The Terrible Transformation: From Heathenism to Racialism, 1630-1741

Week 11 – Lecture 1

16 November 2004

The “hidden agenda of modernity”: the repression of fluid ambiguities
<low boundaries: religion-science>
and
the invention of absolute certainties
<thick boundaries: science vs. religion>

The “hidden agenda of modernity”: the repression of fluid ambiguities
<low boundaries: biological race>
and
the invention of absolute certainties
<thick boundaries: European v. Other>

16th century: 1500s
1) Mediterranean Sea
2) “Christendom”
3) “Race” = “Xtn v. heathen”
i.e., Jewish race, Muslim race

17th century: 1600s
1) Atlantic Ocean
2) “Europe”
3) “Race” = “European” v. “Other”
i.e., Indian, African

ca. 1500:
“Self” = “Christendom”
“Other” = “non-Xtn” [i.e., heathen]

“Seek out, discover, and find whatsoever isles, countries, regions or provinces of the heathen and infidels, which before this time have been unknown to all Christians.”

--- Henry VII of England to Giovanni Caboti (1496) [Columbus: 1492]

“Heathenism” = religious basis of self-identity
“Race” = Christian race, Jewish race, Moorish race, heathens
16th century: Reformation II:
- 1543 --- Copernicus dies
  Revolution of Heavenly Spheres
- 1546 --- Luther dies
- 1555 --- Peace of Augsburg
- 1556 --- Loyola dies
- 1559 --- Elizabeth I
- 1564 --- Calvin dies
- 1572 --- St. Bartholomew’s
- 1598 --- Edict of Nantes
- 1603 --- Elizabeth I dies
Identity Rhetoric: heathenism

1750:
“Self” = “Europe”
“Other” = “non-European”

“Discover lands and islands of great extent hitherto unvisited by any European power.”
--- George III of England to Commodore John Byron (1746)

“Europeanism” = geographical basis of self-identity
“Race” = biological: European race v. American (Indian) race, Indian race, African race

1496:
Christians v. heathens/infidels
“Race” = religious tribe

1746:
European powers v. non-Euro
“Race” = geographical → biological phenotype

Problem:
What is a “European”? 

A member of the “Christian race” is a baptized person…

But what is a member of the “European race”?

Construction of “European”
depends on a prior construction of “Europe”

BUT
WHAT IS “EUROPE”???
West? East?  
Ambiguous identities

If even “the School of Athens” — Plato and Aristotle!! — isn’t “Western,” then what is “the West” .... ?

Is “Europe” “Christian”?
Are Istanbul and Athens “Eastern”?
NB: they are boundary regions: ambiguous identities

Pre-modernity: empire

Post-modernity: union
Phenotype

“all the observable characteristics of an organism --- such as shape, size, color and behavior --- that result from the interaction of its genotype (total genetic inheritance) with the environment.”

From race as religious [“heathen”] to race as physical [“non-white”]

NB: Importance of the body in conservative / organic ideology

e.g., from blood inheritance both in “Three Estates” (aristocratic/peasant) system to 20th-c. European Fascism and American segregationism

(Liberal ideology: “rights” accrue to the human “person” --- a metaphysical (not a bodily) concept)

“Biology as Destiny”:

--- “Race” [Aryan/Semitic]
--- Gender [Women] ---reproduce for the race
--- Homosexuals --- do not reproduce
--- Retarded / handicapped --- reproduce and pass on racial “degeneration”

1935 Nuremberg Laws:

forbid marriages between Aryans and “Christian non-Aryans”
[i.e., baptized Jews --- phenotype, not religion]

“The Right Choice of Marriage Partner”

“In your spousal choice lies the future of your sex and of the nation.”

17th century: end of fluidity

1616: Copernicus condemned
1618-1648: Thirty Years’ War
1632: Galileo Inquisition
1648 --- Peace of Westphalia

Nation-states

1620- 1700: “A Terrible Transformation”

“White” indentured servants can work for freedom;
“Black” indentured servants become lifelong

Race = from “religious race” to

“phenotype” or “blood” / biological inheritance

The “hidden agenda of modernity”

is the repression of fluid ambiguities

<low boundaries>
and

the invention of absolute certainties

<thick boundaries>

II. A new relationship to the body?
5) World is machine explained by mathematics
   - a) Creator = "Deity": a giant clockmaker
   - b) evacuated of internal purpose and meaning:
     How? questions replace Why? questions
   - c) YOU CAN TREAT IT AS SOMETHING INSTRUMENTAL
     e.g., body v. mind ➔ anatomy ➔ autopsy

Mondino, *Anathomia* (1493)

Ketham, *Fasciculus medicinae* (1550)
Veronese, 
De re anatomica 
(1559)

Raphael, “School of Athens” 1519-1520

Cultural meaning of comparison?

“Scientific” Anatomy is Italian Renaissance humanism
“Look, the body really is a machine!”

---René Descartes (1600s)

“Look, the body really is a machine!”

