



DEALING WITH KANT'S RACISM

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Abstract: Immanuel Kant presents what looks like a universal theory that says that every human being has an innate dignity and value and should be treated with respect. But then, Kant's ethical theory is far from being a universal moral theory. In fact, Kant's ethical theory is an exclusive ethical principle structured for the white-Europeans only. This paper therefore, is an attempt to reconstruct and salvage Immanuel Kant's racial views which stand on the way of his universal principle – the categorical imperative. Although this paper is aimed at a reconstruction of Kant's racial views, it however does not in any way exonerate Kant from the guilt of his racism, rather it tries to highlight Kant's racism and at the same time argue that although Kant is guilty of racism, his ethics which contain morally worthy elements should not be abandoned just because of his few sins.

Keywords: Kant's Racism, Kant's Racism in Brief

Introduction

Immanuel Kant was a child of the age of Enlightenment. The Enlightenment was a European cultural movement that spanned the eighteenth century. Jean Jacques Rousseau, Voltaire and David Hume who were all products of the Enlightenment sought to replace the traditions and superstitions of religion and monarchy with a worldview that primarily relied on the powers of reason which later found audience in Kant. And as a child of the Enlightenment, he had a great respect for science and sympathized with its humanistic ideals. He was a firm believer in the rationality of man who grew up so to say, in the "heavenly city of the eighteenth century philosophers".

Every philosophical system they say is borne out of other experienced systems, thus rendering it a system influenced by other systems in the past. It is obvious from Kant's own writings that he was stirred and deeply influenced by the writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau,

with whom he shared similar anthropological and moral view points with regards to the "belief in the common man". Thus, Kant writes:

I am myself by inclination a seeker after truth. I feel a consuming thirst for knowledge and a restless passion to advance in it, as well as a satisfaction in every forward step. There was a time when I thought that this alone could constitute the honour of mankind, and I despised the common man who knows nothing. Rousseau set me right. This blind prejudice vanished; I learned to respect human nature...(Kant, 1949).

Kant was also influenced by the writings of philosophers like Vortaire, and David Hume. And Vortaire, Rousseau, David Hume and many other Enlightenment philosophers had several erroneous and immoral claims or prejudices about non-white societies. Kant's problem is his forming an opinion about non-white world by blindly believing travelers' accounts and considering them as a piece of

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reality. Besides, there is no valid moral argument to justify racism - racism is by itself an evil or immoral act which Kant has unfortunately but unapologetically enmeshed in. And racism is no doubt something of importance in judging a figure's work especially a contentious thinker like Kant. Suppose for instance, that Einstein was a racist, this would have little or no impact at all on the meaningfulness of his professional works as a physicist and his opinions on human diversity have no direct bearing or have nothing to do with his field. But in Kant's case, his ethical writings flow from his pragmatic anthropology and he was largely connected with ethics, human nature and human behaviour. So his racism may well be important because racism is not only a highly immoral position but also one which broad exposure to humanity, learning and honest examination of the world around us should cure one of. But then, we must note that several enlightenment philosophers had some erroneous and immoral claims that did not portray them typically as bad moral philosophers.

No doubt some of Kant's claims are good and some like the racist claims are inexcusably bad, yet, although his bad claims reflect poorly on his general philosophical aptitude, they do not necessarily mean that all of his claims are wrong or cannot be salvaged. It is on this note that this paper attempts to examine Kant's racism with a view to determining whether Kant's racism can be excused or salvaged.

Kant's Racism in Brief

Immanuel Kant was not the first to introduce the classification of the human variability; it was rather the Swedish botanist named Carolus Linnaeus who having been inspired by the physician Galen Pergamon's division of human types according to four bodily fluids, introduced the first classifications of the human variability when dividing the genus *Homo Sapiens* into four categories. Pergamon's division of human types was later expounded by the most influential ancient physician called Hippocrates. In his book *Systema Naturae*, Linnaeus determined four basic races as verities thus:

Homo Americanus, *Homo Asiaticus*, *Homo Europaeus* and *Homo Africanus*. This was followed up later by the professor of medicine named Johann F. Blumenbach who became the first to introduce in his work *De Generis Humani* a division of races based on skull, jaw and brain size, between 1770 and 1778.¹⁵ He divided humankind into five distinct groups thus: Caucasian, Mongolian, Ethiopian, American, and Malaysian. Inspired by Hippocrates, Linnaeus and Blumenbach's works, Kant taking skin colour as evidence of a racial class, classified humans into four races thus: white (Europeans), yellow (Asians), black (Africans), and red (American Indians) from the geographic standpoint (Kant, 1978).

Having classified humans into these four different races, Kant provides a psychological or moral description of the characteristics of each of the races. He argues that different nations have different aesthetics and moral sensibilities, hence the "beautiful" and the "sublime" are various qualities of aesthetic and moral "feeling." As one would expect, Kant himself a German, placed the German at the topmost level in his classification of the human races. According to Kant, the German has a fortunate combination of feeling, both in that of the sublime and in that of the beautiful. The German for Kant is reasonably methodical both in love and in all forms of taste. He combines the beautiful with the noble and is particularly interested in peoples' judgment of him. He has healthy inclinations in love (Kant, 1960).

