

ABSTRACT:

In this paper, I will explicate how generalizations, oversimplifications, and reductionism are the inevitable consequences of dualistic approaches in understanding the complex phenomenon of racism. Such racial-dualistic frameworks are not only inadequate and ambiguous, but could be harmful on many levels. By utilizing a comparative analysis of Marxist dialectical-monist approach and a non-Marxist dualistic approach, I will contend the effectiveness of the former approach as being more elucidating in treating the intertwined issue of race and racism. I will start by providing an introduction and definition of race and racism by tracing their origins in history and commonplace discourse. Second, I will examine two different racial binary theoretical paradigms i.e. the Superiority/Inferiority Paradigm (Eugenics theory) and the Black/White Paradigm. In this analysis, I will attempt to offer a thorough critique, discuss capitalist agendas and their consequences, and suggest alternatives to such misleading and uninformative paradigms. I will present, define, and suggest the Marxist dialectical-monist approach as an alternative in comprehending race and

racism. Overall, my aim is to discuss the importance of embracing dialectical monism, instead of dualism, in improving human progress and comprehension of the phenomenon of racism, and in uncovering the limitations and destructive consequences of the dualistic approaches produced by capitalism.

Introduction

Racism is not only a subject of debate and examination in the realm of academia, but it has been publicly foregrounded in modern times. For decades now, emancipatory social sciences have relentlessly aimed at finding a unified definition of the concept of racism. Yet, until this moment, social scientists have not offered a clear-cut definition, but a wide array of different accounts. This lack of consensus among scholars led to the overuse and abuse of the concept of "racism." Miles and Brown (2004) note in their book *Racism* that:

Like many sociological concepts, racism has an everyday use and many everyday meanings. During the last fifty years or so, it has become a key idea in daily discourse as well as in sociological theory. Like

other elements of 'common sense' discourse (Gramsci 1971:323–33), much of the everyday language is uncritical, taken-for-granted. (Miles and Brown:3)

Thus, there is a growing body of research pointing out the negative consequences of overusing the concept of "racism" in everyday life. Many social scientists argue that the overuse of the concept of "racism" will eventually "diminishes the moral force of the word" and weaken the societal concern towards "racism and other racial wrongs" (Blum 2002:2). Blum makes it clear that "not every instance of racial conflict, insensitivity, discomfort, miscommunication, exclusion, injustice, or ignorance" constitutes a racist act (2). Although people perceive acts such as xenophobia, prejudice, injustice, and bigotry as racism acts, social scientists have been arguing for more than two decades now that a distinction must be made between these terms (Blum:3; Isaac 2004; Ridley 2005; Rattansi 2007). For instance, in his book *Dismantling Racism: The Continuing Challenge to White America*, Barndt (1991) argue that even though all acts of racism, prejudice, and bigotry cause negative consequences,

they are not the same (27). However, some researchers believe that many people, regardless of their color, are racially prejudiced through a learning process in childhood. They suggest that humans are either taught or have developed themselves certain preconceived misconceptions about people from different religious and ethnic backgrounds (Zastrow 2009; Lane 2008; Barndt 1991).

Rattansi (2007) on the other hand offers a nuanced approach on the issue of prejudice stating that:

the historical and anthropological evidence suggests that outsiders and strangers are not inevitably subjected to hostility. Empathy, curiosity, tolerance, dialogue, and co-operation are human traits that are as common as hostility and prejudice. Outsiders are not automatically feared or hated; they are as likely to be admired, found sexually attractive, to provoke ambivalence, or be envied. (3)

Rattansi asserts that fear and hatred of strangers are not innate traits of humans. Instead, he suggests that the possibility of celebrating perceived

differences of strangers is parallel to that of hating or fearing them. With the majority of people confusing acts of racism with that of xenophobia, researchers have emphasized the importance of distinguishing between the two concepts (Bourdeau 2010). For instance, Bourdeau notes that while racism is the belief that one race is superior to another, xenophobia is merely "the irrational fear or distrust of foreigners" (1). Therefore, this paper will examine the phenomenon of racism in an attempt to uncover the generalizations and oversimplifications in terms of understanding "race" and racism.

Definitions and the History of Race and Racism

In their attempts to trace the roots of "race" and racism in history, social scientists unanimously agreed that the word "race" has been around since the fifteenth century, while the concept of racism is of a very recent origin (Miles and Brown 2004; Reilly et. al. 2003; Blum 2002). They presuppose that before the late eighteenth century the term "race" was used merely to refer to "a lineage or line of descent where particular groups of people were attributed with a common history" (Satzewich 1998:2). Hence, the

word "race" was neither used to inferiorize or superiorize people nor was it used to assign biological distinctions to them. The shift of the usage and the meaning of the word "race" took place in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Many thinkers of diverse backgrounds (e.g. philosophy, science) started to use the term "race" to inferiorize, superiorize, and assign biological distinctions to certain groups of people. Social scientists, however, disagree in their explanation of the reasons of such sudden shift of the meaning of "race." While some have argued that it is due to the advancement in the scientific inquiry "to explain the physical and cultural diversity that had been exposed through European colonialism and overseas expansion," others viewed the shift as a product of the "class structure and configuration of power relations" (Satzewich:3). In the latter view, the shift is caused by the bourgeoisies who utilized "race" as a tool to enslave those "others" who do not share the same biological, social and intellectual capabilities. In his article "Race, Racism, and Racialization: Contested Concepts," Satzewich (1998) writes about "race":

