

The hidden cost of science in the dark age and the needed humility

The costs of doing science have no longer been limited to investments or expenditures in relation to scientific experiments or conducts. They now refer to different aspects of scientific progress (or stagnation [1]) and reflections upon the development (or failure) status of countries [2].

Nonetheless, an article by Livni (2019) in *Quartz* deals with another aspect of the cost of science, a hidden and inhumane one: the health and lives of enslaved people in the past [3]. The article concludes by saying:

There may come a time when these anonymous and involuntary efforts will finally be recognized as having contributed important findings to the study of science.

And this conclusion is reasonable. It is because the following has been agreed on:

The connections between science and the slave trade could also feed into ongoing debates about reparations and the historical legacies of slavery. Like some U.K. organizations, U.S. universities such as Yale, Georgetown, and Brown have acknowledged how they benefited from slavery.[4]

Or put as for the most part, Kathleen Murphy says, those conversations are framed “in terms of just dollars and cents, pounds and pence. Yet [the profits] can also clearly be measured in specimens collected and papers published.”

It seems that humility will be even more important for today’s scientists and researchers because individual contributions could hardly reflect the true costs that humans spent for scientific developments over the past centuries. And acknowledging the fact is the least modern sciences can do to show their intellectual honesty and humility [5]. Or as Kean put it correctly in [4]:

In research papers, scientists should mention how specimens were gathered. Taking the origin of specimens into account can also improve the research itself, especially given the paucity of collecting records in some cases.

And this view clearly resonates with Shkliarevsky (2019) that:

Today, science is more important than at any other time in human history. We no longer view science as merely a way to satisfy our curiosity. We expect science to contribute directly to our economic progress and to the general wellbeing of our society.[1]

It is also worth noting that Shkliarevsky says that with his full (and authoritative) understanding of “science and its discontents.” [6]

References

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