

ON THE SOPHISTRY OF RACISM

Racism is today's strongest example of sophistry. The issues which surround racism are important and affect all who are subject to it; however, for different reasons than convention dictates.

Sophistry is an ancient Greek art of making an argument, or refutation, appear true. It is, in short, the art of lying. Either the conclusion to sophistical premisses is false or the premisses themselves are false.

Let us define racism. General opinion defines racism as discrimination against another race. That race is often argued to be 'black people'. But what is the true etymological meaning of racism?

By discrimination, general opinion defines this as prejudice. And it is true to say prejudice is an irrational (that is, contrary to the natural law) preconception of an object. However, discrimination is a common activity of all men. We discriminate between two numbers: for instance one and two. We discriminate between plant and animal: for instance, an oak tree and a bear. We discriminate between persons: for instance, an Englishman and a Frenchman. And so discrimination is the categorisation of objects with different essential or material features.

By against, general opinion defines this as contrary to something. For instance, black is contrary to white; sky is contrary to land; and body is contrary to soul. However, recalling the etymological definition of discrimination, how can a man discriminate against anything? For discrimination is concerned not with contraries but with categorisation. Therefore, a man discriminates between categories, and never against them.

By race, general opinion defines this under the broad categories of cultural background, linguistic background, historical background, nationality or skin colour. However, the idea of race has far outlived this ambiguous definition of modern times. For race is a group of individuals with common ancestry and inherited physical characteristics. And so there is the English race, the Russian race, the Greek race. However, it is absurd to say a man is of the 'white race' or the 'black race' or the 'Buddhist race'; for these features are accidental, and without common ancestry nor inherited physical characteristics.

And so when we speak of racism truly, etymologically, we speak not of discrimination against race but categorisation between groups of individuals with common ancestry and inherited characteristics.

Thus racism is an example of sophistry. An idea that is tossed about hither and yon without common understanding of its meaning.

So often racism is used as an equivocation for prejudice. Naturally, prejudice against accidental qualities exists. And it always will exist because the subtle influences of an individual's life will raise suspicion, doubt and curiosity against unfamiliar or vilified characteristics conditioned since childhood.

Racism is not what man appears to believe. Because of its etymology, the general opinion of racism is an equivocation of prejudice with categorisation, a solecism through against instead of between and an equivocation of common ancestry and inherited physical characteristics with accidental quality. Bearing in mind that equivocation and solecism are major examples of sophistry, we may say that racism is the modern world's strongest example of sophistry.

Critics will argue that racism should follow its conventional definition because prejudice against predominantly 'black persons' is a real obstacle to political progress. However, recalling 'black persons' applies to one category of quite ambiguous persons — and highlighting the ideological identifier -ism in racism — racism serves only a faction of individuals, and so politically is a form of oligarchy; an oligarchy which serves only this faction, and so fails to serve the common interest of all individuals within a state.

Indeed, prejudice against 'black persons' is a problem; as is prejudice against women in certain economic and political capacities. However, this is a problem of prejudice — of irrational preconception — not of discriminate categorisation. The solution to prejudice, of course, being rational preconception through education. And so he who uses the term racist, or sexist, or homophobic is in fact using sophistry to make themselves appear wise: whether willingly or otherwise. In short, they are lying.

By using the general principle of prejudice, the accidentally aggrieved will best overcome their individual struggles. By clinging onto this ambiguous notion of racism, a man continues to confuse himself and his neighbours of the problem he faces. Understand racism, reject sophistry and address prejudice to overcome your accidental problems.