Rather than being used as a

category to define the “self”, it was now used as a way to define “others,” be they “Arabs,” “Asiatics,” “Jews,” “Negroes” or “Blacks”. But in addition to changes in to whom the concept of race referred, there were also changes in its meaning. Categorizing certain groups as races became linked with the negative evaluation of the “other’s” social and biological capacities. (3)

So far, it is evident that the task of defining “race” is almost impossible because races do not exist in a real or biological sense, as many would like to believe. As a result, it is also problematic to give a clear definition of racism as a commonplace concept in the academic as well as political realms. In his study “What is Racism?” Benoist (1999) traces some of the historical and recent definitions of racism. He cites various dictionaries to investigate the differences and similarities of the definition of the concept “racism.” Benoist makes a comparison between the following definitions:

“A system which affirms the superiority of one racial group over the others” (Larousse); “A doctrine claiming the existence

of biological differences between various races and the superiority of one of them”; “A theory of the hierarchy of races based on a belief that social conditions depend on racial characteristics” (Robert); “A theory of racial hierarchy which claims the necessity of preserving the so-called superior race from miscegenation and the right to dominate other races” (Petit Robert), ..UNESCO’s 1978 “Declaration on Race” defines racism as “any theory claiming the intrinsic superiority or inferiority of racial or ethnic groups which would give to some the right to dominate or even eliminate others, presumed inferior, or basing value judgments on racial differences.” Ruth Benedict writes: “Racism is a dogma according to which one ethnic group is condemned by nature to congenital superiority.”..... Arthur Kriegel has written: “Racism is an ideological-scientific system which divides the contemporary human species into sub-species, resulting from separate development and

endowed with unequal average aptitudes. Miscegenation with these inferior sub-species could only result in half-breeds inferior to the favored race.” (3)

Benoist’s thorough analysis of the various old and present definitions of the term racism led him to two major findings: (1) All of the definitions overlap; and (2) all of the definitions neglect behavior and focus on theories that suggest that inequalities of races legitimize the domination of “inferior” races by “superior” ones (Benoist:4). Researchers, therefore, note that agreeing upon one definition of the word “racism” is a problematic and challenging task (Miles and Brown 2004; Blum 2002; Stoler 2002; Benoist 1999). Nonetheless, there is a consensus between prominent scholars in the field on when, where, and how the word racism came into existence. The word racism was introduced in the 1930s “as a response to the Nazi project of making Germany judenrein, or “clean of Jews” (Rattansi 2007; Fredrickson 2002; Blum 2002; Montagu 1997). Yet, Rattansi believes that the “Nazi Project” is only one phase out of many phases throughout history that reflects an immemorial past of anti-Semitism, which he considered one of

the oldest forms of racism (4). Although, the word was coined in the 1930s, Fredrickson (2002) stresses the fact that the “phenomenon” itself existed long before that. Fredrickson notes, though, that our perceptions of what constitutes racist acts shifted and changed throughout history (5). Rattansi (2007) sides with other scholars and argues that the definition of racism is extremely complex and “it requires relatively sophisticated treatment” (1). Yet, what distinguishes Rattansi’s approach is the fact that he points out the ontological problematic in understanding racism as a social phenomenon. He expresses his strong disagreement with social scientists, historians, and political scientists who treat the issue of racism using dualistic ontologies. His contention is that in order to understand the phenomenon of racism “public and academic debates should move away from simplistic attempts to divide racism from non-racism and racists from non-racists” (Rattansi 2007:2). Thus, social scientists should recognize their underlying ontological considerations when dealing with the issue of racism. To better understand how to avoid these ontological problems, one should ask the following question: What is dualistic

ontology in comparison with non-dualistic ontology?

Dualistic Social Ontology: Definition and Implications

Regardless of passing intellectual fashions, ontological questions have always been of great significance for philosophers and social theorists. Neges (2013) argues assuredly that those who are not interested in the question of “what really exists in the world” have no place in the realm of academia (2). Although the word “ontology” sounds intimidating to many, it is “understood broadly as a concern with the nature of being” (Lawson, Spiro, and Martins 2007). It should be noted, however, that in recent years social scientists have displayed a growing interest in reviving and utilizing ontology in their analyses, thereby eschewing the positivist inclination to pejoratively equate ontology with metaphysics. While rarely engaging directly with the concepts and methods of contemporary academic philosophy, they have begun to question the practice of taking “scientific theories and their ontological presuppositions for granted regardless of their empirical record” (3 - 6). Furthermore, some social scientists have pointed directly to what they

see as the problematic and specifically *dualistic* ontological commitments of many *sociological* researchers. But, what is the meaning of “ontological dualism” in a sociological context?

