

HERACLITEAN CRITIQUE OF KANTIAN AND ENLIGHTENMENT ETHICS THROUGH THE FIJIAN *ETHOS*

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ABSTRACT: Kant makes a much-unexpected confession in a much-unexpected place. In the *Criticism of the third paralogism of transcendental psychology* of the first *Critique* Kant accepts the irrefutability of the Heraclitean notion of universal becoming or the transitory nature of all things, admitting the impossibility of positing a totally persistent and self-conscious subject. The major Heraclitean doctrine of *panta rhei* makes it impossible to conduct philosophical inquiry by assuming a self-conscious subject or “I,” which would potentially be in constant motion like other thoughts. For it rules out the possibility of completely detached reasoning which necessitates an unchanging state of mind. In this paper, Kaplama uses *panta rhei* to critically examine the philosophical shortcomings and contradictions of Kantian and Enlightenment ethics. In his examination, he specifically focuses on the teleological nature of Kant’s principle of freedom and ideal of moral autonomy which have dominated the Enlightenment thought. By doing so, he argues that it is essentially inaccurate to posit *Überlegenheit* (the state of being superior to nature) as the foundation of philosophical inquiry mainly because this would contradict the Enlightenment’s claim to constitute a rupture from classic and medieval metaphysics and would render Enlightenment a mere extension of Christian metaphysics. As in Christianity, *Überlegenheit* presupposes two separate realms, the actual (contingent) and ideal (pure) realms of thought and assumes that the transcendence commences from the level of the late metaphysical/teleological construction of the ‘subject’ who is completely persistent, self-conscious and immune to change. He then substantiates these points with reference to the philosophical roots of ethnic prejudice displayed by the post-Enlightenment colonialists and the missionaries in Fiji and the Pacific. This brief critical examination of the post-Enlightenment ethnocentrism will be conducted under the following three points: a) On the Enlightenment’s teleological and universalistic understanding of humanity and the concept of progress versus the Fijian concepts of the continuity of life, regeneration, and reproduction b) On the Enlightenment’s ideal of the free-willing and independent individual subject versus the Fijian ideas of ‘the cord’, reciprocity, and *vanua*, and c) On the Enlightenment’s (and Christianity’s)

strict dualism between physics and metaphysics, nature and human mind, body and soul versus the Fijian bio-centrism, the sanctity of *vanua* and the cosmological concept of *mana*.

KEYWORDS: Kant; Heraclitus; Enlightenment; Physis; Ethos; *Panta rhei*; Change; Subject; Free-will; Transcendence; Universalism; Naturalism; Life; Vanua; Mana

INTRODUCTION

Kant makes a much-unexpected confession in a much-unexpected place. In the *Criticism of the third paralogism of transcendental psychology* of the first *Critique* Kant accepts the irrefutability of the Heraclitean notion of universal becoming or the transitory nature of all things, admitting the impossibility of positing a totally persistent and self-conscious subject:

“Even if the saying of some ancient schools, that everything is transitory and nothing in the world is persisting and abiding, cannot hold as soon as one assumes substances, it is still not refuted through the unity of self-consciousness. For we cannot judge even from our own consciousness whether as soul we are persisting or not, because we ascribe to our identical Self only that of which we are conscious; and so we must necessarily judge that we are the very same in the whole of the time of which we are conscious. But from the standpoint of someone else we cannot declare this to be valid because, since in the soul we encounter no persisting appearance other than the representation “I,” which accompanies and connects all of them, we can never make out whether this I (a mere thought) does not flow as well as all the other thoughts that are linked to one another through it.”¹

The major Heraclitean doctrine of *panta rhei* makes it impossible to conduct philosophical inquiry by assuming a self-conscious subject or “I,” which would potentially be in constant motion like other thoughts. For it rules out the possibility of completely detached reasoning which necessitates an unchanging state of mind. However, Kantian-Enlightenment ethics requires an unchanging or completely detached reasoning, thus setting a certain predetermined *telos* for human behaviour

