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SCHOOL OF RELIGION, PHILOSOPHY AND CLASSICS

FROM RACE TO CULTURE: REVERSING RACIAL ILLUSIONS

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INTRODUCTION

The human race consists of different groups with perceptible differences. Distinct perceivable human traits have been construed as being grounded in some deeper quality which is particular to each group. A thorough scrutiny of the notion of race reveals that the concept is vacuous, and thus, it does not tell us much about humanity. Hypothetically, racial classifications have no ontological basis; hence, they could be termed as illusory. Racial categories have been overemphasized at the expense of culture. Culture, a significant aspect of human life, has been overshadowed by racial classifications.

This thesis proposes a paradigm shift from illusory racial classifications to culture. The title of the thesis is: *From Race to Culture: Reversing Racial Illusions*. The thesis is divided into five chapters. The first chapter solely focuses on the history of the concept of race. Moreover, it will explore the contending contemporary philosophical views on the subject under scrutiny. The second chapter scrutinizes the ontological status of the concept of race. To accomplish this, the thesis revisits the *Illusions of Race* by Kwame Anthony Appiah and recapitulates Dubois' conception of race as presented by Appiah. Thereafter, Appiah's critical analysis of Dubois' sociohistorical conception of race is presented. The chapter concludes by highlighting the Implications of Appiah's analysis of Dubois' conception of race.

Chapter three explores the unity which runs through the diverse human groups despite their distinct physical characteristics. The chapter proposes means of comprehending and explicating the human physical characteristics without compromising the essential unity which undergirds all humans.

Chapter four will propose a paradigm shift from racial classifications to cultural categories. Chapter five will conclude the thesis by presenting interculturality as a reality of postmodern humanity. Given the myriads of literature on the subject under investigation, the thesis explores only a few philosophers. Additionally, it may not be able to go into an in-depth discussion of the various philosophical views on race or give a systematic defense of the view that I intend to support.

CHAPTER ONE

DOES RACE EXIST?

1.0. Introduction

This chapter seeks to define race and trace its historical development. The chapter further critically explores the various contemporary views on race. For this undertaking, recent and historical literature on the contending philosophical views on the said topic will be considered. I will scrutinize these so as to discover their underlying assumptions. The aim is to gain more information on what academicians are saying on the subject under assessment. This will enable me to provide informed answers to questions about the ontological status of race.

1.1. What is Race?

The concept of race signifies the classification of humanity into groups. Historically, the division of humanity according to racial groups has its foundation in Aristotelian metaphysics as well as natural biology of the 19th century. The racial categories, as far as Aristotelian metaphysics and the natural biology of the 19th century are concerned, are based on what was termed as the racial essence. According to this perspective, people of the same racial group have a common characteristic or racial essence which runs through all of them. The racial essence is believed to be inherited and then passed on genetically from one generation to the next. The racial essence serves as a defining characteristic that makes any racial group distinct. This makes it possible for any attentive and intelligent observer to tell the racial grouping that one belongs to.¹ The truth of this claim is highly questionable. For this reason, the reality of the so-called “racial essence” has been an occasion for the most heated philosophical and scientific debates since antiquity, as we shall soon discover.

¹ James, Michael, "Race", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.) <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2016/entries/race/> (accessed September 19 2016).

Humanity has also been classified according to race based on geographical location which is often termed as the place of origin. For instance, there are people from Asia, Africa, Europe, North and South America. According to this view, people who share the same geographical location belong to the same race and exhibit similar morphological traits. Therefore, the biological and geographical factors which are believed to be the basis for racial categorization, exhibit themselves through skin colour, eye shape, bone structure and hair texture.²

James Michael notes that “both in the past and today, determining the boundaries of discrete races has proven to be most vexing and has led to great variations in the number of human races believed to be in existence.”³ For this reason, some thinkers have concluded that racial distinctions are highly flawed. Those who hold this position, downplay any biological or genetic basis for the distinction between races. There has also been a scholarly debate with regards to whether evolution may create genetic isolation to justify the use of the term race in reference to human groups that share physical similarities and other genetic traits.⁴

Today, some thinkers hold that the notion of race is biologically and philosophically unsound. Michael Yudell notes that “its scientific meaning seemingly drawn from the visual and genetic cues of human diversity is an idea with a measurable past, identifiable present and uncertain future.”⁵ Hence, there is a growing consensus that race as a concept does not serve any purpose in the real world of experience. For instance,

by the 1970s, many prominent biologists, including the geneticists Richard Lewontin and L. Luca Cavalli-Sforza, came to see the race concept as a deeply flawed way to organize human genetic diversity that is inseparable from the social prejudices about human difference that spawned the concept in the 18th century and have accompanied its meaning since⁶

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Michael Yudell, *A short History of the Race Concept*, <http://www.councilforresponsiblegenetics.org/pageDocuments/K4IQ3T8YCD.pdf> (accessed October 11, 2016).

⁶ Ibid.

However, humanity as whole has become accustomed to the concept of race; therefore it has become very hard to talk about human diversity without reference to the notion of race. The studies in genetics and evolutionary biology have however proved that race can never be used as a classificatory tool. Popular biologists and geneticists have concluded that the concept of race does not stand for anything and hence it is highly flawed. Therefore, it can never be used as the marker of human biological difference. Michael Yudell further observes that the concept is also riddled with prejudices of the 18th century which were grounded in deterministic biology. Yudell contends that “race is socially constructed, meaning that the biological meaning of race has been constrained by the social context in which racial research has taken place.”⁷ The challenge is upon thinkers to come up with new concepts and other means to explore human diversity without using racist notions which have characterized the concept of race itself. That having been said, we turn to the historical development of the concept of race and racial classifications.

1.2. History of the Concept of Race and Racial Classifications

Frank Snowden (1970, 1983) argues that there were no prejudices towards people of colour in the ancient world.⁸ However, Benjamin Isaac (2004) and Denise McCoskey (2012) contend that Snowden naively conceived racism from the viewpoint of skin colour, which is the kind most prevalent in America. History teaches that from antiquity racism existed in various forms.⁹ James Michael suggests that racial classifications have a long history. For instance, the Greeks and Romans had racist notions which they applied to certain groups which today might be considered white. For the ancient Greeks and Romans, the major divisions were between the civic and barbarians, citizens and foreigners. Classifications, based on blood line or ancestry, were not part of this kind of arrangement. These are modern concepts of classification. These became common in the eighteenth century with enlightenment. They were employed around this time to make sense of diverse humankind. The aim was to justify the inferiority of certain groups which were targets for enslavement. However, it is worth noting that the racial classifications in the ancient

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Isaac, Benjamin, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 253.

Greek and Roman world were generated without the aid of the modern concept of race, which is grounded in the 19th century biological postulations.¹⁰ However, the attitudes exhibited towards foreigners in Greece and Rome could be similar to what is termed as “racism” today. As far as the Greeks and Romans were concerned, the observable physical characteristics by which groups of people could be distinguished were perceived as being immutable. This is because it was believed that they were determined by hereditary factors. The racial categories by the ancient Romans and Greeks has prompted some thinkers such as Benjamin Isaac (2004) and Denise McCoskey (2012) to argue that such ancient views have contributed a great deal to the formation and development of today’s concept of race.¹¹

However, the first unconscious traits of racism developed in the Iberian Peninsula where Isabel the Spanish Queen decreed the expulsion of foreigners in 1502. The monarchy decreed that only those with ancestral ties to those Christians who survived the Moorish invasion in the eighth century could be granted citizenship. This was the beginning of the concept of the purity of blood. James Michael notes that purity of blood here is “not fully the biological concept of race but perhaps the first occidental use of blood heritage as a category of religio-political membership.”¹² Moreover, the Iberian Peninsula was the first in Europe to utilize the African slaves as it did away with European slaves. With the discovery of the new world by the Iberian explorers, Christians came into contact with the inhabitants of America. This provoked a debate as to whether the Indians of the new world were inferior, thus worthy of enslavement and conquest in 1550.¹³

Although the happenings in Iberian Peninsula provided the first conducive platform for the development of the concept of race, the rise of modern science and philosophy also played a vital role. It is worth noting that in the ancient world science as a discipline was not well defined and by and large it went hand in glove with philosophy and vice versa. Ancient racial categories had

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

close links with the ideas that were being propagated by deterministic biology. The first essay to articulate the concept of race was published in 1684 by Francois Bernier. He categorized humanity into four distinct races. The postulations by Bernier could be termed as the foundation for all racial categories today. For Bernier, the people who inhabit most parts of Europe and North Africa, through Persia, North and central India and right up to the parts of present day Indonesia belong to one racial group. Though they have different skin tones, they share several characteristics such as hair texture and the structure of the bone.¹⁴ The second group is that of African people found in the south of the Sahara Desert, whose distinct features include black skin, thick noses and lips. The third group encompasses people who inhabit Asia, China, Siberia parts of eastern Russia. Their distinguishing features are the white skin, wider shoulders, flat faces and noses. The people of northern Scandinavia constituted what could be termed as the fourth race. Bernier was never sure whether the Native Americans constituted the fifth race but nonetheless he assigned them to the first group. Despite having initiated the use of the concept of race to differentiate human groups, Bernier fails to venture into what brought about the perceptible physical differences among groups. In this way he circumvents the by then unresolved scientific debate between monogenesis versus polygenesis.¹⁵ It is quite clear that Bernier's racial categories are based on observable physical characteristics and geographical location. Bernier however never substantiates how these serve as criteria for racial categories.

Michael Yudell observes that the concept of race was mostly applied to animals which were domesticated. However, the same term was introduced in science by Comte de Buffon in 1749. As far as Comte de Buffon is concerned, the distinctions between humans were caused by variations in climate. For Comte de Buffon, the original human beings came from Europe. These were capable of producing the most handsome men who possessed the original colour of humans.¹⁶

¹⁴ James, Michael, "Race."

¹⁵ Monogenesis propagates the Biblical story in Genesis which holds that all human have a common ancestor, thereby belonging to one common species. Polygenesis on the other hand claims that different human races have different ancestral roots and thus belong to different races. Ref. James, Michael, "Race."

¹⁶ Michael Yudell, "*A Short History of the Race Concept.*"

Another contribution towards the development of the concept came from Carolus Linnaeus a Swedish botanist and naturalist. He divided the human family into four groups: Africans, Americans, Asians and Europeans. He appeals to physical characteristics as distinguishing marks of each race. Trying to solve the same paradox of human diversity, Johann Fredrick Blumenbach, an anthropologist, in *On the Natural variety of Mankind*, published in 1775, identifies four types of races. He classifies these according to geographical location; Europe, Asia, Africa and America. Blumenbach proposed five racial categories; the Caucasians, Mongolians, Ethiopians, Americans, and the Malay. Blumenbach argued that the Caucasians are the ideal, or mean race, "and on either side of that mean were racial extremes; the Mongolian and Ethiopian on one side and the American and Malay on the other. Both divergences from the Caucasian ideal were considered inferior."¹⁷ Fredrick Blumenbach coined the term Caucasian to signify the different groups of people who inhabit Europe, west Asia and northern India. As he perceives things, the distinctions among the Caucasians emerged from the Caucasus mountains in Georgia. Blumenbach strongly rejected the polygenetic theory basing his rationale on the human ability to breed interracially which is impossible between humans and other creatures. He propounded the monogenetic theory citing biological forces compounded by environmental factors as causes of the variation in the human races. As can be seen, Blumenbach bases the racial categories on geographical locations and beauty which fall under perceptible physical characteristics. Of course different geographical locations can effect distinctions in physical appearance among people. Be that as it may, geographical locations and differences in physical characteristics can never serve as the basis for racial categories. Blumenbach further talks about the Caucasians as being the Ideal race and others as being inferior. However, the basis for the racial superiority of the Caucasians, as portrayed by Blumenbach, is unclear. Let us consider other contributors to the development of the concept of race.

