Black Radical Kantianism

Charles W. Mills

Abstract: This essay tries to develop a "black radical Kantianism"—that is, a Kantianism informed by the black experience in modernity. After looking briefly at socialist and feminist appropriations of Kant, I argue that an analogous black radical appropriation should draw on the distinctive social ontology and view of the state associated with the black radical tradition. In ethics, this would mean working with a (color-conscious rather than colorblind) social ontology of white persons and black sub-persons and then asking what respect for oneself and others would require under those circumstances. In political philosophy, it would mean framing the state as a *Rassenstaat* (a racial state) and then asking what measures of corrective justice would be necessary to bring about the ideal *Rechtsstaat*.

1 Introduction

Subordinated social groups trying to develop an emancipatory politics routinely face the problem of how to relate to the frameworks, principles, and ideals officially promulgated by those who dominate the social order. Should they seek to adapt these frameworks, principles, and ideals to their own ends, or should they attempt to devise alternatives? The former strategy has the (seemingly) obvious virtue of self-positioning within the mainstream, taking up a conceptual and normative apparatus already familiar and socially hegemonic, albeit for unfamiliar and anti-hegemonic purposes. The possible downside is that this apparatus—shaped, after all, by long-established exclusionary practices—will turn out to be more refractory than hoped to any such appropriation. The latter strategy has the (seemingly) obvious virtue of jettisoning altogether the oppressor's creation, the master's tools, for one's own original liberatory vision. The possible downside is that this putatively emancipatory ideology may have less appeal than hoped for even among one's fellow-oppressed, let alone that section of the privileged whom one is trying to win over (assuming this goal to be on the agenda), and that it may turn out to be marred by unattractive exclusions of its own. Hence, the historic debates in the realms of class, gender, and racial theory between those trying to retrieve

liberalism (in one form or another) for social democracy, or feminist liberalism, or black liberalism and those convinced that liberalism (or any other dominant-group candidate) is necessarily and irretrievably "bourgeois," or "androcentric," or "white," and that what is called for instead is a revolutionary communitarianism, or a radical, sororally derived feminism, or a distinctively black/Afrocentric revival of pre-colonial axiologies and political philosophies.

In this essay, I want to look specifically at Kantianism, and the resources it might provide for an anti-racist retrieval by what has recently come to be denominated the "Afro-modern political tradition" (Gooding-Williams 2009). Afro-modern (previously "black" or "Negro") political thought develops, as its name declares, in modernity, necessitated by resistance to the oppressive institutions of Atlantic slavery and European colonialism. Pre-modern African political thought would not have been black, Negro (these are Euro-imposed categories), or continentally uniform. But the advent of these new systems of domination eventually turns people from different African nations and civilizations, with different cultures and languages and traditions, into generic "blacks"/"Negroes," stigmatized as natural slaves—Ham's grandchildren (Haynes 2002; Goldenberg 2003). Whether in abolitionism, anti-colonialism, anti-imperialism, anti-Jim Crow and anti-apartheid activism historically, or in more recent resistance to polities now nominally racially egalitarian but in reality still anti-black, Afro-modern political theory seeks to overcome the "regimes of white supremacy" (Gooding-Williams 2009, 3) in their protean and ever-evolving guises.

Far from being monolithic, however, it should be regarded as a general category extending over many different variants. Depending on the respective diagnoses offered of the dynamic of these regimes, and the corresponding prescriptions for their overturning or reform, one can derive varieties of black liberalism, black Marxism, black nationalism, black feminism, and even black conservatism (Dawson 2001). My own project in recent years has become the articulation of a "black radical liberalism" that draws on what are standardly judged to be the "radical" strains of Afro-modern thought—black Marxism, black nationalism, and black feminism—while incorporating their key insights into a modified and radicalized liberal framework (Mills 2017a, epilogue). And a "black radical Kantianism" is supposed to be a key element of this proposed synthesis, though not in the sense of documenting the *actual* uptake of Kant by black radical theorists (unlike their actual reading of Marx), but in the sense of demonstrating how classic themes in this literature can illuminatingly be translated into a Kantian discourse reshaped by the realities of racial subordination. So the agenda is both descriptive and prescriptive, looking at the fortunes of "personhood" as a general liberal category under illiberal circumstances, and suggesting a "Kantian" reconstruction as a de-ghettoizing approach for bringing together these segregated conversations.

Why Kant, though? To begin with, there is the strategic argument from Kant's rise to centrality in contemporary Western normative theory over the last half-century. With the demise or at least considerable diminution in significance of the utilitarian liberalism (Jeremy Bentham, James and John Stuart Mill, Henry Sidgwick) that was hegemonic from the early 1800s to the mid-twentieth century, it is deontological/contractarian liberalism that is now most influential, whether in analytic Anglo-American political theory or Continental critical theory. Immanuel Kant is now regarded not merely as the most important ethicist of modernity, but as one of its most significant normative political theorists also.[1] So a racially informed engagement with this body of discourse would have the virtues of being in dialogue with what is now the central strand in Western ethico-political theory: Afro-modern political thought in conversation with Euro-modern political thought. But second, in addition to these strategic considerations (and perhaps more importantly), the key principles and ideals of Kant's ethico-political thought are, once deracialized, very attractive: the respect for the rights of individual persons, the ideal of the *Rechtsstaat* (admittedly somewhat modified from Kant's own version), and the vision of a global cosmopolitan order of equals. The problem, in my opinion, has been less Kant's own racism (since it is simply bracketed by most contemporary Kantians)[2] than the failure to rethink these principles and ideals *in the light of* a modernity structured by racial domination. And that brings me to the third point. In contrast with, say, a dialogue between European and Asian political traditions, which at least for long periods of time developed largely separately from one another, the Euro-modern and the Afro-modern traditions are intimately and dialectically linked. As emphasized at the start, the latter develops *in specific contestation of the former*, involving both resistance to and rejection of its crucial tenets insofar as they rationalize and justify Euro-domination, while nonetheless sometimes seeking to appropriate and modify others for emancipatory ends (Bogues 2003). So developing a "black radical Kantianism" as a self-conscious enterprise should be not merely instrumentally and intrinsically valuable, but illuminative of a counter-hegemonic normative system *already present* in Afro-modern thought, if not self-denominatedly "Kantian," formed in opposition to a white domination predicated on the denial of equal personhood to blacks.

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[1] As Hans Reiss writes in his postscript to the 1991 second edition of his edited collection of Kant's political writings for the Cambridge University Press "History of Political Thought" series: "Kant's standing as a political thinker has been substantially enhanced in the English-speaking world since this volume went to the printers just over two decades ago. More and more scholars are willing to rank him among the leading figures in the history of political thought" (Reiss in Kant 1991b, 250),

[2] For an overview of some of the debate, and a detailed bibliography, see Mills 2005 and Mills 2014.

2 Revisionist Class and Gender "Kantianisms"

Let me begin with a brief comparative overview of class and gender approaches to Kant to see what lessons can be learned for racial theory.

Marxism is famously weak on normative theory, on the one hand seeming to use moral language to condemn capitalism, on the other hand seeming to reject morality as such (not just "bourgeois" morality) as "ideological." In the brief heyday of "analytical Marxism" (1970s–1980s), accordingly, a large body of literature was generated on the question of whether Marxism's meta-ethic was noncognitivist, error theorist, relativist, or objectivist, whether in normative ethics Marx was best thought of as a utilitarian, an Aristotelian, a communitarian (future- rather than backward-oriented, of course), or even, implausible as it may seem, a natural rights theorist, and whether justice for him could be a transhistorical norm or was necessarily mode-of-production relative (Cohen et al. 1980; Nielsen and Patten, eds. 1981; Lukes 1985). Kant was almost never invoked in these debates. Apart from his problematic (from a Marxist materialist point of view) metaphysics and libertarian assumption that humans could somehow rise above empirical causality, his rejection of the right of revolution (Kant 1991b, 79–87, 143–147, 263–267) would obviously have been anathema to Marxism, not to mention his property restrictions on full ("active") citizenship. We associate Locke rather than Kant with making private property foundational, but it needs to be recalled that Kant also emphasizes the importance of private property, if within a different normative framework (Ripstein 2009, ch. 4), and infamously excludes the non-self-supporting (along with women as a group) from the category of citizens entitled to full rights (Kant 1991b, 61–92, 139–140). So the Kantian *Rechtsstaat* is, no less than the Lockean commonwealth, a state of property owners, a bourgeois state, and one that, even if it is oppressive, cannot licitly be overthrown, only protested via "the freedom of the pen" (Kant 1991a, 85).

Nonetheless, various commentators have argued from the start that such proscriptions are incompatible with Kant's own proclamation of the three "rightful attributes which are inseparable from the nature of a citizen"— that is "lawful freedom," "civil equality," and "civil independence" (Kant 1991b, 139–140). Contemporary Kantians, whether left, centrist, or right, do not, of course, believe that they have to endorse his metaphysical libertarianism, and, in these more enlightened times, they would unequivocally reject his proprietarian and gendered restrictions on citizenship (Kersting 1992). For them, the crucial theses are the moral commitments to respect for personhood and rational agency, and the implications of the categorical imperative for moral and political practice (all conceived of in an inclusive fashion).

