

RACISM AND ITS PRESUPPOSITIONS: TOWARDS A PRAGMATIC ETHICS OF SOCIAL CHANGE

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Abstract: Racism has been described as a litmus test or a barium meal which reveals other disorders and injustices within the body politic. It presupposes the legitimacy of racial classifications and the metaphysical reality of races and therefore provides a vital area of scrutiny for philosophical traditions. This paper examines racism and its anti-social effects both on the individual and the society at large. It argues that racism is generally driven by fear and hatred hence all forms of racism are dangerous, socially harmful and morally wrong in practice. The paper recommends ways of overcoming the evil of racism by emphasizing social intelligence and self-realization as moral ideals drawing on John Dewey's pragmatism in ethics. It concludes by stressing Dewey's moral pragmatism as a potent instrument of social change.

Keywords: racism, pragmatism, moral philosophy, ethics and social change.

Introduction

Racism is a doctrine of superiority and inferiority built upon the idea of race. This kind of inferiority is often used to justify race-based deprivation of benefits, emotional repudiation, moral distaste and perhaps social discrimination. Such justification suggests that when holding a belief as wrong and racist, it is because the belief rationalizes racist indifference towards contempt for, hatred of or victimization of those assigned to a certain racial group (Garcia 2001, 1437).

This paper examines the effects of racism both on the individual and the society. It argues that racism is morally wrong because the practice is irrational, economically inefficient, socially harmful, a disregard for the dignity in a person and in all, it is unjust. It draws on Dewey's pragmatism in ethics to explain the moral ideal of self realization and his idea of social intelligence or democracy as a way of life which promotes the virtues of tolerance and interrelationship. Social intelligence or the democratic way of life as Dewey conceives it implies respect for persons and this means that every person has a right not only to participate in the formation of goods but that individuals should be seriously receptive to each others concern, taking them into account as deserving an honest hearing (Dewey 1998, 49). If this is the case, then Dewey's moral pragmatism has implications for racism for it offers an insight into the social problems of men in society among which is racism and the need for social reform. The paper will therefore conclude by developing the implication of Dewey's pragmatism in ethics for racism by recommending his moral pragmatism as a tool for social change.

Defining the Problem

Racism has been defined as an

ideology and/or structure of action in the public sphere, implicitly or explicitly based on a concept of racial difference as a policy category which results in both disadvantage and discrimination for certain racially defined groups (Leech 1996, 710).

Such a definition differentiates racism which operates at the economic and political levels from racial prejudice which operates at the cultural and psychological levels. Naomi Zack (1998) identified four main components of racism in European and American traditions. These include biological differences among groups, cultural differences among groups, unequal distributions of political and economic power whenever different groups have come together and believed differences in the value or fundamental human worth of members of different groups (Zack 1998, 11).

The biological differences associated with race are commonly held to be the factual foundation of racial difference. Until the early twentieth century the cultural differences associated with race were believed to be inherited along with the biological differences. Since the 1920s the consensus among biological and social scientists has been that such cultural differences are not inherited but are the result of different historical circumstances (Zack 1998, 11). However, the differences in economic and political power that are associated with racial differences, as well as differences in social status, are the most serious part of the cultural differences associated with race. These inequalities in power between white and nonwhite racial groups motivate ongoing public debate about race and social justice.

Today, all human ranking based on racial difference is believed to be racist by educated people of all races. Similarly, any claim which holds that there is a biologically determined hierarchy of capacity or value among different races and that allegedly inferior races should be ruled by allegedly superior races is also described as racist (Bunnin and Yu 2004, 582). Racism is generally driven by fear and hatred and has led to major genocidal violence and war. Particularly, racism has been identified with the ideology and practice of slavery and other repressive control of African, Asian and indigenous American and Australian people (*ibid.*).

Historically, racism was employed to justify colonialism and imperialism and to destroy indigenous people and their culture. Racism is related to anti-semitism and was the intellectual foundation of Nazism in Germany. Pointedly, the German Nazis were keen race theorists, believing that distinctions can be drawn between Aryans and others specifically the Jews. The fact that Nazis showed concern only for the welfare of members of the "Aryan" race and the sufferings of Jews, Gypsies and Slavs were of no concern to them (Singer 1983, 319) explains the moral wrongness of racism.