According to De Quincey (2002), “ontological dualism” refers to “a fundamental split of reality itself.” He explicates ontological dualism by stating:

The idea is that there are two fundamentally different kinds of reality – in this case, 1) matter or physical reality of things extended in space (e.g., atoms, tables, mountains, animal bodies), and 2) mind or spiritual reality of things without any extension in space (e.g., thoughts, feelings, desires, beliefs, souls). Somehow, these two utterly different kinds of reality happen to interact – one can cause effects in the other. The perennial riddle for philosophy is how? How could something as ghostly as a thought, a mind, or a soul impact anything as solid as a human body? (17)

Similarly, in his article “Against Dualism: Marxism and the Necessity of Dialectical

Monism,” Smith (2009) defines ontological dualism as:

...a metaphysical world view that conceives of reality as divided into two substantially opposed and “estranged” spheres: the natural and the supernatural; the physical and the mental; the material and the ideal. (357)

In a historical analysis of the notion of dualism, Smith contends that modern dualism can be traced to the opening stages of the Age of Reason (the 17th century). He maintains that “Descartes’ mind-body” and “Locke’s external objects – ideas” dualisms were adopted by many early-modern, modern and postmodernist European thinkers. Well-known philosophers and social theorists such as Immanuel Kant, Max Weber, Anthony Giddens, Michael Hardt, Antonio Negri and many other influential intellectuals have all explicitly or implicitly utilized dualistic ontology (362 - 364).

Now, why exactly is it so important for social scientists to become cognizant of their ontological commitments? And why is ontological dualism so problematic?

Philosophically, one of the most

noteworthy problems associated with ontological dualism is the “problem of interaction.” This problem has been viewed as the difficulty to understand how two *separate* realities (for example, mind and body) can interact. To conceptualize how fundamentally separate and distinct entities can interact or at least act together to produce a particular outcome, event or phenomenon is not only extremely difficult; it would seem to be impossible in principle. Another well-known problem of ontological dualism concerns the “ultimate subjectivity of experience.” How is it possible for humans to experience objective reality through their subjective experiences and perceptions and mark the boundaries between two separate ontological domains? (Proctor and Capaldi: 463 - 464). These are two philosophical problems of dualistic ontology, and there are many other well-documented issues and difficulties as far as ontological dualism is concerned (Refer to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy 2011). At bottom, however, from a *scientific* point of view, the dualistic perspective is problematic because it presents an obstacle to identifying, locating and mapping the myriad elements

making up reality and disclosing their manifold relations. And it does this in order to sustain a metaphysical separation of matter and mind.

Many social theorists have voiced their concern and underlined the negative consequences that result from adopting, explicitly or implicitly, a dichotomous framework when conducting emancipatory social-science research. According to Smith, the inevitable consequence of ontological dualism is dualistic social ontology. Such ontology, he argues, negatively impacts modern social theory, and therefore the quality of intellectual and political debates. In elaborating on the shortcomings of dualistic social ontology, Smith argues forcefully that it fails, above all, to recognize the crucial and irreducible role of the social relations of production in determining the concrete realities of a historically constituted totality:

dualistic social theory necessarily “misses something” that is of utmost significance to the “human condition”: the social relations of production in the dialectical mediation of what dualism posits as the “material–natural” and “ideal–cultural”

aspects of human existence. (366)

It is noteworthy that humans commonly tend to simplify and make sense of their lives by utilizing dualistic worldviews (e.g. light and darkness, black and white, good and evil), and that various other polar contrasts continue to dominate our thinking. Smith suggests that the continuing domination of such a distorted dualistic worldview is due to the fact that, at specific points in history, certain societal conditions have strengthened the appeal of this particular outlook. The separation of intellectual and manual labor (associated with class division), as well as the separation of exchange and use (associated with commodity production), are among the more significant “historically specific conditions” that have helped perpetuate dualism as a dominant worldview. The predicament is that, although there is great resistance by most philosophers and some social theorists to dualism, the problem of ontological dualism is pervasive in mainstream (non-Marxist) social science. Indeed, a growing body of research suggests that social scientists, whether aware or unaware of their ontological proclivities, are generating distorted and partial analyses based on

problematic dualistic presuppositions.

In his book *The Structure of Social Theory*, King (2004) supports the view that nowadays many social theorists are committed to ontological dualism. Indeed, he suggests that there is an evident threat of the dominance of ontological dualism within the social sciences. On the other hand, Smith (2009: 356 - 366) argues that ontological dualism *has long been* dominant, whether acknowledged or not. Furthermore, it is unfortunately true that contemporary social scientists, by accepting a dualistic social ontology, are encouraged to neglect what is actually the most crucial element in the analysis of social reality, what Karl Marx called the social relations of production and reproduction.

Now, considering the serious and arguably misleading consequences of applying the assumptions of ontological dualism in modern social theory, it seems reasonable to pose the following questions: Is there an alternative? What kind of ontology should social scientists commit themselves to when conducting sociological research? And what is the most effective ontology that can be implemented to develop modern social

theory and understand the reality behind the various social phenomena and problems facing humanity today?

