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RACISM IN KANT'S ANTHROPOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

Immanuel Kant has been credited with much of the foundational thoughts in the evolution of deontology and deontological outlooks. The basic principle of his moral philosophy is that reason is the basis of our status as moral agents. By this, Kant means that to be moral is to be perfectly rational. But in his rather neglected or forgotten works – anthropology and physical geography, Kant had alluded that Africans lack rationality because of their skin colour. This paper therefore argues to the contrary that Africans are rational beings and that race or colour has nothing to do with rationality. Therefore, this paper is an attempt to show that Kant's Anthropology is racist and so should be reconstructed. It is on this note that the paper concludes that although Kant's bad claims reflect poorly on his general philosophical aptitude, they do not necessarily mean that all of his claims are wrong or cannot be salvaged.

KEYWORDS

Kant, Anthropology, Racism, Human Nature, Ethics.



I. Introduction

Kant's ethical thought is regarded as the finest and the most characteristic product of the Enlightenment. This is because his comprehensive and systematic work in epistemology, ethics, and aesthetics greatly influenced all subsequent philosophy, especially the various schools of Kantianism and idealism. Unfortunately scholars often forget that Kant produced the most profound racial thought of his time. This forgetfulness or neglect of the most crucial part of Kant's works may be because most scholars had been concerned with the desire to present Kant only as a pure philosopher who was concerned only with pure culture and colour blind philosophical themes in the traditions of Western philosophy.

Given the significance that anthropological questions had for Kant and his contemporaries and the enormous quantities of recent scholarship on Kant's theoretical and practical philosophy, one would expect a significant body of literature on Kant's *Anthropology* and its relevance to other aspects of his thought. Yet Kant's *Anthropology* remained neglected or forgotten. Part of this neglect is due to the fact that the anthropology and the course on which it was based contained a number of considerable tensions with other aspects of Kant's thought, tensions that have left even sympathetic readers understandably puzzled about the status and place of anthropology in Kant's system and the relation of this to his other works.

In his book *Observation on the Feelings of the Beautiful and Sublime*, Kant had vehemently considered Africans as lacking in rationality when in his response to a story in praise of a black man's progressive views concerning the treatment of wives. Kant had said: *And it might be that there was something in this which perhaps deserved to be considered; but in short, this fellow as quite black from head to foot, a clear proof that what he said was stupid* (Kant, 1960). Kant's statement above clearly shows his aversion to other races (blacks or non-whites). For Kant, the fact of race or colour is enough reason to discredit or disqualify blacks or Africans and non-whites from the status of moral agents because they lack rationality.

In his later works especially in the *Critiques* Kant postulated that man's rational will itself is the source of the moral law (Kant, 1960). In other words, Kant is saying that morality is clearly the function of practical reason. Arming himself with this, Kant developed a universal moral theory – the categorical imperative that explains what makes an action right or wrong. This categorical imperative is a universal principle that applies to every moral person. But Kant had earlier denied Africans and non-whites the ability to reason, thereby excluding them from the group of humans that are moral agents. As such, the categorical imperative only applies to moral agents – the white race only.

In this essay we intend to show the following: (1) that Kant in his earlier works denied Africans the ability to reason based on their skin colour or race, and (2) that Africans are equally pure race/human beings, and like other humans are rational beings and therefore moral agents.

II. Overview of Kant's Anthropology

Immanuel Kant was the one who introduced anthropology as a branch of study to the German universities when he first started his lectures in the winter semester of 1772-3 (May, 1970). He was also the first to introduce the study of geography, which he considered inseparable from anthropology, to Königsberg University, beginning from the summer semester of 1756 (Kant, 1978). The questions one would like to ask here are: what does Kant mean by "anthropology"? Why was he interested in anthropology? Why did Kant conceive of anthropology and geography as twin sciences? To start with, anthropology as conceived by Kant was a broad-based inquiry into the nature of human beings in general. It was also conceived as a discipline that was *empirical* and *pragmatic*. It was to be completely divorced from metaphysical speculation, based instead upon observations of ordinary life (whether first-hand or through literature, travel accounts, histories, etc.). It was also to be *useful*, providing the kind of "worldly wisdom" that would allow one to get ahead in life, to successfully pursue happiness. As actually practiced by Kant in his lectures and subsequent book, anthropology involved a consideration of the faculties of the human mind in general (i.e., cognition, pleasure/ displeasure, and desire), of the "characters" of various sub-sections of humanity (the two sexes, the different nations and races), and of the "destiny" of humanity as a whole.

