RESEARCH ARTICLE

2023, vol. 10, issue 2, 71 – 81
https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15254234

Some remarks on contemporary racism

SIMONA RODAT

Professor, PhD, Adventus University, Cernica, Ilfov, Romania, simona.rodat@uadventus.ro, https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2916-7002

Abstract

Far from being a past or obsolete phenomenon, racism is branching out and spreading in many forms today. The scope of the concept of racism remains, however, difficult to demarcate. So is the differentiation of this term from other notions that designate similar attitudes, behaviors and practices. This paper discusses some issues of current interest in relation to racism, starting with the link between the terms "racism" and »race«, and debating the current distancing and even separation of the two concepts, despite the linguistic link. The paper also analyzes various definitions and perspectives on racism. Some content issues are approached, such as the fact that racism is, as contrary to some shared attitudes such as xenophobia, both an ideology or theory and a set of exclusionary and marginalizing practices. Furthermore, different forms of racism are addressed, from 'classical', biological racism, which resorted to biological differentiations, to the forms of racism that characterize the contemporary world, which emphasize cultural differences and/or include racist views and practices embedded in social values, norms and even in the functioning of society. These present-day forms of racism have been referred to by various expressions, such as cultural racism, differential racism, symbolic racism, racism without races, neo-racism, and institutional racism. Some conclusions are drawn from these delimitations, discussions and reflections, such as that maybe it might be more accurate to speak of racisms in the plural, given that the hypothesis of multiple racisms is increasingly confirmed by practice, as well as the fact that not only multiple racisms but also multiple dogmata should be considered in order to have a comprehensive overview of exclusion, marginalization, oppression, exploitation or discrimination.

Keywords: racism, »race«, cultural racism, neo-racism, racism without races, institutional racism, multiple racisms

1. The concept of »race«[1]

The term »race« is used in various discourses. On the one hand, it appears in science, particularly in the discourse of biology (especially genetics), history and the social sciences; on the other hand, it functions as a key element of so-called common sense, when people give the social world an ideological structure within which they can act (Miles, 1991: 94).

At the level of ordinary understanding, the term »race« denotes a subdivision of the human species. »Race« would be a collective group of humans distinguished from other groups by various physical characteristics. The criteria used for differentiation were primarily skin colour, hair texture and head shape, but also fictitious biological characteristics such as "purity of blood". This arbitrary selection of physical characteristics used as criteria of difference clearly shows that it is not a natural subdivision of the world's population, but a historical and cultural attribution of meanings to the totality of variations of the human species (ibid.: 96).

[1] The term »race« is a controversial one, containing discriminatory connotations in itself, as can be seen in the explanations in this section of the paper. Therefore, in order to demarcate and distance myself from these connotations, in this paper it will be used in quotation marks (» «). The term is addressed here for explanatory and bibliographical references only.

As a result of the arbitrary nature of the elaboration of the racial classifications, the use of the concept is therefore highly controversial, both in terms of the number of »races« and the criteria used (Policar, 2005). Even if currently genetic variance, rather than phenotypic differences, is predominantly invoked to assign people to presumed »races«, there is no indisputable scientific justification for generating classifications or hierarchies of the population. The construction of the species, which supposedly order genetic diversity, can most easily be challenged by the fact that genetically, except for identical (homozygous) twins, each human being is unique, which would mean that each human being is itself a distinct »race« (Policar, 2005: 545). Biologically and genetically, »races« do not exist in the sense of distinguishing characteristics of genotypic and phenotypic provenance (Miles, 1991: 94).

The origin of humanity and »races« has constantly attracted the attention of historians and social scientists. According to Wieviorka (1994: 21), during the nineteenth century, the newly emerging social sciences gave special importance to the notion of »race« and thus contributed to its establishment as a category reflecting the structure and the change of society, or even the evolution of history, thus paving the way for the racism developed by ideologues. Wieviorka (ibid.) sees that as a major intellectual phenomenon: the formation of ideas and doctrines that established »race« as an explanatory principle of social life and, above all, of history. These ideas and doctrines do little to help construct racism as an object of analysis.

In general, in the social sciences, the term »race« was mainly considered in the context of the ideas of race relations, racial classifications, and racial hierarchies. Apart from biological differences, especially skin color, other various criteria – such as origin, social class (aristocrats vs. “plebs”), religion, language, etc. – were used to justify not only the differentiation but also the superiority or inferiority of »races«. The wide diversity of meanings of »race« depending on social structures points to the subjective nature of the concept. The term should therefore be seen as a social construction, above all as “a category of exclusion and annihilation” (Guillaumin, 1981: 65).

Since the eighteenth century, various theories about hierarchies of individuals and human races have been developed, including theories about racial struggles, social Darwinism, theories about the opposition of "Aryans" and "Semites", theories of racial hygiene and eugenics, etc. (Koller, 2009), which have been used in ideological and political discourse to justify discrimination, exploitation, persecution and extermination of some human groups. The colonialism of European domination, slavery in the USA or extermination of the Jews under the Nazi regime were “supported” by such theories. In addition to its ambiguity, the association with the genocides of the Second World War contributed to the demeaning of the concept of »race«. Consequently, it has little acceptance – apart from historical references – in the scientific discourse over the last half century.

However, it has been noted that discriminatory practices go also without biological categorizations (the existence of “racism without race” proves this) and can operate only on the symbolic level. The symbolic and social reality of »race« makes this fictional conception even more powerful (Policar, 2005: 548).

