Carrol and All,

Carrol chided me, at first anyway, for referencing the implied scientific racism of Steven Pinker, preparatory to my supportive account of Pinker’s citing of “ideology” as the culprit in the making of authoritarian rhetoric, not “hereditarianism,” transcendental “religion,” the idea of Divinely inspired texts, or what have you. Since Richard Lewontin on “Human Biological Diversity” (1972, 1982) and Stephen Jay Gould in *Panda’s Thumb* (1981, chapters 13-16) and the *Mismeasure of Man* (sic; 1982), the word “race” has had little or no rhetorical sanction in most intellectually respectable circles in the U.S. of A., as Carrol avowed. Even general-interest works now---I have two such on my shelves---vouchsafe, as Carrol says, that no such thing as “race” any longer exists, nor, presumably, ever did. Different hominid species perhaps, the past 2.6 million years. Not disparate “sapient” races.

(A few outliers of the Hans J. Eysenck [London], Thomas J. Buschard, Jr. [Minnesota], or A. W. F. Edwards [Cambridge] type demur [Google “Lewontin’s Fallacy” for particulars, for a Wikipedia piece based on Edwards’ 2003 article in the journal *BioEssays*], but they enjoy little credence in public political or social discussion. Indeed, theirs is a distinct rhetoric of “deflection” anytime they step beyond the cloistered safety of their academic journals and university presses. [See, as I indicated, Chapter 8 in Pinker’s *Blank Slate* for, in this case, risible rhetorical gymnastics.] They recognize their status as pariahs. Publicly, as in their general-interest books and articles in the political “public square,” they try to dilute the poison in their pens as much as possible.)

A new rhetorical theme has, though, not only replaced the rhetoric of “race,” but has seemingly gained conspicuous cachet and acceptance in popular communication. I speak of the notion of “continent” or “region” of “primary genetic origin.” Henry Lewis Gates, an African-American scholar at Harvard, is now well into his second series on PBS on such a hereditary motif. (E.g., Condoleezza Rice, 51 percent African, 40 percent European, 9 percent Asian; “Finding Your Roots with Henry Louis Gates,” PBS, April 30, 2012). All the anchors at CNN have likewise been featured the past three months in terms of percentages of DNA from this continent or that. This approach got credence via Neil Risch, Esteban Birchard, Elad Zev, and Hua Tang, “Categorization of Humans in Biomedical Research: Genes, Race and Disease,” *Genome Biology* (July 3, 2002). Risch and Tang are from Stanford; Birchard and Zev, from San Francisco.

Celeste Condit directly attacked Risch et al. in *QJS*, November, 2008. Kelly Happe did so indirectly, in *QJS*, 99 (2), 2013. In any case, the work of the Stanford/San Francisco team has caught on, with, seemingly, few raised eyebrows.

Complicating the matter still further, researchers from Oxford, University College London, and the Max Planck Institute in Germany, now claim to have isolated genetically 95 distinguishable populations, not only as to place, but also as to time (Nicholas Wade, “Tracing Ancestry, Researchers Produce a Genetic Atlas of Human Mixing Events,” *NYTimes.com*, February 13, 2014).

Now, whatever the virtues or vices of the concept of “primary continent or region of genetic origin”---valid or not in terms of more or less exact biological traceability (how would I know, a humble rhetorician?)---such terminology at least tames a bit Burke’s “entelechial dog” (*LASA*, pp. 73-74). “Black” and “White,” “African-American” and “European-American,” to say nothing of “Asian-American” and “Native-American” and “Hispanic-American,” etc., are especially egregious “allness” terms, to cite Korzybski. They are “ideals,” each of which subsumes within it quite disparate human beings, as to their genomic cast. In this day and age, many, if not most, citizens of the fruited plain are ethnic mixtures of one variety or another. The new nomenclature acknowledges and puts into play the complex reality global abstractions like “African-American” and “European-American” ignore. Genetically, various groups tend to be contraries, not contradictories. Or so we’re told. (Geneticists are assuring us now that Europeans and European-Americans are 2 to 4 percent Neanderthal, for cryin’ out loud. Talk about biological variety!)

Here’s where Burke’s “cheese” analogy may come into play. Burke says, the universe is like a “cheese.” The arbitrary languages the “symbolic species” (Deacon) has evolved over time can “slice” that space-time or space-process continuum any which way, into variously denominated “events.” There exist, however, certain constraints or pressures that will limit, over time at any rate, the flexibility implicit in the notion of “arbitrary.” One constraint is, we all know, the general resistances Burke subsumes under the heading of “recalcitrance” (*P&C*, pp. 255-61). A recognition of the “sheer brute materials of the world as it is” in their structure and function, material “recalcitrance” we can call it, is surely a primary aspect of this fractious force (*GM*, p. 100). We can perhaps also credit “social” recalcitrance as a resistant feature as well. I won’t right now go into how that tension might play itself out. It’s something of a long story (note the “ethical bent” Burke considers “a part of the universe, and a very important part,” *P&C*, pp. 256-57).

However, let’s note, too, as a hefty coercive force in symbolic action the motive implicit in the term Burke highlights in *P&C*, pp. 102-107, and Cassirer pinpoints as well (*Language and Myth*, p. 37): “interest.” Our “classification[s]” are “dictated by interest,” Burke says. Interests, intentions, purposes, values, and the common “expectancies” they generate over time can be viewed as the very essence of the “arbitrariness” a given language manifests, or as a formidable incentive in shaping language one way or another. Our interests, purposes, values, needs---choose your preferred label---can and do serve as a potent impetus toward this linguistic “merger” and that favored “division,” instead of some alternative or alternatives.

