

EDITORIAL

Foreword

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This was already going to be a rather special ‘special issue’ of *Kantian Review* when Charles Mills agreed to co-edit it. My own interest in the topic was, admittedly, fairly young. I had just led a graduate seminar looking into the history of the philosophy of race, which naturally devoted a fair amount of time to Kant’s notorious contributions to racial ‘science’ as well as to Mills’ careful and critical scholarship on Kant’s views on race. As a consequence of Mills’ work, and of that of others (some of whom are represented in this issue), I had come to be rather pessimistic about whether Kant’s ethical and political project might be salvaged in light of his repugnant racial theories, and what (positive) relevance it might have, especially in a contemporary context where the terrible legacy and the persistent reality of racism (not to mention of sexism and colonialism) had become plainly obvious.

It was in this pessimistic cast of mind that I came across Mills’ ‘Black Radical Kantianism’ (BRK) published in 2018. With BRK, Mills attempts to ‘rethink [Kantian] principles and ideals *in the light of* a modernity structured by racial domination’ (Mills 2018: 3), and in so doing opens a possibility for a reappropriation of Kantian thinking that harnesses its considerable resources without resorting to highly contentious or otherwise problematic strategies such as quarantining or soft-peddalling Kant’s own views on race and their structuring significance for core parts of his philosophy (cf. Mills 2018: 9, 10–11). Mills’ BRK is an agenda-setting piece, and it was by way of exploring the potential of such a radicalization of Kantianism that I first approached him in October 2020 with the proposal for co-editing an issue of *Kantian Review* devoted to the topic of ‘Radicalizing Kant’. It is fair to say that Mills was enthusiastic about the project, though in a testament to his own intellectual humility, he insisted that the issue also invite contributions that are sceptical about the prospect of such a radicalization. Accordingly, it was decided to add the question mark that appears in the issue’s title.

After finalizing and confirming a list of contributors to the issue, a workshop for the papers was held 16–17 June 2021. The event took place remotely, with all of the contributors attending along with a couple of invited participants. Mills himself was actively engaged throughout, attentive, generous (even exuberant) in his praise, but also fair and constructive in his criticism. This was all the more notable, and poignant, given the fact that Mills had been diagnosed with metastatic cancer the month previous, a circumstance that I (and, I suspect, many of the participants) had been

unaware of at the time. With drafts of the contributions in hand, the plan had been for Mills to pen an introduction to the issue, reflecting on the prospects and possibilities of his radicalized Kantianism in light of the discussion. This plan was upended by the advance of Mills' illness through the summer, and he passed away on 20 September 2021. At that point, the editorial decision was made to proceed with the issue, and all of the original group of contributors graciously agreed to continue to be involved. It was also decided that the issue should retain the critical perspective on Mills' project, thereby honouring his original vision for it. Mills' unwritten introduction to the special issue is but one of the many losses to scholarship on, among other topics, the history of political philosophy, the philosophy of race and Kant scholarship, incurred by his passing. In place of the intended introduction, his former colleague Rachel Zuckert kindly agreed to pen a memorial, which follows this foreword.

Acknowledgements. A special issue such as this, even under normal circumstances, is the work of many hands. First and foremost, I am grateful to Charles Mills, whose work was its inspiration in the first place and gave me the opportunity to make the acquaintance of a truly remarkable thinker. I am also grateful for the assistance of my editorial colleagues at *Kantian Review* – Howard Williams for his enthusiasm and support throughout, and Richard Aquila for his support and ever-diligent work in copy-editing the contributions. For their service as referees and advisers, or in just generally making up for the considerable deficits in my own expertise, I would also like to thank the following: Elvira Basevich, Patrick Frierson, Louis-Philippe Hodgson, Sarah Holtman, Dilek Huseyinzadegan, Dwight Lewis, Robert Loudon, Huaping Lu-Adler, Inder Marwah, Jennifer Mensch, Jordan Pascoe, John Zammito and Rachel Zuckert.

Reference

Mills, Charles W. (2018) 'Black Radical Kantianism'. *Res Philosophica*, 95(1), 1–33.