

KANT'S RACIAL AND MORAL THEORIES

The Importance of a Teleological Perspective

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INTRODUCTION

It is often observed that the works of Immanuel Kant contain many propagations of racist and prejudiced beliefs, which seem to have been sincerely held by Kant himself. There is currently a large and growing body of scholarly work engaging with this fact: some authors have demonstrated his role in the development of scientific race theory in the 18th and 19th centuries; others are investigating the connections between these racist beliefs and other aspects of Kant's thought; and still others are investigating what a serious engagement with Kant's apparently racist positions might reveal about the rest of his work. As an example of the latter, read John Harfouch's recent book, *Another Mind-Body Problem*. At its core, this essay is also attempting to understand Kant's prejudiced beliefs in the context of his whole system of thought, both as it is situated in history and in its contemporary philosophical applications.

In particular, one short excerpt from Kant's 1795 essay "Towards a Perpetual Peace" has been at the center of a debate about how Kant's racism interacts with his political and moral theories. This quotation, given in the "Third definitive article", reads:

If one compares with [the right of hospitality] the inhospitable behavior of the civilized states in our part of the world, especially the commercial ones, the injustice that the latter show when visiting foreign lands and peoples (which to them is one and the same as conquering those lands and peoples) takes on terrifying proportions... they brought in foreign troops under the pretext of merely intending to establish trading posts... they introduced

the oppression of the native inhabitants, the incitement of the different states involved to expansive wars, famine, unrest, faithlessness, and the whole litany of evils that weigh upon the human species.¹

A piece that has been highly controversial in this debate is a 2014 essay published by Pauline Kleingeld, in which she argues that Kant “radically changed his mind” on race.² She bases most of her argument on an interpretation of “Perpetual Peace”, including the above quotation, that has Kant declaring people of color to be legitimate citizens of independent nations that demand the same respect as “civilized” or European nations. This argument failed to convince many Kant scholars of what would have been a late-life change of heart. In response, many have tried to find other explanations for the apparent contradiction that Kleingeld points out in “Perpetual Peace.” One notable objection to Kleingeld’s piece is Lucy Allais’s “Kant’s Racism,” which argues that Kleingeld overemphasizes the notability of Kant’s critique of colonialism. Allais maintains instead that Kant was, in the end, consistently racist and that the contradictions in his universalist moral and political theories can be attributed to “cognitive deficiencies” common to racists interested in creating a manufactured congruence between their racist and moral beliefs.³

Despite reaching opposite conclusions, both of these essays seem to view Kant’s racism as a basically psychological phenomenon that preexists and is separable from the development of his larger philosophical system. However, their insistence that racist attitudes necessarily generate contradictions ignores the possibility that Kant’s racial thought might be, in fact, entirely valid—even if also personally comfortable—within his system of thought. I think it is clear that the Anthropology is not a peripheral text, as these arguments imply, and that the arguments and observations Kant puts forth in his non-critical works should not be dismissed as less important than or tangential to his a priori works. In this essay, I argue that Kleingeld and Allais’s arguments are unsatisfactory because they fail to adequately prioritize the teleology ubiquitous in Kant’s thinking when comparing his ethical and empirical work relating to race. Ultimately, I demonstrate that, while there may be apparent contradictions in Kant’s moral system regarding human difference, these contradictions are more easily accommodated for when viewed through the lens of his teleology, which unites his entire philosophy.

¹ Immanuel Kant, “Toward Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch,” Essay, in *Toward Perpetual Peace and Other Writings on Politics, Peace, and History*, edited by Pauline Kleingeld, translated by Jeremy Waldron, Michael W. Doyle, Allen W. Wood, and David L. Colclasure, 67–109, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006, 82.

² Pauline Kleingeld, “Kant’s Second Thoughts on Colonialism,” essay, in *Kant and Colonialism: Historical and Critical Perspectives*, edited by Katrin Flikschuh and Lea Ypi, 43–67, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, 573.

³ Lucy Allais, “Kant’s Racism,” *Philosophical Papers* 45, no. 1–2 (2016): 1–36, <https://doi.org/10.1080/05568641.2016.1199170>, 30.

