


# Philosophical silences: race, gender, disability, and philosophical practice

Robert A. Wilson 

School of Humanities and UWA Public Policy Institute, University of Western Australia, 35 Stirling Hwy, Crawley, WA 6009, Australia

Corresponding author. E-mail: [rwilson.robert@gmail.com](mailto:rwilson.robert@gmail.com)

## ABSTRACT

Who is recognized as a philosopher and what counts as philosophy influence both the content of a philosophical education and academic philosophy's continuing demographic skew. The 'philosophical who' and the 'philosophical what' themselves are a partial function of matters that have been passed over in collective silence, even if that now feels to some like a silence belonging to the distant past. This paper discusses some philosophical silences regarding race, gender, and disability in the context of reflection on philosophical education and on philosophical practice in the public sphere. It focusses on Charles Mills' writings on race, Susan Babbitt's on race and gender, and on more collaboratively generated work on eugenics and disability.

**KEYWORDS:** Kant on race, eugenics and disability, educational inclusion, public philosophy, philosophical practice, education and the history of philosophy, epistemic injustice, philosophical silences, the epistemology of ignorance, racial contract, rationality and gender

## 1. SPEAKING OF SILENCES

One striking feature of professional philosophy over the past thirty or so years is the attention given to race, gender, and disability. This attention is a *striking feature* in that in the many different facets to professional, university-based, academic philosophical practice—job applications, student enrolments, conference speakers, course content, journal readership and authorship, departmental and other rankings, professional associations, research grants, awards and recognition—questions of race, gender, and disability now form a regular part of disciplinary reflections. Broadly speaking, these reflective practices express *demographic concerns*, concerns about who does philosophy, who gets discussed in philosophical work, who is a

**Received:** February 15, 2023. **Revised:** May 11, 2023. **Accepted:** May 15, 2023

© The Author(s) 2023. Published by Oxford University Press on behalf of Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain.

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited. For commercial re-use, please contact [journals.permissions@oup.com](mailto:journals.permissions@oup.com)

philosopher. What is *striking* is that this is only a relatively recent feature of those practices.<sup>1</sup>

My interest here is neither in ongoing discussions of the appropriateness of the level of attention that race, gender, and disability receive in contemporary philosophy, nor in questions about the relationship of philosophy to other disciplines or to larger trends in society of a related nature. My focus is not on what has been said, but on *philosophical silences* about race, gender, and disability within the discipline of philosophy and what this might suggest about philosophical education and philosophical practice in the public sphere.

Philosophical silences may be oversights or omissions, reflections of ignorance, incidental by-products of a focus directed elsewhere, cultivated exclusions, casualties of delineation, the result of overt subterfuge. A taxonomy of such silences might be of interest, but it is not part of my goal to provide one here. My primary aim is to identify a handful of examples of what has been collectively passed over in silence in philosophy, including in the philosophical past, with respect to race, gender, and disability. These silences have structured, and continue to structure, academic philosophy's continuing demographic skew (see also [Wilson 2023](#)).

I take as my cue comments about the neighbouring field of Science and Technology Studies (STS) drawn from Adele Clarke's introduction to her *Making Kin Not Population* (2018), co-edited with Donna Haraway. Clarke explains the origins of that volume in a pair of talks that she and Haraway gave at separate events at the same university in 2013. Clarke identifies Haraway's later description of a 'booming silence' that greeted each talk as the basis for a subsequent session at the 2015 meetings of the Society for Social Studies of Science that broke that silence.<sup>2</sup> Here the relevant silence is over how to generate a 'politics of reproductive justice for *all* species and future imaginaries toward their realization in our era of environmental crises and degradation' (Clarke 2018: 1). In short, silence about present and future living things in an environmentally degraded world. *Making Kin* contributed to breaking that silence, extending nascent work on multispecies

<sup>1</sup> A good indicator of both the nature and recency of these demographic concerns is provided by the resources now available at the American Philosophical Association's 'Data and Information on the Field of Philosophy' website page: <https://www.apaonline.org/page/data>. For those aiming to get a sense of the demographics, see especially the 'APDA Diversity and Inclusion Report' (Jennings et al. 2019) there, as well as the short summary form documents 'Minorities in Philosophy' and 'Women in Philosophy' at the bottom of the page. A comparison with the earlier 'Philosophy in America in 1994: Summary and Data' available there provides a sense of the origins and development of this professional attention to demographic diversity (Schacht 1994).

<sup>2</sup> That session's abstract read, in part, as follows: 'Feminist STS scholarship has long and richly addressed biogenetic reproduction, focusing on race, region, sexuality, class, gender, and more. However, feminist STS has also *largely been silent* about reducing the human burden on earth while strengthening ecojustice for people and other critters as means and not just ends. ... Where are the feminist utopian, collaborative, risky imaginings and actions for earthlings in a mortal, damaged, human-heavy world? Why hasn't feminist STS taken the lead in such fundamental endeavours?' (Clarke 2018: 4–5, emphasis added).

ethnography and companion studies that views itself as inherently meliorative in offering a philosophical rethinking in the public sphere.

To shift from these introductory remarks to some philosophical silences concerning race, in Section 2 I shall consider several passages from the late Charles Mills' now widely discussed work, *The Racial Contract* (2022 [1997]), before moving in Section 3, to discuss the silence surrounding Immanuel Kant and race.

## 2. EPISTEMOLOGY OF IGNORANCE, RACIAL CONTRACTS, THE EVIDENCE OF SILENCE

*The Racial Contract* established Mills as a major political philosopher and is responsible for about two-thirds of the overall citations for his work. Yet the book wormed its way into the disciplinary mindset of philosophers only slowly and chiefly after (and via) its reception in other fields, such as political science and African American studies (see Mills 2017; Marwah 2022a; and Appendix 1 below).

In a passage tagged under the heading of *an epistemology of ignorance* (Mills 2022: 93), Mills reflects on canonical texts and authors in the history of modern political philosophy. Here Mills is making the case for the complicity of such authors and the tradition of political philosophy that they constitute in the Racial Contract, the contract within settler-colonial states between White people to exploit, dominate, and oppress non-White people, and Black people more particularly. Mills notes that the overt racism that one finds in proponents of social contract theory (such as Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, and Kant) is matched by that of its critics (such as J. S. Mill and G. W. F. Hegel). Thus, as he says, 'the Racial Contract is "orthogonal" to the varying directions of their thought' (p. 94). Mills then says:

There is also the evidence of silence. Where is Grotius's magisterial *On Nature Law and the Wrongness of the Conquest of the Indies*, Locke's stirring *Letter Concerning the Treatment of the Indians*, Kant's moving *On the Personhood of Negroes*, Mill's famous condemnatory *Implications of Utilitarianism for English Colonialism*, Karl Marx and Frederick Engel's outraged *Political Economy of Slavery?* (Mills 2022: 94)

I shall return in Section 3 to the combination of overt racialization and racism and such silence in the face of pervasive practices of slavery and colonial dispossession in the works of Kant, and our own booming silence about this until very recently. I note first, however, Mills' own continuation of his reflection on the evidence of silence:

Intellectuals write about what interests them, what they find important, and—especially if the writer is prolific—silence constitutes good prima facie evidence that the subject was not of particular interest. By their failure to denounce the great crimes inseparable from the European conquest, or by the halfheartedness of their condemnation, or by their actual endorsement of it in some cases, most of the leading European ethical theorists reveal their complicity in the Racial Contract (Mills 2022: 94).

