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Kleingeld, Pauline

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CONTENTS

ARTICLES

The Regress of Pure Powers?	Alexander Bird	513
The Expressive Role of Truth in Truth-Conditional Semantics	Claire Horisk	535
The Responsibility of Soldiers and the Ethics of Killing in War	Yitzhak Benbaji	558
Kant's Second Thoughts on Race	Pauline Kleingeld	573
How is Descartes' Argument against Scepticism Better than Putnam's?	Michael Jacovides	593
Reid on Consciousness: HOP, HOT or FOR?	Rebecca Copenhaver	613
Why Williamson Should Be a Sceptic	Dylan Dodd	635
The Anti-Zombie Argument	Keith Frankish	650

DISCUSSIONS

A Consistent Reading of <i>Sylvan's Box</i>	Daniel Nolan	667
Depicting Colours: Reply to Newall	John Hyman	674

CRITICAL STUDY

Mulgan's Future People	Rahul Kumar	679
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BOOK REVIEWS		686
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The Scots Philosophical Club and the University of St Andrews

KANT'S SECOND THOUGHTS ON RACE

BY PAULINE KLEINGELD

During the 1780s, as Kant was developing his universalistic moral theory, he published texts in which he defended the superiority of whites over non-whites. Whether commentators see this as evidence of inconsistent universalism or of consistent egalitarianism, they generally assume that Kant's position on race remained stable during the 1780s and 1790s. Against this standard view, I argue on the basis of his texts that Kant radically changed his mind. I examine his 1780s race theory and his hierarchical conception of the races, and subsequently address the question of the significance of these views, especially in the light of Kant's own ethical theory. I then show that during the 1790s Kant restricts the role of the concept of race, and drops his hierarchical account of the races in favour of a more genuinely egalitarian and cosmopolitan view.

Most of the old divisions of the human species have long been rejected anyhow. Noah's sons, the four parts of the world, the four colours, white, black, yellow, copper red – who still thinks of these outdated fashions today?

Georg Forster, *Guiding-Thread to a Future History of Humankind* (1789)¹

I. INTRODUCTION

In 1788, the year in which he published the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant also published an essay in which he claimed that people from Africa and India lack a 'drive to activity', and hence lack the mental capacities to be self-motivated and successful in northern climates, never becoming anything more than drifters.² He writes that Nature, whose wisdom he praises, discourages the migration of races across the globe by making them ill

¹ Akademie der Wissenschaften der DDR, later Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften (ed.), *Georg Forsters Werke* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1958–), Vol. VIII, p. 193.

² References to Kant are to *Kants Gesammelte Schriften*, Royal Prussian (later German) Academy of Sciences (Berlin: Reimer, subsequently Walter de Gruyter, 1902–). Abbreviations: A = *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*; DCHR = 'Determination of the Concept of a Human Race'; DHR = 'Of the Different Human Races'; G = *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*; HR = Review of Herder's *Ideen*; IUH = 'Idea for a Universal History'; MM = *Metaphysics of Morals*; PP = *Toward Perpetual Peace*; TPP = 'On the Use of Teleological Principles in Philosophy'.

equipped to change from one climate zone to another, ill equipped ‘especially [for] the exchange of a warm climate for a cold one’ (TPP 8: 173). He adds a footnote here in which he endorses a pro-slavery text, citing with approval a critique of a proposal to free black slaves, with the argument that they will never be good labourers unless they are coerced into activity (TPP 8: 174n.). They can work, but they cannot *make themselves* work. Native Americans, he goes on, are a race (or rather, a semi-race) stunted in its development because their ancestors migrated to a different climate before they had fully adapted to their earlier environment. As a result, they are weak, inert, ‘incapable of any culture’; and they occupy the lowest level of the racial hierarchy that Kant claims to have determined:

That their temperament has not become *entirely* adequate to any climate can also be inferred from the fact that it is hard to find any other reason why this race, which is too weak for hard labour and too indifferent for industrious work, and which is incapable of any culture³ even though there are enough examples and encouragement in the vicinity [namely, the example set by the European colonial settlers], stands far below even the Negro, who occupies the lowest of all other levels which we have mentioned as racial differences (TPP 8: 176).

Kant’s unstated assumption, made explicit elsewhere, is that ‘whites’ occupy the top level of this hierarchy.⁴

These statements, in the essay ‘On the Use of Teleological Principles in Philosophy’, are appalling at many levels. The racial hierarchy, defended with a biased reading of travel reports and a teleological race theory, goes against the presumption of human equality which one would expect from someone with a universalist moral theory. After all, the basic moral principle which Kant formulates during the 1780s, the Categorical Imperative in its several versions, is, at least in its wording, addressed to all humans (or, even more broadly, to all finite rational beings). Although Kant’s own *definition* of race as such is formulated merely in terms of heritable differences in physical appearance, he nevertheless connects his understanding of race with a hierarchical account according to which the races *also* vary greatly in their capacities for agency and their powers of intellect. This was despite the fact that there were well known and esteemed authors who provided much evidence to the contrary in works that Kant himself had reviewed or commented on. Moreover, Kant’s race theory and its implications for global migration cast his cosmopolitanism in a disconcerting light – at least

³ The term ‘culture’ here could refer to agriculture or to development generally.

⁴ *Lectures on Anthropology* (1781–2), 25.2: 1187. Cf. also ‘Humanity is at its greatest perfection in the race of the whites’, *Lectures on Physical Geography*, 9: 316. It should be noted that although the *Lectures on Physical Geography* were published in 1802, the book cannot be regarded as reflecting the views Kant held during the late 1790s. There are problems with the edition that make it difficult to date specific passages (quite a few go back to the pre-Critical period).

his cosmopolitanism of the 1780s. As I shall show below, however, Kant changed and improved his position during the 1790s.

The claim that Kant had second thoughts on race in the middle of the 'Critical' period goes against the existing views on the matter in the Kant literature. Whether they emphasize his racism or his universalism, commentators generally suppose that Kant's position remained stable during the Critical period. Authors such as Bernasconi, Eze and Mills highlight Kant's white supremacist comments, and argue that his moral theory is less than universalist.⁵ Authors such as Loudon, McCarthy and Hill and Boxill devote much attention to Kant's racist remarks, but argue, in different ways, that Kant's main theory as defended during the 1780s and 1790s is truly universalist, even though Kant fundamentally contradicts this theory with his racial hierarchy.⁶ Sankar Muthu acknowledges Kant's racial hierarchism, but claims that he abandoned it at the beginning of the Critical period.⁷ In contrast with all these interpretations, I shall argue that Kant did defend a racial hierarchy until at least the end of the 1780s, but that he changed his mind, after the publication of 'On the Use of Teleological Principles in Philosophy' (and most likely after 1792), and before the completion of *Toward Perpetual Peace* (1795).

