



Black Rights/White Wrongs »

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## Kant's Untermenschen

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### Abstract and Keywords

Immanuel Kant is pivotal to the Enlightenment, so if racist ideas were central to his thought this implies a radical rethinking of the conventional narratives of the history of modern Western philosophy. After an opening section on the significance of the concept of personhood to modernity, the chapter turns to an examination of Kant's racial views and their implications. It canvasses the work of various commentators and argues for the position that Kant's racism shaped his view of personhood and who is entitled to equal respect—not, it claims, blacks and Native Americans, whom Kant saw as “natural slaves.” The final section outlines various possible objections to this line of argument and presents replies.

**Keywords:** Immanuel Kant, racism, sexism, persons and sub-persons, scope of the categorical imperative

And that brings us to personhood, and a title deliberately chosen to be provocative. In bringing together the moral theorist of the modern period most famous for his putatively uncompromising commitment to the infrangibility of our duty to respect *persons*, and the term, *sub-persons*, infamously associated with the Nazi movement, I am seeking to demonstrate the racialization of this foundational concept of liberalism and thus to challenge how we think about modern Western moral and political philosophy. Kant's pivotal place in the Enlightenment project and the significance of his work for ethics, political philosophy, metaphysics, epistemology, and aesthetics locates him strategically. If Kant is central as an emblematic figure, and if racist ideas were in turn central to his views, then this obviously implies a radical rethinking of our conventional narratives of the history and content of Western philosophy. And such a rethinking, as emphasized from the start, is precisely what I am arguing for.

I will divide my discussion into three sections: (1) some general background points about modernity and personhood, (2) Kant's racial views and their implications, and (3) objections and replies.

### Background: Modernity and Personhood

What are *persons*, and why does the concept become particularly important in the modern period? “Persons” is the non-sexist way of referring to humans instead of calling them “men.” (With science fiction having opened up our horizons, it would also be appropriately used, as in Kant, to categorize intelligent aliens.) Persons are entities who, because of their characteristics (for example, their threshold level of intelligence, their capacity for (p.92) autonomy), morally deserve to be protected by certain rights and freedoms, and who are on a normatively level playing field with respect to one other. And the link with the modern period is that whereas in previous ages (the slave states of ancient Greece and Rome, the feudal hierarchies of medieval Europe) moral *inequality* was the norm, modernity is supposed to usher in the epoch when all

humans are seen as, and treated as, equal rights-bearing persons. In the Athenian *polis*, slaves were certainly not equal to citizens, nor could the humble serf of the feudal manor dare to put himself on the same level as the lords and ladies who ruled over him. But these distinctions of (class) rank and status are supposed to vanish in the modern period, so that *liberty* and *equality* become the central slogans of the liberalism of both the American and French revolutions. People may vary tremendously in wealth and social standing, but everybody is supposed to be morally equal and as such to be entitled to equality before the law and equality of political citizenship.

Now as an *ideal*, this is, of course, a very attractive picture. But the problem with mainstream ethics and political philosophy is that—at least until comparatively recently—this moral egalitarianism has been presented not merely as an ideal but as an accomplished *reality*. In other words, the mainstream narratives of the transition to the modern period represent liberalism as the anti-feudal political philosophy for which moral equality is the achieved default mode, the accepted normative standard from which sexism and racism are unfortunate but non-representative deviations. And I want to challenge this picture and argue, as feminist philosophers have done over the past four decades with respect to gender, that racial exclusions generally limit this supposed universal equality to Europeans. *Class* distinctions of rank and status are eliminated by the revolutions of the modern period, but pre-existing distinctions of gender are not, and distinctions of a new kind—of race—are established by modernity itself. If the supposedly equal “men” are really male, they are also generally white.

What I am suggesting, then, is that racism should be seen as a normative system in its own right that makes whiteness a prerequisite for full personhood and generally (the need for this qualification will be explained later) limits nonwhites to “sub-person” status. So whereas mainstream narratives tend to assume that adult humanness was usually sufficient, or at least strongly presumptively sufficient, for one’s equal moral personhood to be recognized, I am claiming that in reality there were necessary racial pre-conditions also. In this racist conceptual and normative framework, “person” is really a technical term, a term of art, and non-Europeans are generally seen not as persons but as “savages” and “barbarians.” Far from being in contradiction to modernist universalism and egalitarianism, then, racism is simply part of it—since the egalitarian theory’s terms were never (p.93) meant to be extended generally outside the European population. What seem to be racist inconsistencies and anomalies in the writings of the classic political philosophers of the modern period would, if I am right, now turn out to be simple and straightforward implications of racially restricted personhood.

Here is a simple way of thinking about the two rival interpretations under consideration, the mainstream view of modernity (that I am challenging) and my revisionist view. Let T be the (egalitarian) moral/political theory of the modern white Western philosopher in question, p stand for person, and sp for sub-person. Then the mainstream view is claiming that for philosopher P,

- T asserts egalitarianism for all p, where p is race-neutral.
- Racist statements are then an exception, and not part of T.

And what I am recommending as an alternative and superior interpretive framework is that, for philosopher P,

- T asserts egalitarianism for all p, where whiteness is generally a necessary condition for being p.
- T asserts non-egalitarianism for sp, where nonwhiteness is generally a sufficient condition for being sp.<sup>1</sup>
- Racist statements are then part of T, not an exception.

Now if this recommendation were accepted, it would, of course, dramatically alter our conception of liberalism and modern Western moral and political theory. Far from being egalitarian and universalist, in supposed sharp contrast to the hierarchical ideologies of the ancient and medieval world, liberalism too would be revealed to be a multiply tiered ideology. Persons (those humans meeting the gender and racial prerequisites) would have one standing; sub-persons (those humans failing to meet the gender and racial prerequisites) would have a different and inferior standing. So liberalism too would turn out to be a hierarchical political philosophy, though the distinctions are of gender and race rather than of class.

The great virtue of this conceptualization, apart from (I claim, anyway) its correspondence to the actual historical facts, is that it would immediately create a conceptual space for locating the distinctive character of the political struggles of people of color in the modern period in relation to mainstream political philosophy. If liberal universalism already accommodates everybody, if *person* is already race-neutral, then struggles around race and against racial subordination are puzzling. (What are they fighting for?) But once we recognize that personhood has been (p.94) racially normed, they become transparent. Mainstream political philosophy textbooks sanitize and mystify the actual record of the past few hundred years by constructing the West as if white racial domination had not been central to the history of the West. We go from Plato to Rawls without a word being uttered about the racist views of the leading modern Western political theorists and the role of these views in justifying Western political domination over the rest of the world. Acknowledging the racial exclusions in these thinkers' ideologies provides a far more honest and illuminating political framework, since it unites the anti-feudal (white) politics of the standard narrative of modernity with the "other" (nonwhite) politics of the alternative narrative of modernity: the anti-colonial, anti-slavery, anti-imperialist, and anti-segregationist struggles of people of color against racialized liberalism and for the recognition of equal nonwhite personhood. They can then be discussed together rather than in separate Jim-Crowed conceptual spaces.

