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Amos Morris-Reich and Dirk Rupnow, eds. *Ideas of Race in the History of Humanities*. ISBN: 978-3-319-49953-6. xiii+337 pp. 12 black and white illustrations. Palgrave MacMillan 2017. \$109 (hardcover), \$85 (e-book).

This volume addresses an important and neglected topic: the contributions discuss the significance of the humanities for the history of the idea of race in modern thinking. The illuminating introduction emphasizes the innovative approach of the volume. The theorization of race is usually associated with a scientific project that is based on biology and realized in anthropology. The volume shows, however, that “race has a long-standing, deep-seated and complex history within the humanities” (9). The exposition of its multiple origins and forgotten trajectories demonstrate that the concept of race has always been a “contested”, “diffuse” and “fuzzy” concept (2). These historical facts make it all the more problematic that the humanities have not followed anthropology in critically examining their contributions to the rise of modern scholarship on race. The editors argue convincingly that “the humanities have yet to examine the role of racial thinking in their histories” (4). Their volume is definitely the “first exploratory step toward filling [this] fairly gaping lacuna in the literature” (8).

The editors critically reflect on the methodological challenges of their delicate endeavor. They propose a convincing approach to the complex subject of their volume. The contributions should study the history of race in the humanities “in intellectual terms” and consider its “immediate, local and wider historical contexts” (17). The volume purposely does not focus on the “clearly racist end of the spectrum” (10) but attempts to reveal the widespread use and different functions of notions of race in the humanities. This methodological decision has an apparent editorial consequence: the subject of race in the Nazi context is only covered by one chapter but serves as vanishing point of several chapters.

The volume reaches most of its defined goal: it gives us a first impression of the significance and range of racial thinking in the humanities. The contributions also show us the diverging contexts and shifting meanings of scholarly notions of race. Yet some of the editors’ claims are too bold. They argue that the chapters of their volume “do suggest that certain methodologies were more predisposed to develop, appropriate or integrate notions of race than others” (21). Such an argument would require the examination of different methods within one discipline. The chapters of the volume are situated in quite different disciplines, however. The editors name phenomenology as an example of a philosophical tradition with a

methodological proneness to engage with ideas of race (20 f., 22). Yet when we look into the historical context, we see most camps of early-twentieth-century German philosophy engaged in racial thinking (e.g., Neo-Kantianism, *Lebensphilosophie*, hermeneutics). The notable exemptions—logical positivism and critical theory—are not connected by their methodologies.

Many chapters engage in intriguing accounts of neglected parts of disciplinary histories (a). Some present us promising approaches (b). Other chapters are, however, disappointing because they do not look at their subject from the innovative perspective that is outlined by the editors (c).

a) *Margaret Olin's* fascinating chapter on formal analysis in art and anthropology voices a suspicion against a renowned method. She depicts the eerie similarity and historical proximity between close observation in art history and racist anthropology. She also traces the use of this scientific method in art history and shows that the seemingly natural observations of Giovanni Morelli were shaped by social prejudice (97 f.). Her conclusion points to a category mistake that causes a lot of trouble: close observers often do not distinguish between the representation that guides their classification and the object itself. They forget that their depictions are already interpretations. *George S. Williamson* examines the role of the notion of race in Schelling's late *Philosophy of Mythology*. He shows that term race has a pejorative meaning for Schelling and signifies the "physical and moral degeneration" (171) of certain groups of people within a theological anthropology. Here "overcoming race" is an essential part of the "Christian economy of salvation" (184). *Suzanne Marchand* presents the scholarly reasons why oriental philologists turned to ideas of race in the nineteenth century. She locates the rise of racial thinking in the debates on the origins of religion. Marchand emphasizes that the racial perspective should ensure the relevance of orientalism in the historical context. Her conclusion highlights the ambivalent result of the racial paradigm in linguistics: while "both racialized and prejudiced prehistories" were "unlocked", oriental philology also put forward "a wider and broader set of religious and culture histories of humankind" (247). *Nigel Eltringham* discusses the intellectual and political distortions of two racial classifications—the "Nordic" and the "Hamite"—that were introduced by Joseph Deniker. While Deniker himself regarded race as only a matter of physical characteristics without an impact on culture, his physiological distinctions were subsequently associated with intellectual dispositions. The British anthropologist Charles Seligman regarded the "Hamites" as the "great civilizing force of black Afrika" (Seligman, cited here on p. 259). The racist myth of the "Nordic race" was created by two Americans, William Z. Ripley and Grant Madison, and

