

W. E. B. Du Bois in the Ruins of the Warsaw Ghetto: Notes on the Relations of ›Race‹ and ›Racism‹

Abstract

My paper addresses the importance of a broad approach in the analysis of racism. To this end, I discuss the relations of ›race‹ and ›racism‹ in three sections. *First*, I deal with the subject matter of racism analysis. Investigating the opposition of purity and mixture, I conclude that racism includes more than race. *Second*, I oppose the increasing hypertrophy of the race concept. Discussing the position of W. J. T. Mitchell, I highlight some problems concerning the overexpansion of the category of race. *Third*, proceeding from the thoughts of W. E. B. Du Bois on witnessing the destroyed Warsaw Ghetto, I design a virtual exhibition room. It elucidates the necessity of a concept of racism that exceeds the range of race.

Keywords

race and racialization, concepts of racism, color line, antisemitism, anti-Muslim racism, W. J. T. Mitchell, W. E. B. Du Bois.

My notes on the relations of ›race‹ and ›racism‹ carry a heading that takes into account at least two widespread racisms, the racism of the ›colour line‹ and of antisemitism. My orientation is determined by the invitation to the conference ›Race – history and actuality of a dangerous concept‹.¹ It contains a brief outline for a projected exhibition on the subject of race, which specifies three objectives: »bringing together a group of international experts to discuss the latest developments of the investigation and theoretical reflection of the phe-

¹ The conference ›Rasse: Geschichte und Aktualität eines gefährlichen Konzepts‹ was organised by the *German Hygiene Museum*, the *German Federal Agency for Civic Education* and the *Historical Institute of the University Koblenz/Landau* in Dresden, October 8–10, 2015. This paper is a translated and slightly supplemented version of my presentation there. I want to thank Charles W. Mills and Stefanie Affeldt for their detailed reading of my text.

nomenon of racism«; »debating the role and the topicality of racism for our contemporary world sincerely and also controversially«; and »exploring how an exposition concerning the topic of race and racism in Germany could be modelled«.²

In this programmatic passage, the word ›race‹, eponymous for the conference as well as for the envisaged exposition, turns up only once. The word ›racism‹, however, appears in the context of all three items. Though this may be accidental, I nonetheless take it as evidence for my argument, since the categorical disparity refers to a shift in the international discussion of racism as well as to a vagueness in the exposition's concept.

I discuss these problems in three sections. *First*, I approach the object of racism analysis, indicate its varying definitions, illustrate its complexity by investigating the opposition of purity and mixture, and come to the conclusion that racism has a wider reach than race. *Second*, I criticize the increasing hypertrophy of the category of race, not least by a retrospective use of the idea of racialization, and explain my point of view using the example of W. J. T. Mitchell's ›semitic moment‹. *Third*, I use W. E. B. Du Bois' thoughts regarding the destroyed Warsaw Ghetto to outline a potential exhibition room, which requires simultaneous reflections on antisemitism and colour racism and thereby points to the necessity of a broad concept of racism, at the same time involving and going beyond the scope of race.

1 The Complexity of Racism

In reference to the *first point* of the above quoted outline, the ›current state‹ of racism analysis reveals at best a disparate picture. This applies to its topic, which is diversely defined, as well as to its scope, which oscillates historically between Antiquity and Modernity and geographically between Europe and the world. On the one hand, many scholars still share the view that the »concept of race enters European social consciousness more or less explicitly in the fifteenth century« and that racism »appeal[s] ex hypothesi to the concept of

² Diskussionspapier für die Internationale wissenschaftliche Tagung (Oktober 2015) zur Vorbereitung einer Ausstellung am Deutschen Hygiene Museum (2017/18) zum Thema ›Rasse. Schicksal und Methode‹, Dresden: Deutsches Hygiene Museum, 2015 – the quotes further down with reference to this conference are also from this paper.

race as the basis for discrimination« (Goldberg 1993: 21, 123).³ On the other hand, »the durability and pervasive nature of elements of race-thinking over millennia« is suggested and leads to the postulation that »the social construction of racial identities should be understood as a global process being produced by many societies outside the West« (Law 2010: 3, 8).⁴

The concept of this conference argues in a comparatively restricted manner but dates the »history of racistly motivated persecution« at least back to the »forced conversion of the Jews in Spain at the end of the Reconquista« and the »beginning of the colonial domination of Europeans in the rest of the world«. In both cases racism doubtlessly existed – but it was a racism without races. In Spain, it was not only aimed against forcibly converted Jews and Muslims but also against voluntary converts and their descendants. Many did not adhere covertly to their old religions and traditions but had become sincere Christians and were therefore regarded as apostates by their former communities. Nevertheless, they fell victim to anti-Judaistic and anti-Islamic persecution, which discriminated against them by questioning their faith through linking genuine Christian belief to the purity of blood.⁵

³ D. T. Goldberg, *Racist Culture. Philosophy and the Politics of Meaning*, Malden [et al.]: Blackwell, 1993.