Even though Mills' appeal to a lack of interest as the cause of silence here may be misleadingly simplistic, some silences—and this is one of them—are forms of

complicity. Furthermore, complicity entails culpability, both are integral to the epistemology of ignorance (Fricker 2007; Sullivan and Tuana 2007).

Consider how both ‘the epistemology of ignorance’ and ‘the evidence of silence’ aptly describe Mills’ discussion earlier in *The Racial Contract* of settler colonialism. Having just concluded that the ‘modern world was thus expressly created as a *racially hierarchical* polity, globally dominated by Europeans’ (Mills 2022: 27), and noting the rarity of frank admissions of this in philosophical discussion, Mills continues:

Yet the United States itself, of course, is a white settler state on territory expropriated from its aboriginal inhabitants through a combination of military force, disease, and a ‘century of dishonor’ of broken treaties. The expropriation involved literal genocide (a word now unfortunately devaluated by hyperbolic overuse) of a kind that some recent revisionist historians have argued needs to be seen as comparable to the Third Reich’s. ... other white settler states—for example, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Rhodesia, and South Africa—were all founded on similar policies: the extermination, displacement, and/or herding onto reservations of the aboriginal population. (Mills 2022: 28).

The booming collective silence amongst philosophers is, of course, located within a larger epistemology of ignorance, what the anthropologist W. E. H. Stanner (2009) called, in the antipodean context, ‘the great Australian silence’ (see SBS Television 2022 and Nichols 2020).

What of the philosophical silences in the overlap between two domains: the conduct and focus of philosophical inquiry in the history of our discipline, and public engagement around race (in the first instance), gender, and disability in the historical record? Grappling with the historiography of philosophical inquiry and with the facts of modern history will eventually bring us to more future-oriented reflection of the kind explicit in Clarke and Haraway’s *Making Kin, Not Population*.

### 3. RACE: KANT, EUROCENTRIFICATION, EMBARRASSED SILENCES

The work of Immanuel Kant is one starting point in the historiography of the philosophy of race. Kant is widely regarded as amongst the most important and influential philosophers, both by academic philosophers and by members of the general public. He is one of the few philosophers to have an ongoing approach to ethics named after him, one taught regularly in university courses in philosophy, often enough from first year on. Kant’s metaphysics and epistemology are taught more sparingly, but he is viewed as a pivotal figure for philosophers on both sides of the putative analytic-continental divide and a reference point for much contemporary discussion in philosophy.

Consider a trifecta of philosophical silences here concerning Kant’s status as one of the founders of race theory, Kant’s substantive views of race, and Kant’s influence in promoting a Eurocentric conception of the nature and limits of philosophy. A glance at the recent special issue of the *Kantian Review* (Basevich 2022; Huseyinadegan 2022; Marwah 2022b; Shorter-Bourhanou 2022; Valdez 2022) gives some idea of the wealth of recent attention given to Kant on race (see also Mensch 2017; Yab

2021; Lu-Adler 2022a, 2022b, 2023). Yet whilst these are *now* ongoing topics of discussion amongst academic philosophers, this is a relatively recent phenomenon. Despite Kant's influence and reach within the discipline of philosophy, for 200+ years there was practically *no attention whatsoever* amongst philosophers to Kant's contributions to the triad of race theory, racism, and the Eurocentricity of philosophy.

For example, consider one of the most highly regarded early 20th-century works on Kant's life and work, Ernst Cassirer's *Kant's Life and Thought*, published in German in 1918 and translated into English in 1981. There is no mention at all in this 420-page masterful work of Kant's race theory, racism, or the Eurocentricity of philosophy, with only passing mention of any of the publications and lectures listed below. Stephan Körner's introduction to the English translation makes clear that Cassirer's book is a classic in part because of the way in which it identifies *critical philosophy* as Kant's most enduring and systematic influence on philosophy. Körner's introduction itself is silent about Cassirer's silence about Kant on race, racism, and Eurocentricity.

Kant was especially important to Cassirer's broader original contributions to philosophy, and his silence about Kant is all the more salient in light of his final, posthumously published book, *The Myth of the State* (1946), a book written very much in mind of the rise of fascistic totalitarianism. There Cassirer dedicates Chapter 16 to a strongly worded critique of Arthur Gobineau's notorious racist tract, *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines* (1853) and the relationship of the *race worship* it advocates to contemporary totalitarianism. Cassirer's discussion of Kant here (1946: 235) appeals only to the humanitarianism and egalitarianism most naturally read into Kant's categorical imperative as a counter to Gobineau's views. This is despite the fact that the seeds for that race worship were sown in Kant's own thoughts about race.

Kant published only three essays on race—'Of the Different Races of Human Beings' (1775), 'Determination of the Concept of a Human Race' (1785), and 'On the Use of Teleological Principles in Philosophy' (1788 [Bernasconi 2001]). But as Emmanuel Eze (1995: 201) and Jennifer Mensch (2017: 133) have both pointed out, Kant's views of race were regularly incorporated into his most extensively taught lecture course—on Physical Geography—which he gave nearly fifty times between 1756 and 1796.

The first of these essays on race, which is preserved in both 1775 and 1777 versions, contains one of the earliest racial categorizations of people made by a philosopher in the modern era. Early in this essay, Kant distinguishes four pure races: '(1) the race of *whites*, (2) the *Negro race*, (3) the *Hunnish race* (Mongolish or Kalmuckish), and (4) the *Hinduish, or Hindustanish, race*' (1775: 47; see also the variation in Count 1950: 18).

Towards the end of this essay, Kant addresses the question of which of these races is likely most similar to the 'stem stock' that gave rise to these racial variations in our monogenetically created species: 'If we were to ask with which of the present races the first human lineal stem stock might well have had the greatest similarity, we will presumably—although without any prejudice on behalf of the presumptuously greater perfection of one colour <when compared to> another—pronounce <favor> for the <race> of whites' (1775: 54). Keep that caveat regarding prejudice about 'presumptuously greater perfection' in mind in what follows.

In the 1777 version of this paper, this claim, along with Kant's racial taxonomy, undergoes representational change, with Kant now providing a quasi-tabular summary of his view of racial genesis:

Lineal stem species

White of more brown-complexioned colour

First race

Noble blond (north<ern> Europe)  
from humid cold

Second race

Copper red (Americ<a>)  
from dry cold

Third race

Black (Senegambia)  
from humid heat

Fourth race

Olive–yellow (<Asian->Indian)  
from dry heat.

(Kant 1777: 69–70).

Here we note three chief changes in this modified racial taxonomy: (1) the colour-coding of the races becomes more pronounced, with the whitening or darkening from the lineal stem species representing the primary visible divergences over time; (2) explicit reference to the medieval theory of humours in the *explanans* for these visible divergences; and (3) the introduction in the surrounding text of discussions of each of these divergences.

