

Philosophical aspects of the 'AAA Statement on "Race"'

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Abstract

I apply philosophical analysis to the AAA Statement on "Race" (American Anthropological Association, 1998) and the commentary on its earlier draft published in the *Anthropology Newsletter* (1997). Racial essentialism is the theory that there are distinct and general human biological traits that determine racial membership and cause the presence of specific racial traits. This theory is false, as is the belief that a taxonomy of human races, *or race*, exists. But the 1998 'AAA Statement on "Race"' fails to repudiate racial essentialism explicitly. Instead, the Statement denies that race determines culture or psychology and thereby misses the broad logical point that race cannot determine anything, because it does not exist. In the *AN* discussion of Kennewick Man, which appeared to be a debate about racial essentialism, contributors spoke past one another in confusing population-based measures of human diversity with race. The same confusion clouds contemporary concerns about the relevance of common-sense racial categories to medical diagnosis and treatment. Education is the solution to the public's ignorance about the scientific foundation for its ideas about race. It is an empirical question whether such education will remedy racism or unjust treatment based on the false racial taxonomy. Although mixed-race categories are no more real than 'pure' ones, their acceptance may help unsettle the prevailing false taxonomy of race.

Key Words

common-sense racial categories • mixed race • race • racial essentialism • taxonomy of human races

INTRODUCTION

Over the 20th century, most philosophers writing about race have focused on social identities and racism. Anthropologists, by contrast, have focused on the biological foundations of race. As a philosopher, I have been trying for a decade to convince other philosophers that race as understood in common sense has no foundation in science, and that this fact is socially important. I am therefore encouraged that anthropologists now substantially agree about these issues. However, I think that philosophical conceptual analysis can still be fruitfully applied to the connections between the nonexistence of biological race and statistical facts about populations, as well as to cultural beliefs about race. In this article I consider several theoretical aspects of the 1998 AAA Statement on "Race" and the commentary on the earlier draft of the Statement published in the *Anthropology Newsletter (AN)* between September 1997 and September 1998. Some philosophers will find my approach too empirical and some anthropologists will find it too theoretical, but I think that in this case the intersection of disciplines is necessary, because the subject remains complex (and vexed), particularly when *essentialism* appears to be residual .

Scholars across disciplines now eschew racial essentialism. The AAA Statement on "Race" ' is avowedly nonessentialist, as is this article. Let us therefore begin with some relevant aspects of essentialism as applied to race. Essentialism is a doctrine about reality, originating with Aristotle. Different kinds or groups of things exist in nature and an individual's membership in a group is the result of the individual having the essence or

essential properties distinctive of that group. Science, in this Aristotelian tradition, involves the discovery of essences and their description in definitions. An essential definition describes the necessary and sufficient conditions for group membership. By the time John Locke came to analyze the beginnings of empirical science, in the 17th century, it was evident that few things in nature had observable real essences or essential properties, in Aristotle's sense. Rather, the empirical (i .e. scientific) classification of existing things into groups was coming to be understood as a product of the mind, imposed on nature. Nonetheless, it was widely believed in classical, pre-evolutionary biology, that species had unchanging essential properties (Sober, 1997; Zack, 2000). Since species and subspecies change over time, today human biologists do not think in terms of essences or essential properties, either for *Homo sapiens* generally, or human populations (groups) more particularly (Corcos, 1997: 141-8).

The mistaken 18th and 19th-century notion of racial essences posited the existence of general racial essences or essential properties for each race which determined specific racial traits for its members. Essentialism is the theory or doctrine built around this core notion. Sometimes the posited essences were presumed to be biological and sometimes metaphysical or spiritual. Biological essentialism is the version relevant to race, and it has several tenets that still linger in varied way: Each race has a distinct physical essence. Every individual has the physical essence of the race to which he or she belongs. Biological racial essences cause racially distinctive physical, cultural and psychological traits. Essentialism presupposes a belief in the existence of race. However, some contemporary practitioners believe that races exist, as populations, but that there are no racial essences. The belief that race does not exist logically entails the belief that there are no racial essences or essential properties.

Contemporary theoretical work in the human sciences which is relevant to what is thought about as race in common sense is now developed and presented in opposition to essentialism. However, false essentialist beliefs are not always clearly articulated, and as a result, positions presented in opposition to them may miss their target(s). Sometimes this happens because essentialism, as a scientific doctrine, was often used to justify a hierarchical model of human races, within which the white race was judged superior to all others. Writers seeking to refute white supremacist doctrines (in the sense of that association of hierarchy with essentialism), often assume that they are refuting essentialism. In fact, they are refuting *racism*, and while that is a noble undertaking, it may leave essentialist assumptions unexamined.

THE LOGIC OF NONESSENTIALISM

The 1998 AAA Statement on "Race" is a work of theory because it interprets past empirical research and, if accepted, would influence future research. At the same time, the Statement is meant to present the facts about race 'to the public' in a way that will increase social justice (*Anthropology Newsletter*, 1997). Scientists in the 19th century were insistent about imposing a socially-constructed hierarchical taxonomy of biological race on the public, partly as a justification for slavery and segregation (Smedley, 1997). In the 20th century scientists, including anthropologists, were less firm about disabusing the public about false notions of biological race. There are several reasons for this softness. Not all scientists fully recognize the biological emptiness of the idea of race. Often, scientific ideas of race are based on population traits or geographical origins,

which are less than what the public believes is the basis of race, and scientists see no reason to abandon their own minimal concepts (Forsey, 1997). Scientists engaged in research and teaching are often too busy to compose popularized versions of current consensuses in their fields. Furthermore, popular belief in racial categories has become associated with efforts to eliminate racial injustice, and the news that such categories do not exist is often received as an attack on such efforts. This is a political dilemma that empirical practitioners may be ill-equipped to resolve, because humanistic scholars and activists have thus far failed to resolve it. Overall, since scientists are not usually ideologues, firmly telling the public that its beliefs about race are groundless may resemble activism or propaganda. Nonetheless, many anthropologists now seem to think that the public ought to be informed by anthropologists that the 19th-century racial taxonomy does not exist. Of course, this benighted 'public' includes politicians, teachers, and scholars in other fields, who for one reason or another are extremely resistant to the idea that race as they imagine it is nonexistent (Moses, 1997).