Left Kantians in particular see the prohibition against using others as mere means as a potential moral indictment of capitalism and the kingdom of ends as translatable into a vision of the socialist future. In the late

nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, for example, the "Marburg School" associated with Hermann Cohen tried to develop a "Kantian socialism" to guide the German social-democratic movement of the time, remedying what were from their perspective the patent normative deficiencies of Marx's self-conceived "scientific socialism" (van der Linden 1988). More recently, of course, John Rawls's (1999) left-liberalism famously draws on (elements of) Kant to map out a "perfectly just," "well-ordered" society in which there is no pre-existing right to private property in the means of production, the capitalist market is constrained by fair equality of opportunity and the difference principle, and the equal basic liberties formally guaranteed for everyone are supposed to have equal worth independent of one's class membership. (Because the actual Kant was much closer to libertarianism than social democracy, this appropriation involves a significant rewriting of his theory.) "Exploitation," a concept traditionally associated with the Marxist left, has also recently been revived by some liberal scholars. In its classic Marxist formulation, it was tied to the labor theory of value, now widely seen as discredited. But alternative liberal conceptualizations founded on Kantian and related liberal norms of not "using" people or otherwise taking advantage of their unfortunate circumstances have become increasingly respectable (Deveaux and Panitch, eds. 2017).

So a left-liberal/"democratic socialist" Kantianism is, far from being a contradiction in terms, the modal political position for many on the left today. Insofar as Marxism offered a normative alternative to such a vision, it was usually taken to be the gesture toward a kind of Rousseauean communitarianism in "On the Jewish Question" (Marx 2000), a text that condemns the language of rights as itself necessarily part of the alienated bourgeois order. But the "negative rights" (life, liberty, property) hegemonic in the liberal discourse of the time have long since been supplemented—albeit controversially for classical liberals—with the "positive rights" proposed by social democrats, which it would be hard to frame as intrinsically bourgeois. And on an ecologically imperiled planet, any radically redistributivist global justice project will necessarily require—even under "socialist" auspices—a detailed set of moral and juridical norms for adjudicating pressing rival claims in conditions of crisis and scarcity quite dramatically different from the global cornucopia of goods Marx and Engels envisaged as marking the post-bourgeois order (the "forces of production" now supposedly having been completely "unfettered"). It is difficult today to imagine a credible alternative to rights discourse, and a Kantian foundation seems more secure than a utilitarian one, although of course a separate battle will be required against the critique of positive rights from Lockean liberals.

Class-sensitive appropriations of Kantianism are therefore long established. However, because of the under-representation of women in the profession (and, perhaps, its higher degree of sexism), a corresponding feminist engagement is not as well developed. Kant's sexism is, of course, far more extreme than his classism (Schott, ed. 1997), focused on putative

innate gender differences that, being essential and permanent, cannot be overcome (unlike a bourgeois or petty bourgeois escape from "passive citizen" status through property acquisition or appropriate career change) (Kant 1991b, 75, 77–79, 139–140, 257). Moreover, given the centrality of marriage and the family to the social order, his sexist characterizations of women are far more pervasive throughout his texts and arguably more integrally related to his social and political philosophy. As feminist commentators such as Pauline Kleingeld (1993) and Hannelore Schröder (1997) have argued, to read Kant's claims about the rights of "men" or "persons" in a gender-inclusive way is to ignore the foundational patriarchal commitments in his thought, which deny women the capacity for autonomy and prescribe permanent male guardianship for them. Moreover, apart from these gender restrictions, the tenor of his philosophy has also been found distinctively "masculinist" by some feminists—rigid, formalistic, hyper-rationalist, insensitive to context. An ethic of "care" supposedly more typical of women's moral orientation and development was sometimes proposed as a superior alternative, as in the famous Gilligan-Kohlberg debate (Gilligan 2016 [1982]).

But various prominent feminist liberals such as Jean Hampton, Susan Moller Okin, and Martha Nussbaum can be found who are either themselves open to contractarianism (Hampton 2007; Okin 1989), or, even when sympathetic to other normative strategies (Nussbaum's [2000] "capabilities" theory), are still dubious about such an ethic, or believe that, to the extent that it is valuable, it should be viewed less as competing with than complementary to more formalized approaches. For them, Kant's sexism was not to be ignored, but to be regarded as readily purgeable from his theory. More recent work, however, such as that by Carol Hay (2013), has begun to take a somewhat different approach. The methodology is not simply to ignore Kant's own sexism, but to ask how that sexism has shaped his theory to make it male-biased, even when the sexist pronouncements are excised, and how, correspondingly, a revisionist "Kantianism" self-consciously reoriented by a commitment to gender equity would have to be restructured to deal with a patriarchal world. Hay, for example, argues that the duty to respect oneself as a person would require resistance to everyday sexist practices. So it is not a matter of treating women as normatively fungible with men, but of rethinking conventional Kantian norms and precepts to register the radical difference in women's experience.

My belief is that a black radical Kantianism can fruitfully draw on the example of both of these bodies of literature, insofar as the situation of blacks in modernity has been marked not merely by economic exploitation (as with the subjects of [white, largely male] Marxist class theory) but essentialist derogation (as with the subjects of white female gender theory). Including blacks and other people of color in Kant's apparatus in a nominally race-neutral way is obviously easily enough done—hence, the puzzlement on the part of critics as to the philosophical point of bothering

to highlight Kant's racism in the first place. One just takes "person" as racially inclusive and continues as before. But the more interesting and challenging operation, as in the analogous work of Hay, is the project of the *race-sensitive* re-articulation of the apparatus to take account of, and redress, a racial subordination not merely national but (historically) global, and one that has left a legacy of structural injustice not only in economic disparity and stigmatized identity but, reflexively, in the "color-blind" conceptual deficiencies of "deontological liberalism" itself.

So in actuality, there have always been two sets of issues here: Kant's own classism/sexism/racism and how it does or does not affect his theory, and whether an apparatus that is recognizably Kantian (or at least "Kantian") can be developed to illuminate, critique, and adequately address class/gender/racial domination, and if so, how.

3 Kant and Race

Let me turn now to race, my focus in this essay. Since the background here may be less familiar to some readers, I will go into greater detail.

Beginning in the 1990s, a body of philosophical work began to emerge calling attention to the startling fact that Kant, the most celebrated ethicist of the modern period, was not merely a racist but a pioneering theorist of modern "scientific"/biological racism.[3] As an orthodox Christian, Kant was of course committed to a monogenetic rather than polygenetic account of the origins of humanity. But the *Keime* (germs, seeds) he postulated as being present in the originary human race would—on being stimulated by the different physical environments across the planet to which human beings had migrated—so develop as to shape in a permanent way what became the different branches of humanity. White Europeans, yellow Asians, black Africans, and red Amerindians were created in what Kant claimed was a color-coded hierarchy of intellectual and characterological traits (see sources in Mikkelsen 2013). So, particularly for blacks and Native Americans—natural slaves, in Kant's judgment—the question was naturally raised of whether (in a theory for which autonomy is foundational) they could really count as "persons" for him in any robust sense.

In the two decades-plus since then, various approaches to this sensitive subject have emerged. Some philosophers have simply proceeded as before, contending that such writings, while undeniably deplorable, should be attributed to the prejudices of the time, and—as largely located in the anthropology and physical geography texts—can just be segregated from the moral/political/teleological texts. Others have seen such an interpretative

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[3] Specialists in the history of racism disagree on the periodization of Western racism, whether a "short" periodization that locates its origins in early modernity (Fredrickson 2015 [2002]) or a "long" periodization that tracks it back to the ancient world (Isaac 2004). But the standard judgment is that if pre-modern racism did exist, it would have been theological and cultural in form, or perhaps (following Isaac), a kind of ur-Lamarckianism.

policy as question-begging, ignoring (as with gender) what are taken to be the real contradictions and inconsistencies in Kant's thought. As a further complication, the possibility of an evolving Kant (on race, but not on gender) has been put forward. Sankar Muthu (2003) and Pauline Kleingeld (2007; 2014) have independently proposed that we need a periodization of Kant's thought separate and distinct from the pre-critical/critical division: a racist Kant who undergoes a conversion experience to an anti-racist Kant, whether in the 1780s (Muthu) or the 1790s (Kleingeld)—hence, the passages seemingly unequivocally condemnatory of European colonialism and African slavery in *Toward Perpetual Peace* (Kant 1991b, 106–107) and *The Metaphysics of Morals* (Kant 1991b, 172–173), texts from 1795 and 1797.

