

**BETWEEN FICTION AND FACT: FURTHER REFLECTIONS ON
JONATHAN CHIMAKONAM'S CRITIQUE OF KWESI TSRI ON
BLACKNESS AND RACE**

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Abstract

In his [Africans are not Black: The Case for Conceptual Liberation], Kwesi Tsri relies extensively on myths and non-fictional narratives to dictate the origin of the racial disparagement of Afro-Americans and Africans from south of the Sahara. Owing to the synonymy between 'black' and 'Africa(n)' as well as the derogatory symbolism in the former that fuels the latter, Tsri submits the need to disassociate Africans from the concept, 'black.' Upon a critical conversation with Tsri's text however, Chimakonam discerns three flaws. Granted, the objections are salient, I augment herein, one of Chimakonam's critiques – the exclusion by Tsri, of non-fictional or scientific texts on the race discourse. Whereas I agree with Chimakonam that both the fictional and non-fictional accounts on race are pertinent for intellectual balance in Tsri's disquisition, I further suggest that in most cases, non-fictional or scientific theories on race are undergirded by the prejudice initiated by mythical and/or fictional narratives. I substantiate my thesis, relying on Karl Popper's evolutionary epistemology, with 21st century science admission that human genetic diversity cannot be captured by scientific theories of race.

Keywords: Africa, Blackness, Jonathan Chimakonam, Karl Popper, Kwesi Tsri.

Introduction

The context from which the concept 'black' emerged, on the one hand, and the categorical and symbolic usages of same to describe Afro-Americans and Africans, south of the Sahara, on the other hand, has yet to receive adequate reflection. This, to my mind is the core message embedded within the pages of Kwesi Tsri's (2016a) "Africans are not Black: Why the use of the term 'black' for Africans should be abandoned," and his (2016b) [Africans are not Blacks: The Case for Conceptual Liberation]. These intellectual efforts of his are thought-provoking, consciousness-raising and groundbreaking. For Tsri, the concept, 'black' when used to refer to [the] Africa[n], has categorical and symbolic connotations. These connotations for him, lead to the "...association between the group of people categorised as black and the negative qualities associated with the symbolic use of black" (TSRI 2016a, 147).

Tsri reflects that in ancient European texts, the concept 'black' symbolically depicts negativity, evil, badness, sorrow, death, and even personifies *Kip*, the goddess of death (TSRI 2016a, 148). He forays into the ancient Greek and ancient Roman literatures to relay the genesis and evolution of the term 'black' as a derogatory reference for Africans. He further submits that the symbolic usage of 'black' for Africans and their categorization as lesser humans also extend to early modern English literatures, especially in the works of William Shakespeare's. Even when he admits that there has been efforts to valorise 'blackness' by some movements, Tsri offers that these movements "...underestimate the fact that 'black' is so embedded with negative symbolism that anything it is used to qualify takes on a new meaning which is mostly negative" (TSRI 2016a, 155). Hence, he submits that the concept, 'black,' be abandoned, since it has become almost interchangeable with 'Africa[n].'

Though he lauds his effort as worthy and insightful, Jonathan Chimakonam (2018) in one of his three rebuttals, does not trust Tsri's excessive reliance on myths and similar works of fiction for his premises. Consequently, he hints that the conclusion drawn by Tsri is not intellectually balanced since Tsri omits non-fictional works of reputable personae such as Charles Darwin, Carolus Linnaeus, and Johann Blumenbach. Perhaps Tsri may have omitted these scholars because of their widespread and accentuated contributions to the discourse on race and applied more energy to the fictional and non-scientific perspectives, which have not garnered popular or public recognition, I concede to the thrust of Chimakonam but seek to extend the research and conversation further. Hence, in the pages ahead, I attempt to strike this intellectual balance (Chimakonam's demand) but also foreground my central thesis – "In nearly all instances, fictional narratives influence the non-fictional theories of race." I disclose that the concept 'black' and its derogatory symbolic embellishment for referring to Africans did not emerge *after* Charles Darwin, Comte de Buffon, Carolus Linnaeus, Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, Samuel Morton, Francis Galton, Theodosius Dobzhansky, Richard Lewontin, Luca Cavalli-Sforza, Francis Collins and Craig Venter, but prior to each of these scientific theorists of race.

