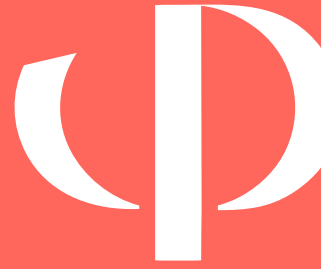


Teaching Philosophy



SPRING 2019

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APA NEWSLETTER ON

Teaching Philosophy

TZIPORAH KASACHKOFF AND EUGENE KELLY, CO-EDITORS

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FROM THE EDITORS

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We welcome readers to the spring 2019 issue of the *APA Newsletter on Teaching Philosophy*. In this issue we feature two articles, three poems, a short entertaining piece on blunders (gaffes?) the author has made in her classroom—she calls them “zingers”!—and one book review. We also take note of two recently published books that will be of interest to philosophy instructors.

Our first article, “Kant was a Racist: Now What?” authored by David McCabe of Colgate University, explores the question, raised by some philosophers, of how—indeed, even *whether*—we should teach our students the philosophy (and especially the moral philosophy) of Immanuel Kant given that Kant, who famously declared that both moral reasoning and social interaction were undergirded by certain “principles of humanity,” was himself the author of racist claims concerning the degraded status of non-white peoples—claims clearly antagonistic to the very humanistic principles that he himself espoused. Professor McCabe details both the arguments put forth to defend the view that, given the historical fact of Kant’s racism, we should not teach him, as well as arguments that contest this position. Additionally, Professor McCabe helpfully points out what he takes to be the merits and insights even of those arguments whose conclusions he himself ultimately rejects. We believe that readers will find Professor McCabe’s presentation of the issues raised here not only interesting but informative and nuanced. And we very much hope that readers will be inspired to write their own views regarding the issues discussed in this paper.

Our second article is by Steven M. Cahn, and is entitled “Teaching and Testing.” In this paper, Professor Cahn sets out what he takes to be four pedagogical purposes of giving examinations, and how best to construct examination questions so they provide a reliable assessment of students’ mastery of the material they are being tested on. Readers should benefit from the many examples that Professor Cahn gives of good and bad test-questions, and from his analysis of why they succeed and/or fail.

Professor Cahn argues for the greater value of examinations than term papers *if* the latter is used as the *sole* criterion for whether a student has mastered the material of a particular course of study. He also takes up and answers various criticisms that have been made of the giving and taking of exams, and he offers readers, with reference to some nice examples, a list of some of the pitfalls instructors should steer clear of in constructing and in grading exams. Finally, Professor Cahn shares with readers his practice, and the grounds for its value, of reviewing with students the answers to each of the questions asked on examinations recently taken by them.

Our third offering consists of three poems by Professor Felicia Nimue Ackerman of Brown University. Professor Ackerman has contributed her poetry to our publication previously and we always welcome the whimsical perspective on philosophy instruction invariably expressed by her poems.

Our fourth piece, also authored by Professor Ackerman, which she has titled “Calling All Zingers!,” consists of a list of remarks she has made in class which she quickly came to realize (through student responses) were “ill-advised.” Perhaps readers would like to share their own “zingers” with fellow readers of our newsletter?

Following the above, we present a book review, by Nils Ch. Rauhut, of *Philosophers in the Classroom: Essays on Teaching*, edited by Steven M. Cahn, Alexandra Bradner, and Andrew Mills.

As always, we encourage our readers to suggest themselves as reviewers of books and other materials that they think may be especially good for classroom use. It is especially useful to receive reviews of materials from those philosophy instructors *who have used those materials in their own classrooms and so can comment from experience on the merits and/or disadvantages of their use*. (Bear in mind that our publication is devoted to pedagogy and not to theoretical discussions of philosophical issues. This should be borne in mind not only when writing articles for our publication but also when reviewing material for our publication.)

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

We warmly encourage our readers to write for our publication. We welcome papers that respond to, comment on, or take issue with any of the material that appears within our pages.

Guidelines for submitting papers to be considered for publication in the *APA Newsletter on Teaching Philosophy*

The author's name, the title of the paper, and full mailing address should appear on a *separate* sheet of paper or, if the paper is sent to the editors electronically, on a note that will not print out within the text of the paper itself. *Nothing that identifies the author or his or her institution should appear within the body or within the footnotes/endnotes of the paper.*

The title of the paper should appear on the top of the paper itself.

Please submit the paper in electronic form. If this is not possible, four complete copies of the paper should be sent to one of the co-editors listed below. Authors should adhere to the production guidelines that are available from the APA.

In writing your paper in electronic form, *please do not use your word processor's footnote/ endnote function; all notes should be added manually at the end of the paper.*

All articles submitted to the newsletter undergo anonymous review by the members of the editorial committee:

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ARTICLES AND POEMS

Kant Was a Racist: Now What?

David McCabe

COLGATE UNIVERSITY

I

That many influential philosophers held a range of deeply troubling views—racist views, sexist views, anti-Semitic views, and so on—is by now widely known, not only among the professoriate but, more and more, by our students as well. As college campuses have grown increasingly attentive to issues of social justice and to the oppression and marginalization of various groups, philosophers face the question of how such dismaying facts about some of our tradition's central figures should affect our teaching. Not too long ago, professors might have had success in authoritatively dismissing such problematic views as simply not relevant to our study of a thinker, case closed. Today, however, not only will such declarations be met with far greater skepticism and resistance by students, but they also, given our more nuanced understanding of the complicating effects of race, seem in greater need of defense. How, then, should we approach teaching such figures?

In this essay I pursue this question by focusing on the case of Immanuel Kant's racism. While the general topic of how race figures within the philosophical tradition has received sustained investigation,¹ the case of Kant in particular has recently been the object of extended discussion.² So while I suspect that Kant can serve as something of a placeholder for our engagement with other figures who have held a range of alarming views, there are various features of his case that make it an especially rich vein of discussion. Consider, then, the following passages from Kant.

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 [native] American peoples.³

Whites contain all the impulses of nature in affects and passions, all talents, all dispositions to culture and civilization[,] and can as readily obey as govern. They are the only ones who always advance to perfection.⁴

[Native] Americans and Blacks cannot govern themselves. They thus serve only for slaves.⁵

Hindus 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.⁶

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. . . . 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.⁷

These quotations come from diverse sources (published material, student lecture notes, and Kant's own notes), and while some can be dated confidently (the last quoted passage appeared in print in 1764), the precise dating of others is uncertain. There is, however, good evidence that Kant expressed such sentiments well into the 1780s, and Pauline Kleingeld (2007) has noted that as late as 1788 Kant was defending in print a clear hierarchy of races and attributing various traits to distinct races as a matter of biology. There is no doubt, then, that through much of Kant's scholarly life he believed that races existed as quasi-natural kinds marked by different capacities, dispositions, and aptitudes, and that whites were at the top of that hierarchy. His views must strike us as unacceptably racist.