The other important figure as far as the debate on race is concerned is David Hume. In *Of National Characters*, Hume contends "that the differences among European nations are attributable not to natural differences, but to cultural and political influences."¹⁸ Hume further

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ James, Michael, "Race."

contends that all the four distinct races that are found in the world are inferior to the white race. The civilization of the white race supersedes all races both in action and speculations. He further contends that “whereas even the most barbarous white nations such as the Germans “have something eminent about them,” the “uniform and constant difference” in accomplishment between whites and non-whites could not occur “if nature had not made an original distinction betwixt these breeds of men.”¹⁹ However Hume later on changed his stance after being heavily criticized thereby limiting his general claim about the inferiority of other races to Africans or Negroes. As he sees things, there has never been civilization experienced by any nation that has people of black skin as its inhabitants. As Zack (2002) observes, Hume holds that the “uniform and constant difference” in accomplishment between whites and non-whites could not occur “if nature had not made an original distinction betwixt these breeds of men.”²⁰ From this it became apparent that Hume is driving at the point that racial differences are inherent in nature. This stance by Hume seems to presuppose some sort of a racial essence as a distinguishing mark between different racial groups. However, the racial essence which undergirds the proposed distinctions among races is not substantiated by Hume. Moreover, Hume seems to espouse the polygenesis theory which holds that different races descended from different ancestors. However, the postulations by Darwin which he propounded in the *Descent of Man*, has rendered the theory polygenesis erroneous. Additionally, Hume cites civilization as a distinguishing mark. However, civilization is a cultural phenomenon which is learnt. As a cultural reality, civilization cannot be inherent in human nature. Besides, civilization is relative, what might be considered as civilization in Europe might not be similar to what could be termed as civilization in Africa and others parts of the world. Therefore, civilization cannot serve as a racial maker. Let us look elsewhere for answers.

Immanuel Kant, a modern philosopher gives us an argument in favour of monogenesis. As he observes, “all human beings belong to the one line of descent from which --- regardless of their dissimilarities---they emerged, or from which they might at least possibly have emerged.”²¹ All

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Naomi Zack, *Philosophy of Science and Race*. New York: Routledge, 2002.

²¹ Immanuel Kant, “*Of the Different Human Races*” in Hackett Readings in Philosophy: Idea of Race, 8-22, (Hackett Publishing Company, Inc: Indianapolis, 2000), 9.

humans have one ancestor who possibly came from Europe. This ancestor had the potential to generate the difference physical traits. For Kant, races can be perceived as “deviations that are constantly preserved over many generations and come about as a consequence of migration (dislocation to other regions) or through interbreeding with other deviations of the same line of descent which always produces half-breed off-spring.”²² He further argues that the distinct physical human traits are triggered by variations in environmental factors such as heat and humidity. These factors have brought about the distinct physical characteristics that are perceivable among humans. As he see things, humidity and heat compounded by migrations, geographic isolation and in-breeding have brought about the emergence of four races. He categorizes these as blacks found in Africa, the blonds of northern Europe, Copper red of America and the olive yellow of Asia. As far as he is concerned, once these distinct races are fully developed, there is no climate or geographical factor that can effect further changes in them. Kant maintains that all humans have a common ancestor and thus they belong to one human family. He bases his argument on the fact that people of different races are able to breed with their off springs inheriting features from both parents. For him, the blending of features from both parents does not only validate the claim that all races belong to one humanity, but also that the two are also distinct. For instance, a white and black person might have an off spring that would manifest both black and white traits. “Such interracial mixture accounts for the existence of people who do not fit neatly into one or another race...”²³

Kant seems to hold the idea that human beings belong to one human species. Within that one human species, there are several races whose distinguishing marks are observable physical traits. He firmly holds that these are signs of deeper distinctions among humans. However, he never substantiates how deep these are even though he explains how they are caused. Moreover, one wonders if at all physical traits serve as a racial essence. If that is the case, another problem arises in terms how to categorize individuals who are products of a long exchange of genes. Kant seems to be aware of this though he never explains this.

²² Ibid.

²³ James, Michael, "Race."

The debate between polygenesis and monogenesis came to an end when Charles Darwin published his book *The Descent of Man* in 1871. Considering his postulations, it is apparent that he was not propagating the idea that races denote distinct human species. However, the polygenetic theory persisted and was particularly upheld in the American school of anthropology. Proponents include Agassiz Louis (1850), Robins Gliddon and Josiah Clark. Right at the beginning of the 19th century, Samuel Morton, Josiah Clark and George Gliddon came up with theories to account for the racial hierarchy of which it was presupposed that the white race was superior. The theories were also meant to account for the intellectual as well as the physical differences. Samuel Morton carried out an experiment on the cranial as well as intelligence capacities with the view to validate the theory of polygenesis. This was done by collecting several skulls from around the world and then measuring their sizes. To this effect, it was concluded that the Caucasians and the Mongolians were the highest in terms of the cranial capacity thus the most intelligent of all races and that Africans have the lowest intellectual capacity. For many years this became the basis for racial distinctions and determining their respective intellectual abilities. However years later after the death of Morton, a biologist, Stephen Gould carried out more experiments and discovered that Morton's conclusions were highly flawed and subjective. This is because they omitted much of the data that pointed to the contrary.

The contributions to the debate on race by Samuel Morton and his counterparts can never go unappreciated. They reveal how subjectivity and prejudices can colour scientific explorations. The theory under which the experiments were conducted already presupposed that humans descended from various original human ancestors. Therefore, it follows of necessity that these original human ancestors are distinct and so are their descendants. These presuppositions conditioned the explorations by Samuel Morton. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that polygenesis as a theory that tried to account for the distinction among different human groups is highly flawed. Modern science, particularly the theory of evolution, reveals that all humans have one common ancestor. The physical distinctions are products of climatic factors and geographical factors.

At the beginning of 20th century more studies on the question of race based on skin colour and the capacity of the cranium brought another dimension to the subject of race. It was concluded that the notion of race was based on heredity and genes. Thus the race debate shifted and it became grounded on natural biology which in turn became very influential in debates on race. It was concluded that behavioral patterns and racial distinctions are based on genetic distinctions. This perspective on race was based on the movement called Eugenics. Francis Galton, the founder of the movement, focused on selective breeding with the aim of improving the health, vigor, skill, masculinity and civil dispositions in human beings. It was held that Eugenics²⁴ provided “the more suitable races or strains of blood a better chance of prevailing over the less suitable.”²⁵ For many years the movement of Eugenics propounded the idea that human races differ based on heredity and this also affected their physical appearance as well as their intellectual abilities. In *Race Crossing in Jamaica* (1929), Charles Davenport, states that “we are driven to the conclusion that there is a constitutional, hereditary, genetic basis for the difference between the two races [whites and blacks] in mental tests. We have to conclude that there are racial differences in mental capacity.”²⁶ Years later, eugenicists Paul Popenoe and Roswell Hill Johnson also propounded the idea “that the Negro race differs greatly from the white race, mentally as well as physically, and that in many respects it may be said to be inferior when tested by the requirements of modern civilization and progress.”²⁷ They further argued that black children as well as adults are characterized by an aspect of inferiority when compared to their white counter parts. This ranges from physical aspects to emotional and intellectual capacity.

The postulations of the Eugenics movement seem to be very appealing at first glance. Of course selective breeding may enhance human ability and give them better chances of survival. However, this serves no purpose as far as grounding the notion of race. The talk about behavior patterns among the people who might be considered to be of the same race is worth exploring.

²⁴Eugenic is the science of improving a population by controlled breeding to increase the desirable heritable traits.

²⁵ Michael Yudell, “A Short History of the Race Concept.”

²⁶ Charles Davenport, *Race Crossing in Jamaica* (1929), <http://velesova-sloboda.vho.org/archiv/pdf/davenport-race-crossing-in-jamaica.pdf> (accessed September 19, 2016).

²⁷ Yudell Michael, “A short History of the Concept of Race.”

The genetic variation among the people who might be considered to be of different races is no longer a factor. When we consider people of the so-called same racial group and those of other races, the genetic variation among them is not any different as modern science has revealed. Similarly, Michael Yudell points out that “human genetic diversity cannot be captured by the concept of race... all humans have genome sequences that are 99.9% identical” and that “the concept of race has no genetic or scientific basis.”²⁸ The behavior pattern also among people of different racial groups can never be explained as being grounded in genetic distinctions; these by and large are conditioned by cultural and environmental factors. Therefore, they cannot serve as basis for racial classifications. Additionally, these cannot serve to explain the difference in intellectual capacity among humans. It is for this reason that Yudell notes that the postulations by Eugenicists, with regards to the said differences, are false and not worthy of any belief. “Eugenic propagandists gave race an unalterable permanence; neither education, nor change in environment or climate, nor the eradication of racism itself could alter the fate of non-whites.”²⁹

With time, several African American intellectuals responded to the biased racial approach by scientists so as to uphold the equality of all human beings. These include Kelly Miller, who in 1909 argued that “since civilization is not an attribute of the color of skin, or curl of hair, or curve of lip, there is no necessity for changing such physical peculiarities...”³⁰ He was backed by Dubois who argued that science was being applied to champion racist intention and motives. Dubois synthesized anthropological literature and argued that the notion of race is not a significant scientific category and that race was a social construct. Therefore, race can never be an effective marker of human difference. Given that “the human species so shade and mingle with each other that... it is impossible to draw a color line between black and other races.”³¹

Around the 1940s, slowly but surely, an anthropologist, Franz Boas (1858–1942) started doing away with the eugenic conceptions of human difference and began to embrace the evolutionary

²⁸ Yudell Michael, “*A short History of the Concept of Race.*”

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

perspective proposed by Darwin.³² He threw out the rigid genetic conception of human differences and began to view human difference as being dynamic. Thus, it became increasingly difficult to explain human differences as being rooted in some trait which is particular to a given group. For this reason, Yudell argues that, "the concept of race in the context of population genetics and evolutionary biology is simply a tool for making genetic 'diversity intelligible and manageable' in scientific study."³³ Although there are perceptible differences among humans, the manner of classifying them is simply a methodological decision that an investigator might make. However, this does not give us grounds to postulate racial hierarchies among different human groups.

Further doubt was cast on the Eugenics and its rigid racial classifications through strides which were made in genetics, especially the discovery of the structure of the double helix³⁴ in 1953. This "confirmed the complexity of human heredity and thereby undercutting the simplistic theories of eugenicists and other racial scientists who advanced the idea of a fixed racial taxonomy."³⁵ Other evolutionary thinkers argued that, "the concept of race was a methodological tool by which to measure genetic difference within species, not a way to understand the physical and intellectual differences between peoples with varying skin color."³⁶ The new mode of thinking with regards to the notion of race moved fast and slowly found its way in other aspects of life beyond the scientific discipline. For instance, Gunnar Myrdal (1944), in *An American dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* argued against the idea that there are static racial essences which distinguish races.³⁷ He further contended that the physical

³² James, Michael, "Race."

