

BLACK ATHENA

Hostilities to Egypt in the Eighteenth Century

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Almost always the men who achieve these fundamental inventions of a new paradigm have either been very young or very new to the field whose paradigm they change.

Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*

My use of this quotation from Thomas Kuhn is an attempt to justify my presumption, as someone trained in Chinese history, to write on subjects so far removed from my original field. For I shall be arguing that although the changes of view that I am proposing are not paradigmatic in the strict sense of the word, they are none the less fundamental.

These volumes are concerned with two models of Greek history: one viewing Greece as essentially European or Aryan, and the other seeing it as Levantine, on the periphery of the Egyptian and Semitic cultural area. I call them the "Aryan" and the "Ancient" models. The "Ancient Model" was the conventional view among Greeks in the Classical and Hellenistic ages. According to it, Greek culture had arisen as the result of colonization, around 1500 B.C., by Egyptians and Phoenicians who had civilized the native inhabitants. Furthermore, Greeks had continued to borrow heavily from Near Eastern cultures.

Most people are surprised to learn that the Aryan Model, which most of us have been brought up to believe, developed only during the first half of the nineteenth century. In its earlier or "Broad" form, the new model denied the truth of the Egyptian settlements and questioned those of the Phoenicians. What I call the "Extreme" Aryan model, which flourished during the twin peaks of anti-Semitism in the 1890s and again in the 1920s and '30s, denied even the Phoenician cultural influence. According to the Aryan Model, there had been an invasion from the north—unreported in ancient tradition—which had overwhelmed the local "Aegean" or "Pre-Hellenic" culture. Greek civilization is seen as the result of the mixture of the Indo-European-speaking Hellenes and their

indigenous subjects. It is from the construction of this Aryan Model that I call this volume *The Fabrication of Ancient Greece 1785–1985*.

I believe that we should return to the Ancient Model, but with some revisions; hence I call what I advocate in Volume 2 of *Black Athena* the “Revised Ancient Model.” This accepts that there is a real basis to the stories of Egyptian and Phoenician colonization of Greece set out in the Ancient model. However, it sees them as beginning somewhat earlier, in the first half of the second millennium B.C. It also agrees with the latter that Greek civilization is the result of the cultural mixtures created by these colonizations and later borrowings from across the East Mediterranean. On the other hand, it tentatively accepts the Aryan Model’s hypothesis of invasions—or infiltrations—from the north by Indo-European speakers sometime during the fourth or third millennium B.C. However, the revised Ancient model maintains that the earlier population was speaking a related Indo-Hittite language which left little trace in Greek. In any event, it cannot be used to explain the many non-European elements in the later language.

If I am right in urging the overthrow of the Aryan Model and its replacement by the Revised Ancient one, it will be necessary not only to rethink the fundamental bases of “Western Civilization” but also to recognize the penetration of racism and “continental chauvinism” into all our historiography, or philosophy of writing history. The Ancient Model had no major “internal” deficiencies, or weaknesses in explanatory power. It was overthrown for external reasons. For eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Romantics and racists it was simply intolerable for Greece, which was seen not merely as the epitome of Europe but also as its pure childhood, to have been the result of the mixture of native Europeans and colonizing Africans and Semites. Therefore the Ancient Model had to be overthrown and replaced by something more acceptable.

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The nineteenth and twentieth centuries have been dominated by the paradigms of progress and science. Within learning there has been the belief that most disciplines made a quantum leap into “modernity” or “true science” followed by steady, cumulative, scholarly progress. In the historiography of the Ancient East Mediterranean these “leaps” are perceived to have taken place in the nineteenth century, and since then scholars have tended to believe that their work has been qualitatively better than any that has gone before. The palpable successes of natural science during this period have confirmed the truth of this belief in that area. Its extension to historiography is less securely based. Nevertheless, the destroyers of the Ancient Model and the builders of the Aryan believed themselves to be “scientific.” To these German and British scholars, the stories of Egyptian colonization and civilizing of Greece violated “racial science” as monstrously as the legends of sirens and centaurs broke the canons of natural science. Thus all were equally discredited and discarded.

For the past hundred and fifty years, historians have claimed to possess a “method” analogous to those used in natural science. In fact, ways in which the modern historians differ from the ‘prescientific’ ones are much less certain. The

best of the earlier writers were self-conscious, used the test of plausibility and tried to be internally consistent. Furthermore, they cited and evaluated their sources. By comparison, the “scientific” historians of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have been unable to give formal demonstrations of “proof” or establish firm historical laws. Today, moreover, the charge of “unsound methodology” is used to condemn not merely incompetent but also unwelcome work. The charge is unfair, because it falsely implies the existence of other methodologically sound studies with which to contrast it.

