SIPA USA-KT/Sipa Press/Newscom

KWAME ANTHONY Appiah

Kwame Anthony Appiah (pronounced AP-eea, with the accent on the first syllable) was born in London; he grew up in Ghana, in the town of Asante; he took his MA and PhD degrees from Cambridge University in England; he is now a citizen of the United States. He has taught at Yale, Cornell, Duke, Harvard, and, most recently, Princeton, where he is the Laurence S. Rockefeller University Professor of Philosophy and a member of the University Center for Human Values. Appiah's father was Ghanaian and a leader in the struggle for Pan-Africanism and Ghanaian independence from Britain; his mother, originally Peggy Cripps, was British and the daughter of a leading figure in the Labour government. Appiah's work circulates widely and has won numerous awards. He was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the American Philosophical Society and was inducted in 2008 into the American Academy of Arts and Letters. In 2012, he was awarded the National Humanities Medal.

Appiah's life illustrates the virtues of a "rooted cosmopolitanism," a term he offers to describe a desired way of living in the world, and it illustrates the difficulties we face in naming someone as black or white or African or American. In the preface to his book *The Ethics of Identity* (2004), he says,

> What has proved especially vexatious, though, is the effort to take account of those social forms we now call identities: genders and sexual orientations, ethnicities and nationalities, professions and vocations. Identities make ethical claims because — and this is just a fact about the world we human beings have created — we make our lives as men and as women, as gay and as straight people, as Ghanaians and as Americans, as blacks and as whites. Immediately, conundrums start to assemble. Do identities represent a curb on autonomy, or do they provide its contours: What claims, if any, can identity groups as such justly make upon the state? These are concerns that have gained a certain measure of salience in recent political philosophy, but, as I hope to show, they are anything but newfangled. What's modern is that we conceptualize identity in particular ways. What's age-old is that when we are asked — and ask ourselves — who we are, we are being asked what we are as well. (p. xiv)

Appiah is an award-winning and prolific writer. His books include *Assertion and Conditionals* (1985); *For Truth in Semantics* (1986); *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (1992); *The Ethics of Identity* (2005); *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (2007); *The Honor Code: How Moral Revolutions Happen* (2010); and *Lines of Descent: W. E. B. Du Bois and the Emergence of Identity* (2014). He is also the author of three mystery novels, *Avenging Angel* (1991), *Nobody Likes Letitia* (1994), and *Another Death in Venice* (1995); a textbook, *Thinking It Through: An Introduction to Contemporary Philosophy* (2003); and, with Henry Louis Gates Jr., edited the *Encarta Africana* CD-ROM encyclopedia. The selection that follows was taken from a book coauthored with Amy Gutmann, *Color Conscious: The Political Morality of Race* (1996), winner of the 1997 Ralph J. Bunche award from the American Political Science Association. *Color Conscious* is drawn from the lectures Appiah and Gutmann gave as the Tanner Lectures on Human Values at the University of California, San Diego. We've included one section from Appiah's half of the exchange, so at times you will hear him allude to things he said earlier in that chapter. The section we've provided can, however, easily stand alone and be read as a single, coherent essay.

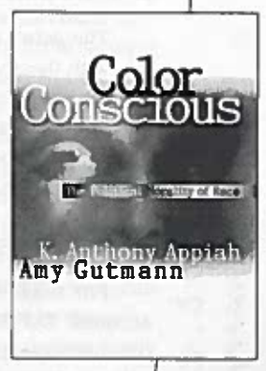
As you read "Racial Identities," it will help to pay particular attention to *voice* — to the way the writer locates himself within available ways of speaking and thinking. Appiah writes as a philosopher. That is, he writes from within ideas, from within trains of thought. He is not necessarily endorsing these ways of thinking. They are not necessarily his thought processes, or ones he would endorse. He is trying them on, testing their consequences or limits, showing where they might lead.

You can't, in other words, quickly assume that an affirmative sentence expresses Appiah's own thoughts or beliefs. This is tricky. For example, listen to these sentences. Where might you locate Appiah?

> I have insisted that African-Americans do not have a single culture, in the sense of shared language, values, practices, and meanings. But many people who think of races as groups defined by shared cultures, conceive that sharing in a different way. They understand black people as sharing black culture by *definition*: jazz or hip-hop belongs to an African-American, whether she likes it or knows anything about it, because it is culturally marked as black. Jazz belongs to a black person who knows nothing about it more fully or naturally than it does to a white jazzman. (p. 52)

Appiah is not saying that he believes jazz belongs to a black person more fully or naturally than it does to a white person. He is saying that "many people" have a way of thinking about race and culture that will lead them to such statements or beliefs.

Learning to read along with a philosopher, with a writer who is thinking about ways of thinking, is challenging. As you read, keep an ear cocked for moments when Appiah gives voice to others, and be alert for those moments (and they are fewer) when he speaks for himself.



Racial Identities

"SPEAKING OF CIVILIZATIONS"

In 1911, responding to what was already clear evidence that race was not doing well as a biological concept, W.E.B. Du Bois, the African-American sociologist, historian, and activist, wrote in *The Crisis*, the magazine of the NAACP, which he edited:

> The leading scientists of the world have come forward . . . and laid down in categorical terms a series of propositions[1] which may be summarized as follows:
>
> 1. (a) It is not legitimate to argue from differences in physical characteristics to differences in mental characteristics . . .
>
> 2. The civilization of a . . . race at any particular moment of time offers no index to its innate or inherited capacities . . .[2]

And he concluded: "So far at least as intellectual and moral aptitudes are concerned we ought to speak of civilizations where we now speak of races."[3] I have argued before that Du Bois's proposal to "speak of civilizations" turns out not to replace a biological notion but simply to hide it from view.[4] I think there are various difficulties with the way that argument proceeded, and I should like to do better. So let me try to reconstruct a sociohistorical view that has more merit than I have previously conceded.

Among the most moving of Du Bois's statements of the meaning of "race" conceived in sociohistorical terms is the one in *Dusk of Dawn*, the "autobiography of a race concept," as he called it, which he published in 1940. Du Bois wrote:

> The actual ties of heritage between the individuals of this group, vary with the ancestors that they have in common with many others: Europeans and Semites, perhaps Mongolians, certainly American Indians. But the physical bond is least and the badge of color relatively unimportant save as a badge; the real essence of this kinship is its social heritage of slavery; the discrimination and insult; and this heritage binds together not simply the children of Africa, but extends through yellow Asia and into the South Seas. It is this unity that draws me to Africa.[5]

For reasons I shall be able to make clear only when I have given my account, Du Bois's own approach is somewhat misleading. So instead of proceeding with exegesis of Du Bois, I must turn next to the task of shaping a sociohistorical account of racial identity. Still, as it turns out, it is helpful to start from Du Bois's idea of the "badge of color."

RACIAL IDENTITY AND RACIAL IDENTIFICATION[6]

I have argued that Jefferson and Arnold thought that when they applied a racial label they were identifying people with a shared essence. I have argued, also, that they were wrong — and, I insist, not slightly but wildly wrong. Earlier in American history the label "African" was applied to many of those who would later be thought of as Negroes, by people who may have been under the impression that Africans had more in common culturally, socially, intellectually, and religiously than they actually did. Neither of these kinds of errors, however, stopped the labeling from having its effects. As slavery in North America became racialized in the colonial period, being identified as an African, or, later, as a Negro, carrying the "badge of color," had those predictable negative consequences, which Du Bois so memorably captured in the phrase "the social heritage of slavery; the discrimination and insult."

