

Is Academics Inclusive?

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Abstract

The following question was discussed, “Is academics inclusive?” The method was archival and autoethnographic. Immanuel Kant’s racist views were discussed in relation to his ethics, for the purpose of considering how biographical material could shed light on understanding his ethics. In addition, the author focused upon their own experience as a racialized Canadian student from about 1989 to 2002, about 12 years, cumulating in a doctorate, specializing in the philosophy of mathematics, and further work he did in the social sciences, thereafter, leading to another doctorate in educational studies and sessional work. Finally, some suggestions are offered to make academics more inclusive: (1) Use diverse materials to teach, specifically, from non-Western sources. (2) Explore the racist views of those that are studied to help us better understand their work. And (3), involve diverse students, teachers, and researchers in education.

Keywords: pedagogy, inclusion, racism, historical research, non-Western studies

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Racism within the educational system has been explored at various levels: grade schools, urban schools, rural schools, universities, and various courses of studies (Delpit, 1997; Burnett & Lampert, 2018; Ferfoljia, Jones-Diaz, & Ullman, 2018; Moustakim, 2018; Tyson, 2014). Indeed, biographical studies of many twentieth century thinkers that are part of the canon of Western philosophy expose racist views (Babbitt & Campbell, 1999; Bernasconi, 2001, 2003a, 2003b; Valls, 2005). Does inclusion requires using materials from non-Western sources? Does an inclusive education require that we discuss the racist views of the thinkers we study? Does inclusion require that those teaching and doing research are from diverse backgrounds?

In what follows, I look at racism in academics, using studies in philosophy for the purpose of illustration. By *racism* I have in mind depreciatory views of people based on their membership in identifiable groups, which are often also cultural and ethnic. Non-inclusion in academics involves studying materials that are bias, or one-sided; created by people that hold racist views, such as holding a lower estimation of people's abilities based on their group affiliation; and excluding students, teachers, and researchers from educational opportunities based on race. In-depth studies of racism in higher education have been harder to glean personal experiences from in the literature, especially in the humanities, and that is, in part, what is offered here.

I shall proceed thus. Beginning historically, I wish to expose Kant's thoughts about race for the purpose of illustration—which is little remarked upon in academic studies of philosophy generally; he is chosen due to his stature in our intellectual canon as the embodiment of enlightened reason. Next, I will focus upon my own experience as a student of from about 1989 to 2002, about 12 years, cumulating in a doctorate, specializing in the philosophy of mathematics, and further work I have done in the social sciences, thereafter, leading to another doctorate in educational studies and sessional work. Finally, I shall outline some challenges that academics faces, specifically, how racism of those authors, like Kant, that are studied could affect our understanding of their research opus, shape our comprehension of other traditions, and affect our aims for an inclusive pedagogy—because the people we are studying and those teaching us are all White.

The methodology of this paper is archival and autoethnographic. Some matters about the scope of my paper should be kept in mind regarding both points. There is already an existing literature on racism in academics, as well as philosophy, and indeed much written about Kant's essentialism. I could have chosen from a breath of philosophers that runs the gauntlet from Aristotle to Frege. Even though their views about issues like race and women are well known (e.g., Dummett, the preeminent commentator of Frege, called him a “red-neck”) I needed one example, and choose what is often taken to be a paragon of logical rigour, Immanuel Kant. In so doing, one should be prepared that, by our current lights, Kant's views are distasteful and cringeworthy.

My purpose, we may wish to recall, is to produce a case study of my own experience as a racialized Canadian, educated in that country. In this paper, I offer some remarks about how the role of identity, of who, how, and under whom we study, can affect our educational experiences and opportunities. Flowing from my findings and discussion, I provide some suggestions of how to make academics, generally, more inclusive.

Kant's Hierarchy of Minds

Kant, writing in the eighteenth century, has often been taken to be an Enlightenment philosopher par excellence. At the very least, he had tried to apply reason to questions about what we can know and how we should act. Hence, it is surprising—because his views were to be beyond culture, and rooted in universal human reason, to the extent possible—to discover his racist views. However, it is also not surprising because he was writing in the nineteenth century that is well-known to be racist, a time of colonialism and imperialism.