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ "The double helix is a description of the molecular shape of a double-stranded DNA molecule. In 1953, Francis Crick and James Watson first described the molecular structure of DNA, which they called a "double helix," in the journal *Nature*. The double helix describes the appearance of double-stranded DNA, which is composed of two linear strands that run opposite to each other, or anti-parallel, and twist together. Each DNA strand within the double helix is a long, linear molecule made of smaller units called nucleotides that form a chain." Ref. Double Helix, <http://www.nature.com/scitable/definition/double-helix-277>, (accessed October 10, 2016)

³⁵ James, Michael, "Race."

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Yudell Michael, "A short History of the Concept of Race."

differences among humans do not signify some sort of a racial hierarchy. This is because there is “great variability of traits among individuals in every population group... and there is a considerable amount of overlapping between all existing groups.”³⁸ He further observed that through scientific explorations, the unity and equality which exists among diverse human beings is becoming more of a reality. In this way he rendered the classification of races in terms of inferior to superior as being grossly erroneous. Moreover, his postulations played a pivotal role in the formulation of the statement that “from the biological standpoint, the species *Homo sapiens* is made up of a number of populations, each one of which differs from the others in the frequency of one or more genes,” and that “for all practical social purposes “race” is not so much a biological phenomenon as a social myth.”³⁹

1.3. Contemporary Philosophical Views on the Concept of Race

The contending contemporary philosophical views on race can be divided into three camps whose debates revolve around the ontological status of the notion of race. The prominent schools include racial naturalism which propagates the biological conception of race. For this school, race is grounded in the natural racial essence. The racial essence is inherited and then passed down from one generation to the next. The racial essence serves to explain the common traits among people of the same race. The racial essence also serves to explain the behavioral dispositions as well as the cultural dispositions among people of one racial group.⁴⁰ Michael James notes that this philosophical position on race has been discarded by many philosophers and scientists. However, the bone of contention still remains around the question of the ontological status of race. This has seen various philosophical positions and viewpoints being floated. This has led to the emergence of three metaphysical camps.⁴¹ These include Racial Skepticism, Racial Constructivism, and Racial Population Naturalism.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ James Michael, “Race”

⁴¹ Ibid.

Racial skepticism propagates the idea that race does not have any ontological status and therefore it does not exist. Anthony Appiah and Naomi Zack argue that the notion of race does not refer to anything in the world of experience. This is because race as it was propounded by the 19th century biologists has been found to be extremely erroneous and baseless. Additionally, the Aristotelian essences, which served as an explanation for all the characteristics common to those who belong to the same race, has been vehemently rejected by modern philosophers as being grossly flawed. Naomi Zack observes that “essences, geography, phenotypes, genotypes, and genealogy are the only known candidates for physical scientific bases of race. Each fails. Therefore, there is no physical scientific basis for the social racial taxonomy.”⁴²

Whereas folk theories rely on *geography* to divide humanity into African, European, Asian, and Amerindian races, contemporary population genetics reveal the vacuity of this foundation for two reasons. First, geographically based environmental stimuli lead to continuous physical adaptations in skin, hair and bone rather than the discrete differences associated with race; and second, although mitochondrial DNA mutations provide evidence of the geographical origins of populations, these mutations do not correlate with the physical traits associated with racial groups.⁴³

Racial skeptics further contend that the notion of race is based on physical characteristics such as skin colour and hair texture. However, these cannot ground the notion of race. Moreover, “race cannot be founded upon *transmission genetics*, since the genes transmitted from one generation to the next lead to very specific physical traits, not general racial characteristics shared by all members of a putatively racial group.”⁴⁴ Worse still, the genealogy which is employed to ground race is also suspect. There is, indeed, a possibility that those people who might have descended from a common ancestor might have similar genetic traits. However, these do not resonate with perceptible physical traits which are associated with race. For this reason, Appiah argues that the whole notion of race cannot serve any purposes in the world of experience. For him, the concept of race can only refer to a group of people with common genetic features. However, this is only possible in a group which is engaged in strict and continuous inbreeding. Such a group must also

⁴² Zack, N., *Philosophy of Science and Race*, (New York: Routledge, 2002), 88.

⁴³ James, Michael, "Race."

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

remain geographically and genetically isolated. However, this is also highly questionable given the constant migrations of people that characterize our world.

The school offers a plausible and critical analysis of the concept of race. It highlights for us how erroneous and misleading the concept of race can be. The concept of race seems to have been based on assumptions which were never vigorously analyzed. A thorough scrutiny by racial skeptics indeed exposes several inconsistencies in the notion of race.

For *Racial Constructivism*, although biological race has been rejected, races still persist in reality and are propagated by human culture and various decisions taken by human beings. They agree with the racial skeptic's rejection of biological race, but they still maintain that race is still a vital concept. For them, race refers to distinct human groups which are categorized based on observable physical characteristics. As they see things, society classifies people according to races based on resources, opportunities and the dignity that an individual has.⁴⁵ They contend that the concept of race must be conserved, in order to smoothen the process of affirmative action which counters socially created racial differences.

Part of the argument for racial constructivism is the idea that the concept of race plays an important role in Medicare and therefore it needs to be retained. Indeed recent findings attest to this fact. In, *Race and Medicare*, Keith Norris points out that scientific "findings clearly support the presence of race-related variations in disease risk, disease progression, treatment response, and treatment-related side effects."⁴⁶ For this reason Keith Norris argues that

there remains an important role for race/ethnicity, as a marker for ancestry and often for culture, as well as other sociodemographic traits, in characterizing patients with respect to medical care. These variables can be helpful in understanding key aspects of health beliefs, health behaviors, access to care, and likely response to therapeutic interventions.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ James, Michael, "Race."

⁴⁶ Keith Norris, *Race and Medicare*, <http://www.the-scientist.com/?articles.view/articleNo/38950/title/On-Race-and-Medicine/> (accessed March 12, 2017).

⁴⁷ Ibid.

Indeed Racial constructivism, seems to have a point in their retention of racial categories. However, many people today are products of a long chain of a historical exchange of genes. There are plausible reasons to believe that a huge chunk of the human population fits in no category or racial group believed to be sharing not only physical features but also deep biological characteristics. Based on this, the argument by Racial Constructivism based on the role race plays in Medicare becomes questionable. As a matter of fact, “the ultimate goal is to arrive at a point where medicine becomes so personalized that it is driven from a “fingerprint” of one’s biologic makeup, not from racial typecasting.”⁴⁸

Of course one would sympathize with racial constructivism and their need to uphold the notion of race for the sake of social order and affirmative action. For this school, “the concept of race must be conserved, in order to facilitate race-based social movements or policies, such as affirmative action, that compensate for socially constructed but socially relevant racial differences.” However, affirmative action is still possible without the notion of race. It is also worth noting that affirmative action itself is based on the principle that all humans are equal. It is for this reason that conservation of race as proposed by racial constructivism raises lots of questions given that much of the unjust schemes such as apartheid and social inequalities are based on the notion of race. Humanity at this point in history is seriously working against social inequality. However, race as a concept is riddled with serious prejudices which have contributed to the widening gap between the poor and rich, and between people of different races. One wonders why such a notion needs to be upheld.

Racial population naturalism contends that racial naturalism had invalidly ascribed mental, cultural and physical traits to certain distinct human races. As they perceive things, it is possible to conceive of the existence of genetically and biologically generated human groups which could be termed as races. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that there is no biological or genetic characteristic that would run through all the people of one race which would distinguish them from other racial groups. Therefore, they do not subscribe to the idea that distinct races exist. Be that as it may, they contend that refuting the notion of race and the racial essence would also obliterate the differences between other existents such as pigs and lions. Philip Kitcher, a

⁴⁸ Ibid.

member of this school, contends that, “there is no...genetic feature...that separates one species of mosquito or mushroom from another”⁴⁹ Philip further contends that “in effect, if the failure to satisfy the condition of discreteness and essentialism requires jettisoning the concept of race, then it also requires jettisoning the concept of biological species.”⁵⁰ Philip contends that the difference between species is not determined by genetic factors, but by reproductive isolation. These are conditioned by non genetic factors such as climate and other environment factors. Racial population naturalism believes that humans have a common ancestor. Different races have emerged due to evolution with distinction physical characteristics being compounded by geographical isolation and inbreeding. However, given interracial breeding, racial differences are slowly being obliterated.

The school seems to have a point. Indeed, if there is no genetic or essential difference between other non-human species, then other problems arise. The fact is that a cat is not a lion though the two belong to the genus, animals. Nonetheless, it has to be highlighted that when it comes to humans, the things that make them different are not as deep as those that make them similar. Cats and lion can never cross breed and neither can they communicate or come to some consensus. However, humans can cross breed and they have lots in common and they can interact at a deeper level. They also seem to share in the common search for the meaning of life. This simply entails that they are one.

1.4. Conclusion

This chapter has been an exploration of the historical progression of the concept of race. I have critically engaged the different arguments by philosophers with regards to the question of race. I have also highlighted the current status of the notion of race by envisaging the contemporary philosophical camps. These include racial skepticism, racial constructivism, and racial population naturalism. As can be seen, those who argue for the notion of race, by and large, base their philosophical arguments on physical characteristics as well as geographical factors. Others also try to ground the notion of race on common ancestry or common blood. In the next chapter,

⁴⁹ Kitcher Philip., 2007, “Does ‘Race’ Have a Future?” in *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 35(4): (293–317), 294.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

I will revisit the *Illusions of Race* by Kwame Appiah with the view to establishing the ontological basis of the notion of race.

CHAPTER TWO

THE ONTOLOGICAL BASIS OF RACE

2.0. Introduction

In this chapter, I will explore the ontological basis of the concept of race. To accomplish this, I will revisit the *Illusions of Race* by Kwame Anthony Appiah. It is important to note that some perspectives on race that I have already highlighted in the first chapter might resurface in certain sections of Appiah's analysis. I have divided this chapter into four parts. The first part presents a quick recapitulation of Dubois' conception of race as presented by Appiah. The second part explores Appiah's analysis of Dubois' sociohistorical conception of race. The third part envisages Appiah's analysis of the scientific conception of race which is espoused by Dubois. The chapter concludes by highlighting the Implications of Appiah's analysis of Dubois' conception of race. The chapter brings to the surface the fact that the use of the concept of race as a classificatory tool is intellectually misleading. For now, let us look at Appiah's recapitulations of the notion of race espoused by Dubois.

2.1. Appiah Recapitulates Dubois's Conception of Race

Presenting the *Illusions of Race*, Kwame Appiah thoroughly analyses the underpinnings of the notion of race espoused by Dubois in the *Conversation of Races*, a paper that Dubois delivered to the American Negro Academy in 1897. A quick recap of the *Conversation of Races* through the lenses of Appiah is indispensable for our undertaking and to this, we turn. In *Conversation of Races*, Dubois contends that the American Negro has been led to diminish race distinctions. Dubois believes that much of the discussions around the question of race that he was aware of "have lurked certain assumptions as to his natural abilities, as to his political, intellectual and moral status, which he felt were wrong."⁵¹ Appiah Observes that Dubois (1897) argues that we have to come to terms with fact the human family is divided into races. He notes that the final word by science is that there are three main races, the whites, black and yellow races. Dubois

⁵¹ Appiah, Kwame. A, *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture*, 28.

individuals but as races...for the development of Negro genius, of Negro literature and art, of negro spirit, only Negroes bound and welded together, Negroes by one vast ideal, can work out its fullness the great message they have for humanity...."⁵⁵ Dubois contends that if the Negro people of the United States of America come to this realization and thereafter appropriate to themselves the values of Pan-Negroism, they will circumvent being assimilated into the white American community. Dubois wraps his postulations with a creed which he suggests must be espoused by the American Negroes Academy.