Considerations of this kind lead to the question of positivism and its requirement of “proof.” Proof or certainty is difficult enough to achieve, even in the experimental sciences or documented history. In the fields with which this work is concerned it is out of the question: all one can hope to find is more or less plausibility. To put it another way, it is misleading to see an analogy between scholarly debate and criminal law. In criminal law, since conviction of an innocent person is so much worse than acquittal of a guilty one, the courts rightly demand proof “beyond reasonable doubt” before a conviction can be made. But neither conventional wisdom nor the academic *status quo* has the moral rights of an accused person. Thus debates in these areas should not be judged on the basis of *proof*, but merely on *competitive plausibility*. In these volumes I cannot, and therefore do not attempt to, *prove* that the Aryan Model is “wrong.” All I am trying to do is to show that it is less plausible than the Revised Ancient Model and that the latter provides a more fruitful framework for future research.

Twentieth-century prehistory has been bedevilled by a particular form of this search for proof, which I shall call “archaeological positivism.” It is the fallacy that dealing with “objects” makes one “objective”; the belief that interpretations of archaeological evidence are as solid as the archaeological finds themselves. This faith elevates hypotheses based on archaeology to a “scientific” status and demotes information about the past from other sources—legends, place names, religious cults, language and the distribution of linguistic and script dialects. In these volumes it is maintained that all these sources must be treated with great caution, but that evidence from them is not categorically less valid than that from archaeology.

The favourite tool of the archaeological positivists is the “argument from silence”: the belief that if something has not been found, it cannot have existed in significant quantities. This would appear to be useful in the very few cases where archaeologists have failed to find something predicted by the dominant model, in a restricted but well-dug area. For instance, for the past fifty years it has been believed that the great eruption on Thera took place during the ceramic period Late Minoan IB, yet despite extensive digging on this small island, no sherd of this ware has appeared below the volcanic debris. This suggests that it would be useful to look again at the theory. Even here, however, some pots of this type could still turn up, and there are always questions about the definition of ceramic styles. In nearly all archaeology—as in the natural sciences—it is virtually impossible to *prove* absence.

It will probably be argued that these attacks are against straw men, or at least

dead men. "Modern archaeologists are much too sophisticated to be so positivist," and "no serious scholar today believes in the existence, let alone the importance, of 'race.'" Both statements may be true, but what is claimed here is that modern archaeologists and ancient historians of this region are still working with models set up by men who were crudely positivist and racist. Thus it is extremely implausible to suppose that the models were not influenced by these ideas. This does not in itself falsify the models, but—given what would now be seen as the dubious circumstances of their creation—they should be very carefully scrutinized, and the possibility that there may be equally good or better alternatives should be seriously taken into account. In particular, if it can be shown that the Ancient Model was overthrown for externalist reasons, its supersession by the Aryan Model can no longer be attributed to any explanatory superiority of the latter; therefore it is legitimate to place the two models in competition or to try to reconcile them.

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We are now approaching the nub of this volume and the origins of the forces that eventually overthrew the Ancient Model, leading to the replacement of Egypt by Greece as the fount of European civilization. I concentrate on four of these forces: Christian reaction, the rise of the concept of "progress," the growth of racism, and Romantic Hellenism. All are related; to the extent that Europe can be identified with Christendom, "Christian reaction" is concerned with the growth of European hostility to Asia and Africa and the increase of tension between Egyptian religion and Christianity.

On the question of "progress," I argue that its rise as a dominant paradigm damaged Egypt for two reasons. The country's great antiquity put it *behind* later civilizations; while its long and stable history, which had been a source of admiration, now became reason to despise it as static and sterile. In the long run we can see that Egypt was also harmed by the rise of racism and the need to disparage every African culture; during the eighteenth century, however, the ambiguity of Egypt's "racial" position allowed its supporters to claim that it was essentially and originally "white." Greece, by contrast, benefited from racism, immediately and in every way; and it was rapidly seen as the "childhood" of the "dynamic" "European race."

Racism and "progress" could thus come together in the condemnation of Egyptian/African stagnation and praise of Greek/European dynamism and change. Such assessments fitted perfectly with the new Romanticism, which not only emphasized the importance of geographical and national characteristics and the categorical differences between peoples but saw dynamism as the highest value. Moreover, Greek states were small and often quite poor and their national poet was Homer, whose heroic epics fitted splendidly with the eighteenth-century Romantic passion for Northern ballads, most of which were extremely gory, like the *Iliad*. Here, as with language, a special relationship was seen between Greece and Northern Europe which was marred only by Greece's geographical position in the South-Eastern Mediterranean and the Ancient Model,

which emphasized her close association with the Middle East. All in all, while Egypt, along with China and Rome, were the models of the Enlightenment, Greece became allied to the lesser, but growing eighteenth-century intellectual and emotional current of Romanticism.