It is traditional for scientists to base their claims about the existence or nonexistence of things on empirical data. But empirical data may confirm or disconfirm the existence of things on different levels of generality. Human biological racial taxonomy, or *race*, is a very general construct. The lack of empirical referents for the construct of racial taxonomy (i.e. for 'race') precludes the existence of more specific aspects of such a taxonomy and of the interaction of elements of such a taxonomy with things that do exist. This is simply a matter of logic. The AAA Statement on "Race" would have been theoretically stronger, as well as potentially more enlightening for the public, if some of the logical truths concerning racial taxonomy had been clearly stated. The relevant logical truths follow from two assumptions: nonexistent entities cannot be causes, effects, or objects in relationships with things that do exist; nonexistent entities cannot have subcategories that exist. Thus, for example, unicorns, which do not exist, cannot have an impact on existing ecological systems, and since unicorns do not exist as a general category, it is impossible for grey or golden unicorns to exist. The relevant logical truths about race are as follows:

1. If there is no human biological racial taxonomy, then there is no human biological racial hierarchy.
2. If there is no human biological racial taxonomy, then there are no specific biological races.
3. If there are no biological races, then there are no pure or mixed biological races.
4. If there *is* no human biological racial taxonomy, then there are no biological causal connections between biological race and culture or psychology.
5. If there is no human biological racial taxonomy, then there are no biological causal connections between biological race and other aspects of human biology.
6. If there is no human biological racial taxonomy, then there are no biological causal connections between race and ethnicity (Moses, 1997).

To say that 1-6 are logically true is another way of saying that they are *a priori* true. They need no further empirical confirmation and they are immune to further empirical findings. If the first clauses in 1-6 are true, i.e. if race does not exist, then there is no scientific finding that could lend credence to links between race and hierarchy, purity, culture, biology or ethnicity. I will say more about what it means to say that race does not

exist, i .e. about what 'race' means, soon. First, the AAA Statement Once it was asserted in the Statement that there are no human races, some form of the logical truths stated in 1-6 should have been recognized and relevant conclusions drawn. To see how this was *not* done, let us consider the text. At the outset, a claim about the nonexistence of biological race is set forth.

In the US both scholars and the general public have been conditioned to viewing human races as natural and separate divisions within the human species based on visible physical differences. With the vast expansion of scientific knowledge in this century, however, it has become clear that human populations are not unambiguous, clearly demarcated, biologically distinct groups. Evidence from the analysis of genetics (e .g. DNA) indicates that there is greater variation within racial groups than between them. This means that most physical variation, about 94% lies *within* so-called racial groups. Conventional geographic racial groupings differ from one another only in about 6% of their genes. In neighboring populations there is much over-lapping of genes and their phenotypic (physical) expressions. Throughout history whenever different groups have come into contact, they have interbred. The continued sharing of genetic materials has maintained all of humankind as a single species . . . Today scholars in many fields argue that race as it is understood in the USA was a social mechanism invented during the 18th century to refer to those populations brought together in colonial America: the English and other European settlers, the conquered Indian people, and those peoples of Africa brought in to provide slave labor. (American Anthropological Association, 1998)

It should be noted as a factual clarification of the Statement that since it is 94% of the human genetic difference overall, which falls within races, and that overall difference is 0.2%, the 6% of genetic difference due to perceived racial difference is 6% of 0 .2% of all human genetic material, which is 0 .012%, or less than $1/8000$ (Appiah, 199: 68-9; Templeton, 1998). And, as Jonathan Marks points out, the difference based on racial difference as defined by social categories may be even less. The figures used for difference in the Statement are based on differences in mitochondria) DNA, which occur about 5 times more rapidly than nuclear genetic differences in the histories of species. Marks therefore suggests that the nuclear genetic differences, based on preselected social racial categories, are probably 0 .0024%, or less than $1/40,000$ of human genetic material (review comments, 2000).

Following the AAA Statement claim about the nonexistence of biological race is an explanation of how hierarchical theories of racial difference functioned historically to justify cultural domination, by whites, of indigenous people, colonized people, Africans, and Jews. The Statement closes with the broad anthropological tenet that human cultural behavior is learned and all normal human beings are able to learn any culture. Furthermore, studies of infant and childhood learning confirm the effect of culture on human identities. Therefore, it is concluded:

. . . that present day inequalities between so-called racial groups are not consequences of their biological inheritance but products of historical and contemporary social, economic, educational and political circumstances . (American Anthropological Association, 1998)

In 1952, Claude Levi-Strauss wrote an essay that explained how cultural differences among human beings were not the result of biological or racial differences, but of history and environment (1965). During the 1950s and 1960s, this position was developed in different ways by L.C. Dunn (1965), Michel Leiris (1965), and others. The consensus within this group about the independence of culture and human aptitude from biology and race was expressed in four statements on *racism*, or discrimination and beliefs about the inferiority and superiority of different races, which were first published by UNESCO (1965). Throughout these statements, the existence of biological race is not clearly and directly contested. The liberatory force of the statements lies in the proclamation that human cultural achievement is not determined or constrained by biological racial identity:

The peoples of the world today appear to possess equal biological potentialities for attaining any civilizational level. Differences in the achievements of different peoples must be attributed solely to their cultural history. (UNESCO, 1965)

We have seen that the AAA Statement begins with the claim that biological race does not exist. But the AAA Statement implies that both the nonexistence of race and the ineffectiveness of racial difference for causing cultural difference have been empirically confirmed. However, as noted earlier, if race does not exist, it is logically impossible that race biologically causes culture, so the facts concerning the universality of human learning, and the ways in which culture determines identities, are beside the point. That these facts are reiterated almost 50 years after Levi-Strauss and his cohort brought international attention to them, suggests that the authors of the AAA Statement take them to be a confirmation of the nonexistence of race. This in turn implies that if the facts in question were otherwise, race might have the biological reality it is now falsely assumed to have by the public. But, the evidence for the nonexistence of race, or the lack of evidence for the existence of race, has to be independent of 'nature vs nurture' interpretations of human learning and development. Otherwise, it would be acceptable to base the existence of race on empirical evidence that biology determines culture, without first defining race. Part of the difficulty in refuting false constructions of race is that those biological traits believed to be racial traits are in fact hereditary. However, not everything that is biological or hereditary qualifies as racial -- not even according to the most extreme racists. Therefore, the general claim that biological inheritance does not determine human capacities, abilities or cultural identities, while it may be true on many grounds, is too broad a defense of the nonexistence of race. The breadth of this claim makes it seem as though future empirical findings about the link between biology and culture could confirm the existence of human biological racial taxonomy, which is not the case.