Burke advances the notion of “adequacy” or “inadequa[cy]” as a viable, generalized standard of judgment of our quasi-arbitrary symbolic action (*P&*C, p. 101; *ATH*, p. 4; or “serviceability,” “satisfaction,” curative power, what have you). “We must,” Burke says, “name the friendly or unfriendly functions and relationships in such a way that we are able to do something about them” [let’s say, something useful as per sustainable human life in the large; *ATH*, p. 4; *P&C*, “Tests of Success,” pp. 100-102).

Burke affords an example of “adequate” vs. “inadequate” slicing of the linguistic “cheese” via “merger and division.” Socrates, Burke notes, held in favor a “dialectician” who could “carve an idea at the joints.” The question would be, for Burke and his epigone, where do we find the “joints” (*GM*, p. 404) in a given instance? They’re not necessarily “out there,” clear-cut and visually and “logically” obvious, in the universe of material flux and change. Where the “joints” are depends on human “interest[s],” “value[s],” “purpose[s],” in the service of doing something useful, adequate, preservative, even “protective” (*P&C*) for symbolizing animals. For animal life in the large, that something, drawing a line of demarcation “accurately,” requires, Burke-wise, separation between the symbolic and the nonsymbolic. The symbolizing species is both emersed in, and transcendent in respect to, “sheer” motion, as Burk would put it. Animals that do not morally symbolize possess no such transcendence.

Burke therefore inveighs against the “treat[ment],” via merger, “of ethical issues in exclusively non-ethical terms,” that is, putting symbolic and nonsymbolic animals in the same bin, when applying, as perspective, the criterion of “motivation.” We don’t get a good and accurate handle on human beings, when we treat them like pigeons in a Skinner box, like Pavlov’s dogs at dinner time, like the “naked apes” of Desmond Morris, or like the sociobiologically-driven fauna E.O. Wilson’s “conscillience” wants to turn them into.

So, what’s the perspective, value, or interest that has, in effect, eradicated the term “race” in respectable academic conversation, sliced the “cheese,” so to speak, in terms of a new and more useful merger, a more socially “adequate” terminology, one that fuses together all humanity from the perspective of abilities and potential, as well as intrinsic worth, and “divides” humanity in unison from beings in the nonverbal realm? After all, superficial “morphological characters” (Ernst Mayr, *Animal Species and Evolution*, 1963, p. 649) still enable us, generally, to distinguish persons with different types of “primary genetic” backgrounds, be they Sub-Saharan African, Northern European, Southern European, East Asian, Native American, Hispanic, and so forth. The rhetoric of “racial” and “ethnic” differences still seems alive and well in the parlance of the great unwashed, who tend to unite and divide according to what even Celeste Condit (*QJS*, November, 2008) labels, if invidiously, their “practical” approach to a “reality” they think they can plainly see as they look around at the physical appearance of other people.

(Case in point: After a recent extended-family event, I remarked to my wife that her grandniece, Jennifer, was such a bright and beautiful Italian-looking young woman. Jennifer’s mother, Wendy, the niece, is of a more northerly European ancestry. Wendy married a Sabatino.)

For what it’s worth, my view is that the culmination of the civil rights revolution that transpired in the 1960s might have---I modestly emphasize “might have”---had something to do with the transformation on the word and concept of “race” that began in earnest in the early 1970s, a mere half-dozen years after the civil rights bills. Shame, revulsion, rejection of the “Ancient Grammar” (Happe, *QJS*, “The Body of Race: Toward a Rhetorical Understanding of Racial Ideology,” 2013) was so intense, a compensating and cleansing thrust toward the egalitarianism in our founding Declaration, now at last within reach, took potent hold. We could now truly “merge” where there had been “division.” Black/White, Negroid/Caucasoid, African-American/European-American---the superficial morphological characters that had previously justified such a dialectic in a Jim Crow world were now seen as tokens of a shameful past. Differences in skin color were now subordinate to the overwhelmingly more numerous species similarities. Human symmetricality superceded formerly “racial” complementarity. Ideally, at least, in the U.S., all of humankind was not only “free at last,” but also “one” at last. The rhetoric of Lewontin and Gould and those books on my shelves have made it so.

Consequently, this welcome pentadic shift has transpired: When it comes to disparate human outcomes, the agent-act ratio has been displaced by a scene-act correspondence. Conspicuously failing public schools, with their safely unionized and coddled teachers; discrimination; poverty; prenatal and postnatal malnutrition; bad neighborhoods; and the lingering legacy of three hundred years of slavery and segregation are recognized and decried for their baneful and persistent influence.

The upshot is: The civil-rights revolution brought in its wake a rhetorical revolution that banished not only the asymmetrical “White”/”Negro” polarization, but also, among progressive elites, the very concept of race itself. A now legislatively sanctioned egalitarianism consigned the “Ancient Grammar” of “racial” privilege to the dustbin of history, carved away at the dialectic of “race” so as to locate a more adequate “joint” placement between the symbolic and nonsymbolic, construed at last superficial morphological characters as just that, superficial and inconsequential, and dissolved the psychotically entelechial ideals of racial nomenclature into the genetic ambiguities modern populations evince.

“Ethnicity,” not “race.” Even the discredited Herrnstein and Murray of *Bell Curve* infamy were constrained to so characterize (p. 269).

Would that the “tragedy” of dialectical entelechies might give way to the promise of a unifying entitlement the notion of mere “ethnicity” would suggest.

Ed