

Discussing the Relationship Between Slavery and Racism; How Slavery Causes Racism?

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Abstract:

This study aims to demonstrate the Relationship Between Slavery and Racism in terms of how slavery causes racism in four areas; first, the Greek civilisation; second, the son of Noah “Ham” and slavery; third, the scientific movement and racism; and fourth, the slave trade. This study uses inductive, historical, and critical methods to discuss the four headings stated above.

The most important conclusion is that the division into those who were Greeks and those who were non-Greeks (barbarians) had led into a belief in Greek superiority emphasised that, and being a member of a superior group gives a right of doing violence towards barbarians. Second, the story of Ham was an excuse for enslaving black Africans and linking blackness with slavery, while this relationship was not known until the seventeenth century. The story supports the idea of discriminating against black slaves and linking colour with social class and prepares Europeans to accept the modern practice of slavery in the Atlantic slave trade. Third, scientists participated in provoking racism to value the European race over other races, considering it as a central race. Forth, The trade slave was the only alternative to a search for cheap labour in order to cover the gap in supply and stem this increase.

Keywords: Slavery, Racism, Greek civilisation, Son of Noah Ham, Slave trade

1. Introduction

Throughout human history people have experienced the enslaving and segregation of others. In other words, it is not a modern phenomenon. However, slavery may become more or less visible, or have different forms, according to the circumstances. While Jews struggled in Germany because of their different ethnic-religion, the Irish suffered in Britain due to their adherence to the Catholic Church, despite the fact that they were Christian. Religion in America on the other hand, did not have the same role, in that people were distinguished and discriminated against according to their colour (white and black), which might be considered as a consequence of the slave trade that brought millions of black people to the American continent. The issue of slavery and racism has become a controversial topic among researchers, not only sociologists interested in this area, but others such as psychologists and economists. The central debate is about whether slavery resulted in racism or racism resulted in slavery. This essay discusses the relationship between slavery and racism in terms of how slavery causes racism, which is part of this debate. In order to reach a conclusion, this relationship will be discussed under four headings: first, the Greek civilisation; second, the son of Noah “Ham” and slavery; third, the scientific movement and racism; and fourth, the slave trade.

1.1. The Study Objective:

This study aimed to explore how slavery causes racism in the Greek civilisation, the son of Noah “Ham,” the scientific movement and racism; and the slave trade.

2. Greek civilisation

It is argued that slavery is a phenomenon that goes side by side with the development of the economy in civilisations, and it may be true that the Greek civilisation was not different from others in this respect. In other words, human resources are the most important factors for economic growth. The number of slaves reported in the eighth century BC within the Greek civilisation differed from that in the fourth and fifth centuries BC. Westerman (1955) stated that, contrary to expectations, those Greeks who owned slaves were very limited in terms of their number, even among the richest chieftains in the Homeric period. Working as freemen in Greek society, slaves had opportunities to improve their working status as the Greek economy and industrialization developed, from working in fields and households to managing banks and carrying out skilled work; they were treated as freemen in terms of both wages and the kind of work they did (Westerman, 1955).

It could be suggested that the word *barbarian* was coined as a consequence of a massive influx of slaves into Greek society. The number was gradually increased, which influenced social life beyond the economic and political spheres, in order to maintain the early Greek colonies and industry. This resulted in the Greek slave trade becoming one of the primary businesses, and some (barbarian) countries showed their willingness to feed this new industry (Westerman, 1955). This division into those who were Greeks and those who were non-Greeks (barbarians) had developed into a belief in Greek superiority in the fourth and fifth centuries BC (Schlaifer, 1936) as a consequence of the mixture within society.

It was in the fifth century BC when the word barbarian was first used in Greek literature, which emerged as a result of the “Heightening in Hellenic self-consciousness caused by the rise of Persia” (Hall, 1989: 9). Euripides, in the fifth century BC, elevated the class of Greeks in relation to barbarians, and emphasised that ‘Greeks should rule barbarians’ because the latter are the same as slaves in nature (Isaac, 2006). Aristotle accepted this idea and developed it. Believing in grouping mankind into those who have a natural right to empire, and the rest of the people who are stupid and naturally created to be slaves, Aristotle considered the natives of Greece to be among the former group of mankind:

