

A Philosophical Critique: Is Race Real?

Rev Wadigala Samitharathana Thero

School of History, Philosophy and Culture, Oxford Brookes University, United Kingdom

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ABSTRACT

Race has been a prominent discourse in the contemporary world and academic discipline since the last few decades as it determines a variety of moral problems. In response to this discussion, race tends to emphasise a couple of philosophical aspects in favour of concepts and categories. The concept of race forms a debate in reality whilst racial taxonomy gives a physical system of division such as black, white, Asian, Native American, and so forth. Correspondingly, there have been remarkable problematic issues with regards to biological realism, antirealism or eliminativism alongside social constructivism. In addition, the particular term, race, predominantly embodies a pair of notions: it is a biological position, demarcated by observable physical characteristics in terms of certain ancestry and geographical territory - it is a historical moral perspective, which is construed by ancient societies. Therefore, by employing qualitative mode of enquiry, I attempt this research to defend the thesis that race is not real, and it could be an upshot of social constructivism. Then, I look forward to illuminating a few substantial findings: the central claims of antirealism or eliminativism, a critique of social constructivism along with a brief analysis of political and cultural constructionism. Notwithstanding these limited outcomes, this research suggests that further studies need to be carried out in order to explore the unreal nature of race.

1. Introduction

In recent years, philosophical discussion of race has been emerged as a pivotal role in human moral behaviour; it, presumably, facilitates a vast array of categories with regards to psychological and physiological traits of social beings (Zack, 2018). Accordingly, this sort of controversial theme certainly comes with biological realism, antirealism, as well as social constructivism. In addition, the technical term, 'race' effectively refers to biological essence along with psychic characteristics (Hasalanger, 2012, p. 15; Holmes, 2018, pp. 4-5). Hence, the debate about race has gained fresh prominence with many argue that race has a real substance of human life. Nevertheless, the central thesis of this research: race is not real, and it appears to be a circumstance of social constructivism. Then, relevant findings are grounded by qualitative research methodology; in fact, this study provides new insights into antirealistic view on racism, too. The remaining content of this paper proceeds as follows: firstly, I will

*Corresponding author. E-mail address: samitharathana23@gmail.com

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explain the central claims of antirealism or eliminativism, afterwards, will provide a critique of social constructivism along with a brief analysis of political and cultural constructionism.

2. Methodology

Although a variety of ways have been proposed to determine the concept of race as not a realistic notion, it has been used the mode of case-study throughout this research; indeed, this method offers an effective way of approach by means of theoretical and pragmatic prospective. Then, in order to address the following rationale, secondary sources such as peer-reviewed journal articles, electronic and paperback books, biographies, digital and internet media, and reliable websites were utilised in terms of analysing and synthesising. The first stage involved reading the sources to discover common themes of the above resources; then, the second step was used to scrutinise and evaluate the findings. The final stage of the study was to conclude the most significant findings with a further recommendation.

3. Findings and Discussion

3.1. The Central Claims of Antirealism or Eliminativism

Preliminary, this view advocates that racial categories cannot be real because there are no real distinctive features towards the kinship of humanity. This position goes to further argue that racial concepts are unable to refer to real human beings as it would necessarily associate with only physical/objective traits, which are biologically inherited (Zack, 2018). For instance, it often seeks for facial features, skin colour, hair texture, eye, etc. (Zack, 2018). Hence, this seems that antirealism is intended to eliminate the taxonomical view on race whilst flourishing race as a mere concept of human beings. Consequently, the ideology does not facilitate any physical morphology or geography for humans like whites, blacks, Asians, Native Americans, and so forth (Hasalanger, 2012); in fact, there are no important source to verify personal identity, whereas social discrimination, violence, injustice, and prejudice. Thus, it becomes clear that owing to biological fallacy, antirealism tends to relate with all human beings without any categorical species.

Likewise, there is a constant difference between the nature of race and ethnicity in respect to realism. The term race is likely manifested as a group of competent people by means of history, anthropology, linguistics, Christian theology, biology, and geography (Glasgow, 2019). Nevertheless, naturally and theoretically, it does not prove that there is such a vast array of racial taxonomies, but ample amounts of concepts; ideologies; thoughts. On the other hand, 'ethnicity' could intimately concern a person's ancestral relation, superficial biological appearance, geographical region, as well as systematic subordination or privilege (Hasalanger, 2012). Additionally, it is widely believed that this schematic account provides social hierarchy and grouping people as regards ethnic diversity. For these reasons, it becomes evident that race is not familiar with the current social discrimination whereas ethnicity will probably refer to such a categorical recognition.