In reaching this judgment, though, are we not in danger of unfairly applying to Kant standards appropriate to our time but not his? Many influential figures in the history of thought held views that strike us as objectionable today, it will be said, and we need to acknowledge their having lived under very different conditions. So even if holding such views today could reflect only a deep racial animus insistent on denying obvious facts, Kant's views are perhaps much more excusable, given both the norms of his time and the evidence available to him. Might not the whole worry over how to proceed in the light of Kant's racist views be overstated?

Now, to be sure, questions about the appropriateness of retroactive moral judgments are challenging. But for two reasons that fact won't dissolve the problem here. First, even though Kant's society tolerated racism (and sexism, anti-semitism, etc.) far more than ours and presented far fewer cases of highly educated non-whites than ours, we should be wary of giving these facts too much exculpatory power in Kant's case. We know Kant was acutely aware of powerful arguments challenging not only his theoretical views on race but also the accounts of non-whites brought back by Europeans with distorting pre-conceptions, accounts he seemed all too eager to accept. In addition, one notorious statement by him in his 1775 essay "On the Different Races of Man"—"this fellow was quite black from head to foot, a clear proof that what he said was stupid"—suggests that his racism didn't simply *result from* evidence he encountered but instead *helped determine* such evidence; how else could the fact of the man's blackness be cited as *proving* anything? It's not for nothing, then, that Kant has been charged with playing a critical role in helping establish scientific racism.⁸

Second, even if the worry over retroactive judgment leads some to diminish Kant's culpability for his views, that would not eliminate the problem we face today. For in teaching

Kant we are demanding that our students engage with the ideas of a man who, during the time he claimed to be addressing foundational and universal questions on issues such as knowledge, morality, politics, and aesthetics, held a view that today could only be called white supremacism. Kant did not believe that what he judged to be the comparatively low achievement of non-whites resulted from unfortunate cultural influences, disadvantaged social positioning, and the like. Rather, he saw it as reflecting an unchangeable biological fact, which no amount of social change could remediate. Irrespective of the question of Kant's fault in holding his beliefs, "racist" seems the only apt term to describe someone who holds such views, and many students will, not unreasonably, wonder why they are being asked to give serious attention to the philosophical ideas of such a person. The urgency of that question is, I think, only heightened by conditions on college campuses, with students, faculty, and administrators sharply attuned to the corrosive effects of racism. Finally, given that philosophy as a discipline has conspicuously lagged behind many others in expanding the demographic of its professoriate, it strikes me as especially unwise to downplay the challenge of Kant's racism simply by noting that he lived in quite different times; that approach is unlikely to satisfy many of the skeptics we want to reach. The challenge of how to respond to Kant's racism must be engaged.

Faced with that challenge, we have a range of possible responses. At one extreme is a position I shall call "deep irrelevance," which sees Kant's racism as both intellectually uninteresting and irrelevant to his philosophical contributions and, for that reason, argues that in teaching Kant we should make no reference to his racism at all. At the other end, we can imagine someone holding that the severity and scope of Kant's racism show that his works by and large should not be taught, or should be substantially discounted or denigrated if they are taught. Call this the "deep relevance" view. And, of course, there might be various positions in between these.

I will begin with "deep relevance." This position can be defended through two main kinds of arguments: either (a) Kant's racism reveals something sufficiently problematic *about the man himself* as to outweigh whatever reasons exist for engaging with his philosophical texts, or (b) Kant's racism infects and invalidates *his philosophical arguments*, and so reveals the obvious untenability (or worse) of his philosophical views.

II

The first approach for defending deep relevance grows out of a strong intuition that the alarming nature of Kant's views on race thereby disqualifies him as a person from whom we can learn important ideas. This intuition can seem to gain strength through the following line of reasoning. If you continue to believe that we should teach Kant despite evidence of his deep racism, then you must believe he articulated important ideas that we and our students would seriously benefit from engaging with. So then you must believe the following conjunction is true: "Immanuel Kant was deeply racist, and he articulated important ideas that we would seriously benefit from engaging with." But that is surely a statement that many of us would be deeply

reluctant to assert publicly in front of our students, and that reluctance might seem to bolster the case against teaching Kant: after all, it seems highly problematic if your decision to teach Kant commits you to a position you would rather not avow publicly.

It's easy to see that this line of reasoning is unpersuasive. It trades on the unease that anyone of any sensibility would feel in uttering the quoted statement above (because of how it might naturally be construed), and in doing so it intentionally ignores the logically equivalent expression that we would surely use in such a situation: viz., "Kant was deeply racist, **but nonetheless** he articulated important ideas that we would benefit from engaging with." I mention this specious line of reasoning, however, because I suspect that the central idea behind it motivates some who may be quick to endorse "deep relevance." I have in mind the mindset that views the tradition of liberal education, along with its central figures, largely as the self-congratulatory celebration of a privileged sex, race, and class, and believes that the edifice of ideas generated by any such figure is just the expression of that particular social position dressed up in bogus claims for objectivity. To critics of that mindset it is a truism that the racism of Kant the man cannot be separated from his overall philosophical thought. Now philosophy to its credit has met such criticisms with careful argument and reasoned assessment, acknowledging the general cautionary principle concerning potential bias and blindspots without taking on board the sweeping indictment of our distinctive work. But in defending that work, it behooves us to recognize the deep suspicion that some have about the possibility of distinguishing a thinker's philosophical contributions from other views (however objectionable) that they might have held, and to do what we can to prevent that distinction from collapsing.

Further reason for holding fast to that distinction derives from our obligation to present to our students both the intellectual tradition we represent and its potential for helping them make sense of our world. A central and distinctive feature of philosophy (indeed, the humanities overall) is the belief that figures and works from the past, even from very long ago, continue to offer distinctively valuable insights. We read texts from the past not because we see in them illustrative mistakes we have properly moved beyond (like the theory of phlogiston or Lamarck's idea of acquired inheritance), but because we think that across the time that separates us, their ideas speak to us. Works by Plato and Maimonides, Hume and Descartes figure not as echoes of a distant era but as options in a live conversation. At the same time, we know that many such figures held views that must strike us only as benighted and retrograde. If philosophers (and humanists generally) decide that we shall not teach the work of people who held troubling racist views, sexist views, and so on, how many texts would have to be sacrificed in such a moral crusade? Such excisions would substantially deprive our students, and ourselves, of works and ideas that help illuminate our world.