The Englishman, says Kant, is cool and indifferent toward a stranger. He has little inclination to small complaisance. He is a great performer of services in friendship. He takes little trouble to be witty in society or to display a polite demeanor. He is reasonable and steady, a bad imitator who cares very little about what others judge. He follows his own taste and in relation to women, he is not so polite but accords respect and esteem. He is very steadfast (Kant, 1960).

The Frenchman on the other hand, is gracious, courteous, complaisant and has a predominant feeling for



the morally beautiful. He becomes familiar very quick and is witty and full of noble qualities. While the Spaniard is earnest, taciturn, truthful, a proud soul and more feeling for great than for beautiful actions. He has little kindness and gentle benevolence. He is often harsh and cruel. Kant claims that the Italian has a feeling mixed from that of a Spaniard and that of a Frenchman. According to him, the Frenchman has more feeling for the beautiful than the Italian, and more for the sublime than the Spaniard. As for the Dutchman, Kant observes that he has orderly and diligent disposition as well as little feeling for what is in the finer understanding of beautiful or sublime. He contrasts as much with a Frenchman as with an Englishman (Kant, 1960)

Having classified the characteristic dispositions of the European race, Kant in his usual manner of disdaining the non-European races has this to say:

If we cast a fleeting glance over the other parts of the world, we find the Arab the noblest man in the Orient. The Arab has a feeling that degenerates very much into the adventurous. He is hospitable, generous, and truthful. His inflamed imagination presents things to him in unnatural and distorted images. The Persians on the other hand are good poets, courteous and of fairly fine taste. The Japanese are very resolute which degenerates into utmost stubbornness in their valor and their disdain for death. They display few signs of finer feeling (Kant, 1960).

Speaking of the Hindus, Kant notes that they have motivating forces but they have a strong degree of passivity and they all look like philosophers. But then, Kant did not fail to tag them as he says that they incline greatly towards anger and love. However, Kant accords the Hindus some degree of rationality without realizing it when he notes that the Hindus can be educated to the highest degree but only in the arts and not in the sciences. Kant did not fail to put the Hindus in the waste dump of irrational races when he notes that the Hindus can never

achieve the level of abstract concepts. A great Hindustani man according to Kant is one who has gone far in the art of deception and has much money and who has a dominating taste of the grotesque. Not only that the Hindus are irrational, Kant claims that their religion is a religion which consists of grotesqueries. He equally accused them of sacrificing the wives for their dead husbands. The height of Kant's disdain for the Hindus is when he asserts that the Hindus always stay the way they are and can never advance, although they began their education much earlier. This claim is quite serious as it connotes a lot of negativities for the Hindus. In Kant's categorization, "the Hindus, Persians, Chinese, Turks and actually all oriental peoples belong" to this description (Kant, 1960).

The North America for Kant displays so sublime a mental character more than other nations of the Savages. He writes:

They have a strong feeling for honour. They are truthful, honest and extremely proud. They feel the whole worth of freedom and have little feeling for the beautiful in moral understanding. They have no virtue of forgiveness. In fact, the virtue of forgiveness is disdained as a miserable cowardice. The Americans are completely uneducable because they lack "affection and passion." They cannot be educated. It has no motivating force, for it lacks affection 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 (Kant, 1960).

Meanwhile, having catalogued, categorized or classified the rest of the races showing their strengths and weaknesses, Kant did not see or say anything good about the black race. In fact, Kant's descriptions of Africa and African people are the worst and the most humiliating and disdainful of all the races already discussed. Not even a single good comment or positive characteristic was attributed to the black race. In the classifications of the different human races, Kant writes of the black people thus:



The Negroes of Africa have by nature no feeling that rises above the trifling. Mr. Hume challenges anyone to cite a single 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 even been set free, still not a single one was ever found who presented anything great in art and science or any other praiseworthy quality even though 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 colour (Kant, 1977).

Kant noted that the religion of fetishes is so widely spread among the Negroes, a sort of idolatry that sinks as deeply as into the trifling as appears possible to human nature. Kant describes the Negroes as animist - "a bird feather, a cow's horn, a conch shell, or any other common object, can be consecrated to become an object of veneration and of invocation in swearing oaths"(Kant, 1977). In Kant's table of moral classifications, the Africans unfortunately can only be "trained" as slaves and servants. The race of the Negroes is, according to Kant, completely the opposite of the Americans; "they are full of affection and passion, very lively, very vain in the Negroes way, and so talkative that they must be driven apart from each other with thrashings. They can be educated but only as servants (slaves); that is, they allow themselves to be "trained" as servants. They have many motivating forces, are also sensitive, are afraid of blows and do much out of a sense of honor" (Kant, 1960).

