological flaws are quite obvious and appear to have served his racial bias, as demonstrated by his "shifting criteria" and "procedural omissions." Gould points out how Morton clearly manipulated his data to support his presumption that Caucasians were the superior race.

Morton often chose to include or delete large subsamples in order to match group averages with prior expectations. He included Inca Peruvians to decrease the Indian average, but deleted Hindus to raise the Caucasian mean. [Both the Incas and the Hindus have smaller skulls because of their smaller body size.] . . . Negroids yielded a lower average than Caucasians among his Egyptian skulls [which were gathered from mummified remains] because the negroid sample probably contained a higher percentage of smaller-statured females...Morton used an all-female sample of three Hottentots [a very short tribe found in South Africa] to support the stupidity of blacks, and an all-male sample of Englishmen to assert the superiority of whites.⁸⁶

If Morton's research on race was considered to be exemplary for this period of time, then one can only imagine what was being done by scientists of less repute. An example of the work of such a scientist is the bizarre theory of a prominent southern physician named S.A. Cartwright. He states, "It is the defective . . . atmospherization of the blood [the inability to remove carbon dioxide from the blood], conjoined with a deficiency of cerebral matter in the cranium . . . that is the true cause of that debasement of mind, which has rendered the people of Africa unable to take care of themselves."⁸⁷ During the 1840s, "a Romantic racism and the idolization of Nordic people" emerged in the writing of such authors as Thomas Carlyle.⁸⁸ By 1850, the concept of race as a valid system of classification was thoroughly established in Europe and the Americas. By this time, not only had race thinking become commonplace, but also the belief that levels of societal development were biologically determined by race had also become commonplace. A position that epitomized this thinking can be found in the writings of anatomist Robert Knox, whom historian Léon Poliakov refers to as the first racist scholar. Knox states the following:

That race is everything is simply a fact, the most remarkable, the most comprehensive, which philosophy has ever announced. Race is everything: literature, science, art—in a word, civilization depends on it.⁸⁹

Pre-evolutionary concepts of the origins of the human species and its subgroups are steeped in a poisonous brew of racism, religious creationism, and ignorance, a brew that has unfortunately seeped into and stained the very fabric of western civilization.

"The [US] Civil War lay just around the corner, but so did 1859 and Darwin's *Origin of Species*. Subsequent arguments for slavery, colonialism, racial differences, class structure, and sex roles would go forth primarily under the banner of science."⁹⁰ The post-evolutionary world of the natural sciences was thrown into a vortex of change, confusion, and increased conflict as "[e]volutionary theory swept away the creationist rug that had supported

the intense debate between monogenists and polygenists, but it satisfied both sides by presenting an even better rationale for their shared racism."⁹¹ Polygenists were forced to abandon their theory of multiple origins in favor of a theory of common ancestry, while monogenists, with their theory of common ancestry still intact, continued to advance their belief in the existence of "linear hierarchies of race [arranged] according to mental and moral worth."⁹² Darwin, despite his exploits and far-flung travels, was a somewhat timid and retiring man who "never meant to start trouble. In fact he hated disagreements, quarrels, emotional disruptions..."⁹³ He, however, knew that his theory could and most likely would be the cause of much rancor and argument. "The argument would focus first on the theory of evolution, on a view of the way the world worked and species originated that was singularly Darwin's own. But in an astonishingly short time, the argument would shift from the theory itself to its application to human beings, and thence to the value of differences among the races."⁹⁴ Darwin was so concerned about the latter argument that he all but omitted it from his manuscript by making only a passing reference to the evolution of the human species, when he states, "light will be shed on the origin of Man and his history."⁹⁵

"Powerful as they were, Darwin's words and ideas could not travel of their own volition."⁹⁶ Darwin's dislike of controversy and conflict made him a poor spokesman for his own ideas. According to Pat Shipman in *The Evolution of Racism*:

His aversion to facing his theory and its implications was so great that he had difficulty admitting to it, even to his friends. Year after year he circumvented any bald, written statement of his beliefs, disguising them behind needless words and dithering clauses. He felt compelled to distance himself from his ideas even as he was driven to bring them forth and try them out.⁹⁷

Darwin needed confident advocates to confront the creationists in both the church and scientific establishments and carry the banner of evolution forward. He needed messengers who could transmit his ideas in less-turgid and self-effacing prose in order that his ideas could become more accessible to the broader public. An energetic core of advocates out of England, Germany, and America rallied to champion his cause of evolution. From Darwin's motherland came Thomas Huxley, a young English naturalist, who was aided by a cadre of Darwin's colleagues and friends. From Germany came another young crusader, Ernst Haeckel, who came to be characterized by Charles Darwin's son, Francis, as one of evolution's "enthusiastic propagandists."⁹⁸ From America, the botanist, Asa Gray, became Darwin's advocate in the New World by being the first to suggest an American edition of the *Origin of Species*.

When Thomas Huxley first read Darwin's *Origin of Species*, it was, to him, like "the flash of light which to a man, who has lost himself on a dark night, suddenly reveals a road which whether it takes him straight home or not, certainly goes his way."⁹⁹ As Huxley's insight into the adaptive mechanisms of nature was expanded by Darwin's theory, he found himself overwhelmed by Darwin's simple yet powerful truth and declared, "How extremely stupid not to have thought of that!"¹⁰⁰ Huxley was a very intelligent young man whose brash and unconventional speaking style eventually provided Darwin's evolutionary army with an articulately stalwart knight.

However, it would be the bold young German, Ernst Haeckel, who would take up the lance of evolution and lead Darwin's biological revolution. Haeckel embodied the stereotypical image of the youthful German male, "broad-shouldered, blond, bearded, and handsome, with a deeply rooted love of the German countryside and outdoor sports such as climbing, hiking, and swimming."¹⁰¹ He also exhibited the archetypical bluff, vigor, and assertiveness of the German male. Darwin's wife Emma once described Haeckel in a letter to her son, as a "very nice and hearty and affectionate" man, who "[b]el-lowed out his bad English in such a voice that he nearly deafened us."¹⁰²

It was after receiving his doctorate in medicine from the University of Würzburg and a failed attempt at a medical practice that Haeckel first heard of Darwin's extraordinary book. He was twenty-six years old when he first read Darwin's *Origin of Species* and seized upon Darwin's theory of evolution. Haeckel took to Darwin's theory so readily because of his "willingness to see species as both mutable and variable—two key elements in Darwin's hypothesis."¹⁰³ Haeckel eventually took a position as a lecturer at the University of Jena in 1861. It was there that he began to realize that Darwin's overarching view of life could illuminate his own work in much the same way that it had illuminated the work of Thomas Huxley, his English counterpart. Haeckel's first publication was an unabashed declaration of the power of Darwin's ideas, and with this publication he joined Darwin's legions, along with Huxley, as a knight in the cause of evolution.

As Haeckel's career at the University of Jena progressed from the rank of lecturer to that of Extraordinary Professor of Zoology, and with his assignment to the prestigious position of director of the university's zoological museum, his confidence and standing in the scientific community grew at a rapid rate. With this newfound stature, Haeckel was determined to do in public that which Darwin feared: apply Evolutionary Theory to the origin of the human species. If Darwin and other evolutionists were to be consistent and true to all of the implications of Evolutionary Theory, Haeckel argued, they must acknowledge the human species' immediate primate ancestor, the ape. He further argued for the exploration of even earlier evolutionary connections be-

tween humans and low species such as marsupials, reptiles, and fish. Haeckel shocked the German scientific community with his vision of an evolutionary tree with one primeval stem from which all high forms of life branched, including *Homo sapiens*.¹⁰⁴

Despite eloquence, scientific stature, and charm, Haeckel could not overturn the ferric-like core of the German scientific community, embodied in the iron will of his old professor and role model, Rudolph Virchow. It was the power and thorough magnetic brilliance of Virchow's mind that had drawn the young Haeckel's attention and admiration while he attended the University of Würzburg, and it was this brilliance that Haeckel sought to challenge with his own ideas. In 1863, at the Scientific Congress held in Stettin (Szczecin), Haeckel would challenge Virchow, his old mentor and the father of modern cellular pathology. Haeckel's challenge took on the tenor of adolescent rebellion, as the conflict between the student and his former teacher became more public and overt. Virchow viewed Haeckel's defense and expansion of Darwin's theory as a dangerous extension of an already-flawed hypothesis.

During this congress, the conflict between Virchow and Haeckel quickly escalated beyond their profound differences over Darwinism and spread into several other areas, both intellectual and social. It was at this congress that Haeckel presented his grand philosophical and scientific vision of the universe. Virchow most vehemently disagreed with Haeckel's attempt to weave an essentialist theoretical web that, if accepted, encompassed all of natural history under one grand universal theory by interlacing Haeckel's own philosophical and theoretical concepts with those of Darwin. Haeckel had originally seized upon Darwin's theory because he was completely enthralled by the ideas of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and his philosophical school of thought known as *Naturphilosophie*. Goethe's *Naturphilosophie* "was a Romantic school of thought that postulated that the structure of organisms reflected an archetype or master plan devised by a higher being."¹⁰⁵ This philosophical school articulated a Hegelian-like belief that the history of life was "the continuous development of God's underlying plan."¹⁰⁶ Haeckel linked Darwin's theory of evolution with Goethe's *Naturphilosophie*, using his own Romantic conception of the world and cosmos. This synthesis of ideas, for Haeckel, explained nature, human biology, and society, at both the micro and macro levels of human organization. He was constructing his own universal theory of development, which he called monism, "a name that symbolized the oneness of all the universe."¹⁰⁷

Haeckel's concept of monism was not a new revelation in Western thought; in fact, monism finds its roots in the sixth century BC, during the first period of Greek philosophy. His notion of monism, or universal oneness, can still be

found in the more ancient thoughts of Eastern mysticism, as manifested in the world's oldest recorded religion, Hinduism, and as exemplified later in the religions of Taoism and Buddhism. During this period of Greek history, science, philosophy, and religion were not separated. The aim of the ancient Greeks, especially the Milesian school of Ionia, was to discover the essential nature of things that they referred to as *physis*. The modern term "physics" derives its meaning from *physis*, which originally referred to "the endeavor of seeing the essential nature of all things."¹⁰⁸

In 1877, at a jointly attended scientific conference, Haeckel escalated the ever-widening intellectual war between himself and Virchow. During this conference, Haeckel made a very provocative speech that was published under the title *Freedom in Science and Teaching*. In his address, he proposed sweeping changes in Germany's national science curriculum, which would place evolution at its center. It was his intent to install evolution as "the unifying principle of both nature and society," which would in turn unify the German people in a common vision of themselves.¹⁰⁹ Haeckel believed that this common vision would allow the German people to overcome the shackles of their traditional Christian beliefs to "unite, purify, and assume their rightful (superior) place in the world."¹¹⁰ The intellectual war between Haeckel and Virchow had spread beyond science and education to social policy, and it was the "Enlightenment" notion of human equality that was at stake. Haeckel, in addition to his quest to install evolutionary theory as the foundation of German metaphysics, had also taken up the white supremacist banner of Arthur de Gobineau, the author of the 1853 work *The Inequality of Human Races*, which asserted the theory of the Aryan or Nordic "master race." This theory gave additional currency to Haeckel's belief that Germany represented the evolutionary apex of human civilization, as he publicly declared the German people to be the true descendants of the Aryan "master race."¹¹¹

Virchow directly attacked Haeckel's *Freedom in Science and Teaching* in his own address, entitled *Freedom in Science in the Modern State*, which was published in 1878. In his address, Virchow unleashed a frontal assault on Haeckel's view of German education and society with its Aryan overtones. This assault appears to be an extension of an earlier campaign launched in 1876 by Virchow against Haeckel's belief in the Aryan master race. Virchow seemed to hate what he considered the myth of the Aryan master race as much or even more than he hated Darwin's evolutionary theory. In order to debunk Haeckel's contention that the German people were the true descendants of the Aryan "master race," Virchow embarked on an ambitious anthropological survey of over six million German children. His motivation was twofold: 1) to remove physical anthropology from the eccentric realm of anecdotal evidence and ethnic bias to the quantitative realm of modern science and 2) to destroy the myth of the tall, blue-eyed, blond-haired Aryan as the archetype

of the German people. Virchow believed that he could prove that being tall, blue-eyed, and blond was not the representative phenotype of the typical German, hence dispelling the myth of Germanic Aryan roots. “Perhaps Virchow...sensed the vicious turn racism—in particular, anti-Semitism—was starting to take under Bismarck’s encouragement, with Haeckel’s growing ‘scientific’ justification. Perhaps, equally, Virchow was uncomfortable with his own obviously Slavonic ancestry, revealed in both his name and his appearance.”¹¹² Virchow’s appearance stood in stark contrast to the stereotypical image of the Teutonic Aryan “master race,” as exemplified by Haeckel’s physique and as described by the racial nationalists of Germany. Chamberlain, in his 1910 work *The Foundation of the Nineteenth Century*, described the Aryan archetype as follows:

The great radiant heavenly eyes, the golden hair, the gigantic stature, the symmetrical muscular development, the lengthened skull (which an ever-active brain, tortured by longing, had changed from the round lines of animal contentedness and extended towards the front), the lofty countenance, required by an elevated spiritual life, as the seat of its expression.¹¹³

Finally, after ten years of surveying, Virchow published his findings in 1886, which proved that Germans were not, on average, tall, fair-skinned, blue-eyed, or blond-haired people. These findings, however, did not alter Haeckel’s popularized vision of Christian Germans as a unified race that had descended from an Aryan ideal.

Virchow struggled to retain control of the intellectual establishment of physical anthropology, halt the advances of Darwinism, and thwart Haeckel’s attempt to establish racial nationalism as the foundation of the German identity. He was, however, unable to overcome the support given by Prime Minister Otto von Bismarck for Haeckel’s vision of German society. For Bismarck, whose schemes for a new unified German Reich had already lead to the conquest of several territories, the embrace of racial nationalism had given theoretical support to his use of anti-Semitism as a tool to galvanize the German people against an “enemy within.” “Haeckel continued to battle for evolutionary theory, defeating Virchow by longevity if not logic.”¹¹⁴ Virchow died before his former student, leaving Haeckel the victor in their protracted intellectual and social war. “Haeckel himself was regarded as godlike, a prophet, a genius who evoked a fervent nationalistic faith among his followers. His words were mystical, romantic, compelling: tantamount to holy.”¹¹⁵ Pat Shipman clearly identifies Haeckel’s contribution to race thinking and racism in her following statement:

Haeckel was completely open about his conviction that biological laws must equally govern human society. “[N]atural selection in the struggle for life,” he

wrote, “transforms human society, just as it modifies animals and plants.” He flatly believed that races were different from each other as species of animals, offering what seemed to be scientific support for outright racism. He reasoned that, because the “lower races” (such as the Veddahs [of India] or Australian Negroes) are psychologically nearer to the mammals (apes and dogs) than to civilized Europeans, we must, therefore, assign a totally different value to their lives.” Because of the differences among races, maintaining (or reestablishing) German racial purity was of utmost importance to the well being of the world. Germany, of course, represented the evolutionary apex of humanity and must lead the way in the “preservation of the individual character of nations and races,” since the greatest progress would rise from the greatest people.¹¹⁶

Haeckel’s theoretical assertions gave biological credence to Hegel’s belief in the *Göttliche Ordnung oder Grund* (Divine Order or Reason) in which God, the “spirit,” had taken the form of history and was moving “Western man” to ever-higher levels of perfection. Chancellor Otto von Bismarck was quite taken by Haeckel’s ideas because they provided a scientific basis for designating the German people as superior to all others, allowing him to consolidate them as one race, the Aryan race. Haeckel’s ideas would ultimately help fuel the Nazi propaganda machine of Adolph Hitler, a man who ironically favored in stature and appearance Rudolph Virchow, not Ernst Haeckel.

Eventually, the seductive supremacist lure of racial nationalism, which emerged out of the corruption of evolutionary theory, would return to Darwin’s motherland, England. Fortunately, Darwin, this man who “never meant to start trouble,” had died before his theory had deteriorated into a pseudo-scientific justification for modern racism. Darwin, however, had anticipated the controversy that would emerge out of the application of his theory to the human species. This is probably why he omitted any overt theoretical speculation as to the origin of the human species from his manuscript, confining his thoughts to that one enigmatic sentence: “Light will be shed on the origin of man, and his history.” Darwin’s theory of evolution, as applied and interpreted by England’s Thomas Huxley and Germany’s Ernst Haeckel, gave support to Herbert Spencer’s multi-volumed work *A System of Synthetic Philosophy*, in which he articulated his views on biology, psychology, morality, and sociology. Spencer had modified and reinterpreted Darwin’s theory of evolution to bolster his own social, economic, and political philosophy, a philosophy that Spencer applied to every aspect of reality “from the evolution of the solar system to animal species and human society.”¹¹⁷ For Spencer, evolutionary theory held an even greater truth than Darwin could imagine. Spencer believed that the world was evolving towards a perfect state, driven by the biological engine of natural selection.

As stated in chapter two, Spencer’s conception of human society became the foundation for what came to be known as Social Darwinism, a theory that

became popular in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries and one that continues to hold sway in the twenty-first century with neoconservatives in the United States. According to Social Darwinist theory, the weak, as represented by the poor and “primitive” peoples of the world, would diminish over time and their cultures wane, while the strong would grow in power and cultural influence. He characterized this process as a struggle for the “survival of the fittest.” Spencer’s argument was not restricted in its application to the explanation of socioeconomic class in various Western societies; he also used Social Darwinism to explain intercultural differences. He argued that “the intellectual traits of the uncivilized...are traits recurring in children of the civilized.”¹¹⁸ His counterpart in America, William Graham Sumner, also believed in the “survival of the fittest, arguing that the process of natural selection in society would result in the survival of the best competitors in the population. He also believed that whole societies, like individuals, could be viewed as organisms that evolved in Darwinian fashion. Social and economic stratification in America, historically, has been implicitly and explicitly justified by laissez-faire capitalists and political conservatives under the Social Darwinist’s interpretation of natural selection.

Social Darwinism provided yet another stone in the conceptual foundation of what was a Western “biological determinist” argument for human inequality. The inequality manifested in the social, economic, and racial stratification of the United States, now as in the past, was justified on the basis of inequalities that “naturally” exist among individuals. Biological determinists argued that inherent moral attributes such as industriousness, temperance, and frugality correlated directly with the acquisition of wealth and the control of property. Many of America’s wealthy conservatives use this argument as a rampart to defend themselves against the accusation that they have benefited from the 388 years of white racism, which has forced a disproportionate numbers of African American into the lowest socioeconomic strata of American society.

The construction of race, as stated in the introduction of this work, has served as a means of social control, dividing people hierarchically into discrete caste-like groups that segregated and continues to separate poor whites from poor blacks in America. Such separation has historically thwarted any tendency towards a populous resistance to the economic manipulation and control of the white power elite in America. This is not to say that those who constructed the concept of race were disingenuous in their belief in the supposed biological underpinnings of race and racial ranking. “The tragedy is that modern biology allows us to recognize that the concept of race is fundamentally flawed. However, the eighteenth-century ‘Enlightenment’ scholars never doubted that God and science declared the existence of races and that there should be hierarchical relations among them. According to this thinking, [of course] the European stood at the pinnacle of human perfection, and

all other races were to be measured against him.”¹¹⁹ It was this type of thinking that justified the colonization of the majority of the world, the enslaving of countless Africans, and, on some extreme occasions, genocide. During the post-evolutionary era following Darwin’s momentous assertions, Social Darwinist theory served to buttress the construction of race as a biologically valid means of explaining inequality. The Spenserian doctrine of the “survival of the fittest” became the hegemonic refrain of Western civilization. Tragically, Darwin’s “theory was born incomplete, and its initial applications to the problem of race suffered from this incompleteness. In the 1950s, the discovery of DNA and subsequent understanding of the mechanisms that governed heredity had a profound impact on this problem. The invention of new molecular techniques for studying genetic diversity at even finer levels of resolution made possible the growth of new evolutionary theory.”¹²⁰ Then in the sixties a series of theories and discoveries emerged that further refined science’s view of evolution. Author Joseph L. Graves, Jr., in *The Emperor’s New Clothes: Biological Theories of Race in the Millennium*, points out some of this research in the following quote:

Japanese geneticist Motoo Kimura . . . proposed that many genetic substitutions at the DNA level led to the formation of protein variations [that had] no impact on an organism’s fitness. Thus, the DNA of a population would accumulate many more changes than had been predicted by previous theories. . . . [By the] 1980s [researchers produced] a significant body of literature [attesting to] the amount of genetic diversity that actually existed within and among the populations of the human species. Scientists soon realized that the largest amount of genetic variation in our species resides at the level of the individual rather than the group.¹²¹

In 1994, after years of research, Luigi Luca Cavalli-Sforza, Paolo Menozzi, and Alberto Piazza, in a 1059-page work entitled *The History and Geography of Human Genes*, summarized hundreds of studies, reconstructed a *Homo sapiens* tree of descent that compared archaeological data and linguistic classification, evaluated genetic data for the geographical subdivisions of all the human inhabitants of the earth, and concluded the following:

From a scientific point of view, the concept of race has failed to obtain any consensus; none is likely given the gradual variation in existence. It may be objected that the racial stereotypes have a consistency that allows even the layman to classify individuals. However, the major stereotypes, all based on skin color, hair color, and facial traits, reflect superficial differences that are not confirmed by deeper analysis with more reliable genetic traits and whose origin dates from recent evolution, most under the effect of climate and perhaps sexual selection. By means of painstaking multivariate analysis, we can identify “clusters” of

populations and order them in a hierarchy that we believe represents the history of fission in the expansion to the whole world of anatomically modern humans. At no level can clustering be identified with races, since every level of clustering would determine a different partition and there is no biological reason to prefer a particular one. The successive levels of clustering follow each other in a regular sequence, and there is no discontinuity that might tempt us to consider a certain level as a reasonable, though arbitrary, threshold for race distinction. Minor changes in the genes or method used shift some populations from one cluster to the other. Only “core” populations, selected because they presumably underwent less admixture, confer greater compactness to the clusters and stability to the tree.¹²²

Although the contemporary scientific community has failed to obtain any consensus on the concept of race, there continues to be a small minority who cling doggedly to the old consensus that biology justifies the construct of race and the practice of racial ranking. Two such individuals are professor emeritus of anthropology, Vincent Sarich of the University of California at Berkeley, and his co-author Frank Miele, the senior editor of *Skeptic Magazine*. Sarich and Miele, in *Race: The Reality of Human Differences*, argue that scientific evidence supports the biological construct of race and the hierarchical ranking of races according to intelligence, physical prowess, and other characteristics. Reviewing the same data available to the rest of the scientific community, Sarich and Miele stand firmly against the tide of prevailing scientific opinion, representing the position of a small minority of scientists who argue that racial inequality is almost solely the result of genetic variance.

Sarich and Miele began their work by declaring: “We deny the validity of the contemporary media and social science consensus on the concept of race and reject the need for race-based policies to right past wrongs.”¹²³ These two authors, and many of those who subscribe to the same position, believe that America’s concern for “political correctness” has caused most social scientists and many in the media to reject the biological basis for race and racial ranking. They go on to say, “Until relatively recently, believers in literal equality of the races (or the sexes) in either mental or physical ability have been few and far between, even among the ranks of abolitionists and anti-colonialists.”¹²⁴ In support of this assertion, they quote a series of prominent historical figures, beginning with Thomas Jefferson, who stated: “in memory they [blacks] are equal to the whites; in reason much inferior, as I think one could scarcely be found capable of tracing and comprehending the investigations of Euclid; and that in imagination they are dull, tasteless, and anomalous.”¹²⁵ They then cite Abraham Lincoln, the Great Emancipator, who, in his debates with Stephen Douglas, stated, “There is a physical difference between the white and black races which I believe will forever forbid the two

racess living together on terms of social and political equality. And inasmuch as they cannot so live, while they do remain together there must be the position of superior and inferior, and I as much as any other man am in favor of having the superior position assigned to the white race.”¹²⁶ Moving on through history, they cite the Progressive Era president, Teddy Roosevelt, who said, “A perfectly stupid race can never rise to a very high place. The Negro, for instance, has been kept down as much by his lack of intellectual development as by anything else.”¹²⁷ Next, they cite an example from the Nixon administration provided by President Nixon’s trusted aid John Ehrlichman, who recounts how the president told him, “America’s blacks could only marginally benefit from Federal programs because blacks were *genetically inferior* to whites. All the Federal money and programs we could devise could not change that fact. . . . Blacks could never achieve parity—in intelligence, economic success, or social qualities; but he said, we should still do what we could for them, within reasonable limits, because it was ‘right’ to do so.”¹²⁸

In an attempt to support their interpretation of the research on human genetics, Sarich and Miele resurrected the practice of measuring skulls using craniometrics, drew on interspecies data from dog breeding, collected research on patterns of disease distribution, gathered observations from athletic competitions, and aggregated cross-racial IQ scores. The authors claim the purpose of their efforts was “to dispense with the illusory quest for equality of results in favor of the achievable path of promoting equality of opportunity by removing all reference to group identity from both statutory and administrative law, and to focus instead on enhancing the potential for achievement by individuals.”¹²⁹ However, their ignoble attempt merely appears to be subterfuge for their biological determinist’s assertion that people of African descent are intellectually inferior. Sarich and Miele state their position quite succinctly in the following quote:

Simply stated, the case for race hinges on the fact that genetic variation in traits that affect performance and ultimately survival is the fuel on which the evolutionary process runs. If there is no such functional genetic variation, there can be no adaptive evolution. Thus, variation in every relevant domain is the norm, the null hypothesis, the expected condition, and not, as many would have it, the exception in the case of humans. In the study of *Homo sapiens*, the null hypothesis should be that there is genetic variation underlying the variation in performance that is being observed; it should not be assumed that, as has often been claimed, in a fair society, genetic factors can and should cancel each other out.

Strong evidence in the case for race comes from examining the amount of variation actually present in a proper comparative context. The differences in morphology (cranial and facial features) between races are typically around ten times the corresponding differences between the sexes within a given race,

larger even than the comparable differences taxonomists use to distinguish the two chimpanzee *species* from each other. To the best of our knowledge, human racial differences exceed those for any other nondomesticated species. One must look to the breeds of dogs to find a comparable degree of within-species differences in morphology. We also point out other aspects in which human diversity in morphology, pharmacogenetics (body chemistry), and behavior more closely parallels our best friends (the dogs) than our nearest relatives (the apes), and what that reveals about the origin of our species. . . .

The most objectively measurable and least culturally bound comparisons involving racial differences can be found in the athletic arena. Just as personal experience confirms that some kids run faster than other kids, so too some groups (women or men; races) contribute disproportionately to one end or the other of the bell curve for any human activity. [Two of the examples, one physical and one mental, used by the authors to support their assertion are, on one hand,] the fact that over the twelve-year period 1985–1997, one tribe of Kenyans, the Kalenjin, numbering perhaps three million people, provided eighteen of the thirty-six medal winners in the World Cross Country Championships. [On the other hand,] the mean sub-Saharan African IQ [score being] 70. [In addition, the authors state that] the most extensive documented research on race differences in behavior concern the fifteen-point difference between the average IQs of white Americans and African Americans, whites being higher . . .¹³⁰

The most disturbing aspect of the work by Sarich and Miele is their assertion of black intellectual inferiority, an assertion that is devoid of any historical, economic, social, cultural, or psychological analysis, not to mention their failure to acknowledge the clearly flawed assumptions and methods used by biological determinists to explain the 15-point difference between white and black aggregate IQ scores. Not one page of their 262-page work is devoted to the impact of white racism on African Americans. The authors fail to take into account the 424 years of deprivation, torture, rape, and systematic murder endured by blacks on both the continents of Africa and America at the hands of white colonialists, slave traders, and masters. Sarich and Miele choose not to consider the fact that it was illegal for blacks to be educated in America from the 1700s up until the end of slavery, nor do they mention the fact that black education historically has received half of the funding of white education. It does not take much psychological insight to realize that 388 years of racial oppression would have some impact on the social, economic, political, and psychological conditions of African Americans.

When one examines the historical record, the accomplishments of African Americans seem quite astonishing, given their supposedly inferior intellect and the oppression experienced at the hands of whites. Clearly, Sarich and Miele are completely oblivious to the numerous contributions of African Americans in the fields of science, medicine, and technology. Although

African Americans constituted approximately 10 percent of the population during the nineteenth century, with an adult illiteracy rate of 80 percent, blacks still managed to make great contributions in science, technology and medicine. This fact, in part, is evidenced by the number of patents granted to African-American inventors. Science & Medicine:

- George Washington Carver invented 500 agricultural-based products between 1896 and his death in 1943. Carver only patented three of these products.
- Percy Julian extracted sterols from soybeans, which enabled the mass production of cortisone for arthritis. He also synthesized physostigmine for the treatment for glaucoma.
- William Hinton invented a test for detecting syphilis in the early 1900s.
- Dr. Daniel Hale Williams performed the first open-heart surgery in 1893.
- Charles Drew developed the process for preserving blood plasma in the late 1930s and became the first director of the Red Cross.
- Dr. Samuel L. Kountz developed a technique for detecting and preventing the rejection of transplanted kidneys. In 1964, he performed the first kidney transplant between patients who were not identical twins. In order to promote the cause of organ donation, he performed a kidney transplant on NBC's Today Show, which prompted some 20,000 viewers to offer kidneys to patients who needed them. Over course eight years, he performed over 5000 kidney transplants. (This is believed to be a record.)

Technology:

- Andrew Jackson Beard invented one of the first safe rotary steam engine, which he patented in 1892. He also invented an automatic railroad car coupler in 1899.
- Albert B. Blackburn invented a railroad signal in 1888.
- Charles B. Brooks invented a street sweeper in 1896.
- John A. Burr invented a lawn mower in 1899.
- William F. Burr invented a switching device for the railroad in 1899.
- David N. Crosthwait, Jr. invented an automatic water feed in 1920, a vacuum heating system in 1928 and a vacuum pump in 1930.
- Frederick M. Jones invented one of the first practical refrigeration system for trucks in 1940, an air conditioning unit in 1949 and a two-cycle gas engine in 1950.
- Lewis H. Latimer invented manufactured carbon in 1882.
- Elijah McCoy had twenty-eight inventions with the most famous being an automatic lubricating device for machines in 1872.

- Alexander Miles invented an elevator in 1887.
- Garret A. Morgan invented a gas mask in 1914 and an automatic traffic light in 1923.
- Elbert R. Robinson invented an electric railroad trolley in 1893.
- Richard B. Spikes invented an automatic gearshift in 1932.
- B. H. Taylor invented a rotary engine in 1878.¹³¹

Social scientists like Arthur Jensen, with his 1969 article entitled *How much can we boost IQ and scholastic achievement*, Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray, with their 1994 work *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life*, and Vincent Sarich and Frank Miele, with their recent book *Race: The Reality of Human Differences*, would most likely argue that the accomplishments of these African Americans was due to the inheritance of the Caucasian gene for intelligence.

The history of Africans in America has been one of almost unrelenting social, political, economic, physical, and psychological injustices at the hands of white America. The following timeline provides a brief chronicle of the history of African-Americans:

- 390 years residing in North America from 1619 to 2009.
- 224 years enslaved under legal sanctions from 1641 to 1865
- 99 years of legal and extralegal segregation and discrimination from 1865 to 1964.
- 323 years of legalized racial oppression and discrimination from 1641 to 1964.
- 45 years of legally sanctioned equality from 1964 to 2009.

Critical events during this timeline:

- 1619, blacks arrive as indentured servants in the colony of Jamestown.
- 1641, Massachusetts becomes the first colony to legally sanctions slavery.
- 1664, the colonies began to enact slave codes. These codes were laws that prohibited slaves from receiving education, assembling or moving about without the permission of their master, testifying against whites in a court of law, and in many colonies, it was illegal to free a slave.
- 1865, the Civil War is ended.
- 1865, the Thirteenth Amendment is passed, abolishing slavery.
- 1865, the first Black Codes are enacted in Mississippi, which later spread through the south and into northern states such as Illinois and Indiana. These codes prescribe the social position of former slaves who are defined as Freedmen but not citizens. These codes provide some second-class civil

rights but focus primarily on prohibitions and restrictions in such areas as voting, assemblage, travel, residency, employment, and interracial relationships.

- 1867, the Reconstruction Act is passed, enabling blacks to vote and run for political office in the federally occupied south.
- 1866, the first Ku Klux Klan branch is established in Pulaski, Tennessee to counteract black advancements.
- 1867, the Ku Klux Klan convenes its first national meeting.
- 1868, the Fourteenth Amendment is passed granting full citizenship to blacks.
- 1870, the Fifteenth Amendment is passed, guaranteeing the right to vote regardless of race.
- 1871, the Enforcement Act is passed, overturning state laws that denied blacks the right to vote.
- 1875, the first comprehensive Civil Rights Act is passed, granting blacks the right to equal employment and full access to public accommodations.
- 1878 to 1898 ten thousand blacks are lynched.
- 1881, the first segregation laws are passed in Tennessee.
- 1883 the Supreme Court overturns the Civil Rights Act of 1875.
- 1896, the Plessy v. Ferguson case is decided, establishing the “separated but equal” legal precedent for segregation.
- 1954, the Supreme Court settles the Brown v. Board of Education case, overturning the “separate but equal” precedent of Plessy v. Ferguson and striking down legalized school segregation.
- 1964, the most comprehensive Civil Rights Act is passed, outlawing the use of federal funds in organizations, programs and schools that discriminate, banning discrimination in public accommodations, forbidding discrimination in employment and unions, and prohibiting federal courts from remanding civil rights cases back to local or state courts.

It was 1619 when the first Africans arrived in the North American British colony of Jamestown. Their status was that of indentured servants. Although they had originally been taken as slaves by the Spanish, commandeered from the Spaniards by a Dutch man-of-war, and sold to the government of Jamestown for provisions, they could not be enslaved under English law because they were baptized as Christians. This meant that their legal status was that of indentured servants, and as time progressed, the majority worked their way out of servitude with many going on to own their own land. In fact, some became quite successful, most notably Anthony Johnson, who acquired over two hundred acres and several indentured servants, both black and white.

Once upon a time in America, it seemed that all men would be free and able to partake in the American dream. However, the dream of freedom and land ownership would become a dream deferred for African Americans as the demands for indentured servants increased and the supply of willing servants from Europe decreased. European peasants found indentured servitude less attractive as they discovered how difficult it was and as more opportunities for work in Europe became available. In response to this growing shortage, the various colonial governments began looking for a dependable, controllable, permanent source of labor. Tragically, African Americans became the prime candidates for this labor source for two reasons: 1) There was an already preexisting prejudice towards blacks who, despite their relative success, were already viewed as outsiders, and 2) the already existing robust European slave trade to the Caribbean and South America made blacks ideal candidates for that dependable, controllable, permanent class of labor viewed as being so necessary by the various colonial governments. From that point on, blacks found themselves being herded down that 224-year trail of exploitation, denigration, torment, and despair known as racial slavery.

Even with the end of slavery, the deprivation, distress, and discrimination caused by white racism did not cease. First, the Southern states passed a series of laws known as the Black Codes. This series of laws imposed severe restrictions on freed slaves, “such as prohibiting their rights to vote, forbidding them to sit on juries, and limiting their right to testify against white men. They were forbidden from carrying weapons in public places and working in certain occupations. [The significance here being that] segregation begins [and institutions such as] public schools [become] segregated. . . .”¹³² Then in 1873, the Slaughterhouse cases “narrowly defined federal power and emasculated the Fourteenth Amendment, [which granted blacks citizenship], by asserting that most of the rights of citizens remained under state control. [The significance of this ruling was that] pro-segregation states would come to justify their policies based on the notion that segregation in the public schools was a states rights issue.”¹³³ By 1887, “[t]he practice of comprehensive racial segregation known as ‘Jim Crow’ emerged and racial separation [became] entrenched. . . . Florida was the first to enact a statue requiring segregation in places of public accommodation. Eight other states followed Florida’s lead by 1892.”¹³⁴ Next, there was the landmark Plessy v. Ferguson Supreme Court decision of 1896 in which “Homer A. Plessy challenged an 1890 Louisiana law that required separate train cars for Black Americans and White Americans. The Supreme Court held that *Separate but Equal* facilities for White and Black railroad passengers did not violate the Equal Protection clause of the 14th Amendment. Plessy v. Ferguson established the ‘separate but equal’

doctrine that would become the constitutional basis for segregation. Justice John Marshall Harlan, the lone dissenter in *Plessy*, argued that forced segregation of the races stamped Blacks with a badge of inferiority. . . .”¹³⁵

This badge of black inferiority would color practically every social, political, economic, and educational policy concerning the rights of African Americans down to the present day. Almost every black/white interaction was and still is filtered through the lens of black inferiority; this causes a large number of whites to wonder if blacks are academically or occupationally qualified, or in many cases actually to expect them to be unqualified, while blacks often find themselves wondering if whites see them as qualified. This badge of black inferiority has also affected how blacks view themselves and each other, causing a negative impact on black expectations of themselves personally and their expectations of other blacks. In other words, many blacks find themselves suffering from what is often called internalized racism.

The previously mentioned laws and Supreme Court decisions have set a damaging precedent and have profoundly affected the quality of black education in this nation as witnessed by the *Cumming v. Richmond County [Georgia] Board of Education* decision of 1899. In this case, “the Supreme Court upheld a local school board’s decision to close a free public Black school due to fiscal constraints, despite the fact that the district continued to operate two free public White schools. The court’s opinion argued that there was no evidence in the record that the decision was based on racial discrimination and that the distribution of public funds for education was within the discretion of school authorities.”¹³⁶

Over the course of the last 388 years in America, one of the primary tasks of black parents has been to try to shield their children from the corrosive effects of white racism, as manifested in the denial of equal educational opportunity, low expectations, and the stigma of supposed inferiority. Black parents, however, find themselves overwhelmed and disheartened by the assertions of white social scientists such as Jensen, Herrnstein, Murray, Sarich, and Miele who champion the position that blacks are genetically predisposed to intellectual inferiority as they argue for the reduction of government remedies for past social, political, economic, and educational discrimination. For 388 years, black children have been sacrificed on the altar of racism to justify and maintain white supremacy. The devastating effects of white racism, of poverty, malnourishment, lead poisoning, and inferior education on black children are cruel beyond measure. Meyer Weinberg, in his work entitled *A Chance to Learn*, very aptly describes the role of racism in American education as follows:

Since its earliest beginnings, the American public school system has been deeply committed to the maintenance of racial and ethnic barriers. Higher Edu-

cation, both public and private, shares this outlook. Philosophers of the common schools remained silent about education of minority children.

The most devout defenders of the common school from Horace Mann to John Dewey held their tongues when the subject of minority—especially black—children became a public issue. Exceptions were few, and the comfort they afforded minority children slight.

Public school authorities also all but deserted minority children. Federal, state, and local governments communicated the political imperatives of racial exclusion to the school. These became guidelines for discriminatory school policies. Professional organizations of teachers and administrators collaborated actively in maintaining the racial order. The alum of privilege sealed many a lip. White educators profited from the enforced absence of black and other minority competitors for jobs. Planned deprivation became a norm of educational practice. Deliberate racial and ethnic discrimination in schools followed a national, not a sectional, pattern. Nor did the discriminatory pattern flow northward. If anything, the direction of flow was southward. Before the Civil War, every important technique of discrimination was practiced in the north. These ranged from statutory exclusion of black children from public schools to legally required separate schools to discriminatory finance. After the Civil War, these practices—and more—made their appearance throughout the South. The development of a national educational profession facilitated the nationwide transfer of discriminatory techniques.¹³⁷

Given this shameful pattern of discrimination, one has to question the credibility and motivation of social scientists like Jensen, Herrnstein, Murray, Sarich, and Miele when they fail to consider the historic pattern of educational discrimination in their analysis of black intelligence. This failure is particularly egregious when one considers the previously enumerated accomplishments of African Americans in the face of all the educational discrimination. For more progressive historians of the common school, such as Meyer Weinberg, it is clear that the motivation of right-wing intellectuals is to maintain “the racial order” and white privilege by not considering the impact of educational discrimination on black academic and intellectual achievements. A community foundation of literacy, intellectual self-confidence, and high expectations for success is crucial to academic achievement and the quantitative demonstration of learning by students. The foundation for the academic success necessary for intellectual development in the black community has been impeded by racist educational policies in America. If the tables were turned and whites were subjected to 388 years of bigotry and the denial of social, economic, political, and educational opportunities, one is forced to wonder what the mean IQ scores for whites would be.

Even when one looks at the IQ testing data used by Jensen, Herrnstein, Murray, Sarich, and Miele, their assumptions about the cause of the differential gap in scoring between whites and blacks is flawed. Despite the fact that

blacks on average score about one standard deviation, or 15 IQ points, below whites and achieve at lower levels in school, this does not mean that blacks are innately inferior to whites as asserted by right-wing intellectuals. Jensen, Herrnstein, and Murray use data on *within-groups* heritability of intelligence to suggest a supposed heritability of *between-group* differences in intelligence. The operative word is “suggest,” because they have no way to control all of the genetic and environmental variables such as the exact hereditary lineage of each subject and the true effects of discrimination versus privilege. Robert Steinberg, one of America’s premier experts on intelligence, points out the fallacy in the assumptions made by those on the “intellectual right,” who argue for a genetic cause for *between-group* difference on IQ test scores. Sternberg states the following:

[A] study of predominantly white twins tells us about sources of variation between individuals who are white twins, not about sources of variation between groups of individuals, some of whom are white and some of whom are black.

The difference is not just a matter of statistical fine points. To use a frequently cited example, one that Herrnstein and Murray themselves use, suppose we have a large handful of corn seeds that show the normal variations in the corn. We plant half the seeds in cornfields in Iowa and the other half in barren land in the Mojave Desert. Although the attributes of the corn will be highly heritable, the differences in development between the two sets of corn seeds will be due wholly to the environment. How does this logic apply to black-white differences?

Even if intelligence is moderately heritable, such heritability as determined within groups doesn’t tell us anything about causes of differences between groups. That’s the point of the corn example. Moreover, when we compare groups, we have to be clear about the groups we are comparing. For example, in the United States, it is downright silly to talk about pure races. African Americans represent, for the most part, interbreeding between predominantly black individuals of African descent and predominantly white individuals of European and other descent [not to mention a 20 to 30 percent mixture of Native American Indian]. The racial groups used in psychological investigations are socially, not biologically, constituted. In other words, people are characterized as being of a race because of what they say, not because of how they were born.

There is evidence suggesting that, in fact, black-white differences are predominantly environmental rather than genetic in nature. For example, children of several hundred German children fathered by black GIs in World War II had average IQs within a half a point of those fathered by white GIs. Moreover, children of black-white unions have IQs that are higher if the mother is white, consistent with socialization rather than genetic effects.

Another thing: Richard Nisbett, a psychologist at the University of Michigan, has reviewed the literature and has found seven published studies that compare genetic versus environmental origins of differences in black-white IQs. These

studies, unlike the twin studies, directly seek to find the source of the differences between blacks and whites. Six of the studies failed to find any evidence for genetic effects.¹³⁸

It is interesting that Sternberg acknowledges environmental factors as being the primary cause of black-white differences in IQ scores, while Jensen, Herrnstein, Murray, Sarich, Miele, and other members of the intellectual right all but ignore the impact of environmental factors on black-white differences in IQ scores. In Sternberg's work, he focuses his attention on socialization as the most important environmental factor causing black-white differences in IQ scores, a factor that is clearly of great importance. However, socialization does not fully take into account another critical factor affecting black-white IQ score differences—poverty. The intellectual right views poverty as the natural Social Darwinist result of lower IQ, not as a cause of low IQ test performance, failing to take into consideration the devastating results of poverty. It is well documented that poor communities get fewer educational resources and that poverty is a major cause of family disorganization, not to mention poverty's role in the retardation of cognitive development among African-American children as a result of the spread of malnutrition and lead poisoning in low-income black communities.

According to the 2001 census data, 32.9 million people are in poverty. Of those in poverty, a much higher percentage of the overall black population finds itself in this economic category than do whites. In 2001, according to the United States Department of Agriculture's economic research data on Household Food Security, the number of Americans who were hungry or at risk of hunger was 33.6 million. Again, the percentage of the total black population that finds itself in this predicament is significantly higher than the percentage of whites. What is the significance of this data for black-white differences in IQ scores? The research is quite clear in its findings that inadequate nutrition causes problems in attention, concentration, memory, and learning—all of which are obviously critical not only for academic success but also for test performance. Michigan State University's Extension program states in its report on hunger: "Moderate under nutrition is the type [of hunger] most commonly seen in the United States, poverty being the primary factor leading to under nutrition in children. Though termed moderate, under nutrition has long-lasting effects on the cognitive development of children, including the possibility of leading to educational failure."¹³⁹ Of course, the situation in the "developing world" is much more serious, with approximately 36 percent of all children suffering from hunger and/or malnutrition, which incidentally may account in part for the low average IQ of 70 in sub-Saharan Africa, an average cited by Sarich and Miele as baseline data for their contention that blacks are intellectually inferior.

Compounding the effects of hunger among children in the black community is the problem of lead poisoning. Amy J. Pearse and Mary C. Mitchell, in an article entitled *Nutrition and Childhood Lead Poisoning*, state the following:

Epidemiologic studies of children show that those exposed to lead, even low levels of lead may have a lower IQ, learning disabilities, behavior abnormalities, and kidney damage. Cognitive and growth defects also may occur in infants whose mothers are exposed to lead during pregnancy. Lead intoxication is a widespread problem. One of every nine children under six years of age has blood lead levels high enough to be at risk. In 1970, an estimated 3 million children aged less than 6 years had blood lead levels associated with adverse health events. Children in older, inner-city neighborhoods are more likely to be affected . . .¹⁴⁰

Of course, Pearse and Mitchell point out that even those children in suburban and rural areas are at risk, too, but clearly those children residing in the decaying cores of the nation's inner cities are at greater risk and it is these children who are disproportionately black and Latino. Simply and forcefully put, for the intellectual right not to consider the devastating physical, social, and psychological effects of poverty when discussing black-white differences in IQ scores is disingenuous, to say the least.

In addition to the previously mentioned failures, the intellectual right wing also fails to realize or acknowledge the sociopsychological impact of internalized racism on the test-taking performance of African Americans. In a society so implicitly and explicitly replete with racism and assumptions of white superiority, it is virtually impossible for African Americans not to be negatively affected by the stereotype of black intellectual inferiority. The impact of this stereotype on the test performance of African Americans is an area of research that has not been deeply plumbed until the work of Claude Steele and Joshua Aronson. These two social scientists have focused much of their research efforts on examining the actual impact of the stereotype of black intellectual inferiority on the test-taking performance of African Americans. As previously stated, there is a one standard deviation, or 15-point difference, on average between black and white IQ test scores. Steele and Aronson point out that there is also a test score gap between blacks and whites of about 100 points on each of the various subtests of the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), which measure verbal and quantitative skills. Steele and Aronson hypothesize that African Americans, having internalized the white stereotype of black intellectual inferiority, in turn lowered their own expectations of their own test-taking performance, thus creating a self-fulfilling prophecy. This phenomenon Steele and Aronson labeled as "stereotype threat." They theorize

that every time a situation arises where a negative stereotype about one's group emerges, that person is more likely to inadvertently do something that would confirm the stereotype. Steele describes the process of measuring the effects of "stereotype threat" in an article entitled *Thin Ice: "Stereotype Threat" and Black College Students*.

To acquire . . . evidence, Joshua Aronson and I (following a process developed with Steven Spencer) designed an experiment to test whether the stereotype threat that black students might experience when taking a difficult standardized test could depress their performance on the test to a statistically reliable degree. In this experiment, we asked black and white Stanford students into our laboratory and gave them, one at a time, a thirty-minute verbal test made up of items from the advanced Graduate Record examination in literature. Most of these students were sophomores, which meant that the test was particularly hard for them—precisely the feature, we reasoned, that would make this simple testing situation different for our black participants than for our white participants. In matters of race, we often assume that when a situation is objectively the same for different groups, it is *experienced* in the same way by each group. This assumption might seem especially reasonable in the case of "standardized" cognitive tests. But for black students, difficulty with tests makes the negative stereotype relevant as an interpretation of their performance, and them. They know that they are especially likely to be seen as having limited ability. Groups not stereotyped in this way don't experience this extra intimidation. And it is a serious intimidation, implying as it does that they may not belong in walks of life where the tested abilities are important—walks of life in which they are heavily invested. Like many pressures, it may not be experienced in a fully conscious way, but it may impair their best thinking.

This is exactly what Aronson and I found. When the difficult verbal test was presented as a test of ability, black students performed dramatically less well than white students, even though we had statistically matched the two groups in ability level. Something other than ability was involved; we believed it was stereotype threat.

But maybe the black students performed less well than the white students because they were less motivated, or because their skills were somehow less applicable to the advanced material of this test. We needed some way to determine if it was indeed stereotype threat that depressed the black students' scores. We reasoned that if stereotype threat had impaired their performance on the test, then reducing this threat would allow their performance to improve. We presented the same test as a laboratory task that was used to study how certain problems are generally solved. We stressed that the task did not measure a person's level of intellectual ability. A simple instruction, yes, but it profoundly changed the meaning of the situation. In one stroke "spotlight anxiety," as psychologist William Cross once called it, was turned off—and the black students' performance on the test rose to match that of equally qualified whites.¹⁴¹

The fact that black test performance on standardized measures can be so drastically influenced by whether the test taker believes the test is or is not a true measure of intellectual ability in a very significant finding for those who oppose the hypothesis that blacks are intellectually inferior to whites. Claude Steele and Joshua Aronson provide a disturbing example of how white racism can have a profound sociopsychological effect on African Americans, a fact that the intellectual right appears to be incapable of, or perhaps unwilling to grasp, as they seek to validate their belief in black intellectual inferiority.

Beyond the intellectual right's problematic practice of using within group differences in IQ scores as a means of supporting their argument for the heritability of between-group differences in black/white IQ performance is their questionable assumption that the abilities being measured by IQ tests are immutable. This assumption has been challenged by almost four decades of theoretical and applied research in the area of cognitive modifiability, conducted by Israeli psychologist Reuven Feuerstein and colleagues from around the world. "In 1965 professor Reuven Feuerstein, at that time a chief psychologist of the Youth Aliyah, established a Research Unit for the purpose of developing assessment and intervention methods for integration of immigrant children and youth into Israeli society. In 1970, the research unit was transformed into the Hadassah-WIZO-Canada Research Institute (HWCRI). In 1993 the International Center for the Enhancement of Learning Potential (ICELP) was founded with an aim to expanding and diversifying the work done at the HWCRI."¹⁴² The central thesis of the work done by Feuerstein and his colleagues at the HWCRI, and later at the ICELP, is "that the brain could change structurally and functionally as a result of learning and experience—for better or worse."¹⁴³ Feuerstein's thesis is bolstered by research on memory formation, which indicates that the brain retains information by laying down biochemical pathways between various memory fragments stored in neurons, forming a kind of flexible neurological network.

Feuerstein became interested in the possibility of modifying the cognitive processes of human beings while first working with children whose families had been destroyed in the Holocaust and later while attending to the educational and social needs of immigrant children from North Africa. Having witnessed the struggles of newly immigrated students in their attempt to cope with the unfamiliar learning environment of Israeli schools, Feuerstein:

. . . proposed distinguishing between two phenomena: cultural difference and cultural deprivation. Culturally different children are children who receive an adequate amount and type of MLE [Mediated Learning Experience] in their native culture and who face the challenge of adapting to a new culture. Such children are expected to have good learning potential; the major challenge for them is to use this potential in mastering new language, internalizing new rules of for-

mal education, and acquiring new knowledge. On the contrary, culturally deprived are those children who for one reason or another (war, famine, social displacement, etc.) were deprived of MLE in their native culture. Such children show a reduced learning potential, and for them the challenge of adapting to a new culture is twice as difficult due to the absence of the prerequisite learning skills.¹⁴⁴

This is not to say, however, that the Feuerstein approach has not shown promise with children who have a deficit in prerequisite learning skills.

Even though distinguishing between cases that involve cultural difference and those involving cultural deprivation is not easy, Feuerstein has developed some instruments to assist in this differentiation. In difficult cases, Feuerstein's "Learning Potential Assessment Device (LPAD) helps to identify culturally different children whose true learning potential is obscured by the lack of familiarity with a new culture. Those children positively respond to mediation provided during the assessment, the difference between their pre-and post-mediation scores is substantial, and they are the first to benefit from the cognitive intervention provided through the Instrumental Enrichment (IE) program."¹⁴⁵ In other words, the Feuerstein's LPAD and IE process is one where the subject's cognitive functions are assessed as would be done on an IQ test, but instead the standardized measures of the LPAD are used to determine where improvement is needed. During the assessment process, whenever a cognitive deficit is uncovered, the subject is engaged in mediated learning using the IE process in order to improve the requisite cognitive processes that underpin the deficit in cognitive function. The subject is then reassessed and more finely adjusted mediations are applied until the deficit is corrected. "Many of the difficulties facing culturally different students [according to Feuerstein] stem from the lack of congruence between their previous learning experience and the demands of the formal educational system. Because of this, the application of static IQ tests with culturally different students produces particularly inadequate results. Feuerstein's Learning Assessment Device (LPAD) helps overcome this problem, by radically changing the character of assessment."¹⁴⁶

In essence, almost four decades of research carried out by Feuerstein and his associates not only call into question the intellectual right's use of within group differences in IQ scoring as a means of supporting their argument for the heritability of between-group differences, but also their assumption that IQ is immutable. Several studies have been authored that fly in the face of Jensen, Herrnstein, Murray, Sarich, and Miele's assumptions about the genetic basis for between-group differences in IQ scores, the immutability of IQ itself, and the intellectual inferiority of African peoples. One such study conducted by Kaniel, Tzuriel, Feuerstein, Ben-Schacher, and Eitan, entitled

Dynamic Assessment: Learning and Transfer Abilities of Ethiopian Immigrants to Israel, involving three hundred adolescent Ethiopian immigrants residing in Israel, demonstrated the power of mediated learning experiences. These adolescents were first administered a static pre-test using Raven's Progressive Matrices, in which their aggregate score was more than two standard deviations below the Israeli norm. However, their post-mediated scores were within one standard deviation of the norm.¹⁴⁷ Similar results were found in another study by Tzuriel and Kaufman, comparing Israeli children and the children of Ethiopian immigrants. In this study, a group of Israeli children and a group of Ethiopian children from the first grade were tested on the Colored Progressive Matrices (CPM) and on two Dynamic Assessment (DA) measures of learning potential. Significant group differences were found on the CPM and on the pre-mediation scores on both DA measures, indicating a clearly superior performance of the Israeli-born children over the Ethiopians. However, after a brief, but intense mediation process, the Ethiopian group all but caught up with the Israeli-born group, and performed at about the same level on post-mediation and transfer task.¹⁴⁸ Again, these studies further emphasize the inadequacy of static IQ tests when assessing children who are culturally different or who are from non-industrial societies.

If the distinction that Feuerstein makes between cultural difference and cultural deprivation is considered in the analysis of academic achievement among black children, it helps to resolve a three-decades-long debate over whether the poor academic performance of so many black children is the result of cultural difference or deprivation. This debate has been posed as an either/or proposition, when in fact it is more of a both/and proposition. Despite what many black and white Americans believe, there are clear cultural differences between African Americans and European Americans. These differences are due on one hand to antecedent cultural influences from Africa and Europe, respectively, and on the other to the unique experience of blacks being subjected to 224 years of slavery and 99 years of legally sanctioned oppression and discrimination. Cultural differences that were the result of antecedent cultural influences from Africa were first documented by authors such as Newbell Puckett, in his 1926 work *Folk Beliefs of the Southern Negro*; Carter G. Woodson in 1936 with his text *African Background Outlined*; W. E. B. Du Bois, with his 1939 book *Black Folks Then and Now*; Melville Herskovits, with his classic text *Myth of Negro Past*; and more recently, Joseph E. Holloway, with his comprehensive work entitled *Africanism in American Culture*. In addition, numerous sociologists and historians such as E. Franklin Frazier, John Hope Franklin, and Andrew Billingsley, just to mention a few, have documented the impact of slavery on African-American culture.

Clearly, there are cultural differences between African-American children and European-American children in terms of their worldview, language, communication, and interpersonal style, values, and attitudes. Despite these cultural differences, African-American students should respond as positively to mainstream education as the immigrant students in Feuerstein's research if they are provided with appropriate in-school Mediated Learning Experiences and counseling to help them overcome the effects of racism. Of course, there are many African-American children who do not need intense Mediated Learning Experiences because they are culturally assimilated and have much less difficulty negotiating and achieving in mainstream schools. However, these students often find themselves experiencing an identity crisis once they reach adolescence.

For those black children who have become refugees of racism because their families are devastated by the oppressive conditions of poverty and discrimination, their plight is similar to that of the culturally deprived children that Feuerstein describes in his research. In such cases, these children are often not provided appropriate Mediated Learning Experiences because their parents' lives have been so disrupted by the struggle economically and emotionally to survive poverty and racism. When parents find themselves overwhelmed, they often fail to parent their children adequately. This failure, in turn, is often passed on to the next generation as the quality of mediated learning becomes worse with each successive generation. Unfortunately, this type of dysfunction, even though it is generally caused by racism and poverty, is most often viewed by the white community as being both the result of and representative of African-American culture. For whites, similar dysfunction in their community is not seen as being the result of or representative of European-American culture. For example, criminologists indicate that upwards of 90 percent of all serial killers are white males, but the white community does not view serial murder as a European-American cultural trait. It instead is viewed as an individual pathology.

Whether black children fall into the category of culturally different or culturally deprived, one major problem that can affect any black child is the tendency to develop an oppositional cultural reaction to white racism. When this occurs, there is a tendency to reject attempts to assimilate them into the dominant culture, because the dominant culture is viewed as being inherently racist. The logic that drives this oppositional culture stance goes as follows: if an individual internalizes a culture that ignores the contributions of that individual's ethnic group, discriminates against its members, and denigrates its culture, then that individual will ipso facto become inculcated with self-hate. Sadly, both assimilation to mainstream culture and the embracing of an oppositional culture can lead psychologically to poor academic performance.

Some 128 years after the end of slavery and 29 years after the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the brilliant black intellectual Cornel West published a bestselling book entitled *Race Matters*. Whites were surprised and immediately became fascinated that this obviously successful Harvard professor, whom they perceived to be “privileged,” would write such a book, especially since he is a prime example of “how far blacks had progressed since slavery.” One, unfortunately, has but briefly to consider the previously described historical and contemporary examples of racism that are so much a part of America to realize that race and racial ranking still matter very much to white America. In fact, for some members of the intellectual right, proving that blacks are inferior has become their academic *raison d’être*. The concept of race and the assumption of racial hierarchy is a thread that continues to be woven through the fabric of American culture, despite the lack of scientific consensus on the biological validity of discrete racial classes and the general rejection by mainstream scientists of the genetic argument for black inferiority. The continued existence of race thinking and racial ranking perplexes most African Americans so much that in private conversations amongst themselves the discussion inevitably turns to issues of race, racism, and anger over racial discrimination. Over three centuries of denigration, oppression, and discrimination weighs heavily on the black psyche, as African Americans have endured what psychiatrists Abram Kardiner and Lionel Ovesey described as “The Mark of Oppression” in their classic 1962 book of the same name. Generation after generation, black parents find themselves burdened with having to answer their children’s questions about racism while trying simultaneously to protect them from its poison and help them positively manage their anger and pain. Why do they hate us? What did we do to them? Why do they act as if they are so much better than we are? These are the questions that black children expect their parents to answer, when their parents have no answers.

The answers to these questions are obviously not simple, because racism, as has been stated throughout this text, is a convoluted Euro-American ideology that has evolved out of the unintended confluence of myriad historical, religious, philosophical, socioeconomic, cultural, and political forces. However, once the notion of race as a system of biological classification, and racial ranking as a means of hierarchical differentiation was established, groups of people became fixed as immutable biological constructs in the Western mind. This mindset provided a rationalization for Western hegemony, which in part give rise to imperialism and racial slavery. As Europeans moved out into the world, they needed to understand and explain the human diversity they encountered, especially given the ethnocentric and theocratic backdrop of their own beliefs. Race and racial ranking provided Europeans

with a comfortable way of explaining their place in this new and different world. For, as Albert Einstein stated in his classic 1922 work, *The Meaning of Relativity*:

The object of all science, whether natural sciences or psychology, is to co-ordinate our experiences and to bring them into a logical system—the only justification for our concepts and system of concepts is that they serve to represent the complex of our experiences; beyond this they have no legitimacy.¹⁴⁹

The construct of race and the hierarchical arrangement of groups into discrete racial categories provided the West with a self-fulfilling logical system that explains its place and justifies its actions in the world.

The natural outgrowth of this race thinking for whites was a vision of hierarchy that placed them at the top of a pyramid of privilege and prosperity, as witnessed in the symbolism of Cesare Rippe's 1593 edition of the standard encyclopedia of personification entitled *Iconologia*, referred to in chapter two. "Europe was represented as a queen with crown and scepter, flanked by a horse [and her subjects]; Asia as a woman in fine garments . . . Africa as a black woman with loose and curly hair, almost naked. . . . [A] cornucopia containing ears of corn is a reference to the time of Hadrian, when Carthage was one of Rome's bread baskets."¹⁵⁰ It was an image of the non-western world and its inhabitants of color that portrayed them as inferior and subjugated. In this vision, the people portrayed in Rippe's iconography were so ignorant and backward that they did not deserve the lands on which they resided and were good for nothing more than servitude. It was at the top of this natural racial hierarchy, masters of all they surveyed, within this exclusive, closed society, that Europeans felt they belonged. As is the case with all privileged societies or clubs, membership has worth, because it is a form of property that must be protected from the devaluation of populist inclusion. Members of such societies or clubs must be able to clearly define membership in order to maintain the privilege of its status. One reason why the construct of race is held on to so doggedly by whites, despite its biological fallacy, is the value that white racial identity affords its members. There have been several occasions during racial sensitivity workshops when whites who believed that race no longer mattered were asked how much money would it require for them to accept becoming black if that were possible. This hypothetical was borrowed from Professor Andrew Hacker of Queens College in New York. For over twenty years, Professor Hacker has been asking young white economics students to estimate how much their white skin was worth. Typically, the response of those who accepted the premise of this hypothetical was that white skin was worth well over a million dollars. In 1996, Ted

Koppel asked the same question of a white audience during the second show in a series entitled *America in Black and White* and found results similar to those of Professor Hacker. Such responses provide much insight into the property value placed on whiteness in America.

In Western society, property rights rival human rights in terms of importance. In fact, property rights and human rights are often viewed as synonymous. The political theorist C. B. MacPherson argues that in Western society, human rights and property rights are synonymous in his theory of “possessive individualism.” He asserts that “possessive individualism” constituted the unifying political thought upon which seventeenth-century England rested, a fact articulated by the political philosophy of John Locke. This is why John Locke declared that man had the “natural right” to “Life, Liberty and Estate.” In other words he linked life with liberty and property. For Locke, the primary role of government was to protect men in the exercising of their property rights. According to MacPherson, “The basic assumption of possessive individualism—that man is free and human by virtue of his sole proprietorship of his own person [i.e., his body, labor, and capacity] and that human society is essentially a series of market relations—were deeply embedded in the seventeenth-century foundation.”¹⁵¹ One implication that can be drawn from his statement is that in the market place of relationships, some individuals and groups are worth more than others are.