Marxist Dialectical-Monistic Ontology

Smith (2009) argues that Marx's dialectical-monistic ontology is fundamental to effectively countering ontological dualism in general and dualistic social ontology in particular. Although some social scientists have argued against dualism and in favor of ontological monism (King 2004, De Quincey 2002), Smith is precise in insisting upon the uniqueness and indispensability of Marx's dialectical-monistic ontology for critical-emancipatory social science:

Against all forms of idealism and dualism, Marx embraced a materialist-monist perspective, one distinguished by the idea that reality is unified and that its manifold elements are dialectically interrelated within a material world — an ontology that regards all the elements of a dynamic and ever-changing reality as implicated in complex processes of mediation

with one another. (366)

The above passage clearly signals two crucial concepts: monism and dialectics. It is important to clarify these two concepts to understand Marx's social theory. The term "monism" is very broad, and it can assume a materialist or an idealist form. According to the Concise Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy, monism "is the doctrine that there is only one substance, or one 'world', or that reality is in some sense one, that is, unchanging or indivisible or undifferentiated. For instance, the alternative claims that 'everything is mental' or 'everything is material' are crudely expressed forms of monism, each opposed to the common-sense dualism of mind and matter" (2005:258). Smith argues that Marx's ontology is both dialectical and materialist-monistic. He defines the dialectic as the "interrelations of two or more terms," and "materialist monism" as the "fundamental oneness" of material reality (369). Smith asserts that within this oneness, Marxist monistic ontology posits the dialectical interplay of three distinct, yet overlapping and interpenetrated "ontological fields": the Natural (N), the Social (S), and conscious Activity (A).

In an attempt to explicate the role of each of these ontological fields within a unified ontological triadic system, as well as their dialectical interconnections in shaping the human condition and history, Smith defines and articulates these triads with respect to the specific element or field that is being given analytical priority (17- 20). However, for him, the three triads are all grounded *within the production/reproduction process* of humanity – and this underlines the fact that two of the approaches reviewed in this paper (the Superiority/Inferiority approach and the Black/White approach) place themselves beyond the boundaries of Smith's conception of the triad. What distinguishes the Marxist understanding of the elements of the triad from the dualistic approach(es) discussed in this paper is precisely their divergent ontological assumptions concerning these three elements. While Marxism emphasizes the centrality of the production and reproduction process as encompassing and connecting these elements, the dualist approach involves an ahistorical, reductionist and metaphysical understanding of them.

For Smith, dialectical-monist ontology involves the need to elaborate a

specifically “historical-materialist system of dialectical triads” at the center of which is the $A \leftarrow S \rightarrow N$ triad, one which calls attention to the determining role of The Social (particularly the historically constituted “social relations of production and reproduction”) in mediating the relationship between The Natural and Conscious Activity. The three triads comprising the system of triads are defined in greater detail as follows:

1) $S \leftarrow N \rightarrow A$. This dialectical triad emphasizes the role the Natural (N) in determining the range of specific “natural” features available to A (conscious Activity) and to S (the Social). The Natural refers to the natural laws that are beyond human control (e.g. the laws of thermodynamics), to human corporeal organization, and to the forces of production, that is, to “the capacities that humans have devised to subdue nature, manipulate its laws, and reduce the burden of toil and material insecurity that afflicts humankind.” (373)

2) $N \leftarrow A \rightarrow S$. This dialectical triad points to the role of conscious Activity (A) in social life, that is to the “active relations that humans establish toward ‘Nature’ and toward each other, as well as the capacities they develop through these relations” (377). An analytical focus on

conscious Activity calls attention to the fact that the categories of human thought are “historical and transitory products of human practical activity and, potentially at least, veritable ‘forces of production’ in their own right.” (377)

3) $A \leftarrow S \rightarrow N$. This dialectical triad emphasizes the role of the Social (S) in mediating between the Natural and Conscious Activity. S refers precisely to “modes of cooperation as constituted by definite relations of production and reproduction.” Smith underscores the importance of the social relations of production and reproduction for “the Social,” arguing that the “social relations of production and reproduction are at the heart of ‘the Social’; they are both defined by and constitutive of such social forms as commodity exchange, wage labor, capital, social class, gender, race, citizenship and the family.” (375)

Thus, on the basis of a careful analysis of Marx’s social ontology, Smith introduces a “system of dialectical triads” whose implementation is crucial to adequately understanding social reality in its rich complexity. Ignoring any one of the “ontological fields” or any one of the dialectical triads will inevitably lead to

an inadequate analysis of a given social phenomenon. Thus, within the framework of the system of triads, Smith argues that:

...S←N→A, taken in isolation, lends itself to “vulgar” or “mechanical” versions of materialism, to one-sidedly “naturalistic” explanations of social phenomena of the type associated with sociobiology and evolutionary psychology, and/ or to a spurious universalism (such as technological determinism). A fixation on N←A→S, on the other hand, tends to be associated with subjective idealism, relativism, and a voluntaristic social constructionism. Although central to and definitive of historical-materialist inquiry, the N←A→S triad, when considered alone, is also inadequate to the extent that it understates the essential role of material–natural conditions in shaping the social and/or the necessary role of conscious Activity in effecting social change. (372)

In Smith’s quote about the Social, “race” is enlisted with many other social forms

that are inherent in the social relations of production and reproduction, as the latter are defined by and constitutive of race among other things. This hint will open the way for our discussion of race and racism within the dialectical monistic triads. In my analysis, I will focus on two dualistic ontological paradigms: the Superiority/ Inferiority (Eugenics), and the Black/White (Racism). By applying Smith’s system of dialectical triads (the Natural, the Social, and the active Conscious) on the dualistic ontological paradigms; I will explore three main themes: 1) Social scientists' understanding of eugenics and racism as approaches which give priority to the Natural in the dialectical triad S←N→A, and 2) A meta-critique of social scientists' accounts of the phenomenon of racism to demonstrate that they themselves have given the priority to the conscious Activity N←A→S , and finally 3) I will introduce an alternative model which gives the priority to the Social A←S→N, to better understand the reality behind racism.