Furthermore, eliminativism exclusively differs from biological realism and psychological essentialism in response to reality. As Spencer (2019) states, biological realism encourages to differentiate human beings as a substantial epigenetic process and genetic sequence, for example, DNA and RNA molecules. Similarly, in accordance with folk perspective, it has also been contended that, every organism should have a hidden or obscure essence; in fact, this is, apparently, a psychological domain encircled a collection of hidden properties, which are used to constitute it, for instance, aardvarkness and handedness. In contrast, eliminativism is,

arguably, demonstrated that it is unable to acknowledge genetic variation in observable characteristics as real because the human race seems to be a constructive property of human conceptualisation as well as imaginative thoughts (Glasgow, 2019). According to Appiah and Gutman (1996), ideational meaning of race motivates a bunch of rules for social manifestation and criterial beliefs about biological entities, which are not real; indeed, it is, seemingly, certainly different from realistic stance of the above in terms of semantic meaning of race and its philosophical context. Thus, it is, abundantly, clear that antirealism strives to determine race is not a real entity, so it is a hypothetical assumption regarding diversity of human beings.

3.2. A Critique of Social Constructivism

Social constructivism is a significant rebuttal argument instead of biological realism or idealism as it attempts to clarify that race is a dynamic upshot of social movement (Sveinsdóttir, 2015). In general, social constructionism states that racial categories are not a physiological essence, but a substantial product of social institutions, practices, conventions along with shared mental states (Ásta, 2018). For example, it has commonly been assumed that the category of university students and small groups of hunter gatherers do not intend to be objective like aardvarks. Nonetheless, existence of such categories constantly depends on the human mind and engagement in a complex network of the above. Hence, this, persistently, refers to metaphysical moderation, scientific explanation, and the global antirealistic position as concerns race (Mallon, 2016; Taylor, 2013). Accordingly, humans' common appearance (facial features, skin colour, hair texture, etc.) can simply reflect their common ancestry, which relates to a particular geographical territory, for example, black people and their antecedents, who lived in Sub-Saharan Africa. For the social constructionists, the core principle is that numerous ancestry groups have different identical and social significance, whereas they cannot be considered as natural characteristics in human beings (Hasalanger, 2012). It, therefore, enables us to realise that social constructivism could operate a vital role against biological realism; then, race could have a vigorous impact on social movement.

In addition, the causal process of social constructivism tends to play a noteworthy task with reference to a wide range of social representation. Correspondingly, there are a few essential components, which contribute to the product of race in the social domain: impersonal explanation (mechanistic forms of expression) and personal explanation (rational forms of expression) (Mallon, 2016). Moreover, impersonal matter constantly determines a class of constituents such as cultures, institutions, as well as conventions. On the contrary, for personal matters, it is mainly demonstrated by human consciousness; in fact, this seems to accommodate a conceptual and empirical substance of race (Mallon, 2016); hence, this provocative claim also suggests a psychological extent of racial classification. It could, thereby, presume that race precisely associates with a wide variety of social outcomes rather than biological inheritance.

In spite of this, epistemic and metaphysical aspects of social constructivism, debatably, refer to a pivotal stance of the thesis. Consequently, categorical ideas and conceptions certainly derive from human knowledge and belief, which are supposed to be an epistemological approach to racial recognition (Sveinsdóttir, 2015). Likewise, typical construction and evaluation of the racial ideas dramatically come with metaphysical implication (Sveinsdóttir, 2015). Thus, the prominent role of epistemic reasons indicates dynamic enhancement of social institutions and cultural practices - similarly, metaphysical facets also attempt to engage in social conventions along with dominant ideologies and attitudes by means of racial taxonomies. For these reasons, in brief, it becomes obvious that social constructivism has instantly connected with classification of race rather than natural comprehension.

3.3. A Brief Analysis of Political Constructionism

On the ground of social constructivism, there is a wide prospect of political factors regarding the unrealistic nature of race. According to Taylor (2013), this further declares that political circumstances have been affected global oppression, exclusion, exploitation, as well as genocide as a historical tragedy. However, it is evident that these sorts of desperations have occurred after the advent of European imperialism in the late 15th century. Owing to the European invaders (British, French, Spanish, Portuguese, German, Dutch, and Belgian), there have arisen a number of vulnerable impacts such as social heritage of slavery, imposition of alien cultural practices, seizure of land and possessions, as well as unjust power hierarchy (Du Bois, 1975 cited in Appiah and Gutman 1996). Hence, it is widely believed that plenty of people were exploited and downgraded, afterwards, occupied as privileged victims due to this historical moment; in fact, there seems to be a political and legal testimony, which is debatable in terms of race (Haslanger, 2019). Then, it is crystal clear that political factors and European imperialism are succinctly correlated with an influential reason for racial identity, which is not perfectly natural.