## Kant's Racial Views and Their Implications

Let us now turn specifically to Kant. Kant is, of course, the famous theorist of personhood whose deontological (duty-based/rights-respecting) version of liberalism now dominates moral and political discourse, having triumphed over the previously dominant consequentialist (welfare-based/utilitarian) version of liberalism originally associated with Jeremy Bentham and the two Mills, James and John Stuart. Utilitarian liberalism was the orthodoxy for about a century and a half, but by the mid-twentieth century it was increasingly perceived to have deep problems of both an operational and, more important, moral kind. John Rawls's classic *A Theory of Justice* was one of the most powerful weapons in the attack on utilitarian theory, and Rawls explicitly drew on Kant for his famous judgment, "Utilitarianism does not take seriously the distinction between persons."<sup>2</sup> The weakness of utilitarianism is that it seems, *prima facie* (utilitarians, of course, have their comeback counterarguments), to permit infringements on the rights of some, say an unpopular minority, if social welfare for the majority could thereby be increased. As a consequentialist theory, it defines the right in terms of good consequences and as such, it could generate a "right" action or social policy that clearly seems *wrong*. By contrast, Kantianism defines the right separately from the good, in terms of the categorical imperative to respect other persons. So human rights seem to be set on a far firmer and more trustworthy normative foundation. All persons are morally equal and may not have their basic rights violated. (p.95)

In this spirit, Allen Wood speaks of what he sees as Kant's "unqualified egalitarianism":

People tend to judge themselves to be better than others on various grounds, such as birth, wealth, honor, power... . But [for Kant] these judgments are always mere opinions, without truth, and all social inequalities are therefore founded on falsehood and deception... . The reason that Kant's egalitarianism is unqualified is that the worth of every human being is a "dignity"—that is, an absolute and incomparable value.<sup>3</sup>

An inspiring picture—but the problem with it is that, as philosophical work by Emmanuel Eze and Robert Bernasconi reminds us (I say "remind" because both writers emphasize that this is old news in other disciplines, if breaking news to contemporary philosophers), Kant is also seen as one of the central figures in the birth of modern "scientific" racism.<sup>4</sup> Whereas other contributors to early racial thought like Carolus Linnaeus and Johann Friedrich Blumenbach had offered only "empirical" (scare-quotes necessary!) observation, Kant produced a full-blown *theory* of race. His lectures and writings on anthropology and physical geography are usually ignored by philosophers, but the question is whether this bracketing is theoretically legitimate considering that they map a human hierarchy of racialized superiors and inferiors: white Europeans, yellow Asians, black Africans, red Amerindians.

Consider the following passages (all cited from Eze or Bernasconi):

The Racial Hierarchy:

In the hot countries the human being matures earlier in all ways but does not reach the perfection of the temperate zones. Humanity exists in its greatest perfection in the white race. The yellow Indians have a smaller amount of Talent. The Negroes are lower and the lowest are a part of the American peoples.<sup>5</sup>

#### Whites:

The white race possesses *all* motivating forces and talents *in itself*.<sup>6</sup>

[Whites] contain all the impulses of nature in affects and passions, all talents, all dispositions to culture and civilization and can as readily obey as govern. They are the only ones who always advance to perfection.<sup>7</sup>

#### Asians:

[The Hindus] do have motivating forces but they have a strong degree of passivity and all look like philosophers. Nevertheless they incline greatly towards anger and love. They thus can be educated to the highest degree but only in the arts and not in the sciences. (p.96) They can never achieve the level of abstract concepts. A great hindustani man is one who has gone far in the art of deception and has much money. The Hindus always stay the way they are, they can never advance, although they began their education much earlier.<sup>8</sup>

#### Blacks:

The race of the Negroes, one could say, is completely the opposite of the Americans; they are full of affect and passion, very lively, talkative and vain. They can be educated but only as servants (slaves), that is they allow themselves to be trained. They have many motivating forces, are also sensitive, are afraid of blows and do much out of a sense of honor.<sup>9</sup>

Mr [David] Hume challenges anyone to cite a simple example in which a Negro has shown talents, and asserts that among the hundreds of thousands of blacks who are transported elsewhere from their countries, although many of them have been set free, still not a single one was ever found who presented anything great in art or science or any other praiseworthy quality; even among the whites some continually rise aloft from the lowest rabble, and through superior gifts earn respect in the world. So fundamental is the difference between the two races of man, and it appears to be as great in regard to mental capacities as in color.<sup>10</sup>

The Negro can be disciplined and cultivated, but is never genuinely civilized. He falls of his own accord into savagery.<sup>11</sup>

#### Native Americans:

The race of the American cannot be educated. It has no motivating force, for it lacks affect and passion. They are not in love, thus they are also not afraid. They hardly speak, do not caress each other, care about nothing and are lazy.<sup>12</sup>

That their [Native Americans'] natural disposition has not yet reached a complete fitness for any climate provides a test that can hardly offer another explanation why this race, too weak for hard labor, too phlegmatic for diligence, and unfit for any culture, still stands—despite the proximity of example and ample encouragement—far below the Negro, who undoubtedly holds the lowest of all remaining levels by which we designate the different races.<sup>13</sup>

Americans and Blacks cannot govern themselves. They thus serve only for slaves.<sup>14</sup>

#### “Miscegenation”

Should one propose that the races be fused or not? They do not fuse and it is also not desirable that they should. The Whites would be degraded. For not every race adopts the morals and customs of the Europeans.<sup>15</sup> (p.97)

Instead of assimilation, which was intended by the melting together of the various races, Nature has here made a law of just the opposite.<sup>16</sup>

## The Future of the Planet

All races will be extinguished ... only not that of the Whites.<sup>17</sup>

Now if the only Kant one knows is the Kant sanitized for public consumption, these views will obviously come as a great shock. Kant believed in a natural racial hierarchy, with whites at the top, and blacks and Native Americans ("savages") at the bottom. He saw the last two races as natural slaves incapable of cultural achievement, and accordingly (like an old-time southern segregationist) he opposed intermarriage as leading to the degradation of whites. Ultimately, he thought, the planet would become all white.

So what are the philosophical implications of these views? Doing an open-minded inquiry into this question requires us, to a certain extent, to bracket what we *think* we know Kant's philosophy is and not substitute hagiography for theoretical investigation. Accordingly, various authors have been grappling with this question in the English-language secondary literature and a range of positions has emerged. Pertinent work would include *Allen Wood's Kant's Ethical Thought*; *Robert Louden's Kant's Impure Ethics*; *Eze's Achieving Our Humanity*, building on his Kant article and other related critiques; Tsenay Serequeberhan's "The Critique of Eurocentrism and the Practice of African Philosophy"; Robert Bernasconi's two articles, cited above; and pieces by Mark Larrimore, and (jointly) Thomas Hill and Bernard Boxill.<sup>18</sup> Representative positions from the German literature would include work by Rudolf Malter and Reinhard Brandt.<sup>19</sup> These authors variously offer condemnations and defenses of Kant, qualified in different ways, so that a set of characteristic moves is now recognizable.