For example, preceding this quasi-table, Kant now says, of the relationship between the lineal stem species and the 'first race', that the 'nearest northern deviation to develop from this <form> appears to be the *noble blond* [hochblonde] of tender white skin, reddish hair, <and> pale blue eyes, which during the Roman era inhabited the northern regions of Germany' (p. 69); correspondingly, following the quasi-tabular summary, Kant's puzzlement over why the Black and Indian races are located only where he identifies them leads him to talk more explicitly about their various characters and survival without Noble blond admixture (pp. 70–1). Like Carl Linnaeus, whose colour-coded geographic classifications—white, black, red, yellow—Kant clearly echoed in the scheme above, Kant here expressed a view of what we might euphemistically call the *differential humanity* of each race (see Charmantier 2020 and Appendix 2 below).

To unmince words: Kant's evaluative hierarchy itself is an early, enduring, influential contribution to both racialized and racist thinking (see also Mills 2005, 2014). For those tempted even minimally by whatever reputational lifeline the



distinction between racialized and racist thinking might afford, consider more overt expressions of Kant's racism. In 'Kant as an Unfamiliar Source of Racism' (2002), Robert Bernasconi assembled a range of racialized and racist statements from Kant's corpus, a sample of five of which I present here by way of example:

1. 'Humanity is at its greatest perfection in the race of the whites. The yellow Indians do have a meagre talent. The Negroes are far below them and at the lowest point are a part of the American peoples.' (Bernasconi 2002: 147)
2. 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'. (pp. 147–8)
3. Commenting on Native Americans, he wrote: 'That their natural disposition has not yet reached a *complete* fitness for any climate provides a test that can hardly offer another explanation why this race, too weak for hard labor, too phlegmatic for diligence, and unfit for any culture, still stands ... far below the Negro, who undoubtedly holds the lowest of all remaining levels by which we designate the different races.' (p. 148)
4. 'mericans [Native Americans] and Blacks cannot govern themselves. They thus serve only for slaves.' (p. 152)
5. 'The Negro can be disciplined and cultivated, but is never genuinely civilized. He falls of his own accord into savagery.' (p. 158)

Twenty-five years ago, Kant *was*, as per Bernasconi's title, an 'unfamiliar source of racism'. The philosophical silence over his contributions to race theory and racism had been broken by the Nigerian-born philosopher Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze's 'The Colour of Reason: The Idea of "Race" in Kant's Anthropology', published originally in the little-known *The Bucknell Review* in 1995.<sup>3</sup>

What of the Eurocentricity of philosophy, the third member of the triad of philosophical silences surrounding Kant? Bryan Van Norden's public-facing *Taking Back Philosophy: A Multicultural Manifesto* (2017b) and his corresponding teaser essay in *Aeon*, 'Western Philosophy is Racist' (2017a)—almost certainly not his original chosen title—are widely read recent attempts to identify culturally imposed limits to the conception of philosophy. Van Norden's view is that in 'order to grow intellectually, to attract an increasingly diverse student body, and to remain culturally relevant, philosophy must recover its original cosmopolitan ideal' (2017a, last sentence), with that earlier cosmopolitan ideal having been (with some irony) countered by a Kantian tradition that made philosophy exclusively a European intellectual adventure.

<sup>3</sup> Eze had completed his doctoral dissertation at Fordham University just two years earlier in 1993; in the following few years, Eze would assemble a pair of anthologies—*Race and the Enlightenment* (1997a) and *Postcolonial African Philosophy: A Critical Reader* (1997b)—contribute to the listserv AFRI-PHIL, and constructively extend his ideas in his book, *Achieving Our Humanity: The Idea of the Postracial Future* (2001). The reach of Eze's influence was stymied both by early career marginalization and his death in 2007 at the age of 44.

As Van Norden, a specialist in Chinese philosophy, says attention-grabbingly with more than a touch of hyperbole:

Kant is easily one of the four or five most influential philosophers in the Western tradition. He asserted that the Chinese, Indians, Africans and the Indigenous peoples of the Americas are congenitally incapable of philosophy. And contemporary Western philosophers take it for granted that there is no Chinese, Indian, African or Native American philosophy. If this is a coincidence, it is a stunning one. (2017a: 4)

In more measured scholarship to which Van Norden appeals, Peter K. Park's *Africa, Asia, and the History of Philosophy* (2013) makes a strong case for the role of early Kantians in narrowing the scope of philosophy through the exclusion of Africa and Asia from the history of philosophy (see esp. Park 2013: Chapters 1–4). To be clear, the claim by Van Norden (and by Park) is not that Kant is single-handedly or even predominantly responsible for this narrowing of the conception of philosophy. But Kant's influence is undeniable, despite being recognized only recently.

That recent recognition can create a complacent and self-congratulatory bubble that masks the significance of the extended disciplinary silence that is my focus here. Recent attention to one side, we have a philosophical silence about Kant on race, on his racism, and on his influence in narrowing who counts as a philosopher and what counts as philosophy. This silence is virtually uninterrupted for the first 90 per cent of the time since Kant wrote 250 years ago. Whilst the silence has been broken, its legacy is clear both in reactive attempts to minimize the significance of Kant's racism and xenophobia for Kantian views and in the palpable discomfort that mention of Kant's racism and xenophobia often causes amongst those who continue to teach and discuss Kant's *other work*. This 200+ year silence about Kant is part of a more sweeping silence about race, racialization, and Eurocentricity in the disciplining of philosophy over this multigenerational period (Bernasconi 2017; Mills 2017).

#### 4. GENDER: RATIONALITY, IMAGINATION, A QUESTION OF SILENCE

In segueing from race to gender, which I discuss more briefly, I want to talk about what strikes me as a different kind of philosophical silence, although I will continue to operate with an unanalysed notion of silence. Here I focus on the Canadian philosopher Susan Babbitt to rehearse a few of her core contributions to thinking about rationality, imagination, race, and gender (see Babbitt 1996, 2001). Babbitt's ideas constitute some of the earliest developments of standpoint epistemology within the analytic tradition, as well as reflection on *transformation experiences*, long familiar in overt political form to feminist scholars and whose most discussed version in recent years amongst analytic philosophers was generated by Laurie Paul's *Transformative Experience* (2014).

The philosophical silences that I want to highlight here can be brought out through two examples that Babbitt discussed often: that of the character Sethe in Toni



Morrison's 1987 Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *Beloved*, in which race and gender are entwined, and that of the three female characters in the lesser-known 1982 Dutch film *A Question of Silence*. As with the case of Kant and the history of modern philosophy and race, here silences are found both in the first-order phenomenon and in the philosophical sense-making we engage in in understanding and explaining the phenomenon.

In *Beloved*, Sethe is a slave in 19th-century America and her escape from slavery gives her a sense of freedom, autonomy, possibility, and selfishness that she has never had before. At the moment that Sethe is about to be captured, knowing she will be returned to slavery, she does something horrific: she murders her own eldest child (and does so with a handsaw), with the intention to kill her two younger children as well. When this part of Sethe's past is revealed, she is regarded as crazy by other characters in the story, the unintelligibility of the action itself being brokered by that judgement.