⁴ I. Law, *Racism and Ethnicity. Global Debates, Dilemmas, Directions*, Harlow [et al.]: Pearson, 2010. For an extensive recent effort in the direction of a comparative analysis of racisms see F. Bethencourt, *Racisms. From the Crusades to the Twentieth Century*, Princeton [et al.]: Princeton University Press, 2013; for a thorough critique of this endeavour cf. the review by S. Affeldt, M. Hinrichsen, W. D. Hund, »Review of Francisco Bethencourt, *Racisms. From the Crusades to the Twentieth Century*«, *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, Vol. 55, 2015 (<http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/afs/81630.pdf>; last accessed 27 October 2015).

⁵ Cf. i. a. N. Roth, *Conversos, Inquisition, and the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain*, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1995; M. Carr, *Blood and Faith. The Purging of Muslim Spain*, New York [et al.]: The New Press, 2009. Carr, from my point of view, accurately concludes: »Some historians have argued that modern concepts of racism are anachronistic in the context of sixteenth-century Spain and that religion rather than race was the deciding factor in Christian hostility towards Muslims and Jews. Such criticisms ignore the extent to which modern notions of racism are a continuation of a tradition whose essential contours can be traced back to classical times. Crucial to this tradition is the idea that all members of a particular society or social group share the same inherently hateful, inferior, or contemptible characteristics. Whether these narratives of inferiority are attributed to culture, religion, or biology, they invariably serve to justify domination, exclusion, and even extermination by the group that takes its own superiority for granted« (*ibid.*: 185).

This politics of ›limpieza de sangre‹ cannot simply be understood as an antecedent of genealogical racial thought. This became extremely clear after the colonial conquest of South America. Here, too, evidence of blood purity had to be provided to gain membership to public and social institutions. Even having distant Jewish or Muslim ancestors was seen as a criterion for exclusion. In contrast, the forebears of the heathen Indians did not present a problem, especially if they came from ›good‹ families (Martínez 2008; Carrasco 1997).⁶ Not only could European conquerors marry American women, but a high-ranking Spanish lady like Doña Francisca de la Cueva could also take an Indian husband like Don Diego Louis de Moctezuma (Connell 2011: 64).⁷

The corresponding ideology persisted up to the Mexican ›casta‹ paintings of the eighteenth century (Katzew 2004).⁸ According to the message of these paintings, the union of Spanish and Indian partners would ultimately again produce Spaniards. However, this was not seen as applying to the offspring of Spaniards and Africans and hence reflected the social consequences of transatlantic slavery as a genealogical fate. As late as the first half of the twentieth century, José Vasconcelos (1997) presented similar arguments in his promotion of a ›raza cósmica‹.⁹ The (mixed) cosmic race would be the greatest in the world because it would combine the most outstanding qualities of the other races: the civilising capabilities of the ›white‹, the stoicism of the ›red‹, the sensuality of the ›black‹, and the spirituality of the ›yellow‹ race. In the long run, however, this amalgam did not amount to much because a spontaneous aesthetic-eugenic process of selection would, in the end, lead to the disappearance of the ›black‹ elements of this superrace (cf. Hund 2014: 70 ff.).¹⁰

⁶ M. E. Martínez, *Genealogical Fictions. Limpieza de Sangre, Religion, and Gender in Colonial Mexico*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008; P. Carrasco, »Indian-Spanish Marriages in the First Century of the Colony«, in S. Schroeder, S. Wood, R. Haskett (eds.), *Norman Indian Women of Early Mexico*, University of Oklahoma Press, 1997, pp. 87–103.

⁷ W. F. Connell, *After Moctezuma. Indigenous Politics and Self-Government in Mexico City, 1524–1730*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011.

⁸ I. Katzew, *Casta Painting. Images of Race in Eighteenth-Century Mexico*, New Haven [et al.]: Yale University Press, 2004.

⁹ J. Vasconcelos, *The Cosmic Race. La raza cósmica*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997.

¹⁰ W. D. Hund, *Negative Vergesellschaftung. Dimensionen der Rassismusanalyse*, Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot, 2014.

To understand this line of reasoning requires not an exhibition of ›race‹ but rather the showcasing of the issues of social ›purity‹ and ›contamination‹. The phantasmagoria of maculation and pollution imputed and propagated a dichotomy that was considered as basically unbridgeable because it was thought to rest upon an indelible stain. This notion was still contained in Nazi antisemitism – despite all its race rhetoric. The first leader of the ›Department for Genealogy‹ (›Sippenamt‹) of the ›National Socialist German Workers' Party‹, which was to ensure the ›racial purity‹ of the party members, was convinced that the characteristic of »Judenstämming« (literally: stemming from Jews) would be »inherently unlimited«, because it would be impossible to »specify the number of generations which were necessary to eliminate the impact of the occurred mixture« (quoted in Esser 2002: 78).¹¹