¹ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. Guyer and Wood, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, p.424 (A364)

that ought to rule and regulate it. At stake here are the ideals of freedom and moral autonomy. The ideal of freedom not only dominates the Enlightenment thought but also defines the ethical action/behaviour. An action is ethical only insofar as a free-willing individual who acts based on the principles of detached reasoning conducts it. This reasoning must be detached from nature (*phusis*) in order to satisfy the criteria of the ideal of freedom. However, this predetermined *telos* (of freedom) contradicts another main argument of Enlightenment ethics, namely its critique of Christian asceticism or medieval metaphysics which is itself based on the detachment of human soul and reason from dynamic nature. Kant's concept of *Überlegenheit* (the state of being superior or transcendence) refers to *one's* ascending or going beyond his subjectivity (achieving purity and superiority). Thus *Überlegenheit* presupposes two separate realms, the actual (contingent) and ideal (pure) realms of self and the understanding. It assumes that the transcendence commences from the level of the late metaphysical construction of "the subject." Due to the superiority (*Überlegenheit*) assigned to it, the notion of subject as well as human reason replace the God and the godly in classical and medieval metaphysics² instead of generating a substantial rupture from the Christian tradition. Especially after Descartes, the modern philosophical argumentation is based on an either-or reasoning. In a strict and limited modern philosophical context, a way of thinking is either objective or subjective, either naturalist or rationalist, either empirical or speculative, either realist or idealist, either physical or metaphysical. Such arbitrary oppositions have contributed to the deepening of the large gap inherited from the traditional monotheistic religions based on the opposition between the physical world or nature and God and metaphysics. What then is needed to divert the philosophical reasoning from these ready-made opposing conceptions?

Other than this difficult and generic problem, this article aims to give satisfactory responses to the following questions: How can we use the Heraclitean doctrine of change (*panta rhei*) to demonstrate the weaknesses and shortcomings of the Kantian and Enlightenment ethics? How can we use the Heraclitean doctrine of "it is in changing that things find their purpose" to provide an alternative to the teleological nature of the Enlightenment thought? What is the most crucial difference between the Enlightenment's ideas of "progress" and "change"? Why is it philosophically important to distinguish them? How does the idea of progress itself entail the narrowing of Enlightenment's *Weltanschauung*? How do Kantian ideas of moral autonomy and principle of freedom relate to "progress" rather than "change"? What

² Erman Kaplama, *Cosmological Aesthetics through the Kantian Sublime and Nietzschean Dionysian*, UPA: Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, 2014, p.12

role does the principle of universality play in the formation of Kantian and Enlightenment ethics? What role does the idea of freedom play in the formation of Kantian and Enlightenment ethics? And how does this idea differ from the *not-yet metaphysical* (cosmological) idea of freedom? How do such Cartesian dualisms³ as internal-external, ideas-sense objects, mind/soul-body affect the prospect and *telos* of the Enlightenment project and Kantian ethics? How does Kant replace the purely metaphysical and teleological idea of God with the anthropocentric and teleological idea of free, autonomous and fully self-conscious human subject? How can we overcome the inherent contradiction between naturalism and rationalism? Why do we need to abandon teleological and theological epistemologies to achieve this? How does Kant's teleological and dualistic move to justify such self-sufficient intelligible ideas as the categorical imperative, freedom and moral autonomy undermine his (and Enlightenment's) zeal to break away from Cartesian dualisms and to mediate between rationalism and naturalism?

I will then substantiate the responses to these questions with reference to a case study on the philosophical roots of ethnocentrism and ethnic prejudice displayed by the post-Enlightenment colonialists and missionaries in Fiji. This brief study will expose the shortcomings of the universalistic Kantian and Enlightenment ethics while demonstrating its contrasts with the Fijian *ethos* (which led to the misunderstanding of and prejudice towards the Fijian culture). However, in our examination, we need to be careful not to romanticize the Fijian *ethos* or over-emphasize the conceptual/spiritual aspects but rather focus on the ancient worldview embedded in the Fijian culture which may then be used to show its contrasts with the ideas and ideals imparted by the post-Enlightenment colonialists and Christian missionaries. This brief critical examination of the post-Enlightenment ethnocentrism will be conducted under the following three points: a) On the Enlightenment's teleological and universalistic