Cheryl L. Harris, in an article entitled “Whiteness as Property,” expands and focuses the notion of “possessive individualism” on the construction of race and its relation to the emergence of whiteness as property. Harris begins her article by citing the 1896 Supreme Court decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which established the infamous “separate but equal” doctrine that has served as the basis for racial segregation. In this case, the lawyer for the defendant, Homer Adolph Plessy, argued the following:

[The] petitioner was a citizen of the United States and a resident of the State of Louisiana, of mixed descent, in the proportion of seven eighths Caucasian and one eighth African blood; that the mixture of colored blood was not discernible in him, and that he was entitled to every recognition, right, privilege and immunity secured to the citizens of the United States of the white race by its Constitution and laws . . . and thereupon entered a passenger train, and took possession of a vacant seat in a coach where passengers of the white race were accommodated.¹⁵²

Homer Plessy was arrested for violating the segregation statutes of Louisiana. He lost his case in part because his one-eighth African blood disqualified him as being white, although one would never know that he was

mixed from looking at him. This court decision was rendered despite his argument “that the segregation statute requiring that he ride in the colored coach deprived him of ‘the reputation of being white’ and excluded him ‘from the friendship and companionship of the white man.’”¹⁵³ The court rendered a decision that rejected Plessy’s claim to white privilege. “To the plaintiff’s claim that the right to be treated as a white man was a property right and that the Fourteenth Amendment prohibited the states from unlawfully depriving him of this right, the court responded circularly that ‘If he be a colored man and be so assigned [to the colored coach], he has been deprived of no property, since he is not lawfully entitled to the representation of being a white man.’”¹⁵⁴ Clearly, the court believed it necessary to protect the property right of whiteness from devaluation as an asset of privilege by the demands for inclusion by a “mixed breed.”

Harris provides a clear and succinct connection between race and property when she states:

The racialization of identity and racial subordination of blacks and Native Americans provided the ideological basis for slavery and conquest. Although the systems of oppression of blacks and Native Americans differed in form—the former involving the seizure of labor, the latter entailed the seizure and appropriation of land—undergirding both was a racialized concept of property implemented by force and ratified by law.¹⁵⁵

It is interesting that on the other side of that same paradigmatic coinage of race and property on which African Americans are minted by their blackness as objects of property is the concept of whiteness as a property right. In America, whiteness is a social asset, a form of quasi-legal tender that can be cashed in for privilege. Harris confirms this point of view in her following argument:

Whiteness fits the broad historical concept of property described by classical theorists. In James Madison’s view, for example, property “embraces everything to which a man may attach a value and have a right,” referring to all of a person’s legal rights. Property as conceived in the founding era included not only external objects and people’s relationships to them, but also all of those human rights, liberties, powers, and immunities that are important for human wellbeing, including freedom of expression, freedom of conscience, freedom from bodily harm, and free and equal opportunity to use personal faculties. Whiteness defined the legal status of a person as slave or free. White identity conferred tangible and economically valuable benefits, and it was jealously guarded as a valued possession, allowed only to those who met a strict standard of proof. Whiteness—the right to white identity as embraced by the law—is property if by “property” one means all of a person’s legal rights.¹⁵⁶

The impact of race identity and the sociopolitical power of white identity to leverage economic resources can be witnessed even today in America. Again, Harris is able to put a fine point when she states the following:

The legal affirmation of whiteness and white privilege allowed expectations that originated in injustice to be naturalized and legitimized. The relative economic, political and social advantage dispensed to whites under systematic white supremacy in the United States were reinforced through patterns of oppression of blacks and Native Americans. Materially, these advantages became institutionalized privileges; ideologically, they became part of the settled expectations of whites—a product of the unalterable original bargain. The law masks as natural what is chosen; it obscures the consequences of social selection as inevitable. The result is that the distortions in social relations are immunized from truly effective intervention, because the existing inequities are obscured and rendered nearly invisible. The existing state of affairs is considered neutral and fair, however unequal and unjust it is in substance. Although the existing state of inequitable distribution is the product of institutionalized white supremacy and economic exploitation, it is seen by whites as part of the natural order of things, something that cannot legitimately be disturbed. Through legal doctrine, expectation of continued privilege based on white domination was reified; whiteness as property was reaffirmed.

The property interest in whiteness has proven to be resilient and adaptive to new conditions. Over time it has changed in form, but it has retained its essential exclusionary character and continues to distort outcomes of legal disputes by favoring and protecting settled expectations of white privilege [despite assaults on its integrity by Affirmative Action].¹⁵⁷

Race, that construct which evolved from the unintended confluence of historical, religious, philosophical, socioeconomic, cultural, and political force, emerged as a more deliberately structured system of inequality that, in turn, has become such an integral part of America's sociopolitical framework that whites are unaware of how it supports their privilege.

In contrast to this obliviousness of whites to their privilege, blacks are constantly made aware that racism serves as the cornerstone of white privilege in “the house that race built.” Blacks and whites have always experienced America differently. Take, for example, John Winthrop, who was one of the original Puritans to settle in America, serving twelve terms as governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Winthrop is held up by people such as Cotton Mather and Tocqueville as exemplifying the American spirit. In Winthrop's sermon “A Model of Christian Charity,” which he delivered on board ship in Salem Harbor just before landing in 1630, he described the “city set upon a

hill” that he and his fellow Puritans intended to found. His words provide an archetype for one understanding of what life in America was to be: “We must delight in each other, make others conditions our own, rejoice together, mourn together, labor and suffer together, always having before our eyes our community as members of the same body.”¹⁵⁸ Unfortunately, Winthrop’s vision of America did not prevail, as witnessed by the number of slaveholders who signed the Constitution. These men did not lose their moral compass, they just conveniently misplaced it for profit and privilege. Thomas Jefferson was the best example of this tendency. Two weeks before Jefferson’s death, he wrote a letter to Washington Mayor Roger Weightman. In that letter, Jefferson asserted that the Declaration of Independence would serve as “the signal arousing men to burst the chains under which monkish ignorance and superstition had persuaded them to bind themselves, and to assume the blessings and security of self-government. He went on to cite the famous speech of an Englishman named Richard Rumbold as he awaited hanging for conspiracy in 1685 in Edinburgh, Scotland.¹⁵⁹ Paraphrasing Rumbold, Jefferson wrote mankind “has not been born with saddles on their backs, nor favored few booted and spurred, ready to ride them legitimately, by the grace of God.”¹⁶⁰ Yet, Jefferson two weeks before his death stood before history “booted and spurred” having ridden the backs of his slaves in the pursuit of his own happiness, while declaring “all men are created equal.” It would appear that keeping his slaves was the moral price he would have to pay in order to maintain his own privilege.

Was he aware of his hypocrisy? Of course he was. In fact, when considering the continuation of slavery, Jefferson wrote:

... can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are of the gift of God? That they are not to be violated but with his wrath? Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just; that his justice cannot sleep forever; that considering numbers, nature and natural means only, a revolution of the wheel of fortune, an exchange of situation is among possible events; that it may become probably by supernatural interference! The Almighty has no attitude which can take side with us in such a contest. But it is impossible to be temperate and pursue this subject through the various considerations of policy, of morals, of history natural and civil. We must be contented to hope they will force their way into every one’s mind. I think a change already perceptible, since the origin of the present revolution. The spirit of the masters is abating, that of the slave rising from the dust, his condition mollifying, the way I hope preparing, under the auspices of heaven, for a total emancipation, and that this is disposed, in the order of events, to be with the consent of the masters, rather than by their extirpation.¹⁶¹

The stark difference between the visions of America held by whites and blacks can be clearly seen if one contrasts John Winthrop's vision of the "city upon the hill," from his discourse "A Model of Christian Charity," with the reality expressed by the famous black writer Langston Hughes in his poem *I, Too*. John Winthrop, the governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, wrote the following during his voyage to Massachusetts in 1630:

For we must consider that we shall be as a City upon a Hill. The eyes of all people are upon us. So that if we deal falsely with our God in this work we have undertaken, and so cause him to withdraw his present help from us, we shall be made a story and a byword throughout the world.¹⁶²

Some two hundred and ninety-five year later not in that "city upon a hill" but in Harlem, Langston Hughes would write with much lamentation:

I, too, sing America
 I am the darker brother.
 They send me to eat in the kitchen
 When company comes,
 But I laugh,
 And eat well,
 And grow strong.

Tomorrow,
 I'll be at the table
 When company comes.

Nobody'll dare
 Say to me
 "Eat in the kitchen,"
 Then.

Besides,
 They'll see how beautiful I am
 And be ashamed—

I, too, am America .

NOTES

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Part II

A Pyramid of Privilege: The Structure of American Inequality

Almost six thousand years ago, the Great Pyramid was designed and built . . . [it was] . . . once covered with protective blocks of pure white limestone weighing sixteen tons each. These six-sided limestone blocks were smooth-cut in five planes: bottom, top, facing, and two ends, one hundred sixty-eight square feet of precision cutting per casing stone. The facing stones of the Great Pyramid's four sides—one hundred fifteen thousand casing stones with nineteen million three hundred twenty-six square feet of surface—were polished down to the smoothness of a contact lens. Surface blemishes in the relatively soft limestone casing blocks were carefully chipped out, filled with mortar, sanded, and melted down, to match the surrounding block, furnishing a more highly reflective surface. One hundred fifteen thousand casing stones were then cemented together with an extraordinarily fine film of white cement, no thicker than foil. Each joint was thirty-five square feet in area—yet almost invisible to the naked eye.

—*Richard W. Noone, 1986*

The Pyramid of Khufu, known to most as the Great Pyramid of Giza, was erected on a barren, rocky plateau near the west bank of the Nile River close to Al-Jizah in northern Egypt, in or about c.2465 BC. The pyramid covers approximately 14 acres and originally stood a little over 481 feet in height. As an engineering feat, it stands as the most extraordinary structure ever built, and the fact that it has remained almost perfectly level over its entire base of 571,536 square feet for some six thousand years is a testimony to this truth. The Great Pyramid was and is the most dominant structure in the world. When it was first erected, the reflective light from its white limestone casing and golden cap were almost blinding, and could be witnessed for miles in all

directions. In the seventeenth century, John Winthrop, one of America's Puritan forefathers, dreamt of building a bright, shining city on a hill, a society that would dominate the landscape much as the Great Pyramid did. Winthrop said, "We shall be a City upon a Hill, the eyes of all people are upon us . . . we shall be made a story and a byword throughout the world."¹ Like the Great Pyramid, Winthrop's shining city on a hill came to be the most dominant political structure in the world; and like the Great Pyramid, it could not have been built without slaves.

Not only does the Great Pyramid represent perfection in engineering, it also displays geometric strength. Its evocative presence has provoked much wonder and speculation, making it the most studied structure in human history and the source of a multiplicity of theories as to its purpose and origin. Speculation as to its purpose ranges from the beliefs of traditional Egyptologists, who argue that it was built as a tomb for Khufu, the second Pharaoh of the fourth dynasty, to those non-conventional speculators who believe it is an astrological observatory. On one hand, there are those who believe the ancient Egyptian architects of the Great Pyramid were black Africans, while on the other, there are those who believe Caucasians from western Asia or possibly even Europe built this wonder. The nineteenth-century German Egyptologist, Adolf Erman, wrote:

Nothing exists in the physical structure of the Egyptian to distinguish him from the native African . . . from the Egyptian to the negro population of tropical Africa, a series of links exist which do not admit of a break. The Egyptians . . . cannot be separated . . . from Berbers, nor the latter from the Kelowi or the Tibbu, nor these again from the inhabitants around Lake Tsad; all form one race.²

Erman's French contemporary, Gaston Maspero, stands in direct opposition when he asserts:

On examining innumerable reproductions of statues and bas-reliefs, we recognized at once that instead of presenting peculiarities and the general appearance of the negro, they really resembled the fine white races of Europe and western Asia.³

Whatever the Great Pyramid's purpose and origin, it is a source of awe, inspiration, and, for those who belong to the secret society of Free Masons, it is a source of reverence.

For those who belong to the secret society of Freemasons, the Great Pyramid is a source of almost religious devotion. This ancient society supposedly traces its roots back to the secret master who allegedly designed and built the

Great Pyramid. Fascination with the Great Pyramid even found its way into the psyche of America's Founding Fathers with fifty of the fifty-six men who signed the Declaration of Independence joining the Freemasons. George Washington was the "Worshipful Master" of the Virginia Lodge of the Freemasons. Fifteen other presidents were Freemasons—prominent among them were Thomas Jefferson and James Madison—not to mention scores of early patriots.⁴ The Founding Fathers' dedication to and reverence for the Freemasons is most clearly exhibited by the Great Seal of the United States, which contains the mystical Masonic symbol of the Great Pyramid with the Latin inscriptions *Annuit Cœptis* and *Novus Ordo Seclorum*. These inscriptions, which, when translated mean "he has blessed our beginning" and "the new order of the ages," respectively. Both of these inscriptions conjure up a sense of "manifest destiny," that glorious-sounding phrase meant to give dignity to this country's westward expansion during the 1800s. The symbol of the Great Pyramid is so revered that it has appeared on every one-dollar bill printed in the United States.

Over the ages, the symbol of the pyramid has come to represent not only mystery and power, but also privilege. Supposedly, only a privileged few comprehend the Great Pyramid's mystery and power, and similarly, only an elite few are able to ascend America's Great Pyramid of privilege and power. Beginning in the mid-eighteenth century, colonial America's burgeoning capitalist economy, aided by England's flourishing mercantilist trade, expanded the wealth of the colonial elite, creating an economic pyramid of privilege that would dominate pre- and post-revolutionary America. At the top rested "The greater gentry, [or] the richest 2 percent, who held about 15 percent of all property . . . [then came] . . . the lesser gentry, or second wealthiest 2 to 10 percent, who held about 25 percent of all property. . . ."⁵ With wealth came political power through the control of the legislative and judicial processes.

Colonial gentlemen not only monopolized wealth but also dominated politics. Governors invariably appointed members of the greater gentry to sit on their councils and as judges on the highest courts. Most representatives elected to the legislatures' lower houses (assemblies) also ranked among the wealthiest 2 percent . . . [O]utside New England (where any voter could hold office), legal requirements barred 80 percent of white men from running for the assembly, most often by specifying that a candidate must own a minimum of a thousand acres. (Farms then averaged 180 acres in the South and 120 acres in the middle colonies. [As far as voting was concerned the colonies] . . . excluded women, blacks (free as well as enslaved), and Indians from elections. In seven colonies, voters had to own land (usually forty to fifty acres), and the rest demanded that an elector have enough property to furnish a house and work a farm with tools. About 40 percent of free men could not meet these requirements. . . .⁶

Some 239 years later, many things have changed, including the percentage of wealth controlled by the top 20 percent of Americans. According to Federal Reserve figures for 1989, the wealthiest one percent of American households, meaning individual households with a net worth of at least \$2.3 million, owned nearly 40 percent of the nation's wealth; and the top 20 percent of American households worth \$180,000 or more owned 80 percent of the nation's wealth. Census data beginning in 1947 shows an initial broad-based growth in income across the entire U.S. population. However, between 1973 and 1979, income growth began to become increasingly uneven, with the top 20 percent slowly pulling away from the remaining 80 percent. After 1979, this pattern of uneven growth in income began to escalate, with those at the top end of the economic distribution outpacing those in the middle. David Cay Johnston, in his book entitled *Perfectly Legal*, provides another way of envisioning the changes in economic distribution that are occurring in this country. He characterizes the change as follows:

Think of a ladder with 100 rungs. The poorest person in America stands at the bottom and the person with the biggest income [Bill Gates] stands at the top, with everyone else taking his or her place on the rungs in between.

Between 1973 and 2001, those whose income ranked them above 80 percent of Americans but below the richest 5 percent—those on the eightieth up to the ninety-fifth rungs—saw their share of national income rise almost imperceptibly. The Bureau of the Census calculated that in 2001 they earned 27.7 percent of all income, up from 27 percent in 1973.

The top 5 percent did much better. Their share of the national income grew by more than a third, from 16.6 percent to 22.4 percent. There is the suggestion of a pattern here, of those at the top of the ladder having so much added income that it is reinforcing their position, holding the middle class in place and squeezing those at the bottom, whose incomes were falling.⁷

Another quite startling statistic made evident by Johnston's analysis is the fact that the top 20 percent of the American population shares 50.1 percent of the entire national income. Alarming, it appears that not only is the pinnacle of prosperity and privilege becoming less accessible as wealth becomes increasingly more concentrated in the hands of a few people, but that the percentage of people in poverty will also accelerate. Census data are indicating that the incomes of the bottom 80 percent are slipping while the incomes of the top 20 percent are increasing, especially those in the top 10 percent, who have experienced an 88.6 percent increase in income adjusted for inflation from 1970 to 2000.⁸

To be privileged—what does this mean? Privilege is taken from the Latin word *privilegium*, which in turn derives its meaning from two other Latin words, *privus*, meaning private or one's own, and *legis*, meaning law or legal.

When *privus* and *legis* are combined, the resulting word, *privilegium*, means a piece of specific legislation that is for or against a private person. Hence, privilege is a right or a particular form of protection that is granted, as a special benefit, to those who possess a certain prescribed status. To be privileged is to enjoy certain entitlements and liberties because of one's status, not necessarily one's efforts. When a society is stratified, its "people are accorded their statuses and privileges as a result of characteristics which are regarded as individually acquired, or as a result of characteristics which are regarded as innate and therefore shared by those of common birth...The former is usually described as class stratification, referring to shared statuses identified by such features as income, education, and occupation, while the latter is frequently termed caste or racial stratification...referring to statuses defined by shared ancestry or attributes of birth."⁹ It can be argued that American society represents a pyramid of privilege that was initially founded on a Constitution and system of laws that granted liberty and entitlements to some while denying basic democratic rights to others. George Lipsitz, in his work on white privilege, contends "that both public and private prejudice have created a 'possessive investment in whiteness' that is responsible for the racialized hierarchies of our society . . . [that protects] . . . the privilege of whites by denying communities of color opportunities for asset accumulation and upward mobility."¹⁰

Race and gender served as the primary legal criteria for determining one's entitlements and liberties in the British colonies of North America, a condition that did not end even once the colonies won their independence. For approximately 323 years, a structural labyrinth of laws that spanned the pre- and post-Revolutionary Era was erected to deny people of African descent their human rights and to exploit them physically and economically in order to expand white prosperity and privilege. Manning Marable, in his book entitled *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America*, comes directly to the point, stating the following:

The most striking fact about American economic history and politics is the brutal and systematic underdevelopment of Black people. Afro-Americans have been on the other side of one of the most remarkable and rapid accumulations of capital seen anywhere in human history, existing as a necessary yet circumscribed victim within the proverbial belly of the beast. The relationship is filled with paradoxes: each advance in white freedom was purchased by Black enslavement; white affluence coexists with Black powerlessness; income mobility for the few is rooted in income stasis for the many.¹¹

Interestingly, America's privilege and prosperity were not even distributed equally amongst whites. In fact, in post-Revolutionary America, there was a

hierarchy of inequality even among whites. At the pinnacle of the American pyramid were wealthy white males and their families; next in this hierarchy came white male commoners and their families; and finally poor unmarried white women and their children. This is not to say that poor whites were held in as low regard as blacks. Whiteness did afford even the lowliest European Americans some advantage over people of color. "From the start, European settlers in North America established structures encouraging a possessive investment in whiteness . . . [through] . . . national legal systems [that] authorized attacks on Native Americans and encouraged the appropriation of their land . . . legitimated racialized chattel slavery, [and] limited naturalized citizenship to 'white' immigrants."¹²

Capitalism provided the means for building America's pyramid of privilege, the constitution served as the blueprint that established racial caste and class as its foundation, and Western theology and philosophy became the justification for its construction. Reigning as the "symbolic pharaohs" of *Novus Ordo Seclorum*, the Founding Fathers were the first in a procession of pseudo royalty beginning with George Washington. The cornerstones of America's inequality were and still are race, gender, class, and normative divergence. Those who fall into the latter category, according to society, exhibit undesirable "individual differences" such as homosexuality, some sort of disability, mental illness, unattractiveness, or non-mainstream religious affiliation, which allows them to be marginalized. Social awareness and levels of societal tolerance determine the length of this list at any given point in time. The number of categories that a person occupies profoundly affects the relative status and level of privilege attained by an individual in this society's hierarchy. For example, an individual identified as an African American, with few exceptions, will experience more difficulty gaining upward mobility than a white male of equivalent merit. However, this situation can be further compounded if that African American is also a low-income woman who openly identifies herself as a lesbian. Further exacerbating this situation could be the open practice of a West African religion involving ancestor worship. As an individual moves further down America's pyramid of privilege, the more categories of oppression usually befall that person. Eventually, the geometrically expanding pressure of opulence and privilege crushes and grinds those at the lowest levels of society into dust.

Initially, white indentured servants served as the conscripts that would begin the task of erecting this monument to privilege, but they would soon be replaced by captive slave labor from Africa. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the mercantile form of capitalism, which was an outgrowth of a more ancient form originating in Rome and the Middle East, was developing in Europe and its colonies. Mercantilism can loosely be defined as a

for-profit economic system of distribution, where goods are purchased in one locale at a certain price and then transported to another locale to be sold at a higher price. With the exception of the Romans, mercantilism did not contribute significantly to Europe's economy, which was largely local. However, mercantilism played a dominant role in Middle Eastern Arab culture, and as Islam spread, so did mercantilism, becoming the economic framework governing trade between the three great empires of Egypt, Persia, and later Byzantium. In fact, Medieval Europe essentially acquired mercantilism from the Arabs, as is evidenced by the large number of economic terms that have been incorporated into European languages from the Arabic, such as "tariff," and "traffic."¹³ This is most likely why Europe adopted the concept of mercantilism as its economic model for international trade. It also appears that the Portuguese probably acquired their interest in trading African slaves for profit from the Arabs, setting the stage for the rest of Europe's involvement in the trade. In addition, the preexisting prejudice against sub-Saharan Africans held by both the Arabs and Europeans seems to be more than a coincidence, especially considering the fact that they both used the "curse of Noah" as a religious pretext for enslaving Africans. It should be reiterated at this point that the Arab and European slave trading nations used the Old Testament of the Bible to justify enslaving Africans. They believed that Noah laid a curse upon his son Ham by condemning Ham's son Canaan to be a "servant of servants," which was interpreted to mean that all of Ham's descendants were destined to be slaves. Although the Bible does not describe Noah or his family in racial terms, Ham came to be depicted over the centuries as being black by Islamic, Christian and Jewish scholars. It appears that the portrayal of Ham as being black is rooted in an Arabic belief that blackness, in fact, had been inflicted upon Ham's descendants by a curse from Noah.

Mercantilism, despite representing the first stage of capitalism, was not the free market enterprise system that exists today. Under the European form of mercantilism, nations believed the economic activity between sovereign states and even between sovereign states and their colonies had to be subject to government regulation. This belief was based on the assumption that the world's wealth was finite, meaning that when one nation gained economically, another automatically lost, almost like double-entry bookkeeping. It was this assumption that drove nations to seek a "favorable balance of trade" as a primary goal, attempting to insure that they exported more than they imported, i.e., they sold more than they bought. As an economic system, mercantilism was based on government-controlled monopolies that determined the companies that would gain exclusive international trading rights, such as the Royal African Company that traded in slaves, or the East India Company that traded in exotic commodities, such as spices and silks. The shareholders

in these companies were all wealthy members of nobility and the newly emerging merchant classes. By the middle- to late-eighteenth century, what has come to be known as “commercial capitalism” emerged. This economic system was and is distinguishable from other systems by the fact that production and distribution are basically independent of the government and, for the most part, privately owned and operated for profit. Capitalism, with its “process of capital accumulation, [became] a, if not the, principal motor of modern history. Structural inequality and temporal unevenness of capital accumulation [were and] are inherent to capitalism.”¹⁴

According to Richard Hooker, author of *Glossary of World Cultures*, capitalism in practice exhibits the following characteristic:

The accumulation of the means of production (materials, land, tools) as property into a few hands; this accumulated property is call “capital,” [hence] the property-owners of these means of production are called “capitalists.”

Productive labor—the human work necessary to produce goods and distribute them—takes the form of wage labor. That is, humans work for wages rather than for product. One of the aspects of labor is that the laborer tends not to be invested in the product. Labor also becomes “efficient,” that is, it becomes defined by its “productivity;” capitalism increases individual productivity through “the division of labor,” which divides productive labor into its smallest components.

The result of the division of labor is to lower the value (in terms of skills and wages) of the individual workers. . . .

The means of production and labor is manipulated by the capitalist using *rational calculation* in order to realize a profit. So that capitalism as an economic activity is fundamentally teleological. . . .¹⁵

By legitimizing and facilitating the accumulation of the means of production by a few individuals, capitalism supports the establishment of hierarchy, privilege, and inequality. Capitalism by its very nature is “fundamentally individualistic, that is [to say], that the individual is the center of capitalist endeavor. This idea draws on all the Enlightenment concepts of individuality: that all individuals are different, that society is composed of individuals who pursue their own interests, that individuals should be free to pursue their own interests (this, in capitalism, is called ‘economic freedom’), and that, in a democratic sense, individuals pursuing their own interests will guarantee the interest of society as a whole.”¹⁶ This Enlightenment assertion that takes the single-minded position that “individuals pursuing their own interests will guarantee the interest of society as a whole,” fails to take into account the inherent societal tension between such things as freedom and responsibility, the individual and the group, or elitism and egalitarianism. For example, both planters in the South through slavery and industrialists in the North through

the exploitation of labor pursued their own individual interests in profit, while ignoring personal responsibility, the good of the many, and human equality.

Upon first glance, slavery seems to fly in the face of another central characteristic of capitalism, productive labor in the form of wage employment, unless one views slaves through the eyes of their masters as mere beasts of burden. This view is most clearly illustrated by the fact that slaveholders listed slaves as livestock when they assessed their assets. Of course, “capitalism as a way of thinking divorces the production and distribution of goods from other concerns, such as politics, religion, ethics, etc., and treats production and distribution as independent human endeavors.”¹⁷ For capitalists “the means of production and labor is manipulated . . . using [the] *rational calculation* [of economics] in order to realize a profit.” For example, “Thomas Jefferson . . . was one of the planters who [in order to reduce cost and increase profit] often deviated from the dietary preferences of his slaves. Noting on one occasion that ‘a barrel of fish’ (which sold for \$7) ‘goes as far with laborers as 200 pounds of pork’ (which sold for \$16), Jefferson switched to fish as an economic measure.”¹⁸

Indentured servitude initially allowed colonial landowners almost complete control over labor and its related costs after the expense of labor acquisition. There was not much control that could be exercised over the initial purchase price of an indentured servant’s contract, but the ability to manage some of the expenses for that servant’s food, clothing, and shelter allowed the landowner to lower labor costs. However, as the flow of indentured servants declined and demands for their rights as Englishmen and women increased, often accompanied by violent revolt, it became obvious to landowners that another source of labor would be required. It was at this point that the colonies turned to racial slavery as an alternative. Preexisting prejudice against Africans, the fact that they were viewed as outsiders with no rights as English citizens, made them vulnerable to being enslaved. In addition, the observable physical differences in appearance of Africans allowed them to be more readily identifiable and hence more controllable than were white indentured servants. For many colonists, slavery was viewed as a less-expensive alternative to the indentured servant system. After the initial capital outlay for slaves, landowners were able to control labor costs by strictly managing expenditures on food, clothing, and shelter for slaves. In pre- and post-Revolutionary America, land defined one’s status, but land without affordable labor remained wilderness. “Desire for slave labor encouraged European settlers in North America to view, first Native Americans and, later, African Americans as racially inferior people suited ‘by nature’ for humiliating subordination of involuntary servitude.”¹⁹ Race would become one of the primary legal criteria for entitlement and liberty in the new republic and African slaves would

toil under the weight of the casing stones laid down as the foundation for America's pyramid of privilege.

When Israel was in Egypt's land,
 Let my people go.
 Oppressed so hard they could not stand,
 Let my people go.
 We need not always weep and moan,
 Let my people go.
 And wear these slavery chains forlorn,
 Let my people go.
 What a beautiful morning that will be,
 Let my people go.
 When time breaks up in eternity,
 Let my people go.
 —*Go Down, Moses*, Traditional
 Negro Spiritual

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13. Richard Hooker, *Glossary of World Cultures: European Enlightenment-Capitalism* (Pullman: Washington State University, 1966), 1. www.wsu.edu:8080/~dee/GLOSSARY/CAPITALISM.HTML
14. Andre G. Frank, "World Accumulation, 1492–1789," in *New York Monthly Review Press* (1978), 238–39.
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16. Hooker, *Glossary of World Cultures: European Enlightenment-Capitalism*, 2.
17. Hooker, *Glossary of World Cultures: European Enlightenment-Capitalism*, 2–3.
18. Robert W. Fogel, *Without Consent or Contract: The Rise and Fall of American Slavery*, (New York: W. W. Norton, 1994), 195–96.
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Chapter Five

Slavery: The Bedrock of English and Colonial Privilege

Black slavery in America, it should be emphasized, was an important economic institution. It was profitable for both the traders and for those whose wealth was acquired from the labor of slaves. But colonists of all sorts, slave owners, non-slave owners, did not seek to maintain slavery for merely economic reasons. It became predominantly a social institution, a mechanism integral to the structuring of the colonies' social system. It evolved simultaneously as a relationship of dominance and power and as a form of conspicuous consumption for the socially ambitious. Europeans of all social and economic classes and ethnic identities learned that they had the right to yearn for the plantation lifestyle with comforts, gracious, elite mannerisms, and luxuries. Even if the economic efficiency of slavery declined or was subject to question at times, the structural relationships and social functions persisted and strengthened in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

—Audrey Smedley, *Race in North America: Origins and Evolution of a Worldview*

In 1944, Eric Williams published *Capitalism and Slavery*, a classic work that continues to provoke intense debate today with its assertions about the role of racial slavery and the slave trade in the financing of the Industrial Revolution in England and the establishment of economic wealth and privilege among the Anglo-American colonial elites of North America. Although it can be argued that Williams' analysis overestimates the degree to which English, and later American, economic dominance in the world was initially based on slavery and the slave trade, the critical nature of these practices to the development of these respective economies cannot be denied. Slavery, the slave trade, and their attending enterprises served as the bedrock upon which a significant

portion of the emerging capitalist structure of England was based, but more importantly, they provided the economic foundation upon which the “pyramid of privilege” in pre- and post-colonial America rested.

In the spring of 1607, April to be exact, three ships carrying “120 colonists landed on the fringes of the Virginia wilderness at a place they named Jamestown. These men clung desperately to the hope of building the first permanent English settlement in the New World. . . . The colonists’ picture of the New World was painted in warm, brilliant, eager colors. It was a place where men could grow rich, where the vanquished could be born again, where poisoned souls could be saved, and where a heaven on earth could be built on the cornerstone of Christianity. It was expected that the established Christians would work side by side with [those indigenous peoples whose souls they could save from the Devil’s grasp], and that their joint effort would cause the strange land to grow fruitful.”¹

In addition to its religious mission of converting indigenous peoples to Christianity, the charter under which King James had established the Virginia Company of London also had the business mission of finding and extracting natural resources for shipment back to England. Settlers who were recruited as labor for this endeavor were to be paid based on “the number of shares they owned. Men could purchase shares, but could [also] acquire them simply by paying for their passage to Virginia. With the money obtained by selling shares, the company [conveyed] unemployed laborers, and some skilled craftsmen, from England. These men toil[ed] for the company for seven years in return for their transport. After that they [were] free to engage in whatever work they wished, carving a niche for themselves in the New World.”² Initially, it seemed that the primary source of labor in the British colonies of North America would be white indentured servants, not black slaves. However, when one examines the plight of those first indentured servants, it is hard to differentiate between their lot and that of a slave. Given the unfettered nature of early capitalism and the rigged class-oriented hierarchy of English society, profit ruled and the stigma of class carried almost as much weight as that of race. “As was fairly standard in Europe at the time, the settlers were driven by an almost mindless focus on profit and a chilling casualness about just how much suffering a human could endure. . . . Servants were mutilated, maimed, and sold like cattle. . . . They were murdered with impunity. The servants who didn’t die of disease perished because they were abused by the people they worked for or killed by Indians whose lands they threatened. Of the fifteen thousand people transported to Virginia during the first fifteen years after 1607, only two thousand survived.”³ During those early years of British colonialism in North America, the central social issue would be class, not race, until the arrival of the first Africans.

In 1619, a year before the Mayflower arrived at Plymouth Rock, the first Africans would arrive in Jamestown. During August of that year, a Dutch man-of-war, while carrying out routine raids on Spanish shipping in an attempt to break their maritime monopoly, captured a Spanish ship and its cargo of twenty Africans. Having run afoul of bad weather, the ship later ran desperately low on food and water, causing the captain, “a mystery man named Jope [and] his pilot, an Englishman named Marmaduke,”⁴ to trade the African captives for provisions. So, in August of 1619, the twenty African captives, including one man named Antoney and a woman named Isabella, were set ashore to become the first Africans in British colonial America. The names Antoney and Isabella are particularly noteworthy, because they fell in love, married, and eventually in 1623 or 1624 produced from their union what was probably the first black child born in British colonial America. Antoney and Isabella had a son whom they named and baptized as a Christian in the Church of England.⁵

Of this first group of Africans to arrive in Jamestown, a few spoke English, and some had even converted to Christianity. Since the majority of the African captives were probably Christians, either through conversion or forcible baptism, they were bound over not as slaves but as indentured servants, as it was morally unacceptable to enslave Christians. In addition, there were no economic or legal provisions at that time for slavery in the British colonies of mainland North America. This was despite the fact that England had been involved in the slave trade since 1562 and employed African slaves on colonial plantations that it had established in places such as Bermuda in 1609, St. Christopher in 1623, and later on in the Leeward Islands of Antigua and Montserrat. However, in the English colonies of mainland North America, indentured servitude provided the primary source of labor until the 1640s. This meant that these newly arrived Africans toiled as indentured servants next to their English counterparts until the end of their contracted servitude. For example, Anthony Johnson was the first of a long line of Africans to own land in colonial Virginia. There is some debate over when Anthony Johnson arrived and his place of origin is still unclear. Some believe that he was a man simply known as Antonio, who arrived in 1621 on a ship named the *James* from Angola in southwestern Africa. Upon his arrival, his contract was sold and he became an indentured servant. His name appears in the census of 1625 as “Antonio a Negro servant.” According to some accounts, Antonio later married a woman who was listed in the census simply as “Mary a Negro woman.” Apparently, Mary had arrived in Virginia aboard a ship named the *Margrett and John*. It is the belief of some that Antonio eventually changed his name and became the landowner named Anthony Johnson.⁶ However, there are others who believe that Anthony Johnson arrived in Virginia from

England in or about 1621.⁷ Although there is still considerable disagreement over Anthony Johnson's origins, according to court records it is certain that by 1641 he had worked out his term of indenture and gained his freedom and a parcel of land in accordance with his contract. Later, the historical record indicated that on July 24, 1651, Anthony Johnson established a farm on the shores of the Pungoteague River after having been granted 250 acres of land for importing five persons under the headright system of the colony.⁸ This system gave landowners 50 acres for each indentured servant imported into Virginia. As far as it can be determined, Anthony Johnson and his relatives were the first of some three hundred freed African indentured servants to own their own land. Anthony Johnson and other free landowners of African descent initially had the right to vote and even held office. In fact, they had about the same economic opportunities as their free white counterparts who they toiled side-by-side with as indentured servants.⁹

This is not to imply that preexistent prejudice against Africans did not exist in the colonies, it just means that race as a defining characteristic and racism as a subjugating ideology had not yet overcome Christianity as a defining characteristic. Identity during this period was more powerfully rooted in one's religion and nationality. People in the colonies were classified more as Christians or heathens, and/or English or aliens. However, Africans, despite being Christians, were always viewed as aliens, an association that, when compounded by economic expediency, would eventually lead to a utilitarian identity totally circumscribed by slavery. It is important not to be trapped by either/or thinking; just because Africans had the right to own land, vote, and hold office, it does not mean that prejudice and discrimination did not exist. One has to look no further than race relations in contemporary America where there are a few African Americans in the upper echelons of society who are shielded from the caustic effects of racism, while the remainder experience racism in the form of discrimination and segregation almost every day of their lives. It is now as it was then, with a both/and proposition with racism and the promise of equal opportunity existing in dynamic opposition to each other. In chapter four, Winthrop Jordan's theory of reciprocal causation is referenced as an example of both/and thinking when it came to the perplexing dilemma of which came first—racism or slavery.

Again, Jordan's both/and thinking goes as follows: "Rather than slavery causing 'prejudice,' or vice versa, they seem rather to have generated each other. Both were, after all, twin aspects of a general debasement of the Negro. Slavery and 'prejudice' may have been equally cause and effect, continuously reacting upon each other, dynamically joining hands to hustle the Negro down the road to complete degradation."¹⁰

Jordan provides a powerful example of the myopic lens of English ethnocentric religiosity that was used to view and assess the humanity of African people prior to the establishment of the North American colonies. This view served as the basis for the preexisting prejudice against blacks that made them vulnerable to enslavement in the North American colonies. In his example, he refers to a discussion in 1577 between an Elizabethan adventurer name George Best and his sailing companion Martin Frobisher. During the course of their conversation about the world and its inhabitants, Best focused on what he perceived to be the problem of the Negro's color. Like many Christians of the period, he turned to the scriptures as a means of explaining the problem, specifically referring to the "Curse of Noah," as most Englishmen were given to do when referring to the origins of black people. Jordan, citing "The First Voyage Made by Master William Towrson" from Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations VII*, states the following:

The cause of their blackness, [Best] decided, was explained in Scripture. Noah and his sons and their wives were "white" and "by course of nature should have begotten . . . white children. But the envie of our great and continuall enemie the wicked Spirite is such, that as hee coulde not suffer our olde father Adam to live in the felicite and Angelike state wherein he was first created, . . . so againe, finding at this flood none but a father and three sons living, hee so caused one of them to disobey his father's commandment, that after him all his posteritie should bee accursed." The "fact" of this "disobedience," Best continued, was this: Noah "commanded" his sons and their wives to behold God "with reverence and feare," and that "while they remained in the Arke, they should use continencie, and abstaine from carnall copulation with their wives: . . . which good instructions and exhortations notwithstanding his wicked sonne Cham disobeyed, and being perswaded that the first childe borne after the flood . . . should inherit . . . all the dominions of the earth, hee . . . used company with his wife, and craftily went about thereby to dis-inherit the off-spring of his other two brethren." To punish this "wicked and detestable fact," God willed that "a sonne should be born whose name was Chus, who not onely it selfe, but all his posteritie after him should bee so blacke and lothsome, that it might remain a spectacle of disobedience to all the worlde. And of this blacke and cursed Chus came all these blacke Moores which are in Africa.¹¹

For Jordan, this exemplifies how:

English perceptions could integrate sexuality with blackness, the devil, and the judgment of a God who had originally created man not only "Angelike" but "white." These running equations [for Jordan] lay embedded at a deep and almost inaccessible level of Elizabethan culture; only occasionally do they appear

in complete clarity, as when evil dreams [like in John Day's 1608 play *Law-Tricks or, Who Would Have Thought it*, where he writes] "hale me from my sleepe like forked Devils, Midnight, thou Æthiope, Emprise of Black Soules, Thou general Bawde to the world."¹²

To argue that there was no preexisting prejudice against Africans in the colony of Virginia is to dismiss a core element of European metaphorical understanding of the issue of good versus evil, and that is the role of blackness.

Despite the initial opportunities that those first three hundred or so freed black indentured servants realized, the tide of freedom and opportunity would begin to ebb as a sea of white privilege rose to wash away their rights one law at a time. In fact, this turn in fortune had begun thirteen years before Anthony Johnson had acquired his own land when, in 1639, "the colony of Maryland declared that a Christian baptism did not make a slave free." Prior to this ruling, both European and English colonists "had long believed that they had the missionary right to enslave anyone who was not a Christian. But slaves could convert to Christianity and gain their freedom." From that moment on, the most accessible door to freedom was closed for slaves now that "religious salvation no longer spelled liberty."¹³ The tide of change continued to erode the soil of freedom from beneath the feet of African colonists when Massachusetts became the first colony to give statutory recognition to slavery in 1641, with Connecticut following in 1650. The slave laws first passed in Massachusetts made a point of saying that:

"[T]here shall never be any bond-slavery, villenage, or captivity amongst us [meaning white English men and women]; unless it be lawful captives taken in just wars, and such strangers as willingly sell themselves, or are sold to us." One could not keep one's own in perpetual servitude, neither according to the Old Testament nor to English custom; but on the other hand, the Bible, Aristotle, and current international law [meaning European law] all allowed the enslavement of "strangers," which by now meant racial outsiders—that is to say, for Massachusetts in 1641, Negroes and Indians.¹⁴

Although racial slavery was first legally sanctioned in Massachusetts, the nature of New England economics made slavery impractical on a wide scale. The topology of the Northeast made ownership of smaller family farms, speculation in real estate, shipping, trade, and other commercial enterprises more profitable than large plantations employing slave labor. Notwithstanding this fact, there were those individuals, such as John Saffin, who continued the practice of slavery even in the face of strong antislavery opposition from men such as Samuel Sewall, who in his writing described "the Negro as 'a kind of extravasate blood' in the body politic. A New England that spilled Indian

blood sooner than take it into the social organism was even more vehemently opposed to a significant Black presence, slave or otherwise.”¹⁵ Despite the fact that Sewall had directed an antislavery polemic against Saffin, the two men did agree on one central issue, which was the potential that the “extravasate blood” of African aliens would taint the body politic and possibly the bloodline of the colony if left unchecked. Saffin agreed that “he could accept the abolition of slavery in the colony, provided that the owners be reimbursed, and that the Negroes ‘be all sent out of the country, or else the remedy would be worse than the disease; and it is to be feared that those Negroes that are free, if there be not some strict course taken with them by authority, they will be a plague to this country.’ No Southern plantation owner could have provided a clearer statement to show how any innate distaste for slavery among Anglo-Saxons was overcome by an even greater distaste for racial mingling.”¹⁶

In the South during this same period, first Virginia then Maryland chose a plantation-style tobacco economy, which required the mass importation of cheap labor.¹⁷ Initially, that labor force was, as previously stated, made up of indentured servants, the vast majority of who were white. This all changed, however, in the mid-seventeenth century with “[i]mproved wages and living conditions for unskilled workers in England along with decreasing opportunities for freed servants in the New World . . . the decision to migrate [became] less and less attractive for whites.”¹⁸ In addition, the recruitment of labor became even more difficult, as the poor of England and Europe became more aware of the harshness of indentured servitude and the difficulty in gaining both freedom and the land promised at the end of service. This situation was further compounded as good farmland became more of a premium and labor became scarce. Reacting to these conditions, landowners further resisted their contractual obligations and as a result servants “who had reached the end of their indentured period found contracts were not being honored, and the resulting unrest bordered on rebellion.”¹⁹

The increasing possibility of a populist revolt by indentured servants caused those in power to live “in constant fear that beleaguered black and white laborers would realize strength in numbers and join to rise up against authority.”²⁰ Black and white indentured servants “[w]orking together in the same fields, sharing the same huts, the same situation, and the same grievances . . . developed strong bonds of sympathy and mutuality. They ran away together, played together, and revolted together.”²¹ The cultural arrogance of English-style hierarchy in Virginia had given rise to a system of indentured servitude that gave practically no accounting for the humanity of those who served under this system. The intense misery of indentured servitude blurred almost all distinctions between racial and class oppression as blacks and

white increasingly joined in resistance against their masters. It was probably at this point that the landed gentry and colonial officials seized upon the age-old strategy of divide and conquer, as they used race to trump class as the criteria for servile oppression. By doing so, they hoped to fracture the budding alliance between black and white indentured servants and thus regain control over their labor force. The clearest and most historically significant example of the differential treatment of white and black indentured servants in Virginia occurred in 1640, when three servants, two white and one black, broke their contracts by running away to Maryland. All three men escaped from the farm of Hugh Gwyn under the same circumstances and were all adjudged of the same crime. However, when captured and brought back to Jamestown, the disparity in treatment between the two white servants and the black servant foreshadowed a deteriorating status for blacks and a future of black/white tension and conflict. This disparity in treatment is obvious to anyone who cares to review the Virginia General Court's record of the case, which describes the situation as follows:

One called Victor, a Dutchman, the other a Scotchman called James Gregory, shall first serve out their times according to their indentures and one whole year a piece after . . . and after that . . . to serve the colony for three whole years a piece. The third, being a Negro named John Punch, shall serve his said master or his assigned for the time of his natural life.²²

On that day, the only equal treatment dispensed by the Virginia court was the thirty lashes given to all three men for running away. A further review of all surviving colonial records indicates that no white servant had ever been sentenced to natural life in servitude for the crime of running away.

In the case of John Punch, one is forced to wonder why his treatment was so much harsher than that of his white counterparts. It was as though the court was attempting to make a statement about the social and legal status of blacks in the colony. Of course, there were many "white settlers . . . [who] . . . found the free Blacks in their midst irritating for many reasons, the main issue, as always when racism begins reaching its highest refinement, was sexual union and its consequences [one of them being children]. The angriest of the scattered early documents involving Blacks are always focused on this point. In Virginia in 1630, for example, a [white] man named Hugh Davis was sentenced 'to be soundly whipped, before an assembly of Negroes and others for abusing himself to the dishonor of God and shame of Christians, by defiling his body in lying with a Negro.'"²³ The increasing differential treatment between white and black indentured servants seems to be due to a reciprocal causation, where preexisting prejudice against Africans and the need for a workforce that could be treated as property and over whom absolute control

could be exercised became conflated in the English conception of black people's role in the colonial economy. As Audrey Smedley points out in *Race in North America*:

The imposition of permanent slavery on the Negroes was not the result of a single, abrupt decision as virtually all historians now note. Slavery as an institution only gradually developed. In Virginia, over the critical years between 1660 and 1705, dozens of statutes and regulations were passed restricting some of the rights of blacks, establishing servitude for life, limiting their rights to bear arms and to hold certain property, and providing penalties for interracial marriage or fornication. Both Virginia and Maryland systematically and step by step enclosed blacks, both bonded servants and free Negroes, in a tightening vise of legal restrictions, the most telling of which were the prohibitions against private manumissions during the 1690s. North and South Carolina followed suit in the early decades of the eighteenth century. By 1723, the right to vote was ultimately denied to all Negroes in the southern colonies, free as well as slave.²⁴

The increasing economic crisis caused by the shortage of labor from England and Europe was further compounded by growing political unrest caused by the thousands of free men, most of who were former indentured servants, demanding land and their freedom dues. Then in 1661 the landowners' greatest fear became reality as a group of indentured servants in York County Virginia rebelled. This populist uprising served to further reinforce the landowners' growing commitment to racial slavery. Some fifteen years later, the kindling flame of unrest among Virginia's indentured servants, landless Europeans, and newly enslaved Africans, ignited and came to an explosive culmination in 1676 as the colony erupted in near civil war. An army of some five hundred freemen, indentured servants, and slaves revolted against the Virginia colonial establishment over restrictions on available land. The rebels went on a rampage, sacked, and destroyed the property of landowners, and burned the colonial capital of Jamestown, sending the government into hiding. In response to the growing economic and political crisis in the colony, powerful Virginia landowners decided to follow the lead of Massachusetts and Connecticut by enslaving Africans. The destruction and disorder caused by the ills of indentured servitude firmly set the feet of the Southern planter class on a path toward an agrarian economy that would be based on racial slavery. In the minds of the planters, Africans were aliens who could be forced into a permanent, controllable, dependable, inheritable laboring caste, for here was a population who were already victims of an established slave trade and who were visibly different, and hence easily identifiable, once enslaved.

For the first fifty years in colonial Virginia, the majority of the labor force that was not free consisted primarily of indentured English and European

servants. However, the change in status between Africans and Europeans in colonial America meant that white skin spelled liberty and became the prerequisite for privilege in British America. Then, in 1663, a Virginia court decreed that all children born in the colony would be judged slave by status of the mother. From that point forward in the colony of Virginia, slavery would be defined by race and perpetuated through heredity. In 1705, the fate of Africans in the colony was sealed when the Virginia General Assembly declared:

All servants imported and brought into this Country . . . who were not Christians in their native Country . . . shall be accounted and be slaves. All Negro, Mulatto, and Indian slaves within this dominion . . . shall be held to be real estate. If any slave resists his master . . . correcting such slave, and shall happen to be killed in such correction . . . the master shall be free of all punishment . . . as if such accident never happened.²⁵

Other colonies followed the example of Virginia and reduced the status of African slaves to real estate because it “became apparent that the dehumanization which afforded the planters such satisfaction from their chattels also provided the best method of controlling the slaves’ rebelliousness.”²⁶ Once a person is captured for the purpose of slavery, the master must transform the person’s self-perception from one of a prisoner to one of a slave by breaking his or her will to escape or rebel. Slave masters discovered that “Nothing domesticated the undesirable rage out of black people so much as consistent and prolonged ‘thingification.’”²⁷

South Carolina eventually followed Virginia’s lead by defining slaves as “[a]ll Negroes, Mulattoes and Indians which at any time heretofore have been Bought and Sold now are and taken to be or hereafter Shall be Bought and Sold . . . and their Children.”²⁸ The die had been cast; racial slavery would become the engine that would drive the economic development of the colonies—England, France, Holland, Spain, Portugal, and much of Europe. Charles Johnson and Patricia Smith describe the situation as follows:

By the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, the economic future of the new colonies would be tied to the buying, selling, and maintenance of black people, bred to be the lifelong slaves of whites. England became the dominant force in the slave trade. Throughout the eighteenth century, England’s triangular trade with Africa and the New World poured thousands of captives into the British colonies.²⁹

Of all the colonies, none was more obsessed with breaking and controlling the will of slaves than South Carolina. Of all the British colonies, South Carolina was the only colony that had a black majority. Upon witnessing the

large black population of South Carolina, Samuel Dyssli, a Swiss settler, wrote that the colony “looks more like a Negro country than like a country settled by white people.”³⁰ In a desperate attempt to manage the slave population, colonial officials dispatched regular patrols of armed militias to control and capture runaway slaves. In March of 1696, South Carolina enacted its first comprehensive slave law, designed to bring the runaway slave problem under control. This “law relied on the brutish Barbados slave code [the island from which most South Carolina planters migrated] for its preface and most of the components relating to police control.”³¹ There were, however, a few South Carolinians who became upset by brutal measures employed to control slaves and discourage them from running away. Francis Le Jau, an Anglican minister, wrote “I have had of late an opportunity to oppose with all my might the putting of a very unhumane law, and in my judgment, very unjust it is in execution in relation to runaway Negroes.” Le Jau goes on to say that the law states:

[S]uch an Negro must be mutilated by amputation of testicles if it be a man, an Ear if a woman . . . I must Informe you of a most Cruel Contrivance a man has Invented to punish small faults in slaves. He puts them in a Coffin where they are crushed almost to death and he keeps them in that hellish Machine for 24 hours commonly with their feet chained out and a lid pressing upon their stomach.³²

This treatment was mild in its extreme; many slaves routinely had limbs amputated for running away. An ex-slave name Olaudah Equiano wrote of such an occurrence in his memoirs, describing a conversation he had with his master, who had earlier amputated the leg of a runaway slave. Equiano writes:

One Mr. Drummond told me . . . he once cut off a negro-man’s leg for running away. I asked him, if the man had died in the operation? How he, as a Christian, could answer for the horrid act before God? And he told me, answering was a thing of another world; but what he thought and did were policy . . . He then said that his scheme had the desired effect—it cured that man and some others of running away.³³

Those slaves adjudged of more serious crimes met an even more grisly fate. Again, Francis Le Jau reports one such incident: “A poor slave woman was barbarously burnt alive near my door without any positive proof of the Crime she was accused of, which was the burning of her Master’s House, and protested her innocence even to myself to the last.”³⁴

As the slave population in all the colonies increased, violence against slaves grew in direct proportion to the anxiety and fear felt by slave masters who had become overwhelmed by the ratio of blacks to whites. Nowhere was

this brutality more evident than in South Carolina, with its black majority. “In 1715, according to one estimate, there were . . . 10,500 blacks and 6,250 whites in South Carolina.”³⁵ In addition, the number of recently imported slaves, especially from the Angola region of southwest Africa, was at a historic high. Therefore, it should be of no surprise that of the 250 documented slave revolts on mainland North America, the largest uprising in colonial history occurred along the shores of the Stono River in South Carolina. It was the inflammatory mixture of several elements that ignited the Stono Revolt. Specifically, there appeared to be four elements that sparked and fueled the revolt, the first being the existence of a black majority, the second being the level of extraordinary cruelty employed by whites to control the slave population, the third being the high percentage of newly arriving slaves from Angola, and the fourth being the hope engendered amongst slaves by “the Spaniard in St. Augustine [who] offered liberty to black fugitives.”³⁶ The Stono Rebellion erupted:

On the morning of Sunday, September 9, 1739, [when] hundreds of slaves gathered along the banks of South Carolina’s Stono River to fight for freedom. The rhythmic cadence of African drum beats, combined with the cries for “liberty,” followed a small army of slaves as they marched along the river, freeing fellow slaves, killing their masters, and torching plantations. The uprising, which occurred near Charleston, South Carolina, began while whites were attending church services and lasted until nightfall, when it was crushed by state militias. Sixty people were killed in the fight, including 35 slaves.³⁷

Out of the Stono Rebellion came the Negro Act of 1740, a slave code that, among many restrictions, outlawed the use of “talking drums,” freedom of movement, assembly, the raising of food, the earning of money, and education. The Constitutional Court of South Carolina made the status of slaves quite clear, stating:

A slave can invoke neither Magna Carta nor common law . . . in the very nature of things he is subject to despotism. Law to him is only a compact between his rulers and the questions which concern him are matters agitated between them. The various acts concerning slaves contemplate throughout the subordination of the servile class to every free white person and enforced the stern policy which the relation of master and slave necessarily requires. Any conduct of a slave inconsistent with due subordination contravenes the purpose of these acts.³⁸

Slave patrols were established to enforce this law, and were empowered to challenge, stop, interrogate, seize, and/or punish any slave found off the plantation. “The Negro Act . . . which lasted in its fundamental principles until the end of slavery in 1865, defined the status of the slave. If black, the law as-

sumed that the person was a slave, if Indian, it assumed the person was free unless there was proof of enslavement.”³⁹ Although, the Stono Revolt did not succeed, it caused hundreds of whites to abandon their property, fleeing to neighboring colonies, and served as an inspiration to other slaves throughout the colonies. This rebellion also convinced whites in all of the slaveholding colonies that they must have unconditional control of the slave population and, as a result, other slave codes were enacted in other colonies.

The focus in this chapter thus far has been on slavery in the British colonies of North America; however, it is useful to compare the Anglo-American system of slavery to those of Spain and Portugal. Such a comparison can provide deeper insight into why racism and brutality became such an integral part of the English system. Although the Portuguese and Spanish, much like their British counterparts, used both the threat and the actual application of whippings and torture to increase productivity, there were for the Portuguese and Spanish, unlike the British, formal restrictions on such treatment of slaves. “As was common throughout the Spanish and Portuguese colonies in America, there was a royal code devised to control the governing of slaves in Brazil [and other Latin American and Caribbean colonies]. It was supposed to protect slaves from cruel treatment, but the code was difficult to enforce.”⁴⁰ In addition to the royal code, Portuguese laws “did require newly arrived slaves to be baptized before a year had passed. Accepted into the Roman Catholic Church, the slaves attended mass and confession. By declaring that slaves had souls, the Catholic church granted blacks a status that the Anglican church in North America never gave them.”⁴¹ With such status, slaves were able to develop skills and participate in occupations that the British forbade them from participating in, such as the priesthood, architecture, dentistry, art, and the teaching of white children. In fact, white children were happy to be taught by black teachers, because “[t]hey were far gentler and kinder than the priests and schoolmasters who taught by rule of the rod.”⁴² Much was similar in the Spanish colonies of Latin America and the Caribbean, where “under Spanish law, custom, and tradition, it was not nearly so hard for a slave to achieve freedom as it was in North America. Both Spanish law and Catholic doctrine—that all men were equal in the sight of God—eased open the gate to freedom. The Roman Catholic Church and the law favored manumission. The master was encouraged to release his bondsman and the slave to seek his freedom. Proof of this influence is seen in the great size and importance of Cuba’s free black population. By 1800 there were more free blacks on the island than in all the British West Indies.”⁴³

For the Spanish and Portuguese, the boundaries between themselves, Africans, and the indigenous peoples of the Americas was much more porous than they were for the English, resulting in very fluid social, cultural, and sexual

relationships between these various groups. William McNeill, in his work *The Rise of the West: A History of the Human Community*, provides a concise but illuminating comparison between slavery in the Spanish, Portuguese, and English colonies of the Americas and the Caribbean. McNeill describes the differences as follows:

Racially mixed societies arose in most of Spanish and Portuguese America, compounded in varying proportions from European, Indian, and Negro strands. Fairly frequent . . . manumission mitigated the hardships of slavery in those areas; and the Catholic church positively encouraged marriage between white immigrants and Indian women as a remedy for sexual immorality. However, in the southern English colonies [of North America] and in most of the Caribbean islands, the importation of Negro slaves created a much more sharply polarized biracial society. Strong race feelings and the servile status of nearly all Negroes interdicted intermarriage, practically, if not legally. Such discrimination did not prevent interbreeding, but children of mixed parentage were assigned the status of their mothers. Mulattos and Indian half-breeds were thereby excluded from the white community. In Spanish (and, with some differences, Portuguese) territories, a more elaborate and less oppressive principle of racial discrimination established itself. The handful of persons who had been born in the homelands claimed topmost social prestige; next came those of purely European descent; while beneath ranged the various racial blends to form a social pyramid whose numerous racial distinctions meant that no one barrier could become as ugly and impenetrable as that dividing whites from Negroes in the English . . . colonies.⁴⁴

The fact that white privilege in the Anglo-American colonies was based to a large degree on slavery should not come as a surprise to anyone who is a serious student of history, since racial slavery “was, rather, an established sin of the New World commerce, accepted by English men as far back as Sir John Hawkins [in 1562]—when there was no Virginia yet.”⁴⁵ Hawkins was a shrewd, ambitious swashbuckler who had inherited his love of the sea from his seafaring father. These attributes enabled him to gain the confidence and funding from a group of London merchants for his first voyage to Africa in 1562. However, none of the three ships under Hawkins’ command flew the British flag because the voyage did not have the support of the Crown, nor did he possess the highly coveted *asiento* (assent or agreement), which would have given him diplomatic privilege to supply Spanish colonies with slaves. So Hawkins embarked on his voyage to Africa without license to engage in commerce and proceeded to operate as an outlaw by engaging in piracy. This assertion may seem like historical slander, considering that he eventually became knighted, but is supported by Hawkins’ own accounting, if one is to believe the marine records of 1589, which reports that Hawkins:

Passed to Sierra Leona, upon the coast of Guinea, which place by people of the country is called Tagarin, where hee stayed some good time, and got into possession partly by the sworde and partly by other meanes, to the number of 300 Negroes at least, besides other merchandises which that country yieldeth. With this praye hee sailed over the Ocean sea unto the Island of Hispaniola . . . ⁴⁶

After seizing the African slaves from the Portuguese, Hawkins set sail across the Atlantic for the Spanish colony on the island of Hispaniola. En route, “his ships were becalmed [by the lack of wind], and the slaves were in danger of dying. Hawkins, a pious Protestant, comforted himself with the thought that God would not allow his ‘elect’ to suffer.”⁴⁷ Hawkins, as a pious Protestant, believed in Calvin’s “doctrine of double predestination,” which states that it is God who chooses to save some people and damn others. Those whom God chooses to save are the “elect.” This doctrine is often called Calvin’s “horrible decree,” because it essential states that neither worldly deeds nor faith determine whether or not one will receive God’s grace or be admitted to heaven. As a part of this doctrine, Calvin asserts the concept of “limited atonement, which taught that Christ died only for the elect—not for all humanity.”⁴⁸ Calvin also believed and taught that “grace, or ‘motion of the heart’ . . . was God’s gift to the elect, and the instrument of their salvation. . . . Grace was not merely an idea but an emotion, which has been defined as a feeling of ‘ecstatic intimacy with the divine.’ It gave . . . a soaring sense of spiritual freedom which . . . [was] called ‘soul liberty.’”⁴⁹ Hawkins’ comfort most likely came from his belief that God predestined the fate and souls of all aboard and as a result, he bore no responsibility for them. In addition, as a pious protestant, he may have sensed the “motion of the heart,” or God’s grace, which meant he was one of the “elect.” Such beliefs probably allowed the Puritans of New England to engage in the slave trade and related enterprises with little or no guilt. Once the wind picked up, Hawkins sailed on with his cargo of slaves and traded the spoils of his piracy to the planters on the island of Hispaniola for hides, sugar, ginger, and pearls at a substantial profit.⁵⁰

At this point, the English were mere interlopers in the slave trade; the European trade in slaves had actually begun “in the year 1441, when a little Portuguese ship commanded by young Antam Goncalvez captured 12 blacks in a raid on the Atlantic coast of Africa. The prisoners were carried back to Lisbon as gifts for Prince Henry the Navigator (1394–1460). Delighted with his slaves, Prince Henry sent word to the Pope, seeking his approval for more raids. The Pope’s reply granted, ‘to all of those who shall be engaged in the said war, complete forgiveness of all their sins.’ In 1445 a papal bull authorized Portugal to reduce to servitude all heathen peoples.”⁵¹

This trade in African slaves that had begun with the Portuguese did not stay with them, as noted by a trader named Willem Bosman who, in 1704, stated, "The Portuguese served for setting dogs to spring the game, which as soon as they had done was seized by others."⁵² That game to which Bosman referred was the lucrative Atlantic slave trade, the dominance and control of which would change flags several times in the coming centuries. An important aside should be made at this point for those who wonder how the extraordinary enterprise known as the European slave trade grew from the chance capture of 12 black Africans to such a critical engine of Western economic growth and domination. Clearly, treaties, alliances, and economic compacts had to be formed with various sub-Saharan African states in order for the slave trade to flourish. One has to only view a topographical map of sub-Saharan Africa to understand why these agreements were necessary. "The continent south of the Sahara [desert] is a vast plateau that drops abruptly to the ocean's edge. That is why the large African rivers form on the tableland and fall to the edge in great cataracts to the narrow coastal plain that rims the whole continent. Penetration of the interior by ships sailing up from the ocean was impossible. The harbors could not accommodate European ships, and even small boats had trouble making shore through the huge breakers."⁵³ Sub-Saharan Africa was like an island isolated from the outside world, which in part explains why Africans were such a mysterious people to Europeans, especially northern Europeans.

"The Africans, like other peoples throughout the world, had practiced slavery since prehistoric times, [which established the requisite basis upon which Africans and Europeans could enter into the trade]. [Africans] took prisoners in war and forced them into domestic service, as they did to their criminals."⁵⁴ Like most citizens of the world at that point in time, Africans kept prisoners of war as slaves until they could be pacified and assimilated into the conquering civilization. The great empires of sub-Saharan Africa, like Ghana, Mali, and Songhay, became superstates; Mali, in particular, was as large as Europe. The size of these superstates dictated that they exact huge tributes in the form of human and material resources in much the same way that the Greek and Roman empires had in order to support their military forces and monetary foundations. However, the European system of slavery that developed between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries was significantly different than that of Africa and, for that matter, it was also different from the slavery of classical Greece and Rome. For one thing, slavery was not a capitalist enterprise that necessitated lifelong intergenerational bondage.

Among African societies, slavery did not mean the legal extinction of human rights or the denial of human personality [as it tended to mean in the Anglo-American system of slavery]. To Africans, says the anthropologist Paul Bohannon, a slave was:

a kind of kinsman—with different rights from other kinsmen, different positions in the family and household from other kinsmen, but nevertheless a kind of kinsman. Slaves had either to be captured or they had to be acquired from their kinsmen who were “selling them into slavery [as a kind of punishment].” This means that, as a form of banishment, some groups took their criminal or generally unsatisfactory kinsmen and performed a ritual which “broke their kinship” and then sold him . . .

Bohannon adds that until the Europeans came, African wars were local and small and produced few captives. Not many people were rejected by their kinsmen. The native institution, he concludes, was a “basically benign, family-dominated slavery.”⁵⁵

On a continent three times the size of the United States, quite obviously there were exceptions to this benign pattern of slavery, specifically among the Igbo, the Ashanti, and in the Kingdom of Dahomey, where large groups of slaves were used in a systematic way in agriculture. Usually, however, even in such situations, although life could be very harsh, “people conquered in warfare were treated as the feudal vassals of Europe had been.”⁵⁶ Historian Basil Davidson points out: “In the Songhay kingdom of the fifteenth century along the Middle Niger, ‘slaves’ [or serfs] from the non-Muslim peoples of the forest verge were extensively used in agriculture. They were settled on the land and tied to it [as serfs had been in medieval Europe]. In return for this livelihood, they paid tribute to their masters both in crops and in personal services. Their bondage was relative: time and custom gave them new liberties. Yet being generally restricted by custom and convenience in the varieties of work and the peoples among whom they might seek wives, these ‘slaves’ [or serfs] tended to form occupational castes [as again was the case in medieval Europe].”⁵⁷ Clearly, the nature of African slavery was different from that which would be established in the English colonies of the Caribbean, where many of the slaves that Sir John Hawkins commandeered would arrive.