The idea of contamination as formulated here was already part of the basic elements of scientific racism in the eighteenth century. This caused, inter alia, a methodological aporia in the race theory of Immanuel Kant (cf. Hund 2011).¹² He endeavoured to formulate what he thought to be a strictly scientific definition of races by describing them as groups that are defined by inherited differences within a species, which can nevertheless produce fertile offspring and, in this way, equally (›halbschlächtig« – literally: which one half of each kind) pass on their respective attributes. But, at the same time, Kant declared exactly this *differentia specifica* of his definition to be undesirable and noxious: »Half-breeds [...] are not much good« (Kant 1923: 589).¹³ Even in his notes on anthropology, Kant initially defined »races« as groups which »could generate their equals«, only to subsequently profess: »It is not good that they mix« (Kant 1923: 878).¹⁴

¹¹ C. Esser, *Die ›Nürnberger Gesetze‹ oder die Verwaltung des Rassenwahns 1933–1945*, Paderborn [et al.]: Schöningh, 2002.

¹² W. D. Hund, »It Must Come from Europe«. The Racisms of Immanuel Kant«, in W. D. Hund, C. Koller, M. Zimmermann (eds.), *Racisms Made in Germany*, Berlin [et al.]: Lit., 2011, pp. 69–98.

¹³ I. Kant, »Reflexionen zur Anthropologie«, in *Kants gesammelte Schriften* (Akademie-Ausgabe), Vol. 15, Berlin: Reimer, 1923, pp. 55–654.

¹⁴ I. Kant, »Entwürfe zu dem Colleg über Anthropologie«, in *Kants gesammelte Schriften* (Akademie-Ausgabe), Vol. 15, Berlin: Reimer, 1923, pp. 655–899. The handling of Kant's racisms in the German discussion is an example for a stubborn denialism ignoring the international debate. According to it, Kant has argued in an exclusive scientific manner and has renounced the discriminatory defamation of racistly constructed others. Nothing could be further from his deliberations (cf. i. a.

This straining of logic indicates that earlier culturalist elements of racist discrimination remained even in race thinking that was trea-

R. Bernasconi, »Who Invented the Concept of Race? Kant's Role in the Enlightenment Construction of Race«, in R. Bernasconi (ed.), *Race*, Oxford [et al.]: Blackwell, 2001, pp. 11–36; R. Bernasconi, »Kant as an Unfamiliar Source of Racism«, in J. K. Ward, T. L. Lott (eds.), *Philosophers on Race. Critical Essays*, Oxford [et al.]: Blackwell, 2002, pp. 145–166; M. Brumlik, *Deutscher Geist und Judentum*, Munich: Luchterhand, 2000, pp. 27–74; E. C. Eze, »The Colour of Reason. The Idea of ›Race‹ in Kant's Anthropology«, in E. C. Eze (ed.), *Postcolonial African Philosophy*, Oxford [et al.]: Blackwell, 1997, pp. 103–140; R. Lagier, *Les Races humaines selon Kant*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2004; C. W. Mills, »Kant's Untermenschen«, in A. Valls (ed.), *Race and Racism in Modern Philosophy*, Ithaca [et al.]: Cornell University Press, 2005, pp. 169–193; T. Serequeberhan, »Eurocentrism in Philosophy. The Case of Immanuel Kant«, *The Philosophical Forum*, Vol. 27, No. 4, 1996, pp. 333–356; B. Stangneth, »Antisemitische und antijudaistische Motive bei Immanuel Kant«, in H. Gronke, T. Meyer, B. Neißer (eds.), *Antisemitismus bei Kant und anderen Denkern der Aufklärung*, Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2001, pp. 11–124; A. Sutter, »Kant und die ›Wilden‹. Zum impliziten Rassismus in der Kantischen Geschichtsphilosophie«, *prima philosophia*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 1989, pp. 241–265.