In the first section, I present Kant's 1780s theory of race. The fact that Kant simultaneously defended a universalist moral theory and a racial hierarchy during the 1780s raises important questions for interpreters, however. Should one choose to disregard Kant's racism and focus on the *Groundwork* and the *Critique of Practical Reason* while abstracting from his racist attitudes?

⁵ R. Bernasconi, 'Who Invented the Concept of Race? Kant's Role in the Enlightenment Construction of Race', in R. Bernasconi (ed.), *Race* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), pp. 11–36, and 'Kant as an Unfamiliar Source of Racism', in T. Lott and J. Ward (eds), *Philosophers on Race* (Oxford UP, 2002), pp. 145–66; E.C. Eze, *Achieving Our Humanity: the Idea of the Postracial Future* (New York: Routledge, 2001), and 'The Colour of Reason: the Idea of "Race" in Kant's Anthropology', in K.M. Faull (ed.), *Anthropology and the German Enlightenment* (Bucknell UP, 1994), pp. 200–41; C.W. Mills, 'Kant's *Untermenschen*', in A. Valls (ed.), *Race and Racism in Modern Philosophy* (Cornell UP, 2005), pp. 169–93; M. Larrimore, 'Sublime Waste: Kant on the Destiny of the "Races"', in C. Wilson (ed.), *Civilization and Oppression* (Calgary UP, 1999), pp. 99–125. Cf. also T. Serequeberhan, 'Eurocentrism in Philosophy: the Case of Immanuel Kant', *Philosophical Forum*, 27 (1996), pp. 333–56.

⁶ T.E. Hill Jr and B. Boxill, 'Kant and Race', in B. Boxill (ed.), *Race and Racism* (Oxford UP, 2001), pp. 448–71; R.B. Loudon, *Kant's Impure Ethics* (Oxford UP, 2000); T. McCarthy, 'On the Way to a World Republic? Kant on Race and Development', in L. Waas (ed.), *Politik, Moral und Religion – Gegensätze und Ergänzungen: Festschrift zum 65. Geburtstag von Karl Graf Ballestrem* (Berlin: Duncker and Humblot, 2004), pp. 223–43. Cf. also B. Dörflinger, 'Die Einheit der Menschheit als Tiergattung: zum Rassebegriff in Kants physischer Anthropologie', in V. Gerhardt et al. (eds), *Kant und die Berliner Aufklärung. Akten des IX. Internationalen Kant-Kongresses*, 2000 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2001), Vol. iv, pp. 342–52.

⁷ S. Muthu, *Enlightenment against Empire* (Princeton UP, 2003), pp. 182–4. Muthu claims that TPP contains 'no arguments about the pre-eminence of whites or Europeans over other human races' (p. 184).

Or do the latter imply that Kant's moral universalism should be read quite differently? Was Kant an inconsistent universalist, or, as has been argued recently, a consistent inequalities? After an exposition of Kant's 1780s theory of race, I address these questions. I then move to a discussion of the views Kant developed during the 1790s, showing how they differ from his earlier commitments.

II. KANT'S 1780s THEORY OF RACE AND ITS CRITICS

When he started his theoretical work on the concept of race, Kant had already expressed on several occasions his views on the inferiority of non-whites. One of the most notorious examples is his remark, in *Observations on the Beautiful and the Sublime* (1764), that the fact that a negro carpenter was black from head to toe clearly proved that what he said was stupid (2: 255). He cites Hume's comment that no Negro has ever shown any talent, concluding (2: 253) that the differences between blacks and whites are 'essential' and seem to be 'as large with regard to mental powers as they are in colour'.

Kant's first essay dedicated to a theoretical examination of questions of race was originally published in 1775 in the form of a course announcement, then amplified in 1777 and entitled 'Of the Different Human Races'. In this essay, Kant connects race with common ancestry and certain bodily properties. He defines racial features as heritable traits that are perpetuated through generations regardless of geographical location, and are necessarily passed on to offspring, so that procreation with a human of a different race leads to a blending of characteristics. Kant's focus was on features such as skin colour, facial traits and hair structure. But he also added comments, such as that blacks are lazy and that Native Americans have a 'half-extinguished vital energy' (DHR 2: 438), and remarked on their respective usefulness as slaves.⁸

Statements of a similar nature are found in Kant's lectures on anthropology and on physical geography. In anthropology lectures from (probably) 1781–2, he asserts that Native Americans are the lowest of the four races, as they are completely inert, impassive, and incapable of being educated at all. He places the 'Negroes' above them, as they are capable of being trained⁹ to be slaves (but are incapable of any other form of education) (25.2: 1187).

⁸ 'To mention just one example, in Surinam one uses red slaves (Americans) only for domestic work, because they are too weak for work in the field. For field work one needs negroes' (DHR 2: 438, note). Surinam was a Dutch colony, and the term 'one' [*man*] refers to the slave owners. It is hard to avoid the impression here that Kant implicitly accepts slavery, at least for non-whites.

⁹ 'Abrichten', a term used for the training of animals.

Kant's acceptance of non-white slavery is also apparent in passages such as the following: 'Americans and Negroes cannot govern themselves. Thus, [they] serve only as slaves' (sketches for the Lectures on Anthropology, from the 1780s, 15: 878). The 'Hindus' are superior to the Negroes, because they can be educated, but they can be educated only in the arts, not in the sciences and other endeavours that require abstract concepts. The 'white' race is superior and is the only non-deficient race: 'the race of whites contains all incentives and talents' (*ibid.*).¹⁰ Perhaps such views also explain why in his 1784 essay 'Idea for a Universal History', defending the belief that history is progressing towards a 'cosmopolitan constitution', Kant casually and ambiguously comments that Europe 'will probably eventually legislate for all other continents' (IUH 8: 29).