Taking up a discussion begun by Drucilla Cornell, Babbitt argues that the unintelligibility of Sethe's action within the story (and its corresponding *intelligibility* to contemporary readers of the novel), tells us something important about rationality, integrity, and what it is to act in a fully human way. For what has been denied to Sethe as a slave—and what will be taken away from her children through re-enslavement—is fully human status: being a person with dignity, self-respect, and autonomy. To adopt Sethe's own view of her action as an act of love for her children is difficult for multiple reasons, but Babbitt thinks that this is at least in part because we struggle to know what it is like to be someone who has been transformed by the experience of full humanity, being able to take that for granted as a shared background condition. As Babbitt says:

Personal integrity, then, depends on moral imagination. Indeed, in significant cases, personal integrity is defined, in important part, in terms of imagined possibilities for pursuing human flourishing, even though these possibilities may not be imaginable by the people in question at the time. ... intuitions that she [Sethe] is not crazy rest on presuppositions about what Sethe *ought* to be able to dream, what *ought* to be available for her to choose but that, under conditions of slavery, is considered crazy. (1996: 116–17)

So one might see Sethe's action as breaking, in spectacular fashion, the silence of her dehumanization as a subperson. But our imaginative reactions to Sethe's killing of her beloved child also offer a challenge to conceptions of rationality and integrity that view them as articulable from a universal perspective, taking the list of goals and ends as antecedently fixed. Instead, Babbitt suggests, we need to recognize the active role that moral imagination plays in the constitution of both identity and what it is for people undergoing transformative experiences to act for reasons. This, in effect, is to break the silence that standard philosophical accounts of rationality express in making sense of such actions.

Consider the second example that Babbitt takes up, the three female characters in the film *A Question of Silence*. In the film, three women—a secretary, a housewife, and a waitress—come together in a clothing store and brutally murder the owner, someone unknown to them. The narrative of the film is driven by the attempt, led by a female psychiatrist, to determine whether the women are sane, given this

action. The immorality of what they do is not in dispute; the question is whether (and how) one can make sense of them as rational individuals. Contrasting with the dominant understanding of the women's action as crazy is an alternative that emerges from the psychiatrist's explorations. As Babbitt says:

There is another story that can be told, that to which the psychiatrist refers when she tells her husband that this case is not about *them*, the women. ... this case is not about the individual women but rather about the way women are hated and feared in society in general and about how the conditions of these women's lives are an expression of such hatred. If one ignores society's hatred and fear of women, or if one assumes, perhaps that such hatred is just how things are and ought to be, there can be, of course, no reasons for the women to have done what they did. Yet if one tells a story about systemic injustice, including that it is wrong, there *are* reasons for the women to have done what they did, even though the act is certainly morally wrong. (1996: 113)

Silence here functions at multiple levels. First, it is the societal expectation within a misogynist society that women will be silent about how they are treated, as the instances of their speaking up in the film indicate. Second, the women on trial use silence as a form of solidarity in refusing to try to explain their actions. Third, and more metaphilosophically, we struggle to make sense of how the women's violence and their silence about it could be part of acting with integrity, of 'being true to oneself'. For those notions presuppose people individuated *as people*, and that is precisely the possibility that misogyny denies for women.

## 5. DISABILITY: EUGENICS, BIOETHICS, COUNTERING SILENCES

Finally, I turn to disability, something I have become enmeshed with primarily through work on eugenics and secondarily through acquiring a relatively minor traumatic brain injury nearly fifteen years ago. The work on eugenics has been most centrally informed by long-term interactions with a handful of eugenics survivors in the Canadian province of Alberta, and the community engagement jointly undertaken in oral history construction as part of the *Living Archives on Eugenics in Western Canada* project between 2010 and 2016. The visible signatures of that highly collaborative work can be found at the EugenicsArchives.ca website (and in the 900 or so articles, 250 or so images, thirteen survivor stories, and twelve tools of access, that constitute it); in the film *Surviving Eugenics* (2015), freely available at the website; and in *Wilson* (2018), a reflection on eugenic thinking with a focus on disability informed chiefly by my experiences directing this project.

The first *philosophical* silence might be so called only in the most sociological of senses. It is the silence around the fact that the founding chair in philosophy at the University of Alberta (and the University's longest-serving provost), John MacEachran, was the long-standing chair of the Province's Eugenics Board, a Board that approved nearly 5,000 sterilization orders between 1928 and 1972. That silence persisted until after MacEachran stepped down from the Board—in 1965, twenty years beyond his retirement from the University—barely gaining a mention with the repeal of the sexual sterilization act of Alberta in 1972. It was

only between 1995 and 2000 that the recklessness of the actions of the Board became more widely known through a lawsuit for wrongful confinement and sterilization filed and won by eugenics survivor Leilani Muir, together with the almost 900 further legal cases settled out of court by the Province of Alberta during that period.

Without recounting more of the local history than necessary here, I note simply that it is not so much that the philosopher MacEachran occupied this administrative position, authorizing the sterilization of people deemed to be mentally deficient in an era when eugenics reigned but rather, it is the finding via the court case that the Board's approvals were systematically reckless, dehumanizing, and inflicted considerable harms on some of the province's most vulnerable citizens. Consider the summarizing words of Madame Justice Veit concerning the case of *Muir vs Alberta*, for which Veit served as the judge. Veit writes that the:

circumstances of Ms. Muir's sterilization were so high-handed and contemptuous of the statutory authority to effect sterilization and were undertaken in an atmosphere that so little respected the plaintiff's dignity that the community's and the court's sense of decency is offended. (*Muir vs Alberta* 1996: 695)

The basis for that judgement is the fact that Leilani Muir, like many of the people the Board approved for eugenic sterilization under MacEachran's watch, did not only not meet the criteria for sterilization, but manifested in person and through their medical and 'training school' files—both persons and files being available to the Board in making their decisions—many signs that they did not meet those criteria.

The local silence here in this micro-instance of eugenics is paralleled by more general silence from philosophers about eugenics, especially once one moves from Nazi eugenics and the Holocaust. In parallel with the silence over Kant on race, as well as other moral and political philosophers of the modern period, there has been *almost no critical engagement in philosophy with past eugenics*. When contemporary philosophers engage with eugenics, as they do, it is overwhelmingly likely to be as *supporters* of some kind of eugenics, whether it be 'liberal' (Nicholas Agar), 'laissez-faire' or 'utopian' (Philip Kitcher), or 'moderate' eugenics (Michael Selgelid). Perhaps here some silence would be welcome.

Within bioethics and in discussions of technologies and their relationship to improving future human lives, overtly pro-eugenic views are not only entertained but keenly defended. Here the basic move is two-fold: to sever the relationship between contemporary forms of eugenics and the ugly eugenic past; and to emphasize the positive, transformative potential of eugenic modification. We see both moves, for example, in a pair of articles recently published in the *Monash Bioethics Review*: Jonathan Anomaly's 'Defending Eugenics' (2018) and a six-authored paper (whose most prominent co-authors are Nicholas Agar and Peter Singer) 'Can "Eugenics" Be Defended?' (Veit et al. 2021).