The position that Kant's defenders have taken is not to deny Kant's racial views but to deny that they have the philosophical implications claimed by Eze, Bernasconi, and others (such as myself). So either Kant's racial views do not affect his philosophy *at all* (the extreme position), or they do not affect it in its *key/central/essential/basic* claims (the more moderate position). The assumption, obviously, is that we have a principled, non-question-begging way to demarcate what is central from what is peripheral to his philosophy, and a similarly principled way of showing how the racial views (and, of course, their implications) fail to penetrate to this inner circle. And the case critics must make is that such a penetration does in fact take place, so that what has been represented as Kant's philosophy in innumerable journal articles, monographs, and textbooks over the years is, insofar as it is racially neutral, quite misleading. (p.98)

Let us focus on the obvious candidate: the ethics and political philosophy. Kant's claims about the imperative to respect *persons*, his views about the moral state (the *Rechtsstaat*) and its obligations to its citizens, his vision of a future cosmopolitan order where all peoples on the planet will be guided by universal law, are all familiar to us. Now suppose it turns out that not all adult humans are *persons* for him, either (depending on how we want to draw the conceptual geography) because they constitute a separate category of their own, or because within the category of personhood, internal differentiations can be made. In other words, what is supposed to be the starkly polarized moral geography of his theory, with everything being categorizable either as a *person*, with full moral status, or as a *non-person*, a *thing*, with zero moral status, would have to be redrawn to accommodate the fuzzier category of entities with some *intermediate* status. And what we think we know his various moral, political, and teleological claims to be would all then have to be rethought in the light of this category's existence, so that what holds for the full-blooded, 100 percent, 24-karat persons would not always necessarily hold in the same way for those in this inferior group. If this analysis is correct, it is obviously a radically different picture of the Kant we all thought we knew. The distinction between "Treat all persons with respect," where "person" is assumed to be racially inclusive, and "Treat only whites with respect" (at least here on Earth) is obviously not minor and trivial at all. It would mean that his vaunted universalism and egalitarianism are restricted to the white population.

How would the case be made? I think the evidential supports fall into three main possible categories: (a) attempts to demonstrate how Kant's general theoretical claims can be shown to have these implications; (b) citations of specific remarks and passages from Kant seemingly consistent with these implications; (c) the evidence of textual silence. The last is obviously a tricky category, since silence can speak in more than one way. But if a convincing background theoretical context has been sketched, the failure to address certain topics, or failure to make certain points that would naturally be expected when certain topics are raised, can—in conjunction, of course, with other considerations—at least count as supporting evidence for an interpretation, if not as a definitive proof. Correspondingly, what Kant's defenders

have to do is to argue that no such general theoretical ramifications can be established, that seemingly damning passages can be reinterpreted, or quarantined, and/or countered with passages pointing the other way, and that textual silence either has no significance or can be heard differently.

Let us start with (a). Eze takes Kant, inspired by Rousseau's account of how we develop our humanity, to be working with a general theory by which humans transform themselves into moral beings. Hence the significance of Kant's anthropology. Because of his views of natural and immutable racial (p.99) hierarchy, Eze argues, Kant thought that nonwhites—especially blacks and Native Americans—were not so constituted as to be able to go through this process of self-development and moral maturation. (I focus on blacks and Native Americans as the clear-cut case. As seen above, Asians are just one rung below whites, and though they “can never achieve the level of abstract concepts,” Kant does at least describe them as “look[ing] like philosophers.” So perhaps, though still inferior, they can parlay this phenomenal appearance into a noumenal payoff.) In other words, there is a certain minimal threshold of intelligence, capacity for autonomy, and so on required to be a full person, and blacks and Native Americans do not reach this threshold. As such, they are all (in my terminology rather than Eze's) sub-persons. And Eze argues that for Kant this claim is “transcendentally” grounded, so that as a theorist of scientific racism, Kant has advanced beyond the more empiricist Linnaeus:

Beyond Buffon and Linnaeus, then, Kant practiced a transcendental philosophy of race... . In the *Observations* ... Kant deployed the transcendentalism of the *Critique of Pure Reason* in order to establish ways in which moral feelings apply to humans *generally*, how the feeling differs between men and women, and among the races... . The themes Kant presented in these books ... give synthesis to the principles and practices he philosophically defined as immanent to humans, but only to white human nature... . The inferiority of the Negro, as proposed by Hume, is now in Kant successfully grounded in transcendental philosophy.<sup>20</sup>

If this analysis is correct, the implications for the categorical imperative (CI) could be simply expressed as follows:

CI: All persons should be treated with respect. GLOSS: “Person” is a technical term, a term of art, signifying beings of a certain level of intelligence and capacity for moral maturity, and on this planet, whiteness is a necessary prerequisite for being a person in the full sense.

(Whiteness is not sufficient, because of the parallel feminist case with respect to gender.)

Now this, to say the least, would obviously be a radically different way of thinking of the categorical imperative, and insofar as the categorical imperative is central to Kant's moral and political philosophy, Kant's views on race would indeed have major and central philosophical implications. The case could then be buttressed by (b), specific negative passages on blacks and Native Americans such as those cited above—for example, that they are savages and natural slaves, that Native Americans are completely incapable (p.100) of moral education, while blacks need to be educated through flogging (and with a specially constructed split bamboo cane),<sup>21</sup> that race mixing leads to the degradation of whites and is contrary to nature, that only the white race is destined to survive, and so forth. It would be contended that these passages constitute obvious prima facie evidence that Kant did not envisage blacks and Native Americans as fully included in his kingdom of ends, “active citizens” of the polity, and equal beneficiaries of the cosmopolitan order toward which the planet is evolving.

Finally, on (c), textual silence, Robert Bernasconi makes the valuable point that, so far as he knows, nowhere in Kant's writings (and remember these comprise numerous volumes) does Kant offer an unequivocal condemnation of African slavery.<sup>22</sup> (Note that one can condemn the *cruelties* of slavery, as some reformers did, while still being anti-abolitionist. Obviously, the ethical desideratum is the principled condemnation of the institution as such.) Yet a more flagrant violation of the prohibition against using one's fellow-persons as mere means to an end could hardly be imagined, and it was not as if the Atlantic slave trade was in its infancy at the time he wrote. Whence this puzzling silence, even when the subject of slavery came up in his writings? Obviously, one simple solution to the mystery would be that Kant did not see blacks as fellow-persons, even if they were fellow-humans.

However, we must now turn to the case for the defense. Above, I distinguished extreme and moderate positions among Kant's defenders. The work of Malter, Wood, and Louden seems to me to fall toward the more extreme end of the

spectrum, insofar as they deny that Kant's racial views have any implications for his philosophy at all.

Let us begin with Malter, the most extreme of all, for whom, remarkably, Kant emerges as a committed *anti*-racist: "The *equality* of all individuals of the human race is for Kant knowable by pure reason. . . . The Kantian theory of race not only does not pave the way for racism, (but) it is the most serious, energetic objection to this—the very worst—madness."<sup>23</sup> Morality for Kant is a priori, not empirical, based on pure reason. So the full personhood of nonwhites is guaranteed as a synthetic a priori truth. But this seems to me to rest on an elision of "human" and "person" of precisely the kind I earlier warned against. What is a priori is that all rational beings are deserving of our respect; it is *not* a priori that all humans are rational beings (in the requisite full sense).