1. We believe that the Negro people, as a race, have a contribution to make to civilization and humanity, which no other race can make.
2. We believe it the duty of the Americans of Negro descent, as a body, to maintain their race identity until this mission of the Negro people is accomplished and the ideal of human brotherhood has become a practical possibility.⁵⁶

2.3. Appiah's Analysis of Dubois' Conception of Race

Appiah contends that, in the *Conservation of Races*, Dubois' argument is that race is not scientific, but a social historical concept. Social historical races carry with them, a particular message which is believed to be rooted in the divine plan for human races. According to this view, the Negro race has its own message which is yet to be brought to full realization. It is therefore the responsibility of the Negroes to work tirelessly together as a race towards the deliverance of that message. Appiah contends that we do not have to get into the theological basis of the above argument. For now, it is enough to take it that the Negroes, through their being a sociohistorical group, have the ability to realize certain vital ends, which otherwise, can never be realized. Appiah observes that, Dubois' strategy here is the "antithesis of a classic dialectic in reaction to prejudices."⁵⁷ The thesis in this dialectic, which Du bois presents as the American

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Burghardt Du Bois, *The conservation of Races*, 27.

⁵⁷ Appiah, K. A, *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture*, 30.

Negro's endeavor to diminish racial differences, is the rejection of distinctions. "Dubois' antithesis is the acceptance of differences along with the claim that each group has its part to play, that the white and the Negro races are related not as superior to inferior, but as complementaries; the Negro message is, with the white one, part of the message of humankind."⁵⁸ As far as Appiah is concerned, the reasoning above by Dubois is dialectic because it is comprised of a straightforward argument for equality and the rejection of any considerable distinctions among races. However, Appiah contends that regardless of his claims to the contrary, Dubois' conception of race is not any different from the 19th century scientific concept of race. This is because Dubois relies heavily on it in an attempt to circumvent the proposed black racial inferiority.

Appiah thus embarks on a serious mission of scrutinizing the points of contradiction in the sociohistorical notion of race which Dubois proposes against the scientific notion of race. He contends that the tension in Dubois' conception of race is quite apparent especially that Dubois makes reference to the idea common blood. The basis for his conception of race, though expressed in different terms, to a great extent resonates with the notion of race espoused by the 19th century scientists. Appiah wonders why Dubois makes common blood part of his definition if at all he had transcended the scientific notion of race. Appiah notes that Dubois tried to move away from the biological conception of race to a socio-historical one.⁵⁹

To begin the analysis of Dubois' conception of race, Appiah first puts aside the notions of common impulses and involuntary strivings which Dubois makes part of his definition. As far as he is concerned, "these must be due either to shared biological inheritance, based on the physical, but infinitely transcending it; or to a shared history; or of course to some combination of these."⁶⁰ Appiah further observes that we can only know if Dubois conception race is entirely sociohistorical as he claims if we scrutinize that which is at the core of his take on race.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 30.

⁵⁹ Appiah, K. A, *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture*, 30.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

Appiah rejects the claim that race is comprised of people who share a common language. To shed more light on this, Appiah gives an example of the “Romance” and the Negro races. Though each of these groups is believed to constitute people of one race, it does not attest to the above claim given that Negroes do not share one language. Neither do those who belong to the Romance race. The notion of common blood also cannot imply more than what is implied in idea of shared ancestry. This entails that what lies at the core of Dubois’ conception of race is the notion of “vast human family of shared common history and traditions.”⁶¹ If we are to understand Du bois clearly, we need to comprehend what he means by the “vast human family of shared common history and traditions.” In all this, what comes to the surface is the fact that Dubois’ conception of race does not go beyond the 19th century scientific notion of race which postulates common racial features as being anchored in some common biological makeup which springs from common ancestry. Appiah argues that the vast family sometimes can be comprised of people who have been adopted and yet by no means biologically linked. Appiah contends that the probability that Dubois was thinking in terms of such a family is quiet low. Just like other thinkers of his time he could have taken it for granted that the criterion for belonging to a family is always through birth.

Therefore, for us to comprehend what is implied by family, it is important to do away with all sociological postulations. Appiah notes that a family is explicated “culturally through either patrilineal or matrilineal descent alone.”⁶² However, if we are to trace one’s descendants through a family tree over a period of many years and suppose that such a person descended from each ancestor in only one way, the family tree to be drawn might have many branches at its apex. “Although in fact many individuals would be represented on more than one branch that far back, we are all going to be descended from many people by more than one route—it is plain, as a result, a matri-or patrilineal conception of family histories drastically misrepresents the biological rage of our ancestry.”⁶³

⁶¹ Ibid.31.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid., 31.

Appiah notes that, Dubois' talk about common history which he presupposes distinguishes the Slav from Teuton becomes a significant aspect of his conception of race. Given that, the contention becomes one of considering whether common history serves as the basis for differentiating one group of humans from the other. However, the idea that common history serves to account for such distinctions between groups such as the Negroes, the whites, Slav or Teuton does not seem to hold as well. This entails that this claim by Dubois is highly questionable. People may share a history but that is not enough reason to categorize them as being one race. Appiah brings this home when he argues that Dubois has Dutch ancestors yet the history of Holland which he shares with the people of Dutch descent does not make him a member of the Teutonic race because the Dutch are not negroes which he is. Appiah observes that, "but it follows from this that the history of Africa is part of the common history of the African Americans not simply because African Americans are descended from various people who played a part in African history, but because African history is the history of the people of the same race."⁶⁴ Appiah further observes that

just as to recognize two events at different times as part of the history of a single individual, we have to have a criterion of identity for the individual at each of those times, independent of his or her participation in the two events, so, when we recognize two events as belonging to the history of one race, we have to have a criterion of membership of the races at those two times, independently of the participation of the members in the two events.⁶⁵

In simple terms, Appiah brings home the point that, participation in common history cannot be taken as the principle standard for determining group membership ⁶⁶ Of course history makes us what we are; shapes and conditions the way we perceive things and interact with the environment and other people, but it does not make us one race with all those who share our history. Therefore, common history is nonessential as far as mapping racial distinctions are concerned. People may share a common history only because they are already bound together through a common geographical location and then being subjected to similar conditions and experiences. Even then, the manner in which the experience and the history is appropriated by

⁶⁴ Ibid., 32.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 32.

2.4. Appiah's Analysis of the Scientific Conception of Race as Espoused by Dubois

Appiah observes that Dubois talk of common history by and large conceals Dubois' subtle inclusion of a geographical criterion to his conception of race. In other words, his talk of common history is based on the idea that "your history is in part, the history of people who lived in the same place"⁷¹ This explains why Dubois posits eight races instead of the three which were earlier put forth by the scientific conception of race. Appiah notes that when we consider the list of races that Dubois presents before us, it becomes apparent that most of these like the Slavs, Teutons, English, Hindus, and Romance races inhabit specific geographical territories. This entails that Dubois' criterion basically boils down to the idea that people of the race share the same physical characteristics because they share one geographical region. "Focusing on one sort of feature---"grosser difference of colour, hair and borne"—you get whites and Negroes, possibly the yellow race" the "final word of science so far. Focusing on a different feature—language or shared customs—you get Teutons, Slavs and Romance peoples"⁷²

When one considers the above idea, it becomes apparent that Dubois relies heavily on the scientific definition of race which he claimed to have rejected. Appiah notes that when Dubois talks about the "grosser differences" which he claims characterizes races it becomes manifests that Dubois believes these were a manifestation of some kind of a racial essence which serves to explain the intellectual and moral insufficiency of lower class races. When one considers the *Conservation Races* it becomes clear that Dubois believes that colour is a manifestation of the racial essence. Nonetheless Dubois refutes the idea that the "cultural capacities of the black skinned, curly-haired members of humankind---the capacities determined by their essence---were inferior to those of the white skinned, straight haired ones."⁷³ Appiah observes that it is only when the 19th century science its idea of racial inferiority collapsed that Dubois was prompted to reject his earlier postulations. Dubois contended that there is no necessary connection between the cultural capacity and the human physical characteristics. This came to the fore in the *The Crisis*, a journal that he published in 1811. In this journal, Dubois argued that it is not justifiable

⁷¹ 33

⁷² Ibid.,34.

⁷³ Ibid.

genetically conditioned to the degree that they conditioned by the succession of the DNA in the chromosomes—in simple terms by genes. However given only

a person's race, it hard to say what his or her biological characteristics (apart from those that human beings share) will be except in respect of the "grosser" features of colour, hair and bone (the genetics of which is in any case poorly understood)—feature of Morphological differentiation," as the evolutionary biologist would say. ..The differentiation between human races is not always correlated with the degree of morphological differentiation.⁷⁷

The above bring us to the realization that the notion of race cannot serve to explain the differences between human beings. Moreover the notion does not account for the observed difference in intellectual and moral capacities. These by and large are determined by interaction of genes with the environment. The presence of alleles⁷⁸ which are responsible for both moral and intellectual abilities serves to explicate the apparent difference in those capacities among the people who seem to inhabit the same geographical location. This entails that physical characteristic such as skin colour, hair texture or bone structure can only account for such differences if they seriously correlate with alleles. However such correlation is not possible. This entails that those who think that moral or intellectual abilities are genetically conditioned are mistaken. They have to come to terms with the fact race is not a manifestation of such abilities.

Appiah further notes that as far as the ideology of *racialism* is concerned, there are human characteristics which are inherited. These make up what could be termed as a racial essence. According to racialism, the racial essence serves to explain the physical characteristics among people of the race such as skin colour, facial features and the type of hair. These serve as basis for racial categorizations. Appiah contends that

to say that biological races existed because it was possible to classify people into a small number of classes according to their gross morphology would be to save racialism in the letter but lose it in the substance. The notion of race that was recovered would be of no biological interest—the interesting biological generalizations are about genotypes, phenotypes and their distribution in the geographical

⁷⁷ Ibid.,36.

⁷⁸ A region of the chromosome occupied by a gene is called a locus. Some Loci are occupied in different member of a population by different genes, each of which is called an allele. Ref: Appiah, K. A, *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 35.

populations. We could just as well classify people according to whether or not they were redheaded and freckled, or redheaded, freckled, and broad-nosed too, but nobody claims that this sort of classification is central to human biology.⁷⁹

Appiah argues that many people today are products of a long chain of a historical exchange of genes. There are plausible reasons to believe that a huge chunk of the human population fits in no category or racial group believed to be sharing not only physical features but also deep biological characteristics. Appiah points out that the heated debate between polygenesis and monogenesis which argued that humans descended from several ancestors and one ancestor respectively is long gone. The consensus is that all human beings have a common ancestor in Africa. According to the Conventional evolutionary theory, as people migrated to various other parts of the world, the observable differences emerged due to differences in climatic conditions and mutations genes for survival purposes. Emphasizing this point, Appiah notes that human history is for the most part characterized by migrations and huge movements of people such as the Hordes of Attila the Hun, the Bantu migrations. These provide a conducive platform for genetic exchange. Therefore, human populations are all linked to some extent.⁸⁰ These have left marks of evidence of genetic exchange of which many humans today are products. These cannot fit in any form of classification because they are products of a long chain of a historical exchange of genes.