³ Descartes' rationalism and his disbelief of the senses that maintained the irreconcilable separation between the external, sensible, material world and mind/ideas/metaphysics and God led to the following controversies that fed into the Enlightenment: "Are mind and body two distinct sorts of substances, as Descartes argues, and if so, what is the nature of each, and how are they related to each other, both in the human being (which presumably "has" both a mind and a body) and in a unified world system? If matter is inert (as Descartes claims), what can be the source of motion and the nature of causality in the physical world? And of course the various epistemological problems: the problem of objectivity, the role of God in securing our knowledge, the doctrine of innate ideas, et cetera." (William Bristow. 'Enlightenment' in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2010, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/enlightenment/>) Retrieved on 8/8/14

understanding of humanity and the concept of progress versus the Fijian concepts of the continuity of life, regeneration, and reproduction b) On the Enlightenment's ideal of the free-willing and independent individual subject versus the Fijian ideas of "the cord", reciprocity, and *vanua*, and c) On the Enlightenment's (and Christianity's) strict dualism between physics and metaphysics, nature and human mind, body and soul versus the Fijian bio-centrism, the sanctity of *vanua* and the cosmological concept of *mana*.

SITUATING KANT IN THE ENLIGHTENMENT THOUGHT AND THE ENLIGHTENMENT IN KANTIAN THOUGHT: THE PRINCIPLES OF ENLIGHTENMENT, KANTIAN ETHICS AND DEONTOLOGY

The Enlightenment is the culmination of major historical events and revolutions that took place in philosophy, science, politics and society in 17th and 18th century Europe. The common ground for all these events is their reactionary nature against the medieval Christian *Weltanschauung*. This common ground is mainly structured on the teleological and rationalistic (and thereby universalistic) Enlightenment ideals of freedom, progress and equality. Particularly the scientific revolution made it compulsory for philosophers and social scientists to question not only the medieval theology and cosmology (as two branches of metaphysics) but also the dualistic presuppositions of medieval thought. This questioning led to Enlightenment's zeal to generate a rupture from geocentric, religious conceptions of the cosmos to establish the philosophical principles of a new era of thinking based essentially on human rational capacity (rather than religion, tradition, culture and wisdom). In that sense, it is safe to say that the ideas of progress and change played an equally significant role in Enlightenment's attempt to generate a rupture from the medieval worldview characterized by the Biblical and Socratic presumptions and dualisms.

Despite these common principles, Enlightenment thought is a combination of rather disparate intellectual traditions such as French *Encyclopédistes* (D'Alembert, Voltaire, Diderot, Montesquieu), British empiricism (Hume, Locke and Hobbes), and German idealism and *die Aufklärung* (Leibniz, Wolff and Kant). This paper intends to focus on the latter in an attempt to provide an extensive critique of the main philosophical principles that underlie both the Enlightenment and Kantian thought and ethics in particular. Leibniz's arguments "everything that exists has a sufficient reason for its existence" (see Kant's principle of causality⁴) and the universe is fully

⁴ Korsgaard doubts the validity of Kant's principle of causality referring to the new discoveries in modern physics: "the principle that every event has a cause has been challenged by modern physics; modern scientists believe that at the level of the most fundamental particles and events it does not hold. An obvious question is what impact this has on Kant's argument. Must he give up the idea that the causal

intelligible to human beings through our natural capacity of reasoning⁵ constitute the groundwork of German Enlightenment (*die Aufklärung*)⁶. Leibniz's principle of sufficient reason informs and directs Enlightenment's and Kant's zeal to prove that the universe is fully intelligible to us through the exercise of our faculty of reason. It establishes the natural priority and supremacy of reason over other faculties, senses and intuitions. This is one of the reasons why the Enlightenment is otherwise called the Age of Reason (in contrast with the Medieval Age of Faith). However, attributing purpose to natural and mental phenomena, this principle also makes Kantian and Enlightenment ethics and philosophy in general teleological.