In the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781/1965), Kant raises three questions: What can I know? What should I do? And for what can I hope? The second question, about ethics, is our focus, as it involves us with his account of human nature, and hence, how we should act. Yet, as we shall see, there seems to be different types of human nature—for example, depending on if one is Black or White—for Kant, which could have potentially interesting consequences for his deontological (or duty-bound) ethics.

Kant “Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime” noted that “Mr. Hume challenges anyone to adduce a single example where a Negro demonstrated talents” (1764/2007, 2:253). Kant is not only repeating the views of another philosopher but citing them to buttress his own. As he says, “So essential is the difference between these two humankind [Blacks and Whites], and it seems to be as great with the capacities of mind as with respect to color” (1764/2007, 2:253).

In considering a claim purportedly made by a Negro (to the effect, the Whites give too much freedom to their women then complain when they drive them crazy), Kant remarks: “There might be something here [in what the Negro said] for the fact that this scoundrel was completely black from head to foot, a distinct proof that what he said was stupid” (1764/2007, 2:255).

To understand what Kant takes intelligence to be (and hence, stupidity), we must have a broader appreciation of his understanding of human nature. For Kant, we only become human beings through education (1775/2007, 2:445). In fact, he calls the beginning of writing the beginning of the world (1803/2007, 9:447).

Yet we are faced with an “antagonism” (1784/2007, 8:12), as he explains in the “Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim.” We have to be socialized to be fully human, yet we also want to exercise our own will. Thus, our fellows are those “whom he cannot stand, but also cannot leave alone” (1784/2007, 8:12). As Kant puts it, like trees in a forest that grow up because of those around them force them to the light above—since we become deformed when grown alone, we need our fellows (1784/2007, 8:22).

We have, Kant says, a natural propensity for freedom, which is why we need discipline (1803/2007, 9:442). We need a master. As important as freedom is, so too are discipline and work (1803/2007, 9:471). At the same time, according to Kant, concern for the opinion of others is a “weakness” (1764/2007, 2:248). Kant reconciles our need for freedom and the necessity of social conformity, by creating a taxonomy that allows us to identify one that has gone to one or the other extreme.

In *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, Kant distinguishes between the following intellectual benchmarks (1798/2007, 7: 139). The *blockhead* is led by others. The *genius* has originality and can bring forth what normally what one has to learn from others. The *ignoramus* can learn nothing. The *pedant* is limited by their schooling and cannot think for themselves. Lastly, the *narrow minded* cannot think for themselves, but are capable of great learning.

Kant also holds the following three principles leading to wisdom: (1) to think for oneself; (2) to take the place of the other; and (3) think consistently (1798/2007, 7:228) (e.g., for him even a white lie is not permitted (1803/2007, 9:491)). He further distinguishes between common sense, dealing with concrete knowledge; and men of science, those having abstract knowledge (1798/2007, 7:140). He says that a *fop* is a young buffoon; and a *coxcomb* an old one (1798/2007, 7:211).

Other deficiencies of the mind relate to insanity (*Wahnwitz*) or going mad (*toll*). As he notes about madness: “to rave with reason is a special predisposition” (1798/2007, 7:215). Insanity is to have replaced one’s common sense with one’s private sense (1798/2007, 7:219).

According to Kant, when mentally healthy, we restrain ourselves by the understanding of others: “instead of isolating ourselves with our own understanding and judging publicly with our private representations, so to speak” (1798/2007, 7:219). Once again, it is by social conformity that we become human and healthy.

Kant thus advises that we should never marry into a family with a history of mental illness because the malady will be passed down to future generations (1798/2007, 7:217). That is to say, the idea of the hereditary of traits loomed large in his mind, both with intelligence and mental illness. In fact, anticipating the work of Spalding over a century and a half later, he proposes a test to see what part of our nature is instinct and what learned, by seeing if songbirds can sing if kept alone (1803/2007, 9:443).