As the principal in the initiation of the English slave trade, Hawkins would, with a second voyage to Africa in or about 1566, attempt to encroach on the Portuguese- and Spanish-controlled slave trade, thus establishing England as more than a mere interloper in the trade. This voyage, however, unlike the first, had the approval of the Crown, which now saw the profit in Hawkins’ scheme. Queen Elizabeth I, in her desire to inspire others to such adventurous enterprise, bestowed upon Hawkins the title of Sir John Hawkins, sending him back to Africa as a knight of the realm on this and one subsequent voyage.⁵⁸ On his second voyage, Hawkins once again pirated about four hundred slaves from the Portuguese and transported them to Panama, where he realized a net profit of 60 percent.⁵⁹ On his third and final voyage, Hawkins set out with six ships and was initially successful securing four hundred and some odd Africans and, in the process, he also seized a Portuguese slave ship.

However, the voyage took a turn for the worse as his fleet was caught in bad weather, resulting in severe damage to at least one ship. Hawkins was then forced to trade his captives for repairs. Out of frustration it appears, Hawkins in the interim committed a senseless act of war by burning a Spanish port. Finally, in the fall of 1568, after being blown off course in a storm, Hawkins' fleet had to seek anchorage in the port of Vera Cruz, where a vengeful Spanish fleet trapped him and his fleet. A battle ensued with Hawkins escaping, but not before the loss of several ships, their crews, and all of the expedition's profits. Although Hawkins escaped, somehow maintaining his reputation, this "stage of England's participation in the Atlantic slave trade had come to a discreditable and bizarre end."⁶⁰ England would not reenter the trade for one hundred or more years. However, despite England's setback, Hawkins' two successful voyages to Africa represent the earliest examples of the first triangular trade. The trade followed a route that shipped English goods to Africa in exchange for slaves, which in turn were carried to the West Indies and sold for profit. These ships then returned to England with colonial goods and products bought with the profits made from the sale of slaves.⁶¹ Eventually, it would be the triangular trade routes that would provide much of the financial foundation of England and its North American and Caribbean colonies.

However, it was not until the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that England formally committed itself to reentering the African slave trade; the reentry was due, in part, to the acquisition of colonies in North America and the Caribbean and the shortage of labor needed to tend the newly gained tobacco plantations of Virginia and sugar plantations of the West Indies. Adam Smith, in his classic work *The Wealth of Nations*, contends that the discovery of the New World and the Cape route to India were "the two greatest and most important events recorded in the history of mankind."⁶² The discovery of America meant vast new markets for English goods and African slaves. As historian William Wood stated, in 1718 the slave trade was "the spring and parent whence the others flow."⁶³ With its newfound colonial interest, England was lured along with Denmark, Holland, Sweden, and France, to join the Spanish and Portuguese in both the use of African slave labor and the lucrative slave trade itself. Initially, England's interest in the slave trade was privately sponsored. In 1618, a group of London businessmen formed a private enterprise known as The Company of Adventurers to deal exclusively in the trade of African slaves. It was not until some 54 years later that the English government itself became involved in the slave trade, as its interest in the Caribbean grew and as its naval power increased sufficiently to dominate the trade. In order to facilitate England's involvement in the slave trade, the British Crown, in 1672, established the Royal African Company to manage the African trade in gold, silver, and slaves. The charter of the Royal African Company reads as follows:

We do hereby, for us, our heirs and Successors, grant unto the said Royal Africa Company of England and their Successors, that it shall and may be lawful to and for the said Company and their Successors, and none others, from time to time to set to Sea such and so many shippes . . . as shall be thought fitting by the said Court of Assistants for the time being, of [which] the Governor, Sub-Governor, or Deputy Governor to be prepared and furnished with Ordinance. Artillery, and Ammunition or any other habiliments in warlike manner fitt and necessary for their defence; And shall for ever hereafter have, use and enjoy all mines of Gold and Silver . . . And the whole, entire and only Trade, Liberty, use and privilege of Trade and Traffic into and from the said parts of Africa . . . into and from all and singular Regions, Countries, Dominions, Territories, Continents, Islands, Coasts, and places now or at any time heretofore called or known by the name or names of South Barbary, Guinny, Buiny or Angola or any of them . . . for the buying, selling, bartering and exchanging of, for, or with any Gold, Silver, Negroes, Slaves, goods, wares, and merchandize whatsoever to be rented or found at or within any Cities, Towns, places, Rivers situate or being in the Countries, Islands, Places, Ports, and Coasts aforementioned, any situate, Law, grant, matter, customs, or privilege to the contrary in any wise, notwithstanding . . . Witness the King at Westminster the seven and twentieth day, 1672, by the King.⁶⁴

With the creation of the Royal African Company came the revivification of the triangular trade route first established by Sir John Hawkins in 1562. The reemergence of the slave trade generated enormous profits for England and its colonies. In fact, there are those who argue that without slavery and the slave trade, the economies of England and its American colonies would not have burgeoned as quickly. Many of the first entrepreneurial fortunes were amassed as a result of slavery and/or its related industries and enterprises. New England and English shipping companies made large fortunes from the reopening of the triangular trade. This trade had two distinct routes, with one originating in England and the other in the New England colonies. Phyllis Raybin Emert, in her work entitled *Colonial Triangular Trade*, states the following:

There were two main patterns of triangular trade. The first was a voyage from England to Africa, on to the West Indies, and then back to England. For example, a ship would leave the English port of Liverpool with a cargo of manufactured goods, then proceed to West Africa where these items were exchanged for slaves. The slaves were transported to the West Indies and sold, and the profits were used to purchase a cargo of sugar (or other produce), which was brought back to Liverpool. The second pattern of triangular trade originated in New England. Slave ships sailed to West Africa with a cargo of rum and they exchanged the rum for slaves. Then they headed on to the slave markets of the West Indies where the slaves were sold. The profits of the sale were used to purchase cargoes of molasses, which were brought back to New England and distilled into rum.⁶⁵

The corner of the triangular trade that began in England provided much of the capital that fueled the English economy. There are historians, such as Eric Williams, author of *Capitalism and Slavery*, who argue in quite a compelling fashion that the Industrial Revolution in England was financed by the slave trade. Williams asserts that if historians are concerned about the economic history of England they “must now trace the investment of profits from the triangular trade in British industries, where they supplied part of the huge outlay for the construction of the vast plants to meet the needs of the new productive process and the new markets.”⁶⁶ Cities such as Liverpool were built on the profits of the slave trade. “Liverpool’s entry into the slave trade occurred in the 1690s . . . [and] [b]y 1740, Liverpool was sending thirty-three ships a year to Africa, and every year the total grew.”⁶⁷ In fact, between 1783 and 1793 Liverpool alone averaged about eighty ships a year to Africa, transporting an average of 27,612 slaves a year for a grand total of 303,737 over an eleven-year period. The average yearly value for 27,612 slaves was ?1,380,623, for an eleven-year total value of ?15,186,850.⁶⁸ Between 1750 and 1800, the average price for a slave in Virginia was about ?40.⁶⁹ It is clear from these figures that the slave trade and its related enterprises were extraordinarily profitable for the British. “It was a fact of life, and the whole of British society had invested in it. The Liverpool Town Hall was decorated with ‘blackamoors’ carved in stone. Chains and padlocks, leg irons, and handcuffs, thumbscrews and mouth-openers (to force slaves on hunger strikes to eat) were on view in shop windows and advertised in the newspapers. On the streets fashionable ladies paraded with their little black slaves adorned in turbans and pantaloons. Slave servants were common in rich [English] households.”⁷⁰

However, there are many historians who would debate Eric Williams’ claim that the slave trade provided the financial capital that fueled the Industrial Revolution. But such critics must realize that it was not the slave trade alone that fueled England’s Industrial Revolution; it was the broader triangular trade, and the slave trade’s keystone role in that trade, which fueled the Industrial Revolution. Not until the manufactured goods and services—directly or indirectly stimulated by the triangular trade—have been identified can one truly assess the impact of slavery on the English economy. The products shipped to Africa in trade for slaves ranged from fabric, clothing, household goods, guns, lead and iron bars, to tobacco and distilled beverages. The Royal African Company, in 1682, was shipping up to 10,000 bars of iron annually to Africa.⁷¹ Of all of the cotton fabric woven in England, up to 1770 one-third was exported to the slave coast of Africa.⁷² By 1788, Manchester was exporting goods worth £200,000 to Africa annually. The manufacturing related to this trade provided employment for approximately 180,000 men, women,

and children.⁷³ During the eighteenth century, it was customary for the Royal African Company to trade one gun for each male slave delivered, as it was estimated that one African male was worth one Birmingham gun. As a result of this trading practice, Birmingham's export during this period of time totalled between 100,000 to 150,000 guns annually.⁷⁴ According to Williams, the triangular trade gave a triple stimuli to Britain's economy by 1) creating a need for manufactured goods for barter in the African slave trade, 2) processing tropical products from the islands and shipping them back to mainland colonies, and 3) maintaining slaves and their owners with manufactured goods from British industries and foodstuffs from colonies in New England and Newfoundland.⁷⁵ One of the most significant effects that the triangular trade had on England's economy was the stimulation of shipping and the ship building industries, which parenthetically helped provide England with the maritime dominance so crucial to the building of its later empire. The West Indian colonies in 1690 employed 114 ships manned by 1,203 sailors; during that same period of time, the mainland colonies employed 111 ships manned by 1,271.⁷⁶ Shipbuilders, many of whom were slave traders, developed specialized ships for the slave trade with large capacities for maximum cargo and great speed to reduce the mortality rate for maximum profit. The trade was so demanding that in the 1700s about half of all the sailors in Liverpool were engaged in the slave trade, for a total 5,967 in 1771.⁷⁷

Counter arguments to Williams' assertion are based on the assumption that since the profits from the slave trade did not spark an industrial revolution in the major slave-trading nations of Portugal and Spain and their respective colonies, then such profits could not have been responsible for sparking an industrial revolution in England and its North American colonies. In fact, historian Hugh Thomas, in his challenge of Eric Williams' contention that the slave trade financed the Industrial Revolution, makes this exact argument when he says, "After all, the slave-trading entrepreneurs of Lisbon and Rio, or Seville and Cádiz, did not finance innovations in manufacture."⁷⁸ However, this argument is as flawed and simplistic as Williams' contention. It is extremely naïve to believe that England and its colonies would have been able to exploit the agricultural resources of the colonies without slaves. Equally naïve is the belief that the Industrial Revolution in England, and eventually in North America, would have been possible without the raw materials from the colonies and the enormous amounts of capital garnered from the triangular trade. Interestingly, Thomas points this out himself when he states:

[T]hose who became rich as a result of trading slaves often did put their profits to interesting uses: Marchionni, for instance, invested in Portuguese journeys of

discovery, as did Prince Henry the Navigator; John Ashton of Liverpool helped to finance the Sankey Brook Canal, between his own city and Manchester; René Montaudoin was a pioneer of cotton manufacture in Nantes, and so was James de Wolf in Bristol, Rhode Island. Such investments aside, the slave trade had a great effect on shipbuilding, on marine insurance, on the rope industry, on ships' carpenters in all interested ports, as also on textile manufacture (such as linen in Rouen), the production of guns in Birmingham and Amsterdam, and iron bars in Sweden, of brandy in France and rum in Newport, not to speak of beads from Venice and Holland, and on the sugar refineries near important European and North American ports.⁷⁹

It stretches credulity to believe that all of these examples of industrial investment, innovation, and productivity that Thomas describes would have occurred in such a revolutionary fashion without the slave trade. Certainly, industrialism would have occurred, but it would have been more of a slow evolution than a revolution.

Of course, the causal factors driving the Industrial Revolution are very complex and multifaceted, and by juxtaposing the positions of Eric William and Hugh Thomas, one runs the risks of becoming trapped in either/or thinking when assessing the role of slavery in the emergence of the Industrial Revolution in England. Clearly, there are a host of factors that conspired to trigger such a major economic change. The use of such a blanket term as the "Industrial Revolution" makes it is easy to oversimplify the complexity of this economic phenomenon. Norman Davies, in his epic work *Europe: A History*, quite succinctly summarizes the complexity of this dynamic period when he states the following:

The Industrial Revolution is . . . widely used to describe a range of technological and organizational changes that were considerably wider than the single best-known element: the invention of power-driven machinery. What is more, the term has come to refer, after immense historical debate, to merely one stage in a still more complex chain of change—now called "Modernization"—that did not begin to have its full effect until the following century. Even so, there are a dozen elements of "proto-industrialization" that must be taken into consideration; they include farming, mobile labour, steam power, machines, mines, metallurgy, factories, towns, communications, finance, and demography.⁸⁰

This explosive change in manufacturing technology and industrial organization, which resulted in an industrial growth of approximately three percent per year in the English economy between 1801 and 1831, occurred on the heels of the American Revolution and was due to the previously mentioned factors and more. As stated above, the requisite proto-industrial factors for the Industrial Revolution predate its onset. Like gunpowder, that explosive mix-

ture of potassium nitrate, charcoal, and sulfur, the Industrial Revolution was made up of several inert elements that, when combined in the proper proportions and ignited, caused a release of energy that transformed the world. Colonialism and slavery served as the ignition source for the economic explosion that was the Industrial Revolution.

At this point, it is important to challenge the hubris of the widely held Eurocentric and racist assumption that industrialization spread from the West to the rest of the world. Without this challenge, the myth of the West as the world's savior is allowed to overshadow the reality of Western hegemony and exploitation. In actuality, industrialization existed in other parts of the world prior to the Industrial Revolution in England. The nature and source of its power differed, but the concepts of industrial organization, such as division of labor and specialization, existed independent of Western influence. Felipe Fernández-Armest, in his ambitious work *Millennium: A History of the Last Thousand Years*, documents the independent development of industrial organization in the non-Western world by proving the following examples:

[A]s recently as the eighteenth century, the great industrial centers of the world were in China and India, where traditional technology could support enormous concentrations of production and remarkable degrees of specialization . . . [I]n the early nineteenth century, for instance, the Beneficial and Beautiful wholesaling firm, founded two hundred years previously by Mr. Wang of Hangchow, built up its clothing sales to a million lengths a year . . . Mr. Wang employed 4,000 weavers and several times that number of spinners . . . There were ironworks in Szechuan that employed two or three thousand men . . . In Kwangtung, water-driven hammers pounded incense "without any expenditure of muscular effort" . . . In [the] eighteenth century, India was an enormous exporter of manufactures. . . . Even in Britain, industrialization was in its infancy and was probably not advanced enough to smother Indian textiles . . . before the 1820s. [But even after the 1820s it was] still British policy . . . to favour home produce by tariff regulation. . . .

Eventually, the drain of English silver to India was reversed and the British textile mills began to supplant Indian textiles. As one French missionary very candidly and cogently put it: "Europe no longer depends on India for anything, having learnt to beat the Hindus on their own ground, even in their most characteristic manufactures and industries, for which from time immemorial we were dependent on them. . . ." Tragically, "India's industrial debacle coincided with the establishment of British rule, or hegemony, over most of the subcontinent and, in particular, over its former industrial heartlands."⁸¹

The story of India's industrial decline is an important one because it demonstrates how England gained ascension at the dawn of modernity and eventually overshadowed the inhabitants of the non-western world.

Despite the fact that many parts of the world had become industrialized before England, the Industrial Revolution associated with the power-driven machine and modernity was initiated in England. Why England? It began in England because at this period in history it found itself, as an island, free from the threat of invasion; absent of any major civil strife; secure in the arms of a stable government with centralized banking and secure currency; peopled by a mobile workforce and a large middle class involved in banking, trade, and light manufacturing; established in navigation and commerce; and blessed by the natural resources of coal and water power. Notwithstanding these key elements of England's industrial machine, it would be its wealth that would fuel and drive the machine to world dominance. According to historian Marvin Perry England's industry need raw materials from abroad to feed its ravenous machinery and markets to sustain and expand its capital base.

Contributing to the accumulation of capital was the rapid expansion of trade, both overseas and on the Continent, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (the commercial revolution). This expansion resulted from an aggressive search for new markets and tapped the wealth of a much larger area of the world than the Mediterranean lands accessible to earlier generations. Thus, the resources, both human and material, of the New World and Africa fueled Europe's and [England's] accumulation of wealth.⁸²

The corner of the triangular trade that began in the Massachusetts Bay colony provided entrepreneurs with much of the capital needed to build the economic base of New England. Critical to the triangular trade was the trafficking in slaves. Interestingly, slavery only really took root in the colonies of the South, despite the fact that Massachusetts was the first colony legally to sanction slavery in 1641. The only exception in the north was New Jersey, which continued the practice under law until 1846. The failure of slavery to fully take hold in the North, however, was not due to the superior moral character of the New England colonists. The simple fact was that the geography of the North, with the exception of New Jersey, did not lend itself to the large plantation-style farming to which slavery was best suited. According to an article by Gavin White:

In the legal sense, slavery developed in both the Northern and Southern colonies. But since they both faced a common externally determined price, a price which reflected the high profits of slave labor in the sugar islands, slaves were imported only where the value (marginal) product of labor was usually high, as it was in the tobacco areas of the Chesapeake and later in the rice districts of Georgia and South Carolina. In other words, the "origins of slavery" are not a part of North American history; instead, the geographic distribution of the slave population was "economic," reflecting the interaction of supply and de-

mand. "Supply" took the form of an exogenous price, and "demand" was mainly determined by availability of profitable export staples. The timing of this development, however, depended on the interaction between these elements and a third factor, the supply of alternative forms of unfree labor, primarily indentured servants.⁸³

Although slavery did not flourish in the North as it did in the South, a good portion of the industries of New England revolved around and depended on the slave trade. Without slavery, it can be argued, American capitalism would not have flourished as quickly or as robustly. New England shipping companies made fortunes from the colonial leg of the infamous triangular trade route. Yankee ships would follow this route from New England to Africa, where they would exchange guns, jewelry, cloth, and rum for slaves, which they would transport to the British West Indies for sale. Upon arrival in the West Indies, the slaves were sold to planters and slave breeders for between 740 and 750. Each ship carried between 100 and 454 slaves and if its captain could keep the survival rate above 50 percent and negotiate top price for those remaining slaves, then the ship's owner could realize a hefty profit. The profits from these sales were then used in part to purchase sugar and molasses that in turn was shipped back to new England. Molasses and sugar were particularly profitable because they could be distilled into rum. "The New England traders refused to purchase West Indian rum and insisted on molasses, which they themselves distilled, and sent to Newfoundland, the Indian tribes, and above all Africa."⁸⁴ Historian Emory R. Johnson notes that the rum trade to Africa constituted over four-fifths of the total export from New England in 1770.⁸⁵ The use of rum in the slave trade was indispensable to the trader because it was not only a medium of exchange for slaves, but was also used to ply indigenous African traders. Often a bargaining advantage could be gained if the African trader could be made drunk. Ironically, there were instances when African slave traders, upon becoming drunk, were themselves tricked and enslaved by their European counterparts. In fact, one such occasion is a matter of record. During this particular incident, an African trader, after being invited to dinner by a captain with whom he was negotiating, became drunk, fell asleep, and awoke in pain to find himself branded and placed in irons with the Africans he had sold into slavery.⁸⁶ "In the eighteenth century, between fifty thousand and one hundred thousand slaves crossed the Atlantic each year."⁸⁷ The majority of these slaves were shipped to the West Indies and Brazil. Of those slaves shipped to the West Indies, a high percentage were carried on ships owned by New England shipping companies. Yankee commerce thrived off the profits realized from transporting African slaves, importing West Indian molasses, and in turn exporting New England rum to Africa and the world.

England's triangular trade and, for that matter, all other forms of trade with its colonies were governed by laws designed to facilitate the orderly and profitable functioning of its mercantilist economy. "The 'Americanization of British trade,' according to its most judicious scrutineers, turned Britain from 'simply part of a traditional European trading network with growing interest in American and Asian markets' into the center of an Atlantic economy."⁸⁸ Mercantilism, that earliest form of capitalism, became the primary economic system of Europe as it emerged from the Middle Ages and into the age of empire. As an economic system, it is rooted in the commercial and trading practices of ancient Rome, which were continued by the Arabs after Rome's fall at the hands of the Germanic tribes of Northern Europe. It was not until the seventh century AD, when Islam spread across the North African desert and into Spain, that mercantilism was reintroduced to Europe. Between the fall of the Roman Empire and the reintroduction of mercantilism into Europe, the various economies of the continent were rather simple and parochial in nature. Mercantilism can be defined as a theory of political economics which posits that a nation's wealth resides not in labor and its products, but in the excess quantities of silver and gold realized by a nation above and beyond the cost of production and distribution of goods and services. In other words, the goal of a mercantilist economy is to garner a profit, not a simple exchange of one desired commodity for another one of equal value, as is the case in a barter economy. Norman Davies summarizes the role of mercantilism as follows:

Mercantilism has meant many things to many [people]; but in essence it referred to the conviction that in order to prosper, the modern state needed to manipulate every available legal, administrative, military, and regulatory device. In this sense, it was the opposite of the *laissez-faire* system, which [Adam] Smith would later advocate. In one popular form it consisted of bullionism—the idea that a country's wealth and power depended on amassing gold. In another, it concentrated on improving the balance of trade by assisting exports, penalizing imports, and encouraging home manufactures. In all forms, it was concerned with strengthening the sources of economic power—colonies, manufactures, navies, tariffs—and was expressly directed against a country's commercial rivals.⁸⁹

The basic assumption underpinning mercantilism is that the wealth of a nation can only be measured in terms of its possession of rare commodities, such as gold, silver, and precious jewels, not investments in various means of production. This assumption is predicated on the metaphysical view that the world's wealth is finite, and hence one nation's economic gain is another's loss. From this metaphysical view of economics flowed three basic

economic rules, the first being that in order for a nation to assure its prosperity in a finite universe of wealth, a favorable balance of trade must be maintained, meaning that a nation had to export more than it imported. For mercantilists, a favorable balance of trade referred especially to economic relations with friendly nations, since purchasing commodities from nations regarded as rivals or enemies was viewed as aiding and abetting the opposition. Under the principles of mercantilism, this was a situation that had to be kept to a minimum. Second, all economic activity should increase the domestic control and international power of government. And, third, all colonies should exist solely for the social, economic, and political benefit of the mother country. In the mercantilist state, there was “no room for open doors and colonial trade was a rigid monopoly of the home country.”⁹⁰ The English mercantilist system was a giant vortex drawing raw materials, products, and hard currency into the home state, which in turned fueled the expansion of its economy. However, trade restrictions and regulations, coupled with the omnivorous government monopolies of mercantilism, generally tended to suppress competition, innovation, and entrepreneurship, especially in the colonies. For England, like most mercantilist states, colonies were viewed merely as utilitarian tools for state economic expansion. Charles D’Avenant, one of the most experienced economists of the day, wrote, “Colonies are a strength to their mother kingdom, while they are strictly made to observe the fundamental laws of their original country, and while they are kept dependent on it.”⁹¹

The bulwark of English mercantilism was its navigation laws, which put all trade with territories ruled by England into a closed economic system. As a closed system, the English government supported national companies like the Royal African Company and the East India Company, while enforcing highly regulated trade policy in an attempt to dominate its other mercantilist European rivals. Although mercantilism had become the dominant economic system of England, it was eventually challenged as the years progressed by laissez-faire free market capitalists like Adam Smith, who decried government control of imports and exports and the support of monopolies. As previously stated, England’s navigational laws provided the structural framework that gave shape and strength to its mercantilist economy. Like the three-cornered triangular trade, these navigation laws were structured around three key provisions. Those provisions were as follows: 1) all trade with British colonies had to be transported on ships built in England or its colonies with at least three quarters of the crews being English subjects; 2) all imports to the colonies, with a few exceptions, were to first be brought through England; and 3) profitable exports from the British colonies could only be shipped to England or its colonies.

As Eric Williams writes:

The colonies were obliged to send their valuable products to England only and use English ships. They could buy nothing but British unless the foreign commodities were first taken to England. And since, as dutiful children, they were to work for the greater glory of their parent, they were reduced to a state of permanent vassalage and confined solely to the exploitation of their agricultural resources. Not a nail, not a horseshoe . . . could be manufactured, nor hats, nor iron, nor refined sugar. In return for this, England made one concession – the colonial products were given a monopoly of the home market.⁹²

The navigation laws were aimed at keeping other maritime powers, such as the Dutch, from providing credit and supplies to English colonies and from purchasing and delivering English colonial products to Europe. In addition, they were also designed to keep the Scots and Irish out of the slave trade. Enforcement of these laws, as previously stated, created a closed system of monopolistic advantage for the English. The triangular trade in slaves and sugar, because of its reliance on England's maritime strength, eventually proved to be more valuable to England than its coal and tin mines.⁹³ As a result of this economic reality, one of the principle "commodities" covered by the navigational laws was slaves, the most important export of Africa, and sugar, the most important export of the West Indies.⁹⁴

Governed by the laws and principles of mercantilism and powered by the enterprise of slavery, the triangular trade functioned like a well-oiled machine, conveying material and human commerce in a cycle from England to Africa, on to the colonies and back. Malachi Postlethwayt, one of England's most rigid and prolific mercantilist writers of the eighteenth century, characterized the slave trade as "the first principle and foundation of all the rest, the mainspring of the machine which sets every wheel in motion."⁹⁵

English mercantilists placed a higher value on the island colonies of the West Indies than those of mainland America because of the valuable sugar trade. Without this lucrative trade, the mercantilists would have little to no access to gold or silver, except for that gained through illegal trade with Spain. Since such trade would have violated their mercantilist principles and created an unfavorable balance of trade with the Spanish, this option was not considered to be advantageous. The tropical products of the West Indies made these islands more valuable to England than its North American holdings because the products of those islands, unlike those of its North American colonies, did not compete with the products created in England itself.⁹⁶ At this point in England's economic history, sugar was king, the sugar planters were the ruling class, and Parliament was a loyal subject, which meant that the West Indies would always be accommodated as England's favorite child.

Mercantilism, although advantageous for England, posed many restrictions on the economy of New England. Initially, New England's population was much like that of England, made up of merchants, farmers, fishermen, and seamen who were becoming heavily dependent on the export trade. As a result of the similarities in their economic structures, New England found itself in direct competition with England over the food markets of the West Indies. Food was at a premium in the markets of the West Indies because the majority of all available farmland was dedicated to the production of sugar. New England found, by virtue of its situation, that it was able to undersell its English rivals in the West Indian food markets. "England [as a result] was losing, in sales and freights, two and a half million sterling a year."⁹⁷ Data from colonial export records clearly demonstrate the degree to which New England's economy was flourishing from the West Indian trade in agriculture. Eric Williams provides the following data:

In 1770 the continental colonies sent to the West Indies nearly one-third of their exports of dried fish and almost all their pickled fish; seven-eighths of their oats, seven-tenths of their corn, almost all their peas and beans, half of their flour, all their butter and cheese, over one-quarter of their rice, almost all their onions; five-sixths of their pine, oak and cedar boards, over half their staves, nearly all their hoops; all their horses, sheep, hogs and poultry; almost all their soap and candles.⁹⁸

The trade advantage held by New England in the West Indies was further increased by their populations' religious and social ties. In fact, the colonists of New England and those of the West Indies had more in common with each other than they did with the English back home. Ronald Sanders describes this relationship as follows:

New England, which traded with the British West Indies from the outset, found its most intimate link there with an island far from the others, in the teeth of Spanish continental power. By the time of the great Puritan migration that founded Massachusetts Bay in 1630, the West Indies was as inviting a place for some religious refugees as New England was, and in the same year a group of Puritan planters founded a colony at Providence, off the coast of Nicaragua . . . Providence developed a standard West Indies planter class, which freely owned Negro slaves. . . ⁹⁹

Trade between the mainland colonies of North America and the islands of the West Indies served to disrupt the well-oiled machine that was the triangular trade, diverting profits from the trade to the mainland colonies and creating a wealthy merchant class in New England.

This newfound wealth did not go unnoticed by the English government, as it attempted to pay down the large national debt incurred as a result of the Seven Years' War, a complex worldwide war triggered by major trade disputes between various mercantilist nations. This war raged across Europe, North America, and India, pitting allied groups against one another with the French, Russians, Swedish, and Spanish on one side and the British, Prussians, and the House of Hanover on the other. In 1762, with the treasury all but empty, England stopped its subsidy for the war, which subsequently caused the war to wind down. This trade conflict along with other conflicts of the eighteenth century was not merely about profit and loss, they were intensely political and ideological in nature, with mercantilism serving as the lightning rod at the center. At its core, mercantilism is monopolistic. Economic theorists and political leaders operating within the mercantilist paradigm believed that the world's wealth was finite, and could most clearly be gauged in terms of gold bullion. This meant that nations attempted to acquire absolute trade advantages through tariffs, monopolies and even blockades in order to gain the lion's share of the world's finite wealth. These measures often lead to war.

Eventually, the concepts of "free trade" and later "comparative advantage" began to take hold in England even though the notion of "comparative advantage" had not become a fully articulated theory. The theoretical articulation of the concept of "free trade" was set forth by Adam Smith in his seminal work entitled *An Inquiry into the Nature and Cause of the Wealth of Nations*, published in 1776. In this classic work Smith writes, "If a foreign country can supply us with a commodity cheaper than we ourselves can make it, better buy it off them with some part of the produce of our own industry, employed in a way in which we have some advantage."¹⁰⁰ Smith's statement served as the partial catalyst for the theory of "comparative advantage" later set forth by David Ricardo in his work entitled *On the Principles of Political Economy and Taxation*, published in 1817.

Ricardo's explanation of "comparative advantage" can be summarized in the following hypothetical trade exchange. France has a comparative advantage in trade if it can produce a particular item at a lower cost than its trading partner England. France may not be the best at producing item "A" but it can still have a "comparative advantage" in other areas of production. For example, England may have the potential to be better at producing not only item "A" but "B," "C," and "D." However, if England does not have the labor and capital resources to excel at producing all four items, it must focus on producing only one item, such as "A," in order to gain an "absolute advantage" in that one area of trade. This then gives France a lower "economic or opportunity cost," i.e. the benefit of choosing to produce an item, such as "B," outweighs

the loss of producing item “A.” This is the case given France’s inability to meet the quality and quantity standards necessary to gain an “absolute advantage” over England in the production of item “A.” This lower “economic or opportunity cost” gives France a chance to develop a “comparative advantage” over England by producing item “B” at a lower cost. This means that France has a “comparative advantage” in the production of item “B”, whereas England has an “absolute advantage” in the production of item “A,” which ultimately leads to a mutually beneficial trade relationship. Christopher A. Bayly, in his masterpiece entitled *The Birth of the Modern World*, states:

In the new century, however, the British and Americans of the southern states, in particular, came to believe in the virtues of free trade and the evils of monopoly. This was not just an economic theory, as it had been in the works of the Scottish economist Adam Smith or his French equivalent François Quesnay. It became an article of faith to the extent that some statesmen and theorists believed that the laws of the free market were virtually the cornerstones of God’s plan for mankind.¹⁰¹

Free market capitalism eventually became the engine that would drive Western hegemony, “the desire to gain access to large markets in Asia, Africa, and Latin America without paying high tariffs became a key aspect of policy. British statesmen in general and Lord Palmerston, British foreign secretary and prime minister, in particular, wished devoutly to open up world trade and believed it right to do so by force of arms if necessary . . .”¹⁰² First under British imperialism and later under the hegemonic inclinations of the United States, the forcing of world markets to yield to the new order of the ages became common place. If one were to apply the eminent theologian Paul Tillich’s definition of a quasi-religion to free market capitalism, the West would have to be considered its basilica.

Although the New England trade in agricultural commodities was not a direct part of the triangular trade, it provided a sizable portion of the revenue stream that helped keep New England’s end of the triangular trade afloat. Moneys derived from the West Indies’ trade in agricultural commodities helped purchase the sugar needed to produce the molasses for the distilling of rum. Parenthetically, it is interesting to note that the process for distilling alcohol was not developed in the West. This process was gained from the Arabs, who used it to refine oil for lamps and to extract essential oils for perfumes. The profits from the trade in agricultural commodities also allowed the colonists to purchase manufactured goods from England. Rum and English manufactured goods were critical to that portion of the triangular trade that began in New England, because they were needed in the negotiations for African slaves.

Given the existence of this tangential trade between New England and the West Indies, it is no surprise that British Parliament passed the Molasses Act of 1733, prohibiting the British-held colonies of the Americas from exporting to foreign islands of the Caribbean and imposing high duties on foreign sugar and molasses. As previously stated, the newfound wealth of New England merchants did not go unnoticed by the British government. With this newfound wealth came higher taxes, as England's new and rather anti-American prime minister, George Grenville, attempted to decrease England's debt and at the same time increase its control over its American colonies, which by this time had begun to circumvent the navigation laws and the Molasses Tax by engaging in smuggling. Grenville first addressed the problem of lost tax revenues that resulted from colonial smuggling by sending the Royal Navy to enforce the Navigation Acts. Then in 1764, Grenville shepherded the Sugar Act through Parliament with the intent of raising taxes on imported goods, particularly sugar. This act had a major impact on New England trade, because molasses, a by-product of sugar, was necessary for the production of rum and, as previously stated, was critical to the African slave trade. In his effort to further control the colonies, Grenville gained passage of the Quartering Act, which required the colonies to pay for the maintenance of up to 10,000 British troops on American soil. In another attempt to control the loss of revenues from the colonies, Grenville secured the passage of the Currency Act of 1764, forbidding the colonies from issuing currency that was not redeemable in gold or silver. However, the most inflammatory piece of legislation pushed through Parliament by Grenville was the Stamp Act of 1765, which posed a direct tax on every purchase made by the colonists. For the colonists, this was the first time that they had a tax directly imposed on them for everything from clothing to newspapers. The Stamp Act required colonists to purchase revenue stamps for every item purchased. It was, in essence, a harsh sales tax that was particularly hard on the poor. The Stamp Act inflamed the colonists because it ignored the advantage already afforded the British by their mercantilist trading restrictions and created an overwhelming drain of hard currency from the colonies.

Taxes and duties on such basic commodities as sugar, molasses, rum, lead, paper, tea, paint, and glass began to undermine the profits of the merchant class. This resulted in increasing friction between the merchants and the British tax collectors. Initially, the colonial reaction was staid, as it relied primarily on petitions and leaflets with slogans such as the famous "taxation without representation is tyranny." When prices began to rise as a result of this increased taxation, the general citizenry, who were suffering the most, became angered. Eventually, their protest culminated in a violent clash with colonial officials. New England merchants, driven by their anger over the

erosion of profits, the stationing of British troops, and taxation without representation, began to organize the general citizenry to push for independence.

In the South, planters were amassing great fortunes from slavery. The African slave trade allowed southern planters to emerge as wealthy, privileged elite. Audrey Smedley, in *Race in North America*, describes the southern planters as follows:

These large plantation owners were powerful enough to become formidable opponents of English colonial policies. They resented, among other things, taxation; control of exports and imports; and interference with their business enterprises through numerous, vexatious laws, particularly the arbitrary setting of the price of tobacco and the attempted regulation of the slave trade. In their confrontations with England, the plantation owners developed an ideology of republicanism to promote their cause, inspired by John Locke's view of liberty and society. Every man, they argued, had the right to life, liberty, and property. Liberty was construed generally as freedom from government interference in private lives. Property was construed . . . as an inalienable right equivalent in profundity to life itself. Government should exist, the colonists insisted, only to protect people in the exercise of their proprietary rights and from foreign invasions. When government exceeds these mandates, it becomes tyrannical and oppressive.

These were political and social values with which even the poorest landowners (or would-be landowners) could identify. All concurred in the belief that the man who owned his own property had the God-given, natural right to protect it. In this freedom, with responsibility, he was the equal of every other man with property. In this, and in other economic matters, the small landowner recognized common interests with the large planter. A growing republican philosophy bound them together, especially as opposition to English policies grew.¹⁰³

The common belief in the ideas of a new form of republicanism among the majority of the colonists explains why so many of those without property and with limited means became involved in the colonial resistance and the ultimate revolution. It was the dream of becoming a landed person of means that was driving them. Under the old aristocracy, status was prescribed, but under this new republicanism, they believed that status could be earned despite one's origins.

This new republicanism was not the product of ivory-tower theorists, but like most political philosophies, it originated "within the context of ongoing debates about the nature of political reality and struggles over societal goals and the most efficacious means for achieving them."¹⁰⁴ Before delving more deeply into the origins and true nature of this new republicanism, a definition of what constitutes a political philosophy needs to be established. Politics is the societal exercising of power and influence. And it is a society's political

philosophy that provides a clear articulation of the underlying assumptions about “what is” and “what ought to be” the political reality of that society. A political philosophy “includes theories about human nature, the origins of government, and the relationship between government and society. Political philosophies also identify practices, institutions, and historical agencies through which the desired future should be pursued. They include ethical standards for judging both individuals and institutions. Thus, a political philosophy stipulates both means and ends and provides evaluative criteria for assessing programs and policies undertaken in its name.”¹⁰⁵ Like most political philosophies that challenge the status quo, this new republicanism confronted the British establishment by providing the colonists with “the basis for a different interpretation of reality and [gave] ideological support for an alternative course of human development.”¹⁰⁶

The foundation of this newly emerging ideology of American republicanism was rooted in the philosophy of Enlightenment, which put forth the argument that “every man had the right to life, liberty, and property.” This political philosophy, taken on face value and out of its social and historic context, is an extraordinarily compelling vision. However, when analyzed within the social and historic context of slavery, this ideology falls prey to a profound irony and a number of moral and logical inconsistencies, such that it becomes a mockery of itself. Just the mere fact that much of this ideology’s rhetoric of liberty was inspired by Enlightenment philosophers such as John Locke and Voltaire is irony enough, given the gap between their rhetoric and the reality of their behavior. Who were these men whose words so inspired the colonial elite? As previously stated, Locke was a young professor of philosophy at Oxford University who is often referred to as the philosopher of liberty. However, while inspiring the colonists with thoughts on life and liberty, “he was a shareholder in the Royal African Company, whose initials, RAC, would be branded on so many black breasts in Africa during the last quarter of the seventeenth century.”¹⁰⁷ Locke’s holdings in the Royal African Company were “£400 of stock to begin with, and £200 more in 1675.”¹⁰⁸ Given the conflict between Locke’s philosophy, which espoused the natural human rights to life and liberty, and his interest in the world’s most powerful slave trading enterprise, one might ask how he reconciled such an obvious discrepancy. Locke rationalizes his way out of this conundrum by simply stating that slavery is a “state of war continued between a lawful conqueror and a captive.”¹⁰⁹ English arrogance and racism, it can be argued, also influenced Locke’s attitudes about slavery. The English were, after all, extremely ethnocentric and viewed “themselves as not only distinct from others, but superior.”¹¹⁰

When it came to the slave trade, hypocrisy was not limited to Locke; there was also Voltaire, the grand figure of the Enlightenment, who made fun of

“those who call themselves whites . . . [while he proceeded] to purchase blacks cheaply in order to sell them expensively in the Americas.”¹¹¹ Voltaire, whose revolutionary words and courageous crusades against tyranny, cruelty, and bigotry inspired the colonists to seek liberty, was in the final analysis of history corrupted by greed, as he too dabbled in the very trade that he condemned.¹¹² Voltaire, like Locke, was able to rationalize his way around the inconsistency of his words and behavior by arguing “we are superior to the Africans because they sell each other.”¹¹³ This rationalization was a canard; Africans very seldomly sold people from their own ethnic group into slavery. However, when it did occur, those sold into slavery were typically imprisoned criminals. In fairness to Voltaire, perhaps he was mistaken and assumed that all Africans were one people bound by color. The fact of the matter, however, was that Africans viewed themselves as members of separate nations who were no more bound to each other by color than were the English and the Spaniards. At any rate, Voltaire’s rationalization provides him no defense against being hailed a hypocrite. The profound irony of this new ideology of republicanism is the hypocrisy, and intellectual and moral corruption, of the philosophers who inspired it.

This new American republicanism that captured the minds and spirits of colonial American was not only tainted by the hypocrisy of the Enlightenment thinkers, it was also flawed by moral and philosophical inconsistencies in both its logic and practice. The most obvious moral flaw was the institution of slavery itself and its critical role in the economic lives of those who were demanding freedom. Africans had begun their history in the British colony of Virginia as indentured servants, with many of them working off their servitude, becoming landowners, colonial citizens, and even elected officials, only to be systematically forced overtime into racial slavery. Clearly, the legal sanctioning of slavery flew in the face of Christian principles, the concept of human rights, and the philosophy of liberty as espoused by those who believed in the Enlightenment. Not to include the abolition of slavery in this new American republicanism was far more than hypocrisy; it was immoral in its intent. Avarice was at the heart and soul of the colonial quest for liberty. Slave owners used every excuse to justify the subjugation of Africans. Their rationalizations ranged from claiming that Africans were not human and hence could be treated as beasts of burden, to invoking the “curse of Ham.” This curse provided them with the theological justification for enslaving Africans, because they believed that black people were doomed by the supposed sins of their ancestors to be enslaved by all others for all eternity. If whites believed that Africans were not human, then why did so many white men marry African women during the early years of the colonies, and why did white slave owners continue to seek sexual liaisons with slave women by

either seduction or force? Would not such behavior be considered bestiality? Of course, the general colonial population knew that blacks were humans after well over 100 years of close personal contact and interaction. The most pressing question posed by slavery is how could a society that professed to be Christian sanction slavery? If a society claims to believe in Christianity, then the words of Christ, when he proclaimed “all things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them,”¹¹⁴ and those of Saint Paul, who declared, “God hath made of one blood all men and all nations of men,”¹¹⁵ should serve as a moral standard for that society’s behavior. Within the context of Christianity, slavery should not have been a defensible institution in colonial America. Yet, for 224 years, beginning under colonial law in 1641, slavery dominated much of the social, political, economic, and moral life of the American colonies and the country that those colonies would eventually unite to form.

One of the purposes of a political philosophy, as previously stated, is to establish “ethical standards for judging both individuals and institutions [by stipulating] both means and ends and [providing] evaluative criteria for assessing programs and policies undertaken in [that philosophy’s] name.”¹¹⁶ It is clear from the historical record that the issue of slavery was considered when the colonists debated the possibility of an independent American republic. However, it was equally clear that the ethical standards of the Enlightenment were distorted in their application. If the Enlightenment criteria that endowed all men with the right to life, liberty, and property were used to evaluate the individuals and institutions of this period, then surely slavery would have been abolished. The glaring contradiction between the Enlightenment assertions of John Locke, that “[p]roperty was . . . an inalienable [human] right equivalent in profundity to life itself”¹¹⁷ and the fact that black men, women, and children were owned and consciously counted as property, served to reduce this new American republicanism to self-indulgent rhetoric. And it was this rhetoric that was eventually used to justify a revolution in the name of property and privilege for some, not equality and freedom for all. It appears that the only proposition from John Locke’s philosophy that was truly embraced is the notion that “government should exist . . . only to protect people in the exercise of their property rights and from foreign invasion.”¹¹⁸ Led by the elite of the southern planter class and the entrepreneurs of the northern bourgeoisie, the colonies began to resist the parental rules of England’s Parliament. Much of the initial leadership of the independence movement came from the South. In the southern colonies, particularly Virginia, the most influential men were those descendants of early planters who owned many slaves and could afford lives of leisure and travel. They had time and the wealth to dabble in politics, read the classics, send their children to school in Europe, and emulate European aristocracy.¹¹⁹ However, it was not enough

for the southern planters to merely emulate the aristocratic elite of England and Europe; they eventually aspired to become the aristocracy of the “New World.” Ultimately, the aspirations of the colonial elite became transformed into a desire for autonomy as a reaction to the greed of England’s mercantilist class and the imposition of greater parliamentary controls over the economic life of the colonies. If the English elites had taken under advisement the words Francis Bacon, the American Revolution could possibly have been averted. Bacon, in his essay “Of Plantations,” states the following:

Plantations are amongst ancient, primitive, and heroical works. When the world was young, it begat more children; but now it is old, it begets fewer: for I may justly account new plantations, to be the children of former kingdoms. I like a plantation in a pure soil; that is, where people are not displanted, to the end, to plant in others. For else it is rather an extirpation, than a plantation. Planting of countries is like planting of woods; for you must make account to leese almost twenty years’ profit, and expect your recompense in the end. For the principal thing, that hath been the destruction of most plantation, hath been the base and hasty drawing of profit, in the first years. It is true, speedy profit is not to be neglected, as far as may stand with the good of the plantation, but no further Let not the government of the plantation, depend upon too many counsellors, and undertakers, in the country that planteth, but upon a temperate number; and let those be rather noblemen and gentlemen, than merchants; for they look ever to the present gain. Let there be freedom from custom, till the plantation be of strength; and not only freedom from custom, but freedom to carry their commodities, where they may make their best of them, except there be some special cause of caution.¹²⁰

Eventually, the large plantation owners became powerful enough to act on their growing resentment, presenting such a serious threat to British colonial rule that the king and Parliament felt that military action was necessary to preserve their economic interest.

Bring me men to match my mountains,
 Bring me men to match my plains,
 Men with empires in their purpose,
 And new eras in their brains.

—S.W. Foss, *The Coming American*, 1894

NOTES

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Chapter Six

The Constitution: A Guarantor of Property Rights and a Blueprint for Racial Inequality

[Americans] must . . . come to grips with the moral dilemma that impaled leaders of the American Revolution and confounded other enlightened men of goodwill throughout the Western world for the better part of a century. The root of the dilemma was the rationalistic doctrine of natural rights, which linked freedom and justice with the inviolability of property and which was the philosophical platform of the Revolution. Men who rebelled because the confiscatory taxes of Parliament and the arbitrary regulations of the Crown had diminished their wealth were bound to be confounded by the demand for compulsory abolition of slavery. Despite anguish and desire, most of the founding fathers and their intellectual heirs were unable to find an apt solution to the conflict between the natural rights of the enslaved to their freedom and the natural right of the masters to security of their property.

—Robert William Fogel, *Without Consent or Contract*

When the Founding Fathers penned the Declaration of Independence, Constitution, and Bill of Rights, they avoided the moral dilemma of racial slavery with its attending losses of liberty and humanity for one group in the service of another. The moral dilemma of slavery, an issue that would eventually plunge this fledgling nation into a ruinous Civil War, was avoided in order to forge a constitutional compromise. In crafting this constitutional compromise, the Founding Fathers, for the self-serving ends of greed and collective ends of unity, chose to deal with the question of human bondage as a political and economic issue, rather than one of morality and ethics. By separating the reasoning behind their compromise into two epistemologically unkempt compartments, they were able to create a highly rationalized partition between their ends of political and economic freedom and the means to their

ends, racial slavery. Thus, this separation enabled them to fashion an uneasy but functional peace within themselves and between each other. This compromise welded the non-slave holding colonies of the North and the slave-holding colonies of the South into an imperfect union. Without this dark compromise, it would have been impossible to persuade the southern colonies to join the Union. Therefore, in 1787, the Founding Fathers, by making a conscious decision to set forth a Constitution that included provisions for slavery, befouled the cause of liberty. By flinging the rotting corpse of human bondage into the wellspring from whence the fundamental principles governing freedom and equality would flow, they poisoned the soul of this democracy for centuries to come. Interestingly, “[t]he word ‘slavery’ appears in only one place in the Constitution—in the Thirteenth Amendment, where the institution is abolished. Throughout the main body of the Constitution, slaves are referred to as ‘other persons,’ ‘such persons,’ or in the singular as a ‘person held to Service or Labour.’”¹ Although slavery is never directly referred to in the non-amended portion of the Constitution, the noun “person,” however obscure in its description, is quite transparent in its deception.

Article I

Section 2. Clause 3. Representatives and direct Taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within this Union, according to their respective Numbers, which shall be determined by adding to the whole Number of free Persons, including those bound to Service for a Term of Years [indentured servants], and excluding Indians not taxed, three fifths of all other Persons [referring to the black slave population of each state] . . .

Section 9. Clause 1. The Migration or Importation of such Persons [slaves] as any of the States now existing shall think proper to admit, shall not be prohibited by the Congress prior to the Year one thousand eight hundred and eight, but a tax or duty may be imposed on such Importation, not exceeding ten dollars for each Person [slave].

Article IV

Section 2. Clause 1. The Citizens of each State shall be entitled to all Privileges and Immunities of Citizens in the several States.

Section 2. Clause 3. No Person held to Service or Labour [a slave] in one State, under the Laws thereof, escaping into another, shall, in Consequence of any Law or Regulation therein, be discharged from such Service or Labour [released from bondage], But shall be delivered up on Claim of the Party [slave master] to whom such Service or Labour may be due.

Articles one and four provide clear and compelling evidence of what one could arguably claim represents an amoral utilitarianism and the height of moral corruption on the part of the Founding Fathers. In Article I, Section 2,

Clause 3, the Founding Fathers not only legitimized slavery, but also granted a representative bonus in Congress to the slave states by allowing them, for the purpose of representation, to count slaves as three-fifths of a person. What must these black men and women have thought? Imagine being a slave and facing the cruel irony of living in a representative democracy where your body is counted and used as a political instrument of your own oppression. In addition, Section 9, Clause 1 of this article allowed the importation of slaves until 1808. However, this clause, “The Migration or Importation of such Persons [slaves] as any of the States now existing shall think proper to admit shall not be prohibited by the Congress prior to the Year one thousand eight hundred and eight, but a tax or duty may be imposed on such Importation not exceeding ten dollars for each Person [slave],” is misleading. “Awkwardly phrased and designed to confuse readers, this clause prevented Congress from ending the African slave trade before 1808, but did not require Congress to ban the trade after that date. The clause was a significant exception to the general power granted to Congress to regulate all commerce.”²²

Article IV, Section 2, Clause 3 later served as the legal foundation of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793, which was passed by the Second Congress of the United States. The constitutionality of this law was later challenged, but upheld by the Supreme Court in *Prigg v. Pennsylvania*, 41 U.S. (16 Pet.) 539 (1842). Some sixty-three years after the Constitution was set forth, the plight of slaves was further compounded by the Missouri Compromise of 1850, which strengthened the Constitutional provisions for slavery and the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793.

For anyone with an independent mind and a willingness to look with honest eyes, Article I and IV of the Constitution serve as *prima facie* evidence of this nation’s failure to meet its first moral and ethical crisis. Some of the most intelligent and gifted men of their time, many of whom prided themselves on their Enlightenment philosophy, failed to rise to the level of their own moral and ethical rhetoric. On what ontological reality could their reasoning be based, and by what epistemological route could they have arrived at this compromise? Moreover, how could men so wedded to the Enlightenment notion of liberty render their epistemology utterly corrupt by separating the moral and ethical principles undergirding that liberty from the construction of their new political and economic beginnings? If one reviews the historical record, it becomes obvious that the Founding Fathers were profoundly influenced by their Renaissance and Enlightenment heroes, as evidenced by intellectual historian Peter Gay’s list of the following American disciples of European thought and the learned authorities to which they paid deference.

Traces of this discipleship mark the leading figures of the American Revolution. Benjamin Franklin confessed that he had formed his style on Addison’s *Specta-*

tor . . . perfected his knowledge of modern science by studying the English Newtonians. He greatly admired Voltaire early and late for his good sense. . . . John Adams . . . made it no secret that his defense of “lawful” revolution owed much to Grotius, Pufendorf, Barbeyrac; his political outlook much to Harrington, Locke, Montesquieu; his view of human nature much to Hutcheson, Ferguson, Bolingbroke. . . . Even more than Adams, Thomas Jefferson was European to the bone. . . . He loved the classics but also used them, as the European philosophes had used them, to free itself from the burdens of belief; he worshipped the three giants—Bacon, Newton, and Locke—whom Voltaire, d’Alembert, Hume, Lichtenberg, and Kant also worshipped, as the trinity of the three greatest men the world had ever seen.

[James] Madison imitated Addison’s style and found Voltaire congenial. Locke and Dubos, Montesquieu and Hume shaped his political thought and, with that, the Constitution of the United States. . . . Finally, whatever the ultimate reasons for Alexander Hamilton’s eventual estrangement from this group, it was not caused by any disagreements about the European Enlightenment . . . [he too had grasp of] Pufendorf and Burlamaqui, Locke and Montesquieu. . . . Even George Washington, though less of an intellectual than his colleagues, did not escape, and almost automatically adopted their enlightenment philosophy.³

Of course, the Founding Fathers were afflicted with the same ethnocentric customs and prejudices that their Enlightenment heroes were. This ethnocentrism allowed them to dehumanize Africans and enslave them because their customs and physical appearance differed from their own.

Although the constitutional framers were profoundly influenced by the ideals of the Enlightenment, they, like their European heroes, were caught up in the need for political expedience and seduced by economic greed. Tragically, these moral and ethical lapses overshadowed the Enlightenment principles they referenced in the drafting of the Constitution. Audrey Smedley, in *Race in North America*, argues that with the inclusion of Articles I and IV:

America’s first leaders demonstrated the extreme degree to which black slaves had come to be seen as mere property. The close interlinking of life, liberty, and the right to property has been a consistent and enduring theme throughout American history. When the country’s leaders spoke of individual or private rights, they always meant rights of property, which tended to eclipse all others. Such actions also reflected the transparent ambivalence that we saw in Jefferson, and in many other minds, about the humanity of slaves.⁴

It was this commitment to property and the obsession with it that bound this new and potentially fractious union together. The Founding Fathers were virtual brothers whose family identity was rooted in property. To be without property was to be without identity. An individual was no more than a vagabond without property—mere flotsam and jetsam, afloat without land to

sink roots into, unable to vote or hold office, devoid of status, a citizen free, free to drift in a perpetual state of powerlessness.

How did property and the individual obsession with its acquisition come to assume such an important role in the West, and why is property so central to the personal identity of its inhabitants? Even in Europe, at one point in history, land was viewed as the common possession of a nation, handed down by God to the people, and held in trust by the monarch in a hierarchy of stewardship, which flowed in authority through the nobles to the commoners. The private taking of the great commons of Europe first began in England at the end of the medieval era. This trend towards privatization swept across Europe on the hooves of capitalism, like an unbridled steed—directionless, wild, and committed to its own survival.

In an attempt to posit a philosophical definition of property, Joel Kovel states, “Property is some portion of the external world that man’s self may call its own.”⁵ Presumably, the acquisition of property expands one’s presence or sphere of influence, meaning “that a man’s self—the inner idea of his personage—is united with and enlarged by part of the ‘thing’- world.”⁶ The one aspect of the world that is presumably owned by every individual is one’s own body, unless it is in bondage as a slave to another, and even then, one has ultimate power over his or her body through suicide. However, if a slave chose life over suicide, the system of slavery transforms that person, according to David Davis, into a “mere extension of his master’s physical nature.”⁷ Kovel goes on to say, “[T]he West is extraordinary in that it has held for centuries that the *summum bonum* [the highest good] of life on earth is the expansion of the self through its acquisition of property.”⁸ The word property—“any object of value that a person may lawfully acquire and hold”⁹—derives its meaning from the Latin word *proprietas*. In Latin, *proprietas* originally referred to “the peculiar nature or quality of a thing,” however, this meaning became secondary to “ownership.” A further exploration of the Latin root of property reveals a distinction between that thing which is possessed by an individual and that thing which is commonly possessed by many. *Proprietas* is rooted in the Latin adjective *proprius* meaning “peculiar” or “own,” as opposed to *communis*, meaning common, or *alienus*, meaning another. In turn, there is linguistic evidence that *proprius* finds its roots in the Indo-European languages of Greek and Sanskrit. The related Greek words are *pro* and *prin*, with the related Sanskrit word being *pra*. All three of these words fall within a group of words that mean “before,” “in front,” “close to,” and “on behalf of.” *Pro*, *prin*, and *pra* are all similar in that they distinguish a thing from a group of things. From this etymological trail, it appears safe to conclude that property as a construct has evolved from a family of words that express the difference between one thing and a group of things by virtue of its unique in-

herent qualities or, more importantly to this analysis, its possession by an individual versus a collective.¹⁰

Modern Western concepts of ownership refer to “the state of being an owner” or the “one who has the legal title or right to or has possession of a thing.”¹¹ This concept of ownership finds its basis in Western property law; however, unlike conventional wisdom, private ownership of property is not a natural, universal, and inevitable byproduct of society. Of course, this is not to say that non-western societies have no concept of private property. In fact, most societies, even those that are collectivistic, provide for personal control over certain kinds of things, rules to determine who controls things, and procedures for the transference of things from one living person to another, or between the deceased and living. However, the belief that private ownership in the capitalist sense is ubiquitous, normative, and central to all societies is the product of Western ethnocentrism. This ethnocentric view of private property fosters an assumption among most Westerners that collectively oriented societies, which by their very nature limit the scope of private ownership, are unnatural, deviant, and somehow backward.

Essential to the Western notion of property is the individual and his or her legal right to claim private domain over a thing. Samuel von Pufendorf, the seventeenth-century German historian, philosopher, and jurist, theorized that the origins of property rights, as a construct, emerged from the interplay of individual and state action. On an individual level, he argued that there had to be a person who could physically wrest control of an object of property. In addition to an individual seizing an object, there had to be a politically sanctioned entity—the state—to bestow the right of possession on the individual who had acquired the object of property. The state also had to be able to exercise the power to protect that individual’s right of possession against those bent on seizing it. However, John Locke, Pufendorf’s English counterpart, had a somewhat different view as to the origins of property rights. For Locke, it was not enough to seize a thing; one had to put some effort or labor into a thing in order to claim a right to possess it. He also argued that dominion over a thing was a natural right that drew its basis from the labor invested in it. The great Western expansion of the United States into the Indian territories, beginning in the latter part of the eighteenth century and through the nineteenth century, represents a concrete example of Samuel von Pufendorf’s theory of property, especially at the height of the land rush. The seizing of Native American land was legitimized by the kind of reasoning put forth by Pufendorf. Land was seized and claimed by individuals and groups in the name of the United States. This seizure and expansion quite naturally triggered wars with the various “Indian” nations. However, this fact did not seem to concern the white settlers or the government officials, who sponsored

them. According to the author of *The Tide of Empire: America's March to the Pacific*, Michael Golay:

Americans offered no apology, then or later. Indian war, the treasury agent J. Ross Browne wrote in 1857, "is the natural result of immigration and settlement. . . . The history of our Indian wars will show that the primary cause is the progress of civilization, to which the inferior races, from their habits and instincts, are naturally opposed." In Oregon, . . . the territorial legislature, with its Land Donation Law of 1850, in effect issued an invitation to settlers to seize Indian lands. The tribes of Willamette Valley, Browne conceded, were simply informed that the country no longer belonged to them.¹²

Ethically, the seizure of Native American land is often justified using the philosophical reasoning of John Locke, who argues that individuals and groups who put the land to a supposedly "more productive use" should have title to that land. In addition, Browne wrote of the Native Americans whose lands were seized by white settlers: "They could never be taught to comprehend that subtle species of argument by which another race could come among them, put them aside, ignore their claims, and assume possession, on the grounds of being superior people."¹³ The "subtle species of argument" of which Browne writes is that white settlers, as a "superior people," would supposedly put in the effort and ingenuity necessary to improve the land. Golay writes the following:

By 1890 two million Americans had migrated to the Country of the Setting Sun [the West]. Just as they arranged for most of the original inhabitants to disappear, the Americans in their furious energy reshaped the landscape of the conquered lands, from the pristine hinterland . . . of Puget Sound to . . . California . . . They hacked wagon roads through the mountains, burrowed into the hillsides in quest of mineral wealth, cut down . . . forests, dredged harbors, rerouted rivers, excavated canals, plowed under . . . prairies for wheat, turned livestock loose to range where they allowed the grasslands to survive, and laid down iron ribbons of railroad tracks that stretched beyond the horizon.¹⁴

This was the legacy for Native Americans of the Founders' commitment to this Western notion of property rights—the supplanting of human rights by property rights.

According to Locke, an individual's right to possess property did not require state sanction, but he argued that it was the duty of the state to protect an individual's property rights.¹⁵

[W]hen the Framers of the Constitution said that the protection of property was a (or the) fundamental purpose for submitting to the authority of government,

they understood that the word *property* had more meanings than one. In its older and more general sense, it was related to the word *proper*, derived from the Latin *proprius*, meaning particular to, or appropriate to, an individual person. John Locke usually (though not invariably) used the term in that way. In the more restricted and more common usage, by the late eighteenth century property had come to be related to the idea of dominion, derived from the Latin *dominus*, meaning lordship, and ultimately from *domus*, meaning house. Sir William Blackstone used the term thus in his celebrated definition: “that sole and despotic dominion which one man claims and exercises over external things of the world, in total exclusion of the right of any other individual in the universe.”¹⁶

Within the context of capitalism and John Locke’s definition of property, a human being could also be considered as an individual’s possession or a capital asset. However, this redefinition could not occur until there was state action sanctioning the devolution of slave status to that of property by Constitutional law. In order to define Africans as property, all whites had to do within the Anglo-American conception of property was to seize African people as slaves, invest in their transport, create a system of husbandry, and organize their labor through a carefully structured mechanism of servile oppression and control.

Again, for the West, “the *summum bonum* of life on earth is expansion of self through acquisition of property,” an assertion that, if accepted, makes property the axiological centerpiece of Western identity. To understand the central role of property in Europe and North America, one must make an axiological comparison between Western cultures and those of Africa, Asia, and aboriginal America. Axiology in this work refers to the philosophical study of goodness or value. In the cultures of the West, the most fundamental axiological relationship is between “man” and the object world. For Africans, the fundamental axiological relationship is “man” to “man,” meaning that the highest value is placed on interpersonal relationships. Asians and Native Americans place the highest value on group cohesion, meaning that the fundamental axiological relationship is “man” to “group.”¹⁷ Ergo, one’s relationship to the material realm is what defines one’s worth in the West, hence it follows that the extent of one’s worth is directly proportional to one’s material acquisitions. On the other hand, however, for Africans, Asians, and Native Americans, one’s worth would be determined by one’s ability to develop interpersonal and collective relationships with others. Central to the Western notion of property is the individual and the individual’s right to property, beginning with the control of one’s self.