If we follow the badge of color from "African" to "Negro" to "colored race" to "black" to "Afro-American" (and this ignores such fascinating detours as the route by way of "Afro-Saxon") we are thus tracing the history not only of a signifier, a label, but also a history of its effects. At any time in this history there was, within the American colonies and the United States that succeeded them, a massive consensus, both among those labeled black and among those labeled white, as to who, in their own communities, fell under which labels. (As immigration from China and other parts of the "Far East" occurred, an Oriental label came to have equal stability.) There was, no doubt, some "passing"; but the very concept of passing implies that, if the relevant fact about the ancestry of these individuals had become known, most people would have taken them to be traveling under the wrong badge.

The major North American exception was in southern Louisiana, where a different system in which an intermediary Creole group, neither white nor black, had social recognition; but *Plessy v. Ferguson* reflected the extent to which the Louisiana Purchase effectively brought even that state gradually into the American mainstream of racial classification. For in that case Homer Adolph Plessy — a Creole gentleman who could certainly have passed in most places for white — discovered in 1896, after a long process of appeal, that the Supreme Court of the United States proposed to treat him as a Negro and therefore recognize the State of Louisiana's right to keep him and his white fellow citizens "separate but equal."

The result is that there are at least three sociocultural objects in America — blacks, whites and Orientals — whose membership at any time is relatively, and increasingly, determinate. These objects are historical in this sense: to identify all the members of these American races over time, you cannot seek a single criterion that applies equally always; you can find the starting point for the race — the subcontinental source of the population of individuals that defines its initial membership — and then apply at each historical moment the criteria of intertemporal continuity that apply at that moment to decide which individuals in the next generation

count as belonging to the group. There is from the very beginning until the present, at the heart of the system, a simple rule that very few would dispute even today: where both parents are of a single race, the child is of the same race as the parents.

The criteria applicable at any time may leave vague boundaries. They certainly change, as the varying decisions about what proportion of African ancestry made one black or the current uncertainty as to how to assign the children of white-yellow "miscegenation" demonstrate. But they always definitely assign some people to the group and definitely rule out others; and for most of America's history the class of people about whom there was uncertainty (are the Florida Seminoles black or Indian?) was relatively small.[7]

Once the racial label is applied to people, ideas about what it refers to, ideas that may be much less consensual than the application of the label, come to have their social effects. But they have not only social effects but psychological ones as well; and they shape the ways people conceive of themselves and their projects. In particular, the labels can operate to shape what I want to call "identification": the process through which an individual intentionally shapes her projects — including her plans for her own life and her conception of the good — by reference to available labels, available identities.

Identification is central to what Ian Hacking has called "making up people."[8] Drawing on a number of examples, but centrally homosexuality and multiple personality syndrome, he defends what he calls a "dynamic nominalism," which argues that "numerous kinds of human beings and human acts come into being hand in hand with our invention of the categories labeling them."[9] I have just articulated a dynamic nominalism about a kind of person that is currently usually called "African-American."

Hacking reminds us of the philosophical truism, whose most influential formulation is in Elizabeth Anscombe's work on intention, that in intentional action people act "under descriptions"; that their actions are conceptually shaped. It follows, of course, that what people can do depends on what concepts they have available to them; and among the concepts that may shape one's action is the concept of a certain kind of person and the behavior appropriate to that kind.

Hacking offers as an example Sartre's brilliant evocation, in *Being and Nothingness*, of the Parisian *garçon de café*: "His movement is quick and forward, a little too precise, a little too rapid. He comes toward the patrons with a step a little too quick. He bends forward a little too eagerly, his eyes express an interest too solicitous for the order of the customer."[10] Hacking comments:

> Sartre's antihero chose to be a waiter. Evidently that was not a possible choice in other places, other times. There are servile people in most societies, and servants in many, but a waiter is something specific, and a *garçon de café* more specific. . . .

> As with almost every way in which it is possible to be a person, it is possible to be a *garçon de café* only at a certain time, in a certain place, in a certain social setting. The feudal serf putting food on my lady's table can no more choose to be a *garçon de café* than he can choose to be lord of the manor. But the impossibility is evidently of a different kind.[11]

The idea of the *garçon de café* lacks, so far as I can see, the sort of theoretical commitments that are trailed by the idea of the black and the white, the homosexual and the heterosexual. So it makes no sense to ask of someone who has a job as a *garçon de café* whether that is what he really is. The point is not that we do not have expectations of the *garçon de café*: that is why it is a recognizable identity. It is rather that those expectations are about the performance of the role: they depend on our assumption of intentional conformity to those expectations. As I spent some time arguing earlier, we *can* ask whether someone is really of a black race, because the constitution of this identity is generally theoretically committed: we expect people of a certain race to behave a certain way not simply because they are conforming to the script for that identity, performing that role, but because they have certain antecedent properties that are consequences of the label's properly applying to them. It is because ascription of racial identities — the process of applying the label to people, including ourselves — is based on more than intentional identification that there can be a gap between what a person ascriptively is and the racial identity he performs: it is this gap that makes passing possible.

Race is, in this way, like all the major forms of identification that are central to contemporary identity politics: female and male; gay, lesbian, and straight; black, white, yellow, red, and brown; Jewish-, Italian-, Japanese-, and Korean-American; even that most neglected of American identities, class. There is, in all of them, a set of theoretically committed criteria for ascription, not all of which are held by everybody, and which may not be consistent with one another even in the ascriptions of a single person; and there is then a process of identification in which the label shapes the intentional acts of (some of) those who fall under it.

It does not follow from the fact that identification shapes action, shapes life plans, that the identification itself must be thought of as voluntary. I don't recall ever choosing to identify as a male;[12] but being male has shaped many of my plans and actions. In fact, where my ascriptive identity is one on which almost all my fellow citizens agree, I am likely to have little sense of choice about whether the identity is mine; though I *can* choose how central my identification with it will be — choose, that is, how much I will organize my life around that identity. Thus if I am among those (like the unhappily labeled "straight-acting gay men," or most American Jews) who are able, if they choose, to escape

I DON'T RECALL EVER CHOOSING TO IDENTIFY AS A MALE, BUT BEING MALE HAS SHAPED MANY OF MY PLANS AND ACTIONS.

ascription, I may choose not to take up a gay or a Jewish identity; though this will require concealing facts about myself or my ancestry from others.

If, on the other hand, I fall into the class of those for whom the consensus on ascription is not clear — as among contemporary so-called biracials, or bisexuals, or those many white Americans of multiple identifiable ethnic heritages[13] — I may have a sense of identity options: but one way I may exercise them is by marking myself ethnically (as when someone chooses to wear an Irish pin) so that others will then be more likely to ascribe that identity to me.

DIFFERENCES AMONG DIFFERENCES

Collective identities differ, of course, in lots of ways; the body is central to race, gender, and sexuality but not so central to class and ethnicity. And, to repeat an important point, racial identification is simply harder to resist than ethnic identification. The reason is twofold. First, racial ascription is more socially salient: unless you are morphologically atypical for your racial group, strangers, friends, officials are always aware of it in public and private contexts, always notice it, almost never let it slip from view. Second — and again both in intimate settings and in public space — race is taken by so many more people to be the basis for treating people differentially. (In this respect, Jewish identity in America strikes me as being a long way along a line toward African-American identity: there are ways of speaking and acting and looking — and it matters very little whether they are "really" mostly cultural or mostly genetic — that are associated with being Jewish; and there are many people, white and black, Jewish and Gentile, for whom this identity is a central force in shaping their responses to others.)

This much about identification said, we can see that Du Bois's analytical problem was, in effect, that he believed that for racial labeling of this sort to have the obvious real effects that it did have — among them, crucially, his own identification with other black people and with Africa — there must be some real essence that held the race together. Our account of the history of the label reveals that this is a mistake: once we focus, as Du Bois almost saw, on the racial badge — the signifier rather than the signified, the word rather than the concept — we see both that the effects of the labeling are powerful and real and that false ideas, muddle and mistake and mischief, played a central role in determining both how the label was applied and to what purposes.