By contrast, Allen Wood concedes Kant's racism but argues that it is overridden by his philosophical commitments. Kant, according to Wood, "conspicuously declines to infer from [his] racist beliefs . . . that there is any difference in the *human rights* possessed by different peoples," and "the most influential philosophical articulation of these values is Kant's theory of moral autonomy, grounded in the dignity of humanity as an end (p.101) in itself."<sup>24</sup> Similarly, Robert Louden's *Kant's Impure Ethics* draws a contrast between Kant's *theory* and Kant's *prejudices*, denying that the latter should be taken to modify (what we think of as) the former:

Kant's writings do exhibit many private prejudices and contradictory tendencies. . . . But Kant's theory is fortunately stronger than his prejudices, and it is the theory on which philosophers should focus. We should not hide or suppress the prejudices, but neither should we overvalue them or try to inflate them into something they are not. . . . The prejudices are not centrally connected to the defining features of his theory of human moral development.<sup>25</sup>

Both writers, then, are offering us a conceptual partitioning of Kant's discourse, on the one hand, the philosophical theory (morally egalitarian), and on the other hand views assigned to some lower epistemic category, not rising to the level of the theoretical: unthinking prejudice, bigotry, and so on. So though the prejudices are offensive, the theory itself is untouched, quarantined behind a conceptual cordon sanitaire.

This is obviously a better argument than Malter's,<sup>26</sup> but I would claim it is still problematic. The question is why we should accept this partitioning. I think there are three possible ways of defending this move: one can claim that Kant's egalitarian theory (henceforth T) is not affected by his racist views because they are in a different conceptual space; one can claim that T represents the essence of Kant's position; and one can claim that T can be reconstructed as a sanitized version of Kant's position. But each of these moves faces problems of its own.

The first is assuming that the racism is sub-theoretical and so should be judged to be overridden by T (understood as egalitarian and non-racial). But I began by arguing that racism should be seen as a normative theory in its own right, so this overriding cannot simply be asserted but must be demonstrated. Nor can it casually be inferred from T's apparent race-neutrality, as revealed in its vocabulary of "men," "persons," or "humans," for the very question is whether people of color are being conceived of as full persons, fully human.

The second differentiates Kant's essential from his non-essential views and represents the egalitarian T as the essence of his position. But "essential" is ambiguous: does it mean "essential" for *our* purposes (we later philosophers seeking a usable version of Kant) or "essential" for Kant's view of his own theory? The first shades over into option three, below; the second needs to prove by non-question-begging criteria that Kant himself did not see the racist claims as crucial to his theory, T.

Finally, the problem with the third is that it is a separate question. While it is, of course, always possible to reconstruct a theory in which personhood (p.102) has no racial or gender restrictions, the question at issue is what Kant thought. And if Kant himself did not think of nonwhites and women as full persons, then this cannot really be said to be *Kant's* theory. Most of the theoretical terms will be the same (respect, the kingdom of ends, the categorical imperative), but at least one crucial theoretical term, "person," will not have the same denotation. So while such an enterprise is justifiable from the perspective of developing a moral theory acceptable for our purposes, it cannot be claimed, except in some scare-quotes sense, that this is still "Kant's" theory.

Consider now the moderate position. This position does not deny that Kant's racial views affect his philosophical claims, but it denies that they affect the *central* ones. I take Hill and Boxill's joint paper to be a good statement of this line of argument:

Our position, then, is that, while it is important to notice and block the influence of aspects of Kant's writings that reflect or might encourage racism, the charges of racism do not reach Kant's deep theory... . [T]he texts do not in fact support the extreme form of racist beliefs that Eze attributes to Kant, e.g. that some races are not human... . Eze succeeds in showing that Kant saw his racial theory as a serious philosophical project, that it was not an offhand, unreflective set of conjectures, and that it deserves philosophical attention... . But these concessions do not imply that Kant's central philosophical principles are tainted with racism.<sup>27</sup>

So the presumption is that we have at hand a principled, non-question-begging criterion for distinguishing the deep and central from the shallow and peripheral, and that by this criterion it can be shown that Kant's key theses emerge untouched. A different kind of conceptual partitioning is proposed, which concedes philosophical status to Kant's racial views (they are not just "prejudices"), but relegates them to a subordinate status in his thought, and maintains the unaffectedness of what are taken to be the key principles.

Now one way of defending this partitioning is to emphasize the differential epistemic status of Kant's moral claims. As just mentioned, Kant famously thought that there were synthetic a priori truths, substantive claims (as against definitional truths like "bachelors are unmarried males") discoverable by pure reason, and that the categorical imperative was one of them. So the reformulation above could be stated thus:

CI: All persons should be treated with respect. Status: (supposedly) synthetic a priori truth. → CENTRAL

Auxiliary claim: Whiteness is a prerequisite for personhood. Status: empirical a posteriori claim. → PERIPHERAL

(p.103)

On this basis, then, you could concede that Kant's racial views affect his philosophy, while denying that they affect it *centrally* (deeply, basically, in its key tenets). For you now have a principled demarcation, a conceptual wall, to separate the central from the peripheral.

Opponents of this line of argument have (at least) two moves that could be made in reply. One would be to claim that race also is a transcendental. Whether or not his motivation was to establish centrality by this criterion, this, as we have seen, is Eze's move. But Hill and Boxill argue against this claim, and to my mind make some good points: the inferiority of nonwhites seems (to us, obviously, but more to the point, to Kant) more a matter of an empirical a posteriori claim than something that could be determined by pure reason, or as a condition of experience.<sup>28</sup> And Robert Louden, both in his book and in his paper on Eze's book on a 2002 American Philosophical Association Author-meets-Critics panel, is similarly skeptical.<sup>29</sup>

Perhaps Eze has a reply that will vindicate his position. But whether he has or not, I wonder whether he is not setting himself an unnecessarily onerous task in trying to defend his crucial claim, which I take it is the assertion of the centrality of racial views (in Kant and others) to modern Western philosophy. For the alternative move is to *deny* that being a synthetic a priori truth is a prerequisite for being central/basic/deep for Kant, and to make a case by other, arguably non-question-begging and uncontroversial, criteria of "centrality." Certainly for moral and political theory in general the auxiliary claim *is* absolutely crucial, since it demarcates who/what is included in and who/what is excluded from full membership in the moral/political community.

Consider our moral duties toward non-human animals and the environment. As we all know, non-human animals, trees, plants, and so on have no moral standing for Kant; his is a classic statement of an anthropocentric moral theory (though *anthropos* here is broader than human, including intelligent aliens). But recently some environmental ethicists have argued for an expansion and modification of the Kantian notion of "respect" to accommodate respect for the earth and other living things. Now wouldn't it seem very peculiar to say that this was *not* a major modification of Kant's theory? This expansion of the scope of beings to which respect is supposed to be extended would have major repercussions for how



the theory is applied and how we think of it—if it even counts as the “same” theory any more. Kant’s own Kantianism and this non-anthropocentric “Kantianism” are worlds apart in their implications for what is obligatory, prohibited, and permissible for us to do as moral agents.