Appiah observes that an attempt to classify people according to few races is like classifying books in the library:

You may use a single property---size, say---but you will get a useless classification, or you may use a more complex system of interconnected criteria, and then you will get a good deal of arbitrariness. No one—not even the most compulsive librarian---thinks that book classifications reflect deep fact about books. Each of them is more or less useless for various purposes; all of them, as we know, have the kind of rough edges that take a while to get around.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Ibid., 37.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 38.

⁸¹ Appiah, K. A, *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture*, 38.

The same applies to classifications of humanity according to races which have characterized human history and science. Appiah notes that the use of race as classificatory notion brings us in touch with what was at stake in the history of science. Scientists began to construe observable phenomenon based on folk theories of the world. They often relied on unaided senses for such. Scientists and philosophers had to find means of making sense of the diversity which exists among humans and for the most part they had to rely on perceivable features such as color. This is because way back color played a major role with regards to knowledge and identification of entities. However, as science develops, “concepts are developed whose application requires more than unaided senses; instead of the phenomenal properties of thing, we look for “deeper” more theoretical properties. The price we pay is that classification becomes a more specialized activity; the benefit we gain is that we are able to make generalizations of great power and scope.”⁸² This has erased many paradoxes which humanity battled with in ancient time. Through serious discoveries in biological and genetic sciences, the human internal composition which was hidden from the human eye has been exposed. This has led to the discovery of flaws in many categories and concepts which were earlier devised to make sense of human life. Appiah further highlights that it is very hard to depict the laws of nature by reference to colours, taste, smell or texture of entities. This has made it extremely hard to come to terms with the fact that the colour of existents which is very significant with regards to the role it plays in enabling us to recognize visible entities of our experience never serves to explain the intrinsic make up of objects.⁸³

Having discarded all the proposed grounds for race as propounded by Dubois in the *Conservation of races*, Appiah contends that there is nothing left for those who are prone to racial attitudes to have an attitude towards. This entails each human being has to be judged based on merit and not on race. The implication of this is that without cultural information being given about a particular person from any part of the world, it would be practically impossible to suppose much about them.⁸⁴ As a matter of fact “in the absence of a racial essence, there could

⁸² Ibid., 38.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 39.

be no guarantee that some particular person was not more gifted in some specific respect than any or others in the populations of other regions”⁸⁵

Appiah concludes that race does not exist and there is nothing in this world that corresponds to race and all that is associated with. There is nothing in the world that race can do what we ask race to do for us, Appiah contends. He further makes the point that the “talk of race distresses those of us who take culture seriously. For where race works in place where gross differences of morphology are corrected with subtle difference of temperament, belief and intention it works as an attempt as metonym for culture and it does so only at a price of biologizing what is culture, ideology.”⁸⁶ As he sees things, “what exists out there in world are communities of meaning, shading variously into each other in the rich structure of the social world.”⁸⁷ Such dynamism cannot be studied by biology because it belongs to the field of human sciences.

2.5. The Implications of Appiah’s Analysis of Dubois’ Conception of Race

The analysis by Appiah exposes a number of things which were hidden or taken for granted for centuries. It exposes in a very profound way the ontological basis of race. It is clear that, common history, common traditions, physical characteristics such bone structure and hair texture, common impulses and strivings are not deep enough to ground the notion of race. This makes one wonder what is implied by race. For now it is unclear what race stands for and it seems to be a very slippery concept. When one inquires into what is at the core of racial categories, it is hard to find any apart from the observable physical characteristics by which we customary distinguish people. However, beyond these there is a lot that humans share in common. In other words, on the ontological level human beings are the same. This raises a lot of questions about the significance of racial categories. Through the analysis above, Appiah brings to the surface the fact that race as a classificatory notion has been intellectually misleading. It deconstructs us from the intrinsic unity which is embedded in human diversity. The notion of race as it has been propounded is deceptive because it thrives on the notion that the human physical

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 45.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 45.

characteristic are more important than the intrinsic unity which runs through all human existents. In other words, race as a notion is based on distorted or misconstrued information. The concept of race as it has been propounded throughout History has misrepresented the truth about humanity. To talk about races is as good as entertaining illusions. This is probably what prompts Appiah to argue that race does not exist. If this is true, it means that the whole of human history has been characterized and duped by a monstrous lie under the guise of race.

In his analysis of Dubois' conception of race, Appiah seems to be driving at the idea that humanity is one despite being comprised of different human groups with perceptible physical characteristics. Appiah highlight for us that humans descend from one common ancestor. The distinct observable characteristics are consequences of human adaption to different climatic conditions in different geographical locations. That being the case, we need then to find new ways of speaking about human diversity devoid of resuscitating racial categories postulated by the 19th century scientific conception of race which were riddled with prejudices and stereotypes. Peaceful coexistence as a massive human project for the future depends on how we make sense of such diversity. The next chapter will first try to make sense of human diversity.

2.6. Conclusion

This has been an exploration of the ontological status of the concept of race. The analysis of the ontological status of the notion race has been expedited by revisiting the *Illusions of Race* by Kwame Anthony Appiah. This has been accomplished by recapitulating Dubois' conception of race through the lenses of Appiah. Appiah's critical analysis of Dubois' sociohistorical conception of race has also been explored. The chapter concludes by highlighting the Implications of Appiah's analysis of Dubois' Conception of race thereby bringing to the surface the fact that the notion of race as a classificatory too is intellectually misleading. Race as a notion is based on distorted or misconstrued information. The concept of race as it has been propounded throughout History has misrepresented the truth about humanity. To talk about races is as good as entertaining illusions

CHAPTER THREE

TOWARDS A HOLISTIC PICTURE OF HUMANITY

3.0. Introduction

In this chapter, I will explore the unity which runs through the diverse human groups despite their distinct physical characteristics. The chapter will propose means for comprehending and explicating the distinct physical characteristics which characterize different human groups without compromising the essential unity which undergirds all humans. To accomplish this, I have divided the chapter into two parts. The first part explores humanity as both one and many. The second part explores and explains how racial illusions can destroy the intrinsic unity which undergirds diverse human groups thereby bringing about the disintegration of human society.

3.1. Humanity is both One and Many

According to Norris Clarke, reality as it manifests itself to us is both one and many.⁸⁸ This important aspect to reality seems to cover a wide range of existents. This ranges from plants insects, wild animals as well as human beings. As can be seen, it is very easy to make sense of the unity in diversity that exists among creatures such as pigs or cat. We might have, black white, or grey cats but the bottom line is that they are all cats. At such levels, the problem of classification never arises. Nonetheless, on the level of humanity, this seems to have been an occasion for the most heated debates since antiquity. To help us come to a consensus about the intrinsic human identity and the unity which undergirds diverse humanity, I am going to employ the philosophical facts that we have discovered in the course of our philosophical exploration of race.

⁸⁸ Norris Clarke, *The One and the Many: A Contemporary Thomistic Metaphysics*, (Indiana, University of Notre Dame press, 2001), 72.

Here it has to be stated that the Leibniz law⁸⁹ which focuses on the properties as determinants of identity is beyond the scope of this endeavor. "Leibniz's Law is a bi-conditional that claims the following: Necessarily, for anything, x , and anything, y , x is identical to y if and only if for any property x has, y has, *and* for any property y has, x has."⁹⁰ As far as human identity is concerned this law may not be applicable. This is because the law requires that all the properties possessed by x be possessed by y if the two are to be the same. Given the difference in properties such as colour and body size or structure among humans of various races, Leibniz law would raise concerns about any claim that all humans are equal.

Therefore, the argument will be premised on the ontological status of the notion of race. As we have seen, the concept of race signifies the distribution of humanity into groups. Appiah's analysis helps us to comprehend the fact that common history, the common traditions, physical characteristics such as bone structure and hair texture, common impulses and strivings are not deep enough to ground the notion of race. If this is the case, it follows of necessity that the notion of race has no ontological basis. This implies that we have no authentic grounds for dividing humanity into races. Therefore, humanity is essentially one. Given this conclusion, we need to ground and make sense of the unity that exists in the diversity of the one human family. This is the daunting task that I will embark on in this section of my exploration. To begin this exploration, it is worth noting that the human race consists of several groups with different perceptible physical characteristics. Similarly Johann Gottfried (1828) notes that

no matter how different the form in which humankind appears on earth, it is still everywhere one and the same human species. Just as in nature two leaves of a tree are the same, even less so are two human faces and two human organizations. What an infinite diversity is possible for our skillfully crafted construction! Its solid particles dissolve into such fine, numerous interwoven fibers that no eye can follow them: these are held together by glue whose fragile mixture escapes all calculative skills, and yet these particles are the least significant things that we have about us. They are nothings other than containers, shells, and holders

⁸⁹ Leibniz's Law is a bi-conditional that claims the following: Necessarily, for anything, x , and anything, y , x is identical to y if and only if for any property x has, y has, *and* for any property y has, x has. Because this is a bi-conditional, it is comprised of two conditional statements (i) and (ii):
(i) If x is identical to y , then for any property x has, y has and for any property y has, x has.
(ii) If for any property X has, Y has, and for any property Y has, X has, the X is Identical to Y . Ref: Leibniz's Law, the Indiscernibility of Identicals, and the identity of Indiscernibles, <http://www.oberlin.edu/faculty/mwallace/LeibnizsLaw.html> (accessed November 20, 2016).

⁹⁰ Leibniz's Law, the Indiscernibility of Identicals, and the identity of Indiscernibles, <http://www.oberlin.edu/faculty/mwallace/LeibnizsLaw.html> (accessed March 12, 2016).

of manifold and diversely animated juices that are present in much greater amounts, the juices through which we enjoy and live.⁹¹

Given this, we are faced with the philosophical problem of making sense of the distinct physical characteristics which characterize humanity without compromising the essential unity which is traceable from one common ancestor as the theory of evolution highlights for us. When we consider evolutionary philosophy and biology, we would realize that human physical characteristics are products of evolution. Darwin explains this in his theory of evolution particularly in the *Descent of Man*. Humans have a common ancestor who probably came from Africa. From there people migrated to different parts of the world. The distinct physical traits, by which ancient philosophers and deterministic biologists classified people into races are in fact products of environmental factors such as heat and other climatic conditions and geographical isolation. These changes probably came up because they enhanced the chances of human survival in certain climatic condition as the theory of *natural selection* suggests. In North Africa where people experience scorching heat, we have people with very dark skins to counter the severe heat conditions. In the North Pole where it is extremely cold we have people with very light skin to enable them to absorb as much heat as possible to keep them warm. However, it has to be noted that the evolutionary changes that occurred due to climatic and geographical factors cannot bring about the complete alteration of what constitutes the human essential nature. By essential nature is meant the sum total of all the essential characteristics that run through all existents that could be classified as humans. Johann Gottfried defines human nature as that complex whole which is constituted by the interaction of multiple elements such emotions, capacities, faculties and a set of eight fundamental aspects manifested through

an economic nature is the natural tendency to minimize effort and maximize rewards; an hedonistic nature, or the natural tendency to seek pleasure and avoid pain; a sexual nature which is the natural tendency to seek sexual gratification, which is a particular manifestation of our hedonistic nature; a nature personality which is the individual way of responding to the environment; a nature of self-preservation which is the natural tendency to preserve the integrity of the self; a competitive nature which is the natural tendency to

⁹¹ Johann Gottfried, "Ideas on the Philosophy of the History of Humankind," in *Hackett Readings in Philosophy: Idea of Race*, 23-72, (Hackett Publishing Company, Inc: Indianapolis, 2000), 27..

control reproductively meaningful resources; a social nature is the natural need to form part of a social group; and a developmental nature which is the natural capacity of cognitive development.⁹²

These eight vital aspects of human nature are common to all humans regardless of their geographical location or place of origin, colour, time or culture. The truth of this statement becomes manifest especially when we envisage human culture. This entails that whatever fully instantiates human nature, is a human person. Similarly, one can argue that Negroes, Indians and Caucasians are human if they fully instantiate human nature. All these groups of people fully instantiate human nature in a fashion that Johann Gottfried highlights above. It thus follows of necessity that all these groups of people qualify as human beings.