2. The construction of meanings: Racialization, racialism, racism

In the Anglophone literature, besides the concept of “racism”, notions such as “racialization” (i.e., “race construction”, cf. Miles, 1991) and “racialism” (that is, “thinking in racial categories”, cf. Appiah, 1990; Fredrickson, 2011) are also used in connection with that of »races«. According to Miles (1991: 99), the notion of “racialization” refers to a representational categorization process “through which particular biological (usually phenotypic) traits are given social significance”. In other words, this concept refers to those cases,

“in which social relations between people are structured through the construction of meaning of biological characteristics in such a way that they define and construct differentiated social groups. The characteristics selected as carriers of meaning have a historical range of variation; usually they are visible somatic properties, but also invisible (fictional and real) biological properties” (Miles, 1991: 100-1, personal translation by the author – S. R.).

The meaning of “racialism” is not far from that of racialization. According to Appiah (1990), racialism could be defined as a belief that

“there are significant characteristics that allow us to divide the members of our species into some races in such a way that all members of these races share certain common characteristics and tendencies with each other that they do not share with members of all other races” (Appiah, 1990: 4f, cited by Fredrickson, 2011: 210, personal translation by the author – S. R.).

From these definitions it follows that, like »race«, *racialization* and *racialism* also refer to social constructions, whereby categorizations and divisions of groups of people are made by more or less arbitrary criteria (“characteristics”). From another point of view, it can be argued that the »races« are socially constructed by means of racialization and racialism.

While the differences between »races« are perceived as differences in essence, they do not necessarily imply hierarchies or inequalities. It is the concept of "racism" that refers to these hierarchies and inequalities. Fredrickson (2011: 211) points out that *racialism* turns into *racism* when racial differences lead to "inferring claims of special privilege for members of one's supposed »race« or disparaging or harming members of the supposed other »races«".

The characteristics through which differentiations and hierarchies are constructed are not only biological but also cultural. Racism emerges when this fundamentally essentialized "biologistic" or "culturalist" conceptualization of human diversity is thus used to serve political and social interests whose purpose is to legitimize either exclusion (segregation, discrimination, expulsion, extermination) or exploitation (slavery, colonialism) of a category of the population (Taguieff, 2005c: 565).

Thus, on the one hand, the term "racism" refers to a theory or ideology that can take a relatively coherent form. It may have a logical structure and even provide evidence to support it (Miles, 1991: 106), but it also takes the form of less coherent clichés, stereotypes, images, prejudices, attributions and explanations constructed and used in everyday life (ibid.). On the other hand, racism refers to exclusionary and marginalizing practices that involve concrete actions and processes. However, most descriptions of racism are neither limited to exclusionary practices nor to an ideology. Essentially, these elements function in interdependence.

3. Relationship between the terms »race« and "racism"

While the origin of the word »race« is disputed, its arising can probably be placed in the 13th century in Romanic languages with the meaning "family membership" (Koller, 2009: 9). However, it had already included racist elements since the end of the 15th century by describing phenomena of exclusion (in Spain, Jews were referred to as a »race« in 1492 in order to make a primordial and religious demarcation against them; in France, the old aristocracy by birth invoked its »race« in the 16th century in order to distinguish itself from the rising aristocracy by office – cf. ibid.). Accordingly, »race« and thus racist thinking have been connected from the very beginning. Although the classifications of human races were developed later (from the 18th century onwards), elements of racism appeared in Europe already at the beginning of the modern era (Taguieff, 2005c: 553). Originally a Western invention, it was generalized as an ideology and as a set of socio-political practices, through colonialist imperialism, the system of slavery and xenophobic nationalism (ibid.).

In this respect, the idea of »race« as well as a "proto-racist imaginary" (ibid.: 563) preceded racialism. The reference to "blood" preceded that to »race« in one sense of classification (Todorov, 1989). This "proto-racist imaginary", which emerged because of the obsession with mixing and the "purity of descent", appeared long before the development of the classification criteria and scales that, in the name of science and the idea of progress, allowed the hierarchization of the labelled races of people, according to a brisk standardized model (from top to bottom: white, yellow, black, cf. Banton, 1987).

4. Definitions of "racism" – broad and narrow explanations

The term "racism" is one of the most controversial and ambiguous concepts in the social sciences (see Balibar, 2008; Fredrickson, 2011; Koller, 2009; Mac an Ghaill, 1999; Rodat, 2017a; Sow, 2008). Often imprecise and unreflected, and even banalised as a result of its political use and saturation in the mass media (Taguieff, 2005c), it also poses many problems in terms of a scholarly definition. According to Taguieff (2005c: 549), since it is not possible to arrive at a complete, universally applicable definition, an appropriate approach would be for each science that uses the term to define its conceptual content.

As Wieviorka (1994: 12) argues, racism is a global phenomenon with remarkable historical consistency, often defined very broadly as synonymous with exclusion or denial of alterity. A stricter definition, according to the same author (ibid.), imposes the idea of a link between the attributes or heritage (physical, genetic or biological) of an individual or group and their intellectual and moral traits. The imprecise realm of racism is also highlighted by Bowser (2017), who notes that nowadays racism describes virtually anything related to racial conflict.

R. Miles (1982; 1991) suggests that the various meanings and uses of the term "racism" should be scientifically limited for analytical reasons by referring to it exclusively as an ideological phenomenon. Miles argues that "the analytical value of a concept is determined by its usefulness in describing and explaining social processes" (Miles, 1991: 103). Racism refers to practices and processes of exclusion, although, according to Miles, this is an over-extension that "on the one hand does not have sufficient sharpness of distinction, and on the other hand makes establishing of deterministic relationships more difficult" (ibid.). Therefore, in order to achieve analytical accuracy, racism should be understood as a representational phenomenon, and thus determined not by its function but by its ideological content. According to Miles, this ideological content consists, on the one hand, of a process of racial construction, which means that one or more biological characteristics are used as a criterion for describing a

collective group, and that these characteristics are regarded as natural and unchanging and are ascribed as an intrinsic differentiation from other groups (Miles, 1991: 105). On the other hand, additional negative characteristics – both biological and cultural – are attributed to all people who belong to this collective group, and consequently "the presence of such a group appears highly problematic: it is ideologically presented as a threat" (ibid: 106). In this narrow definition of racism, one or more biological characteristics are referred by Miles as the initial criterion of differentiation. Thus, in this view, not only institutional racism (exclusionary practices and processes), but also cultural racism (which refers to the cases in which different "cultural" characteristics are used as criteria in the process of racial construction) would be excluded from the scope of racism.