In the second part of his *Ideas for a Philosophy of the History of Humankind*, Johann Gottfried Herder rejected Kant's concept of race, on the grounds that both the criterion of common ancestry and that of skin colour fail to lead to a clear-cut division between four or five races: either one takes a very wide perspective, and then all humans share the same ancestors, or else one interprets the criterion of common ancestry more narrowly, and then one ends up with an infinitely large number of races, many of which would have the same colour.¹¹ Herder also offered much evidence intended to disprove race-related hierarchies, e.g., emphasizing the culture, strength and liveliness of Native Americans.¹²

Kant, in his 1785 review of Herder's work, mentions their disagreement. Regarding Herder's rejection of the concept of race, Kant remarks that this must mean that the concept of race was not yet 'determined' precisely enough for Herder (HR 8: 62). Kant wrote the review and his essay 'Determination of the Concept of a Human Race' around the same time, and both texts were published in November of 1785 (the same year as *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*). Thus it is not implausible to assume that this essay was at least in part a reaction to Herder.¹³

¹⁰ In the Lectures on Physical Geography Dohna (Summer semester 1792), Kant still endorses Hume's claim that blacks are naturally inferior (Physical Geography Dohna, p. 105). I would like to thank Werner Stark for providing me with the relevant passages of the Dohna MS as well as several of Kant's earlier lectures on the topic.

¹¹ *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, ed. B. Suphan, *Herders Sämmtliche Werke* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1909), Vol. xiii, pp. 257–8.

¹² *Op. cit.*, pp. 244–5. Herder's opposition to Kant's race theory should not let us forget that Herder was opposed to mixing 'nations' or (curiously) 'human species' (*Menschen-Gattungen*, 9: 385). Herder was opposed to this not on the basis of a hierarchy among them, but on the assumption that they each have a different 'character', and that mixing these inevitably produces a non-viable monstrosity.

¹³ The disagreement with Herder was certainly not the only occasion for Kant's essay, though. In 1779, Kant mentioned that he had a text in preparation on the topic of race, in

In 'Determination of the Concept of a Human Race', Kant lays out a race theory which deals strictly with physical differences among humans and does not mention any race-related differences in moral or cognitive capacities. Although the paper is clearly written from a 'white' perspective and for a 'white' audience (as indicated by Kant's use of the words 'we' and 'us', and features such as his readiness to assume that blacks necessarily smell bad), there is no indication of a racial hierarchy with regard to moral standing or intellectual, moral and psychological abilities. In fact, Kant states early on that all humans share the essential human predispositions, and that these are therefore irrelevant for the discussion of race:

Properties that belong to the species itself in its essence, and which are hence common to all human beings as such, are inevitably hereditary; but because human beings do not differ with regard to these properties, these will be kept out of the discussion of the subdivision of the races (DCHR 8: 99).

Thus one might think that by 1785 Kant had dropped his earlier view that racial differences included not only physical but also intellectual, moral and psychological differences.

His leading questions in the essay regard the theory of heredity. They are pre-Mendelian eighteenth-century puzzles like this one: why is it that when a blue-eyed and a brown-eyed white human procreate, the child's eyes are *either* blue *or* brown, whereas when a black-skinned and a white-skinned human procreate, the colour of the baby's skin is something in between? Kant's proposal is that the first case concerns *varieties* within one race, and in such cases the offspring does not necessarily inherit the features of both parents; the second case, by contrast, concerns *racial* features, which do necessarily inherit.

Kant situates 'race' conceptually between 'species' and 'variety'. Physical properties that inherit necessarily, but are not characteristics of the species as a whole, define different races, according to Kant. In 'Determination of the Concept of a Human Race', he claims that only skin colour constitutes such a physical property. A 'race', then, denotes a subset of the species that is characterized by a set of necessarily heritable characteristics which are

which he would respond to criticisms of his 1777 piece. He specifically mentioned Eberhard August Wilhelm Zimmermann's critique (Kant to Johann Jacob Engel, 4 July 1779, Ak 10: 256). Zimmermann's disagreements with Kant did not so much touch on the concept of race as such, but rather seem to have been limited to explanations and interpretations of specific purportedly racial properties, e.g., as to whether Native American men were naturally beardless or pulled their beards out, and as to whether the short stature of certain Nordic peoples was caused by the arctic cold or by other external influences. Cf. E.A.W. Zimmermann, *Geographische Geschichte des Menschen, und der allgemein verbreiteten vierfüßigen Thiere, nebst einer hieher gehörigen zoologischen Weltkarte*, 3 vols (Leipzig: Weygandsche Buchhandlung, 1778–83), Vol. 1, pp. 70–3.

not characteristics of the species as a whole (8: 99, 100), and which hence indicate common ancestry.

Another difficulty which Kant seeks to resolve with his race theory is that if one assumes, as many European theorists did at the time, that climate and local conditions determine race, it is impossible to explain why we do not always find the same race in different regions with the same climate. For example, one would expect to find similar races in the tropical rainforests in Africa and South America, yet this expectation is not met.

Kant claims to be able to explain this phenomenon, borrowing an idea from Buffon,¹⁴ by stipulating that there once was an original 'stem species' [*Stammgattung*] in one region of the world. This stem species possessed the predispositions for all the different racial features; when humans subsequently started to inhabit other regions of the earth, these predispositions developed differently in accordance with the requirements of the climates and conditions in these different regions. Once this developmental process was complete, however, it could not be undone, and this is why inhabitants of one region, and even their offspring, do not change colour after they move to another region.¹⁵ There can be different races in regions with similar climates, then, if one or more of these regions has been populated by a race that had already developed (part of) its predispositions elsewhere.

Kant himself saw his race theory as significant. Already in 1779 he described, in a letter to Johann Jacob Engel, an essay on race he was preparing, claiming that because of his novel perspective on the matter, the essay had 'gained some importance'.¹⁶

The letter to Engel also indicates that Kant believed that the 'physical' description could be separated from a 'moral characterization' of the races: 'Moreover, the attached principles of a moral characterization [*moralische Charakteristik*] of the different human races will serve to satisfy the taste of those who do not particularly pay attention to the physical aspects' (p. 256). Apparently Kant regarded the issue of the 'moral characterization' of the races as something of an add-on, included to satisfy the taste of a broader audience, but not part of the *physical* theory of race itself, and hence as

¹⁴ G.-L. Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, *Histoire naturelle, générale et particulière*, 44 vols (Paris, Imprimerie Royale: 1749–1804).

¹⁵ Earlier, Kant hypothesized that the *Stammgattung* was coloured a kind of brownish white ('Weisse von brünetter Farbe', DHR 2: 441). In 1785, however, he claims that it is impossible to guess the colour and anatomy of the first humans, and that whites too have developed from the original stem species (DCHR 8: 106).

¹⁶ Letter to Johann Jacob Engel, the editor of the *Philosoph für die Welt*, to whom he promised the piece on race, 4 July 1779 (10: 255–7, at p. 256). Kant states that he is too busy to finish the essay right away, but that he will send it to Engel when it is done. Kant did not return to the topic directly after finishing the *Critique of Pure Reason*, however, and he finally sent the essay to the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*.

something that might or might not be 'attached'. In the final version of the essay, published in 1785 in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, he chose to leave it out. Because Kant believed that one could separate the physical race theory from the moral characterization, however, we should not infer from the fact that he did not include a moral characterization of the races in the essay that he did not subscribe to one at the time. And indeed, as shown above at the beginning of this article, his racial hierarchy resurfaces a few years later in 'On the Use of Teleological Principles in Philosophy' (1788).