It is to be noted that for Kant, to be "educated" or to educate oneself, and to "train" somebody consists purely of physical coercion and corporeal punishment. This can be seen in Kant's writings about how to flog the African servant or slave into submission. Hence, Kant advises that in order to control and bring the African servants to total obedience or submission "a split bamboo cane be used instead of a whip, so that the 'negro' will

suffer a great deal of pains (because of the 'Negro's thick skin, he would not be racked with sufficient agonies through a whip) but without dying"(Kant, 1960). Kant gives reason why it is necessary to beat the African servants with a split bamboo cane instead of a whip. According to him, "to beat the Negro efficiently requires a split cane rather than a whip, because the blood needs to find a way out of the Negro's thick skin to avoid festering"(Kant, 1960). To justify his view, Kant argues that the African deserves this kind of "training" (corporeal punishment) because he or she is "exclusively idle," lazy, and prone to hesitation and jealousy. Kant attributes all these negative qualities of the Negro to the fact that he (the Negro) through some climatic and anthropological reasons lacks "true" (rational and moral) character. Kant further stated that "all inhabitants of the hottest zones (which include Africa) are, without exceptions, idle"(Kant, 1978). Obviously, Kant's views above about the African was informed by the transatlantic slave trades in which he observes that African slaves are flogged, and in his words "trained" as European labour.

While considering the relation of the sexes, Kant notes that "the European alone has found the secret of decorating with so many flowers the sensual charm of a mighty inclination and of interlacing it with so much morality that he has not only extremely elevated its agreeableness but has also made it very decorous"(Kant, 1978). In other words, Kant implies that it is only the Europeans who have mastered the art of treating women with respect and esteem. Speaking of 'treating women with respect', Kant himself did not have a favourable disposition towards the female sex. In fact, Kant's feelings towards women in spite of all the nice things or qualities he ascribed to them could be regarded as one of aversion. For instance, in the Observation on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime, Kant asserted that women are "inferior" to men in some important way; that, because of this weakness or inferiority, women need (for their own good, or for the good of the marriage, or for the good of society) to be constrained in some way; that



marriage automatically makes the wife the servant of her husband; that, also because of this weakness or inferiority, women lack a requisite for active participation in the political life of the society (Kant, 1978). By this Kant affirms a belief that women lack intellectual ability and political wisdom and as such should be excluded from active citizenship.

As for the Orient, Kant notes that he has very false taste with regards to the relation of the sexes because he has no concept of the morally beautiful. He thrives on all sorts of amorous grotesqueries. Among this race says Kant, a woman is always in a prison. In the lands of the blacks Kant had exclaimed: "what better can one expect than what is found prevailing, namely the feminine sex in the deepest slavery!"(Kant, 1978). Kant cites Father Labat's report in which a Negro carpenter whom he reproached for haughty treatment toward his wives answered: "You whites are fools, for first you make great concessions to your wives, and afterwards you complain when they drive you mad."³² Rather than addressing the issue raised by the Negro carpenter, Kant avoided the issue and instead makes a universal racial declaration thus: "it might be that there were something in this which perhaps deserved to be considered, but in short, this fellow was quite black from head to foot, a clear proof that what he said was stupid"(Kant, 1978). Kant accords the Canadians the best of all the Savage nations by whom the feminine sex is held in great actual regard.

Within Kant's classification therefore, the American (American Indian), the African, and the Hindu appear to be incapable of moral maturity because they lack "talent," which is a "gift" of nature. Kant notes that "the difference in natural gifts between the various nations cannot be completely explained by means of causal [external, physical, climatic] causes but rather must lie in the (moral) nature of Man himself"(Kant, 1960). Kant goes on to provide the psychological moral account for the differences on the basis of a presumed rational ability or inability to "elevate" (or educate)

oneself into humanity from the rather humble "gift" or "talent" originally offered or denied by mother nature to various races (Kant, 1960).

From the ongoing, it is therefore, clear that the only race Kant recognizes as not only educable but capable of progress in the educational process of the arts and sciences is the white race or the European males. This can be seen in his statement: "the white race possesses all motivating forces and talents in itself"(Kant, 1960). Kant, in his article "On the varieties of the different races of man," gives a variation on the classification of races he had done in the Observations by making the colour of skin the dominant variable based on the geographic and elemental climates. This fact is clearly captured in Kant's hierarchical chart from the superior to the inferior hues of the skin thus:

STEM GENUS: white brunette

First race: very blond (northern Europe), of damp cold.

Second race: Copper-Red (America), of dry cold.

Third race: Black (Senegambia), of dry heat.

Fourth race: Olive-Yellow (Indians), of dry heat (Kant, 1960).