How seriously one should take such pro-eugenic articles as contributions to ongoing academic debate remains contentious, a contentiousness heightened by Agar's recent 'Confessions of a Philosophical Shit-Stirrer' (Agar 2021; see also Aly and Stephens 2021). Replies to 'Defending Eugenics' and 'Can "Eugenics" Be Defended?' (e.g.

Wilson 2019, 2021) might well function chiefly to buff up the intellectual credibility of some kind of ‘debate over eugenics’, where the consumers of such credibility lurk chiefly in the dark recesses of alt-right and overtly fascistic political culture. Agar’s ‘confession’ suggests a location for the source of engagement hesitation that is much closer to home: within philosophy and bioethics themselves. Apart from manifesting the phenomenon of shit-stirring it describes, Agar’s ‘Confessions’ does two different things.

First, it calls attention—through naming and locating—to the very phenomenon of shit-stirring, which Agar begins by identifying as ‘a big problem in philosophical ethics, where it tends to take the form of statements that purport to be earnest moral advice but whose real purpose is to piss people off’. Part of the way in which Agar locates this phenomenon is by comparing it to Harry Frankfurt’s belatedly famous discussion of *bullshit*; he also identifies shit-stirring as a practice that deliberately aims to enhance the academic credibility of those who engage in it, for example, through increasing citations and readership.

Second, it introduces Agar’s own advocacy of ‘liberal eugenics’ as an instance of what he calls an *enhancement shit-stir*. Here Agar refers to his 1998 article, ‘Liberal Eugenics’ in the journal *Public Affairs Quarterly*, whose title was picked up critically a few years later by Jürgen Habermas in his *The Future of Human Nature* (2003). Locating his discussion in a fifteen-year tradition that includes prominent philosophers in bioethics, such as Peter Singer, Philip Kitcher, John Robertson, Robert Nozick, and John Harris, Agar’s 1998 paper manifests little of the sensationalism or self-servingness that he identifies as problematic features of shit-stirring. One wonders just when Agar came to think of his contribution here as instancing shit-stirring, especially given that so calling it coincides with his new-found discovery of shit-stirring.

Many intricate philosophical issues are raised by the topic of eugenics and I am sympathetic to the idea that we need to move from the knee-jerk reactions caused by the very mention of eugenics. But here I draw attention to the effect that this combination of historical silence about the eugenic past with contemporary philosophical bravado about some form of eugenics has on the relationship between philosophy and disability, bringing us back to the demographic concerns with which I began. For the effect here of that combination is very much one of silencing that operates (1) through dehumanizing discussions difficult to imagine being so extensively and nonchalantly engaged in with respect to race and gender, except through some kind of historical screen (such as Kant); (2) through a disciplinary centre of gravity that leaves people with disabilities very much drowning, not swimming; and then finally (3) through the self-selective avoidance of the discipline of philosophy for more hospitable pathways of inquiry. The evidence of silence about eugenics and disability matches that of the evidence of silence about race in the history of philosophy; by contrast, the contemporary bravado about eugenics has a centrality within bioethics and in discussions of bioenhancement that, fortunately, pro-racialization discussions lack in contemporary discussions of race.

One counter to these forms of silencing relating to philosophy and disability is the creation of forms of public philosophical engagement that partially build community with, and stand with, people with disability. There are many ways in which this has been done, the vast majority of which typically involve stepping outside of

academic philosophy, both to integrate with other disciplines (where disability has more cache) and into the public realm. I provide just one pair of related examples.

The EugenicsArchives.ca project already mentioned is one example of how both disabled voices and audiences to hear them were cultivated, over an extended period of time. A second example is Eva Kittay and Licia Carlson's 2008 conference, 'Cognitive Disability and its Challenge to Moral Philosophy', which led to a special issue of the journal *Metaphilosophy* in 2009 and then to a book with the same title in 2010. The conference provided a landmark forum that brought together prominent philosophers—most notably Peter Singer and Jeff McMahan—with philosophers of disability and disability scholars more generally. The two endeavours also share an entwined history, one that gives some idea of how public philosophy can go beyond its typical broadcast function and more lastingly break the silences within philosophical education and practice surrounding disability.

In starting out with the community organizing central to what became the EugenicsArchives.ca project, participants took the opportunity to develop a group blog called the What Sorts of People blog. After a few months, the group decided to focus on blogging in a sustained way on the talks at the conference organized by Kittay and Carlson, since the video from the conference (held in New York City) was freely available (and we had Kittay's blessing in doing so). The group generated thirteen of these posts over a two-month period, along with some high-quality discussions, organized as a series under the heading 'Thinking in Action', generating a significant audience. The idea was to use a short video clip from the conference to make a philosophical argument, with fellow bloggers helping to generate some more general discussion. The resulting blog posts were of a high quality and stand up (e.g. in classroom discussions) more than ten years later. Here's a link—<https://whatsortsofpeople.wordpress.com/2008/12/14/singer-on-parental-choice-disability-and-ashley-x/>—to the first of them and the summary post that contains a link to all the posts in the series is here: <https://whatsortsofpeople.wordpress.com/2009/02/13/all-wrapped-up-complete-thinking-in-action-series/#more-2747>. Much of the series focusses on intellectual disability; the other main person driving this, Dick Sobsey, was my colleague at Alberta and is a leading authority in education on disability and violence.

## 6. PHILOSOPHY'S PUBLIC SPHERE AND PHILOSOPHICAL EDUCATION

The preceding treatment of the discussion of eugenics in philosophy's public sphere provides some idea of how I see philosophical education being enhanced to address issues of epistemic injustice. I conclude with some more explicit thoughts on this issue.

There's a sense in which philosophy has excelled at moving into the public sphere over the past fifty years, beginning with the important work of Peter Singer on famine and of Michael Tooley and Judith Jarvis Thompson on abortion in the early 1970s. On the standard, one-way, projective conception of the relationship of academic philosophy to the public sphere, demographic concerns have a secondary



standing. But they remain fundamental to what I will call a two-way, *transformative* conception of that relationship. On this conception, philosophy's contribution to the public sphere is to facilitate the creation of spaces in which individuals and groups can become (rather than just be); the converse contribution of the public sphere to philosophy is demographic reflectiveness. Given the whiteness, maleness, and able-bodied/mindedness of philosophy, this both poses deep challenges and creates transformative opportunities for public philosophy and philosophical education (Bernasconi 2017; Yancy 2020; Mills 2021).

The silences that I have discussed—about race, gender, and disability—are *collective silences* that express a disciplinary quietude with a consequential demographic dimension. They not only reflect but refract the ways in which the discipline of philosophy has been a much narrower field of inquiry than it might have been. That refraction contributes to the mundane statistics about who does philosophy and who is a philosopher—1–2 per cent of members of the American Association of Philosophy identify as Black (Jennings 2019); the number of Indigenous people on philosophy faculties is significantly fewer still; 25–32 per cent of philosophy undergraduate majors and graduate students are female; and 1 per cent of full-time philosophers in Canada report having a disability (Tremain 2014).