Whether Kant's 'determination' of the concept of race satisfied people such as Herder is highly doubtful. Kant did not solve the problem of demarcation, because his emphasis on skin colour would still raise the question of where to draw the lines between races.¹⁷ His assumption of necessarily heritable characteristics did not convince everyone either, as can be seen from the scathing criticisms of Kant's race theory in a 1786 paper by Johann Daniel Metzger (1739–1805). Metzger, a professor of medicine at the University of Königsberg, argues that Kant's theory runs counter to the most basic principles of modern physiology. At any stage in human history, he writes, accidental causes *can* produce changes that are subsequently heritable, and *no* feature is ineradicably heritable.¹⁸

The most visible criticism of Kant's 1785 race essay, however, both because it was published in the *Teutsche Merkur* and because Kant published an extensive reply to it, came from Georg Forster (1754–94). Forster, who had spent three years travelling around the world with Captain Cook and had had extensive personal contacts with non-Europeans, found that Kant did injustice to the facts, trying to make them fit his theory, a theory which Forster also regarded as itself fundamentally mistaken. In his 1786 critical essay 'Something More on the Human Races', Forster foregrounds his methodological disagreements with Kant. He claims that Kant is too preoccupied with his teleological model, and fails to take account of messy facts and empirical uncertainties. Also, Forster objects, if Kant's teleological framework assumes that Nature is designed wisely, why does he rule out the

¹⁷ In TPP, Kant sometimes speaks of there being only four races (white, yellow, black and red), and sometimes he additionally labels smaller groups as races, e.g., the Papuas, Haraforas, Eskimos and Arabs: cf. TPP 8: 176–7.

¹⁸ J.D. Metzger, 'Über die sogenannten Menschenrassen', in *Medicinischer Briefwechsel von einer Gesellschaft Ärzte*, Vol. II (Halle: J.J. Gebauer, 1786), pp. 41–7, at p. 46. Metzger's rejection of the notion of race should not be misunderstood as evidence of an egalitarian disposition. In a 1788 essay on the same topic, he contrasts the two paradigmatic 'varieties' of humans. Of the 'white human being', he writes 'largest brain and the smallest nerves. The ideal of human beauty and perfection'. Of the 'black human being', by contrast, he writes 'orang-outang-like head, small brain, and large nerves' (and, by implication, far removed from the ideal of human beauty and perfection): Metzger, 'Noch ein Wort über Menschenrassen', in *Neues Magazin für Ärzte*, 10 (1788), pp. 508–12, at pp. 511–12.

possibility that Nature might enable later migrants to adjust to their new environments? In addition to voicing these and other disagreements, Forster criticizes white supremacist theories and the practices of non-white slavery.¹⁹

Two years later, Kant replies to Forster's criticisms in the essay 'On the Use of Teleological Principles in Philosophy' (1788). Without addressing the many empirical difficulties Forster had pointed out, Kant provides a clarification of the philosophical underpinnings of his teleological model. On the basis of this clarification, he replies to Forster's claim that the inability of races to adjust to different climates is counter-purposive. He insists that this arrangement is purposive. In a passage previously cited above, he writes (TPP 8: 174; my italics) that Nature especially discourages people from warm climates from moving to colder ones:

By the arranged adaptation to one's climate Nature has prevented the exchange thereof, especially the exchange of a warm climate for a cold one. For precisely this bad adaptation of the new region to what had already become the natural temperament of the inhabitants of the old region automatically keeps the latter from doing so [*viz* migration].

Of course, it is circular to explain the purposiveness of Nature's hindering trans-climatic migration in terms of Nature's making people ill adapted for this kind of mobility. Kant adds (TPP 8: 174) a further stipulation which is supposed to explain *why* it is purposive for some people to be ill adapted for trans-climate migration, namely, the stipulation that the non-white races are not just physically but mentally unfit for this kind of migration:

And where have the Indians or Negroes tried to spread in Northern regions? – Those who were driven away in that direction have never, in their offspring (such as the creole Negroes or the Indians called Gypsies), yielded a type that was fit to be sedentary farmers or manual workers.*

Kant here re-attaches his 'moral characterization' of the races to his physical race theory. His claim that the different races do not change, once they have differentiated out from the *Stammgattung*,²⁰ is given a teleological interpretation, *viz* in terms of purposive design; and he connects this claim with the assumption that some races are not just different, but inferior. Incidentally, the argument remains circular. What is important in the present context, however, is that Kant's comment about the 'Indians' ('Gypsies') and 'Negroes' makes clear that his assumption that the non-white races have inferior *mental* capacities (including capacities for agency) plays a crucial role. It is no coincidence, then, that the footnote connected with this passage (at

¹⁹ *Georg Forsters Werke*, 8: 150, 154–5.

²⁰ Interbreeding does lead to change but not to a change *of a race*, on Kant's view, as it produces a third kind of entity, different from the original races, namely, the person of mixed race.

the point indicated by the asterisk in the quotation above) contains Kant's endorsement of an anti-abolitionist text.

Finally, the practical consequences which Kant draws from the supposed racial differences show that the racial hierarchy cuts deeper than a 'mere' difference in temperament (such as the differences in temperament attributed to the French and the Germans, A 7: 311–20). His endorsement of a pro-slavery text,²¹ for example, goes far beyond what could ever be warranted by any 'natural temperament' on the part of the enslaved, as slaves are reduced to property and used as mere means.

III. INCONSISTENT UNIVERSALISM OR CONSISTENT INEGALITARIANISM?

The account so far raises the important question of how to deal with Kant's racism. Given Kant's hierarchical view of the races, what is the appropriate attitude of a commentator or Kantian theorist today? In the current Kant literature, one can distinguish two basic reactions. The most common view is that Kant's racism is a regrettable and appalling fact, but that it lies at the periphery of his philosophy, and that one can quite easily isolate it from the more important core of his Critical philosophy. Kant's moral universalism contradicts his particular views on race, it is argued, but one can and should focus on the former. Thus Robert Louden writes

Kant's writings do exhibit many private prejudices and contradictory tendencies. It may well be that the Kant who wrote that 'the Negro can be disciplined and cultivated but never genuinely civilized' (Refl. 1520, 15: 878), and who 'hardly believes the fair sex is capable of principles' (Beob. 2: 232), would not accept these logical implications of his own theory [namely, that he is contradicting himself]. But Kant's theory is fortunately stronger than his prejudices, and it is the theory on which philosophers should focus.²²

²¹ In the passages referred to above, TPP 8: 174n.; see also the other texts mentioned above, such as DHR, 2: 438n.; and Sketches for the Lectures on Anthropology, 15: 878.