This, I believe, is why Du Bois so often found himself reduced, in his attempts to define race, to occult forces: if you look for a shared essence you won't get anything, so you'll come to believe you've missed it, because it is super-subtle, difficult to experience or identify: in short, mysterious. But if, as I say, you understand the sociohistorical process of construction of the race, you'll see that the label works despite the absence of an essence.

Perhaps, then, we can allow that what Du Bois was after was the idea of racial identity, which I shall roughly define as a label, R, associated with

ascriptions by most people (where ascription involves descriptive criteria for applying the label); and *identifications* by those that fall under it (where identification implies a shaping role for the label in the intentional acts of the possessors, so that they sometimes act *as an* R), where there is a history of associating possessors of the label with an inherited racial essence (even if some who use the label no longer believe in racial essences).

In fact, we might argue that racial identities could persist even if nobody believed in racial essences, provided both ascription and identification continue.

There will be some who will object to my account that it does not give racism a central place in defining racial identity: it is obvious, I think, from the history I have explored, that racism has been central to the development of race theory. In that sense racism has been part of the story all along. But you might give an account of racial identity in which you counted nothing as a racial essence unless it implied a hierarchy among the races;[14] or unless the label played a role in racist practices. I have some sympathy with the former strategy; it would fit easily into my basic picture. To the latter strategy, however, I make the philosopher's objection that it confuses logical and causal priority: I have no doubt that racial theories grew up, in part, as rationalizations for mistreating blacks, Jews, Chinese, and various others. But I think it is useful to reserve the concept of racism, as opposed to ethnocentrism or simply inhumanity, for practices in which a race concept plays a central role. And I doubt you can explain racism without first explaining the race concept.

I *am* in sympathy, however, with an animating impulse behind such proposals, which is to make sure that here in America we do not have discussions of race in which racism disappears from view. As I pointed out, racial identification is hard to resist in part because racial ascription by others is so insistent; and its effects — especially, but by no means exclusively, the racist ones — are so hard to escape. It is obvious, I think, that the persistence of racism means that racial ascriptions have negative consequences for some and positive consequences for others — creating, in particular, the white-skin privilege that it is so easy for people who have it to forget; and it is clear, too, that for those who suffer from the negative consequences, racial identification is a predictable response, especially where the project it suggests is that the victims of racism should join together to resist it. I shall return later to some of the important moral consequences of present racism and the legacy of racisms of the past.

But before I do, I want to offer some grounds for preferring the account of racial identity I have proposed, which places racial essences at its heart, over some newer accounts that see racial identity as a species of cultural identity.

CULTURAL IDENTITY IN AN AGE OF MULTICULTURALISM

Most contemporary racial identification — whether it occurs in such obviously regressive forms as the white nationalism of the Aryan Nation or in

an Afrocentrism about which, I believe, a more nuanced position is appropriate — most naturally expresses itself in forms that adhere to modified (and sometimes unreconstructed) versions of the old racial essences. But the legacy of the Holocaust and the old racist biology has led many to be wary of racial essences and to replace them with cultural essences. Before I turn to my final cautionary words about racial identifications, I want to explore, for a moment, the substitution of cultures for races that has occurred in the movement for multiculturalism.

In my dictionary I find as a definition for "culture" "the totality of socially transmitted behavior patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions, and all other products of human work and thought."[15] Like most dictionary definitions, this is, no doubt, a proposal on which one could improve. But it surely picks out a familiar constellation of ideas. That is, in fact, the sense in which anthropologists largely use the term nowadays. The culture of the Asante or the Zuni, for the anthropologist, includes every object they make — material culture — and everything they think and do.

The dictionary definition could have stopped there, leaving out the talk of "socially transmitted behavior patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions" because these *are* all products of human work and thought. They are mentioned because they are the residue of an older idea of culture than the anthropological one; something more like the idea we might now express with the word "civilization": the "socially transmitted behavior patterns" of ritual, etiquette, religion, games, arts; the values that they engender and reflect; and the institutions — family, school, church, state — that shape and are shaped by them.[16] The habit of shaking hands at meetings belongs to culture in the anthropologist's sense; the works of Sandro Botticelli and Martin Buber and Count Basie belong to culture also, but they belong to civilization as well.

There are tensions between the concepts of culture and of civilization. There is nothing, for example, that requires that an American culture should be a totality in any stronger sense than being the sum of all the things we make and do.

American civilization, on the other hand, would have to have a certain coherence. Some of what is done in America by Americans would not belong to American civilization because it was too individual (the particular bedtime rituals of a particular American family); some would not belong because it was not properly American, because (like a Hindi sentence, spoken in America) it does not properly cohere with the rest.

The second, connected, difference between culture and civilization is that the latter takes values to be more central to the enterprise, in two ways. First, civilization is centrally defined by moral and aesthetic values: and the coherence of a civilization is, primarily, the coherence of those values with each other and, then, of the group's behavior and institutions with its values. Second, civilizations are essentially to be evaluated: they can be better and worse, richer and poorer, more and less interesting. Anthropologists, on the whole, tend now to avoid the relative evaluation of cultures, adopting a sort of cultural relativism, whose coherence philosophers have tended to doubt. And they do not take values as more central to culture than, for example, beliefs, ideas, and practices.

The move from "civilization" to "culture" was the result of arguments. The move away from evaluation came first, once people recognized that much evaluation of other cultures by the Europeans and Americans who invented anthropology had been both ignorant and biased. Earlier criticisms of "lower" peoples turned out to involve crucial misunderstandings of their ideas; and it eventually seemed clear enough, too, that nothing more than differences of upbringing underlay the distaste of some Westerners for unfamiliar habits. It is a poor move from recognizing certain evaluations as mistaken to giving up evaluation altogether, and anthropologists who adopt cultural relativism often preach more than practice it. Still, this cultural relativism was a response to real errors. That it is the wrong response doesn't make the errors any less erroneous.

The arguments against "civilization" were in place well before the midcentury. More recently, anthropologists began to see that the idea of the coherence of a civilization got in the way of understanding important facts about other societies (and, in the end, about our own). For even in some of the "simplest" societies, there are different values and practices and beliefs and interests associated with different social groups (for example, women as opposed to men). To think of a civilization as coherent was to miss the fact that these different values and beliefs were not merely different but actually opposed. Worse, what had been presented as the coherent unified worldview of a tribal people often turned out, on later inspection, to be merely the ideology of a dominant group or interest.

But the very idea of a coherent structure of beliefs and values and practices depends on a model of culture that does not fit our times — as we can see if we explore, for a moment, the ideal type of a culture where it might seem to be appropriate.

A COMMON CULTURE

There is an ideal — and thus to a certain extent imaginary — type of small-scale, technologically uncomplicated, face-to-face society, where most interactions are with people whom you know, that we call "traditional." In such a society every adult who is not mentally disabled speaks the same language. All share a vocabulary and a grammar and an accent. While there will be some words in the language that are not known by everybody — the names of medicinal herbs, the language of some religious rituals — most are known to all normal adults. To share a language is to participate in a complex set of mutual expectations and understandings: but in such a society it is not only linguistic behavior that is coordinated through universally known expectations and understandings. People will share an understanding of many practices — marriages, funerals, other rites of passage — and will largely share their views about the general workings not only of the social but also of the natural world. Even those who are skeptical about particular elements of belief will nevertheless know what

everyone is supposed to believe, and they will know it in enough detail to behave very often as if they believed it, too.

A similar point applies to many of the values of such societies. It may well be that some people, even some groups, do not share the values that are enunciated in public and taught to children. But, once more, the standard values are universally known, and even those who do not share them know what it would be to act in conformity with them and probably do so much of the time.

In such a traditional society we may speak of these shared beliefs, values, signs, and symbols as the common culture; not, to insist on a crucial point, in the sense that everyone in the group actually holds the beliefs and values but in the sense that everybody knows what they are and everybody knows that they are widely held in the society.