"IDEA FOR A UNIVERSAL HISTORY WITH A COSMOPOLITAN AIM" AND KANT'S TELEOLOGY

Some of Kant's most explicitly teleological thinking can be found in his philosophy of history. In his essay "Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim", Kant's view of history and his moral theory are engaged in a dialogue, and this complicated dialogue produces an interpretative difficulty for readers seeking to reconcile it with the rest of his work. In this section, I will discuss the relationship between reason, ethics, and teleological history, and demonstrate (A) the primacy of the history to Kant's work and (B) the importance of viewing Kant's moral theory through that teleological lens. I begin by discussing the role of teleology in "Idea for a Universal History", and demonstrating that Kant's belief in a purposed humanity underlies each of his major claims about the progression of history. Then, I investigate how this teleological sense of progress interacts with Kant's definitions of rational human nature and perfection. These investigations lead to the conclusion that, for Kant, a state of human moral perfection is not yet realized, and can only be realized through cultural progress. Such a state of humanity, it will be observed, is necessarily hierarchical. This hierarchical structure, it will be argued, offers an internal buttress and place for Kant's racism.

The opening line to "Universal History" reads: "Whatever concept of the freedom of the will one may develop in the context of metaphysics, the appearances of the will, human actions, are determined, like every other natural event, in accordance with universal natural laws".⁴ Although "individual human beings and even whole nations" act according to their own free wills, the set of possibilities upon which they exercise their will is not determined by them. Observable human actions are no more than appearances of individual human wills, the freedom of which is realized only within certain bounds—namely, those set by the will of nature.⁵ Thus, each free human action is merely participating in some larger history bounded by nature's will, and all human actions over time direct themselves toward "the ultimate destiny of the human race".⁶ With this, Kant immediately provides a limit through which human behavior—and its potential moral value—can and should be understood, which is the destiny coded into his predispositions.

Another aspect of Kant's teleology exemplified in "Universal History" is its relationship to the Principle of Sufficient Reason, which informs many of Kant's most basic philosophical claims. The first proposition is as follows:

All natural predispositions of a creature are determined sometime to develop themselves completely and purposively. With all animals, external as well

⁴ Wood and Kant, "Universal History", 108.

⁵ Nature's will is functionally the same for Kant as the will of God, and thus can also be understood as perfectly good.

⁶ Kant, Lectures on Ethics, 252.

as internal or analytical observation confirms this. An organ that is not to be used, an arrangement that does not attain to its end, is a contradiction in the teleological doctrine of nature. For if we depart from that principle, then we no longer have a lawful nature but a purposelessly playing nature; and desolate chance takes the place of the guideline of reason.⁷

The Principle of Sufficient Reason asserts that every true phenomenon must have a sufficient reason or cause to justify its truth.⁸ This proposition implies that all observable biological phenomena must contribute to or result from some greater intentional goal of nature, or else they are absurd. It can be seen, then, that in a world according to reason, a thing cannot exist without a *telos*, or some final purpose. History, of course, is not exempt from this. Although the actual purpose of human history seems impossible to discover, Kant is confident that some guideline running through history should exist, and that philosophers should search for it.^{9,10} Most importantly, Kant believes that the best way to find this path is through the analysis of human predispositions, and their pointing toward some ultimate destiny of humanity. That is to say, Kant believes that insofar as nature and *telos* intimately inform one another, adequate analysis of the predispositions given to us by our nature will elucidate our *telos*.

One of these predispositions, which receives the most mention in “Universal History”, is the capacity for reason. For Kant, reason is the foundation of all moral laws, and the human capacity for reason is what allows us to function as moral agents.¹¹ Kant defines human beings as simultaneously causal and sensible creatures, meaning that, though they possess the ability to act autonomously—according to their free will and reason—they are also always bound by the laws of nature.¹² This duality of nature is what drives the tension between human actions as they tend to be versus how they ought to be. While human beings cannot behave as purely rational beings, they also “do not behave merely instinctively”;¹³ thus, it is possible for an individual to act according to pure reason, even if it would be unreasonable to expect them to do so at all times and for all actions. This concept helps clarify how Kant views the development of reason in the human being: it is not that reason itself increases across

⁷ Wood and Kant, “Universal History”, 109.

⁸ This is the Leibnizian formulation of the Principle, which was put forth in *Monadology*.

⁹ Wood and Kant, “Universal History”, 118.