Kant was interested in anthropology because he was bent on the study of man as moral agents which would later inform the rest of his moral philosophy. Kant sees anthropology and geography as twin sciences because the peculiar nature of anthropology in his view is mainly understood in conjunction with his idea of physical geography. For Kant, physical geography is the study of the natural condition of the earth and what is

contained on it such as seas, mountains, plants, continents, rivers, man, animals, minerals and the atmosphere. In Kant's conception, physical geography and anthropology combine to study man in these two aspects namely: geography studies the bodily, physical, external aspects of man while anthropology studies the psychological, moral, internal aspects of man. This is why Kant conceives geography and anthropology as twin sciences. Thus, for Kant, while anthropology studies humans or human reality as they are available to the internal sense, geography on the other hand studies the same phenomena as they are presented or available to the external sense.

Kant's study of race and racial classifications on the basis of physical characteristics (skin colour) was done under the disciplinary domain of geography while his study of the internal structures which condition the human being as moral entity and which are therefore susceptible to development of character comes under the disciplinary domain of anthropology.^[6] Again while Kant's geography studies the human being as a physically given, his anthropology studies the human being as a moral agent or a free acting being (Kant, 1978).

Kant in his book *Anthropology from the Pragmatic Viewpoint* focused on the study of the human being as a moral agent. For Kant, the human being is a moral agent because he is capable of experiencing himself as an ego, one who thinks and wills. The capacity for consciousness and agency according to Kant elevates human beings beyond the casualty and determination of physical nature in which the individual is nevertheless implicated by embodiment. An individual says Kant is a being who by reason of his preeminence and dignity is wholly different from things, such as the irrational animals that he can master and rule at will. Kant then posits that what confers or constitutes the ego or personhood is the ability to think and will, and this ability in turn is what makes a person a moral agent (Kant, 1978).

For Kant, "geography" can be either *physical* or *moral*. The physical aspect of geography studies humans in their physical/bodily varieties such as "racial," skin-color; in its moral aspects, geography studies human customs and unreflectively held mores which Kant calls "second nature" (Kant, 1978). Anthropology, too, can be either *pragmatic* or *physiological*, as it studies humans as moral agents or as part of physical nature.

The interrelatedness of geography and anthropology and moral philosophy is evident throughout Kant's lectures. As late as 1764, Kant himself had not separated anthropology from geography and thus included "moral anthropology" under the broader designation of "moral and political geography." Moral philosophy presupposes physical geography and anthropology, for while the first two observe and provide knowledge of "actual behavior of human beings and formulates the practical and subjective rules which that behavior obeys," moral philosophy seeks to establish "rules of right conduct, that is, what ought to happen" (Kant, 1978).

III. Kant's Doctrine of Human Nature

Kant succinctly defines "nature" as "the existence of things under law" (Kant, 1978). In the announcement of his anthropology lectures for the academic year 1765-6, Kant stated that he would set forth a "new" method for the study of "man," a method based not just on the observation of humans in their varying historical and contingent forms; but on that which is fixed, permanent, and enduring in human nature (Kant, 1978).

Kant clearly distinguished between a raw "state of nature" and a "state of *human* nature" which "man has now attained." For Kant, if the "state of nature" is a state of evil, it is "human nature," as moral nature, which offers the possibility of the overcoming of evil (Kant, 1978). For Kant human nature, unlike natural nature, is, in essence, a *moral* nature, so that what constitutes human nature *proper* is not, as the ancients may have believed, 'simply intelligence or reason, but moral reason - the capacity to posit oneself rationally as a moral agent'. Kant writes that the individual "has a character which he himself creates, because he is capable of perfecting himself according to the purposes which he himself adopts" (Kant, 1978). The "goal" of society and civilization is therefore tied to the destiny of the species: "to affect the perfection of man through cultural progress" (Kant, 1978).