Another narrow definition, a "classical" understanding of racism, is also brought into discussion by C. Lévi-Strauss (1983; 1988), which sees racism as a precise doctrine that can be summarized in four points (Lévi-Strauss, 1988: 208): First, a correlation is established between genetic inheritance and intellectual abilities and moral attitudes; second, it is claimed that this inheritance, on which these abilities and attitudes depend, is common to all members of certain groups of people; third, these groups, called »races«, can be hierarchized according to the "quality of their genetic inheritance"; fourth, these differences entitle the so-called »superior races« to dominate, exploit, and even annihilate the other »races«. However, as compared to Miles' view, this definition considers not only a theoretical but also a practical component of racism, since it involves actions and behaviors.

With a broader scope, G. M. Fredrickson (2011) asserts that racism has two components: difference and power. In the first place, racism corresponds to a delimitation of one's own human group from all "others". In this respect, "they" are permanently different from "us", and these differences are not bridging (Fredrickson, 2011: 19). Since differentiation is always in favor of "us", this sense of difference provides a motive or justification for treating the "inferior others" unfairly or cruelly.

"The spectrum of possible consequences of this interplay of attitude and action ranges from an unofficial, but continuous practiced social discrimination, to genocide; between them lies something like the racial separation, which is sanctioned by the government, colonial subjugation, exclusion, expulsion (or «ethnic cleansing»), and enslavement" (Fredrickson, 2011: 19-20, personal translation by the author – S. R.).

A much broader range of meanings can be seen in this understanding of racism. Fredrickson no longer talks about the role of biological/genetic characteristics as differentiation criteria. Although this definition is less precise, it gives the concept of racism a broader extent by including cultural characteristics as a starting point. In addition, this author emphasizes the element of power: racism occurs when one group of people has power over other groups. It is therefore a question of domination and subordination, of "racists" and their victims (ibid: 20). Finally, it should be noted that this perspective emphasizes the "function" of racism (as was also in Miles' view), that is, what actions are carried out in the name of racist attitudes.

The scope of the concept of racism is even broader in other understandings. The term is sometimes used in everyday, media, and political discourse without an analytical framework. Thus,

"racism seems to have become a passe-partout under which seemingly any discrimination of the «others» can be subsumed" (Priester, 1997: 13, personal translation by the author – S. R.).

The broad use of the term makes "racism" an approximate synonym for exclusion, rejection, discrimination, hostility, hatred, intolerance, phobia or contempt (Taguieff, 2005c: 555). In French, for example, terms such as "racism against the young", "racism against the elderly", "racism against women", "racism against homosexuals" or "racism against the French" are used (ibid.). From this point of view, it becomes more difficult, if not impossible, not only to develop relevant scientific approaches, but also to develop accurate anti-racist strategies at the actual, practical level.

5. Is the era of 'old racism' over? Some remarks

As has been seen, there is a wide range of definitions and considerations of racism. Despite this large number of approaches and explanations, the definition of racism is not always clear-cut. Not only does its scope of coverage vary depending on one's point of view, but racism is also a concept that cannot easily be distinguished from other terms such as ethnocentrism or xenophobia. In the context of these debates, the question arises whether the current situations included in the sphere of racism actually refer to racism, or they represent a different, distinct category of phenomena.

What is common to most definitions of racism is that it refers to an ideology. This distinguishes the term from ethnocentrism and xenophobia. Ethnocentrism can be considered as an attitude, a mental disposition, or a behavior accompanied by rejection of cultural diversity (Ferreol, 2005: 285). It is based on an individual's strong identification with their group and on a certitude of one's own superiority of a certain set of values, views, beliefs or ideas. Likewise, xenophobia is essentially a shared attitude. Etymologically, the term "xenophobia" means fear and, in a broader sense, hostility, resentment or even hatred towards everything that is foreign, and especially

towards foreigners themselves (Jucquois, 2005: 672; Taguieff, 2005c: 553). If the meaning of the Greek word "phobia", from which the term originates, is taken into account, xenophobia would fit into an extensive category of phobias. However, in humanities and social sciences, it is mainly considered as a collective attitude rather than an individual neurosis (Jucquois, 2005: 672). Ethnocentrism and xenophobia, as well as cultural-ethnic heterophobia, which will be discussed later, have existed since time immemorial and are universal phenomena common to all human beings (Memmi, 1972).

However, while most definitions of racism indicate that it involves an ideology, it is still highly controversial what this ideology refers to and, moreover, whether the actions and the consequences associated with those actions are also necessary to call a phenomenon "racism".

A narrow view of racism considers only biological/genetic characteristics as premises or criteria of differentiation. The narrowest perspective would consider only skin color, and in particular it would be a *black-white dualistic model* of »race« and racism (Mac an Ghaill, 1999: 79). But the inaccuracy of such a definition is considered proven even just by anti-Semitism.

R. Miles (1982; 1991) points out that while one or more biological characteristics are used as criteria in the process of constructing »races«, it is erroneous to limit the parameters of racism by reference to skin color.