Many contemporary discussions of racism focus on the instances of Nazi Germany, South Africa and the American history of the one-drop rule. In colonial America, prisoners from Africa were worked as slaves, along with Europeans and Native Americans. By the end of the eighteenth century, these African slaves were known as "negroes". By that time, those individuals who were then referred to as "negroes" and who historians after the 1930s later referred to as "Negroes", but who probably should have been referred to as American slaves,

had been conceptualized as a different race from whites, lower in biological hierarchy and intellectually and morally inferior to whites (Zack 1993, 116-122). The implication of this was that having made African prisoners slaves, they were defined as a “race” of “negroes”. Every member of this “race” of “negroes” was described as having the characteristics of a population that was essentially different from the “white” population (Zack 1998, 76).

However, because the “white” population was conceived as having a human birthright of freedom, what follows from the American racializing program was an identification of enslavement itself as a determinant of race. Many contemporary historians believed the “Negroes” were enslaved because they were “negroes” but the fact was that African prisoners and their descendants were enslaved and kept in slavery simply because they or their ancestors were first enslaved. This was made possible by the concept of “negro race.”

In South Africa, the doctrine of equality of all human beings came into conflict with public policies based upon the contrary doctrine of racial inequality. A racist attitude characterized the position that the South African citizens of European origin took, particularly the descendants of the original Dutch or Boer colonists, with regard to the local black Africans or Bantu inhabitants. In 1965, the Bantu inhabitants numbered about thirteen million as against some three million whites (Goffart 1967, 58). In spite of this huge gap in the numbers of blacks as against whites, the nation’s constitution and legislation expressly prescribe and legalize a complicated system of racial discrimination affecting practically every phase of private and public life.

Goffart (1967) identified historical, religious and economic factors as responsible for the complicated situation of South Africa. Historically, each of the principal racially opposed elements has originated from outside the South African territory. Religiously, the rigid doctrines of the predominant white element—Afrikaaners or Boers—have followed strict Calvinist lines, sanctioning racial inequality as a matter of divine and biblical institutions. Economically, the exploiters of the country’s principal sources of wealth—such as its highly developed mining industry, its diamonds coal, platinum and gold—utilize a far-reaching and complex force of black or Bantu labour, supplied by immigrants from other part of the African continent and subjected to a highly elaborate system of travel and social restrictions and corresponding limitations in the field of self-government (Goffart 1967, 58).

Although the South African situation may not be what we experience today, the form of behaviour usually identified with racism is discrimination.

Any behavioural account of racism (in terms of its effects, motivation or being connected to a social system) threaten to self-destruct because the key to racism lodges not in actions themselves but in the inputs, outputs or contexts that make those actions racist (Garcia 2001, 1437).

This is evident in certain debate over alleged differences between blacks and whites in America in whatever is measured by IQ tests. In this instance, applicants are considered for jobs on the basis of the race to which they belong rather than their individuality.

The principal characters in current problems involving race is for the typical American, the blacks and whites. Other races may include: Indians, Asians, people of mixed race and women of color. Also in reality, differences in racial types of identity are also constituted by ethnicity or the cultural traditions that are distinctive to varied groups and families (Zack

1998, 11). Hispanics for example are an American ethnic group with great racial variety among members. It is worthy of note to mention that black-white racial problems seem to be the most severe and this can be attributed to the history of slavery, segregation and poverty among African-Americans coupled with strong feelings of distance (lack of interaction) between blacks and whites.

America has a long history of racial categorization. These racial categories of black and white race form a rigid, asymmetrical classification system in the United States. At work is the one-drop rule which has been reflected in the United States census since 1920 (Zack 1998, 74). According to the one drop rule, an individual is racially black if he or she has one black ancestor anywhere in her genealogical line of descent, and this holds regardless of whether, or how many, white, Asian or Native American ancestors were also present. Contrastively, a person is white only if she has no nonwhite ancestors (Zack 1998, 74). This has become the logic behind American racial designation and the basis of the public policy associated with black chattel slavery which has been described as unjust by many historians.

Another racial category apart from that of the black-white are women of color. One of the tasks of feminist philosophy has been to explore the way in which feminist theory has itself maintained a conceptual legacy and a philosophical methodology rooted in racist presuppositions. Since the inception of feminist philosophy, its concern has been with race and racism due to historical and conceptual reasons. Historically, the struggle against sexism consistently followed in the footsteps of the struggle against slavery and racism, both in the nineteenth as well as the twentieth centuries. Women who resisted slavery and racism began to rethink common beliefs about women's role, and took inspiration from the abolitionist and civil rights struggle (Alcoff 1998, 475).