This reference to the humanities, however, suggests a second way of defending "deep relevance." If (as some philosophers like to boast) philosophy is essentially

about rigorous argument and the logical march of ideas, undistorted by rhetorical flourishes, distracting figures of speech, and so on, then why can't we simply present students with Kant's main philosophical ideas, just not in Kant's own words? Why must they read Kant? One might rebut this option by appealing to Cleanth Brooks's worry about "the heresy of paraphrase," insisting that there is sometimes an inextricable connection between the ideas being advanced and the particular manner of expressing those ideas. But Brooks was chiefly concerned with works of art, in particular, poetry and literature. The arguments and conclusions of mathematicians and natural scientists, by contrast, seem eminently paraphraseable. If the same is true of philosophical argument, then it might well seem that if we could present students with Kant's philosophical ideas (perhaps as other philosophers have reconstructed them) in their full scope, breadth, and depth without reading Kant's texts themselves, we should do that. Since one might think that Kant's racism counts as at least a *prima facie* reason not to grant him the standing conveyed by inclusion on a syllabus, why not pursue that strategy?

Here we come to deep and complex questions about the nature of philosophical argument. We needn't resolve those, however, to see that the proposed alternative fails for at least three reasons. First, the hypothetical invoked—that one could bypass Kant's works and present his ideas in sufficient scope, breadth, and depth—is wildly implausible: the only place where one finds the scope, breadth, and depth of Kant's work is in Kant's work. Second, the approach in question would make it far more difficult both to understand Kant's place in the philosophical tradition and to follow the more than two centuries of commentary and responses to him. This point is worth stressing. As teachers we bear responsibility for introducing our students to traditions of thought that span decades, centuries, and, in some cases, millennia. Once figures have been established as nodal points in those traditions, with massive amounts of serious intellectual energy having gone into understanding and responding to their works, one simply can't responsibly teach that tradition without teaching that work. The final problem with the proposed alternative is that there is often no neutral or impartial way of presenting a philosopher's complex arguments. Such efforts inevitably involve emphasizing some elements, downplaying others, and putting ideas together in ways over which even sympathetic interpreters disagree. If we want to capture Kant's arguments and ideas, the only appropriate interpreter is Kant himself; the only evidence, his work.

III

In light of the substantial challenges facing any argument for deep relevance grounded on the fact that Kant himself was deeply racist, I turn now to the other way of defending that position, which is much more promising. The idea here is that Kant's racist views cannot *simply be bracketed from his philosophical views but rather* substantially inform and infect them. This line of argument has been advanced, with different emphases, in influential work published by Emanuel Eze and Charles Mills,⁹ and I shall concentrate on their arguments. But I want to be very clear: neither Eze nor Mills says we should stop teaching Kant. Indeed, though

Mills does assert that “we certainly should throw out Kant’s moral theory”¹⁰ on the grounds that it is deeply inflected by racism, he has more recently offered a “black radical appropriation” that enlists elements of Kant’s thought as part of an emancipatory project.¹¹ Still, it seems to me that if either Eze’s or Mills’s argument succeeds, the way we teach Kant would need to change radically. Too, I suspect that any version of the second approach supporting deep relevance would have to rely on something like the claims that Eze and Mills make, and for that reason their arguments merit especially close attention.

The central thrust of Eze’s account is that Kant elaborated (in works not often read by philosophers¹²) a systematic racism that can’t be explained away simply as free-standing regrettable beliefs, as Kant’s defenders would have it, but was instead defended by appeal to some of Kant’s central philosophical commitments. Eze stresses Kant’s reliance on the notion that we have certain a priori ideas that make the world intelligible and allow for a scientific account of it, and he argues that Kant arrived at his racist views by direct appeal to such ideas. On Eze’s reading, for example, Kant appealed to the regulative a priori principle that causes should not be multiplied unnecessarily in defending his claim that all races had a single common origin prior to being distinctively shaped by their natural environments; he appealed to a teleological historical principle in arguing that because non-whites could not achieve perfection, they were not as fully human as whites; and in rejecting Linnaeus’s classificatory scheme he suggested not only that we can group objects in the world (including different races of people) in a genuinely scientific way only by deploying certain a priori principles of classification but also that distinctions among races constituted one such principle. The fact that Kant invoked such a priori claims in buttressing his scientific racism, Eze concludes, shows the degree to which central planks of his overall philosophical approach supported his racist views, demonstrating the close connection between the two and rendering Kant’s overall project of transcendental idealism highly suspect.

To this argument for deep relevance, however, it seems to me that Bernard Boxill and Thomas Hill have offered exactly the right response.¹³ They note that even if Kant in justifying his claims for racial superiority did invoke certain a priori ideas in a manner central to his philosophy, that would show that his philosophy is racist at the conceptual level only if the claims for racism follow from those ideas. But they don’t—not by a long shot. Their central point is worth quoting at length:

Suppose we grant that Kant appealed to his general philosophical principles to derive and state his racial theory. It would follow that these principles are tainted with racism only if they strictly entailed his racial theory. If Kant’s racial theory depends on false factual assumptions, or if his attempt to derive it from his general philosophical principles is invalid, these principles need not be tainted with racism any more than genetic science is necessarily tainted with racism just because some racists try to use it to justify their views.¹⁴

Adapting the final point here, imagine that in some of his work Darwin appealed to his own evolutionary account to defend a claim about inherited differences across races. (I am well aware that certain passages in Darwin strike modern ears as racially problematic.) That faulty derivation would in no way undermine the central argument in *The Origin of Species*. If Kant derived his racist claims by misreading evidence or making unwarranted inferences, that would not in itself show anything problematic in either the appeal to a priori principles or his overall philosophical approach. Eze sometimes seems to suggest that Kant viewed the idea of racial differences and classifications as something like a priori conditions for any possible experience of the world, but as Boxill and Hill note, this claim is so implausible that it is hard to believe Kant could have endorsed it. So while Kant did believe that a priori principles were essential to constructing a genuinely scientific account, and also offered an account with distressing racist elements, this does not show anything racially problematic per se either in the appeal to a priori principles or in Kant’s overall method.

The general response to Eze’s argument offered by Boxill and Hill has been echoed by others similarly intent on rescuing Kant’s moral theory.¹⁵ In response to such efforts, Charles Mills has taken a somewhat different line in arguing that Kant’s philosophy reflects a thoroughgoing racism. Unlike Eze, who concentrates on the way Kant’s transcendental approach grounds his scientific racist claims, Mills considers Kant chiefly with an eye to his moral philosophy. Here the challenge to Kant seems to me both more intuitively compelling and more threatening as a matter of philosophical argument.

To see the general problem Mills raises, recall that Kant grounds our status as moral beings on our capacity to act rationally. Our ability to act on reasons, to set ends in accordance with principles we give ourselves, marks us out as ends in ourselves. Kant seems also to believe that this capacity varies on racial lines. Now, if the quality which grounds our moral status varies across races, it might seem that Kant’s views about race imply that a person’s moral status might also differ, depending on the degree to which that person possesses this status-conferring feature. And this, some might worry, opens the door to the idea that on Kant’s own approach to morality, different racial differences imply different moral status.