Verona 1559

Paris 1629

Veronese, De re anatomica 1559 (16th-c. Renaissance)

Riolan, Les Oeuvres anatomiques, 1629 (17th-c. Sci-Rev)

Rembrandt, The Anatomy Lecture of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp (1632)
Rembrandt,  
*The Syndics of the Clothmaker's Guild* (1662)

A Passion for Observation!

Valverde,  
*Anatomia del corpo umano* (1560)

If the micro-cosmos is a machine / mathematically quantifiable, composed of atoms and without internal meanings or purposes --- can you exploit it however you want?
Economic rationality: efficiency

III. The Terrible Transformation

- “Indentured Servants”
- Exchange food, shelter, and clothing for 4-7 years of work
- If live to complete service, can begin a free life with a bushel of corn, a new suit, and a parcel of land.
- Virginia Company of London: “sign-ups” to go work the tobacco crop
  - criminals; innocent accused; kidnapped; children

- Between 50% - 66% of all “white” immigrants to American colonies --- esp. Scots / Irish --- came as indentured servants
- High mortality: e.g.,
  - 1607-1622:
    - 15,000 to Virginia;
    - 13,000 perish
    - 02,000 survive

1619: Dutch ship arrives with cargo---Africans---stolen from a Spanish ship
Economic rationality: efficiency
The Terrible Transformation: told in marriage legislation

FROM HEATHENISM TO RACIALISM
The American Colonial Example
From American Negro Slavery and Abolition: A Critical Study
1680 Christian heathen union forbidden: “religious ministrations”
1681 “The shame of Christians”, defining a “vile odious and abominable” [Virginia]
1682 Free / slave: rationality: the power of racial differentiation first introduced:
“divorce free-born [i.e. white] women, forgetful of their free condition, do importune with negro males…” [Maryland]

The first class are prohibited to intermarry with the other: “religious ministrations”

Salem, 1692

Then all were ordered to go down into the street, where a ring was made and the more accurate sorted out. There stands Aiden, a bold fellow with his last at before the Indians, he sells powder and shot to the Indians and French and lies with the Indian squaws and has Indian papouses. Then was Aiden committed to the

1705

Turning point: Virginia General Assembly

- “All servants imported and brought into this County… who were not Christians in their native Country… shall be accounted and be slaves. All Negro, mulatto and Indian slaves within this dominion… shall be held to be real estate…”
- “If any slave resist his master… and shall happen to be killed in such correction… the master shall be free of all punishment… as if such accident never happened.”

Newton: Principia Mathematica 1687

1687 The first class are prohibited to intermarry with the other: “religious ministrations”

“mixture” = “perversion”

1692

Salem, 1692

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From “Heathen” to “Phenotype”

- 1639: Maryland: Christian baptism does not make a slave free
  - NB: COMPARE NAZIS
  - The end of Christian/ non-Christian distinction
  - From now on: phenotype [skin color]

- 1640: Jamestown: an African is punished for escaping with “being an indentured servant for the time of his natural life.”

Epilogue: 1670 Anthony and Mary

- 1670: Anthony Johnson dies a free man
- Wife Mary renegotiates the lease for 99 yrs
- August 1670: all-white jury rules that Anthony’s land can be seized by the state “because he was a Negroe and by consequence un alien”
  - NB: SANDER GILMAN: distance / foreign / alien

Son Richard— a free man with wife and children evicted
- Property goes to wealthy white neighbor George Parker
- Sum: Virginians no longer needed to “lure” workers to plantations; now they could buy them and chain them there.

A “terrible transformation” between 1650 and 1750: from heathenism to racism.

NB: THERE WERE OPTIONS:
- Blacks and whites both indentured
- Both condemned to lifelong servitude
- The conscious choice was made: invent the system of color difference.
- NOTHING INEVITABLE OR “NATURAL” ABOUT “RACE” AS BIO-CONSTRUCT
  - cf. social contract! A “nominalist” agreement
  - “sacralization”: make what is arbitrary seem “natural”
**Invention of racial slavery < --- >**

1618-1648: Thirty Years’ War

- 1632: Galileo at Inquisition
- 1632: Rembrandt *Anatomy Lesson*
- 1648: Westphalia
- 1687: Newton, *Principia Mathematica*

**1641:** Massachusetts becomes first colony in North America to recognize slavery as a legal institution.

**1650:** Connecticut

**1661:** Virginia

**1663:** Virginia law: if a child is born to a slave, that child also enslaved

- NB: BLOOD INHERITANCE

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**Two songs:**
- “Good Lord (Ran Old Jeremiah)”
- “I Feel Like Dyin’ In This Army”

- NB: Cajun --- some words: French

- Note hybridity
  - Rhythms; scales; percussion; improvisation; shouts---all African elements
  - Words: Biblical

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**African-American Field Songs**

- Field songs --- Negro spirituals --- Gospel
- --- Blues --- Ragtime --- Jazz
- --- 1950s Rock ‘n Roll (Elvis) ---
- --- 1960s Motown --- Rap --- Hip-hop