Parenthetically, it should be noted that one of the primary sources of contention between the so-called “underdeveloped” nations of the non-western

world and the West during the latter part of the twentieth century and the beginning of this century has been and continues to be over multinational corporate ownership of those nation's businesses, lands, and natural resources. The administration of George W. Bush, in its effort to rebuild Iraq, provides an excellent example of John Locke's political philosophy. Again, Locke argues that the unequal appropriation of a major share of a society's wealth by a few individuals is not only reasonable but also appropriate according to "natural law."¹⁸ Naomi Klein, in an article entitled "Baghdad Year Zero: Pillaging Iraq in Pursuit of a Neocon Utopia," argues that the Bush Administration, its neoconservative advisors, and multinational corporate supporters have approached the rebuilding of Iraq based on a philosophy "that greed is good." L. Paul Bremer, in charge of the occupational government of Iraq, stated at an economic summit in Jordan just before the Iraq War that it was important to get "inefficient state enterprises into private hands." Upon the occupation of Iraq, he began reengineering the Iraqi economy by issuing several transformational orders. Three of these orders—37, 39, and 40—"lowered Iraq's corporate tax rate from roughly 40 percent to 15 percent . . . allow[ed] foreign companies to own 100 percent of Iraqi assets outside of the natural-resource sector . . . permitted investors [to] take 100 percent of the profits out of the country . . . [and] welcomed foreign banks to Iraq under the same favorable terms [as the multinational corporations]." She goes on to write that greed for the Bush Administration, the neoconservatives, and multinational corporations is "[n]ot just good for them and their friends but for humanity, and certainly good for Iraqis. Greed creates jobs, products, services, and everything else anyone could possibly need or want. The role of good government, then, is to create the optimal conditions for corporations to pursue their bottomless greed, so that they in turn can meet the needs of society."¹⁹

Not only are Western corporations privatizing the world's economies, but even water rights, flora, and fauna of the world are falling under corporate control. One powerful example of a corporate attempt at privatizing a nation's most critical natural resource, water, occurred in Bolivia. Swept up by the worldwide wave of corporate privatization and pressured by the World Bank to privatize its utilities, the Bolivian government contracted with Aguas del Tunari, the major shareholder of which is International Water Ltd., a subsidiary of the American-owned Bechtel, "to run the water system of Cochabamba, a water-starved region in central Bolivia. . . . The government in compliance with its contract with the company passed a law that prohibited people from collecting water from local lagoons, rivers, deltas, and even rain water."²⁰

In addition, with regard to the earth's flora and fauna, progress in the science of genetics has enabled corporations to identify, isolate, and extract

genes from living organisms for the purpose of biological engineering of plant and animal DNA. These advances, coupled with the U.S. Supreme Court's decision to allow the patenting of a bacterium that had been bio-engineered to consume oil spills, has opened a metaphysical Pandora's Box, allowing life in the broadest sense to become private property. The next logical step, based on this legal precedent, was the patenting of animal and human DNA, which led to the patenting of cloned animals. With the patenting of plant and animal DNA has come the ownership and control of many of the biological products that constitute the world's food supply. Now that plant life has been engineered and animals cloned, what is next? Will humans be cloned and for what purpose? Will another form of human chattel emerge as a logical conclusion to the Western concept of property? Noam Chomsky, in a lecture on his book, *Manufacturing Consent*, stated:

Modern industrial civilization has developed within a certain system of convenient myths. The driving force of our industrial civilization has been individual material gain, which is accepted as legitimate, even praiseworthy on the grounds that private vices yield public benefits in the classic formulation. [But] it's long been understood . . . that a society that is based on this principle will destroy itself in time. [Such a society] can only persist with whatever suffering and injustice it entails, as long as it is possible to pretend that the destructive forces that humans create are limited, that the world is an infinite resource, and that the world is an infinite garbage can. At this stage of history, either one of two things is possible: either the general population will take control of its own destiny [from the controlling elite] and will concern itself with community interests, guided by values of solidarity and sympathy and concern for others, or alternatively, there will be no destiny for anyone to control.²¹

Before continuing this discussion on property, it is important briefly to explore the concept of individualism and its relationship to the modern definition of property held in the West. At the dawn of the first millennium, individualism was not a clearly articulated social, psychological, political, or philosophical construct. There was, however, an emerging sense of the uniqueness and importance of the individual as a valued and central aspect of society. This newly emerging sense of individualism finds its roots in the Judeo-Christian and Greek traditions of the West. However, the present-day Western construct of individualism did not truly come to fruition until the twilight of the medieval era and the political and economic dawning of modernity. It was at this point that new forms of normative restraint and governmental pressure would be brought to bear on the European citizenry, galvanizing this new sense of individual uniqueness and importance into a demand for personal efficacy. "Modern individualism emerged out of the struggle

against monarchical and aristocratic authority that seemed arbitrary and oppressive to citizens prepared to assert the right to govern themselves.”²² This emerging sense of individualism was wrapped in a fabric woven of “moral and religious obligation that in some contexts justified obedience as well as freedom.”²³ In fact, “[c]lassical republicanism evoked an image of the active citizen contributing to the public good and Reformation Christianity, [and] in both Puritan and sectarian forms, [it] inspired a notion of government based on the voluntary participation of individuals.”²⁴

A more radical form of individualism emerged later in seventeenth-century England, which did not rely on classical or biblical sources for its epistemological grounding, but instead was rooted in nature. According to this new paradigm, “the biological individual in a ‘state of nature’ . . . derived a social order from the actions of such individuals, first in relation to nature and then in relation to one another.”²⁵ It was John Locke, in his *Second Treatise of Civil Government*, who posed what could be characterized as “ontological individualism.” For him, “[t]he individual is prior to society, which comes into existence only through the voluntary contract of individuals trying to maximize their self-interest . . . [and] . . . [i]t is from this position that we have derived the tradition of utilitarian individualism.”²⁶ In essence, Locke is asserting that human beings do not find their origin and identity in social grouping, nor do they live together as a community by God’s design. Locke, again in his *Second Treatise of Civil Government*, states, “all men are naturally in that state and remain so till by their own consent they make themselves members of some political society.”²⁷ Reason, he contends, is the basis of that consent, the adhesive that holds community together. Locke believed that, “Men living together according to reason, without a common superior on earth with authority to judge between them, is properly the state of nature.”²⁸ He goes on to say, “The state of nature has a law of nature to govern it, which obliges everyone; and reason, which is the law, teaches all mankind who will but consult it that, being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty, or possessions.”²⁹ Modern, classical republican, and religious conceptions of individualism coexisted and vied for dominance in Europe and England for a long period. However, the modernist conception of individualism eventually held sway in the colonies of North America and, ultimately, became the dominant form in the United States, with its emphasis on what has come to be known as “rugged individualism.” This form of individualism stresses the dignity to be found in being autonomous and self-reliant. It would seem safe to say that the core identity of Western civilization, especially that of Northern Europe, England, and the United States, is rooted in individualism. Inherent in the United States’ emphasis on individualism, however, is the struggle that is created between the individual and the group. This struggle is

manifested in the intrinsic tension between the two core principles of the Constitution—freedom and equality. Freedom in the context of unrestrained capitalism threatens the liberty of everyone by creating a cutthroat economic environment that unleashes pure avarice and undermines the principle of equality.

Modern individualism eventually evolved into a comprehensive and ubiquitous philosophy of human nature that provides an ontological and epistemological framework for the social, political, and economic life of the United States. At the center of this philosophy is the individual, who is viewed as the supreme expression of society; it is this expression of the individual that is an end in itself. Society in this system of thought merely provides individuals with a vehicle for realizing their ends of autonomy, self-reliance, and property. Parallel, but often in conflict, is the notion of equality, or the assertion that all “men” are equal philosophically and before God. This meant that, theoretically, one person’s freedom could not impinge on or interfere with another’s right to be. The collectivism of the past in its various manifestations, be it kinship, tribal, ethnic, or religious, had subordinated the individual to the will of the group. Individualism and collectivism, in their purest form, stand in direct opposition and often in conflict with each other. Philosophers such as Voltaire and Locke came to view societal movements towards individualism as a war of liberation to emancipate the true potential of the individual from the restraints of collective obligation and conformity. This view was perfectly understandable, given the rigid hierarchy that was medieval Europe. Feudalism, as the primary social, political, and economic system of medieval Europe, subsumed individual rights and responsibilities and determined each person’s status by where he or she was placed in the feudal hierarchy of society.

This war for individual liberation would first manifest itself in the Protestant Reformation, a frontal assault on the papal hierarchy of the Catholic Church, and later in a series of revolts against the mercantilist economies of Europe’s monarchs. The Protestant Reformation would first liberate the conscience of its converts from the moral and ethical constraints of papal decrees and Catholic catechisms. Then would come a series of political revolutions that would liberate the citizenry, particularly the merchant class, from the various state-controlled mercantilist systems that had become insinuated into the most minute aspects of European economic life. The Glorious Revolution of England in 1688 would be the first of a series of great revolts, and then would come the millennium-transforming American Revolution in 1775, followed by the French Revolution in 1789.

America’s political philosophy would be profoundly influenced by England’s “philosopher of liberty,” John Locke. His theory of property incorporated what is often referred to as *possessive individualism*, a concept that

cemented the relationship between individualism and property by asserting that property is critical to life and liberty and is an absolute right of man. These assumptions are present in the Declaration of Independence, but do not fully manifest themselves in law until 1791, when they became the foundation upon which the Fourth and Fifth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution were based.

Fourth Amendment

The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.

Fifth Amendment

No person shall be held to answer for a capital, or otherwise infamous crime, unless on a presentment or indictment of a Grand Jury, except in cases arising in the land or naval forces, or in the Militia, when in actual service in time of War or public danger; nor shall any person be subject for the same offence to be twice put in jeopardy of life or limb; nor shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself, nor be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation.

In Locke's political philosophy, the state serves as a vehicle for the acquisition of property and a protector of individual property rights. The U.S. Constitution represents an extraordinary example of praxis, in that it is a practical application of Locke's political theory. However, it is the Fourth and Fifth Amendments to the Constitution that best represent one of the basic assumptions of *possessive individualism*, which is "that man is free and human by virtue of his sole proprietorship of his own person."³⁰

Ironically, the Fifth Amendment would be used in the 1857 Dred Scott case, to argue that slaves were property and, as such, any attempt to use the law to free a slave violated that slaveholder's property rights, as guaranteed under that amendment. This Supreme Court interpretation is another flagrant example of property rights trumping human rights. Ultimately, this travesty of justice was reversed in 1865 by the passing of the Thirteenth Amendment, which formally abolished slavery. However, the blurring of the line between property rights and human rights continued with another Constitutional irony. This time the irony involved the Fourteenth Amendment, which guaranteed, "[a]ll persons born or naturalized in the United States . . . are citizens of the United States and the state wherein they reside." The irony associated with the Fourteenth Amendment revolves around its paradoxical application,

which on one hand assured citizenship to African Americans who had been denied this right under *Dred Scott*, while on the other hand provided the legal grounds for corporations to gain the status of a person. In 1825, corporations were viewed merely as legally constructed instruments, chartered by grants from government to carry out publicly or privately mandated activity. However, as Joel Bakan points out in *The Corporation*:

By the end of the nineteenth century, through a bizarre legal alchemy, courts had fully transformed the corporation into a “person,” with its own identity, separate from the flesh-and-blood people who were its owners and managers and empowered, like a real person, to conduct business in its own name, acquire assets, employ workers, pay taxes, and go to court to assert its rights and defend its actions [all of which protects owners behind the shield of limited liability]. . . . The logic was that, conceived as natural entities analogous to human beings, corporations should be created as free individuals, a logic that informed the initiatives in New Jersey and Delaware, as well as the Supreme Court’s decision in 1886 that, because they were a “person,” corporations should be protected by the Fourteenth Amendment’s rights to “due process of law” and “equal protection of the laws,” rights originally entrenched in the Constitution to protect freed slaves.”³¹

Interestingly, twice as many court cases were filed on behalf of corporations under this Constitutional Amendment than were filed on behalf of former slaves. By granting the abstract embodiment of property, the corporation, the rights of a person, this ruling created the ultimate political irony. Prior to abolition, a slave was considered property but had no rights as a person; now property, in the form of the corporation, has the rights of a person. This interpretation of the Fourteenth Amendment represented a major victory for those who would continue to assert property rights over human rights and champion a renewed affirmation of the Western metaphysical relationship between “man and the material world.”

Of course, there are Constitutional historians who believe the Founding Fathers, when crafting the Constitution, were not as driven by concerns over property rights as they were by ideology. These scholars contend that the Founders reached back to traditional sources of received political wisdom that were rooted in Western antiquity to inform the deliberations that lay at the ideological origins of the revolution. It is their assertion that the Founders “were neither more nor less determined to protect private property as a foundation of personal freedom and to advance economic enterprise than their predecessors and opponents.”³² However, it is hard to believe that these “hard-nose practical men” of enterprise and means would become swept up, like members of an English debating society, in esoteric contests over neo-classical republican ideology when taxes, trading privileges, and profits were

at stake. After all, America gave rise to the philosophy of pragmatism because of the steely resolve and ax-like practical edge of America's pioneering entrepreneurial metaphysic. This is not to say that the founders did not believe in and rely upon the lexicon of their philosophical tradition to argue their political positions. But one should not lose sight of the fact that colonists of means and position instigated the revolutionary struggle against the mercantilist control of the English government to insure their own profit margins.

This chapter, in its attempt to analyze the role of property rights in the drafting of the Constitution, embraces the more economic-oriented "neo-Beardian" approach taken by Forrest McDonald in *E Pluribus Unum*. McDonald's work focuses on the interplay of politics and economics in the crafting of the Constitution. The embracing of a neo-Beardian economic approach to the origins of the Constitution is not meant to discount the role of ideology in the founding of the republic. Historians such as Bernard Bailyn provide an important insight into the ideological frameworks used to support the various political positions taken by the Founders. However, this approach in many substantive ways is lacking, as was the purely economic approach taken by Charles A. Beard in his work *Economic Interpretation of the Constitution*. McDonald makes the following assertions about the ideological approach to the analysis of the Constitution.

It fails to distinguish among the several kinds of republicanism that were espoused by various Americans, which by and large reflected regionally different social and economic norms. Those ideological historians who have concentrated on the tradition of civic humanism have all but left the influential Scots thinkers out of account, and in their eagerness to downplay the influence of John Locke . . . they have neglected the importance of theories of natural law and natural rights. They have largely disregarded the law and legal institutions. In the whole corpus of the ideological literature, there is scarcely a mention of what used to be called social, political, and economic "reality," or of such practical men of affairs as George Washington and Robert Morris, without whom, arguably, there might have been no founding.³³

Readers may wonder how the Founding Fathers could justify the inclusion of slavery in the Constitution. Did they not feel any shame? The answer is a qualified yes; some, especially those from the North, had been ashamed to use the word "slave" in crafting the three-fifths formula, according to William Paterson, delegate from New Jersey. "In wording the Constitution the peculiar scruples' of Northerners led them to omit the word 'slave' so as to shield the new government from any 'stain.'"³⁴ Scruples, interestingly enough, refers to uncertainties regarding questions of moral rights or duties. It is quite obvious that there was a palpable degree of uncertainty amongst several of the Founding Fathers when it came to slavery. According to McDonald:

Some Americans expressed concern about the matter. No small number of Virginia slaveholders, including Jefferson, Madison, and George Mason, agonized over it, though few made serious efforts to free their own slaves. Too, the language with which different Virginians denounced slavery was so similar that it sounded more like a mandatory litany than like a heartfelt sentiment. . . . Most Americans, however, seem to have been indifferent with regard to slavery and, indeed, to have felt no embarrassment about the apparent contradiction between the Declaration [of Independence] and the existence of slavery. . . . As Charles Pinckney pointed out in the [Constitutional] convention, the ancient Greek and Roman republics had been based upon slavery, and the institution had been sanctioned by the modern nations of Western Europe. . . . Moreover, slavery had been sanctioned, under certain conditions, by most of the great writers on natural law and natural rights, including Locke.³⁵

In fact, there were “Boston merchants in 1764 [who] were still content to speak in a matter-of-fact way of the economics of the slave trade.”³⁶

It is precisely because of this uncertainty over the issue of slavery amongst many of the Framers of the Constitution that the moral and ethical foundation of colonial America warrants closer analysis. Clearly, this obsession with property, which was so deeply rooted in the sociocultural, political, and economic grounding of Western civilization, affected the Founding Fathers’ moral and ethical choices. Due to the broad societal nature of morals, it is important to differentiate between social conventions and morality. Social conventions refer to the various social rules that individuals in a particular society are expected to adhere to in their interpersonal commerce. For example, in mainstream American culture it is inappropriate for a man to wear his hat indoors, or to burp during a meal. These behaviors would not pose a problem of social etiquette if there were no social conventions prohibiting them. Issues related to the social, emotional, and physical well being of others are generally associated with morality. “Thou shall not steal,” and “thou shall not bare false witness,” and, importantly, “thou shall not kill” are examples of rules of conduct that are associated with the broader moral code of a society. Tragically, in the absence of clear ethical and moral deliberation, many social conventions are put forth as moral truths. Race etiquette in the United States is one of the clearest examples of the confusion between social convention and morality. Etiquette refers to “conventions governing correct or polite behavior in society or in a specific social group or situation,”³⁷ but in truth, these rules are really meant to govern the relationships between people of unequal status more so than relationships between equals. For some whites, laws that advocated racial equality are still viewed as immoral and even sinful at some level. At one point in this nation’s history, African Americans were expected to address whites as mister, misses, or miss, while whites addressed African American adults by their first name or simply as “boy” or “girl.” Interracial

sexual relations in most parts of the United States were forbidden by law or popular convention and were considered immoral if not sinful in nature. A black male of almost any age caught looking admiringly at a white female could be lynched, particularly in the South, with little or no public outcry, while white men who raped black women and girls with regularity and impunity were held neither legally nor socially accountable for their actions. There are even those who have gone so far as to base their “moral code,” as it relates to race, on their interpretation of the scriptures. Race etiquette was and is a societal convention that flies in the face of the social, emotional, and physical well-being of entire groups of people and, as such, is immoral unless one believes that African Americans are subhuman.

In order to appreciate the Founding Fathers’ view of slavery, the societal rules and guidelines that delineate the boundaries of morally acceptable behavior in colonial America must be understood. When discussing the evolution of morality in colonial America, and more specifically, when discussing the ethics of the Founding Fathers, it is important to distinguish between ethical reasoning and ethical behavior. Ethics, as used in this work, refers to the rules that govern the conduct or behavior of an individual or an organized body of individuals. As a philosophical discipline, ethics focuses on the reasoning that undergirds moral choices and, as such, is particularly well suited for analyzing the decision-making process that gave rise to the Constitution’s compromise that sanctioned slavery. Ethics derives its meaning from the Latin word *ethicus*, which means “character.” Again, ethical reasoning refers to the thinking process involved in making judgments about the moral rightness or wrongness of an act. On the other hand, ethical behavior refers to whether one’s actions are viewed by the broader society as moral or immoral. The relationship between ethical reasoning and ethical behavior is not as strong as most people would like to believe. For example, if killing another human being is considered immoral by a society, how does that society justify the death penalty? If only God can take a life, is society somehow doing God’s will, and how would one know God’s will? If all men are created equal, how can slavery be justified? When assessing the often-conflicted relationship between ethical reasoning and ethical behavior, consideration must be given to the distorting and corrupting influence of intellectual rationalization in the form of pseudo-ethical defenses that allow people to escape responsibility and self-blame for their behavior. These ethical defense mechanisms include reconstructing the situation, euphemistic labeling, and attributing blame to authority, circumstance, or the victim.³⁸ A good place for one to begin an analysis of the moral code and ethical reasoning of a society is its laws. Legislative intent and the judicial interpretation of the law provide a clear window into not only the moral values of a society, but also its ethical reasoning. Two statutes from colonial Virginia provide a perfect example of almost all

of the aforementioned ethical defense mechanisms, as well as insight into the values and moral code of colonial America as they relate to race. In 1662, the Virginia Assembly declared:

[I]f any slave resist his master (or others by his master's orders correcting him) and by the extremity of the correction should chance to die, that his death shall not be accounted [reported] felony, but the master (or that other person appointed by the master to punish him) be acquitted from molestation, since it cannot be presumed that premeditated [contemplated] malice (which alone makes murder felony) should induce any man to destroy his own estate.³⁹

In 1705, the Virginia General Assembly not only reconfirmed its earlier declaration, it removed any general stigma that might have been associated with the killing of a slave, when it declared:

All Negro, mulatto, and Indian slaves within this dominion . . . shall be held to be real estate. If any slave resists his master . . . [and while being corrected by the master] shall happen to be killed in such correction . . . the master shall be free of all punishment . . . as if such accident never happened.⁴⁰

“Thou shall not kill” is one of the central moral and ethical standards of this society. Murder is considered to be, with few exceptions, an immoral act. However, the Virginia General Assembly removed the moral stigma and granted immunity to slave owners who killed their slaves. Here the Virginia legislators, by defining slaves as property, were able to employ the ethical defense of reconstruction to change what they considered the facts of the situation. After all, who has the right to stop a man or woman from destroying his or her own useless property, or blame a person for killing a farm animal that turns on its owner? Slave masters were thus allowed to attribute blame for their cruelty to the circumstance and/or the victim. In other words, the master was able to claim, to self and society, that the government sanctioned his/her actions, and the circumstance of the slave's resistance justified such actions. Of course, in Virginia, and for that matter in most colonies, “[v]iolence was thought to be the legitimate instrument of masters against servant, husbands against wives, parents against children, and gentlemen against ordinary folks.”⁴¹ This tendency towards a hierarchy of violence in the colonies was a cultural holdover from England. One graphic example of this violence was the horrific chain of savagery that occurred in the English manor of Lord Lovelace. Mary Isham, in a correspondence to Sir Thomas Isham on December 9, 1677, wrote:

Lord Lovelace, seeing a maid in his kitchen pursue a dog with a spit, snatched it from her and killed her on the spot. The girl's lover revenged her death by similarly killing Lord Lovelace.⁴²

Given the status of African slaves in Virginia, there is little doubt that they were subjected to the same violence, if not more savage in measure, to that historically inflicted upon servants in England. The diary of William Byrd, a prosperous Virginia descendent of the English landed gentry, provides a window onto the customary violence inflicted upon slaves in the colonies. The following is an account of his treatment of a young slave named Eugene, who served as Byrd's houseboy:

- 10 June 1709 Eugene was whipped for running away and had the [bit] put on him. I said my prayers and had good health, good thoughts, and good humor, thanks be to God.
- 30 November 1709 Eugene was whipped for pissing in bed.
- 1 December 1709 Eugene was whipped.
- 3 December 1709 Eugene pissed abed again, for which I made him drink a pint of piss.
- 10 December 1709 Eugene had pissed in bed for which I gave him a pint of piss to drink.
- 16 December 1709 Eugene was whipped for doing nothing.⁴³

To even the most impartial observer, the moral implications of laws regarding the treatment of slaves has to be that property was paramount and the right to do with it as the owner saw fit took precedent over any regard for humanity. The hasty adoption of these Virginia laws by other colonies speaks volumes about the moral and ethical state of colonial America.

Contemporary historians often justify the inhuman treatment of slaves by saying that one must consider the times, implying that the supposed ignorance and lack of sophistication on the part of the colonists could excuse such treatment. Ignorance and the lack of sophistication, however, cannot excuse the ethical reasoning employed in the drafting of Virginia's laws. Surprisingly, British colonial America during the eighteenth century was one of the most, if not the most, literate society in the Western world, with 35 to 50 percent of the white male population having the ability to read and write. In New England, a region strongly committed to primary school education, as high as 90 percent of the adult white male population and 40 percent of the adult white female population could read and write well enough to marginally comprehend and sign civil and commercial documents. This fact becomes even more astonishing when these literacy statistics are compared to England, where no more than 33 percent of all males could read and write. Newspapers, journals, and books from Europe circulated among the more affluent men and women of the cities along the eastern seaboard and among much of the elite southern planter class, which included men such as Thomas Jefferson. Enlightenment beliefs in the innate goodness of human beings, and the

potential for human progress and perfectibility through reason, inspired those who would eventually become the architects of the new republic. This infectious enthusiasm spilled over into the general population and, as a result, the colonies were awash with an Enlightenment conception of the world. Even the least literate colonists engaged in lively discussions and heated debates over politics, philosophy, and science in the broad shops of colonial American cities and towns. America was primarily an oral culture at this time, due in part to the expense of printed material and the wide variance in reading comprehension amongst the colonists. In a way, ideas probably spread more rapidly by word of mouth and received more attention than they would have if print were the primary medium of intellectual stimulation. The colonies were illuminated by Enlightenment discussions of progress, the perfectibility of humans, and the natural right to be free.⁴⁴ Yet, at the base of the Enlightenment's luminescence, in the hidden shadows of its rhetoric, was the black oil that fueled this newfound light of liberty, oil rendered from the flesh of thousands of African slaves.

As the colonial history of America flowed forward along its ever-widening course, meandering towards its inevitable liberation from British confines, its clear current became increasingly fouled by the dirty business of slavery. Practically all of the colonies, especially those in the South, were caught up in an economic eddy, a backwater cul-de-sac, which increasingly mired them in an economic, social, and psychological dependence on slavery. This growing dependence on slavery, coupled with a broadening desire for independence and self-rule, created a deepening moral and ethical dilemma in the colonies. Eventually, the ethical debate over the dilemma of slavery was plunged into the murky depths of unfathomable logic and twisted rhetoric as self-interest and political expediency swept away almost all accounting for humanity. The most obvious example of the tortured logic and rhetoric underpinning the case for slavery can be found in the Declaration of Independence, a document that historians purport to be one of the clearest examples of the ethics of natural rights. Implicit within the concept of natural rights is the relationship between two parties, the "rights-holder" and the "rights-observer." This relationship is often made explicit by legal statutes. Within this philosophical construct, rights flow from a social contract that permits the "rights-holder to act on his or her behalf as a free agent, to exist without arbitrary threat to life and limb by other individuals or the state, to pursue and enjoy life, and to demand that individuals and the state honor these rights. According to the principles of natural rights, this social contract is an entitlement sanctioned by God. In addition, this contract places a 'duty or obligation' on the rights-observer to uphold or refrain from interfering with the rights-holder's freedom to exercise his or her rights."⁴⁵ Hence, Jefferson penned these immortal words, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men

are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.” The gap between the rhetoric and reality of American life was so delusional as to boggle the mind when one considers the fact that slavery was legally sanctioned some 135 years before this document was ratified. In order to truly grasp the gravity of this claim, a moment should be taken to read an excerpt from the Declaration of Independence while reflecting on the lives of the black men, women, and children who were suffering in bondage as human chattel.

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume, among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed, by their Creator, with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.

That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security.

Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpation, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let the Facts be submitted to a candid world.

It is the final draft of this document with which the world is most familiar, but it is the first draft that truly shows the depth of the new republic’s hypocrisy. In that first draft, which was vetoed as antislavery propaganda by other slave owners, Jefferson laid the blame for slavery squarely at the feet of

King George III. Here he clearly used the earlier mentioned ethical defense of attributing blame to authority.

He has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating its most sacred rights of life and liberty in the persons of a distant people who never offended him, captivating and carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere, or to incur miserable death in their transport thither.⁴⁶

Before Jefferson's declaration could be ratified, the condemnation of King George III was removed. According to Jefferson, his denunciation of the king was expunged from the document "in complaisance to South Carolina and Georgia, who had never attempted to restrain the importation of slaves and who, on the contrary, still wished to continue." He went on to say, "Our northern brethren also, I believe, felt a little tender under those censures; for though their people had very few slaves themselves, yet they had been pretty considerable carriers of them for others."⁴⁷ Political expedience eventually prevailed and Jefferson complied with the wishes of those advocates for slavery, omitting the offending line. Jefferson's declaration was summarily ratified and the rest is history; the Declaration of Independence went on to become one of humanity's most revered documents. This document, composed by a man who, in his rhetoric, vehemently opposed slavery while owning slaves, is a study in denial verging on delusion. The gulf between Jefferson's ethical rhetoric and behavior is staggering.

Although Jefferson looms larger than life in the minds of present-day Americans, he "was an average master who had his slaves whipped and sold into the Deep South as examples, to induce other slaves to obey."⁴⁸ Yes, he also believed in the innate inferiority of blacks, having put forth these theories in *Notes on the State of Virginia*, in which he states, "I advance it therefore as a suspicion only, that the blacks, whether originally a distinct race, or made distinct by time and circumstances, are inferior to the whites in the endowments both of body and mind."⁴⁹ Yet, at every opportunity, to almost anyone who would hear him, Jefferson railed against slavery as an immoral act that violated the most "sacred rights of life and liberty." Why would a man of such conviction continue to hold slaves? Could he have not just released them and lived by his own devices? It is not as though he was a man of limited intellect and ambition. The answer is quite simple: Jefferson, despite his egalitarian rhetoric, envied the opulence of Europe's elite and loved rubbing shoulders with aristocracy. He spent much time and money pursuing his fancy in Europe. In fact, upon his death in 1826, Jefferson was no less than "\$100,000 [in] debt [or] roughly \$10 million" in today's dollars. His "death caused the young nation to stop and reflect; it also caused his human property a great deal of anxiety . . . [as over] . . . 130 slaves were sold at auction in one day."⁵⁰

Jefferson, however, despite his addiction to a lifestyle afforded him by his slaves, chose not to use in public discussions the typical slave master's argument that blacks were a subhuman species and hence had no real claim to the "natural rights" of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Audrey Smedley writes:

After he came into public office, Jefferson personally managed to avoid much of the controversy over slavery and the questions of Negro inferiority. . . . He never publicly condemned [slavery] after his rise to political prominence, and he did not support any of the abolitionist movements or publications.⁵¹

In fact, Jefferson admits as much in a correspondence with his friend George Logan on May 11, 1805, where he writes, "I have most carefully avoided every public act or manifestation on that subject [slavery]."⁵² However, not too long before his death, Jefferson, upon reflection, was heard to express trepidation for the future of a union so increasingly divided over slavery, and voiced regrets for his failure to champion the cause of abolition. When Jefferson was told that slavery would be extended into the southwest territories under the provisions of the Missouri compromise, he said, "This momentous question, like a fire bell in the night, awakened me and filled me with terror."⁵³ This trepidation is also evident in a letter to John Adams. Jefferson's letter is particularly noteworthy, as he and Adams had avoided directly discussing slavery for almost fifty years in the interest of their friendship. Their opposing positions appear to have been the only weak link in their friendship, a link that they avoided testing until they both became aware of the potentially ruinous consequences to the union of the Missouri Compromise. In his letter to Adams on December 10, 1819, Jefferson writes:

The real question, as seen in the states afflicted with this unfortunate population, is are our slaves to be presented with freedom and a dagger? For if Congress has a power to regulate the conditions of the inhabitants of states, within the states, it will be but another exercise of power to declare that all shall be free. Are we then to . . . wage another Peloponnesian War to settle the ascendancy between them? That question remains to be seen; but not I hope by you or me. Surely, they will parlay awhile, and give us time to get out of the way.⁵⁴

In regards to the circumstance of slavery and its continuation, probably while reflecting on his own slaves and his failure to free them or to champion the cause of abolition, Jefferson wrote, "Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just; that his justice cannot sleep forever."⁵⁵

Patrick Henry's cry, "Give me liberty or give me death," is one of the most-quoted passages in American history. Like many white patriots, he was often

heard complaining that the British treated the colonists like slaves, a condition that he, as a slaveholder, should have found all too familiar. Here is yet another example of the depth of the moral and ethical duplicity of many of the Founding Fathers who have come to be canonized as saints of liberty. Were these men aware of their hypocrisy? Many contemporary historians argue that given the consciousness of the people during this period, such awareness was not likely. Such assertions are ludicrous. Of course, they knew; one has to only read their words. In the case of Patrick Henry, not too long after his famous “give me liberty or give me death” speech, he demonstrated his awareness when he declared in a letter to Robert Pleasants, “Would any one believe I am the master of slaves of my own purchase!” Later in that same letter he wrote, “Let us transmit to our descendants, together with our slaves, pity for their unhappy lot, and an abhorrence of slavery.”⁵⁶ Like Jefferson, Patrick Henry was swept up in the convenience of slavery and had become mired in his economic, social, and psychological dependence, as is evidenced by the fact that he continued to acquire slaves until his death in 1799. Was he embarrassed by the obvious contradiction between his rhetoric of freedom and the reality of his participation in slavery? The answer is a documented yes. On one occasion, when Henry felt pressed to explain this contradiction, he said, “I am drawn along by the general inconvenience of living here without them [and] . . . I will not, I cannot justify it.”⁵⁷

At the risk of being accused of sacrilege, it would appear that Jefferson, and many of his contemporaries, despite their rhetoric of natural rights, were engaged in ethical behavior that was more in keeping with the philosophy of egoism. Ethical behavior rooted in egoism holds that whatever is in one’s self-interest is good. In other words, the *summum bonum* or highest good of life should be to procure the most satisfaction possible for oneself. This view is also evident in some of the hedonistic tendencies of materialists, such as Thomas Hobbes, rationalists such as Benedict de Spinoza, and followers of utilitarianism such as Jeremy Bentham. Hobbes, in his 1651 work entitled *Leviathan*, appears to assume that self-interest or egoism is at the core of moral and political life, seeing humans as “brutish and nasty” beings. Spinoza’s assertion that good and evil are determined by the degree of usefulness or disusefulness to the person or persons involved also implies egoism. Philosopher Jeremy Bentham, in his work entitled *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, specifically defines utility in terms of “benefit, advantage, pleasure, good, or happiness,” which clearly has egoistic overtones. Slavery provided men like Jefferson and Henry with the means to pursue life, liberty, and happiness. It appears that Jefferson applied a “hedonic calculus” to the comporting of his personal life, a calculus rooted in Bentham’s method for choosing actions, which was based on the amount of pleasure

those actions would provide. In fact, Jefferson's pursuit of happiness ranged from luxurious European trips to an apparent lifelong sexual liaison with a mulatto slave girl named Sally Hemings, begun when she was fourteen. This relationship is partly documented by historical and recent genetic evidence. Tragically, his commitment to the ideals of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" only extended to eight of his slaves, whom he freed over the course of his long life, five of whom were released at his request upon his death—all of them were said to be blood relatives.⁵⁸ Unfortunately, Sally Hemings was never given her freedom and died a slave.

Given the paradox of all these moral and ethical inconsistencies, one question begs an answer, albeit rhetorical in nature. What was the moral and ethical foundation upon which this nation was erected? Clearly, Christianity had a profound impact on this nation's moral and ethical foundation, as Jon Butler attests to in *Awash in a Sea of Faith*.

In 1606 James I chartered the Virginia Company to propagate Christianity to Native Americans, heathens who the English imagined were living "in darkness" and in "miserable ignorance of the true knowledge and worship of God." A quarter century later the Puritans created covenanted Christian communities in New England for themselves. They said they would follow "the counsel of Micah: to do justly, to love mercy, to walk humbly with our God."⁵⁹

For the majority of those in the British colonies, as was also the case for those living in England and Europe, "no real conflict between God's commands and genuine morality [existed] because whatever God commands is what is right simply because God commands it."⁶⁰ However, it was the reasoning of the Enlightenment, as represented in the "Ethics of Rights," which sparked the fuel of economic self-interest that ignited the American Revolution. Lawrence Hinman, in *Ethics: A Pluralistic Approach to Moral Thought*, states the following about the Ethics of Rights:

When the founders of the United States stated in the Declaration of Independence that certain rights are inalienable, they were at the forefront of a moral movement . . . Americans were implementing the notion of rights as one of the cornerstones of our democracy; the French were also developing their own equivalent to our Declaration of Independence, their Declaration of Rights of Man and Citizen. Thus two of the most influential political documents of the modern age take the notion of rights as the central concept upon which their political organizations are built.⁶¹

These two powerful moral and ethical currents of religious dogma and moral reason have commingled in the mainstream of this nation's culture since its inception. Hinman goes on to contend:

[T]he underlying issue has always been about whether reason or religious sources . . . tell us what the right thing to do is. [S]ome have maintained that, whenever there is a moral conflict between religion and reason, religion provides the correct guide for our behavior and should take precedence over reason . . . At the other end of this spectrum are those who maintain that in cases of such moral conflict, reason ought to take precedence over religion. Reason provides the criterion for judging which actions are right and wrong.⁶²

Another question cries out for an answer. What justification did those who believed in the ethics of God's "divine commands" and those who believed in the ethics of "natural rights" use to defend their position on racial slavery? Those who believed in the "divine commands" of God generally relied on the scriptures as the primary source of their moral and ethical code. Of course, it was their interpretation of discreet passages of the bible that were the basis of their moral and ethical truths. Jan Nederveen Pieterse, in his work entitled *White on Black*, identifies the historical link between Christianity and slavery, discussing how the biblical story of Noah's angry outburst against his son Ham came to be the basis of the Christian justification of slavery. Pieterse chronicles this history as follows:

While science thus marched forward, popular thinking in Europe still followed Christian modes of thought. Christian Ethiopianism [the existence of black Christians in Africa] had faded into the background and another tradition emerged—the medieval tale of Africa as the continent of Ham's descendants acquired another dimension. Genesis 9:18–27 relates that Noah drank wine and fell into a slumber while naked. Ham, his youngest son, saw him, but did not cover his shame, whereat his brothers Sem and Japheth covered their father with a cloth. Awakened, Noah praised Sem and blessed Japheth, but he cursed Canaan, Ham's son—*Cursed be Canaan, a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren*. In the early church of Augustine, the curse of Ham or Canaan was regarded as an explanation of slavery, but not of blacks, simply because slavery at the time was "colourless." The association of the curse of Canaan with blackness arose only much later in medieval Talmudic texts. In the sixteenth century it became a Christian theme and by the seventeenth century it was widely accepted as an explanation of black skin colour. From here it was but a small step to the justification for the slavery of black Africans.⁶³

Ronald Sanders, in *Lost Tribes and Promised Lands*, indicates that it was actually the Arabs who first used Genesis 9:18–27 as the justification for enslaving black Africans. He contends that it was later, when many Christians "held that [this particular scripture] condemned all of [Ham's descendants] to slavery. . . . [In fact], one Arab tradition maintained that blackness itself had been inflicted upon Ham's descendants by the curse from Noah. . . ." ⁶⁴ It appears that the Arabs provided the Christians of Europe with the theological

construction that allowed them to use the biblical myth of creation while making a specific exception for Africans, which explained their color and justified their status as slaves. European Christians had been provided with what they believed to be theological truths, “that all human beings were descended from Adam and Eve (the so-called monogenesis); the continents peopled by the descendants of Japheth (Europe), Sem (Asia), and Ham (Africa) were ranked in a master-servant relationship. Until well into the nineteenth century, even after the development of the race theory, this remained the most popular explanation of slavery.”⁶⁵

Interestingly, when it came to issues of race and slavery, the Founders, despite their supposed Enlightenment beliefs in scientific reasoning and natural rights, chose merely to reproduce, in a different epistemological framework, the “old scripture categories and metaphors.” On one hand, there were those who believed in the monogenic or single origin theory of human difference that, by a convoluted form of deduction, supported the Garden of Eden thesis from the Old Testament, embellishing it with a bit of speculation called the theory of “degeneration.” On the other hand, there was the polygenic or multiple origin theory of human difference. Stephen Jay Gould described the two theories as follows:

Human races [according to monogenic theory] are a product of degeneration from Eden’s perfection. Races have declined to different degrees, whites least and black most. . . . [Polygenic theory] . . . abandoned scripture as allegorical and held that human races were separate biological species, the descendants of different Adams [and as such, constituted] another form of life, [meaning that] blacks need not participate in the “equality of man.”⁶⁶

In his *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Thomas Jefferson entertains both the monogenic and polygenic theories of black inferiority as possibilities when he states “that the blacks, whether originally a distinct race or made distinct by time and circumstance, are inferior to whites in the endowment of body and mind.”⁶⁷ Now, as previously stated, Jefferson did not use his belief in the inferiority of blacks as a public justification for slavery. However, it was clear that racism was able to flourish in the highly rationalized medium of Enlightenment ethics, as evidenced by the many Enlightenment philosophers who harbored racist attitudes against Africans. “Voltaire believed that the gap between whites and blacks could not be bridged,”⁶⁸ and it appears that he even invested in the slave trade. The French philosopher, Charles de Montesquieu, whose principle of separation of powers was incorporated into the Constitution, although opposed to slavery, once quipped, “It is impossible for us to assume that these creatures are men; because if we supposed them to be men, one might begin to think that we are not Christians.”⁶⁹

European intellectuals and the colonial novices who apprenticed themselves on the musings of these heroes of the *Siècle des Lumières* [Century of Lights] claimed that their vision of the world was based on reason and the judicious application of the principles of scientific inquiry. If this were, in fact, true, then there should be an obvious empirical basis for their assumptions and assertions of black inferiority. When their assertions are put under the critical eye of reason, almost all that is visible are anecdotes, rumors, and myths masquerading as data. One need do no more than read the descriptions of Europe made by the ancient Greeks and Romans to understand how Africa and its inhabitants could come to be portrayed so negatively by so many of the Enlightenment thinkers. In or about 450 BC, the Greek historian Herodotus claimed, “The Boundaries of Europe are quite unknown and there is not a man who can say whether any sea girds it round either on the north or the east.”⁷⁰ He went on to describe the inhabitants who dwelled along the northern shores of the Black Sea until about 100 BC, such as the Scythians, as a bloodthirsty group of savages who took scalps from their victims. Herodotus states: “The Scyth is proud of these scalps and hangs them from his bridle-rein.”⁷¹ In addition, Herodotus claims that they used the skulls of their enemies and friends as drinking vessels and “[w]hen important visitors arrive, these skulls are passed round and the host tells stories of them.”⁷² Julius Caesar claimed that the Gauls of France engaged in human sacrifice: “[W]hen the supply of [thieves and robbers] fails, they resort to the execution even of the innocent [to please the immortal gods].”⁷³ During this period, Europe was described as the “Dark Continent,” a place of extreme savagery, populated by ignorant peoples. Were these truths, half truths, or mere myths? It is difficult to say, but historical research indicates that one of the earliest democratic assemblies, the Ding, was “[t]he custom among Germanic tribes . . . and there is little doubt that they had existed since prehistoric times.”⁷⁴ The Ding represents a bright flame in the dark savage night that was the Europe of Herodotus’ and Caesar’s conjecture. How many more points of light did the enlightened thinkers of classical Greece and Rome miss? If soothsayers had told Herodotus and Caesar that these Germanic “barbarians,” in the ninth century AD, would establish a kingdom that would subsume the majority of their own ancient empires, they probably would have executed them as heretics.

In Africa as in Europe, the range of societal complexity varied widely. In Europe, “[i]t would be problematical . . . to talk of national states at any point in the thirteenth century. But if national identities were judged to be developing effectively in any place at the time, it could only have been in some of the small countries who had successfully segregated themselves from their neighbors.”⁷⁵ During the 1700s, the economic life of Europe was greatly affected

by the flow of resources from the colonies, as the countries of Europe increasingly became divided into those that could benefit from colonialism and those that could not. The countries of Central and Eastern Europe comprised those states that could not take full advantage of colonialism and, as such, remained dependent on land as the basis of their wealth. In those regions, feudalism and serfdom reigned supreme, resulting in less diverse agrarian-based economies.⁷⁶ Basil Davidson, one of the most prolific scholars of African history, speaks to the diversity of African societies when he states:

It is possible for the sake of convenience to classify African societies into a number of general types, distinguishing those with much government from those with little, those with centralized forms of rule from those whose cohering authority has been dispersed among heads of clans or extended families. In West Africa, for example, the last fifteen hundred years have seen the growth of large and long-lived systems of central rule involving great hierarchies of privilege and government, intricate systems of justice, regular recruitment into a wide range of professional services, civil or military, including a sometimes numerous literate bureaucracy. Other West Africans, at the same time, have continued to live under rules so simple as to raise the question of whether the rules may be said to constitute government at all.⁷⁷

Ghana, Mali, and Songhai represent the most politically powerful, wealthy, and enduring examples of these West African kingdoms, all of which were based on the lucrative trans-Saharan trade in gold, salt, sugar, fruit, wheat, and textiles. Ghana, which was known as the “Land of Gold” by the Arabs, dominated the Sudan and was considered old in 800 AD. At its peak in the tenth century, Ghana had a standing army of over 100,000 men and its rulers lived in lavishly decorated castles. The fall of Ghana allowed the small Mandingo state of Mali to assert its dominance over the Sudan. During the fourteenth century, two great rulers, Keita and Musa, eventually transformed Mali into one of the greatest countries of the medieval world. As Mali began to decline during the fifteenth century, Songhai emerged as the largest and most powerful state in the Sudan. Chronologically, this occurred in about 1493, a year after Columbus arrived in the Western Hemisphere. Geographically, this kingdom was larger than the continent of Europe. Great cities such as Timbuktu served as centers of banking, economics, education, medicine, and religion for the kingdom. Timbuktu was a grand city of over 100,000 people. At its center stood a Great Mosque and the University of Sankore, which had a large valuable collection of books and manuscripts in several languages. Scholars came from Europe and Asia to study in Timbuktu.⁷⁸

Were the great inquiring minds of the Enlightenment only privy to data on the simplest kinship-based societies of Africa? Europe’s historical record of African encounters indicates quite the contrary. In fact, this record shows that

Europeans had significant encounters with various complex and sophisticated African societies. As Basil Davidson writes:

Ancient Ghana [was] approaching maturity in the Western Sudan at about the same time as the Franks were organizing their structurally comparable empire in Western Europe . . . [and had become] . . . legendary as the years flowed by: writing in the twelfth century at the court of Norman King Roger II of Sicily, [the Arab scholar] al-Idrisi described how the lords of Ghana would often feed thousands at a time, spreading banquets more lavish than any man had ever seen before.⁷⁹

In *White on Black*, historian Jan Nederveen Pieterse addresses this issue when he states:

What is striking . . . is that there were drastic changes and differentiations in European images of Africa, which were related mainly to changes which took place in Europe. There were drastic changes in the imagery, even in periods when Europeans had no contact whatsoever with black Africans.

From antiquity to the early Middle Ages, the dominant image changed from positive to negative, while the early to late Middle Ages saw the transformation of the black from an infernal demon to the highly honored representative of a remote Christendom—Europe’s redeemer and help in distress. The principle that the image-formation of outsiders is determined primarily by the dynamics of one’s own circle, and not because the people in question themselves changed, is a recurring refrain in the study of image-formation.

The developments described above are significant also against the background of later developments, when gradually a negative image of Africans comes again to predominate. The significance of extremely negative images of blacks and of Africa which predominate in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries become apparent only if placed against the extremely positive images predominantly from the twelfth to fifteenth centuries.⁸⁰

The racist assumptions and assertions of the previously mentioned Enlightenment intellectuals and their American disciples, such as Thomas Jefferson and many of his contemporaries, were not based on objective analysis. These assumptions and assertions, in actuality, grew out of years of “western expansion and hegemony manifested in racism and exoticism,”⁸¹ Africa lies on the stark white consciousness of Europe like a black ink blot, a kind of giant Rorschach, a projected image of the European psyche, an image which provides clearer insight into the fears, needs, hopes, and desires of Europeans, than the reality of Africa. Colonial America, although growing increasingly apart from Europe, still reflected Europe’s psyche and with that psyche came all of the intellectual contradictions of the Enlightenment with it attending pseudoscientific “rationalization of old prejudices.”⁸²

Unfortunately, for Africans in America, the racist psyche the Founders inherited from Europe would corrupt the political philosophy of this newly emerging republic, hence insuring that Africans would not be included in America's body politic. It is important to point out that one of the purposes of a political philosophy is to establish "ethical standards for judging both individuals and institutions [by stipulating] both means and ends and [by providing] evaluative criteria for assessing programs and policies undertaken in [that philosophy's] name."⁸³ Based on this teleological assertion, the ends of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" espoused by the Founding Fathers and the economic means of slavery by which they hoped to realize these ends were clearly at moral and intellectual odds with one another. In order to resolve this contradiction, the Founding Fathers engaged in some very convoluted ethical reasoning. The Constitutional compromise on slavery and the subsequent legal precedents that it put into motion represent a uniquely amoral form of American utilitarianism that focuses on the usefulness of actions as criteria for determining its moral and ethical worth.

With regards to the utilitarianism of America's Founders, Max Weber, in his classic work *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, asserts:

[Virtually] all [Benjamin] Franklin's moral attitudes are coloured with utilitarianism. Honesty is useful, because it assures credit; so are punctuality, industry, frugality, and that is the reason they are virtues. A logical deduction from this would be that where, for instance, the appearance of honesty serves the same purpose, that would suffice, and an unnecessary surplus of this virtue would evidently appear to Franklin's eyes as unproductive waste. . . . According to Franklin, those virtues, like all others, are only in so far virtues as they are actually useful to the individual, and the surrogate of mere appearance is always sufficient when it accomplishes the end view. It is a conclusion which is inevitable for strict utilitarianism. The impression of many Germans that the virtues professed by Americanism are pure hypocrisy seems to have been confirmed by this striking case [of Franklin's assertions].⁸⁴

This assertion is supported by Franklin's famous words, "He that is known to pay punctually and exactly to the time he promises, may at any time, and on any occasion, raise all the money his friends can spare. This is sometimes of great use. After industry and frugality, nothing contributes more to the raising of a young man in the world than punctuality and justice in all his dealings; therefore, never keep borrowed money an hour beyond the time you promised, lest a disappointment shut up your friend's purse forever."⁸⁵

The hypocrisy of American utilitarianism, as practiced by the Yankee Puritans and Quakers of the North, was significantly different from that practiced by the Anglicans of the South. For that which constitutes utility is different from individual to individual and group to group and, in this case, from

region to region. If one compares Franklin and Jefferson with regard to the ends sought by their utilitarianism, a North-South dichotomy becomes quite evident. Weber goes on to assert:

[Franklin] ascribes his recognition of the utility of virtue to a divine revelation which was intended to lead him in the path of righteousness, [which] shows that something more than mere garnishing for purely egocentric motives. . . . In fact, the *summum bonum* of this ethic, the earning of more and more money, combined with the strict avoidance of all spontaneous enjoyment of life, is above all completely devoid of any eudæmonistic, not to say hedonistic, admixture. It is thought of so purely as an end in itself, that from the point of view of happiness of, or utility to, the single individual, it appears entirely transcendental and absolutely irrational. Man is dominated by the making of money, by acquisition as the ultimate purpose of his life.⁸⁶

On the other hand, as previously stated, Jefferson's utilitarian orientation appears to have been based on a hedonic calculus that allowed him a pursuit of happiness, which ranged from luxurious European trips to an apparent life-long sexual liaison with a mulatto slave girl named Sally Hemings.

In all fairness, it must be pointed out that utilitarianism, in its uncorrupted form, demands that individuals consider the impact of their behavior on all parties involved. Utilitarianism posits that ethically correct actions are those that produce the greatest overall happiness or positive consequence for everyone involved in a particular action. As a philosophical system, utilitarianism is rooted in the social and economic realities of European intellectual thought; however, it finds its clearest articulation in the words of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century English philosophers, such as David Hume, Jeremy Bentham, and John Stuart Mills. The essential elements of utilitarianism, as is the case with many philosophies, predate Hume, Bentham, and Mills. Again, the clearest articulation of this philosophy still rests with these three men, although one can go back to Greece in the fifth century BC to find the roots of the utilitarianist notion of pleasure and happiness in the hedonistic philosophy of Aristippus of Cyrene, or some 100 years later in that of Epicurus. Bentham was clearly a hedonist; he believed that the utility of something could be determined by the amount of pleasure and happiness versus pain and displeasure it afforded someone. As a system of thought, utilitarianism holds that normative ethics can be defined in terms of the utility or usefulness of an action. This philosophy espouses the ethical doctrine that actions derive their moral quality from their usefulness as a means to some ends. Jeremy Bentham defined utility as "any object, whereby it tends to produce benefit, advantage, pleasure, good or happiness, or . . . to prevent the happening of mischief, pain, evil, or unhappiness to the party whose interest is considered."⁸⁷ David Hume, one of the last great classical British empiricists, in his work

Treaties of Human Nature, attacked what he considered the fiction of a “social compact or contract” as the adhesive that held society together; instead he argued that essentially all virtue was based on utility. His utilitarian argument had a powerful impact on the thinking of Bentham, who credits Hume for illuminating his mind. Bentham, in turn, influenced the philosophy of John Stuart Mills. Hume continued this argument in another work entitled *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Moral*, where he states, “public utility is the sole origin of justice.”⁸⁸ What Hume asserts is more than an alternative to the social contract implicit in the concept of natural rights; he is saying that governmental authority and the sanctity of the individual should be based on utility.

It should be mentioned, as an interesting and poignant aside, that David Hume believed in the inferiority of all nonwhite races:

I am apt to suspect the Negroes and in general all other species of men (for there are four or five different kinds) to be naturally inferior to the whites. There never was a civilized nation of any other complexion than white, nor even any individual eminent either in action or speculation.⁸⁹

Hume provides a perfect example of the corrupting effect that racism can have on the most rational and “enlightened” person. This is why “race matters” and why it must always be factored into the philosophical, social, economic, and political history of Western civilization. America’s Constitutional compromise on slavery serves as another case in point for why the distorting and corrupting power of racism must be factored into the analysis of Western political philosophy, especially where Africans are concerned. Since racist preconceptions defined Africans as subhuman and slavery had reduced them to the status of property, Africans would be no more considered a part of the greater community than would a horse or any other beast of burden.

In a review of racism’s history in America, it is Article IV of the Constitution that serves as the most powerful and telling example of institutionalized racism, white privilege, and the immoral application of power in the history of this country. To the casual, uninformed reader of the Constitution, the provisions for slavery in its articles typically go unnoticed, due to the care taken by its framers to avoid the use of slave in its text. This fact, in and of itself, is sufficient, one could argue, to support the earlier charge of amoral utilitarianism and corruption leveled at the Founding Fathers. Clearly, the contradiction between slavery and the lofty Enlightenment rhetoric of this nation’s foundational documents must have been a source of shame for at least the more liberal representatives at the Constitutional Convention. Even many present-day educators charged with the responsibility of teaching the Constitution avoid

discussing the provisions for slavery put forth in this document in order to keep from tarnishing the image of the Founding Fathers.

Given the obvious contradictions inherent in the Constitution, why then did the Founding Fathers draft a document that they must have known was, at best, logically inconsistent and, at worst, morally corrupt? Even more importantly, why did the North give in to the demands of the South? The answers to these rather pointed questions lay bare the complex psyche of the Founding Fathers, exposing their commitment to private property and the extent of their racism. It is quite clear upon close scrutiny that the “Founding Fathers, in establishing the framework of the new federal government, handled the question of slavery as an economic and political rather than a moral matter, particularly so in light of the sensitivity of Southern delegates who brooked no interference with their institution.”⁹⁰ Having taken a stance based on a distorted and morally corrupt version of utilitarianism versus one that advocated human rights, the Founding Fathers, in effect, attempted to mask their support of slavery in the utilitarian rhetoric of the greatest common good in order to escape the harsh judgment of history. This choice must have been particularly devastating for those free black patriots who fought so gallantly in the Revolution.

Emboldened by the Enlightenment philosophy of Locke and Voltaire, and visions of an independent American republic, England’s colonial offspring had become a defiant adolescent, bent on a life of economic and political autonomy. Charles Townshend, in an address to Parliament, articulated the mood of England when he asked, “[N]ow will these Americans, children planted by our care, nourished by our indulgence . . . grudge to contribute their mite [i.e., small sum of money] to relieve us from the heavy weight of that burden which we lie under?”⁹¹ Despite the impatient mood of Parliament and increasing prosperity among New England merchants and Southern planters, the colonies became even more recalcitrant in their adolescent fervor. Led by the bourgeois elite of the entrepreneurial class and landed gentry, the colonies began overtly to resist the parental authority of their motherland. As colonial resistance to England’s mercantilist laws increased, especially those governing sugar and molasses importation, many colonists reacted by smuggling sugar and molasses from non-British colonies in order to supply their distilleries and maintain profit margins on the sale of rum. In an attempt to discourage smuggling, the Sugar Act of 1764 was passed by Parliament, which increased the hostility of the New England merchant class. The Sugar Act of 1764 would, in many ways, prove to be more devastating than the Stamp Act of 1765, which placed taxes on all purchases made in the colonies. John Adams would later admit with some degree of embarrassment, “[I] should blush to confess that molasses was an essential ingredient in American

independence.”⁹² The enactment of the Sugar Act of 1764 and the Stamp Act of 1765 generated more pronounced cries for freedom. Blacks, both freed and enslaved, “[s]timulated by the white cry for freedom . . . developed a concept of themselves as deprived citizens and dishonored native sons.”⁹³ As early as the Stamp Act Riots of 1765, blacks viewed themselves as patriots in the struggle for liberty. However, they also experienced and expressed their anger as a disenfranchised people as they “collected money, hired lawyers, and filed suits asking for freedom, and damages for unlawful detention in America.”⁹⁴

With the colonial resistance verging on rebellion, the embattled Governor of Massachusetts issued a plea for troops from England. In response to his request, a fleet of British ships was dispatched to Massachusetts, dropping anchor in Boston harbor in the late summer of 1768. Approximately four thousand troops were deployed with the intent of frightening the colonists and, if necessary, controlling them by enforcing British law. Many colonists viewed the presence of British soldiers in Massachusetts as an invasion. Groups of white and black colonists responded to the patriotic rhetoric of the merchant class by attempting to repulse the British troops. During one such incident, the British troops were engaged in a major confrontation on Boston Commons by a large crowd of black colonists. As the winter of 1769 progressed, the commoners continued to join with the merchant class as they instigated riots among the masses and began to ferment revolution.

On March 5, 1770, the sporadic rioting of the previous winter erupted into another head-on confrontation with the British troops. John Adams described the crowd that gathered as “a motley rabble of saucy boys, negroes and mulattoes, Irish teagues, and Jack tarrs.”⁹⁵ In the forefront of this “motley” crowd was a fugitive slave named Crispus Attucks. Witnesses state that he was a tall, brawny man who stood about six foot, two-inches with an intimidating look. He was a sailor by trade, which probably accounts for his being in Boston. Attucks was said to be a forty-seven years old Massachusetts native of African and Wampanoag background with the look of a natural-born leader. Unlike many textbook accounts that portray him as merely the first unfortunate casualty of a mob action against the British, Attucks was, in fact, the leader of this band of rebels who confronted the British troops. The confrontation was triggered that evening by a group of British soldiers who arrogantly decided to leave their barracks to take a stroll on the streets of Boston. In response to their presence, an angry mob was mobilized by the ringing of the fire bell on the Old Brick Meeting House. As the crowd gathered, a young barber ran into the crowd, claiming that a British sentry had struck him in the head. His claim further infuriated the crowd. From most accounts, however, it was Crispus Attucks who rallied the crowd, convincing them to confront the soldiers and lead the charge. The British troops were quickly overwhelmed

and forced back by the crowd. It was at this point that Hugh Montgomery, a private in the British Army, was struck by a flying stick thrown by one of the crowd. As Private Montgomery fell backwards, he fired his musket into the crowd, hitting Attucks in the chest and killing him on the spot. In almost a reflexive reaction, other soldiers fired into the crowd. "John Adams, who later served as defense counsel for the British soldiers, told the court that a witness 'saw the mulatto [Attucks] seven or eight minutes before the firing, at the head of twenty or thirty sailors in Cornhill, and he had a large cord-wood stick.' Adams added: 'So that this Attucks, by the testimony of Bailey compared with that of Andrew and some others, appears to have undertaken to be the hero of the night, and led the army with banners to form them in the first place in Dock Square and march them up King Street with their clubs.'"⁹⁶

Crispus Attucks was the first of five men to be killed by British troops in what came to be known as the "Boston Massacre." Many say that this event was the spark that ignited the passionate fire of revolution. However, the ultimate and tragic irony of Crispus Attucks' death "was that this American—an oppressed American, born in slavery with . . . African and Indian genes . . . carried the American standard in the prologue that laid the foundation of American freedom."⁹⁷ Tragically, it was a freedom that African Americans would not realize until 1865. The poetic injustice of Crispus Attucks' death is no more clearly manifested than in the speech of the patriot and slave owner, Patrick Henry, five years later. In 1775, he said:

Is life so dear or peace so sweet as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!⁹⁸

The dilemma that has confronted African American soldiers since the beginning of this republic has been whether or not to fight and die for a country that oppresses and devalues them. During World War II, over a century and a half after Crispus Attucks fell in the name of liberty, Lieut. Col. Benjamin O. Davis, commander of the 99th Pursuit Squadron, was confronted with this very same dilemma when some member of Congress attempted to disband his squadron. They based this attempt on their belief that blacks were intellectually, physically, and emotionally incapable of flying fighter aircraft. Col. Davis, who later became this country's first black general, when testifying before Congress, according to the documentary drama entitled *The Tuskegee Airmen*, is alleged to have said, "As a United States Army officer who gladly puts his life on the line every day, there is no greater conflict within me. How do I feel about my country and how does my country feel about me? Are we only to be Americans when the mood suits you? A fair and impartial opportunity is all we ask—nothing that you yourselves wouldn't

demand.”⁹⁹ The 99th Squadron went on to be one of the most highly decorated units in the European theater of operations, losing not one B-17 bomber under its escort.

Having been there in 1770 at the prologue to the American Revolution, black patriots continued to be in the forefront of the struggle for independence. They volunteered by the thousands, some believing in the ideals of the new American republicanism, while others hoped that their service would somehow change their status and that of their people. The latter motivation was the more cynical and mercenary but perhaps the most realistic. The presence of these black patriots during the battles of 1775 provided a second offensive wedge as the colonies moved from defiance to the next phase, revolution.¹⁰⁰ “This phase began with the shot heard around the world. When Paul Revere galloped through the Massachusetts countryside, he alerted black and white patriots. Black Minutemen, most notably Lemuel Haynes, Peter Salem, and Pomp Blackman, were at Lexington and the bridge at Concord. Lemuel Haynes was also at Ticonderoga when Ethan Allen invoked Jehovah and the Continental Congress. So were Primas Black and Epheram Black, two members of the famous Green Mountain Boys.”¹⁰¹ The loyalty and sacrifice of black patriots throughout the Revolutionary War only serves to heighten the tragedy of their abandonment by the Founding Fathers. The failure of the Founding Fathers to grant African Americans freedom for their patriotism not only denied the debt owed them, but would also serve to cheapen the words of the yet-to-be-passed Declaration of Independence.

At the Battle of Bunker Hill, one of the heroes of the day was a black patriot named Peter Salem who is credited with shooting a British major named Pitcairn just as he announced, “The day is ours.” Another great hero of the war was Salem Poor, who received praise from no less than fourteen officers in the Continental Army. They stated that he “behaved like an experienced officer as well as an excellent soldier.”¹⁰² However, despite such skill and heroic service, black patriots could not escape the racism of white colonists and patriots. The Battle of Bunker Hill took place in June of 1775, and it was in July of that same summer when George Washington took command of the Continental Army, adding insult to injury by forbidding blacks from enlisting. Washington was motivated by both racism and fear. He believed that blacks “would be difficult or impossible to train, have trouble understanding what was required of them, and [would] prove to be a disciplinary nightmare.”¹⁰³ In addition, the officer core of the army was generally in agreement with Washington, despite the fact that blacks had fought at the Battles of Concord, Lexington, and Bunker Hill, as well as having participated in the siege of Boston. Washington was also worried that if the Continental Army used blacks as soldiers, then the British would be tempted and able to induce

blacks to fight for England.¹⁰⁴ Whether or not to use free blacks and slaves to fight in the war of independence continued to be a source of major debate until Lord Dunmore, the deposed British governor of Virginia, made the following proclamation:

And I do hereby further declare all indentured Servants, Negroes, or others, free that are able and willing to bear Arms, they join His Majesty's Troops, as soon as may be, for the more speedily reducing this Colony to a proper Senfe of their Duty, to His Majesty's Crown and Dignity.¹⁰⁵

In a stroke of genius, Lord Dunmore had offered freedom to all indentured servants and slaves who were willing to fight for the Crown. In response, "thousands of slaves, including some bondsmen of General Washington, left the plantation to fight for their freedom."¹⁰⁶ With the possibility of fighting a war on two fronts, repelling a British invasion on one hand, and a slave revolt on the other, Washington reversed his earlier position. Initially, only free blacks were allowed to enlist in the Continental Army, because Congress refused to enlist slaves. Shamefully, there is little mention made of the gallant service and sacrifice made by these black patriots in historical accounts of the Revolutionary War. "There is no question that black men served conspicuously in the patriot armies. A black soldier named Oliver Cromwell helped row Washington across the Delaware. (He is for some reason absent in the famous painting of the scene.)"¹⁰⁷

The dilemma experienced by the slave population—to heed Lord Dunmore's clarion call to fight for the Crown or remain bound to their masters—is best captured in the struggles of three slaves who ran away and fought for the British. After running away from their master in Virginia, these three slaves changed their names and altered their appearance. Titus changed his name to John Free and grew a beard; his cousin Caesar changed his name to George Liberty; and Caesar's younger sister, Dorothy, shaved her head, put on men's clothing, and changed her name to Alexander Freeman. Their story is as follows:

Over the first months, then years of the seesawing war, you [Alexander], Titus, and Caesar served His Majesty's army in more capacities than you had fingers on the hand: as orderlies to the white officers, laborers, cooks, foragers, and as foot soldiers who descended upon farms abandoned by their white owners, burning the enemy's fortifications and plundering plantations for much-needed provisions; as spies slipping in and out of southern towns to gather information; and as caretakers to the dying when smallpox swept through your regiment, weakening and killing hundreds of men. Your brother among them. And it was then you nearly gave up the gamble. You wondered if it might not be best to take

your chips off the table. And pray the promise of the Virginia Convention that black runaways to the British side would be pardoned was genuine. And slink back home, your hat in your hand, to Master Selby's farm—if it was still there. Or perhaps you and Caesar might switch sides, deserting to the ranks of General Washington who, pressured for manpower, belatedly reversed his opposition to Negroes fighting in the Continental Army. And then there was that magnificent Declaration penned by Jefferson, proclaiming that “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness,” words you'd memorized after hearing them. If the Continentals won, would this brave, new republic be so bad.?