In the *Anthropology*, Kant explicitly writes: Man, on account of his reason, 'is destined to live in a society of other people, and in this society he has to cultivate himself, civilize himself, and apply himself to a moral purpose by the arts and the sciences' (Kant, 1978). Humanity is clearly demarcated away from and against the natural state and elevated to a level where it has necessarily to construct in freedom its own culture. For Kant, it is this radical autonomy that defines the worth, the dignity, and therefore the essence of humanity. Pragmatic anthropology therefore, is meant to help "man" understand how to make himself worthy of humanity through combat with the roughness of his state of nature (Kant, 1978).

In the *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, in which he draws a radical distinction between "inner" and "outer" nature, Kant argues that humans are essentially different from brutes because humans possess an inner nature, or character. He defines character in three senses: as natural disposition, as temperament, and as rational moral. The first two refer to humans in their passive, bodily capacity, as subject to physical/causal laws of external nature (or "what can be done to man"), while the last refers to the human "as rational creature who has acquired freedom" and relates to "what he himself is willing to make of himself" through categorical self-regulation (Kant, 1978). It is "character" in this moral sense which distinguishes human nature from animal nature: Here it does not matter what nature makes of man, but what man himself makes of himself, for the former belongs to the temperament (where the subject is merely passive) and the latter shows that he has a character (Kant, 1978). The human project, then, is to overcome the state of nature by human nature, to overcome evil by good.

IV. Kant's Conception of Race

As we have seen, Kant's physical geography, in conjunction with anthropology, is supposed to provide a full range of total knowledge on the subject of "man." Specifically, physical geography, which studies outer nature, provides knowledge of humans as external bodies: color, height, facial characteristics, and so forth, while pragmatic anthropology provides knowledge of the inner, morally conditioned structure of humans. In the *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*, ("Of national characteristics"), which essentially belongs to geography and anthropology, Kant, following Hippocratic lines, outlines a *geographical* and *psychological* (moral) classification of humans (Kant, 1978). From the geographic standpoint, just as other biological phenomena such as animals are divided into domestic and wild, land, air, and water species, and so forth, different human races are also conceived of as manifesting biologically original and distinct classes, geographically distributed. Taking skin color as evidence of a "racial" class, Kant classified humans into: white (Europeans), yellow (Asians), black (Africans) and red (American Indians).

From the *psychological* or moral standpoint, then, within Kant's classification the American (i.e., in the context of this discussion, American Indian), the African, and the Hindu appear to be incapable of moral maturity because they lack "talent," which is a "gift" of nature. After stating that "the difference in natural gifts between the various nations cannot be completely explained by means of causal [external, physical, climatic] causes but rather must lie in the (moral) nature of Man himself" (Kant, 1960). Kant goes on to provide the psychological moral account for the differences on the basis of a presumed rational ability or inability to "elevate" (or educate) oneself into humanity from, one might add, the rather humble "gift" or "talent" originally offered or denied by mother nature to various races (Kant, 1960). In Kant's table of moral classifications, while the Americans are completely uneducable because they lack "affection and passion," the Africans escape such but can only be "trained" as slaves and servants. In other words, the race of the American cannot be educated. It has no motivating force, for it lacks affection and passion. They are not in love, thus they are also not afraid. They hardly speak, do not caress each other, care about nothing and are lazy (Kant, 1960). However, the race of the Negroes, one could say, is completely the opposite of the Americans; they are full of affection and passion, very lively, talkative and vain. They can be educated but only as servants (slaves); that is they allow themselves to be trained. They have many motivating forces, are also sensitive, are afraid of blows and do much out of a sense of honor (Kant, 1960).