In short, these collective silences serve to embellish existing exclusionary tendencies within the discipline of philosophy. They need not simply to be recognized but actively countered and resisted. Working backwards: people with disabilities are less likely to be drawn into interactive environments in which people 'like them' are thought to have a subhuman status; that is so whether we are talking about contemporary forms of eugenics or the silence about the eugenic past. Accounts of rationality and integrity, as Babbitt argued throughout her career, that make unintelligible the circumstances and choices of those facing racial and gender oppression differentially limit philosophical opportunities. And overcoming the legacy of long neglect of the significance of the Racial Contract requires more than the sustained recent attention that the work of philosophers like Charles Mills has generated.

Mills' familiar and oft-cited (even if variously expressed) verbal quip that philosophy was like Antarctica—cold, distant, and very, very White—is a good piece of stand-up philosophy that encapsulates much of his core as a philosopher, an activist, and a human being. But once the nervous chuckles settle, maybe that quip will also spark the thought that the work to be done in making philosophy less 'White', as well as less gendered and less ableist, will also make it less cold and less distant as well.

Critical here is how we conduct philosophical education, both within tertiary institutions but also beyond them. Those of us in universities and colleges could start by breaking the silence about philosophy's limited engagement with diversity in its past with explicit discussions of the topic, encouraging metaphilosophical reflection, as well as by employing more inclusive curriculum materials at all class levels. As important as these are, they also need to be complemented with an embrace of epistemic diversity in terms of what kinds of methodologies and tools are welcome in a philosophical classroom. In addition to the reading of texts (however diverse in origin and orientation), we should be prepared as philosophical educators to welcome lived

experience, reflexivity, inter- and trans-disciplinarity, blog posts, video and other artistic creation and analysis, and ideas for community impact and inclusion, into the conversations, discussions, and written assignments we develop in every classroom.

Whilst we can acknowledge but not change philosophy's past track record, that acknowledgement will avoid educational hollowness in part by being integrated with curricular and methodological extensions and reorientations. Here philosophy within the university has much to learn from philosophy beyond it, particularly from philosophy with children and youth and in public spaces.

Crucial to capitalizing on the curiosity of children especially is starting with their ideas, weaving these into the kind of community of inquiry central to the pedagogy developed by Lipman and Sharp over the past fifty years (Lipman and Sharp 1978; Lipman 2003 [1991]: Chapter 5) and promulgated beyond school classrooms to other learning environments, such as children's holiday camps and juvenile and adult centres of detention. Bypassing the epistemic injustice of exclusion from philosophical thinking by broadening who sees themselves within various communities of inquiry from the very outset of childhood lightens the burden of redressing that injustice for teenage and adult practitioners of philosophy. The best practices for making philosophy less cold and less distant start here.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This paper was originally written to gather thoughts for an invited keynote address at the Murdoch Colloquium, delivered at Murdoch University in Perth, Western Australia, on 22 October 2021. My appreciation to the organizers, Tim Flanagan and Anne Schwenkenbecker, for the opportunity to participate and for running such a high-quality, full-day colloquium, and to the audience for lively discussion during and after the presentation. Thanks also here to participants in the Global Epistemologies and Ontologies (GEOS) workshop group at Wageningen University in The Netherlands, where I gave a shortened version of the paper as a keynote in May 2022, and to audiences at talks given at Concordia University, the University of British Columbia, and the University of Victoria in November 2022; respective thanks to David Ludwig, Matt Barker, Barbara Weber, and Colin Macleod for organizing these visits. Finally, thanks to two anonymous referees for the *Journal* for brief comments that led to some late additions to the paper. The specific content of the paper and talk were directly motivated by the passing of Charles Mills and Susan Babbitt within forty-eight hours of each other in September 2021, losses that were felt hard, and I dedicate the paper to Charles and Susan in acknowledgement of their far-reaching contributions to philosophical thinking about silences.

### FUNDING

The author's work on this paper was supported by the Australian Research Council via funding for his Discovery Project "Keeping Kinship in Mind" (ARC-DP 210102954).

## REFERENCES

## VIDEO AND ONLINE RESOURCES:

- Agar, N. (2021) 'Confessions of a Philosophical Shit-Stirrer', Australian Broadcasting Commission, Religion and Ethics Opinion Piece, <https://www.abc.net.au/religion/confessions-of-a-philosophical-shit-stirrer/13611942>, accessed 9 October 2023.
- Aly, Waleed and Stephens, Scott (2021) 'The Ethics of "Sh\*t-Stirring"', The Minefield, ABC Radio National, 2 December 2021, [https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/theminefield/the-ethics-of-sh\\*t-stirring/13657864](https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/theminefield/the-ethics-of-sh*t-stirring/13657864), accessed 9 October 2023.
- Charmantier, I. (2020) 'Linnaeus and Race', <https://www.linnean.org/learning/who-was-linnaeus/linnaeus-and-race>, accessed 9 October 2023.
- Jennings, C. D. et al. (2019) 'The Diversity and Inclusivity Survey: Final Report', <https://philpapers.org/rec/JENAPD-4>; or [https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.apaonline.org/resource/resmgr/data\\_on\\_profession/apda\\_final\\_report\\_2019.pdf](https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.apaonline.org/resource/resmgr/data_on_profession/apda_final_report_2019.pdf); or via the APA website page <https://www.apaonline.org/page/data>, accessed 9 October 2023.
- Living Archives on Eugenics in Western Canada. [www.EugenicsArchives.ca](http://www.EugenicsArchives.ca), accessed 9 October 2023.
- Living Archives on Eugenics Blog. 'Thinking in Action' blog series, <https://whatsortsofpeople.wordpress.com/2009/02/13/all-wrapped-up-complete-thinking-in-action-series/>, accessed 9 October 2023.
- SBS Television (2022) *The Australian Wars*. Television series. Produced and directed by Rachel Perkins.
- Schacht, R. (1994) 'Philosophy in America in 1994: A Survey Conducted by the American Philosophical Association', [https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.apaonline.org/resource/resmgr/data\\_on\\_profession/1994\\_philosophyamerica-summar.pdf](https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.apaonline.org/resource/resmgr/data_on_profession/1994_philosophyamerica-summar.pdf), as well as via the APA website page <https://www.apaonline.org/page/data>, accessed 9 October 2023.
- van Hejningen, M. (1982) *A Question of Silence* [*De stilte rond Christine M.*, Dutch] Directed by Marleen Gorris, 92 minutes.
- Van Norden, B. (2017a) 'Western Philosophy is Racist'. Aeon, 31 October, 2017, <https://aeon.co/essays/why-the-western-philosophical-canon-is-xenophobic-and-racist>, accessed 9 October 2023.

