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A Philosophical Analysis of the Impact of Racism in the Contemporary Society

Peter A*

Department of Philosophy, University of Port Harcourt, Port Harcourt, Nigeria

*Corresponding author: Peter A, Department of Philosophy, University of Port Harcourt, Port Harcourt, Nigeria, Tel: 07066784981; E-mail: Perteralawa@yahoo.com

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Abstract

In our contemporary society today, we are facing challenges because people look down on others. Some people believe that they are superior to others; therefore, they must control other human beings since others are inferior. These challenges take different names in different cultures. Names such as "Racism", "Osu", "Nazism", "Caste system", "Colour", "Apartheid". This problem is in Germany, in America, South Africa and in Igbo land; it is because some people want to dominate others. But if we understand what authority really is (that is duty and service) this problem of racism will be eradicated. However, history proves that prior to the advent of capitalism, racism as a form of systematic oppression did not exist. This is because early Greeks and Romans were liberated societies although they advocated for slaves. Today, Racism is the order of the day. In this work, we are looking critically at the works written on racism in order to know its effect in the society and how to abolish racism.

Keywords: Racism; Nazism; Osu; Apartheid and Indian caste system

Introduction

Generally people think, by dominating and controlling other humans through racial discrimination and other subjection they have succeeded, in making themselves more superior to those subjected. This thinking is one of the greatest undoing of humans. They portray the superiority of a given race over the others (white superior to blacks, freeborn superior to slaves etc). In this work, we are reflecting on what is racism? Types of racism, the impact of racism in the society and conclusion.

What is Racism?

Racism is the prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against someone of a different race or within one's own race on the belief that one is superior. Mautner defines it as:

The doctrine that ascribes to another race inferior or dangerous qualities. The doctrine is frequently linked with the view that in dealings with other race, its inferiority or dangerousness justifies exemption from the usually more restraints [1].

Racist often regard the other as biologically, intellectually and morally inferior. Racism has existed throughout human history. It may be called the hatred of one person by another. Or a belief that another is less than another, because of skin, colour, language, customs, place of birth, or any factor that supposedly reveals the basic nature of that person. This can influence wars, slavery, unrest and disorder in the society. The most notorious example of racism by the west has been slavery; particularly the enslavement of Africans in the new world. The enslavement was accomplished because of racist belief that Black Africans were less fully humans than the white Europeans and their descendants.

However, the belief that the Africans were inferior to the whites was not an automatic belief because Africans were not originally inferior.

This is because when the Portuguese sailors first explored Africa in the 15th and 16th centuries, they came upon empires and cities as advanced as their own. They considered Africans to be serious rivals. Over time, as African civilization failed to match the technological advances of Europe and major European powers began to plunder the commitment and forcibly remove its inhabitants to work in the new world. As William remarks:

The reason was economic, not racial; it has nothing to do with color of the laborer, but the cheap labor. This was not a theory; it was a practical conclusion deduced from personal experience of the planter. He would have gone to the moon, if necessary, for labor. African was nearer than the moon.

Racism is an age long human tendency as revealed in the works of philosophers of all ages ranging from the days of Aristotle even up to the contemporary scholars. Therefore, the policy making, the old strategy of divide and rule stands. To an extent, this view was necessary to justify slave trade, the willingness of some Africans to sell other Africans to European for slave traders which also led to false belief that the blacks were inferior to the whites.

In another perspective, Jews are usually seen by anti-Semites as sub humans but also super human: devilishly cunning, skills and powerful. Blacks and others are seen by the racists as merely sub human more like beasts than men. Indeed, Aristotle has something to say about racism, though racism never existed in the vocabulary of his time yet he encouraged slavery which is a racist tendency. Aristotle writes "some men are by nature free and others slaves, slavery is both expedient and by the way justifiable, and it was not only an idea but an institution" [2].

In the Medieval period, Thomas Aquinas who Christianized Aristotle says these two classes of souls, the Christian soul is different from pagan soul, and indeed the pagan is the second class soul. The pagans are to be punished and killed. During this period, the caste system was also applied to women as inferior to men.