Now, the citizens of one of those large "imagined communities" of modernity we call "nations" need not have, in this sense, a common culture. There is no single shared body of ideas and practices in India, or, to take another example, in most contemporary African states. And there is not now and there has never been a common culture in the United States, either. The reason is simple: the United States has always been multilingual, and has always had minorities who did not speak or understand English. It has always had a plurality of religious traditions; beginning with American Indian religions and Puritans and Catholics and Jews and including now many varieties of Islam, Buddhism, Jainism, Taoism, Bahai, and so on. And many of these religious traditions have been quite unknown to one another. More than this, Americans have also always differed significantly even among those who do speak English, from North to South and East to West, and from country to city, in customs of greeting, notions of civility, and a whole host of other ways. The notion that what has held the United States together historically over its great geographical range is a common culture, like the common culture of my traditional society, is — to put it politely — not sociologically plausible.

THERE IS NOT NOW AND THERE HAS NEVER BEEN A COMMON CULTURE IN THE UNITED STATES.

The observation that there is no common American national culture will come as a surprise to many: observations about American culture, taken as a whole, are common. It is, for example, held to be individualist, litigious, racially obsessed. I think each of these claims is actually true, because what I mean when I say there is no common culture of the United States is not what is denied by someone who says that there is an American culture.

Such a person is describing large-scale tendencies within American life that are not necessarily participated in by all Americans. I do not mean to deny that these exist. But for such a tendency to be part of what I am calling the *common culture* they would have to derive from beliefs and values and practices (almost) universally shared and known to be so. And *that* they are not.

At the same time, it has also always been true that there was a dominant culture in these United States. It was Christian, it spoke English, and it identified with the high cultural traditions of Europe and, more particularly, of England. This dominant culture included much of the common culture of the dominant classes — the government and business and cultural elites — but it was familiar to many others who were subordinate to them. And it was not merely an effect but also an instrument of their domination.

The United States of America, then, has always been a society of many common cultures, which I will call, for convenience, sub-cultures, (noting, for the record, that this is not the way the word is used in sociology).

It would be natural, in the current climate, with its talk of multiculturalism, to assume that the primary subgroups to which these subcultures are attached will be ethnic and racial groups (with religious denominations conceived of as a species of ethnic group). It would be natural, too, to think that the characteristic difficulties of a multicultural society arise largely from the cultural differences between ethnic groups. I think this easy assimilation of ethnic and racial subgroups to subcultures is to be resisted.

First of all, it needs to be argued, and not simply assumed, that black Americans, say, taken as a group, *have* a common culture: values and beliefs and practices that they share and that they do not share with others. This is equally true for, say, Chinese-Americans; and it is a fortiori true of white Americans. What seems clear enough is that being an African-American or an Asian-American or white is an important social identity in the United States. Whether these are important social identities because these groups have shared common cultures is, on the other hand, quite doubtful, not least because it is doubtful whether they *have* common cultures at all.

The issue is important because an analysis of America's struggle with difference as a struggle among cultures suggests a mistaken analysis of how the problems of diversity arise. With differing cultures, we might expect misunderstandings arising out of ignorance of each others' values, practices, and beliefs; we might even expect conflicts because of differing values or beliefs. The paradigms of difficulty in a society of many cultures are misunderstandings of a word or a gesture; conflicts over who should take custody of the children after a divorce; whether to go the doctor or to the priest for healing.

Once we move from talking of cultures to identities whole new kinds of problems come into view. Racial and ethnic identities are, for example, essentially contrastive and relate centrally to social and political power; in this way they are like genders and sexualities.

Now, it is crucial to understanding gender and sexuality that women and men and gay and straight people grow up together in families, communities, denominations. Insofar as a common culture means common beliefs, values, and practices, gay people and straight people in most

places have a common culture: and while there are societies in which the socialization of children is so structured by gender that women and men have seriously distinct cultures, this is not a feature of most "modern" societies. And it is perfectly possible for a black and a white American to grow up together in a shared adoptive family — with the same knowledge and values — and still grow into separate racial identities, in part because their experience outside the family, in public space, is bound to be racially differentiated.

I have insisted that we should distinguish between cultures and identities; but ethnic identities characteristically have cultural distinctions as one of their primary marks. That is why it is so easy to conflate them. Ethnic identities are created in family and community life. These — along with mass-mediated culture, the school, and the college — are, for most of us, the central sites of the social transmission of culture. Distinct practices, ideas, norms go with each ethnicity in part because people *want* to be ethnically distinct: because many people want the sense of solidarity that comes from being unlike others. With ethnicity in modern society, it is often the distinct identity that comes first, and the cultural distinction that is created and maintained because of it — not the other way around. The distinctive common cultures of ethnic and religious identities matter not simply because of their contents but also as markers of those identities.

I HAVE INSISTED THAT WE SHOULD DISTINGUISH BETWEEN CULTURES AND IDENTITIES.

In the United States, not only ethnic but also racial boundaries are culturally marked. In *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness*,[17] Ruth Frankenberg records the anxiety of many white women who do not see themselves as white "ethnics" and worry, therefore, that they have no culture.[18] This is somewhat puzzling in people who live, as every normal human being does, in rich structures of knowledge, experience, value and meaning; through tastes and practices: it is perplexing, in short, in people with normal human lives. But the reason these women do not recognize that they have a culture is because none of these things that actually make up their cultural lives are marked as white, as belonging specially to them: and the things that *are* marked as white (racism, white privilege) are things they want to repudiate. Many African-Americans, on the other hand, have cultural lives in which the ways they eat, the churches they go to, the music they listen to, and the ways they speak *are* marked as black: their identities are marked by cultural differences.

I have insisted that African-Americans do not have a single culture, in the sense of shared language, values, practices, and meanings. But many people who think of races as groups defined by shared cultures, conceive that sharing in a different way. They understand black people as sharing black culture *by definition*: jazz or hip-hop belongs to an African-American, whether she likes it or knows anything about it, because it is culturally marked as black. Jazz belongs to a black person who knows nothing about it more fully or naturally than it does to a white jazzman.

WHAT MATTERS ABOUT CULTURE: ARNOLD AGAIN

This view is an instance of what my friend Skip Gates has called "cultural geneticism."[19] It has, in Bertrand Russell's wicked phrase, "the virtues of theft over honest toil." On this view, you earn rights to culture that is marked with the mark of your race — or your nation — simply by having a racial identity. For the old racialists, as we saw, your racial character was something that came with your essence; this new view recognizes that race does not bring culture, and generously offers, by the wave of a wand, to correct Nature's omission. It is as generous to whites as it is to blacks. Because Homer and Shakespeare are products of Western culture, they are awarded to white children who have never studied a word of them, never heard their names. And in this generous spirit the fact is forgotten that cultural geneticism deprives white people of jazz and black people of Shakespeare. This is a bad deal — as Du Bois would have insisted. "I sit with Shakespeare," the Bard of Great Barrington wrote, "and he winces not."

There is nothing in cultural geneticism of the ambition or the rigor of Matthew Arnold's conception, where culture is, as he says in *Culture and Anarchy*, "the disinterested and active use of reading, reflection and observation,"[20] and what is most valuable to us in culture, in the anthropological sense, is earned by intellectual labor, by self-cultivation. For Arnold, true culture is a process "which consists in becoming something rather than in having something, in an inward condition of the mind and spirit";[21] whose aim is a "perfection in which characters of beauty and intelligence are both present, which unites, 'the two noblest of things,' — as Swift, who of one of the two, at any rate, had himself all too little, most happily calls them in his *Battle of the Books*, — 'the two noblest of things, sweetness and light.'"[22]

Arnold's aim is not, in the proper sense, an elitist one: he believes that this cultivation is the proper aim of us all.