"After all, various «white» groups have been objects of racism and manifestations of racism are not limited to «white» people" (Miles, 1991: 13, personal translation by the author – S. R.).

Taking this point of view as a basis, as well as C. Lévi-Strauss' position, it can be argued that biological "classical" racism resorts to real or fictitious biological characteristics, such as skin color, texture of the hair and the shape of the head, "blood", etc., in order to realize the racial construction. Further, by means of these biological features, supposedly unchangeable nature-given, negatively valued characteristics – both biological and cultural – are attributed to all members of these constructions (»races«). In the name of their supposed superiority, the dominant groups of people (»races«) have discriminated, exploited, enslaved, colonized, marginalized, expelled, annihilated the others, depending on the situation (Fredrickson, 2011; Lévi-Strauss 1988).

To understand racism in this "classical" biological sense would imply that racism is not currently a significant social and political phenomenon. Under these circumstances, the question arises whether, indeed, the era of racism is over.

However, even in the present, there are often events, or appear attitudes, behaviors and actions that are called "racist" and, moreover, are considerably similar to the "classical" ones. According to Taguieff (2005b: 498), we are currently experiencing a paradox, evidently the paradox of a racism that is not linked to biology and does not require an explicit – and even possible – reference to a difference of »races«. Furthermore, this kind of racism can sometimes appear without resorting to the thesis of inequality (ibid.). Thus, it no longer presupposes a hierarchical classification of human groups (Taguieff, 1988).

In this context, a more legitimate question would probably be whether there is a shift from the era of biological, "classical" racism to that of the emergence of a new form or some new forms of racism. Or is this racism, which does not resort to biological differentiations, not essentially different from the "old" racism?

6. Cultural racism, neo-racism, and 'racism without races'

In its classical meaning, racism focused on the concept of biological inequality, and was characterized by state and legal support. Some explicit examples in this regard are the Nazi government in Germany, racial segregationist laws in the American Southern States until the 1960s, and the apartheid regime in South Africa. However, as Fredrickson (2011: 13) notes, racism is not a phenomenon of the past because it does not need this state and legal support, nor is it an ideology of biological differentiation and inequality. Forms of discrimination and rejection of people emerge or even flourish, including in societies that are said to be free of racism (Fredrickson, 2011; Rodat, 2021). These are rejectionist attitudes and behaviors that do not necessarily draw on biology to support the "inferiority" of some people or groups of people. Instead, ethno-cultural origins are absolutized in order to discriminate, exclude, or expel (Taguieff, 2005b: 499). These attitudes and behaviors are referred to as "cultural racism" (ibid.).

Discussions of this phenomenon have emerged particularly in connection with the "problem" of immigrants (ibid.), that is, as a reference to "alleged deep-seated cultural differences" (Fredrickson, 2011: 13), which have often been used to justify hostility and discrimination against those "cultural different" immigrants. What some categories of immigrants are accused of is that they are not culturally "assimilable" and, as a result, would pose a threat of disorder to society and to the national group (Taguieff, 2005b: 500). In his analysis of the new current forms of racism, P. A. Taguieff (2005b) uses the term "neo-racism", or more precisely "differential cultural/culturalist neo-racism", to refer specifically to this emerging ideological configuration, which has the

dimensions of a global phenomenon. Taguieff sees in "racism against immigrants" only one illustration among others of precisely this neo-racism.

"Immigration" as the central category of neo-racism, as well as "insurmountability of cultural differences" as its dominant theme are also highlighted by another French scholar, E. Balibar. According to Balibar (1991), while the old, biological racism has flourished in both ideology and practice as European countries colonized other parts of the world, the new racism ('neo-racism') has been related to the increase of non-European migration to Europe in the decades after the Second World War (Balibar, 1991: 21). Thus, in 'neo-racism' the notion "immigration" replaces that of »race«, and racism itself does not need any more this category of differentiation, as it is now a "racism without races". This new racism no longer emphasizes biological heredity, but cultural differences, more precisely the "inexpugnability of cultural differences". This cultural racism, "does not postulate, at first sight, the superiority of certain groups or peoples in relation to others but 'only' the harmfulness of abolishing frontiers, the incompatibility of lifestyles and traditions" (ibid.). However, he argued that cultural racism's claims that different cultures are equal are "more apparent than real" and that, when put into practice, cultural racist ideas reveal that they are inherently based on the belief that some cultures are superior to others (Balibar, 1991: 24).

The multitude of situations that presuppose rejections, discriminations, or expulsions of people show that racism can be constituted on bases other than biological ones, especially with reference to cultural differences and ethnic or ethno-national identities, to the extent that groups of people are essentialized, differences absolutized (Taguieff, 2005b: 500), and stated as "innate, ineradicable, and unchangeable" (Fredrickson, 2011: 15), and supposedly antagonistic in relation to the "dominant culture" (Taguieff, 2005b: 500). Taguieff (ibid.) refers to this as "cultural/ethnic heterophobia". This is an internal and selective xenophobia that functions neither on the basis of the idea of »races«, nor on the basis of highlighting some inequalities, but on the basis of essentializing and absolutizing the differences between groups of people. Essentialization refers to the tendency to construct substantial genera/species ("Jew", "Black", "Aryan", etc.) by treating visible differences as permanent and unambiguous signs of belonging to one or the other category (Taguieff, 1988: 155). That means that only one or some of the characteristics of human groups are considered as essential. Further, the construction of essentialized human identity appeals to fixed or essential characteristics that are regarded as natural and unchangeable (Taguieff, 2005a: 38), and are supposed to persist continuously (Mac an Ghaill, 1999: 7). Additionally, a transition is made from that distinct (usually physical) aspect to a specific genetic substance and, moreover, to different mental abilities and skills (Taguieff, 1997: 65-6). At the same time, all the members of these human groups are considered alike/equal, the differences within the groups are homogenized (Mac an Ghaill, 1999: 10), the multiplicity of the individual characteristics is not considered, and the situational factors are neglected (Taguieff, 2005b: 510). In this context one can speak about the reductionism of people: they are reduced to one or a few ("significant/ enduring/ inherent") trait(s), whereas human groups are reduced to uniform, homogeneous, one-dimensional collectivities (Rodat, 2017a: 135). Moreover, there is a tendency to absolutize the differences between the essentialized human groups, whether the differences are perceived or invented. This means that cultural differences are absolutized to such an extent that they seem irreconcilable, and the coexistence of people belonging to different cultural groups seems not only problematic but impossible. In such a perspective, as a result of the processes of essentialization, reductionism and absolutization, all immigrants would be similar, and they would be culturally incompatible or incapable of integrating into the dominant culture, and are therefore of concern to society (ibid.).