In the modern period, Karl Popper for instance sees Hegel as the founder of German racism. According to Walter Kaufmann "the Nazis got their racism from Hegel" (102). Many of Hegel's critics have argued that Hegel provided the basis for modern racism and established a role in history by arranging a hierarchy of civilization of races. Hegel is labeled a "racist". Hegel addressed human diversity through species and he believes that racial differences are natural differences in so far as they are determined by natural factors. Paul Edwards commenting on Hegel's racism states:

According to the concrete differences of the terrestrial globe, the general planetary life of nature-governed mind specializes itself and breaks up into several natural minds which on the whole gives expression into the nature of the geographical continents and constitute the diversities of race [3].

Indeed, the differences between the races of mankind is still natural differences, that is, differences that, in the first instance, concerns the natural soul as such the differences are connected with the geographical differences of those parts of the world where human beings are together in masses. Hegel believes that the contemporary philosophical distinction between the Carthasian, Ethiopian, the Mongolian and the American races are shown differently in the formation of the skull and face. In another perspective, Hegel ridiculed physiognomy and phenomenology when he discussed in his book *The Phenomenology of the Spirit*. In summary, Hegel is a racist, and contributed to the German racism. Even though, he was opposed to anthropological physiological "wisdom" of his day concerning the concept of race and saying Africans are not spirited, and that they have no history. This is because Hegel believes that history is a progressive development of freedom in the world, reaching its apex in European consciousness especially the Germans.

Martin Heidegger was actually member of Nazi party. He was actually promoted to the Rector of the University of Freiburg at a time when he was in charge of the University: He was ideologically aligned with Nazi ideology like denying Jews financial aid. Heidegger supported slavery like Aristotle, but he did support the genocide of the Jews by the Germans. Jean-Paul Sartre believes that freedom is given to man and therefore man should not be a slave to any other person. In his work *Anti-Semitism and Jew* and he argued that to know a person one must know the situation that surrounds that person. For the Jews to face anti-Semitism one has to make a choice to be authentic or inauthentic. To be authentic is to live full one's condition and assert one's chain in the face of all disdain. To be in-authentic one flees; and seeks avenues to escape. Steve Maritnot commenting Sartre remarks:

For Sartre, the racist idea does not count Paraxist, but what he calls idea-exists, an idea other or what De Beauvoir calls "ready-made ideas" Exists, for Sartre is the opposite of Paraxis, it is an activity directed not by subject out from elsewhere. The language of racism, are stories, never translated into real concrete thoughts [4].

According to Sartre, racism should not be in our society, one should understand the circumstances surrounding that person before one begins to look down on him/her.

Having seen what racism is, contemporary scientist did not agree on whether white race is superior to black race. For skin, colour, hair, facial shape not much scientific significance. Infact, genetic differences within the so called race may be greater than physical appearance. In summary, people believe that the causes of racism may be fear (xenophobia) that one is inferior and the other is superior. Also ignorance of people that do not know other people's culture, religions

and values. Also allowing only one group in the society to dominate it because of economic resources. Let us now discuss types of racism.

Types of Racism

We have different types of racism, the German Nazism, the Indian caste system, Osu caste system in Igbo land.

The German Nazism

The racial policy of Nazi German was set of policies and law implemented by Nazi Germany, asserting the superiority of the "Aryan race" and based on specific racist doctrine which claimed scientific legitimacy. It was combined with eugenics programme that aimed racial hygiene by using compulsory sterilization and extermination of the "untermenshen" (sub humans), which eventually culminated in the Holocaust. These policies targeted peoples, in particular Jews, as well as homosexuals and handicapped people. For the Nazis, in the racial hierarchy the Russians come first as "inferiors" then follow by the Romani, Serbs, Blacks and the Jews at the bottom. The Aryan master race conceived by the Nazis, graded humans on a scale of pure Aryan. At the top of the scale of pure Aryan included Germans and other Germanic peoples such as Dutch, Scandinavians and the English, people as a suitable composition of German blood. The feelings that Germans were Aryan (master race) were widely spread among the German public through Nazi propaganda and among Nazi officials throughout the ranks particular when Erich Koch says:

We are a master race, which must remember that the lowliest German worker is radically and biologically a thousand times more valuable than the population here [5].