The endeavour to throw the smokescreen of an allegedly general zeitgeist over Kant's reflections on Africans, Americans, Asians, Gypsies, and Jews (cf. Hund 2011: 69–98) is likewise foredoomed to fail. The contemporary debate had already been controversial. Kant's dispute with Georg Forster and Johann Gottfried Herder shows that the scientific knowledge of that time had not been as uniform and generally backed as it is being occasionally depicted until today. In contrast to Kant, Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (cf. id., *Beyträge zur Naturgeschichte. Erster Theil*, Göttingen: Dieterich, 1790, pp. 93–118), in his library, had collected a whole stock of writings of or about outstanding Africans and, i. a., mentions Anton Wilhelm Amo, Jacobus Elisa Johannes Capitein, Ignatius Sancho, Gustav Vassa, i. e. Olaudah Equiano (cf. A. W. Amo, *Übersetzung seiner Werke*, Halle: Martin-Luther Universität, 1965; J. E. J. Capitein, *The Agony of Asar. A Thesis on Slavery by the Former Slave Jacobus Elisa Johannes Capitein, 1717–1747*, G. Parker (ed.), Princeton: Marcus Wiener 2001 [1742]; I. Sancho, *Letters of the Late Ignatius Sancho, an African. To Which are Prefixed, Memoirs of his Life*, F. Crewe (ed.), Cambridge [et al.]: Cambridge University Press, 2 vols., 2013 [1782]; O. Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the American, Written by Himself*, W. Sollors (ed.), New York [et al.], Norton, 2001 [1789]. For recent publications on Amo see: O. Ette, *Anton Wilhelm Amo. Philosophieren ohne festen Wohnsitz. Eine Philosophie der Aufklärung zwischen Europa und Afrika*, Berlin: Kadmos, 2014; J. E. H. Smith, *Nature, Human Nature, and Human Difference. Race in Early Modern Philosophy*, Princeton [et al.]: Princeton University Press, 2015, pp. 207–230. For Capitein see: K. K. Prah, *Jacobus Elisa Johannes Capitein 1717–1747. Etude critique sur un Africain du XVIII^e siècle*, Paris: Présence Africaine, 2005. For Sancho see: M. Ellis, »Ignatius Sancho's Letters. Sentimental Libertinism and the Politics of Form«, in V. Carretta, P. Gould (eds.),

ted as science (cf. Hund 2007: 34–87).¹⁵ These elements are clustered in characteristic contrastive pairs of opposites and, among others, find expression in the stereotype of the barbarian (constructing incomplete humans or half-humans and sub-humans), the stereotype of demons and devils (imagining outcasts descendent from religious counterworlds), and the stereotype of impurity (declaring others to be a contagious threat).

2 The Boundaries of Race

In reference to *point 2* of the outline quoted at the beginning, I want to stay with its key categories (»race« and »racism«) and to point out a pervasive hypertrophy of the concept of race in the theory of racism. The »topicality of racism« this conference is expected to discuss and which the planned exhibition is intended to illustrate is undoubtedly evidenced by the persistence of racial discrimination. But it is also reflected in patterns of racist exclusion and contempt with reference

Genius in Bondage. Literature of the Early Black Atlantic, Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2001, pp. 199–217. For Equiano see: V. Carretta, *Equiano, the African. Biography of a Self-Made Man*, New York [et al.]: Penguin 2005).

Capitain, Sancho, Equiano, as well as Ottobah Cugoano, Angelo Soliman, Phyllis Wheatley and many others, were contemporaries of Kant (cf. O. Cugoano, *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil and Wicked Traffic of the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species*, Cambridge [et al.]: Cambridge University Press, 2013 [1787]; P. Wheatley, *Complete Writings*, V. Carretta (ed.), New York [et al.]: Penguin, 2001. For Cugoano, see L. Gordon, *An Introduction to Africana Philosophy*, Cambridge [et al.]: Cambridge University Press, 2008, pp. 40–45. For Soliman, see: P. Blohm, and W. Kos (eds.) *Angelo Soliman. Ein Afrikaner in Wien*, Wien: Brandstätter, 2011. For Wheatley, see: H. L. Gates, Jr., *The Trials of Phillis Wheatley. America's First Black Poet and Her Encounters with the Founding Fathers*, New York: Basic Books, 2003).

Not least, Kant himself was a witness of the beginning of the revolution in Haiti. In her paper on »Kant's Second Thoughts on Colonialism« (in K. Flikschuh, L. Ypi (eds.), *Kant and Colonialism. Historical and Critical Perspectives*, Oxford [et al.]: Oxford University Press, 2014, pp. 43–67), P. Kleingeld has argued that Kant has changed his attitudes concerning colonialism and slavery in view of the abolitionist debates of his time. Whether this has had any impact on Kant's racism is questioned by R. Bernasconi, C. W. Mills and others and is open to further debate (cf. R. Bernasconi, »Kant's Third Thoughts on Race«, in S. Elden, E. Mendieta (eds.), *Reading Kant's Geography*, Albany: Suny Press, 2011, pp. 291–318; C. W. Mills, »Kant and Race, Redux«, *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal*, The New School for Social Research, ed., Vol. 35, Nos. 1–2, Philosophy and Race, 2014, pp. 125–157).

¹⁵ W. D. Hund, *Rassismus*, Bielfeld: transcript, 2007.

points not shaped by an alleged dissimilarity of races. This includes, for example, anti-Muslim racism. Its history commences long before of the invention of race and its current manifestations can neither be understood adequately by applying the category race nor, by its derivation, the idea of racialization.