“Men of little genius, and great bodily strength, are by nature destined to serve, and those of better capacity, to command; that the native of Greece, and some of other countries, being naturally superior in genius, have a natural right to empire; and that the rest of mankind, being naturally stupid, are designed to labour and slavery” (Beatte, 1997: 34)

The physical factor in Aristotle’s view is seen in the phrase ‘great bodily strength’, which suggests that physical difference is not absent in this division of humankind, but it is still too general as a reference to link it with race. In *On the Generation of Animals*, he argues that the physical differences among humankind are caused by climate, where he mentioned that people having curly hair and a dry brain are affected by both hot and dry air (Aristotle, 2004). Even intelligence, from Aristotle’s perspective is the result of climate (Schlaifer, 1936).

As nature was regarded the principle factor in dividing people into slaves and masters, Aristotle’s political writing added another element that could bring about slavery, beside nature, slavery by law: “There is a slave or slavery by law as well as by nature... because one man has the power of doing violence and is superior in brute strength, another shall be his slave and subject” (Aristotle,

2005: last para). He also explained in his writing that the male differs from the female as slaves differ from free people, except among the barbarians' society: "But among barbarians no distinction is made between women and slaves, because there is no natural ruler among them: they are a community of slaves, male and female" (Aristotle, 2005: first para.). From his point of view every society has those who deserve to rule and those who are ruled; in a small community, such a household, the male is in the superior position and the female is inferior. However, this cannot be applied within a slave society because they are slaves and cannot rule.

To summarise, slaves from Aristotle's point of view had three main characteristics: they were stupid, powerless, and incapable of being rulers. There were three main causes, too, for being in this class: the environment, which includes both climate and geography; being barbarians as a collective ethnic group; and the position of power (law). It could be argued that slavery was the key to Aristotle's understanding of his own ethnicity through its contrast with barbarians. Greeks were in a powerful position during that period. Additionally, Greeks had a democratic government, which reflects their effective ability in terms of being the kind of people who were prepared to be appropriate rulers in comparison with the Barbarians who were ruled. Moreover, the matter of intelligence emerged as a distinctive feature of Greeks' attitudes towards barbarians. Aristotle used the term *stupid* above, whereas Heraclitus described the eyes and ears of men 'with barbarian souls' as bad witness, which means they do not understand (Hall, 1989). Similarly, Herodotus stated that non-Greeks "produced men who did not and could not understand or appreciate freedom" (Westerman, 1955:27).

Having discussed the emergence of the barbarians and the link with the development of slavery, it is time to examine the extent of racism in Greek society. The definition of racism chosen for this essay is Isaac's definition:

"An attitude towards individuals and groups of peoples which posits a direct and linear connection between physical and mental qualities. It therefore attributes to those individuals and groups of people collective traits, physical, mental and moral, which are constant and unalterable by human will, because they are caused by hereditary factors or external influence such as climate or geography" (Isaac, 2006: 23)

It might be clear, to some extent, that the case of the Greek civilisation may share some of the elements of this definition, with the exception of slavery by law.

However, the physical aspect seems to be less clear, which drives some writers such as Baum (2006) to claim that the Greeks did not have a negative attitude towards blacks; in particular, they cite Diodorus' attitude when he described African people as "the first of all men and as the originators of divine rituals most pleasing of the gods" (Baum, 2006:36). Byrd and Clay (2000) went further in claiming that there were neither biological nor intellectual differences between slaves and Greeks. That might be true to some extent; however, Testskhladze's writing regarding the Aristotlean Physiognomica contradicts the claim regarding physical differences when he says that "those with thick nostril ends are lazy...those who are too black or have wooly hair or black eyes are cowardly" (Tsetskhladze, 1999: 52). As seen above, claims made by Herodotus, Heraclitus, and Aristotle regarding intelligence as a main factor in which Greeks differed from barbarians contrasts with the claim made by Byrd and Clay. Some writers, like Tsetskhladze (1999), argued the matter of racism in terms of likening barbarians to animals such as pigs and frogs, which suggested that barbarians were alien; however, as he mentioned, it was a cultural rather than a racial difference because the term *barbarian* was used in that context to describe the barbarian language.