was passed on to the Nazi ideologue Alfred Rosenberg. Eltringham shows that the distorted images of the “Nordic” and the “Hamites” served as ideological justifications of the genocides in Rwanda and Germany. *Christopher Hutton* argues convincingly that the usual opposition between “soft theories” of identity (based on language, culture or religion) and “hard theories” (based on common descent, blood ties and race) is misleading (279). He reveals the significance of the phonocentric concept of *Volk* for ethnocentric and xenophobic models of identity. The sole focus on biological racism even gives us a false picture of Nazi racism. The major part of Hutton’s fascinating chapter is dedicated to the “triumph of the phonocentric *Volk* model” (285) in Western understandings of China and in China’s self-understanding. He convincingly shows that the phonocentric paradigm structures the conservative policy of the PRC today.

b) *Anna G. Piotrowska* demonstrates the significance of the concept of race for the development of musicology in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. She especially examines racial approaches to “so-called Gypsy music” (215) and focuses on the racist accounts of two famous composers: Liszt and the early Bartók. Her critical analysis of Bartók fails, however, to explain why he later changed his attitude and developed a more convincing social understanding of “Gypsy music” (226). *Derek Charles Catsam* engages with a current political context. He examines the significance of the concept of race for the education policy and the historiography of South Africa. His chapter attempts to cover the development of both fields in the Apartheid Era. This approach gives a first overview on an extensive subject, but lacks an in-depth conceptual analysis of notions of race in the specific context.

c) The volume starts with a disappointing examination of premodern debates on cultural differences. Joan-Pau Rubiés asks in his very long chapter (54 pages) whether early modern Europeans were racists. Since he identifies racism with biological determinism, he arrives at a predictable answer: this distinctive modern template cannot be found in premodern thought. Moreover, Rubiés explicitly contrasts the “hard” racism of scientific thinking with the “soft” racism of ethnic and cultural classifications (36) – a distinction that is forcefully criticized by Hutton. Rubiés also insists that the “orthodox consensus” of Christian universalism and monogenism repelled racial anthropologies. But cases like that of Schelling show that within the Christian framework peculiar kinds of racial thinking emerged. *Dani Schrire*’s chapter on the development of Jewish folkloristics is characterized by a similar shortcoming. Schrire emphasizes that scholars of the Jewish *Volk* rejected the concept of race in contrast to their German colleagues from *Völkerkunde*. He presents Grunwald’s convincing anti-racist arguments, but does not analyze the problematic character of his conception of the *Volk*.

Grunwald believes that “culture grows from the native soil” (Grunwald, cited here on p. 121). The only chapter on the Nazi context also disappoints: Nicolas Berg examines the special kind of anti-Semitism that characterized the conference “Jewry in Jurisprudence” in October 1936. The infamous conference was organized by Hans Frank and Carl Schmitt and targeted the “Jewish spirit” (*Jüdischer Geist*) in German jurisprudence. Berg shows that this “academic anti-Semitism” was widespread especially among legal and economy scholars. But he does not draw consequences for the critical understanding of Nazi racism from the significance of this motif. The chapter concludes with an examination of the contemporary critique of the conference in Otto Sinzheimer’s *Jüdische Klassiker der Rechtswissenschaft* (Jewish Classics of Jurisprudence) from 1938. Berg claims that “from today’s perspective we can add nothing more” to Sinzheimer’s understanding of the “‘Jewish influence’ in German jurisprudence” (Sinzheimer, cited here on p. 151)—a peculiar conclusion in a volume that attempts to overcome the anachronistic approach to ideas of race in the history of humanities.

This shortcoming in a chapter on a topic that should not be addressed in the first place reflects a more general problem of the composition of the volume. It originated from a conference on the same topic that took place in Haifa in 2010. The editors emphasize that “the volume differs significantly from that conference” (99). They claim that they only haven chosen contributions that follow their chosen intellectual approach to their delicate topic (9–11). This argument is, however, not convincing: the editors only cut contributions, but did not add new contributors after the conference. Moreover, some contributions still contain references that only makes sense in a talk (211, 245). Yet this critique should not shadow the achievements of the volume. It presents us an intriguing collection of approaches to the manifold ideas of race in the history of the humanities and will hopefully inspire more critical research on this important topic.<sup>1</sup>

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