¹⁰ Importantly, Kant does end this paper with a deference to historians and empirical evidence, indicating that he considers his propositions to be “up for debate”, in some sense. However, I think it is also reasonable to assume that this sort of evidence would have to be pretty massive for him to accept its criticism, especially because so many of the fundamental implications of these propositions are based on knowledge that Kant uses as a basis for other a priori thought. I would think, perhaps, that the argument put forward in proposition 4 about the antagonism willed by nature in human beings is one that is “more” up-for-debate than that presented in proposition 1, which is more of an analytic statement based on Kant’s undisputed belief in biological predispositions. Thus, I interpret this statement to mean that Kant is less sure of the application of nature’s will and its specific processes than the idea that nature has a will, and that it exercises that will on human society.

¹¹ Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*.

¹² Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*.

¹³ Wood and Kant, “Universal History”, 108.

generations, or that its capacity necessarily differs between individuals, but that the laws of nature simply hold people back from exercising their capacity for reason in its fullest and most pure form.

The fourth proposition continues this line of thought in its analysis of how human beings actually exercise their capacity for reason. Kant admits that the use of reason is not instinctual for human beings, and that it needs “attempts, practice, and instruction” in order to progress from stage to stage, and from a mere predisposition embedded in human nature to a fully realized capacity.¹⁴ Furthermore, Kant argues that full realization of this capacity in the individual is impossible; perfect reason will only be exercised in a perfect human society, which still contains imperfect human wills and inclinations, only now with a structure of knowledge and instruction that can help individuals learn how to best exercise their reason.^{15,16} Even more so, an individual’s ability to act morally is inseparable from their cultural context and its own moral-rational development. Since reason is the tool for moral action, they cannot develop into a perfect moral agent, and should not be expected to do so. Due to this, it is important to consider the sociopolitical state of the world when looking at ethics from a pragmatic perspective: although the moral actions of individuals shouldn’t be expected to always benefit the present state of development, it seems there is good reason, from Kant’s perspective, to think that prescriptive ethical suggestions should take this into account to be most effective.¹⁷

Kant’s work regarding humanity does not admit the possibility of things being as they are simply because they are, demonstrated by his unquestioned acceptance of both a teleological perspective and the Principle of Sufficient Reason. The Principle of Sufficient Reason establishes that human difference cannot be arbitrary, and the existence of a highest state of humanity, which mirrors the highest state of man as an individual, establishes that these differences exist on a spectrum of moral value. In propositions 5, 6 and 7, Kant describes the concept that the only path towards moralization of the species is the development of a “civil society”, which follows certain internal and external political rules that are best suited towards the development of man’s free will and his capacity for reason.¹⁸ One major consequence of this idea, that a complete development of reason can occur only on a societal scale, is that reason is directly tied to culture. Just as the individual can fail in instances of reason, and is even expected to, so can a society.

¹⁴ Wood and Kant, “Universal History,” 109.

¹⁵ Wood and Kant, “Universal History.”

¹⁶ Kant, Lectures on Ethics.

¹⁷ I base this interpretation in part off Kant’s Lectures on Ethics, in which he asserts that there is some value to pragmatic judgements and that actions according to pragmatism can be good (even if they are not morally pure), and also on Kant’s argument for the role of warfare and “disagreeability” in “Universal History”: although he would presumably consider many aspects of warfare to be morally wrong, the development of culture cannot happen without it, which gives it an overall teleological goodness.

¹⁸ Wood and Kant, “Universal History,” 112.

Here, the link between teleology and anthropology becomes vital to understanding the meaning of Kant's history: culture has the distinct power to lock its people into certain states of existence if they do not appropriately exercise their capacities. This happens through an undescribed metaphysical process that entirely stops the development of specific capacities, or "seeds".¹⁹ Furthermore, the development of this capacity can be completely stopped: when this happens regarding reason, a manifestation of human culture is completely locked out of participation in humanity's final destiny.²⁰ A society that stops men from using reason stops men from being men. So, for Kant, it is of vital importance that human beings live in a culture that appropriately develops and instructs them toward the moral ideal, even if it does not instruct them perfectly, in order to move the whole of humanity forward. The seed must not be locked away.