According to Eze, the assumption behind this arrangement and this order is precisely the belief that the ideal skin color is the "white" (the white brunette) and the others are superior or inferior as they approximate whiteness. Eze notes that in Kant's anthropological system, "all other skin colours are merely degenerative developments from the white original"(Eze, 1977). Kant's exaltation and proclamation of the white supremacy is quite parallel with his declaration that all other skin colours are merely degenerative development from the original - white skin colour. In the Physical Geography, Kant narrates how at birth the skin color of every baby of every race is white, but gradually, over a few weeks, the white baby's body turns black. "The Negroes" he says, "are born white, apart from their genitals and a ring around the navel, which are black



during the first month; blackness spread across the whole body from these parts"(Kant, 1960).

Meanwhile, still maintaining the usual four categories of the species (Europeans, Asians, Africans, and Americans), Kant writes:

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 (Kant, 1960).

Kant based his hierarchical colour/racial arrangement upon presumed differing grades of "talent. And "talent" for Kant is that which, by "nature," guarantees for the "white," the highest position above all creatures, namely rational and moral order, followed by the "yellow," the "black," and then the "red." Kant's point therefore, is that skin colour is an evidence of superior, inferior, or no gift of talent, or the capacity to realize reason. Hence Kant writes: "skin colour is the marker of "race" as specie-class, as well as evidence of this difference in natural character"(Kant, 1960). For that reason, Kant sees skin colour as that which codifies the natural human capacity for reason and rational thoughts. This is quite clear in his assessment on the reasoning ability or capacity of an African whom Kant, having evaluated the statement he (the African) made regarding the treatment of wives, not only dismissed the statement but regarded what the African said as irrational just because he is black - "this fellow was quite black from head to foot, a clear proof that what he said was stupid"(Kant, 1960). For Kant therefore, "skin colour is not merely a physical characteristic of humans, but also an evidence of an unchanging and unchangeable moral quality."⁴³ That is precisely why Kant maintains that the Negroes and the Hindus are incapable of moral maturity because they lack talent.

It is necessary at this juncture, to note that Kant did not say that the whites and non-whites are different

species of human beings since they all belong to one stock; what he says is that they are different races as presented in his hierarchical chart above. Kant writes: "the 'races' of humanity are clearly not distinct species, as they are capable of producing fertile offspring through interbreeding. They are rather 'deviate' forms, even though they are still so distinct and persistent that they are justifiably distinguishable as classes"(Kant, 1960). By this Kant departed from the views of Enlightenment thinkers such as Voltaire and few others who held the view of polygenism and rather remained committed to the competing views of monogenism possibly because of his Christian (Pietist) background. According to Kant, "races are marked by hereditary characteristics that must be passed on to offspring, whereas the characteristics of 'varieties' are not necessarily transmitted across generations: "race...is an inevitable hereditary peculiarity which certainly justifies division into classes"(Kant, 1978). Going by Naomi Zack's point of view, race is "a biological taxonomy or set of physical categories that can be used consistently and informatively to describe, explain, and make predictions about groups of human beings and individual members of those groups"(Kant, 1960). Kant did not just use race consistently to inform, describe, explain and make predictions about blacks and other non-whites, he equally gave race a scientific interpretation of backing. In this way Kant became the first to establish the difference between 'races'. And as such, the biological concept of race can be seen as European invention. This claim is clearly supported by Bernard Boxill, when he writes that the Europeans "invented the idea of biological race after they had enslaved Africans as part of a strategy to rationalize crime that was already well under way"(Boxill, 2001). Boxill suggests that "Europeans had the idea of race before they enslaved Africans and that the idea helped to identify Africans as candidates for enslavement," which was why Kant could not oppose European slavery and colonialism (Boxill, 2001).



Meanwhile, in addition to establishing the differences between races, Kant equally shows his disdain for women. Like Aristotle, Kant argues that women are to their husbands what slaves are to their masters. Thus for Kant "marriage can make the husband the master of his wife, he the party to direct, she to obey"(Kant, 1960). Besides, Kant does not see women as complete or active citizens of the state. According to Kant, "no woman, no matter how astute, financially and politically independent, rational or capable she is, can do what (at least in principle) the poorest and most dull-witted of male serfs and apprentices can do" (Kant, 1960). The implication is that women are naturally inferior to men and that no matter how gifted or outstanding a woman may be, she can never attain the heights that men generally found themselves in.

In the Anthropology from the Pragmatic Point of View, Kant argues that "a harmonious and indissoluble union cannot be achieved through the random combination of two persons. One party must subject himself to the other, and alternatively, one must be superior to the other in something, so that he can dominate or rule"(Kant, 1978). Kant then warns that "if two people who cannot do without each other, have identical ambitions, self-love will produce nothing but wrangling"(Kant, 1978). He then asserts that "for there to be harmony or unity of will between the partners in marriage, it is practically necessary that one partner is the master, one person must command, the other must relinquish the natural equality they would possess in the ideal situation, and obey; otherwise there will be "nothing but wrangling" and progress towards the purpose of marriage (whatever that purpose is) will be slow, perhaps stalled."⁵³ Therefore Kant advises that in the interest of the progress of culture, one partner must be superior to the other partner in a heterogeneous way. For Kant, the man must be superior to the woman in respect to his physical strength and courage, while the woman must be superior to the man in respect to her natural talent of mastering his desire for her"(Kant, 1978).