Recall that for Kant there is an antagonism at the heart of the human predicament. We want freedom but need to be constrained; we want to have our way but must get along with our fellows. Rousseau famously romanticized the noble savage that lived in freedom, aloof from the corruption implicit in human societies; similarly for Kant, at least in this, we become most human among our fellows. Yet when we conform and still think for ourselves, we find the ideal balance between two competing goals—we become exemplary. We avoid the twin pitfalls of insane isolation or mindless conformity. In sum, for Kant, we are not intended to be a member of a herd, nor a bee that has completely isolated themselves from the hive (1798/2007, 7:330).

The picture that emerges is the following. The most venerable and distinguishable aspects of human beings are their capacity for reason and understanding, qualities more characteristic of men than women, and Whites than Blacks. Blacks are not insane; in that they can adhere to

social rules. Yet inferring from what Kant has already told us, they are likely condemned be blockheads, or at best pedants; if they are educated, they are prey to weakness of being followers, not leaders. They may be a fop or a coxcomb. He must rule out the idea of the Black genius as a virtual oxymoron. For Kant, when it comes to the races, biology is destiny.

For Kant, Blacks are prey to two types of threats. They are less civilized, meaning they lack proper socialization, yet when subjected to education, they never demonstrate talent or originality: because it is taken as axiomatic—due to Kant’s adherence to White supremacy—that Blacks are inferior to Whites. In fact, even among White males, there is a difference between those that have common sense dealing with knowledge of particulars, and abstract knowledge sought by men of science.

Women, as has been the tradition, would be thought to be closer to nature, to inclination, to the passions, and to social situations; similarly, and at a lower rung than the White females, Blacks, would be further removed from obtaining abstract knowledge, for Kant. Whereas a woman loses, said Kant, something of her feminine nature by laborious study, he offers no reason to believe that Blacks are capable of becoming men of science. In fact, in cultures that have oral traditions, Kant would consider them outside the circle of civilization altogether.

Though my focus is racism, it is important to take a quick detour into sexism, to understand, what we can call, and Kant’s *hierarchy of minds*. In discussing the sexes, Kant remarks that laborious learning destroys the merits of the fair sex (1764/2007, 2:229). He also seems to justify the need for wife beating (1798/2007, 7:305). According to Kant, women should

dominate the household and man govern it, because inclination dominates and understanding governs (1798/2007, 7:310). Once again, reason is the providence of White men.

In between Blacks and Whites, others, too, would likely find a place in Kant's thought. Kant praises the Natives of North America for their "sublime character of mind" (1764/2007, 2:253), which generally falls in with a romanticism that has surrounded Indigenous peoples in some quarters of Western thought—but this reverence is rarely extended to Blacks. Though he also speaks of Indigenous' "barbaric conceit" (1798/2007, 7:238) for submitting to slaughter when it is clear that they cannot win. We may wish to recall that Kant holds that suicide can be motivated by anger (courage), despair (sadness), or can be cowardly (if the suicide is unsuccessful). With the case of Indigenous submitting to slaughter, we are dealing, it would seem by Kant's eyes, with despair. So even with Indigenous, for Kant, we are dealing with a mixed bag.

In any case, Kant offers no reason to believe that Blacks could ever be equal, something even Russell holds out hope for, arguing we do not know if they were submitted to the same social circumstances as the Whites, what they could achieve.

In fact, Kant also offers a physiological explanation of why Blacks are lesser human beings. According to him, phlogiston, something conjectured to explain combustion, is not removed fast enough in the blood of Blacks, but rather through the skin to deal with the hot climate from which they originate. Kant writes:

Now already the strong odor of the Negroes, which cannot be helped through any cleanliness, gives cause for conjecturing that their skin removes much *phlogiston* from

the blood and that nature must have organized this skin so that the blood could *dephlogistize itself* in them through the skin in a far greater measure than happens in us [Whites], where that is for the most part the task of the lungs. (1785/2007, 8:103)

There is a hierarchy of minds for Kant: all are not created equal, and there are potential consequences for interpreting his writings.