But it could be replied that even if this is true, this is not a legitimate comparison, since extending “respect” to non-human animals obviously requires us to dispense with rationality and the capacity for autonomy as the (p.104) bearers of moral status, so that Kant’s basic principle is altered. In the case of race, however, even if it were true that nonwhites count as sub-persons for Kant by virtue of their inferior rationality and diminished capacity for autonomy, deracializing the theory just requires getting rid of a false factual claim, not modifying the basic moral principle.

I would have to concede that there is something to this objection. However, it seems to me that the claim of centrality can still be made. Consider the following example. A well-known twentieth-century figure, whose views (unlike those of the vast majority of philosophers) actually did touch the lives of millions, had a moral philosophy whose terms could be reconstructed (admittedly in a somewhat idealized way) as follows: group G should flourish, are owed respect, should be protected by the state, have their rights respected, and so forth. I am sure everybody will agree that this all sounds very good and commendable. Now suppose I reveal that the thinker I have in mind is Adolf Hitler, and group G are the Aryan race. “Oh, that’s quite different!” you will exclaim in horror. But wait, I say, the *central principles, the essential claims*, of his ethical theory are very attractive. It is just—a minor point, this—that because of his empirical beliefs, he wanted to apply them only to a restricted set of the human population. However, surely we can lightly pass over this minor empirical mistake and argue that his basic views remain untouched, since the ideals of flourishing, the respect for rights and so forth are the really important thing, even if in his own formulation, not everybody was included. So could we not say that Hitler’s moral theory is, at its core, at the deep level, a non-racial one ...?

Now I am not comparing Kant to Hitler. But the point I am trying to bring home is that there is something very strange about dismissing the issue of who gets counted in the moral community as merely a matter of incidental detail. We rightly think that the whole burden of Hitler’s moral theory, if it deserves the name, is that it is racially exclusionary, and that once you extend it beyond “Aryans,” then obviously it is not the same theory. Even if Hitler had never come to power, even if the Holocaust had never occurred, we would still see this fact of racial restriction as deeply pernicious and as profoundly shaping the theory. How then can it be denied that—whatever their epistemological foundation—these claims about the scope of the populations to which the principles are supposed to extend are indeed philosophically “central” (in theory, and unquestionably in practice)?

So this would be my friendly amendment to Eze’s project: that even if the “transcendental” claims cannot be sustained, the thesis of philosophical “centrality” can still be defended on other grounds. And the argument is made all the stronger, of course, by the fact that in the case of Kant at least we are not really talking about a mere “empirical” belief but a sophisticated (p.105) and elaborated *theoretical* position. Both Eze and Bernasconi see Kant as one of the founders of modern “scientific” racism. So if this is right, then what is involved, while weaker than transcendental necessity, is stronger than empirical fortuitousness: it is a nomological, causal necessity, according to which humanoids of a certain color cannot achieve the basement-level intelligence to be fully moral beings. The color of the skin is a surface indicator of the presence of deeper physico-biological causal mechanisms. If we think of the “ontological” as covering what an entity *is*, then the physical makeup of a dog will have ontological implications (its capacity for rationality, agency, autonomy, and so on), and so similarly will the makeup of these inferior humans: race does not have to be transcendental to be (in a familiar sense) metaphysical.

The other friendly amendment I would offer—in response to Hill and Boxill’s other criticism of Eze, that it is false that Kant regarded nonwhites as non-human—is, as discussed earlier, that the case for diminished moral status can be defended (through the “sub-person” category) without making such a strong assumption. One does not have to claim that for Kant nonwhites are non-humans; one just has to assert that for him (and others) humans come in different sub-categories, and that not all humans make it to the (full) “person” level.

This, then, with variants in (a) (Eze’s version is not the only possibility) would be the case for the prosecution: when Kant urged on us the overwhelming importance of respecting *persons*, he was really talking (on this planet) about whites (more precisely, a subset of whites).

## Objections and Replies

Let us now consider some of the objections that could be made to this case from the defense.

*The writings in anthropology and physical geography are separate from, and irrelevant to, the writings in ethics and political philosophy.*

This just begs the question. Since the case for the prosecution rests crucially on the claim that Kant made internal differentiations in the category of human beings, and since it is in these very writings that we find the evidence for the differentiations, they cannot be rejected in advance. This would be to assume that we *know* that when he was speaking of “persons,” he fully included nonwhites within the category. But we don’t “know” this—we are just assuming it, in keeping with the orthodox view, which is precisely what is being challenged. Eze also makes the useful point that in the course of his academic career Kant gave far more courses on these subjects (p.106) (seventy-two) than on the moral philosophy (twenty-eight), which would seem to constitute *prima facie* evidence that he considered them important. Moreover, these subjects were new at the time, and Kant was himself the person who introduced both of them to German universities, drawing on his own research.<sup>30</sup>

*Kant’s moral community is famously clear-cut in its geography, being starkly divided between persons (with full moral status) and non-persons or things (with zero moral status). So there is simply no conceptual room for your “sub-person” category.*

The “sub-person” category is, admittedly, a reconstruction of the normative logic of racial and gender subordination in his thought, a reconstruction that is certainly not openly proclaimed in the articulation of his conceptual apparatus, and may seem, *prima facie*, to be excluded by it. (In a personal communication, Robert Louden points out as an objection to my reading that nowhere does Kant himself use the term *Untermenschen*.) Nonetheless, I would claim that it is the best way of making sense of the *actual* (as against officially represented) logic of his writings, taken as a whole, and accommodates the sexist and racist declarations in a way less strained than the orthodox reading. In other words, there is an ironic sense in which the principle of interpretive charity—that we should try to reconstruct an author’s writings so as to maximize their degree of internal consistency—points toward such a concept’s being implicit in his thought, since in this way the degree of contradictoriness among his various claims is reduced.

Consider gender. Work by feminist theorists such as Pauline Kleingeld and Hannelore Schröder emphasizes the stark disparity between Kant’s supposed commitment to unqualified personhood and what he actually says about women. Kleingeld points out that while Kant supposedly “asserts both the equality and autonomy of all human beings,” he simultaneously “regards men as naturally superior to women, and women as unfit for the public, political and economic domain,” implies that women, being guided by “inclination,” are incapable of autonomy, asserts that women “have to be legally represented by men,” “are under permanent male guardianship,” “have no legal competence, cannot go to court,” and “lack the right to citizenship,” being merely “passive citizens” who do not have the attributes of lawful freedom, civil equality, and civil independence.<sup>31</sup> So Kleingeld does not at all want to downplay Kant’s sexism. But she thinks the correct approach is to highlight (what she sees as) the tension between his universalism and his gender-differentiated views, and in her comments on my presentation of this paper she argued that we should conceptualize his racism in the same way, as being inconsistent with his stated position elsewhere.<sup>32</sup> By contrast, I would claim that it is, ironically, more charitable (p.107) to Kant to see him as tacitly operating with a concept of personhood that is gender- and race-restricted. This reduces the degree of cognitive dissonance involved in his writings: the *flagrant* contradiction contained in the assertions that women are (full) persons but can be only passive citizens, or that blacks and Native Americans are (full) persons who are simultaneously natural slaves, becomes the less dissonant position that personhood comes in degrees.