Finally, Kant brings his mockery of women to its fullest when he writes: "As for scholarly women, they use their books somewhat like a watch, that is, they wear the watch so it can be noticed that they have one, although it is usually broken or does not show the correct time"(Kant, 1978). These passages show clearly Kant's perception of women. As a child of the Enlightenment, Kant did not resist the temptation of advancing arguments that disdain women and other races that are not European; and this very attitude portrays Kant as a racist. We must not forget that right from the ancient period to the modern era, 'race', 'racism' and 'racist' are words used by individuals and peoples to describe the ideological frame of mind and actions of other people who espouse the doctrine of inequality (Guerra, 2014). As Nwosimiri rightly noted, "racism mostly comes down to prejudice against one or more racial groups that displays some certain kind of hostile behaviour towards the members of the other groups"(Nwosimiri, 2015). Hence racism exists "when one ethnic group or historical collectivity dominates, excludes, or seeks to eliminate another on the basis of differences that it believes are hereditary and unalterable"(Mabogo, 1996). From our study of Kant's anthropology and physical geography, and backed by the definitions of racism above, it is quite evident and undeniable that Kant was a racist. We see this manifest clearly in Kant's classifications of the different races of human kind, where the Africans and other non-whites are said to be "naturally inferior" to the white race (Europeans) based on the possession of rationality by the whites and its absence among the non-whites. This was why Kant did not hesitate in asserting that: "the Negroes of Africa have not received any intelligence from nature that rises above foolishness (trifling)....."(Kant, 1978). This racial discrimination and humiliation on the Africans is not just on the lack of rationality but also on the differences that Kant believes are hereditary and unalterable such as skin colour. Other remarks such as: "This fellow was quite black from head to toe, a clear



proof that what he said was stupid" (Kant, 1978), is another ugly insight on Kant's racial beliefs.

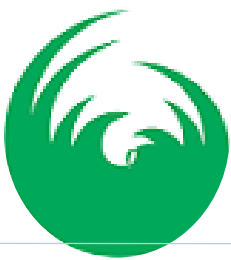
Meanwhile, a brief look into the different types of racism would enable us to situate Kant's racism. There are basically two types of racism namely, intrinsic or moderate racism and extrinsic or strong racism. The intrinsic racism refers to a condition or situation in which a person prefers his family members simply because they are his family members or relations (Bernasconi, 2002). While extrinsic racism on the other hand, is a situation where the racial essence entails certain morally relevant qualities. That is, "the extrinsic racist believes that people in different racial categories exhibit different characteristics and this justifies different treatment" (Bernasconi, 2002). In this sense Kant is an extrinsic racist because not only did he devalue Africa as a group, he equally characterized them as 'very vain' and 'talkative' who can be 'educated' or 'trained' as slaves, and 'whipped with a split bamboo cane.' Kant would have appeared as an intrinsic racist had he merely preferred the white race (Europeans) or simply assert the superiority of the white race over and above other races. Unfortunately Kant did not. He rather tried (quite unsuccessfully) to give a scientific justification of his racial attitudes and beliefs.

The idea of racism is further made clear by Peter Sedwick when he notes that: "racism draws hierarchical distinction between races, opening a gulf between them and setting one racially designated group over and above another on a scale of worth, intelligence, or importance" (Sedwick, 1991). Kant is quite guilty of this 'sin' as he made it more explicit that "humanity exists in its greatest perfection in the white race." In other words, the Europeans embody the ideal humanity whereas other groups are regarded as subhuman or a people who have no status whatsoever.

It is quite true that most Enlightenment thinkers such as Rousseau, Montesquieu, Voltaire, Hume, Hegel and several others exhibited and harbored some racial views and prejudices common to their time, yet none of them was as damning and questionable as Kant's racial

views. At least none of them would have said: "The Negroes of Africa have by nature no feeling that rises above the trifling (foolishness)." Thus Kant cannot simply be excused as a product of his time about racial superiority because as Stuart Elden notes, "Kant went out of his way to explicitly theorize race, as a crucial category of human life" (Stuart, 2009). Besides, Kant is seen as a thinker who actually invented the scientific concept of race or as Bernasconi puts it, "Kant was the thinker who 'gave the first clear definition of racism'" (Bernasconi, 2002). In fact, Bernasconi (2002) strongly contends that "Kant did not simply define race, but 'played a crucial role in establishing the term 'race' as the currency within which discussions of human variety would be conducted in the nineteenth century."