This applies, inter alia, to the racist marginalization and persecution of the Moros in the Philippines, the Rohingya in Myanmar or the victims of religiously linked conflicts in the Central African Republic or other African states.¹⁶ But this also holds true for a society

¹⁶ The colonisation of the Philippines by the USA in 1899, for example, inspired Rudyard Kipling's metaphor of the ›White Man's Burden‹. Shortly afterwards, the issue was presented in the context of the contemporary race paradigm at the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair. The exposition included a differentiation of the Philippine population into ›savage‹ and ›civilised‹ parts, projecting ›savageness‹ onto the non-Christian members of the population and visualising it by the exhibition of a group of Igorots. In Mark Bennitt's contemporaneous history of the world fair, this led to the assessment that the population of the Philippines would represent »many stages of social progress from the lowest types of head-hunting savages to the best products of Christian civilization and culture« (quoted in P. A. Kramer, *The Blood of Government. Race, Empire, the United States and the Philippines*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006, p. 262).

In the course of the Lake Mohonk Conference of 1912, dealing with the imperialism of the USA under colonial auspices, its secretary Henry S. Haskins declared the »Moro Province« to be a »problem within a problem«, because this »province contains over a quarter of a million of fighting Muhammadan fanatics« (quoted in A. Lubin, *Geographies of Liberation. The Making of an Afro-Arab Political Imaginary*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014, p. 62). In the further course of discussion of the subjects of a limited autonomy and the possible independence of the Philippines, Senator Millard Tydings in 1934 downplayed religious antagonisms and emphasized the ›racial identity‹ of the population and the dominance of its Christian majority (cf. D. Rodríguez, »White Supremacy as Substructure. Toward a Genealogy of Racial Animus, from ›Reconstruction‹ to ›Pacification‹«, in M.-K. Jung, J. H. Costa Vargas, E. Bonilla-Silva (eds.), *State of White Supremacy. Racism, Governance, and the United States*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011, pp. 47–76, p. 71). In the late twentieth century – after the foundation of numerous Muslim organisations of resistance like the Moro National Liberation Front or the Moro Islamic Liberation Front – in his ›Abu Sayyaf. Displays of Violence and the Proliferation of Contested Identities among Philippine Muslims‹ (*American Anthropologist*, Vol. 100, No. 1, pp. 41–54, p. 43), the anthropologist Charles Frake referred to the diverse ethnic groups subsumed under the name ›Moro‹ and commented that this identity was invented by the Christians and only recently accepted by the Muslims.

The multilayered and continuing discrimination against the Moros is embedded in a complex historical process. Although it was continued at the beginning of the twentieth century with a »thoroughly racialized war of conquest« (E. San Juan, Jr., *Racism and Cultural Studies. Critiques of Multiculturalist Ideology and the Politics of Dif-*

like the USA in which race consciousness figures prominently. Of the Muslim population living there, 30 percent claim themselves as white, 23 percent as black, 21 percent as Asiatic, 6 percent as Hispanic, and 19 percent refer to another category. Surveys in the UK show that when it comes to people's attitudes towards Muslims, religion overrides all other ethnic criteria. The attitudes towards Muslims are markedly more negative than towards Buddhists or Hindus (despite all of them in the UK having to a considerable extent South Asian origins).¹⁷

In such and related contexts, the race concept is unhelpful and leads to inconsistencies. I will elucidate this using the example of a leading scholar of visual culture. William J. T. Mitchell (2012) views »race« as a »diagnostic tool [...] that provides access to the disease known as racism« (*ibid.*: 17).¹⁸ Thereby, he wants to dissociate his position from theories representing »race« as an »illusion«. Instead, he recommends pursuing a path that allows the combating of racism through a renewal of the race concept. In doing so, however, he falls prey to the naturalistic undertow of the category of race by linking it to the elements »blood« and »body« which, moreover, he disconnects from modern race theory and instead generalises historically. Against this backdrop, he rejects the »idea that race-thinking and racism are specifically modern« and alleges that this idea »has to be consigned to the dustbin of history«. Subsequently, he states: »I want us to be able to see and to say that the [ancient] Greeks were racists too« (*ibid.*: 69).

Except for its voluntaristic charm, the questionability of this statement is not based in the reference to racism in Antiquity but in the fact that it links this form of racism to the existence of races. Mitchell regards racism and races as an inseparable entity. However, ancient racism did not rest on the construction of races but on the

ference, Durham [et al.]: Duke University Press, 2002, p. 2), whose structural consequences are manifest until today, the continuing racist discrimination against the large number of Philippine overseas workers in places as different as Hong-Kong, the USA, or the United Arab Emirates cannot be reduced to the concept of race. In fact, the discrimination is dependent on a combination of classism with different racisms based on disparate cultural foundations.

¹⁷ Cf. »A Demographic Portrait of Muslim Americans« (<http://www.people-press.org/2011/08/30/section-1-a-demographic-portrait-of-muslim-americans/>; last accessed on 27 October 2015) and: »Why are Muslims Less Accepted Than Other Minorities in Britain« (<http://blog.policy.manchester.ac.uk/featured/2015/04/why-are-muslims-less-accepted-than-other-minorities-in-britain/>; last accessed on 27 October 2015).