> This is the *social idea*; and the men of culture are the true apostles of equality. The great men of culture are those who have had a passion for diffusing, for making prevail, for carrying from one end of society to the other, the best knowledge, the best ideas of their time; who have laboured to divest knowledge of all that was harsh, uncouth, difficult, abstract, professional, exclusive; to humanise it, to make it efficient outside the clique of the cultivated and learned, yet still remaining the *best* knowledge and thought of the time, and a true source, therefore, of sweetness and light.[23]

If you have this view of culture, you will think of cultural geneticism as the doctrine of the ignorant or the lazy, or at least of those who pander to them. And it is a view of culture whose adoption would diminish any society that seriously adopted it.

Not only is the conflation of identities and cultures mistaken, the view of cultural possession that underlies that error is the view of the Philistine, who, in Arnold's translation of Epictetus, makes "a great fuss about

exercise, a great fuss about eating, a great fuss about drinking, a great fuss about walking, a great fuss about riding. All these things ought to be done merely *by the way*: the formation of the spirit and character must be our real concern."[24]

IDENTITIES AND NORMS

I have been exploring these questions about culture in order to show how unsatisfactory an account of the significance of race that mistakes identity for culture can be. But if this is the wrong route from identity to moral and political concerns, is there a better way?

We need to go back to the analysis of racial identities. While the theories on which ascription is based need not themselves be normative, these identities come with normative as well as descriptive expectations; about which, once more, there may be both inconsistency in the thinking of individuals and fairly widespread disagreement among them. There is, for example, a very wide range of opinions among American Jews as to what their being Jewish commits them to; and while most Gentiles probably don't think about the matter very much, people often make remarks that suggest they admire the way in which, as they believe, Jews have "stuck together," an admiration that seems to presuppose the moral idea that it is, if not morally obligatory, then at least morally desirable, for those who share identities to take responsibility for each other. (Similar comments have been made increasingly often about Korean-Americans.)

We need, in short, to be clear that the relation between identities and moral life are complex. In the liberal tradition, to which I adhere, we see public morality as engaging each of us as individuals with our individual "identities": and we have the notion, which comes (as Charles Taylor has rightly argued)[25] from the ethics of authenticity, that, other things being equal, people have the right to be acknowledged publicly as what they already really are. It is because someone is already authentically Jewish or gay that we deny them something in requiring them to hide this fact, to "pass," as we say, for something that they are not. Charles Taylor has suggested that we call the political issues raised by this fact the politics of recognition: a politics that asks us to acknowledge socially and politically the authentic identities of others.

CHARLES TAYLOR HAS SUGGESTED THAT WE CALL THE POLITICAL ISSUES RAISED BY THIS FACT THE POLITICS OF RECOGNITION: A POLITICS THAT ASKS US TO ACKNOWLEDGE SOCIALLY AND POLITICALLY THE AUTHENTIC IDENTITIES OF OTHERS.

As has often been pointed out, however, the way much discussion of recognition proceeds is strangely at odds with the individualist thrust of talk of authenticity and identity. If what matters about me is my individual and authentic self, why is so much contemporary talk of identity about large categories — race, gender, ethnicity, nationality, sexuality — that seem so far from individual? What is the relation between this collective language and the individualist thrust of the modern notion of the self? How has social life come to be so bound up with an idea of identity that has deep roots in romanticism with its celebration of the individual over against society?[26]

The connection between individual identity, on the one hand, and race and other collective identities, on the other, seems to be something like this: each person's individual identity is seen as having two major dimensions. There is a collective dimension, the intersection of her collective identities; and there is what I will call a personal dimension, consisting of other socially or morally important features of the person — intelligence, charm, wit, cupidity — that are not themselves the basis of forms of collective identity.

The distinction between these two dimensions of identity is, so to speak, a sociological rather than a logical distinction. In each dimension we are talking about properties that are important for social life. But only the collective identities count as social categories, kinds of person. There is a logical category but no social category of the witty, or the clever, or the charming, or the greedy: people who share these properties do not constitute a social group, in the relevant sense. The concept of authenticity is central to the connection between these two dimensions; and there is a problem in many current understandings of that relationship, a misunderstanding one can find, for example, in Charles Taylor's recent (brilliant) essay *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition*.

AUTHENTICITY

Taylor captures the ideal of authenticity in a few elegant sentences: "There is a certain way of being that is *my* way. I am called upon to live my life in this way. . . . If I am not [true to myself], I miss the point of my life."[27] To elicit the problem, here, let me start with a point Taylor makes in passing about Herder: "I should note here that Herder applied his concept of originality at two levels, not only to the individual person among other persons, but also to the culture-bearing people among other peoples. Just like individuals, a Volk should be true to itself, that is, its own culture."[28] It seems to me that in this way of framing the issue less attention than necessary is paid to the connection between the originality of persons and of nations. After all, in many places nowadays, the individual identity, whose authenticity screams out for recognition, is likely to have an ethnic identity (which Herder would have seen as a national identity) as a component of its collective dimension. It is, among other things, my being, say, an African-American that shapes the authentic self that I seek to express.[29] And it is, in part, because I seek to express my self that I seek recognition of an African-American identity. This is the fact that makes problems: for recognition as an African-American means social acknowledgment of that collective identity, which requires not just recognizing its existence but actually demonstrating respect for it. If, in understanding myself as African-American, I see myself as resisting white norms, mainstream

American conventions, the racism (and, perhaps, the materialism or the individualism) of "white culture," why should I at the same time seek recognition from these white others?

There is, in other words, at least an irony in the way in which an ideal—you will recognize it if I call it the bohemian ideal—in which authenticity requires us to reject much that is conventional in our society is turned around and made the basis of a "politics of recognition."

Irony is not the bohemian's only problem. It seems to me that this notion of authenticity has built into it a series of errors of philosophical anthropology. It is, first of all, wrong in failing to see what Taylor so clearly recognizes, namely the way in which the self is, as he says, dialogically constituted. The rhetoric of authenticity proposes not only that I have a way of being that is all my own but that in developing it I must fight against the family, organized religion, society, the school, the state—all the forces of convention. This is wrong, however, not only because it is in dialogue with other people's understandings of who I am that I develop a conception of my own identity (Charles Taylor's point) but also because my identity is crucially constituted through concepts (and practices) made available to me by religion, society, school, and state, and mediated to varying degrees by the family (Hacking's point about "making up people"). Dialogue shapes the identity I develop as I grow up: but the very material out of which I form it is provided, in part, by my society, by what Taylor calls its language in "a broad sense."[30] I shall borrow and extend Taylor's term "monological" here to describe views of authenticity that make these connected errors.

I used the example of African-Americans just now, and it might seem that this complaint cannot be lodged against an American black nationalism: African-American identity, it might be said, is shaped by African-American society, culture, and religion. "It is dialogue with these black others that shapes the black self; it is from these black contexts that the concepts through which African-Americans shape themselves are derived. The white society, the white culture, over against which an African-American nationalism of the counterconventional kind poses itself, is therefore not part of what shapes the collective dimension of the individual identities of black people in the United States."

This claim is simply wrong. And what shows it is wrong is the fact that it is in part a recognition of a black identity by "white society" that is demanded by nationalism of this form. And "recognition" here means what Taylor means by it, not mere acknowledgment of one's existence. African-American identity, as I have argued, is centrally shaped by American society and institutions: it cannot be seen as constructed solely within African-American communities. African-American culture, if this means shared beliefs, values, practices, does not exist: what exists are African-American cultures, and though these are created and sustained in large measure by African-Americans, they cannot be understood without reference to the hearers of other American racial identities.

There is, I think, another error in the standard framing of authenticity as an ideal, and that is the philosophical realism (which is nowadays usually called "essentialism") that seems inherent in the way questions of authenticity are normally posed. Authenticity speaks of the real self buried in there, the self one has to dig out and express. It is only later, after romanticism, that the idea develops that one's self is something that one creates, makes up, so that every life should be an artwork whose creator is, in some sense, his or her own greatest creation. (This is, I suppose, an idea one of whose sources is Oscar Wilde; but it is surely very close to the self-cultivation that Arnold called "culture.")