“Alex, those are just words,” said Caesar. “White folks' words for other white folks.”

“But without us, the rebels would lose—”

“So would the redcoats. Both sides need us, but I don't trust neither one to play fair when this thing is over. They can do that Declaration over. Naw, the words *I* want to see are on a British pass with my name on it. I'm stayin' put 'til I see *that*.”

Caesar never did. A month later your regiment was routed by the Continental Army. The rebels fired cannons for six hours, shelling the village your side occupied two days before. You found pieces of your cousin strewn everywhere. And you ran.¹⁰⁸

This is but one of thousands of stories of blacks, both free and enslaved, who found themselves not caught but impaled on the horns of a dilemma that would show them little to no mercy.

Then on April 12, 1776, the revolutionary convention of North Carolina decided to authorize its delegates to the Continental Congress to vote for independence. The Virginia convention on May 15 followed suit by directing Richard Henry Lee, one of its congressional delegates, to put forth a motion for independence, which he did on June 7. Promptly on June 11, a committee was chosen to draft a rationale for the decision to declare independence. This committee was made up of Thomas Jefferson, a southern lawyer, plantation owner, and slaveholder; John Adams, a northern lawyer; Benjamin Franklin, a northern publisher; Roger Sherman, a northern merchant and lawyer; and Robert Livingston, a northern lawyer and the son of a wealthy New York family. Clearly, this committee represented a cross-section of the colonial elite. However, the primary duty of writing the Declaration of Independence fell to Thomas Jefferson. For, as a southern planter and aristocrat, he had been afforded the leisure time to read the classics and the philosophers of the Enlightenment; as such, he was a skilled political philosopher and polemicist, as displayed by his work *A Summary View of the Rights of British Americans*, which he wrote in 1774. Finally, on July 2, the motion to declare indepen-

dence was accepted and on July 4, 1776, the document itself was approved by Congress, announcing the separation of twelve of the thirteen North American British colonies from Great Britain. New York initially abstained, but shortly after, on July 15, voted to affirm the declaration. The armed struggle that had begun a year earlier was now formally a war of independence, once the following words were penned: "When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another . . ." Of course, history bears witness to the fact that "Jefferson wrote only part of the truth. It was economic, not political, bands that were being dissolved. A new age had begun. The year 1776 marked the Declaration of Independence and the publication of the *Wealth of Nations*."¹⁰⁹

As stated earlier, only free blacks were allowed to enlist in the Continental Army. This decision was soon reversed, as it became more and more difficult to coax whites into volunteering for service. It appeared that the turning point was because of Washington's ordeal at Valley Forge in December of 1777. "Although there were one million men of fighting age in the colonies, the Continental line never exceeded fifty thousand soldiers."¹¹⁰ After Valley Forge, there were mass desertions, so in an act of desperation, Washington asked the Rhode Island Assembly to allow their slaves to enlist. In February, the Assembly honored Washington's request with Massachusetts following suit two months latter. Black soldiers from all thirteen colonies eventually became involved in the struggle and "[b]y the end of the war some five thousand blacks, slaves and free men, had shouldered arms in defense of American Liberty."¹¹¹ However, there were approximately thirteen thousand more who were loyalists and escaped with the British to England, Canada, and the British West Indies. "Now that the Continental Army [was] victorious, blacks who fought for the crown [were] struggling desperately to leave on His Majesty's ships departing from New York harbor. Even as [boats] eased away from the harbor, some leaped from the docks into the water, swimming toward the [ships] for this last chance to escape slavery."¹¹² The use of blacks as cannon fodder in America's war of independence, without granting them freedom and citizenship, confirms the hypocrisy and moral corruption of the Founding Fathers.

With the ending of the Revolutionary War, free blacks in the North hoped that those Northern whites with whom they had fought side by side would support their dream of freedom for their enslaved sisters and brothers in the South and citizenship for themselves. However, racism and the commitment to private property on the part of the northern delegation to the Constitutional Convention prevented them from attacking slavery. After all, as capitalists, they were as committed to protecting their individual property rights as were

their Southern counterparts, especially since they believed that private property was the foundation of individual wealth generation, be it in the form of land, industry, or slaves. If one follows Joel Kovel's earlier argument on racism, it becomes quite evident that the Founding Fathers' commitment to property was deeply rooted in Western culture and it was this commitment to private property that, in effect, defined the nature of slavery in North America. Kovel further argues that the "aspect of Western culture which has made it unique among people and has correspondingly made its brand of slavery unique [is] its attitude toward property."¹¹³ This commitment to property rights over human rights on the part of the Founding Fathers is perhaps most clearly evident in the conflicted behavior of Gouverneur Morris, a delegate to the Constitutional Convention. According to Derrick Bell:

Gouverneur Morris was the [Constitutional] Convention's most outspoken opponent of slavery, the South Carolina delegation were its frankest defenders; but their identical assumptions about the place of property in society drove them to similar conclusions. Thus, in the Convention debates of July 5 and 6, Morris declared that "life and liberty were generally said to be of more value than property," but that "an accurate view of the matter would never the less prove that property was the main object of society." This was a view that the South Carolinians could only echo. What it came down to was, as Charles Cotesworth Pinckney put it, that "property in slaves should not be exposed to danger under a government instituted for the protection of property." And so, while Morris stated on July 11 that if compelled to do injustice to human nature or the Southern states, he must do it to the latter, the same evening he worked out the formula—proportioning representation to direct taxation—which proved a "bridge" to the three-fifths compromise; and in August it was he who proposed what he termed a "bargain" between North and South over slave importation.¹¹⁴

What was of great concern to the Founding Fathers was the establishment of a political union that could protect the private property of its citizenry and serve as a vehicle for generating personal and national wealth and power. For the colonists, slavery was just another mode of production in the system of capitalism, where the means of production are privately owned and market forces influence productivity and profits. Since the end of feudalism, capitalism has been the economic system that has allowed the West to pursue property, an obsession that the Founding Fathers had inherited from their English and European ancestors. As Joel Kovel further contends: "The most superficial glance at our civilization discloses the power of the concept of property, and a good deal of what is radically destructive to human potentiality in our culture derives from its well known preference for property rights over human rights."¹¹⁵

Such biased reasoning is not only evident in the crafting and interpretation of the Constitution, but also in the overwhelming majority of the laws and legal decisions related to slavery and racial segregation from the colonial period up to the 1954 Supreme Court desegregation decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*. In 1857, the Fifth Amendment of the Constitution was used in the *Dred Scott* case as a quasi-utilitarian justification for slavery. In the decision of the Supreme Court, Chief Justice Taney expressed the following opinion:

The only two provisions which point to them [blacks] and include them, treat them as property, and make it the duty of Government to protect it; no other power, in relation to this race, is to be found in the Constitution; and as it is a government of special, delegated powers, no authority beyond these two provisions can be constitutionally exercised. The government of the United States had no right to interfere for any other purpose but that of protecting the rights of the owner [slave master], leaving it altogether with the several States to deal with this race, whether emancipated or not, as each State may think justice, humanity, and the interests and safety of society, require. The States evidently intended to reserve this power exclusively to themselves.¹¹⁶

Property in the form of “human chattel” was the driving force behind this distorted form of utilitarianism, and as Locke argued, property is a requisite for liberty. The Supreme Court ruled in favor of property rights, which it believed represented the great common good.

This amoral form of utilitarian reasoning represented in the court’s decision was not limited to rationalizing slavery; it was also used to exclude free blacks from citizenship. Chief Justice Taney, in the 1857 *Dred Scott* decision, had the following to say about the issue of citizenship for free blacks:

The words “people of the United States” and “citizens” are synonymous terms, and mean the same thing. They both describe the political body who, according to our republican institutions, form the sovereignty, and who hold the power and conduct the government through their representatives. They are what we familiarly call the “sovereign people,” and every citizen is one of this people, and a constituent member of this sovereignty. The question before us is, whether the class of persons described in the plea in abatement compose a portion of this people, and are constituent members of this sovereignty? We think they are not, and that they are not included, and were not intended to be included, under the word “citizens” in the Constitution, and can therefore claim none of the rights and privileges which that instrument provides for and secures to citizens of the United States. On the contrary, they were at that time considered as a subordinate and inferior class of beings, who had been subjugated by the dominant race, and, whether emancipated or not, yet remained subject to their authority, and had no rights or privileges but such as those who held power and the Government might choose to grant them.¹¹⁷

Thirty-one years after the conclusion of the Civil War, this quasi-utilitarian reasoning was again employed in the 1896 Supreme Court decision of *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which legally sanctioned the practice of racial segregation. In this case, a man who appeared to be “white” was denied access to a railway coach reserved for whites because, according to Louisiana law, he was “one-eighth African,” and hence a Negro. He was subsequently arrested and tried for violating the statutory mandate requiring separate facilities for whites and blacks. The argument that such a law was in violation of the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment was denied by the Supreme Court. For the Court, Justice Brown argued that the Fourteenth Amendment:

. . . was undoubtedly [meant] to enforce the absolute equality of the two races before the law, but in the nature of things it could not have intended to abolish distinctions based upon color, or to enforce social, as distinguished from political equality, or a commingling of the two races upon terms unsatisfactory to either.” Here Justice Brown’s logic is clearly flawed, because blacks did of course ride on white coaches in Louisiana, but as servants. Commingling in this form was not unsatisfactory, even to the most prejudiced white passengers, because racial hierarchy and the etiquette of servitude were maintained. The purpose of segregation is “to produce benefit, advantage, pleasure, good, or happiness [and] . . . to prevent . . . unhappiness to the party whose interest is considered.”¹¹⁸

As far as the Court was concerned, *Plessy v. Ferguson* represented an obvious case of “public utility [being] the sole origin of justice.”¹¹⁹ In this court case, as in every case upholding segregation, the white majority determined what served as public utility, and hence, what was just. The moral climate of this nation, with its distorted ethical reasoning, would continue for another 58 years before a change in the legal arguments concerning racial equality would occur. Finally, this long series of biased legal decisions was broken in 1954, when the Supreme Court in *Brown v. Board of Education* rendered a decision that did not champion the prejudiced and political interests of the white majority over the civil rights of the black minority. In this case, the court argued, “that in the field of public education, the doctrine of ‘separate but equal’ has no place,”¹²⁰ because black students were denied equal protection under the Fourteenth Amendment.

There is one question that remains unanswered: why did the liberal delegates from the North accept slavery as a part of the Constitution, even though they were so steeped in the Enlightenment’s commitment to liberty as a natural human right? Members of the Enlightenment, such as Locke, Rousseau, Voltaire, and Jefferson, argued against the arbitrary, authoritarian states of the

old monarchies in favor of a higher social organization that would be based on the natural rights of human beings to pursue knowledge, freedom, and happiness within the political context of a functioning democracy. The answer to this question is clear and it extends beyond their commitment to property rights; quite simply put, it was racism. Africans were not viewed as being worthy of those human rights reserved for Europeans. This meant that men like John Locke, an Oxford scholar and the so-called “philosopher of liberty and tolerance,” could not see the hypocrisy associated with being a shareholder in the Royal African Company, which held the monopoly on the slave trade. Nor could Thomas Jefferson forego economic gain and act against what he knew to be morally corrupt by releasing his own slaves and pressing for abolition of this degrading institution. So, if men of such intellect and stature were blinded by their own racism and greed, how could those more common folk be expected to rise to a higher liberal standard? Derrick Bell contends that:

Even the most liberal of the Founding Fathers were unable to imagine a society in which whites and Negroes would live together as fellow citizens. Honor and intellectual consistency drove them to favor abolition; personal distaste to fear it. Jefferson said just this when he wrote: Nothing is more certainly written in the book of fate, than that these people are to be free; nor is it less certain that the two races, equally free, cannot live in the same government. These were also the sentiments of Northerners like Otis, Franklin, and John Quincy Adams. Otis condemned slavery in the abstract, but also prided himself that America was settled “not as the common people of England foolishly imagine, with a compound mongrel mixture of *English, Indian, and Negro*, but with freeborn *British white subjects*.”¹²¹

It had only been 73 years since the ratification of the Constitution, yet amazingly the United States had gone from a fledging republic to an eagle amongst nations, second only to England in industrial might. The United States Constitution, despite the acrimony generated by its creation, served to protect the property rights of its signatories and their landed counterparts while also providing a blueprint for white privilege and black inequality. As Wahneema Lubiano so poignantly points out in the title of her book, America had become “The House That Race Built.”¹²²

In no country in the world is the love of property more active and more anxious than in the United States.

—Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 1835

NOTES

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Chapter Seven

Black Labor/White Wealth: Slavery's Role in Constructing America's Pyramid of Privilege

The “Great Ascent” of the West since the sixteenth century was fundamentally a process of growing capital accumulation, the endless drive to control the human and material resources of the world's people. For Western Europe, Great Britain, and the United States, domestic development [would mean] the conquest of foreign markets, and the stimulation of demand for Western goods . . .

—Manning Marable, *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America*

Five years had passed since the Revolutionary War officially concluded with the signing of the Treaty of Paris. It was 1788 and New Hampshire had just ratified the Constitution, making it the law of the land. The sky was the limit and, in the minds of the Founding Fathers, America's new republicanism stood as the incarnation of the Enlightenment vision of liberty. Property had become the center of this new republic's cosmology, making it the equivalent in profundity to life itself. Not only had the amassing of personal property become the focal point of American life, the activity of amassing it had become the central passion of a significant portion of the citizenry. In medieval Europe, personal identity had been almost solely determined by one's social rank at birth; in this new republic, property ultimately determined one's place in the social hierarchy. The United States, as an extension of Europe, had become a hyper reflection of Western civilization, “the first civilization to have created a type of man, the bourgeois, for whom economic activity is itself the end of life.”¹ America came to represent a quintessential example of the Western axiological relationship between “man” and the material realm, a relationship where the pursuit of economic ends had become “the *summum bonum* of life on earth.”² Central to the realization of America's materialist ends was the economic institution of slavery. The centrality of slavery to this

new republic was rooted in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century mercantilist policies of England. As Robert Fogel writes:

The growth of capitalism in England [that] led the Crown and Parliament to encourage the formation of large-scale slave plantations. Since these “capitalist plantations” were producing commodities eagerly demanded at home, English governing authorities were prepared to stimulate them with subsidies, where necessary, and to remove legal impediments. Ironically, the English tradition of representative government meant that the formulation of the laws that gave legal definition to the institution of slavery was left to colonial legislatures dominated by slaveholders. The legislatures passed a series of statutes during the seventeenth century that quite literally deprived Africans of their humanity in a legal sense, reducing them to the status of mere property . . .³

In the North, slavery began to wither and die as many slaveholders simply realized how impractical slavery was in the North, given the agricultural limitations of an environment not suited for plantation-style farming. This, coupled with the development of successful non-agrarian forms of entrepreneurship, caused a major shift in the North’s economy. Many Northern slave owners, influenced by these economic changes and forced to confront their own hypocrisy, having born witness to the heroic efforts of black patriots during the Revolution, chose to abandon slavery on both economic and moral grounds. Many of these black patriots had been inspired to join their white counterparts in the colony’s struggle for freedom by Thomas Jefferson’s discourse on natural rights and liberty. In that discourse, Jefferson asked, “[C]an the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are the gift of God?”⁴ Unlike Jefferson, many whites in the North took the concept of natural rights and liberty seriously, and, at the height of the Revolutionary War, began to emancipate their slaves. In 1777, Vermont became the first state to abolish slavery. Massachusetts followed Vermont’s lead, ending slavery in 1783. Next in line were Connecticut and Rhode Island, which each abolished slavery in 1784, followed by New York in 1785, and New Jersey in 1786. For a while, many African Americans believed that their patriotic efforts would be rewarded by a nationwide abolition of slavery. Tragically, the euphoria triggered by Northern emancipation had blinded African Americans to the culturally entrenched nature of slavery in the South and the nation’s general addiction to the direct and indirect profits of slavery. Soon, those black patriots who fought so valiantly during the Revolutionary War came to the realization that one out of every five Americans was a slave and that this represented a reality that was not about to change in the near future.

African-American dreams of emancipation were crushed in 1787 by the adoption of the final draft of the Constitution, with its provision for the legal

sanctioning of slavery. It was clear to them that the sanctioning of slavery was an enticement for the South to join the new republic. "The Revolution had promised the country a progressive destiny—but that fact ignored the contradiction that built America. The nation wanted so much to be that glittering new republic where each and every person is endowed with certain natural rights. But an asterisk would accompany that claim. The Founding Fathers espoused a doctrine they could never live up to."⁵ By 1790, free blacks began to lose practically all hope of becoming citizens of this self-professed beacon of liberty. Left in the cold depths of despair, some 59,000 free blacks, unable to wrap themselves in the protective warmth of the American flag, found themselves reduced to the status of permanent aliens, stripped of the rights and privileges of citizenship. Even those black patriots who had fought so bravely to keep the flame of liberty burning were denied the warmth of this nation's gratitude. Initially, many states had granted free blacks the right to vote; however, by 1840, practically all of them had been politically disenfranchised. In addition to depriving free blacks of the right to vote, many states imposed all manner of legal prohibitions on them, including laws that restricted their mobility, required them to carry passes, and limited their occupational opportunities.⁶ Then, in 1791, Kentucky became the first of many new slave states to be admitted to the Union, confirming the political and economic direction of the nation and making it obvious that America was willing to differentiate between what was legally right and what was morally right. The tension between liberty and equality would increase in the coming centuries as blacks struggled to realize their "inalienable rights" and slaveholders continued to exercise proprietary rights over their "material and human holdings." However, for blacks, the reality of white America's rejection did not dissuade them from their quest for liberty; it merely tempered their despair with a resolve to make this new republic live up to its declaration.

As this fledgling republic began to spread its wings, much of its energy focused on erecting a center of government worthy of its newly emerging sense of power and significance. America desired a lofty perch, a seat of government that could rival the capitals of Europe in symbolism and architectural grandeur. So, in 1790, Congress chose a site on the banks of the Potomac River between Maryland and Virginia for the nation's capital and designated it the District of Columbia. America's capital would become one of the very few cities in the world to be planned and erected as a national capital. The District of Columbia was to become a display case for the architectural vision, historical artifacts, and monuments that would inspire this new nation. On September 18, 1793, George Washington laid the cornerstone for the Capitol building, which would become the iconic symbol of American democracy. This edifice was to symbolize America's "core social attitudes about democracy's sub-tenets: fairness, inclusiveness, openness, tolerance, and in

the broadest sense, freedom.”⁷ In the minds of the Founders, the Capitol building with its soaring rotunda was to be the temple in which the secular scripture of the Enlightenment, the Constitution, would be worshiped. The District of Columbia, as the republic’s new seat of government, was to represent the culmination of a historic evolution towards freedom and a symbol of a new beginning for the republic and the world. Unfortunately, for those of African descent, this building and city, in all of their architectural splendor, stood for a different history, one not born of freedom but servitude. In fact, their construction would prove to be one of this nation’s cruelest ironies, for like much of this new republic, they would be built on the backs of slaves. When the plans for the Capitol building were first drafted, the United States government sent out a request for one hundred slaves. The first stage of the Capitol’s construction would run from 1793 to 1802. In exchange for slave labor, the government agreed to pay slave owners five dollars per month per slave. In addition, slaves were not only made to labor on the construction of the Capitol building, but were also forced to work on Pierre-Charles L’Enfant’s grand design for the whole of the District of Columbia.⁸

In a different twist of fate, the nation’s Capitol would bear witness to yet another grand irony in the form of Benjamin Banneker, the grandson of an Englishwoman and African native, who would find himself appointed to the commission that conducted the first survey of the District of Columbia. Banneker’s grandmother, Molly Welsh, had been an indentured servant who, after having served out her indentures, gained her freedom. She would eventually save enough money to purchase a farm of her own and two slaves, later freeing both and marrying one. Ultimately, Molly and her husband would have four children, one named Mary, who would also marry an African native. Benjamin was born free to Mary and her husband in the colony of Maryland in 1731. As a freeborn person, Benjamin Banneker was able to attend school with both black and white children. Throughout his school years, he showed a gift for mathematics and an interest in astronomy.⁹ Banneker would eventually become a celebrated mathematician and the publisher of a very successful almanac that would rival *Poor Richard’s Almanack*, which was published by Benjamin Franklin. It was the success of Banneker’s almanac that would prompt Thomas Jefferson to recommend him to the commission as a surveyor. It was Jefferson’s recommendation that constituted the source of this irony, because of Jefferson’s negative attitude towards blacks. As stated earlier in part one of this text, Jefferson had written extensively on his theory of black intellectual inferiority in his *Notes on Virginia*. In fact, Banneker had written Jefferson a letter criticizing his racial views. In that letter to Jefferson in 1791, Banneker wrote:

Suffer me to recall to your mind that time, in which the arms of the British Crown were exerted, with every powerful effort, in order to reduce you to a state of servitude; look back, I entreat you. . . . You were impressed with proper ideas of the great violation of liberty, and free possession of those blessings to which you were entitled by nature; but, sir, now pitiable is it to reflect, that although you were so fully convinced of the benevolence of the Father of Mankind, and His equal and impartial distribution of these rights and privileges which He hath conferred upon them, that you should at the same time counteract His mercies, in detaining by fraud and violence, so numerous a part of my brethren under groaning captivity and cruel oppression, that you should at the same time be guilty of the most criminal act, which you professedly detest in others.¹⁰

During the War of 1812, the British burned the Capitol building and again slaves were put to work in its rebuilding. The concluding phase of its construction occurred during the Civil War, when once again slaves were enlisted as laborers. However, many of the slaves employed in this phase of construction were individuals who had escaped from the South only to be captured by Union troops and put to work as “contraband slaves,” seized from the Confederacy. The final cruel irony of the construction of the Capitol revolves around the design and casting of the *Statue of Freedom*, which sits atop the Capitol dome. This statue, designed in Rome by Thomas Crawford in 1856 for \$3,000, was later cast in 1863 in a Maryland bronze foundry owned by Clark Mills at a cost of \$23,736. Part of this irony had to do with the casting and transportation of the five-ton statue, because it was not carried out by the owner of the foundry, Philip Reed, but by his slave. However, the cruelest aspect of this final irony rests with the statue’s symbolism. For the *Statue of Freedom* that adorns the Capitol’s dome represents the height of American hubris and insensitivity with its image of “a Native American female warrior clad in a star-festooned helmet and flowing robes.”¹¹ The hypocrisy of the Founding Fathers has been referenced on several occasions in this text, but one can only hope that the choice of a Native American female as the symbol for freedom was the result of some unconscious convoluted romantic esthetic. It was an unmentionable cruelty to consciously use the image of a Native American as the symbol of freedom, while Native American lands were being seized and the various peoples who constituted their numbers were being pressed into near extinction in a series of genocidal wars. However, these ironies should not come as any surprise to those historians who dare explore the shadowy dark antebellum soul of the city’s commercial heart beyond the shining marble and granite façades of the capital’s buildings. “Washington, D.C., the showplace of American government, was home to one of the most notorious and lucrative slave markets in the country . . . [where every free]

black person in the vicinity of a slave market was in danger of being captured and sold into servitude. . . . Slavery was the lifeblood of Washington, D.C., the city that slave owners controlled.”¹²

In the same year that George Washington laid the cornerstone for the nation’s Capitol, a then-obscure man named Eli Whitney invented a small machine, known as the cotton gin, which would serve as the cornerstone upon which the South would rebuild its faltering economy. This invention would also seal the fate of millions of slaves as another stone in the pyramid of privilege was laid on their backs in the name of property, profit, and progress. “Working all day, a slave could clean about a pound of cotton . . . this . . . kept cotton from becoming a major cash crop for plantation owners at the time when the new mills in New England were demanding more.”¹³ However, with Whitney’s invention of the cotton gin in 1793, the cultivation of cotton was made profitable by simplifying the cleaning process. In fact, Thomas Jefferson, as the then Secretary of State and inspector of patents, realized the importance of the cotton gin when he received a request for a patent from Whitney in 1793. Jefferson conveyed his personal interest in the cotton gin in an official reply to Whitney in which he stated:

As the state of Virginia, of which I am, carries on household manufactures of cotton to a great extent, as I also do myself . . . I feel a considerable interest in the success of your invention for family use.¹⁴

The demand for more cotton in New England was, in part, the result of the work of another inventor from Massachusetts, Francis Cabot Lowell. Like Whitney, he contributed significantly to the rise of cotton as an important commodity and the contiguous development of the textile industry as a critical aspect of the United States economy. Lowell had studied the textile industry in England, subsequently returning to the United States to build the first successful power loom in Waltham, Massachusetts, in 1814. After Lowell’s death in 1817, his associates developed a mill town on the Merrimack River, naming it after him. With the increased processing efficiency brought by the cotton gin and the textile industry’s rise in productive capacity because of the water-powered loom, there came an escalating demand for Southern-grown cotton.

By freeing slaves from the labor-intensive activity of processing raw cotton, the cotton gin made slavery extremely cost effective. “As a result, new territories were opened to cotton cultivation. From South Carolina to Georgia and eventually westward to Texas, cotton plantations sprang up all over the South.”¹⁵ In 1790, three years prior to the invention of the cotton gin, approximately 3,000 bales of cotton at five hundred pounds a bale were produced a year in the United States. However, by 1801, with the widening use

of the cotton gin, the number of bales rose to 100,000, then on to 400,000 in 1820, and finally skyrocketing to *four million* bales by the eve of the Civil War. This extraordinary increase in cotton production made it the country's leading commodity during the first half of the nineteenth century,¹⁶ making cotton fabric the cloth of choice in both New England and England. With the huge demand for cotton in both New England and England came an increased need for slave labor. In turn, this drove the price of field hands to extraordinary heights. The price of a field hand was determined by the following formula. Typically, the value of a field hand was \$800 when cotton was sold for eight cents a pound, and as the price of cotton increased, the cost of a field hand would increase proportionately. The formula was simply this: for every cent increase in the price of cotton, \$100 would be added to the price of a field hand.¹⁷

However, by the 1850s, the price of slaves outpaced the price of cotton, which "brought an average of a little more than ten cents [a pound], while the price of a good slave increased to \$1,800 as a result of the demand for labor."¹⁸ But the demand for cotton offset the labor overhead of increased slave prices, plus, most large plantations were involved in some sort of "breeding program," making slaves a renewable resource. In addition, slaveholders were also able to decrease their overhead by producing much of the food needed to maintain their slaves, which meant that they generally realized more than a satisfactory return on their investment in slave labor. With the increased cost effectiveness of slavery, Southern plantation owners became even more deeply committed to slavery as an economic institution. The cotton gin made cotton "king" of the South and greedy plantation owners its loyal subjects. Once cotton was established as the king of agriculture, a cotton curtain of tyranny rained down around its realm, trapping almost four million blacks in servitude. Historian Lerone Bennett provides a glimpse into this world in the following statement:

Behind this cotton curtain four million human beings were systematically deprived of personality. Vice, immorality and brutality were institutionalized. The sanctity of the family was violated; children were sold from mothers and fatherhood, in effect, was outlawed. The rape of a slave woman, a Mississippi court ruled, is an offense unknown to common or civil law. The "father of a slave," a Kentucky court ruled, "is unknown to our law."¹⁹

Fifteen years after the invention of the cotton gin, the Constitutional provision ending the United States' involvement in the international slave trade was enacted as specified by that provision in 1808. Surprisingly, the end of the international slave trade actually served to strengthen the domestic slave trade by decreasing the external availability of slaves, thus causing a scarcity.

This scarcity, in the midst of an increasing demand for field hands in the cotton-producing regions of the lower South and western territories, coupled with the surplus of slaves in the upper South, triggered the domestic slave trade. Many historians argue that the surplus of slaves in the upper South was caused by the overproduction of tobacco, which resulted in the depletion of soil quality in the region. Poor soil conditions in the tobacco region of the upper South translated into a decrease in crop yield, which in turn reduced the cost effectiveness and need for slave labor. It was and still is believed by many historians that these poor soil conditions caused the massive transfer of slaves from the upper South to the lower South and the western territories, where the soil was more conducive to cotton. However, many contemporary historians contend that the movement of slaves, particularly to the western territories, was “not due to the degradation of eastern soil, or any sort of land shortage whatsoever.”²⁰ For these historians, it was the shift in demand for agricultural products from tobacco and various forms of grain to cotton that caused the deflation of the eastern agricultural markets. This deflation resulted in a surplus of slaves. “The black-belt lands of Alabama and Texas were more congenial to [cotton] than the sandy soils of the Carolina Piedmont or the marshes of the coastal plains, except for long-staple cotton. The best cotton lands of all were the alluvial soils of the Mississippi flood plain.”²¹ No doubt, it was probably a combination of depleted soil in some areas of the East and the demand for labor in the cotton regions of the southwest that fueled the domestic slave trade. Laws of supply and demand quickly were set into motion when the surplus of slaves in the upper South created a natural market for slaves in the lower South and the western territories where there was a scarcity. “The westward shift of cotton and slaves was also stimulated by breakthroughs in transportation. The response of slave owners to steamboats and railroads reveals the eagerness with which they sought to bend the industrial technology of the nineteenth century to their advantage.”²²

The scarcity in slaves caused by the end of the international slave trade contributed to the previously mentioned increase in the price of slaves as their cost steadily rose to a high of \$1,800 per slave in 1850. In fact, “slave prices had tripled between 1807 and 1860, while cotton prices drifted downward.”²³ This increase in labor cost, corresponding with a decrease in the cotton prices, gave rise to the popular belief that slavery was not profitable. Implicit in this belief was the notion that slavery was a backward institution, cherished by “ignorant” Southerners. This coincided with the popular belief that slavery contributed little to the wealth of America. Gavin Wright, in an article entitled *Economics of Slavery*, debunks this belief with the following argument:

The critical point is that after the closing of the African slave trade in 1808, the size of the aggregate slave population was fixed in the short run, independent of

price. The slave population did, of course, grow over time, but only through the slow process of natural population growth; there was no short-run mechanism of elastic supply, in response to changes in demand [as there was in the North with immigrant labor]. The implication is that the observed rise in slave prices must have been a result of increases in demand, and hence it could not very well be the basis for an “unprofitability” that would cause the decline of slavery. Indeed, the high profitability of slavery is itself reflected in the rising slave prices, the bulk of which are “capitalized rent” captured by owners at the time of birth or at the time of the price increase in the form of capital gains. In prosperous decades like the 1830s and the 1850s, capital gains were a major component of the profitability of slavery, and they were enjoyed by every owner, whether efficient in production or not.²⁴

Historical analysis of slavery in the past tended to focus more on the sociology of slavery than its economics. This meant that historians failed to view the increased cost of a slave as being a gain in a capital asset. For example, if a slaveholder purchased a slave for \$800 and the price to replace that slave rose to \$1,800, then this increase would represent a capital gain of \$1,000, because if the slaveholder sold that slave he would realize a profit of \$1,000. In effect, slaveholders could realize a profit not only from a slave’s labor, but also from his or her worth as a capital asset. And, of course, that capital asset could be converted into cash at any time through sale or by using the slave as collateral for a loan. As a result of being able to profit from slave labor, while also counting slaves as capital assets, “the average wealth among farmers of the cotton belt in 1860 was \$13,124.”²⁵ On the other hand, the average wealth of non-slave holding Southern farmers was only \$1,777. Interestingly, scholars and lay students of history often wish to forget that slaves were viewed as property and were inventoried as such. When one assesses the average wealth of ordinary Southern and Northern laborers in 1840, which was \$105 and \$110 respectively, it becomes quite obvious that neither group had the capital to purchase a single adult slave, not to mention the land and other capital expenses associated with cotton farming.²⁶

The aforementioned increase in demand for slaves, particularly in the lower Southern states where there was an abundance of rich cotton land, gave rise to the ugly and often secretive practice of slave breeding. “Frederick Bancroft, in a well-researched study of the domestic trade in slaves [entitled, *Slave Trading in the Old South*], amassed evidence drawn largely from Southern newspapers establishing that slave owners had been [so] greatly concerned with the number of children born to their slaves, that they placed a high value on fertile women, and that slave mothers received various incentives to encourage reproduction. In some cases, women were punished when they failed to produce sufficient numbers of children.”²⁷ This explains why 56 percent of 3,952,760 slaves accounted for in 1860 were less than twenty years

of age.²⁸ The existence of breeding programs on Southern plantations is also substantiated by “research in narratives of ex-slaves, [in which] a significant number of those interviewed [stated] that slave women were subjected to arranged marriages, forced mating, and other forms of sexual abuse. There were reports of slave men [being] rented for the purpose [of] impregnat[ing] slave women.”²⁹ In public, slave owners cavalierly dismissed these claims as being antislavery propaganda, while in private they discussed breeding wenches and profits made from slave sales. The upper South was particularly known for the practice of slave breeding, as this area became the domestic source of slaves for the lower South. Anecdotal evidence of this practice also can be found in the journals of observers, such as Frederick Law Olmsted, who thoroughly chronicled his travels and observations throughout the South, reporting that slave breeding was a common practice. Again, all one has to do is look through Southern newspapers of the era to see the numerous advertisements for the sale of slave women, described as good breeding stock. Olmsted admits that most gentlemen of character did not openly discuss the matter; however, he does go on to say:

It appears evident, however, from the manner in which I hear the traffic spoken of incidentally, that the cash value of a slave for sale, above the cost of raising it from infancy to age at which it commands the highest price is generally considered among the surest elements of a planter’s wealth . . . That a slave woman is commonly esteemed least for her laboring qualities, most for those qualities which give value to a brood-mare, is, also, constantly made apparent.³⁰

In an 1858 article published in the *Southern Cultivator* entitled “Profits of Farming—Facts and Figures,” an unidentified author reports:

I own a woman who cost me \$400 when a girl, in 1827. Admit she made me nothing—only worth her victuals and clothing. She now has three children, worth over \$3000, and have been field hands say three years; in that time making enough to pay their expenses before they were half hands, and then I have the profit of all half hands. She has only three boys and a girl of a dozen; yet with all of her bad management, she has paid me ten percent interest, for her work was to be an average good, and I would not this night touch \$700 for her. Her oldest boy is worth \$1,250 cash and I can get it.³¹

These attitudes were not limited to nameless planters but also were held by the nation’s political elite, such as Thomas Jefferson, who wrote “a child raised every 2 years is of more profit than the crop of the best laboring man.”³² Jefferson viewed the “labor of a breeding woman as no object and directed his plantation manager to make sure that the overseers understood that . . . it is not their labor, but their increase which is the first consideration with

us.”³³ For many years, the subject of slave breeding was avoided by historians from the South, who attempted to hide the practice, possibly out of shame. Northern historians apparently felt uncomfortable with the subject. In the past, the debate was over whether or not slave breeding even existed; however, a sizable number of contemporary historians now accept its existence as a fact. The present-day debates tend to be over the degree to which the practice occurred. For many contemporary historians, mere anecdotal evidence is not sufficient; they demand empirical proof. In this regard, one of the most compelling studies of the practice of slave breeding was conducted by Richard Sutch, who:

. . . undertook a study of 2,588 separate slave farms, examining the age-sex distribution of their slaveholdings, as reported in the census of 1860. He found on slaveholdings with at least one woman that the average ratio of women to men exceeded 1.2. The imbalance between the sexes was even more dramatic in the “selling states”—the states of the upper South [Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee] that supplied slaves to the newer states of the South and West. There the excess of women over men exceeded 300 per thousand. The missing men were located on holdings with only one slave. The unbalanced sex ratios suggest that slaveholders with large holdings wished to maximize the number of children produced by a given number of adults. The adults constituted the work force available for crop production (the size of the labor force required would be determined by the amount of acreage under cultivation), and the children born represented the potential gains from slave breeding. The more women in the labor force, the higher would be the potential number of children produced on a given farm. The maximum child-to-adult ratio was achieved on farms where women outnumbered men by between two and three to one. In the selling states, the ratio of children to adults on such farms exceeded that on farms with balanced sex ratios by more than one third.³⁴

This study did not, as Sutch admits, “prove that forced multiple sexual partners, or other forms of sexual abuse were common.”³⁵ However, the fact that whippings and even mutilations of uncooperative slaves was a common occurrence should provide *prima facie* evidence of the likelihood that force was applied when it was deemed necessary to assure that the substantial profits of procreation were realized. In fact, the use of corporal punishment for infractions both large and small was so common that “few slaves, no matter how obedient or humble, reached old age without receiving at least one lashing . . . even ‘kind’ slave masters whipped the skin off the backs of slaves and washed them down with brine.”³⁶ Given this fact, it is hard to believe that force was not used to pressure unwilling slaves to breed. One slave holder admitted in a letter to Frederick Olmsted that “in the states of Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Missouri, as much attention

is paid to the breeding and growth of negroes as to that of horses and mules."³⁷ In the light of such attitudes, one must assume that slaves were subject to the same type of consideration or lack thereof when it came to procreation and the increasing of their numbers.

In addition to the belief that slavery was not profitable was the belief that slave labor was inefficient. This belief was held originally by antebellum Northerners but eventually became accepted as virtual dogma by many contemporary historians. However, Robert W. Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman, in their 1974 work *Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery*, put forth a significantly different picture. This picture shows a plantation system with slave labor that was "35 percent more efficient than the Northern system of family farming."³⁸ This is not to extol or defend the practice of slavery, but to point out its ruthless efficiency. Cotton farming, in particular, benefited from the gang system of slavery. In this system, slaves were divided into functional groups under a slave supervisor designated as the "driver." Each gang was given a daily assignment and the "driver" would be responsible for setting the pace of the work. On the larger plantations, the entire operation was usually conducted by a white "overseer," who managed the plantation for the owner.³⁹ The simple fact of the matter was that the gang system of slave labor, when employed efficiently in accordance with sound market principles, generated a great deal of wealth. In fact, "the average wealth of gang-system farms exceeded \$56,000, which is more than 15 times the average either for Southern yeomen or for Northern farmers."⁴⁰

More recently compiled data indicates that the South's slave-based economy was much more efficient and profitable than previously thought. In fact, economist Robert Fogel states:

[I]t is evident that the South was quite advanced by the economic standard of the antebellum era. If we treat the North and South as separate nations and rank them among the countries of the world, the South would stand as the fourth most prosperous of the world in 1860. The South was more prosperous than France, Germany, Denmark, or any of the countries of Europe except England. The South was not only advanced by antebellum standards but also by relatively recent standards. Indeed, a country as advanced as Italy did not achieve the Southern level of per capita income until the eve of World War II.⁴¹

The question is why did so many Northern observers believe that slavery and the Southern economy were inefficient and lacked sophistication, when obviously most Southerners believed in the plantation system? "[T]hese differences may be traced back to a key distinction between forms of wealth: slaves were movable personal property, whereas Northern wealth was prima-

rily held as land or fixed capital, both of which were effectively fixed in place.”⁴² In fact, it was the flexibility of a slavery-based economy, with its movable personal property, that saved the plantation owners of Virginia and Maryland. As previously mentioned, soil depletion had reduced the cost effectiveness of slave labor in the upper Southern states, causing a surplus in slave labor. Virginia and Maryland plantation owners, in response, became the primary exporters of slaves to the lower Southern states and western territories.

With the expansion of cotton production throughout the Deep South and southwestern territories came a rapid increase in the demand for slaves. As previously mentioned, this growth triggered a massive transfer of slaves from the upper Southern states of Maryland and Virginia, in particular, with North Carolina, Kentucky, and Tennessee following close behind. Slaves were rounded up by the hundreds of thousands, families were separated and forced to march hundreds of miles into the Deep South and Southwest. A slave named Charles Ball from Maryland left a record of his ordeal with the aid of an abolitionist name Isaac Fisher. He describes the pain of being separated from his wife and children and taken to Georgia.

My purchaser ordered me to cross my hands behind, which were quickly bound with a strong cord; and then he told me that we must set out that very day for the South. . . . I joined fifty-one other slaves . . . thirty-two of these were men and nineteen were women . . . A strong iron collar was closely fitted by means of a padlock round each of our necks . . . [W]e were handcuffed in pairs, with iron staples and bolts . . .⁴³

Charles Ball goes on to describe what happened later, stating:

[W]e all lay down on the naked floor to sleep in our handcuffs and chains. The women, my fellow slaves, lay on one side of the room, and the men who were chained with me, occupied the other. . . . I at length fell asleep, but was distressed by painful dreams. My wife and children appeared to be weeping and lamenting my calamity; and beseeching and imploring my master, on their knees, not to carry me away from them. My little boy came and begged me not to go and leave him, and endeavored . . . with his little hands to break the fetters that bound me.⁴⁴

After Charles was purchased, he asked if he could see his family one more time and he was told he would be able to “get another wife in Georgia.”⁴⁵ In the following quote, an escaped slave named Harriet Jacobs describes in her memoirs an encounter with a mother whose seven children had just been sold on the auction block in North Carolina.

She knew that some of them would be taken from her; but they took all. The children were sold to a slave trader, and their mother bought by a man in her own town. Before night her children were all far away. She begged the trader to tell her where he intended to take them; this he refused to do. How could he, when he knew he would sell them, one by one, wherever he could command the highest price? I met the mother in the street, and her wild, haggard face lives today in my mind. She wrung her hands in anguish, and exclaimed, "Gone! All gone! Why don't God kill me?"⁴⁶

In the ocean of misery that was slavery, these tragic stories are mere teardrops in the flood of human commerce known as the domestic slave trade. "From the time of the cotton gin's invention to 1860, more than 835,000 slaves were moved into the western cotton states, which were at that time primarily Alabama, Mississippi, and Texas."⁴⁷ The need for slaves in the cotton-producing states of Alabama, Mississippi, and Texas were so acute that even free blacks were subject to being kidnapped into slavery. "Many of them were children, considered easy to kidnap and conceal because a couple of years of wretched slave labor often rendered them unrecognizable."⁴⁸ One Mississippi planter, named John W. Hamilton, wrote the mayor of Philadelphia to convey his suspicion that several of his newly acquired slaves were kidnapped free blacks. One boy, Samuel Scomp, "insisted that the captives had been forced to walk barefoot for a total of six hundred miles and that they were whipped soundly whenever they complained."⁴⁹ At this point, one might be compelled to ask whether slaveholders felt any attachment or sympathy for the slaves whose families were dismantled by the domestic slave trade. Unfortunately, "analyses of the slave trade have . . . demonstrated the business acumen with which masters valued their chattel and the limited role of sentimentality in effecting their economic decisions. . . . [Slave masters] . . . like Jefferson . . . made no apologies for selling recalcitrant slaves and purchased new ones when he was short handed."⁵⁰

Throughout the early nineteenth century, the textile industry flourished as a result an ample supply of slave-produced cotton. Even though England had abolished slavery by judicial decision in 1771, it continued to benefit from the importation of slave-produced American cotton. In fact, the highest levels of cotton production in the Southern region of the United States were, to a great extent, due to England's insatiable demand for cotton. An editorial printed on the January 30, 1857 in the *London Times* proclaimed:

We know that for all mercantile purposes England is one of the States, and that in effect we are partners with the Southern planter; we hold a bill of sale over his goods and chattels, his live and dead stock, and take a lion's share in the profits of slavery . . . We fete Mrs. Stowe, cry over her book, and pray for an antislavery president . . . but all this time we are clothing not only ourselves, but

all the world besides, with the very cotton picked and cleaned by “Uncle Tom” and his fellow sufferers. It is our trade. It is the great staple of British industry. We are “Mr. Legree’s” agents for the manufacture and sale of his cotton.⁵¹

England was not the only textile center to reap large profits from the processing of Southern cotton. In the United States, the textile industry started by Francis Cabot Lowell was largely responsible for elevating the state of Massachusetts to its position of dominance in manufacturing. Robert Fogel documents the tremendous expansion of the textile industry in the following statement:

The American lunge toward industrialization began during the second decade of the nineteenth century. As late as 1810, the bulk of the cotton and woolen products were manufactured in households rather than in factories. During the next several decades hundreds of relatively large-scale cotton textile mills were constructed in the Northeast, with Massachusetts leading the way. By 1850 the typical cotton mill of the Northeast employed about 150 workers, and the top 10 percent averaged more than 500 workers. These large, and by the standards of the time highly mechanized, factories symbolized the North’s status as a leader of the Industrial Revolution.⁵²

Even the South, despite common perception, had a small, but profitable industrial base that benefited from the processing of cotton and other raw materials. It is generally believed that the slave economy of the antebellum South was solely agricultural in nature. However, by the 1850s, about five percent of the South’s total slave population of about 200,000 bondsmen worked in industry. Slave labor, both skilled and unskilled, was the backbone of the iron industry from its very inception during the first decades of the eighteenth century. By the end of the eighteenth century, the ironworks of colonial America had expanded to the point that it was the third largest producer of crude iron in the world, the bulk of which was produced in the slave-manned plants of Virginia and Maryland. Approximately 25 percent of the 257 plants built prior to the Revolutionary War were located in Maryland and Virginia. After the Revolution, the iron industry expanded, along with its slave labor force. In the Chesapeake Bay area alone, the number of ironworks grew from sixty-five plants in the eighteenth century to eighty by the nineteenth century, with an increase of slave labor from 4,500 to 7,000. At that point in time, Virginia dominated the iron industry of the South. However, there were other significant iron-producing centers in the South, such as South Carolina, Missouri, and most notably Tennessee, with twenty-one ironworks, totaling 2,165 slave laborers.⁵³ The majority of the slaves put to work in southern industries were men, but women and children worked in the textile, hemp and tobacco factories.⁵⁴

Of all the Southern industries, however, it was textile manufacturing that represented the most long-term exploitation of slave labor. Again, this was because cotton was the leading commodity produced in the United States during the first half of the nineteenth century. In the South, there existed a natural linkage between the cotton plantation and textile manufacturing from the dawn of the Industrial Revolution until the South was defeated in the Civil War.

During the initial phase of the textile industry in the South, the 1790s to the 1830s, most manufacturers were planters/mill owners whose principal concern was their agricultural operations. They ran very small factories on their plantations where they used slaves who had little or no value as field hands, primarily woman and children. [However, b]y the 1840s the nature of the Southern textile industry had changed markedly. Mills had more spindles than earlier mills (at least 1,000 or more), usually had their own looms, sometimes ran their own dyeing operations, and generally employed thirty to forty workers. Instead of running mills as ancillaries to their plantations, mill owners expended most of their energies and time on factory operations. These operations had to have work forces which were better trained and more steady than mills of the earlier era. Here, slave labor, especially if the slaves were owned, not hired by the manufacturer, offered real advantages to employers since turnover and absenteeism were severely restricted.⁵⁵

Southern mill owners exploited the advantage that slave labor force afforded until the 1850s, "when the rising prices of slaves and raw cotton made hiring or purchasing slaves for textile mills less advantageous finally."⁵⁶ This led to a decline in the use of slaves in the mills of the southeast, while the practice continued at a high level in the Old Southwest.⁵⁷

Slavery continued not only to benefit slave owners but also was the economic tide that lifted all boats, according to economist Robert Fogel, who states the following:

The exploitation of slaves raised the per capita income of the free Southern population by 45 percent and the annual rate of growth of their per capita income by about 8 percent. Nor were slave-owners the only ones who appear to have benefited from slavery. For if it is true, as is frequently asserted, that slavery retarded the rate of growth of the South's free labor force, then free wage workers of the region also benefited from slavery. Whatever the merit of that argument, it is interesting to note that rate of increase between 1850 and 1860 was greater in the South than in the nation as a whole. Moreover, the 1860 money wages of Southern farm laborers and domestics compared favorably with the national average of these groups. These considerations have some bearing on why the cause of the Confederacy enjoyed such strong support among non-slaveholding Southerns.⁵⁸

The argument is often made, especially in public school textbooks and curricula, that slavery was carried out by evil nameless and faceless people. When students, both white and black, ask their teachers who were the slave owners, the typical answer is an immoral minority of whites in the South who were the sole beneficiaries of this exploitive institution. However, the facts do not support this high school social studies fiction. The cruel irony of such an answer is that it sounds too much like the answers given by many Germans when asked about the Holocaust. Of course, because Germany lost the war, they were forced as a society to admit to their collective responsibility and the degree to which the entire society profited from the persecution and enslavement of the Jews. James M. Loewen, bestselling author of *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, in his analysis of American social study texts describes how public school textbooks have attempted to minimize the fact and impact of slavery in America.

The emotion generated by textbook descriptions of slavery is sadness, not anger. For there's no one to be angry *at*. Somehow we ended up with four million slaves in America but no owners! This is part of a pattern in our textbooks: anything bad in American History happened anonymously. Everyone named in our history made a positive contribution (except for [abolitionist] John Brown). . . . Textbooks play their part by minimizing slavery in the lives of the founders.⁵⁹

When assessing the role of slavery in the ascent of America's early economy, the fact of the matter is that the economic tide of slavery lifted the wages of free workers, both in the South and the North, on an ancillary swell of industrial productivity and profitability. "Until the end of the nineteenth century, cotton—planted, cultivated, harvested, and ginned by slaves—was by far [America's] most important export. Our graceful antebellum homes, in the North as well as in the South, were built largely by slaves or from profits derived from the slave and cotton trade."⁶⁰ Not only was slavery profitable for the South, it was the black powder that ignited the explosive expansion of northern industry and wealth. Industrialization would have come to the North, but much more slowly if not for slave-produced cotton. If one were to compare the per capita income of the free populations of the North and the South, with the South boasting the fourth most successful economy in the world between 1840 and 1860, one could not help but be struck by the economic vigor of the North. The per capita income for the free population of the North was \$110 in 1840, increasing to \$142 by 1860, as compared to the South, where the per capita income of the free population was \$105 in 1840, increasing to \$150 by 1860. It was the northeast, however, which boasted the highest per capita income of \$130 in 1840 and \$183 by 1860.⁶¹ This increase in per capita income was due, in part, to the numbers of mill towns in the northeastern

states of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania—all of which benefited from the slave-produced cotton of the South. In fact, when one looks at the free population in the North Central region, an area known more for its farming than its industry, one finds a per capita income among the free population that is significantly lower than that in the Northeast. The actual per capita income for the free population in the North Central region, which includes the Dakotas, Nebraska, Kansas, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio, was only \$66 in 1840 and \$90 by 1860.⁶²

As previously stated, not only did the wealthy industrialists who owned the textile mills and the entrepreneurs whose businesses supplied the South with goods and services benefit, but so too did the white working-class laborers employed in those businesses and industries. Interestingly, a large number of these laborers were foreign-born immigrants with limited English proficiency and few industrial skills, yet they all benefited from the industrial vigor of the Northeast. “By 1860, one-eighth of America’s 32 million people were foreign-born, and most of them had settled in the North, drawn to the mill towns.”⁶³ Working-class whites in the North not only benefited directly from the literal and figurative blood, sweat, and tears of enslaved blacks in the form of the cotton they provided Northern mills, but as whites they also benefited from industrial policies of racial exclusion, designed to discriminate against their free black counterparts. “[T]he material circumstances and specific interests of the white working class . . . has for more than a century benefited from diminished competition from other racial groups who were barred by custom and law from jobs and positions available only to whites.”⁶⁴

In the introduction to this text, a quote from Derrick Bell, the eminent black legal scholar, was cited which captures the essence of the economic dynamic of racial stratification in America. Bell describes the relationship between whites and blacks in America as follows:

Black people are the magical faces at the bottom of society’s well. Even the poorest whites, those who must live their lives only a few levels above, gain their self-esteem by gazing down on us. Surely, they must know that their deliverance depends on letting down their ropes. Only by working together is escape possible. Over time, many reach out, but most simply watch, mesmerized into maintaining their unspoken commitment to keeping us where we are, at whatever cost to them or to us.⁶⁵

Racial stratification in America is attitudinally based in racism, historically defined by slavery, and maintained through the divide and conquer strategies of those wealthy white elites who benefit from economically pitting whites of lesser status and non-whites against each other. This form of stratification is

but one type of hierarchical ranking that falls under the broader category of ethnic stratification. "Ethnic stratification is a system of stratification wherein some relatively fixed group membership (e.g., race, religion, or nationality) is utilized as a major criterion for assigning social positions with their attendant differential rewards."⁶⁶ Social scientist Donald Noel puts forth a theory of ethnic stratification that gives an insightful explanation of black/white relations in America. His theory provides a formula that explains the interactive dynamics that create ethnic stratification. This formula is computed as follows: ethnocentrism plus contact plus competition plus a differential in power between the competing groups equals ethnic stratification. (Ethnocentrism + Contact + Competition + A differential in power = Ethnic Stratification)

According to Noel's formula, encounters between ethnic groups are always colored by the ethnocentrism of each group. Ethnocentrism refers to the belief that "one's own group is the center of everything, and all others are scaled with reference to it."⁶⁷ Although interethnic encounters are always to one degree or another characterized by the ethnocentrism of the encountering groups, contact between groups "need not lead to either interethnic conflict or ethnic stratification."⁶⁸ Ethnic groups, despite being racially and culturally dissimilar, can live "in peace as politically independent but economically interdependent societies for several centuries."⁶⁹ However, this can only occur when there is "mutual respect and admission by each that the other is superior in certain specific respects . . . some [sense of] shared values and interests, and . . . [an] absence of competition due to complementary economics and low population density."⁷⁰ On the other hand, competition over mutually desired goals and/or resources can and does tend to trigger interethnic conflicts. Competition is a critical variable in Noel's formula for ethnic stratification. Ultimately, "[t]he presence of competition along ethnic lines is [a] . . . prerequisite for the emergence of ethnic stratification."⁷¹ Again, competition requires the presence of mutually desired goals and resources. Absent these mutually desired goals and/or resources, ethnic groups that come in contact with each other typically would have no reason to engage in competition or conflict.

All of this is not to say that ethnic stratification cannot occur absent mutual competition between groups. There are cases when ethnic stratification can occur when only one group is initially striving for a particular goal or resource. "[T]he indifference of one group towards the goal in effect reduces scarcity—i.e., fewer seekers enhance the probability of goal attainment by any one seeker. However, if the goal is still defined as scarce by members of one group, they may seek to establish ethnic stratification in order to effectively exploit the labor of the indifferent group and thereby maximize goal attainment. In such a situation the labor . . . of the indifferent group may be said

to be the real object of competition.”⁷² A clear example of such a case occurred when the Spaniards conquered and enslaved the indigenous peoples of Central and South America, putting them to work mining a scarce and valuable commodity, gold. Both the Spanish and indigenous peoples of the Americas valued gold. However, for the Spaniards, gold represented more than a mere element of religious adornment and priestly status; it was the foundation of their emerging mercantilist economy and national identity.

Ethnocentrism and competition are not unto themselves sufficient to cause ethnic stratification. Two ethnic groups could be engaged in ruinous competition and conflict for years without one or the other gaining sufficient dominance to subjugate the other. “Highly ethnocentric groups involved in competition for vital objects will not generate ethnic stratification *unless* they are of such unequal power that one is able to impose its will upon the other[D]ifferential power is the foundation element in the genesis of any stratification system.”⁷³ Noel summarizes his theory as following:

When distinct ethnic groups are brought into sustained contact (via migration, the emergence and expansion of the state, or internal differentiation of a previously homogeneous group), ethnic stratification will invariably follow if—and only if—the groups are characterized by a significant degree of ethnocentrism, competition, and differential power. Without ethnocentrism, the groups would quickly merge and competition would not be structured along ethnic lines. Without competition, there would be no motivation or rationale for ethnic lines. Without differential power, it would simply be impossible for one group to achieve dominance and impose subordination to its will and ideals upon the other.⁷⁴

When Noel’s theory of ethnic stratification is utilized as an interpretative frame for the historic relationship between blacks and whites in Americas, it provides a paradigm for understanding slavery and racial stratification with all of its attending elements of social, political, and economic discrimination. With regards to the use of Noel’s theory for the purposes of understanding slavery and racial stratification, his theory provides a more robust explanation of racial stratification than it does for the origins of slavery. Again, Noel’s theory argues that ethnocentrism plus contact plus competition plus a differential in power between competing groups equals ethnic stratification. In the case of slavery, there was not much of a competitive element in the initial relationship between Africans and Europeans, because in the beginning Europeans were primarily interested in coastal trade with Africans because they found that continent’s geography and climate made its interior relatively impenetrable. The realities of geography and climate, in addition, made it difficult for the nations of Europe to conquer and exploit the continent’s resources

through colonization. This meant that one of the crucial elements in Noel's formula, competition, was missing. However, as previously cited, he did present a possible exception to his strict formulation. Noel states that, although a differential in power is necessary for ethnic stratification to occur, competition may be a dispensable element. "For example, perhaps extreme ethnocentrism independent of competition . . . [may be] sufficient motivation for seeking to impose ethnic stratification. Certainly ethnocentrism could encourage efforts to promote continued sharp differentiation [between groups], but it would not by itself motivate stratification unless [one] assume[s] the existence of a *need* for dominance or aggression."⁷⁵ David Davis, in his work *Slavery and Human Progress*, provides an excellent example of the role of extreme ethnocentrism in ethnic stratification. Davis cites "the fact that the early expansion of Islam, of Christianity, and of mercantilist Europe involved the enslaving of millions of pagans and infidels for their own supposed benefit as well as for the benefit of a 'superior civilization.'"⁷⁶

As asserted in the second chapter of this text, and exemplified in the aforementioned example, Western hegemony, in the form of imperialism and slavery, was clearly born of a reactionary ethnocentrism in the extreme, an ethnocentrism that would eventual devolve into racism. It was this extreme ethnocentrism that provided the philosophical and psychosocial rationale for the West's goals of imperialism and slavery. Clearly, Africans did not share the West's imperialistic goals in the "New World." To cite Noel once more, even if only one group strives for the realization of a particular goal while the other is indifferent, the striving group "may seek to establish ethnic stratification in order to effectively exploit the labor of the indifferent group and thereby maximize goal attainment."⁷⁷ In this case, Europe's need for labor in the newly emerging colonies of the Americas, coupled with the decimation of indigenous American slaves by foreign diseases, made the enslaving of Africans an attractive alternative. So, in keeping with Noel's formulation, "the labor of the indifferent group," namely the indigenous Africans, not their lands, became the real object of the initial competition. It was, however, ethnocentrism, as usual, that served as the catalytic agent that triggered the chain reaction of the social variables—namely contact, competition, and a differential of power—that caused the ethnic stratification which led to slavery. It seems safe to assume that the rapidity of the onset of such a chain reaction is, to a large extent, dependent on the relative intensity of ethnocentrism on the part of the encountering groups. If one were to take Africans and Europeans and compare the relative intensity of ethnocentrism in each group, history would demonstrate with few if any exceptions that Europeans are more intensely ethnocentric. It is important to realize when discussing ethnocentrism that it is more than often a precursor of hegemonic desire. In fact, it can be

stated with some degree of certainty that “Western hegemony also means the hegemony of Western culture [i.e., cultural imperialism]. Over the centuries [Western] cultural hegemony has taken shape in science and in fiction and in a mixture of both.”⁷⁸ For example, English philosopher David Hume in the mid 1700s stated the following:

I am apt to suspect the Negroes and in general all other species of men (for there are four or five different kinds) to be naturally inferior to the whites. There never was a civilized nation of any other complexion than white, nor even any individual eminent either in action or speculation. No ingenious manufactures amongst them, no arts, no sciences. . . .⁷⁹

Later, in 1830, in a lecture at the University of Jena, the German philosopher Hegel stated the following:

The Negro represents the natural man in all his wild and untamed nature. If you want to treat and understand him rightly, you must abstract all elements of respect and morality and sensitivity—there is nothing remotely humanized in the Negro’s character. . . . Nothing confirms this judgment more than the reports of missionaries.⁸⁰

It was the extreme ethnocentrism exhibited by people like Hume and Hegel that devolved into the type of racism that made it easy for Europeans to exploit the labor of Africans to maximize their own imperialist goals. The Americas presented the potential for an abundant source of agricultural and mineral wealth, but all that was lacking was the labor to realize that potential. Africans would provide the source for that labor and, in the process, would become relegated to the lowest rung of America’s ladder of ethnic stratification and privilege. Even in colonial North America, when Africans still occupied the status of indentured servants, the ethnocentrism of the English colonists served to diminish their status. Historically, the English since their emergence as a unified culture have tended to rate other cultures on a scale from civilized to primitive, using their own society as the standard for civilized decorum. Because of this ethnocentrism, the English have had little tolerance for cultural differences. This meant that they perceived African manners as rude, their language as strange, and found it difficult to communicate “English notions of morality and proper behavior, [which] occasioned sporadic laws [to be passed by colonial legislatures] to regulate [African] conduct.”⁸¹ Such extreme ethnocentrism on the part of the English, coupled with the fact that Britain had been involved in the slave trade since the 1500s, facilitated the diminution of African American status from that of indentured servant to chattel slave.

Although Noel's theory of ethnic stratification is helpful in explaining the origins of racial slavery, it is particularly useful in explaining the dynamics of black/white relations and racial stratification in America. His theory is especially useful when applied to both the antebellum conditions of free Northern blacks as a specific class and the post-war conditions of blacks in general. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the West had at least three centuries of world exploration upon which to base its view of the non-western world, a view that unfortunately devolved from curiosity to an extreme form of ethnocentrism and eventually on to racism. Nineteenth-century America represented one of the low ebbs in this devolutionary process. As previously mentioned, ethnocentrism, in most cases, is the social variable that serves as the catalyst that triggers the chain reaction of other variables that cause ethnic stratification. History shows that there was no shortage of ethnocentrism and outright racism amongst native-born whites in pre-Civil War America; these were attitudes that they had no problem sharing with European immigrants. In fact, whites from the working class, both native and foreign born, quickly realized that "white skin" was an asset. They, of course, knew that they were not as privileged as the white middle and upper classes; however, they did realize that white skin at least gave them an entrance to the economy and possible access to the American Dream.

The mass immigration of ethnic white into the Northeastern region of the United States triggered bitter competition between these newly arriving immigrants and the already established communities of free blacks. Between the 1840s and the mid to late 1850s, Irish Americans and African Americans provided the bulk of America's unskilled labor.⁸² This competition initially did not have racial overtones, especially since the Irish could identify with the oppression of African Americans, given their own history of subordination under the British. Unfortunately, race eventually became a central feature of the competition between free blacks and the Irish, in part because of instigation on the part of both wealthy Northern industrialists and Southern slave owners. In the North, the wealthy industrialists often used race to divide blacks and Irish in order to drive wages down. For slave owners in the South, the prospect of free and prosperous black communities in the North gave rise to the fear that slaves may be lured into escaping north by the image of a "promised land" with good jobs and respect. This concern led many slave owners to form alliances with white industrialists in the North for the purpose of instilling race thinking and fear in the white population.