1) Eugenicians and "White" Racists

First, let us explore how researchers have described eugenicians’ ideology and examine their accounts. In her article "Sex and the ordinary Cuban: Cuban physicians,

eugenics, and marital sexuality, 1933-1958," Arvey (2012) defines eugenics as "the science of improving human breeding based upon theories of heredity" (94). Arvey emphasizes the fact that the eugenics project represented a new way of the scientific application to the regulation of sexual reproduction during the period of the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. According to Arvey, eugenicists claimed that the mere purpose of their practices was to produce better quality of humans. She explicates this claim in detail and argues that there were two methods by which the eugenics project achieves this purpose. The eugenics project was carried out by either: (1) The removal of the "undesirable" offspring as decided by the government (e.g. by killing the infants as in the past; or by (2) practicing forced sterilization, euthanasia, and abortion in modern times), or selective breeding to produce superior types of people. Also, in her book *The Politics of Heredity: Essays on Eugenics, Biomedicine, and the Nature-Nurture Debate*, Paul (1998) points out Francis Galton's (the founder of the term) definition of eugenics; which he described as:

the science of improvement of the human race germ plasm through better breeding" and as "the study of agencies under social control which may improve or impair the racial qualities of future generations. (Paul 1998:99)

In addition, in his book *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity*, Kevles (1985) notes that the main argument that was introduced by the founder of the faith of eugenics, i.e. Francis Galton, was the "natural ability" (3). Inspired by his distorted understanding of his cousin's ideas (Charles Darwin's evolution theory), Galton was thinking about ways to get rid of the undesirable traits of humans and "improve" the desirable ones (Isaac 2004). His "sincere" goal was to encourage humans to take charge of their own evolution (Kevles:3). Thus, he believed in the possibility of producing "highly gifted race of men by judicious marriages during several consecutive generations" (Kevles:4). Galton's heredity analysis advocates the idea that "talent was rarely impaired by social disadvantage" (4). In analyzing Galton's way of thinking, Kevles (1985) makes it clear that:

Galton heredity analysis proceeded from the premise that reputation – especially the kind that earned a place in a dictionary of eminence – truly indicated ability, that the lack of it just as reliably bespoke the absence of ability, that neither outcome depended upon social circumstance. (4)

Based on the above accounts, it is clear that eugenicists' racism was concerned with producing "fit" society by eliminating the "unfit" individuals. However, what about "white" racists, do they share the same beliefs with eugenicists i.e. the conviction that heredity and biological superiority are worth promoting? Now, let us turn to the "white" racists and explore how did researchers define this group of people? According to Feagin et. al. (2001), the phenomenon of "white" racism is "centuries-old system intentionally designed to exclude Americans of color from full participation in the economy, polity, and society" (2). Notably, "white" racism points out the oppression faced by African Americans and other non-"white" people by "white" Europeans and "white" Americans (3). Feagin et. al. (2001) argues that there is no such a thing as

"black" racism and that is:

....because there is no centuries-old system of racialized subordination and discrimination designed by African Americans that excludes white Americans from full participation in the rights, privileges, and benefits of this society. Black racism would require not only a widely accepted racist ideology directed at whites but also the power to systematically exclude whites from opportunities and rewards in major economic, cultural, and political institutions. (3)

In his book *Blacks in Colonial America*, Reiss (2006) notes that one of the most prominent intellectuals in American history, i.e. Thomas Jefferson, emphasized the physical differences between "black" and "white". Jefferson believed that there are significant differences between "blacks" and "whites" in terms of their hair, color, and figure (Reiss:12). Jefferson viewed "blacks" as inferior to "whites" physically, as he stated that:

Blacks had less hair on their bodies and faces. They secreted

less from their kidneys and more from their skin; this caused a strong, disagreeable odor from their skin. They were more tolerant of heat and less of cold because of these skin secretions. Black lungs were different, and they did not extract heat from air....Blacks required less sleep; after hard labor, they could stay up until midnight for amusement despite the need to get up for more labor at dawn. They were brave as whites, but more "adventuresome," perhaps owing to a lack of the foresight needed to recognize danger. (Reiss 2006:13)

Likewise, Jefferson promoted the idea of "blacks" inferiority in terms of their mental capacities, as he accentuated that:

They were not reflective, so when not laboring or involved in discussions, they slept. Their memory was equal to that of "whites", but their reasoning and their minds were inferior to and their thought processes limited: ...They were tasteless and dull in imagination. (ibid.)

It is noteworthy that many physicians (in

the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) supported the idea of "blacks" as inferior to "whites" "whites." Some physicians argued that "blacks" did not originate from the same source as "whites", others said "blacks" resembled apes (ibid:12-14). Reiss argues that many believed that "slavery was a structure of divinely ordained nature. The ape had dominion over his slaves, the lower animals; the white had dominion over his slaves, the Negroes" (14).