The meaning of the distinction that Kant makes between ability to be "educated" or to educate oneself on the one hand, and to "train" somebody on the other, can be surmised from the following. "Training," for Kant, seems to consist purely of physical coercion and corporeal punishment, for in his writings about how to flog the African servant or slave into submission, Kant "advises us to use a split bamboo cane instead of a whip, so that the 'negro' will suffer a great deal of pains (because of the 'negro's' thick skin, he would not be racked with sufficient agonies through a whip) but without dying" (Kant, 1960). To beat "the Negro" efficiently requires "a split cane rather than a whip, because the blood needs to find a way out of the Negro's thick skin to avoid festering" (Kant, 1960). The African, according to Kant, deserves this kind of "training" because he or she is "exclusively idle," lazy, and prone to hesitation and jealousy, and the African is all these because, for climate and anthropological reasons, he or she lacks "true" (rational and moral) character. Kant further stated that all inhabitants of the hottest zones are, without exceptions, idle. With some, this laziness is offset by government and force.' The aroused power of imagination has the effect that he [the inhabitant] often attempts to do something; but the heat soon passes and reluctance soon assumes its old position (Kant, 1960). From the

foregoing, it is obvious that Kant is able to hold the above views about the African because, thanks to transatlantic mercantile slave trades, Kant *sees* and *knows* that, in fact, African slaves are flogged, "trained" in his words, as European labor. More generally, and from a philosophical perspective, and perhaps in a more subtle way, Kant's position manifests an inarticulate subscription to a system of thought which assumes that what is different, especially that which is "black, is bad, evil, inferior, or a moral negation of "white," light, and goodness. Kant's theoretical anthropological edifice, then, in addition to its various conscious and unconscious ideological functions and utilities, had uncritically assumed that the particularity of European existence is *the* empirical as well as ideal model of humanity, of *universal* humanity, so that others are more or less human or civilized ("educable" or "educated") as they approximate this European ideal.

In his "orientalist" inscription of the Asian into his system, Kant writes of "the Hindus" that they do have motivating forces but they have a strong degree of passivity and all look like philosophers. Nevertheless they incline greatly towards anger and love. They thus can be educated to the highest degree but only in the arts and not in the sciences. They can never achieve the level of abstract concepts. A great Hindustani man is one who has gone far in the art of deception and has much money. The Hindus always stay the way they are, they can never advance, although they began their education much earlier. And just in case anybody missed it, Kant reminds us that "the Hindus, Persians, Chinese, Turks and actually all oriental peoples belong" to this description (Kant, 1960). It is, therefore, rather predictable that the only "race" Kant recognizes as not only educable but capable of *progress* in the educational process of the arts and sciences is the "white" Europeans. In an important single sentence, Kant states: "The white race possesses *all* motivating forces and talents *in itself*, therefore we must examine it somewhat more closely" (Kant, 1960). Indeed, in his lectures and in the *Anthropology*, Kant's preoccupation can be summarized as: an exercise in the sympathetic study of European humanity, taken as humanity *in itself*, and a demonstration of how this "ideal" or "true" humanity and its history is *naturally* and qualitatively (spiritually, morally, rationally, etc.) and quantitatively (bodily, physically, climatically, etc.) superior to all others. The position on the psychological-moral status of the non-Europeans assumed by Kant in his lectures and in the *Anthropology* is consistent with his more explicitly *color-racial* descriptions in other writings.

Physical geography, according to Kant, deals with "classifying things, with grouping their external attributes, and with describing what they are in their present state" (Kant, 1960). In the essay "On the varieties of the different races of man," Kant gives a variation on the classification of races he had done in the *Observations* by making explicit the geographic elemental climate, but the dominant variable here is the color of skin. Kant's hierarchical chart of the superior to the inferior hues of the skin is as follows:

STEM GENUS: *white brunette*

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

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

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

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

The assumption behind this arrangement and this order is precisely the belief that the ideal skin color is the "white" (the *white brunette*) and the others are superior or inferior as they approximate whiteness. Indeed; all other skin colour are merely *degenerative* developments from the white original (Kant, 1978). That Kant seriously believed this can be seen in a story he tells about the process by which the "white" skin turns "black." In the *Physical Geography*, Kant states that at birth the skin color of every baby of every race is white, but gradually, over a few weeks, the white baby's body turns black (or, one presumes, red or yellow). "The Negroes are born white, apart from their genitals and a ring around the navel, which are black during the first month blackness spread across the whole body from these parts" (Kant, 1978).