Of course, neither the picture in which there is just an authentic nugget of selfhood, the core that is distinctively me, waiting to be dug out, nor the notion that I can simply make up any self I choose, should tempt us. We make up selves from a tool kit of options made available by our culture and society—in ways that I pointed out earlier. We do make choices, but we don't determine the options among which we choose.[31]

WE MAKE UP SELVES FROM A TOOL KIT OF OPTIONS MADE AVAILABLE BY OUR CULTURE AND SOCIETY. . . . WE DO MAKE CHOICES, BUT WE DON'T DETERMINE THE OPTIONS AMONG WHICH WE CHOOSE.

If you agree with this, you will wonder how much of authenticity we should acknowledge in our political morality: and that will depend, I suppose, on whether an account of it can be developed that is neither essentialist nor monological.

It would be too large a claim that the identities that claim recognition in the multicultural chorus *must* be essentialist and monological. But it seems to me that one reasonable ground for suspicion of much contemporary multicultural talk is that the conceptions of collective identity they presuppose are indeed remarkably unsubtle in their understandings of the processes by which identities, both individual and collective, develop. The story I have told for African-American identity has a parallel for other collective identities: in all of them, I would argue, false theories play a central role in the application of the labels; in all of them the story is complex, involves "making up people," and cannot be explained by an appeal to an essence.

BEYOND IDENTITY

The large collective identities that call for recognition come with notions of how a proper person of that kind behaves: it is not that there is *one* way that blacks should behave, but that there are proper black modes of behavior. These notions provide loose norms or models, which play a role in shaping the life plans of those who make these collective identities central to their individual identities; of the identifications of those who fly under these banners.[32] Collective identities, in short, provide what we might call scripts: narratives that people can use in shaping their life

plans and in telling their life stories. In our society (though not, perhaps, in the England of Addison and Steele) being witty does not in this way suggest the life script of "the wit." And that is why what I called the personal dimensions of identity work differently from the collective ones.

This is not just a point about modern Westerners: cross-culturally it matters to people that their lives have a certain narrative unity; they want to be able to tell a story of their lives that makes sense. The story — my story — should cohere in the way appropriate by the standards made available in my culture to a person of my identity. In telling that story, how I fit into the wider story of various collectivities is, for most of us, important. It is not just gender identities that give shape (through, for example, rites of passage into woman- or manhood) to one's life: ethnic and national identities too fit each individual story into a larger narrative. And some of the most "individualist" of individuals value such things. Hobbes spoke of the desire for glory as one of the dominating impulses of human beings, one that was bound to make trouble for social life. But glory can consist in fitting and being seen to fit into a collective history: and so, in the name of glory, one can end up doing the most social things of all.

CROSS-CULTURALLY IT MATTERS TO PEOPLE THAT THEIR LIVES HAVE A CERTAIN NARRATIVE UNITY; THEY WANT TO BE ABLE TO TELL A STORY OF THEIR LIVES THAT MAKES SENSE.

How does this general idea apply to our current situation in the multicultural West? We live in societies in which certain individuals have not been treated with equal dignity because they were, for example, women, homosexuals, blacks, Catholics. Because, as Taylor so persuasively argues, our identities are dialogically shaped, people who have these characteristics find them central — often, negatively central — to their identities. Nowadays there is a widespread agreement that the insults to their dignity and the limitations of their autonomy imposed in the name of these collective identities are seriously wrong. One form of healing of the self that those who have these identities participate in is learning to see these collective identities not as sources of limitation and insult but as a valuable part of what they centrally are. Because the ethics of authenticity requires us to express what we centrally are in our lives, they move next to the demand that they be recognized in social life as women, homosexuals, blacks, Catholics. Because there was no good reason to treat people of these sorts badly, and because the culture continues to provide degrading images of them nevertheless, they demand that we do cultural work to resist the stereotypes, to challenge the insults, to lift the restrictions.

These old restrictions suggested life scripts for the bearers of these identities, but they were negative ones. In order to construct a life with dignity, it seems natural to take the collective identity and construct positive life scripts instead.

An African-American after the Black Power movement takes the old script of self-hatred, the script in which he or she is a nigger, and works, in community with others, to construct a series of positive black life

scripts. In these life scripts, being a Negro is recoded as being black: and this requires, among other things, refusing to assimilate to white norms of speech and behavior. And if one is to be black in a society that is racist then one has constantly to deal with assaults on one's dignity. In this context, insisting on the right to live a dignified life will not be enough. It will not even be enough to require that one be treated with equal dignity despite being black: for that will require a concession that being black counts naturally or to some degree against one's dignity. And so one will end up asking to be respected *as a black*.

I hope I seem sympathetic to this story. I *am* sympathetic. I see how the story goes. It may even be historically, strategically necessary for the story to go this way.[33] But I think we need to go on to the next necessary step, which is to ask whether the identities constructed in this way are ones we can all be happy with in the longer run. What demanding respect for people *as blacks* or *as gays* requires is that there be some scripts that go with being an African-American or having same-sex desires. There will be proper ways of being black and gay: there will be expectations to be met; demands will be made. It is at this point that someone who takes autonomy seriously will want to ask whether we have not replaced one kind of tyranny with another. If I had to choose between Uncle Tom and Black Power, I would, of course, choose the latter. But I would like not to have to choose. I would like other options. The politics of recognition requires that one's skin color, one's sexual body, should be politically acknowledged in ways that make it hard for those who want to treat their skin and their sexual body as personal dimensions of the self. And "personal" doesn't mean "secret" but "not too tightly scripted," "not too constrained by the demands and expectations of others."

IF I HAD TO CHOOSE BETWEEN UNCLE TOM AND BLACK POWER, I WOULD, OF COURSE, CHOOSE THE LATTER. BUT I WOULD LIKE NOT TO HAVE TO CHOOSE. I WOULD LIKE OTHER OPTIONS.

In short, so it seems to me, those who see potential for conflict between individual freedom and the politics of identity are right.

WHY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN GROUPS MATTER

But there is a different kind of worry about racial identities; one that has not to do with their being too tightly scripted but with a consequence of their very existence for social life. We can approach the problem by asking why differences between groups matter.

This is, I think, by no means obvious. If some minority groups — Korean-Americans, say — do especially well, most people feel, "More power to them." We worry, then, about the minorities that fail. And the main reason why people currently worry about minorities that fail is that group failure may be evidence of injustice to individuals. That is the respectable reason why there is so much interest in hypotheses, like those of Murray

and Herrnstein, that suggest a different diagnosis. But let us suppose that we can get rid of what we might call Sowellian discrimination: discrimination, that is, as understood by Thomas Sowell, which is differential treatment based on false (or perhaps merely unwarranted) beliefs about the different average capacities of racial groups.[34]

Even without Sowellian discrimination socioeconomic disparities between groups threaten the fairness of our social arrangements. This issue can be kept clear only if we look at the matter from the point of view of an individual. Suppose I live in a society with two groups, blacks and whites. Suppose that, for whatever reason, the black group to which I obviously belong scores averagely low on a test that is genuinely predictive of job performance. Suppose the test is expensive. And suppose I would have, in fact, a high score on this test and that I would, in fact, perform well.[35] In these circumstances it may well be economically rational for an employer, knowing what group I belong to, simply not to give me the test, and thus not to hire me.[36] The employer has acted in a rational fashion; there is no Sowellian discrimination here. But most people will understand me if I say that I feel that this outcome is unfair. One way of putting the unfairness is to say, "What I can do and be with my talents is being held back because others, over whose failings I have no control, happen to have the characteristics they do."