Conceptually, both racism and sexism appear to be similar form of oppression. "White supremacy" and "male supremacy" were parallel concepts developed to describe the structures of naturalized social hierarchies corresponding to each form of oppression. Both racism and sexism involve essentialist attributions of inferiority over whole categories of persons and thus are both fundamentally identity-based forms of oppression. Racial or sexed identity is said to determine life aspirations, achievable skills and intellectual abilities, among other things. The result in both cases is a kind of social segregation to appropriate spheres enforced by violence and economic blackmail (Alcoff 1998, 477).

Noting the intersections of racism and sexism, second-wave feminist theory (from the 1960s) has recognized the importance of addressing racism and racial differences among women. A concern with racism and racial differences among women has been in the background of most of the critical debates within feminist theory since the 1980s. The debates over essentialism and universalism have been motivated in large part by a concern with the tendency to overgeneralize from white Anglo women's lives. Similarly, early anthologies included essays on feminist issues like the family from black and Latina perspectives and explored the specific forms of sexism that nonwhite women face. Black and Asian women and Latinas offered a very different political approach to the family and to men, weighing the need to resist oppressive traditional institutions and relationships against the need to maintain strong communities (Alcoff 1998, 476).

In an attempt to explain how racism has been specifically manifested in black women's lives, Bell Hooks (1981 and 1992) argued that we need categories of racist sexism and sexist

racism to comprehend the forms of oppression black women suffered under slavery and in its aftermath. Hooks also criticized the concept of black matriarchy used widely in government reports as well as cultural representations that falsely portrayed black women as stronger, more confident and more capable than white women because of their experiences of the double burden of racism and sexism (Hooks 1992, 116). She viewed part of the legacy of slavery as that of allowing white misogyny to permeate black culture and black liberation movement, leaving black women to be treated as degraded property while white women are treated as more valuable property.

The Moral Wrongness of Racism

The social effects of racism on the individual and the society are myriad and this explains why racism as a practice is often described as arbitrary and morally wrong (Singer 1983, 310). These effects include poverty, miseducation, demoralization, corruption, hatred, despair, emotional repudiation, race-based deprivation of benefits, moral distaste, social discrimination and other setbacks that some racially oppressed people have suffered (Garcia 2001, 1437 and 1439). I will sketch the effects on the individual first then after, the society.

Racism denies the dignity in a person and prevents the individual from fully developing his potentials as a human being. Judging a person merely as a member of race rather than on his individual person not only amounts to failure to respect the dignity in that person but also means treating the person as less than the unique individual that he is. Even where our individual qualities would merit less than we receive as a member of a group—if we are promoted over better-qualified people because we went to the “right”, private school—the benefit is usually less welcome than it would be if it had been merited by our own attributes. When something of value has been lost, the sense of loss will be compounded by the feeling that one was not assessed on one’s own merits, but merely as a member of a group (Singer 1983, 316). One can infer from this that the inner unity and self-realization of the human person is indispensable for the creation of any truly human society. Since a racial society cannot guarantee the inner unity and self-realization required of the human person, racism cannot be reconciled with the independent core of personality, with that physical and psychological unity that each individual represents (Goffart 1967, 57).

Racism denies individuals of their fundamental human rights. People have rights to education, housing, employment and other basic human rights. To discriminate against blacks for instance in an ordinary employment situation, or in the letting of accommodation, threatens their basic rights and therefore should not be tolerated. Since individuals possess basic human rights by virtue of being human beings, these rights should be taken into consideration when providing them with employment, education or other benefits. This should also be based on their merits as individuals and not as members of some larger racial groups. Selecting or discarding whole groups of people will generally result, in, at best, a crude approximation to the results that are to be achieved (Singer 1983, 316).

On the social level, when racism is tested in the light of the undeniable unity of the human race, it is seen to tend essentially to purposes and values that contradict the objective purposes and values that unify humanity. In fact, racism denies practically, if not in theory, that there are any objective purposes and values common to all humanity (Goffart 1967, 57).

Race is not something one has control over in terms of choosing to belong to one race rather than the other or even choosing to give it up. The person who is denied advantages because of his race is totally unable to alter this particular circumstance of his existence and so may feel with added sharpness that his life is clouded, not merely because he is not being judged as an individual, but because of something over which he has no control at all. This according to Peter Singer (1983, 317) makes racial discrimination peculiarly invidious. Giving support to this view, Feinberg (1973) and Hart (1961) explain that it is difficult to think of anything for which race is a relevant characteristic, and hence to use race as a basis for discrimination is arbitrarily to single out an irrelevant factor, no doubt because of a bias or prejudice against those of a different race.