As in biological racism, the fear of mixing also emerges in cultural (neo)racism because this "mixing" would supposedly be destructive to the "pure identity" (Taguieff, 2005b: 501) of the dominant group. "Mixophobia" presupposes the desire to distance oneself from or simply eliminate those who are "different". This desire for separation can become extreme, in the form – as in biological racism – of strict exclusion, total expulsion, and even extermination (ibid.).

The (neo)racism may emphasize differences rather than inequalities, but it nonetheless does not lack the construction of a permanent hierarchy of different groups of people, since some individuals and groups do not "conform" to the dominant, national culture, precisely because of their culture. Such an assumption, which can be seen as a strategic and instrumental overestimation, alleges that these groups, characterized by diverse "other" cultural (ethnic, religious, etc.) traits, cannot "integrate" into the dominant culture and, as a result, coexistence with them is impossible.

From this approach, one can see that – although the term "racism" establishes an inescapable linguistic connection with that of »race« – (neo)racism is not based on reference to »races« but to culturally essentialized groups of people. Consequently, the term "racism without races" has emerged (Rodat, 2017b: 91) which is also used to refer to the new racist manifestations.

"A main element of the 'new racism' is the deracialization of race, involving the displacement of an older racial vocabulary in public arenas, in which explicit references to race are now coded in the language of culture" (Mac an Ghaill, 1999: 71).

Griese (2004: 143) points out that nowadays instead of »race« (or also "nation", "people", or "tribe"), which was central in scientific discourse as well as in mediatic-political language use in the 19th century until the 1980s, "culture" (or also "ethnicity/ethnos/ethnic group") has prevailed as the dominant descriptive category in perception and thought both in science and in the media and politics.

As Fredrickson (2011: 232) notes, culture "can be essentialized to such an extent that it has the same deterministic effect as skin color". However, in order not to confuse racism with ethnocentrism, and "rightly to speak of racism", according to Fredrickson (ibid.) two additional elements must be present. On the one hand, there should be a belief that the differences between ethnic groups are permanent and ineradicable. Otherwise, if conversion or assimilation is a real possibility, we can talk about cultural or religious intolerance, but not about racism (ibid.: 233). On the other hand, there is supposed to be a political and social side to the ideology, that is, an "exercise of power in the name of »race« and the resulting patterns of domination or exclusion" (ibid.). Following Fredrickson (2011), the definition of (neo)racism can be stated that it exists

"when one ethnic group or historical collective dominates, excludes, or seeks to eliminate another group on the basis of differences, which are considered hereditary and immutable" (Fredrickson, 2011: 233, personal translation by the author – S. R.).

An alternative definition of cultural racism was provided by R. DiAngelo (2012). She considered that cultural racism is the racism that is "deeply embedded in the culture" and therefore "always in circulation". Cultural racism is transmitted through and continually reinforced by the process of socialization (DiAngelo, 2012: 113). A similar view about racism being embedded in cultural values and norms was expressed by Carmichael and Hamilton (1967), who believed that racism arises from the organization of society itself. However, they named this form of racism "institutional racism", a term that will be addressed later in this paper.

7. Cultural (neo)racism vs. culturalism

At this point a conceptual demarcation between the terms "cultural/differential racism/neo-racism" and "culturalism" should be made. While they are linked, they do not overlap.

What cultural (neo)racism refers to has been outlined before. In the following the concept of "culturalism" is regarded. It was introduced in the middle of the 20th century in the USA and is associated with the works of the anthropologist Ruth Benedict. She argued that a particular form of culture imposes different value systems on its different members (Valiere, 2005: 176). In this regard, culture is perceived as a matrix that determines the shape of behaviors and representations (ibid.: 177). Studies from this perspective examined the distinctive cultural characteristics of small communities or minorities (Mac an Ghaill, 1999: 5) and suggested that social behavior is to be understood primarily in terms of culture.

Culturalism distinguished between social behavior and biological and physiological behavior, and established a coherent link/association between anthropology and psychoanalysis (Valiere, 2005: 176). To this end, weight was given to the personality of members of society, as in the elaborations of ethnologists Ralph Linton and Margaret Mead. Linton contributed to the explanation of the concept of "basic personality", the constitutive elements of which are common to members of a society and are shaped by the cultural framework (ibid.: 177). Mead pointed out on the basis of her studies that personality is determined by the cultural pattern rather than by the gender of the individual (ibid.: 178).