On the other hand, if defenders of the orthodox interpretation reply that though women and nonwhites are “persons” in a somewhat different way for Kant, they are nonetheless still *persons* and not “sub-persons,” then it seems to me that they face the following simple dilemma. Either (a) they are conceding the point in all but terminology, so the difference between us becomes merely verbal and not substantive (though I would claim that my vocabulary, formally divided, signals the real differentiations in reference, and so is superior to theirs, which obfuscates these differentiations), or (b) they are so

weakening the concept of a “person,” so evacuating it of significant normative content, that it loses most of the moral force supposedly associated with it.

The German scholar Reinhard Brandt, for example, argues that for Kant “women and people of color cannot act in accordance with principles of their own, but can only imitate morality... [T]herefore from the moral perspective they constitute intermediate creatures (*Zwischenwesen*) in between the human and animal kingdoms.” This might seem to be an endorsement of something very like my “sub-person” reading. But despite appearances, it is not, for in the very next paragraph Brandt goes on to conclude: “People of color and women are for Kant legal persons and enjoy the protection of universal moral and legal principles... . Respect for the moral law as such knows no bounds of sex and race.”<sup>33</sup>

Brandt does not explain how enjoying “the protection of universal moral and legal principles” and savoring one’s entitlement to gender- and race-neutral respect are compatible with persons’ being restricted to passive citizenship or being viewed as natural slaves who have to be whipped to further their moral education. If a sub-category exists within “persons” of somewhat-differently-constituted-persons, *Zwischenwesen*, and if this difference in constitution is (as it is) one of *inferiority*, precluding the full array of rights, entitlements, and freedoms of full persons, then what is this but to concede in all but *name* the category of sub-personhood? On the other hand, if it is still possible to be a person in some sense, and yet (as with women) to be denied the basic rights of political participation, or (as with blacks and Native Americans) to be judged to be natural slaves, then what is this “personhood” worth? Would you raise the flag of liberty, man the barricades, prepare to sacrifice your lives for it? Obviously not. Such a concept (p.108) would be a radically etiolated version of the one that is supposed to be the normative soul of the modern epoch. So if personhood in the standard sense is supposed to be a robust notion linked with moral egalitarianism and an associated bundle of moral rights and freedoms that translates into juridical and political equality, then this concept clearly is not it.

*Kant was an orthodox Christian, and as such a believer in monogenesis; so he could not possibly have accepted such a radical differentiation in the human race.*

See the last five hundred years of global history. Who do you think has been responsible for the origination and implementation of the most important variants of racism over the past half-millennium, from anti-Semitism to colonial white domination, if *not* orthodox Christians? The opening chapter of George Fredrickson’s book, *Racism: A Short History*, is in fact explicitly titled “Religion and the Invention of Racism”—and he is not talking about Buddhism.<sup>34</sup> The two most unqualifiedly racist governments of the twentieth century, Nazi Germany and apartheid South Africa, were both located in Christian countries, as was, of course, the American Old South. In general, Christianity’s ostensible universalism has never constituted more than a weak, easily overcome barrier against racism. And as recently as the late nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries, Social Darwinists had no problem in reconciling monogenesis with the view that some races, though of the same origin as Europeans, and thus human, were “lower,” less evolved, and destined for permanent inferiority and/or extinction.

*The simple refutation of your thesis is that Kant explicitly condemned European colonialism and urged that Europeans make contracts with Native Americans.*

If, as I claim, people of color, especially blacks and Native Americans, were sub-persons for Kant, then how could he have condemned their colonization and demanded that treaties be made with the latter?<sup>35</sup> This is probably the strongest argument in the arsenal of Kant’s defenders (it is emphasized by both Wood and Louden).<sup>36</sup> Here is a set of possible moves.

First, one needs to distinguish condemnations in principle of colonialism from condemnations of specific aspects of it. At least some of the passages in his writings seem to be focused on specific colonial atrocities, and insofar as, given my analysis, nonwhites (unlike animals) *do* have a non-zero moral status, it is not inconsistent with my reading that there should be moral constraints on how people of color are treated. Over the history of European imperialism, there were, after all, many European reformers who deplored its cruelties while still endorsing it in principle, and who proselytized for a reformed, enlightened colonialism. So Kant could be one of those theorists. (p.109)

Second, Robert Bernasconi has argued that even where Kant does seem to condemn colonialism in principle, he is really denying the validity of *one kind* of justification of colonialism, leaving open the possibility that other kinds of justification

could be developed.<sup>37</sup>

Finally, there is the fallback position that such passages are simply inconsistent with the theoretical implications (i.e., on the sub-person reading) of his work, and that rather than concluding it is the theory which must give way, we should take the opposite tack and conclude that it is these passages that must give way. In other words, rather than claiming that there is complete unity and consistency in all his writings, we would contend that some are inconsistent with others, so the decision has to be made as to which are better supported by the overall logic of his thought. Insofar as we should privilege a theoretically based claim over one that seems lacking in such support, the theory should dominate. This is Eze's own solution in the opening pages of the Kant chapter of his book, where he argues that Kant is *not* entitled, given the assumptions of his own theory, to such condemnation.<sup>38</sup> Obviously, however, there is the danger of circularity here, since defenders of Kant will claim that no such theory has in fact been established, so that where the condemnation is uncontroversial and the putative theory is contested, greater adjudicative weight has to be placed on the specific passages than on question-begging theoretical claims. (Pauline Kleingeld argues that a virtue of her interpretation in contrast to mine is that such passages do not pose a problem for her, since she is claiming that Kant's views do lead to contradictions.)<sup>39</sup>

With respect to Native Americans in particular, though, Maureen Konkle's *Writing Indian Nations* has provided me with some illuminating insights, from real-life history, on the possibilities for reconciling equality and inferiority.<sup>40</sup> Naïve and simple-minded philosophers, bewitched by seemingly obvious syllogisms (treaties are only made with those seen as equals; treaties were made with Native Americans; therefore, Native Americans were seen as equals), would have been lost in dealing with the far subtler minds of colonial jurisprudence, for whom the affirmation of  $p$  &  $\sim p$  was a routine matter. Konkle begins by pointing out that "no other instance of European colonization produced as many or as significant treaties" as in US relations with Native Americans. But this by no means implied unequivocal recognition of their equality. Citing the 1831 and 1832 *Cherokee Nation* cases ("which remain the key cases of Indian law"), Konkle emphasizes that the problem was "to assert colonial authority—tyrannical, imperial authority, of the kind the United States had thrown off in the Revolution—while appearing not to." So while Native peoples were conceded to form sovereign nations, these were also, in Chief Justice John Marshall's formulation, "domestic (p.110) dependent nations," thus reconciling nationhood with "the necessity of colonial control":

Indians formed *nations*, he posits, but because they were *Indian* nations and because Indians could be characterized by their essential difference from and inferiority to Europeans, they are in a permanent state of "pupilage" to the United States... [In his concurring opinion, Justice William Johnson] exposes the high political stakes in the concept of Indians' inherent difference: it is the only available means of displacing and denying Native legal claims while retaining the notion of their consent to give up their land, which is still necessary to legitimate EuroAmerican control of territory.<sup>41</sup>

The fact that American justices saw Native Americans as inferior while making treaties with them does not, of course, prove that Kant had a similar view. But I think the actual historical record here demonstrates the mistakenness of the smooth and unproblematic inference from treaty-making to the commitment to moral egalitarianism and should alert us that colonial and racial discourse has the ability (as with gender ideology) to take away with one hand what it gives with the other (European givers?).