While maintaining the usual four categories of the species (Europeans, Asians, Africans, and Americans), Kant explains:

In the hot countries the human being matures earlier in all ways but does not reach the perfection of the temperate zones. Humanity exists in its greatest perfection in the white race. The yellow Indians have a smaller

amount of Talent. The Negroes are lower and the lowest are a part of the American peoples (Kant, 1977:63).

This hierarchical color/racial arrangement is clearly based upon presumed differing grades of "talent." "Talent" is that which, by "nature," guarantees for the "white," in Kant's racial rational and moral order, the highest position above all creatures, followed by the "yellow," the "black," and then the "red." Skin color for Kant is evidence of superior, inferior, or no "gift" of "talent," or the capacity to realize reason and rational-moral perfectibility through education. Skin color, writes Kant, "is the marker of "race" as specie-class, as well as evidence of "this difference in natural character" (Kant, 1978). For Kant, then, skin color encodes and codifies the "natural" human capacity for reason and rational talents.

Kant's position on the importance of skin color not only as encoding but as *proof* of this codification of rational superiority or inferiority is evident in a comment he made on the subject of the reasoning capacity of a "black" person. When he evaluated a statement made by an African, Kant dismissed the statement with the comment: "this fellow was quite black from head to foot, a clear proof that what he said was stupid" (Kant, 1978). It cannot, therefore, be argued that skin color for Kant was merely a physical characteristic. It is, rather, evidence of an unchanging and unchangeable moral quality. "Race," then, in Kant's view, is based upon an ahistorical principle of reason and moral law.

V. Critique of Kant's Anthropology

Kant's conception of human nature is problematic on many grounds. How did Kant accumulate so much knowledge of Africa, Asia and America without traveling out of his home town – Konigsberg? From Kant's own writings we have evidence that he read travel novels or literatures, both serious and light as well as fictions and novels that exploited emerging interests in the exotic stories of explorers, missionaries and fortune seekers (Kant, 1978). No doubt, Kant's readings of such materials found their way as confirming evidence and proofs into his lectures in anthropology and geography. Hence, Kant believed that travel stories provided accurate or factual information for academic science (Kant, 1978). Although travel or fieldwork by the scholar himself is an ideal way to gather knowledge of other cultures, Kant argued that reading travel books only (regardless of their Eurocentric audience-appeal and their intended purpose namely: propagandistic justification of foreign expansion and exploitation) can legitimately substitute for fieldwork. Unfortunately, it didn't seem to matter to Kant whether the research scholar simply read in a travel novel, or actually saw in situ. This can be seen in Kant's writing thus: "Travel is among the means of enlarging the scope of anthropology *even if such knowledge is only acquired by reading books of travel*" (Kant, 1978). But Kant is quite wrong because travel novels or literatures do not present accurate account of the people, culture or things they are meant to explore. It is apt to recall here that most of the information the Western world posses about Africa and African people came from travel novels written, of course, by white missionaries and explorers whose audience was Europe for the purpose of further foreign expansion and exploitation of Africa. Some of these travel novels presented the African people as sub-human beings who live on trees with no blood flowing in their veins. Till now, many Europeans who had never ventured outside the European continent let alone setting foot into the African continent still hold the view that Africans are apes, live on trees and have tails between their legs. This misconception of Africa and African people came from the travel novels and other writings of influential European writers like Kant, Hume and others.

Now, for Kant to have formed the source of his anthropology and geography from such travel novels or literatures without himself traveling around to gather firsthand information (fieldwork) or without adequate verification or justification is not only unscholarly but also a clear evidence of his raciological project. Strictly speaking, Kant's anthropology and geography offer the strongest if not the only sufficiently articulated theoretical philosophical justification of the superior/inferior classification of races of men of any European writer up to his time. Walter Scheidt got it quite right when he notes that Kant produced the first theory of race which really merits that name.