This worry is met by a standard response on behalf of Kant, centering on his idea that the world divides exhaustively into two classes. As Kant famously says in the *Groundwork*:

Beings the existence of which rests not on our will but on nature, if they are beings without reason, have only a relative worth, as means, and are therefore called things, whereas rational beings are called persons because their nature already marks them out as an end in itself, that is, as something that may not be used merely as a means.¹⁶

On the standard response, possessing rationality not only puts you in the world of persons, but functions for Kant as a threshold concept (like being pregnant) and not as a scalar concept (like being drunk). So if (1) any being with some

rationality is thereby rational, and (2) all rational beings are ends in themselves, i.e., persons with full moral status, then (3) members of all races (all of whom Kant regards as having *some* rationality) are persons, and so entitled to full moral respect. This is the familiar move by which Kant's defenders block the idea that his belief in racial differences poses any problems for his claims for moral equality, thus securing the independence of Kant's moral theory from his racist claims.

It's precisely here, however, that we need to consider seriously Mills's argument, and in particular, his title: "Kant's *Untermenschen*." Mills's thesis is not that Kant thought non-whites had no moral status at all. It is that Kant accorded them a liminal moral status, higher than non-humans but lower than whites. If so, then showing that a particular human has the rationality that distinguishes him or her from non-humans does not show that a human being with that level of rationality has the same moral status as other human beings with higher degrees of rationality. Mills is suggesting, in other words, that Kant endorsed a tripartite moral schema (comprising whites, non-whites, and things), not a bipartite one (with only persons and things), and since the standard defense of Kant just offered assumes a bipartite schema, it's not clear that it defends Kant against Mills's criticism. Mills thinks that when Kant is talking about the equal moral status of persons, he is talking about whites.

In assessing this debate, we need sharply to distinguish two questions: whether Kant thought that some races were more talented than others, and whether on Kant's moral theory such differences matter to persons' moral status. To see how these differ, note that it's perfectly intelligible to believe that some human beings are more talented than others, perhaps even inherently so, and yet still believe that from the standpoint of morality all humans matter equally, regardless of how smart or beautiful or talented they are. The first evaluates persons along some metric; the second asks how that evaluation affects moral status.

Now, regarding the first question, i.e., whether Kant thought that some races are naturally more talented than others, the answer is undeniably yes. Like many of his day, Kant thought that whites led lives that were in important ways better, more fully exemplary of human values, than non-whites. But if (as Kant's rescuers insist) the central point of his moral theory is that our moral status does not depend on such achievements, then the answer to this first question won't tell us anything important about the second. By themselves, judgments about persons' abilities don't entail that persons with lesser abilities have lesser moral status. Mills's view is that the former judgments carry clear implications for the determination of moral status in Kant's theory. But why?

Mills advances various considerations in support of his reading. First, some of Kant's racist passages express positions that are just very hard to reconcile with a commitment to moral egalitarianism and the bipartite view. Consider, for instance, Kant's suggestion (quoted earlier) that Native Americans and blacks are made to be slaves. If, as the bipartite view holds, Native Americans and blacks

are fully persons on account of possessing some capacity for rationality, then Kant should see them as capable of exercising autonomy and so as ends in themselves. (Kant would have to have been mad to deny *some* rationality to other races.) But how could anyone think a group of people is capable of exercising autonomy, and so are ends in themselves, and yet believe they should be enslaved? True, the passage on slavery comes from an unpublished lecture note of Kant's, but the idea it expresses is alarmingly consistent with the fact that Kant, in a 1788 essay, endorsed a pro-slavery text and aligned himself with a group opposed to emancipating black slaves.¹⁷

Along with references to what Kant did say, Mills also stresses what he didn't. Prior to the 1790s, for example, Kant offered virtually no criticism of European colonialism, and in various places clearly condoned it. But even more troubling is the fact, noted by Robert Bernasconi, that for much of his life—most alarmingly, during the period when he was writing the *Groundwork* and would have been acutely aware of ongoing debates over slavery—Kant offered no criticism of the practice.¹⁸ Mills sees Kant's silence in the face of this brutal assault on moral equality as evidence that Kant did not attribute full moral status to non-whites.

Against this reading, defenders of Kant can offer a range of responses. For starters, they can point out that later in his career Kant expressed strong criticism of certain aspects of European colonialism. That fact alone, however, does not resolve the bipartite/tripartite debate, because the critique of colonialism's savagery requires only that one see non-whites as having *some* moral status, not a status *equal* to whites. Stronger support for the view that Kant saw non-whites as having moral standing on par with that of whites can be found in his insistence that land must not be taken from indigenous peoples without their having entered freely into a contract. The very idea that interactions should involve contract and not force assumes a meeting between free parties each of whose consent is needed to legitimate the outcome, and this goes some way to suggesting equal moral status. Finally, various works in Kant's final productive years (e.g., *The Metaphysics of Morals*) criticize slavery as being everywhere inconsistent with the demands of universal morality.¹⁹ So even if Kant continued to hold retrograde views about the abilities of non-whites (a question on which I think the evidence is inconclusive), he seems by the end of his career to have endorsed a doctrine of equal moral status.

The best sense I can make of all of this is to believe that over the course of his life Kant held various ideas that don't easily harmonize with one another. This shouldn't surprise us. Living when many believed that racial differences sanctioned unequal treatment among human beings, and believing firmly in such differences, Kant was at the same time generating a powerful account of human dignity the logic of which undermined some of the views he himself endorsed. The result was, for some of Kant's life, a kind of schizophrenia, as he continued personally to endorse views that did not square with the moral theory he articulated. This conflict eventually gets resolved in favor of the moral theory, as Kant repudiates his earlier tacit acquiescence

to slavery and comes to recognize the rights of colonized peoples. Mills wants to eliminate the schizophrenia by suggesting that Kant's moral theory simply does not have the egalitarian implications it carries on its face. I suggest instead that Kant's moral theory was at odds with other views he had endorsed and that this conflict took time to get sorted out in a more consistent way.

Partial support for the reading I am offering can be found in the answer to the question of what we philosophers distinctively do, i.e., what we are especially interested in. Most broadly, we are interested in how ideas join together to form compelling arguments and frameworks for addressing important questions. That's why we read the work of philosophers: not for their specific views on a particular subject (e.g., Kant's insistence that it was always wrong to lie), but for their theoretical frameworks elaborating and giving structure to central considerations we need to address. So even if Kant at some point held positions sympathetic to the tripartite view, the gross incompatibility between (1) his occasional comments suggesting the tripartite view and (2) the overall sweep of his impressive moral theory is a further reason to see those comments as not worthy of our serious attention. It's as though Einstein, because of his idiosyncratic mathematical failures or biased reading of data, failed to reach the correct conclusion that his own theory of relativity demanded and physicists are then asked which conclusion Einstein's account validates. They wouldn't (and shouldn't) care about the inferences reached by Einstein the man but would instead concentrate on the conclusions properly entailed by Einstein's theory of relativity. Similarly, as philosophers, our eyes should be on Kant's moral theory.