Christian Reaction

Here it should be emphasized that for most of the almost 2,000 years with which we are concerned, the tension or "contradiction" between Christianity and the Egyptian "twofold" philosophy was not—in the Leninist or Maoist sense—an "antagonistic" one. As movements confined to the elite, Hermeticism and Masonry did not fundamentally threaten the social, political or even the religious *status quo*. However, the exclusive claims of Judaeo-Christian-Islamic monotheisms make any kind of unconformity difficult to tolerate, and there have been periods of bitter rivalry between the two traditions.

The ruthless and bloody destruction of Gnosticism and Neo-Platonism by the early Church was mentioned in Chapter II. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, however, the Church generally tolerated or even encouraged Platonism and Hermeticism. The execution of Bruno was not surprising, given his blatant attacks on the Judaeo-Christian tradition and his call for a return to Egyptian religion. Moreover, the burning was followed not by a ban on the study of Egypt but by the encouragement and massive funding of what Frances Yates calls Athanasius Kircher's "reactionary Hermeticism" or, to put it more charitably, a Church-sanctioned "Egyptology" which included Kircher's establishment of Coptic studies.¹ Although Hermeticism and Rosicrucianism were often influential in Northern European intellectual circles, they did not loom large in the violence of the Thirty Years War in Germany, the Fronde revolts in France and the antimonarchical struggles in England and Holland. The religious struggles between Catholic and Protestant or High and Low Church had little or nothing to do with Hermeticism.

Neo-Platonism and Hermeticism, as I have said, were often philosophies espoused by moderates as attempts to transcend the raging political and religious battles of the time. Similarly, the atomist atheism associated with Thomas Hobbes grew up in an atmosphere of despair at competing brands of religion. Thus in England in the 1660s and 1670s moderate men like Ralph Cudworth, who were concerned with two main foes, Catholic superstition and Puritan Enthusiasm, saw Platonism as an antidote to both.² Apart from its transcendence over sectarian squabbles, its doctrine that there was a light or life immanent in the world weakened the Enthusiasts'—or inspired believers'—claims to have a monopoly of holy spirit. Furthermore, Cudworth believed that the danger of atheism from the Egypto-Platonic identification of spirit with matter, or the Creator with the Creation, was less acute than that from Hobbesian mechanical, atomist atheism.³

Newton was intellectually formed in this atmosphere and it is in this context that his early admiration for the Egyptians, referred to in the last chapter, must be seen. However, his attitude towards Egypt changed drastically in the 1690s and the last years of his life were spent on chronological works, of which the most important was *The Chronology of Ancient Kingdoms Amended*. Here, as mentioned on p. 168, Newton *proved*, on the basis of the Bible and astronomy, that the claims for antiquity made by the Egyptians and other peoples had been grossly exaggerated, and that the Israelites had existed long before all the others.

Newton's most recent biographer, Professor Westfall, describes this as "a work of colossal tedium" and believes that in it Newton had "produced a book with no evident point and no evident form." The only explanation Westfall can give for it is that it had a concealed deist message.⁴ But the same could be said for most of Newton's works, and I do not think it provides a sufficient motive for the immense labour he put into his *Chronology*. Indeed, it could be argued that it was the most orthodox work Newton ever wrote: William Whiston, who can be described as Newton's deist conscience, fiercely attacked *The Chronology*, as did the French atheist Fréret.⁵ Furthermore, as Westfall points out, Newton had effectively been co-opted by the Establishment by the end of his life. Thus I think it more useful to see *The Chronology* as the result of what the modern intellectual historian Professor Pocock describes as "a complete reversal in Cudworth's attempt to demonstrate that ancient thinking was naturally in accord with Christian theology."

Pocock attributes this partly to the "impact of Spinoza," an attribution that has problems because, as the historian Professor Colie has shown, Cudworth was fully aware of Spinoza's thinking by the 1670s, and his great work *The True Intellectual System of the Universe* contained an attack on Spinoza's position.⁶ This is not to deny that Spinoza's pantheism continued to weaken the possibility of a Christian Platonism after the publication of Cudworth's work in 1679. However, the new factors after the "Glorious Revolution" of 1689 were Toland and the Radical Enlightenment. All in all, I think Newton's later work and his lowering of the antiquity of the Egyptians and other ancient peoples should generally be seen as a "respectable" deist and Christian defence against the Radical Enlightenment and the latter's use of the antiquity of Egypt and the Orient. As with Bruno in the sixteenth century, the peaceful coexistence between Christianity and esoteric Egyptian religion and philosophy, which had lasted through most of the Renaissance, broke down in the 1690s and the Christians struck back.