## BOOKS, ARTICLES, CHAPTERS:

- Agar, N. (1998) 'Liberal Eugenics', *Public Affairs Quarterly*, 12: 137–55.
- Anomaly, J. (2018) 'Defending Eugenics: From Cryptic Choice to Conscious Selection', *Monash Bioethics Review*, 35: 24–35.
- Babbitt, S. (1996) *Impossible Dreams: Rationality, Integrity, and Moral Imagination*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Babbitt, S. (2001) *Artless Integrity: Moral Imagination, Agency, and Stories*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Basevich, E. (2022) 'The Promise and Limit of Kant's Theory of Justice: On Race, Gender and the Structural Domination of Labourers', *Kantian Review*, 27: 541–55. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415422000292>
- Bernasconi, R., ed. (2001) *Race*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Bernasconi, R. (2002) 'Kant as an Unfamiliar Source of Racism', in J. K. Ward and T. L. Lott (eds) *Philosophers on Race: Critical Essays*, pp. 145–66. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers.
- Bernasconi, R. (2017) 'Critical Philosophy of Race and Philosophical Historiography', in P. C. Taylor, L. M. Alcoff, and L. Anderson (eds) *The Routledge Companion to the Philosophy of Race*. New York: Routledge.
- Cassirer, E. (1946) *The Myth of the State*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Cassirer, E. (1981 [1918]) *Kant's Life and Thought*. Trans. J. Haden, with an introduction by S. Körner. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Clarke, A. E. (2018) 'Introducing Making Kin Not Population', in A. E. Clarke and D. Haraway (eds) *Making Kin Not Population*, pp. 1–39. Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press.
- Count, E. W., ed. (1950) *This is Race: An Anthology Selected from the Internal Literature on the Races of Man*. New York: Henry Schuman.

- Eze, E. C. (1995) 'The Color of Reason: The Idea of "Race" in Kant's Anthropology', *The Bucknell Review*, 38: 200–41.
- Eze, E. C., ed. (1997a) *Race and the Enlightenment*. New York: Blackwell.
- Eze, E. C., ed. (1997b) *Postcolonial African Philosophy: A Critical Reader*. New York: Blackwell.
- Eze, E. C. (2001) *Achieving Our Humanity: The Idea of the Postracial Future*. New York: Routledge.
- Fricker, M. (2007) *Epistemic Injustice*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Gobineau, A. (Count Joseph-Arthur de Gobineau) (1853–55) *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines*, 4 volumes. Paris: Didot Frères.
- Habermas, J. (2003) *The Future of Human Nature*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Huseynzadegan, D. (2022) 'Charles Mills' "Black Radical Kantianism" as a Plot Twist for Kant Studies and Contemporary Kantian–Liberal Political Philosophy', *Kantian Review*, 27: 651–65. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415422000310>
- Kant, I. (1775) 'Von den verschiedenen Racen der Menschen', Translated as 'On the Different Human Races', in J. M. Mikkelsen (ed.) *Kant and the Concept of Race: Late Eighteenth-Century Writings*, pp. 41–54. Albany: SUNY Press. 2013. Earlier translated as 'On the Different Races of Man', in *Count* (1950): 16–24.
- Kant, I. (1777) 'Von den verschiedenen Racen der Menschen'. translated as 'On the Different Human Races', in J. M. Mikkelsen (ed.) *Kant and the Concept of Race: Late Eighteenth-Century Writings*, pp. 55–71. Albany: SUNY Press. 2013.
- Kant, I. (1785) 'Bestimmung des Begriffs einer Menschenrace'. Translated as 'Determination of the Concept of a Human Race', in J. M. Mikkelsen (ed.) *Kant and the Concept of Race: Late Eighteenth-Century Writings*, pp. 125–41. Albany: SUNY Press. 2013.
- Kant, I. (1788) 'Über den Gebrauch teleologischer Prinzipien in der Philosophie'. Translated as 'On the Use of Teleological Principles in Philosophy', in J. M. Mikkelsen (ed.) *Kant and the Concept of Race: Late Eighteenth-Century Writings*, pp. 169–94. Albany: SUNY. 2013. Earlier publication in Bernasconi 2001.
- Kittay, E. and Carlson, L. (2010) *Cognitive Disability and its Challenge to Moral Philosophy*. Malden, MA: Wiley–Blackwell.
- Linn, C. (1800) [1758] *A General System of Nature: Through the Three Grand Kingdoms of Animals, Vegetables, and Minerals; Systematically Divided into Their Several Classes, Orders, Genera, Species and Varieties, with the Habitations, Manners, Economy, Structure, and Peculiarities*. 7 volumes. Edited by William Turton. London: Lackington, Allen & Co.
- Lipman, M. (2003) [1991] *Thinking in Education*, 2nd edn. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Lipman, M. and Sharp, A.-M. (1978) *Growing up with Philosophy*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Lu-Adler, H. (2022a) 'Kant on Lazy Savagery, Racialized', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 60: 253–72.
- Lu-Adler, H. (2022b) 'Kant and Slavery—Or Why He Never Became a Racial Egalitarian', *Critical Philosophy of Race*, 10: 263–94.
- Lu-Adler, H. (2023) *Kant, Race, and Racism: Views from Somewhere*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Marwah, I. S. (2022a) 'Charles W. Mills, The Racial Contract', in J. T. Levy (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Classics in Contemporary Political Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198717133.013.62>
- Marwah, I. S. (2022b) 'White Progress: Kant, Race, and Teleology', *Kantian Review*, 27: 615–34. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415422000334>
- Mensch, J. (2017) 'Caught between Character and Race: "Temperament" in Kant's Lectures on Anthropology', *Australian Feminist Law Journal*, 43: 125–44.
- Mills, C. W. (1998) *Blackness Visible*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Mills, C. W. (2005) 'Kant's Untermenschen', in A. Valls (ed.) *Race and Racism in Modern Philosophy*, pp. 169–91. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Mills, C. W. (2014) 'Kant and Race, Redux', *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal*, 35: 125–57.
- Mills, C. W. (2017) 'Philosophy and the Racial Contract', in N. Zack (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Race and Philosophy*, pp. 65–76. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Mills, C. W. (2018) 'Black Radical Kantianism', *Res Philosophica*, 9: 1–33.

- Mills, C. W. (2021) 'Black Counterpublic Philosophy?: Some Comments on George Yancy's across Black Spaces', *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 38: 569–80.
- Mills, C. W. (2022) [1997] *The Racial Contract*. 25th anniversary edn. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Morrison, T. (1987) *Beloved*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Muir vs Alberta (1996) *Dominion Law Reports* 132 (4th series), pp. 695–762. 1996 Can LII 7287 (QB AB).
- Nichols, R. (2020) *Theft is Property! Dispossession and Critical Theory*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Park, P. (2013) *Africa, Asia, and the History of Philosophy: Racism in the Formation of the Philosophical Canon 1780–1830*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Paul, L. (2014) *Transformative Experience*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Shorter-Bourhanou, J. (2022) 'Reinventing Kant?', *Kantian Review*, 27: 529–40. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415422000346>
- Stanner, W. E. H. (2009) *The Dreaming and Other Essays*. Melbourne: Black Inc Agenda.
- Sullivan, S. and Tuana, N. (2007) *Race and Epistemologies of Ignorance*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Tremain, S. (2014) 'Disabling Philosophy', *The Philosophers' Magazine* 65 (April 2014): 15–17.
- Valdez, I. (2022) 'Toward a Narrow Cosmopolitanism: Kant's Anthropology, Racialized Character and the Construction of Europe', *Kantian Review*, 27: 593–613. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415422000358>
- Van Norden, B. (2017b) *Taking back Philosophy: A Multicultural Manifesto*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Veit, W. et al. (2021) 'Can "Eugenics" be Defended?', *Monash Bioethics Review*, 39: 60–7.
- Wilson, R. A. (2018) *The Eugenic Mind Project*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Wilson, R. A. (2019) 'Eugenics Undefended', *Monash Bioethics Reviews*, 37: 68–75. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40592-019-00094-w>
- Wilson, R. A. (2021) 'Eugenics Offended', *Monash Bioethics Review*, 39: 169–76. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40592-021-00145-1>
- Wilson, R. A. (2023) 'Confronting Silences', *Tapuya: Latin American Science, Technology and Society*, 6: 1–5. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198717133.013.62>
- Yab, J. (2021) *Kant and the Politics of Racism: Toward Kant's Racialized Form of Cosmopolitan Right*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Yancy, G. (2020) *Across Black Spaces: Essays and Interviews from an American Philosopher*. London: Rowman and Littlefield.