Part of this confusion in the AAA Statement, between biology and heredity overall and race, stems from the lack of a clear definition of what those who believe that race is biologically real mean by race. Obviously, the cultural traits distinctive of different so-called races on a geographical basis, as well as the stereotypical traits attributed to subordinate racial populations, are not biologically determined. But the nonscientific belief in biological race is more than a belief in the existence of racially-specific culture and behavior, although that belief about culture and behavior is part of

the nonscientific belief about race. The nonscientific belief in biological race entails that there is a biological foundation for distinct racial identity that underlies phenotypes within any race. This assumed biological foundation resembles genealogy but it is supposed to underlie even genealogy, at least in the United States. Consider the American 'one drop rule', which is an exaggerated form of hypodescent: A person is designated racially black if he or she has at least one black ancestor anywhere in his or her family history. Today, the one drop rule may be justified by reference to either custom or preference, but at the end of the 19th century it was justified by a belief that physical racial essences are passed down generationally, through blood. The foundation of the 'one drop rule' was thus a belief in racial essences, a belief that still lingers despite widespread scientific evidence that no such things have ever existed (Kinney, 1985; Mencke, 1979; Zack, 1993: ch. 8).

It has been known since about 1900 that human blood types are not racially distinct (Dubinin, 1965). No other candidate for physical racial essences has ever been presented. A biological racial essence, did it exist, would have to be some general factor, distinct for each race, and present in all members of each race. The biological racial essence would have to be *nomological*: descriptions of the essence would be used to explain and predict more specific physical racial traits. Also, if racial essences existed, they would have to be present in genetic material that differed according to race. As stated earlier, this would be the 1/8,000 (or 1/40,000) of all human genetic material that can be assigned to racial difference. That the fraction of difference is so small does not in itself prove its insignificance and neither does it prove the low probability of racial essences. Rather, the low probability of the existence of racial essences lies in the nature of what counts for racial difference, and this differs according to the race in question (Paredes, 1997; Zack, 1998: ch. 8). That is, the phenotypic criteria for racial difference are themselves different kinds of things for each of the main social racial groups: dark skin shades determine black identity; Asian identity is determined by facial features and ancestral national origin; white identity rests on the absence of traits for black or Asian identity. The genealogical requirements for racial identity also differ: blacks have black ancestry; Asians have varied ancestries of different national origins; whites have no black or Asian ancestry (Arisaka, 2000).

If an attempt is made to keep the criteria for racial difference of the same type, for instance, restricting them to differences in skin shade, hair texture and bone structure, the empirical impossibility (or very high improbability) of discovering racial essences remains, because the genes for even scientifically selected phenotypes do not get inherited together or co-vary. The recombination of racially selected phenotypes is important because there is no one phenotype shared by all members of any one race. Furthermore, any attempt on the part of science to rationalize social racial typology would be further complicated by the fact that the social phenotypical and genealogical criteria for race have varied over history and in different places. Examples of such variation are well known: the criteria for black identity in the United States varied among the states during the 19th century, between $\frac{1}{4}$ and $\frac{1}{32}$ known black ancestry, before stabilizing at the 'one drop rule' at the turn of the 20th century; Brazil does not have a one drop rule for black identity but rather a one drop rule for white identity, because ascriptions of whiteness increase with economic status; people whose ancestors were born in India may be considered black in England but white in the United States,

depending on their skin shade; Native Americans have different criteria for tribal membership from those of the US government (Jaimes, 1995 ; Wilson, 1992).

Notice, again, that this case against racial essentialism is a purely biological one, following from the improbability of finding racial essences given broad facts about Mendelian heredity (i.e. genetic recombination) and varied kinds of criteria for cultural racial identity, as well as the fact that no racial essences have ever been found. The case against biological essentialism is different from the other meaning of essentialism, whereby stereotypical cultural traits are believed to be the effect of what people believe to be biological race. However, the biological case logically overrides the cultural case (see points 4 and 6 of the list given earlier in this section), because what people believe to be biological race in the case of cultural essentialism does not exist . (Beliefs about culture are often themselves lacking in existent referents, but that is another matter.)

In science, biological racial essences have gone the way of phlogiston. But the notion lingers on in ordinary thinking, and the failure of the AAA Statement to address this superstition is costly. We are told, 'Throughout history whenever different groups have come into contact, they have interbred. The continued sharing of genetic materials has maintained all of humankind as a single species ' (*American Anthropological Association*, 1998). The implication here is that humankind might not be a single species without continued sharing of genetic material. Indeed, speciation can result from isolated breeding within groups that have common ancestors with other groups. But, if humans never were distinct races to begin with, their maintenance as one species would not be due to the kind of continued sharing of *racial* genes, as the statement implies. Rather, there has simply been a mixing *of genes* in the history of humankind. The authors of the AAA Statement are not alone in describing humanity as a whole as inextricably racially mixed. Many who now write about mixed-race identity fall into the confusion of thinking that mixed race people have varied biological *racial* ancestry. This assumption is poignantly evident in the 2000 US census forms, in which mixed-race respondents were allowed to 'identify "more than one" category of race as a means of reporting diverse ancestry' (Overby, 1997). But, if there are no racial essences, then there are no races in the way the public believes and there are no things that in combination could result in mixed race in a biological sense (see point 3 of the list given earlier on p. 448).