So when we think of Kant's famous categorical imperative—treat another as if you were enacting a universal law, such that you put yourself in someone else's shoes—however, we may be forced to understand the following. Act as if you were another White male. Given his views about the difference between the races and sexes, it is not obvious he would assent to the equal rights to Blacks or women, even though that has often been claimed.

First, at the basis of Kant's thinking about ethics is that humans have dignity, and we should never treat a rational agent means to an ends. Second, we should act as if we were legislating a universal law, being able to put ourselves in another's place. However, it is not clear, that is, if we are radically different, based on race and sex, as Kant claims, why the categorical imperative would be extended to these groups, any more than other ones, like animals.

It is far from obvious that he grants enough dignity and rationality to Blacks and women to make them worthy of being included in legislating a moral law that includes them, unless we grant humans, according to him, just have dignity in virtue of potentially—in principle—being rational, hence, including children, the disabled, and so on. Yet at least some White, male

children have a potentiality for reason and understanding that he denies to some other groups, like Blacks, in principle.

The severely disabled is a more difficult case to make sense of because they also lack potentiality, in Kant's terms; socialization, schooling, and so on, may not help them become rational. If Blacks fall within the purview of the categorical imperative, at the very least, Kant himself is forced to inconsistency: Blacks both do and do not have dignity. Including them within the purview of the categorical imperative assumes they do have dignity. But he has clearly stated things about Blacks that deny their dignity.

Arguing about the range of the categorical imperative takes us beyond our ken and too far into Kantian scholarship; suffice it to say, that exploring Kant's views about race opens interesting lines of questioning about his ethics that are worth exploring anew. We can question how universal his deontological ethics really is, or could, consistently be.

In addition, we may wish to recall that there is research done in little corners here and there that seeks to update Kant's biological arguments, focusing on intelligence itself as a measurable construct. Bertrand Russell had written:

Before long, birth-control may become nearly universal among the [W]hite races; it will then not deteriorate their quality [of the White race], but only diminish their numbers, at a time when uncivilized races are still prolific and are preserved from a high death-rate by [W]hite science. (1924, 640)

Russell's words reflect the rational, scientific spirit of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, where social Darwinism loomed large. Just as species evolve, so too do individual groups. Some

are higher on the scale of development, some lower. Some better, some worse. Some smarter, some more stupid. Some civilized, some not so.

Russell's thought, which he revised somewhat as the years went by to be politically correct or to follow reason, has an earlier legacy, as we saw with Kant. It is not my purpose to evaluate such lines of thought, which infamously were embraced by James Watson, one of the founders of the double-helix structure of DNA.

Rather, my purpose has been, through the example of the thought to Kant (and I could have picked many others) that the assumption of racial superiority of Whites permeates philosophical thinking in ways that are often left little explored and even less discussed. Since traditionally truth is supposed to be universal, it should matter little who is its spokesperson. Just as justice is blind, so too should our scholars be. But it is not clear that we are blind, so to speak.

Next, I want to provide some background about myself, to provide a first-hand account of a non-White student of philosophy. I am of Hindu Punjabi descent, born in England, and have lived most of my life in Canada. My father was an engineer and mother a teacher, both running a manufacturing company for some 18 years.

An Experience of a Racialized Canadian

My interest in philosophy is perhaps not that different from many who choose this field of study. The identity of my professors never occurred to me as a student. I thought it irrelevant for the same reason it is not important what a philosopher thinks about race. My point is that I was

trained to think a certain way—focus on the arguments—believing nothing else matters. Race does not matter. Identity does not matter. Or so I thought.