Racism, poverty, and overcrowded conditions in the industrial cities of the North created the type of social environment that gives rise to the kind of ethnic stratification that Noel theorized about. Noel's theory can be seen unfolding in the reality of nineteenth-century America as newly arrived European

immigrants came into competitive contact with black workers. The competition between black workers and European immigrants was intensified by the fact that newly arrived immigrants were quickly inculcated with America's racist ideology. Noel Ignatiev verifies this process of inculcation in his work *How the Irish Became White*, where he states the following:

America was well set up to teach new arrivals the overriding value of the white skin. Throughout the eighteenth century, the range of dependent labor relations had blurred the distinction between freedom and slavery. The Revolution led to the decline of apprenticeship, indenture, and imprisonment for debt. These changes, together with the growth of slavery as the basis of Southern society, reinforced the tendency to equate freedom with whiteness and slavery with blackness. At the same time, the spread of wage labor made white laborers anxious about losing the precarious independence they had gained from the Revolution. In response, they sought refuge in whiteness. Republican ideology became more explicitly racial than it had been during the Revolutionary era. The result was a new definition of citizenship, what Alexander Saxton has labeled the "White Republic." Blackness was the badge of the slave, and in a perfect inversion of cause and effect, the status of Afro-Americans was seen as a function of their color rather than of their servile condition.⁸³

Ultimately, the divisive instigation of Northern and Southern elites caused white ethnics in general and the Irish in particular to fear black emancipation and the potential glutting of the Northern labor force, not only by unskilled but also highly skilled ex-slaves. Charles Wesley, in a study entitled *Negro Labor in the United States, 1850–1925*, points out that there were large numbers of "skilled and semi-skilled" slaves in the South involved in the "mechanical pursuits of the plantations and the towns."⁸⁴ In fact, on the eve of the Civil War, blacks dominated the building trades in the South, where only about 20,000 of 120,000 skilled artisans were white. However, in the years following the Civil War, the South's white working class would move rapidly to eliminate black competition through terrorism and segregationist laws.⁸⁵ Economist Robert Fogel's estimates show "that slaves and free blacks made up over 80 percent of the artisan class of the South."⁸⁶ Fear generated in the white working class by the mere thought of a northern migration of emancipated ex-slaves made the competition between white and black workers so intense that it was even recognized by foreign visitors. John Finch, an Englishman traveling in the United States in the early 1840s, made the following observation: "It is a curious fact that the Democratic Party, and particularly the poorer class of the Irish immigrants in America, are greater enemies to the negro population, and greater advocates for continuance of negro slavery, than any portion of the population in the free states."⁸⁷ By the early 1850s, the struggle between Irish and free blacks had escalated to such an intense level

that Frederick Douglass, the great black abolitionist, commented: "Every hour sees us elbowed out of some employment to make room for some newly arrived emigrant from the Emerald Isle, whose hunger and color entitle him to special favor."⁸⁸ As time progressed, the competition between European Americans and free African Americans became increasingly more violent because of America's racist ideology, which represented the most extreme and virulent form of ethnocentrism. When such an extreme form of ethnocentrism is introduced into Noel's theoretical formulation, contact and competition inevitably leads to violent conflict. As previously stated, this conflict was further fueled by white elites from the North and South whose aim was to depress wages by pitting whites against blacks. Of course, the most critical variable in Noel's theory of ethnic stratification, the relative differential of power between competitive groups, was, in this case, tipped towards European immigrants. For above all other status considerations, Europeans were considered white. "In the two decades preceding the Civil War, white immigrants depressed wages and eliminated . . . [free African Americans] as serious competitors in several fields. The situation was alarming; some [African Americans] were actually starving, and behind the danger of starvation lay danger of mob violence at the hand of desperately insecure immigrants."⁸⁹

The racist attitudes of the white working class in the North led them to take a strong non-interventionist stand on slavery. Eventually, when the Civil War broke out, the lack of support for abolition by Northern working-class whites would translate into a lack of support for the war. Unlike their Southern counterparts, who were in favor of secession and who would, upon the outbreak of war, support it by volunteering in droves, working-class whites of the North in many cases were violently opposed to the War. As the tension and strife between free blacks and white ethnics increased in the North, so too did the tensions between the North and the South. Tragically, that same tension eventually found its release in the Civil War, that violent American conflagration which would leave more than 620,000 soldiers dead, hundreds of thousands more crippled and maimed, and as many as 50,000 Confederate civilian fatalities.⁹⁰ Sentiment against the war was so deep among many working-class whites that they openly rebelled by instigating several draft riots. Historian Kenneth Davis reports the following:

In New York, [during a three day period in July of 1863,] resentment against the [Union] Conscription Act turns into deadly rioting in which blacks are lynched. Federal troops sent from the Gettysburg battle eventually quell the rioting. Similar riots occur in several major northern cities, including Boston, Rutland, Vermont, and Troy, New York. The crowd's anger has two sources: the idea of fighting to free the slaves, and the unfairness of allowing the wealthy to avoid conscription by paying a substitute. In some northern counties, taxes are raised

to pay large numbers of substitutes so that residents of those counties will not have to fight.⁹¹

Opposition on the part of the white working class was countered, in part, by a vocal but often splintered group of abolitionists. The disunity of these various abolitionist groups was due to the sacred-secular split between more religiously oriented and politically oriented abolitionists, compounded by frustration over the inability to sway the masses towards their cause. Religious differences plus tactical and strategic disagreements also made it difficult for them to create a unified front in their struggle against slavery. Historically, going back to the colonial period, the abolitionist movement had been plagued by a certain degree of disunity. Initially, both the British and American abolitionist movements had their roots in religion rather than politics. However, the British abolitionist movement remained theological in its focus, as opposed to the movement in America, which quickly became political.

When the issue of slavery became stripped of its spiritual implications and defined almost solely in political terms, the American abolitionist movement lost its moral authority to the more utilitarian concerns of the secular world and its economic interests. "Chattel slavery was not *a sin*, a horrible violation of God's commandments, but at worst the breach of a contract among men. [Yet] it was not at all clear that a contract was actually breached since Locke, among others, had specifically excluded chattel slaves from the social compact."⁹² For both pre- and post-revolutionary America, the secular world rested on "the rationalistic doctrine of natural rights, which linked freedom and justice with the inviolability of property and which was the philosophical platform of the Revolution."⁹³ However, under the natural rights doctrine, as applied to slavery, there was a logical paradox. For on one hand this doctrine violated the natural rights of enslaved blacks as human beings, provided one viewed blacks as human. While on the other, it protected the property rights of masters to own slaves. "The quandary between the natural rights of masters and of slaves made it difficult to turn rhetorical declarations against slavery into concrete action, even in the Northern states."⁹⁴

By 1831, religion was again injected into the movement by "men identified with the transformed Calvinism that took root especially in the Congregational, Presbyterian, and Unitarian denominations."⁹⁵ Further fueling the religious zeal of abolitionists were evangelical Christians, such as William Lloyd Garrison, the founder of the American Antislavery Society, who called "for reformations in the evangelical church on the basis of an abolitionist creed. Under this creed slavery was not just *a sin*, but an extraordinary sin, a sin so corrupting that persistence in it or complicity with it overrode and degraded all other efforts to achieve salvation."⁹⁶

The revitalization of the abolition movement forged an alliance between people like abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison; clergy such as Theodore Parker and Theodore Dwight Weld; writers such as James Russell Lowell, Lydia Maria Child, and John Greenleaf Whittier; and members of the free black community such as Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, and William Wells Brown. Fiery editorials by Frederick Douglass in his newspaper, the *North Star*, helped fuel the drive of his fellow abolitionists. In an open letter to his former master, published on September 8, 1848, in the *North Star*, Douglass wrote:

The grim horrors of slavery rise in all their ghastly terror before me; the wails of millions pierce my heart and chill my blood. I remember the chain, the gag, the bloody whip, the death-like gloom overshadowing the broken spirit of the fettered bondman, the appalling liability of his being torn away from wife and children, and sold like a beast in the market. . . . Your mind must have become darkened, your heart hardened, your conscience seared and petrified, or you would have long since thrown off the accursed load and sought relief at the hands of a sin-forgiving God. How, let me ask you, would you look upon me, were I some dark night in company with a band of hardened villains, to enter the precincts of your elegant dwelling and seize the person of your own lovely daughter, Amanda, and carry her off from your family, friends, and all the loved ones of her youth—make her my slave—compel her to work, and I take her wages—place her name on my ledger as property—disregard her personal rights—fetter the powers of her immortal soul by denying her the right and privilege of learning to read and write—feed her coarsely—clothe her scantily, and whip her on the naked back occasionally; more and still more horrible, leave her unprotected—a degraded victim to the brutal lust of fiendish overseers, who would pollute, blight, and blast her fair soul. . . . I ask, how you would regard me, if such were my conduct? . . . I intend to make use of you as a weapon with which to assail the system of slavery. . . . I shall make use of you as a means of exposing the character of the American church and clergy—and as a means of bringing this guilty nation, with yourself, to repentance. . . .

I am your fellow-man but not your slave.

Frederick Douglass⁹⁷

As the abolition movement grew in strength, it began to threaten the stability of the regional détente between the North and South that had been established at the inception of the nation. This détente that had averted the potential of earlier strife was anchored in the Constitutional compromise, which had allowed the question of slavery to be answered by the individual states. Now a more zealous religious-based abolitionist movement was morally challenging this compromise. However, it was this very threat that shackled the movement and limited its effectiveness. As the movement's rhetoric escalated, national tension steadily mounted, especially after the South intensified

its system of slave controls in the wake of the Nat Turner revolt of 1831. As pressure grew, the South became increasingly defensive and the North became distrustful of what was perceived as an extremist movement threatening the peace.

Then the nation was shocked by abolitionist John Brown's attack on Harper's Ferry, Virginia. Brown led a group of thirteen white and five black men on the historic raid that convinced the South that their whole way of life was about to come to an end—despite Brown's defeat, capture and subsequent hanging. In fact, Brown's tactics were not indicative of the abolitionist movement, which itself posed no direct threat of violence. However, compounded by the South's concern over the possible election of Abraham Lincoln, who opposed the spread of slavery into the western territories, Brown's actions fueled Southern talk of secession. Here again the South's concerns were overblown because Lincoln, during his presidential campaign, was caught between his moral objection to slavery and the constitutionally protected "right" of slaveholders to own and traffic in human chattel. Unbeknownst to Lincoln, he had fallen prey to the unresolved logical paradox of the doctrine of natural rights as expressed by John Locke and championed by the Founding Fathers. For John Locke, the natural right to liberty meant being generally free from government interference in one's private social and economic life. He also believed that property was critical to liberty and was "an inalienable right equivalent in profundity to life itself."⁹⁸ Locke's view, and that of the Founding Fathers, would not have been a problem if they had not considered slaves as property. The problem for Locke and the Founding Fathers was how to develop a rationale that, given their belief in liberty, justified their own behavior. In the case of John Locke, it was justifying the ownership of shares in a slave-trading company; and in the case of many of the Founding Fathers, such as Washington and Jefferson, it was possession of slaves. As stated earlier, this doctrine violated the slave's natural right to liberty as a human being, while protecting the property rights of masters to own said slave. Locke and the Founding Fathers resolved the paradox of the doctrine of natural rights by simply defining blacks as inferior, a position that continued to be held by most whites, including many abolitionists and even Lincoln himself. Abolitionists, however, believed that it was a sin to enslave even the "most lowly" of the human species.

"The potent mix of economic fear and racially tinged emotions coalesced over the question of slavery. Even those in the Confederacy who held no slaves thought the powers of the North had no right to tell them how to live their lives. With their political power diminishing in Congress as the free states were growing in number and population, the men who made the Confederacy turned to the one weapon they thought they had a right to use—

secession.”⁹⁹ For the better part of the nineteenth century, the United States was a country struggling to become a nation but with too few national institutions to create the true sense of nationhood required to transcend parochial state and regional identities. The loosely structured society that resulted from the lack of national identity gave rise to extreme provincialism. However, as technological and economic change swept the nation, with its attending improvements in communication, transportation, and industrialization, the disparate elements of the country began to fuse and consolidate into regional alliances. Quite naturally, the economic context of capitalism sparked competition between the various regions as they vied for power and national control. The Northeast was threatened by the West, which was draining the human energies of the region; the most adventurous and vigorous members of the labor force sought their fortunes in the land-rich territories and states of West. In addition, the elite of New England had grown resentful of “the long reign of the Virginia dynasty in national government . . . [which they felt] . . . threatened to overwhelm and corrupt their . . . society.”¹⁰⁰ The people of New England had inherited the ethnocentric attitudes of their British cousins, perceiving themselves to be morally, socially, and politically superior to the rest of the nation. “Fearful that their culture might be made politically subordinate to the inferior cultures of the expanding South and West, New England’s leaders began to toy with the possibility of secession.”¹⁰¹ This fear was further exacerbated by the Supreme Court’s decision in the Dred Scott case, which allowed slavery to be expanded into the new territories, further imperiling the political strength of the North. The South was, in turn, threatened by several factors: the exploding demographic of the Northeast, caused by foreign immigration; “the widespread Southern feeling that the South was being overpowered by Northern political, industrial, banking, and manufacturing strength; the fear that the Southern way of life was threatened by Northern control of Congress; race-baiting hysteria that Southern editorialists and politicians fanned with talk of black control of the South and widespread intermarriage and rape of Southern white womanhood.”¹⁰²

The perceived immorality of the South and its system of bondage is what drove the antislavery activities of abolitionists, but this perceived immorality was not the engine that drove the North and South to ruinous sectional conflict. “Prior to the 1860 election and well into the war years neither Lincoln nor the Republican party was committed to freeing the slaves or to granting political and social equality to free blacks of the North.”¹⁰³ This war would be fought over power, control, and privilege—not morality. As of the census of 1860, the population of the twenty-three states that would remain in the Union was approximately 22 million people, with 4 million being combat-eligible men. On the other hand, the population of the eleven states that would

become the Confederacy was a mere 9 million including 4 million slaves. The industrial might of the North, as represented by 100,000 factories employing some 1.1 million workers, was vastly superior to the 20,000 factories and 100,000 workers of the South. Critical to the ability to wage war is a nation's transportation network. However, when one compares the Confederacy's 9,000 miles of track to the 20,000 miles of track crisscrossing the Union, it becomes quite obvious that the South did not have the transportation infrastructure necessary for the logistics of war. In addition, the North possessed 96 percent of the nation's railroad equipment. Amazingly, the Union States in 1860 boasted more miles of railroad than all the world's railroads combined. And, if this differential in resources was not enough, Union banks held 56 million dollars in gold or the equivalent of 86 percent of the United States' bank deposits.¹⁰⁴ "Despite the common ground of language, religion, race, and heritage—America was primarily a white Anglo-Saxon Protestant nation—the people of the day saw more differences between themselves."¹⁰⁵ For the Southern slave-owning elite, the fear of lost wealth and privilege prior to the war had grown to the point of near hysteria. Fear of the fall from grace, fear of the loss of position, fear of the loss of dominance and control, fear of the loss of grandeur, and for those whites of lesser means, the fear of losing the dream and possibility of antebellum leisure was what drove the South into this seemingly hopeless conflict. Fear, military skill, and the commitment of white Southerners to the Confederacy, regardless of class, would prove to be almost too much for the industrial might of the North. The Union army, a force often lead by wealthy glory seekers, was a hapless mass of working-class whites forced or wooed into battle for pay as proxies for the sons of the wealthy Northern elites. In many cases, the incompetence of the Northern army proved to be its own worst enemy.

The North and South, after 241 years of existence in two distinctly different social and economic environments, found themselves on separate and distinctly different evolutionary paths. No longer was the glue of a common racial, linguistic, and religious heritage sufficient to maintain a sense of cultural homogeneity between the white Anglo-Saxon Protestants of the North and South. Kenneth Davis describes the country as follows:

The United States was . . . two countries, two cultures, two ideologies destined for collision. The simplest explanation for the war might be that Southerners, in a very basic expression of human nature, did not want to be told how to live their lives—with respect to slavery, politics, or any number of other questions. This basic resistance to being ruled by someone else had been ingrained into the American character before the Revolution, because part of the national debate from the time Jefferson drafted the Declaration, and was written into the compromises that created the Constitution. But it was a powder keg with a long-burning fuse, an emotional question of ideology that simmered for those

decades between Washington and Lincoln, factoring into every question facing the nation and every presidential election of the time, until it ultimately exploded with such horrifying results.¹⁰⁶

As the presidential election of 1860 approached, the South became increasingly anxious and agitated in anticipation of the Republican nomination of Abraham Lincoln, a man whom they immensely distrusted and disliked. Lincoln was a man of public caution and personal ambiguity, who believed slavery was wrong but would not take a strong public stand on abolition. "Convinced of slavery's immorality, Lincoln was not, however, an abolitionist. . . . [Although he believed] that slavery was wrong, he also held that it was legal under the Constitution."¹⁰⁷ He has been called the great liberator by many and a racist by some, a charge that shocks and angers many mainstream Americans. Was Lincoln a racist? This is a point of much controversy and disagreement. It is, however, a matter of historic record that "[Lincoln] did not think blacks equal to whites in intellect or ability [and] opposed the idea that blacks should vote, serve on juries, or intermarry with whites. For the sake of winning a state election, he was willing to keep emancipated blacks out of Illinois."¹⁰⁸ Clearly, by modern American standards, Lincoln would be considered a racist, but by the standards of his day he was progressive. A story that captures Lincoln's attitudes towards blacks was overheard in a black barbershop in Boston, Massachusetts in or about 1956. The story was conveyed by an elderly black man and former Pullman porter by the name George Warren during a general shop wide discussion of the Civil War. Mr. Warren was between ninety-five and one hundred years of age and had worked on the passenger service between Boston and Washington, DC for over forty years when he retired. He indicated that he had gotten the story from an older porter when he first began working for the railroad. According to Mr. Warren, the older porter had supposedly gotten the story from a group of black servants who had worked in Washington, DC. The story went as follows: An elderly black servant once overheard Lincoln talking informally with a group of men during the presidential primary of 1860. In the midst of that conversation, Lincoln was asked about the abolition of slavery and the possible integration of the Negro into society. Lincoln allegedly answered with this analogy: "When you see a man beating a horse you stop him from beating the horse, but you do not marry the horse." This story may be black folklore; however, Lincoln's own public words during a debate with Steven Douglas in the 1858 Illinois senatorial campaign confirm this attitude, albeit in more civil tones. Lincoln's words were as follows:

Judge Douglas has said to you that he has not been able to get from me an answer to the question whether I am in favor of negro citizenship. So far as I know, the Judge never asked me the question before. He shall have no occasion to ever

ask it again, for I tell him very frankly that I am not in favor of negro citizenship. I will say that I am not, nor ever have been in favor of bringing about in any way the social and political equality of the white and black races, that I am not nor ever have been in favor of making voters or jurors of Negroes, nor of qualifying them for office, nor to intermarry with white people; and I will say in addition to this that there is a physical difference between the white and black races which I believe will forever forbid the two races living together on terms of social and political equality. And inasmuch as they cannot so live, while they do remain together there must be the position of superior and inferior, and I as much as any other man am in favor of having the superior position assigned to the white race.¹⁰⁹

These words are often dismissed by some Lincoln scholars as political rhetoric; however, the following words were taken from a sheet of paper upon which Lincoln, in a less ceremonial fashion, expressed his opinion about black equality.

Negro equality! Fudge! How long, in the government of a God great enough to make and rule the Universe, shall there continue knaves to vend, and fools to quip, so low a piece of demagogism as this.¹¹⁰

Despite Lincoln's racial attitudes, he was considered an abolitionist by many in the South and, as such, his presidency was feared. However, there are those historians who in retrospect believe that the South had nothing to fear, because Lincoln believed slavery was authorized under the Constitution. They argue that Lincoln, as a lawyer, would not have challenged the Constitution and the Supreme Court's position on slavery, which held that slaves were property, and, as such, slaveholders had a Fifth Amendment right to be secure in the possession of their slaves. Lincoln openly declared on several occasions that he had no intention of disturbing slavery where it already existed. Southerners, however, did not seem to realize that, in essence, Lincoln was "[a] pragmatic and ambitious 'nonextensionist,' opposed to allowing slavery to spread beyond its current boundaries [and was of the belief that] it would gradually die out. . . ."¹¹¹ When Lincoln was pressed to estimate how long slavery would take to die out, he "guessed it would take one hundred years to happen."¹¹²

For the power elite of the South, however, their concern with Lincoln went beyond whether or not he would attempt to abolish slavery. They were, for all intents and purposes, equally concerned with whether he would or could block the expansion of slavery. They took the position that without the ability to expand slavery into the western territories and states, the South would be demographically overpowered by the North's exploding immigrant population. Such a circumstance, they believed, would render the South politically

and economically impotent. When the Republican Party nominated Lincoln for president in May of 1860, the South made it clear that if the Democratic nominee Steven Douglas lost to Lincoln in the election, the South would secede from the Union.¹¹³ Frederick Douglass, the great black abolitionist and publisher of the *North Star*, described the general mood and attitude of whites in the North as being grave and conciliatory, when he wrote:

The feeling everywhere seemed to be that something must be done to convince the South that the election of Mr. Lincoln meant no harm to slavery or the slave power, and that the North was sound on the question of the right of the master to hold and hunt his slave as long as he pleased, and that even the right to hold slavers in the Territories should be submitted to the Supreme Court, which would probably decide in favor of the most extravagant demands of the slave States. The Northern press took on a more conservative tone towards the slavery propagandists, and a corresponding tone of bitterness towards anti-slavery men and measures . . . From Massachusetts to Missouri, anti-slavery meetings were ruthlessly assailed and broken up. With others, I was roughly handled by a mob in Tremont Temple, Boston, headed by one of the wealthiest men of that city. The talk was that the blood of some abolitionist must be shed to appease the wrath of the offended South, and to restore peaceful relations between the two sections of the country.¹¹⁴

On November 6, Lincoln was elected and on December 20, South Carolina voted to secede. Then on December 27, South Carolina's militia captured Fort Moultrie and the federal arsenal at Charleston, declaring them a foreign outpost on sovereign soil. Inspired by South Carolina's secession, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas followed suit, and by February 1, 1861, these states had also seceded. In turn and rapidly on the heels of their secession and during that same month, representatives of the seven seceding states met in Montgomery, Alabama to form the Confederate States of America. During this meeting, they adopted a constitution that, in many ways, was much like the U.S. Constitution, with some variations—the most significant ones being the right to move slaves between states and the clear recognition of state sovereignty. From this point on, any debate over Lincoln's racial attitudes would only be of academic significance, as the country careened towards its bloodiest period.

On March 4, 1861, Abraham Lincoln delivered his first inaugural address. In this address, he stressed his commitment to national unity, while avoiding militaristic bravado and any commitment to the abolition of slavery. With regard to his commitment to national unity, Lincoln stated:

I therefore consider that, in view of the Constitution and the laws, the Union is unbroken; and to the extent of my ability shall take care, as the Constitution

itself expressly enjoins upon me, that the laws of the Union be faithfully executed in all the states. Doing this I deem to be only a simple duty on my part; and I perform it so far as practicable, unless my rightful master, the American people, shall withhold the requisite means, or in some authoritative manner direct the contrary. I trust this will not be regarded as a menace, but only as the declared purpose of the Union, that it will constitutionally defend and maintain itself . . .¹¹⁵

Lincoln's address avoided all mention of abolition; however, he does appear to make a vague reference to his belief that slavery was protected under the Constitution when he states:

If by the mere force of numbers a majority should deprive a minority of any clearly written constitutional right, it might, in a moral point of view, justify revolution—certainly it would if such a right were a vital one. But such is not our case. All the vital rights of minorities and of individuals are so plainly assured to them by affirmations and negations, guarantees and prohibitions, in the Constitution, that controversies never arise concerning them. But no organic law can ever be framed with a provision specifically applicable to every question which may occur in practical administration.

No foresight can anticipate, nor any document of reasonable length contain, express provisions for all questions. Shall fugitives from labor [slaves] be surrendered by national or State authority? The constitution does not expressly say. Must Congress protect slavery in the territories? The Constitution does not expressly say.

From questions of this class spring all our constitutional controversies and we divide upon them into majorities and minorities. If the minority will not acquiesce, the majority must, or the government must cease. There is no other alternative; for continuing the government is acquiescence of one side or the other.¹¹⁶

When Lincoln states, "If by the mere force of numbers a majority should deprive a minority of any clearly written constitutional right, it might, in a moral point of view, justify revolution—certainly it would if such a right were a vital one," he is, in this author's opinion, referring to Article I, Section 2, Clause 3, and Article IV, Section 2, Clause 3 of the constitution. In Article I, Section 2, Clause 3, not only is slavery authorized but also a representative bonus is granted to the slave-holding states by allowing them to count each slave as three-fifths of a person for the purpose of representation in Congress. In addition, Article IV, Section 2, Clause 3 served as the legal foundation for the Fugitive Slave Act, which was passed by the Second Congress of the United States of 1793. The constitutionality of this law was later challenged, but upheld by the Supreme Court in *Prigg v. Pennsylvania*, 41 U.S. (16 Pet.) 539 (1842). Since the right to own slaves was authorized by the Constitution, Lincoln, as a defender of this document, was not about to violate it.

Lincoln's address appears to be, at best, purposefully ambiguous and, at worst, misleading. One might easily have the following interpretation of his statement. If a majority (the North) should attempt to deprive a minority (the South) of any clearly written Constitutional right (e.g., the right to their property, including slaves), the South then is justified in their rebellion. Lincoln is also incorrect when he states, "Shall fugitives from labor [slaves] be surrendered by national or State authority? The Constitution does not expressly say. Must Congress protect slavery in the territories? The Constitution does not expressly say." Here Lincoln is wrong; clearly Article IV, Section 2, Clause 3 states, "No Person held to Service or Labor [a slave] in one State, under the Laws there of, escaping into another shall, in consequence of any Law or Regulation therein, be discharged from such Service or Labor [released from bondage], but shall be delivered up on claim of the Party [slave master] to whom such Service or Labor be Due." This article clearly serves as the basis of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793. In regards to Congress protecting slavery in the territories, the Constitution does not expressly say yes or no, but the Fifth Amendment, as interpreted by the Supreme Court in *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, does protect slavery in the territories. Chief Justice Roger B. Taney, speaking for the court, "ruled that Congress never had the right to ban slavery in territories because the Constitution protects people from being deprived of life, liberty, or property." Taney essentially argued, "slaves, like cows or goats, were property and could be taken anywhere under U.S. jurisdiction."¹¹⁷

Finally, Lincoln implies the possibility of compromise in the following statement. "If the minority will not acquiesce, the majority must, or the government must cease." Lincoln appears to be saying if a compromise cannot be struck on the issue of slavery, then the government should not pursue it. Lincoln believed that the "idea of secession was the essence of anarchy." For Lincoln, his primary goal must be to preserve the Union, which he is sworn to uphold. Given the gravity of the moment, it is understandable that the preservation of the Union at any cost would be of utmost urgency to the white president of a predominantly white nation. However, it is also equally understandable why the preservation of the union was not of utmost urgency to the slave population, for whom oppression, not liberty, was their birthright.

In their analysis of Lincoln's inaugural address, mainstream historians traditionally focus on the reactions of whites in the North and South while ignoring those reactions of free and enslaved blacks. Lincoln himself was particularly concerned about appeasing and keeping the border slave states of Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, and Missouri in the Union. However, blacks were not particularly pleased with Lincoln's address. In fact, the black abolitionist, Frederick Douglass, had grown quite tired of Lincoln's vague non-committal stance on slavery. Out of pure frustration, Douglass wrote an editorial,

asking the following rhetorical question: “Who is Lincoln and who does he stand for?” In response to his own rhetorical question, Douglass writes, “With the single exception of the question of slavery’s extension, Mr. Lincoln proposes no measure which can bring him into antagonistic collision with the traffickers in human flesh.”¹¹⁸ Lincoln concluded his first inaugural address by offering the South an olive branch of peace with the following words:

I am loath to close. We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels in our nature.¹¹⁹

The failure of Lincoln to address the issue of abolition in his inaugural address, and his conciliatory words of friendship for those who would enslave for all eternity the poor souls whom Douglass considered his brothers and sisters, enraged him to no end.

After Lincoln’s address, Douglas became so dismayed that he contemplated emigrating to the independent black nation of Haiti. However, the assault on Fort Sumter and the beginning of the Civil War resurrected Douglass’ dream of an America free of slavery and racial injustice. For blacks, the impending Civil War represented the possibility of a new beginning and a renewal of faith in the American dream; for whites, this war would be an unwanted nightmare that would, in many cases, destroy friendships, shatter families, and bring the Republic to the brink of destruction. “At 4:30 a.m. on April 12, 1861, a single mortar was discharged. It was the signal for forty-three Confederate guns around Fort Sumter, which proceeded to fire some four thousand shells. The bloodiest war in American history had begun.”¹²⁰ However, the optimism engendered in the black community by the commencement of the war was premature, since Lincoln’s government still had not publicly committed itself to the full abolition of slavery. In fact, Secretary of State William Henry Seward had ordered U.S. diplomats to inform the government to which they were assigned that “the status of no class of the people of the United States would be changed by the rebellion—that the slaves would be slaves still, and that masters would be masters still . . .”¹²¹

From the very onset of the war, free blacks volunteered in mass to fight against the Confederacy and those slaves who had escaped to Union lines volunteered to help liberate their bothers and sisters in bondage. Once again, blacks would demonstrate their commitment to freedom, but unlike the Revolutionary War, this battle was for black liberation, not for nationhood. “For in the beginning, in the middle, and in the end of the Civil War, the black

American—as soldier and civilian—was central.”¹²² As they did during the Revolutionary War, the government dismissed the importance of black volunteers. “Nothing shows this more clearly than [Lincoln’s] response to the black volunteers who thronged the recruiting stations, eager for a chance to fight for black freedom. . . . The Lincoln administration thanked the black volunteers and sent them home with an understanding that the war was a “white man’s war.”¹²³ Lincoln’s rejection struck a blow to the spirit of those black volunteers who were desperate to fight for black freedom. This rejection, however, fits “a pattern of racial conduct discernible throughout the nation’s history . . . [whereby in] an almost predictable process whites will permit blacks to perform hitherto forbidden activities whenever the potential benefit of such performance outweighs racially oriented preferences and fears. Service of blacks with the military forces is a clear example of this behavior pattern.”¹²⁴ In their zeal to serve, black volunteers had formed their own militias with names like the Crispus Attucks Guard of Albany, Ohio and the Hannibal Guard of Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. Lincoln added insult to injury not only by barring blacks from the military but also by having his administration and his generals enforce the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, ordering runaway slaves to be returned to their masters. General McClellan warned slaves in advance that “if any attempt was made by them to gain freedom it would be suppressed with an iron hand.”¹²⁵ The administration’s fugitive slave policy and its extreme interpretation proved ill conceived, rendering it impossible for Union generals to turn back the tide of escaped slaves streaming into the Union lines. The South was virtually awash with fugitive slaves fleeing their masters, seeking refuge amongst Union troops. Lincoln and his generals were at a loss as to what to do with this flood of fugitive slaves until General Butler, a former Massachusetts politician, began “welcoming slaves into his line, putting them to work and grandly dubbing them ‘contraband’ of war. The word contraband caught on; the word—and a great many people had been waiting for a word—permitted the North to strike at slavery without using that dangerous word slavery.”¹²⁶ Interestingly, “[e]fforts by blacks to serve in the Civil War were initially rejected . . . [b]ut Lincoln . . . underwent changes in attitude similar to those experienced by Washington.”¹²⁷ Lincoln, like his predecessor George Washington, would bar blacks from the army until forced by the military necessity to admit blacks into service. It would not be until the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 that blacks would be allowed into the military.

On January 1, 1863, Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, freeing all the slaves held in the rebel states of the Confederacy. Upon first hearing about this momentous event, blacks, both enslaved and free, and their white advocates in the abolitionist movement were ecstatic. However, once

the harsh light of reality shone on the actual substance of this document, it became painfully obvious that there were clear political exceptions to its mandate. The proclamation did not apply to the loyal Border States, with their 300,000 slaves, or those sections of the South still under federal control, namely “thirteen parishes in Louisiana, forty-eight counties in the future state of West Virginia, and seven counties of eastern Virginia.”¹²⁸ However, despite disappointment on the part of African Americans, “[m]ore than 200,000 free black men and runaway slaves fought for the Union cause. In the end, 617,000 Americans died, more than in the two World Wars, Korea, and Vietnam combined.”¹²⁹ Finally, after almost four years of ruinous conflict, that bloodiest of American conflicts that began on April 12, 1861, came to an end on April 18, 1865, when “Confederate General J. E. Johnston surrendered to General Sherman, marking the formal end of Confederate resistance.”¹³⁰

Now that slavery was no longer a sanctioned economic system in America, and its nearly four million victims were no longer valued property, ex-slaves were finally free, free to sit down when tired without the fear of being whipped, free to have a last name, free to legally marry, free to learn to read and write, and free to own property. In an attempt to address black desires for land, and in order to provide some small reparation for the time spent in bondage, the government promised land to ex-slaves. General Sherman on January 15, 1865, proclaimed in Field Order Number 15 “each family should have a plot of not more than forty acres of tillable ground” and the protection to farm that land. However, by August of 1865, President Andrew Johnson halted the policy of distributing confiscated and abandoned land to ex-slaves for fear of provoking an uprising amongst disgruntled southern whites. Two months later, the federal government decided to return the land to white farmers and plantation owners. This reversal of government policy was the first in many setbacks to real freedom for ex-slaves. Without land in a nation that considers property synonymous with liberty, ex-slaves were left without the means to pursue freedom. As a result of this reversal of government policy, many ex-slaves were forced to return to the plantations from which they were liberated to face the wrath of their previous masters as the next closest thing to a slave, a lowly sharecropper. Frederick Douglass once said that the ex-slave was now “free to starve and die of exposure to the elements.” Unfortunately, this was the case for more ex-slaves than history accounts for. There is a saying amongst many older African Americans that describes the black condition in America: “It’s a long, hard road up to the bottom.” For African Americans, the end of slavery represents their emergence from a deep well of despair and desperation, but this emergence was merely the beginning of a long and agonizing journey up the pyramid of American privilege in search of equality and dignity. This journey represents a trail of tears rendered all but

impassable because of racism, danger, and even death; well over ten thousand African Americans would die from lynchings, burnings, shootings, and bombings in the course of this journey. Tragically, after 386 years in North America and 140 years since the end of slavery, the majority of African Americans are still struggling to reach that Promised Land of equality and dignity, as America's greed, quest for profit, and canonization of property rights continues to impede the realization of human rights and dignity for all.

Had the country been conceived of as existing primarily for the benefit of its actual inhabitants [the Native American], it might have waited for the natural increase or immigration to supply the needed hands; but both Europe and the earlier colonists themselves regarded this land as existing chiefly for the benefit of Europe, and as [such.] designed to be exploited, as rapidly and ruthlessly as possible, of the boundless wealth of its resources. This was the primary excuse for the rise of the African slave trade to America.

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Chapter Eight

Black Observations from the Shadow of the Pyramid

We Wear the Mask
We wear the mask that grins and lies,
It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,—
This debt we pay to human guile;
With torn and bleeding hearts we smile,
And mouth with myriad subtleties.

Why should the world be otherwise,
In counting all our tears and sighs?
Nay, let them only see us, while
 We wear the mask.

We smile, but, O great Christ, our cries
To thee from tortured souls arise,
We sing, but oh the clay is vile
Beneath our feet, and long the mile;
But let the world dream otherwise,
We wear the mask.

—Paul Laurence *Dunbar Lyrics of Lowly Life*, 1896

Paul Laurence Dunbar, the son of a former slave, was born in Dayton, Ohio, in 1872. He was the first African-American poet to gain national recognition for his writing. Having attended an all-white high school, Dunbar's poem *We Wear the Mask* undoubtedly reflects the nature of his early interpersonal circumstances, means of social survival, and emotional state as a singular black soul awash in a sea of whiteness. Although over a century has passed since he penned his poem, it still resonates for African Americans. Witness a day in the

life of a black professional named Consuella Lewis, from David Shipler's *A Country of Strangers*:

Every morning, Consuella Lewis consciously transformed herself as she drove to her job . . . at Claremont McKenna College. About a block away from the lush southern California campus of low buildings and graceful palms, she reached down to her radio, lowered the volume, and changed the music from throbbing rap to soothing classical. Along with the clothes she was wearing and the vocabulary and accent she would use at work, Lewis was deliberately crossing into the white world.¹

African Americans have several ways of describing what Consuella does on her way to work; some call it code switching, others call it shifting, those who are more cynical and resentful describe it as “a whippin’ game” or “frontin’ for the man.” Tragically, those African Americans who are unable to code switch fall prey to the inherent racism and ethnocentrism of American society. As Shipler describes:

[M]illions of black Americans travel between cultures every day, struggling to maintain their identity while fitting into what they believe is “white.” What is white is hardly monolithic, of course. Numerous white subcultures organize themselves around class, region, religion, and ethnicity; Italian-American, Jews, and WASP Episcopalians are not culturally alike. But they do meet on some common ground, which Thomas Kochman [of Kochman, Mavrelis and Associates], [a] specialist in black-white cultural dissonance, calls [U.S. mainstream] “Anglo Culture,” a corporate (largely white male) set of values and behavioral patterns that has established the tone in much of the working world. As it has spread into the society at large, this cultural lingua franca has faced growing challenges by those who resent its domination. But it remains the route by which cultural minorities still move into successful lives.²

Over a century ago, the renowned black intellectual W. E. B. Du Bois articulated in perhaps the most eloquent and concise fashion the struggle of African Americans for a sense of ethnic identity when he wrote: “One ever feels his two-ness—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.”³

African Americans, as a relatively powerless minority, have had to become astute observers of white society in order to negotiate safely the common ground where the various white subcultures commingle; those shared public spaces of work and commerce so essential to life in America. Unfortunately, African Americans often find themselves having to negotiate these potentially hostile spaces in much the same way that prey guilefully avoids predators on

the open plain. On many occasions, blacks have publicly voiced displeasure with being preyed upon and discriminated against by members of white society. Even those more assimilated blacks who have lowered their guard express shock and disbelief when confronted by overt verbal and/or physical racism, especially when they find their protestations falling on deaf ears. However, this is the reality of power and dominance in a competitive capitalist society. To quote Friedrich Nietzsche:

There is nothing very odd about lambs disliking birds of prey, but this is no reason for holding it against large birds of prey that they carry off lambs. And when the lambs whisper among themselves, "These birds of prey are evil, and does not this give us a right to say that whatever is the opposite of a bird of prey must be good?" there is nothing intrinsically wrong with such an argument—though the bird of prey will look somewhat quizzically and say, "We have nothing against these good lambs; in fact, we love them; nothing taste better than a tender lamb."—To expect that strength will not manifest itself as strength, as the desire to overcome, to appropriate, to have enemies, obstacles, and triumphs, is every bit as absurd as to expect that weakness will manifest itself as strength.⁴

When reviewing the history of European and American capitalism, one finds it is a chronicle of imperialist expropriation, ethnic displacement, and hierarchical exploitation, which, in many cases, has devolved into a struggle between predator and prey. The famous black poet, Langston Hughes, some sixty years after the end of slavery, published a book of poetry entitled *The Ways of White Folks*, in which he featured the short story "Slave on the Block." Although "[s]et in early-twentieth-century New York City, not the Antebellum South, and describing the experiences of a black servant rather than a slave, Hughes's story nonetheless claimed the angle of vision from the [slave] auction block as indispensable in describing how African Americans have learned about white ways."⁵ Like Nietzsche's lambs, African Americans have acquired a way of knowing what is critical to their survival in the often-predatory jungle that is racialized America.

Throughout the course of almost four centuries, black people have turned the necessary art of observing whites into a near science, passing their quasi-ethnographic findings on to their families and their "colleagues in survival" during informal conferences convened in black restaurants, pool halls, bars, lodges, and churches. Over the centuries, black people have developed a practical taxonomy for describing and cataloguing various types of whites. Due to the fluidity and creativity of black language, some of the descriptive terms used for various categories of whites are continually evolving; however, the construct of the underlying taxonomy remains essentially the same. This informal taxonomic system for classifying whites is separated into two large re-

gional categories, the North and South, within which individual whites are further differentiated into subcategories according to their racial attitudes, ranging from the most racist to the least racist. Whites in the Midwest, Southwest, and West are classified according to the attitudinal and behavioral characteristics of the regional subcategory that they, as individuals, most clearly fit, regardless of whether they are from that region. For example, a person born and raised in Seattle, Washington, could be classified within a subcategory usually reserved for poor whites from the South if that person exhibits those attitudinal and behavioral characteristics. As an applied taxonomy, it is, of course, of no surprise that it is organized around black issues of survival, discrimination, and equality. More simply put, this taxonomy sorts whites according to who has the potential to kill black people, block their progress, or advance their cause.

In the South, poor whites traditionally have been referred to by blacks as “crackers,” “rednecks,” or “peckerwoods,” while middle- and upper-income whites are referred to as “Mista Charlie” and “Miss Ann.” Crackers, rednecks, and peckerwoods are groups of whites who are generally as poor as their black counterparts but rely on the privilege of white skin to gain advantage and power over blacks.

The epithet *cracker* has been applied in a derogatory way . . . to rural, non-elite white southerners, more specifically to those of south Georgia and north Florida. Folk etymology claims the term originated either from their cracking, or pounding, of corn (rather than taking it to mill), or from their use of whips to drive cattle. The latter explanation makes sense, because in piney-woods Georgia and Florida pastoral yeomen did use bullwhips with “cracker” tips to herd cattle.⁶

However, the term *cracker* has a particularly derogatory meaning for African Americans, because in the black Southern idiom of nineteenth-century Georgian slaves, the term referred to the slave master’s whip. In fact, Geneva Smitherman and other African-American linguists indicate that for blacks the term *cracker* most likely “derived from the sound of the master’s whip during enslavement.”⁷ *Redneck* refers to any lower-class white person and is most likely derived from the image of white sharecroppers that have red sun-burned necks from working in the fields.⁸ When the term *redneck* is used by blacks, it often carries with it a demeaning tone that implies an inferior status vis-à-vis other whites and even blacks. *Peckerwood* is an old Southern term that is typically used in a derogatory fashion to describe poor whites. The term is derived from the common name for the red-headed woodpecker, which has a red-neck.⁹ Hence, *peckerwood* is a variation on the red-neck descriptor for poor Southern whites.

Crackers, rednecks, and peckerwoods represent the most desperate and dangerous whites because elements of the aforementioned groups have been known to rape, lynch, burn, and shoot black people in order to maintain dominance and control over them.

[This is evidenced by the] thousands of white southerners [who] witnessed and participated in lynchings as the twentieth century unfolded . . . From 1893 on railroad companies could be counted on to arrange special trains to transport spectators and lynchers to previously announced lynching sites. On some occasions these trains were actually advertised in local papers . . . [P]articipants, investigators, and present-day scholars have all to varying degrees argued, lynchings, particularly the blatantly public spectacles, worked by ritualistically uniting white southerners, by embodying the community in action. Thus the “whole populace,” the “whole male community as a unit,” “the citizens of this county,” and “all the white people” lynched [the black man]. . . .¹⁰

These lynchings did not simply involve hanging the victim; castration, burning, and general torture were commonplace. As one white eyewitness to the brutal lynching of Claude Neal in 1934 bragged, “[T]hey cut off his penis. He was made to eat it. Then they cut off his testicles and made him eat them and say he liked it.”¹¹ Howard Kester, a white liberal Southerner serving as an undercover investigator for the Committee on Economic and Racial Justice, claimed that the lynching of Claude Neal “drew between three and seven thousand whites to the ‘ringside seats.’”¹²

The Claude Neal lynching marked an end to the horrific era of mass public lynchings. Although the spectacular lynchings, such as that of Claude Neal, were not as numerous as those carried out by clandestine white night riders, their affect on the psyche of black people was much more profound because of the flagrant public disregard for black humanity. Records kept during the early years of these lynchings are not very accurate; however, between 1878 and 1898 approximately ten thousand blacks were lynched. Although the number of formally reported lynchings declined after 1898, lynchings continued into the 1900s, with approximately 1,132 occurring between 1889 and the 1930s¹³ when Claude Neal was lynched. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) lobbied Congress and President Franklin D. Roosevelt for the enactment and passing of an anti-lynching law. Although an anti-lynching bill was put before Congress there was not enough support to enact it as a law. Unfortunately, one of the stains on the illustrious presidency of Franklin D. Roosevelt was his failure to intervene in the lynchings, let alone even speak out against the spate of lynchings that beset blacks not only in the South but also in the North. When an anti-lynching law was put before Congress, Roosevelt never voiced any public support for

the bill. In a letter dated March 19, 1936, addressed to Walter White of the NAACP, Eleanor Roosevelt wrote:

The President feels that lynching is a question of education in the states, rallying good citizens, and creating public opinion so that localities themselves will whip it out. However, if it is done by a northerner, it will have an antagonistic effect.¹⁴

President Roosevelt “did not share [the NAACP’s] enthusiasm [for the anti-lynching law] and believed that pressing for the NAACP’s demands would endanger congressional support for his New Deal programs.”¹⁵ However, it was his tenaciously egalitarian wife, Eleanor, who “led a group of descendants [of lynchings] into the [Senate] Chamber . . . to urge the Senate, by their presence, to act. . . .”¹⁶ She championed the bill, but to no avail. Southern senators were able to block the measure by holding a filibuster that lasted six weeks, during which time she sat in the Senate gallery with the black supporters of the bill. When newspaper reporters asked her why she sat in the gallery since the passing of the bill was hopeless, she is alleged to have stated, “to bear witness.”

Even during the middle and latter parts of the 1900s, blacks continue to fall victim to white racially motivated murders of all kinds, some of which have gained more notoriety than others because of the heinous nature of the crimes—notorious murders like that of Emmett Till, a 14-year-old black youth who was brutally beaten and shot twice on August 28, 1955, for whistling at a white woman. One month after his body was found, two white men admitted to abducting the youth and were tried by an all-white jury and subsequently acquitted because the body was supposedly too badly mangled to be positively identified. Another notorious case occurred on June 7, 1998, in Jasper, Texas. Early that Sunday morning, a black man named James Byrd, a father of four, accepted a ride from two young white men who, unbeknownst to him, were self-styled white supremacists. After picking him up, they beat him, chained him to the back of their pick-up truck, and dragged him for three miles until his body literally disintegrated, leaving body parts all along the road. Not long after the incident, the Ku Klux Klan held a rally in support of the two men and, to add insult to this tragedy, James Byrd’s tombstone was stolen not long after his burial. The possibility of these kind of attacks still make black people leery of those whites they refer to as crackers, peckerwoods, and rednecks.

As previously stated, there are those middle- and upper-income whites, referred to as “Mista Charlie” and “Miss Ann,” who are labeled as such out of a sense of coerced deference because of their higher economic, social, and

political status. Typically, whites who are placed in this category are more secure in their positions of authority and dominance in the racial hierarchy of Southern society because they are the ones who employ both poor whites and blacks. This is due to the fact that whites who fall into the category of Mista Charlie and Miss Ann do not have to compete with blacks for jobs like their poor white counterparts; they feel no threat, and hence less animosity towards blacks. This category of whites finds its roots in an “amalgamation of ex-planters, prewar middling southerners, and rising shopkeepers, farmers and businessmen. . . . Manners distinguish better-off white southerners from ‘crackers’. . . .”¹⁷ They are usually more gentele, and hence, more refined in their exercising of control and dominance. Their roll in the terrorizing of blacks was usually one of silent acquiescence, although the anonymity provided by the hooded costumes of the Ku Klux Klan undoubtedly attracted some membership from this class of whites. After all, the founder of the Ku Klux Klan was a famous ex-Confederate general named Nathan Bedford Forrest, who was from a wealthy antebellum Memphis family. In the mid-1950s, shortly after the 1954 Brown decision was rendered, desegregating schools, some leading citizens of Greenwood, Mississippi, founded the White Citizens’ Council. This group’s goal was to maintain segregation through economic and political means. Because this organization was more palatable to those whites who felt themselves above their lower-class white counterparts, branches surfaced all over the South in more affluent white neighborhoods. However, there are many who believe that the White Citizens’ Council, in many parts of the South, gives direction and support to the Ku Klux Klan, treating it as if it were the council’s military wing.

Although Southern whites who fall into the more well-to-do category of Mista Charlie and Miss Ann tend to view themselves as members of a more gentele class, they, like their lower-income counterparts, also have a more crass and sordid side. In particular, white males of this more patrician class posed a rather insidious sexual threat to black women who found themselves in the employ of white households. One of the most powerfully compelling examples of white sexual imposition by a member of this class is that of Thomas Jefferson on his mulatto slave, Sally Hemings. History and DNA evidence strongly suggest that Sally Hemings served as his mistress for much of her life, bearing him at least one child. A more recent example is that of Senator James Strom Thurmond, the late segregationist federal legislator and presidential candidate who, as a young man, fathered a daughter by a black teenage housekeeper who was employed in one of his relative’s homes.

Continuing with this taxonomy, poor whites in the North traditionally have been referred to by blacks as “honkies,” “Paddy boys,” “wops,” or “ofays,” while those middle- and upper-income whites who exhibit little or no overt prejudice are often referred to by blacks as fair-weather liberals. Honkies,

Paddy boys, and wops are not considered quite as dangerous as southern poor whites but do pose a threat of violence when they feel the pressure of competition from blacks for jobs or when they feel themselves threatened by the integration of previously all-white neighborhoods and schools. For example, when Martin Luther King and fellow open housing marchers entered the working-class ethnic neighborhoods of the southwest side of Chicago, they were viciously assaulted with stones and racial epithets. King commented that the crowd was as hostile as any he had encountered in the South. The term honky, like cracker, appears to have two etymological sources, one white and one black. According to the white etymology, honky is derived from “bohunk” and “hunky,” which are derogatory terms that were used by American nativists around the turn of the twentieth century to identify Bohemian, Hungarian, and Polish immigrants. It is believed that black workers in Chicago meat-packing plants picked up the term from white workers and began applying it to all Caucasians indiscriminately, apparently because to them all whites looked alike.¹⁸ The black etymon for honky is believed by some to be derived from Wolof, one of the two major language groups, along with Bantu, spoken by West African slaves. The Wolof term honky is alleged to derive from *honq*, which means “red or pink,” a term frequently used in West Africa to describe white people.¹⁹

Similarly, Paddy boy and wop are negative terms that also referred to European immigrants, specifically the Irish and Italians respectively. Cultural diversity expert Thomas Kochman, when describing the race relations between white immigrants and blacks to clients, states, “The immigrant wants America’s future, but not its past.” This is because the white immigrant mindset in a competitive economy quite naturally is to take advantage of the lower status of blacks in order to leverage their own economic and social status. White immigrants tend to take the position that they did not cause slavery and racial discrimination in America but are perfectly willing to take advantage of that discrimination to gain employment and upward mobility. “U.S. historians have noticed the rise in racism in the urban North before the Civil War—a racism expressed in attacks on vestigial civil rights, in physical attacks on blacks by white crowds, in the growth of racist invective, in color bars in employment, and in the huge popularity of minstrel shows.”²⁰

One such group that appeared to be willing to take advantage of the racial discrimination against blacks was the Irish. As a group, they were unable to afford to take up farming, as did many of the immigrant groups of greater means. They were also “reluctant to abandon the community ties they had established in the Eastern cities, which helped them survive in a hostile Protestant world. . . . Unable or unwilling to avail themselves of the white-skin privilege of setting themselves up as independent farmers, the vast majority clung to the Democratic Party, which continued to protect them from the nativists

and guaranteed them a favored position over those whom they regarded as the principal threat to their position, the free black people of the North. . . .”²¹ In fact, the Irish mobs routinely attacked blacks, so much so that “by 1843, the British Owenite [a follower of Robert Owen, who tried to reorganize society on a socialistic basis, and established an industrial community on the Clyde, Scotland, and, later in Indiana] traveler John Finch would report to London readers the ‘curious fact’ that ‘the Democratic party and particularly the poorer class of Irish emigrants, are greater enemies to the negro population . . . than any portion of the populations in the free states.’”²²

Over the years, the Irish, along with other Northern white ethnic groups, have been almost as discriminatory and exclusionary as Southern whites in their attempts to keep blacks out of “white” labor unions, neighborhoods, and schools. “Yet segregation alone did not meld these new heterogeneous crowds [of European immigrants] into a white public. The spectacle of African American otherness was also required. Thus whites of all classes, genders, and ethnicities could gawk at the ‘Dahomeys’ in a fair exhibit of ‘Darkest Africa,’ ‘buy three balls for five [cents] to “dunk the nigger” at Coney Island,’ and cheer on a black man’s lynchers in *Birth of a Nation*.”²³ Some historians assert that the racist entertainment of the period, like the aforementioned fair exhibits and the all-pervasive minstrel shows, were in fact the projection of “white male anxieties onto black-faced characters. [In particular], the minstrel show goers were themselves consumed by the struggle for success and fears of cultural inferiority. They were knotted with repression, sexual and otherwise.”²⁴ Noel Ignatiev, in *How the Irish Became White*, puts it very succinctly when he states, “America was well set up to teach new arrivals the overriding value of white skin.”²⁵ Black people are very aware of this fact, as black comedian Richard Pryor once pointed out in a comedy routine, “The first word of English that most immigrants learn is nigger.” History has shown that “the white working class . . . has for more than a century benefited from diminished competition from other racial groups who were barred, by custom and law, from jobs and positions available only to whites.”²⁶

It is important also to note that blacks in the North were and still are in many cases as vulnerable to white control and violence as their counterparts in the South. The difference being that in the North, white control and violence is more formal than informal, because it is applied by local and state government, primarily through the apparatus of law enforcement and the criminal justice system. As the late Johnnie Cochran, the former criminal defense attorney for O. J. Simpson and the winner of numerous multimillion-dollar police brutality cases, once said, “People in New York and Los Angeles, especially in the African-American community, are more afraid of police

injuring or killing their children than they are of muggers on the corner.”²⁷ Of course, Attorney Cochran was engaging in a bit of rhetorical hyperbole. The reality is that more black youths die as a result of gang violence than from law enforcement. However, the fact that this perception exists primarily in black and other non-white communities must cause one to wonder from whence this perception comes. To answer this question, one has to but to look at the headlines in almost any urban newspaper across this nation. In fact, in one of the most publicized cases involving Johnnie Cochran, a Haitian immigrant, named Abner Louima, successfully sued the city of New York for police brutality after being arrested outside a Haitian nightclub on August 9, 1997. Louima was brutally beaten and sodomized with the wooden handle of a plunger, which was then forced into his mouth by Officer Justin Volpe inside the bathroom of the 70th precinct while three other officers witnessed the attack. In addition, the desk sergeant on duty was also charged with an attempted cover-up of the incident. Interestingly, only one officer was convicted while three witnessing officers, who could have prevented the torture, were acquitted. Mr. Louima suffered a torn bladder and rectum, which required several surgeries to repair.²⁸

This sadistic sexual torture of a helpless and handcuffed black man is sadly reminiscent of earlier actions taken by Southern lynch mobs, but in this instance it was carried out by the police. In a publicly issued statement, Manfred Antoine, the president of the Alliance of Haitian Émigrés, said, “When a Haitian sees a police officer, instead of thinking this is someone to protect and serve them, they think this is someone to be careful around, to stay away from as much as possible.”²⁹ Haitians quickly learned the lessons of their black brothers and sisters in the African-American community.

Even after all of the negative publicity caused by the horrible abuse of Abner Louima and the massive demonstrations held by thousands of Haitian immigrants, New York still did not learn from this incident. Two years after this atrocious case of brutality, the New York police would be back in the public eye for an attack on another black immigrant, but this time with a more deadly consequence. On February 4, 1999, Amadou Diallo, a West African immigrant was shot to death by four white New York police officers of the Street Crime Unit. The tragic events that led to the shooting death of Diallo were set in motion by a simple decision on the part of Diallo to go out for a late dinner after finishing work. Upon returning home from dinner, Diallo was confronted in the hallway of his apartment building by four plainclothes police officers. Police claim he was told to identify himself, but when he attempted to present his wallet with identification, he was fired upon by the officers, who discharged 41 bullets, 19 of which found their mark.³⁰ “Diallo may have pulled the wallet out of his back pocket because he wanted to show

identification or because he mistook the plainclothes officers for muggers.”³¹ Regardless of his intent, the point is moot. Tragically, Amadou Diallo, this unarmed West African immigrant with no previous criminal record, would die of his wounds and the four white officers who killed him would be acquitted of all criminal charges in a trial held outside of the city’s jurisdiction. The change in venue was ordered so that the officers could get a fair trial. His death sparked hundreds of people to demonstrate and moved approximately two thousand people to attend his memorial service. Nearly five years later, his family was awarded a three million dollar settlement. Many of the black residents of New York wonder why the innocent victims of police violence always seem to be minorities of color, not whites.

During the late eighties and early nineties, the Boston police department received a great deal of national notoriety following the October 1989 shooting death of a white pregnant woman named Carol Stuart. In the course of the investigation into her death, the murdered woman’s husband claimed “[h]e and his wife had both been shot by a black man in a jogging suit. . . . This crime tapped a deep well of frightened outrage in much of white America. The innocence of the white couple, cut down by a vicious black man at such a pristine moment of joyful anticipation. . . . The *Boston Herald* published a grizzly picture of Carol Stuart’s blood-covered body. There seemed no doubt about what had happened: Once again, a black man had ruthlessly murdered a white woman—and a pregnant white woman at that.”³² Reacting to the husband’s claim, the police went on a door-to-door search through the nearby predominantly black housing project, harassing scores of alleged suspects.³³ In their haste to solve the crime, “police pressured a seventeen-year-old boy, Dereck Jackson, to state falsely that he had heard a confession from William Bennett, a black resident of Mission Hill. Stuart, in his hospital bed, was shown a photograph of Bennett and agreed that he resembled the murderer. Once discharged, Stuart identified Bennett in a lineup, and Bennett was arrested.”³⁴ Fortunately for William Bennett, the brother of Charles Stuart, Matthew, came forward and told the police that his brother had fabricated the whole story and had shot his wife in the head and wounded himself in the stomach. Stuart’s motive was that he wanted to collect the insurance in order to open a restaurant. Stuart later committed suicide. As a result of the search, which was characterized by many residents as a police rampage, scores of excessive force complaints were made to the Boston Police Department. However, despite the community outcry, disciplinary actions against the officers were minimal. Many in the black community assert that such a search in a white neighborhood, regardless of its socioeconomic level, would not have occurred or been tolerated.

Throughout the nineties, however, it was the Philadelphia Police Department that earned the reputation as the nation’s worst big city police depart-

ment. Over the course of decades, the Philadelphia Police Department had developed a culture of corruption and brutality that went virtually unchecked. Because police officers were not held accountable, many officers who should have been removed from duty or prosecuted were allowed to operate with impunity, unlawfully harassing, injuring, and even killing civilians. Due to the corruption and excessive force employed by many of Philadelphia's police, the city has had to pay exorbitant damage awards and settlements to victims of police misconduct. For example, in the infamous 39th district, a police officer nicknamed Blondie "was notorious for a version of Russian roulette he used with those arrested—evidence or no evidence."³⁵ Minority communities like that covered by the 39th District have been particularly hard hit by false arrests, fabrication of arrest reports, and police brutality to the point that these communities often view the police as the criminals.³⁶ As one judge who tried corrupt police officers from the 39th district stated, they generally "squashed the Bill of Rights into mud."³⁷ All of this police misconduct, in the 39th district in particular, has resulted in thousands of cases being put under review with the potential of hundreds of these cases being overturned.³⁸

Like the Philadelphia Police Department, the Los Angeles Police Department has found itself confronted with similar investigations of harassment, false arrest, fabrication of evidence, and police brutality, with the most notable case being the infamous Rodney King beating. However, it is the corruption and falsification of evidence scandal in the Rampart Division of the Los Angeles Police Department that has the most far-reaching implications for the department, with over one thousand cases under review and more than fifty officers under investigation. In fact, the scandal is so far reaching that Chief of Police Bernard C. Parks said, "I don't know if we can ever say we found all of it."³⁹ The potential for civil litigation because of police misconduct is staggering and the impending financial cost in the form of compensatory and punitive damage is enormous. Again, it is only minorities of color who are primarily affected.

An even more sinister example of police misconduct and brutality, if not for its scale but its malevolence, is that which was found in the Chicago Police Department's Southside Area 2 Station, located in the nation's largest contiguous community of African Americans. By its own admission, the department's Office of Professional Standards found that physical abuse "did occur and that it was systematic. . . . [T]he type of abuse described was not limited to the usual beating, but went into such esoteric areas as psychological techniques and planned torture. The evidence presented by some individuals convinced juries and appellate courts that personnel assigned to Area 2 engaged in methodical abuse."⁴⁰

Although the Chicago Police Department, like most big city law enforcement agencies, has had its history of misconduct and abuses, the Area 2

scandal is possibly the worst. Ten African Americans were put on death row as a result of “the work of one of the state’s most discredited groups of police officers—former Burnside Area [2] Comdr. Jon Burge and some of his detectives. . . . Among the accusations leveled at the Burge regime: that detectives from the late 1970s to the late 1980s beat suspects, shocked them with electric wires, and put guns to their heads or in their mouths in an effort to get confessions.”⁴¹ During the course of a protracted civil case in which Andrew Wilson was attempting to sue the City of Chicago for the abuse suffered at the hands of Burge, the city attempted to argue that Burge and his detectives were not acting within their employment. In the course of the city’s pleading, its attorneys admitted that “immediately following his arrest, plaintiff Wilson was placed in the custody of Chicago police. While in police custody, defendant [Comdr Jon] Burge physically abused plaintiff Wilson by a variety of means including kicking him, electro-shocking, and burning him by attaching him to a radiator. . . .”⁴² Over the course of Burge’s twenty years as a police officer, he received numerous advances, promotions, and accolades from the chief of police and the mayor for his arrest and conviction record. Of the forty or more black men tortured into confessions, ten were convicted of murder and sentenced to death and of those ten men four were released in 2003. U.S. Judge Milton Shadur wrote the following comment on a death row inmate’s appeal: “It is now common knowledge that in the early to mid-1980s, Chicago Police Comdr. Jon Burge and many officers working under him regularly engaged in the physical abuse and torture of prisoners to extract confessions.”⁴³ The comments of Judge Shadur are quite disturbing because they imply that not only the Chicago Police Administration, but also the whole criminal justice system was complicit in this systematic abuse. The *Chicago Tribune* newspaper, in an article under the banner headline entitled “Report: Cops Used Torture,” summarizes the findings of the special prosecutes assigned to the Jon Burge case as follows:

Concluding a four-year probe, the prosecutors painted a portrait of a criminal justice system where the top officials in a position to stop Burge—among them Mayor Richard Daley, when he served as Cook County state’s attorney—appeared blind to the abuse.

But, the prosecutors concluded, it’s too late to pursue charges against Burge or any of the other officers. Statues of limitation have long since run out on the case, which they said stretched from the 1970s through the 1980s.

The prosecutors single out for criticism former Chicago Police Supt. Richard Brzeczek, who served under Mayor Jane Byrne.

Brzeczek was guilty of “dereliction of duty,” failing to act in the early 1980s on suspicions that Burge and detectives under his command had mistreated prisoners, the prosecutors said. Brzeczek publicly praised the detectives while privately harboring suspicions about their activities, the prosecutors alleged. His

inaction, they added, allowed the torture of criminal suspects to continue for years.⁴⁴

Despite the fact that the abuses perpetrated during the Burge regime finally were acknowledged, prosecutors and police never did re-examine the death row cases linked to Burge to answer the question of whether innocent people had been sentenced to death row. Fortunately, for the six remaining Burge death row inmates, Governor George Ryan imposed a moratorium on executions in Illinois, declaring, "Until I can be sure that everyone sentenced to death in Illinois is truly guilty, until I can be sure with moral certainty that no innocent man or woman is facing a lethal injection, no one will meet that fate."⁴⁵

Due to a less powerful history of racial politics and interracial tension in the North, the nature of white/black relations is less informed by the kind of culturally defined race etiquette and socially sanctioned racial abuse that exists in the South. In the South, control was historically exercised and violence meted out to blacks informally through the cultural system of race etiquette and white-sponsored terrorism. However, over the past three decades, white control and violence against blacks has become more formally organized through law enforcement and the criminal justice system. As stated previously, in the North, white control and violence towards black people historically was and still is more formally applied through law enforcement and the criminal justice system. This conclusion is hard to avoid when one reviews the litany of police misconduct and abuse reported in black communities all across the nation and the statistical data on black incarceration rates, sentencing rates, and the number of blacks serving death sentences.