²² Louden, *Kant's Impure Ethics*, p. 105. In this context, Louden (pp. 104–6) has claimed that Kant's repeated assertion that 'the whole human race' has a moral destiny implies that Kant believed that women and non-white men, too, will eventually participate in the process towards moralization. Given Kant's usage of the phrase, however, this implication should not be drawn. According to Kant, humankind can make progress even if many humans cannot. He did not shy away from suggesting that some races may not contribute to or benefit from historical progress. When asking whether the history of humankind is progressive, he explains, he is looking at 'the human species as a whole (not, say, whether humans of a specific race, e.g., whites – and excluding Negroes or Americans – share in this advantage); therefore [the question is] not whether all human beings, but whether the whole of them makes progress, even if some of them lag behind' (undated, Refl. Anthr. 15: 650). Thus when Kant asserts that there are reasons to believe that humankind makes progress, this does not imply that he assumes that whites and non-whites will equally contribute to and share in this process.

Hill and Boxill argue, on the basis of the claim that Kant's racism does not follow from his basic moral and political principles, that his moral and political theories are not infected with racism. What needs to be changed, in their view, is 'certain false empirical beliefs and inessential derivative theses' defended by Kant.²³

This dominant reaction has been sharply criticized of late. Charles Mills has argued that Kant's moral and legal theory is not universalist at all. He claims that Kant intends to apply the Categorical Imperative and the Principle of Right to whites only: when Kant speaks of 'everyone', he means in reality 'all whites', not 'all humans'. Therefore, Mills argues, there is no contradiction between Kant's official universalist theory and his views on race: his so-called universalism is in reality no more than white egalitarianism. 'Racist ideas are central to his thought', Mills writes, and Kant 'makes whiteness a prerequisite for full personhood'.²⁴ Thus (p. 171), 'far from being in contradiction to modernist universalism and egalitarianism, then, racism is simply part of it – since the egalitarian theory's terms were never meant to be extended generally outside the European population'. Or, putting it differently (p. 183), 'when Kant urged on us the overwhelming importance of respecting *persons*, he was really talking (on this planet) about whites (more precisely, a subset of whites)' [*viz* males]. When Kant states, for instance, that we ought not to treat the humanity in our own person and that of others as a mere means, he simply does not *include* non-whites in the group of *persons*. They are merely *sub-persons*, in Mills' terminology, to whom the core Kantian principles are not supposed to apply. If one follows Mills' interpretation, Kant is better read as a consistent inegalitarian than as an inconsistent universalist.

Mills' interpretation erroneously projects our current notion of personhood onto Kant's texts, however. When one looks at the way in which Kant himself defines personhood ('personality'), it becomes clear that he attributes it to all humans, as beings endowed with reason.²⁵ Kant introduces the idea of beings that are ends in themselves by stating 'rational beings ... are designated "persons" because their nature indicates that they are ends in themselves.... Now I say, a human being, and in general every rational being, exists as an end in itself and not merely as a means to be arbitrarily used by this or that will' (G 4: 428). This is not because of membership in the human species as a biological group, but because of the nature of humans as rational beings. From what Kant says in the *Groundwork*, then, it is clear

²³ Hill and Boxill, 'Kant and Race', pp. 459, 449.

²⁴ Mills, 'Kant's *Untermenschen*', pp. 169, 170; cf. also pp. 185, 188.

²⁵ This argument could most easily be made on the basis of Kant's discussion of 'personality' in the *Religion* (6: 15–20), but because I am here discussing his 1780s views, I shall develop the argument by referring to the *Groundwork* only.

that we find personality wherever we find humanity (because we find it wherever we find rationality). Correspondingly, the restriction on the use of others is formulated in terms of their being rational beings or human beings, where human beings are taken to be one kind of rational beings, i.e., beings endowed with reason.²⁶

Thus in order to defend convincingly his thesis that Kant's stated moral principles consistently exclude non-whites (as being sub-persons), Mills needs to show that on Kant's view, non-whites are not even human beings. But Mills himself denies that Kant saw non-whites as non-humans, and indeed, Kant is perfectly clear about the fact that he regards all 'races' as humans, as illustrated by the essay 'Determination of the Concept of a Human Race' discussed above.

What this shows is that Kant was an inconsistent universalist. There is a genuine contradiction between, on the one hand, Kant's stated universalist moral principles, which are formulated as applying equally to all humans (and even to all rational beings), and, on the other hand, his specific views on racial hierarchy and the various alleged deficiencies on the part of non-whites.

Importantly, however, this does not have the implication rejected by Mills and championed by others, namely, that Kant's racist claims can be demoted to regrettable but philosophically unimportant atavisms or idiosyncrasies which contemporary interpreters can safely ignore when they 'focus on Kant's theory'. Even if Kant's racism does not infect the formulation of his universalist principles, this does not mean that it is therefore easily put aside.

Both sides in the discussion seem to focus merely on the question of whether or not Kant's racism is connected with his core ethical and political principles. Authors who believe that it is not argue that we can isolate it from these principles and continue our business as usual. Mills believes that it is, on the basis of Kant's racist remarks, and argues that Kant's principles should be rephrased in egalitarian terms. Even if the most fundamental principles of Kant's practical philosophy (such as the Categorical Imperative) are free from racism, however, this does not by itself imply that his racism is merely a matter of 'inessential derivative theses'.

What is overlooked by both sides is the possibility that Kant's principles are race-neutral in their formulation, but that his racism still makes its influence felt in his theory by affecting the articulation of intermediate principles and the selection of central problems to be addressed. Before we

²⁶ In the *Religion*, Kant distinguishes somewhat differently between 'humanity' and 'personality' (6: 15–20). Both there and in the *Groundwork*, however, he states that all humans, by virtue of their nature as rational beings, have personality.

can be certain, therefore, that Kant's racism can be isolated from the rest of his theory, we should investigate carefully exactly what role it plays in his wider moral and political theory. Only by actually investigating its systematic role in the larger whole of his practical philosophy can we assess the importance of Kant's racism (or lack thereof), and determine what (if anything) is needed to eradicate it entirely.