Inherent in a call for forward movement is the claim that it is better to be closer to an ideal than farther from it. By establishing the development of reason as the one good path for humanity, Kant demonstrates that a hierarchy is fundamental to his vision of human development. An object simply must evolve toward something, since that something is already determined by another thing outside of the object itself. Furthermore, that something contains a moral worth, also determined externally. Thus, there have to be developments of human predispositions—which are now inextricably linked to manifestations of human culture—that are simply closer to the goal than others. This is the perfect breeding ground for hierarchical prejudices to flourish, exactly how we see in Kant's thought.²¹ Fundamentally, Kant's form of racism—although searching for some biological justification—is a cultural racism, and he ultimately sees race as a physical manifestation of a people's culturally conditioned capacities.

It is not necessary that this hierarchy be expressed as racism and sexism, the way Kant does; nevertheless, such an expression makes sense in the context of the predominant beliefs in Kant's time. He was racist before he conceived of this teleological world, and he made no effort to escape this racism at any point; rather, he simply developed a system that worked in accordance with the beliefs he already held. This can also be seen in Kant's ethical system in the context of what exactly he defines as moral goodness. It is not necessarily the case that a teleological perspective will lead to the conclusion of a reason-based moral goodness, like Kant's, but it again makes sense in the context of Kant's other beliefs and those who influenced him that it would develop in this way. Overall, although none of these concepts rely on each other,

¹⁹ Wood and Kant, "Universal History."

²⁰ Immanuel Kant, "On the Different Races of Human Beings," essay, in *Anthropology, History, and Education*, translated by Zöllner Günter and Robert B. Loudon, 82–97, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007, 86–87.

²¹ This is also evidenced in his proposition that all men must have a master, even though that master is a man who also needs a master. This is related to his political beliefs, and is also seen in the relationship between government and citizen that he puts forward in "What is Enlightenment?"

it is better supported in the text to understand Kant's racism and Kant's ethics as developed through a teleological lens, rather than through some other preventent and incompatible bias, because the teleology can be found to entail in itself the basic assumptions that Kant's work operates upon, whether those be religious inclinations, prejudices, or even value judgements. It is not that any of these beliefs precede each other in time, but rather that Kant's idea that a purpose to humanity not only goes unquestioned but is necessary to explain why these other previous beliefs are correct, that proves the higher importance of teleology to Kant's system than his concepts that are explained through it.²²

THE IMPORTANCE OF TELEOLOGY TO THE REALATIONSHIP BETWEEN ETHICS AND ANTHROPOLOGY

The given assertion that Kant's system of thought is a teleological one is hardly controversial—after all, he makes frequent explicit references to teleology and purpose across many of his critical and non-critical works. However, I argue that the importance of these teleological views should take precedence as the underlying ideology to Kant's system of thought. I have established the importance of these teleological principles to Kant's moral theory and its relationship to his theory of history; in this section, I explain how these principles also underlie the relationships between the different parts within Kant's ethical system. In Kant's ethics, teleological principles determine not only the methodology by which ethical thought should occur, but also serves as the actual source of moral value.

A central characteristic of Kant's ethics is its division into two distinct parts. In the *Groundwork*, Kant defines ethics as a study of freedom and the laws "to which [freedom] is subject"; from this, ethics is divided into an empirical part, called anthropology, and a rational part, called moral theory.²³²⁴ More specifically, anthropology is defined as a "science of the subjective laws of the free will", and moral theory as a science of the objective.²⁵ For Kant, moral theory and anthropology must also be preceded by a pure metaphysics derived from a priori principles—specifically, the pure principles of a good will—in order to contain any real epistemological value.²⁶ This metaphysics of morals is determined by the nature of human beings as being both rational and causal beings, and thus Kant posits that it would be equally valid for any other non-human being that also has rational cognition.²⁷ Because

²² The necessity in this claim comes from Kant's adherence to the Principle of Sufficient Reason.

²³ Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 3.

²⁴ For the purposes of this paper, I will only use these particular terms to describe this division, in order to accommodate for translation inconsistencies across Kant's works.

²⁵ Kant et. al., *Lectures on Ethics*, 3.

²⁶ Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*.

²⁷ For Kant, a rational creature possesses reason and acts accordingly, not just to instinct; a causal creature recognizes themselves as being actors in the world.

these qualities are pure and non-empirical, a moral theory built upon them can be considered a priori and universal. Using this a priori moral theory, philosophers should then be able to derive prescriptive, universal moral laws for all rational creatures including human beings.