In short, building on what has been argued above, the overall picture seems to be that the development of the Greek civilisation led to a demand for human sources, which was filled by slaves. As a result of the influx of slaves into Greek society, the matter of distinguishing Greekness from others became important. Consequently, the fifth century was the time when the word *barbarian* (collective ethnic group) appeared to define a slave class in relation to Greeks. Racism resulted from slavery in Greek civilization, because slavery itself became a belief during the fifth and fourth century BC, which contrasted with the rise of Greekness. The matter of being intelligent and having the ability to rule were the two most important elements in the Greek understanding of their own ethnicity, while they believed that the barbarian ethnic group could not have them due to their nature as slaves. Additionally, being a member of a superior group gives a right of doing violence towards non-Greeks (barbarians) according to Aristotle.

3. The son of Ham; slavery and racism

According to Baum (2006), by the middle-ages the story of Ham had influenced Europeans' views of Africans; it encouraged them to regard Africans as slaves from a punished nation, who deserved to be so due to their father's sin. Therefore, this story was an excuse for enslaving black Africans. Indeed, the idea of being slaves, according to this story, reached Arabic sources too; it drove Ibn-

Khaldun (2004) to describe it as a myth, especially according to his view that skin colour is a result of climate and the sun. At-Turki (1997) the editor of *Albidaiah Wal-Nihaiah* (historical book) criticized this story, too (Ibn-Khatheer, 1997). Ibn-Khatheer (1997), a 14th AD Arabic historian, accepted the general meaning of this story on which he depended to cover the historical events of the Noachic era. One of the good points that Ibn-Khaldun (2004) made in this respect is that the story in Arabic books linking blackness with slavery is not in the Bible. Ibn-Khaldun's suggestion might be fair, since in the King James Version, Noah said "...Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren" (Carroll and Prickett, 1998: 24). This suggests that there was a translation mistake from the word *servants* to *slaves*. This may mean also that the role of the Arabic slave trade had an effect on scholars, causing them to link slavery and blackness due to the great number of African slaves that came to the Arabic world as a result of Islam, which reached Africa around the 9th century (Hunwick, 2005).

The story of Ham was questioned not only by Arabs (Muslim), but also by European writers. The division of the world into three nations within this story and considering Africans as belonging to Ham was one of the questions raised by Braude (1997), who argued that this division of the world was not known until the seventeenth century according to the Oxford English Dictionary. He also claimed that the Sons of Noah in the Jewish Bible were not linked with this division (Asia, Europe and Africa).

Rather than arguing about the existence of this story among nations, it is worth considering its effect on the core issues around slavery and racism. It is notable that this story created a connection between being a slave and being black; the sin of Ham caused his sons to be slaves. In addition, it supports the idea of discriminating against black slaves and linking colour with social class and prepares Europeans to accept the modern practice of slavery in the Atlantic slave trade. That may account for Europeans being aware of a connection between Africans and slavery before reaching Africa, as suggested by Walvin (1992).

4. Scientific movement and racism

It might be argued that scientists have played a significant role regarding racism. The scientific theories of nature, the creation of humans, and evolution have received much attention from researchers. The prominence of these theories grew gradually in Europe and America while the slave trade itself expanded, resulting in a massive number of black slaves (negroes) being brought to live among white societies.

The seventeenth century witnessed studies of physical differences within the human species; one of the first books published on the topic was *The New Division of the Earth* (1684) by Francois Bernier, who was a French traveller and philosopher (Jackson and Weidman, 2004). In the eighteenth century that idea became more specific, in that it developed to value the European race over other races, considering it as a central race, while others could be seen as ‘degenerate’ (Jackson and Weidman, 2004). It was also in the eighteenth century when scientists linked humankind and apes (Samson, 2005); however, some scholars, such as George Cuvier and Blumenbach, rejected that theory. Despite his rejection of the theory, the former still regarded the Africans to be a kind of people who have always stayed in a position of barbarians (Samson, 2005), which may perhaps be explained by the influence of the slave trade on scientists.