Therefore, Kant is a racist. He is indeed guilty of categorical racism because he relegated all people of African descent to one single category and devalued as a group. There was in Kant no consideration for a possible individual differences and historical circumstances. This can be seen in his comments about Africa as he writes:

“The Negroes of Africa have by nature no feeling that rises above the trifling. Mr. Hume challenges anyone to cite a single example in which a Negro has shown talents, and asserts that among the hundreds of thousands of blacks who are transported elsewhere from their countries, although many of them have even been set free, still not a single one was ever found who presented anything great in art or science or any other praiseworthy quality, even though among the whites some continually rise aloft from the lowest rabble, and through superior gifts earn respect in the world. So fundamental is the difference between these two races of man, and it appears to be as great in regard to mental capacities as in color. The religion of fetishes so widespread among them is perhaps a sort of idolatry that sinks as deeply into the trifling as appears to be possible to human nature” (Kant, 1960).

By this Kant agrees with Hume that blacks lack talents and are incapable of great dealings in art and science just because their skins are black in colour. Kant presented peoples of African descent as naturally inferior to whites. The superiority of the whites over the blacks as presented by Kant is based on the possession of rationality or mental capacity by the whites and its absence in the people of African descent.

There might have been no African or black during Kant's time who showed talents or presented anything great in art and science due to Europeans' enslavement and exploitation of Africa, but how about some decades later when African slaves regained their freedom from slavery and colonialism? Obviously Kant didn't bother to consider that the entire African people were not enslaved or sold out into slavery to Europe. Of course we had men and women who had talents and presented great works in arts and science (traditional or indigenous arts and science) even before and during slave era. If blacks lacked mental capacity and were educable only as servants or slaves as Kant noted, how come the history of Europe, America and the entire world civilization can never be written today without a mention of the great contributions of the black race? Today as ever, the contributions and achievements of blacks or people of African descent are felt all over the world in arts, sciences and technology. If Africans lacked rationality or mental capacity, how did people like Philip Emegwali, Steve Biko, Michael Jackson, Oby Ezekwesili, etc become heroes in their various fields of endeavour?

Contrary to Kant's thesis that Africans lack mental capacity or rationality, let us recall or present just a few of the numerous contributions of Africa and African people to the world civilization as a solid proof that Kant's thesis is quite false and that Africans like other races of the world are rational people and consequently moral agents. To start with, the earliest known surgery was performed in Egypt in Africa around 2750 BC. Homer (800 BC) remarked in the *Odyssey*: "In Egypt, the men are more skilled in medicine than any of human kind" and "the Egyptians were skilled in medicine more than any other art". The Greek historian Herodotus visited Egypt around 440 BC and wrote extensively of his observations of their medicinal practices. Hippocrates (the "father of medicine", Herophilus, Erasistratus and later Galen studied at the temple of Amenhotep, and acknowledged the contribution of ancient Egyptian medicine to Greek medicine (Kresge, 2011).

The invention of mathematics is placed firmly in African PRE-HISTORY. “The oldest known possibly mathematical object is the Lebombo bone, discovered in the Lebombo Mountains of Swaziland and dated to approximately 35,000 BC. It consists of 29 distinct notches cut into a baboon's fibula. Also prehistoric artifacts discovered in Africa and France, dated between 35,000 and 20,000 years old [respectively], suggest early attempts to quantify time (Sertima, 1983).

Numeral systems have been many and diverse, with the first known written numerals created by Egyptians in Middle Kingdom texts such as the Rhind Mathematical Papyrus. More than 35,000 years ago, Egyptians scripted textbooks about math that included division and multiplication of fractions and geometric formulas to calculate the area and volume of shapes (Adams, 1983). Distances and angles were calculated, algebraic equations were solved and mathematically based predictions were made of the size of floods of the Nile. The ancient Egyptians considered a circle to have 360 degrees and estimated π at 3.16. Eight thousand years ago, people in present-day Zaire developed their own numeration system, as did Yoruba people in what is now Nigeria. The Yoruba system was based on units of 20 (instead of 10) and required an

impressive amount of subtraction to identify different numbers. Scholars have lauded this system, as it required much abstract reasoning (Adams, 1983).