Early on, my experiences in Canada were colored by issues of race. Our house was often targeted on holidays, with small groups of teenagers throwing rocks and yelling racist insults, like “Paki.” This happened on Devil’s Night, the night before Halloween, which is no longer made much of anymore, as well as other holidays. I have woken up to broken windows, including in my own bedroom, and that of our car. Even my pet rabbit was killed by the same group. The police would come and write a report, but it went on for years without much action. Sometimes the police were better, sometimes worse. In order to protect our family, my father bought a shotgun. We once went into the country so he could practice using it. I remember him shooting from the kitchen window, on one night, probably a holiday, when our house was attacked.

Things changed when we moved to a more upscale area of town. As much as possible, I tried to forget these racist incidents, as they seemed shameful to me. However, there often remained a difference in my experiences and that of Whites. In high school, most Canadians had girlfriends, but since people stuck to their own groups, I mostly spent time by myself; there were few, in any, visible minorities where I studied. I got involved in drugs, which overlapped with interests I had in music and politics, because the members of some cliques (punk rockers and hippies) had concerns that were like mine, namely, animal rights and environmental lifestyles. Looking back at my high school years, it is hard not to see my desire to fit in to Canadian society

one way or another. In addition, I have come to see my animal rights activism, in part, as an attempt to retain some of my Hindu heritage, where all forms of life have value.

When it came time to go to university, I found that the smaller classes, critical discussion, and intelligence of my philosophy professors better suited my temperament than other courses of studies in the humanities and social sciences. It is not uncommon in many other courses of study to be crammed into massive lecture halls, reading from textbooks, and having interaction more with teaching or graduate assistants than professors, sometimes all the way to one's final year. Overall, university studies suited me, and the more I studied, the more immersed I became.

Recall, politically, I was socially active in high school, having concerns specifically with animal rights and the environment, and I felt that such a mindset was well-reflected in the ethos of philosophy. Generally, the humanities and social sciences tend to be bastions of leftism and progressive thinking, ironically in the case of philosophy and in the context of this paper.

On one occasion the philosophy department I studied in was hiring and the chairperson, let the students know they would be hiring a woman, to fix the gender imbalance (there were no women on staff). Philosophy has tended to repel women due to the competitive and aggressive nature of the discipline.

Further, the case has been similar in mathematics. In the nineteenth century, according to Hersh and John-Steiner (2011) in a book about the social context of learning mathematics, women were not welcome in mathematics, and some were hired in unpaid, adjunct positions. They wrote the following about Moore, who taught the subject for some 49 years at the University of Texas: "Banning African American students from his class was part of a long

legacy of racism in the ‘slave states’ that sought to secede from the Union” (Hersh & John-Steiner, 2011, p. 299). They went on to explain, “Full integration of previously excluded groups is still to be achieved. It requires more than legal equality; it demands transformative teaching methods.” I had never seen a Black professor, or new there was such a thing, until I began studies in education, which I turn to next.

While I studied in a Bachelor of Education’s program, I had befriended a female fellow student of Ethiopian decent, who I will call, using the pseudonym, Ebo. When we graduated, I sheepishly asked, “Are you going to convocation?” Ebo replied, “No, they don’t hire us.” I, myself, was hesitant about going to convocation to “celebrate” completing my degree, but did not share this, thinking it antisocial. So I was surprised that someone else harbored such a sentiment. Ebo once told me that she applied, over the phone, to work in a daycare center in Toronto. The person was so impressed by her qualifications, she asked Ebo to come over right away. It seemed that she was going to be hired on the spot. When she saw Ebo, not expecting that she was Black, Ebo said she saw her face literally drop. Ebo was asked to leave her resume, and never heard back from this organization again.

As someone that is now an instructor, writing letters of reference for students, I realize that who you are does matter. I like to think I am fair minded. I do my job, consciously, and to the best of my ability. Still, if I can empathize with a student, it stands to reason that is a benefit to them. Most people that are honest, have experience on hiring committees, or both, will concede my point, I believe.