My own position, as developed in two essays on the subject (Mills 2005; 2014), is that the quarantining of these racist writings is not philosophically justifiable, and that we *do* need to ask what their implications are for the conventional consensus on what Kant's "theories" (moral/political/teleological) are actually saying. I agree with Robert Bernasconi (2001) that they are in contradiction with what Kant's theories are *taken* to be. But what I have suggested, contra Bernasconi, is that the seeming contradictions can be reconciled once we postulate that Kant was working with a philosophical anthropology of persons and sub-persons. So in keeping with Christian monogenism, blacks are indeed human, but they are not, I am contending, persons for Kant, since (on this planet) whiteness is a prerequisite for personhood status. Hence, there is no actual contradiction once we recognize that the egalitarian assumptions and pronouncements in the moral/political/teleological writings are really referring to the (male subset of the) superior race (i.e., whites). (I am agnostic on the issue of whether or not Kant changed his mind, but would point out that even if he did, it would still imply that he endorsed an integrated racist theory—for me, the racist texts are *part* of his theory, not contradictions to it—for most of his professional career.) This has gone unnoticed in the profession, I suggest, because of the paucity of racial references in the most familiar and widely read texts, and the aprioristically sanitized view of Kant—at least in the postwar period—as a philosopher for whom such sentiments were impossible. But in fact, Kant's record as a racist theorist was apparently well known in Germany up to World War II, and only seems to have been suppressed after the war. An interesting investigative essay, or maybe even an entire book, is waiting to be written on this subject, and what it says about the broader issue of the West's cover-up of its racist philosophical history in the aftermath of the Holocaust.

For our purposes, though, the important point is that race in a racist sense is central to his thought, which means—given what a systematic thinker he was—that it ramifies throughout his practical philosophy in the ethical, political, and cosmopolitan spheres. Here, I am following Mark Larrimore (2008, 361–362), who writes:

> Not knowing what to look for, scholars have not seen
> the structural and structuring part race plays in [Kant's]
> work. . . . Kant's concept of race was never just a classifi-
> catory term in a physiological anthropology. We will not
> understand its continuing appeal if we accept the anachro-
> nistic idea that race was a "theoretical" or "scientific" issue
> rather than a "practical" or "pragmatic" one; it was and is
> both. We will better understand the abiding appeal of race
> if we see it in the context of the interconnection of geog-
> raphy, anthropology, philosophy of history and practical
> philosophy. . . . Kant did not think you could responsibly
> do practical philosophy without physical geography and
> pragmatic anthropology, and wasn't trying to. We misread
> his ethics if we do not also read his accounts of human
> diversity and their implications for respecting the humanity
> in everyone, treating none as a means only.

As I interpret Larrimore, race (in the racist sense) is part of Kant's
practical philosophy because it determines the way in which the aprioristic
principles are applied to different races. In his important *Kant's Impure
Ethics*, Robert Louden (2000) had argued that Kant's ethics is far more
"naturalistic" than standardly recognized. Far from being utterly remote,
abstract, and formalistic ("empty" in the characterization of its critics), the
principles are to be operationalized in different ways in different contexts.
The problem has been the secondary literature's failure to understand that
Kant's practical philosophy includes *both* aprioristic ("pure") and empirical
("impure") elements. In Louden's revisionist judgment:

> [C]ontrary to popular belief, Kant's approach to ethics
> is . . . not an example of a "purist view of morality" which
> rejects any "biological . . . [or] historical and psychological
> understanding" of human morality. . . . Rather, his
> project is simply one that explicitly seeks both to construct
> the foundational principles of theory from non-empirical
> sources and then to bring in empirical content for purposes
> of application to human life. . . . [P]ure ethics, although
> it must come first, does not take us as far as we need
> to go. It can show us what the foundational principles
> of moral thought and action are for rational beings in
> general, but it can never show us (or any other specific
> kind of finite rational being) what to do in a concrete
> situation. Principles of pure ethics, precisely because they
> are pure, have no special connection to human life. Such a
> connection can only be established by bringing empirical
> knowledge of human nature into the picture. (11)

Accordingly, Louden (2000) goes on to differentiate "pure ethics,"
"morality for finite rational beings," the "determination of moral duties for

'human beings as such'" (as against non-human rational beings such as intelligent aliens), and to point out the complications generated for identifying the "aids and obstacles to morality" by the existence of "subgroups within a species," and the consequent challenge of judging "what to do in a specific situation" (11–16). Women (white) and people of color are, of course, as Louden reminds us, among the most salient of these subgroups, indeed together constituting the majority of the human race. But at this point Louden's revisionism ends, and he endorses the conventional conclusion (as with Kleingeld) that there is "an unresolved tension . . . between the core message of universality in [Kant's] ethics and frequent assertions that many different groups of people . . . are in a pre-moral state of development" (15). By contrast, as indicated above, I think we should take the more radically revisionist position that Kant is *not* committed to universality (in the sense of imputing equal moral standing to all humans), but rather to a bifurcated ethics in which the innate and unchanging inferior nature of white women and people of color limits them permanently to sub-person status. Louden's characterization—"pre-moral state of development"—implies that Kant was envisaging a stadial progression toward the eventual attainment of moral agency. But Kant says *explicitly* that this state is permanent. So the facts have to be faced, however upsetting they may be to Establishment scholarly orthodoxy. In my opinion, there is no "tension" here, and putatively universalist Kantian egalitarian proclamations really need to be translated as restricted in their scope to the white male minority (at least for this time period, if we concede the possible correctness of Kleingeld's racist/anti-racist periodization).

How then do I propose to develop a black radical Kantianism?[4] As earlier emphasized, my strategy will not be simply to bracket off the racism and then *assimilate* blacks and other people of color to the white population, which would only obfuscate the real difference that race makes, but to transform the *significance* of "race." We would still be working with a

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[4] Note that this question is logically separate from the issue of whether or not Kant's racism did in fact shape his view of human personhood, since even if it did not, we would still need, I claim, to work out how the "pure" principles are to be applied in a racialized world, a task not usually tackled in mainstream Kantian scholarship. This seems like a good place to acknowledge and thank the journal referee for his thorough, detailed, and helpful comments and criticisms, some of which I have acted upon in revising the penultimate draft of this essay. Let me briefly discuss where we differ. Basically, the referee agrees that the project of trying to develop a "black radical Kantianism" is a worthwhile one, while contending that many of my claims about Kant's racism and its implications (as alleged above) are unjustified and unfair. As emphasized (and as he would concur), the two issues are distinct, and my focus here is on the the former rather than the latter. Nonetheless, I would claim in addition that his criticisms on the latter score have already been largely addressed in Mills 2014, a follow-up reply and elaboration of my argument in response to other Kant scholars critical of what I said in Mills 2005.

The main point of contention is this. The referee rejects my person/sub-person dichotomy as a "terrible oversimplification," and "ultimately not defensible" as "a characterization of Kant's views." The reason is that "it is not just 'Blacks' and other 'non-white' races that,

"Kantianism" in which race is central, but now rethought from a critical philosophy of race perspective. So "race" would no longer signify location in a biological hierarchy of superiors and inferiors within the human species, as in Kant, but the location of equals in a social hierarchy of the privileged and the oppressed in a system of racial domination. The "structuring" role of race (Larrimore) would continue, but now in a corrective, *anti-racist* way.

Of the range of competing metaphysical positions within critical philosophy of race, it is obviously the social constructionist view (race as [1] existent but [2] non-biological and [3] a social construct) that lends itself most straightforwardly to this project (Haslanger 2012). But I believe that all the other (non-racist) alternatives could be adapted also, albeit through more convoluted formulations. For example, the eliminativist position on race (Appiah 1992) is that races do not exist at all, whether as biological or social entities. Nonetheless, insofar as eliminativists do not deny that *racism* exists, and is targeted at groups mistakenly thought to be races, we could operate with a cumbersome locution like "groups in society wrongly

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viewed collectively, are typically presented as seriously deficient in realizing their capacity for acting in accordance with the principles of morality—for the problem is a 'human' problem, not simply one of 'race.'" So Kant thought of nonwhites "as less developed as human beings" but not as "sub-persons." But my reply would be that racism, especially in its "scientific" biological form, is a theory about essential comparative limitations, a ceiling on the cognitive and characterological capacities of the "inferior" races that is far below the white ceiling. According to my analysis, then, Kant is not saying that it is *harder* for blacks and Native Americans ("natural slaves") to achieve autonomy than white men; he is saying that it is *impossible*. These are naturally heteronomous beings. And as Bernasconi (2001) has pointed out, his anti-miscegenation proscriptions mean that we cannot even hope that an infusion of white blood will eventually uplift these unfortunates. So what are the implications for Kant's "critical" theory? The referee judges Pauline Kleingeld's (2007; 2014) periodization of a putatively racist/anti-racist Kant, whose conversion does not take place until the 1790s, to be more plausible than Sankar Muthu's (2003) periodization, which dates it to the 1780s. But then, as Kleingeld points out, the implication is that Kant's commitment to a racial hierarchy extended over most of his professional life, covering the publication of the *Groundwork* and the three critiques. Are we seriously to believe—especially for a philosopher so famous for the rigor and systematicity of his thought—that this invidious ranking of humanity was siloed, with no ramifications for his "critical" theoretical claims over this period? Finally, the referee cites Christian Meiners and Houston Chamberlain as racist theorists whose writings were far more influential than Kant's, and asks why we shouldn't be focusing on them instead: "Why give such priority to 'minor' writings of Kant?" But if we are trying to determine the origins of modern "scientific" racism, then the issue is not whose version ultimately became most influential, but whose version was developed first, and the credit for this dubious achievement does seem to belong to Kant—a judgment made by many other commentators (see Mills 2014). Moreover, Meiners and Chamberlain are notorious figures rightly anathematized, but categorized as fringe thinkers in the Western tradition. Kant, by contrast, is celebrated and honored as the most important ethicist of modernity. So if you are trying, as I am, to establish that racism has been central rather than marginal to modern Western theory, then obviously Kant is the thinker whose racism needs to be exposed and publicized.

believed to be races, whether superior or inferior, and privileged or disadvantaged accordingly in this group membership through the structures and policies justified by racist beliefs about them."