The "Triangle": Christianity and Greece against Egypt

The defence of Newtonianism brought Greek studies into alliance with Christianity, and this brings us to a central concern of this volume, which is less with the binary conflict between Egypt and the Bible than with the triangular relations between Christianity, Egypt and Greece. During the first centuries of the Chris-

tian era the main struggle was between Christians and pagans. As the dominant culture of the East Mediterranean during this period was Hellenic with a religion based on Egypt, both Christians and pagans—of whom the most influential were the Neo-Platonists—saw the distinctions between Egypt, the Orient and Greece as relatively unimportant. Jews like Josephus and Church Fathers like Clement of Alexandria and Tatian, on the other hand, scored points against the Greeks by pointing out the lateness and shallowness of Greek civilization in comparison with those of the Egyptians, Phoenicians, Chaldaeans, Persians and so on and, of course, the Israelites. They also stressed Greece's heavy cultural borrowings from the more ancient peoples.⁷

The possibility of pitting Greeks against the Egyptians, Chaldaeans and others, in the defence of Christianity, did not occur until the Renaissance. I have already pointed out that Erasmus' hostility to Hermeticism in the early sixteenth century was essentially linked to his defence of Christianity and religion against magic. Erasmus, however, was also a champion of pure Latinity and the study of Greek.

During these same decades, Germans were becoming aware of striking similarities between their language and Greek. The nouns of both had four cases rather than the five of Latin. Both Greek and German used the definite article and made massive use of particles and of prepositions with verbs. After the Reformation, and the break away from Roman Catholicism, the relationship became much stronger, with the new image of Greek and German as the two languages of Protestantism. Luther fought the church of Rome with the Greek Testament. Greek was a sacred Christian tongue which Protestants could plausibly claim was more authentically Christian than Latin. With the spread of the Reformation to England, Scotland and Scandinavia, a feeling developed that the Teutonic-speaking peoples were "better" and more "manly" than the Romance-speaking nations of France, Spain and Italy and that their languages as a whole were superior to Latin and on a par with Greek. As a seventeenth-century English writer put it:

Our language was a dialect of the Teutonick, and although then but in her infancie, yet not so rude as hopefull, being most fruitfull and copious in significant and well-founding rootes and Primitives and withall capable and apt for diffusion from those her rootes into such a Greek-like ramosity [sic] of derivations and compositions, beyond the power of Latine and her off-spring dialects . . .⁸

Greek studies flourished in Protestant schools and universities throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It is striking, for instance, how many of the major French Hellenists of the seventeenth century—including Isaac Casaubon and Mme Dacier, who will be discussed when I come to the cult of Homer—were brought up as Huguenots.⁹ From using Greek to attack Roman Catholic superstition, it was not such a long step to employing it against Egyptian magic. Nevertheless, Casaubon's criticism of the antiquity of the Hermetic Texts was not juxtaposing a rational Greece to a magical and superstitious Egypt. It was using

critical methods of approach to Greek texts to discredit the age, and hence the value, of Egyptian wisdom.

A similar approach was used seventy years later by Richard Bentley. Known in his lifetime as the hated and tyrannical Master of Trinity College Cambridge, Bentley is, however, a hero in the history of Classics as the discoverer of the *digamma*, or rather of the fact that the *w* sound represented as *F* in some Greek alphabets had existed in Homeric and other Greek dialects, in which it was not written. This Bentley did with extreme ingenuity by observing that in certain cases words beginning with vowels did not elide or come together with the preceding syllables. He is even more respected for his rigorous critical scholarship which, though not particularly appreciated in his own day, has given him the later reputation as the greatest English Classicist of all time.¹⁰

Richard Bentley was also the first man to popularize Newtonian physics and to spell out its theological and political implications: that, as matter could not move itself, a god—of generally regular habits—was needed to create and maintain the universe, just as a king was necessary to a Whig constitutional monarchy. Bentley put this scheme forward in 1692, when he preached the first series of sermons or lectures set up by the famous Anglo-Irish chemist Sir Robert Boyle against “notorious infidels, namely, Atheists, Theists, Pagans, Jews and Mahometans.”¹¹ Bentley hardly mentioned the last two. His concern was clearly with the first three, and most of all with the Radical Enlightenment. He seems to have been especially concerned with the radical thinker and pioneer of Freemasonry John Toland’s use of Bruno’s Egyptian notion of animate matter, which the radical had used to attack Newtonian physics. Bentley and his circle also seem to have known about Toland’s republicanism. Toland was fully aware of the interconnections between his physics and his politics.¹² Bentley used his own formidable intelligence and Classical scholarship not only to expound the Newtonian system and its implications, but also to cast doubt on the reliability and age of the Greek sources referring to Egyptian and Oriental wisdom and astronomy.¹³ Thus he tried to deprive Toland and the radicals of one of their most powerful sources of legitimacy.