I recall being in a graduate class, and a student noted that they were from an Irish Catholic background, and one of the instructors (also Irish) smiled, literally glowing. I do not see anything sinister here; just that speaking about my background, as a Hindu, would likely not have elicited the same response. Again, who we are did matter and does matter.

After all we know from psychological studies about the way our decisions are shaped by a variety of cognitive, affective, and biological processes, which are automated; it would be pure fantasy to think that one's identity makes no difference when we make decisions about people different from ourselves. After all, virtually no one wakes up thinking, "I am today going to discriminate against such-and-such a group," but it does happen.

I do not think my professors were racists. On the contrary. As often left-leaning academics, many philosophers view themselves as the opposite, perhaps the intellectual vanguard of the social justice movement. Some of my professors were truly good people, scholars of the highest calibre with well-developed social and ethical sensitivities.

But the fact is that they, taken together and by and large, were male, White, and it is quite impossible to say definitively how racist they, generally as a group, including me (since I saw myself as White, at least in my days as a student of philosophy), were. If I have one advantage, putting aside that I am Brown, hence potentially empathetic to those that experience racism, is that I am aware from my teaching and research in psychology how much our decision processes are influenced by our passions, as philosophers used to call them.

Some of my professors, to be sure, were just technicians, fully occupied with the details of their work, with little interest in politics, and these folks, in retrospect, frighten me less than

the activist types. The scholars lost in their research may have been colorblind! The absent-minded professor and all that.

It is ironic that philosophy departments, and other ones in the humanities, that are most concerned about the human experience are often exclusively a club of White males, hence, reflecting their subjectivity. In my time, inclusion meant hiring a White woman or a Jew.

Some students avoided a racially monolithic environment, even if that was not their intention. Many students from immigrant families choose to study in the natural sciences due to career opportunities linked to them, thus experiencing a more diverse setting, both in terms of who their professors and peers are.

As I have said, I never had any problems in university due to being a visible minority; however, once I came to reflect upon the nature of philosophers' views about race, and my training, I now think race did matter, and it does matter. It affected me in explicit and subtle ways that, of course, one cannot easily prove, and hence, I do not want to commit to print. What I can do is share me experience, as I am doing here.

Further, I did a course of study at a bilingual school, the University of Ottawa, where classes were offered in English and French. Here, some of the francophone (French-speaking) professors made a point of making us—the Anglophone (English-speaking), non-Whites—get the message that we were not as important as them; our language and culture (not that they were interested in knowing anything about our linguistic or cultural background!) was inferior. Discrimination by the Francophones is a double whammy for a racialized Canadian: one is neither a francophone, nor White.

Even once employed as a sessional instructor, I often found the presumption of racial difference continued, bringing me full circle to my experiences of youth. A secretary once asked me on a warm day, “Do you like hot weather?” Responding in the affirmative, she remarked, “That’s because it is hot in your country.” I wondered what my country was. Am I from India? Even one of the administrative officials that had hired me to teach a Chinese cohort of students said, “We hired you because of your international experience.” Other than teaching in America I have no international experience, but it was clear the assumption was that I was from India. Upon being interviewed for a job in another department I was asked, “Why I speak such good English?” “Perhaps because I was born in England?” I replied. Sometimes those that do not look European are “perpetual foreigners” (Woolfolk et al., 2020, p. 201) in Canada. One could live here for generations, and still be identified as Indian, Chinese, or African.

Thus far, I have discussed my experience, and noted that the context is Canada. The States may be in a slightly better position, due to the history of slavery, forcing the discussion of racism in intellectual and political circles, and the offering of courses on civics, but generally, I believe the gist of the points I make hold across the Western world, for the most part, wherever philosophy is taught.

Conclusion: Other Worlds

Racist views, held unconsciously or consciously, are sometimes thought to have little consequence for pedagogy or research. In early critical thinking classes taught in many

undergraduate programs at Western universities, to be concerned about the background of the author is considered to fall prey to the *ad hominem* fallacy, i.e., confusing the logical truth of a proposition with who says it. As a logical point, if Hitler says, “smoking it unhealthy,” we cannot deny the truth of the claim based on who the author was (namely, Hitler!). However, logic tends to be a narrow way to understand complex phenomena, which can resist being stated in such a simple way. Further, it has been argued that the idea that *who* one is has a potential bearing on understanding why one thinks something and what it means (Gupta, 2005).