So "race" in this revisionist Kantianism would now be tracking something different, and the "empirical content" (Louden 2000) that must guide our application of the abstract Kantian principles is to be derived from investigation of the historic and current reality of an unjust and racially structured world. If, simplifying things, and abstracting away from "intersectionalist" complications of gender, class, and so forth, we use *R1s* to stand for the putatively superior race (located in the socially privileged slot) and *R2s* to stand for the putatively inferior race (located in the socially subordinated slot), then the question is what Kant's principles demand of us *as R1s* and *R2s*, and in application *to* the divergent situations of *R1s* and *R2s*.

Moreover, a critical philosophy of race approach to these matters will perforce be intent on exploring how issues of moral psychology, the necessary education of the virtues, and individual and social cognition are likewise affected by race. Contemporary Kantians skeptical of Kant's own metaphysical libertarianism (the ability of rational moral agency to rise above empirical causality) will, of course, dispense with his weird metaphysics and locate *within* empirical causality itself (socio-environmental factors; our own beliefs, desires, and willings) the distinction between mere inclination and the will to obey the moral law. The challenge is separating out, within this messy and deceptive mélange of motivations, the genuinely ethical and universalizable from the self-seeking or otherwise particularistic. Kant's own account of ethical hazards was predominantly individualistic, shaped by his Christian pessimism about our unchanging "radical evil" as fallen humans, and the "unsociable sociability" that both promoted conflict and drove human history forward. For our purposes, it will be crucial to understand not merely a generic "human" nature and an accompanying generic moral psychology, but particular group moral psychologies, "racialized" *R1* and *R2* moral psychologies, produced by socialization at different poles of the system, and catalyzing and combining general human weaknesses and innate tendencies in distinctive and specific, socially shaped ways. The striving for virtue will thus likewise require moral attention to the peculiar vices to which one's group is most likely to be prone, both motivational and cognitive.

So—in what is a classically rationalistic theory—the supra-individual cognitive aspects of these processes will then likewise need to be brought to the fore far more saliently. Recent developments in social epistemology stimulated by Miranda Fricker's (2007) work have highlighted the epistemic injustices, both testimonial and hermeneutical, that develop in societies characterized by structural oppression (Kidd et al. 2017). But the implications of this emergent body of literature for *moral* cognition

clearly need to be investigated also. Kant's famous "What Is Enlightenment?" essay (Kant 1991b, 54–60) can then, in this unfamiliar context, be reconstructed as a demand to develop the moral "maturity" necessary to overcome the racialized cognitive obstacles generated by society and our socialized "second nature," and to learn to reject the racialized "dogmas and formulas"—the "mechanical instruments for rational use (or rather misuse) of [one's] natural endowments" (54–55)—that are typical of such oppressive social orders.

4 Black Radical Kantianism

Against this background, let me now sketch out, in what I hope is a fruitfully suggestive way, how such a revisionist black Kantianism could be developed in the two areas of ethics and political philosophy. (A distinctive black perspective on cosmopolitanism/global ethics could also be developed, but this task will have to be postponed till another day because of space considerations.)

4.1 The Ethical

We start, appropriately enough, with personhood. Deontological liberalism is, of course, classically distinguished from consequentialist liberalism in making persons and their natural rights foundational rather than social welfare. In Rawls's (1999, 24) famous Kant-inspired indictment: "Utilitarianism does not take seriously the distinction between persons." Kant tells us in the *Groundwork* (Kant 1964, 96) that "Rational beings . . . are called *persons* because their nature already marks them out as ends in themselves," so that one formulation of the categorical imperative is "Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end" [italics removed]. Persons are themselves the makers of the universal law that morally binds them, so that, as self-legislators, "*Autonomy* is therefore the ground of the dignity of human nature and of every rational nature" (103).

But Kant also tells us (though not in the *Groundwork*) that blacks "can be educated but only as servants (slaves)," that "The Negro can be disciplined and cultivated, but is never genuinely civilized. He falls of his own accord into savagery," and that (along with Native Americans) "Blacks cannot govern themselves. They thus serve only for slaves" (see Mills 2005 for details). I submit, as I have argued elsewhere (Mills 2005; 2014), that such claims cannot plausibly be regarded as mere "inconsistencies," but point to a radical Kantian differentiation in the ranks of humanity between those who, being capable of autonomy, reach the person threshold, and those ("natural slaves") who, incapable of autonomy and self-legislation, do not. So as stated at the beginning, my contention is that Kant is working

with a philosophical anthropology of persons and sub-persons, determined by respective degrees of rationality and proneness to character defect, which is why, in its application to this particular sub-section of humanity, the categorical imperative permits (seemingly) inequitable treatment, such as enslavement. Within critical philosophy of race, as with the metaphysics of race, competing analyses have been given of racism. But one candidate that would obviously fit perfectly here is Joshua Glasgow's (2009) suggestion that we conceptualize racism as *race-based disrespect*. Blacks, then—not being capable of self-government—are appropriately deserving of disrespect rather than respect, and are creatures without essential dignity.

So how does a critically rewritten discourse of "race" reconceptualize this situation—that is, a modern world shaped by Atlantic *racial* slavery (unlike the non-racial slavery of antiquity and the medieval epoch), and other varieties of racial domination in the form of colonialism, imperialism, expropriative white settlement, Jim Crow, and apartheid? My suggestion is that the great theoretical insight and contribution of the Afro-modern political tradition is the recognition that such a world is metaphysically dramatically divergent from its Euro-modern political representations, whether mainstream or radical.

To the extent that the dominant varieties of colonial/imperial liberalism were originally racist (Mehta 1999; Pitts 2005; Hobson 2012), presupposing a hierarchy of European superiors and non-European inferiors (biologically and/or culturally), they got the social ontology wrong in an obvious way. But to the extent that postwar postcolonial (at least nominally) liberalism retroactively sanitized its racial past and transformed this hierarchical essentialist metaphysics into an ontology of morally equal and symmetrically positioned atomic individuals, it still continues, I would contend, to get the social ontology wrong. The Afro-modern claim is that neither is correct, because (contra the first) blacks and other people of color *are* equal and because (contra the second) the socially constructed inequalities and their historic legacy cannot be metaphysically ignored considering how *fundamentally and asymmetrically* they have shaped the modern world order and the raced individuals within that order.

In other words, the Afro-modern tradition is insistent that modernity is established on and structured by a social ontology of race. It is not, of course—assuming meta-ethical objectivism—that these racist social conventions and structures actually *make* blacks and other people of color less than full persons. But the denial to them of social recognition as full persons, depriving them of equal rights, freedoms, and protections, and unjustly privileging whites at their expense, foundationally affects both these racial groups and the moral and political dynamics of the societies so created. Objectively, their personhood is unaffected, along with the rights, freedoms, and protections they *should* have, as persons. But intersubjectively, insofar as white social recognition is dominant and determinant, their socially effective personhood—the rights, freedoms, and protections they *actually*

have—is denied.[5] Thus, we have an ontology—races as central existents profoundly shaping one's being as an individual—but an ontology socially rather than biologically created—the product of "sociogenesis," in Frantz Fanon's (1991 [1967]) famous coinage.

As George Fredrickson (2015 [2002], 11–12) has pointed out, premodern social ontologies are characterized by social hierarchies of multiple kinds. So even if race existed then (which Fredrickson denies, as an exponent of the short periodization), it would not have been sharply differentiated from the others. It is the advent of modernity, which is supposed to flatten these systems of ascriptive hierarchy into simple personhood (as in the conventional portrayal of Kant), that sets racial inferiority so sharply into relief, since the *R2s* are then being stigmatized as less than human while the *R1s* become (making allowance for gender differentiation) coextensive with the human. The Afro-modern diagnosis of a metaphysics of personhood that is actually racialized is thus different from standard Euro-modern discussions of personhood and its implications for ethicopolitical theory. It is making a different claim than the anti-utilitarian critique *within* liberalism that it permits the disrespecting of persons. The putative problem with utilitarianism is not that it regards a set of persons as sub-persons, but that the fungibility of (equal) persons opens the door to the rights-violations of some (equal) persons if social welfare for (equal) persons as a whole can thereby be maximized. The Afro-modern analysis is saying that, independent of this issue, some persons are not recognized as equal persons in the first place. So it is also different from the Marxist critique from *outside* liberalism. The putative problem here, as originally stated in "On the Jewish Question" (Marx 2000) and later in *Capital* (Marx 1990 [1976], 279–280), is that in assuming individuals of equal moral and juridical status, equal recognized personhood, liberalism's social ontology is ignoring the effects of the material differences in wealth and property ownership in the liberal state that in reality make the (white) working class effectively unequal. But the Afro-modern claim is that for blacks and other people of color, not even ethico-juridical equality, limited as it may be, is attained, so that their positioning in the liberal state is different from the beginning.