*Your attempted critique runs aground on the following simple dilemma: either, (a), you are arguing, absurdly, that we must now throw out Kant's moral theory, or, (b), you are forced, more reasonably, to wind up conceding (somewhat anti-climactically) that we should keep it, in which case your whole critique has been much ado about nothing.*

If my analysis is correct, then we certainly should throw out Kant's moral theory, since Kant's moral theory makes whiteness and maleness prerequisites for full personhood!

But of course when people make this rejoinder, they do not mean that. What they mean is "Kant's moral theory" in the racially inclusive and gender-inclusive sense, which (if I am right) is not Kant's moral theory at all but a bowdlerized, idealized, and sanitized reconstruction that draws on crucial Kantian concepts but, in its inclusivity, violates Kantian principles. Nonetheless, it will be insisted, that is just a quibble. So this could be thought of as the "So what?" challenge,

raised not merely against this analysis of Kant but against parallel analyses of other canonical philosophers. The claim will be made—the claim *is* made—that from a philosophical point of view, Kant's, or P's, racial views are irrelevant (even if conceded), either because they do not affect his philosophy at all, or because even if they do, even if (it may be grudgingly admitted) my argument goes through, it is in ways that can easily be purged from the theory. So even if P's pronouncements about “men” or “people” were actually only about males and whites, the extension to all humans can readily be made. According to the “So (p.111) what?” challenge, this kind of project is just sensationalism, “tabloid philosophy,”<sup>42</sup> muckraking, and muckraking without much or any theoretical payoff either.

I think this view is fairly widespread in philosophy, and as I have argued elsewhere, I think it is mistaken. I want to conclude by listing at least three reasons why I think it is wrong.

To begin with, if it is indeed the case that Kant, or more generally P, was just describing whites, or was morally and politically prescribing just for whites in his (egalitarian) theory, then surely this is an important fact about his thought that needs to be known and made explicit. Even if P's thought can be easily sanitized, to talk as if P were putting forward race-neutral theories when he is really putting forward racially differentiated theories is still a fundamental misrepresentation. As argued above, there is something deeply troubling and profoundly misleading about racially sanitizing Kant's views and then representing them as if they *were* the views of the pre-sanitized Kant.<sup>43</sup> Who and what makes the cut in a moral theory is central to what kind of theory it is. Obviously the principle of respect for persons can be extended in a racially indifferent way to include all races. But if this is an extension, it is not a minor technicality that is somehow “already” (essentially, really) implicit in the theory. At the basic level of doing an accurate history of Western philosophy, then, the official narratives need to be rethought and rewritten. So there are meta-theoretical implications for how we think of the development of philosophy. As the discipline standardly presents itself, matters of race are unimportant to its development; Western philosophy is supposed to be universal and inclusive. Now it would turn out that matters of race were indeed important to its evolution, at least in the modern period. The colonial dimensions of the thought of, and in some cases actual colonial roles of Hobbes, Hume, Locke, Kant, Hegel, Mill, and so on would become a legitimate part of the history of modern philosophy.

Second, it could well be that these exclusions do in fact affect the thinker's thought in other ways whose ramifications need to be worked out. In the case of gender, the connection is easier to make, in part because feminists have been laboring on these questions longer than critical race theorists. If you have been generalizing about humanity on the basis of one-half of it, then there will obviously be vast areas of history and experience that need to be brought in to correct for these omissions. Political theorists such as Susan Moller Okin have argued against a merely “terminological” gender neutrality, which contents itself with a self-conscious alternation of “he” and “she” without considering how the originally sexist theory's basic conceptual apparatus, assumptions, and pronouncements may have been shaped by these gender exclusions.<sup>44</sup> Do crucial concepts such as “autonomy” need (p.112) to be given a different emphasis, if a case can be made that a tacitly masculine experience has grounded their formation? Is the disdain for “inclination” linked with its identification with the body and the feminine? It could be argued similarly that genuine race neutrality requires a careful rethinking of white philosophy's content in the light of racial domination. If nonwhite “savagery” is the negative antipode against which civilized (white) humanity is going to define itself, then obviously the interlocking conceptual relationships are likely to shape how these concepts of “civilization,” and what it is to rise above nature, develop. Both in the descriptive realm, where full humanity is conceptualized in Eurocentric and culturally loaded terms, and in the prescriptive realm, the implications could be far-reaching.

Finally, ignoring the racial exclusions in Kant's (and other modern Western philosophers') moral and political theory obfuscates the distinctive moral topography opened up by recognizing the experience of those persons systematically treated as less than persons. Instead of seeing these exclusions as merely an embarrassment, we should be taking them as a philosophical challenge. Instead of pretending that Kant was arguing for equal respect to be extended to everybody, we should be asking how Kant's theory needs to be rethought in the light not merely of his own racism but of a modern world with a normative architecture based on racist Kant-like principles. How is “respect” to be cashed out, for example, for a population that has historically been seen as less than persons? Should it be reconceptualized with a supplementary group dimension, given that white supremacy has stigmatized entire races as less than worthy of respect, as appropriately to be “dissed?” What corrective measures would be required of the *Rechtsstaat* to redress racial subordination? How is

cosmopolitanism to be realized on a globe shaped by hundreds of years of European expansionism? Even if we still want to call the theory “Kantianism,” it would be a Kantianism radically transformed by the challenge of addressing the moral demands of the sub-person population.<sup>45</sup>

In short, the moral and political agenda of those persons not originally seen as full persons will be significantly different from the agenda of those whose personhood has traditionally been uncontested, and we need concepts, narratives, and theories that register this crucial difference. So that's what.<sup>46</sup>