Capitalism — like life — is full of such unfairness: luck — from lotteries to hurricanes — affects profit. And we can't get rid of all unfairness; for if we had perfect insurance, zero risk, there'd be no role for entrepreneurship, no markets, no capitalism. But we do think it proper to mitigate some risks. We think, for example, that we should do something about bad luck when it has large negative effects on individual people, or if it forces them below some socioeconomic baseline — we insure for car accidents, death, loss of home; the government helps those ruined by large-scale acts of God. We don't worry much about the chance production of small negative effects on individuals, even large numbers of individuals.

It is at least arguable that in our society the cost to competent, well-behaved individual blacks and Hispanics[37] of being constantly treated as if they have to measure up — the cost in stress, in anger, in lost opportunities — is pretty high.[38] It would be consistent with a general attitude of wanting to mitigate risks with large negative consequences for individuals to try to do something about it.[39]

This specific sort of unfairness — where a person is atypically competent in a group that is averagely less competent — is the result, among other things, of the fact that jobs are allocated by a profit-driven economy and the fact that I was born into a group in which I am atypical. The latter fact may or may not be the consequence of policies adopted by this society. Let's suppose it isn't: so society isn't, so to speak, causally responsible. According to some — for example, Thomas Sowell, again — that means it isn't morally responsible, either: you don't have to fix what you didn't break.

I'm not so sure. First, we can take collective responsibility, "as a society," for harms we didn't cause; as is recognized in the Americans with Disabilities Act. But second, the labor market is, after all, an institution: in a modern society it is kept in place by such arrangements as the laws of contract, the institution of money, laws creating and protecting private property, health and safety at work, and equal employment laws. Sowell may disapprove of some of these, but he can't disapprove of all of them; without all of them, there'd be no capitalism. So the outcome is the result not only of my bad luck but of its interaction with social arrangements, which could be different.

Thus once we grasp the unfairness of this situation, people might feel that something should be done about it. One possible thing would be to try to make sure there were no ethnic minorities significantly below norm in valuable skills. If the explanation for most significant differences between groups is not hereditary, this could be done, in part, by adopting policies that discouraged significant ethnic differentiation, which would gradually produce assimilation to a single cultural norm. Or it could be done by devoting resources most actively to the training of members of disadvantaged groups.

Another — more modest — move would be to pay special attention to finding talented members of minority groups who would not be found when employers were guided purely by profit.

A third — granted once more that the differences in question are not largely hereditary — would be to explore why there are such differences and to make known to people ways of giving themselves or their children whatever aptitudes will maximize their life chances, given their hereditary endowments.

Fourth, and finally, for those differences that were hereditary it would be possible to do research to seek to remedy the initial distribution by the genetic lottery — as we have done in making it possible for those without natural resistance to live in areas where malaria and yellow fever are endemic.

Each of these strategies would cost something, and the costs would be not only financial. Many people believe that the global homogenization of culture impoverishes the cultural fabric of our lives. It is a sentiment, indeed, we find in Arnold: "My brother Saxons have, as is well known, a terrible way with them of wanting to improve everything but themselves off the face of the earth; I have no passion for finding nothing but myself everywhere; I like variety to exist and to show itself to me, and I would not for the world have the lineaments of the Celtic genius lost."[40] The first strategy — of cultural assimilation — would undoubtedly escalate that process. And all these strategies would require more knowledge than we now have to apply in actual cases so as to guarantee their success. Anyone who shares my sense that there is an unfairness here to be met, an unfairness that has something to do with the idea that what matters is individual merit, should be interested in developing that kind of knowledge.

But I want to focus for a moment on a general effect of these four strategies. They would all produce a population less various in some of the respects that make a difference to major socioeconomic indicators. This would not mean that everybody would be the same as everybody else — but it could lead to a more recreational conception of racial identity. It would make African-American identity more like Irish-American identity is for most of those who care to keep the label. And that would allow us to resist one persistent feature of ethnoracial identities: that they risk becoming the obsessive focus, the be-all and end-all, of the lives of those who identify with them. They lead people to forget that their individual identities are complex and multifarious — that they have enthusiasms that do not flow from their race or ethnicity, interests and tastes that cross ethnoracial boundaries, that they have occupations or professions, are fans of clubs and groups. And they then lead them, in obliterating the identities they share with people outside their race or ethnicity, away from the possibility of identification with Others. Collective identities have a tendency, if I may coin a phrase, to "go imperial," dominating not only people of other identities, but the other identities, whose shape is exactly what makes each of us what we individually and distinctively are.

COLLECTIVE IDENTITIES HAVE A TENDENCY, IF I MAY COIN A PHRASE, TO "GO IMPERIAL."

In policing this imperialism of identity — an imperialism as visible in racial identities as anywhere else — it is crucial to remember always that we are not simply black or white or yellow or brown, gay or straight or bisexual, Jewish, Christian, Moslem, Buddhist, or Confucian but that we are also brothers and sisters; parents and children; liberals, conservatives, and leftists; teachers and lawyers and auto-makers and gardeners; fans of the Padres and the Bruins; amateurs of grunge rock and lovers of Wagner; movie buffs; MTV-holics, mystery-readers; surfers and singers; poets and pet-lovers; students and teachers; friends and lovers. Racial identity can be the basis of resistance to racism; but even as we struggle against racism — and though we have made great progress, we have further still to go — let us not let our racial identities subject us to new tyrannies.

IN CONCLUSION

Much of what I have had to say in this essay will, no doubt, seem negative. It is true that I have defended an analytical notion of racial identity, but I have gone to worry about too hearty an endorsement of racial identification. Let me quote Matthew Arnold again, for the last time: "I thought, and I still think, that in this [Celtic] controversy, as in other controversies, it is most desirable both to believe and to profess that the work of construction is the fruitful and important work, and that we are demolishing only to prepare for it."[41] So here are my positive proposals: live with fractured identities; engage in identity play; find solidarity, yes, but recognize contingency, and, above all, practice irony.[42] In short I have only the proposals of a banal "postmodernism." And there is a regular response to these ideas from those who speak for the identities that now demand recognition, identities toward which so many people have struggled in dealing with the obstacles created by sexism, racism, homophobia. "It's all very well for you. You academics live a privileged life; you have steady jobs; solid incomes; status from your place in maintaining cultural capital. Trifle with your own identities, if you like; but leave mine alone."

To which I answer only: my job as an intellectual is to call it as I see it. I owe my fellow citizens respect, certainly, but not a feigned acquiescence. I have a duty to reflect on the probable consequences of what I say; and then, if I still think it worth saying, to accept responsibility for them. If I am wrong, I say, you do not need to plead that I should tolerate error for the sake of human liberation; you need only correct me. But if I am right, so it seems to me, there is a work of the imagination that we need to begin.

And so I look forward to taking up, along with others, the fruitful imaginative work of constructing collective identities for a democratic nation in a world of democratic nations; work that must go hand in hand with cultivating democracy here and encouraging it everywhere else. About the identities that will be useful in this project, let me say only this: the identities we need will have to recognize *both* the centrality of difference within human identity *and* the fundamental moral unity of humanity.

NOTES

[1] This claim was prompted by G. Spiller, ed., *Papers in Inter-Racial Problems Communicated to the First Universal Races Congress Held at the University of London, July 26–29, 1911* (London: P. S. King and Son, 1911). Republished with an introduction by H. Aptheker (Secaucus, N.J.: Citadel Press, 1970). [All notes are Appiah's.]

[2] W.E.B. Du Bois, "Races," in *Writings in Periodicals Edited by W.E.B. Du Bois, Vol. 1, 1911–1925*, compiled and edited by Herbert Aptheker (Milwood, N.Y.: Kraus-Thomson Organization Limited, 1983), p. 13.

[3] Ibid., p. 14.