Consider some classic statements of this realization from figures across the black diaspora. In his second autobiography, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, Frederick Douglass (1996, 213) describes how, after he had escaped from slavery to the North, and was giving abolitionist speeches, "I was generally introduced as a '*chattel*'—a '*thing*'—a piece of southern '*property*'—the chairman assuring the audience that *it* could speak." But

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[5] This clarification is necessary to demarcate my line of analysis from that of Derrick Darby (2009), who argues that because of this lack of social recognition, racially subordinated groups like black Americans *did not have* moral rights, since the existence of moral rights no less than legal rights—contra the natural rights tradition—is dependent upon social recognition. I see this as a meta-ethically relativist position (though Darby disagrees).

this was not surprising to him, because the experience of enslavement had taught him that "A man, without force, is without the essential dignity of humanity. Human nature is so constituted, that it cannot *honor* a helpless man, although it can *pity* him" (199). W. E. B. Du Bois's *Darkwater* (2007 [1920], 35) concludes that "By reason of a crime [Atlantic slavery] (perhaps the greatest crime in human history) the modern world has been systematically taught to despise colored peoples. . . . all this has unconsciously trained millions of honest, modern men into the belief that black folk are sub-human." The Jamaican anti-colonial activist Marcus Garvey (1992 [1923–1925]) judges of blacks that "A race without authority and power is a race without respect." French colonial subject Aimé Césaire (2016 [1972], 202) draws up the equation "colonization equals 'thingification'," an assessment echoed and elaborated upon in his Martiniquan compatriot Frantz Fanon's (1991 [1967], 8), description of "the zone of nonbeing," in which "the black is not a man." Black American writer Ralph Ellison (1995 [1952]) uses *Invisible Man* as the title of his celebrated first novel, signifying not, as in its predecessor, H. G. Wells's (2017) early 1897 science-fiction classic *The Invisible Man*, a physico-chemical invention to make the body imperceptible to our fellow-humans, so that the inventor cannot be seen, but rather the lack of equal social recognition given to blacks by their white fellow humans, who simply refuse to see them. Malcolm X (Breitman, ed. 1965, 51) recounts how "I grew up with white people. . . . and I have never met white people yet—if you are around them long enough—who won't refer to you as a 'boy' or a 'gal,' no matter how old you are. . . . All of our people have the same goals, the same objective. That objective is freedom, justice, equality. All of us want recognition and respect as human beings. We don't want to be integrationists. Nor do we want to be separationists. We want to be human beings." Across the Atlantic, South African militant Steve Biko (2002 [1978]) declares that:

> In terms of the Black Consciousness approach we recognize the existence of one major force in [apartheid] South Africa. This is White Racism. It is the one force against which all of us are pitted. . . . What Black Consciousness seeks to do is to produce . . . real black people who do not regard themselves as appendages to white society. . . . We do not need to apologise for this because . . . the white systems have produced through the world a number of people who are not aware that they too are people. (50–51)

So the common theme is the demand for equal recognition, equal dignity, equal respect, equal *personhood*, in a white-supremacist world where disrespect rather than respect is the norm, the default mode, for blacks. A race-sensitive Kantianism not merely purged of Kant's own racism but attuned

(in a way nominally color-blind Kantianism is not) to these racially demarcated particularities for the different sub-sections of the human population—a black radical Kantianism—will thus understand the need to "universalize" the categorical imperative in a very different way to register the crucial differences between those socially recognized as persons and those socially recognized as sub-persons.

I suggest that we divide the different moral relations involved into two categories based on whether one is a member of the privileged race, the *R1s*, or the subordinated race, the *R2s*. That gives us the following six-way breakdown: (1) one's duty as an *R1* to give respect to oneself, (2) one's duty as an *R1* to give respect to one's fellow-*R1s*, (3) one's duty as an *R1* to give respect to *R2s*, (4) one's duty as an *R2* to give respect to oneself, (5) one's duty as an *R2* to give respect to one's fellow-*R2s*, and (6) one's duty as an *R2* to give respect to *R1s*. Historically, each of these will have been affected by race (as racism), leaving an ideological and psychological legacy, habits of disrespect, that will shape the "inclinations" most likely to be determinative and most imperatively to be resisted. Instead of (what could be graphically thought of as) "horizontal" relations of reciprocal and symmetrical race-indifferent respect among equal raceless persons, the *R1s* will have historically respected themselves and each other *as R1s*, while "vertically" looking down on, disrespecting, *R2s* as inferiors. In turn, the *R2s* will have been required to show racial deference to the *R1s*, looking up to them *as R2s*, and—having most probably internalized their lower ontological status—will have been prone to regard both themselves and their fellows with racial contempt.

Thus, a morally reclamatory project now self-consciously cognizant of race as social positioning rather than biology will need both to identify and expunge these corrupt inherited reflexes, and to rethink what genuine race-sensitive universalization now requires of us. Universalization for the goal of respecting objective personhood in a Kantian "impure ethics" of this kind will require advertence to these differentiated histories, this differentiated positioning, and the need for addressing and redressing them. To treat everyone in a "color-blind" way would in this context be equivalent to *ignoring* the history, and thus particularizing rather than universalizing respect by taking as one's reference point those persons (the *R1s*) whose personhood has not historically been in question. Abstracting away from the history and (possibly ongoing) reality of social disrespect for the *R2s* and social deference for the *R1s*, tempting as it may be, actually undermines universality, because it does not genuinely include the *R2s* on the terms necessary to correct their situation. Rather, by *assimilating* the *R2s* to the *R1s*, it renders *their R1* particularity the universal, which is a bogus universal considering how radically different their normative positioning in the social order and the social ontology has been.

This revisionist framework, I would claim, enables us to better understand and appreciate the dynamics both of the long black tradition of

moral uplift through what has been called "racial vindicationism" and the more recent activism (albeit with older precedents) of white anti-racists urging a critical rethinking of "whiteness." These can both legitimately be framed as "Kantian" exercises once we acknowledge how divergent from the ideal Kantian community actual racialized societies have been. I am not, of course, suggesting that anyone in either camp had to have read Kant to be motivated to take on this moral-political task. Rather, the idea is to bring out, especially for a largely white philosophical readership, how recognizable these projects *should* be, how illuminating their translation into, and analysis from the perspective of, Kantian discourse *could* be, once one recognizes the radical difference a racially partitioned personhood would make to the assumptions of that world of discourse. We could think of it as the systematic working out of personhood theory under non-ideal conditions. Whereas mainstream ideal-theory Kantianism tends to presuppose an *already-achieved* social ontology of socially recognized equals, here a social-ontological transformation is being sought *to bring that equality about*. Such a transformation will require the repudiation of internalized inferiority on the part of blacks and of internalized superiority on the part of whites, with their associated asymmetries and non-reciprocities. Far from being themselves racist, then (as, through an apprehensive mainstream white lens, both, but particularly the black project, are often represented as being), they should ideally culminate in a convergence, an equalization of respective socially recognized metaphysical statuses. But to repeat: precisely because these respective standings have been tied *to* race, a "color-blind" ignoring of race cannot accomplish this end. Rather, the history and its legacy need to be admitted and confronted for the Kantian ideal of a community of reciprocally respecting persons to be realized.

Moreover, as briefly mentioned in the previous section, the obstacles to such universalization will be far more extensive, and they require far more theorization than in mainstream Kantianism, including as they will cognitive and motivational hurdles manifest not just in individualist but group-linked and social-structural forms. One of the virtues of the left tradition, going back to Marx, is the realization that in class society, ruling-class-linked "ideology" is a central barrier to the objective apprehension of the social world. Correspondingly, *Ideologiekritik* is a crucial part of the struggle for the new socialist order. However, Marxism's general weakness on normative matters means that the specifically moral dimension of this critique was historically undeveloped, so that those sympathetic to the project of moralizing historical materialism had to seek theoretical resources elsewhere, as discussed in section 2.

What I am now suggesting is that a black radical Kantianism needs a comparable theorization of white racial ideology, both for the achievement of individual and civic virtue. Liberalism in general, especially considering the (descriptive) individualism of its dominant versions, and its ideal-theoretic

orientation in Rawls in particular, has not historically paid much attention to such issues. But contractarian liberalism in particular is nominally committed to the ideal of what Rawls (1999, 15, 48–49, 152–156) calls the "publicity" (what we would now term "transparency") of the society's political principles, institutions, and basic structure, taken (in ideal theory) to be the result of general agreement, and consistent with people's moral psychology and desire to secure their self-respect. Given the deviation from ideality of real-life racialized societies calling themselves liberal, however, these actual principles, institutions, and basic structure will reflect a *white* rather than race-inclusive agreement, with deleterious effects for both white and black moral psychologies. So the achievement of "Enlightenment" and the overcoming of "immaturity"—here on both an individual and a group level—will require a recognition of the distinctive opacities, the peculiar systemic violations of transparency, necessary to maintain the racialized social order, and their effect at different racial poles on people's self-respect.

