

## Lecture 4:

### Racism

## Descent communities

(ancestry, genealogy, lineage, origin)

- the principle of genealogical connection by which attachment to a particular ancestral group is attained
- key words: lineage, kinship, ancestors, blood, 'own kind', brothers and sisters, father and mother (land) – 'fatherland', 'Mother Russia', 'the children of Africa'...
- 3 English words with connotations of shared descent and culture: ethny, race, nation

## Ethnic group or ethny (*ethnie*)

- from Greek *ethnos*: people, unity of people with common blood or descent (it referred to a basic human category, not a subgroup)
- *ethnikos*: referring to heathens, the 'others', foreign
- 15th century in English *ethnic* meant somebody not Hebrew, not Christian, so again a pagan --> not 'us' but 'others'
- the term 'ethnicity' first appeared in English in the 1950s; it has various meanings: ethnic identity, the essence of ethny, belonging to ethny...

## 6 main features of ethnies:

(Hutchinson & Smith, 1996)

- common name
- myth of common ancestry (shared origin)
- shared historical memories
- elements of common culture
- homeland
- sense of solidarity

## What is the difference between race and ethny?

- the need to distinguish between the two: **race** refers to the classification of people, it is concerned with the categorisation of 'them'; **ethnicity** refers to group identification and is more concerned with the identification of 'us' (Banton)
- the distinction is not necessary (Eriksen; van den Berghe) – in both cases the social concern is with common biological descent, even when the markers are primarily cultural

## 'Race'

- the origin of the word is obscure, unknown; same word found in English, French, German, Spanish, Portuguese, Slovenian, Czech? ...
- the word *race* entered the English language in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, from the French *race* "race, breed, lineage," possibly from Italian *razza*, (cf. Sp. *razza*, Port. *raza*)
- Oxford: a group of persons, animals or plants connected by common descent, origin
- persons descended from a common ancestor
- a tribe, nation or people regarded as of common stock (used from about 1600 onward)
- one of great divisions of mankind, based on physical peculiarities (from 1774)

## 'Race'

- group of common descent; biological type; type determining social and cultural characters
- race: a group defined as distinct because of its supposed common physical characteristics (late 18<sup>th</sup>, early 19<sup>th</sup> century)
- social construct; race exists as a social category - it is people who make the classification and definition (historical and contextual role)
- ideas about race emerged in specific social and political contexts, circumstances, environments
- the idea of race as a meaningful biological category is predominantly dismissed
- no fixed or unchanging meaning

## History of racism

- seeing contemporary forms of racism in isolation from the past means ignoring the history of racism
- the idea of different 'races' emerged when European and non-European peoples came into contact (late 15<sup>th</sup>, early 16<sup>th</sup> century)
- European era of exploration and expansion
- the rise of the African slave trade
- European imperial domination and colonisation
- all this resulted in articulation of ideas about the attributes of other races, 'what is the Other like?'
- from the 18<sup>th</sup> century onward proliferation of writing about race and the emergence of racism (racial ideas about black 'inferiority' and 'superiority' of some racial groups etc.)

## Race and science

- early use of word was parallel to nation or people
- in late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century the word acquired new meanings
- initially scholars focused on cataloguing and describing; a strong tendency to rank all the things in the world (18<sup>th</sup> century)
- 18<sup>th</sup> century Europe = the cradle of modern racism (Mosse)

## Race and science: the Enlightenment

- the authority of science promotes and encourages observation, comparison, measuring, ordering of physical characteristics of human bodies
- these 'scientific activities' are regulated by classical aesthetic and cultural norms (the Enlightenment brought a revived interest and appreciation of classical antiquity; for example the Greek 'beauty ideal')
- phrenology (reading the skull), physiognomy (reading the face) – combined with value judgements following aesthetic criteria
- socio-political uses of science; hierarchical ordering of races
- e.g. USA, later Germany, **eugenics** (= the study of methods of improving genetic qualities by selective breeding, especially as applied to human mating)

## Modernity and race

- racism is inseparable from modernity (Wieviorka)
- the dialectic of Enlightenment (racism present in major writings of the era: Montesquieu, Voltaire, Hume, Jefferson, Kant etc.)
- exploration, domination, science and Christianity
- the idea of race has been most influential in a period of European hegemony
- by end of 19<sup>th</sup>, start of 20<sup>th</sup> the idea of racial superiority widespread – colonial racism postulated the inferiority of colonised people; modern anti-semitism

## Bringing in the ethnicity

- after the atrocities of the Second World War and the Holocaust and anti-semitism, the word 'race' became problematic
- the word 'ethnicity' becomes the preferred choice for expressing inter-group differences
- especially from the 1960s onward; anti-colonial, anti-racist arguments => ethnicity expresses positive feelings of belonging to a cultural group
- after the collapse of communism more negative aspects of ethnicity come to the fore (esp. because of 'ethnic cleansing')
- but - the persistence of race:

## Race in the US law enforcement

- FBI identifies fugitives by sex, physical features, occupation, nationality and **race**:
- White,
- Black,
- White Hispanic,
- Asian



## 8. Ethnicity

Please indicate with a tick the ethnic group to which you feel you belong, or give details of the group to which you feel you belong in the section marked OTHER. Ethnicity is not the same as nationality, place of birth or citizenship but is to do with colour, race, broad ethnic group and culture.

**Asian or Asian British:**  
 Bangladeshi  
 Indian  
 Pakistani  
 Other Asian Background

**Mixed Parentage:**  
 White and Asian  
 White and Black African  
 White and Black Caribbean  
 Other Mixed Background

**Black or Black British:**  
 African  
 Caribbean  
 Other Black Background

**White:**  
 White British  
 White Irish  
 Other White Background

**Chinese or other ethnic group:**  
 Chinese  
 Any other - please state: \_\_\_\_\_



PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL

<b>RACE</b>	
Asian or Asian British	<input type="checkbox"/> Indian <input type="checkbox"/> Pakistani <input type="checkbox"/> Bangladeshi <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="text"/> Please specify
Black or Black British	<input type="checkbox"/> Caribbean <input type="checkbox"/> African <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="text"/> Please specify
Mixed	<input type="checkbox"/> White & Asian <input type="checkbox"/> White & Black African <input type="checkbox"/> White & Black Caribbean <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="text"/> Please specify
White	<input type="checkbox"/> British <input type="checkbox"/> Irish <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="text"/> Please specify
PTO	
Chinese	<input type="checkbox"/>
Any other ethnic group	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="text"/> Please specify

## Contemporary racism

- no single monolithic racism but various distinct racisms?
- no longer an ideology about biological arguments ('classical' racism as natural)
- a new era in the history of racism began with decolonisation, decline of scientific racism, economic crisis of the industrial societies (1960s, 1970s)
- a range of characteristics employed to construct the difference – 'cultural racism'
- the need to study the role of the state and the political institutions in shaping ethnic and race relations (cf. nationalism)
- post-1989, post-socialist racism, neo-racism

## Next week's readings:

- What is the nation? What is nationalism? What is the relationship between the two?
- Read texts from these authors either from readers "Nationalism" or "The Ethnicity Reader" or go straight to the original:
  - **Miroslav Hroch**: Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe (pp. xi-xv, 3)
  - **Anthony D. Smith**: The Ethnic Origins of Nations (pp. 6-13)
  - **Ernest Gellner**: Nations and Nationalism (1-7)
  - **Benedict Anderson**: Imagined Communities (5-7)