People have grown up with racial stereotypes, and these stereotypes are reinforced by a tendency to notice occurrences which conform to the stereotype and to disregard those which conflict with it. Stereotyping is morally problematic because in some forms it seems inevitable yet at the same time faulty. Putting this view in perspective, Judith Lichtenberg (1998, 46) explains that although it is difficult to make our way in the world without generalizations about people and situations by correlating their characteristics with predictions about what we can expect to happen, such generalizations are always flawed. This is because they attribute particular qualities to some people who don't possess them. Hence to generalize is to overgeneralize.

However, apart from denying the validity of the universal order as a benefit that unifies the whole human race, racism also denies the general and equal application of essential values in the fields of economic welfare, of art, of science, and above all, of religion. It maintains, for instance that each race should have its own science that should have nothing in common with the science of another race, particularly an inferior race (Goffart 1967, 57). This presupposition serves to perpetuate a divided society in which race becomes a badge of a much broader inferiority. When race is associated with economic status and educational disadvantage, this in turn gives rise to a situation in which there could be a coloring of truth to the claim that race is an irrelevant ground for discrimination between prospective applicants for employment or even tenants. The consequence of this is that members of a racial minority becomes overwhelmingly among the poorest members of a society, living in a deprived area, holding jobs low in pay and status, or no jobs at all, and less well educated than the average member of the community. This may result to violence among different races if the situation is not remedied.

Racism is generally driven by fear and hatred and has led to major genocidal violence and war which may destroy the structure of the society. It is on this ground that racism has been condemned as a practice that destroys the structure of society and fails to stand the test of extensive totality (Goffart 1967, 57). A group that claims for itself extensive totality, that is to say which judges the content of all other purposes and values from the standpoint of its own purpose and fundamental scale of values destroy the basic structure of humanity as true unity in true diversity and thereby destroys its own inner falsity and worthlessness. This is precisely the case with racism, both theoretical and practical. It places the fact of racial grouping in the central position, assigns to it such exclusive significance and efficacy that, in comparison, all other social bonds and groupings have no distinct individual and juridical foundation (Goffart 1967, 57). Through the extension of racial values, the entire life of

society becomes a mechanically unified totality; it is robbed of that form that is given it by the spirit, true unity in true diversity.

Another reason why racism is morally wrong on the social level is that it runs counter to the conception of justice which requires equal opportunity for everyone. In contemporary debates, equality of opportunity entails that social goods and benefits are distributed fairly among competing parties. A fair distribution of goods and benefits— especially well-paying jobs and seats in high-quality educational programs—to competing parties does not require that these benefits are distributed equally among them, but only that each party is not hindered by society in its pursuit of particular goods so that those persons who genuinely earn or merit them receive them (Shrage 1998, 559). In short, achieving equality of opportunity is about “leveling the playing ground” or making the competition for resources fair, rather than achieving more equal outcomes. In this way, the notion of equal opportunity is tied more to liberal principles of distributive justice than to radical egalitarian ideals.

It is because racism perpetuates racial discrimination with the attendant consequence of unequal opportunity that some liberal principles of justice stress the need to remedy the unequal circumstances of individuals in society. John Rawls (1971, 83-90) for example was motivated by the need to mitigate the effects of unequal circumstances created by race and class when he sets out the procedure towards arriving at the principles of justice that are fair and just. His liberty and difference principles of justice which are to be formulated in the original position behind the veil of ignorance serves to guide the distribution of resources in order to promote justice, fairness and moral equality of persons in any society.

Dewey’s Moral Pragmatism: An Instrument of Social Change

Pragmatic ethics is naturalistic, pluralistic, developmental and experimental.

It reflects on the motivations influencing ethical systems, examines the individual developmental process wherein an individual’s values are gradually distinguished from those of society, situates moral judgments within problematic situations irreducibly individual and social and proposes as ultimate criteria for decision making, the value for life as growth, determined by all those affected by the actual and projected outcomes (Seigfried 1999, 730).

