

Subject: Re: [FLIP] [nativestudents] Review's being jokes again

From: Eric Wilson - To: Grant Avalon - Date: 24 February 2016 at 03:55

I was going to just let this die, but it's past midnight and I'm still awake so I might as well put in my 2 cents.

Dear Grant,

I'll speak to you, one FroSoCoan to another. I shall begin by asking you this very simple question: how was Western culture central to the fight against slavery?

You bring up the works of Montesquieu and Mill. I have read Mill, and shall not pretend to have read Montesquieu. So we have two examples of men who opposed slavery on some grounds. Okay, good.

But these two men do not negate the fact that the West has been perhaps the most infamous driver of slavery in the world. I (and I believe many others would agree) am not one to give credit to a civilization for "fixing" a problem when that civilization knowingly played a direct part in creating the problem to begin with. That the descendants of slavers (keeping to the civilization aggregate) realized that their ancestors had committed a grave injustice is not enough to undo the perhaps unknowable amounts of suffering their ancestors had wrought. As Malcolm X said, "If you stick a knife nine inches into my back and pull it out three inches, that is not progress."

It is on this note that I must directly address the straw man attack you made on Jonathan, claiming that he "[Harshly judged] individuals based on the actions of their contemporaries..." Read his critique again, and notice that he said nothing ill of Montesquieu and Mill, stating only that their antislavery positions "[do] not make them original or great by any means." For what originality is there in the idea that people should be treated better than livestock?

But lastly, I find it hypocritical that you call Jonathan "smug and dismissive" yet your first public reply was "I apologize. It appears their message was lost on you," when he stated that he had read Montesquieu and Mill.

Don't criticize people for "not making an attempt to forge a dialogue" when you start out by insulting their intelligence. Also, don't be so presumptuous that a written work has the same value and meaning to everyone that has ever read it (as you suggest in your second reply when you imply that Jonathan's reading would automatically make him agree with the quotes he put up).

Dear Jovan,

Any idea out in the open is subject to whatever public praise or thrashing that people feel like giving it. I do not believe that Grant came into the conversation seeking dialogue. His statement "Perhaps you should read Montesquieu or Mill. I think you'll find their works back up the quotes you selected," followed by "Because if you had, you presumably wouldn't be mocking these assertions," sound less like invitations for dialogue and more like sheer rudeness (had another phrase here, but decorum).

Maybe he didn't want his views out in the open. Fine, he probably could have asked. But that doesn't excuse the fact that his first reply-all seems as nothing more than an insult.

On Tue, Feb 23, 2016 at 5:14 PM, Grant Avalon <gavalon@stanford.edu> wrote:

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the_diaspora mailing list

the_diaspora@lists.stanford.edu

https://mailman.stanford.edu/mailman/listinfo/the_diaspora