In the section that follows, I provide a terse exposition of Tsri's contention before divulging the 'three' charges raised against him by Chimakonam (2018). Since my aim is to strike the needed balance, I invoke Karl Popper's (1963) evolutionary epistemology to demonstrate that nearly all scientific theories derive their basic assumptions from myths and fictions. I then extend this thinking to the scientific theories of race. Upon a historical assessment of the evolution of the concepts of race, I find my central thesis well corroborated – even in the face of scientific evidence, my research discerns that the fictional accounts are still influential for theoretical assumptions and hypotheses. Since 21st century science has come to admit that it cannot account for human genetic and racial diversity, fictions and myths, will need to be taken seriously. It is for this reason that I applaud Tsri for uncovering the real culprit in the race conversation – fictions and myths, even though he overlooks the significance of non-fictional narratives on race as pointed out correctly by Chimakonam.

On the ‘Three’ Rebuttals: Chimakonam on Tsri’s Reflections on ‘Africa[n] and ‘Black’

Tsri contends that the concept, ‘black’ is a misleading nomenclature for Africa[n]. Since colours have symbolic connotations which may be complementary and in other cases derogatory, Tsri finds ‘black’ a derogatory depiction of the African. With the established Eurocentric employment of the concept, ‘black’ from ancient times to refer to Africans, Tsri finds it insulting and racially loaded. Hence, he explores “...the genesis and evolution of the descriptions of Africans as black, the consequence of this practice, and how it contributes to the denigration and dehumanization of Africans” (TSRI 2016b, 1). I find Tsri’s reflections highly illuminating and consciousness-raising, especially as he shows how myths which are usually taken for granted actually inform human prejudice.

From his perusal of ancient Greek myths and literatures, Tsri (2016b) finds that the colour ‘white’ has always been perceived as a signifier for sanctity, cleanliness, excellence, and even superiority whereas ‘black’ on the other hand portrays impurity, badness, evil, savage, and inferiority. To show how this works in Greek literature, Tsri turns to Price (1883) whose philological exploration of the term in Greek literature is commendable. Price (1883: 1), avers that the Greek word for ‘black,’ which is ‘*melas*’ signifies negative concepts like sorrow, evil and even death. ‘Black’ also personifies ‘*Kip*’, the goddess of death. Meanwhile, ‘white’ on the other hand, in Greek is ‘*leukos*’, the concept which connotes all good and positive things. This usage was exported into ancient Rome as the notions – ‘*ater*’ and ‘*niger*’ for black refer to bad and negative things, ‘*albus*’ which means white, signifies good and positive things. Tsri (2016b, 28) perceives the ascription of ‘black’ and its negative connotations to Africans as calculated efforts to dehumanize Africans. For Tsri (2016a, 148) “available historical evidence shows that the ancient Greeks used both terms for Ethiopians and black interchangeably for Africans.” Works of prominent scholars such as Snowden (1971), Thompson (1989) and even Hannaford (1996) attest that the concept ‘Ethiopian’ which in the literal sense refers to ‘burnt-face’ or ‘sun-burnt-face’ was first used to depict Africans in the literatures of the Greek poet, Homer. At this juncture, a critic may interject: Granted that in ancient Greece, the concept, ‘black’ both symbolizes evil and refers to Ethiopians (or Africans) as Tsri portrays, but did this in anyway initiate any racial and political resentment against them by the Greeks? A straight answer to this question, to my mind, is elusive. It remains one of the enigmas in Tsri’s works.

On the one hand, Tsri's reasoning may lead one to affirm such possibility. However, historian, Frank Snowden discloses that before the sixth century A.D., although there was an "association of blackness with ill-omens, demons, devil, and sin, there is in the extant no stereotyped image of Ethiopians as the personification of demons or the devil" (SNOWDEN 1983, 107). Elsewhere, I also found that in ancient Greece and Rome, "the major divisions between people were more clearly understood as being between civic and barbarous, between the political citizen and those outside of the *polis*, and not between bloodlines and skin colour" (HANNAFORD 1996, 14). These approaches may lead to the affirmation that in the ancient world "no concept truly equivalent to that of 'race' can be detected in the thought of the Greeks, Romans, and early Christians" (FREDRICKSON 2002, 17). At this juncture, one is encouraged to pause and ponder whether or not the use and perception of 'race' in modern times, roughly as a term which "refers to supposedly discrete categories of people defined according to their physical characteristics" (BULMER & SOLOMOS 1999, 8) is how it was understood in ancient Greece and Rome. Tsri (2016a; 2016b) is silent concerning this.