Now, by comparing and contrasting eugenicists' racism and "white" racism, it is evident that both groups have implemented dualistic ontological assumptions in order to proceed with their desired projects. On one hand, eugenicists' dualistic ontology is created through the formulation of the "fit" vs. the "unfit", and on the other hand, "white" racism dualistic ontology stems from the notion of the "superior" race vs. the "inferior" race. In utilizing Smith's dialectical triadic system (the Natural, the Social, and the conscious Activity), it is clear that both groups are giving the center to the Natural. Eugenicists and "white" racists are simply suggesting that being "mentally retarded" or "black" is out of their control, and for them as "experts" eugenicists

and “superior” “whites”, it is impossible to deny, repeal, or escape these natural “facts.” For eugenicists and “white” racists the Natural features i.e. genetics, of these “retarded people” or people of color, in this case “blacks,” isolate the Social i.e. social relations of production and reproduction on one hand, and cover up the conscious Activity behind their approach i.e. human ideas and agency, on the other hand. Both groups believe that the role of the Natural has determined their conscious Activity and the structure of their society. They do believe that S (social relations of production and reproduction) and A (the conscious Activity) are static elements that are of lesser importance. As a result, both eugenicists and “white” racists are utilizing the following formula: $S \leftarrow N \rightarrow A$, which constitutes an objective relation of color to color in “white” racism and body to body in eugenics (“objective relation of things to things,” see Smith:378).

2) Meta-Critique of Social Scientists’ Position on the Reality of Racism

The previous section was dedicated to social scientists’ understanding of the dualistic ontological model that eugenicists and “whites” racists utilized to justify their

actions. Social scientists proved that these two groups have divided society into two categories “fit” vs. “unfit”; “superiors” vs. “inferior.” Thus, this division was based on a dualistic ontological model that emphasizes the natural features of the “unfit” and “black” individuals. The dialectical triad system demonstrated that these two groups i.e. eugenicists and “white” racists are focusing on the Natural element of the triad; considering the Social and the conscious Activity as static elements. With this in mind, we should explore the following question critically: What did social scientists propose to understand the problem of racism? The following pages will be dedicated to answer this question by investigating social scientists’ focus on the ideological standpoint of eugenicists and “white” racists.

In her examination of the eugenics practices, Arvey (2012) argues that policy makers considered eugenics as the only way to promote a healthy society free of the divorce problem (118). She asserts that government officials, physicians, and many other professionals believed that “with careful planning and policy making, nation-states could do much to improve

the quality and "fitness" of their citizenry" (94). Cuban physicians took the role of educating Cuban married couples about sexuality by "using science to combat female frigidity and sexual ignorance (118). Arvey (2012) underlines the fact that in "... postwar [WWII] era eugenicists targeted laypersons and promoted normative and unequal gender roles within marriage as a means to maintain stable, reproductive family relations" (94- 95). Therefore, Arvey argues that physicians' hidden agendas were implemented for the purpose to maintain a patriarchal society, she states that:

The patriarchal subtext here is clear and not surprising for a society that often condoned married men's extramarital affairs, especially those between white men and women of color, and that had condemned married women found in adultery to unequal legal treatment until the early 1900s. (119)

Also, in his analysis of the history of eugenics, Kevles (1985) emphasizes the role of Francis Galton, i.e. founder of eugenics, and his intellectual attempt to oppose religion and embrace the evolution

concepts as they were introduced by his cousin Charles Darwin, Kevles argues that:

To Galton's mind, the scientific doctrine of evolution destroyed the religious doctrine of the fall from grace. (12)

Despite that Kevles considers the importance of Galton's statistical and mathematical equations in his study of heredity, he describes Galton's work as lacking academic rigor. As a matter of fact, Kevles believes that Galton's work is just some type of work you expect from "a pass-degree Cambridge graduate", not a professional scholar (17).

It is clear from Arvey and Kevles accounts on eugenics that they are referring to the idea that the natural features of humans i.e. genetics are exploited by certain people in pursuing specific goals and achieving certain agendas. For Arvey what lies behind eugenics is a patriarchal mode of consciousness. She shifts the emphasis from the Natural, which is the approach of the eugenicists themselves, to patriarchy as the cause behind the doctrine, according to her interpretation. For Kevles, on the other hand, the

explanation for Galton's enthusiasm for eugenics is traced in the mediocrity of his intelligence as "a pass-degree Cambridge graduate." Similar to Arvey, Kevles shifts the focus from the Natural to the problem of Galton's level of intelligence.

Similarly, social scientists who dealt with the issue of "white" racism have emphasized the importance of focusing on the conscious of "white" racists. Reiss (2006) traces the roots of "black" slavery and discusses various prominent political and professional figures throughout history who promoted ideas of "white" "superiority" (11 - 16). He argues that "the idea of the inferiority of blacks was pounded into white consciousness from the legislature, the courts, newspapers, and the pulpit" (15). As a result, as Feagin et. al. (2001) underlines, in order for researchers to understand all types of racism that are directed towards other people of "color," it is essential to understand "white" on-"black" oppression (6). Feagin et. al. (2001) emphasizes that:

In North America a racist ideology was developed in hundreds of books and thousands of articles defending white superiority and African

inferiority. This ideology has dominated white thought from the seventeenth century to the twenty-first century. White racism and the black struggle against it have shaped the character not only of the founding documents of the United States, such as the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution, but also of a huge body of law and much social practice over the intervening centuries. From the 1600s to the present, a majority of white Americans have held a range of antiblack prejudices and images which are webbed into a full-fledged racist ideology and which have played a dynamic role in implementing an extensive and institutionally buttressed set of discriminatory practices against African Americans and other peoples. (6)

In Feagin's quotation, it is clear that racism is explained through different forms of human approaches to the problem, such as ideological and legal. Feagin et. al. (2001) has shifted the emphasis from the Natural as he understood the

racists to underline, to the ideological (i.e. conscious Activity), which he thinks explain the phenomenon. He suggests that the solution to eradicate racism lies in correcting the consciousness of the many Americans (people of different backgrounds and of different “colors”), who should continue to resist “white” racism (220).