Here's one final reason to think that Kant's moral theory is not fatally infected by his views on race: viz., that it has for years been taught without any reference to those views. Mills thinks that means philosophers have been teaching a sanitized version of Kant's views, but as I just said, it's not clear why we should be interested in someone's views except where they seem likely to be *philosophically* significant and fruitful, and Kant's views on race are certainly not that. (A philosopher's personal views might be helpful in resolving interpretative questions about certain passages in that philosopher's writings, but Kant's developed moral theory is unambiguous in asserting equal status for all rational beings.) Nor is it a trivial point here that the non-racialized version of Kant's moral theory has been so valuable in making a powerful case on behalf of groups about whom Kant himself held retrograde views. There is, for example, no better way to express outrage over the Tuskegee syphilis experiments than through the Kantian objection that African Americans were being used merely as a means and not respected as ends in themselves. Or think of the ongoing work in combatting sexual violence against women, another group about whom Kant held problematic views. Everyone who stresses the importance of consent in sexual encounters invokes a concept whose moral significance no one did more to establish than Kant. The fact that Kant's ideas can be so powerfully advanced on behalf of groups that he too often denigrated is further demonstration that his moral theory can and should be understood independent of his racist views.

IV

In raising doubts about deep relevance, I have implicitly been giving reasons for continuing to teach Kant's philosophy in its non-racialized form. But even if we present Kant's work that way, as teachers we still face the questions of whether and how to respond to the fact of Kant's racism. Here I see three general options. First, the position we might call "deep irrelevance": we can simply ignore Kant's racism and teach his work without mentioning it. Alternatively, we can teach the very passages where Kant expresses this racism in order to give students the fullest picture of his thought. Finally, we can acknowledge Kant's racism in some way (probably when introducing him to students) and then proceed in a discussion of Kant's texts that refers to his racism where it has philosophical or other substantial relevance (which on my argument will be not very often).

I can see the temptations of "deep irrelevance," and not just because that's how I, like many of us, first encountered Kant. In addition, that approach reflects the idea that as philosophers we are chiefly interested in the persuasiveness of the ideas we are considering, and that issue doesn't seem directly to depend on contingent aspects of the individual lives of the authors. Perhaps, however, that is stated too strongly, and facts about a philosopher's life do influence that philosopher's views. For example, it's hard to see how the deep anxiety over the prospect of life without a state central to Hobbes's political thought didn't reflect his own experience of England's descent into civil war. In this way facts about Hobbes's life might well seem relevant to his philosophical thought, suggesting that an adamant distinction between ideas and biography is too simplistic. Perhaps. A hard-nosed philosopher might just reply that whether life without a state is so horrible as to justify Hobbes's position is not itself a question determined by whether Hobbes himself grew up under certain conditions; it's either true or false, independent of his particular experience. So while the details of a thinker's life might explain why they took the positions they did, some might say they are not relevant in assessing whether those positions are sound. If so, that might again lend some support to "deep irrelevance."

Even if that last attempt to shore up the distinction between ideas and personal experience holds, there remain good reasons we should not ignore Kant's racism in our teaching. One is that students might well know of it, or come to learn of it, and then wonder whether their professors have not been as forthright about a strain of thought they should have acknowledged. This in turn might engender a kind of suspicion about the whole enterprise of philosophy, and might even lead students to imagine that philosophy is in other ways infected by a racism it dare not acknowledge. This general worry gains strength when we consider that certain arguments supporting deep relevance (those of Eze and Mills) have been most powerfully advanced by philosophers of color. Earlier I criticized those who believe that any thinker's ideas are simply an expression of their own particular situatedness. But one can reject that extreme while still recognizing that our own subject positions can well affect our judgments of both the salient issues in a text and the importance we ascribe to those

issues within an overall argument. It is no doubt much easier for a white man like me to see Kant's racism as a less significant aspect of his work, and so as likely to be less relevant to his philosophical achievement, than it is for a member of a group that Kant's views explicitly target, who has experienced the effects of racism in their own lives. This diversity of perspectives is just one factor that can make interpretative consensus harder to achieve, but it is nothing to lament. Quite the opposite: Mills's work on the importance of race in shaping the social contract tradition, for instance, is a terrific example of the enormous benefits that come when different perspectives are brought to bear on philosophical work. The possibility that my own subject position may affect the significance I attribute to Kant's racist claims, then, leads me to be even more skeptical of the first approach and its easy bracketing of such claims.

The second option is to teach the racist texts directly, alongside Kant's other texts. I confess that this approach would not have occurred to me had it not been proposed by a colleague who is deeply troubled by Kant's racist views, but I'm skeptical of it for two reasons. The first is that the works in question constitute bad philosophy—not because they are racist, but because they are marked by narrow-mindedness and poor reasoning. (To cite one example from Boxill and Hill, Kant's own methodological commitment to not multiplying causes unnecessarily should have led him, as it did Rousseau, to explain human differences around the world simply by citing environmental factors rather than by citing environmental factors and natural racial differences.) One might, I suppose, present Kant's racist views as a case study illustrating the risks of human beings' overconfidence in what we take to be our own objective reasoning. But the value of that lesson would have to outweigh the second reason against this way of proceeding—namely, that after encountering some of these highly objectionable passages, all sorts of students might find it difficult to be genuinely receptive to the powerful philosophical ideas (about metaphysics, free will, morality, aesthetics, and so on) that Kant advanced. They may well conclude that anyone who could have written such things couldn't really have expressed any ideas worth attending to.

So we come to the third approach: Present Kant's work, but also mention the troubling fact of his racism. This could be accompanied by an invitation to students to identify places in Kant's work where they think important parts of his argument either are distorted by his racism or are blind to considerations he should have addressed. For instance, in the *Groundwork* Kant refers to South Sea islanders as an example of people living lives of idle luxury and failing to develop their talents in the way (Kant thought that) all persons should. It might be worth discussing with students whether persons in certain parts of the world really don't have to work as hard as others to meet their basic needs, and whether Kant reached the conclusion he did because he already had a view of the diminished capabilities of South Sea islanders. Students could also explore the question how *should* we understand our basic needs, and against what background? We might pursue the question of how far Kant's view that human beings have a moral obligation to develop their talents reflects beliefs he held as a Northern European Protestant man at a particular point

in history without wider applicability, whether the influence of one's cultural context on one's ideas *thereby* renders one's claims parochial, and so on.