Regardless of the foregoing ambivalence, ancient Greek and Roman employment of the term 'black' assumed decidedly negative denotations and connotations in the Bible where "the term black is extensively used in this religious context as a symbol to denote both negative and socially undesirable qualities, including sin, evil, curse and malevolence" (TSRI 2016b, 173). Tsri (2016a, 149) cites passages from the Bible [see (Jer. 13, 23); (Num 12, 1)]; early Christian literatures (*Life of Melania the Young* and *Epistle of Barnabas*); and Christian Church fathers like Origen and Jerome to conclude that:

The early Christian exegetes did not only describe and categorise Africans as black, but they also found it appropriate to present them as black in the symbolic sense. They considered the colour black and the term 'Ethiopian' as synonyms, and used both as religious terms for demons, evil, sin and carnal lust." (TSRI 2016a, 149)

Tsri brings this assessment in his reflection on Bibles African language translations of the Bible. Tsri (2016b) explains that the adventure of Christian missionaries in Africa led to the translation of the Bible into local African languages. Specifically referencing the *Ewe* version of the English King James Version of the Bible, he discloses that "...through colonialism/Christian mission, the racist use of the term black was exported back to Africa so that today, many Africans describe and categorise themselves with racially denigrating and dehumanizing terms" (CHIMAKONAM 2018, 3).

The description of Africans in classical antiquity and the Middle Ages soon infiltrated early modern fiction. In William Shakespeare's play, *Othello*, Tsri (2016b) finds that Shakespeare expresses the bias of his time toward the concept 'black.' In his words: "...the depiction of Othello as black results in other characters establishing an essential link between his humanity and moral and religious evils" (TSRI 2016a, 149). Tsri (2016a, 150) furthers that "...Shakespeare writes in a language in which the use of 'black' to both symbolise evil and to categorise people constitutes a deep conceptual structure that pre-exists any purpose he might use it for." Hence, while "...Othello was presented in the play as evil, demonic, barbarous, savage and all that is negative due to the colour of his skin, Desdemona was presented as good, heavenly, civilised and all that is positive due to the colour of her skin" (CHIMAKONAM 2018, 3). This negative profiling of Othello based on his skin is rendered clearer in Iago's proclamation to Brabantio in Act 1 Scene 1 of the work thus: "Even now, now, very now, an old black ram is tupping your white ewe. Arise, arise, Awake the snorting citizens with the bell or else the devil will make a grandsire of you. Arise I say." To have a black skin amounts to being a devil, obviously!

Assuming the anti-racist is convinced by his argument thus far, Tsri reasons that it will be misleading for the anti-racist to focus on the expulsion of the symbolic use. In his words: "I argue that it is the categorical use of the term 'black' that should be abandoned. This is so because as long as the symbolic use of the term 'black' remains, the categorical use of the term will be derogatory. Its use contributes to the persistence of racial stereotypes that are informed by the idea of blackness" (TSRI 2016a, 151). He strengthens his argument by revealing that 'black' as a synonym for Africans was not a self-acclaimed term but an imposition by Europeans. Africans have their original names that identify them with their geography and cultural statuses (LAKE 2003, 1). This outlook is also shared by Cheikh Anta Diop (1987, 13) who relays that the "in antiquity, the Ethiopians call themselves *autochthon*, those who had sprung from the ground." From these initial submissions, Tsri (2016a, 152-3), then asserts that "the argument for the abandonment of the categorical use of the term 'black' is about self-affirmation and self-definition that are void of imposed derogatory conceptual and semantic systems." Precisely for this reason, Tsri disagrees with the valorisation of 'black' by such groups as Steve Biko's Black Consciousness Movement, the Negritude Movement, the Harlem Renaissance, the New Negro Movement and the Black Power Movement as well as effort to decolonise blackness. The common denominator among them is that "the proponents of these ideologies have devised diverse ways of defining blackness as a positive concept in order to disconnect it from its embedded negative symbolism and then use it both as a legitimate identity from Africans and also as an appropriate tool for restoring Africans' denigrated/blackened identity" (TSRI 2016a, 153). Tsri reflects that those who seek to valorise blackness have not adequately realized that the concept categorically reinforces hegemony. In his words:

The importance of the term 'black' in the construction of the 'otherness'

and ‘difference’ of Africans and how it facilitated their marginalisation, exploitation and oppression is underestimated by these advocates. The depiction of African peoples as black has nothing whatever to do with the literal or symbolic blackness of Africans, but has instead to do with the denigration (blackening) of their nature and character. Thus, what needs changing is not the ‘culture’s attitudes toward blackness and black’ but rather the socio-cultural practice of using a term that is embedded with negative moral values to depict a group of people. (TSRI 2016a, 155)

He observes that these movements have not really given deep thoughts to the concept ‘black’ to be able to decipher exactly what made it a choice vocabulary for imperialist and racist agenda. Both ‘white’ and ‘black’ are binary oppositions which help preserve the system of racism. He concludes:

So, as long as the concepts of black and white bodies permeate our emancipatory discourses, the struggle against racism, particularly racism against Africans, will be counterproductive...Thus the use of the term ‘black’ for Africans and their descendants should be abandoned because of its ‘implicit racial modifier.’ (TSRI 2016a, 156-7)

On the whole, Tsri’s (2016b, 1) contention is to use “the analysis to advance a case for abandoning the use of the term “black” to describe and categorise Africans.”

As apposite as the foregoing seems, Chimakonam submits three reasons why Tsri’s scheme founders. Firstly, Chimakonam charges Tsri for failing to offer an alternative, in spite of marshaling commendable arguments why and how the word ‘black’ reinforces discrimination and denigration of Africans. In his words: “Having recommended the abandonment of the term black, what does the author provide as its better alternative? The author was silent on this and the reader may find it unsatisfactory to give up what is available without any alternative” (CHIMAKONAM 2018, 4).

Secondly, since, Tsri’s object is conceptual liberation, Chimakonam finds a detailed and original analysis in this connection, lacking throughout the treatise. For Chimakonam (2018, 4), “the author’s original contribution in the work is in his ‘conceptual liberation’ but his definition of the formulation appears imprecise or, at least, muddled up in Ngugi wa Thiongo’s project of linguistic liberation. The reader would expect to see an elaborate description of what conceptual liberation really is and how it might work in practice...” I now turn to the third warrant from Chimakonam (2018), although it is the first cited by him against Tsri.

Chimakonam observes that Tsri's commitment to *only* fictional works vitiates his conclusion owing to the failure to explore non-fictional literatures that "...would have created the needed balance and confidence in his conclusion" (CHIMAKONAM 2018, 4). He recommends Carolus Linnaeus (1758), Johann Friedrich Blumenbach [1999 (1795)] and Charles Darwin [1949 (1859)] as non-fictional literatures that could have provided much needed balance in Tsri (2016b). As an aftermath, Chimakonam (2019b, 1), in another publication submits that the colour-branding of peoples ought to indicate racial variety but not racial hierarchy, as the latter not only reinforces racial subjugation but substantiates racism. In the section follows, I make an effort to meet the demand of Chimakonam, strike this 'balance' and draw the essential implications.

Prejudices and the Evolution of Scientific (Race) Theories: A Popperian Exploration

Here, I argue that the 'something' between mythical or fictional proposals and scientific narratives on race is prejudice – an influence diffusing from the former into the latter. And it is usually assumed that fiction can never be factual even when in some instances, it has served as the catalyst for the evolution of scientific thought. This is what Karl Popper proclaims in his *Conjectures and Refutations*, that there is a connection between what we call myths today and scientific theories proper. In other words, it is the view of Popper that almost all that passes as scientific theories derived from myths. For Popper (1963, 36):

I realize that such myths may be developed, and become testable; that historically speaking all – or very nearly all – scientific theories originate from myths and that a myth may contain important anticipations of scientific theories. Examples are Empedocles' theory of evolution by trial and error or Parmenides' myth of the unchanging block universe, in which nothing ever happens and which if we add another dimension becomes Einstein's block universe...

The foregoing obviously implies that most times, myths, which have metaphysical basis, inform the starting point of scientific theories. Once the myths are developed and become testable, they evolve, albeit not automatically into scientific theories. Since Popper's approach validates the outlook that "every fact is theory-laden" (HARRIS 1988, 12), I take his reflections further to foreground the central thesis of this inquiry – "Nearly all scientific theories are myth-laden." I will converse with some scientific explanations or theories of racial differences from ancient to modern times in European history to corroborate Popper and my central thesis. In this direction, Popper's evolutionary epistemology, which treats the process of science as a process of selecting among "bold theories," without emphasis on their sources or authors (POPPER 1963, 215), will be indispensable.