¹⁸ W. J. T. Mitchell, *Seeing Through Race*, Cambridge (Mass.) [et al.]: Harvard University Press, 2012.

construction of barbarians. Efforts to associate this construction retrospectively with the category race (which was unknown in Antiquity) give rise to a re-naturalization of this concept.

But not only is Mitchell's approach supposed to facilitate a far-reaching historical critique of racism by means of the category race, it is also thought to be a means to overcome the impact of racism in the long run. The author exemplifies this by using the conflict in »Israel/Palestine« (as he labels it using a double name) in conjunction with what he calls »the Semitic moment« (*ibid.*: 63–90). In the course of his argument, he obliterates the borders between racist ascriptions and ethnic identity formation. Moreover, he conflates important historic differences through the alleged logic of the category race and thereby renounces the analytical precision of racism analysis.

This becomes apparent in the reified representation of a »semitic race«. Despite this idea originating from the nineteenth century and owing its dubious provenance to misleading translations, viz. from biblical genealogy into linguistics and from there into race science, Mitchell asserts: »A blanket anti-Semitism that did not discriminate between Jews and Arabs was a powerful feature of European Christianity for centuries« (*ibid.*: 66).¹⁹

He then reverses this postmodernist historical speculation and presents it as a potential (albeit today still utopian) basis for a peaceful resolution of the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. The claim is that it could underwrite the replacement of the unrealistic two-state solution by the vision of a binational community. In order to back up this assertion, Mitchell supplements his twofold division of »body and blood« with the duality of »blood and soil« and portrays both a »shared identity as Semites« and a »shared piety about a material place« (*ibid.*: 75) as the foundation of a future Jewish-Palestinian State.

The critique of racism in this argument is, in its own reasoning, completely caught up in the race trap. The attempt to subsume racist ascriptions and ethnic identity under a joint paradigm ends up disas-

¹⁹ The problem with this remark is not the fact that racist anti-Jewish and anti-Muslim justifications for discrimination often used overlapping arguments. Petrus Alfonsi, for example, developed his denigration of Islam in his »Dialogues against the Jews«, and Petrus Venerabilis declared that Muhammed had Jewish teachers. The writings of both were part of an »increasing tendency to link anti-Jewish and anti-Muslim polemics« (J. V. Tolan, *Saracens. Islam in the Medieval European Imagination*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2002, p. 154). The pitfall of Mitchell's proposition is that it naturalistically overstretches and uncritically flattens the meaning of antisemitism.

trously. The historical differences between anti-Judaism and anti-Islamism are blurred by a racially construed notion of antisemitism, and the discriminatory concept of race is taken to be suited for securing a coming »racial harmony« (*ibid.*: 87).

3 The Spectrum of Racisms

With that said, I turn to *point 3*: the question, formulated at the outset, of »how an exposition concerning the topic of race and racism in Germany could be modelled«. I hope that I have already made clear what I assume to be questionable regarding the formulation »race and racism«: in my view, it indicates a questionable narrowing of the analysis of racism.

To elucidate this judgment, I have imagined a virtual room for the planned exhibition in which pictures and artefacts should be merged into a telling ensemble and combined with a textual message. The ensemble shows William Edward Burghardt Du Bois considering the ruins of the Warsaw Ghetto and the memorial by Nathan Rapoport raised in memorial of the ghetto uprising. The textual message is a quote from an article written by Du Bois under the title »The Negro and the Warsaw Ghetto« and published in the journal »Jewish Life« (*cf.* Rothberg 2001).²⁰



[Fig. 1]

²⁰ M. Rothberg, »W. E. B. Du Bois in Warsaw. Holocaust Memory and the Color Line, 1949–1952«, *The Yale Journal of Criticism*, Vol. 14, No. 1, 2001, pp. 169–189.

The memorial in the destroyed ghetto could be shown on a large-sized photograph (see fig. 1). In front of this picture I visualize a stele with images of the two sculptural elements of the memorial. The one shows the stone carving with a migration of sufferers (see fig. 2), the other presents the bronze figures of resistance fighters (see fig. 3).²¹ This already makes clear that racist discrimination is a social relation determined by power, whose aim is the social death of all those subjected to it but which is not able to break and prevent their resistance. This indicates that racism was always deemed illegitimate and iniquitous by those forced to endure it. Because of this, not even a time-bound exculpation of racism is conceivable. It was never an undivided manifestation of a zeitgeist, however shaped.



[Fig. 2]

The assembly of these pictures should be surrounded by rubble, as it surrounding the memorial when Du Bois visited it. This arrangement would be as realistic as symbolic and would illustrate the violence of racism directed to the destruction of the cultural identity of the oppressed.²²

²¹ Incidentally, both works of art cover complex subtexts. For the bronze figures of the resistance fighters created by Rapoport in Paris, kibbutznikim of the Jishuv in Palestine were the artist's models. The big granite blocks for the memorial and the relief came from Sweden. They had already been prepared for transport some time ago and had originally been ordered by sculptor Arno Breker for a victory monument of German fascism (cf. J. E. Young, 'The Biography of a Memorial Icon. Nathan Rapoport's Warsaw Ghetto Monument', *Representations*, Vol. 26, 1989, pp. 69–106).

