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## Non-moral Considerations on the Civil Rights Narrative

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## Non-moral Considerations on the Civil Rights Narrative\*



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In this paper I argue that in the service of their political agenda, many leaders of the recent past have made decisions that, even today, serve to confuse the racial dialectic and slow civil rights progress in the 21st century. This confusion is then exacerbated by two related factors: the oversimplification of history common in the civil rights era, and the imprecision brought about by the use of moral language. Understanding these two factors is key to many phenomena seen both politically and culturally in America today.

Nietzsche believed that without the moral authority that God provides, we've lost our grounding for our belief in what "Good" or "Evil" truly is. A chair without a blueprint can never be said to have failed in its design or can never be said to require any essential qualities besides the most general ones that make up the form of a chair. Similarly, without a "blueprint" or design for human moral behaviors (like the morals found in say, the bible), little can be said of what is required in human moral behaviors as well. For example, justifying the condemnation of the system of morality used by Joseph Stalin, or in some Islamic cultures, becomes much more difficult.

In this paper a similar position is taken on the Civil Rights Movement using Black history to exemplify my argument. I use Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue* and other texts to examine contemporary thinkers like Coates. Without Reverend King's spiritual beliefs, the evils of racism become much more nuanced than simply a condemnation of acts broadcasted irregularly over the news in the last 50 years or so. I'll try to illustrate the practical issues of understanding race relations with the modern emotivist ethics MacIntyre asserts is our common moral system today. I'll do this by taking a closer look at the philosophical realities of both the political relationship between Blacks and in the hypothetical perpetrators of different eras of racism. I do this because I believe realistically, those two levels are the only two which can be agreed upon by academic thinkers and otherwise to be contextually appropriate and free of any anachronistic moral judgements possessed of the same weaknesses he characterizes.

With that, I'll also establish a more contextual understanding of our racial past. Then I'll say a little more about how this understanding is more conducive to social progress for disadvantaged groups; for I believe it is intellectuals and academics who will have to take the first steps towards a practical, realistic diagnosis of the problems surrounding disadvantaged groups and offer a prescription for a more egalitarian future. In this paper I will attempt to establish that the racism of different eras are distinctly different occurrences and that the inclusion of moral language stifles conversation between not only Blacks and Whites, but theoretically any disadvantaged group with the majority by infusing assertions of injustice with a relativism and does not encourage a closer look at the issues.

\*This scholar and faculty mentor have requested that only an abstract be published.