What most concerns us here, however, is the alliance between Newton and Bentley and the combination of the new science and critical Classical scholarship to defend the *status quo*. It is ironic that these two men, who were always on, if not over, the brink of Arianism or deism became two of the most effective defenders of the Christian Establishment.¹⁴

“Progress”

It is frequently said that the clearest eighteenth-century statement of the idea of “progress” was that of Condorcet’s *Sketch of a historical table of the progress of the human spirit*, written in 1793. However, most of the ideas Condorcet propounded there had been set out earlier in a speech *On the Successive Progress of*

the Human Spirit, given in 1750 by the nineteen-year-old Anne Robert Turgot. Turgot, who later became a finance minister of Louis XVI, was close to the leading Physiocrats and was a promoter of Chinese economic ideas. He was subsequently described as the founder of political economy. From the speech and unfinished draft histories, his ideas on “progress” are quite clear.¹⁵

These ideas are important in themselves and because of their bearing on the views held by Turgot and his contemporaries on the Egyptians, Phoenicians and Greeks. According to the new paradigm, these civilizations had to be seen in ascending order as the human spirit “progressed.” But, as in all schemes of historical evolution—notably the Hegelian and the Marxist—each stage was seen as having started out beneficially “progressive” but as having later slipped into decadence and opposition to the new forces. Thus Turgot saw Egypt and China as initially pioneering: “they advanced with great strides towards perfection.”¹⁶

The Egyptians and Chinese were perceived as having been mathematicians, philosophers and metaphysicians. Unfortunately, in both civilizations these “sciences” had been sapped by superstition and priestly dogmatism. Just as Bishop Warburton had tried to exculpate the priests on this issue out of “clerical solidarity,” so intellectuals like Turgot and Condorcet were delighted to have yet another stick with which to beat them, for here, as in the modern world, priests could largely be blamed for the decadence.¹⁷ However, Turgot differed from the Physiocrats, who admired contemporary China, by condemning the country to the past; and this part of the “progressive” scheme brought him—or kept him—very close to the old, regressive picture of the Egyptians as having been in possession—probably from the Israelites—of a pure and true religion, but as having lost it.

Turgot also saw the decadence as the result of the despotism of Egyptian and Chinese government. Like Montesquieu, however, who had attributed it to the morally improving effects of irrigation, Turgot maintained that Egyptian and Chinese governments were not as bad as their hot climates would seem to determine, or as the Mahometan forms actually were.¹⁸ Like Brucker and most eighteenth-century thinkers, Turgot included the Pythagoreans, Neo-Platonists and, by implication, Plato himself among the decadent Asiatic metaphysicians.¹⁹ For him, the higher stages of the progress of the human spirit began with Aristotle’s logic and continued directly to Bacon, Galileo, Kepler, Descartes, Newton and Leibniz.²⁰ As far as Greece was concerned Turgot, although encouraged by the country’s disunity and liberty, believed that “it was only after many centuries that one saw the appearance of philosophers in Greece.”²¹

For Turgot the real Hellenic glory was in poetry, which derived directly from the richness of the Greek language. This richness had come about because

the Phoenicians, inhabiting an arid coast, made themselves the agents of exchange between peoples. Their vessels spread throughout the Mediterranean. They began to reveal nation to nation, astronomy, navigation and geography perfected each other. The coasts of Greece and Asia Minor were filled with colonies. . . . From the mixtures of these independent colonies with the an-

cient peoples of Greece and with the remains of successive barbarian invasions the Greek nation was formed . . . by these multiple mixtures this rich language was formed, expressive and sonorous, the language for all the arts.²²

The liberal denial of the Egyptians in favour of the Phoenicians was an indication of future attitudes on their relative importance. Otherwise, Turgot's statement reflects the contemporary linguistic research already mentioned in connection with Barthélemy, and Turgot's scheme also seems to reflect the origin of French from a mixture of Celtic, Latin and Germanic languages. This does not, however, affect its competitive plausibility against the equally subjective image of Greek as a language that was somehow "pure," like the idealized German. The picture of purity is extremely improbable, not only on geographical and historical grounds but also, as Turgot pointed out, on linguistic ones too.

While Turgot and his contemporaries proclaimed and articulated the new vision of "progress," they retained respect for the Egyptians and Phoenicians and never questioned the legends of their having colonized and civilized Greece.²³ Nevertheless, the introduction of the "progressive" paradigm was ultimately fatal to the reputation of the Egyptians. Their antiquity—which had previously been one of their major assets—now became a liability.

The obverse to the fall of the Egyptians was a rise in the status of the Greeks. Before coming to this, however, we must consider the two forces that aided Christian reaction and the "progressive" paradigm in the overthrow of the Ancient Model: racism and Romanticism.