It would, in many cases, be a distortion to interpret the way in which the idea of race is now used in evolutionary biology, genetics or biological anthropology as an unspoken or unexamined assumption about the existence of literal racial essences. Those scientists who use concepts that resemble common-sense racial categories, such as *mongoloid*, *negroid*, or *caucasoid*, are usually referring to collections of typical traits shared by members of groups originating in geographical areas at a certain time in the past. In addition, most evolutionary models for group membership now rely more on common ancestry than similarity of traits for classificatory purposes (on the genealogical vs similarity model, see Andreasen, 1998). When scientists do currently speak of races, it is often with qualifications and disclaimers to disassociate their views from 19th-century biological essentialism: they are speaking of populations rather than individuals; their conclusions about the traits shared by such groups are no more than statistical or highly probable; the groups identified in genealogical terms, based on genetic analyses, may not resemble common-sense racial categories, even though the names for them are similar

(Andreasen, 1998). Nevertheless, such scientific use of biological concepts of race easily slides into a kind of typology that can be mistaken for the phlogiston kind of racial essentialism. This is because typology itself partly relies on what the 18th-century philosopher George Berkeley called *abstract general ideas*. An abstract general idea is supposed to be a symbol for all members of a group, which characterizes each one of them, as a whole entity, in the same way. Berkeley thought that abstract general ideas are tricks of the mind because there is nothing in reality to which they refer. He believed that our idea *man* is an abstract general idea because all men are different, and there is nothing that characterizes every one of them, as wholes, in the same way (1982: 9-14).

If population and genealogical concepts of race, which apply to groups, are applied to individual members of those groups, then they become abstract general ideas in Berkeley's sense, because there is no one thing or set of things that all members of such groups have in common. Usually, evolutionary biologists and population geneticists do not speak of individuals. However, forensic anthropologists, who classify individuals based on their skeletal remains, *have* no choice but to speak of individuals, and this is where group-based scientific concepts of race may slide into essentialist concepts of race. The group-based racial term becomes a label for an individual, and by extension it sounds as though every individual in the group to which the new individual has been assigned shares the same defining *something*, in this case a racial essence. Once this assumption becomes fixed in place, it may be very difficult to imagine that an individual could be a member of a pre-described geographic or genealogical group if that individual lacks typical traits of the group. However, on either the geographic or genealogical model of human populations, there are bound to be 'atypical' members of these groups once the similarity model is rejected and, of course, once the notion of group essences has *gone* the way of phlogiston. The question of whether a given individual is assigned to a group if the individual is atypical will be decided on the basis of whether the criteria for group membership are primarily geographical, osteological or genetic. This kind of decision highlights the ways in which all typologies are somewhat arbitrary constructions rather than literal models of natural divisions.

NONESSENTIALISM AND KENNEWICK MAN

Leonard Lieberman explains how the nature of the relevant *skeletal reference collection* determines how forensic anthropologists classify new skeletal remains. All of the skeletal traits that compose the typology of skeletal reference collections exist on continua among the different types, and they are usually referred to as *clines* rather than racial traits. This means that the existence of a typology depends on more or less arbitrary decisions about where to draw the lines between types. The criteria for inclusion in types are further contingent in that bones are shaped by environmental, as well as hereditary factors. Classification therefore works best if unidentified members have ancestors who come from the same geographic area as those in the reference collection (Lieberman, 1997). This qualification poses extreme difficulties when remains that are unusual or of unknown origin have to be classified. Given these parameters for forensic anthropology, it is clear that care must be taken not to equivocate between meanings of labels for groups in interpreting data. For instance, if a skeletal reference collection is made up of remains of members of groups with no living descendants, there is no basis on which to assume that traits of the group characterize members of living groups who, according to cultural

criteria, have been assigned to a race bearing a name similar to the name of the decedent group. Furthermore, as Lieberman points out, the forensic assignment of an individual to any group is only going to be as valid as were the original criteria used in assembling the skeletal reference group.

The discussion of Kennewick Man in the *Anthropology Newsletter* is an informative example of how the application of population- and genealogically-based ideas of race to human osteological remains sounds like racial essentialism to those who reject commonsense racial typology, while it may seem to be no more than normal empirical science to forensic anthropologists who think they can classify given remains. Let us begin with the facts of the case. Kennewick Man is the name given to remains found after the flooding of the Columbia River in Kennewick, Washington in 1996. The skeleton was examined by James Chatters, who identified a well-preserved middle-aged man with apparent 'caucasoid' features, alive about 9300 years ago (Preston, 1997a). Chatters believes that his preliminary data support hypotheses that there was an earlier, now extinct, European group in the Americas, which predated occupation by the north Asian groups believed to be the ancestors of contemporary Native Americans (Chatters, 1998). Chatters and his colleagues anticipated further study of the remains, but the age of the skeleton brought it under the jurisdiction of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) of 1990. The Army Corp of Engineers removed the skeleton to a secure vault on the assumption that it legally belonged to the Umatilla Indians, tribes in Oregon, Washington and Idaho, who claimed Kennewick Man for reburial. Chatters and seven colleagues initiated litigation for return of the skeleton to them for further study (Preston, 1997a). Those were the main facts at the time of the *AN* discussion.

The Umatilla Indians do not think that further study is desirable, because it is against their spiritual traditions to remove the dead from original places of burial. Neither do they think that further study of the skeleton is necessary, because they believe that its age alone establishes its identity as Native American. Thus, Armand Minthorn, speaking for the Umatillas:

If this individual is truly over 9,000 years old, that only substantiates our belief that he is Native American. From our oral histories, we know that our people have been part of this land since the beginning of time. We do not believe that our people migrated here from another continent, as the scientists do. We also do not agree with the notion that this individual is Caucasian. Scientists say that because the individual's head measurements do not match ours, he is not Native American. We believe that humans and animals change over time to adapt to their environment. And our elders have told us that Indian people did not always look the way we look today. (partly quoted by Preston, 1997a ; text in full at Umatilla Tribe, URL, 1999)

It should be added that Practitioners of a Norse religion in California, with ideological ties to white supremacist groups, have also claimed the skeleton as an ancestor of members of their group, the Asatru Folk Assembly (*Runestone*, URL, 1999).