Bioecological models are commonplace in the social sciences, whereby it is held that understanding someone requires considering a variety of factors: biological, familial, social, and cultural. If *who* we are does influence how we think and act, it is reasonable to believe that understanding biographical details of those we study could be relevant to understanding their work. Nevertheless, there is also sometimes an unspoken social prohibition against discussing racism in academics, especially as it relates to those we study in philosophy. I have contended that a thinker’s racist views could provide important insights that are substantive, affecting our interpretation of their writings and research.

In the title to this paper, I have used a question mark: Is academics inclusive? I focused upon my experience as a student of philosophy and later as a social scientist. To what extent can the universal proclamations of White scholars be taken to speak for all? My suspicion is, based on my reading of Kant, is that thinkers’ views about matters such as race can have profound implication to understanding their thinking if they touch on issues such as ethics, psychology, or even perhaps more abstract ones, about the nature of knowledge.

“Culturally competent educators,” writes Ford (2016) in discussing racially and culturally diverse (RCD) students, “integrate the realities of students’ lives, experiences, and cultures into the classroom and curricula” (p. 374). However, some espouse “a color-blind or ‘culture-blind’ philosophy, which is also offence to RCD students,” likely because it leads, says Ford (2016, p. 371) to “negating, minimizing or even trivializing the richness and reality of diversity and difference.” Sometimes students of color see “school success as a form of resistance,” Nasir et al. (2016, p. 193) noted, writing about identity and diversity.

In the “Author’s Note,” to Berry’s (2017) *The Price for their Pound of Flesh: The Value of the Enslaved, from the Womb to the Grave, in the Building of a Nation*, she recounts some early school memories about the valuation and devaluation of blackness. When Berry was six, she tells of a neighbourhood bully that called her a “a dirty n—r” (2017, p. x). She goes on, “In first grade, a classmate asked me what it was like to be a slave” (p. x). Yet “I was raised,” she explains, “to be proud of my history and not ashamed. I come from a lineage of survivors” (p. x). We see two different perspectives about blackness, and what has been often missing is the voice of those from traditionally disadvantaged communities.

In fields like mathematics, diversifying the curriculum is relatively easy, as much of that field came from far and wide (du Sautoy, 2012), though we often peg discoveries to Europeans (e.g., the Pythagorean theorem was discovered by the Indian mathematician Baudhāyana in 800 BCE, i.e., several hundred years before Pythagoras).

Considering works from non-European countries should be easy enough to do in academics—if we accepted that other traditions were not inferior, or if we were willing to study

oral traditions, like those of Indigenous peoples, with the same seriousness we look to the written word. Other traditions have been either ridiculed or romanticized, and again here, Indigenous people bore the brunt of the European gaze.

Indigenous were said to be either hailing from, as it was common to say in the eighteenth century, “the savage nations” (Smith, 1759/1971), or noble ones that point the way back to a more idyllic past, where we were free of pollution, community and family disintegration, and smart phones. The natives became our other selves, both the idealized bad and good ones. There has been attempts to revisit the history as told by conquerors (Tharoor, 2016; Wilson, 2017), which now involves us in matters of post-colonial narratives.

To some extent, studying other traditions is self-reflection—in psychological jargon, using own internal working models to decipher whatever culture we encounter. At best, however, the study of other traditions, once we rid ourselves of White supremacy, could respectfully tell us both something about ourselves, about others, and perhaps about the diversity of the human experience. Studying works from other parts of the world stands to enrich the student experience and make academics more relevant (Allen, 2015; Doniger, 2009, 2016, 2017, 2018).