Having arrived at this conclusion, we still have to grapple with explicating human diversity and at the same time uphold the oneness that undergirds all humans. The metaphysical problem that seems to be the bone of contention is the question of persistence of identity through change. The manner in which change is construed in this case will determine our conception of diverse human groups and their distinct physical characteristics. For us to accomplish this, we have to explore change and what constitutes it. When we consider the world of our experience, we encounter one important fact about reality, change. The world as we know it is quite dynamic and it is constantly changing. What brings about change is not of any significance for this endeavor. The plain fact is that existents come into being; sometimes they change their mode of existence by losing some of their properties or simply become completely altered or cease to be what they had been before. Human beings are born, they grow up and change in spatial dimension and other physical features or die and decompose and turn into dust. This is the reality and fact about the world that we cannot distance ourselves from. However, the manner in which we comprehend change determines how we perceive and comprehend existents that undergo various changes. Ancient philosophers like Heraclitus believed that everything is in a constant state of change or flux. Change is the only basic principle of reality. From this emerged the saying that “you cannot step into the same river twice” because water is constantly flowing.

⁹² “Human Nature,” in *Philosophy of Nature: On a Monist Theory of the Universe*, <https://physicalspace.wordpress.com/> (accessed 16, October 2016).

As we venture into exploring the evolutionary changes which have brought about the perceptible physical characteristics in humans, we keep in mind the fact that there are two types of changes, substantial and accidental changes. This line of thought was developed by Aristotle⁹³ and further expounded by Thomas Aquinas.⁹⁴ Substantial change is the kind through which an existent goes thereby resulting in the complete obliteration of the existent concerned. In other words, at the end of the process of that change, the existent becomes a complete new thing. For instance, a piece of wood burns down and becomes ashes. Accidental change on the other hand is the kind through which an existent goes without losing their basic identity. For instance, a human person grows and passes through various stages of growth and eventually becomes an adult. I acknowledge that this is highly disputable, but for this purpose it works to shed more light on the philosophical problem at hand. When we consider the evolutionary changes that have brought about distinct perceptible characteristics in humans, we would realize that such fall under accidental or none essential change. This is because they have not resulted in the complete obliteration of the basic human identity. The truth is that although humans have undergone several alterations due to natural selection and other evolutionary processes which have brought about changes in their skin colour, eye shape and hair texture, their basic human identity has not been altered. This entails that all humans regardless of their colour or geographical location belong to one human species.

The above synthesis helps us to come to the realization that humanity as a whole is held together by great bonds of unity as opposed to what apparent diversity within the human family might suggest to the naïve mind. Similarly, Dubois observes that “as Darwin himself said, that great as is the physical unlikeness of the various races of men their likenesses are greater, and upon this rests the whole scientific doctrine of human brotherhood.”⁹⁵ Given this, it helps to perceive all diverse human groups as parts of the one human race. This must be premised on the principle

⁹³ Aristotle, 350 B.C.E., *On Generation and Corruption*,

Translated by H. H. Joachim http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/gener_corr.html (accessed March 12, 2017)

⁹⁴ Thomas Aquinas, 1224/6—1274, “Aquinas: Metaphysics,” *In Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* <http://www.iep.utm.edu/aquinas/#H5> (Accessed 12 Marth 2017).

⁹⁵ Burghardt Du Bois, *The Conservation of Races*, 4.

inseparability and unity among humans reveals itself like a positive energy through which all the diverse human groups actively cohere together as parts of one single whole which is characterized by dynamic cultural forces that express themselves through art, beliefs and morality. In every organism or community of existents, there is a unifying force which holds various cells in the organism or different existents respectively thereby helping them to work together for the good of an organism or community. When this central controlling force grows weak through disease or age, the organism grows weaker and it dies, its parts break away and become autonomous. Norris Clarke puts this well when he says “science teaches us that the unity in an atom is held together by a powerful energy, the so called “strong force” so powerful that if broken apart by splitting the atom an enormous amount of energy is released which can be destructive.”¹⁰⁰ Similarly, obliterating the unity in the human community, through racial classifications results in the release of the destructive force of racism. Racial classifications have seriously weakened the bonds of unity in the human community and the obvious consequence has been racial attitudes and the disintegration of the human community as we shall see in the next section.

3.2. The Destructive Effects of Racial Illusions on Humanity

The analysis of the concept of race by Appiah as we have seen exposes the fact that race as a classificatory notion has been intellectually misleading. It destroys us from the intrinsic unity which is embedded in human diversity. The notion of race as it has been propounded is deceptive because it thrives on the notion that the human physical characteristics are more important than the intrinsic unity which runs through all human existents. In other words, race as a notion is based on distorted or misconstrued information. For this reason, it can be termed as an illusion. This is because it misrepresents the truth about humanity. To talk about races is as good as entertaining illusions or deceptive notions. The first consequence of such has been creation of an ideology known as racialism. Racialism is the idea that there are distinct heritable traits which run through all members of a given racial group thereby making it distinct. The problem with this ideology is that it does not respect the world as it is. On the contrary, the ideology of racialism wants the world to operate according to its interests and postulations. The ideology has

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 63.

obliterated human society and annihilated all bonds of unity among humans. The ideology seems to thrive on naïve and rigid racial categories and upholds these at the expense of the intrinsic unity which undergirds human beings. Appiah observes that this ideology operates in similar ways like all racisms which are at the core of the horrific sufferings that humanity has experienced. One of such doctrines is what Appiah terms as extrinsic racism. This ideology makes moral distinctions among different human groups based on the presumed racial essence which is believed to embody moral qualities.¹⁰¹ This doctrine holds that there is a difference in terms of moral worth among members of different racial groups. Therefore, they do not have to be treated in the same way. Appiah clarifies this when he says,

this the belief that all races have distinct moral status quite independent of the moral characteristics entailed by its racial essence just as for example, many assume that the bare fact that they are biologically related to another person---a brother, an aunt, a cousin---gives them a moral interest in the person, so an intrinsic racist hold that the bare fact of being of the same race is a reason for preferring one person to another.¹⁰²

Nonetheless, these have no philosophical or scientific grounding as we have seen. However, these doctrines have a strong grip on people's mind even in the face of evidence to the contrary. Sigmund Freud is right when he points out that "Illusions commend themselves to us because they save us pain and allow us to enjoy pleasure instead. We must therefore accept it without complaint when they sometimes collide with a bit of reality against which they are dashed to pieces."¹⁰³ This brings us to the realization that Illusions and fantasies "are strategies for escape, never engagement, and they are at work whenever we seek to evade truths that are hard for us to bear."¹⁰⁴ Such are upheld by those who benefit from structures of discrimination. For Appiah those who uphold such views suffer from a cognitive incapacity.¹⁰⁵ Similarly, victims of racial illusion suffer from cognitive incapacity. Even in the

¹⁰¹ Appiah, K. A, *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture*, 13.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁰³ Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), *Reflections on War and Death*, <http://www.bartleby.com/282/1.html> (accessed October 25, 2016).

¹⁰⁴ Lamoureux Patricia & Wadell J. Paul. *The Christian Moral life: Faith Discipleship for a Global Society*. (Orbis Books: Maryknoll, 2010), 26.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

face of great evidence and facts that prove the contrary to what is held and upheld by them, they are not ready to let go of their beliefs. For victims of racial illusions, no amount of intellectual, social, cultural development or achievement by people of other so-called “racial groups” would make them admirable and deserving better treatment. From this, it becomes apparent that those who espouse racist attitudes “exhibit a systematically distorted rationality—precisely the kind of systematically distorted rationality that we often recognize in ideologies.”¹⁰⁶ This manifests the deep-seated cognitive incapacity and lack of moral consciousness. Appiah observes that “the refusal of some extrinsic racists to accept evidence against their belief is an instance of widespread phenomenon in human affairs. It is a plain fact to which theories of ideology must address themselves, that our species is prone both morally and intellectually to partiality in judgment.”¹⁰⁷

This highlights for us how powerful illusions can be. Once they get consolidated, it becomes almost impossible to reverse. Illusions can be seen at “work when nations embrace dangerous illusions about their importance and adopt distorted and self-serving views of the rest of the world. Illusions may comfort us in deceptive ways, but they are highly destructive because they impede the growth and transformation that are necessary for life.”¹⁰⁸ Today there is great evidence that the racial categories which were propagated by the 19th century deterministic biology are highly flawed. Moreover, the racial essence on which all racial classifications were grounded does not exist. Yet, it has been extremely hard to overcome racial divides. Appiah points out that for “racists, however intelligent or otherwise well informed often fail to treat evidence against theoretical propositions of extrinsic racism dispassionately”¹⁰⁹

The obvious implication of racial illusion has been the unjustified fear of human diversity. Anyone who looks different from what one is customarily used to is perceived with suspicion. This has led to escalated levels of attitudes of racism, discriminations and stereotypes. As far as Lawrence Blum is concerned, racism can be described as inferiorization or belittling of a certain group of people based on biological inferiority. Inferiorization is an act of forcing a stereotype or

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Lamoureux Patricia & Wadell J. Paul. *The Christian Moral life: Faith Discipleship for a Global Society*, 26.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

stigma to instill sense inferior identity on a group of people. The victims of such are often forced to adopt a sense of inferiority that leads to the diminishment of their confidence and ability. This eventually leads to the perpetuation of personal and collective predicaments.¹¹⁰ Racism can also be described as hatred or hostility towards a certain group whose physical traits make them appear different from those known by the one being hostile. Racism has often been described as a deep seated prejudice or stereotype. It is based on the notion that a certain racial group is superior over another. This becomes manifest when a certain racial group gets more privileges than others based on their perceptible physical characteristics. This was experienced in South Africa during the apartheid regime where power was used as a means to discriminate against the people that were perceived to be inferior so as to safe guard the privileges for the apartheid regime. In this sense, racism can be described as discrimination which is fueled by racial prejudices. It is often aimed at systematically oppressing, and even exterminating other groups of people. It may manifest itself through a group of people which comes together to propagate an agenda of oppression against another as was the case during the genocide in Rwanda. This entails that racism pervades color, tribal economical and political aspects.

Racism also manifests itself through xenophobic attitudes. Xenophobia entails the fear and non-welcoming attitudes and hatred for people of a foreign nationality or people who belong to a different ethnic group. This was seen in South Africa in 2008 and 2015 when many foreign nationals were killed with thousand displaced from various residential areas. All these bring to the surface the fact that racial illusions have had a serious impact on human society. They have seriously ravaged the human family to the core thereby destroying the intrinsic unity which holds humanity together. Having realized how illusive and divisive the notion of race is, it is indispensable at this juncture to rediscover the truth about humanity which has been distorted by the illusions of race. The truth is that humanity is one and that through culture we can obtain a comprehensive picture of humanity. Hence, it is time to do away with vacuous racial classifications so as to have a fresh look at humanity through the lenses of culture.