In the nineteenth century, Darwin (2007) made a connection between civilisation and this hierarchy of humankind, and attributed that to nature. The example of Negroes as the lowest order was visible in his idea:

“The civilized races of man will almost certainly exterminate, and replace, the savage races throughout the world. At the same time the anthropomorphous apes...will no doubt be exterminated... The break between man and his nearest allies will then be wider ... it will intervene between man and in a more civilized state as we may hope ... even than the Caucasian, and some ape as low as a baboon, instead of as now between the Negroe or Australian and the gorilla”
(Darwin, 2007: 136)

Before Darwin, Hume (1754) stated that not only Negroes but all species of human will be ‘inferior to the whites’; the explanation he gave was that there was no civilized nation, arts, or sciences among any non-white peoples. Klein (1999) argued that African civilisation and industry, such as exporting gold, is as old as the classic civilisations of Egypt, Greece, and Rome, which means there was an African civilization. It might be said also that Hume’s view ignored the role of the Arabic civilisation (9th and 10th centuries) and its influence on Europe in the arts and sciences, as Dawson (2002) mentioned in *The making of Europe: an introduction to the history of European unity*.

To summarise, it might be suggested that around the period of the Atlantic slave trade, the matter of racism grew steadily by linking humans with their physical appearances and their level of civilization.

One consequence that might be expected of such theories among traders, was that the idea of enslaving Negroes could be seen as a natural mechanism of life, and racist treatment of them increased. In this regard, the question that arises is, to what extent slavery confirmed the theory of nature, or to what extent this theory contributed to the practice of racism in the area of the slave trade. According to Drescher (1990), race played an important part in explaining ‘human variation’ because of the slave market; the impact of which leads scientists to look at the slave trade as proof of the lower order of negroes when European civilisation witnessed more development and colonial expansion as compared to Africa.

In short, scientists participated in provoking racism by linking the theory of evolution with the classification of humans. The role of slavery was the basis on which scientists proved Negroes to be a lower class than whites.

5. The slave trade

It could be argued that the slave trade was a link in the chain of European development and its commercial growth. It might be fair to describe that era as a revolution, not only in terms of economy, but also knowledge and discovery. Before 1400 AD, Europeans did not know about African slaves, as Rawley and Behrendt (2005) claimed. This claim contrasts with Walvin’s (1992) assertion that Muslim blacks were generally known in Spain in the 11th and 12th century.

As the Industrial revolution grew the demand for labour also increased, and, therefore, it was likely that domestic wages would rise. This led to a search for cheap labour in order to cover the gap in supply and stem this increase. At that point, the trade slave was the only alternative (Eltis, 1999). Furthermore, the slave trade may be regarded as the basis of modern trade according to some writers, such as Marx (2005).

Marx’s view (2005) was clear when he highlighted the benefits of slavery and its importance in modern international trade. Slavery was a marginal part of the modern capitalist system, through which the rapid increase in world trade and the industrial sector developed:

“Slavery is an economic category ... Direct slavery is the pivot of bourgeois industry as well as machinery, credits, &c. Without slavery you have no cotton; without cotton you have no modern industry. It is slavery that has given the colonies their value; it is the colonies that have created world trade, and it is world trade that is the pre-condition of large-scale industry. Thus slavery is an economic category of the greatest importance” (Marx, 2005: 121)

As can be seen, he attributed global gains to slavery, regardless of other elements, and considered slavery as the first stage in this chain. One of the limitations of this explanation is that Marx's interpretation relies too heavily on slavery, but despite that it was one of the earliest theories connecting slavery centrally with economic development.

America had become an attractive and appropriate environment for immigrants, receiving a number of white immigrants from various European countries such as Britain, Germany, Italy, and Poland in the nineteenth century (Lincoln and Mamiya, 2003). Therefore, the economic sector witnessed, between 1840 and the early twentieth century, a racial competition that resulted in almost pushing blacks to disadvantage (Lincoln and Mamiya, 2003). For example, between 1947 and 1987 unemployment among blacks was double that of whites, and black businesses represented only 2.7% of all businesses in 1972. The situation continued to get worse for the next 14 years (Lincoln and Mamiya, 2003).

The theory of economic competition might be proved by comparing America's slavery with the case in Europe; the latter had a much smaller proportion of blacks. In the last quarter of the seventeenth century 0.2% of the population were black in Britain, and only 0.02% in France, while the proportion in America ranged between 2% and 60% (Drescher, 1990). Walvin described toleration within British society among white and black labour to the extent that they worked together in "Cutting back the bush, building homes and clearing fields and roads" (1992: 53). Also, Jordan (1962) mentioned that whites and blacks were not concerned about their colour in the seventeenth century, which may support the idea of competition, in that slaves became competitors only after they were freed.