According to government statistics, although blacks comprised only 12.7 percent of the U.S. population in 1999 and 15 percent of those using drugs in 1998, as opposed to 72 percent of whom were white, blacks still comprised 36.8 percent of those arrested for drug abuse.⁴⁶ In addition, "the Sentencing Project, a Washington-based advocacy group . . . estimate[s] that blacks represent . . . 55 percent of convictions, and 74 percent of those sentenced to prison [in the country]. A white policeman working the undercover narcotics beat in black neighborhoods of Washington complained . . . that his unit would gain credibility with black jurors if the department put as much effort into arresting whites in the clubs on Georgetown's M Street for the drug offenses that proliferate there."⁴⁷ Such uneven arrest patterns are due to police policies and their underlying assumptions about drug abuse and sales. It is a well-known fact that in almost every metropolitan area police assign more narcotics squads to black neighborhoods than they do to white neighborhoods, despite the higher numbers of drug abusers in the white community. The discrepancy between white and black arrest rates for drug abuse is also

directly linked to federal legislation. In 1986, “[r]ace and fear were mixed into crime legislation . . . when Congress set radically higher penalties for crack cocaine than for powdered cocaine. Crack is sold mostly by small-time black street dealers; the powdered form is smuggled and sold by large narcotics traffickers, most of whom are non-black. As a result of the new statute, the sale of only 5 grams of crack (less than 18 percent of an ounce) brought a mandatory five-year sentence on the first offense. It took 500 grams of powder to trigger the same penalty. A mandatory ten-year sentence kicked in at 50 grams of crack and 500 grams of powder.”⁴⁸ Of the 246,100 state prison inmates incarcerated for drug offenses in 2001, 139,700 (56.7 percent) were black and 57,300 (23 percent) were white.⁴⁹ Interestingly, “[m]ore blacks are sent to state prison for drug offenses (38 percent) than for crimes of violence (27 percent). In contrast, drug offenders constitute 24 percent of whites admitted to prison and violent offenders constitute 27 percent.⁵⁰ Compounding these statistics is the fact that despite only constituting 12.7 percent of the U.S. population, blacks comprise 48.2 percent of all U.S. adults in federal and state prisons and local jails. Even more tragically, blacks comprise 42.5 percent of all prisoners under death-penalty sentencing.⁵¹ These statistics are particularly disquieting when one realizes that approximately 25 percent of all the people incarcerated in the world are in U.S. prisons and jails. Unfortunately, the future does not look much better, with “32.2 percent of all black males in their twenties . . . in prison.”⁵² In addition, as the NAACP points out, police brutality in the black community is a national crisis.

Returning to taxonomy, the term “ofay” refers to any white person and is most likely derived from the West African word *ofaginzy*, which literally means “white man.”⁵³ When blacks use this term to describe whites, it typically does not carry a derogatory or necessarily demeaning connotation. It is often used to describe the masses of whites who are confused by and out of touch with issues related to race, racism, and inequality. Whites who fall into this category tend to be pleasant people who, on the surface, get along with black people as long as issues of race, racism, or inequality do not enter into the conversation. Often such people assume that black acquaintances are friends until they unwittingly mention something with racial overtones and find that they are in reality just acquaintances. This is due to the fact they had failed to develop a deep enough relationship with their black acquaintances to discuss the most fundamental issue facing black people in America, race. All across the nation, this failure became evident when whites engaged blacks, whom they believed to be friends, in discussions about the outcome of the O. J. Simpson trial. Unfortunately for them, they assumed that blacks agreed with their belief that Simpson was wrongly acquitted, only to discover themselves swept up in a tsunami of black rage over the long history of police mis-

conduct and brutality in the black community. When confronted by this rage, whites found themselves drowning in a turbulent sea of racial confusion and miscommunication, seeking, ironically, to be saved from their discomfort by the very people whom they had misunderstood and offended.

Another group of whites classified under this taxonomy is “fair-weather liberals” who are often members of the professional and entrepreneurial classes, and as such they tend to be better educated. This fact generally translates into a more nuanced and tolerant view of racial politics. However, this more nuanced and tolerant view is qualified by self-interest, and is subject to change when that self-interest is threatened—hence the classification fair-weather liberal. When this group of whites has their self-interest threatened, they often act like the mythological Roman god Janus, manifesting a kind of two-faced subtle racism that presents a liberal, accepting face on one side and a rejecting face on the other. A white folk singer named Phil Ochs, during a show in the 1970s, once proclaimed, “Liberals are ten degrees to the left during good times and ten degrees to the right on issues that directly affect them.” Interestingly, it was a white social scientist named Robert Merton who first coined the term fair-weather liberal in his 1949 essay “Discrimination and the American Creed.” It is not clear how the term found its way into the black lexicon; however, his typology is quite congruent with the black taxonomic characterization. Merton provides the following description of the fair-weather liberal, also known as the unprejudiced discriminator:

The fair-weather liberal is the man of expediency who, despite his own freedom from prejudice, supports discriminatory practices when it is the easier or more profitable course. His expediency may take the form of holding his silence and thus implicitly acquiescing in expressions of ethnic prejudice by others or in the practice of discrimination by others. This is the expediency of the timid: the liberal who hesitates to speak up against discrimination for fear he might lose status or be otherwise penalized by his prejudiced associates. Or his expediency may take the form of grasping at advantages in social and economic competition deriving solely from the ethnic status of competitors.⁵⁴

It is this group that gives that unforeseen additional energy to the anti-civil rights backlash in white America, which so often disarms and disheartens black people. What surprises blacks is the realization that behind the smiling mask of the fair-weather liberal, beyond the benevolent façade of tolerance, lies this unforeseen core of negative racial attitudes. This group smiles patronizingly while warning blacks not to provoke a backlash by pushing too hard for equality, while complaining amongst themselves that blacks are trying to take over. There is “nothing new in the tendency for white liberals to withdraw support from the liberation movement—essentially the same thing

had happened during Reconstruction. In both [the case of Reconstruction and the Civil Rights movement] advances made by blacks were followed by periods of racism and reaction, each feeding on the other, and liberals capitulated on this white backlash by urging blacks to curb their demands. . . . [In the case of the Civil Rights movement, i]t did not take long for the intensifying backlash and the liberal retreat to manifest themselves politically. The critical turning point was 1965, the year the Civil Rights movement reached its triumphant finale.”⁵⁵ Unfortunately, many black people believe the rhetoric of fair-weather liberals only to be confronted by the reality of their duplicity. It is these kinds of encounters and realizations that tend to radicalize moderate blacks more so than overt racism. This is why so many black people say that they prefer Southern racists to Northern racists because at least Southern racism is more overt, making whites in the South more predictable than their counterparts in the North.

Fortunately, in both the North and the South, there are whites of integrity who traditionally have been referred to by blacks as “soul brothas and sistas,” or in some rare instances, righteous soul brothas and sistas. Those whites who are referred to as soul brothas and sistas are often granted the status of “honorary blacks” because of their ability to blend into black culture. “Soul” refers to “the essence of life; feeling, passion, emotional depth—all of which are believed to be derived from struggle, suffering, and having participated in the Black Experience.” The terms “brotha” and “sista” are “derived from the traditional Black Church pattern of referring to all male and female members of the church as ‘family’”⁵⁶ For example, “[w]hen Jessica Prentice took a year away from Brown University to spend as the only white at Tougaloo College in Mississippi, several friends there gave her the black name ‘Shanikwa’ as a way of defusing her whiteness.” Jessica’s black friends had to compartmentalize their relationship with her in order to keep their protective shield against racism from being eroded by individual exceptions. Jessica described her relationship with her black friends as one where, “Either they kind of mistrusted me, or they would say, ‘Well, she’s not white anymore.’”⁵⁷ Whites that most often fall into the category of soul bratha and sista are jazz musicians and vocalists. As a result of their association with black music and culture, white musicians often find themselves walking, talking, playing, and even thinking “black.” As the black poet LeRoi Jones once said, “Black music is an attitude that happens to be musically expressed.” Jones, in his work *Black Music*, writes:

The socio-cultural philosophy of . . . [blacks] in America . . . is . . . important in any intelligent critical speculation about the music that came out of it. [Black] music cannot be completely understood . . . without some attention to the attitude which produces it . . . [Musicians, John] Coltrane’s cries . . . [and] . . . Or-

nette Coleman's screams and rants are only musical once one understands the music [their] emotional attitude seeks to create. This attitude is real, and perhaps the most important aspects of [their] music.⁵⁸

This means that white jazz musicians must, to a certain degree, adopt a black attitude about life to be good at jazz. Robert Merton identifies a type of white person whose description is somewhat congruent with the black typology of the soul brotha and sista. Merton identifies those who fall into this category as all-weather liberals, and describes them as follows:

These are racial and ethnic liberals who adhere to the [American] creed in both belief and practice. They are neither prejudiced nor given to discrimination. Their orientation towards the creed is fixed and stable. Whatever the environing situation, they are likely to abide by their beliefs: hence, the *all-weather* liberal.⁵⁹

Although Merton's descriptions of the all-weather liberal generally fits the position taken by this text, his analysis of liberals as being free of prejudice is a departure from the position taken in this work. It is virtually impossible to grow up in a society so steeped in racism without harboring some prejudice. Fortunately, such prejudice can be reduced, if not eliminated, through recognition of its existence and through continual self-reflection.

Those few whites traditionally referred to as righteous soul brothas and sistas are considered as such because they have demonstrated their commitment to equality and social justice through their actions. Because of this commitment, they have been embraced by many in the black community for their sincerity. The phrase righteous soul brotha and sista is derivative of four terms frequently used in the black community, the latter three of which have already been discussed. The term "righteous" is defined as "excellent, especially referring to somebody . . . that is . . . [a] political and/or social activist."⁶⁰ Merton's description of the militant all-weather liberal is compatible with the black concept of the righteous soul brotha and sista. According to Merton:

This is . . . the strategic group which *can* act as the spearhead for the progressive extension of the [American] creed into effective practice. They represent the solid foundation both for the measure of ethnic equities which now exist and for the future enlargement of these equities. Integrated with the creed in both belief and practice, they would seem most motivated to influence others toward the same democratic outlook.⁶¹

Whites who fall into the category of all-weather liberals, as previously stated, have a history of demonstrating through their actions and deeds sincere commitment to equality and social justice. Ethnolinguist, diversity

consultant, and author of *Black and White Styles in Conflict*, Thomas Kochman contends that one of the major communication breakdowns between blacks and whites has to do with their different understandings of the concept of commitment. He contends that in mainstream American culture, the concept of commitment has lost the quality of certitude that it once carried in more traditional times. In this post-modern era of corporatization, rapid change, and fleeting alliances, commitment no longer possesses the tensile strength that sincerity afforded it in more traditional times. As Kochman has often stated in diversity presentations, “commitment in mainstream America tends to be qualified by cost, convenience, and risk. If it’s not too costly, inconvenient, or risky, I’m behind you.” Whereas on the other hand, he points out that the tendency amongst African Americans is to believe that commitment should not be qualified by cost, convenience, or risk. In other words, if it’s the right thing to do, you should do it. Blacks want to know if “you walk the talk.” In order to illustrate this point, Kochman gives the example of a white alderman in an all-black ward in the city of Chicago who has consistently won his seat in city hall by significant majorities despite being regularly challenged by black candidates. The reason that this particular white alderman is so successful, Kochman asserts, is because he delivers and is committed to his constituents. He goes on to point out that race tends to have a greater impact on whites than it does blacks when it comes to voting. The issue for blacks is the sincerity of a person’s commitment to the cause of the group. For Blacks, what defines a person is not what the individual says, but what he or she actually does. African Americans have a history of honoring white people like John Brown, who went beyond the rhetoric of abolition, losing a son and eventually his own life to the cause of freeing black people from slavery. “When asked for whom he intended to vote in one lackluster presidential election, James Baldwin answered, ‘John Brown.’ Brown, the white abolitionist revolutionary executed after leading an ill-fated 1859 raid on the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia, has been the subject of a large body of African-American tributes, including Countee Cullen’s wrenching ‘A Negro Mother’s Lullaby’ (1942) and W. E. B. Du Bois’s 1909 biography.”⁶²

Finally, there are those whites who blacks have traditionally referred to as “Negrophiles” or “wannabes,” who often go “native,” abandoning their own group to mix and identify with black people. Upon first blush, these whites appear to be all-weather liberals, but prove to be fair-weather liberals at best. As cited earlier, Robert Merton describes the fair-weather liberal as a “man of expediency who, despite his own freedom from prejudice, supports discriminatory practices when it is the easier or more profitable course.”⁶³ They embrace black culture, language, and dress, often attempting to establish some sort of

romantic liaisons with blacks in the process. Whites who become Negrophiles or wannabes want all the perceived excitement of being black without having to necessarily suffer the consequences of being black in a racist society. Members of this group are often accepted initially by blacks who feel flattered by white attention. However, blacks usually withdraw from these types of whites when it becomes obvious that they are not sincere in their commitment to black people. Furthermore, blacks tend to reject these types of whites when it is discovered that many of them are only interested in commandeering, through outright theft or exploitive performance contracts, those parts of black culture that will personally or professionally benefit them. This often occurs in the music industry. Black people particularly resent whites who abandon black culture and seek refuge in white privilege for convenience or safety sake when being associated with black people becomes difficult or dangerous. Unfortunately, over the last century African-American music and culture have been appropriated for commercial use by whites. More tragic, however, are the numbers of black men who have been charged with rape and lynched because their white lovers would not admit to the consensual nature of their sexual liaisons. In these cases, typically the white woman was so afraid of being rejected or punished by other whites that she cried rape.

Having said all of this, it is important to also say that the aforementioned taxonomic categories for classifying whites are not immutably fixed. People can and do change, as acknowledged in the work of the white social theorist, Rita Hardiman, who poses a five-stage model for White Identity Development. She summarizes her model as follows:

[T]he first stage is characterized by *No Social Consciousness of Race or Naiveté* about race, marked by a lack of awareness of visible racial differences . . . This naive period, which ends in early childhood, is followed by a stage of *Acceptance*, whereupon the White person accepts or internalizes racism and a sense of himself as racially superior to people of color, although this sense of dominance, privilege, or entitlement is often unconscious. The WID [White Identity Development] model assumes that it is impossible in this society to escape racist socialization in some form because of its pervasive, systematic, and interlocking nature. This is not a matter of choice for whites, it is a by-product of living within and being impacted by the institutional and cultural racism which surrounds [everyone in this society].

The third stage, called *Resistance*, is marked by an individual questioning the dominant paradigm about race, and resisting or rejecting his racist programming. It is also a stage wherein Whites can become antiracist or active in efforts to reduce, eliminate, or challenge racism. In reference to the person's own race, this stage is often characterized by embarrassment about one's Whiteness, guilt, shame, and a need to distance oneself from the White group.

The fourth stage, *Redefinition*, occurs when the White person begins to clarify his own self-interest in working against racism, and begins to accept and take responsibility for his Whiteness. Rather than estrangement from Whiteness and their peers, Whites at this stage attempt to redefine themselves as “new whites.” They take ownership of their Whiteness rather than trying to deny it or embracing another racial identity, such as taking on the most visible elements of Black or Native American culture.

The fifth and final stage, *Internalization*, involves integrating or internalizing this increased consciousness regarding race and racism, and one’s new White Identity into all aspects of one’s life.⁶⁴

Acceptance, the second stage of Rita Hardiman’s model for White Identity Development, is quite descriptive of the previously identified taxonomic categories for poor whites in the South and poor and working-class white ethnics in the North. Whites who fall into the categories of cracker, redneck, honky, Paddy boy, and wop have accepted and internalized the belief that they are inherently superior to people of color. Resistance, the third stage of Hardiman’s model, is descriptive of the taxonomic categories of fair weather liberals and wannabes. Redefinition, the fourth stage of the model, is descriptive of the taxonomic category of soul brotha and sista. And stage five, *Internalization*, appears to be quite descriptive of those whites who are classified in the taxonomy as being righteous soul brothas and sistas.

Hardiman identifies both a passive and active facet for stage two and three of her model. In the acceptance stage of Hardiman’s model, there is a conscious identification on the part of whites with the various social systems that afford them privilege as members of the dominant society. From this position of dominance, whites who fall within the active facet of this stage believe in and actively promulgate negative stereotypes about people of color. They blame non-whites for their own low and unequal status, using negative stereotypes to explain and justify their status. Whites who fall into the active facet of this stage reward people of color who accept the negative stereotypes that serve as the logical underpinnings for the system of oppression that relegates them to an unequal position in society. Conversely, these same whites punish those people of color who would dare to question or challenge the oppressive status quo of racial inequality.⁶⁵

Clearly, the South had and still has the highest number of whites who fall into the active facet of the acceptance stage, as is evidenced by slavery, segregation, overt racism, and the extraordinary number of blacks who were raped, lynched, burned, tortured, castrated, mutilated and murdered over the centuries. In fact, the depth of the oppression and degradation to which blacks in the South were subjected was so heinous as to possibly boggle even the mind of the French aristocrat Donatien Alphonse-François de Sade, whose

writings gave rise to the term sadism. Donatien Alphonse-François de Sade, the Marquis de Sade as he is better known, was a writer and philosopher who advocated freedom in such extremes that it transcended morality, religion, and law, a freedom that often feasted on pornographic violence. Many of the plantation owners of the old south fancied themselves as nouveau aristocrats and philosophers who were often prone to the same excesses of freedom that characterized Sade. Francis Le Jau, an Anglican vicar in the colony of South Carolina, wrote a daily chronicle of his experiences in St. Paul's Parish. On one occasion Le Jau noted the following observation:

A poor slave woman was barbarously burnt alive near my door without any positive proof of the crime she was accused of . . . Many Masters can't be persuaded that Negroes and Indians are otherwise than beasts, and use them like such. . . . I daily perceive that many things are done here out of a Worldly and Interested principle, little I fear for God's Sake.⁶⁶

Later in his chronicle he describes the inhuman laws and punishments imposed on runaway slaves, writing:

. . . such an Negroe must be mutilated by amputation of Testicles if it be a man, and of an Ear if a Woman. . . . I must Informe you of a most Cruel Contrivance a man has Invented to punish small faults in slaves. He puts them in a Coffin where they are crushed almost to death, and keeps them in that hellish Machine for 24 hours commonly with their feet Chained out, and a Lid pressing upon their stomach.⁶⁷

Interestingly, one of the most prominent members of St. Paul's Parish was Arthur Middleton the owner of The Oaks, a five-thousand-acre plantation alone Goose Creek. Arthur Middleton is most noted for being one of the Founding Fathers and a signers of the Declaration of Independence.

This is not to say that the North has not had its share of racial violence perpetrated against blacks. As stated earlier, white violence against blacks in the North goes back at least to the draft riots in the North during the Civil War, when white ethnics who resented being conscripted into the Union Army ransacked New York City and randomly hung several blacks in protest of the draft. White violence against Northern blacks became more formal and systematic over the years, as white-dominated police departments began engaging in racial profiling and police brutality to intimidate and keep black people in their place. Tragically, there are still untold numbers of white supremacy groups and thousands of individual white supremacists in both the North and South who, on a regular basis, engage in all manner of hate crimes against blacks, including murder. However, individual civilian acts of violence

against black people are more likely to occur in the South, whereas, when such violence occurs in the North, as previously stated, it most often is carried out by law enforcement officials.

Those whites who fall into the passive facet of the acceptance stage of Hardiman's model, unlike those in the active aspect of this stage, identify, on an unconscious level, with the various systems and social groups that provide them with white privilege. Whites who fall into the passive facet of this stage, like their more active counterparts, deny the existence of racial oppression and discrimination and blame people of color for their own conditions.⁶⁸ For those in the acceptance stage, poverty is the result of personal moral failure on the part of the poor, not discrimination. Such beliefs have been confirmed by the Pew Global Attitudes Project, which found that "[t]wo-thirds of Americans believe that success is not outside of their control. . . . By more than six to one, Americans believe that people who do not succeed in life fail because of their own shortcomings, not because of society. . . . [In addition, however,] there is . . . a more unsavory side to the issue. Racism, note a growing number of commentators, can't entirely be dismissed from the poll results. Dig deeper, and we find that many Americans associate poverty with black America, even though in terms of raw numbers, there are more whites under the poverty line. But in terms of percentages, a far larger proportion of the black community lives below the poverty line. In 2002, the U.S. census reported that 8 percent of whites and 24.1 percent of blacks, up from 22.7 percent in 2001, are below the poverty line."⁶⁹ Whites in the present-day South find themselves increasingly falling into the more passive facet of the acceptance stage because of the legal prohibitions against overtly acting on their prejudice. The exercising of restraint in the expression of their prejudice is particularly important for whites of means and position because the failure to at least marginally conform to the American creed can cost them in status and/or income. An excellent example of this point is evidenced by the fact that Senator Trent Lott of Mississippi had to step down as the majority leader after having made what was deemed a racially insensitive remark in the senate. Lott said of Senator Strom Thurmond, a former segregationist politician, "I want to say this about my state: when Strom Thurmond ran for president, we voted for him. We're proud of it. And if the country had followed our lead, we wouldn't have had all these problems over all these years . . ." ⁷⁰ Whites in the South, whose businesses must rely in part or totally on black patrons, must also be careful not to offend their client base by inadvertently making racially insensitive comments as such inadvertence could cost them financially. In the North, with some notable exceptions, the constraints of law have kept whites from engaging in the types of racist violence that occurred in the South. This is why working-class white ethnics in the North, by and large,

tend not to overtly express bigotry in public, particularly if they are outside of the security of their own neighborhoods and/or peer groups.

However, there are whites in the passive facet of the acceptance stage who are in the process of transitioning to the resistance stage of Hardiman's model and, as a result, they are willing to help non-whites overcome their marginalized and/or impoverished conditions. But this help is contingent on the willingness of non-whites to accept responsibility for those conditions and their commitment themselves to the social values of the dominant society. Aid offered by such whites is typically characterized by condescension and a paternalistic attitude. Such whites who are transitioning from the passive aspect of the acceptance stage seem to fit into the white taxonomic category of Mista Charlie and Miss Ann and the ofay. The Mista Charlie and Miss Ann category, as stated earlier, represents those whites who fall into the middle- and upper-income strata of Southern society. Whites who fall into this category are typically more secure in their position in the racial hierarchy of Southern society. They are generally more genteel in their demeanor and hence more refined in their exercising of dominance and control. In fact, they are often quite munificent in their relationship to blacks, albeit patronizing and condescending in nature. This category of whites is not as crass in expressing their racism as their poor white counterparts. However, their belief in the inferiority of black people runs as deep as that of poor whites. As previously stated, "ofay" is a term often used to describe the masses of whites who are confused by and out of touch with issues related to race, racism, and inequality. They are typically pleasant and well-meaning people who have fallen under the spell of what Robert Merton refers to as an "illiberal" belief system. An "illiberal" belief holds that one is justified in denying the American creed of liberty, justice, and equality for all to those who are considered unworthy.⁷¹

Because of the decline in overt racism in the South, many whites of the present generation increasingly can be classified under Hardiman's model as being in the passive facet of the acceptance stage of White Identity Development. Similarly, in the North, the constraints of law have decreased the instances of overt racism, and, as a result, the present generation of whites is increasingly falling into the passive facet of the acceptance stage. There are even some Southern and Northern whites in the acceptance stage who have begun to recognize and, on occasion, acknowledge that there is racial injustice in society. Some even go as far as to accept the possibility that the poor conditions so many people of color find themselves in may not be their fault and that their challenging of the current system may be justified. Such whites often find themselves ultimately challenging the legitimacy of a social, political, and economic system that discriminates based on race, and as result of this new awareness, they move into what Hardiman refers to as the resistance

stage. During this stage, they literally begin to reject their racist programming, often out of a sense of embarrassment, guilt, and shame over the things that are done to maintain white dominance and privilege.

Hardiman points out that there are a significant number of whites who evolve to the resistance stage of White Identity Development. Those whites who evolve into the resistance stage as passive resisters begin to search for examples of discriminatory or oppressive attitudes and behaviors in individuals and institutions. When they come upon such attitudes and behaviors, they find themselves questioning and even challenging, in safe social and professional settings, those individuals and institutions that promulgate these attitudes and behaviors. On one hand, some whites, as they begin to increasingly realize that discrimination and oppression exist throughout the society, attempt to drop out or distance themselves from the social systems of discrimination and oppression. On the other hand, some whites become extremely frustrated and alienated by all of the oppression and discrimination in society and experience a need to take a more active role in engaging the problems of racism in society. This typically begins with taking responsibility for their own participation in the systems that discriminate against and oppress people of color. Whites in this stage begin to question "who am I?"⁷²

Often those whites who fall into this passive facet of the resistance stage are among the better-educated members of the professional and/or entrepreneurial class. Typically, this is because they have been afforded the opportunity to develop a more nuanced and sophisticated view of racial politics because of their social and economic security. These individuals are often more racially tolerant and, as a result, are viewed with less trepidation by blacks. However, many of those whites in the passive facet of the resistance stage are not firmly grounded in this stage of White Identity Development because they are still struggling with the question "who am I?" This means that they are subject to possibly regressing to the previous stage of acceptance. "Indeed, this was the subject of a prescient article in the [1963] *Atlantic Monthly* entitled 'The White Liberal Retreat.' Its author, Murray Friedman, observed that 'the liberal white is increasingly uneasy about the nature and consequences of the Negro revolt.' According to Friedman, a number of factors contributed to the white liberal retreat. For one thing, after school desegregation came to northern cities, white liberals realized that the Negro was not just an abstraction, and not just a southern problem. Second, the rise of Black Nationalism exacerbated tensions with liberals, especially when white liberals were ejected from some Civil Rights organizations. Third, the escalating tension and violence tested the limits of liberal support. 'In the final analysis,' Friedman wrote, 'a liberal white, middle-class society wants change, but without trouble.'⁷³ Such regression often can occur when whites have negative ex-

periences with people of color, such as being rejected when they attempt to get involved in social action efforts controlled by people of color. Many whites experienced such difficulties when various Civil Rights organizations during the sixties and seventies became black power oriented and chose a separatist versus integrationist path. Whites in this passive resistance stage seem to be particularly vulnerable to regression because their tolerance and support of equality is qualified by self-interest. Support for civil rights, integration, and liberal race politics by whites in the passive facet of the resistance stage often collapses if they become a victim of a criminal encounter with a person of color, perceive a threat from Affirmative Action, or discover that one of their children has a black love interest.

Redefinition, the fourth stage in the Hardiman model, coincides quite well with the taxonomic category of soul brotha and sista used by blacks to describe whites who have essentially become comfortable enough in their own identities to function in cross-cultural settings without feeling threatened. Earlier a young white woman named Jessica Prentice was cited as an example of a white person who was considered a soul sista by her black friends. While attending an Ivy League school in the East, she decided to go on a student exchange to a historically black college in Mississippi. During the semester or so that she spent on her exchange, she became so well accepted by her black friends that they gave her an honorary black name. When they were asked by other black students who did not know Jessica why she was given a black name, they responded, "she's not white anymore." Clearly, Jessica was secure enough with her own identity that she felt comfortable to go on the exchange in the first place, and it is obvious from the response of the black students who befriended her that she was able to function quite well in a cross-cultural setting without feeling threatened.

Internalization, the fifth and final stage of the Hardiman model, appears to be quite descriptive of those whites who are categorized as righteous soul brothas and sistas within the black taxonomy. Whites who fall into this category demonstrate an ongoing commitment to racial equality and social justice through their actions. Earlier in this chapter, the white abolitionist John Brown was cited as being someone who was considered a righteous person and a brotha by blacks because he sacrificed his life in the cause of black freedom. A more contemporary example is the case of Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner who, along with their black co-worker, James Chaney, were attacked and killed in Mississippi during the Freedom Summer of 1964. Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner had gone to investigate a church bombing near Philadelphia, Mississippi. While investigating, they were stopped and arrested for a supposed traffic violation and arrested by the local police. Subsequently, they were released, only to be stopped by the local Ku Klux Klan.

They were not seen again until their badly decomposed bodies were discovered six weeks later at the base of a local dam. Having said all of this, the commitment to racial equality and social justice does not require whites to lay down their lives in the name of these causes, but it does require that one engage in some kind of action that demonstrates sincerity. Black people require whites to “walk the talk” before they are viewed as being righteous soul brothas or sistas.

Black people, as previously stated, use the aforementioned taxonomy as a framework for observing and analyzing white behavior. For some blacks, this taxonomy is used as a conscious tool of observation and analysis, while for others, who are less reflective, this taxonomy tends to be used on a more subconscious level. The prolific black author bell hooks [who deliberately lowers her name] describes the previously mentioned quasi-ethnographic process of observing and analyzing whites as follows:

Although there has never been any official body of black people in the United States who have gathered as anthropologists and/or ethnographers to study whiteness, black folks have, from slavery on, shared in conversations with one another ‘special’ knowledge of whiteness gleaned from close scrutiny of white people. Deemed special because it was not a way of knowing that has been recorded fully in written materials, its purpose was to help black folks cope and survive in a white supremacist society. For years, black domestic servants, working in white homes, acting as informants, brought knowledge back to segregated communities—details, facts, observations, and psychoanalytic readings of the white Other.”⁷⁴

Black observations of white people have, for centuries, been compiled, categorized, and metaphorically bound in cultural encyclopedias as a sort of reference guide for black survival in America. Historically, this pastime of observing whites was born out of necessity, but also has come to serve as a source of entertainment for blacks that filled an “ongoing curiosity about the ‘ghost,’ ‘the barbarians,’ these strange apparitions they were forced to serve.”⁷⁵

One reason why black people have been able to become such astute observers of white people, ironically, is due to that characteristic that makes blacks so “highly visible,” skin color; for whites, darkness has a historical association with utility and servitude. Slavery, segregation, and the pyramidal structure of white privilege have cast a long sinister shadow over American history, a shadow that to this day has hidden African Americans in darkness, rendering them invisible to white eyes. The non-person status of the slave and the general invisibility that results from servitude have given blacks a unique viewpoint and perspective on white America, especially those whites of

power and privilege. Ralph Ellison, the renowned black author of *Invisible Man*, wrote of being black: “Despite the bland assertions of sociologists, ‘high visibility’ actually rendered one un-visible. . . .”⁷⁶ It is not that whites literally cannot see blacks, they merely tend to get lost in the dark when looking into the face of a black person, hence, the saying “All black people look alike.”⁷⁷ This is precisely what Ellison meant by invisibility, the loss of vision due to the darkness. However, some whites understand what Ellison is saying and do, on occasion, bare witness to the phenomenon of black invisibility. For example, the renowned author Studs Terkel provides a powerful accounting of the phenomenon of black invisibility in his book *Race*. In that work, Terkel invites his readers to “[c]onsider the case of the senior editor of *Ebony* [magazine]. He, elegant in dress, manner, and speech, lives in an expensive high-rise. As he waited at the curb, a matronly white [woman] handed him her car keys.” Terkel notes “in our daily run of the course, the black is still the invisible man.”⁷⁸ This type of behavior occurs most often amongst the privileged who rarely remember the faces of those who serve them; they recognize their uniform and unfortunately, the ultimate uniform of servitude in America is dark skin, due to its association with slavery. For example, “newspaper heiress Sallie Bingham recalls, in her autobiography *Passion and Prejudice* [that] ‘Blacks, I realized, were simply invisible to most white people, except as a pair of hands offering a drink on a silver tray.’ Reduced to the machinery of bodily physical labor, black people learned to appear before whites as though they were zombies, cultivating the habit of casting the gaze downward so as to not appear uppity. . . . Safety resided in the pretense of invisibility.”⁷⁹ As previously demonstrated, African Americans of lower status are not the only blacks who fall prey to the inability of so many whites to distinguish one black face from another; it even happens to black people of considerable note. “The late Secretary of Commerce Ronald Brown kept in his desk a news photograph from a Midwestern paper that had been sent to him by Colin Powell. The picture was of Mr. Brown, but the caption identified him as General Powell. Attached to the clipping was a handwritten note from Powell: ‘Ron, they still can’t tell us apart.’”⁸⁰

Ironically, because of the convoluted reality created by American racism, it is whites who “‘imagine that they are invisible to black people since the power they have historically asserted, and even now collectively assert over black people, accorded them the right to control the black gaze. . . . Black slaves, and later manumitted servants, could be brutally punished for looking, for appearing to observe the whites they were serving, as only a subject can observe, or see. To be fully an object then was to lack the capacity to see or recognize reality.”⁸¹ This assumption on the part of whites that they have the power to make themselves invisible to blacks through some sort of decree

represents the height of arrogance. This assumption is probably what prompted a black woman to wonder “if [white] people who hired [black] domestic help had any idea how much their employees learned about them while fixing their meals, making their beds, and emptying their trash. Did it ever occur to the kind of women for whom she worked that they and their lives were often the topics of conversation and sometimes objects of ridicule or pity among the help’s friends and families?”⁸² Of course, in actuality it is black people who historically were rendered invisible, due to the lack of personal power and presence caused by the imposition of a race etiquette that required them to indulge whites with an indirect gaze that never allowed blacks to directly look upon whites. Eventually, some whites began to realize, to their amazement, that they were being observed by blacks and became quite disturbed by this discovery. Little do whites realize that “[t]heir amazement [over the fact] that black people watch white people with a critical ‘ethnographic’ gaze, is itself an expression of racism. . . . [This is because] [t]hey have a deep emotional investment in the myth of ‘sameness,’ even as their actions reflect the primacy of whiteness as a sign informing who they are and how they think. Many of them are shocked that black people think critically about whiteness because racist thinking perpetuates the fantasy that the Other who is subjugated, who is subhuman, lacks the ability to comprehend, to understand, to see the working of the powerful.”⁸³ As the power of whites to control the black gaze has eroded over the years, especially in the North, whites have increasingly felt uncomfortable and threatened by the engaging assertive gaze of black people. Often that assertive gaze triggers police brutality on the part of white officers when encountering blacks.

This dark cloak of invisibility, woven out of the threads of white arrogance and indifference, has allowed blacks to observe white people in both their public and private lives. The great black intellectual, W. E. B. Du Bois, in *The Soul of White Folks*, describes his relationship with whites as follows:

Of them I am singularly clairvoyant. I see in and through them. I view them from unusual points of vantage. Not as a foreigner do I come, for I am native, not foreign, bone of their thought and flesh of their language. Mine is not the knowledge of the traveler of the colonial composite of dear memories, words, and wonder. Nor yet is my knowledge that which servants have of masters, or mass of class, or capitalist of artisan. Rather I see these souls undressed and from the back and side. I see the working of their entrails. I know their thoughts and they know that I know. This knowledge makes them now embarrassed, now furious. They deny my right to live and call me misbirth! My word is to them mere bitterness and my soul, pessimism. And yet as they preach and strut and shout and threaten, crouching as they clutch at rags of facts and fancies to hide their nakedness, they go twisting, flying by my tired eyes and I see them ever stripped,—ugly, human.⁸⁴

Du Bois is speaking about a deep cultural knowledge and understanding of the white psyche possessed by black people, knowledge spawned of the savage intimacy of slavery, an intimacy that goes beyond that of servant and master, because it is an intimacy that lacks the protection of the most basic boundaries of civility. Slave women suckled and reared their master's children, were confidantes to their master's wives, and were often forced to sexually gratify those same masters and occasionally even their sons. Regardless of one's gender, slave men and women were treated like dumb beasts and as such they were subject to the same harsh treatment. However, this subhuman status often allowed blacks to be present during the most private of conversations of whites because as inferiors, blacks were inconsequential.

Slaves knew the breadth of their masters' hopes and desires, the jagged edges of their fears, the depth of their pornographic lust, and the scale of their capacity for cruelty and inhumanity. The slave was an economic vehicle for the master's hopes and desires, and as an omnipresent being in the master's life, the slave was privy to some of the master's most private moments. Tragically, this also meant that the slave served as a catharsis for the master's frustrations, anger, and fears, and unfortunately the subject of the master's most base sexual desires. One would assume, given the subordinated status of white women, that enslaved black women would be able to garner some sympathy, if not support, from their oppressed white sisters. Instead, they were often subjected to almost the same level of abuse from their white mistresses as was inflicted upon them by their masters. "Some of the most sadistic behavior inflicted on [black] female house servants was at the hands of White wives in retaliation for their husbands' affairs."⁸⁵ Even when there was no physical abuse, the suspicion, jealousy, and verbal abuse heaped on the heads of black women by their white mistresses was almost unrelenting. This abuse prompted an ex-slave named Harriet Jacobs to make note of such in her autobiography, when she writes:

I had entered my sixteenth year, and every day it became more apparent that my presence was intolerable to Mrs. Flint. Angry words frequently passed between her and her husband. He had never punished me himself, and he would not allow anybody else to punish me. In that respect, she was never satisfied; but, in her angry moods no terms were too vile for her to bestow upon me. Yet I, whom she detested so bitterly, had far more pity for her than he had, whose duty it was to make her life happy. I never wronged her, or wished to wrong her; and one word of kindness from her would have brought me to her feet. . . .

By managing to keep within sight of people, as much as possible, during the day time, I had hitherto succeeded in eluding master [and his advances], though a razor was often held to my throat to force me to change this line of policy. . . .

After a while my mistress sent for me to come to her room. . . . She handed me a Bible, and said, "Lay your hand on your heart, kiss this holy book, and swear before God that you tell me the truth."

I took the oath she required, and I did it with a clear conscience. "You have taken God's holy word to testify your innocence," said she. "If you have deceived me, beware! Now take this stool, sit down, look me directly in the face, and tell me all that has passed between your master and you."

I did as she ordered. As I went on with my account her color changed frequently, she wept, and sometimes groaned. She spoke in tones so sad, that I was touched by her grief. The tears came to my eyes; but I was soon convinced that her emotions arose from anger and wounded pride. She felt that her marriage vows were desecrated, her dignity insulted; but she had no compassion for the poor victim of her husband's perfidy. She pitied herself as a martyr; but she was incapable of feeling for the condition of shame and misery in which her unfortunate, helpless slave was placed.⁸⁶

Much has been made of the master's lust for slave women. However, "[w]hile little has been written about White women crossing the color line for sexual excitement, there were those who did so regularly—a few even abandoned their husbands for dark-skinned men. Some White women even flaunted such affairs, talking openly about the Negro male's sexual prowess. In 1837, a Kentucky minister named John Rankin disclosed that the daughters of some of the finest White families had had affairs with their fathers' male slaves."⁸⁷

Neither age nor gender served as shelter from the abusive reach of a potentially depraved master or mistress. As rare as sexual unions between black males and white females were in the antebellum South, the fact of the existence of such relationships helped spread the myth of black male sexual superiority. The pervasiveness of this myth eventually replaced "the loyal 'Old Negro' with the black beast rapist"⁸⁸ during the post-Civil War era, when there no longer existed the control over black males that slavery afforded. It was during these years that this newly constructed image of the "black beast rapist" would be used to justify both the control and murder of black men, as evidenced by the lynching of thousands of black males for allegedly raping white women.

One cannot discuss the historical relationship between whites and blacks without addressing the most salient issue affecting this relationship, color, a thing so powerful that it demarcates their worlds as clearly as day and night. During the colonial era and the first eighty-nine years of the new republic, those in power held back the dark corrupting implications of slavery with the bright distracting light of liberty's torch, a light that cast a brilliant sphere of freedom that separated and sheltered whites from blacks. Immersed in this luminescent circle of privilege and security, whites gazed with fascination and fear into that dark night that was slavery, beyond the dusk into those shadowy quarters where the slaves resided. For centuries, Europeans have had a fasci-

nation with the skin color of Africans. For as Spanish historian Francisco López de Gómara stated in the mid 1550s, “One of the marveyulous thynges that god useth in the composition of man, is coloure: whiche doubtlesse can not bee considered withowte great admiration beholding one to be white and another black, beinge colours utterlye contrary.”⁸⁹ Prior to the English settling in North America, writes Winthrop Jordan:

[T]he concept of blackness was loaded with intense meaning. Long before they found that some men were black, Englishmen found in the idea of blackness a way of expressing some of their most ingrained values. No other color except white conveyed so much emotional impact. . . . Black was an emotionally partisan color, the handmaid and symbol of baseness and evil, a sign of danger and repulsion. . . . White and black connoted purity and filthiness, virginity and sin, virtue and baseness, beauty and ugliness, beneficence and evil, God and the devil. . . . Whiteness . . . carried a special significance for Elizabethan Englishmen: it was, particularly when complemented by red, the color of perfect human beauty, especially *female* beauty. This ideal was already centuries old in Elizabeth’s time, and their fair Queen was its very embodiment: her cheeks were “roses in a bed of lillies.”⁹⁰

When white, this prototypical symbol of perfection, was juxtaposed with its metaphysical opposite, black, it gave the English an ontological definition of self as beings of light and goodness in that mythical Arthurian tradition that they so desperately wanted to establish on earth. In addition, this pairing of such symbolic opposites gave them a teleological purpose for existence. Steadfast in this purpose they would go forth, presuming to be sages, bringing enlightenment to the non-western world in much the same way that Socrates enlightened Plato’s half brother, Glaucon, when he presented him with the *Analogy of the Sun* and the *Allegory of the Cave*. In the *Analogy of the Sun*, Socrates demonstrated to Glaucon that as the Sun is the source of Light that makes Sight possible and objects visible to the eye, so is Goodness the source of Truth that makes Knowledge possible and idealized abstract forms comprehensible to the mind. In the *Allegory of the Cave*, Socrates demonstrates to Glaucon that the Cave of darkness and ignorance represents the realm of unsubstantiated belief, and the World of Day outside of the Cave represents the illuminated realm of substantiated Knowledge. For Europeans, and most particularly the English, blackness represented that dark cave of ignorance from which they were escaping and whiteness represented the light of knowledge towards which they were fleeing. The English viewed themselves as the Knights Templar of the Enlightenment, whose purpose was to liberate non-western people from their dark caves of ignorance. Of course, in order to finance this merciful mission they would have to plunder the lands

of those whom they were attempting to save in much the same way that the Crusaders, who had gone before them, had done.

Blackness also represented the dark, murky bog of repressed lust and unresolved sexuality from which the English were driven by an oppressive Protestant religiosity that offered them no absolution for indulging in the dark sins of carnal knowledge. When English explores, privateers, and slave traders first found themselves confronted by Africans, they were at once both attracted to and repulsed by the dark complexion of African women. Even the great bard, Shakespeare, a man who had his pick of fair beauties, found himself in this dilemma when he wrote apologetically of his black mistress.

My mistress's eyes are nothing like the sun;
Coral is far more red than her lips' red:
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.
I have seen roses damask'd, red and white,
But no such roses see I in her cheeks.⁹¹

This fascination with the complexion of the dark Other on the part of some Englishmen seems to have become even more heightened in colonial North America. It was the repressive religiosity of Protestantism and the close proximity between blacks and whites within the colonial systems of indentured servitude and slavery that created the context for this fascination to flourish. "The African women's dark skin seemed to have a profound effect on the White man's psyche, and many white men longed to escape the suffocating effects of a Christian ethic that equated sex with sin. Southern white males, nursed at a Black servant's bosom as infants, often experienced their first real sexual pleasure as men in the arms of black women."⁹² This fascination with black women is personified in a poem entitled *The Sable Venus: An Ode*, published in several West Indian Books and the *South Carolina Gazette*, which read as follows:

Next comes a warmer race, from sable sprung,
To love each thought, to lust each nerve is strung;
The Samboe dark, and the Mullattoe brown,
The Mestize fair, the well-limb'd Quaderoon,
And Jetty Afric, from no spurious sire,
Warm as her soil, and as her sun—on fire.
These sooty dames, well vers'd in Venus school,
Make love an art, and boast they kiss by rule.⁹³

As Europeans ventured out into the world beyond their own settled shores, what they found is best captured in the earlier citation from Francisco López

de Gómara, who stated, “One of the marveyulous thynges that god useth in the composition of man, is coloure. . . . Sum lykewyse to be yelowe whiche is betweene blacke and white: and others of other colours as it were of dyvers liveres.”⁹⁴ With the logging of distance and time on the part of European navigators and explorers came an increased realization that white people were a minority in the world and were themselves, in fact, quite unique amongst the world’s population. Interestingly, it was Benjamin Franklin, in an article published in 1751 entitled “Observations Concerning the Increase of Mankind,” who wrote, “The number of purely white People in the world is proportionably very small.”⁹⁵

As whites increasingly, over time, have come to the realization that they are a minority in the world, there appears to be a shift in their valuation of skin color from white to darker hues. Historical evidence of this shift can be seen in the writings of such authors as Herman Melville and Mark Twain. In the case of Melville, there are many who argue that his great allegorical novel, *Moby Dick*, represents, among other things, an attempt by him to confront the racist hierarchy of his day and its assumptions about the status of whiteness both symbolically and aesthetically.⁹⁶ In his work, this changing valuation of whiteness becomes quite evident in the words of the narrator, Ishmael, a former school teacher turned whaler, when he indicates how disturbed he is by whiteness. For Ishmael, there is something about whiteness, this absence of color, that he finds horribly frightening. He feels that whiteness possesses some inexplicable quality that “by its indefiniteness . . . shadows forth the heartless voids and immensities of the universe.”⁹⁷ In Ishmael’s words, one senses his perception of whiteness as a sinister, unfathomably evil force. One can also see that the standard for human attractiveness is shifting away from whiteness in the following depiction by Melville of the albino:

What is it that in the Albino man so peculiarly repels and often shocks the eye, as that sometimes he is loathed by his own kith and kin! It is that whiteness which invests him, a thing expressed by the name he bears. The Albino is as well made as other men—has no substantive deformity—and yet this mere aspect of all-pervading whiteness makes him more strangely hideous than the ugliest abortion. Why should this be so?⁹⁸

Melville’s description of the ugliness of the pure white man, as contrasted with the earlier descriptions in the *South Carolina Gazette* of beautiful African women who were “samboe [Indian and Negro mix] dark” or “jetty [pure black] Afric” marks an aesthetic departure from the Elizabethan imagery of lily white beauty described earlier.

In the essay “Skin Deep,” from a compilation of essays entitled *The Damned Human Race*, Mark Twain appears to concur with Melville’s assessment

of the relative attractiveness of the white race as compared with those of color. Twain states the following in this essay:

[White] is not an unbearably unpleasant complexion when it keeps to itself, but when it comes into competition with masses of brown and black the fact is betrayed that it is endurable only because we are used to it. Nearly all black and brown skins are beautiful, but a beautiful white skin is rare. How rare, one may learn by walking down a street in Paris, New York, or London on a week-day—particularly an unfashionable street—and keeping count of the satisfactory complexions encountered in the course of a mile. Where dark complexions are massed, they make the whites look bleached out, unwholesome, and sometimes frankly ghastly. I could notice this as a boy, down South in the slavery days before the war. The splendid black satin skin of the South African Zulus of Durban seemed to me to come very close to perfection. I can see those Zulus yet . . . handsome and intensely black creatures, modestly clothed in loose summer stuffs whose snowy whiteness made the black all the blacker by contrast. Keeping that group in mind, I can compare those complexions with the white ones which are streaming past this London window now. . . . The advantage is with the Zulu, I think. He starts with a beautiful complexion, and it will last him through.⁹⁹

Over the centuries, it seems that whites have gone from a position of being repulsed by black skin as being ugly and a symbol of evil to one of present-day envy. Today, one has to but witness the staggering increase in sunbathing among whites and the explosive acceleration of the tanning industry in both Europe and America. Increasingly, dark skin is viewed as being beautiful and a symbol of wholesomeness. However, this change in attitude towards dark skin does not necessarily translate into a change in white racial attitudes, because regardless of whether whites are repulsed by or envious of dark skin, there is still an element of discomfort and/or anger directed towards blacks, albeit subtle, that is associated with both repulsion and envy. Such subtle anger in the form of hostile envy can be felt when whites hold their arms next to those of black people and say, “I’m almost catching up,” or, “Watch out, I’ll be darker than you soon.” Such comments are particularly irritating, since whites wear their sun-tanned skin as a sign of visible health and pride while blacks are expected to wear their dark skin as a sign of pathology and shame.

In the previously cited excerpt from *The Soul of White Folks*, the pronouncement by W. E. B. Du Bois about how white Americans gave voice to their innermost collective thoughts of African Americans, he wrote, “Of them I am singularly clairvoyant. I see in and through them. I view them from unusual points of vantage. . . . I see the soul undressed and from the back and side. I see the workings of their entrails. I know their thoughts”¹⁰⁰ The historical phenomenon of black invisibility, of which Ralph Ellison speaks so

eloquently, afforded black people those “unusual points of vantage,” points which allowed them to observe whites in all kinds of settings and in all manner of circumstance; in effect, to see their souls undressed. Even after slavery ended, blacks in the South, serving as sharecroppers and servants, continued to be privy to the intimate lives of whites. Ralph Ellison, in *Shadow and Act*, very insightfully captures the depth of the intimate involvement of black people in the psyches of whites when he states, “whatever the efficiency of segregation as a sociopolitical arrangement, it has been far from absolute on the level of *culture*. Southern whites cannot walk, talk, sing, conceive of laws or justice, think of sex, love, the family, or freedom without responding to the presence of Negroes.”¹⁰¹ Novelist, essayist, and journalist George Schuyler, in “Our White Folks,” one of his more combative essays, wrote:

While the average Nordic knows nothing of how Negroes actually live and what they actually think, the Negroes know the Nordics intimately. Practically every member of the Negro aristocracy of physicians, dentists, lawyers, undertakers and insurance men has worked at one time or another for white folks as a domestic, and observed with cynical detachment their orgies, obsessions and imbecilities, while contact with the white proletariat has acquainted him thoroughly with their gross stupidity and often very evident inferiority.¹⁰²

It could be said that Ellison’s insight into the white psyche and Schuyler’s attitudes towards whites holds true even in today’s America. The source of much of white America’s sense of insecurity and awkwardness around blacks most likely comes from the deep, perhaps subconscious, awareness of the degree to which black people have not only been privy to the inner workings of their psyches, but also the extent to which black people have influenced their psyches.

Even in present-day America, blacks spend a lot of time observing whites in all types of settings, communicating their observations to one another and sharing their interpretations. In racially mixed gatherings, one might catch a glimpse of a black person looking indirectly at whites as they go about the business of attempting to appear superior and in control of themselves and their surroundings. If observant enough, one might even notice the nuanced communication between black people as they subtly roll their eyes, looking askance at their supposed “betters.” Look again and one might discern a slightly enigmatic smile forming on their faces as they gaze upon whites proudly “strutting” around in their veils of transparent entitlement. Unbeknownst to whites is the fact that they still appear to black people as the undressed souls Du Bois described in 1890 when he wrote, “They clutch at rags of facts and fancies to hide their nakedness, they go twisting, flying by my tired eyes and I see them ever stripped,—ugly, human.”¹⁰³ Black people have

glimpsed the Wizard of Oz crouched naked and vulnerable behind his imaginary veil of superiority, protected by a dimwitted troop of flying monkeys recruited from the ignorant legions of the white proletariat who have fallen under the spell of this supposed magician. Thus is the constructed illusion of race and class in this Land of Oz known as America.

One can argue, as do many blacks, that this feeling of entitlement experienced by so many whites, this intrinsic belief that they supersede black people in personal quality, rank, dignity, and rights as the majority, represents the essence of a white supremacist ideology. This belief in white superiority quite obviously informs the conscious and subconscious minds of many whites in America.

Few white Americans will admit openly nowadays that they regard blacks as mentally inferior. But many harbor such beliefs, according to surveys [of a cross section of about 1,200 Americans, 150 of whom were black] by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago. The first study, in 1990, had special significance because it used sophisticated methodology. Polls usually attempt to measure stereotypes by presenting bigoted statements to respondents, asking them to agree or disagree: "Black people are less intelligent than white people," for example. Or "Generally speaking, black people are lazy and don't like to work hard." The crude caricatures make many of those surveyed recoil; to agree is obviously racist, and not many Americans want to brand themselves that way, even in an anonymous poll. So the National Opinion Research Center devised a questionnaire with nuanced choices. Respondents were invited to consider the supposed characteristics of Various groups . . . and rate them on a scale of one to seven. Offering a continuum of gradations about more than one group elicited prejudices that the blatant survey questions would have missed. Of all the whites surveyed, 30.6 percent believed that blacks were unintelligent, 46.6 percent believed that blacks were lazy; 58.9 percent believed that blacks preferred welfare to self-reliance; and 53.7 percent believe that blacks were violent.¹⁰⁴

For many whites, their feelings of racial superiority are so powerful that they could be classified as having a superiority complex, especially those who overtly proclaim a white supremacist ideology to bolster their social status and/or sense of self-worth. In psychology, the designation of a superiority complex is applied to "those who have an exaggerated and unrealistic sense of themselves and is generally interpreted as a defense against deeper feelings of inferiority. . . . There are (indeed, must be) persons who are in fact superior in various ways and who recognize their talents."¹⁰⁵ However, for those who demonstrate a psychological compulsion to degrade and subordinate others, it is clear that they are attempting to overcome deep-seated feelings of inadequacy and inferiority in their own lives by dominating others. As stated in

chapter three of this text, there were centuries during which Europe was of little significance in the world. In fact, during this time period, Europe was either being dominated or threatened by peoples of color from the Far, Near or South East. If white supremacists or, for that matter, just typical white Americans from this century could be whisked back in time to 1304, they would be confronted by possibly their worst nightmare, a Europe dominated by Muslims and Mongols. Moreover, if per chance these temporal interlopers tried to convince the inhabitants of that period that white people represented the most superior race, they would be perceived as delusional.

Anyone who had tried to suggest, in that year, that white people were the world's dominant race would have been laughed into silence. It was Muslims and Mongols, not Europeans, who had the upper hand in 1304. European Crusaders had been driven from the Holy Land in 1291. Moorish sultans from Africa continued to rule parts of Spain, just as they had since 712. The Mongols held Russia, which they conquered—along with much of Central Europe—between 1237 and 1242. Now they grew rich selling their white subjects to Muslim slave traders.¹⁰⁶

The argument made in that chapter is that Europe's initial drive for superiority was, in essence, the result of a reaction formation to its inferior status in the medieval world.

Fortunately for Europeans, the tide of dominance shifted rather abruptly, in historical terms, to favor Europe.

Surprisingly, it began with what ought to have been a military breakthrough for the Muslims. Arab craftsmen, not Europeans, succeeded in making the first gun, in 1304. Yet, it turned out to be Europeans, some hundred years later, who put this new invention to work most effectively on the battlefield. By the time Henry the Navigator sent his first caravels down the African coast in the 1430s, his explorers went heavily armed with cannon and muskets.

Europe's rise to world supremacy followed with breathtaking speed. With it came a new self-image for Europeans. Gone were the days when white people bowed low before Asian and Muslim rulers. Now it was brown, black, red, and yellow people of the world who bowed before them. A new idea arose in European minds.¹⁰⁷

As Europe became increasingly successful at fending off and overcoming its age-old enemies, many of whom were in decline, this drive for superiority gave rise to an assumption of white superiority, which became woven into the metaphysical fabric of Western culture. With this assumption of white superiority came an exaggerated sense of ethnocentrism, which devolved into racism and a white supremacist doctrine as the newly emerging Western

pseudoscience of racial classification and European hegemonic drive became merged.

During the latter part of the nineteenth century, an elaborate edifice of social philosophy and theory was developed around the theme of white racial superiority. Theories of racial history were transformed into theories of world history. Facts that did not fit the racial worldview of white superiority and black degradation were ignored, deleted, distorted, or obfuscated. Typical was the widely read book by Dr. John Van Evrie, *White Supremacy and Negro Subordination* [1861]. Explaining the “magnificent structures” of the ancient cultures of Mexico-Guatemala-Yucatan and Peru, he reasoned that such high cultures were due to Caucasian adventurers or shipwrecked mariners who settled in these areas. . . . Likewise, in Asia . . . all of the great leaders were white—Attila the Hun, Genghis Khan, Tamerlane. Confucius was also white, as were all the more progressive portions of Chinese society. Explications for advanced social systems in Africa, discovered or rediscovered in the late nineteenth century, were predicated on ascertaining the degree of Caucasian mixture in the aristocratic or ruling elements. Thus the Hamites, once the burnt-face sons of Ham and lineage founder of all blacks, were reinterpreted to be archaic Caucasoids who had conquered Negro tribes and provided them with whatever aspects of order, law, and civilization were discernible among them. According to Van Evrie, “progress and indefinite perfectibility are the specific attributes of the Caucasian.”¹⁰⁸

This “exaggerated and unrealistic” sense of self that serves as a mask for “deeper feelings of inferiority” was quite evident in the behavior of the English colonialists of North America.

The facts . . . are suggestive of a disquieting uncertainty and apprehension about the English sense of their own identity. The posing of this question [of identity] by writers of the colonial period suggested that deep-seated doubts existed about the value and worthiness of English culture. It may be that the more threatening this reality, the more attenuated the sense of self and society, the more rigidly insular and introspective the English felt it necessary to become. Could it also be that the Englishman’s need to associate himself with property and power was, in part, a desperate effort to construct and preserve a sense of self?¹⁰⁹

At the base of the overarching macro culture of America that provides a framework for the mainstream identity of whites lays a sense of apprehension, uncertainty, and even, at points, doubt with regards to this mantle of supposed racial superiority inherited from the English. Historically, black people, serving as the dutiful invisible “other,” have borne witness to this sense of trepidation that periodically manifested itself in white America. Blacks, being privy to this sense of vulnerability amongst whites, have passed this knowledge on to each successive generation for the sake of survival and encour-

agement. This is why most black people at some level know that racism, be it in its most malignant or mild form, wells up from a soul poisoned by insecurity, guilt, and a sense of unworthiness. As stated in chapter three of this text, the Puritans essentially laid down the cultural foundation for what has come to be known as mainstream American culture, the culture to which each successive wave of ethnics is expected to assimilate. This sense of insecurity, guilt, and worthlessness referred to earlier was founded in the Puritan concept of “depravity, which . . . meant the total corruption of ‘natural man’ as a consequence of Adam’s original sin.”¹¹⁰ This original sin was further exacerbated by the “sin” of ambition and the ill-gotten privilege garnered from slavery. Clearly, the general unwillingness of whites to acknowledge the effects of slavery and racism, their tendency to blame the victims of racism for their own plight, and their drive to project suppressed needs and desires onto subordinated races, is evidence of deep-rooted feelings of insecurity, guilt, and unworthiness. Like the pharaohs of ancient Egypt, who staged great pageantry, amassed major armies, and built monumental pyramids to their assumed greatness, white America hides all doubts about its supremacy under a star-spangled banner of arrogant display, meaningless cultural pageantry, military excess, and grandiose architecture. But, standing like sentinels of truth in the shadow of all of this grandiosity, are the descendents of African slaves who, by their very existence, belie this extravagant American image.

Racism at a societal level represents a system of belief, thought, and action that is the product of a sociopolitical formula, which progresses as follows: prejudice plus discrimination plus power equals racism. Power is the variable that enables racism to be manifested at a societal level to such a degree that it is alloyed to the very structural members that support society. In order for this to happen, a group must have sufficient numerical and/or monetary power to act on its prejudice and establish both a formal system of discriminatory laws and policies, and an informal framework of socially sanctioned norms, mores, and/or practices. However, the starting point of this formulation is always going to be prejudice. The concept of “prejudice,” as used in various psychological texts, has been traditionally defined as an attitude, i.e., “a consistent, learned emotionalized predisposition to respond in a particular way to a given object, person, or situation.”¹¹¹

[Prejudice, like all attitudes,] has two aspects: the *cognitive*, which consists of the nature and contents of the opinions, beliefs, and views about certain social groups; and the *affective*, which consists of the associated emotions and values. These attitudes must be distinguished from the actual behavior towards certain groups or their members, which is often referred to as “discrimination.” Prejudice against a group may sometimes be present without the existence of clear and objective marks of discrimination.¹¹²

The cognitive aspect of prejudice represents the learned systems of negative beliefs and generalizations about select out-groups. Such systems of beliefs and generalizations in psychology are known as social stereotypes. For centuries, African peoples have endured the deleterious effects of the negative stereotypes promulgated by Western civilization. "Europeans constructed images of Africa and blacks on the basis of selective perception, expedience, second-hand information, mingled with reconstructed biblical notions and medieval folklore, along with popular 'scientific' ideas that were current at the time."¹¹³ The affective aspect of prejudice represents the "emotionalized predisposition to respond in a particular way" to selected out-groups. Emotions constitute internally generated visceral and externally manifested behavioral responses that have the power to motivate a person to action.¹¹⁴ Given the intimately complex and often pathological history of black/white relations in America, it is no surprise that the affective component of white prejudice is emotionally charged. However, black people find the emotional depth of many white people's prejudice and hatred fascinating when considering the fact that it was whites who enslaved, brutalized, raped, and lynched blacks. If the situation was reversed and blacks were the ones who enslaved, brutalized, and raped whites, the depth of white prejudice and anger would be understandable. In addition, black people also find it fascinating that white America cannot acknowledge the impact that slavery and racism has had on black America. To add insult to injury, white America continues to treat black America like second-class citizens, while blaming them for their own victimization. Blacks often wonder how white people would respond to almost three centuries of racial oppression in North America.

In order to truly understand the nature of white prejudice, one has to go beyond the cognitive dimension, as represented in stereotypes, and delve into the affective or emotional dimension of prejudices. First, it must be noted that the cognitive construct of race and its associated stereotypes have become an American obsession, be it manifested in the angry rhetoric and actions of white supremacists, the paranoid fears of the suburban "soccer moms" living in gated communities, or in the guilt-ridden liberal whites who bow to community pressures to sell their homes to whites. Ironically, the archaic definition of obsession refers to "a vexing or haunting, as by an evil spirit" or being "beset or actuated by the devil."¹¹⁵ This definition owes its irony to the number of occasions throughout Western history that dark-skinned people have been referred to as evil-spirited devils. In the psychological literature, an obsession is defined as "any idea that haunts, hovers, and constantly invades one's consciousness. Obsessions are seemingly beyond one's 'will' and awareness of their inappropriateness."¹¹⁶ Studs Terkel, in his book *Race*, provides a very powerful example of how the obsession with race can invade the

consciousness of whites in the most inappropriate ways, like an evil spirit possessing its unaware victim. In his example, Terkel shares the impassioned words of a white friend who declaimed:

It obsesses everybody, even those who think they are not obsessed by it. My wife was driving on a street in a black neighborhood. The people at the corners are all gesticulating at her. She was very frightened, quickly turned up the window and drove determinedly. She discovered, after several blocks, she was going the wrong way on a one-way street and they were trying to help her. Her assumption was that they were blacks and they were out to get her. Mind you, she's a very enlightened woman. You'd never associate her with racism, yet her first reaction was that they're dangerous.¹¹⁷

The affective dimension of prejudice often incorporates several ego defense mechanisms such as *denial*, *rationalization*, *projection*, *reaction formation*, and *displacement*. An ego defense mechanism refers to the "type of reaction [that is generated] to maintain [an] individual's feelings of adequacy and worth rather than to cope directly with the stress situation [that is threatening those feelings of adequacy and worth]; [such reactions are] usually unconscious and reality distorting."¹¹⁸ The stress situation in the case of white America is quite obviously the result of deep-seated feelings of guilt and shame over the almost four centuries of racist exploitation of blacks and the resulting ill-gotten gains and privilege. In addition to such profound guilt and shame is the fear of free and open competition with blacks, which might disprove the assertions of white supremacy. Blacks have always been able to make significant contributions to science and technology, some of which are cited in chapter four, despite racism and the lack of opportunity. In the public arena of sports and music, blacks have been able to make their presence felt. As they increasingly gain opportunities in various other professions, the reaction of whites is becoming increasingly more strident.

Denial of reality is perhaps the simplest and most basic of all the ego defense mechanisms. Individuals and even entire groups are able to escape unpleasant or disturbing aspects of reality by simply ignoring or refusing to acknowledge them. For example, confronting the inevitability of death is an aspect of reality that is almost universally avoided. People will generally turn away from unpleasant sights and often refuse to discuss disturbing topics. Individuals and groups tend to ignore and/or deny criticism, refuse to face problems, and avoid those aspects of reality which devalue or contradict individual or group perceptions of self worth.¹¹⁹ For instance, individuals may deny that they have financial problems or refuse to believe that their children are delinquents. Whole societies may deny some reprehensible aspect of its history that does not support the nation's image of itself. Such is the case with

America's treatment of many aspects of its history, including slavery and the legacy of racism.