This racial policy regarding the Jews was so serious that the Germans began to persecute the Jews by saying. Who is qualified to be a Jew and that of the Aryan race, a Jewish blood and that of Aryan blood. This persecution became worse with years that culminated in the Holocaust what the Germans called "the final solution" which was made official January 1942. The Nazi boycott the Jewish business and passed a law throughout German against Jew. Six days later, the law for the Restoration of the professional Civil Services was passed, banning Jews from government job. These laws made for the Jews were indirectly and directly dissuaded or banned from privileged and superior positions reserved for "Aryan German" From then on Jews were forced to work at menial positions, becoming second class citizens or to the point they were illegally residing in ghettos.

In May 1935, Jews were forbidden to join the armed forces, and in the summer of the same year, anti-Semitic propaganda appeared in shops and restaurants. Then the Nuremberg laws were passed around the time of the great Nazi rallies. The law for protection of "German blood" was passed, at it first, it only prevented sexual relations and marriage between Germans and Jews. But later the law was extended to "Gypsies" — Negroes and their bastard offspring. After the "Reich citizenship law" was passed and reinforced and decreed that only "German blood" could be citizen of Reich and excluded racial caste system of reserving certain rights to one group and barred privileged to another. Ethnic poles were believed by Hitler to be "biologically inferior race" that could be educated or elevated through Germanization. Indeed, during the occupation of Poland, the Nazi kept an eye out for children with Nordic racial characteristics. Those among them found to be classified as "racial unavailable were sent from there to German Reich for adoption and to be rat as Germans.

But for those who failed the test will be used as slaves or murdered in medical experiments.

All others which are Jews and non-Aryan were stripped of their citizenship, and officials title being the subjects of the state. It means that deprived of basic citizens right. For examples, the right to vote; this removal of citizen rights, was instrumental in the process of anti-Semitic persecution. The process of denaturalization allowed the Nazi to exclude the Jews from the community, thus granting judicial legitimacy to their persecution and opening the way to extermination of the Jews. This was confirmed by Hannah Arendt Jewish philosopher when she remarks "Citizens right actually preceded human rights, as latter needed the protection of a determinate state to be actually respected" [6].

According to Arendt, this totalitarian regime that Hitler imposed on Germans allowed him to control the action of the military. Then Hitler conquered European countries, the Jewish populations were put into ghettos, from which they were shipped to death camps, and later were killed.

In another perspective, we have German Mullattoes. Hitler described children resulting from marriages to African occupation soldiers as a contamination of the "white race" by Negro blood on the Rhine of Europe. Hitler believes that the Jews were responsible bringing Negroes into Rindland with the Ultimate idea of bastardizing the white race which they hate; thus lowering its culture and political level so that the Jews might dominate.

Regarding other groups, about 10,000 Japanese nationals in Germany were given "Honorary Aryan" citizenship with more privileges than other non-Aryan. The Nazi favoured marriages between Germans and Norwegians. But they never accepted relationship between Jews and Germans. Finally in 1939-1994 they formed a program called "Germanization" the Germanization program was used as follows, that anyone that do not accept the rules and regulatory of the Germans will not settle in the land.

Indian caste system

In the beginning, Indians were known to be people who respect themselves and respect the cultures and religions of other people. But today they discriminate against each other especially the white Indians hate Indians who are black. The major problem of racism in India is the colour. And this people who are most black Indians are the Bihari people. The most famous attack and the largest number of racial attacks has been towards the Bihari people. The state of Bihari has been extremely ignored by the central government in terms of social welfare and economic development. Bihari have migrated to other parts of India in search of work. Bihari are often looked down on, and their accent ridiculed. The North east of India is where the Bihari significantly occupied the Assam, Manipur and Nagaland. There have been a number of racial attacks against them; which includes a number of massacres. This then resulted in the deaths of hundreds of Bihari people was so problematic that the Indian government has to pass a law to control it. Tripod writers:

Prejudice and discrimination against North East Indians has been testified in 2012, that government of India asked all states and union territories to book anyone who commits as act of atrocity against people from the region under the scheduled castes and scheduled act.