¹¹⁰ Lawrence Blum, *I'm not a Racist: A Moral Quandary of Race*, <http://www.psychpage.com/learning/library/brblum.html> (accessed, October 14, 2016).

3.3. Conclusion

This chapter has been an attempt at exploring the unity that undergirds diverse humanity. This was envisaged by revisiting the basic principles of the *one and the many* as postulated by Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas. The chapter has clearly brought to the surface the fact that despite the distinct physical characteristics, all human groups belong to one human species. Furthermore, this chapter has highlighted the extent to which racial classifications have fueled the disintegration of the human family. The next chapter will seek to propose a shift from racial classifications to culture.

CHAPTER FOUR

HUMAN CULTURE: TOWARDS REVERSING RACIAL ILLUSIONS

4.0. Introduction

In this chapter, I will propose culture as better classificatory tool. The chapter proposes a paradigm shift from deceptive and static racial categories to dynamic cultural categories. The chapter is divided into two parts. The first part explores culture and its various dynamic aspects. It will further expose the various definitions of culture and their rich symbols and how these can help us to come to a better comprehension of humanity. The second part proposes culture as the lens through which the human story can be comprehended.

4.1. Culture and the Human Identity

Discussion the illusions of race, Kwame Appiah makes the point that the “talk of race distresses those of us who take culture seriously. For where race works in place where gross differences of morphology are corrected with subtle difference of temperament, belief and intention it works as an attempt as metonym for culture and it does so only at a price of biologizing what is culture, ideology.”¹¹¹ As he sees things, “what exists out there in world are communities of meaning, shading variously into each other in the rich structure of the social world.”¹¹² In this section I will build on Appiah’s view as I propose a transition from race to culture. To begin, it is vital to have a fresh look at what culture is. When we consider human history, we would realize that culture has been defined in various ways by cultural anthropologists. This in itself reveals that culture is a complex and dynamic component of human existence. Culture pervades various aspects of humanity because it is at the core of what it means to be human. In other words, human existence can only be comprehended through culture. As we shall see, to be human is to belong to a culture. There is no human person who is devoid of culture. Each person in some clear sense

¹¹¹ Ibid., 45.

¹¹² Ibid., 45.

belongs to one or more cultures. It is for this reason that humanity is by and large conditioned by culture. Similarly, culturalism seems to drive at the same point by emphasizing “the idea that individuals are determined by their culture, that these cultures form closed, organic wholes, and that the individual is unable to leave his or her own culture but rather can only realize him or herself within it.”¹¹³ Culturalism as a philosophical concept was developed in 1919 by the Polish-American philosopher and sociologist, Florian Znaniecki in a bid to stress the significance of cultural forces in human development. This framework provides us with tools that can be used to propose a new paradigm that will replace racial classifications. It brings to the surface the fact that culture plays a central role in the development of humanity unlike the vacuous racial classifications. It raises our consciousness to the fact that culture influences an individual’s outlook on life and conditions their relationships with others in society. “Culture affects the way people experience and perceive; the way people understand and make things intelligible and the way people judge and evaluate as they search for the good about things.”¹¹⁴ Nonetheless, the claim by Culturalism that “an individual is unable to leave his or her own culture, but rather can only realize him or herself within it,” is questionable. Today, interculturality plays a pivotal role in the development of humanity. The cultural barriers are slowly melting away. Perceiving humanity from this viewpoint helps us to rise above our apparent differences so as to embrace that which unites us. This will be further explicated in the last chapter when I explore interculturality as the reality of postmodern humanity. For now, it is indispensable to consider the various ways through which culture has been explicated throughout history. For Edward Burnet Taylor, culture entails “that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.”¹¹⁵ Ronald Jackson, another anthropologist, defines culture as “historical transmitted

¹¹³ Mads Jakob & Annie Aarup Jensen, Eds., *Learning and Teaching Culture: Negotiating the Context*, <https://www.sensepublishers.com/media/1756-teaching-and-learning-culture.pdf> (accessed September 12, 2016)

¹¹⁴ Stuart Bate, *Human Life is Cultural: Introducing Anthropology*, (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2002), 24.

¹¹⁵ Spencer-Oatey, H. “What is culture? A compilation of quotations.” *GlobalPAD Core Concepts*. Available at *GlobalPAD Open House* (2012), <http://go.warwick.ac.uk/globalpadintercultural> (Accessed September 9th, 2016).

pattern of meaning embodied in symbols by means of which men and women communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about, and attitude to life.”¹¹⁶

When we closely look at these definitions, we begin to see that culture is complex and it is at the core of human existence. If you take away culture from humanity you rob humanity of its soul. Here it is very important to take note of the word “acquired” which is part of the definition of culture by Taylor. This entails that culture is not something which is innate, but it is something that human pick up through interaction with the environment and other people. Culture like knowledge is acquired through experience and interaction. In other words, it is learned and not given as in the case of racial classifications. It does not depend of common blood or heredity. Racism as a culture is also learned, it is not something that is innate. This brings to the surface that culture is as a result of social learning which in fact is facilitated by the fact that a human person is a social animal. The social capacity is what makes us capable of breaking boundaries which divide human society. When we consider the definition of culture by Taylor we notice the use of the phrase, “that complex whole.” This phrase brings to the surface the intricate aspects of culture. Here, we realize that the definition lists a number of social behaviors which express the deepest human longings and aspirations such as art, religion, morals, customs and laws. Each of these is, in some sense, indispensable to human life and they speak about how humans should interact with each other as well as with the divine.

Similarly, the definition by Ronald Jackson offers us more insights into culture as it introduces us to the pattern of meaning which is expressed through symbols by which humans communicate. Here the term symbol is worth explicating further. A symbol entails a “literary device that contains several layers of meaning, often concealed at first sight, and is representative of several other aspects, concepts or traits than those that are visible in the literal translation alone.”¹¹⁷ It is through these symbols that patterns of cultural meaning are transmitted down the ages. This is what makes symbols very important in culture. Unlike vacuous racial classifications, which never go beyond the perceivable human traits, culture is rich meaning and

¹¹⁶ Ronald Jackson, *The Negotiation of Cultural Identity: Perceptions of Europeans And African and African Americans* (Westport, Ct06881, Praeger Publishers, 1999), 33.

¹¹⁷ *Literary Device*. <http://literary-devices.com/content/symbol> (accessed October 7, 2016).

gives proper insights into diverse humanity. These different definitions attest to the fact that culture is complex and that it is an essentially contested notion and that there is no consensus among scholars with regards to definition of culture. As Appiah had observed, without cultural information being given about a particular person from any part of the world, it would be practically impossible to presuppose much about them. This entails that if you want to have a full and comprehensive picture of humanity; culture is the best aspect of humanity to envisage. Culture is directed at living life in a group in relation to the environment. While the possession of culture might be common to all humans, each culture is often different from the other. Each culture, in a unique sense, functions in its own way in relation to the environment and the divine.

Joseph Ratzinger, talking about faith and the challenge of cultures, defines culture as “the historically developed common form of expression of the insight and values which characterize the life of the community.”¹¹⁸ Culture deals with knowledge and values. This entails that culture is a stride towards understanding human beings and their world of experience and how they make sense of their place in it. It has to be noted that the attempt to understand human beings and their existence in the world is not in a theoretical sense. This is because it is directed at comprehending the fundamental interests of human existence. Thus culture brings to our consciousness what it fundamentally entails to be human and how humanity is to take its proper place in the world so as to respond to its demand and at the same time come to the full realization of who one is in their quest for true happiness and success. Somehow, our approach to culture has to be perceived in terms of relationships given that human beings are social by nature. It is through social relationships that one comes to a better understanding of the world and themselves. This is because one’s full realization and comprehension of who they are as a person can only be realized through the bipolar structure of consciousness; that is, coming to know the self through a real encounter with world of our experience. In this quest, a human person only succeeds with others. “The question of right knowledge is thus also a question about the right

¹¹⁸ Joseph Ratzinger, Christ, Faith and the Challenge of Culture
<https://www.ewtn.com/library/CURIA/RATZHONG.HTM> (accessed September 24, 2016).

formation of the community. The community for its part is the prerequisite for individual fulfillment.”¹¹⁹

Ratzinger observes that “in culture, we are dealing with an understanding which is knowledge, which gives rise to praxis, that is to say, we are dealing knowledge which encompasses the indispensable dimension of values or morals.”¹²⁰ For this reason, culture deals with real questions about human life and their destiny. It is an avenue of the ultimate concerns of human life, and therefore the aspect of the Divine is always at play. This is because the quest for comprehending the world can never avoid the ultimate source of reality and its place in the cultural realm. Culture in the classical sense, thus, includes transcending the visible and apparent to ultimate causes. Culture at its core means an opening up to metaphysical realities. In a bid to understand these metaphysical realities, new symbols, songs and other cultural realities are formed. In the same manner, the individual person in this culture tends to go beyond themselves and finds him/herself engulfed in a larger society whose knowledge they can buy into and develop. From this, it becomes apparent that culture is always in linked to a social human subject who appropriates their experience of life in culture and channels it towards their own development. In this sense, the concerned subject “conserves and develops insights which exceed the capacity of the individual insights which can be termed pre-rational and super-rational.”¹²¹ Seen from this viewpoint, culture will appeal to the rationale and wisdom of the ancient world which is grounded in primordial realities and traditions.

Ratzinger further notes that when cultures fail to bring the super-rational heritage into a convincing connection to new critical knowledge, a crisis arises. When this happens inherited truths become questionable and what was once held as the truth loses its power and other forms

¹¹⁹ Joseph Ratzinger, *Christ, Faith and the Challenge of Culture*
<https://www.ewtn.com/library/CURIA/RATZHONG.HTM> (accessed September 24, 2016).

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

of truth are sought.¹²² In this way, culture evolves and it renews itself which is not the case with static and rigid racial classification as propounded by the 19th century biologists. This is what brings us to the realization that culture can offer us a new perspective which can bring us to a better comprehension of humanity. The above explorations give us enough tools to propose a shift from racial classifications to culture so as to counter racial prejudices and racial illusions. It is worth noting that race says nothing about humanity apart from the morphological traits by which we customarily classify people. On the other hand, culture says it all and furnishes us with vital insights into humanity which if appropriated can lead to the obliteration of racial classifications.

4.2. Comprehending the Story of Humanity through Culture

The historical survey and the philosophical explorations have revealed that human existence is characterized by racial classifications. Consequently, the human society has been fragmented and riddled with racial attitudes and discrimination. Culture as a significant aspect of human life has been overshadowed by racial classifications. However, a careful rereading of history has revealed that racial classifications are illusory and hence not worth upholding. On the other hand, diverse human cultures have rich symbols which manifest the deepest aspirations of human beings and their attitudes towards one another and the environment. Culture is a significant gift through which the story of humanity can be fully comprehended.

To propose a shift from racial categories to culture, we have keep in mind the basic nature of concepts and how they are applied. Common sense teaches us that a concept is a way of classifying something in our thinking. For instance we have concepts of friendship and concepts of danger. A singular concept is a classification that brings the mind to a single entity; for instance a cat is sitting on a chair in class. However, for such a statement to be true and useful, it needs to have a target. The same applies to concepts such as race and culture. If these are to be true and useful, they need to have targets. From our explorations, it has become clear that the concept of race has no ontological basis, therefore it has no target. It is a vacuous concept and cannot be used as a marker of distinctions among human groups. On other hand, culture entails

¹²² Ibid.