In plain terms, evolutionary epistemology is a “naturalistic approach to epistemology, according to which human beings’ and other organisms’ capacities of knowledge and belief are the products of biological evolution (as well as social evolution)” (REDDY 2011, 13). It is in this sense that Popper admits that the way to truth is paved by bold conjectures or trials (SHEARMUR 2019, 2). The main thrust of evolutionary epistemology for Popper therefore is the growth of knowledge and the continuity of animal and human knowledge (REDDY 2011, 10). Evolutionary epistemology finds place in Popper’s *Logic of Scientific Discovery*, where Popper describes scientific progress and also prescribes a methodology for science through the idea of negative falsificationism (AFISI & OFUASIA 2018, 167-168). This association of Popper’s evolutionary epistemology with falsificationism underscores the analogy between biological evolution and the evolution of scientific theories. This is a view that has been branded as Evolutionary Epistemology of Theories (BRADIE 1986). This theory states that the “growth of scientific theories is explained by way of analogy with biological evolutions...a lot of competing views will be proposed to explain phenomena in the world. But only one or some of them are accepted by scientists and all others are eliminated” (REDDY 2011, 16). This is the aspect of Popper’s reflections that I seek to extrapolate to support my view that much as scientific theories of race are undergirded by the principle of trial and error, non-scientific narratives such as myth and fictions inform the minds of nearly all scientists regarding what will be acceptable and/or not.

Mirroring Popper’s framework against the scientific history of the concept of ‘race’ in the pages ahead will reveal two truths. Firstly, the idea that most times, myths and fictions inform the theoretical assumptions of scientific theories (in this case, of race) is relatively accurate. Secondly, the history of the biological research on race not only validates the first claim but also bear semblance with Popper’s evolutionary epistemology as a template upon which scientific progress thrives. I encourage the reader to pay attention to these propositions as I peruse the history of the scientific theories of race to strike the intellectual balance that Chimakonam demands from Tsri.

It is an established reality that does not require further expatiation that ‘black,’ in ancient Greek and Roman fictions depicts things evil, negative, bad and morally undesirable. It underscores how in history Africans have been discriminated against and dehumanized. I propose that the crucial thing is to inquire where and how discrimination along physical and biological features commenced in human history. This is one of the questions that bothered Michael Yudell who reveals that “rooting human variation in blood or in kinship was a relatively new way to categorise humans. The idea gained strength towards the end of the Middle Ages as anti-Jewish feelings, which were rooted in an antagonism towards Jewish religious beliefs, began to evolve into anti-semitism (YUDELL 2011, 14). Granted that distinction along biological features did not arise until the Middle Ages, how does this affect the African?

The discrimination of the Middle Ages in European history seems to have injected some forms of bias into European scholarship and then unleashed upon traditional Africans. For instance, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1975, 177) submits that the African “is an example of animal in all his savagery and lawlessness.” Similarly, Lucien Levy-Bruhl (1995, 43) describes Africans as “Primitive, barbaric, irrational, uncivilised and most importantly people without capacity for critical and rational thinking- qualities that is natural to doing philosophy.” Perhaps this prejudice informs Immanuel Kant’s outburst regarding an African: “This fellow was quite black from head to toe, a clear proof that what he said was stupid” (Quoted in CHIMAKONAM 2019a, 189). David Hume whose intellectual stirrings roused, and inspired Kant submits that Negroes and other races are low-grade vis-à-vis Europeans (POPKIN 1978, 215). These comments which are mostly founded on fictions and prejudice lack proper scientific bases. The African continues to be dehumanised both in person, fiction and scientific works. In other words, the categorisation of the African as a lesser human being is mostly based on skin colour usually informed by fictions. So then, in what ways have the theories of race reinforced this perspective? Perhaps the starting point is to revisit the discourse on race.