However, defenders of Kant's racial views like Sankar Muthu and Pauline Kleingeld concede that Kant's racial philosophy was indeed horrible and unforgivable, yet they argue that Kant had a second thought in which he disavowed his earlier racial philosophy in his later years. Kleingeld in particular acknowledges that Kant indeed defended his racial hierarchy until around the 1780s, but that he (Kant) later changed his mind around the year 1792 after the publication of 'On the use of Teleological Principles in Philosophy', and before he completed 'Toward Perpetual Peace' which was in 1792 (Kleingeld, 2007). Kleingeld then concludes that as Kant changed his mind on racial hierarchy, he became more egalitarian. She was particularly interested in and focused on Kant's later work *Toward perpetual Peace* in which Kant discusses his idea of cosmopolitan right and thereafter had a re-think about colonialism. Contrary to Sankar Muthu and Kleingeld, we argue that it is not clear that Kant indeed changed his mind or that he had a second thought on race in which he disavowed his earlier racial hierarchism, neither did he disavow colonialism unconditionally. This is because even in the year 1802 Kant's published writings - *Physical Geography* still carried and echoed his earlier racial hierarchism. Whereas Kleingeld argues that he condoned colonialism in 1790s.



So if he actually changed his racial views and condoned colonialism in 1790s, how come his later work - *Physical Geography* written in 1802 is still racial pernicious? It is possible that Kant might have condoned some aspects of colonialism and slave trade, but he did not condemn in entirety the whole institution of colonialism and trans-Atlantic slave trade in so far as he still considers some races inferior and subhuman. Besides, even if Kant condemned European colonialism, this does not affect his moral philosophy as Kleingeld claims in her article 'Kant's Second Thoughts on Race.' Just because Kant disagrees with European colonialism in some respect does not mean he reversed his previous stance about black inferiority. In fact, Kleingeld's essay totally ignores the central point raised by Bernasconi. Bernasconi notes that "the argument is not that Kant did not consider the effects of colonialism and slavery, the issue is that while condemning many forms of colonialism and slavery, Kant deliberately remains silent and conciliatory concerning chattel slavery" (Bernasconi, 2003). Kleingeld even makes it more doubtful as to whether Kant really had a second thought on race when she acknowledges that Kant radically revised his views on race during the 1790s but gives no indication of when or why he changes his views and makes no mention of a racial hierarchy anywhere in his published writings in the 1790s. If Kant gives no indication of when or why he changed his views how then does Kleingeld infer from that, that he actually changed his racial views just because he becomes silent? Kant's silence on the issue does not imply that he no longer support his racial views or that he out-rightly disavows them. It is quite obvious that Kleingeld did not read Kant's *Physical Geography* published in 1802 which still carries Kant's initial racial views. If Kant had wanted to disavow or disassociate himself with his earlier racial views, he would have clearly stated that in his last works, instead what we see in his *Physical Geography* which was one of Kant's last published works is a man whose racial classifications and hierarchism remains intact throughout his life.

Julie K. Ward equally supports the view that Kant did not change his racial views. She notes that "although such a thinker with as wide a philosophical scope and as long a career as Kant may change his position, in my view, the evidence for Kant reversing his thinking on race is not supported" (Ward, 2015). Kant makes no comments in his later writings to the effect that he has changed his views on race. So for Ward, the first problem for the reversal of view is that it depends on negative evidence - on what Kant does not say about race in his later political writings. Ward argues that considering that Kant has a long writing career to repudiate his earlier explicit statements about the heritability of racial differences, the absence of comments about race in later writing is hardly evidence of a conversion. In fact, a more natural inference to draw for a lack of comment says Ward, is that he remains unchanged in his earlier views on race. So the argument that Kant recanted or revised his racial views and condemned colonialism is tantamount to reading into Kant's work something that is not explicit.

All over the world, racism is frequently associated with prejudices and hostilities. And more often than not, racist attitudes are generally supported by mistaken and inaccurate beliefs about others as a group. Although Kant's racism may as well be viewed as mistaken and inaccurate beliefs about non-whites particularly the Africans, he, by all means transcended beyond mere mistaken and inaccurate beliefs as he tried to scientifically justify his racial attitudes and beliefs against non-whites. Hence Kant's type of racism is both extrinsic and scientific racism, and scientific racism is based on specie logic. Kant had clearly stated that the Europeans and non-whites are not two different species but rather different races since they both belong to the same stock.

Other things that support racial attitudes according to Tim Soutphommasane - the Australia's Race Discrimination Commissioner, are "fear and anxiety; envy and resentment; ignorance and arrogance" (Soutphommasane, 2014), and we add, hate. But none



of these is good reason enough to espouse racial thoughts or to discriminate against one's fellow human beings on the basis of mental inability and or skin colour. This is because, racism harms the social standing that another person or group of people enjoyed and can impair the ability of its target to exercise their freedom of speech. This can be vividly observed from the sad and ugly experiences of Africans and people of African descent scattered all over Europe and America.