Now, let us turn to the dialectical triad (the Natural, the Social, and the conscious Activity) on the accounts offered by all of these social scientists. According to the dialectical triad system, each one, Arvey, Kevles, Reiss, and Feagin, has emphasized the role of conscious Activity in understanding the phenomenon of racism. As I discussed in the previous section, eugenicists and “whites” racists perceive their actions as necessary and “normal”, due to their reliance on invariable laws of nature, i.e. genetics; thus they emphasize the role of the Natural element of the dialectical triadic system; $S \leftarrow N \rightarrow A$. However, Arvey, Kevles, Reiss, and Feagin believe that these actions are merely based on and stemming from the consciousness of people. The following dialectical triadic system $N \leftarrow A \rightarrow S$ i.e. subjective relation of people to color in “white racism” and people

to body in eugenics (“subjective relation of people to things,” see Smith:378) is essential to understand this point; that is how social scientists perceive eugenicists and “white” racists in working persistently on “unfitting” and “inferiorizing” certain groups of people. According to this formula, the aforementioned researchers are emphasizing the role of the conscious Activity in formulating and propagating eugenics and racism. On this view, the ideas and agency of eugenicists and “white” racists play significant role in shaping the active relations they establish toward the Natural and among themselves; thus, their racist actions are real forces of change in their own right. It is important to note that these social scientists have implemented dualistic social ontology that separates between the “material–natural” and “the ideal.” Smith (2009) has defines the ideal as “the ideas in people’s head, including their preferences” (379). Further, he illustrates this dualistic social ontology very clearly, by stating that:

... within dualistic social ontology, the social aspects of the human condition are understood to be either immutable manifestations or epiphenomena of the natural

laws of the material universe (encompassing non-human as well as human nature) or an objectification of those elements of human consciousness that are considered to have a transcendent and essentially non-material origin. (376)

Based on the historical-materialist system of dialectical triads it is clear that while eugenicists and “white” racists are imprisoned within the formula $S \leftarrow N \rightarrow A$, social scientists analyses are imprisoned within $N \leftarrow A \rightarrow S$. Both have neglected the Social element of the triad; to them it is only a byproduct of the Natural and the conscious Activity respectively. According to the dialectical triads applied in this analysis, the social scientists who have studied the phenomenon of racism have fallen into the trap of ontological dualism. In the following section, I will introduce the Marxist dialectical-monist approach as an alternative to the previous dualistic ontological assumptions that inevitably produce dualistic social ontology.

3) Marxist Dialectical-Monist Approach: Effective Alternative in Examining the Phenomenon of Racism **$A \leftarrow S \rightarrow N$**

All of the previously mentioned social theorists and researchers had distorted understanding of the reality of racism. One sociologist, however, i.e. Joe Feagin, was near to grasp the real mechanisms of racism. But, if Feagin’s analysis is accurate i.e. in order for social scientists to understand racism they should focus their attention on superior-inferior relationship between “whites” and “blacks”; considering the “white” as the superior and the “black” as the inferior, one might ask then Why does the “superior” “white” person experience racism too? Why would “white” Jewish or “white” Irish individuals experience racism? The answers to these questions will certainly contradict the limited dualistic paradigms [things to things, people to things] implemented. These types of contradictions are the unavoidable consequences that stem from utilizing dualistic social ontology.

Feagin et. al. (2001) bases his analysis of racism on the work of Georges Battaille who developed Karl Marx’s “social surplus product” concept (18). Battaille proposed the “excess energy” theory, in which he argued, “human societies ordinarily generate more energy and human resources than are necessary for

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sustaining life at a minimal level” (18). According to this view, humanity produces surplus energy that can be either invested in positive ways (e.g. the construction of castles, pyramids, and cathedrals as was the case in the past), or wasted in negative ways (e.g. current human and ecological destruction and labor exploitation). Although Feagin et. al (2001) bordered on the reality behind racism, his analysis lacks an exhaustive account of the real forces producing racism. In an otherwise excellent book, Feagin fails to bring together the necessary formula to understand this persistent problem. He insists that the solution lies in rectifying the consciousness of the American people. The following three quotes will plainly show that Feagin’s book has provided an ethical analysis of the problematic of racism; throughout his book, he has given the center to the conscious Activity N←A→S, and neglects the Social forces of production and reproduction as the main drive behind racism, he states:

A central thesis of this book [“white” racism] is that Americans should see white racism for what it actually is: a tremendously wasteful set of practices, legitimated by

deeply embedded myths, that deprives its victims, its perpetrators, and U.S. society as a whole of much valuable human talent and energy and many social, economic, and political resources (19)

A dramatic change in individual, group, and societal way of seeing requires a change in white thinking about the history and reality of racism. (31)

We propose that all Americans, but especially white Americans, search for more positive and productive ways of using this society’s excess energy and resources. (Feagin et. al. p.32)

Ghail's study (2002) about racism in Ireland should serve as a good example of the insufficiency of dualistic approaches (e.g. dominant/subordinate, colonised/coloniser, black/white). He argues that due to the lack of a “well-developed” theoretical framework, Irish sociologists tend to use the Black/White paradigm (5). Yet, Irish sociologists have found that the black-white paradigm is insufficient to deal with the peculiarities of the Irish situation. He maintains that black/white dualistic

model is general, reductionist, and ineffective in terms of understanding the phenomenon of racism against the Irish in Britain and the U.S; as well as undermine the reality of anti-Semitism and racism against ethnic minorities in Ireland (7). It is inadequate because it views people of “color” as the prey, and the “white” as the predator. However, in the case of the Irish, they are themselves “white.” According to Ghail (2002) “...much of British colonial history, the Irish were seen as black” (12). These contradictions suggest that racism is a complex phenomenon that should be understood beyond a color-coded dichotomy.