Ancient Egyptian philosophy has been credited by the ancient Greeks as being the beginning of philosophy. Philosophy in Africa has a rich and varied history, dating from pre-dynastic Egypt, continuing through the birth of Christianity and Islam. One of the earliest works of political philosophy was the Maxims of Ptah-Hotep, which were taught to Egyptian schoolboys for centuries. Ancient Egyptian philosophers made extremely important contributions to Hellenistic philosophy, Christian philosophy, and Islamic philosophy.

Several ancient African cultures birthed discoveries in astronomy. Many of these are foundations on which we still rely, and some were so advanced that their mode of discovery still cannot be understood. Egyptians charted the movement of the sun and constellations and the cycles of the moon. They divided the year into 12 parts and developed a yearlong calendar system containing 365 $\frac{1}{4}$ days. Clocks were made with moving water and sundial-like clocks were used.

A structure known as the African Stonehenge in present-day Kenya (constructed around 300 B.C.) was a remarkably accurate calendar (5). The Dogon people of Mali amassed a wealth of detailed astronomical observations (6). Many of their discoveries were so advanced that some modern scholars credit their discoveries instead to space aliens or unknown European travelers, even though the Dogon culture is steeped in ceremonial tradition centered on several space events. The Dogon knew of Saturn's rings, Jupiter's moons, the spiral structure of the Milky Way and the orbit of the Sirius star system. Hundreds of years ago, they plotted orbits in this system accurately through the year 1990 (6). They knew this system contained a primary star and a secondary star (now called Sirius B) of immense density and not visible to the naked eye.

Africans showed their talents in the field of medicine. Many treatments we use today were employed by several ancient peoples throughout Africa. Before the European invasion of Africa, medicine in what is now Egypt, Nigeria and South Africa, to name just a few places, was more advanced than medicine in Europe. Some of these practices were the use of plants with salicylic acid for pain (as in aspirin), kaolin for diarrhea (as in Kaopectate), and extracts that were confirmed in the 20th century to kill Gram positive bacteria. In addition, African cultures performed surgeries under antiseptic conditions universally when this concept was only emerging in Europe. In fact, the first person to perform a successful surgery was a black named Daniel H. Williams. He also opened the first hospital with an interracial staff (Provident Hospital in 1893). In 1894, he was appointed chief of surgery of Freedman's Hospital in Washington, D.C., which originally treated former slaves.

Most of us learn that Europeans were the first to sail to the Americas. However, several lines of evidence suggest that ancient Africans sailed to South America and Asia hundreds of years before Europeans. Thousands of miles of waterways across Africa were trade routes. Many ancient societies in Africa built a variety of boats, including small reed-based vessels, sailboats and grander structures with many cabins and even cooking facilities. The Mali and Songhai built boats 100 feet long and 13 feet wide that could carry up to 80 tons. Currents in the Atlantic Ocean flow from this part of West Africa to South America. Genetic evidence from plants and descriptions and art from societies inhabiting South America at the time suggest small numbers of West Africans sailed to the east coast of South America and remained there. ^[5] Contemporary scientists have reconstructed these ancient vessels and their fishing gear and have completed the transatlantic voyage successfully.

Imagine what our modern roads would look like today without traffic lights. Thanks to Garrett A. Morgan - an African with only 6th grade level of education. He started The Cleveland Call black newspaper in 1920, and patented the mechanical traffic light in 1923 and sold it to General Electric. Thomas Edison may have invented the light bulb, but a black man Lewis Latimer perfected it. Latimer was an assistant to Alexander Graham Bell, who invented the first practical telephone, before joining Edison's research team called "Edison's Pioneers". Edison's prototypical light bulb had a filament that burnt out quickly, but Latimer invented a filament made with more durable carbon, and sold the "Incandescent Electric Light Bulb with Carbon Filament" patent to the United States Electric Company in 1881. He also patented the process to manufacture said filament in 1882, and then created the well-known threaded socket for the light bulb. We use tungsten light bulbs now, but he was famous for making use of electric light possible in public and at home. He oversaw installation of public electric lights in US, UK, and Canada. He also invented water closet for railroad cars and a precursor to the air conditioner.