Dewey begins his pragmatic ethics by viewing all human beings irrespective of race as living organisms acting within and responding to their environment. For him, people are neither predetermined mechanisms nor purely independent. Action is a feedback process of learning, operating within certain constraints but capable of a variety of developments (Hare 1995, 692). As cultural beings, people also live in a social environment in which the experiences of others regardless of their race shape their conduct. The process of learning then offers a third alternative for moral theory. Morals, for Dewey means growth of conduct. It involves learning the meaning of what people are about and employing that meaning in action. Since for Dewey ethics deals with all human action, it also legitimately involves “obtaining reliable information, broad experience, skills in communication, cooperation and deliberation; educational and political organization; and the creation of new values and ideals” (Hare 1995, 692). In short, for Dewey, ethics is the art of rendering human existence as meaningful and intrinsically fulfilling as possible. By viewing the moral life as capable of

being guided by a variety of intelligently undertaken experiments rather than as the subject matter for formal principles, Dewey thought it might be possible to improve or change the human condition.

Dewey identified himself with movements for social change by developing the implications of pragmatism for ethics and social philosophy. In his moral pragmatism, two major moral considerations are relevant in overcoming the evils of racism: these are his views about social intelligence or the democratic way of life and self-realization as a moral ideal. His allegiance to social intelligence was predicated on a number of assumptions. For Dewey, we live in a world of change, and there are always possibilities for contriving ways of bettering human lot. No institutions or policies should be regarded as beyond modification and since every situation presents more or less novel contingencies and opportunities, we should be prepared to address them creatively (Gouinlock 1993, 84). We also have an irreducible plurality of values: goods, obligations, entitlements; and they cannot be reduced to an all-sufficing or uncontroversial norm, or to a single form in each category. We must be willing to be accommodating in some measures. There is, moreover, no reason to suppose that any one individual by himself can decide questions for other mature individuals or can reach verdicts for interpersonal enterprises by consulting himself alone. Consultation, communication, is essential. Just as the isolated individual is impotent in scientific inquiry so also is he impotent in moral matters. One would be moved to adopt social intelligence not by virtue of an antecedent definition of moral rationality, but in response to the conditions and possibilities disclosed in honest and penetrating study of moral realities (Gouinlock 1993, 84).

Dewey inferred the idea of the ideal social order from his analysis of social intelligence. According to him, the ideal social order is a structure that allows maximum self-development of all individuals. It fosters the free exchange of ideas and decides on policies in a manner that acknowledges each person's capacity effectively to participate in and contribute to the direction of social life. The respect accorded to the dignity of each no doubt contributes to the common welfare of all. Differently put, in the realization of individuality, there is found also the needed realization of some community of persons of which the individual is a member; and conversely, the agent who duly satisfies the community in which he shares, by that same conduct satisfies himself (Schneider 1970, 100).

Pointedly, one can draw the implication of Dewey's idea of self-realization and the ideal social order for racism by stressing that his attempt is to overcome the problem of inequality created by racism. A consequence of such inequality is that people are denied equal opportunities as member of a different race and this prevents them from fully developing and achieving their potentials as human beings. Dewey's moral pragmatism therefore serves as instrument of social change if his ideal of the moral order which allows for self-realization is employed in any racial society. This type of growth is the only moral end for Dewey. He identifies it as a social process by stressing that our behaviour is characteristically interpersonal and as such, it is the source not only of most of our learning and our participation with others but also of our most profound satisfaction. As a condition of growth therefore, "shared experience is the greatest human goods" (Gouinlock 1998, 49). The construction of good is typically a shared activity greatly facilitated by deliberate cooperation.

Dewey recognizes the need for interpersonal relationships irrespective of race hence his account gives no room for racial discrimination. His moral pragmatism is essentially communicative. He describes it as a democratic life which implies respect for persons. Respect of this sort does not entail policy prescriptions, but it means that every person has a right to participate in the formation of the goods, that individuals be seriously receptive to each other's concerns, taking them into account as deserving honest hearing and that persons communicate with each other freely and honestly to convey their concerns and to propose their tentatively preferred plans of action. Out of such virtue and discourse, coupled with scientific knowledge, proposals for action would emerge and would be honoured (Gouinlock 1998, 49). It goes without saying that democratic virtues exclude deliberate antisocial behaviour which is a consequence of racist practice.

Again, if racism is conceived as a discriminatory conduct, an attitude of contempt or heartlessness which is expressed in individual or collective behaviour as some historians do (Garcia 1999, 769), then Dewey's moral pragmatism offers a means of behavioural change in racist practices. According to him, we live in a world where people are associated together and what one person does has important consequences for other persons.