### Notes:

- (1.) The qualification is necessary because of a crucial point of *disanalogy* between race and gender, that while there is just one female sex (at least in the West), there are several nonwhite races, and their assigned statuses in racist hierarchies have not historically been the same (as will be seen below for Kant). So while “sub-person” is a useful umbrella term, a more detailed treatment would require additional internal divisions.
- (2.) John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, rev. ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999; orig. ed. 1971), p. 24.
- (3.) Allen W. Wood, General Introduction, *Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy*, trans. and ed., Mary J. Gregor (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. xvii.
- (4.) Emmanuel Eze, “The Color of Reason: The Idea of ‘Race’ in Kant’s Anthropology,” in Eze, ed., *Postcolonial African Philosophy: A Critical Reader* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1997); Robert Bernasconi, “Who Invented the Concept of Race? Kant’s Role in the Enlightenment Construction of Race,” in Bernasconi, ed., *Race* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001); Robert Bernasconi, “Kant as an Unfamiliar Source of Racism,” in Julie K. Ward and Tommy L. Lott, eds., *Philosophers on Race: Critical Essays* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002).
- (5.) Quoted in Eze, “Color of Reason,” p. 118.
- (6.) Quoted in Eze, “Color of Reason,” p. 117.
- (7.) Quoted in Bernasconi, “Kant as an Unfamiliar Source,” pp. 147–48.
- (8.) Quoted in Eze, “Color of Reason,” p. 117.
- (9.) Quoted in Eze, “Color of Reason,” p. 116.
- (10.) Quoted in Eze, “Color of Reason,” p. 122.
- (11.) Quoted in Bernasconi, “Kant as an Unfamiliar Source,” p. 158.
- (12.) Quoted in Eze, “Color of Reason,” p. 116.
- (13.) Quoted in Bernasconi, “Kant as an Unfamiliar Source,” p. 148.
- (14.) Quoted in Bernasconi, “Kant as an Unfamiliar Source,” p. 152.
- (15.) Quoted in Bernasconi, “Kant as an Unfamiliar Source,” p. 158.
- (16.) Quoted in Eze, “Color of Reason,” p. 126.
- (17.) Quoted in Bernasconi, “Kant as an Unfamiliar Source,” p. 159.
- (18.) Allen W. Wood, *Kant’s Ethical Thought* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Robert B. Louden, *Kant’s Impure Ethics: From Rational Beings to Human Beings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Tsenay Serequeberhan, “The Critique of Eurocentrism and the Practice of African Philosophy,” in Eze, ed., *Postcolonial African Philosophy*; Bernasconi, “Who Invented?” and “Unfamiliar Source”; Mark Larrimore, “Sublime Waste: Kant on the Destiny of the ‘Races,’” in Catherine Wilson, ed., *Civilization and Oppression, Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, Supplementary

Volume 25 (Calgary, AB: University of Calgary Press, 1999); Thomas E. Hill Jr. and Bernard Boxill, "Kant and Race," in Bernard Boxill, ed., *Race and Racism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

(19.) Rudolf Malter, "Der Rassebegriff in Kants Anthropologie," in Gunter Mann and Franz Dumont, eds., *Die Natur des Menschen: Probleme der Physischen Anthropologie und Rassenkunde (1750–1850)* (Stuttgart: Gustav Fischer Verlag, 1990); Reinhard Brandt, *D'Artagnan und die Urteilstafel: Über ein Ordnungsprinzip der europäischen Kulturgeschichte* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1991), pp. 133–36. For these references I am indebted, respectively, to Larrimore and Louden.

(20.) Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, *Achieving Our Humanity: The Idea of the Postracial Future* (New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 104–5.

(21.) Eze, "Color of Reason," p. 116.

(22.) Bernasconi, "Unfamiliar Source," pp. 150–52 This claim has been challenged in an important later paper by Pauline Kleingeld: "Kant's Second Thoughts on Race," *Philosophical Quarterly* 57, no. 229 (October 2007): 573–92. Kleingeld also argues (as her title implies) that Kant changed his mind on race, moving from a racist to an anti-racist position in the 1790s. For Bernasconi's reply to both claims, see Bernasconi, "Kant's Third Thoughts on Race," in Stuart Elden and Eduardo Mendieta, eds., *Reading Kant's Geography* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2011).

(23.) Malter, "Der Rassebegriff," pp. 121–22; cited and translated by Larrimore, "Sublime Waste," pp. 99–100.

(24.) Wood, *Kant's Ethical Thought*, pp. 7, 5.

(25.) Louden, *Kant's Impure Ethics*, pp. 105, 177.

(26.) In a personal communication, Louden has referred me to a conference paper of his, "The Spreading over All Peoples of the Earth': Kant's Moral Gradualism and the Issue of Race," where he explicitly criticizes Malter and distances himself from his position.

(27.) Hill and Boxill, "Kant and Race," pp. 449–52.

(28.) Hill and Boxill, "Kant and Race," pp. 453–55.

(29.) Louden, *Kant's Impure Ethics*.

(30.) Eze, "Color of Reason," p. 104.

(31.) Pauline Kleingeld, "The Problematic Status of Gender-Neutral Language in the History of Philosophy: The Case of Kant," *Philosophical Forum* 25, no. 2 (June 1993): 134–50; Hannelore Schröder, "Kant's Patriarchal Order," trans. Rita Gircour, in Robin May Schott, ed., *Feminist Interpretations of Immanuel Kant* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997).

(32.) Kleingeld, "Comments."

(33.) Brandt, *D'Artagnan und die Urteilstafel*, p. 136 (my translation, with help from Ciaran Cronin).

(34.) George M. Fredrickson, *Racism: A Short History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Classics, 2015; orig. ed. 2002), pp. 17–47.

(35.) See, for example, Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Mary Gregor (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 86–87, 159; Kant, "Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch," in Hans Reiss, ed., *Kant: Political Writings*, trans. H. B. Nisbet, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991; orig. ed. 1970), pp. 106–7.

(36.) It is on this basis that Wood argues in *Kant's Ethical Thought* that Kant "declines to infer" differential rights from his racism. But note that Wood does not address the "natural slave" characterization of blacks and Native Americans, which seems a pretty clear statement of inferior rights, especially for a theory founded on autonomy as its central value. Nor

(with respect to gender) can he deny that the restriction to “passive citizenship” does indeed follow for Kant from his sexist characterization of women.

(37.) Bernasconi, “Unfamiliar Source,” pp. 152–54.

(38.) Eze, *Achieving Our Humanity*, pp. 77–80.

(39.) Kleingeld, “Comments.”

(40.) Maureen Konkle, *Writing Indian Nations: Native Intellectuals and the Politics of Historiography, 1827–1863* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

(41.) Konkle, *Writing Indian Nations*, pp. 3, 4, 17, 20–21.

(42.) The phrase, though not the sentiment, is Robert Bernasconi’s.

(43.) Cf. Bernasconi, “Unfamiliar Source,” pp. 160–62.

(44.) Susan Moller Okin, *Justice, Gender, and the Family* (New York: Basic Books, 1989).

(45.) Thomas McCarthy’s *Race, Empire, and the Idea of Human Development* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009) provides a fine example of one possible way of rethinking Kantianism in the light of this history.

(46.) Since the original (2005) appearance of this essay, a significant amount of new work has been published on Kant and race, some of which critiques the position I develop here: Kleingeld, “Kant’s Second Thoughts”; Bernasconi, “Kant’s Third Thoughts”; Samuel Fleischacker, *What Is Enlightenment?* (New York: Routledge, 2013). For my reply to these critics, an elaboration of my argument, and an updated bibliography on Kant and race, see Charles W. Mills, “Kant and Race, *Redux*,” *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal*, “Philosophy and Race,” 35, nos. 1–2 (2014): 125–57. I should clarify that (as explained in the final paragraphs of this essay) my criticism of Kant is not at all meant to rule out a revisionist anti-racist appropriation of his thought. On the contrary, in the epilogue of this book I make a case for a “black radical Kantianism,” which is intended to retrieve and radicalize Kant’s insights on personhood in the context of white supremacy. Compare Carol Hay’s *Kantianism, Liberalism, and Feminism: Resisting Oppression* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), which shows how a feminist Kantianism can be retrieved in the context of patriarchy despite Kant’s own sexism.

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