To the extent that the *R2* sub-persons have internalized the ideology of the dominant *R1s*, they will look up to them as superior beings, who are owed not just respect but deference, while looking down on themselves. The Kantian duty to respect oneself will potentially then have very powerful corrective implications here (cf. Hay 2013), since it will require one to repudiate the status of sub-personhood. And this repudiation will be linked with epistemic duties also, the obligation to develop an enlightenment that sees through white-supremacist ideology, and to not inflict "epistemic injustice" on oneself by refusing to give one's own counter-hegemonic perceptions and alternative conceptualizations a fair hearing. Thinking of oneself as a sub-person is not adventitious but is based on a certain inculcated historical and social picture of the world. Achieving moral virtue will of necessity be intimately tied up with achieving epistemic virtue. As an *R2*, one will need to seek out the actual history that has put *R1s* in a position of domination over *R2s*, and to recognize and repudiate the ideology that has justified it—hence the long-standing emphasis in the black radical tradition of educating oneself about black history, against the myth of the history-less "negro," and of understanding the actual social forces that have brought about the present social order.

Assertions of "black pride," then, need not be racist (though admittedly they may degenerate into racism). Translated as I have suggested, they can be sympathetically read as asserting equal personhood and the entitlement to equal respect for a population traditionally subjugated and denied both. A 1933 essay by Du Bois (2016 [1933]) makes the connection explicit in his title: "On Being Ashamed of Oneself: An Essay on Race Pride." "Pride" in this context is not racial self/group glorification, the assertion of superiority, but the corrective to "shame," aimed at equalization. From the classic civil rights placards that simply (but revolutionarily) declared "I AM A MAN" to the recent "Black Lives Matter!" movement (Lebron 2017), we find a thematic continuity of protest against the reality of continuing

racial subordination. It is the repudiation of psychologically internalized inferiority ("You are not a man/person") and the demand for an end to socially prescribed inferiority ("Black lives do not matter"), the aspiration to equalization rather than to superiority. And "race" as blackness needs to be part of this moral declaration rather than being jettisoned as irrelevant because of its historic signification *as* sub-personhood. In Malcolm X's (Breitman, ed. 1965, 169) typically blunt assessment:

> You know yourself that we have been a people who hated our African characteristics. . . . [W]e hated the color of our skin, hated the blood of Africa that was in our veins. And in hating our features and our skin and our blood, why, we had to end up hating ourselves. . . . Our color became to us a chain—we felt that it was holding us back. . . . It made us feel inferior; it made us feel inadequate; made us feel helpless. And when we fell victims to this feeling of inadequacy or inferiority or helplessness, we turned to [the white man] to show us the way.

Overcoming self-hatred and the lack of self-respect will thus require not merely the nominal repudiation of racial deference to the racially superior *R1s*, but the genuine affirmation of a personhood not defined on *R1* terms, not tacitly tied to "whiteness," and its derogation of oneself and one's fellow *R2s*.

Moreover, the complexities created by growing intra-*R2* class differentiation, and the mutability of racism (including "culturalist" as well as old-fashioned "biological" forms), mean that disrespect can assume evermore subtle guises, not necessarily easily recognizable as such. Historically, in the postbellum period, the solution within the African American community to dealing with the mass of newly freed ex-slaves often took the form of elite programs of racial "uplift" and racial "respectability" (Gaines 1996). Predicated on a social distancing from what were taken to be inferiors within the population (generally the darker and more class-disadvantaged), this moral-political agenda in effect recapitulated an adherence to racialized norms of full personhood. Today, a century and a half later, the seeming intractability of the "dark ghetto" has similarly moved some well-meaning liberal elites, both white and black, to advocate programs of "moral reform" to remedy what are seen as self-destructive cultural practices. But in Tommie Shelby's (2016, 100, 107) judgment, "moral reform attacks the ghetto poor's social bases of self-esteem and fails to honor their need to preserve their self-respect. . . . Such paternalistic attitudes are fundamentally incompatible with the liberal value of respect for persons." A black radical Kantianism will thus need to be sensitized to the nuances of evolving patterns of disrespect in public policies that may facially seem quite defensible, even laudable.

Finally, a de-romanticized view of the psychodynamics of social oppression in general, including racial oppression, should alert us to the likelihood that at least some of those who have been systemically subordinated will be seeking to turn the tables rather than to establish an equitable social order. Not all "resistance" is morally licit, and in the case of race, this prohibition rules out any general license, a *carte noire* so to speak, to ignore all moral rules in the quest for black emancipation. "By any means necessary"—uncompromisingly militant and inspirational as it may sound when shouted in the mass meeting or demonstration—is not actually a defensible ethico-political position, and the refusal to let oneself be "dissed," whether by the *R1s* or one's fellow-*R2s*, does not legitimate in its turn a denial of the personhood of those "dissin'" one, and the respect they, too, are due. A black radical Kantianism cannot be so different that it denies the validity of basic moral proscriptions. As Shelby insists, against an irresponsible amoralism of the privileged posturing as "revolutionary" solidarity with the subordinated, we need a "political ethics" for the oppressed, which will have to undertake the difficult but necessary task of separating out actions and behaviors and moral postures conventionally condemnable, but permissible under the peculiar circumstances of racial subordination and structural disrespect, and actions and behaviors and moral postures impermissible despite these circumstances, requiring our condemnation and censure.

Let me turn now to the privileged *R1s*, and the distinctive obstacles and temptations they will face.[6] In the classic period of overt *R1/R2* racial domination ("white supremacy"), one's respect for oneself and one's fellow *R1s* will have been integrally tied up with *R1* membership. One is respecting oneself, one is respecting one's fellow whites, not as human(s) qua human(s) but as human(s) qua *white*, as members of the superior race. As Linda Martín Alcoff (2015, 24) puts it, "White identity . . . has been inculcated with a vanguardist illusion for over a century that has configured European whites as the scientific, technological, moral, artistic, and political leader of the human race." Indeed, so deeply has this configuration shaped white identity that, as earlier suggested, they have sometimes simply become fused, coextensive. The white race becomes the paradigmatic human, with all other races as deviations from this norm.

Sociologist Joe Feagin (2013) describes what he calls the "white racial frame," a cognitive orientation toward reality so deeply imprinted by white interests and the European/Euro-American experience, and (because of global white domination) so structurally embedded and socially hegemonic, that it loses its identification *as* white and simply becomes *the* way of looking at the world. This framing will, I suggest, be the paradigm example of the "dogmas and formulas, mechanical instruments for rational use"

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[6] For a more detailed treatment, see my "White Right: The Idea of a *Herrenvolk* Ethics": Mills (1998, ch. 7).

cited by Kant that—in this revisionist black Kantianism—obstruct objective factual and moral cognition of the social order. In its factual misrepresentations and evasions, in its conceptual misdirections, it incorporates a powerfully sedimented set of testimonial and hermeneutical injustices to blacks and the black perception of social reality that will somehow have to be overcome for achieving the veridical perception of, and motivational readiness to act on, universal moral law.

A growing number of books by white anti-racist activists, while obviously a positive development, testify in their titles to the magnitude of the challenge to be faced: *White Like Me: Reflections on Race from a Privileged Son* (Wise 2011); *Waking up White and Finding Myself in the Story of Race* (Irving 2014); and *Deep Denial: The Persistence of White Supremacy in United States History and Life* (Billings 2016). The common theme is the difficulty of "waking" whites up to their whiteness. Debby Irving (Irving 2014) writes:

> I didn't think I had a race. . . . The way I understood it, race was for other people, brown- and black-skinned people. Don't get me wrong—if you put a census form in my hand, I would know to check "white" or "Caucasian." It's more that I thought all those other categories, like Asian, African American, American Indian, and Latino, were the real races. I thought white was the raceless race— just plain, normal, the one against which all others were measured. (xi)

Similarly, work in what is called "critical white studies" (Dyer 1997) has pointed out how whiteness functions as the "default mode," the raceless racial reference-point. Think of "flesh-colored" crayons and band-aids, or fiction (short stories, novels) in which the entry of a person of color is formally announced as such—"A Negro approached our table"—the presumptive whiteness of the other characters needing no announcement, being taken for granted (Taylor 2013, 150–152). If the danger zones flagged in an individualist Kantianism center on our individual selfishness and proneness to put ourselves first in decision-making where others' interests are involved, here, in this race-sensitive Kantianism, we have to identify a different and additional set of hazards: a pseudo-universalization that might seem to be conscientiously living up to Kantian prescriptions, but which is actually universalizing only over the white population. The "inclination" to white particularism presents itself here in the guise of universalism insofar as whiteness has functioned as the tacit or overt universal. A genuine, race-inclusive universalism will thus require us to retrain our moral reflexes, products of an "immaturity" not just individual but social, and self-consciously try to take into account the perspective of the sub-person population, those persons who could hitherto legitimately be disrespected not merely as inferior moral beings but inferior cognizers. In a society

characterized by racial domination and hegemonic racialized patterns of thought, veridical moral cognition by the *R1s* will thus involve a far greater degree of labor, self-interrogation, and openness to the challenges, both doxastic and hermeneutical, of the *R2s*, those who, precisely because of their subordination, are more likely to have come closer to an authentically inclusive universalization.