What it means is that any person found guilty under this act, can be jailed for five years. In 2014, Nilotpal Tainan's death in India attracted a

lot of media attention because he was living in the North East of India. However, this caste system made three men to beat up a student in Bangalore for not speaking "Kannada native" Indian language. For the Indians, people are not treated equally; people from other countries are treated differently by some Indians based on the country of man founding from the racial perspective of skin, colour and language. It is the Africans that this affects most because they are blacks. Africans coming to study in India suffer a lot, some are denied accommodation and they are ill-treated.

Osu caste system in Igboland

For many years the phenomena of Osu has remain a very big problem in Igboland. They freeborn (Diala) and "Osu" (slaves).

However, those who are non-Igbos in Nigeria did not understand that such things exists. What is "Osu"? Igwebuike Okeke defines it "as the original architects of the Osu system in Igboland. They did not only reduce the "Osu" into the state of servitude to the god, but also subject the descendants of the Osu into perpetual dehumanization" [7].

Moreover, Osu caste system is also a global phenomenon in varying dimensions. And since it is affecting the society it needs to be eradicated. The question that comes to mind is why Igbos of all the tribes in Nigeria should be the only ethnic nationality with racism. The Igbos are mostly located in the South East Central of Nigeria normally called the Igboland. Tiv speaking peoples along the Benue River. On the South, the Ikwere, Etche, Kalabari, Ogonis, Ekpeye and the Ijaw speaking people of the present Rivers State of Nigeria. On the East, it is bounded by the Ogoja, Ibibio, and Efik speaking people of Akwa Ibom and Cross River State. To the west, Igbos share common boundaries with Edo, Isoko, Urhobo and Itsekiri speaking peoples of Delta State of Nigeria, (35). The Igbos constitutes about one third of the Nigerian population.

In Igboland, traditionally, there are four classes of people, Diala, Osu, Ume and Ohu. Diala, literally means "husband of the land" they are Igboland, they are called the Aniadi or Nwa-obo (son of the soil). The Diala are the original architects of the Osu caste system in Igboland. They did not only reduce 'Osu' to a state of slavery to the gods, but subject their entire lineage into perpetual dehumanization as they perpetuate their self-made 'lordship' into a culture.

Osu

The origin of Osu caste system in Igboland is as complex and different to historians and anthropologists. However, the Igbos has divergent opinions about it but what is common among the Igbos is that Osu people are donated to the gods, they are slaves not freeborn of the land.

"Ohu" is the second classification in our treatments of the caste system in Igboland. Ohu is simply a domestic slave to his fellow man; Ohu can gain freedom through self-redemption in cash or service or by the mercy of the master. The common denominator between "Osu" and "Ohu" is that one can become either an Osu or Ohu through treachery, compulsion or volition, Ohu takes different forms. The first are those sold for the reason of rendering special services to the kings and for rituals. Here some males slaves who were sold are castrated so that they will be giants and also so that they will not have sexual relationship with the daughters and Queen of the palace. The beyond form of Ohu are those given out by their families, kindred, clan or communities for the purpose of settling disputes.

Ume

Ume to the Igbo is a tragic word, hence it is called misfortune which is being placed on a person by the gods because of one's disobedience or a heinous crime committed against the land. Egekyonye reflecting on Ume writes;

The word "Ume" can be translated to mean tragedy; it can be interrupted to mean "victim of calamity" unlike Osu who is either offered or dedicated to a deity. The Ume is simply a victim of fate and circumstances. This is the origin of some Igbo names such as "Umeaku" which means "tragic loss of properties, economic crops and items" there is also the name "Ume Omunna" - loss of children brothers, sisters etc.