Moreover, in the case of political constructivism, Black Lives Matter movement is a significant fact with respect to racial discrimination. In fact, as a tragic outcome of European invasion or imperialism, a multitude of black people were suffered, harassed, and excluded from the public facilities - they were also characterised by subordination. By contrast, white people lived a privileged life and experienced many comfortable household lives. This has commonly been assumed that the product of political factors is probably relative with social institutions, conventions, practices alongside leading ideologies, too. In addition to that, perhaps, the political domain might have provided an intentional physical and social environment, which is deliberately supported to differentiate human biological traits (Ásta, 2018). In short, the realm of socio-political view goes without further saying that unequal power relations or power imbalance between a species of ancestry groups could represent a number of social colours towards the social discrimination, but not ultimate reality in race.

Furthermore, Haslanger 's (2019) substantive statement of political constructionism appears to be a crucial and transformative argument in respect of race. In fact, it is thought that historical diversity of human beings has been transformed to racial classification due to the socio-political stream (Haslanger, 2012). In accordance with Haslanger's (2019) analysis, there are, notably, three fundamental images in terms of subordination and privilege:

1. People, who have specific biological features - adequate evidence of ancestral relations with particular geographical region
2. People, who belonging to a certain context of biological ideology - occupying a different sort of social positions such as privilege or subordinate
3. People, who satisfying and playing a particular role in the extent of some dimension like systematic subordination or privilege

Therefore, many scholars hold the view that racial categories cease to be real because power imbalance or hierarchy has been caused to establish such distinct ancestry groups as contingent features of human lives. In brief, owing to the political movement, racial taxonomies cannot be perceived as real entities, whereas they are a substantial result of European imperialism.

3.4. A Brief Analysis of Cultural Constructionism

In response to social constructivism, there is another essential facet as cultural constructionism; in fact, this intends to demonstrate that socio-cultural transformation has been an intensive reason to arise racial categories rather than socio-political view (Jeffers, 2019). For cultural

constructivists, there are a few entailments in favour of race and culture such as explicit advancement of human civilisation and pursuit of various ideologies, beliefs, as well as knowledge (Du Bois, 1945 cited in Jeffers, 2019). Additionally, this notion could extend to referring to a worthwhile form of life along with dynamic social changes. Accordingly, the form of human life, which is apparent as a distinctive way of life is 'culture' (Du Bois, 1945 cited in Jeffers, 2019, p. 50); then, the following definition of culture is, initially, associated with a variety of socio-historical and etymological meanings: collection of concepts, beliefs, practices, norms, and behavioural acts. Also, as Taylor (2013) explores, cultural theory of race is unlikely an alternative way of social constructivism, so it enables to emphasise a wide range of social groups constituted by religion, education, sport, living arrangements, political organisation, and so forth. Hence, it appears that cultural aspects of race tend to show a vast majority of social embodiments as so-called racial categories.

Another eminent doctrine of cultural constructivism is the impact of sustainable globalisation alongside migration. With regards to racial taxonomies, human cultural characteristics are being rapidly changed due to the inevitable circumstances of globalisation (Milles, 1998 cited in Jeffers, 2019). For instance, nowadays, it is highly increasing world consumerism, the expansion of the popularity of football, as well as Western pop music. Similarly, a number of different migrating people have also begun to develop their shared cultural inheritance and importance in respect of racial inequality and power imbalance (Milles, 1998 cited in Jeffers, 2019). For example, today, it is broadly thought that many ancestry groups living in London, New York have mutually individuated and found plenty of deep commonalities of cultural divergence. For all these reasons, human culture is being converted to a multicultural domain; then, multiculturalism of race has no room for assuming race as a natural phenomenon or absolute reality.

4. Conclusion

In general, thus far, I have argued that race is not real, and it could be a dynamic upshot of social constructionism. Correspondingly, I have fundamentally put forward multiple reasoned arguments to defend the thesis such as the central claims of antirealism, substantial contrast between race and ethnicity, disapproval of biological realism together with psychological essentialism, essential doctrine of social constructivism: political and cultural constructionism. Therefore, in brief, it seems that race has no natural importance and emerged as a conceptual consequence of socio-cultural and political movements. Nevertheless, in spite of these compelling ideas, there are several historical implications, which are still problematic and debatable by means of race, ethnicity, European imperialism, as well as historical inequality; hence, there are a number of significant investigations, which need to be made.

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