The discussion about Kennewick Man in *AN* was published during the same time as another commentary that contributed to the final AAA Statement on Race. Several issues were intertwined in exchanges about Kennewick Man, and their relation to

essentialist versus nonessentialist definitions of race is instructive. First, there is the question of whether the Kennewick remains ought to be made available for study by Euro-American scientists. Then, there is the question of the race of the remains. Finally, there is the question of what the characteristics of the remains might suggest about pre-contact populations in the Americas, and their geographical origins.

No one in the pages of *AN* offered strong support for reburial of the remains under NAGPRA, and even Alan Goodman, who deplored the racialization of the remains, stated that he would welcome an opportunity to study them without such racialization (Goodman, 1997). Richard Jantz and Douglas Owsley claim that the Army Corp ought not to have seized the remains without 'an orderly process' for determining their group identity (Jantz and Owsley, 1998). It is understandable that empirical scientists would be in favor of further study no matter what 'and that they might tend to dismiss obstacles related to folk claims about identity, as 'political'. The Umatilla imperative to rebury the remains follows from their presumed Native American identity, and scientists might not wish to give such an imperative priority insofar as it is merely religious. But, the age of the remains was what triggered their seizure under NAGPRA, and this is related to historical legal principles that cannot be as easily dismissed. United States treaty law and legislation such as NAGPRA recognize the pre-colonial sovereignty of ancestors of contemporary Native Americans. As the only living groups likely to be descended from those erstwhile American sovereign groups, contemporary Native Americans would seem to have a prima facie right to claim remains that could be their ancestors. This would be an argument based on inheritance that by-passes race, in any sense of the term. Even if Kennewick Man were (apparently) racially white, he could still have been the ancestor of contemporary Native Americans. The claim by the Asatru Folk Assembly that Kennewick Man could not have been the ancestor of contemporary Native Americans, as well as a possible assumption by some anthropologists that belonging to a Caucasian or caucasoid group precludes Kennewick Man having Native American descendants, would hold up only on the basis of false biological racial essentialism. The essentialist principle would be that Native Americans and whites each have something biologically distinct about them, which determines that all descendants will be of the same 'race' as their ancestors. Furthermore, even if Kennewick Man were racially white, it is virtually certain that he could not be the ancestor of contemporary racially white Americans, because all of their ancestors arrived after colonial contact. The only way whites, such as the Asatru Assembly, could claim Kennewick Man as their ancestor would be through the nonexistent referent of an abstract general idea of racial whiteness, which overrode actual biological genealogy and made every white person a member of the same line of descent; but even in that case, it is likely that members of the Asatru Assembly would be only collateral kin to Kennewick Man.

What race is Kennewick Man? The question is scientifically meaningless if 'race' means common-sense taxonomies. No one in the *AN* discussion, including the litigating anthropologists, has claimed that if Kennewick Man can conclusively be determined to be caucasoid, it will mean that he is white in common-sense racial terms. Everyone acknowledges that the similarity of the population-based terms 'caucasoid', 'mongoloid', and 'negroid' to the common-sense terms 'white', 'Asian', and 'black', confuses issues of anthropological identification. Thus, Douglas Preston, who wrote a popularized account of the Kennewick Man case for the *New Yorker* magazine, suggested in *AN* that

anthropologists could substitute their racial-sounding taxonomy with 'Group A', 'Group B' and 'Group C' (Preston, 1997b). Whether or not Preston meant this suggestion to be taken seriously, it raises an important point. The terms 'caucasoid', 'mongoloid' and 'negroid', insofar as they are not essentialist, must refer to presumed places of ancestral origin, both as genealogical beginnings and as evolutionary sources, in terms of the environmental adaptation of different skeletal traits that can be used to classify remains. Both ancestral origins and phenotypic differences in groups, which have resulted from environmental adaptation have been racialized in essentialist constructions of race. This does not mean, however, that the varieties that have been racialized are not in themselves real. That is, the problem is not with words or with the traits to which words refer, but with the *essentializing aspect of racialization*. If the words are changed without addressing false beliefs and meanings that have no empirical referents, after a brief respite the old *false* beliefs and meanings will reattach themselves to the new words (or letters).

Nonessentialist population-based typology, although it might have empirical referents, is a weak form of typology for two reasons. First, as everyone acknowledges, the traits typified are continuous over populations, rather than discretely divided. Second, geographical-origin typology is a matter of decision. There is nothing in nature to indicate how far back one must go to make the right cut to the branches of ancestral groups. Over history, geographically isolated populations continually branch off, in terms of time spans in different places, which are reflected in genetic difference. As L. Luca Cavalli-Sforza, Paolo Menozzi and Alberto Piazza describe their own system of human evolutionary branching in *The History and Geography of Human Genes*, 'The level at which we stop our classification is completely arbitrary' (Cavalli-Sforza et al., 1996: 19). Thus, if we accept the hypothesis that modern humans originated in Africa, then all human skulls could be classified as 'negroid'. (Although, whether or not 'negroid' means the same as 'black' or 'Negro', one type does not make a typology, and if all humans are 'negroid', this does not mean that they are all of one race, as race is *typologically* understood.) On what basis is it decided how many years spent in a place make the traits of the inhabitants of that place typical of that particular origin in a defining way? Although a full answer to this question exceeds the scope of this article, it is not highly speculative to suggest that evolutionary geneticists make the major cuts in ways that correspond, albeit roughly, to contemporary common-sense racial typology. If this speculation is correct, then scientific typology is only as good as the common-sense typology on which it is based -- not very good at all.