We would like to ask Kant and Kantians to scientifically demonstrate or justify the connection or relationship between skin colour and rationality. Presently and as has always been, people of African descent have shown through their breakthroughs and pace-setting that rationality is not the birthright of the whites, neither is it a talent or gift of nature bestowed on whites but denied the blacks. In fact, the history of world civilization is replete with numerous contributions of Africa and African people as shown above. If Africans lack rationality, would they have been able to contribute so greatly to the world civilization? The fact that they indeed contributed greatly to the world civilization shows that they are actually rational people, and therefore moral agents. Skin colour or geographical origin has nothing to do with rationality as Kant would want us to believe. Therefore, as we have seen, Kant's anthropology and geography is quite faulty.

Kant expressed various beliefs and attitudes that are aptly called racist as we have noted. These beliefs falsely affirm the belief in the inferiority of non-white races and so are liable to encourage policies and attitudes towards them that are unjust, contemptuous, and callous. Hence, Kant's attitude towards people of African descent was quite deplorable and his ethics is quite dangerous to Africans and nonwhite as long as they (Africans and non-whites) remain excluded from Kant's 'Kingdom of Ends', because it portends a return to slavery and violence against non-whites.

Conclusion

Immanuel Kant has a theory of race and says things that indicate that he fails to apply his own revolutionary theory to black people as we have shown in this paper. But then, although it is quite clear that Kant's writings do exhibit many private prejudices, we however, agree with Mills that Kant's theory is fortunately stronger than his prejudices. Mills advocated for philosophers to focus only on Kant's theory rather than on his prejudices and contradictions, a proposal that we feel is the right thing to do. For this reason, we must not be quick in casting aspersions on Kant because he was not the first to put forward such racial views. In fact, Kant was simply following the script already written by the Enlightenment philosophers. Hume in particular was the first to articulate such racial views when he writes:

I am apt to suspect the negroes, and in general all the other species of men (for there are four or five different kinds) to be naturally inferior to the whites. There never was a civilized nation of any other complexion than white, nor even any individual eminent either in action or speculation. No ingenious manufactures amongst them, no arts, no sciences. On the other hand, the most rude and barbarous of the whites, such as the ancient GERMANS, the present TARTARS, have still something eminent about them, in their valour, form of government, or some other particular. Such a uniform and constant difference could not happen, in so many countries and ages, if nature had not made an original distinction betwixt these breeds of men. Not to mention our colonies, there are NEGROE slaves dispersed all over EUROPE, of which none ever discovered any symptom of ingenuity; tho' low people, without education, will start up amongst us, and distinguish themselves in every profession. In JAMAICA, indeed, they talk of one negro as a man of parts and learning; but 'tis likely he is admired for very slender accomplishments, like a parrot, who speaks a few words plainly (Hume, 1969).

A cursory look at Hume's views above and that of Kant would reveal that Kant was just appropriating or echoing Hume's idea and not that he invented it. This gives us an anchorage to accept the fact that Kant was indeed a product or a child of the Enlightenment, and as such should be forgiven for his mistaken ideas about non-Europeans. After all it has not yet been proved that certain human beings lack rationality because of their skin colour. Thus, we must in all fairness cut Kant some slacks by noting that indeed, good moral philosophers make immoral claims like Kant and still be good moral philosophers. After all philosophers like Voltaire, Rousseau, David Hume and many other Enlightenment philosophers had several erroneous and immoral claims that did not portray them typically as bad moral philosophers. No doubt some of Kant's claims are good as already noted in this study, and some like the racist claims are inexcusably bad, yet, although his bad claims reflect poorly on his general philosophical aptitude, they do not necessarily mean that all of his claims are wrong or cannot be salvaged.

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