Racism

All cultures have some degree of prejudice for, or more often against, people whose appearance is unusual. However, the intensity and pervasiveness of Northern European, American and other colonial racism since the seventeenth century have been so much greater than the norm that they need some special explanation.

It is difficult to say whether or not racism was unusually strong before the sixteenth century, the first in which Northern Europeans came into frequent contact with peoples from other continents. In the early anti-Semitic ballads about the alleged murder of Little Sir Hugh, the evil Jews do not appear to have been seen as particularly dark.²⁴ It is even possible that with the influx of French and Italians after the Norman Conquest, dark colouring had high status, and early ballads do sometimes contrast the poor fair girl with the rich brown one. On the other hand, there is no doubt that the "fair maid" is seen as morally superior and the ballads of two sisters, which appear to have very old Norse antecedents, lay emphasis on the wicked dark sister as opposed to the good fair one.²⁵

By the fifteenth century, too, there is no doubt that clear links were seen

between dark skin colour and evil and inferiority, when the newly arrived Gypsies were feared and hated for both their darkness and their alleged sexual prowess.²⁶ Whether or not this concern with and dislike of the dark "other" was exceptionally intense in medieval Northern Europe, it is generally accepted that a more clear-cut racism grew up after 1650 and that this was greatly intensified by the increased colonization of North America, with its twin policies of extermination of the Native Americans and enslavement of Africans. Both these presented moral problems to Protestant societies, in which equality of all men before God, and personal liberty, were central values which could be eased only by strong racism.

The Classical writer most often appealed to to justify slavery was Aristotle, who argued at length in its favour. The appeal was linked to the fact that his work was shot through with the belief that Greeks were inherently superior to other peoples:

The races that live in cold regions and those of Europe are full of courage and passion but somewhat lacking in skill and brainpower; for this reason, while remaining generally independent, they lack political cohesion and the ability to rule others. On the other hand, the Asiatic races have both brains and skill but are lacking in courage and willpower; so they have remained both enslaved and subject. The Hellenic race, occupying a mid position geographically, has a measure of both. Hence it has continued to be free, to have the best political institutions and to be capable of ruling others given a single constitution.²⁷

In this way Aristotle linked "racial superiority" to the right to enslave other peoples, especially those of a "slavish disposition."

Similar perceptions of "racial" differences appear to have been central to the thought of John Locke, the philosopher of the late-seventeenth-century Whigs. There is no doubt that Locke, who was personally involved with slave-owning American colonies, was what we should now call a racist, as was the great eighteenth-century philosopher David Hume. Whether or not these attitudes affected their philosophies is more debatable, but Harry Bracken and Noam Chomsky's arguments for this connection seem very plausible.²⁸

Locke's consistent disparagement of Native Americans was essential to his politics, because the land the indigenous population inhabited was needed to provide a wilderness available for English and other settlers. The possibility of such colonization was necessary to the argument that men had a choice as to whether or not they joined the Social Contract, with all its manifest inequalities.²⁹ Locke refused to justify the enslavement of people of the same nationality, and called what might appear to be slavery of this kind mere "drudgery." For him, as for most thinkers of the time, slavery was justified only when it was the result of capture as an alternative to a deserved death in a just war.³⁰ Christian European attacks on heathen Africans and Americans, for instance, were classed as "just wars" because the latter were not defending their property, but merely "waste land." Furthermore, Locke had the curious but convenient belief that

Africans and Americans did not practise agriculture and, according to him, the only entitlement to land came from cultivation.³¹ The general scheme allowed for the taking of black slaves by Europeans. Moreover, the very existence of large numbers of African slaves led to the belief that they were "natural slaves" in the Aristotelian sense.

By the 1680s there was in fact a widespread opinion that Negroes were only one link above the apes—also from Africa—in the "great chain of being."³² This type of thinking was made easier by Locke's nominalism: his denial of the objective validity of "species" and view of them as subjective concepts. He was particularly sceptical of the inconvenient category of "man":

And I imagine none of the Definitions of the Word *man*, which we yet have, nor Descriptions of that sort of Animal, are so perfect and exact, as to satisfy a considerate inquisitive person; much less a general consent . . .³³

This position is in sharp contrast not only to the biblical "God made man in his own image" but also to Descartes's insistence on a categorical distinction between unthinking animals and thinking man. Empiricism thus seems to remove an (admittedly flimsy) barrier against racism; however, there is no necessary connection between empiricism and racism.³⁴

To recapitulate: it is certain that Locke and most eighteenth-century English-speaking thinkers like David Hume and Benjamin Franklin were racist: they openly expressed popular opinions that dark skin colour was linked to moral and mental inferiority. In Hume's case, racism so transcended conventional religion that he was a pioneer of the view that there had been not one creation of man but many different ones, because "Such a uniform and constant difference could not happen in so many countries and ages, if nature had not made an original distinction betwixt these breeds of men."³⁵ The centrality of racism to European society after 1700 is shown by the fact that this "polygenetic" view of human origins continued to grow in the early nineteenth century, even after the revival of Christianity.