²² At the same time, this would be an allusion to Gustav Metzger's handling of a well-known photograph from the Warsaw Ghetto which was shown in his exhibition 'Historic Photographs' 2011 in New York – <http://artnews.org/newmuseum/?exi=27602> (last accessed on 27 October 2015).



[Fig. 3]

To the right and the left of this ensemble I picture, on the one side, a statue of Du Bois, for instance the bronze figure to which Radcliffe Bayley had given the posture of Auguste Rodin's ›The Thinker‹ (see fig. 4).²³

On the wall behind this statue, I see three photographs illustrating the historic reality that provided the background to Du Bois' thoughts on the Warsaw Ghetto Memorial. One photo shows the brutality of racism directed against Blacks in the USA, using one of the shots which were made of lynchings and the white mobs involved (see fig. 5) and quite often circulated in the form of postcards (cf. Allen et al. 2005).²⁴ Another photo depicts one of the numerous pub-

²³ Cf. <http://www.newamericanpaintings.com/blog/radcliffe-bailey%E2%80%99s-maroons> and <http://iyyftc1oqf704bytwz45ub151.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/W.E.B.-DuBois-by-Radcliffe-Bailey-016.jpg> (last accessed on 27 October 2015).

²⁴ J. Allen, H. Als, J. Lewis, L. F. Litwack, *Without Sanctuary. Lynching Photography in America*, Santa Fe: Twin Palms Publishers, 2005. In her *Photography on the Color Line. W. E. B. Du Bois, Race, and Visual Culture* (Durham [et al.]: Duke University Press, 2004), Shawn Michelle Smith has analysed the more than 350 photographs presented at the 1900 Paris Exposition Universelle in Du Bois' three albums ›Types



[Fig. 4]

lic protest actions of the civil rights movement (see fig. 6), in this particular case a march against lynching in which Du Bois participated (cf. Waldrep 2009).²⁵ In between these two photos the flag is to be seen in a third one, which the ›National Association for the Advancement of Colored People‹ flew out of the window of its New York office every time news about lynching arrived (cf. Tuttle 2005: 664).²⁶

of American Negroes«. She characterises them as a counter-archive of pictorial resistance to the publicly circulating lynching postcards, which exposes the latter as »a spectacle of whiteness« (ibid.: 118), and demonstrates that »whiteness is a split identity formulated on the violent repression of the other« (ibid.: 143).

²⁵ C. Waldrep, *African Americans Confront Lynching. Strategies of Resistance from the Civil War to the Civil Rights Era*, Plymouth: Rowman and Littlefield, 2009.

²⁶ K. Tuttle, »Lynching«, in A. Appiah, H. L. Gates, Jr. (eds.), *Africana. The Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience*, Vol. 3, New York [et al.]: Oxford University Press, 2005, pp. 663–666. Art exhibitions – curated in 1935 in the Newton Galleries (›An Art Commentary on Lynching‹) and the Contemporary Art Gallery (›Struggle for Negro Rights‹) in New York – have been part of the protest against lynching (cf. H. Langa, ›Two Antilynching Art Exhibitions. Politicized Viewpoints, Racial Perspectives Gendered Constraints«, *American Art*, Vol. 13, No. 1, pp. 10–39). I exemplarily refer to the sculpture ›Death (Lynched Figure)‹ by Isamu Noguchi from 1934, shown at both exhibitions (cf. D. Apel, *Imagery of Lynching. Black Men, White Women, and the Mob*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2004, pp. 92 ff. – for an image see <http://www.wikiart.org/en/isamu-noguchi/death->



[Fig. 5]

The flag bore the inscription: ›A man was lynched yesterday‹ (see fig. 7).

The opposite wall should display a tablet with Du Bois' quote. (In this way, the entire ensemble would form a room, on whose rear wall is mounted the photograph of the ghetto and whose lateral walls are set by Du Bois' statue in front of the images from America and by his quote. Access to this room could well be directed through some kind of curtain, showing Willy Brandt in front of the Ghetto Memorial so that his 1970 Warsaw Genuflection has to be symbolically shared²⁷ by the visitors walking through).

Du Bois' deliberations, central in this context, read:

The result [...] of my view of the Warsaw ghetto [...] was a real and more complete understanding of the Negro problem. In the first place, the problem of slavery, emancipation, and caste in the United States was no longer

lynched-figure-1934; last accessed on 27 October 2015). And I compare this sculpture with Françoise Salmon's ›Le Déporté‹ or ›Der gestürzte (or: sterbende) Häftling‹. The artist, who had survived the Concentration Camps of Auschwitz and Ravensbrück, sculpted this figure in 1965 for a memorial in the concentration camp Neuengamme (cf. KZ-Gedenkstätte Neuengamme (ed.) *Die Bildhauerin Françoise Salmon und ihre Plastik ›Der gestürzte Häftling‹*, 2005; for an image see https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:KZ-Neuengamme_%E2%80%9EDer_sterbende_H%C3%A4ftling%E2%80%9C_%281%29.jpg; last accessed on 27 October 2015).