A strong indication that Kant's racism really does play a role in his 1780s political theory is that Kant himself makes significant structural changes to the relevant parts of his political theory during the 1790s, when he gives up his hierarchical view of the races. As I shall show in more detail in the next section, he then introduces a new, third, category of public right, namely, 'cosmopolitan right', and a new theme in his discussion of cosmopolitanism, namely, the injustice perpetrated by colonial powers. These changes are not necessarily revisions of the *principles* of Kant's practical philosophy (although the introduction of the notion of cosmopolitan right as one of the three parts of public right could probably qualify as such), but they certainly go beyond mere adjustments at the level of 'inessential derivative theses', and can count as changes to the theory.

In the works of the 1780s Kant advocates a 'cosmopolitan condition' (cf. IJH 8: 28). What he means by this is a legal regulation of the relationships between states in the form of an international federation. In the mid-1790s, he introduces a (novel) distinction between 'international right' and 'cosmopolitan right'. The first pertains to states and regulates their interaction; the second pertains to individuals as 'citizens of the world', i.e., independently of national affiliation, and regulates the interaction between states and foreign individuals. Cosmopolitan right applies to humans on all continents, and is explicitly incompatible with slavery and colonialism. Clearly, this view would not occur to someone who views whites as superior and non-whites as so radically inferior that the first may use the second as mere means (as slaves). The same holds for Kant's critique of colonialist injustice, which also appears for the first time in the mid-1790s.

These examples are indicative of the fact that in order to eradicate racism from a theory, often more is needed than merely deleting explicitly racist statements, because the aim will often require introducing additional positive changes as well.²⁷ Even if racism is not seen in the core principles (such as the Categorical Imperative), it may have influenced the intermediate principles which together make up 'the theory', or it may express itself in omissions such as Kant's failure during the 1780s to criticize non-white

²⁷ Hill and Boxill themselves imply as much when they rightly propose supplementing Kant's moral theory with a 'more thorough appreciation of the way racial feelings and beliefs actually function': Hill and Boxill, 'Kant and Race', p. 451.

slavery. Moreover, if present-day Kantian theorists take over the structure of Kant's 1780s moral or political theory and the set of issues he deemed salient (together with the concomitant blind spots), without realizing that their articulation has been influenced by racist assumptions, they are likely to prolong racism's distorting effects.

In short, racist prejudice can (and in Kant's case does) influence how the most basic moral and political principles are applied in the elaboration of the full theory. This is illustrated as much by Kant's failure to criticize race-related injustice during the 1780s as by his theoretical innovations in the mid-1790s, when, as I shall now show, he changed his views on race.

IV. KANT'S SECOND THOUGHTS

Kant radically revised his views on race during the 1790s. He gives no indication of when or why he changed his views. He makes no mention of a racial hierarchy anywhere in his published writings of the 1790s, however, and what he does say about related issues contradicts his earlier views on a racial hierarchy and a plan of Nature designed to restrict human migration (after their initial dispersal across the globe). I first discuss evidence for the thesis that Kant dropped his hierarchical view of the races, and then turn to the status of the concept of race as such in his later work.

In *Toward Perpetual Peace* and the *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant clearly departs from his earlier position in a number of ways. First of all, he becomes more egalitarian with regard to race.²⁸ He now grants a full juridical status to non-whites, a status irreconcilable with his earlier defence of slavery. For example, his concept of cosmopolitan right, as introduced in *Toward Perpetual Peace* (8: 358), explicitly prohibits the colonial conquest of foreign lands:

If one compares with this [*viz* the idea of cosmopolitan right] the *inhospitable* behaviour 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. America, the negro countries, the Spice Islands, the Cape, etc., were at the time of their discovery lands that they regarded as belonging to no one, for the native inhabitants counted as nothing to them.

Any European settlement requires contractual agreement with the existing population, says Kant, unless the settlement takes place so far from other people that there is no encroachment on anyone's use of land. In the section on cosmopolitan right in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant specifically stipulates

²⁸ This is not to imply that Kant became more egalitarian in all respects. His views on women, for example, did not undergo a similar development.

that such a contract should not take advantage of the ignorance of the inhabitants with regard to the terms of the contract (MM 6: 353), a stipulation which presupposes a concern not found in the 1780s texts.

The very fact that Kant regards Native Americans, Africans and Asians as (equally) capable of signing contracts, and as persons whose interests and claims present a normative constraint on the behaviour of European powers, indicates a shift in perspective. After all, as long as Kant regarded slavery as appropriate for Native Americans and Africans, he did not consider their consent to be important at all. The same can be said about the fact that he now defends hunting and shepherding peoples against encroachment by Europeans, instead of highlighting their failure to develop agriculture as he did earlier. In the *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant rejects consequentialist justifications for colonialism (the alleged 'civilizing' effects on the 'savages') (MM 6: 353). He also rejects the argument that the European colonists are justified in claiming ownership over foreign lands and their inhabitants by the fact they 'establish a new civil union with them and bring these human beings (savages) into a rightful condition'. Instead, Kant maintains that the latter have the right of first possession, and that this right is violated by the European ownership claims (MM 6: 266).

Importantly, Kant has now become unambiguously opposed to chattel slavery. Robert Bernasconi has claimed that Kant was 'silent on the slave trade in Africans' and 'failed to speak out against chattel slavery', and that he is 'aware of no direct statement by Kant calling for the abolition of either African slavery or the slave trade, even if only in principle'.²⁹ Such statements do exist, however. In his notes for *Toward Perpetual Peace* (1794–5), Kant repeatedly and explicitly criticizes slavery of non-Europeans in the strongest terms, as a grave violation of cosmopolitan right (23: 173–4). He formulates a scathing critique of the conduct of European powers elsewhere in the world. He sharply criticizes 'the civilized countries bordering the seas', whom he accuses of recognizing no normative constraints in their behaviour towards people on other continents and of regarding the 'possessions and even the person of the stranger as a loot given to them by Nature'. Kant censures the slave trade ('trade in Negroes'), not as an excessive form of an otherwise acceptable institution, but as in itself a 'violation' of the cosmopolitan right of blacks (23: 174). Similarly, he criticizes the fact that the inhabitants of America were treated as objects belonging to no one, and 'were displaced or enslaved' soon after Europeans reached the continent (23: 173–4). After having discussed European behaviour in Africa, America and Asia, he concludes (23: 174):

²⁹ Bernasconi, 'Kant as an Unfamiliar Source of Racism', p. 151.

The principles underlying the supposed lawfulness of appropriating newly discovered and purportedly barbaric or irreligious lands, as goods belonging to no one, without the consent of the inhabitants and even subjugating them as well, are absolutely contrary to cosmopolitan right.

