

McCarthy: Kant on Race and Development

A. Race theory

1. abilities/talents/temperament are counted as nature rather than freedom
2. these are the kinds of qualities Kant means by the “innate differences” between races
 - a. for example, K says peoples in tropical climates are less energetic and industrious (and these become innate propensities [I think])
3. racial attributes: Africans accept culture of slaves; Native Americans too weak for hard labor; Asians civilized but static and lacking in spirit.

B. Teleological theory of nature

1. teleology is reflective not constitutive: heuristic principle needed to make sense of history.
 - a. so compatible with eventual causal explanation (cf later Darwinism)
2. There has to be an “ultimate end of nature” (not just of each organic being)
 - a. which is the full development of the natural capacities of the human being (destined to be developed sooner or later)
3. These can only be developed in the species not in each individual (bec. of trial and error, pass knowledge on to next generation, practice, etc.)
4. Kant sees these developments as part of *nature*, not *morality*
5. Yet he does see the natural developments as preparing the way for the moral good, i.e. the kingdom of ends, through stage of civil society and cosmopolitan order
 - a. rational hope that moral world can be realized
6. Europe will have to provide a model for the rest of the world

C. How does nature/history proceed so as to actualize the development of human powers, according to this framework?

1. Unsocial sociability
2. Nature uses evil to do good
 - a. we are hostile to, competitive with, and resist one another and this awakens our human powers
3. Nature’s purpose is not human happiness, but human development.
 - a. Kant’s criticism of Herder about Tahitians not being worthy of existing

D. Kant’s racial and colonial views in light of this historical/natural framework

1. Kant condemned European settlement and domination on the grounds of morality and right. Was critical of slave practices in “Sugar Islands” (Caribbean)
2. on slavery, K was ambivalent: no right to hold others in bondage except through criminality. But didn’t condemn slavery or slave trade outright
3. Lack of fit between how things look from the point of view of morality or right and how they look from functional point of human progress

4. *McCarthy's interpretive suggestion*: Kant's negative views of Africans and his failure to weigh in on contemporary debates on slave trade make it "not unreasonable to conclude" that from historical-developmental perspective, slavery was one of those evils that contributed to advance of civilization through diffusion of European culture

a. This argument later became pro-slavery argument in U.S.

5. Not clear on Kant's view if Africans are racially inferior how they can be capable of having their powers developed [LB: this throws D4a into question]

E. Problems with Kant's view of progress

1. problems with teleology of nature in light of later developments in biology (Darwin)

2. 65: Hegel and Marx have easier time with "from evil comes good" than Kant, since he needs history to make moral sense, yet seems to be saying that people are being used as means to ultimate good end. His morality should condemn this.

3. 66: How can he hold that all humans are worthy of respect partly because they can develop all their rational powers, yet say that non-Europeans cannot develop these powers, or not develop them to the extent Europeans can?

4. Yet Kant clearly did see unevenness of development of different peoples of the world with civilizing coming from Europeans. (not clear this is really consistent with race theory.)

F. McCarthy vs. Hill/Boxill: They say Kant's racial theories are not tied closely to his philosophy. McC says it is tied closely to his theory of history.

G. What is Eurocentrism? (2 different things that have been called "Eurocentrism")

1. View that standards of right or rationality are *applicable* to all peoples; all peoples should live according to them. But Europeans are the only ones who actually live up to them. Non-Europeans are not capable of living up to the standards of right or rationality.

[rejected by saying that non-Europeans are capable of living up to standards of right and morality even if they are not doing so in the present]

2. View that what are seen as the universal standards of right are actually particularistic European ways of behaving that are *not* appropriately applied to other, non-European peoples.

[rejected by saying that non-Europeans are already living according to appropriate standards of right and rationality]