The term ‘race’ before 1800 was used generally as a synonym for ‘lineage’ (BIDDISS 1979, 11). Elsewhere, one gleans that much as the term had been in use before the 18th century, usually to refer to domesticated animals, “It was introduced into the sciences by the French naturalist Louis LeClerc Comte de Buffon in 1749. Buffon saw clearly demarcated distinctions between the human races that were caused by varying climates” (YUDELL 2011, 15). From a Popperian perspective and in the context of the history of the idea of race, this indicates how myths and fictions were developed to become testable propositions. The history of scientific theories of race and the discrimination along colour lines must honor Buffon as a patron saint. To Buffon, the natural state of humanity was derived from Europeans. According to Yudell (2011, 14), Buffon believes that Europe “produced the most handsome and beautiful men” and represented the “genuine colour of mankind” – which of course is white. The idea that the genuine colour of humanity is white has no biological or genetic backing at this time in history. It is a proposition that was engendered by the assumptions and prejudices sponsored by the fictions that Tsri (2016b) articulates as key culprit in the race discourse. The testable proposition: “Europeans have the genuine colour of mankind,” initiated by Buffon, was further refined as a scientific proposition by Swedish biologist Carolus Linnaeus (1758).

In his “Natural System,” Linnaeus divided humanity into four groups: *Americanus*, *Asiaticus*, *Africanus*, and *Europeaeus*. Since “facts are theory-laden,” and “...motives also influence methodology” (HARRIS 1988, 13), Linnaeus invokes human physical and behavioural features and thus became the first to reduce this prejudice to a testable hypothesis. Regarding *Africanus*, he says they are “black, phlegmatic...hair black, frizzled...nose flat; lips tumid; women are without shame, they lactate profusely; crafty, indolent, negligent...governed by caprice” (SMEDLEY 1999, 164). *Americanus* and *Asiaticus* were not so poorly described. On the other extreme, *Europeaeus*, are “white, sanguine, muscular...eyes blue, gentle...inventive...governed by laws (SMEDLEY 1999, 164).

Toward the end of the 18th century, the assumptions and prejudices initiated by myths were developed further. The German scientist Johann Blumenbach [1999 (orig. 1795)], continued Linnaeus’ efforts by proposing five types of race: Caucasian, Mongolian, Ethiopian, American, and Malay. Of these five, Blumenbach posits that the Caucasian is the paragon or ideal race (GOULD 1996, 408).

What may be observed thus far unveils the transition of ideas informed by myths into prejudices and opinions. It was not until the beginning of the 19th century that these propositions (accrued via fictions), were taken into scientific laboratories where “...motives also influence methodology” (HARRIS 1988, 13). To justify my first hypothesis, how myths and fictions inform the theoretical assumptions of scientific theories I turn to Samuel Morton.

A scientist like Morton “offers a variety of explanations for the nature of white racial superiority...to address the nature and intellectual difference between races, the “natural” positions of racial groups in American society, and the capacity for citizenship of non-whites” (YUDELL 2011, 16). With the scientific method of observation and experimentation in full swing around this time, Morton collected hundreds of skulls from all over the planet to measure their volumes. His experiments led him to postulate that “the Caucasian and Mongolian races had the highest cranial capacity and thus the highest level of intelligence, while Africans had the lowest cranial capacity and thus, the lowest level of intelligence. This work became the basis for more than a century of work studying intelligence and race” (YUDELL 2011, 16).

Morton’s efforts were however, misleading if not false. Stephen Jay Gould, who, more than a century after Morton’s death used the same experimental materials and methods, could not replicate the previous conclusions. This led Gould (1996, 70) to conclude that Morton’s ‘subjective ideas’ (or shall I say prejudice?) about race influenced his methods and conclusions, leading to the omission of contradictory data and to the conscious or unconscious stuffing or under-filling of certain skulls to match his pre-ordained conclusions (FAUST 1981, 14). Between Morton and Gould, I discern how the epistemology of race keeps evolving and how the prejudices from myths keep fueling this evolution.

In the 19th century, Charles Darwin's *The Descent of Man*, substantiates the white supremacy outlook since he considers every population that is not white and European to be savage. In his words the savages have "low morality, insufficient powers of reasoning and weak power of self-command" (DARWIN 1871, 97). Darwin applies his principle of natural selection to justify white supremacy, the extermination and replacement of non-white humans, whom he considers as the evolutionary link between Caucasians, the civilised race and animals. Darwin insists that the gap between civilised man, (whites) and his closest evolutionary ancestors (i.e. non-whites) will widen. The gap will eventually be between civilized man "...and some ape as low as a baboon, instead of as at present between the negro or Australian and the gorilla (DARWIN 1871, 201). Owing to this, Michael Yudell (2011, 16) concedes: "If racial science is science employed for the purpose of degrading a people both intellectually and physically, then beginning in the 19th century...scientists played an increasingly active role in its development, all the while shaping the race concept." At the turn of the 19th century, there was a new dimension to explaining humanity's diversity as the discourse soon migrated fully into the field of biology, precisely genetics.