As V.F. Guerra rightly observes, one of the first things that one notices from Kant's racial thoughts is that "it sets up a racial hierarchy in which the whites are superior and non-whites are inferior in varying degrees"(Guerra, 2014). It is quite worrisome to hear Kant say that the only race that is capable of full rationality and cultural progress are whites (Europeans). This was probably why Nwosimiri is of the opinion that "the philosophical writings of some modern philosophers like Hume, Kant and Hegel arouse psychological defensiveness by most modern African intellectuals when they come across intellectual racial discrimination and anti-African prejudices in the works of some European thinkers"(Nwosimiri, 2015). Nwosimiri is right, for the scholarly works of Mabogo P. More, Nwosimiri himself and in particular Emmanuel Eze, have recently sparked off debate as to how we should interpret Kant's racial philosophy and the relationship it has with his moral philosophy. In fact, it is on this note that Mabogo in his Book *African Philosophy Revisited* argues that the "Western conception of Africans and the idealized logocentric self-image of Western philosophy together with its notion of human nature constitute the pillars around which the rejection of African philosophy is based"(Mabogo, 1996). Mabogo strongly maintains that "Western valorization of 'reason' is directly connected to the interrogation of the legitimacy of African philosophy," and that "rationality - the notion that undergirds Western philosophy's self-conception and self-image and its articulation of human nature - is of course, the primarily source of this exclusionary attitude because

it legitimizes, encourages and leads to the reinvention of beliefs, attitudes, and articulations of otherness" (Mabogo, 1996).

Therefore, Kant's writings contain several pernicious racial views which make Kant himself a racist. And the idea of Kant reversing or disavowing his racial views in his later works is quite unsupported as we have shown.

How to Deal with Kant's Racism

Having established that Kant's racism indeed affects and infects his moral theory, the problem that stares us in the face now is the problem of how to deal with Kant's racism. In other words, since Kant's racism affects and infects his moral theory, what should we do with a racist who has quite a good number of good ideas? What will become of Kant's moral theory? Several scholars have different opinions as to what should be done with Kant and his philosophy. Our task here is to present and critically examine the various views and opinions of different scholars before stating our view or opinion with regards to how to deal with Kant's racism and his moral philosophy.

Arnold Farr one of Kant's defenders acknowledges the fact that Kant was a racist but argues that Kant's moral theory is essentially anti-racist theory (Arnold, 2002). He then suggests that instead of abandoning the categorical imperative, we should rather attempt to deepen our understanding of it and its place in Kant's critical philosophy. He hopes that this would bring about a deconstruction of Kant's writings. According to Farr, the deconstruction will reveal not necessarily the inconsistency of Kant's moral philosophy or the racist or sexist nature of the categorical imperative, but rather it will disclose the disunity between Kant's theory and his own feeling about blacks and women. He concludes by saying that "although Kant's attitude toward people of African descent was deplorable, yet it would be equally deplorable to reject the categorical imperative without first exploring its emancipator potentials"(Arnold, 2002). Farr misses the point here and his argument seems to be very



circular and contradictory such that at the end of his considerations or conclusion, one finds that the problem he sets out to solve is still there. For how can one agree that Kant is a racist and at the same time assert that his moral theory is essentially anti-racist? How can we use racism to combat racism? Kant's categorical imperative is already found to be equally racist, so one cannot use it as an anti-racist theory. The categorical imperative would have been essentially a formidable anti-racist theory if it were free of racism; but unfortunately, it was carefully formulated on the foundation or platform of racial ideology and so can never be a principle or tool for combating racism.

When Farr talks of deepening our understanding of the categorical imperative, we seem to get confused, for we are not clear with the kind of 'deepening the understanding' of the categorical imperative which he suggests that has not been done already. At least, in this study and in several other scholars' works, Kant's works have been examined within the context in which he lived and worked. We have equally studied side by side his important but not so popular works in order to 'deepen' our understanding of the categorical imperative and other aspects of Kant's works. Still we find the categorical imperative faulty and racist. So Farr's suggestion for a deepening of our understanding of the categorical imperative does not add up. And we see nothing deplorable in rejecting the moral theory of a racist. Who among us seeking a professional advice on weight lose can take instructions or advice from a person who weighs ten times his normal body weight and is showing no sign of working towards weight lose?

Louden like others acknowledged that Kant's moral universalism contradicts his particular views on race, but that we should focus on Kant's moral universalism instead of his views on race. He argues Like Farr that Kant's theory is fortunately stronger than his prejudices, and it is the theory on which philosophers should focus (Louden, 2012). We find Louden's assertion that Kant's theory is stronger than his prejudices quite

repugnant. We believe that if Kant were black (African) and had written against the Europeans and non-Africans the way he wrote about and against Africa and other non-white races, Louden and the rest of Kant's defenders would not dare say that Kant's theory is stronger than his prejudices. In what sense is Kant's theory stronger than his prejudices? Is the moral universalism which is exclusively for white Europeans stronger than Kant's racial discrimination? Have we not seen that Kant's moral universalism is not quite universal after all?