There is, finally, one overarching reason for being candid with our students about Kant's racism. We who have labored long in the academy know that we can learn much from people who hold views that are deeply objectionable. It would be convenient if racists, sexists, anti-Semites, and the like were also entirely bereft of any creative or intellectual insights worthy of our attention. The world, however, is not ordered that way, and this is something worth communicating to our students (perhaps now more than ever). Jonathan Haidt and Greg Lukianoff have recently claimed that one of the various ideas that impede college education is the idea that the world divides sharply into two kinds of people, the morally good and the morally bad. Once you align yourself with the morally good—and where else are you going to align yourself?—it's a short step to concluding that you have nothing to learn from the other side, whom you have now confidently slotted, with the easy snapping of your fingers, into the class of people whose voices don't merit your attention. This tendency is not just insensitive to the complexity of the world, but destined to cut ourselves off from important truths, not just about our world but about ourselves as well.

It's not wildly utopian to think that teaching Kant via some version of the third approach might both undermine our students' tendency to so confidently divide the world into allies and enemies and help them see that it is a much more complicated place, one in which we can sometimes learn things from those we might on other grounds condemn. This is a hard lesson to learn, but it is surely one worth teaching our students.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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NOTES

1. See, for example, Valls, *Race and Racism in Modern Philosophy*; Ward and Lott, *Philosophers on Race: Critical Essays*; and Eze, *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader*.
2. Eze, "The Color of Reason"; Bernasconi, "Kant as an Unfamiliar Source of Racism"; Mills, "Kant's *Untermenschen*"; Kleingeld, "Kant's Second Thoughts on Race"; and Allais, "Kant's Racism."
3. Akademie Ausgabe, IX: 316, quoted in Bernasconi, "Kant as an Unfamiliar Source of Racism," 147.
4. Akademie Ausgabe, XV/2: 878, quoted in Bernasconi, "Kant as an Unfamiliar Source of Racism," 147–48.
5. Akademie Ausgabe, XV/2: 878, quoted in Bernasconi, "Kant as an Unfamiliar Source of Racism," 152.
6. *Philosophical Anthropology*, quoted in Eze, "The Color of Reason," 117.
7. "Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime," quoted in Eze, *Race and the Enlightenment*, 55–56.
8. Bernasconi, "Kant as an Unfamiliar Source of Racism."
9. Eze, "The Color of Reason"; Mills, "Kant's *Untermenschen*."
10. Mills, "Kant's *Untermenschen*," 118.
11. Mills, "Black Radical Kantianism."

12. Near the start of his essay, Eze announces: "[W]e will in this essay rely on copious but neglected works and notes [Kant] prepared and used in his lectures in the area [i.e. the area of anthropology and the theory of race]: *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, *Physische Geographie*, 'Conjectural beginning of human history' (1785), 'Bestimmung des Begriffs einer Menschenrace' (1785), 'On the varieties of the different races of man' (1755), and the *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime* (1764)" (Eze, "The Color of Reason," 104).
13. Boxill and Hill, "Kant and Race."
14. *Ibid.*, 452.
15. E.g., Louden, *Kant's Impure Ethics*; Wood, *Kant's Ethical Thought*.
16. Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 237.
17. Kleingeld, "Kant's Second Thoughts on Race," 574.
18. Bernasconi, "Kant as an Unfamiliar Source of Racism," 150ff.
19. Kleingeld, "Kant's Second Thoughts on Race," 587.

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speaking glibly about a subject is not equivalent to providing answers to specific questions, relying solely on oneself and writing down replies to be scrutinized by experts. Effective examinations clarify for students whether they control certain material or possess it only tenuously. What are your strengths and weaknesses? Are your methods of study efficient? How can you change them to study more effectively? Examinations help reveal the answers.

Students, though, are not the only ones tested by examinations. The second purpose they serve is providing teachers with the opportunity to assess the effectiveness of their instruction. Through analyzing the results of tests, teachers can learn how they have succeeded and where they have failed. If three-quarters of the students miss a particular question, the fault is not theirs but the instructor's.

The temptation is to scoff at students who exhibit ignorance and to wonder how they could have learned so little. But if the instructors had taught the material more effectively, the students surely would have performed much better.

A third potential value to examinations is providing a worthwhile learning experience. During a test students are working with a high degree of concentration. If the questions place familiar material in a slightly unfamiliar light and thereby lead students to recognize connections they might not have noticed, the examination itself can deepen understanding.

That potential is reason for constructing examinations carefully. They should not be filled with banal questions but instead should challenge students to use their knowledge and thereby discover whether they have a firm grasp of it.

For example, suppose you have taught your class that a valid argument is one in which the premises imply the conclusion, even if the premises or the conclusion are false. To test whether students understand the nature of a valid argument, an ineffective question would be: "Is a valid argument one in which the premises imply the conclusion?" The difficulty is not only that the question requires merely a "yes" or "no," but that a student might give the correct answer without understanding that false premises might validly yield a true conclusion.

Here's a much better question: "If the conclusion of a valid argument is false, can we be sure that the premises are false? If so, explain why. If not, provide a relevant example that illustrates your view." Only a student who understands the nature of a valid argument will answer correctly.

A fourth value to examinations is the time spent preparing for them. Because questions are not known beforehand, students need to undertake a thorough study of all the material and anticipate questions that may be posed. In doing so, students are led to analyze and synthesize material, and to enhance their control of it.

Term papers have their own worth but are not substitutes for an examination. In researching papers students need master only those parts of the course bearing directly on the chosen topic. If you are taking a course in civics and have

Teaching and Testing

Steven M. Cahn

THE GRADUATE CENTER, CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Does anyone like examinations? For students they are the stuff of nightmares, while for teachers they result in stacks of papers requiring correction and grading. So why not dispense with them?

The answer is that ideally they serve four important purposes. First, an examination provides the opportunity for students to discover the scope and depth of their knowledge. To

been asked to learn the roles of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of the United States government, then if you write a term paper on the committee structure in the Senate, you may do so without showing mastery of much of the course material. Only an examination will cover all the ground.

In this connection, consider a student who came to see me after having received a C on her examination. She was disappointed, especially because, as she explained, she had always been an A student. I asked whether she had studied as hard for this examination as for previous ones, and to my surprise she told me that she had never before taken any examinations. She had gone to a secondary school where they were considered outmoded, and her first two collegiate years were spent at a school that had replaced all examinations with term papers. I asked her whether she thought her learning had been helped or hindered by the absence of examinations. She replied that until she had taken my test she had thought that avoiding examinations had been to her advantage, but she now realized that her grasp of material had always been flimsy. She had never learned a body of material thoroughly enough to draw on it at will and utilize it effectively whenever needed. In short, she never had received the benefits of studying for an examination.

But if examinations are so beneficial, what are the arguments against them?