One of the racial consequences of slavery is that it contributed to a division of work between races, in that some jobs were considered for blacks. For example, field work was considered for blacks even if there were poor whites; on the other hand 'skilled tasks' were kept for whites (Jordan, 1962).

Secondly, when slavery had become a visible phenomenon that required the government to react, legislation was used to expand the gap between Negroes and whites. As Vaughan explains, "When the Africans' place became fixed by law at the basest level, they became objects of extreme degradation: 'the trace of colour became the trace of slavery'" (1989: 318). In 1636, the government in Barbados announced that "Negroes and Indians that come here to be sold, should serve for life" (Vaughan, 1989:341). Laws regarding slaves and slavery extended to deal with

many aspects, such as not allowing marriage among slaves, slaves' children did not have known fathers, and forbidding teaching slaves writing and reading (Lincoln and Mamiya, 2003). It was not only slaves who struggled because of their colour, but also free blacks, who had to prove their freedom; this was especially problematic for those who did not have papers. In 1806 there were 600 persons kidnapped (Wilson, 1994); some free blacks moved from place to place in order to escape from discrimination and the connection of their blackness with slavery, as some Virginians did when they moved to Maryland (Vaughan, 1989). The distinction between Negroes as black, irrespective of whether they were slaves or free, and the whites, started in Chesapeake, and became 'the norm' in America, as Davis (2006) noted.

Regarding the argument above, whether or not there is a relationship between slavery and racism, it might be suggested that the case of the United States does not differ from others, in that slavery was the foundation on which racism stood. The slave trade started as an economic factor on which the New World depended to develop; later, after a massive number of black slaves were freed and came alongside white immigrants, whites (the stronger) competed with blacks (freed slaves / the weaker). In other words, "The most severe forms of racial discrimination against black people have been economic in character" (Lincoln and Mamiya, 2003: 283). For example, one of the obvious ways that blacks suffered neglect was from the growth in the power of labour unions, which excluded blacks and sought jobs for whites (Klarman, 2004). Vaughan (1989) argued that Negroes, free or slaves, had never been treated as equal to whites either prior to or after the 1660s, which means racism was practiced before slavery and the economic sector did not play a role. That leads to another discussion as to whether Negroes were slaves before 1660s, or servants for life. Jordan (1962) contended, with some evidence, that some Negroes were free, such as those who owned other Negroes; the price paid for Negroes was much higher than that for whites. To combine these two views it could be suggested that racism was practiced at an individual level; however, racism did not reach the level that can be considered a phenomenon that drew institutions' attention until the competition of economic development, or as Castles and Miller (2003) describe the two level of racism as informal, and institutional or structural.

6. Conclusion

Having discussed the relationship between slavery and racism in terms of how slavery causes racism, to answer the main question of 'the relationship between slavery and racism', it might be suggested that there is one basic fact that has been shared through history, that slavery itself is a

result of the development of economies. The main factor on which the economy depends is human resources, which were provided by the slave trade. The massive influx of slaves into society influences both social demography and the economic sector, which drives governments to make efforts to legitimate slavery and produce policies to organise slaves in relation to society in general. The government, as they are in the position of power, tend to benefit from slavery no matter to what extent slaves will be disadvantaged. At that point racism is born from slavery by the combination of the feeling of superiority and the translation of this belief into actions.

One result that has appeared regarding privilege and racism is that the shape of privilege differs from civilisation to civilisation depending on what each civilization values. The case of the Greeks showed that the matter of intelligence and having a democratic political system were the most important elements, and, therefore, they used these to distinguish themselves from barbarians; it was a mental rather than a physical distinction that linked made the barbarians a collective ethnic group. On the other hand, in America the economic aspect was the most important and there was no easy way to distinguish between Americans and their revivals, freed slaves (blacks), so they utilized colour as the distinction between them (whites) and others (blacks). At that point the role of religion, the story of Ham, and the sciences, the theory of evolution, became justifications because both dealt with Negroes in a discriminatory way.

Despite the fact that many books and articles have been published regarding slavery and racism, this field still requires more research; in particular as it relates to our modern world. Slavery has gone, but what about racism? Is modern immigration expected to have the same role as the slave trade, or not? Especially when it comes to Muslim immigrants.

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Doi: doi.org/10.52132/Ajrsp.e.2024.60.2