In the published version of *Toward Perpetual Peace*, Kant repeats this judgement. He criticizes the ‘very most gruesome and most calculated slavery’³⁰ on the Sugar Islands (PP 8: 359). In the *Metaphysics of Morals* too (MM 6: 283, 241, 270), he categorically and repeatedly condemns chattel slavery.³¹

These passages show that Kant changed his earlier views on the status of non-whites. The oft-defended thesis that Kant’s racism remained constant thus needs correction, and one should not use evidence from the 1780s in support of claims about his views in the 1790s. For example, his statements from the mid-1790s contradict the view that the role of the ‘idle races’ in Kant’s cosmopolitan theory was merely that of a contrast against which Europeans could measure their own progress,³² as well as the view that for Kant, the non-white races counted as a ‘waste’ of nature.³³ These interpretations are based on Kant’s earlier texts, and therefore they are at most defensible as interpretations of his earlier views, not of his later views on the races.

Kant not only became more egalitarian with regard to race, he also revised his view of the role of race in connection with intercontinental migration. In some of his earlier writings he called racial differentiation ‘necessary’ for the preservation of the species during its initial dispersal

³⁰ A sceptic could object that the critique of the ‘most gruesome’ slavery is not the same as a critique of all slavery as such. One can condemn particular *excesses* of a practice without condemning the practice as such. Yet the strengthened superlative ‘*allergrausamsten*’ used of slavery is best read as implying that chattel slavery is gruesome and that some forms of it are *even more* gruesome. This is confirmed by the fact that the preparatory notes for this passage are completely unambiguous on this point (23: 173–4).

³¹ Robert Bernasconi sees in the *Metaphysics of Morals* merely ‘the basis’ for attacking chattel slavery, but claims that Kant does not actually attack chattel slavery there or anywhere else (‘Kant as an Unfamiliar Source of Racism’, p. 151). In the passage to which I refer, however (6: 283), Kant makes the following statements: all human beings are born free (ll. 30–1); any slavery contract is self-contradictory and therefore null and void (16–20); the head of a household is never allowed to *use* his servants as if he owned them or to *use them up* (15, 24). These statements amount to what may indeed be called a categorical condemnation of chattel slavery. Similarly, at MM 6: 270 Kant denies that it is possible (in accordance with principles of right) for one human being to own another, and at 6: 241 he states that there is no place in a theory of right for ‘beings who have merely duties and no rights (serfs, slaves)’. In the light of this last passage Bernasconi suggests that Kant may have regarded non-whites as not fully human and hence as not affected by his condemnation of chattel slavery (p. 152). This suggestion cannot be reconciled with Kant’s discussion of cosmopolitan right, however.

³² S. Shell, ‘Kant’s Concept of a Human Race’, in S. Eigen and M. Larrimore (eds), *The German Invention of Race* (SUNY Press, 2006), pp. 55–72, at p. 69.

³³ Larrimore, ‘Sublime Waste’.

across the globe (DCHR 8: 98), and claimed that Nature discouraged subsequent migrations. As Mark Larrimore has shown, however, these claims were in tension with Kant's repeated declarations, often in the same writings, that whites are able to live anywhere on earth,³⁴ for they imply that racial differentiation (or, more precisely, the development of non-whites) is not really necessary for the preservation of the species after all. Kant's later position simply does not attribute any special role to racial differentiation (let alone racial hierarchy) for the purpose of global migration.

In his 1795 description of what Nature has done to enable humans to live everywhere on earth, Kant omits any mention of predispositions for different races (PP 8: 360–5). He now claims that Nature has organized the earth in such a way that humans can and will live everywhere, and that they will eventually use the surface of the earth for interacting peacefully (PP 8: 358). The new category of cosmopolitan right, introduced in *Toward Perpetual Peace*, is premised on increasing and continuing movement and interaction across borders. He concludes his exposition of cosmopolitan right (which includes his critique of colonialism and slavery) with the hope that

In this way, remote parts of the world can establish relations peacefully with one another, relations which ultimately become regulated by public laws and can thus finally bring the human species ever closer to a cosmopolitan constitution (PP 8: 358).

Instead of his earlier claim that blacks and Native Americans cannot govern themselves (15: 878) and that Europe 'will probably eventually legislate for all other continents' (IUH 8: 29), Kant now envisages a world in which people of different colours and on different continents establish peaceful relations with each other that honour the normative principles laid down in his exposition of cosmopolitan right.

Finally, Kant's ascription of mental characteristics to the different races has changed. For example, he ascribes the ideal of military courage equally to Native Americans and mediaeval European knights (PP 8: 365). This stands in marked contrast with his earlier insistence on the weakness and inertia of Native Americans.

As Kant dropped his hierarchical view of the different races, the role of the concept of race as such became less prominent. During the 1790s the topic of race disappears almost entirely from his published writings. The only exceptions are found in the *Anthropology*, and they are quite telling.

The role of race in the published version of Kant's *Anthropology* lectures is radically different from that in earlier lectures on the subject. Whereas, under the heading 'The Character of Race', he had previously expounded

³⁴ Larrimore, 'Race, Freedom and the Fall in Steffens and Kant', in Eigen and Larrimore (eds), *The German Invention of Race*, pp. 91–120, at p. 106.

his account of race and racial hierarchy, in the published version of the *Anthropology* there is no discussion at all of the supposedly different ‘characters’ of the races. The section on race now contains a brief reference to a book by Christoph Girtanner, who offers an extensive discussion of race on the basis of Kant’s conception of it.³⁵ Interestingly, Girtanner focuses purely on issues of anatomy and physiology and does not provide any ‘moral characterization’ or racial hierarchy of intellectual talents and psychological strengths.³⁶ As Robert Loudén has rightly remarked, it is strange that the section on race in its final form appears in the *Anthropology* at all, because its current contents have no bearing on the work’s stated aim.³⁷ In fact, in the preface to the work Kant explains that race does not belong in the *Anthropology*, because it is merely a matter of physiology without ‘pragmatic’ relevance, that is, without direct bearing on the use of one’s freedom as a human agent.³⁸ This statement provides further support for the thesis that Kant had given up his description of the different races as having very different ‘characters’ and even different moral standing. This statement, together with the endorsement of Girtanner, also indicates that Kant did not renounce the concept of race as such, but restricted it to physiology, while dropping the racial hierarchy which he had previously associated with it.