## APPENDIX 1

### Early Reception of Mills' *The Racial Contract*

Following the death of Charles Mills in September 2021, there has been an outpouring of accolades for Mills and praise for his work, particularly *The Racial Contract*, furthering the momentum of attention this work had gained in recent years. For example, the book was re-published in a special 25th-anniversary edition in April 2022 and earlier this year joined the distinguished line-up of works deserving of a summary place in *The Oxford Handbook of Classics in Contemporary Political Theory* (Marwah 2022a); Mills' challenging 'Black Radical Kantianism' (2018) is the subject of a special issue of *Kantian Review* whose contributors (Basevich 2022; Huseyinzadegan 2022; Marwah 2022b; Shorter-Bourhanou 2022; Valdez 2022) are early-to-mid-career scholars inspired by Mills' constructive thoughts. Although *The Racial Contract* has been cited approximately 7,000 times (Google Scholar) since its publication in 1997 (see Table 1), note that two-thirds of those citations have come in the past six years, the time during which Mills took up his final position as Professor of Philosophy at The Graduate Center at the City University of New York, with around 1,000 + of these coming since his death.



To get an idea of the book's contrasting early reception, [Table 1](#) shows the cumulative annual citation level on Google Scholar for *The Racial Contract* in the first twelve years following its publication.

Table 1 Google Scholar Citations for *The Racial Contract* (extracted 18 October 2021)

1998	13	2004	359
1999	29	2005	446
2000	74	2006	520
2001	127	2007	637
2002	182	2008	765
2003	273	2009	952

Mills (Charles henceforth) visited Queen's University in Canada, where I was teaching from 1992 until 1996, several times, both times courtesy of my late colleague Susan Babbitt. The first time (February 1995) I was on research leave in Australia, but during that visit Charles gave one of his earliest presentations of the ideas in *The Racial Contract*; for his second visit (January 1996), he delivered his 'But what are you *really*? The metaphysics of race'. His talks then represented some of the earliest work being done in the then emerging area of the philosophy of race, when Charles was a not-so-recent PhD graduate from the University of Toronto, hailing originally from Jamaica.

More vivid in my memory was Charles' visit to the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign in October 1999, to give a colloquium, a university I had moved to a few years earlier following severe budget cuts at Queen's during 1995 of a kind that are now par for the course every few years in the university sector. There he gave a great, polished talk, 'Race and the Social Contract Tradition', that he had just presented a few weeks previously on a panel with Carole Pateman at the American Political Science annual meeting. This talk was delivered by a then colleague from our sister institution, the University of Illinois, Chicago, shortly following the publication of *The Racial Contract* (1997) and the brilliant (but at that time little-read) essays collected in *Blackness Visible: Essays on Philosophy and Race* (1998). I registered at the time that the questions from my colleagues following the talk were especially pointed, frosty, and hostile. More memorable—it turned out for both Charles and for me—was his being completely abandoned by members of the department at the end of the talk, leaving just the two of us to talk impromptu, departing from the usual practice of drinks and dinner. But following this talk, nothing, and no signal as to what instead. Just a room full of silence. In the end, Charles and I sauntered back to my house (where parenting duties with my three-year-old daughter beckoned) and had a few beers and something light to munch on whilst we chatted for a few hours. In response to both my puzzlement and apologies for the lack of departmental hospitality, Charles (in what I gather was his true mode) just shrugged it off, quipping that maybe the whiteness of philosophy is sometimes too much for the whiteness of philosophy.

## APPENDIX 2

## Linnaeus' Racial Taxonomy

The Swedish naturalist, Carl Linnaeus (Charles Linné, Karl von Linné), whose 'Linnaean hierarchy' remains the primary taxonomic system of classification for biological groups today, introduced human races into his *Systema Naturae* (1735), with the four geographically based races being integrated into an expanded six-race classification scheme in the tenth edition (1758); Charmantier (2020) provides an accessible overview of the development of Linnaeus' views and their variant representations in various editions and translations. Here is Linnaeus' racialized taxonomy of *Homo sapiens*, from near the beginning of *Systema Naturae*, redrawn from the 1800 edition in English, edited by William Turton (volume 1, p. 9):

## Mammalia

## Order I. Primates

---

Fore-teeth cutting; upper 4, parallel; teats 2  
pectoral

## 1. HOMO.

*Sapiens*. Diurnal; varying by education and situation.

- |  |                  |
|--|------------------|
| 2. Four-footed, mute, hairy.   | <i>Wild Man.</i> |
| 3. Copper-coloured, choleric, erect.   | <i>American.</i> |
| <i>Hair</i> black, straight, thick; <i>nostrils</i> wide, <i>face</i> harsh; <i>beard</i> scanty; <i>obstinate</i> , content free. <i>Paints</i> himself with fine red lines. <i>Regulated</i> by customs. |                  |
| 4. Fair, sanguine, brawny  | <i>European.</i> |
| <i>Hair</i> yellow, brown, flowing, <i>eyes</i> blue; <i>gentle</i> , acute, inventive. <i>Covered</i> with close vestments. <i>Governed</i> by laws.  |                  |
| 5. Sooty, melancholy, rigid  | <i>Asiatic.</i>  |
| <i>Hair</i> black; <i>eyes</i> dark; <i>severe</i> , haughty, covetous. <i>Covered</i> with loose garments. <i>Governed</i> by opinions.   |                  |
| 6. Black, phlegmatic, relaxed.   | <i>African.</i>  |
| <i>Hair</i> black, frizzled; <i>skin</i> silky; <i>nose</i> flat; <i>lips</i> tumid; <i>crafty</i> , indolent, negligent. <i>Anoints</i> himself with grease. <i>Governed</i> by caprice.                  |                  |
- 

Misleadingly numbered in this edition, Linnaeus' actual taxonomy here begins with a four-footed variant before sketching both physical and moral or political characteristics of each of the four races identified by colour, temperament, and character. Linnaeus continues his discussion of the *Homo* genus with the species *Homo monstrosus*, showing the affinity between race and disability as degenerative or deviant kinds within the *Homo* genus:

*Monstrosus*. Varying by climate or art.

---

1. Small, active, timid	<i>Mountaineer.</i>
2. Large, indolent.	<i>Patagonian.</i>
3. Less fertile.	<i>Hottentot.</i>
4. Beardless.	<i>American.</i>
5. Head conic.	<i>Chinese.</i>
6. Head flattened.	<i>Canadian.</i>

---

The anatomical, physiological, natural, moral, civil and social histories of man, are best described by their respective writers.