Nevertheless, culturalism and the culturalist school have been strongly criticized mainly because of methodological limitations (e.g., the fact that the psychological tests applied in various small cultural communities were conceived in Western societies). The further empirical developments from the culturalist perspective with regard to ("cultural") minorities in Western societies sparked criticism especially by the fact that "culture" was only considered in connexion with ethnic origin, and it would be static, not changeable or only changeable over long periods of time (ibid.: 179). Moreover, such approaches assumed that ethnic groups were homogeneous, namely that all of their members had the same "culture" (Mac an Ghaill, 1999: 6), and that essential characteristics of individual people were limited to the cultural characteristics of a group (Rodat, 2020). In this view, culture appears as a barrier that cannot be overcome, regardless of social and political efforts.

In view of these remarks, the term "culturalism" sometimes has a pejorative connotation nowadays (Valiere, 2005: 179). Looking at the critiques mentioned above, one can see elements that are also specific to cultural racism, such as reductionism and essentialization of people and groups. In this way, one can relate culturalism to cultural (neo)racism.

8. Institutional racism

In the current debates about (neo)racism, in addition to the concept of cultural racism, there is another concept that appears recurrently, namely "institutional racism", as a covert form of racism that is interwoven in social structures and institutions and manifests itself in discriminatory social practices and institutional patterns. This concept is briefly outlined below, as well as the main aspects of the criticism related to its problematic analytical use.

The emergence of the concept of "institutional racism" in the late 1960s was a critical reaction against the mainstream psychopathological perspective on racism, which reduced racism to irrational prejudices, placing it on a level of the psychopathological realm of individuals or (white) groups/minorities (Taguieff, 2005b: 503). In contrast to this perspective, the "institutional" perspective views racism as an objective structural dimension of social space (Weiß, 2013: 313).

The term "institutional racism" was introduced by S. Carmichael and C. V. Hamilton in 1967 in their book *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America*. With this term, the two authors wanted to describe the systematic and structural nature of racism in American society. Carmichael and Hamilton assumed that racism itself arises from the organization of society by being embedded in cultural norms and in "normal" social institutions and practices (Taguieff, 2005b: 503). They held the view that institutional racism was covert, indirect, and socially imperceptible, while "individual racism" – a term used by the two authors to refer to acts of aggression committed by white individuals against black individuals – was overt and direct (Carmichael and Hamilton, 1967: 4).

This view – although highly polemicized (Taguieff, 2005b: 504) – emerged as a new paradigm of racism: it was no longer considered a pathological and minor phenomenon, but an essential and "normal" one, incorporated into the functionality of institutions and customary interactions. It would therefore be intrinsic racism, which would mean an intrinsic aspect of American society (ibid.: 505). Consequently, its elimination would require radical social transformation (ibid.).

Meanwhile, the theoretical substance of the concept has been further developed and refined (San Juan Jr., 2002: 44). In a 1982 analysis, D. Mason showed that institutional racism has analytical value in three versions (Mason, 1982, cited by San Juan Jr., 2002: 44-5). In the first version, a hidden interest of the state or the hegemonic class is seen as the reason behind discriminatory practices (therefore this type is known as "conspiratorial"). The second version, known as "structuralist-Marxist", places institutional racism neither in the purposes nor in the articulations of interest groups and their agents, but in the consequences of state policies (e.g., the super-exploitation of migrant workers in Britain and their racial exclusion in housing, jobs, education, etc. – see San Juan Jr., 2002: 44). Mason's third version of institutional racism is linked to colonialism and focuses on the conditions in which groups are incorporated into "host societies".

Despite these various ways in which institutional racism can be used for analytical purposes, controversies still persist regarding its theoretical and methodological viability (San Juan Jr., 2002: 46). The critiques point out that institutional racism is a too vague concept, in that racism dissolves in the way society works (Taguieff, 2005b: 499). It would include all exclusions, segregations, or discriminations, as well as all disadvantages that affect minorities or various dissenting groups. In addition, it would also refer to all forms of exploitation or domination that are considered unjust or illegitimate (ibid.: 505). This strong generalization of content and vague conceptualization makes the expression "institutional racism" imprecise in terms of analytical use. Taguieff (2005b: 506) emphasizes that a more restrictive redefinition would be needed to "save" the concept. This author believes that institutional racism should simply refer to the processes of transforming discriminatory practices into bureaucratic routines. This would distinguish institutional racism from "symbolic racism", that is, in Taguieff's understanding, exclusionary practices based on racist intentions or beliefs.

Likewise, Miles (1991) believes that the term "institutional racism" can be retained by means of a more precise definition, as an expression that refers to two types of relations. On the one hand, it indicates the relations or conditions "in which exclusionary practices arise from a racist discourse which they consequently embody, without continuing to be justified by it" (Miles, 1991: 113). In this sense, certain practices have become "so normal that no originally racist ideology has to be assumed behind them" (Fuchs, 1994: 43). The implementation of the Aliens Police Act is an example of this (ibid.). On the other hand, according to Miles, institutional racism refers to the circumstances "in which an explicitly racist discourse is modified in such a way that the directly racist content disappears, while the original meaning is transferred to other words" (Miles, 1991: 113). For example, other terms such as "culture" or "ethnicity" take on the original meaning and function of the word »race«. Thus, in both cases, there is no explicit racist discourse, but a continuation of the exclusionary practices initiated and justified by the former racist discourse.

This embodiment of a racist ideology in a range of contemporary practices that do not appear to be justified by a direct racist discourse is what Miles calls "institutional racism". Therefore, in relation to the question of

whether institutional racism exists or not (ibid.), one should not judge the consequences of action, but rather the history of the discourse in order to prove whether or not a racist discourse originally existed.

9. Racism or racisms?

As a result of the different forms of manifestations of racism in contemporary societies, the question arises as to whether using the singular of "racism" is appropriate, or whether it would be more rule-consistent to speak about "racisms". According to Taguieff (2005b: 498), it would at least be justified to advance the hypothesis of the existence of multiple racisms. In addition to its plurality, its evolutionary character should also be taken into account, since racism refers to a phenomenon that is changing (ibid.).