Attempt to influence the action of other persons so that they will do certain things and not other things are a constant function of life. On all sorts of grounds, we are constantly engaged in trying to influence the conduct of others. Lawmakers, clergymen, journalists, politicians are all engaged in striving to affect the conduct of others in definite ways: to bring about changes, redirections, in conduct (Boydston 1985, 292).

The need for behavioural change as a remedy for racist practice is also evident in Dewey's claim that our conduct is governed by precedent which largely represents the entrenched prerogatives of privileged groups. Therefore the most beneficent change that could be introduced into society, consequently, would be the teaching and widespread adoption of experiential habits of thought.

We would not just address our several problematic situations with greater promise of success, but we would re-evaluate our economic and political behaviour with a view to what that behaviour really does and to what any alternatives to it might do (Gouinlock 1998, 49).

In re-evaluating our behaviour, Dewey recommends asking ourselves the question:

what attitude shall I adopt towards an issue which concerns many persons whom I do not know personally, but whose action along with mine will determine the conditions under which we all live (Boydston 1985, 319).

Rather than perpetuating the evils of racism, Dewey's recommendation of schooling of all kinds which incorporates the procedures of cooperative intelligence as a matter of routine can serve as a practical guide. Indeed, all forms of association might be conducted in a manner to make democratic values habitual. Were such favourable conditions to exist, he thought, this way of life would be reasonably approximated (Gouinlock 1998, 49). Dewey recognizes the fact of conflict and frustration which according to him are inevitable, but to prevent the problems of genocidal violence and war which may arise from racist practice, he enjoins that in personal relations, people should not enforce their views on other participants

in a unilateral way. They should assume that there will be differences of opinion and talk this problem over in a civil manner by trying to arrive at an amicable agreement about what to do. Even when this fails, conflict should not ensue for “our common activities are usually too precious for anything so shortsighted; our treasured relationships do not survive such intransigence” (Gouinlock 1998, 49). The virtues exhibited in such relations might be extended to incorporate much wider groups irrespective of their race.

Dewey is critical of the notion of changelessness and sees the need for social change when he explains that the good life is one of intelligent participation in the process of social change. Isolated individuals, in these context members of a race, might contrive any plan of action depending on their antecedent convictions; hence there might well be a chaos of plans. A moral problem such as that of racism arises just because individuals or groups differ in race and consequently are in conflict or disagreement. The common way to address such an impasse is to introduce a moral absolute of some kind, but since each side has its own absolutes, the impasse may continue or one side may defeat the other by means of superior power or race. In order to avoid this scenario that racism may present, a more promising approach according to Dewey might be to abandon the pretended absolutes and engage in a search for common solutions (Gouinlock 1998, 403). In this way, conflict, violence and war arising out of racist practice will be substantially less than they were when immovable oppositions were generated by moral absolutes.

Going by his analysis therefore, the task before everybody, particularly in a racial society is to learn to discard their dogmatic and absolute ways. The parties to moral deliberation must be willing to communicate, willing to be informed, to learn, to entertain novel proposals and to adjust. They must regard each other with respect and be willing to modify their judgments of their shared predicament and of each other (Gouinlock 2001, 404). Dewey was especially worried about blind steadfastness to prejudice and he believed appropriate scientific training would be one of the solvents to our propensity to regard ourselves as infallible. All means of education should attend to the ways in which “the liberal mind”, as he called it, might prosper (Gouinlock 2001, 404).

Moreover, Dewey condemns the idea of individuals been arrayed against each other in adversary relations as it is the case in racial societies. Moral deliberation should be communicative. Individuals should consult with one another, sharing their views about the nature of their problem, exchanging their concerns about the values at issue, proposing alternatives for conduct and modifying the analyses and proposals in an effort to create a consensus. This is the process that Dewey called “social intelligence” or democracy as a way of life (Gouinlock 2001, 403). This type of life rules out any form of racial discrimination and promotes peaceful and harmonious co-existence.

Thus far, this paper has examined racism and its anti-social effects. It argued that the form of behaviour often identified with racism is discrimination hence racism as a practice is morally wrong. Making a case for social change, the paper drew on the implication of pragmatism in ethics for racist practices by making reference to John Dewey’s moral pragmatism as a suitable approach and a possible tool for social change. It concluded by stressing that Dewey’s pragmatist approach of social intelligence and self-realization as moral ideal are two moral considerations that are relevant in overcoming the evil of racism and thus bringing about social change.

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