The basis on which Kant's metaphysics of morals is built is the concept of the free will and its predicates, which all rational-causal beings possess. Kant understands free will in Man to be inseparable from his nature as a rational being, who ascribes his judgment to his reason rather than to an "impulse".²⁸ So, in doing a metaphysics of morals, one must engage with the idea of reason in its purest form; this is what Kant does in the *Groundwork*, as well as in the later *Metaphysics of Morals*. However, as was shown in the previous section, human behavior only rarely seems to be guided by pure reason. The possession of the faculty of reason by human beings is not subject to improvement, but the ability to exercise it appropriately is. If one took human society as existing in some kind of "state" of reason, the highest of which would have all individuals ruled purely by their reason and acting only according to duty, then it would be clear that humanity does not currently exist in this state. Furthermore, the world of behavior that Kant describes through his analysis of pure reason must be understood as an ideal, and not easily accessible to human beings who must also contend with the sensible half of their nature.

In Kant's philosophy of a universal history, it is clearly established that human nature will hold back individual agents from moral perfection. In *Universal History*, he writes:

In the human being ... those predispositions whose goal is the use of his reason were to develop completely only in the species, but not in the individual. Reason in a creature is a faculty of extending the rules and aims of the use of all its powers far beyond natural instinct, and it knows no boundaries to its projects.²⁹

This is due first to the fact that human beings are animals, and thus have inclinations, and second to the fact that they have a free will with which to follow whichever inclinations they desire.³⁰ Man's capacity for reason makes him capable of acting according to duty, but at the same time it is unrealistic to expect him always to do so. Despite the powers of reason beyond nature, man's actual understanding and actions will always be limited by his sensible nature and inclinations.

Despite this, Kant does maintain that it is possible for human beings as a society to learn to exercise their reason in such a way that they can achieve a state of

²⁸ Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 58.

²⁹ Wood and Kant, "Universal History," 109.

³⁰ Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*.

moral perfection.³¹ Although the Groundwork focuses mostly on individual actions (maxims), the principles that a morally worthy maxim must ascribe to are fundamentally social: the Categorical Imperative demands consistency across individuals and situations, and thus it makes sense that Kant would see moral actions as easier in a moral society than an immoral one. So, Kant's metaphysics of morals describes what moral value looks like for both individual actions and on a societal scale: all individuals must be seen as ends in themselves, and only societies and actions that adhere to this principle have real moral value. This becomes possible when both are governed by pure reason. The case of the individual is different: he is a participant in society, and his actions can either be moral or immoral, but he cannot ever be ruled exclusively by his reason; he cannot himself have perfect moral worth, even if he tends to act according to duty. However, the more perfect his society is, the more easily he can exercise his reason without interference, and act according to consistent and duty-based maxims.

Finally, the process of human moralization culminates in Kant's emphasis on the necessity of moral instruction. Kant's discussion of moral instruction provides the clearest understanding of his view of a perfect moral state of humanity in his work and demonstrates the manner by which the capacity for reason and good moral action operates. For Kant, virtue is not inherent, and also cannot be learned through examples; knowledge of virtue must be taught to individuals through the moral rule of duty, and only then will the individual have the necessary knowledge to live in best accordance with it.³² In this way, it is easy to see the progression of moral development in a society: the instructor has knowledge of moral truths, and passes on this knowledge to his students. In turn, his students have the time and knowledge to use their own reason to build upon and refine this knowledge, gradually increasing the moral capabilities of each generation.³³ Each individual will have to "actively struggle" against his instincts to "make himself worthy of humanity", but the state of moral knowledge has no inclinations and will continue to develop in the memory of a society until it finally reaches truth.^{34,35} At this point, the instructed members of said society are still wrestling against their human nature, but they have the real a priori knowledge that they need in order to act as perfectly and virtuously as their nature allows them.

This is the point at which it is crucial to classify Kant's racism as a cultural racism rather than phenotypic (i.e., inherently tied to skin color). The development of the races is inseparable from cultural development, as demonstrated, and the fundamentally cultural nature of the realization of human beings' predispositions

³¹ Kant, "Lectures on Ethics."

³² Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*.

³³ Wood and Kant, "Universal History."

³⁴ Kant et. al., *Lectures on Ethics*, 252.