Victor F. Guerra also argues like Louden and Farr though with a slight difference. According to him, we should adopt an attitude of deep acknowledgement in which one concedes that "Kant's racial thought affects the central tenets of his moral philosophy and as a result one might need to revise one's interpretation of Kant's moral philosophy"(Guerra. 2014). Guerra's position is better than that of Farr. What he suggested is now what is obvious, for most scholars including the present researcher had acknowledged that Kant's racial thought affects and infects the central tenets of his moral philosophy. For this reason, his philosophy should be put in check. But then, Guerra further suggests that the right attitude to adopt is to acknowledge Kant's racism as unforgivable and even permeating his thought up until his death. But that in doing so, one should try to filter it out of his philosophy. In other words, that one should attempt, in a sense, to sanitize Kant's writings. Guerra's approach allows that moral philosophers have some good ideas and some bad ones, and we should not let the bad ideas ruin the good ideas. We should not let a few apples ruin the whole bunch; instead, we should isolate them and acknowledge them as bad apples. What Guerra suggests seems to be practically impossible. We may forgive Kant for his pernicious racial views, but how do we forget or how do we heal the wound already inflicted in the mind by such views? Granted that not all of Kant's views are bad; many of his ideas are quite good, but let us not forget that once an apple is bad it is not worth eating if you must avoid contacting disease. It is just unreasonable to lay



aside bad apples and pick the good ones when you know that the tree itself is diseased. In fact, Kant's racism and his moral philosophy should not be seen as bad apples and good apples (bad ideas and good ideas), rather they should be seen as one bad apple with a fairly good side which one must be very careful lest he bites off or eats off the bad side thereby contaminating his system. And in most cases, when an apple is bad it goes deeper than one can imagine and to salvage it becomes quite difficult. No wonder Eze maintains that "there is no repairing of Kant's system for he (Kant) believes that race is transcendental"(Eze, 1977). Eze argues that "the same rationality that allows us to intuit the categorical imperative is the same critical philosophy demanding race designating blackness as inferior" (Eze, 1977). Kant's good ideas are already tainted and infected with his racial views and it actually needs a lot of sanitizing as suggested by Guerra to make his ideas compatible, but our fear is that the end-result of such a sanitization may end up leaving or rendering Kant's ethics un-Kantian.

Other scholars argue that we should throw away all Kant's racist writings to give way to his moral philosophy. They argue that it might be unreasonable to expect a philosopher to be consistent in all his writings and never to slip up and as such we should consider Kant's racial writings as 'mistakes' or 'aberration' that must yield or give way to his philosophy. Scholars who hold this view equally advise that in regards to Kant's character, it is rather his moral philosophy not his racial thought that one should take into account. This attitude is quite problematic on two accounts: first, why should we consider Kant's racial thought as aberrations that do not fit nicely into his moral philosophy when it is evident that he lectured extensively on anthropology and physical geography more than on moral philosophy? Secondly, what stops us from also reasoning that Kant's moral theories are aberrations that do not agree with his racial thought? Thus, the argument not only misses the point but is also unfounded because Kant's racism was so systematic. Besides, it is not unreasonable to expect

philosophers to be consistent in all their writings especially those who are moralists for there is nothing unreasonable in placing high standards on certain people especially teachers of morals. For that reason, we expect more from them than the average persons.

The position Kant's defenders adopt is not to deny Kant's racial views but to deny that they have the philosophical implications claimed by Eze, Mills and others such as the present researcher. So it is either Kant's racial views do not affect it at all or they do not affect it in its key central claims. And in this work, we have shown that Kant's racial views indeed affect the key central claims of his philosophy. Be that as it may, we must in all fairness cut Kant some slacks by noting that indeed, good moral philosophers make immoral claims like Kant and still be good moral philosophers. After all philosophers like Vortaire, Rousseau, David Hume and many other Enlightenment philosophers had several erroneous and immoral claims that did not portray them typically as bad moral philosophers. No doubt some of Kant's claims are good as already noted in this work, and some like the racist claims are inexcusably bad, yet, although his bad claims reflect poorly on his general philosophical aptitude, they do not necessarily mean that all of his claims are wrong or cannot be salvaged. But then, as already mentioned, it is quite difficult and even immoral if we should bracket off all of Kant's bad claims or ideas, especially his unfortunate racial claims against Africa, women and other non-whites, and pretend that all is well with Kant's theory. In other words, in as much as we accept that not all of Kant's claims are bad, we cannot quickly forget or ignore the consequences and the implications his bad claims have had and still have on the people of Africa and other non-white races. In Kant's case, it is not the case that 'you don't beat an idea by beating a person' as some Kantians would argue. In fact, Kant's bad claims (racism) merit a serious beating on his person along with his ideas or claims. And this is exactly what we have done in this work.

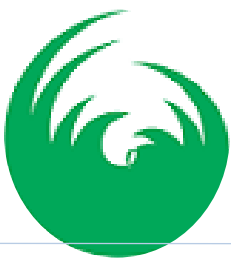


Conclusion

Therefore, to be practical and meaningful in today's society, Kant's ethics should be handled with care so as to avoid the many problems we already identified in this work, and should be reviewed to account for the races already excluded. When this is done, we can then comfortably accept it is a universal moral principle that has more than enough to account for human moral goodness.

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