Rationalization as an ego defense mechanism has two major defense functions: (1) it helps individuals justify what they have done and what they believe, and (2) it aids in reducing the disappointment that arises when confronted with unattainable goals. The process of rationalization involves attempting to generate logical and socially acceptable reasons for one's past, present, or proposed behavior. Typically, rationalization is used to justify and generate social acceptance for desires and behaviors that might be viewed as slightly indulgent. However, in addition, one might also find rationalization as a useful means to justify selfish and morally questionable actions or even anti-social behavior. Individuals not only use rationalization to justify behavior, but also to generate a feeling of righteousness about it.¹²⁰ For example, the Nazis not only believed their stereotypes about the Jewish people but also, through the process of rationalization, were able to feel virtuous in these beliefs. In fact, the overwhelming majority of Nazis believed that by exterminating the Jewish people they were involved in a noble and just crusade. Tragically, many of those in the general German populous used rationalization to justify their ignorance about the death camps and, because of this feigned ignorance, actually felt themselves blameless with regard to the reprehensible deeds of their government. White supremacists in America also believe they are justified in their racist activities and even feel a sense of rectitude about their cause. Like the general German population, there are many white Americans who use rationalization to justify their ignorance about racism and proclaim their innocence based on that ignorance. There are some quite "conclusive indicators of rationalization [and they] are (a) hunting for reasons to justify [one's] behavior and beliefs, (b) being unable to recognize inconsistencies or contradictory evidence, and (c) becoming upset when [one's] 'reasons' are questioned."¹²¹

Projection as an ego defense mechanism also has two functions: (1) to transfer the blame for one's mistakes and misdeeds to others, and (2) to attribute to others one's own unacceptable impulses, thoughts, and desires. In its mildest form, projection associated with the transfer of blame is most often evidenced in one's tendency to blame someone or something else for one's failures. Students who blame their teacher for poor grades even when they have not studied are classic examples of this kind of projection. However, in extreme cases of projection, individuals may be absolutely convinced that there are people and/or forces systematically working against them. For a sizable proportion of the white population in the United States, there is the belief that the federal government is conspiring to take their jobs and their children's educational opportunities away by giving them to blacks and other

minorities, as witnessed in the rhetoric of conservatives and neoconservatives in America. In the case of that form of projection associated with attributing unacceptable impulses, thoughts, and desires to others, the most benign type is to view others within the context of one's own individual personality make-up.¹²² For example, individuals who are dishonest will tend to view others they deal with as being equally dishonest; or those who have a need to control and dominate others will tend to assume that everyone else has the need for control and dominance. By projecting the aforementioned needs onto others, an individual can justify acting on those needs. There are whites whose projected belief is that black people, if given a chance, would act on their supposed desire to control and dominate others, and as a result, whites are preemptively justified in controlling and dominating blacks as a survival precaution. Another example of projection can be found in those individuals who are obsessed with sexual impulses, thoughts, and desires. Such individuals often believe that others are attempting to sexually arouse or seduce them, even when there is no overt evidence. Unfortunately, this manifestation of sexual projection was quite evident during slavery. Black women routinely "were blamed for their own rape, unfairly characterized as Jezebels [who] constantly were tempting good White men."¹²³ In the extreme cases, projection can manifest elements of paranoia, as is the case with white supremacists who believe that people of color are organizing a race war against whites in an effort to control and dominate them.

Repression as an ego defense mechanism serves as a means by which individuals may exclude painful and/or destructive thoughts and desires from the conscious mind, without being aware that such exclusion is even happening. This process is not always completely successful; often-repressed desires manifest themselves in dreams, jokes, so-called "Freudian Slips," or when one is intoxicated. In addition, fleeting feelings of guilt, insecurity, and unworthiness may be associated with repression. In cases of continued frustration, repressed desires may become increasingly agitated to the point where they may threaten to break through into the conscious mind where they could be acted upon. Such threats can trigger the arousal of anxiety and the development of additional defense mechanisms. Repression itself is a very important ego defense because its psychodynamics are involved in varying degrees in other ego defense mechanisms.¹²⁴ Historically, the repression of personal sexual desires by whites in many cases has had a devastating affect on black men. "As Lillian Smith, a Southern white woman writing about the social and sexual mores of the South points out, 'the lynched Negro becomes *not an object that must die* but a receptacle for every man's dammed-up hate, and a receptacle for every man's forbidden sex feelings.' Killing the black man, therefore, provides a peculiar kind of satisfaction."¹²⁵

Reaction formation is an ego defense mechanism that prevents destructive desires and impulses from entering the conscious mind and/or being acted on by fostering an oppositional type of behavior. In essence, a subconscious barrier is established to reinforce the process of repression in order to keep deep-rooted desires from being manifested in real behavior. Typical behaviors associated with a reaction formation range from a “don’t care” attitude to extreme intolerance or bravado. On one hand, an individual may develop a “don’t care” attitude to mask feelings of rejection and loneliness, while on the other hand there are individuals who may be given to flights of aggressive intolerance in order to resist their own repressed impulses. “Reaction formation, like repression, has adjustive value in helping . . . to maintain socially approved behavior and to avoid facing . . . unacceptable desires with the consequent self-devaluation that would be involved. But because this mechanism, too, is self-deceptive, it often results in exaggerated and rigid fears of beliefs which may complicate the individual’s adjustive reactions and may lead to excessive harshness or severity in dealing with the lapses of others.”¹²⁶ For example, the most ardent crusaders are often individuals who struggle against their own impulses by subconsciously defining these impulses as vices and then condemning and attempting to punish individuals who engage in behaviors associated with those supposed vices.¹²⁷ There are also individuals who project an air of bravado to mask feelings of inadequacy, fear, and, in many instances, inferiority. This is more than often the case with those who are overt white supremacists. The “I don’t care” attitude does not appear to contribute significantly to the reinforcing of stereotypes and the development of prejudice. However, the intolerance of the ardent crusader and/or the mock arrogance associated with bravado can contribute significantly to the reinforcement of stereotypes and development of prejudice.

Displacement as an ego defense mechanism allows individuals to redirect emotionally charged attitudes onto less-threatening objects or persons. Often a minor event can trigger a discharge of pent-up emotion such as anger, which, like electricity, is drawn to the grounding source of least resistance. Individuals who possess the least power in social systems or in society typically find themselves serving as the grounding source for people who are predisposed to the defense mechanism of displacement. At one extreme, displacement can take the form of idle gossip or a competitive game of cards. However, on the other extreme, when displacement is combined with projection, the result can be disastrous for a target group with little power. Again, the Nazis provide a disturbing example of displacement when they blamed the Jews, homosexuals, gypsies and communists for all of Germany’s problems.¹²⁸ Similarly, Jerry Falwell, the right-wing television evangelist, blamed the 9/11 terrorist attack of the World Trade Center on “the pagans, and the

abortionists, and the feminists, and the gays and lesbians”¹²⁹ because they had “caused God to lift the veil of protection, which has allowed no one to attack America on our own soil since 1812.” On a more general societal note, whenever there is a downturn in America’s economy, a significant portion of the white population blames blacks and other minorities for the loss of jobs.

Black people are acutely aware of the various emotional defense mechanisms employed by white America to shore up its elaborate cognitive system of negative beliefs and generalizations about blacks. This acute awareness on the part of blacks is the product of those centuries of intimate and intense observations described in the earlier portion of this chapter. Many blacks have become disheartened after years of listening to whites covertly and overtly blame racial inequality on the inferiority of black people or their failure to take advantage of the opportunities offered by America. It is particularly frustrating for black people to watch white Americans rationalize their privileged position as being due to their superiority. By blaming blacks for their own inequality, without considering the effects of centuries of slavery and racial discrimination, whites have been able to assuage their guilt and dismiss any doubts about their own presumed superiority. In addition, it is equally as exasperating to watch so many whites blame their own personal failures on the so-called reverse discrimination caused by Affirmative Action.¹³⁰ Some whites even go as far as to say, “If I were black, given affirmative action and the civil rights laws, I’d have it made.” As things in this country have become socially and economically more difficult, there has been a proportionate rise in the reliance of whites on the ego defenses of displacement to cope with the stress.

The centrality of race to the constructed memory that is American history was delved into in the introduction to this text. It was established that classification by race was and still is one of the most significant standards by which status is determined in America. Additionally, in the introduction, it was also established that the mythic narrative of America is an illusion drawn from the constructed memory of those deemed to be the most powerful and significant Americans. Furthermore, the introduction suggests that in order to gain a more complete and accurate characterization of race in America, white and black narratives must be juxtaposed, as is done in the introduction, when the narratives of John Adams and the ex-slave Olaudah Equiano are compared. The documentary film by Lee Mun Wah entitled *The Color of Fear* provides a similar though more pedestrian juxtaposition of white and black narratives. This film documents a weekend dialogue on race, racism, and assimilation between an ethnically diverse group of men. It presents excellent examples of the cognitive and affective aspect of white racism in America. Moreover, this documentary provides an excellent example of the ability of black people to deconstruct the racist narrative of white America by applying centuries of

informed observation and social analysis. During the course of the two days covered in the documentary, the filmmaker captures the confusion, pain, and anguish that racism has caused in the lives of nine men—two African Americans, two Latinos, three Asian Americans, and two European Americans. Several portions of the film have been excerpted and transcribed for discourse analysis. Although there are other ethnic minorities of color involved in this documentary, for the purpose of this work the focus is on the dialogue between a white man named David and a black man named Victor.

The documentary begins with the men introducing themselves by sharing their name, ethnicity, and reason for participating in the project. David is the first to introduce himself, and when asked his ethnicity he describes himself as simply “an American, a white American . . .” The remainder of the men then introduce themselves and, as the introductions proceed, a pattern emerges amongst the men of color with six out of the seven identifying themselves as hyphenated Americans—African-American, Chinese-American, Japanese-American, and Mexican-American. In turn, each man of color then explains that he chose not to identify primarily as an American because of the exclusionary racist attitudes and policies of white America. The fact that these men chose to identify themselves as Chinese-American, Japanese-American, Mexican-American, and African-American deeply disturbs David, causing him to respond very critically. His critical comments trigger a heated exchange with one of the African-American men named Victor. Later, after further dialogue between David and the other men of color, Victor finds himself irritated by David’s comments and confronts David about what he perceives to be his racist attitudes. During the course of the angry exchange between Victor and David, Victor asks David what it is like to be white. Much of the remaining dialogue between Victor and David revolves around whether or not racism impedes the progress of people of color and facilitates the privilege of white people.

Before proceeding with the discourse analysis of the interaction between David and Victor, it should be noted that David’s attitudes and behaviors are not unique. In fact, they are typical of mainstream white male attitudes and behaviors. According to the black taxonomic system for the classification of whites posed earlier in this chapter, David would be classified as an ofay. Again, this term is often used to describe the masses of whites who are confused by and out of touch with issues related to race, racism, and inequality in America. Whites who fall into this category tend to be pleasant people who, on the surface, get along with blacks and other people of color as long as issues of race, racism, or inequality do not enter into the conversation. In many ways David is much like a white colleague described by black philosopher

Arnold Farr in his article “Whiteness Visible,” which is about the racialized consciousness. In this article, Farr recounts a discussion he had with a white male colleague on the topic of race and African philosophy. During that discussion, he realized that his white colleague did not understand the black perspective on race. Farr describes the conversation as follows:

As I listened to him state his case he became an object of study for me, much like (as I later realized) I had been for him. It became clear to me that this colleague had a thoroughly white way of seeing the world. This colleague was not a mean-spirited racist, but just a white male whose entire epistemic grid for deciphering social data was *too white* to empathize with and comprehend the African-American experience. By “too white” I mean that my colleague’s experience of the world as a white male produced a barrier between himself and those who experience the world in black bodies. Such a person tends to speak to and not hear from those whose different bodies have forced them to experience the world differently.¹³¹

David, like the man described above, is not overtly bigoted in his racial attitudes, but he is the product of the ubiquitous subtext of racism that flows through America’s cultural narrative. He, much like Farr’s white counterparts, has drunk, metaphorically speaking, from that same symbolic river that represents America’s mythic narrative of freedom and equality for all. As noted in this work’s introduction, freedom and equality during the first 188 years of American history, that is until the Civil Rights Act of 1964, was essentially reserved for white males.

Of course, America is not alone in its self-serving use of history as a mythological foundation for its assertion of greatness. As Eric Foner states in *Who Owns History*, “In every country, versions of the past provide the raw material for nationalist ideologies and patriotic sentiments.”¹³² However, the degree of denial and rationalization required to support America’s mythic narrative of freedom and equality for all is quite extraordinary, especially when it comes to dealing with America’s history of slavery and racism.

Americans seem perpetually startled at slavery. Children are shocked to learn that George Washington and Thomas Jefferson owned slaves. . . . Very few adults today realize that [this] society has been slave much longer than it has been free. Even fewer know that slavery was important in the North, too, until after the Revolutionary War. [In fact, t]he first colony to legalize slavery was not Virginia, but Massachusetts. In 1720, of New York City’s population of seven thousand, 1,600 were African Americans, most of them slaves. Wall Street was the marketplace where owners could hire out their slaves by the day or week.¹³³

One extraordinary example of denial and rationalization in historiography is that of Mildred L. Rutherford

. . . a white woman from Georgia, [who] became perhaps the best-known amateur historian in the early twentieth century for her extensive writings and speeches, her historical journal, published from 1923 to 1927, and her promotion of historical work . . . Condemning [contemporary] educated African Americans, Rutherford insisted that “slavery was no disgrace to the owner or the owned.” Blacks had arrived in America “savage,” “without thought or clothes,” “bowing down to fetishes,” and “sometimes cannibals.” Slavery not only Christianized the slaves but made them “the happiest set of people on the face of the globe—free from care or thought of food, clothes, home, or religious privileges. . . . The only thing wrong about slavery for Rutherford, making the familiar slave-as-a-burden argument, was the great obligation the institution placed upon whites. In a passage in which her logic defied gravity, she insisted that “the negro was the free man and the slaveholder was a slave.”¹³⁴

Unfortunately, beliefs that are a product of such historical denial and rationalization still hold much currency among many whites today. This is due, in part, to the fact that “American history textbooks promote the belief that most important developments in world history are traceable to Europe Teachers and curricula that present African history and African Americans in a positive light are often condemned for being Afrocentric.”¹³⁵ Over time, “Afrocentric” has come to be used as code by many whites for blacks they perceive to be radical traitors, not only to the nation, but to their own kind. Even liberal Pulitzer-Prize-winning historian Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., in *The Disuniting of America*, makes the following comments about Afrocentrists:

I am constrained to feel that the cult of ethnicity in general and the Afrocentric campaign in particular do not bode well either for American education or for the future of the republic.¹³⁶

Schlesinger goes on later in his book to say:

Indeed, it is hard to imagine any form of education more likely than Afrocentrism to have a “terribly damaging effect on the psyche.” The best way to keep a people down is to deny them the means of improvement and achievement and cut them off from the opportunities of the national life. If some Kleagle [title held by a Ku Klux Klan officer whose role is to recruit new members] of the Ku Klux Klan wanted to devise an educational curriculum for the specific purpose of handicapping and disabling black Americans, he would not be likely to come up with anything more diabolically effective than Afrocentrism.¹³⁷

Whites of conservative and neoconservative persuasion, both in and out of the academy, are not as generous as Schlesinger in their description of those who would dare to challenge the Western canon. What informs their historical narrative are the words of people like philosopher David Hume, who, in the mid 1700s, stated, "I am apt to suspect the negroes and in general all the species of men . . . to be naturally inferior to the whites. There never was a civilized nation of any other complexion than white, nor even any individual eminent in action or speculation;"¹³⁸ Social Darwinist, Herbert Spencer, who said, "The intellectual traits of the uncivilized . . . [people of color] are traits recurring in the children of the civilized;"¹³⁹ Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray, who in the later nineties in *The Bell Curve* continued to champion the Social Darwinist "conception of an inherently unequal society based on biologically inherited merit."¹⁴⁰ And, most recently in 2004, Vincent Sarich and Frank Miele, who argued in *Race: The Reality of Human Differences*, that scientific evidence supports the biological construct of race and the hierarchical ranking of races according to intelligence, physical prowess, and other characteristics, with blacks ranking lowest in intellectual ability and highest in physical aptitude.¹⁴¹ For white conservatives and neoconservatives, almost any assertion of black competence that is absent white tutelage is perceived as all but impossible. They discount black people who present Africa and the descendents of Africa in a positive light. Even blacks of moderate political persuasion find themselves vilified as Afrocentric revisionists when they challenge the presumption of white supremacy and raise questions about the benign descriptions of Western ascension to world dominance put forth by white historians. To even suggest, as a black person, that the imperialist adventurism of Europe and the United States implies an inherently hegemonic ethos is considered by many whites to be heretical. In the face of such hostile invectives, African Americans attempting to survive a white world that denies and rationalizes racial inequality often find themselves hiding behind that metaphorical mask of "grins and lies" of which the black poet Paul Laurence Dunbar so eloquently speaks.

As stated earlier in this chapter, prejudice, like all attitudes, "has two aspects: the cognitive, which consists of the nature and content of the opinions, beliefs, and views about a particular [issue, thing, or social group]; and the affective, which consists of the associated emotions and values." Lee Mun Wah, in *Color of Fear*, is able to capture on film the cognitive and affective aspects of prejudice in David's discourse and personal narrative. Despite his apparent desire not to be perceived as a racist, he, quite unbeknownst to himself, becomes trapped in a cognitive maze of racialized beliefs and opinions promulgated by his racist father and reinforced by mainstream white society.

As the dialogue between David and the men of color intensifies, he finds himself losing control over his affect and becoming swamped by his emotions. It is at this point that he takes refuge behind a virtual levee of ego defenses.

Even earlier during the group introductions, David, in an attempt to manage his emotions, exhibits the simplest and most basic of all the ego defense mechanisms—denial, when he shares his attitudes about race and racism. David describes his background as follows:

I'm a local boy grown and raised in this small community. And, when the subject of racism was mentioned to me, I found it extremely exciting, because I grew up in this area with friends of all races and we would read in the news and see on the television racial struggles in other areas and could not comprehend how that could be and why they had to cause struggle and strife for each other. Why couldn't they be like at home, happy and productive together? And, I don't think that anybody should be any less than another. I grew up in this area alongside of the Native Americans and some of them to this very day are my dearest friends and I like their culture, yes, and I seek after artifacts from their history. But there is no struggle or strife . . .¹⁴²

David's upbringing in a small, predominantly white semi-rural community afforded him limited exposure to minorities of color, and those that he was exposed to were Mexican-American migrant workers and Native Americans who were hardly in the position to create racial strife. As a white male, David was never the target of overt racial hostility from the few minorities of color in his small town, because he was always in a privileged position of power. David assumes that since he has never heard any complaints from the minority population in his community, they are not experiencing any racial discrimination. However, his assumption about the racism and discrimination in his community stretches credulity, given his later admission in the film that his father was an abusive racist. Thus is the power of denial. Clearly, David is attempting to protect himself from the unpleasant reality of racism by refusing to perceive it. The fact that David historically was in a state of denial when it came to issues of racism became evident near the end of the film, during an exchange with one of the Chinese-American men. Specifically, it is the filmmaker, Lee Mun Wah, who asks David why he is unable to believe the stories of racial discrimination shared by the men of color. In response, David tearfully states, "I don't want to believe that man could be so cruel to his own kind; I don't want to believe it..." If David was to face the reality of racism in America, he would have to do something about it or endure sharp pangs of guilt for his failure to confront racism in himself and society.

As the men of color introduce themselves as a hyphenated American and refuse to identify being simply American as their primary ethnic identity,

David becomes very agitated. His aggravation is evident in the following statement:

So, I see here an attitude expressed . . . that says how can I be an American? I can't and so I won't; I'm going to cling to my heritage. Is this clinging the problem? Is this belief that you cannot become an American the problem? For years I've said, why do these guys have such problems being a color? Why can't they just be individuals and go out and make a place for themselves? And I hear you say that we whites don't allow that. We keep you down. Why aren't we just human? I mean, why aren't we just brothers?¹⁴³

David's response not only denies the unpleasant reality of the racism experienced by the men of color, but also provides an example of rationalization on his part. One of the functions of rationalization as an ego defense is to help individuals justify what they believe and/or do in the name of their beliefs. David's response is a clear attempt to justify his belief that white racism is not the most significant impediment to the success of people of color. One can often determine that another person is rationalizing when that person begins to hunt for reasons to justify a particular belief. David's search for a justification for his belief can be witnessed in the series of questions he poses to the men of color, beginning with: "Is this clinging the problem?" "Is this belief that you cannot become an American the problem?" He then follows up with the rhetorical question: "Why can't they just be individuals and go out and make a place for themselves?" By not accepting the reality of the men of color, and by actively hunting for a means of justifying his countervailing view of their reality, David blames them for their own victimization by racism. Additionally, he also implies that one cannot be both an individual and be identified with a racial or ethnic group at the same time.

As David continues to complain about the refusal of the men of color to identify themselves as other than hyphenated Americans, Victor becomes increasingly angered by David's denial of racism and his attempt to rationalize the lower socioeconomic status of people of color. In response to David, Victor levels the following accusations:

There's a certain sort of consciousness about what it means to be an American that I sense coming from white folks that I'd like to talk about. But before I do that I'd like to say one more thing that's hard about talking about racism, and that is that people of color are spilling their guts and doing education to white people. . . . And then we get cross examined and it's like maybe your problem is [this]. And it's always a person of color's problem, and it's not. We're on the receiving end of the problem. I walk in a world where black people, where Latinos, where Asians, where Arabs are experienced as problem people, and we're

going to deal with the people of color problem. When, racism is essentially a white problem. And that for you to understand what racism is about you are going to be so uncomfortable, you are going to be so different from who you see yourself to be now that there is no way for you to get it; I mean that you need to step outside of your skin and step outside of what seems really comfortable and familiar to you and launch out into, for you, some unknown territory. . . . And you haven't gone out there . . . because you don't have to and that's part of what it means to become an American.¹⁴⁴

Victor's poignant response to David exhibits his insight into the white psyche. He is able to point out how the affective aspect of David's prejudice, i.e., denial and rationalization, is manifested in his belief that people of color are causing the continuation of racism in America. This belief becomes evident when David responds to Victor's angry comments about his racism by saying, "I'm afraid with these feelings there will be no progress and change in racism. The fear of color will remain." This statement prompts Victor to inform David that "racism is essentially a white problem." Victor continues to demonstrate his insight into the white psyche by pointing out how uncomfortable it is going to be for David to confront the fact that whites are the true source of racism in America. Later in the discussion, Victor articulates what he thinks it is like to be white when he says:

I think what it means to be white, in part, is that you have the privilege of blaming people of color for their own victimization under white supremacy. I've heard you say it to every person of color in this room who challenged your perception of yourself in the world. That's what it means to be white.¹⁴⁵

As Victor begins to strip away the ego defenses of denial and rationalization, David finds himself having to confront the disturbing truth of his own racism, a truth that he has been avoiding almost all of his life. It is at this point that David also begins to become aware of the reality of his own white privilege.

Later in the dialogue, Victor returns to a statement made earlier by David, in which he says, "Why aren't we just humans?" It is at this point that Victor, drawing on his culture's long history of informed observation and analysis of whites, demonstrates his ability to deconstruct the white narrative as he scrutinizes and lays bare the meaning behind David's statement. Here, Victor focuses on the cognitive aspect of David's racial prejudice when he says to David:

There is a way in which American, and white, and human become synonyms. That's why we can't just treat each other as human beings; to me, when I hear it from a white person, means why can't we all pretend to be white. I'll pretend

you're a white person and then you can pretend to be a white person. Why don't you eat what I eat? Why don't you drink what I drink? Why don't you think like I think? Why don't you feel like I feel? God damn it; I'm so God damn sick and tired of hearing about that! I'm sick of that, that what it means to be a human being to me, that what it means to be white, that what it means to be American! Why don't you come the hell over here—that's what I hear every God damn day, and you know that I can't come over there, you that this skin and that this hair, and that this way that I think and feel will never ever get included, because I'm unpalatable to this God damn nation! I'm unpalatable, you cannot swallow me, you cannot taste me! You think that you can survive without me, but you can't, man. And you think it will be fine when we treat each other like human beings, and what that says to me is don't be yourself, be like me, keep me comfortable, connect, come out to my place, or maybe I'll come down to your place and get some artifacts from your place . . . that is bullshit! And when you say your ethnicity is American, there is no American ethnicity. You had to throw away your ethnicity to become an American, that's what it means. . . . You give up who you are to become American. And you can pretend that its okay, because you're white. When we give up who we are to become American we know we're dying from it; you're dying from it, too, but you don't know it necessarily. . . . You know, I'm not going to trust you until you are willing to be changed and affected by my experience and transformed by my experience as I am every day by yours. I'm always dealing with you; I'm always dealing with you. . . . You don't deal with him [pointing at another man of color], you don't deal with me, maybe you had some opportunity to deal with some Latinos, but we always deal with you, baby, always, every day!¹⁴⁶

What Victor is attempting to highlight is the conceptual core of David's racism, i.e., the cognitive aspect of his prejudice, which is based on the assumption that whiteness is the norm to which everything else should be compared. Black philosopher Clevis Headley, in his article "Delegitimizing the Normativity of 'Whiteness,'" puts it more analytically when he says:

[W]hiteness masquerades as normativity, and there are various senses of normativity connected to it. From a sociological perspective, whiteness serves as the norm for social acceptability or what is considered to be naturally human. Since whites define acceptable standards of public behavior, normal behavior is behavior that conforms to white standards of decency, while abnormal behavior is behavior that deviates from these standards. Consequently, blacks are seen as pathological to the extent that they engage in styles of speaking, walking, and dressing and embrace attitudes toward intimacy and social interaction that deviate from white standards. Oftentimes, what many neglect to underscore is that ironically, although whites predominately shape mainstream attitudes and behaviors, there is the tendency to treat these attitudes and behaviors as being universally characteristic of any rational being. In other words, these attitudes and behaviors enjoy the status of being those qualities characteristically attributed to

abstract individualism. When mainstream attitudes and behaviors are thus viewed, whiteness becomes normative and deviation from this norm is seen as pathological.¹⁴⁷

Headley also addresses the affective aspect of racial prejudice, pointing out that “the psychological dynamic of whiteness centers on strategies of denial.” For Headley, “denial takes the form of a subject attempting to distort objective features of the social world in order to make the social world more psychologically comforting.”¹⁴⁸ A perfect example of the distorting effects of denial and rationalization can be seen in David’s retort to an earlier statement by Victor, in which he says:

Victor and Lauren [the other black man] here are expressing feelings that I’m afraid with these feelings there will be no progress and no change in racism. The fear of color will remain, the gap isn’t being bridged.¹⁴⁹

David is avoiding the objective features of a social world created by whites in which racism and racial discrimination against people of color is a fact of life that, ultimately, can only be ended by whites. He is also attempting to rationalize away white responsibility for racism by blaming the victims of racism for its continuation. He is arguing that white fear of protestation on the part of people of color justifies their exclusion and oppression by whites.

Later in the dialogue, Victor is compelled to return to the subject of white identity when he makes the following statement:

What I see from white people generally is that they don’t talk about themselves as white people. They talk about themselves as human beings, as if it means the same thing. Now, what I want to know is what it means to be white? Not what it means to be a human being, because we already know that you are a human being and we can already relate to the universal human experience. What is the white experience? When I look at you manifest in your white experience, I also see you not naming it. I see you wanting to blur the distinction between just being a person and also, most particularly, being a white person and what that means. And I think that part of what it’s like to be white is never having to say you’re sorry, but it also means never having to admit that to be white means something different than to be a person of color. And that there is an experience that you have that is very different from what the experience of people of color is.¹⁵⁰

In making this comment, Victor, unknowingly, voices the thoughts of a white social theorist named Richard Dyer, who states in his article “The Matter of Whiteness”:

There is no more powerful position than that of being ‘just’ human. The claim to power is the claim to speak for the commonality of humanity. Raced people

can't do that—they can only speak for their race. But non-raced people can, for they do not represent the interests of a race. The point of seeing the racing of whites is to dislodge them/us from the position of power, with all the inequities, oppression, privileges, and suffering in its train, dislodging them/us by undercutting the authority with which they/we speak and act in and on the world.

The sense of whites as non-raced is most evident in the absence of reference to whiteness in the habitual speech and writing of white people in the West. We (whites) will speak of, say, the blackness or Chineseness of friends, neighbors, colleagues, customers or clients, and it may be in the most genuinely friendly and accepting manner, but we don't mention the whiteness of the white people we know. . . . This assumption that white people are just people, which is not far off from saying that whites are people whereas other colors are something else, is endemic to white culture.¹⁵¹

What Dyer is courageous enough to disclose in the above statement is the insidious nature of white racial prejudice, as it manifests itself in both the cognitive and affective aspects of its debasing suppositions. The cognitive aspect of prejudice reveals itself in a belief system that indirectly negates people of color by labeling them as black, brown, and red, while referring to whites as “just” human. This subtle aspect of prejudice is not just a contemporary phenomenon; its long history is rooted in the metaphysical and ontological characterization of Europeans as the only truly rational and autonomous human beings. This characterization finds its epistemological source in the discourse of Western philosophers such as Descartes, Rousseau, Kant, Fichte, Schelling, and, most particularly, Hegel. The black philosopher Paget Henry does an excellent job summarizing the development of the European self-image as one that is rational, autonomous, and individualistic. In his article “Whiteness and Africana Phenomenology,” Henry states the following:

Crucial to the stability of any race/ethnic order is the defining and evaluating of the identities of the groups that make up the order. In the ethnogenic ritual of New World societies, we saw this evaluative process in the actions of the self-defining, hegemonic Anglo-Saxon groups as they redefined and evaluated the identities of various subordinated groups. Hegel's philosophical elaboration of this hegemonic self and its relations to others is extremely helpful here. . . . He caught glimpses of it in Descartes, Rousseau, Kant, Fichte, and Schelling. Each had wrestled with the distinct “I” that was grounding and helping to shape European modernity. Kant had captured the drives for rationality, autonomy, and universality that marked this self by defining it as the unity of the transcendental ego grasping itself through cognitive acts of self-reflection. However, Hegel remained unconvinced by the apparent circularity, transparency, and autonomy of this new subject. He was skeptical because it came at the price of losing contact with the sociohistorical world [i.e., *Göttliche Ordnung oder Grund* (Divine

Order or Reason)] and the role of the latter in shaping the very reflecting consciousness with which this subject was attempting to grasp itself. Consequently, Hegel needed a definition of the modern European self that would retain the Kantian features of autonomy and rationality but also take into account its sociohistorical formation through work, language, and social interaction with others. The result was Hegel's famous "master" self that comes into being through a dialectic of recognition in a master/slave relationship. . . . As a result of these two opposing tendencies, the European master self can grasp and know itself as freedom only by negating the freedom and power of all others who are capable of determining it from without.¹⁵²

Hegel's construct of the Anglo-Saxon "hegemonic self" can be seen in the work of the Social Darwinist Herbert Spencer and his contemporary apostles in the neoconservative political movement of America's right wing. Additionally, the iconic cultural image of "American rugged individualism" can be seen as resting firmly on the foundation laid by Descartes, Rousseau, Kant, Fichte, Schelling, and again, most particularly, Hegel. This orientation is most clearly manifest in the culture of the American white male. Ethnolinguist Thomas Kochman contends that white males view themselves not as a definable cultural group, but as "a collection of individuals." This is evidenced in the Lee Mun Wah film when David responds to Victor's statement by saying, "I've never considered myself as you do, as part of an ethnic group. [W]e don't look at ourselves as an ethnic group." Contrary to this self-perception, however, is the perception of people of color who view white males as a member of a cultural group.

The previously cited quote of Richard Dyer not only discloses the cognitive aspect of white racial prejudice but also highlights the affective aspects of this prejudice, especially when coupled with Paget Henry's statements. The hegemonic by-product of whites viewing themselves as rational, autonomous, and universal non-raced beings rests in their ability to exempt themselves from almost all individual culpability in the oppression of non-whites, while also denying the humanity of non-whites. By conflating whiteness, humanness, and individualism, whites are able to employ the ego defense of denial to escape identifying with the collective actions of white people as a group. As an autonomous being within the Western construct of individualism, one is only responsible for what one caused or reasonably could have prevented. This belief in individualism enables whites to transcend the actions of their group, regardless of whether they realize much of any status, privilege, and/or wealth from their membership in that group. It also allows them to view their own success as being due only to their talent and hard work, not to their privileged status as members of the dominant group. Of course, for the various peoples of color in this country, this is not a

luxury afforded them because they are viewed by whites as members of a discernible racial group and, as such, are held individually responsible for what their groups do. If whites were to view themselves through the eyes of people of color, it would, as Dyer so aptly states, “dislodge them . . . from the position of power [and] authority [from] which they . . . speak and act. . . .” It would also force whites to admit to all of the oppression, inequality, and suffering caused by their group in the pursuit of privilege and power. As previously stated in this chapter, denial allows individuals and entire groups to escape disturbing aspects of reality by simply ignoring or refusing to acknowledge them.

Paradoxically, the conflation of whiteness, humanness, and individualism also allows whites to conveniently accept some individual blacks as peers. There is an old saying that “imitation is the highest form of flattery.” Many whites are able to accept individual blacks who acknowledge white supremacy by consciously assimilating and mirroring white mainstream values, attitudes, and behaviors. Such individuals are allowed to transcend their Negritude and are accepted as being “just human” in the universal sense, as long as they do not identify with the plight of their less-accomplished black counterparts. Prominent black conservatives and political figures like Clarence Thomas, Condoleezza Rice, and, to a certain degree, Colin Powell, as well as iconic figures such as black athletes like Michael Jordan and Tiger Woods, are allowed to transcend their race because they avoid racial issues and appear to be highly assimilated. The ability of many whites to continually denigrate blacks as a group, while accepting a few special black individuals who are viewed as prominent and culturally compatible, has always been one of the most interesting paradoxes of white racism. This paradox can be witnessed when whites say something derogatory about black people and then turn to black colleagues or friends and say, “I hope you realize I’m not talking about you; you’re different.” What allows whites to manage the inconsistency of this paradox is a form of cultural narcissism where “an object [or person] is chosen because of its similarities to oneself”¹⁵³ or in this case one’s own group. This cultural narcissism results from the conflation of egotism or self-exaltation, egocentrism, and ethnocentrism. The collapsing of egotism, egocentrism, and ethnocentrism is most evident in mass public displays of aesthetic judgment, such as the Miss Universe beauty pageant, where historically the overwhelming majority of the winners have been, if not blonde and blue-eyed, at least fair skinned. Even when a woman of color occasionally wins, her features appear to be Caucasian and her skin color is not too dark. Whites, in many ways, are like the mythic Greek character Narcissus, in that they are transfixed by viewing their own physical and cultural reflection in the various media of popular culture. This is why, at one point in

the Lee Mun Wah documentary, David is heard to say, “You’re just like me, but you don’t realize that.” David is engaging in wishful thinking, preferring that Victor and the men of color would look and act like him. In fact, near the end of the documentary, he apologetically says, “And when we say to you, well can’t you be just like us, we really don’t understand the differences between you and us . . .”

As the dialogue progresses, the film captures David engaging in the ego defenses of projection and displacement when he responds to a statement and question posed by Roberto, one of the Mexican-American men. Roberto’s statement and question concerned statistical evidence of discrimination against blacks in employment. David’s response is prompted by the following statement and question by Roberto:

I wanted to ask David, you seem to be unaware of the statistics in the news stories that come through the general media, which tell you that a black man and a white man laid off from a corporation, that the white man is going to be rehired before the black man?¹⁵⁴

David responds as follows:

I am aware of reports like that, yes. If I were in a position to hire, I’d hire the best man available, and it wouldn’t matter what color he were. Among the whites of my peers, my colleagues, my acquaintances, we are becoming more and more alarmed by the tendency or trend to seek out and hire ethnic groups over the white, and that is disturbing to us in some ways. I have five daughters, and they applied to different schools, and the minority races are many times given added points that give them a boost above the total points of the white race. So you know it’s not just that it’s all against you. There is much against us also.¹⁵⁵

David is engaging in the ego defense of displacement when he complains about Affirmative Action in college admissions, by saying, “So you know it’s not all against you. There is much against us also.” Displacement allows David to redirect onto people of color his pent-up anxieties and hostility over what he perceives to be the loss of a rightful advantage held by whites. David feels this sense of entitlement most likely because he believes that whites built America and, as such, have earned whatever advantages they possess. David is making the typical white argument that declining social, economic, and educational opportunities in society are due not to a recession in the economy, but are instead due to less-qualified people of color taking white jobs, an argument that, incidentally, is not born out in employment statistics. At this point in the discussion, David is unable to see that the disadvantaging of the

American work force is due to foreign competition and the economic policies of the rich white managerial class that is outsourcing jobs to foreign countries for short-term profits.

Over the course of this dialogue on race, David stood fast against the opposing views of his contemporaries of color, steady in his resolve like a craggy granite outcropping, only to be worn into submission and acceptance by the unrelenting winds of their protestation and anguished tears. It took hours of contentious discourse for the layers of David's defenses to be stripped away and for him to accept his white privilege.¹⁵⁶ During the final scene of this documentary, David tearfully says:

This will probably be difficult for me, but so you understand, I was raised by a father who was much opinionated and racist. And he demanded much of his children, to the point where if we didn't obey we were physically abused by his boot or by a big mean strap. I learned to anticipate what he wanted so that I could do it without ever incurring his abuse, and in doing so I learned to protect myself from outside harm or any emotion that would cause me anguish or disturb me. And I carried all of this into a pattern of working to avoid dealing with reality . . . And all my Life that's where I've been; I work hard, I work long hours, and I keep myself content in my work and I'm away from the pain and the strife of the real world. And I know when you tell me your experiences I tend to minimize them so that I don't have to deal with them, but it's not that I don't want to and it's not that I don't feel your anguish and pain as people of color. And I'm deeply hurt that you would consider my race as the oppressor because I have certainly never thought of myself in that way and that disturbs me to know that you consider me and my color that way. Please accept whatever I can do or say to you to allay to you that some of us white men really are not aware that we are such a problem to you. And when we say to you, well, can't you be just like us, we really don't understand the differences between you and us. . . . I'm really appreciative that I was here. It will have an impact on me throughout the remainder of my life and I will be your ally and I will do all I can to stop racism wherever I encounter it.¹⁵⁷

By the end of the Lee Mun Wah documentary, David came to realize for himself what feminist scholar Peggy McIntosh describes in her work *White Privilege and Male Privilege*, when she writes: "White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, assurances, tools, maps, guides, code books, passports, visas, clothes, compass, emergency gear, and blank checks."¹⁵⁸

At the conclusion of this documentary, there is a very moving scene where all of the men tearfully embrace and discuss what the experience meant to them personally. However, it is the embrace between David and Victor that is the most powerful. For it seems that they had finally arrived at reconciliation

after hours of struggle. They, in effect, were able to settle accounts, and in doing so, win the good will of each other. Jean Mavrelis, a psychoanalytic anthropologist and partner in the diversity consulting firm of Kochman, Mavrelis and Associates, often paraphrases an article she read on peace negotiator when addressing the issue of reconciliation between blacks and whites. She says, "In order for there to be reconciliation, there has to be a shared understanding of what happened."¹⁵⁹ In the particular case of David and Victor, the process of reconciliation began with their encounter because they had a shared understanding of what happened in the encounter and were beginning to develop a shared understanding of the history of racism in America.

Unfortunately, it is necessary to go beyond the individual reconciliation of David and Victor and address the issue of reconciliation and equality between blacks and whites at a societal level. In order to do this, it is important to revisit the idea of privilege, because it is so difficult for the average white American to accept the proposition that they are privileged by virtue of being considered white. Again, the question of privilege should be addressed for clarity. To be privileged, what does this mean? Privilege is taken from the Latin word *privilegium*, which in turn derives its meaning from two other Latin words *privus*, meaning private or one's own, and *legis*, meaning law or legal. When *privus* and *legis* are combined, the resulting word, *privilegium*, means a piece of specific legislation that is for or against a private person. Hence, privilege is a right or a particular form of protection that is granted, as a special benefit, to those who possess a certain prescribed status. To be privileged is to enjoy certain entitlements and liberties as a result of one's status, not necessarily one's efforts.

Given the reality of white privilege, what impact does this privilege have on the present-day lives of black people? Joe Feagin, in his work *Racist America*, gives the following example:

Much of the capital and wealth of whites in earlier centuries came directly from the labor of enslaved Africans and African Americans, or from the economic development spurred by the profits from slave plantations. For African Americans the economic cost of slavery included not only the value of the labor expropriated but also the value of lost opportunities to acquire economic and educational resources.

James Marketti has estimated the dollar value of the labor taken from enslaved African Americans from 1790 to 1860 at, depending on the historical assumptions, from at least [\$700 million] to as much as \$40 billion (in 1983 dollars). This is what black individuals and their families lost in income because they did not have control of their own labor under slavery. If this stolen wealth is multiplied by a figure taking into account lost interest from then to the pres-

ent day, the economic loss for black Americans is put at from \$2.1 to \$4.7 trillion (in 1983 dollars). Extending Marketti's calculation for the entire period from the beginning of enslavement in the 1600s, and calculating it in terms of year-2000 dollars, would increase the dollar value of lost wealth to a much higher figure.¹⁶⁰

When one adds 99 year of de jure and de facto racial discrimination in employment, education, voting rights, health services, housing, banking, and mortgage lending to the 224 years of legally sanctioned slavery in North America, the cumulative impact on black people is almost incalculable. There are, however, some specific statistical markers that provide a calculus by which the impact of centuries of black debasement can be enumerated. The following statistics from *State of the Dream 2004* provide some illuminating examples:

White households had an average net worth of \$468,200 in 2001, more than six times the \$75,700 of Black households. In 1988 (the oldest comparable data available), average white wealth was five-and-a-half times Black Wealth. The typical Black family had 60% as much income as a white family in 1968, but only 58% as much in 2002.¹⁶¹

If one were to focus only on the narrowing of the poverty gap between whites and blacks, as opposed simply to the gap in average income, the statistics are even more dismal. "At the rate that the Black-white poverty gap has been narrowing since 1968, it would take 150 years, until 2152, to close."¹⁶² The most troubling and graphic example of the impact of 386 years of racial oppression and discrimination, spanning from 1619 to 2007, can be seen in the comparative infant mortality figures between whites and blacks. "Black infants are almost two-and-a-half-times as likely as white infants to die before age one—a greater gap than in 1970."¹⁶³

Suffice it to say, the presentation of all of this data is to make one simple point: Despite the breakthroughs in individual racism made by the David's of the world, the effects of nearly four centuries of institutional racism all but negates such personal transformations amongst individual whites. David's teary-eyed statement to the men of color at the end of the documentary, in which he promises, "I will be your ally and I will do all I can to stop racism wherever I encounter it," is, unfortunately, inconsequential in the grand scheme of things. His promise represents mere words scrawled in the damp sands of time, caught for a brief moment between the ebbing and flowing of an unrelenting sea. This cruel reality can only be abated if individuals like David have other whites behind them, helping to build a rampart against that unrelenting sea. Without secure ground upon which to construct a more just

and equitable society for everyone, this nation will be besieged by chaotic and uncontrollable anger borne on the waves of change. If whites are not able to confront their own individual and institutional racism, the demographic shift in the American population may cause changes that will not only sweep away their privilege, but also totally disadvantage them as a people. According to Joe Feagin, the following scenario is more than a distinct possibility:

Current demographic trends are creating and amplifying societal contradictions that could eventually lead to a major societal transformation, including the reduction or destruction of white domination over Americans of color. As we begin a new millennium, Americans of European descent are a decreasing proportion of the U.S. and world population. . . . By the middle of the twenty-first century, whites will be a minority of the U.S. population if birthrates and immigration trends continue near current levels.

Over the next few decades, this demographic shift will likely bring great pressures for social, economic, and political change. For example, by the 2030s, a majority of the students in the nation's public school system will probably be black, Asian, Latino, and Native American. They and their parents will doubtless strive for greater representation in the operation, staffing, and curricula of presently white-dominated school systems. In addition, by the mid-2050s, demographers predict that a majority of U.S. workers will be from these same groups, while the retired population will be primarily white. One has to wonder whether these workers will raise questions about having to support elderly whites (for example, by paying into Social Security) who have long maintained a racist society. As voting majorities change from majority white, there will be changes in jury composition, operation of the criminal justice system, and the composition and priority of many state, local, and national legislative bodies. These transformations will, of course, only take place if whites have not reacted to the demographic trends with large-scale political repression.¹⁶⁴

After a mere 229 years of existence as a republic, America, the heir to the legacy of Western liberal democracy, finds itself poised to grapple with its most fundamental flaw: the contradiction between the rhetoric of equality for all and the reality of freedom for only those of the capital class. In America the struggle between freedom and equality presents itself most clearly in the conflict between property rights and human rights, as almost every aspect of American life becomes privatized, including the human genome. Jeremy Rifkin, author of *The European Dream*, makes the following point about the role of property in Western civilization:

The invention and codification of a private property regime in the late medieval to early modern era became the foundation for the pursuit of the Enlightenment utopian vision of unlimited material progress. Private property rights became the essential legal tool for separating the individual from the human collective

as well as from the rest of nature. A private property regime institutionalized the new spatial and temporal consciousness and made possible the modern notions of autonomy and mobility as well as the negative idea of freedom as personal independence and self-reliance. Its stormy development, and the equally fierce resistance to it, has continued, until very recently, to be the defining European politics and the politics of much of the rest of the world. . . . Americans became the purest advocates of [this] European idea, later partially abandoned by Europeans themselves, as they begin to rein in private property rights with a commitment to socialist reforms.¹⁶⁵

The Western notion of private property gave rise to the concept of “possessive individualism,” upon which early seventeenth-century English political thought was founded. “The basic assumption of possessive individualism—that man is free and human by virtue of his sole proprietorship of his own person, and that human society is essentially a series of market relations—were deeply embedded in the seventeenth-century foundations [of not only England, but all of Western civilization].”¹⁶⁶ However, the notion of private property was eventually distorted and corrupted by greed, as “the *summum bonum* of life on earth [became] the expansion of the self through its acquisition of property.”¹⁶⁷ Nowhere is this distortion and corruption more evident than in the entrepreneurial slave trade of Europe and America, where the right of Africans to be free by virtue of their sole proprietorship of their own person was so horribly violated. It was the unholy union of the Western concept of property and race driven by lustful greed that spawned America’s bastard stepchild, slavery. Unfortunately, African-Americans have been condemned to the status of stepchildren ever since. This quest for private property also fueled imperialist expansion, justified the near genocidal expropriation of Native American lands, drove workers to demand proprietorship of their own labor, and continues to trump the human rights of the politically disenfranchised and the poor. Again, the fundamental flaw in the American system is the conflict between the notion that “all men are created equal” and the unfettered freedom to pursue life, liberty, and happiness—regardless of its toll on others. It is interesting to note that at the inception of this nation, Southern planters such as Thomas Jefferson “[i]n their confrontation with England...developed an ideology of republicanism to promote their cause, [a cause that was] inspired by John Locke’s view of liberty and society. Every man, they argued, had the right to life, liberty, and property. Liberty was construed generally as freedom from government interference in private lives. Property was construed . . . as an inalienable right equivalent in profundity to life itself.”¹⁶⁸ For Americans life, freedom and happiness are materially bound to property and its acquisition, meaning that the security of one’s life, the degree of one’s freedom, and the extent of one’s happiness in America is

in direct proportion to one's property or wealth. In short, some people are more equal than others are, or in the vernacular, "money talks," and some people's talk is worth more than others' in the halls of power.

Jeremy Rifkin, by juxtaposing the American dream with that of Europe, is able to delineate the most fundamental flaw in the American cosmology—the contradiction between the rhetoric of equality for all and the reality of freedom for only those of the capital class. Rifkin identifies the differences as follows:

The American and European dreams are, at their core, about two diametrically opposed ideas of freedom and security. Americans hold a negative definition of what it means to be free and, thus, secure. For us, freedom has long been associated with autonomy. If one is autonomous, he or she is not dependent on others or vulnerable to circumstances outside of his or her control. To be autonomous, one needs to be propertied. The more wealth one amasses, the more independent one is in the world. One is free by becoming self-reliant and an island unto oneself. With wealth comes exclusivity, and with exclusivity comes security.

The new European Dream, however, is based on a different set of assumptions about what constitutes freedom and security. For Europeans, freedom is not found in autonomy but in embeddedness. To be free is to have access to a myriad of interdependent relationships with others. The more communities one has access to, the more options and choices one has for living a full and meaningful life. With relationships comes inclusiveness, and with inclusiveness comes security.¹⁶⁹

These two views differ in that the European dream of freedom is defined as equal access "to a myriad of interdependent relationships with others," while the American dream is defined as having a sufficient amount of wealth to be autonomous and independent of others. Americans are engaged in a sort of interpersonal "arms war" to accumulate sufficient wealth to fortify and control their own private autonomous islands against the uncertainties of life. Unfortunately, this strategy requires that the finite resources of the planet be plundered in pursuit of an egocentric utopia as opposed to "a myriad of interdependent relationships." The more collectivist view of freedom and security developing in Europe holds more promise for the struggle between freedom and equality. If America could define security in terms of sustainable development versus unfettered economic development, general quality of life versus the acquisition of personal wealth, and interdependences versus independence, then equality would be possible.¹⁷⁰

In an article entitled "Secession of the Successful," author Robert Reich describes a parallel autonomous universe of the super rich neoaristocrats hidden from the view of America's proletariat, except for those few vassals and

serfs who service the super rich. This parallel universe is one of walled and guarded estates where private limousines and jets whisk the lords and ladies of America's capital elite around the world in pursuit of happiness, i.e., property. To be superrich means to be worth at least a billion dollars. Those who can count themselves amongst this elite number over 200.¹⁷¹

In addition to this discrepancy in wealth, there is also a huge disparity in income between the rich and the general population. If a line were to be drawn between the top 10 percent of the U.S. population and the bottom 90 percent, one would find that the bottom 90 percent lost ground between 1970 and 2000.

Their share of national income fell from two thirds to slightly more than half. And their average income, adjusted for inflation, was . . . \$27,035, which was \$25 less than three decades earlier. [On the other hand, t]he top 10 percent of Americans had done very well since 1970. . . . These 11.3 million households, comprising roughly the population of California, saw their share of national income grow by almost half, from just under 33 percent in 1973 to just above 48 percent in 1998. When examined more closely, however, a curious trend appears, the figures show that the higher the income group, the larger the income gains. . . . [T]he top 1 percent or about 1.3 million households, roughly the population of Kentucky . . . earned more than a fifth of all the income in the country. . . . [Furthermore, if one looks at the population that comprises] a hundredth of [the top] 1 percent, or about 13,400 of the country's 134 million taxpayer households . . . [their] average income [is] \$24 million each or 560 times the average, which for all households in 2000 was \$42,700.¹⁷²

If the aforementioned structural inequality in American society is not corrected, it will most likely lead to its destruction. After all is said and done, it is the conspicuous consumption of the middle class that is the engine that drives the machinery of American capitalism. However, it is the greed of the top 10 to 15 percent of the population that is destroying that same middle class that is so critical to the economy of the nation and the world. By shifting the tax burden to the bottom 85 to 90 percent of the population and by lobbying corporate boardrooms and Congress to hold their wages in place, the wealthy are crushing the middle class.

Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter David Cay Johnston, in his book *Perfectly Legal: The Covert Campaign to Rig Our Tax System to Benefit the Super Rich—and Cheat Everybody Else*, describes how the tax system is structured to benefit the super rich and disadvantage the public. Johnston says the following about the tax system:

If you tally up the economic benefits to the top 1 percent that do not show up in income statistics—for reasons of written law and because of tax tricks fashioned

by lawyers . . . —then the richest 1 percent are taxed more lightly than the middle-class. The same data show that the poor are taxed almost as heavily as the rich are—and even more heavily taxed than the super rich [when considering all federal taxes levied on such things as income, gasoline, household essentials, and Social Security].

In the years ahead, the super rich will pay less, shifting the burden onto those with less means. Using techniques developed by [lawyers] the richest Americans and most large corporations are arranging their affairs in ways that Congress seems to only dimly understand. . . . These trends to lower taxes on wealthy people and on corporations are aided by new rules allowing capital and goods to flow freely around the world, while immigration and employment laws limit any mass movement of workers and ever-tougher rules against union organizing give capital an advantage over labor in setting wages.¹⁷³

It is precisely because of these trends that “the richest 1 percent of Americans, the top 1.3 million or so households . . . own almost half of the stocks, bonds, cash and other financial assets in the country . . . [with t]he richest 15 percent controlling nearly all of the financial assets.”¹⁷⁴

Politically, it can be argued that America’s democracy is devolving with disturbing rapidity into a plutocracy, i.e., “a government . . . in which the wealthy rule.”¹⁷⁵ Kevin Phillips, a former political strategist for President Richard Nixon and author of *Wealth and Democracy: A Political History of the American Rich*, in an interview with journalist Bill Moyers stated, “I think we have one now [a plutocracy] and we didn’t 12 years ago . . . when money ceased just entertaining itself with leveraged buyouts . . . in the 80’s, and really takes over politics . . . [It was] the fusion of money and government.”¹⁷⁶

“In a plutocracy, power and opportunity are centralized within the affluent social class . . . [and] . . . the degree of economic inequality is high while the level of social mobility is low.”¹⁷⁷ As previously stated, recent data show that “the richest 1 percent of Americans, the top 1.3 million or so households . . . owned almost half of the stocks, bonds, cash and other financial assets in the country . . . [with] the richest 15 percent controlling nearly all of the other financial assets.”¹⁷⁸ Additionally, “the official poverty thresholds numbered 35.9 million in 2003, or 1.3 million more than 2002, for a 2003 poverty rate of 12.5 percent.”¹⁷⁹

The devolution of America’s democracy into a plutocracy is evidenced by the above cited data and financial disclosure statements filed by congressional representatives and senators. One needs only to look at Congress to find evidence of a wealthy ruling elite in America. “In the 435-member House of Representative, 123 elected officers earned at least one million dollars [in 2003], according to . . . released financial records.”¹⁸⁰ While next door in the

Senate “there are at least 45 [millionaires], according to the last count by Roll Call, a Capitol Hill newspaper . . . Many . . . government officials, both in and out of Congress, own or even trade stocks directly. In the highly regulated health care industry, for example, 32 senators have disclosed stakes in pharmaceutical or medical device companies, 24 in companies that sell malpractice insurance and 27 in hospital companies or health care providers, according to a survey by the Foundation for Taxpayer and Consumer Rights.”¹⁸¹

The ethical issues inherent in the myriad possible conflicts of interests faced by the wealthy in Congress are further compounded by the potential for collusion that exists between congressional elites and corporate elites. Members of Congress are constantly petitioned by corporate lobbyists who seek to get laws passed that forward corporate interest. Some 34,750 lobbyists, double the number that existed in 2000,¹⁸² have “spent a record \$2.14 billion to influence legislation and federal policy in 2004, \$670 million more than five years earlier, according to PoliticalMoneyLine , a Washington-based company that tracks lobbying spending.”¹⁸³ “That figure represents a 7 percent increase over 2003 and an astonishing 34 percent jump from the amount of money spent on lobbying in 2001”¹⁸⁴ The Republican controlled Congress prior to 2007 “all-to-willingly approved corporate-friendly—and often corporate written—transportation and energy bills, as well as so-called bankruptcy reform that further rents the middle-class’ social safety net . . . ”¹⁸⁵

If these trends continue there is a great possibility that America could devolve beyond a plutocracy to a kleptocracy, i.e. “a government characterized by rampant greed and corruption.”¹⁸⁶ Kleptocracies fly in the face of the fundamental principles of the Enlightenment upon which America’s representational democracy is founded. By their very nature kleptocracies are “Hobbesian” in character. People, in society as envisioned by Thomas Hobbes, enter into a social contract with what he identifies as a Leviathan that is an authoritative and often unaccountable ruling body or sovereign. The people vis-à-vis this contract entrust this Leviathan with the power to make all major social and political decisions. People in a Hobbesian society enter into this type of contract in exchange for security and protection against the vicissitudes of life and the conflicting self-interest of human beings as they struggle to exist in a ‘state of nature.’ The irony of a Hobbesian society is that resources must be exacted from the citizenry by the ruling body or sovereign to provide security and protection, which in turn can tempt the greed and self-interest of the ruling elite. This all but insures a massive transfer of capital assets from the general citizenry to the ruling elite. Fear is often used by the ruling elite to perpetuate the citizenry’s perceived need for security and protection. Even though Hobbesian political philosophy states that one should “do no harm,” absolute power is naturally harmful of the powerless.

Society's ultimate safeguard against a kleptocratic elite rest in the constitutional provisions of a liberal democracy with its bill of rights, separation and balancing of powers, and rule by law. Such provisions prevent political leaders and their consorts from abusing power. However, with the recent assertion of the doctrine of the "unitary executive" the safeguards provided by the United States Constitution appear to be at risk. Jennifer Van Bergen in an article in *Findlaw Legal News and Commentary* states the following:

The *unitary executive* doctrine arises out of a theory called "departmentalism" or "coordinate construction." According to legal scholars Christopher Yoo, Steven Calabresi, and Antony Colangelo, the coordinate construction approach "holds that all three branches of the federal government have the power and duty to interpret the Constitution." According to this theory, the president may (and indeed, must) interpret the laws, equally as much as the courts.

The coordinate construction theory counters the long-standing notion of "judicial supremacy," articulated by Supreme Court Justice John Marshall in 1803, in the famous case of *Marbury v. Madison*, which held that the Court is the final arbiter of what is and is not the law. Marshall famously wrote there: "It is emphatically the province and duty of the judicial department to say what the law is."

However, [President] Bush's recent actions make it clear that he interprets the coordinate construction approach extremely aggressively. In his view, and the view of his Administration, that doctrine gives him license to overrule and bypass Congress or the courts, based on his own interpretation of the constitution—even where that violates long-established laws and treaties, counters recent legislation that he has himself signed, or (as shown by recent developments in the [José] Padilla [enemy combatant] case) involves offering a federal court contradictory justification for detention [in violation of an American citizen's Right of Habeas Corpus].¹⁸⁷

During a 2000 transition of powers meeting with the bi-partisan leadership of the Congress, President-Elect Bush jokingly stated, "there were going to be some times where we don't agree with each other. But that's OK. If this were a dictatorship it'd be a heck of a lot easier just so long as I'm the dictator."¹⁸⁸ Unfortunately, his quip seems to have provided a foreshadowing of his presidency. The precedent being established by the "unitary executive" doctrine is an extremely dangerous one that if allowed to continue could push this democracy into a kleptocracy. Regardless of what party controls the presidency the temptation is to bypass the congressional and judicial branches of government is too great. As the British historian Lord John Dalberg-Acton stated in a letter to Bishop Mandell Creighton in 1887: "Power tends to corrupt; absolute power corrupts absolutely."¹⁸⁹

Compounding this problem of general and growing structural inequality are the pernicious effects of racism. "Nearly four hundred years after the first

slaves arrived in America, the race issue still dominates the American psyche. Any visitor to the U.S. senses, very quickly, the racial tension in the air—it permeates the country. And if the truth be told, many white Americans think that black Americans are lazy, at best, or worst, genetically incapable of rising above their circumstance.”¹⁹⁰ According to the United States Department of Commerce, the circumstance the blacks find themselves in is actually worsening. Data from the 2002 U.S. Census Report indicate that 24.1 percent of the black population is subsisting below the poverty line, which is up from 22.7 percent in 2001, as opposed to 8 percent of the white population.¹⁹¹ This trend, in addition to the demographic shift in the population from white to non-white, is increasing the racial animus experienced by blacks and other people of color. This increasing hostility does not bode well for the survival of America. Diversity consultants Thomas Kochman and Jean Mavrelis often tell their clients “a culture’s greatest strength is also its greatest weakness.”¹⁹² In the case of America, one of its greatest strengths is its diversity, because of the powerful created synergy that diversity generates. However, diversity is also one of America’s greatest weaknesses because of its potential for divisiveness. This is not to say that diversity has to be inherently divisive. The divisiveness is the result of America’s structure of inequality and its legacy of racism. In chapter 7 of this text, social scientist Donald Noel’s theory of ethnic stratification was cited as an explanation of black/white relations in America. His theory provides a formula that explains the interactive dynamics that create ethnic stratification. This formula is computed as follows: ethnocentrism plus contact plus competition plus a differential in power between the competing groups equals ethnic stratification. (Ethnocentrism + Contact + Competition + A differential in power = Ethnic Stratification) It is the emphasis on competition compounded by privilege that is the result of laws that historically have worked for whites and against blacks and other people of color that is the problem, not diversity. Without individual and societal reconciliation between whites and people of color, there will be little hope of redemption for whites. They will find themselves confronted most specifically by blacks and other people of color who will be holding to the old adage “turn about is fair play.”

Trust in the institutions that make up government and civil society is the mortar that holds democracy together. In order for trust to exist, one must have sufficient confidence in the reliability of a person or institution to accept its authenticity at face value. The sense that a person or institution is fair is critical to trustworthiness. Fairness requires that things are done in the spirit of justice and reason. Justice exists only when there is “conformity in conduct and practice to the principles of . . . rightness [and] equitableness,” all of which requires “adherence to truth of fact.”¹⁹³ Unfortunately, the history of law related to race in America has been one that has attempted to ignore the

facts of racism and has promoted laws that support white privilege. This failure to address the fact of racism has allowed whites to engage in a spurious form of reasoning that entirely blames black people for their own unequal status. It is this type of denial and rationalization that has whites wondering why black people do not trust them or the institution of government and civil society.

In the beginning of this text, America's mythic narrative of freedom and equality is likened to a mighty river that flows from a distant and ancient source. It cascades from a deep wellspring of liberty; its sweet waters turn deserts of human despair into lush oases of hope. Tragically, over time, the desert sands of despair, driven by the illiberal winds of greed and injustice, have restricted the flow of this mighty river in much the same way that they contained one other great river, the Nile, which flows in the shadows of the Great Pyramid of Giza by the ruins of another grand empire.

By supporting the transfer of capital resources to the top 15 percent of the population, while shifting the tax burden down to the remaining 85 percent of the population, the wealthy are causing a structural instability in America that is destroying the foundation of the pyramid of privilege that supports their lifestyle of freedom and security. As has been the case for most, if not all, great civilizations of the world, America is beginning to collapse under its own weight, a weight that is primarily born of greed, injustice and imperialism. During an August 7, 2007 presentation to The Federal Midwest Human Resource Council and the Chicago Federal Executive Board, David M. Walker, the comptroller general of the United States Government Accountability Office, issued a rather dire assessment of this country's future. During his presentation Walker said:

America is a great nation, probably the greatest in history . . . [However], there are striking similarities between America's current situation and that of another great power from the past: Rome. The Roman Empire lasted 1,000 years, but only about half that time as a republic. The Roman Republic fell for many reasons, but three reasons are worth remembering: declining moral values and political civility at home, an overconfident and overextended military in foreign lands, and fiscal irresponsibility by the central government.¹⁹⁴

It is, however, those who have lived in the shadow of America's Great Pyramid of Privilege who are most capable of surviving its collapse because they will not have to fall as far as the privileged. As the stock market crash of 1929 so aptly showed, it was the wealthy that jumped from the skyscrapers of New York, not the working class and the poor. There is an old saying taken from a song by Billie Holiday, the great black jazz and blues vocalist, that is one of many that captures the mindset of much of the black community, "I've

been down so long that down don't worry me."¹⁹⁵ People of African descent have witnessed the fall of great civilizations in Africa, the Middle East, and Europe, endured the ravages of racial slavery and racism, and will manage to survive amongst the inevitable ruins of this empire's pyramid of privilege.

Those piles of ruins . . . in that narrow valley watered by the Nile, are the remains of opulent cities, the pride of the ancient kingdom of Ethiopia. Behold the wrecks of her metropolis, of Thebes, with her hundred palaces, the parent of cities, and monuments of the caprice of destiny. There a people, now forgotten, discovered, while others were barbarians, the elements of the arts and sciences. A race of men now dejected from society for their *sable skin and frizzled hair*, founded on the study of laws of nature, those civil and religious systems which still govern the universe. Lower down, those dusky points are the pyramids whose masses have astonished you.

—Constantine Francis Chassebeuf De Volney,
The Ruins of Empires, 1793

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