Further, we can only usefully learn from other traditions, when we distinguish between what anthropologists call an “emic” view (the subjective view of group members) and an “etic” view (an outsider’s perspective). Too often historically, we have prioritized our view of other cultures over their own perceptions under the banner of science.

Yet such fruitful studies of other traditions, requires as a sine qua non a recognition that who we are—our race, class, gender, and family experiences—shape how we perceive and

reason in the world. To be clear, consideration of the emic view is not to say that the only “correct” interpretation is one that is consistent with what indigenous members hold, since one could even be wrong about oneself. Rather, we should recognize that we are telling a story, among other ones that are influenced by who we were, who we are, and who we wish to be.

Academics often pride themselves—in the tradition of Kant, and others—of being independent thinkers. Yet part of the traditionalism of academics relates to the method. In academics, we take as touchstones certain greats within the canon. Within the university, academics are often charged with preserving our intellectual heritage. Our job is an inherently conservative one.

If anything changes in philosophic education, it will be probably a combination of the perfect storm. Diversification of the student body in the West, sagging enrollment in various faculties, internal decay, and purposelessness. In times that are more pragmatic and economically driven, studies in disciplines with no clear exit ramp may deter students. The usual arguments I heard and are still repeated about the discipline seem to have lost their lustre; at least for me, I am skeptical that philosophical study fosters unique cognitive skills, like critical thinking, which cannot be developed elsewhere.

And as I have suggested, looking to other traditions, to begin to think, perhaps for the first time, how social, political, and indeed, the identity of the writer bears on our understanding of their work can revitalize our work. Asking about the racial views of a thinker or researcher can be relevant to understanding their work, and perhaps the key to it. I have pointed out that the views about other races, particularly Blacks, but not them alone, need to be scrutinized, because

they can affect the interpretation of texts and data. Only by keeping in mind the views of authors, and broadening out who those are, can we make education more inclusive.

Even Kant, that very pinnacle of enlightened reason, has been quoted in this essay as saying things that strike us today as obtuse. He holds what we call a “cultural deficit” approach (Nasir, 2016, p. 187; Woolfolk et al., 2020, p. 179), whereby we have lower cognitive expectations from people from non-Western backgrounds. Specifically, when reading, for instance, Kant’s claim that the author of an argument, being Black, proved the words uttered were false, made me wonder if he was trying to be entertaining, or if he was serious.

Either way, serious or not, Kant’s words provide, I believe, serious pause to consider the meaning of some of his seminal works, specifically, how we can make sense of who is included as a patient for the categorical imperative. Biographical details can shine a light on the mindset of some of the people we study, leading us to further scrutinize the methods and conclusions of their research. One could wonder how a Black student studying Kant might feel if they were aware of his racist views. I was never explicitly taught about Kant’s racist views, and although guessed about them because of the time in which he wrote, only discovered them through independent study.

One could, then, well ask if academics is inclusive, even though I have focused on philosophy for the purpose of illustration. Other voices need to be further solicited to see how racialized students experience their education, both of a qualitative and quantitative nature, exploring various disciplines and levels, running the gambit from the elementary setting to graduate school. Deep study of the racial views of various figures we study are tasks that are still

on-going and must continue to complement our post-colonial self-understandings of the relationships between our perceptions of our education, authorial intent, and who we wish to be.

Nasir et al. (2016), wrote about the role of culture and diversity in education, "A sense of pride in one's racial or ethnic group is also correlated with positive achievement for both children and adults" (p. 191). They went on to explain that "healthy identities are critical to young people's sense of selves and the academic outcomes. Additionally, healthy identities provide a layer of support in successfully navigating the inequality and racism they [visible minorities] face in everyday life" (p. 195).

In academics we are telling a story about who we are, and that is one that has to change because it often excludes radicalized peoples in Western countries. Inclusion in academics requires, then, diversifying the materials we study, specifically, the inclusion of non-Western sources; scrutinizing of the racial views of the authors we read to better understand their work; as well as involving students, teachers, and researchers from diverse backgrounds. Inclusion means inclusion.

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