Minthorn, speaking for the Umatillas, uses geographical origin to determine human types, a method shared by the anthropologists who typed Kennewick man as caucasoid: Kennewick Man is Indian for the Umatillas because he comes from the Americas; Kennewick Man is caucasoid for the scientists because he resembles people whose ancestors came from Europe. The main difference in method is that Minthorn does not think the claim that Indians have always inhabited the Americas can be falsified. The oral tradition Minthorn speaks from also posits what scientists might call ad hoc hypotheses of micro-evolution to account for Kennewick Man's caucasoid traits. It is not clear, however, whether Minthorn thinks that anyone alive over 9000 years ago in the Americas is by definition a Native American due to geographical location at that time, or whether Minthorn is, in effect, a polygenecist on the subject of human evolution. His

assertion of the folk belief that Native Americans have always been in the Americas would seem to confirm the latter, unless the Umatillas believe that *Homo sapiens* originated in the Americas and migrated to other continents.

Another difference between the Umatillas and the litigating anthropologists is that the Umatillas use what they believe are ultimate geographic origins in order to type remains, whereas the anthropologists use time slices in ancient history, when relative isolation in different environments resulted in what they can identify as distinct types. There is some question about whether typing in this sense is possible. Those responding to Goodman's assertion that Native American typing cannot be accomplished with accuracy suggest that some methods are more reliable than others (Goodman, 1997). Whatever the method, the size of the sample or skeleton reference collection is crucial. Chatters claims that there is a large enough sample to classify Kennewick man as a member of a distinct and now extinct group (Chatters, 1998). Duane Anderson, Alan Swedlund and David Breterniz believe that the sample is small, and the Kennewick find does not motivate them to change their classification of a 9700 year old female skeleton, found in Gordon Creek in 1963, as Native American, despite her possession of what others identify as caucasoid traits (Anderson et al., 1997).

The population-based identification of Kennewick Man is thus inconclusive, partly due to disagreement about the existence of criteria for classification. And there is one further question, namely whether or not a caucasoid Native American typology is even possible. Goodman claims it is not possible because ancient remains often have varied typological traits (Goodman, 1997). Owsley and Jantz insist that the variety within early groups is only apparent, and that in cases where it is known that whites and Native Americans were present in the same location, after details of where the remains have been found are taken into account, classification can reliably be carried out (Jantz and Owsley, 1998). Jonathan Marks, commenting on the disagreement, emphasizes the possibility of what appears to be racial diversity among ancient Native Americans, and reports that mitochondrial DNA that is characteristic of Native Americans has been found in one very old, apparently caucasoid skull (Marks, 1998). What is interesting about the entire discussion among Goodman, Owsley and Jantz, and Marks is that the disagreement stems from two incompatible premises: groups are osteologically distinct; groups are not osteologically distinct. Assuming that the claim about group distinctions is limited to nonessentialist variations that are not racial, it would seem to be an empirical matter whether remains can be classified in any given context, given accepted criteria for classification. But disagreement about appropriate osteological criteria for classification would need to be resolved on the basis of additional information from archeology and genetics.

How the ancient Americas were settled, when, by which groups - as minimally defined by where they came from - are empirical questions. The completion of this story would be of broad narrative human interest, but without essentialist ideas of race, it is difficult to see how the story could have non-metaphorical (and non-rhetorical), political, or even identity implications in the present. Kennewick Man and members of his historical-geographical cohort might have been caucasoid. Caucasoid or not, they might have been ancestors of contemporary Native Americans, or unrelated to them. As Chatters himself states, the history of the ancient Americas is turning out to be far more complex than was previously believed (Chatters, 1998). This is hardly surprising, because

ancient human history is generally an incomplete inquiry at this time. While writing this section, I read about a BBC program that presented evidence for a hypothesis that the earliest inhabitants of Brazil were a negroid group that originated in Australia (an archeological site at Serra De Capivara in north-east Brazil yielded rock paintings believed to be 50,000 years old and a 12,000-year-old skull with apparent negroid features according to forensic reconstruction [BBC 2, 1999]).

The *AN* discussion about Kennewick Man makes clear the importance of not essentializing geographically-based osteological typology. Such typology may be useful to track human migrations historically, and it is intelligible to the public because it seems to correspond to popular ideas about race. The latter is part of the essentialist problem, because the popular ideas of race are based on genetic variation that is dramatic in terms of appearance and in terms of political and economic history, colonialism especially. In terms of biological reality, as Jonathan Friedlaender points out, more reliable population markers can be found in genetic variations of mitochondria) DNA. The groups picked out by those markers provide a different taxonomy than caucasoid-mongoloid-negroid divisions. Still, the mtDNA markers are not present in all members of those populations in which they occur, so typology based on them is also a fabrication beyond 'nature' (Friedlaender, 1997). What all of the post-essentialist scientific categories of human 'racial' groups share, *epistemologically*, is a certain circularity. Any criterion used to classify members of a group at the same time defines membership in a group. This is because there is no consistent, objective determinant of racial, geographical, osteological or genetic, human group membership, for any group.

ESSENTIALISM AND MEDICINE

In the case of Kennewick Man, a distinction between population-based and racialized, skeletal traits would seem to have the effect of making empirical inquiry less fraught, even though it does not mean that all human remains can or should be objects of scientific study. In the fields of medicine and public health, the essentialist racialization of people identified as Hispanic, Asian, African-American or white may block useful research into the causes of disease-and illness by falsely implying that statistical associations of some debilities with social racial identities has explanatory force on a biological level. If racial distinctions do not exist in human biology then, purely as a matter of logic, biological race cannot be causally linked to physical predispositions for diseases or disabilities. When socially identified racial groups are found to have different diseases or types of illness, which are believed to be directly inherited or the result of inherited 'predispositions', this should be the beginning of demographically-based medical research and not the end of it. Socially identified race has no medical nomological value when it is linked to disease or illness. If such apparent links come to be generally accepted as signals of the necessity for further research, then, eventually, it could be possible to do more than offer treatment for disease (although sometimes the availability of treatment is in itself 'racially' unequal). Unequal social conditions that cause different rates of disease could be addressed as a key toward the prevention of certain diseases. Thus for example, HIV-AIDS has recently been increasing in the African-American community, while decreasing among other groups. This is a problem that at once requires medical treatment, demographically-based research about why blacks are now at greatest risk for AIDS, and social justice remedies, should it be the case

that specific (and immediately correctable) discrimination against blacks is a factor in these figures (Harrison, 1998).