³⁵ Immanuel Kant, "Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View," essay, in *Anthropology, History and Education*, translated by Zöllner Gunter and Robert B. Loudon, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007, 420.

marks culture as the basic determiner of racial differentiation. Kant, as many of his Enlightenment contemporaries, is particularly interested in reason, and thus the cultural development of reason exists at the forefront of his analysis of the development of the species as a whole. Outlined in “Universal History”, there are two paths of development that are available to mankind: first, there is one ordained by nature and evident in his predispositions, which strive towards the ideal application of reason; and there is another which happens if man fails to develop this reason in the species— if we “allow nature unfettered sway, the result is savagery.”³⁶ Kant holds that there are “savage” people existing in the world, and he defines them by their failure to exercise their capacity for reason.³⁷ At the same time, he has faith in the Enlightenment and the possibility of an ideal humanity, which he sees existing in the culture of Europeans.³⁸ If this group continues to exercise their reason, and in a sufficiently good way, then they will bring about a world in which it is possible for them to live according to pure moral laws. In his more pragmatic writings on what people or political groups ought to do in the real world, Kant’s apparent deviations from the categorical imperative make sense if one assumes that, even though the Enlightenment is the correct path towards perfection, it may not yet be possible to live in true accordance with the ideal principles of moral theory.

Ultimately, all of these factors come together to demonstrate the teleological basis of Kant’s ethics. Just as Kant argues in the *Groundwork* that the actions of some agent who acts morally according to some impulse or natural inclination contain less moral value than one who does so purely out of duty, the moral state of all of humanity holds value because it must be achieved through rational moral cognition. If human inclinations and desires were compulsively moral, like the divine will seems to be, then they would be devoid of any real moral worth.³⁹ It is not only that man is destined to achieve moral perfection, but that he “is destined to achieve his fullest perfection through his own freedom”, making that perfection infinitely more worthy.⁴⁰ So, man’s destiny cannot be untangled from the very qualities that allow him to pursue moral worth; functionally, the possibility of perfect moral worthiness is the same as the predisposition to achieve it. This concept creates a slightly different framework by which to understand the relationship between anthropology and moral theory for Kant: while universal moral theory describes the ideal, that which ought to be, this ought is only meaningful because of the limits placed upon it by what is, i.e., anthropology.

In describing the possibility of universal practical philosophy, Kant writes that “[ethics and anthropology] are closely connected, and the former cannot subsist

³⁶ Kant et. al., *Lectures on Ethics*, 249.

³⁷ Kant, “Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime,” 60.

³⁸ Kant, “Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View.”

³⁹ Kant et. al., *Lectures on Ethics*.

⁴⁰ Kant et. al., *Lectures on Ethics*, 252, emphasis mine.

without the latter”— no study of what man is capable of can be correctly done without an idea of what man is.⁴¹ While the universal moral imperatives of practical philosophy should not change, as they are contained in complete predispositions, the findings of anthropology can change as man develops and refines his nature towards something closer to the ideal. Finding meaning in a struggle towards something against what is is a distinctly teleological way to define meaning, and thus Kant's system of ethics is teleological—not necessarily because it is founded on explicitly teleological claims, but because its definition of value is one that constantly posits an eventual ideal against what is real. It is precisely this value that matters in the cultural hierarchy that Kant's racism is built upon: since culture is moralized, it holds relative value; since people are constrained by what their culture instructs, that relative value is passed on to them.

THE NECESSITY OF A TELEOLOGY-FIRST FRAMEWORK IN INTERPRETATION OF KANT'S MORAL WRITINGS

From the above discussion, it should be evident that Kant's teleological approach to understanding human history and human nature underlies his assumptions in both his ethical thought and his work in anthropology. With this established, should also be clear that interpretation of Kant's moral and anthropological thought should always be done with respect to the centrality of his teleological impulse. Within this discussion, the particular debate surrounding Pauline Kleingeld's claim in her essay "Kant's Second Thoughts on Race" that Kant abandoned—or at least lessened—his racist views somewhere in the 1780s or 1790s stands out as particularly interesting, and also particularly fruitless.⁴² Kleingeld interprets Kant's anti-colonial statement in "Perpetual Peace" as an explicit rejection of racism. But shouldn't a racist person, especially one who had previously supported colonial actions on other continents, have an interest in defending the national rights of those he deems inferior? Leaning heavily on this interpretation of "Perpetual Peace", Kleingeld attempts—but ultimately fails—to produce a temporal account of Kant's personal prejudices in order to account for the presumed contradiction.