Likewise, Miles (1991) points out that racism does not denote a specific historical content, but rather designates

"the general characteristics that a discourse must possess in order to be considered an example of racism. Racism, in other words, is not a monotonous, static ideology that can be identified by a particular set of assertions, images, and stereotypes. Empirically, there have been many significantly different racisms, all historically specific and linked in different ways to the societies in which they emerged" (Miles, 1991: 109-10, personal translation by the author – S. R.).

From these perspectives, it is clear that there are multiple racisms, and they differ from each other in time and space. When looking at contemporary racism, one can see that it seems inaccurate to refer to just one racism. According to Mac an Ghaill (1999: 73), since culture is invoked in differentialist theoretical assumptions, the question arises whether it is not more appropriate to accept the suggestion that we should not refer to a single monolithic racism, but to a wide range of contemporary racisms that can be located in specific socio-historical and spatial conditions.

Brah (1992: 133) also assumes that different racisms exist, and they should be identified within the specificity of different economic, political and cultural circumstances that take different forms of expression in diverse societies. Based on this, there is not only one racism based on skin color (*color racism*), but different racisms, such as racism against Jews, racism against Irish, racism against Arabs, etc., which have distinctive characteristics (ibid.). However, Mac an Ghaill (1999) points out that a weakness of these theoretical assumptions is that, although various signifiers of differentiation were recognized, they have failed to move outside of black-white dualism. So, they considered the racism of skin color to be the "real racism". Based on a complex analysis of racism in Britain, this author shows that attitudes, actions, behaviors, practices, etc. against Irish people clearly constitute a form of racism, in other words, a racism that is clearly outside the schema of racism of skin color (or *black-white dualism*, or "racial racism"). Therefore, Mac an Ghaill advocates that sociological approaches should consider more the concept of *multiple racisms*. These racisms are marked by a logic of relationality and contradiction (Mac an Ghaill, 1999: 80). Moreover, it would be advisable (cf. Brah, 1996) that analyses of the interconnectedness between »race«, class, gender, sexuality, etc., should consider the positionality of different racisms in relation to one another.

10. Final remarks and conclusion

Far from being a past or obsolete phenomenon, racism is branching out and spreading in many forms today. It may no longer be, as a result of awareness and proactive measures to combat it, a biological racism, linked to the categorization and hierarchization of certain »races« of people. This would be, in fact, an argument of those who argue that this term should be abandoned, because between it and the notion of »race« there is an obvious linguistic link, or the concept of »race« is, indeed, an outdated, obsolete term, which is no more accepted in today's social sciences. Either way, regardless of the expression used, be it racism, neo-racism, or the term accompanied by various attributes such as cultural, differential, symbolic, institutional racism, etc., the existence of the ideology as such and the reality of its consequences in practice are undeniable. In fact, as stated above, various authors assume that sociological approaches should take multiple racisms into account.

One should therefore be less concerned with the linguistical and ontological link between the terms »race« and racism, and instead focus on the effects of ideology. If we consider these effects, it can be said that the original term of »race«, itself a socio-linguistic construct for categorizing and classifying people, is no longer of such great importance, since although it has been abandoned, other apparently neutral terms have taken its place and functionality. As some scholars argue (Fredrickson, 2011; Griese, 2004; Mac an Ghaill, 1999; Miles, 1991; Valiere, 2005) today »race« is coded as "culture", and culture can be essentialized to such an extent that it has the same deterministic effect as skin color or other biological differentiation criteria. Moreover, if we think about institutional racism, it is a significant issue, as it does not need a justifying "code": it represents a different

paradigm that sees racism as an intrinsic part of society, incorporated into social values, expressed in cultural norms, and involved in customary interactions, and in "normal" social institutions.

However, when analyzing the exclusion, exploitation or discrimination practices, not only multiple racisms but also multiple dogmata should be considered in order to have a complete and correct overview of exclusion, exploitation or discrimination. This is because racism, in any of its forms, is not the only ideology that triggers and justifies practices of marginalization, oppression, and discrimination. Ideologies such as racism, sexism, classism, ageism, ableism or disablism, and so on, have in common the processes of essentialization and reductionism of people and groups of people, as well as the absolutization of differences that are seen as natural and unchangeable. In sexism, for example, biological-sexual characteristics are set as absolute differences and are deterministically linked to various real or fictitious biological and cultural characteristics in order to designate two "categories" of people – men and women (Miles, 1991: 117).

Consequently, to have a more accurate account of the problematic of racial construction and racism, a relevant analysis would require a comprehensive consideration that includes not only the categories or criteria that justify racism, but also other significant categories of difference, and the modalities in which they interconnect.

References

Appiah, Kwame Anthony (1990). Racism. In Goldberg, David Theo (ed.). *Anatomy of Racism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 3-17.

Balibar, Étienne (1991). Is there a Neo-Racism? In Balibar, Étienne and Wallerstein, Immanuel (eds.). *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*. London: Verso, pp. 17-28.

Balibar, Étienne (2008). Racism Revisited: Sources, Relevance, and Aporias of a Modern Concept. *PMLA, 123*(5): Special Topic Comparative Racialization, pp. 1630-1639. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2008.123.5.1630.

Banton, Michael (1987). *Racial Theories*. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press.

Bowser, Benjamin P. (2017). Racism: Origin and Theory. *Journal of Black Studies, 48*(6), pp. 572–590. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/0021934717702135.

Brah, Avtar (1992). Difference, diversity, differentiation. In Donald, James and Rattansi, Ali (eds.). '*Race', Culture and Difference*. London: Sage Publications, pp. 126-145.