Among anthropologists and other scientists in human biology, there are now two different approaches to the combination of the facts about human diversity in disease and recognition of the lack of a biological foundation for race. Both approaches require that physiological, genetic and genealogical data be collected directly from individuals. The first approach accepts a population-based notion of race, but questions whether it is possible to determine what populations individuals belong to as a reliable diagnostic tool. For example, when, in 1991, a policy committee of the American Medical Association recommended that all infants be tested for sickle cell anemia, the reasoning was that although sickle cell anemia does occur most frequently among people with Mediterranean and African ancestry, there is no reliable way independently to determine such ancestry (Uarret, 1991). A second example of the association of population typology with disease concerns research on bone marrow compatibility in terms of human leucocyte antigens (HLAs). Bone marrow compatibility depends on a match in HLAs, and recent studies have confirmed that African Americans and Asian Americans have a large number of HLAs specific to their 'racial' groups, while Caucasians, Latin Americans and Native Americans share a number of common HLAs (National Marrow Donor Program Registry and Motomi Mori et al., 1997). The registry of African American donors is disproportionately small. But African Americans are the most varied in HLAs, so even if the registry for African American donors were very large, some researchers are not confident that transplantation compatibility would increase. They therefore suggest that future resources be concentrated on working with partial compatibilities for hard-to match recipients (Beatty et al., 1995). Also, it should be noted that when donors are tested for bone marrow compatibility and population membership is used to screen applicants, there has to be individual testing to determine a match for the HLAs in question.

The use of population-based typology for medical research was also assumed in places during the discussion attendant to the AAA Statement on Race in *AN*. Thus, Robert Halberstein, writing about research on hypertension, sickle cell anemia and forensic photography in the Caribbean, argues that phenotypical markers of social race are 'unreliable criteria for classifying breeding populations' (Halberstein, 1997). Halberstein's assumption would seem to be that breeding populations are themselves reliable criteria for the presence of certain diseases. Similarly, Jonathan Friedlaender suggests that the concept of isolated breeding populations, subject to *random genetic drift*, will in the future provide useful explanations for research findings about genetic diversity, particularly in matters of disease (Friedlaender, 1997).

None of the scientists using populations as units for genetic research on disease suggests that all members of the populations in question have a gene for the disease in question (e.g. sickle cell anemia among Africans, Tay Sachs disease among Askenazi Jews) or that no members of other populations may have a particular population-based disease. This means that population membership is neither a sufficient nor a necessary condition for the presence of diseases associated with specific populations. This logical truth means that in terms of individual treatment and diagnosis for population-associated diseases, individuals have to be treated by medical practitioners as though they do not have a particular population membership. Man Goodman underscores this conclusion by

relating how in the 1970s some researchers suggested that because blacks have lower mean hemoglobin concentrations than whites, the standard for the diagnosis of anemia should differ according to race. Goodman notes the danger in this kind of thinking, which was confirmed for the case of hemoglobin by a 1991 discovery that the black-white 'racial' difference in hemoglobin concentration was entirely the result of environment (Goodman, 1998).

Goodman's dire caution about the use of population-based categories in medical science is related to his more broad criticism against anything that resembles racial typology in science (Goodman, 1998). In medicine, this is the second approach mentioned at the beginning of this section, an approach to human disease that is not only race-blind concerning a false essentialist notion of race as applied to individuals, but population race-blind, also. As already noted, state-of-the-art medical diagnosis would have to be population race-blind in this sense. The broader issue raised by Goodman is whether all human medical research should be population race-blind. An issue broader still, also raised by Goodman, is whether all human evolutionary history, which is constructed on the basis of models of populations who lived in particular places at particular times, can be constructed without typology that resembles false essentialist typologies of race. Goodman thinks it ought to be constructed without such typologies because of the dangers of retaining false essentialist notions of race, scientifically and socially. I think this brings us back to the end of the previous section: the problem is not with human genetic or geographical variety, but with the racialization of that variety in false essentialist ways. The question is whether scientists can be 'trusted' to work with population-based typologies in terms of medical research and, more broadly, evolutionary biology, without falling into what Goodman calls 'the race pit' (Goodman, 1998). I do not think that there is a real choice here because there is truth on the side of population statistics and truth on the side of the nonexistence of essentialist racial typologies. After all, it was scientists who, in addition to having posited false essentialist typologies, collected and interpreted the data about human diversity that proves the impossibilities of such typologies. Scientists are not the only ones who must be trusted not to think in murky ways with false ideas about race. The public needs to be trusted as well.

ESSENTIALISM AND WHAT TOTELL THE PUBLIC

As noted in the first section of this article, the 1998 AAA Statement on "Race" was intended to be a document that would make the views of anthropologists known to the public. I explained how the Statement failed to develop thoroughly a position against false ideas of the existence of race. It is in lacking distinct essences that human races fail to exist in the kind of typology commonly assumed; and the absence of nomological force for *race*, as an explanation of more specific human characteristics, renders race useless for biological theory. Evolutionary biologists, geneticists, medical researchers and forensic anthropologists continue to work with population typologies, while at the same time repudiating racial essentialism. Members of the public believe that essentialist racial typology exists, and for the most part they also believe that biological scientists have factual information that grounds this typology or gives it an objective and real foundation. And the public functions within private and public social hierarchies that advantage some groups, which it believes are races, at the expense of others.