First, some say that tests do not provide a sound basis for evaluating a student's achievement. After all, examinations require a student to demonstrate knowledge under challenging conditions, answering a restricted set of questions within a limited time, thus causing pressure that prevents many from doing their best work.

This line of argument, however, overlooks that pressure exists whenever anyone attempts to prove competence to experts. For example, a violinist feels pressure when auditioning for an orchestral position. Tension is inherent in such situations, because experts have high standards that are challenging to meet, and you need to meet them at an appointed time. The ballplayer who appears skillful in practice but plays poorly in league games lacks effective control of the requisite skills. Similarly, students who sound informed in conversation but perform poorly in examinations lack command of their subject. Thus the pressure of examinations does not invalidate but confirms the significance of the results.

A second criticism is that examinations inhibit students' independence, discouraging them from pursuing their own interests and instead forcing the study of materials chosen by the instructor.

But why assume that mastering a subject involves only learning those aspects you happen to find interesting? For example, knowing American history involves knowing all periods, not just, for example, the Civil War or the New Deal. You may not be so interested in the Colonial age, but if you claim expertise in American history, you're expected to know it all. And the teacher is your guide to identifying

the important aspects of a subject. Such perspective is not limiting but liberating, removing barriers to understanding and making possible more independent thinking.

A final criticism of examinations is that they stifle creativity, emphasizing the mindless reiteration of facts instead of encouraging imaginative thinking. Thus examinations are said to impede rather than promote learning.

But this line of attack is mistaken for two reasons. First, only poor examinations emphasize learning by rote. Good ones, as stated previously, place familiar material in a somewhat unfamiliar light and lead students to make valuable connections in their thinking. In this connection I recall seeing a political science test consisting of one essay question: Explain the virtues of bureaucracy. Any student who could provide a persuasive answer to that provocative question would have demonstrated mastery of the processes of government.

Second, the mastery of any field requires control of relevant information and skills. As Whitehead wrote, "There is no getting away from the fact that things have been found out, and that to be effective in the modern world you must have a store of definite acquirement of the best practice. To write poetry you must study metre: and to build bridges you must be learned in the strength of material. Even the Hebrew prophets had learned to write, probably in those days requiring no mean effort. The untutored art of genius is—in the words of the Prayer Book—a vain thing, fondly invented."¹

Imaginative thinking does not flow from those ignorant of fundamental information, and examinations reveal whether you know the basics. Hence testing, rather than stifling creativity, provides a framework in which it can flourish.

Yet constructing examinations is a challenge. How to do so? The first guideline is that an examination should be representative of the course material. Consider, for instance, a course in the history of the nineteenth-century English novel covering works by Jane Austen, Charlotte and Emily Brontë, George Eliot, and Thomas Hardy. An appropriate examination would cover all these authors, not only one or two. Furthermore, the questions would call for detailed answers, not just stray bits of information strung together by vague generalizations.

Moreover, students should face more than a series of true-false or multiple-choice questions. The aim is not to test knowledge of minutiae but understanding of fundamental concepts. For instance, only a foolish examination in the history of modern philosophy would be filled with questions like "The title of Section IX of David Hume's *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* is (a) Of Liberty and Necessity, (b) Of the Reason of Animals, (c) Of Miracles, (d) All of the above, or (e) None of the above." Yet it would be equally foolish to ask, "Does anything in the work of Immanuel Kant help us understand ourselves." Instead, the need is for a sharp, challenging question such as "Both Descartes and Berkeley raise doubts about the existence of the material world. Compare and contrast the arguments they use to raise these doubts and their

conclusions concerning the possible resolution of these doubts." Questions such as these emphasize that mastery of the subject requires far more than the memorization of trivia or the improvisation of hazy, high-flown vacuities.

If examinations are to serve their appropriate purposes, a few other pitfalls need to be avoided. The examination should not be a race against time. Rather, students should be able to read the questions carefully, compose answers, write legibly, and review to make corrections.

Clear directions at the beginning of the examination are essential. Imagine beginning work and reading: "Answer three questions from Part I and two questions from Part II, but do not answer questions 2, 3, and 6 unless you also answer question 9. Question 1 is required, unless you answer questions 3 and 5." By the time students have understood these rules, they will already be short of time. An exam should be a test of knowledge and skills, not of an ability to solve verbal puzzles.

One other pitfall is the failure to inform students of the relative importance of each question. If an examination has three questions, but the answers to the first two are together worth less than the answer to the third, then students should be told. Otherwise, they will not realize how their time should be allocated, and the results of the examination may be distorted.

Yet another concern is that examinations should be assessed with care. A means of doing so is reading a paper without knowing its author. An answer from a student who usually does excellent work tends to seem more impressive than a similar response from a student who is not so admired. In addition, rather than reading each paper from start to finish, a better method is to read each answer from every student, thereby helping to ensure that standards remain stable.

Furthermore, examinations should be graded, returned to students, and discussed in class as soon as possible, thus maximizing their impact. Moreover, multiple examinations are better than one, allowing the student to improve from each effort to the next. Offering only one exam encourages cramming; frequent examinations encourage studying. And useful studying is what the teacher should seek to promote.

Let me offer one last example from my own teaching that illustrates the value of examinations. For many years I taught a graduate course in political philosophy, covering major historical writings, including such authors as Plato, Aristotle, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, and Mill. Their writings are among the foundations of the field, so I wanted students to master them. To encourage this result, I gave mid-term and final examinations that called for detailed knowledge of the key texts. I explained that the mid-term was a diagnostic tool that students could use to assess their work. After the test was given, I returned the papers in the next class and reviewed them question by question, explaining the correct answers and indicating where in our anthology they could be found.

I did not, however, anticipate what happened next. The students formed study groups to review the readings, ask one another questions, and otherwise prepare for the final examination. I never mentioned the idea of doing so, but my format had encouraged this highly useful activity. When the final examination arrived, students almost uniformly did well, as they had known how to prepare and make the most of their study time.

The course was one of the most popular I offered, and although students were not used to the examination format, they profited enormously from it. Indeed, they expressed pride in having acquired so much useful knowledge.

Examinations are neither good nor bad, but they are one tool in the teacher's kit. If prepared properly and used appropriately, they are a powerful pedagogical device that can encourage and assess learning.

NOTES

1. Alfred North Whitehead, "The Rhythmic Claims of Freedom and Discipline" in *The Aims of Education and Other Essays*, rpt. New York: Free Press, 1967), 34.

An "A" for Effort?

Felicia Nimue Ackerman

BROWN UNIVERSITY

Originally appeared at *Daily Nous*. Reprinted with permission.

"Why can't you grade partly on effort?"
 Asked a student in hope of an A.
 I said, "Would you go to a surgeon
 If her teachers had graded that way?"

Physics Envy?