Moreover, the "second nature" briefly mentioned by Kant and central to radical theory—our socialization by class (patriarchal/white supremacist) society *into* humans with particular differentiated psychological traits—takes on a far greater significance in the light of recent work on "implicit bias" (Brownstein and Saul 2016a; 2016b). Whatever our efforts at self-conscious ratiocinations to discern the genuine demands of the moral law, we are, it turns out, far more powerfully affected by unconscious processes and predilections than we would previously have thought. Alcoff (2015, 85, 86) suggests that "whiteness" as a real, though non-biological identity becomes "constituted" in the self as a "core set of routine perceptual and epistemic practices [affecting] everyday habits of social interaction, interpretation, and judgment," often "relatively unconscious." Similarly, Shannon Sullivan (2006, 23, 25), drawing on John Dewey's work on "habit," argues for the existence of "raced [white] predispositions [that] often actively subvert efforts to understand or change them, making themselves inaccessible to conscious inquiry [so that] race often functions unconsciously as well." Kant's "phenomenal" with a vengeance!—but here not our "animal" but our "social" nature. In the words of Tim Wise (2011): "My [white] racial identity had shaped me from the womb forward. I had not been in control of my own narrative. It wasn't just race that was a social construct. *So was I*" (viii).

The rethinking of self- and other-respect will thus require a dismantling and reconstruction of a white self related to other white selves through preformed networks of racialized dis/regard. But the problem is that the shift from de jure to de facto white domination has led to one more ironic turn in the history of white particularity representing itself as universality. In an era when "color-blindness" and "post-raciality" have become the new norms, whites are depicting themselves as basically no different in their social positioning than people of color, the long history of systemic differential white advantage being denied, and the racial playing field asserted to be now level. Refusing to acknowledge "race" and their own enduring whiteness, they now declare the raising of the subject by nonwhites to be itself the new variety of racism. As Wise concludes: "Only by coming to realize how thoroughly racialized our white lives are can we begin to see the problem [of racism] as ours, and begin to take action to help solve it. By remaining oblivious to our racialization we remain oblivious to the injustice that stems from it, and we remain paralyzed when it comes to responding to it in a constructive manner" (viii–ix). Hence David Billings's (2016) book title about typical white responses to the imperative of acknowledging

and dismantling white supremacy: *Deep Denial*. From the perspective of revisionist Kantianism, then, we need to recognize how the *general* human tendency ("inclination") to privilege oneself and evade uncomfortable facts in our moral decision-making is massively reinforced here through the construction by social ("phenomenal") forces of oneself *as* white, motivated in unadmitted ways by one's group membership, collective group interests, and unrepresentative ("particularistic") group experience in a segregated and oblivious white world.

4.2 The Political

Let us now turn to the political, the world of *Recht* rather than individual virtue. As mentioned at the start, Kant is now seen in the Western tradition as a normative political theorist who belongs in the first rank, a central reference point for both Anglo-American analytic political philosophy and Continental critical theory. But as Arthur Ripstein (2009, xi) has pointed out, his influence is more "indirect" than direct, because his political theory is not at all as straightforwardly derivable from his ethical commitments as one might anticipate, or desire. Howard Williams (1994, 141) offers a seemingly obvious judgment: Kantian normative political theory should be thought of as "the realization of the categorical imperative in society at large." Similarly, Rawls (1999, 155), in justifying his theory of justice for ideal societies, characterizes it as "freely interpret[ing]" Kant's view "in the light of the contract doctrine": "[A] desirable feature of a conception of justice is that it should publicly express men's respect for one another. . . . [T]he principles of justice manifest in the basic structure of society men's desire to treat one another not as means only but as ends in themselves." Hence the two famous principles of a social-democratic vision of an ideal "well-ordered society." But this interpretation is "free" indeed since, as Ripstein (2009, 2–3) reminds us, "Kant . . . denies that political philosophy is an application of the Categorical Imperative to a specific situation. . . . Most striking of all from the perspective of contemporary readers, he denies that justice is concerned with the fair distribution of benefits and burdens. None of the principles he articulates are formulated in terms of them." Similarly, Allen Rosen (1993, 5) says "Kant believes that justice has nothing to do with human needs or desires. Justice, as he understands it, does not require the state to provide for the material needs of its subjects."

Accordingly, Ripstein (2009, 3) goes on to distinguish between Rawls's "broadly Kantian political philosophy," "employ[ing] Kantian concepts to address a question about social cooperation" and Kant's own political philosophy. Given what turns out to be the unhelpfulness of many of Kant's own theoretical commitments in the political realm, I am therefore going to follow Rawls's example. The black radical political Kantianism I am trying to develop here should thus be thought of as a black radical

Rawlsian Kantianism, or perhaps even just a black radical Rawlsianism. As Rawls took liberties with Kant, I am taking liberties with both Kant and Rawls to ask the question: What would a commitment to bringing about the ideal cooperative *Rechtsstaat* require in a non-ideal world where the actual polity has been an exploitative and unjust *Rassenstaat*? If "social coercion" rather than "social cooperation" has been the norm, if disrespect for and the instrumentalization of some racialized persons as mere means to the ends of others has been foundational to the construction of the actual "basic structure," then what would a race-sensitive categorical imperative now require of us for corrective social justice?

For as I have recently argued in two critical essays (Mills 2015a; 2017b), a remarkable feature of contemporary political philosophy is that neither in Rawlsianism nor in Continental critical theory is the subject of racial justice addressed, despite both being inspired by the Kantian ideal of a polity dedicated to achieving the kingdom of ends for its members. Originally, of course, Marx was the political theorist more important than Kant for Frankfurt School critical theory, but Marxism's normative weaknesses historically rendered it vulnerable to parasitism on liberal democratic norms for its axiology. In addition, with the collapse of Marxist movements and self-described Marxist states in the 1980s and 1990s, liberal social democracy increasingly began to seem the only morally defensible and economically viable form of socialism remaining. So we have witnessed a convergence of "deontological" left-liberalism and critical theory, with the spirit of Immanuel Kant presiding over both, even if the idiom and the vocabulary are very different. Given Rawls's reorientation of Anglo-American normative political theory toward social justice, and critical theory's historic commitment to overcoming social oppression, then what better philosophical environment could one have imagined for getting the subject of racial injustice and its correction on to the agenda?

Yet despite the shaping of the modern world by European colonialism and imperialism, by African slavery and expropriative white settlement, which has made race an integral constituent of the modern polity's "basic structure" (Mills 1997), it is not thematized by this literature. If racial justice has been central to the normative theorizing of people of color, and certainly of blacks, it has been almost completely absent from mainstream "white" justice theory, whether analytic or Continental. What accounts for this glaring lacuna? In my diagnosis, the problem has been a combination of multiple factors: the grossly unrepresentative demography of the profession, the non-traditional nature of the subject matter (race), the un-critically exclusionary drawing on the Euro- and Euro-American experience and philosophical canon for guidance (all white), a sanitization and whitewashing of the past, and the *general* historical under-theorization in the literature of corrective justice in the first place (Roberts, ed. 2005). (Indeed, Samuel Fleischacker [2004] has documented that—contrary to standard assumptions in the profession, including Rawls's—even *distributive* justice

in our contemporary sense, de-linked from social status and extending to property rights, is actually a very recent concept, first put forward by the French revolutionary Babeuf in the 1790s. So if even white men as a group only gained their equal recognized normative status and distributive justice entitlements a bit more than 200 years ago, what would one expect for people of color, denied personhood, and unrecognized as moral equals?) Though Rawls (1999, 8) himself emphasized that ideal theory was supposed to be merely the prologue to properly doing non-ideal theory, including tackling the "pressing and urgent" matter of "compensatory [presumably corrective] justice," he never in his own work moved on to this issue, nor would his disciples and commentators do so either. Jon Mandle and David Reidy's (2014) recent *Companion to Rawls*, for example, dedicates a grand total of one and a half of its nearly 600 pages to race, and a single endnote sentence to affirmative action. Ideal theory in the Rawls industry has turned out to be not a prolegomenon but the main text—not a transitional stage, but the final destination.

A black radical "Rawlsian" Kantianism, by contrast, serving a different constituency, and driven by a genuine urgency about the need to achieve racial justice, must of necessity upend these priorities, making non-ideal theory and corrective justice its starting-point. Rawls's elaborate detailing of the contours of his "well-ordered society" is unmatched by anything but a cursory sketch of the societies we are actually living in. Indeed his general stipulation that we should think of society as "a cooperative venture for mutual advantage" (Rawls 1999, 4) is itself ambiguously positioned between the normative and the descriptive, sometimes seeming to be an earlier categorical idealization (of which well-ordered societies are then a subset), sometimes seeming to be meant as a general characterization of *actual* societies. A black radical Rawlsianism, on the other hand, will be unequivocal in identifying the social order as an oppressive white-supremacist one—not a cooperative venture for mutual advantage, but a coercive venture for white advantage. So just as in the realm of ethics, a black radical Kantianism challenges the liberal ontology of equally socially recognized persons, so here, in the realm of political philosophy, it challenges the liberal contractarian picture of a sociopolitical founding upon the basis of equitable social cooperation. (The perspective from the slaves' quarters is necessarily somewhat different than the perspective from the Big House.) If the ideal is the *Rechtsstaat*, the reality is the *Rassenstaat*, and the role of justice theory—here non-ideal corrective justice theory, the theory appropriate for "ill-ordered societies"—must be to show us how to get to one from the other. But here again we are handicapped by Feagin's "white racial frame," a cognitive apparatus refractory to such theorization. Not only is transitional racial justice hardly recognized as an important subject in mainstream "white" justice theory, but the necessary philosophical recognition of the state *as* racial is also absent.