Racism was not so clear-cut in eighteenth-century France. Nevertheless, the Aristotelian—and pseudo-Platonic—scheme of climatic and topographic determinism of races that had permeated the work of Jean Bodin in the sixteenth century was revitalized by Montesquieu in the eighteenth. Montesquieu became famous in 1721 through his *Persian Letters*. At one level he was using distinguished Persians to criticize and satirize Europe; at another, he was setting up the image of Europe as the "scientific" and "progressive" continent. This primacy was explained as the result of her beneficent, temperate climate. His pro-European views and hostility to Asia and Africa came out more clearly in his *Spirit of Laws*, which was published in 1748.³⁶

Rousseau, in his *Social Contract*, published in 1762, violently attacked any justification of slavery. On the other hand, he followed the school of geographical determinism, believing that a people's virtue and political capacity depended on

climate and topography. He was Europocentric and showed remarkably little interest in Egypt and China. This was a trait which persisted among later Romantics, whose predilections were nearly always for the misty and mountainous North of Europe, which was seen as the true repository of human virtue.

Romanticism

After the defence of Christianity and the idea of "progress," racism was, I believe, the third major force behind the overthrow of the Ancient Model; the fourth was Romanticism. To put it crudely, Romanticism maintains, against the Enlightenment and the Masonic tradition, that reason is inadequate to handle the important aspects of life and philosophy. Romanticism is concerned with the local and particular, rather than the global and general. There is also an oversimplified, but useful, contrast to be made between the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, with its interest in stability and the ordering of space, and the Romantic passion for movement, time and "progressive" development through history. Outstanding examples of Enlightenment achievement are the accurate mappings of the world's coasts, Linnaeus' systematic arrangement of natural species, and the American Constitution, which is supposed to last for ever.

Apart from the extraordinary achievements of natural science during the period of Romantic dominance from 1790 to 1890 there was an enormous interest in history, and in both the chief model used was that of the "tree." Trees, which are to be found in Darwinian evolution, Indo-European linguistics and most nineteenth-century histories, provide the ideal Romantic image. They are rooted in their own soils and nourished by their particular climates; at the same time they are alive and grow. They progress and never turn back. Like the image of history as biography, trees have a simple past and a complicated and ramified present and future. Nevertheless, the image of the tree had disadvantages in the description of European and Greek history.³⁷

It should be borne in mind that despite the enormous influence of Rousseau, Romanticism was never as strong in France as it was in Britain and Germany, and it is in these regions that one should look for the movement's further development.

First, Germany: during the early part of the eighteenth century, Germany went through one of its most acute crises of national identity. In striking contrast to France, Holland and England, for more than a century following the end of the Thirty Years War in 1648 there was continued military devastation, political fragmentation and economic backwardness. The same period saw the military and cultural rise of France to a point where it seemed about to become a "New Rome," capable of absorbing all Europe.³⁸ The language and culture of the German courts, including that of Frederick the Great in Prussia, was French; most of the books published in Germany in the first half of the century were in Latin and

French. Thus there was a reasonable fear, voiced by the late-seventeenth-century philosopher and mathematician Leibniz and later patriots, that German would never develop into a language capable of being used for cultural and philosophical discourse; it might even, like the Germanic Frankish language spoken by the early rulers of France, disappear altogether in the face of French. German culture and the German people were seen as being in mortal danger.³⁹

The most significant response to this crisis on the part of the German Romantics was the attempt to return Germans to their cultural roots, and to create an authentic German civilization from the German soil and the German people. According to the new Romantic and progressive views, peoples now had to be seen in their geographical and historical contexts. The racial genius or spirit belonging to the land and its people changed its forms according to the spirit of the age or, to use a term developed in the 1780s, its *Zeitgeist*; but a people always retained its immutable essence. The most powerful figure concerned with this aspect of the Romantic movement was Johann Gottfried Herder, who was also important in relation both to Neo-Hellenism and the development of linguistics. Herder himself stayed within the universalist bounds of the Enlightenment, maintaining that all peoples, not merely Germans, should be encouraged to discover and develop their own geni.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, the concern with history and local particularity, and the disdain for rationality or "pure reason" apparent in his views and those of other late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century German thinkers including Kant, Fichte, Hegel and the Schlegels, provided a firm basis for the chauvinism and racism of the following two centuries.