Now, one might pose the following question: What is the most effective alternative to understand racism? Feagin’s proposal that the problem in understanding racism is an epistemological one; he mentions:

As we see it, antiracist strategies require an eradication of the separation of knowledge and theory from action. Antiracist strategies demand alternative *ways of knowing*, conceptualizing, and protesting. (Feagin et. al. 2001:32, italics added)

Unlike Feagin, I propose that social scientists face a dualistic ontological problem that must be addressed. The only way to comprehensively understand the reality of racism is to: (1) Reject all forms of dualism and idealism; and (2) apply Marx’s materialist-monist ontology, which proposes that reality is unified and all of its various elements, that is, the Natural, the Social, and the conscious Activity dialectically interplay in a system of dialectical triad. In this dialectical triad, the Social element, i.e. social relation of production and reproduction, must be given the central stage according to Smith (2009):

... the crucial role of the social in mediating the relation between Nature and conscious Activity — the better to not only interpret the world, but also to change it in definite ways. Accordingly, the “practical materialism” affirmed here by Marx is one that regards “the Social” as an irreducible dimension of the unified material reality of which humanity is a part. (368)

The starting point in elaborating the adequacy of the dialectical-monist triad

in tackling the problem of racism is the Social. According to Smith (2009) "By social we understand the cooperation of several individuals, no matter under what conditions, in what measures and to what ends. For Marx, human cooperation can assume many forms: voluntary and coerced, egalitarian and class-antagonistic, solidaristic and exploitative" (20). This definition shifts the attention from the Natural (i.e. the objective relation of color to color/body to body) and the conscious Activity (i.e. the subjective relation of people to color/people to body) to a social relation of people to people. Thus, "white" racism is not originated in the color of people as a natural trait, and eugenics is not a problem of the physical constitution of individuals as "unfit." The problem of racism is a reflection of the ontology of the capitalist system, which marks the relation of people to people by prejudice and distortion. To address the problem of racism, according to this argument, the nature of the capitalist system and the social relations of production and reproduction within the system should be recognized.

The capitalist system in the U.S. and the Nazi regime in Germany have been

established as historically coordinating their efforts in the implementation of eugenics during the 1930s (see Kühl 1994:15 - 17), a fact that shows that eugenics is an outcome of the capitalist system. Many East German historians strongly argue that Nazism - that promoted the practice of eugenics and forcibly sterilized and killed hundreds of thousands of people - was "one manifestation of a general crisis of capitalism" and "Hitler was above all the tool of big business" (Lee 2010:5). It is critical to note that researchers have documented a strong relationship between the appearance of "white" racism in "Europe and the Americas and the expansion of capitalism as an economic system" (A.G. 2006; Cole 2009; Leiman 2010). In addition, it is noteworthy that the Great Depression in the 1930s increased racism against the blacks in the United States (Cohen 2002:196). Cohen emphasizes that "blacks" lost their jobs three to four times faster than "whites" in the Great Depression and was not able to regain employment like "whites" did (196). Most importantly, however, is the fact that the Great Depression was an inevitable "result of capitalism's structural weaknesses, which produced a myriad of

antagonisms" (Navarro 2012:15), among which was "white" racism.

The theoretical framework adopted in this paper supports these historical foundations for the connection between capitalism and "white" racism/eugenics. "White racism" and eugenics are caused by a system that tends to exclude wide segments of the population in moments of crisis. Therefore, racism is an attitude adopted by people who are motivated by their social interests toward other people who represent minorities and working classes. The natural aspect of variation in color is marginalized in comparison to the social existence of the people of different colors, and the conscious Activity which many researchers emphasized (Arvey, Feagin, Kevles, Paul, Reiss) could not gain efficacy without foregrounding the Social A←S→N as the center of the theoretical framework to approach the problem of racism. Their approach, without taking the Social into consideration, is reduced to an ethical prescriptive call to people which could not yield any tangible results. Conscious Activity becomes, when it is connected to a central social consideration, an emancipatory not ethical activity.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have argued that in order for social scientists to understand racism, it is necessary to apply the dialectical triads system on the interwoven issue of "race" and racism. The argument of this paper moved from dualistic ontological assumptions which emphasized the role of the Natural and the conscious Activity respectively to a Marxist ontological-monistic triad in which the Social occupies the center as a leading element in the totality. It has become clear that the epistemological and ethical approaches to the problem of racism are insufficient to explicate the reality behind racism. As illustrated, the social relations of production and reproduction in the capitalist system are the source of the phenomenon of racism, and any attempt to address the problem should consider the capitalist system as the starting point.

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