²⁷ The German original makes use of the ambiguity of the word ›teilen‹, meaning ›to divide‹ or ›to split‹ on the one hand and ›to share‹ on the other hand (for an image see http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/images/Brandt_Polen.jpg; last accessed on 27 October 2015).

in my mind a separate and unique thing as I had so long conceived it. It was not even solely a matter of color and physical and racial characteristics, which was particularly a hard thing for me to learn, since for a lifetime the color line had been a real and efficient cause of misery. [...] [T]he race problem in which I was interested cut across lines of color and physique and belief and status and was a matter of cultural patterns [...]. [T]he ghetto of Warsaw helped me to emerge from a certain social provincialism into a broader conception of what the fight against race segregation, religious discrimination, and the oppression by wealth had to become (Du Bois 2000: 199 f.).²⁸

The relevance of this statement for my reflections is obvious. Du Bois had already conceived ›race‹ as a bio-social fact well before his visit to Warsaw. His criticism of racist relations had always drawn on the concept of race and did not abandon it even then. Nonetheless, he referred to the similarities between the persecution of Jews and Blacks, which could not be comprehended with the category of race. In the face of racist demarcations that drew no ›colour line‹, Du Bois emphatically accentuated the relevance of cultural factors for patterns of racist discrimination and, thereby, pointed beyond the concept of race.

The configuration coming into the picture in this manner admittedly also shows race relations. But, at the same time, these are inter-related with antisemitism, a form of racism that has predominantly existed without the race concept in the course of its long history. Instead, it made use of the religious antagonism of damnation and chosenness, and of the sexist as well as classist antagonism of impurity and purity. Furthermore, besides the devil and the perils of contamination, it drew on the well-nigh classical ascriptions of barbarism and monstrosity as well as on the only marginally more recent Orientalism.²⁹

²⁸ W. E. B. Du Bois, »The Negro and the Warsaw Ghetto«, in P. Zuckerman (ed.), *Du Bois on Religion*, Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 2000, pp. 197–201 (from *Jewish Life*, Vol. 6, No. 7, 1952, pp. 14–15).

²⁹ There are numerous studies concerning the different items on this (incomplete) list: cf. i. a. J. Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews. The Medieval Conception of the Jews and its Relation to Modern Anti-Semitism*, New Haven: Yale University Press 1943 (ad ›devil‹); M. S. Hering Torres, *Rassismus in der Vormoderne. Die ›Reinheit des Blutes‹ im Spanien der Frühen Neuzeit*, Frankfurt [et al.]: Campus 2006 (ad ›impurity‹); B. H. Strickland, *Saracens, Demons, and Jews. Making Monsters in Medieval Art*, Princeton [et al.]: Princeton University Press, 2003 (ad ›monstrosity‹), I. D. Kallmar, D. J. Penslar (eds.), *Orientalism and the Jews*, Waltham: Brandeis University



[Fig. 6]

At the same time, both issues show that the offenders (despite their own hierarchical social stratification) share a common racist symbolic capital, which nevertheless is not legitimate, because racism and its various justifications are suspected, criticised, rejected, and opposed by the victims. As a result, racism must be understood as a social power relation and as a form of discrimination, which, in modernity, intensely avails itself of the ideology of race but extends beyond the construction and degradation of races historically, geographically and topologically. This applies not only to older forms of

Press and Hanover [et al.]: University Press of New England, 2005 (ad ›Orientalism‹); the stereotype of the ›barbarian‹ was positioned against Jews from Antiquity (cf. Y. Shahar, ›Imperial Religious Unification Policy and Its Divisive Consequences. Diocletian, the Jews, and the Samaritans‹, in R. W. Mathisen, D. Shanzer (eds.), *Romans, Barbarians, and the Transformation of the Roman World*, Farnham [et al.]: Ashgate, 2011, pp. 109–119) to Modernity (cf. H. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1951). For a new perspective on anti-Judaism as ›a way of critically engaging the world‹ (however in an affirmative manner) see D. Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism. The Western Tradition*, New York [et al.]: Norton, 2013 (quote: p. 3).



[Fig. 7]

racism. Present-day racisms are the heirs of a multifaceted tradition of discriminations whose diverse patterns of suspicion and exclusion they frequently combine.³⁰

—Wulf D. Hund, Emeritus, University of Hamburg, Germany

³⁰ For a video of the original presentation, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S19lvbw-ibc>; an animated version of the fictional exhibition room conceptualized in chapter 3, can be seen 17:00–21:20.