Members of both advantaged and disadvantaged racialized groups have settled identities and they make both private and public identifications on the basis of the essentialist racial typology that they falsely assume to be grounded in science. To some extent, members of disadvantaged groups, as well as members of advantaged groups, believe that they benefit from having the racial identities they do. One form of such benefit is affirmative action, but there are other liberatory entitlements for non-whites, such as the right to develop minority identities in a pluralistic society, which are thought to be endangered by the news from science that race is unreal. Although race, as biological racial typology, is unreal in the way in which most people think it is real, racism is often real in precisely the ways it is thought to be. Members of some non-white groups, and whites who advocate for them, fear that without the established racial categories, racism will continue on the basis of phenotypic discrimination, but there will then be no grounds on which to criticize it formally or remedy it (Gutman, 1996). This fear ought to be addressed by those who would tell the public about the nonexistence of race in essentialist and nomological ways.

The AAA Statement on Race does not consider the conflict between nonessentialism and apparently liberatory uses of racial categories, because it does not precisely repudiate racial taxonomy or firmly close the door on essentialism. However, many of the salient points of that conflict were debated in *AN* in an article by Geoffrey Clark and responses to it, as well as Clark's reply. I will conclude this article with a consideration of that exchange and some brief remarks about the importance of recognized mixed-race identity as a cultural trend that unravels received ideas about essentialist racial typology.

Clark claims that the public is ignorant of the facts about human genetics and the ways in which these facts undermine racial typology. He associates racial typology with racism and claims that because race is biologically unreal, preferential treatment for nonwhites in affirmative action programs is unjust. Clark suggests that the solution to racism, which is based on false ideas about the reality of race, is massive education on all levels (Clark, 1997, 1998).

Most important of all, we need to become absolutely indifferent to race and ethnicity -- not glorify or celebrate what are, from a scientific point of view, utterly trivial differences. As the world becomes choked with countless millions of humans, we can ill afford to indulge these pernicious vanities. The orderly conduct of public life depends on eliminating race and ethnicity as categories in the discussion of public policy. (Clark, 1997)

Clark's critics emphasize the *social reality* of racial typology and the injustice based on it. Overall, they do not directly take up Clark's advocacy of broad education about the biological unreality of race. Peter Whiteley asserts that the debate over affirmative action is not a simple case of mistaken ontologies, in an intellectual sense, but of exclusion and discrimination, of practices of racism (Whiteley, 1997). Michael Winkelmann claims that the use of scientifically accurate terminology will not 'eliminate historically produced intergroup social inequalities' (Winkelmann, 1998). Lee Baker cautions, 'If we continue to tell the fed. to eliminate race we may be usurping a powerful tool to combat racial

inequality' (Baker, 1998). John Studstill states that people have a right to identify as they choose, and he would include mixed-race identities under that freedom (Studstill, 1998). Mica Pollock sums up the impasses in these disagreements by stressing the complexity of the relationship between science and what the public now believes:

An anti-racist anthropology must loudly theorize a complicated contradiction: racial categories made insidiously relevant throughout history, are neither essential nor outdated. (Pollock, 1998)

To some extent, the disagreement between Clark and his critics is semantic. When Clark claims that race is unreal, he means that it is unreal in science. This is not a denial of the social reality of racism or of the common belief in racial essentialism. By the same token, Clark's critics do not dispute the lack of a scientific basis for racial essentialism. But, there is a real disagreement concerning appropriate remedies for racism. Clark thinks that racism presupposes an essentialist belief in racial typology and that education about the scientific facts will end racism, while his critics believe that the false typology has already effected a kind of damage that cannot be fixed by widespread knowledge of the truth alone. It is difficult to believe that Clark's critics think that education about the truth should be withheld from the public, and difficult to believe that Clark thinks that racism, as social practice, is simply a matter of cognitive error or ignorance. However, widespread education about the scientific facts does not yet exist. It is an empirical question whether or not such education would minimize or in some cases eliminate racism. It is possible that without an underlying assumption about the reality of essentialist racial typology, discriminatory and exclusionary treatment based on that assumption would be much more difficult to justify, and that could lead to greater equality. It is also possible that widespread education could be absorbed and that people would continue with racist practices on an admittedly religious basis, or on a simply 'cultural' basis. Whether it will end racism or not, such education seems just, because it is a matter of specialists presenting their best information to the public. It is morally right, as a matter of principle, to let the truth be known.

However, an answer to the question of whether the public should be told the truth about race does not imply what to do about existing effects of racism, one way or the other. The required education program could be in effect and people who are falsely racialized might still be perceived to be in need of assistance against structural discrimination. The question of whether racial categories should be retained for public record keeping is also a separate issue from telling the public the truth, provided that one credits the public (and its politicians and media) with a modicum of sophistication. Policy makers could design forms that contained the old racial terms, but with disclaimers, or slight variations in their names. Racial terms could be mentioned without being used, which is easily done by the use of quotation marks around racial terms.

The elimination of essentialist racial ideology is not a question of changing words but of changing meanings. The 'fed' could eliminate the words 'race' and 'ethnicity' and all the types subsumed under them, and things might not change at all if people still use the concepts underlying the race words. Alternatively, the usage of the words could continue unchanged but their meanings could change, with very broad progress toward

social justice. Two things are important as Pollock states: educate against essentialism and take action against racism.

For those who do not think that a modicum of sophistication is possible in matters of race, the growing cultural phenomenon of mixed-race identity recognition should be encouraging. This is a cultural matter, because insofar as race is unreal, so is mixed race unreal. But the old essentialist racist paradigm presupposes a certain amount of 'purity' within races, as well as three or four major racial groups that are socially intelligible, based on phenotypes (Zack, 1999). Mixed-race identity recognition results in at least 15 possibilities, allowing for combinations among the four recognized racial groups. That kind of acknowledged diversity makes common-sense racial typing extremely difficult -- even for the politically correct (Zack, 1998: ch. 8). Although some claims for mixed-race identity recognition seem to reify essentialist notions of race, in reality they deconstruct many social ideas and practices based on essentialism, such as phenotypic stereotypes, taboos against out-marriage, residential segregation, monolithic cultural heritages, the one drop rule for black identity, the assumption that parents and children must have the same racial identity and uncritical loyalty to custom.

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