NOTES

1. Iversen (1961, pp. 5, 89–99); Blanco (1984, pp. 2263–64); Godwin (1979, esp. pp. 15–24).
2. Colie (1957, pp. 2–4); Pocock (1985, p. 12).
3. Pocock (1985, p. 13). This is not to say that the Cambridge Platonists were unconcerned by Spinoza and by what they saw as his pantheist or "hylozoic" atheism (Colie, 1957, pp. 96–97).
4. Westfall (1980, p. 815).
5. *Ibid.*; Manuel (1959, pp. 90–95).
6. Pocock (1985, p. 23); Colie (1957, p. 96).
7. See Josephus, *Against Apion*; Clement, *Stromata*.
8. Hare (1647, pp. 12–13), quoted in MacDougall (1982, p. 60).
9. For a survey of the historiography of this link between Protestantism and Greek studies, see Lloyd-Jones (1982, p. 19).
10. Pfeiffer (1976, pp. 143–58; Wilamowitz-Moellendorf (1982, pp. 79–81). It is generally considered that the *digamma* is an ancient letter because it does not exist in the Ionian alphabet, which became standard in Greece at the end of the Peloponnesian War in 403 B.C. I argue in Bernal (1987a; 1988) that the Ionian alphabet is much older than the Dorian

alphabets which contained the *F*, and that the letter was therefore introduced into the Greek alphabet around 1000 B.C.—much later than c. 1600, when I date the transmission of the alphabet as a whole. . . .

11. Bentley (1693).
12. Jacob (1981, p. 89).
13. Bentley (1693). For more on Bentley and the Boyle Lectures, see Pfeiffer (1976, pp. 146–47).
14. For the deist implications of Bentley's Boyle lectures themselves, see Force (1985, pp. 65–66). For further doubts about his orthodoxy, see Westfall (1980, pp. 650–51). There were, of course, Christians who objected to both Newton and Bentley; see Force (1985, p. 64).
15. Turgot (1808–15, vol. 2, pp. 52–92, 255–328).
16. Turgot (1808–15, vol. 2, pp. 55, 315).
17. Manuel (1959, p. 69).
18. Montesquieu (1748, Bk. 18, ch. VI). This is, of course, in direct contradiction to the later "hydraulic theory"—hinted at by Marx and developed by Wittfogel—that water control leads to "Oriental Despotism." Unlike the nineteenth- and twentieth-century thinkers, Montesquieu had the example of Holland on his side. For a bibliography on the Asiatic Mode of Production, see Bernal (1987b).
19. Turgot (1808–15, vol. 2, pp. 65, 253, 314–16). Elsewhere (p. 71) he wrote: "Plato sowed flowers; the charm of his eloquence even embellished his errors." For the persistence into the nineteenth century of the view of Plato as a seductive poet rather than a philosopher, see Wismann (1983, p. 496).
20. Turgot (1808–15, vol. 2, pp. 276–79).
21. Turgot (1808–15, vol. 2, p. 70).
22. Turgot (1808–15, vol. 2, pp. 66–67).
23. Turgot (1808–15, vol. 2, pp. 330–32).
24. Child (1882–98, vol. 3, pp. 233–54). This lack of concern with the Jews' colour is in stark contrast to Walter Scott's reconstruction of the period in *Ivanhoe*, in which their darkness is repeatedly emphasized. This, of course, was written in the early nineteenth century, when there was obsessive interest in "ethnic" or "racial" differences.
25. For a general survey of medieval attitudes to blacks, see Devisse (1979, pt. 1). See also Child (1882–98, vol. 1, pp. 119–21).
26. Child (1882–98, vol. 3, pp. 51–74).
27. *Politics*, VII. 7 (trans. Sinclair, 1962, p. 269).
28. Bracken (1973, pp. 81–96; 1978, pp. 241–60). See also Poliakov (1974, pp. 145–46).
29. See, for example, Locke (1689, Bk. 5, p. 41).
30. Locke (1689, Bk. 4).
31. Locke (1689, Bk. 5, pp. 25–45). For a discussion of this, see Bracken (1973, p. 86).
32. Jordan (1969, p. 229).
33. Locke (1688, Bk. 3, p. 6, quoted and discussed in Jordan, 1969, pp. 235–36). For other examples of Locke's racism, see Bracken (1978, p. 246).
34. See Bracken (1978, p. 253).
35. Footnote to "Of National Characters," cited in Jordan (1969, p. 253); Bracken (1973, p. 82); Popkin (1974, p. 143); and S. J. Gould (1981, pp. 40–41).
36. See, for instance, Montesquieu (1748, Bk. 8, p. 21).
37. For a more extended attack on trees, see Bernal (1988).
38. To some extent, the eighteenth-century French cultural conquest of Europe was shared by the Italians, who were generally acknowledged to be the finest musicians and painters, and still had a formidable scientific tradition.
39. See Blackall (1958, pp. 1–35).
40. Berlin (1976, pp. 145–216); Iggers (1968, pp. 34–37).

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