[4] "The Uncompleted Argument: Du Bois and the Illusion of Race," reprinted from *Critical Inquiry* 12 (Autumn 1985). In *"Race," Writing and Difference*, ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), pp. 21–37. Lucius Outlaw has remonstrated with me about this in the past; these rethinkings are prompted largely by discussion with him.

[5] Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn: An Essay toward an Autobiography of a Race Concept* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1940). Reprinted with introduction by Herbert Aptheker (Milwood, N.Y.: Kraus-Thomson Organization Limited, 1975), pp. 116–17.

[6] I am conscious here of having been pushed to rethink my views by Stuart Hall's Du Bois lectures at Harvard in the spring of 1994, which began with a nuanced critique of my earlier work on Du Bois's views.

[7] See Kevin Mulroy, *Freedom on the Border: The Seminole Maroons in Florida, the Indian Territory, Coahuila, and Texas* (Lubbock, Tex.: Texas Tech University Press, 1993).

[8] Ian Hacking, "Making Up People" reprinted from *Reconstructing Individualism: Autonomy, Individuality and the Self in Western Thought*, ed. Thomas Heller, Morton Sousa, and David Wellbery (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986), in *Forms of Desire: Sexual Orientation and the Social Constructionist Controversy*, ed. Edward Stein (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 69–88 (page references are to this version).

[9] Hacking, "Making Up People," p. 87.

[10] Cited in ibid., p. 81.

[11] Ibid., p. 82.

[12] That I don't recall it doesn't *prove* that I didn't, of course.

[13] See Mary C. Waters, *Ethnic Options: Choosing Identities in America* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990).

[14] This is the proposal of a paper on metaphysical racism by Berel Lang at the New School for Social Research seminar "Race and Philosophy" in October 1994, from which I learned much.
[15] *American Heritage Dictionary III for DOS* (3d ed.) (Novato, Calif.: Word-star International Incorporated, 1993).
[16] The distinction between culture and civilization I am marking is not one that would have been thus marked in nineteenth-century ethnography or (as we would now say) social anthropology: culture and civilization were basically synonyms, and they were both primarily used in the singular. The distinctions I am making draw on what I take to be the contemporary resonances of these two words. If I had more time, I would explore the history of the culture concept the sort of way we have explored "race."
[17] Ruth Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).
[18] The discussion of this work is shaped by conversation with Larry Blum, Martha Minow, David Wilkins, and David Wong.
[19] Gates means the notion to cover thinking in terms of cultural patrimony quite generally, not just in the case of race. See Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *Loose Canons* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).
[20] Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, ed. Samuel Lipman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 119.
[21] Ibid., p. 33.
[22] Ibid., p.37.
[23] Ibid., p. 48. The phrase "sweetness and light" is from Jonathan Swift's *Battle of the Books* (1697). The contest between the ancients (represented there by the bee) and the moderns (represented by the spider) is won by the ancients, who provide, like the bee, both honey and wax — sweetness and light. Sweetness is, then, aesthetic, and light intellectual, perfection.
[24] Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, p. 36.
[25] Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism and "The Politics of Recognition."* With commentary by Amy Gutmann, ed., K. Anthony Appiah, Jürgen Habermas, Steven C. Rockefeller, Michael Walzer, and Susan Wolf (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).
[26] Taylor reminds us rightly of Trilling's profound contributions to our understanding of this history. I discuss Trilling's work in chap. 4 of *In My Father's House*.
[27] Taylor, *Multiculturalism*, p. 30.
[28] Ibid., p. 31.
[29] And, for Herder, this would be a paradigmatic national identity.
[30] The broad sense "cover[s] not only the words we speak, but also other modes of expression whereby we define ourselves, including the 'languages' of art, of gesture, of love, and the like" (p. 32).
[31] This is too simple, too, for reasons captured in Anthony Giddens's many discussions of "duality of structure."
[32] I say "make" here not because I think there is always conscious attention to the shaping of life plans or a substantial experience of choice but because I want to stress the antiessentialist point that there are choices that can be made.
[33] Compare what Sartre wrote in his "Orphée Noir," in *Anthologie de la Nouvelle Poésie Nègre et Malagache de Langue Francaise*, ed. L. S. Senghor, p. xiv. Sartre argued, in effect, that this move is a necessary step in a dialectical progression. In this passage he explicitly argues that what he calls an "antiracist racism" is a path to the "final unity . . . the abolition of differences of race."
[34] "Once the possibility of economic performance differences between groups is admitted, then differences in income, occupational 'representation,' and the like do not, in themselves, imply that decision-makers took race or ethnicity into account. However, in other cases, group membership may in fact be used as a proxy for economically meaningful variables, rather than reflecting either mistaken prejudices or even subjective affinities and animosities." Thomas Sowell, *Race and Culture: A World View* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), p. 114.
[35] You need both these conditions, because a high score on a test that correlates well for some skill doesn't necessarily mean you will perform well. And, in fact, Sowell discusses the fact that the same IQ score predicts different levels of economic success for different ethnic groups; ibid., pp. 173, 182.
[36] Knowing this, I might offer to pay myself, if I had the money: but that makes the job worth less to me than to members of the other groups. So I lose out again.
[37] Let me explicitly point out that many of these people are not middle-class.
[38] I actually think that there is still rather more Sowellian discrimination than Sowell generally acknowledges; but that is another matter.
[39] It will seem to some that I've avoided an obvious argument here, which is that the inequalities in resources that result from differences in talents under capitalism need addressing. I agree. But the argument I am making here is meant to appeal to only extremely unradical individualist ideas; it's designed not to rely on arguing for egalitarian outcomes directly.
[40] Matthew Arnold, *On the Study of Celtic Literature and on Translating Homer* (New York: MacMillan, 1883), p. 11.
[41] Ibid., p. ix.
[42] See, for example, Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), and my review of it: "Metaphys. Ed.," *Village Voice*, September 19, 1989, p. 55.

QUESTIONS FOR A SECOND READING

1. Appiah's essay is a reader-friendly one — that is, it goes out of its way to address, engage, anticipate, and assist its readers. This engagement is a *technical* feat; it is a strategy. It is the result of something Appiah *does* as a writer. His work suggests strategies that you, too, could adopt and use.

   Take note, for example, of the ways in which Appiah punctuates the text. Punctuation is often discussed in relation to the sentence. Writers use marks of punctuation (commas, dashes, colons, semicolons, parentheses) to organize sentences and to help readers locate themselves in relation to what they are reading. Writers also punctuate longer units of text, such as essays or chapters. Appiah's text provides an excellent model of this practice. You can notice immediately how he uses white space and subheadings to organize the essay into sections.

   There are also, however, many moments when Appiah speaks as a writer about the text he is writing (and that you are reading). He does this to remind you (and perhaps himself) where you have been and where you are going in relation to this long piece of writing. Here are some examples:

   > For reasons I shall be able to make clear only when I have given my account, Du Bois's own approach is somewhat misleading. So instead of proceeding with exegesis of Du Bois, I must turn next to the task of shaping a sociohistorical account of racial identity. (p. 42)

   > There will be some who will object to my account that it does not give racism a central place in defining racial identity. (p. 47)

   > I shall return later to some of the important moral consequences of present racism and the legacy of racisms of the past. (p. 47)

   > But before I do, I want to offer some grounds for preferring the account of racial identity I have proposed, which places racial essences at its heart, over some newer accounts that see racial identity as a species of cultural identity. (p. 47)

   > I have been exploring these questions about culture in order to show how unsatisfactory an account of the significance of race that mistakes identity for culture can be. But if this is the wrong route from identity to moral and political concerns, is there a better way? (p. 54)

   As you reread the text, take note of the places where Appiah is punctuating his essay — places where Appiah, as a writer, seems to have you, his reader, in mind.

2. Although this is a reader-friendly text, it is also a learned text. It contains casual references to writers and scholars whom you may not recognize: