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## Reassessing Kant's geography

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### Abstract

This article offers a critical reassessment of Immanuel Kant's lectures on *Physische Geographie* and his contribution to geographical thought more generally. There are a number of reasons why this reassessment is needed: the lectures are finally about to be published in English translation; careful philological work in German has exposed how corrupted the standard text of the lectures is; and philosophers are finally beginning to critically integrate an understanding of the *Geography* into their overall assessment of Kant's work. English speaking geographers will therefore soon have access to the lectures in a way that they have not done before, but they need to be aware both of the problems of the edition being translated and the work philosophers have undertaken on their situation in Kant's work and their impact. More broadly, the reassessment requires us to reconsider the position Kant occupies in the discipline of geography as a whole. The article examines the history of the lectures and their publication in some detail; discusses Kant's purpose in giving them; and looks at the way in which he structured geographical knowledge and understood its relation to history and philosophy. In terms of the broader focus particular attention is given to the topics of race and space. While these lectures are undoubtedly of largely historical interest, it is for precisely that reason that an examination of them and Kant's thought more generally is of relevance today to the history of the discipline of geography.

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### Introduction

Immanuel Kant's lectures on *Physische Geographie* were first published over two hundred years ago. They were discussed by Richard Hartshorne in his comprehensive study of the discipline of

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geography almost seventy years ago, a survey that has formed the basis for most accounts of Kant's text since.<sup>1</sup> The most comprehensive study in English—J.A. May's book—is almost forty years old.<sup>2</sup> So why look again at Kant's views on geography? There are four main reasons.

The first is that the lectures on geography are far more talked about than read. The first full English translation of Kant's *Physical Geography* is due to appear in the *Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant* in the near future, in the volume on 'Natural Science'.<sup>3</sup> Although parts of the lectures have been available in English since the late 1960s,<sup>4</sup> this will undoubtedly make these lectures far more widely available. What are these lectures about, and how might we assess their claims today?

The second is that even this version of the lectures needs to be treated with caution. It is unfortunate that even after such a long wait the English audience is going to have to contend with a problematic edition. Alongside a contextualisation of the lectures, they need a warning about their status. The complicated lineage of the lectures will be discussed below, but for the moment it suffices to say that the text being translated is corrupted, and that it may well obscure parts of Kant's intent. What are these complications and how might this mislead?

The other two reasons are perhaps the most important. Third, these lectures and related writings are now beginning to receive critical attention in English language Kant scholarship. More detail is provided below, but the basic claim is that just as Kant's *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* has been reconsidered over the past decade or so, the *Geography* deserves and is beginning to receive similar work.

Fourth, just as in recent years scholarship has begun to recognise the complexity of Kant's ideas of some key topics, notably race, so too does his view of space need to be rethought. All-too-often Kant is held up as an instance of views that he did not actually hold or was explicitly

<sup>1</sup> R. Hartshorne, The nature of geography: a critical survey of current thought in the light of the past, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 29 (1939) 173–412; 29 (1939) 413–658. This was reprinted in book form under the same title (Lancaster, PA, 1939) to which all references are made. See also Hartshorne, The concept of geography as a science of space, from Kant and Humboldt to Hettner, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 48 (1958) 97–108; Richards, Kant's geography and mental maps, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 61 (1974) 1–16; and M. Bowen, *Empiricism and Geographical Thought: from Francis Bacon to Alexander von Humboldt*, Cambridge, 1981.

<sup>2</sup> J.A. May, *Kant's Concept of Geography and its Relation to Recent Geographical Thought*, Toronto, 1970. One of the rare exceptions among contemporary geographers has been David N. Livingstone, who discusses Kant in the context of his impact on the discipline of geography, in: *The Geographical Tradition: Episodes in the History of a Contested Enterprise*, Oxford, 1992, 113–117; and in D.N. Livingstone and R.T. Harrison, Immanuel Kant, subjectivism and human geography: A preliminary investigation, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 6 (1981) 359–374. The other exception is David Harvey, whose reading is more extensively discussed below. Kant's work only receives the briefest of mentions in physical geography surveys. See, for example, M.J.S. Rudwick, *Bursting the Limits of Time: the Reconstitution of Geohistory in the Age of Revolution*, Chicago, 2005; and R. Inkpen, *Science, Philosophy and Physical Geography*, London, 2005. The treatment is little better in G.J. Martin and P.E. James, *All Possible Worlds: A History of Geographical Ideas*, New York, 3rd ed, 1993, 109–111.

<sup>3</sup> I. Kant, *Natural Science*, edited by H.B. Nisbet and E. Watkins, Cambridge, forthcoming. The translation of the *Physische Geographie* is by Olaf Reinhardt, who has kindly sent me an advance copy of the text.

<sup>4</sup> R.L. Bolin, Immanuel Kant's physical geography, MA Thesis, University of Indiana, 1968. The first six sections of the introduction also appear in May, *Kant's Concept of Geography* (note 2), 255–264.

critiquing. Moving from Kant's *Geography* to Kant's geography more generally, we need to consider his position in the tradition more carefully.

Back in 1939, Hartshorne noted Erich Adickes's assessment of the lectures and agreed that 'for geography today... Kant's work is of little more than historical interest'.<sup>5</sup> This paper does not seek to suggest that reading Kant today will radicalize the discipline, and this is not an attempt to rehabilitate Kant. Rather it suggests that reassessing Kant might be a useful moment in a broader reconsideration of the history of geography, and certainly of the place of Kant within it. Thus this interpretation takes issue with the 'little more' element of the Adickes/Hartshorne assessment, suggesting that its historical interest is precisely why we should look at it today. As Livingstone suggests, 'the history of geography is the history of a contested tradition'.<sup>6</sup> Given that this is true of the history of ideas more generally, and philosophy especially, their point of collision in Kant is a significant marker. As philosophers begin the work of integrating these materials into their overall assessment of Kant's work, geographers too should reconsider his views in light of the history of the discipline. Yet rather than do as Hartshorne himself suggests, and privilege Kant's other writings over the *Physical Geography*, which he suggests should be relegated to a 'historical footnote', this reading begins with the lectures.<sup>7</sup> What do these lectures, and following them Kant's writings on issues of concern to geographers more generally, add to our understanding of Kant's geography today?

### Immanuel Kant's geography lectures

Kant lectured on a variety of topics during his career at the University of Königsberg. These included both philosophical and non-philosophical topics. The lecture courses were often well attended and gained a strong reputation. Many of these courses have come down to us from Kant's own manuscripts or from student transcripts. Today these lectures are part of his complete works, and are invaluable sources of knowledge concerning his work, its substance, coherence and development. Standard philosophical subjects such logic, metaphysics and ethics were part of his normal program, but Kant also gave courses on anthropology and physical geography on a regular basis. Initially it was geography alone, but from the mid 1770s geography was usually offered in the summer semester while anthropology was given in the winter. In total geography was offered forty-nine times over a forty-year period from 1756 to 1796—more frequently than any of his other topics other than logic and metaphysics.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Hartshorne, *The nature of geography* (note 1), 39.

<sup>6</sup> Livingstone, *The Geographical Tradition* (note 2), 101.

<sup>7</sup> Hartshorne, *The nature of geography* (note 1), 44; endorsed by Livingstone, *The Geographical Tradition* (note 2), 115. C. Glacken, in: *Traces on the Rhodian Shore: Nature and Culture in Western Thought from Ancient Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century*, Berkeley, 1967, 530–535, similarly shifts the focus to other texts, in his case largely the beginning of the second part of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, edited and translated by P. Guyer, Cambridge, 2000.

<sup>8</sup> Though these figures differ in various accounts, I have taken them from the archival work of Werner Stark ([http://www.staff.uni-marburg.de/~stark/geograph/geo\\_start.htm](http://www.staff.uni-marburg.de/~stark/geograph/geo_start.htm)) and Steve Naragon (<http://users.manchester.edu/Facstaff/SSNaragon/Kant/Notes/notesGeography.htm>).

Yet Kant never produced a book from these lectures. The course on anthropology was worked up into a book by Kant himself, entitled *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*.<sup>9</sup> The initial print-run was for the largest number of copies any book of his produced in his lifetime.<sup>10</sup> In Kant's words the *Anthropology* was 'the present [i.e. the final] manual for my anthropology course'.<sup>11</sup> It seems that had Kant more time, he would have produced a volume of the geography lectures himself. But he remarked in 1798 that a version of them was 'scarcely possible' at his own advanced age, for the manuscript he used to lecture was one he believed only he could read.<sup>12</sup> Shortly after this comment, the first volume of an edition by Gottfried Vollmer was produced, apparently based on transcripts of lectures from 1778, 1782 and 1793, but this was described by Kant as unauthorized and illegitimate, of which he did not recognise 'either the material or the format' as his.<sup>13</sup> This is hardly surprising: much of the work is not Kant's and this is not made clear in the edition itself; and there is certainly far more material than could ever have been given in a single semester. The semi-authorized version which was then rushed out in 1802, two years before Kant's death, was compiled by Friedrich Theodor Rink, utilizing lectures from 1759, with the introduction from a mid 1770s course, and is much less extensive.<sup>14</sup> Rink claims that he has based this on three notebooks of Kant's, but he unquestionably means student transcripts.<sup>15</sup> Adickes thinks the first part is from 1775, and demonstrates that the text is unreliable in that Rink added notes, and altered or dropped passages of which he could not make sense.<sup>16</sup> Werner Stark has noted that the first half (which he dates to 1774) is much more closely

<sup>9</sup> It is important to note that though the anthropology lectures were edited by Kant himself, they too exist in different forms. Indeed, KGS XXV is devoted to variant drafts; selections from which are forthcoming in the *Cambridge Edition as Lectures on Anthropology*, edited by A.W. Wood and R.B. Loudon, Cambridge. Kant's also wrote a large number of reflections on anthropology, collected in KGS XV (2 parts). For a discussion see W. Stark, Historical notes and interpretative questions, in: B. Jacobs and P. Kain (Eds), *Essays on Kant's Anthropology*, Cambridge, 2003, 15–37.

<sup>10</sup> M. Kuehn, Introduction, in: I. Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, edited and translated by R.B. Loudon, Cambridge, 2006, x, citing F.W. Schubert, *Immanuel Kants Biographie zum grossen Theil nach handschriftlichen Nachrichten dargestellt*, Leipzig, 1842, 154.

<sup>11</sup> Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (note 10), 6 n.

<sup>12</sup> Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (note 10), 6 n.

<sup>13</sup> G. Vollmer (Ed), *Immanuel Kants Physische Geographie*, Mainz, Four Volumes in Seven Parts, 1801–1805. The transcripts Vollmer used are lost. For Kant's repudiation of this edition, see Nachricht, die den Vollmer erschienene unrechtmäßige Ausgabe der physische Geographie betreffend, 29th May 1801, KGS XII, 372, and E. Adickes, *German Kantian Bibliography*, New York, 1970 [1893–1896], 27. There is some dispute about the validity of this refutation, given Kant's advanced age and senility when it came out. I owe this point to Robert Bernasconi.

<sup>14</sup> F.T. Rink (Ed), *Immanuel Kant's Physische Geographie*, Königsberg, 1802, here cited by the KGS edition. On the provenance of the 1802 edition see Friedrich Theodor Rink, Vorrede des Herausgebers, in KGS IX, 153–155; Richards, Kant's geography and mental maps (note 1); and especially W. Stark, *Immanuel Kants physische Geographie – eine Herausforderung?*, 4th May 2001, [http://www.staff.uni-marburg.de/~stark/ws\\_lese4.htm](http://www.staff.uni-marburg.de/~stark/ws_lese4.htm).

<sup>15</sup> Rink, Vorrede des Herausgebers (note 14), 155.

<sup>16</sup> E. Adickes, *Untersuchungen zu Kants physischer Geographie*, Tübingen, 1911, 278; Zu O. Schöndörffes Bemerkungen über Kants physische Geographie, *Altpreußische Monatsschrift* 56 (1919) 55–71, 59. P.D. Fenves describes Adickes's *Untersuchungen* as 'one of the great monuments of Kant philology' (*Late Kant: Towards Another Law of the Earth*, New York, 2003, 202 n. 10). May suggests the first half dates from 1772 or 73, and claims that it represents Kant's mature thought (*Kant's Concept of Geography* (note 2), 72, 75).

edited, with additions and references, while the second half reproduces Kant's text almost verbatim, even allowing a gap in the text (the omission of India and East Asian islands in the survey) to remain.<sup>17</sup> Rink alludes to some of the reasons for this uneven treatment in his introduction to the lectures.<sup>18</sup> His promised revised edition, putting good the problems, never actually appeared. Vollmer's edition came out in an eventual four volumes, in seven parts in total, and was completed in 1805.

It is the Rink edition that is today known as the *Physische Geographie*, later incorporated into the *Akademie Ausgabe* of *Kants gesammelte Schriften* [the Academy Edition of Kant's Collected Writings].<sup>19</sup> This is the one that Hartshorne utilizes, and that almost all accounts in English refer to, either first or second hand. Yet the dates of the materials used should give us cause to pause. Kant gave lectures on this topic from 1756 until 1796, and his comment that only he could read the text in 1798 indicates that he never ceased to revise it over that period. The text we have takes the introductory materials from a mid-period course (1774 or 1775) and bolts them onto the body of very early lectures (1759). At the time of the early lectures, anthropology was not yet being offered as a separate course, and some of the materials for that came from the geography lectures. By way of context, Kant's mature philosophy is said to begin with the *Critique of Pure Reason*, first published in 1781.<sup>20</sup> Nobody seeking to understand Kant's considered views on morality, ontology, logic, physics, or, indeed, anthropology, would content themselves with 'pre-critical' works.<sup>21</sup> Yet that is what is usually done with the lectures on geography.

In the early twentieth century Adickes attempted to get the *Akademie Ausgabe* to produce a new version of the *Geography*, instead of relying on Rink's, but this was declined due to feasibility: the volume was already typeset. The forthcoming Volume XXVI of *Akademie* edition will include several transcriptions of the lectures, prepared by the historian of philosophy Werner Stark,<sup>22</sup> and Volume

<sup>17</sup> Stark, *Immanuel Kants physische Geographie* (note 14). An unpublished analysis by Stark compares the Rink edited introduction with the manuscript, showing line by line just how much interpretation was involved.

<sup>18</sup> Rink, *Vorrede des Herausgebers* (note 14).

<sup>19</sup> It also appeared in other editions, notably I. Kant, *Sammliche Werke Sechster Theil: Schriften zur Physischen Geographie*, edited by K. Rosenkranz and F.W. Schubert, Leipzig, 1839. This volume also includes Kant's writings on related topics, and an appendix of variants from Kant's handwritten materials, 779–805.

<sup>20</sup> C. Browne Garnett Jr., *The Kantian Philosophy of Space*, New York, 1939, 11 (see 119) claims that Kant 'formulated the main tenets of his philosophy of space' in 1769, a belief supported by A. Melnick, *Space, Time, and Thought in Kant*, Dordrecht, 1989, 25, and J.H. Zammito, *Kant, Herder, and the Birth of Anthropology*, Chicago, 2002, 264. The reference is to the developed views found in the Inaugural Dissertation On the Form and Principles of the Sensible and Intelligible World, in: *Theoretical Philosophy 1755–1770*, edited and translated by David Walford, Cambridge, 1992, especially 395–398.

<sup>21</sup> F.K. Schaefer, Exceptionalism in geography: a methodological examination, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 43 (1953) 226–249, 233–234 makes a similar point, although based on the view that the introduction to the *Geography* dates from 1756. This is of course not to denigrate valuable work that takes the 'pre-critical' philosophy as its object of study. On this dating in Kant's work and its relation to the anthropology, see Zammito, *Kant, Herder, and the Birth of Anthropology* (note 20), 255–259.

<sup>22</sup> This will include the Holstein-Beck manuscript from 1758–1759, several from the 1770–1792 period, as well as introductions from several other years and an appendix of J.G. Herder's notes from Kant's courses on logic, moral philosophy, metaphysics and physical geography. See W. Stark, *Immanuel Kant, Physische Geographie: Kurze Information zur Neuausgabe*, unpublished paper; and see [http://www.staff.uni-marburg.de/~stark/geograph/geo\\_edi0.htm](http://www.staff.uni-marburg.de/~stark/geograph/geo_edi0.htm).

XIV includes notes on geography, along with mathematics, physics and chemistry.<sup>23</sup> Yet unfortunately the forthcoming English translation is of the Rink edition. This is certainly better than nothing but it is interesting again to contrast this with the *Anthropology*, which has been available in English for several years in a reliable edition, with translations in 1974 and 1978 and an entirely new recent translation by Robert Loudon with extensive notes from Kant's manuscript and a long introduction,<sup>24</sup> along with forthcoming editions of variant lectures and note materials.<sup>25</sup>

There are thus serious philological difficulties relating to reading the geography lectures that go far beyond their inaccessibility in English. Stark has done invaluable work in ordering and organizing these lectures, following his work on the lectures on ethics and anthropology, setting them in their historical context and showing the variation across time.<sup>26</sup> His transcriptions of the handwritten student transcripts are a major work in themselves. For many purposes the most accessible edition of the lectures is the French, which although it is a translation of the Rink edition includes an extensive introduction and a brief appendix of variants from other years.<sup>27</sup> This is the text used by David Harvey, whose reading is discussed below.

### The neglect

Of all of Kant's work, and of all his wide areas of interest, the neglect of geography is perhaps the most glaring. It generally merits an entry in dictionaries of Kant's work, but these tend to be pretty brief.<sup>28</sup> There is no explicit discussion in the recent *A Companion to Kant*,<sup>29</sup> and a recent edited book on *Kant and the Sciences* makes only a tangential reference to geography.<sup>30</sup> Robert Hanna's comprehensive study, *Kant, Science, and Human Nature*, makes only two passing references to geography and offers no sustained engagement.<sup>31</sup> Many other accounts on related topics are similar.<sup>32</sup> The

<sup>23</sup> See I. Kant, *Notes and Fragments*, edited by P. Guyer, translated by C. Bowman, P. Guyer, and F. Rauscher, Cambridge, 2005, 547 n. 34. Unfortunately this volume does not include any of the notes on geography, which appear in KGS XIV, 541–635. A detailed analysis is provided in the work of Adickes, *Untersuchungen zu Kants physischer Geographie* (note 16); and *Ein neu aufgefundenes Kollegheft nach Kants Vorlesung über physische Geographie*, Tübingen, 1913. See Stark, *Immanuel Kants physische Geographie* (note 14).

<sup>24</sup> The Loudon translation of *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* is cited above (note 10) (n. 8); the earlier translations are by M.J. Gregor, The Hague, 1974; and by V.L. Dowdell, Carbondale, 1978. References to this work are to the Loudon translation.

<sup>25</sup> I. Kant, *Anthropology, History and Education*, edited by R.B. Loudon and G. Zoller, Cambridge, 2007; *Lectures on Anthropology* (note 9).

<sup>26</sup> See Stark, *Immanuel Kants physische geographie* (note 14); and material on his website.

<sup>27</sup> I. Kant, *Géographie*, translated by M. Cohen-Halimi, M. Marcuzzi and V. Seroussi, Paris, 1999. The appendix is taken from Kant, *Sämmtliche Werke* (note 19). See also M. Marcuzzi, L'écriture de l'espace: Récit historique et description géographique dans la *Géographie Physique* de Kant, in: J. Benoist and F. Merlini (Eds), *Historicité et spatialité: Le problème de l'espace dans la pensée contemporaine*, Paris, 2001, 118–139.

<sup>28</sup> See H. Caygill, *A Kant Dictionary*, Oxford, 1995, 214–215; H. Holzhey and V. Mudroch, *Historical Dictionary of Kant and Kantianism*, Lanham, 2002, 131–132.

<sup>29</sup> G. Bird (Ed), *A Companion to Kant*, Oxford, 2006.

<sup>30</sup> E. Watkins (Ed), *Kant and the Sciences*, Oxford, 2001.

<sup>31</sup> R. Hanna, *Kant, Science, and Human Nature*, Oxford, 2006, 56–57, 268–270.

<sup>32</sup> Other examples of the neglect are given by C.W.J. Withers, Kant's geography in comparative perspective, in: S. Elden and E. Mendieta (Eds), *Reading Kant's Geography*, Albany, forthcoming 2009.

same neglect can be found in works concentrating on Kant's theories of space.<sup>33</sup> And while the work on anthropology has been discussed by figures of the stature of Martin Heidegger and Michel Foucault,<sup>34</sup> the *Geography* has not received anything like the same amount of attention.

Aside from the textual problems, one of the reasons is that philosophers have, by and large, not known what to make of the works. This is demonstrated in debates about where the anthropology lectures might be placed in editions of Kant's work. If it seems unquestionably the case that today the anthropology and geography belong together, this has not always been the view. Wilhelm Dilthey and Erdmann argued that their relation was to the cosmology and physical geography; while Emil Arnoldt and Adickes claimed that they were linked to the metaphysics lectures and the section on empirical psychology.<sup>35</sup> This confusion might appear surprising, since Erdmann shows that parts of the *Anthropology* derived from earlier lectures on geography, and Kant goes out of his way to demonstrate the linked nature of the inquiries.<sup>36</sup> Yet there is a certainly a link to the metaphysics lectures. Holly Wilson suggests the following view:

I distinguish between 'origin' and 'arise': the anthropology lectures arose out of the psychology lectures, but had their origin in the physical geography lectures. Kant's banning of psychology from metaphysics initiated the movement toward an independent series of lectures on anthropology, but the intent and content of the anthropology lectures finds its origin in the physical geography lecture, which were initially given fifteen years prior to the start of the anthropology lectures.<sup>37</sup>

Those that do discuss the work on geography do, sometimes, note its relation to wider concerns in Kant's work. Howard Caygill, for instance, in his *Kant Dictionary* says that 'in addition to this explicit treatment of geography in his lectures, it is interesting to note Kant's reliance on geographical terms and metaphors in his more strictly defined philosophical work'.<sup>38</sup> But this is as far as his link goes, perhaps understandable given the nature of his project, but shared much more generally. However, in recent years a number of people have begun to analyse Kant's

<sup>33</sup> See, for example, Browne Garnett Jr., *The Kantian Philosophy of Space* (note 20); Melnick, *Space, Time, and Thought in Kant* (note 20); H. Sidgwick, Kant's 'exposition' of space and time, in: R.F. Chadwick and C. Cazeaux (Eds), *Immanuel Kant: Critical Assessments*, London, 1992, Four Volumes, I 89–102; and M.D. Newman, The unity of time and space, and its role in Kant's doctrine of a priori synthesis, in: *Immanuel Kant: Critical Assessments*, Vol. II, 185–200.

<sup>34</sup> See M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, translated by R. Taft, Bloomington, 1997. Foucault translated the *Anthropology* as *Anthropologie du point de vue pragmatique*, Paris, 1964. This edition includes only a brief Notice historique, which is all that was published of Foucault's secondary thesis on the *Anthropology*. See M. Foucault, Introduction à l'*Anthropologie* de Kant, Thèse complémentaire pour le doctorat des lettres, 1961; now translated by R. Nigro and K. Briggs as *Introduction to Kant's Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, New York, 2008. Foucault does not discuss the work on geography.

<sup>35</sup> H.L. Wilson, *Kant's Pragmatic Anthropology: its Origin, Meaning and Critical Significance*, Albany, 2006, 17; Zammito, *Kant, Herder, and the Birth of Anthropology* (note 20), 293.

<sup>36</sup> B. Erdmann, Zur Geschichte des Textes, in: B. Erdmann (Ed), I. Kant, *Reflexionen Kants zur kritischen Philosophie*, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 1992 [1882], 31–64.

<sup>37</sup> Wilson, *Kant's Pragmatic Anthropology* (note 35), 3; see R.B. Loudon, *Kant's Impure Ethics: from Rational Beings to Human Beings*, Oxford, 2000, 62–63.

<sup>38</sup> Caygill, *A Kant Dictionary* (note 28), 215.

work on *Anthropology* in a new light, which necessarily forces an encounter with the *Geography*. These would include Robert Loudon's *Kant's Impure Ethics*, John Zammito's *Kant, Herder, and the Birth of Anthropology*,<sup>39</sup> and Holly Wilson's *Kant's Pragmatic Anthropology*. In addition Cambridge University Press has recently published a useful book of essays on the anthropology,<sup>40</sup> and there is an exceptional recent biography by Manfred Kuehn which, together with Eckart Förster and Peter Fenves's pioneering work on the late Kant, enables a much more nuanced situation of the geographical work.<sup>41</sup> It is in the light of these researches, alongside those of Robert Bernasconi and David Harvey on race discussed below, that a reassessment can begin.

### Kant's pragmatic purpose

Why did Kant lecture on geography? Although it became one of his most attended courses, this does not explain things sufficiently. Wilson is valuable in tracking the changing objectives for the geography lectures, suggesting that initially they were 'purely scientific, that is, to make a more certain knowledge of believable travel accounts, and to make this into a legitimate academic course of study'.<sup>42</sup> But the popularity of the course meant that Kant could begin to suggest that their aim could be 'to civilise young students to become 'citizens of the world''.<sup>43</sup> Zammito has similarly shown how the lectures are related to the *Anthropology* in providing knowledge, but stresses this is for a philosophical purpose.<sup>44</sup> As Loudon notes, therefore, their aim was more than merely scholastic, but rather:

The anthropology and physical geography lectures are thus not primarily intended as further contributions to Kant's critical, transcendental philosophy program... [which] was not his only concern. A major portion of Kant's teaching activity was devoted to trying to enlighten his students more about the people and world around them in order that they might live (pragmatically as well as morally) better lives.<sup>45</sup>

For Loudon, anthropology and geography are thus 'intersecting halves of a larger whole'.<sup>46</sup> The problematic link between Kant's views on geography and anthropology, and, especially, on race and his cosmopolitan ethics will be discussed below, but the point here is somewhat different. This is that Kant sees these lectures as providing a broad knowledge of the world as a foundation to the more general studies of his students, and that together the physical geography and pragmatic anthropology give an empirical grounding for his thought more generally. In a postscript to his 1775

<sup>39</sup> Zammito, *Kant, Herder, and the Birth of Anthropology* (note 20), especially 57–59, 284–296.

<sup>40</sup> Jacobs and Kain (Eds), *Essays on Kant's Anthropology* (note 9).

<sup>41</sup> M. Kuehn, *Kant: a Biography*, Cambridge, 2001; E. Förster, *Kant's Final Synthesis: an Essay on the Opus Postumum*, Cambridge, 2000; Fenves, *Late Kant* (note 16). This is the case despite the fact that these works do not treat the *Geography* in any detail themselves.

<sup>42</sup> Wilson, *Kant's Pragmatic Anthropology* (note 35), 9.

<sup>43</sup> Wilson, *Kant's Pragmatic Anthropology* (note 35), 8.

<sup>44</sup> Zammito, *Kant Herder, and the Birth of Anthropology* (note 39), 285–286.

<sup>45</sup> Loudon, *Kant's Impure Ethics* (note 37), 65; see Wilson, *Kant's Pragmatic Anthropology* (note 35), 20.

<sup>46</sup> Loudon, *Kant's Impure Ethics* (note 37), 95.



article ‘*Von den verschiedenen Racen der Menschen* [On the Different Races of Human Beings]’ Kant suggested that the two lecture courses together were *Weltkenntnis*.<sup>47</sup> This would usually translate as ‘world-knowledge’, but Wilson has suggested the felicitous ‘cosmopolitan knowledge’, with ‘cosmopolitan philosophy’ for the related *Weltwissenschaften*.<sup>48</sup> This knowledge of the world, for Kant, was integral to the moral and political life of the citizen. Both geography and anthropology were taught by Kant because of their ‘pragmatic’ dimension, the way in which this knowledge can guide us in our moral and practical life.

This world-knowledge, this cosmology, is essential to his other writings. Kant suggests that physical geography is about the world as an ‘object of external sense’; and anthropology as an ‘object of inner sense’.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, in his essay on ‘The Conflict of the Faculties’, Kant divides the philosophy faculty into two parts—the one that deals with ‘pure rational knowledge’ and one that deals with ‘*historical knowledge*’. The former contains metaphysics of nature and morals, along with pure philosophy and mathematics; the latter includes history, geography, philology, the humanities and the empirical knowledge of the natural sciences.<sup>50</sup> Of these aspects, physical geography is ‘the physical description of the earth’, ‘the first part of knowledge of the world’.<sup>51</sup> Wilson is therefore clear that the lectures on anthropology must be seen as philosophy:

Kant explicitly argues that the anthropology is a type of cosmopolitan philosophy. It is not a scholastic philosophy, and it is not critical philosophy, but it is a type of philosophy...

The twofold field of physical geography and anthropology are viewed cosmologically and pragmatically. In other words, Kant considered these two disciplines, in the way he taught them, to be philosophy, and philosophy that was useful for the world.<sup>52</sup>

These lectures were to serve as a propaedeutic for ‘practical reason’, and are a ‘history of the contemporary condition of the earth or geography, in the widest sense’.<sup>53</sup> This, for Kant, is ‘the preliminary exercise in the knowledge of the world’.<sup>54</sup> Knowledge of the world is thus of both ‘the human being and nature’.<sup>55</sup> Physical geography studies nature, anthropology the human, but the latter outweighs the former, since ‘nature exists for the sake of the human being. The human being is the end of nature’.<sup>56</sup> Nonetheless, the twofold field of *Weltkenntnis* needs to be treated cosmologically.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>47</sup> KGS II, 443.

<sup>48</sup> See Wilson, *Kant’s Pragmatic Anthropology* (note 35), 20, 113–115.

<sup>49</sup> KGS IX, 156–157; see *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (note 10).

<sup>50</sup> I. Kant, The conflict of the faculties, in: *Religion and Rational Theology*, translated and edited by A.W. Wood and G. Di Giovanni, Cambridge, 1996, 256.

<sup>51</sup> KGS IX, 157. The phrase ‘description of the earth’ is Rink’s interpolation. As B. Jacobs (Kantian character and the science of humanity, in: Jacobs and Kain (Eds), *Essays on Kant’s Anthropology* (note 9) 105–134, 132 n. 49) notes, in Kant’s *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, the same role is played by physics.

<sup>52</sup> Wilson, *Kant’s Pragmatic Anthropology* (note 35) 5, 115.

<sup>53</sup> KGS II, 312.

<sup>54</sup> KGS II, 443. See also the remarks in §70 of the Education lectures, cited by May, *Kant’s Concept of Geography* (note 2), 132.

<sup>55</sup> KGS IX, 158.

<sup>56</sup> KGS XXV, 470, 733, cited in Loudon, *Kant’s Impure Ethics* (note 37), 95.

<sup>57</sup> KGS II, 443.

## The context and the structure of the geography

Kant was an innovator in geography, if for no other reason that he was one of the very first to lecture on it as an explicit topic, before it was common to have chairs in geography in Germany. While others lectured on it in a way that was more akin to travel writing, Kant attempted to systematise the subject, synthesising insights from a range of different sources. Indeed, his outline for the course was unique, and he had to ask for special dispensation from the Minister of Education in order to give a course for which no textbook could be found.<sup>58</sup> The latter was of the opinion that ‘the worst textbook is certainly better than none, and professors may, if they possess so much wisdom, improve upon their authors to the extent that they can, but the reading from notes must simply be stopped. From this we nevertheless make exception of Professor Kant and his course on Physical Geography, for which no appropriate textbook is yet available’. Kant’s own manuscript was known as the *Diktattext*, prepared around 1759 but much amended and now lost. The Holstein-Beck manuscript is believed to be the closest to Kant’s *Diktattext*. After Kant retired his colleague K.L. Pörschke used the text of George Henry Millar, *The New and Universal System of Geography*.<sup>59</sup>

There is not the space here to outline how Kant’s understandings of specific geographical issues relate to knowledge at the time and to debates in a range of contexts since. This has been discussed at some length elsewhere.<sup>60</sup> Nonetheless Kant’s structure of the subject is important in itself and it is worth focussing on this. Initially his treatment included what was later separated out as the *Anthropology*. While ‘geography’ in the late 1700s meant something rather different to today, and crucially depended on where it was being taught or discussed,<sup>61</sup> what is striking is that Kant is interested in establishing subdivisions within the broad topic, many of which bear similarity to subdisciplines today, even if others are obsolete. Kant is thus trying to move geography—not always successfully—beyond mere ‘earth description’.<sup>62</sup> Anton Friedrich Büsching’s *Neue Erdbeschreibung* (New Description of the Earth) was, as Withers recounts, based on lectures given at Göttingen in the philosophy department, and published in eleven volumes between 1754 and 1792.<sup>63</sup> Kant

<sup>58</sup> Loudon, *Kant’s Impure Ethics* (note 37), 184–185 n. 6, drawing on K. Vörländer, *Immanuel Kants Leben*, Leipzig, 1911, 41–43.

<sup>59</sup> The quote and this information come from <http://users.manchester.edu/Facstaff/SSNaragon/Kant/Lectures/lecturesListDiscipline.htm#geography>. See G.H. Millar, *The New and Universal System of Geography*, London, 1782.

<sup>60</sup> In relation to geography, see Livingstone and Harrison, Immanuel Kant, subjectivism and human geography (note 2); Withers, Kant’s geography in comparative perspective (note 32); and M. Church, Immanuel Kant and the emergence of modern geography, in: Elden and Mendieta (Eds), *Reading Kant’s Geography* (note 32). In relation to the natural sciences more generally, see P.R. Sloan, Preforming the categories: eighteenth-century generation theory and the biological roots of Kant’s a priori, *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 40 (2002) 229–253; and his Kant on the history of nature: the ambiguous heritage of the critical philosophy for natural history, *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences* 37 (2006) 627–648.

<sup>61</sup> On the geographical aspect alongside the temporal in determining geographical knowledge, see Withers, Kant’s geography in comparative perspective (note 32); and more broadly his *Placing the Enlightenment: Thinking Geographically about the Age of Reason*, Chicago, 2007. This is one of the key arguments of D.N. Livingstone, *Putting Science in its Place: Geographies of Scientific Knowledge*, Chicago, 2003.

<sup>62</sup> See Withers, *Placing the Enlightenment* (note 61), 178; Church, Immanuel Kant and the emergence of modern geography (note 60).

<sup>63</sup> Withers, *Placing the Enlightenment* (note 61), 183–184; Livingstone, *The Geographical Tradition* (note 2), 108–109.

too depends greatly on these kind of empirical examples, but he tries to situate this within a broad structure of the subject. It is notable that the structure of most of his geography courses is very similar, even as the content changes. Kant begins with an introduction which provides a general assessment of the subject and its relation to other topics; moves to a discussion of the mechanics of the earth and then breaks the substantive part of the analysis into three parts.

The first substantial part of the text is the more accurately ‘physical geography’. It looks at a range of physical processes concerning earth and water: oceans; land and islands as examples of the earth and its terrain; earthquakes, volcanoes and electricity; springs and wells; rivers and water, wind currents; climate, the atmosphere and temperature; transformations of the earth; and seafaring. The second part concerns the three realms of nature: fauna, flora, and minerals. Many of the aspects of this second part would not fall within the remit of modern day geography, with the exception of biogeography. The final part of the book offers a regional geography of the world, with descriptions of particular regions and places in Asia, Africa, Europe and America. But Kant’s *Physical Geography* was also a moral and political account, and included human beings in it, usually just before the section on animals, discussing racial differences. In addition there are a range of comments in the third part concerning their geographical differentiation. Humans are thus seen as part of physical geography, both because they are one of the features of the *Erdboden*—the earth’s surface—but also because they a causal mechanism for change to the earth itself, because they build dams, drain swamps and fell forests, thus changing landscape and climate.<sup>64</sup>

After a decade of lecturing, announcing his courses for Winter Semester 1765–66, Kant outlined how his vision had developed, and how the more explicitly physical geography could sometimes be underplayed. This is worth quoting at length:

Since then I have gradually expanded this scheme, and now I propose, by condensing that part of the subject which is concerned with the physical features of the earth, to gain the time necessary for extending my course of lectures to include the other parts of the subject, which are of even greater utility. This discipline will therefore be a *physical, moral and political geography*. It will contain, first of all, a specification of the remarkable features of *nature* in three realms. The specification will, however, be limited to those features, among the innumerable many which could be chosen, which particularly satisfy the general desire for knowledge, either because of their rarity or the effect which they can exercise on states by means of trade and industry. This part of the subject, which also contains a treatment of the natural relationship which holds between all the lands and seas in the world, and the reason for their connection, is the essential foundation of all history. Without this foundation, history is scarcely distinguishable from fairy-tales.

This is a point worth underlining. As Kant claims in the geography lectures, geography is the ground or foundation for history, as events necessarily take place somewhere, in some context.<sup>65</sup> This is not to assert a priority for geography over history, but rather to insist on their relation together, a complementary analysis rather than a separation. Indeed, as Withers has noted, it

<sup>64</sup> KGS IX, 298.

<sup>65</sup> KGS IX, 163.

was a commonplace at the time to see geography as the left ‘eye’ of history, with chronology as the right.<sup>66</sup>

The *second* part of the subject considers *human beings*, throughout the world, from the point of view of the variety of their natural properties and the differences in that feature of the human which is moral in character. The consideration of these things is at once very important and also highly stimulating as well. Unless these matters are considered, general judgments about man would scarcely be possible. The comparison of human beings with each other, and the comparison of the human today with the moral state of the human in earlier times, furnishes us with a comprehensive map of the human species. *Finally*, there will be a consideration of what can be regarded as a product of the reciprocal interaction of the two previously mentioned forces, namely, the condition of the *states* and nations throughout the world. The subject will not be considered so much from the point of view of the way in which the condition of states depends on accidental causes, such as the deeds and fates of individuals, for example, the sequence of governments, conquests and intrigues between states. The condition of states will rather be considered in relation to what is more constant and which contains the more remote ground of those accidental causes, namely, the situation of their countries, the nature of their products, customs, industry, trade and population.<sup>67</sup>

Kant therefore sets out a range of distinctions—the physical, moral and political geography is alluded to here, but the actual analysis is rather more complicated. By the mid 1770s he offers a range of possibilities:

- Physical geography: the foundation or ground for other types of geography as well as history—a general study or outline of nature;
- Mathematical geography: concerned with the measure of the shape, size and motion of the earth, and its situation in the solar system;
- Moral geography: the relation between moral codes and customs and regions, a kind of spatial differentiation;
- Political geography: the relation of political systems and political laws to physical features of geography, part of the reason why these are only nominally universal;
- Commercial [*Handlungs*] geography: concerned with the geographical elements of trade in surplus products;
- Theological geography: concerned with theological attitudes and principles and their relation to physical features of the landscape; again a form of spatial differentiation.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>66</sup> Withers, *Placing the Enlightenment* (note 61), 178; Kant’s geography in comparative perspective (note 32).

<sup>67</sup> Kant, *Theoretical Philosophy 1770–1775*, 298–299; KGS II, 312–313, translation modified.

<sup>68</sup> KGS IX, 160–161, 164–165. Rink changes the order of their first presentation, adding ‘literary geography’ (KGS IX, 161) which is not in the 1774 transcript or in the fuller elaboration. He also adds detail to the elaboration, usually based on material later delivered in the lectures themselves. Some of the changes—‘civil society’ for ‘society’ or the replacement of ‘*Handlungs Geographie*’ with ‘*merkantilische Geographie*’—are more interpretative. May claims that ‘his concept of the limits and scope of geography is inevitably much broader than any contemporary concept can reasonably be’ (*Kant’s Concept of Geography* (note 2), 153).

Kant's humans thus move from being detached from the world into closer to relation with the earth, nature and other humans. As the material in the latter part developed this led to the parallel lectures on anthropology.<sup>69</sup> What the lectures together provide is a grounding of empirical detail. Crucially though they try to provide a geographical perspective on a range of social, cultural and physical phenomena. If geography is a study of the difference space makes, Kant can certainly lay claim to being a geographer. Yet, on the other hand, Kant was writing at a time when there was the beginning of a noticeable shift away from the compilation of information and reports from a distance. In the early nineteenth century field-based science was in the ascendance, with the importance of trained eye-witness accounts, following pioneering studies of Alexander von Humboldt, Georges Cuvier, and somewhat earlier, the scientists involved with Cook's voyages.<sup>70</sup>

### The impure physics and the question of race

In his lectures on *Logic*, Kant suggests that there are four fundamental questions.

1. 'What can I know?'
2. 'What ought I to do?'
3. 'What may I hope?'
4. 'What is the human being?'

Kant suggests that '*Metaphysics* answers the first question, *morals* the second, *religion* the third, and *anthropology* the fourth. Fundamentally, however, we could reckon all of this to anthropology, because the first three questions refer to the last one'.<sup>71</sup> Just as these other realms of thought rest on the fundamental question, namely anthropology; so too do Kant's reflections on the material world rest on the understanding of geography. For Kant, knowledge of the world is not pragmatic merely when it is 'extensive knowledge of *things* in the world, for example, animals, plants and minerals from various lands and climates—but only when it contains knowledge of the human being as a *citizen of the world*'.<sup>72</sup> In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant distinguishes between nature and freedom, to which accord the natural law and the moral law. The first accords to everything that is; the second to what should be. He suggests that while both have separate systems, they can come together in a single philosophical system—his own critical philosophy. In this critical philosophy there is a pure philosophy of pure reason; but also an empirical element, and this for both nature and freedom.<sup>73</sup> In the *Geography* lectures Kant begins by distinguishing between pure rational knowledge and knowledge from experience, through our senses.<sup>74</sup> In other

<sup>69</sup> Wilson, *Kant's Pragmatic Anthropology* (note 35) 11, 14.

<sup>70</sup> Church, Immanuel Kant and the emergence of modern geography (note 60); Bowen, *Empiricism and Geographical Thought* (note 1), 208.

<sup>71</sup> I. Kant, *Lectures on Logic*, translated and edited by J.M. Young, Cambridge, 1992, 538. The first three questions appear in *Critique of Pure Reason*, translated by P. Guyer and A.W. Wood, Cambridge, 1998, A805/B853.

<sup>72</sup> Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (note 10), 4.

<sup>73</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (note 71), A840/B868.

<sup>74</sup> KGS IX, 156; see Loudon, *Kant's Impure Ethics* (note 37), 24.

words, pragmatic anthropology is the relation of the human to the world, and is thus what Robert Louden calls ‘impure ethics’.<sup>75</sup> Although much of the material in the geography lectures would also come under that remit—recall the origin of the anthropology lectures—we might make a case that much of the rest of the geography is ‘impure physics’, in other words the empirical detail that inhabits the categories of abstract thought. The use of this kind of detail is pronounced, for example, in Kant’s third critique, especially in the passages on teleological judgment.<sup>76</sup> And in addition, while in his *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* Kant expresses the view that the empirical sciences require a pure grounding;<sup>77</sup> his last work, the *Opus Postumum*, bears the title of ‘Transition from the Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science to Physics’.<sup>78</sup>

Thus while much of the detail of the *Geography* may be outdated and therefore of merely historical interest, Kant’s way of structuring geographical knowledge and its relation to his thought as a whole is of enduring importance. This importance lies both in the way he understands geography as a counterbalance to history, and in terms of the organization of knowledge. All perceived things are located in logical classifications such as those of Linnaeus; and in space and time. Logic deals with the first; physics with space and time, and of these, geography deals with space; history with time.<sup>79</sup> Kant says that our experience of the world is limited in time—our limited lifespan—and space—even if we have travelled extensively. So we must rely on others, who can provide us with either narrative (temporal, history) or description (spatial, geographical).<sup>80</sup> Geography therefore allows us access to the ordering and categorizing of the world. Indeed, Kant distinguishes geography as the description of the whole world from topography as the description of single places and chorography as that of regions.<sup>81</sup> Wilson thus suggests that the role is fundamentally different from a merely enumerative account of the world as it is. As she suggests physical geography in Kant’s terms ‘is not meant to be a description of the world as a scientist would view it, but rather geography is to be viewed in its purposiveness’.<sup>82</sup> Thus for all their problems and their undoubted neglect, these lectures remain a key part of Kant’s work, and in recent years there has been some important discussion. The remainder of this essay will first discuss race—a theme treated at length in the various versions of the *Geography*; and then space, a topic which, while

<sup>75</sup> Louden, *Kant’s Impure Ethics* (note 37). S. Kofman (The economy of respect: Kant and respect for women, translated by N. Fisher, in: R.M. Schott (Ed) *Feminist Interpretations of Immanuel Kant*, University Park, 1997, 355–372, 357) has similarly argued that the *Anthropology* can be seen as an ‘addendum or appendix’ to the work on virtue.

<sup>76</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (note 7), 233–255; see Glacken, *Traces on the Rhodian Shore* (note 7), 530–535.

<sup>77</sup> I. Kant, *Metaphysical foundations of natural science*, in: *Theoretical Philosophy After 1781*, edited by H. Allison and P. Heath, translated by M. Friedman, Cambridge, 2002, 181–270. See also May, *Kant’s Concept of Geography* (note 2), 148 which schematises Kant’s Classification of Sciences.

<sup>78</sup> I. Kant, *Opus Postumum*, edited by E. Forster, translated by E. Förster and M. Rosen, Cambridge, 1993, especially 10–22; Förster, *Kant’s Final Synthesis* (note 41), 1.

<sup>79</sup> KGS IX, 159–160, 162. For a criticism of this division, see Schaefer, *Exceptionalism in geography* (note 21).

<sup>80</sup> KGS IX, 159. This is especially the case for someone who travelled as little as Kant, though his location in the port city of Königsberg meant he had a wider range of contacts than is generally assumed. See Kuehn, *Kant: a Biography* (note 41).

<sup>81</sup> KGS IX, 159. Orography and hydrography—the description of mountains and water—are also mentioned as divisions in Rink’s edition, but not in the transcript.

<sup>82</sup> Wilson, *Kant’s Pragmatic Anthropology* (note 35), 10.

not extensively treated in the *Geography*, is key to any engagement with Kant's geography in more general terms.

The question of Kant's racism has been discussed quite extensively in recent years. More challenging than his rehearsal of racial stereotypes and entertaining of prejudices is his theorisation of race. What this means is that Kant cannot simply be excused as a product of his time—trading on contemporary views about racial superiority and the like—because he went out of his way to explicitly theorise race, as a crucial category of human life. The charges can be found in a series of essays by Robert Bernasconi.<sup>83</sup> For Bernasconi Kant plays a significant role because he can be seen as the thinker who actually 'invented the scientific concept of race', as he was the thinker who 'gave the first clear definition of it'.<sup>84</sup> Indeed, Bernasconi contends that in doing so, he did not simply define race, but 'played a crucial role in establishing the term 'race' as the currency within which discussions of human variety would be conducted in the nineteenth century'.<sup>85</sup> Bernasconi's phrasing is telling: 'Kant opened up a new space for thinking: he took it into new territory'. While Kant may have stopped there, 'those who came after him worked in the space he opened up'.<sup>86</sup> Some responses have contended that this does not affect Kant's broader thought, and that Kant's arguments are stronger than his prejudices.<sup>87</sup> But this is insufficient for Bernasconi. He suggests that there is a difference between analytic and Continental philosophy in terms of their treatment of the biography of thinkers. Analytic is defined as 'a form of thinking that leaves no room for synthesis, holism or dialectic'.<sup>88</sup> While the geographies and histories of this distinction are problematic, as he recognises, there is some profit in the divide for analysis. For Bernasconi the analytical approach to philosophy, which tends to be ahistorical in its reading of canonical thinkers, means that:

The racism of a philosopher is easily put to one side. Kant's racism does not raise a question for his cosmopolitanism because cosmopolitanism can be defined in such a way as to exclude racism. Thus, the fact that Kant was a racist has no implications for contemporary Kantians. However, things are somewhat different for Continental philosophers.<sup>89</sup>

<sup>83</sup> R. Bernasconi, Who invented the concept of race? Kant's role in the enlightenment construction of race, in: Bernasconi (Ed), *Race*, London, 2001, 11–36; Kant as an unfamiliar source of racism, in: J.K. Ward and T.L. Lott (Eds), *Philosophers on Race: Critical Essays*, Oxford, 2002, 145–166; and Will the real Kant please stand up: the challenge of enlightenment racism to the study of the history of philosophy, *Radical Philosophy* 117 (2003) 13–22. See also the exchange between Bernasconi and J. McCarney in *Radical Philosophy* 199 (2003) 32–37, which, while focused on Hegel, discusses the key issues. See also E.C. Eze, Kant, in: Eze (Ed) *Postcolonial African Philosophy: a Critical Reader*, Oxford, 1997, 103–140. Also important is David Farrell Krell, 'The bodies of black folk: from Kant and Hegel to Du Bois and Baldwin', *boundary 2* 27 No. 3 (2000) 103–314; and more generally his *The Tragic Absolute: German Idealism and the Languishing of God*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2005.

<sup>84</sup> Bernasconi, Kant as an unfamiliar source of racism (note 83), 147; see 'Who invented the concept of race?' (note 83).

<sup>85</sup> R. Bernasconi, Introduction, in: R. Bernasconi (Ed) *Concepts of Race in the Eighteenth Century*, London, Eight Volumes, Vol. 1, 2001, viii.

<sup>86</sup> Bernasconi, Will the real Kant please stand up (note 83), 19.

<sup>87</sup> For an account along these lines, see T.E. Hill and B. Boxill, Kant and race, in: Boxill (Ed), *Race and Racism*, Oxford, 2001, 448–471.

<sup>88</sup> Bernasconi, Will the real Kant please stand up (note 83), 22.

<sup>89</sup> R. Bernasconi, Introduction, in: Bernasconi with Sybol Cook (Ed), *Race and Racism in Continental Philosophy*, Bloomington, 2003, 1–7, 2; see Will the real Kant please stand up (note 83), 20, 25.

Given that the fundamental philosophical influence in contemporary geography is from the ‘Continental’ strand, this is of crucial importance.

One of the few geographers who has recognised the implications of this challenge has been David Harvey. In a series of publications Harvey has related the geography lectures to the contemporary interest in Kant’s cosmopolitanism,<sup>90</sup> suggesting, like Bernasconi, that the claims of the lectures render this particular concept deeply problematic. Harvey notes that many Kantians want to dismiss the work on geography as “irrelevant”, ‘not to be taken seriously’ or [suggest that] it ‘lacks interest’.<sup>91</sup> In this position they are close to the oft-quoted remark from Benno Erdmann, who described the *Anthropology* as the ‘laborious compilation of a seventy-four year old man as he stood on the threshold of decrepitude’.<sup>92</sup> For Harvey ‘the content of Kant’s *Geography* is nothing short of an intellectual and political embarrassment’.<sup>93</sup> Both aspects of this assessment might be encapsulated by Kant’s claim that ‘humanity has its highest perfection in the white race’, with ‘yellow’, ‘Negro’ and ‘red’ races at respectively lower rungs.<sup>94</sup>

In his 1755 book *Universal Natural History and Theory of the Heavens* Kant had displayed the same penchant for dubious scientific reasoning, uncritical adoption of other material and wild speculation that was to characterize his geography lectures beginning the next year. In particular, Kant speculates on the inhabitants of Mercury and Venus, suggesting that their bodily constitution is such that they could not dwell on earth. In addition those planets like earth and Mars are midway in the planetary system and therefore their inhabitants are balanced, whereas those of Mercury and Venus are stupid, weak, unable to submit to justice, and coarse in body.<sup>95</sup> As David Clark suggests, this ‘functions as a barely displaced allegory of Europe’s close encounters with Africa and other equatorial regions of the universe’.<sup>96</sup> This text might be considered as an early work, unimportant and tangential to Kant’s mature philosophical edifice. The same cannot be said of the lectures on geography, which extended until his retirement, and, from the available transcripts never ceased to discuss race and racial ideas.

Harvey is right to suggest that there is much material that is offensive, embarrassing and irrelevant in the lectures, and makes a compelling case for the difficulties in accepting Kant’s ethical views in their wake. These views cannot be swept away, disassociated from the thought people want to salvage. In Harvey’s account, there is a direct linkage between the expression of these ideas and the philosophical architecture erected on top of the *Weltkenntnis*. Harvey is right that the responses of traditional Kantians are inadequate, but over recent years there has been the beginning of some interest in these issues. While there are a number of Kantians who remain

<sup>90</sup> D. Harvey, Cosmopolitanism and the banality of geographical evils, *Public Culture* 12 (2000) 529–564; and Geographical knowledges/political powers, *Proceedings of the British Academy* 122 (2004) 87–115. These themes are also central to his forthcoming *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*, New York 2008.

<sup>91</sup> Harvey, Cosmopolitanism and the banality of geographical evils (note 90), 532.

<sup>92</sup> Erdmann, Zur Entwicklungsgeschichte von Kants Anthropologie, in: Kant, *Reflexionen Kants zur kritischen Philosophie* (note 36), 68. I have taken the translation from R.B. Loudon, The second part of morals, in: Jacobs and Kain (Eds), *Essays on Kant’s Anthropology* (note 9), 60–84, 60.

<sup>93</sup> Harvey, Cosmopolitanism and the banality of geographical evils (note 90), 532.

<sup>94</sup> KGS IX, 316.

<sup>95</sup> I. Kant, *Universal Natural History and Theory of the Heavens*, translated by S.L. Jaki, Edinburgh, 1981, 195.

<sup>96</sup> D.L. Clark, Kant’s aliens: the *Anthropology* and its others, *CR: the New Centennial Review* 1 (2001) 201–289, 258.



in denial, both on race and *Geography*, there are others who have risen to a challenge to think both in the context of his work as a whole. In part this has been a by-product of important studies of the *Anthropology*, but more generally there are now philosophers who have taken Kant's geography seriously, which is not to say uncritically.

Louden is a good example of this tendency. He stresses the teleological aspects of Kant's theory of race, which implies that 'racial characteristics are present in the human species because they help us reach our collective destiny',<sup>97</sup> that is they come out depending on climatic and landscape features—a form of geographical determinism. What this means is that Kant is arguing for a theory of race as monogenetic rather than polygenetic, as proposed by contemporaries, such as Lord Kames in 1774. Kames suggested that different races were different species, from different origins, whereas monogenism is the belief that humans are all ultimately related, stemming from some common ancestor. While more traditional biblical accounts stress monogenism—based on the lineage through Adam—accounts at the time began to stress the distinctions of the races. Kant thus believes in the ultimate unity of the human species, rather than being like those racial thinkers who thought that different origins implied inequality.<sup>98</sup> But this is not to defend Kant, as he did say some deeply unpleasant things about race, which in Loudon's balanced judgment means that earlier views—such as that of Ernst Cassirer that Kant was progressive, 'humanitarian' and 'equalitarian', and distinct from Gobineau—need to be discarded.<sup>99</sup> For Loudon, 'not all of Kant's ideas about race are entirely 'humanitarian' and 'equalitarian', and the gap between Gobineau and Kant is unfortunately not always as wide as one would like it to be'.<sup>100</sup>

Given the way that race is the link between the *Anthropology* and the *Geography*, its minimal role in the former is perhaps somewhat surprising.<sup>101</sup> As Wilson suggests, 'the anthropology begins where physical geography ends; the different climates and environments, explored in physical geography, explain the different kinds of human beings in the world, but the inner germs and natural predispositions, explored in anthropology, explain why the human being can adapt itself to the different climates and environments'.<sup>102</sup> Indeed, Kant separated out from the *Physical Geography* course much of what he calls 'moral geography', that is that which concerns the 'customs and characters' of different peoples.<sup>103</sup> But in the published version of the *Anthropology* Kant says little, and suggests that the observations on the relation of physiognomy to race 'belong more to physical geography than pragmatic anthropology'.<sup>104</sup> He does say more in the *Geography*. This has led Loudon to propose the intriguing possibility that the older Kant may have come to doubt

<sup>97</sup> Loudon, *Kant's Impure Ethics* (note 37), 97.

<sup>98</sup> Loudon, *Kant's Impure Ethics* (note 37) 96–98; Bernasconi, Introduction, in: *Concepts of Race* (note 85), viii–ix. For a more detailed discussion, see Bernasconi, Who invented the concept of race? (note 83); Withers, *Placing the Enlightenment* (note 61), Chapter 7; and A.C. Cohen, Kant on epigenesis, monogenesis and human nature: the biological premises of anthropology, *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences* 36 (2006) 675–693, especially 681.

<sup>99</sup> E. Cassirer, *The Myth of the State*, New Haven, 1946, 235.

<sup>100</sup> Loudon, *Kant's Impure Ethics* (note 37), 100.

<sup>101</sup> Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (note 10), 223–224.

<sup>102</sup> Wilson, *Kant's Pragmatic Anthropology* (note 35), 15.

<sup>103</sup> KGS IX, 164.

<sup>104</sup> Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (note 10), 199; for a discussion see Loudon, *Kant's Impure Ethics* (note 37), 94–95.

some of his views on race, which is why they are so brief in the *Anthropology*, which he edited, and more extensive in the *Geography*, based on older materials and not edited until Kant was too old to proofread the manuscript.<sup>105</sup> But as Loudon notes, there is not the evidence to determine this, and those materials Kant did publish on race (from 1775, 1777, 1785 and 1788) tend to confirm the worst.<sup>106</sup> Suggesting that it was after the 1788 essay he changed his mind is the last resort, with Kleingeld arguing that Kant changed his views in the 1790s, and probably after 1792.<sup>107</sup> But we should note that the 1798 edition of the *Anthropology* makes reference to Christoph Girtanner's *Über das Kantische Prinzip für die Naturgeschichte*, a work he saw as 'presented so beautifully and thoroughly... (in accordance with my principles)'.<sup>108</sup>

Thus Kant's politics are rendered deeply suspect. For geographers this may appear relatively unimportant in itself—Kant is hardly alone in the tradition for this—but the contemporary resonances are hard to escape. Yet while almost anyone today would share his rejection of the lectures' reactionary attitudes, this does not mean that the lectures are without value. Geographers have long tried to separate the discipline and its questions from its imperial legacy and the answers from that time and space. Indeed, it is precisely because we need to trace political ruptures that we need to think historically.

### Space: reassessing Kant's geography

It is another rupture that may lead to the more important critique: that while we think we know Kant's view of space, the account Kant offers of space in the work on geography and, more importantly, elsewhere, is at odds with this received wisdom. Thus this final section moves beyond the *Geography* to begin to reassess Kant's geography more generally. Kant's position within the discipline of geography is too often reduced to a caricature, again more often cited than read.

Kant, it is generally supposed, held a view of space that was totalising, based on Cartesian geometry, absolute in the Newtonian sense. Thus we find a range of adjectival pairings common: Kantian space is Cartesian, Newtonian, and sometimes even more ahistorically Euclidean. Certainly in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, in the section on the transcendental aesthetic, space and time are pure intuitions, effectively hardwired into our brains, our very way of perceiving the world, rather than attributes of it. Space and time are thus the way that we experience, forms of sensibility, not experienced as such. The relation of this to Descartes' and Newton's view of the material world is more complicated than a simple equation, but this is certainly not an open system.

<sup>105</sup> Loudon, *Kant's Impure Ethics* (note 37), 207–208 n. 71.

<sup>106</sup> Kant's essays on race are collected in *Concepts of Race in the Eighteenth Century* (note 85), Vol. 3. As Bernasconi notes there (Editor's Note, vii–ix) the 1788 essay *Über den Gebrauch teleologischer Principien in der Philosophie*, is an important step towards Kant's third critique, the 1790 *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (note 7).

<sup>107</sup> Pauline Kleingeld, Kant's second thoughts on race, *The Philosophical Quarterly* 57 (2007) 573–592. See also Fenves, *Late Kant* (note 16), 102–104, 111. A more useful, if problematic, account of the possibilities of Kant is found in S. Muthu, *Enlightenment Against Empire*, Princeton, 2003.

<sup>108</sup> C. Girtanner, *Über das Kantische Prinzip für die Naturgeschichte* [1796], reprinted in *Concepts of Race in the Eighteenth Century* (note 85), Vol. 7; Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (note 10), 223.

Nonetheless Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* and his mature views on space were explicitly directed at challenging a pure Newtonian conception of space. To assert this does not mean that Kant's view of space is something that geographers today would want to, or should, adopt. But they should surely know better what they are arguing against. His earlier writings had been closer to a relational view, much influenced by Leibniz. But Kant's critical turn is not entirely against this perspective. As noted above, Kant's mature views on space were first presented in his 1770 *Inaugural Dissertation*, and here he attempts to mediate *between* a Leibnizian relative view of space—space is a product of the relations between things—and a Newtonian absolute view—space is the container for things.<sup>109</sup>

Back in 1969, in *Explanation in Geography*,<sup>110</sup> Harvey discussed Kant in a rather different register to his more recent work on the question of race and cosmopolitanism. Then, as now, Harvey was deeply suspect of Kant's absolute view of space. Harvey suggests that the absolute view of space needs to be understood, but alongside it we also need to view and understand space as relative and relational. Even given the caveat above, Kant might seem to be a long way from that position. But Harvey in *Explanation in Geography* offers what might be an intriguing possibility. This is when he suggests that Kant's view of space is one in which 'spatial magnitude is... only a measure of the intensity of acting forces exerted by the substance'.<sup>111</sup> Harvey then concludes his analysis:

Such a view of space is contrary to the view on which Kant based his philosophy of geography. Thus space is no longer something which can encompass our perceptions of the world. It is, rather, a collection of measures determined by our perceptions. If space and matter can no longer be effectively separated and if the properties of space can no longer be regarded as given *a priori*, the logical justification for the particular view of geography adopted by Kant, Hettner, and Hartshorne, can no longer be sustained.<sup>112</sup>

Harvey's source for the view of Kant on 'spatial magnitude' is Max Jammer's important study *Concepts of Space*. In the quotation from Jammer, the analysis is of Kant's 1755 and 1756 writings. Jammer actually provides a nuanced account of how Kant moved from a more Leibnizian view in those earlier works, to a more Newtonian view around 1769, under the influence of Leonhard Euler.<sup>113</sup> In 1769 Kant tries to show that 'absolute space, independent of the existence of all matter and as itself the ultimate foundation of the compound character of matter, has a reality of its own'.<sup>114</sup> Kant thus moved, on this account, from a relative view of space to an absolute one.

<sup>109</sup> One of the best geography accounts of this is in Richards, Kant's geography and mental maps (note 1).

<sup>110</sup> D. Harvey, *Explanation in Geography*, London, 1969, 70–78, 207–210.

<sup>111</sup> Harvey, *Explanation in Geography* (note 110), 212; citing M. Jammer, *Concepts of Space: the History of Theories of Space in Physics*, Cambridge, 1954, 130. I have used the 3rd ed (New York, 1993). The citation is from page 132 of this edition.

<sup>112</sup> Harvey, *Explanation in Geography* (note 110), 212. In a more recent piece, Space as a keyword, in: N. Castree and D. Gregory (Eds), *David Harvey: a Critical Reader*, Oxford, 2006, 270–293, Harvey does not significantly depart from this view.

<sup>113</sup> See Jammer, *Concepts of Space* (note 111), 131–132.

<sup>114</sup> Kant, concerning the ultimate ground of the differentiation of directions in space, *Theoretical Philosophy* (1755–1770) 366.

But he does not rest there. As Jammer convincingly claims, Kant further worked on the view of space that he held, and by the *Inaugural Dissertation* of 1770 he had reached a different view, attempting to reconcile these positions.

The concepts of absolute space and absolute time are considered to be mere conceptual fictions, a mental scheme of coexistence and sequence among sense particulars. Not itself arising out of sensations, the concept of space is a pure intuition, neither objective nor real, but subjective and ideal.<sup>115</sup>

This therefore forms the view of space that is well known in Kant, where there are two pure intuitions—space and time—that structure all that we experience about the world. In Jammer's words, space 'is not an object of perception, it is a mode of perceiving objects'.<sup>116</sup>

Briefly, and necessarily crudely, a return to the *Critique of Pure Reason* is helpful here. Kant suggests that space is an object of outer sense, and time of inner sense.<sup>117</sup> Space then is as geography is, an element of the external world alone, whereas time is both of the external and internal.<sup>118</sup> Kant then poses the questions he aims to address:

Now what are space and time? Are they actual entities? Are they only determinations or relations of things, yet ones that would pertain to them even if they were not intuited, or are they relations that only attach to the form of intuition alone, and thus to the subjective constitution of our mind, without which these predicates could not be ascribed to any thing at all.<sup>119</sup>

Kant then suggests that space must be understood as a representation, thus leading him to talk of a representation of space. It is *a priori*, prior to experience, and the necessary condition for it, 'the ground of all intuitions... the condition of possibility of appearances, not as a determination dependent on them'.<sup>120</sup> In a marginal note he added that 'space is not a concept, but an intuition'.<sup>121</sup> It is in this sense, and this sense alone, that time is 'something real, namely the real form of inner intuition'.<sup>122</sup> In another note Kant adds a crucial addition: 'So is space. This proves that here a reality (consequently also individual intuition) is given, which yet always grounds the reality as a thing. Space and time do not belong to the reality of things, but only to our representations'.<sup>123</sup>

In the first edition (1781) the point about magnitude is therefore the reverse of the earlier claim cited by Harvey from Jammer. Kant claims that 'space is represented as a given infinite magnitude. A general concept of space can determine nothing in respect to magnitude'.<sup>124</sup> In

<sup>115</sup> Jammer, *Concepts of Space* (note 111), 134–135.

<sup>116</sup> Jammer, *Concepts of Space* (note 111), 138.

<sup>117</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (note 71), A22–A23/B37.

<sup>118</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (note 71), A34/B50.

<sup>119</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (note 71), A23/B37–B38.

<sup>120</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (note 71), A24/B38–B39.

<sup>121</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (note 71), note to A23.

<sup>122</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (note 71), A37.

<sup>123</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (note 71), note to A37.

<sup>124</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (note 71), A25.

the second edition (1787) he slightly alters the formulation: ‘Space is represented as an infinite given magnitude... Therefore the *original representation* of space is an *a priori* intuition, not a concept’.<sup>125</sup> This leads to the essentially important claim: ‘we can accordingly speak of space, extended beings, and so on, only from the human standpoint’.<sup>126</sup> A separate 1786 essay on orientation, that is literally, finding the sunrise in the sky, Kant notes that ‘even with all the objective data of the sky, I orient myself *geographically* only through a *subjective* ground of differentiation’.<sup>127</sup> Space and time are thus not absolute in anything like a Newtonian sense, nor does Cartesian geometry tell us about the world *as it is*. Rather they are modes of access to the way the world appears to us. Kant therefore concludes in a note to his own edition: ‘space and time of course have objective reality, but not for what pertains to things outside of their relation to a faculty of cognition, but rather only in relation to it, and thus to the form of sensibility, hence solely as appearances’.<sup>128</sup>

Several points emerge from this. One is that Kant’s view of space (and time) undergoes some important developments, and that we need to be careful in taking claims in, and about, certain periods, as indicative of his thought as a whole. The second is that the *Geography*, given over several decades, is in part affected by these shifts. Preliminary investigations of the student transcripts indicate this: the Holstein-Beck from 1758 to 1759 contains no theoretical discussion of space and time and their relation to geography and history; the courses from the mid 1770s have the more extensive introductory discussion drawn upon above (such as Kähler, which is the basis for the Rink edition introduction); whereas a course from the last years, such as the Wolter transcript from 1796, underplays the theoretical material but assumes its essential insights. Third, and most important, that Kant’s mature view—the one that emerges in 1770 and is the view of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, and arguably that of the majority of the geography lectures, is not an absolute view of space on the model of Descartes or Newton.<sup>129</sup> The claim that Kant makes is that space, as this ‘conceptual fiction’, offers a way of insight into how we perceive the world, and is open to scientific examination, rather than this determination being necessarily representative of space itself. In many places Kant recognises that directions in space are a product of our body’s encounter with space rather than absolute and self-evident.

In addition, as the work on space and time in the *Geography* indicates, Kant is trying to work the dimensions of space and time together. Kant surely does not advance the kind of historical–geographical materialism advocated by the likes of Harvey, or the ‘spatial history’ other geographers have suggested. But his separation of space and time is a product of theorising, when in practice—either in our experience or in the relation of geographical details to historical studies—they are continually intertwined.

<sup>125</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (note 71), B39–B40. ‘Given’ and ‘a priori’ are in bold in the text.

<sup>126</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (note 71), A26/B42.

<sup>127</sup> Kant, What does it mean to orientate oneself in thinking?, in: *Religion and Rational Theology* (note 50), 9.

<sup>128</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (note 71), note to A41.

<sup>129</sup> Kant’s views on space are also amended in his *Opus Postumum*. For some instructive indications of where this might go, see J. Edwards, *Substance, Force, and the Possibility of Knowledge*, Berkeley, 2000, especially 173–174.

## Conclusion

Given the renewed interest in the *Anthropology* and the links this material has to the *Geography*, and the forthcoming translation of these lectures in the volume on *Natural Science*, this seems an opportune moment to take stock of their historical importance and contemporary relevance. To read Kant's work on geography is an inherently interdisciplinary venture, since they cover both human and physical geography and obviously relate to philosophical concerns. The issues raised by these texts of Kant's are textual and linguistic, philological and hermeneutic, philosophical and political, even as we consider their relation to geography and the wider history of ideas. Only a multi-disciplinary, and multi-handed, approach can do justice to their complexity.<sup>130</sup> For geographers these lectures have some fundamental challenges to offer. Most of it is indeed, as Hartshorne, following Adickes, suggested, of historical interest. This is the very reason why it is so interesting. If nothing else, this account offered here is to show just how many difficulties there are around the texts of Kant's geographies and their meanings. The link to the anthropology lectures and the question of race is a fundamental concern, precisely because it is so deeply problematic, and because of the challenge Bernasconi and Harvey have thrown down to geographers and others who wish to appeal to Kant's cosmopolitan instincts. More positively, and in part going beyond the *Geography* itself, there may be something of fundamental interest in the thinking of the relation between space and time, geography and history. This is not to co-opt Kant into arguments for the primacy of geography over history, nor for claims of their equal status in the study of social relations, but rather to recognise that the tradition of Western thought has not always had the imbalance it is often assumed to have had.

The argument made here could easily be extended to suggest that the other important geographical issues, such as the relation between the human and the environment, and the link or distinction between the human and nature, might also be profitably be rethought from the perspective of a closer engagement with Kant's critical philosophy as a whole.<sup>131</sup> It seems unquestionable, however, that a more nuanced understanding of these lectures and Kant's work more generally can only be a good thing for the history of the discipline of geography.

## Note on references

Works available in English translation are generally referenced to the *Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant in Translation*, which unfortunately does not have volume numbers. References are therefore given to volumes independently. References to the *Critique of Pure Reason* are given to the standard A/B pagination of the first and second editions.

<sup>130</sup> A forthcoming volume of essays (Elden and Mendieta (Eds), *Reading Kant's Geography* (note 32)) attempts to begin this process of interdisciplinary dialogue concerning the lectures. The book seeks to provide a range of essays discussing, contextualizing and criticizing Immanuel Kant's work on geography; brings together scholars of geography, philosophy and related disciplines to allow a broad discussion of the importance of Kant's text for philosophical and geographical work, both historically and in the contemporary context; and seeks to deal with some of the complexities of this topic.

<sup>131</sup> I owe the specific example to one of the anonymous referees.

For works not in English translation references are to the Akademie Ausgabe of *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1900ff, referred to by KGS, and followed by volume number and page. The *Physische Geographie* appears in Vol IX: *Logik, Physische Geographie, Pädagogik*.

Student transcripts are quoted from the versions produced by Werner Stark, to whom I am extremely grateful for his kind access to as yet unpublished materials.

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