In my reading, Kleingeld fails to produce a satisfactory account of Kant's contradictions due to her interpretation of "Perpetual Peace" as a fundamentally moral document and her confidence that Kant's racial and moral theories are ultimately incompatible. While she fully accepts that Kant "did defend a racial hierarchy until at least the end of the 1780s," she views his later assertion in "Perpetual Peace" that nations of color are deserving of equal "hospitality" as a complete reversal of that hierarchy.^{43,44}

⁴¹ Kant et. al., *Lectures on Ethics*, 2.

⁴² Pauline Kleingeld, "Kant's Second Thoughts on Colonialism," essay, in *Kant and Colonialism: Historical and Critical Perspectives*, edited by Katrin Flikschuh and Lea Ypi, 43–67, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

⁴³ Kleingeld, "Second Thoughts," 575.

⁴⁴ Kant, "Perpetual Peace," 82.

Fundamentally, this interpretation asserts that Kant's Anthropology and other racist claims are essential, and incompatible with his universalist moral theory in that they restrict moral humanity from non-white peoples. Thus, if nations of color can be recognized as sovereign nations, they must no longer be restricted from humanity, meaning Kant must have changed his mind.⁴⁵ However, in the very same paper that Kleingeld heralds as evidence of Kant's changed views, he writes that Europeans "view with great disdain the way in which savages cling to their lawless freedom."⁴⁶ This indicates that the place of race theory in "Perpetual Peace" may be more complex than Kleingeld's interpretation, which can be understood through the teleological principles that I have discussed.

Firstly, "Perpetual Peace" is certainly a pragmatic document—its maxims work towards the end of having peace, which does exclude it from being a work of pure moral principles.⁴⁷ It also can be seen as potential evidence of a step forward for humanity's moral development; whereas the "Universal History" suggests a purpose to war in the process of civilizing man, "Perpetual Peace" calls for a new era in history that prioritizes rational and Enlightened interaction between peoples. It maintains the exact teleological principles that I described in Section 1—one could even say that it functions as part of the pragmatic moral and political instruction that Kant believes will lead to the full moral development of humanity. This also explains the somewhat vague relationship the essay has with non-white societies: they are less developed than European society, even worthy of disdain, mirroring the exact cultural development of predispositions in "Universal History"; simultaneously, non-white nations are still equally equatable to an end as more-civilized European nations, which maintains the moral rule.⁴⁸ When the teleological principles are applied, the presence or absence of racial hierarchy in "Perpetual Peace" becomes irrelevant, which significantly weakens Kleingeld's argument.

On the other side of the debate, Allais argues against Kleingeld's interpretation of the meaning of "Perpetual Peace" in regards to his racism, viewing her evidence as too weak and citing the fact that Kant still published his deeply racist Anthropology into the 1790s as proof that he could not have changed his opinion so much as to disagree with those claims. Allais argues instead that Kant's inconsistencies simply are inconsistencies, and that this makes sense in the context of the psychological effects of racism. Allais proposes a distinction between empirical racism, which would be based in mistaken thought, and disrespectful racism, which aims to humiliate or dehumanize the object of its disrespect, and is rooted in "normative-emotional attitudes" tied up with willing.⁴⁹ She believes that Kant himself demonstrates this

⁴⁵ Kleingeld, "Second Thoughts," 55.

⁴⁶ Kant, "Perpetual Peace," 79.

⁴⁷ Kant, "Lectures on Ethics."

⁴⁸ Kant, "Perpetual Peace," 68.

⁴⁹ Allais, "Kant's Racism", 22.

Kantian disrespect in his racism. On this point, I must disagree— Kant’s racism, although frequently disrespectful, doesn’t aim to disrespect or dehumanize; instead, it exists as the result of choosing to understand humanity through cultural comparison, especially one that aims to understand the teleological goal of human life.

So, Allais’s paper is also ultimately unsatisfying in its attempt at generating an understanding of how Kant’s seemingly contradictory thoughts relate to each other. First, Allais’s implication that Kant’s pragmatic moral theory exists as a justification for his racism ignores the actual distinctions within his ethics, as I described in section 2. It takes Kant’s racism to be something born purely of prejudice, and not teleological in itself. This leads to a reading that feels almost dismissive of a valid insight withing scientific racisms like Kant’s, and the role that they play in a worldview that aims towards a teleological purpose. Overall, Allais’s paper is not a satisfying response to either Kant’s own racism or Kleingeld’s interpretation of it because it ignores the very conscious and intentional role that cultural comparison plays in Kant’s construction of the teleological purpose of humanity itself.