White "radical" theory—white Marxism and white feminism—has challenged mainstream liberal-democratic theory with the concepts of the "bourgeois" state and the "patriarchal" state. But even in radical theory, let alone mainstream theory, very little critical white theorization could originally be found of the "racial" state, except for (what was represented as) the distinctive case of Nazi Germany (Burleigh and Wippermann 1991).

The black radical tradition, by contrast, going back at least to the nineteenth century, in the writings of David Walker, and coming forward through Martin Delany, Frederick Douglass, W. E. B. Du Bois and many others, has not hesitated to depict white supremacy as the political system dominating black Americans and other people of color. So they have generally rejected what has come to be called the "anomaly" view of American racism, which—for example, in the analyses of U.S. political culture offered by such famous figures as Alexis de Tocqueville, Gunnar Myrdal, and Louis Hartz—depicts it as basically egalitarian and inclusive, with racism being a deviation from the norm (Smith 1997). Rather, they have endorsed the "symbiosis" view, which sees racism as central to the workings of the white polity.

During World War II, for example, the "double-V" campaign in the African American community asserted a heretical equivalence between Nazi Aryanism and American white supremacy, and called for victories against racism both abroad and at home. Outrageous—even traitorous—from the perspective of the mainstream political orthodoxies of the time, this judgment has, three-quarters of a century later, been most spectacularly vindicated with the recent publication of James Whitman's *Hitler's American Model* (2017). Expressing surprise that, despite the ready availability of the pertinent documents, "virtually no one has suggested" such a connection, Whitman (2017, 3, 5, 7, 37–43, 160) points out that the Nazis drew on U.S. legislation for the anti-Semitic 1934 Nuremberg Laws, seeing the United States "as the innovative world leader in the creation of racist law,"[7] with "a shared commitment to white supremacy," and constituting an inspirational and pioneering model, in its treatment of "Negroes," for the juridical creation of the categories of first- and second-class citizenship: "It was . . . the natural first place to turn for anybody in the business of planning a 'race state'."

Whitman's book is probably the most striking recent example of such a belated confirmation. But comparable work in history (Fredrickson 1981), political theory (Smith 1997; Marx 1998; King 2007; Lowndes et al. 2008), sociology (Oliver and Shapiro 2006; Jung et al. 2011), and critical legal race theory (Crenshaw et al. 1995; López 2006; Rothstein 2017) has for some decades now been making a case for the racialization of the American juridico-political order. So what was once a heretical black fringe viewpoint

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[7] Though on occasion they judged the U.S. to be *too* racist to be consistently emulated: Whitman (2017, 5, 122–123, 127–131).

has become far more respectable, even within mainstream white scholarship. It is mainstream *political philosophy* that has yet to acknowledge and catch up with this new body of revisionist work. If Kant himself warned about the dangers of ecclesiastical domination and obfuscation, here it is white domination and obfuscation in a supposedly liberal state that has had the most damaging consequences for political transparency and veridical factual and moral cognition.

How then would a reconstructed black radical "Rawlsian" Kantianism in political philosophy tackle racial justice? As indicated above, I suggest that the most obvious and uncontroversial route (if more Rawlsian than Kantian) is through extending the Kantian proscription on "using" others, treating them as mere means, to a norm for the polity as a whole. Writ large, applied to the basic structure as such, the claim would then be that the racial state, the white-supremacist state, is founded on racial exploitation, and thus needs to be fundamentally restructured to end this violation of *R2* personhood.

I have developed these arguments in far greater detail elsewhere (Pateman and Mills 2007, ch. 3 and ch. 4; Mills 2015b; Mills 2017a, ch. 7, epilogue), so this is just a brief summary. Rawls (1999, 272) offers no theorization of exploitation himself because of his self-restriction to the realm of ideal theory: "[T]he notion of exploitation is out of place here. It implies a deep injustice in the background system." For Marxism, by contrast, all post-hunter-gatherer societies are class societies, and as such are based on the exploitation of the subordinate classes. In the case of ancient Western slave societies or medieval feudalism, involving the coercion of slaves and serfs denied equal rights, this case is easy enough to make. But for capitalism, at least in its ideal liberal-democratic form, the case becomes much more demanding, and hangs crucially on the labor theory of value, now generally seen as discredited even by most Marxists, and by all mainstream economists. Hence Rawls's belief that a "property-owning democracy," a "well-ordered society," regulated by his two principles will be non-exploitative.

But consider now how much more easily than in the Marxist critique of liberalism, how much less controversially, the case for systemic exploitation in a *racist* society can be made, one that has historically denied equal status to the *R2s*, and as such has indeed been characterized by "a deep injustice in the background system." Here one does not need to come up with plausible arguments for how the "free" choice to sell one's labor-power is actually constrained and unfair because of economic coercion. The historic refusal to the *R2s* of "person" status means that their "free choices," their "ends," have generally been completely disregarded, whether in the form of slavery, or the postbellum "debt servitude" of sharecropping, or the inferior options of the national racial division of labor, with its discriminatory occupational and wage structures. Moreover, the legacy of this history of denied equal personhood means that even in the present post-Jim Crow, post-civil rights

epoch, after the *formal* repudiation of *R1/R2* racial status differentials, that they will as a group continue to occupy a position in society that will effectively severely curtail their choices by contrast with the *R1s*. So formally "equal" treatment here will still be unequal, still constitute "using," not because (as in the controversial Marxist diagnosis) the compulsions of the relations of production undermine the superficial equality of the relations of market exchange, and/or because surplus value is extracted from them, but because their lack of liberal (Kantian) freedom, equality, and independence, currently or historically (through intergenerational status transfer), has coerced them via current, or past, denied personhood. So in interacting with them, even when seemingly treating them "fairly," the *R1s* will be able to benefit from this past history of denied equality.

A revisionist black radical "Rawlsian" Kantianism would thus have to take account of this history, and to recognize that insofar as—being an *R1*—one is a beneficiary of it, one is still going to be "using" people. Exploitation will not be limited to person-to-person transactions but will be embedded, via this history, in the overall social structure, manifest in huge differentials in wealth between median white and median black households (Oliver and Shapiro 2006). The original denial of equal "ontological" status, equal personhood, to blacks will be materially perpetuated in radically different life-chances. But if the subordination of the group in the first place reveals the lack of respect for them, how can the continuing failure to correct their situation not *itself* be a continuation of this lack of respect? Since Kant presumably means to condemn not just present instances of directly "using" *R2s* but a past history that has left the *R2* population vulnerable to their continued indirect "using," it implies that—to the extent that *R2* subordination has been central to the economy (as it unquestionably has been in the United States)—the society as a whole stands condemned, and *R1s* are the beneficiary on a national scale of racial exploitation, of the anti-Kantian "using" of the *R2s*. Whether in affirmative action—briefly implemented, but now largely dead—or the more radical case for reparations—never seriously considered in the first place—claims for material/economic corrective justice for African Americans can then, I am suggesting, be defended in what is now supposed to be the uncontroversial and broadly accepted normative framework of "Kantian" "deontological liberalism."

Corrective racial justice will, of course, require public policy measures in many other areas also, such as to redress second-class citizenship in the electoral arena and broader civic sphere (e.g., reform of the criminal justice system and the prison-industrial complex), not to mention what could be termed, following Rawls, "the social bases of disrespect" manifest in the symbolic realm. It should be obvious how the social justice movements of recent decades involving the protests against police killings of unarmed black men and women, voter disenfranchisement, and the contestation over the symbolic significance of the Confederate flag, Civil War monuments, and the naming of buildings and institutions after prominent racist white

American figures can all be easily fitted into these categories. But I wanted to focus on the economic aspect in particular as the one most likely to be controversial, and perhaps hardest—at least on first examination—to link to Kantianism. If the analysis above has been persuasive, it means that the Kant of modern ethics, and—albeit by more attenuated links—the Kant of modern political philosophy also,[8] provides far more resources than might at first be presumed for a black radical appropriation. Suitably accessorized with an Afro or dreads, the racist white guy who famously declares "*Fiat justitia, pereat mundus*" (Kant 1991b, 123) would suddenly have taken on a whole new complexion.

Charles W. Mills

E-mail : cmills3@gc.cuny.edu

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[8] However, Kant's (1991a, 71–74, 77–79) insistence that existing property rights are only "provisional" until suitably ratified by a "civil constitution," a "rightful condition," and that "*prolonged possession . . .* regarded as acquisition of a thing by long use of it, is a self-contradictory concept," since "it is absurd to suppose that a wrong becomes a right because it has continued for a long time" (170), might make him more amenable even in his unreconstructed (though at least non-racist) non-Rawlsian incarnation to a redistributivist corrective justice program. After all, white supremacy (as the privileging of a "hereditary" "ruling [race]") can hardly be termed "rightful" or the expression of "the united will of a whole nation" (Kant 1991b, 79). Thanks to Lucy Allais for pointing this out to me.

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