In the race section in the *Anthropology*, Kant writes only one paragraph, and it is meant to comment on *varieties* within one race, not on race itself. This comment is interesting enough, however, as he introduces the topic of ‘variety’ here by speaking of ‘Nature’s aim’ in the ‘fusion of different races’, namely, ‘assimilation’:

³⁵ C. Girtanner, *Das Kantische Prinzip für die Naturgeschichte: Ein Versuch, diese Wissenschaft philosophisch zu behandeln* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1796).

³⁶ The only exception is the remark (p. 63) that ‘the slow Negro’ and ‘the even slower American’, when reproducing together, produce ‘extremely active and courageous’ offspring. Also, such characterizations can be found in a few of Girtanner’s Kant quotations. But Girtanner does not use these parts of the quotations for any point of his own. Moreover, he remarks that civilized Europeans who emigrate to North America ‘become completely savage’. ‘They become just as lazy and inactive as the native savages.... In a word, they do not merely entirely adopt the character and morals of savages, but they also become somewhat similar to them with regard to colour and facial traits’ (pp. 216–17), a remark which seems to indicate that he connects slowness with being ‘savage’, not with race *per se*. Tellingly, Kant’s comment about Nature hindering South–North migration more than *vice versa* is changed, in Girtanner’s paraphrase, to an identical hindrance in both directions (p. 156). In short, Girtanner’s Kantianism does not imply his endorsement of Kant’s earlier race-related hierarchy of natural incentives and talents; so neither does Kant’s endorsement of Girtanner.

³⁷ Loudén, *Kant’s Impure Ethics*, p. 94.

³⁸ Kant states that ‘even knowledge of the human races as resulting from the play of nature does not yet count as pragmatic but merely as theoretical knowledge of the world’ (A 7: 120). Larrimore (‘Race, Freedom and the Fall’, p. 109) reads this as Kant’s ‘promise’ to deliver a pragmatic anthropological account of race. Kant seems to mean the opposite, however (see also his usage of ‘not yet’ in the previous sentence, 7: 120), which is consistent with the fact that he does not provide such an account in the pertinent section in the book. Cf. also A 7: 299.

Instead of assimilation, which Nature aimed at in the fusion of different races, here [*viz* in producing varieties] Nature has made exactly the opposite into a law for itself: namely, in a people of one race (e.g., the white race), instead of letting the characteristics, in their formation, constantly and progressively approach one another ... [this law involves] multiplying endlessly the bodily and mental characteristics in the same tribe and even in the same family (A 7: 320).

Kant's claims about hybridization as such are not new, of course. What is new is that now '*fusion*' of races is seen as at least part of Nature's design, and that it is called an 'aim of Nature' at all. This is quite far removed from Kant's earlier comment in his lectures on physical geography that 'the end of Nature would be lost if half-breeds became common' (because, he then still feared, this would mean that humans would become physically and psychologically similar) (Dohna Lect. Phys. Geogr., Summer semester 1792). What is also new is the remark that racial assimilation does not lead to universal uniformity, because it goes hand in hand with the emergence of an infinite number of *varieties*. Kant does not take the additional step of claiming that Nature aims at *overcoming race* in this way. Still, the only possible conclusion is that he had radically recast the role of race within his teleological view of Nature.

As previously noted, the Dohna Lectures on Physical Geography from 1792 still contain elements of Kant's hierarchical account of the races. Thus Kant's second thoughts must have occurred after those lectures and before the completion of the manuscript of *Toward Perpetual Peace* (1795). That his conception of the role of race was still unstable at the time of writing *Toward Perpetual Peace* can be inferred from the fact that in the preparatory notes he mentioned racial difference as one of the forces that keep humans apart (in addition to differences in religions and languages), but in the final manuscript he left it out (cf. 8: 367 and 23: 170).³⁹

Kant's change of mind may have been prompted by his general revision of his theory of biology.⁴⁰ His earlier race theory had been intimately connected with a theory of biology which he modified in the *Critique of Judgement*;

³⁹ I owe this reference to Susan Shell, 'Kant's Concept of a Human Race', p. 72, n. 29.

⁴⁰ Phillip R. Sloan has argued that Kant dropped the notion of *Keime* at the very end of the 1780s, under the influence of the work of Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752–1840), a leading biologist at the time. Blumenbach had sent Kant a copy of the 1789 second edition of his famous book *Über den Bildungstrieb und das Zeugungsgeschäft*. Kant incorporated important aspects of Blumenbach's theory in his *Critique of Judgement* (1790), which, according to Sloan, resulted in Kant's 'dramatically weakening' his appeal to the existence of preformed 'germs': Sloan, 'Performing the Categories: Eighteenth-Century Generation Theory and the Biological Roots of Kant's *A Priori*', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 40 (2002), pp. 229–53, at p. 248. The notion of preformed germs (*Keime*) was an important part of Kant's race theory, and so changes in the former may well have led to changes in the latter. More research on this issue seems necessary, however, because the notion of *Keime* never fully disappears from Kant's work.

it is possible that he subsequently came to realize that his views on the innate predispositions for the various races no longer fitted his new theory. One difficulty with this possible explanation, however, is that he did not give up the concept of race as a biological category, but only the hierarchy of the races and the associated 'moral characterization'. He continued to endorse race as a *bona fide* physiological concept, and he endorsed Girtanner's book as an elaboration of his own views on race.

More plausible, therefore, is the assumption that Kant gave up the hierarchical view of the races in the context of his elaboration of his political theory and theory of right. The time when he changed his views on race falls within the period during which his political theory and philosophy of right underwent significant transformations, in the wake of the French Revolution. Examples of other important developments in Kant's political theory around this time are his notion of citizenship, his republicanism, and the concept of cosmopolitan right. Kant was never generous in explaining to posterity the genesis or transformation of his views, and thus we may never know the precise circumstances of his change of mind. Yet it would certainly not be surprising if he had started to reconsider his earlier acquiescence in the European practices of colonialism and slavery while he was developing his new theoretical commitments, and if he had decided to give up entirely the hierarchy of the races, even while retaining the notion of race as a purely physiological concept.

However this may be, Kant texts from the mid-1790s show that he had had second thoughts about his earlier hierarchical account of race. During the 1780s, as he wrote the *Groundwork* and the *Critique of Practical Reason*, and probably until at least 1792, his disturbing views on race contradicted his own moral universalism. He finally resolved this contradiction during the mid-1790s, at the latest during the writing of the manuscript for *Toward Perpetual Peace*. This finds expression not only in his explicit strengthening, in his moral and legal theories, of the status of non-Europeans, but also in his description of the mental properties which he attributes to non-whites, and especially in the harsh criticism of the injustice perpetrated by the European colonial powers.⁴¹

Leiden University

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