Brah, Avtar (1996). *Cartographies of Diaspora. Contesting Identities*. Abingdon, New York: Routledge.

Carmichael, Stokely and Hamilton, Charles V. (1967). *Black Power. The Politics of Liberation in America*. New York: Vintage Books.

DiAngelo, Robin (2012). "New" Racism*. Counterpoints. Vol. 398, What does it mean to be white? Developing White Racial Literacy*, pp. 105-132.

Ferréol, Gilles (2005). Etnocentrism. In Ferréol, Gilles and Jucquois, Guy (eds.). *Dicționarul alterității și al relațiilor interculturale*. Iași, București: Polirom, p. 285.

Fredrickson, George M. (2011). *Rassismus*. Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun.

Fuchs, Gabriele (1994). Rassismus und Sexismus – ein gewalttätiges Paar. In Fuchs, Gabriele and Schratz, Michael (eds.). *Interkulturelles Zusammenlebens – aber wie? Auseinandersetzung mit alltäglichem und institutionalisiertem Rassismus*. Innsbruck: Österreichischer Studien Verlag, pp. 39-47.

Griese, Hartmut M. (2004). *Kritik der „Interkulturellen Pädagogik". Essays gegen Kulturalismus, Ethnisierung, Entpolitisierung und einen latenten Rassismus*. Münster: LIT Verlag (Pädagogik. Forschung und Wissenschaft, Band 1).

Guillaumin, Colette (1981). «Je sais bien mais quand même» ou les avatars de la notion de race. *Le Genre humain, 1*, pp. 55-65.

Jucquois, Guy (2005). Xenofobie. In Ferréol, Gilles and Jucquois, Guy (eds.). *Dicționarul alterității și al relațiilor interculturale*. Iași, București: Polirom, pp. 672-677.

Koller, Christian (2009). *Rassismus*. Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude (1983). *Le Regard éloigné*. Paris: Plon.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude (1988). *De près et de loin*. Paris: Odile Jacob.

Mac an Ghaill, Máirtín (1999). *Contemporary Racisms and Ethnicities. Social and cultural transformations*. Buckingham, Philadelphia: Open University Press.

Mason, David (1982). After Scarman. A Note on the Concept of 'Institutional Racism'. *New Community, 10*, pp. 38-45.

Memmi, Albert (1972). Racisme. In *Encyclopædia Universalis*. Paris, pp. 915-916.

Miles, Robert (1982). *Racism and Migrant Labour. A Critical Text*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Miles, Robert (1991). *Rassismus. Einführung in die Geschichte und Theorie eines Begriffs*. Hamburg: Argument.

Policar, Alain (2005). Rasa. In Ferréol, Gilles and Jucquois, Guy (eds.). *Dicționarul alterității și al relațiilor interculturale*. Iași, București: Polirom, pp. 545-549.

Priester, Karin (1997). *Rassismus und kulturelle Differenz*. Münster: LIT Verlag (Politische Soziologie, Band 9).

Rodat, Simona (2017a). Cultural Racism: A Conceptual Framework. *RSP – Revista de Științe Politice/ Revue des Sciences Politiques, 54*, pp. 129-140.

Rodat, Simona (2017b). Perspectives and Current Debates in Intersectional Analysis. In *Symposion, Volume 3: Perspectives on the Human Being and Society*, Editura Institutului Teologic Adventist, Cernica, pp. 82–107.

Rodat, Simona (2020). From Multiculturalism to Interculturation: Current Sociological Approaches. *Social Sciences and Education Research Review, 7*(1), pp. 177-193.

Rodat, Simona (2021). Discrimination: Forms, Consequences, and Anti-Discrimination Strategies. In Özsungur, Fahri (ed.). *Handbook of Research on Policies, Protocols, and Practices for Social Work in the Digital World*. Hershey, Pennsylvania: IGI Global, pp. 487-507. DOI: https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-7998-7772-1.ch027.

San Juan Jr., Epifanio (2002). *Racism and Cultural Studies. Critiques of Multiculturalist Ideology and the Politics of Difference*. Durham, London: Duke University Press.

Sow, Noah (2008). *Deutschland Schwarz Weiß. Der alltägliche Rassismus*. München: C. Bertelsmann.

Taguieff, Pierre-André (1988). *La force du préjugé. Essai sur le racisme et ses doubles*. Paris: La Découverte.

Taguieff, Pierre-André (1997). *Le Racisme*. Paris: Flammarion.

Taguieff, Pierre-André (2005a). Antirasism. In Ferréol, Gilles and Jucquois, Guy (eds.). *Dicționarul alterității și al relațiilor interculturale*. Iași, București: Polirom, pp. 30-43.

Taguieff, Pierre-André (2005b). Neorasism. In Ferréol, Gilles and Jucquois, Guy (eds.). *Dicționarul alterității și al relațiilor interculturale*. Iași, București: Polirom, pp. 498-514.

Taguieff, Pierre-André (2005c). Rasism. In Ferréol, Gilles and Jucquois, Guy (eds.). *Dicționarul alterității și al relațiilor interculturale*. Iași, București: Polirom, pp. 549-568.

Todorov, Tzvetan (1989). *Nous et les autres. La réflexion française sur la diversité humaine*. Paris: Seuil.

Valiere, Michel (2005). Culturalism. In Ferréol, Gilles and Jucquois, Guy (eds.). *Dicționarul alterității și al relațiilor interculturale*. Iași, București: Polirom, pp. 176-180.

Weiß, Anja (2013). *Rassismus wider Willen. Ein anderer Blick auf eine Struktur sozialer Ungleichheit*. 2. Auflage. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

Wieviorka, Michel (1994). *Spațiul rasismului*. București: Humanitas.