

Chapter 9—White Fragility In Action

Summary Points

This chapter is largely informational. DiAngelo starts with our feelings that come from racial challenges 118. Those feelings usually manifest in action or behavior 119. Because these feelings and actions are strong, they need justification (it seems as though every component of whiteness has needed justification!). We use certain claims to do so 119-120. Those claims, DiAngelo notes, are supported by fundamental assumptions 121. These particular assumptions *function* in a certain way for white fragility. Ultimately, this all keeps racism protected—and remember, that racism is a system. Her argument is, if I understand it correctly, as follows: because racism is a system of which is sustained by white people, that system can only survive if white people maintain the habitus discussed in past chapters. This is done so through fragile responses that are the product of racial insulation predicated upon our control and power.

Reflection Questions

1. Why are white people okay, at least when confronted by DiAngelo, with abstract ideas about racism but recoil when it is personal? Moreover, how has this made its way into our theology? We say things all the time like, “people do not care

about what you know, they just want to know that you care,” or “enough with all of that deep theological talk, just talk about Christ and love—the main things.” These are abstract sayings but are deeply theological/philosophical ironies. Can you identify why?

2. Because this chapter is basically the mechanics of white fragility, identify which feelings, behaviors and assumptions you resonate with most, and think through how they come to fruition in your own fragile responses. But also keep in mind that your own responses are not the key point—in a way, that would only further the individualism that DiAngelo is trying to get us out of. Think through how you see them operate societally--that is, systemically.

Recurring Questions

3. How has your understanding of whiteness progressed?
4. How do you sense God is calling you to respond?
5. What are your lingering fragile responses and why?
6. Are you sure you understand the Cross?

Homework

Figure out and journal how each of the introductory examples manifest and display white fragility.