Genetics quickly came to be used as the formative language for modern racism as ideas about human differences and variations became grounded in biology. This is what has been termed as the 'geneticisation of race.' This perspective stresses that racial diversities in appearance and complex social behaviours may be understood as genetic distinctions between the racial groups. This outlook was shaped in large parts by eugenics (YUDELL 2011, 16-7).

In the first three decades of the 20th century, eugenics was generally proposing "the belief that human races differed hereditarily by important mental as well as physical traits, and that crosses between widely different races were biologically harmful" (PROVINE 1986, 857). The movement, according to Francis Galton, the founder, is to create a status quo which allows "the more suitable races or strains of blood a better chance of prevailing over the less suitable" (GALTON 1892, 25). Through eugenics some racial groups deemed fitting, will be allowed to procreate while some others, less fitting will be denied "either through sterilization as was the case in the United States, or through genocide, as was the case in Nazi Germany" (YUDELL 2011, 17). Eugenics is credited with the sterilization of at least 30, 000 humans in the United States and was a powerful ideological force in Nazi Germany (CONDIT 1999, 27).

Fictions should no longer be taken with a pinch of salt! The prejudice ignited by myths albeit innocently in ancient Greek and Roman literatures have continued to endure in an era of sophistication in knowledge and scientific breakthroughs. The prejudices of the myths continue to guide and even inform scientific theories of race. The early 20th century witnessed the height of scientific racism, backed by fictional assumptions from antiquity and 19th century science. It was in this era that efforts were made to contest the derogatory conclusions of scientific racism. Afro-American scholars had to come out to falsify scientific racism since they could no longer withstand the onslaught and dehumanizing implications of the theories of race.

In 1909, Kelly Miller (1909, 4) writes: Since civilisation is not an attribute of color of skin, or curl of hair, or curve of lip, there is no necessity for changing such physical peculiarities". It is the position of W.E.B Du Bois that biological theories on race cannot stand as a basis for human diversity. For him, race is a social construct. I agree with Du Bois since fictions and myths too are social constructs concocted to explain the phenomena. Du Bois may have observed how such constructs affect scientific theories of race, but there was nothing he could do other than raise awareness that "the human species so shade and mingle with each other that it is impossible to draw a color line between blacks and other races" (DU BOIS 1968, 16).

In the mid-20th century, eugenics was faulted and then substituted with population genetics and evolutionary biology. Eugenics was faulted principally for holding a fixed immutable nature of the racial groups it divides. Population genetics and evolutionary biology "understood human races as dynamic populations of genes between populations" (YUDELL 2011, 18). Within the fold of population genetics and evolutionary biology, the task, according to the influential Theodosius Dobzhansky (1962, 263), is to make genetic "diversity intelligible and manageable" in scientific study. This new dimension was consequent on the breakthroughs in genetics wherein genetic variation is accepted to be very common within species than once thought.

In addition to the above, evolutionary synthesis in the biological sciences, a fusion of population genetics, experimental genetics and natural history faulted the eugenic difference among the species. It is from the era onward that "changes in the concept of race were influenced by a growing cadre of scientists who were generally more liberal on matters of race than had been their predecessors" (YUDELL 2011, 18). This is not to say that the era of the influence of fictional narratives on the race theories ended. It has been found that "even as biological and anthropological thoughts embraced the new genetic-based race concept, many scientists held-fast to obsolete notions of race, suggesting that even widely accepted and validated science could not be an antidote to the racism of many in the field and beyond" (YUDELL 2011, 20). Carlton Coon and R.A. Fisher fall within this cadre. Fisher who is one of the founders of population genetics held strongly to the denigrating prejudice that human groups are unequally endowed both intellectually and morally (YUDELL 2011, 20). Coon, on the other hand, went as far as reviving Morton's conclusion which had already been falsified by Gould.

By the late 20th century, Richard Lewontin showed that human populations were even more diverse than initially thought. Through molecular genetic techniques in gel electrophoresis, Lewontin (1972, 381) discovered that race had "virtually no genetic...significance." His finding reveals that since genetic diversity persists even more, within a racial group than between or among them, then racial categorisation on genetic differences will be defective. At this point, a little elaboration is needed.