“that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.”¹²³ This entails that the concept of culture has a target. Given this, it is important to note that a concept that has a target serves as a better description and classificatory tool with regards to human groups. In this case, the notion of culture is a better classificatory concept than race. Therefore, the notion of culture should be employed when referring to diverse human groups.

The conclusion above is vindicated by the very essence of concepts in communication. We develop concepts to comprehend and to picture reality. Concepts are means through which we have to come to know the truth about the world and ourselves. This entails that concepts are very significant to human existence. Without concepts we may not be able to make sense of reality or communicate what we know about reality. If concepts are to be adequate to capture and communicate information about reality, they have to be carefully formed. Very much do we understand the fact that reality is always beyond what we can capture with our limited concepts. Nonetheless, in speaking about reality, we have to use concepts that best picture the world for us to get closer to the truth. Our explorations reveal that the concept of race is nothing else but an illusion. It does not give us the full picture about humanity save for a few perceivable traits which allow us to distinguish human beings. It is for this reason that a move from this concept is cardinal if we are to avoid being deluded from the truth. The concept of culture in this case serves as a replacement for the vacuous concept of race which has led to the fragmentation of the human society. Culture has a lot to contribute to the project of realizing a comprehensive picture of humanity. Unlike the vacuous static racial classifications, culture is complex and it is always dynamic. Classifications based on culture do not confine us. Being social by nature, it is possible for a human person to oscillate between cultures. Take for instance; a Chinese baby who is adopted by a black Zulu speaking family. It is quite possible that that adopted child will become completely immersed in the Zulu culture and he would act and talk like everyone in the Zulu culture. If you are to take him/her back to china, it might be very hard for him to fit into the Chinese culture despite him/her being born of Chinese parents. It may take years for that child to adapt to the Chinese cultural reality. Of course his or her physical appearance will suggest that

¹²³ Spencer-Oatey, H. What is culture? A compilation of quotations. *GlobalPAD Core Concepts*. Available at *GlobalPAD Open House* (2012), at: <http://go.warwick.ac.uk/globalpadintercultural> (Accessed September 9th, 2016).

he is Chinese. Nonetheless, that does not tell you much about him/her unless cultural information is sought. This simply highlights how powerful and influential culture can be.

Today, through interculturality, cultural diffusion and acculturation, there is an exchange of ideas between cultures. This promotes unity and progress among people. This entails that through developing a keen interest in values that are embedded in the myriads of cultures around the globe will slowly but surely draw us away from racial classifications which have nothing to say about humanity. Dubois suggests that, where we speak of race we should instead speak of civilization. Wrapping up this endeavor I propose that instead of speaking about different human groups in terms of races or civilizations, we should be speaking of cultures. Unlike in the vacuous concept of race, in the concept culture is contained the historically transmitted patterns of meanings which is encoded in the language of symbols. Through these, men and women communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about the world and life in general. This is what makes culture such a significant aspect of human life and hence worth exploring. The more culture and its dynamism is emphasized the more the notion of race will be erased from the picture.

4.3. Conclusion

This chapter has been an attempt at proposing a paradigm shift from racial classifications to culture. The chapter first highlighted the role of culture in human development. Thereafter, it explored culture as a lens through which a comprehensive picture of humanity can be achieved. Through this exploration, it has become apparent that culture speaks volumes about humanity and their outlook on life. Thus culture brings to our consciousness what it fundamentally entails to be human. It teaches humanity how to take its proper place in the world so as to respond to its demands. Culture helps one come to the full realization of their identity in their quest for true happiness and success. If we are to have a holistic view of humanity, culture would be an ideal source. Having established this, let us now envisage interculturality as the reality of postmodern humanity.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERCULTURALITY: THE REALITY OF POSTMODERN HUMANITY

5.0. Introduction

This concluding chapter will be solely dedicated to the role of interculturality in human development. Interculturality is the reality which is at the core of postmodern humanity. Interculturality expresses the dynamic interaction which is a characteristic of diverse human cultures. Through interculturality, we are faced with the real truth about humanity. The truth is that humanity is one. What divides humanity is not as deep as what unites it.

5.1. Interculturality and Human Development

Interculturality can be construed as the fusing or meeting of cultures around the global. The meeting of cultures given the presence of cultural diffusion and acculturation is something to philosophically embrace and to envisage. This is because it has serious implications for the destiny of humanity. What we have at the present moment in history are not isolated cultures, but cultures within cultures. At this time in history, we have to come to the realization that we live in a global world. The distance between cultures and countries has been reduced. The boundaries between cultures which were once so much respected and safe-guarded are slowly melting away. The rate at which information is being passed on from one place to the next has become faster than ever. The barriers that divided human society are slowly being erased. Civilizations and technological developments are being shared. This in itself has its own challenges. Be that it may, it raises our consciousness to the fact that racial divisions are no longer of any significance. Additionally, it brings home the fact that what divides human society is not as great as that which unites it. This entails that “we do not become full human agents and define our identity in isolation from others; rather, we define our identity always in dialogue with others...”¹²⁴ This entails that we have to begin to perceive ourselves as important parts of “the whole.” Each has a role to play in the project of the realization and development of the human

¹²⁴ Ibid.

identity. This happens on the real platform of cultural encounters where the exchange of ideas and civilizations plays a significant part.

An attempt to comprehend different human groups and how their cultures interact has seen also the rise of the idea of multiculturalism in contemporary political philosophy which deals with the challenges posed by cultural and religious diversity. Proponents of “multiculturalism reject the ideal of the “melting pot” in which members of minority groups are expected to assimilate into the dominant culture in favor of an ideal in which they can maintain their distinctive collective identities and practices.”¹²⁵ This entails the meeting of cultures must not bring about the annihilation of cultural identity, but it is a cause that allows for openness to the reception and giving of cultural insights. In this way, it allows for cultural introspection which enhances self criticism and self correction among cultures. Similarly, Joseph Ratzinger states that as

“culture unfolds, it encounters new realities and new insights, culture develops not sealed off, culture stands in the dynamic stream of time, which contains a confluence of currents moving toward unity. A culture’s historicity means its ability to progress, and this depends on its ability to be open and to allow transformation through encounter.”¹²⁶

When something within society changes or comes to the fore, culture also is affected. This entails that culture is always historical. As culture unfolds, it encounters new realities and new insights thereby bringing about its development. This viewpoint brings to the surface the fact that culture is always dynamic and never static. Unlike the ancient paradigms like racial categories which depicted the universe and other realities as being static and unchangeable, culture always moves beyond its confinements and transcends human postulation as it is brought to rebirth daily. When we consider racial categories, we realize that they never evolve, they are static. However, this is not the case with dynamic culture. “Yet we have to bear in mind that even the given dynamic state of culture never tells the whole story, because the cosmically directed

¹²⁵ Song, Sarah, “Multiculturalism”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2016/entries/multiculturalism/> (accessed September 24, 2016).

Joseph Ratzinger, *Christ, Faith and the Challenge of Cultures*, <https://www.ewtn.com/library/CURIA/RATZHONG.HTM> (accessed September 24, 2016).

cultures point to death and rebirth, to being human as the way.”¹²⁷ Culture as dynamic is ruled by the principle of openness to renewal and rebirth. The above dynamic movement of culture gives as the ability to understand how the cultures of this world are able to meet and intermingle bringing about the birth of a new cultural reality. Through such encounters, every culture comes to deepen and refine its perspectives, insights and value judgment. Such encounters and assimilation of cultural values by and large can lead to cultural development and the eradication of all the barriers that divide the human race and blind it from the truth about humanity. When we consider human history, we realize that there is always fear around losing cultural values through the interaction and intermingling with other cultures. This is what has led to the perpetuation of racial categories. Be that as it may, we need realize that, what we perceive as cultural deaths through the loss of certain cultural practices and value might actually be a gain. Interaction with peoples of other cultures sheds more light on our cultural dark spots thereby bringing about cultural evolution and transformation.

For this reason, at this time and age we need to be speaking of interculturality or the meeting of cultures and not individual cultures. We live in a globe world where the advancement in technology is the order of the day. Way back cultural exchange and culture diffusion was made possible through migrations of people. The Bantu migration for instance brought about lots of cultural exchange which eventually led to the creation of new cultural realities. With the dawn of new civilization, the reality of interculturality can never be doubted. This has brought about profound cultural exchange and development both at local and international levels. In this way we can also talk about the possibility and reality of the universal culture which is has become so much of the reality today. There is no culture that is left out.

Today we all belong to one universal culture. This universal culture by and large is aimed at the unification of humanity which has been fragmented by vacuous racial categories. In other words, through interculturality we are slowly regaining our original unity which was lost through evolutionary factors and racial classifications. The meeting of all cultures teaches us that despite the difference in terms of history and social constructs, human beings are one. The fundamental

¹²⁷ Ibid.

openness of each culture to the reciprocal exchange of values is in itself a clear sign of that unity which exists in diverse humanity. As the saying goes, “together we are stronger, but divided we fall.” No one can grasp the complete truth about reality and humanity. However, each one in a special contributes to the realization of a comprehensive picture of humanity. Dubois puts this well though he speaks in terms of racial categories when he says, “each race tries to develop a civilization or its particular message, its particular ideal, which shall help guide the world nearer and nearer that perfection of human life for which we all long, that far off Divine event.”¹²⁸ The truth of this statement can never be doubted. This entails that “the myriads cultural insights form and build a kind of mosaic displaying their complementarity and interrelatedness, in order to be whole, everybody needs each other.”¹²⁹ Humanity can only achieve wholeness only in the reciprocity of all the great cultural achievements. This unity and complementarity among the cultures of the world becomes a force to reckon with and can overcome overwhelming obstacles when it is channeled into practical action and concerted effort. Beyond any doubt it has become apparent that there is unity among humans, but there are also negative forces such as racial categories within cultures which work against unity and promote cultural isolation thereby hindering the exchange of cultural ideas and knowledge. This in turn cripples the unfolding of the truth about humanity and the world at large. Be that as it may, when these negative forces are analyzed seriously they get exposed as mere illusions with no ontological underpinnings whatsoever.

¹²⁸ Burghardt Du Bois, *The conservation of Races*, (Washington, D. C. The Academy. 1897), 10.

¹²⁹ Joseph Ratzinger, “*Christ, Faith and the Challenge of Cultures.*”

CONCLUSION

This has been an attempt at proposing a paradigm shift from racial classifications to culture. The endeavor has been expedited through a critical analysis of the development of the concept of race and the various contending philosophical views on the subject under investigation. Through this analysis, it has become clear that the criteria for racial categories are common ancestry, common geographical location, common blood and perceptible physical traits. These, however, are not deep enough to vindicate the concept of race. These criteria do not offer us sufficient reasons to categorize humanity into races. In other words, the notion of race has no ontological basis. It does not tell us much about humanity except for a few perceptible physical traits. For this reason, I proposed a paradigm shift from racial categories to culture. Culture has reach symbols and other practices which speak volumes about human life and how human beings interact with each other and the environment. A continuous and firm emphasis on this human aspect will slowly but surely obliterate racial categories. Finally, I proposed that interculturality as a postmodern reality is worth exploring. We live in a global world in which the barriers that divide humanity are slowly melting way. Cultures have become fused together thereby highlighting to us that what divides humanity is not as deep as that which unites it.

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