Felicia Nimue Ackerman

BROWN UNIVERSITY

Originally appeared at *Daily Nous*. Reprinted with permission.

A physicist's thoughts can be faultless
 And still turn out not to be true.
 But if you go wrong a priori,
 Then isn't the problem with you?

A Plea for Critical Thinking*

Felicia Nimue Ackerman
BROWN UNIVERSITY

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Higgledy piggledy,
Russell and Wittgenstein,
Murdoch, and Geach and his
Eminent wife

Shouldn't be taken as
Super-philosophers,
Objects of worship and
Larger than life.

*This is almost a double dactyl. For the criteria for the form of light verse known as a double dactyl, see this link: <https://www.thefreedictionary.com/double+dactyl>

Calling All Zingers!

Felicia Nimue Ackerman
BROWN UNIVERSITY

Did you ever say something foolish in a class and get a well-deserved zinger from a student in response? I did! Here are three samples. Can you top them?

#1

FNA: "Zoroastrianism is a ditheistic religion, with a conflict between a good god and an evil one."

Student: "I don't think that's right."

FNA: "I got this out of the textbook, so if you have a better source, I'll yield to your superior expertise."

Student: "I am a Zoroastrian, and my uncle is a Zoroastrian priest."

FNA: "I yield to your superior expertise."

#2

FNA: "Reading 1984 will change your life."

Student: "I did and it didn't."

#3

Student: "Will the class meet on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur?"

FNA: "Yes, but don't worry if you can't come—you won't miss anything important."

Student: "Well, you ought to know."

The next time I was asked this question, I said, "You won't miss anything important that can't be made up."

BOOK REVIEW

Philosophers in the Classroom: Essays on Teaching

Steven M. Cahn, Alexandra Bradner and Andrew Mills, eds.
(Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2018) pp. 280.

Reviewed by Nils Ch. Rauhut
COASTAL CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

Teaching philosophy well is a journey rather than a destination. Most of us start off as freshly minted PhDs in front of a classroom trying to showcase our philosophical acumen only to discover that teaching philosophy requires so much more than being the most philosophically knowledgeable. This volume brings together twenty-four first-person essays by distinguished teachers of philosophy, each of which illustrates that effective teaching of philosophy goes hand-in-hand with continued reflection upon and reevaluation of what happens in the process of teaching. Although the contributors come from very different academic institutions as well as from different philosophical backgrounds, all of them have been recognized by their home institutions as outstanding teachers of philosophy.

The anthology is divided into four sections: Teaching Philosophy: A Prologue; Teaching the Students; Teaching the Course; Teaching beyond the Course; and Teaching the Teacher. The twenty-four essays are diverse both in content and style. Some of them (for example, Stephen H. Daniel's "Getting it Right: Forty Years of Intro to Philosophy") are focused on teaching a particular type of class. Others (for example, Bertha Alvarez Manninen's "Teaching Philosophy to First-Generation College Students") are focused on dealing with specific challenges (say, that of teaching first-generation students or teaching large classes). My favorite essays in the anthology are those that chronicle how our aims and concerns as teachers change over time. In "Learning not to Teach" Paul Woodruff points out that after teaching for forty-five years he has learned "to put teaching aside and let the learning happen, as much as possible, through student interaction" (100). He illustrates what he means by this through a detailed and inspiring account of how he redesigned a course in Philosophy of Art. He had taught a version of the course in his early years as a professor but "decided to try something totally different" (102). In his new course students were assigned to learning groups that reflected their own aesthetic interests, and most of the work in the course was done by students within the groups. "This course design," Woodruff observes, "left me little time for traditional teaching, but gave the students unusual opportunities for learning" (105). This essay illustrates beautifully that the best teachers of philosophy continually rethink what they are doing in the classroom leading, sometimes, to changes, big and small. Teaching the same course, in the same way, over and over again, is not a trustworthy sign of teaching excellence.

Another strong contribution to the volume is David W. Conception's "Learning to Teach." Conception describes

how his teaching of philosophy as a novice member of the academy fell short. He writes that “the basic designs of my courses were fundamentally flawed, my actual (as opposed to my espoused) learning objectives shallow. . . . I was pretty narcissistic, and I had very little empathy” (25). In order to make progress he reached out to more experienced colleagues only to discover that this did not lead to the improvement of his teaching that he was looking for. “I didn’t need the tips I could get from well-meaning but uninformed colleagues. I needed to study teaching and learning. . . . I needed to become a scholarly teacher” (26). Concepción writes that his encounter and interaction with the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) made all the difference in his development into a good teacher. The essay is a welcome reminder that engagement with the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning is one promising way of becoming a better teacher of philosophy.

In light of the fact that the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning plays an important part in the development of good philosophy teachers, it is a bit surprising that the book does not have a bibliography. I think this is a missed opportunity by the editors to draw more attention to the excellent work that has been done in SoTL.

In spite of this lacuna, I recommend the book highly to everyone who has an interest in improving her teaching of philosophy. It deserves to be widely read.

BOOKS RECEIVED

We did not receive our usual complement of books from publishers in time for the publication of this issue, so in this section we will list only two books, each of which has come to our attention through their authors and each of which is relevant to philosophy instructors, though for quite different reasons. After the listing of each book, there follows a short description of its contents.

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY PRESS

Steven M. Cahn, *Inside Academia: Professors, Politics and Policies*

Steven Cahn has served in academia both as a Professor of Philosophy and also as an administrator—as provost, vice president for academic affairs, and as acting president. He therefore writes with first-hand knowledge and personal experience of the various aspects of academic life and culture. Some of the topics covered in the book are “How Professors View Academia,” “How Teachers Succeed,” “Choosing Administrators,” “Distribution Requirements,” and “Appointments,” and “Tenure.” The book is both informative and entertainingly written.

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

Christian B. Miller, *The Character Gap: How Good Are We*

Though there is no shortage of articles and books that deal with the question of the principle(s) of right action, aside from the ancient Greeks who dealt with moral philosophy, one doesn’t find a plethora of writers dealing

with the question of the appropriate standards for praising someone as a person “of good moral character.” Christian Miller seeks to advance discussion of this topic in his new book, *The Character Gap: How Good Are We?*, a book that, though intended for a popular audience (i.e., a ‘trade’ book), will be of interest to philosophers and non-philosophers alike. (Indeed, Miller’s book was the subject of an ‘Author Meets Critics’ session at the most recent APA Annual Meeting, Eastern Division, with comments by Nancy Snow and Jen Wright.). Miller explores the question of what is meant by good character, why it matters that we have good character, and how we might seek to improve our moral character. Given that the book is very much an ‘easy read’ lacking any philosophical terminology that is not fully explained, instructors may find it appropriate even for assignment to beginning students, either in ethics or in general philosophy courses.

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