It is generally believed by the Igbos that, Ume dies young and that they die in chins because their destiny is tied to exchange with death, misfortune and destruction. In culture people constantly avoid such families and this is in-human.

A Philosophical Analysis of the Impact of Racism in Contemporary Society

Be it the German model (Nazism), the south African model (Apartheid), or the Igbo or the Indian model (caste system racism is abhorred concept in the contemporary societies. However, there is some form of socio-religious, cultural, economic and moral vices or the other which is more dangerous than racism, but later it was dismantled in the society. Indeed, it was the supremacy of Aryan race that sees the Jews as inferior and decides to eradicate them from the surface of the earth. It was also the self-made "Lordship" of the Diala that made the "Osu" people perpetual slaves from generation to generation. It was also the superiority of white Indians to look down on the black Indians of Bthari — the North east Indians. The fact is that domination and control of human beings by others has been a common practice in the world.

Ukachukwu writes:

The basic issue is that Jews recognized a system anti-discriminated against a tribe or some tribes. To the Jews, every other tribes are classified as gentiles which means inferior, unbeliever and in extreme cases a non-identity.

According to Ukachukwu, Jesus encounter the Samaritan woman in John chapter 4 depicted the level of tribal discrimination or segregation. The Jews could neither drink from the same well with the Samaritans nor from the same cup. At this point in time, Jesus declared to the woman you (Samaritans) worship what you do not know, we know what we worship: for salvation is for the Jews (Jn. 4:22). This was the common notion and belief of the Jews against the Samaritans there are various interpretation to the "outcast" as it is in Isaiah 11: 12, 27: 13 and Jeremiah 30: 17.

In another perspective, the German Nazism and Osu caste system of the Igbos prevented people to marry. For example, the Aryan race will never allow their Sons and daughters to marry non-Germans, the Diala, the son of the soil will never allow their children to marry Osu people and this is man's humanity to man.

In history, we have the caste system called Apartheid which was one of the most inhumane practices of the whites to Africans and this happen in South Africa. All port remarks; "The English, Jews, Indians American made African to suffer for years [8]. Today, even when apartheid was eradicated from South Africa, racism is not removed

from the mind and practices of white Americans and British people. Indeed, the South Africans do not want to see Nigerians in particular in their country and this is discrimination.

However, despite the confusion and sadness the caste system has caused in the society, we have a future for our contemporary society if we understand what authority is. Authority takes different forms. Authority does not compel but persuades. It appeals to the moral elements of man and can be exercised only in so far as subjects are capable of moral actions. The authority for reason, for instance; represents truth for its own sake [9-11]. Those in political authority should provide the basic amenities to their people and have a listening ear to the problems of their citizens. Those in religious authority should take care of their congregation and everyone should know that the God one may conceive must not be the one others must accept. Those in authority of the family must live an exemplary life and provide the needs of their children, so that some Nigerian will not think they are superior to others [12].

In summary, for religious authority reverence, for political authority obedience, for traditional authority loyalties. The point we elucidate in this work is that, because people wants to control others and the result is racism. Alawa says: "that racism can be dismantled if those in authority know that authority is for service and duty and not to lord it over others that they are inferior". It means that authority is to sacrifice for the people; it involves one's personality, time and money [13].

Conclusion

Whatever has a beginning has an end; we have come to the end of this reflection on A Philosophical Analysis of Racism in Contemporary Society. It is evidently clear that there are different types of racism in the world and it is not only known in one place but a global phenomenon. What is common to all of them is the tendency of some people who want to dominate and control others as inferiors and they are superiors is the origin of this problem. From the above it is well known that racism is a universal phenomenon of all ages and custom and the basic common characteristics is the superiority, inferiority mindset of those affected by it. The contemporary world is not built on race, color or culture but by scientific discoveries that does not recognize these disparities.

Therefore, a better understanding of Racism is that we need orientation on things that will bind us; that is those things that geared towards developmental progress of all of us which should be emphasized while deemphasizing racial and cultural issues especially the outdated cultural norms like the outcast issues.

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