Ultimately, Kleingeld and Allais’s papers both fail because they place too much emphasis on Kant’s ethical theory without enough regard for his underlying teleological views. This shared interpretive lens, despite the vastly different conclusions that it can lead to, perpetuates this debate unnecessarily and leads scholarship in circles. By refocusing the question on the placement of “Perpetual Peace” in a progressive and purposed history, it is much easier to see how Kant’s racial, moral, and political theories actually interact with each other towards his philosophical goals. Thus, when writing about the relationship between parts of Kant’s thought or the possibility for change across time, it is important to place all of his thought inside the teleological framework that he himself operated in.

CONCLUSION

It is clear that Kant’s first priority in his work is his teleology; it is evident in the end goal of humanity being something that individuals have a duty to work towards, as well as the more subtle ways that it grants value to morality in human beings and human culture. If this is not sufficiently recognized in interpretation of Kant’s work, especially that which is empirical or pragmatic, then many of the threads between ideas are lost, and it is difficult to find satisfying answers to his inconsistencies. Furthermore, I think that it is actually reasonable to consider that Kant was willing to have inconsistencies between his empirical anthropological work and his a priori moral theory— since we know that the pure principles of the latter cannot be based on the former, and the former is intended to be an observational empirical study of what is currently, not necessarily what must be, we can accept their contradictions as a manifestation of the complicated path towards realization of pure moral goodness in human society. After all, one individual— or even an entire culture— failing to embody these pure

principles does not have any effect on what makes them pure in the first place, or on whether they can or will be embodied in the future. It is not the job of a moral theorist in the Kantian tradition— especially one outlining pragmatic rules, as Kant aims to do in “Perpetual Peace” — to consider who is or is not worthy of receiving moral treatment, but how to construct rules that best sustain the moral rule while still being useful in the current reality of life.⁵⁰ The point, for Kant, is to make the world better;⁵¹ at the same time, it is undeniable that his idea for how this is to be done is deeply embedded with racial and cultural hierarchy.

While both Kleingeld and Allais make compelling interpretations on the controversial nature of Kant’s “Perpetual Peace”, both ultimately fail to provide a satisfactory answer to the ambiguity of Kant’s ethical stance on colonization. It is reasonable, especially from the more contemporary view of colonization as an inherently racialized form of violence, for their interpretation to be entirely entwined with Kant’s writings on race; however, their focus on Kant’s ethical and anthropological works leaves out a wealth of textual evidence that provides much needed context to “Perpetual Peace.” The cultural hierarchy and unequivocal teleology demonstrated in Kant’s “Idea for a Universal History” provide this context to the texts that Kleingeld and Allais engage with, and particularly reveal a more nuanced interpretation of Kant’s moral theory that can close the ideological gap that they see between Kant’s racism and “Perpetual Peace.” Their papers serve as examples of the importance of recognizing this teleology in Kant’s system, taking the time to evaluate its influence on all of his system of thought, and reminding ourselves as scholars to be careful to be as accurate as possible when speculating what, precisely, Kant is focused on when making value judgements. The inconsistencies in Kant’s thought between the “Anthropology”, “Perpetual Peace”, and his ethical writings are much better understood in the context of his teleology, which demonstrates a much more consistent value basis across his entire body of work.

⁵⁰ In this case, “worthiness” of moral treatment would be universally the end-status of an individual or nation, which is universal. Even a person or culture that themselves do not exhibit sophisticated moral thought— or even, potentially, recognize themselves according to the same moral rule— should not be excluded, as that would violate the universalizability of the principle.

⁵¹ Kant engages with this optimistic goal in a 1793 essay called “On the Common Saying: This May Be True in Theory, but It Does Not Hold in Practice,” writing: “I rely here on my innate duty to affect posterity such that it will become better (something the possibility of which must thus be assumed) and such that this duty will rightfully be passed down from one generation to another—I am a member of a series of generations, and within this series (as a human being in general) I do not have the required moral constitution to be as good as I ought, and therefore to be as good as I could be... however uncertain I am and may remain about whether improvement is to be hoped for the human race, this uncertainty cannot detract from my maxim and thus from the necessary supposition for practical purposes, that it is practicable.”

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