The result of Lewontin (1972) suggests genetic differences manifest more *among*, say black Africans than *between* black Africans and Caucasians, or Red Indians, for that matter. Impliedly, the variation gap is not as wide as previously alluded. Lewontin (1982) thus concludes: “The use of racial categories must take its justifications from some other source than biology. The remarkable feature of human evolution and history has been the very small degree of divergence between geographical populations as compared with the genetic variations among individuals.” By the end of the 20th century, geneticist Luca Cavalli-Sforza et al (1997) affirmed Lewontin’s findings via contemporary DNA techniques.

For Cavalli-Sforza (1997, 5419): “the subdivision of the human population into smaller number of clearly distinct, racial or continental groups...is not supported by the present analysis of DNA.” The implication is that race cannot derive its theoretical background from biology. What this means is that ‘race’ as a concept is not applicable as a classificatory paradigm. In the face of this report incipient laboratory research, there is still lack of consensus as Arthur Jensen and Nobel laureate William Shockley still embrace the biological account of racial diversity. However, the 21st century dispels the thrust of these erudite scholars.

In the 21st century, Francis Collins and Craig Venter, after extensive and rigorous laboratory efforts, concluded that human genetic diversity cannot be captured by the concept of race. They further aver that all humans have genome sequence that are 99.9% identical (YUDELL 2011, 22). For Venter, “the concept of race *has no genetic or scientific basis*” [(WIESS & GILLIS 2001, A1) emphasis mine]. In a related fashion, Collins and Mansoura (2001, S224) declare that: “those who wish to draw precise racial boundaries around certain groups will not be able to use science as a legitimate justification.” On the other hand, is it plausible to use non-scientific narratives and myths to draw racial boundaries? At this juncture, Tsri, more than anyone will affirm.

If after all these years and centuries of subjecting Africans especially to countless series of dehumanization, scientific and non-fictional narratives (which Chimakonam places so much weight upon) lacks the capacity to explain racial diversity, does it matter that we turn to Tsri’s insistence on myths? I submit that this is pertinent since no one but Tsri (2016a; 2016b) reminds us of the urgency to return to the origin of racial distinction in works of fiction (via the symbolic meaning of ‘black’ for Africans), as they continue to impress and influence albeit subtly, non-scientific and non-fictional prejudices and assumptions of some people against their fellow human beings.

Conclusion

The black-white distinction which presents itself as oppositional dualism in fictional literatures going as far back as ancient Greece and ancient Rome, seems to have engendered biases in non-fictional scientific accounts of race. My aim is to strike a balance between the non-fictional narratives that Chimakonam (2018) demands from Tsri's (2016a; 2016b) one-sided alliance with fictional and mythical intellectual exertions. Furthermore, reading Tsri reminds me of Popper's submission that almost all scientific theories were formulated from myths. A perusal of the scientific history of the concepts of race not only validates Popper's perspective but also his evolutionary epistemology account of the emergence and advancement of scientific theories. Through the history of the concept of race from ancient times to the 21st century, I have been able to disclose that even when fictional narratives on racial diversity lack scientific backing theoretically, they continue to influence scientists and the public practically. Inadvertently, the failure of scientific theories of race to convincingly account for racial diversity further strengthens Tsri's trust in myths, methinks. Tsri would have, however, made his case fairer had he incorporated into his works, a history of the theories of race as I have helped him here. For this reason, I agree with Chimakonam that Tsri's works ought to have explored non-fictional literatures, in order to attain the required rigour, intellectual balance and the effect that the work should have on readers. Non-fictional narratives on Africans such as the ones recommended by Chimakonam are deeply steeped in prejudices although recent scholarship has exposed these erroneous assumptions. In essence, even when I concede to Kelly Owens and Mary-Claire King (1999: 451-453) that "...prejudice does not require a rational basis, let alone an evolutionary one, but the myth of major genetic differences across "races" is worth dismissing with genetic evidence," it is the case that most people are not schooled in genetics. The fictional narratives are appealing and easily assimilated; they are still popular in several parts of the world. Hence, I agree with Tsri that fictional narratives on race should receive more critical attention and that the 'black' categorisation which symbolises the age-old denigration of Africans be rejected by renaming 'Africa.' This is one of the submissions of Tsri to combating the denigration that is fueled by the symbolic implication of skin colour. It is on this note that I conclude that there is an urgent need for Africans within the continent and in the Diasporas, to converse and offer a worthy name for the continent and its people.

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