Kant is seen by most of the post-Enlightenment philosophers as the Enlightenment thinker *par excellence*. He inherits one of his most important doctrines from the Enlightenment thought, namely the supreme authority of human reason or rational capacity which in turn grounds the basic principle of Kantian (deontological) ethics, namely the principle of moral autonomy. According to this principle, a choice is right if it conforms the moral norms that derive not from religion but from human reasoning capacity that each and every human individual possesses. In his *What is Enlightenment?* Kant articulates this as follows:

“Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to use one's own understanding without the guidance of another...This immaturity is self-incurred if its cause is not lack of understanding, but lack of resolution and courage to use it without the guidance of another. The motto of enlightenment is therefore: Sapere aude! Have courage to use your own understanding!... For enlightenment of this kind, all that is needed is freedom. And the freedom in question is the most innocuous form of all freedom to make public use of one's reason in all matters. The public use of man's reason must always be free, and it alone can bring about enlightenment among men; the private use of reason may quite often be very narrowly restricted, however, without undue hindrance to the progress of enlightenment”⁷.

Kantian thought puts humanity (and human rationality) back in the center. Korsgaard, referring to Kant's *Groundwork*, claims that the rational order metaphysics attempts to find in the world “is something which we human beings impose upon the

principle is a synthetic a priori truth, or is it enough for his purposes that events at the macro-level must still be causally ordered if the world is to be knowable? For our purposes here, the causal principle may still be used as an example of a synthetic a priori truth” (Christine Korsgaard, ‘Introduction’, in Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Cambridge University Press, 2012, p.xxxiv n.3)

⁵ Wolff takes this principle one step further and attempts to theorize a rationalist metaphysical system to explain reality based on scientific truths and principles. (Bristow, ‘Enlightenment’)

⁶ Bristow, ‘Enlightenment’

⁷ Immanuel Kant, *An Answer to the question: What is Enlightenment?*, Königsberg, Germany, 1784, p.1

world – in part through the way we construct our knowledge, but also, in a different way, through our actions”⁸ The central themes of Kant’s *Groundwork* constitute the main principles of Enlightenment ethics some of which are the intrinsic value of human subject, respect of our own humanity finding expression in our respect for that of others, the association of good with free-will and moral autonomy, and evil with enslavement⁹. This is how Kant justifies the relevance of the ideal of freedom in his system of thought. In fact, thanks to Kant, the ideal of freedom or principle of moral autonomy becomes so integral to the Enlightenment that it redefines the latter by becoming its ultimate *telos*. In *What is Enlightenment?* Kant articulates this *telos* as follows:

“If it is now asked whether we at present live in an enlightened age, the answer is: No, but we do live in an age of enlightenment. As things are at present, we still have a long way to go before men as a whole can be in a position (or can ever be put into a position) of using their own understanding confidently and well in religious matters, without outside guidance. But we do have distinct indications that the way is now being cleared for them to work freely in this direction, and that the obstacles to universal enlightenment, to man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity, are gradually becoming fewer. In this respect our age is the age of enlightenment.”¹⁰

The authority ascribed to human reason over and above religions¹¹, beliefs, myths and traditions and a steadfast confidence in intellectual human faculties are very visible in the entirety of the Enlightenment thought. Any systematic or unsystematic religion needs to be opposed or criticized to overcome man’s self-incurred immaturity for the ultimate purpose of awakening his intellectual powers which should in turn lead to a better and more fulfilled existence¹². Before Kant, another Enlightenment thinker, Rousseau identifies the accomplishment of human freedom as the ultimate *telos* of Enlightenment though he leaves unexplained the problem of situating human freedom within cosmos. Kant wrestles with this problem in his entire philosophy from his earliest writings on metaphysics of nature to the three *Critiques* and finally comes up with the purely internal and rational principle of moral autonomy which rests on the presupposed dualism between nature and freedom.

⁸ Korsgaard, ‘Introduction’, p.x

⁹ Korsgaard, ‘Introduction’, p.x

¹⁰ Kant, *An Answer to the question: What is Enlightenment?*, p.4

¹¹ Kant defends this as follows: I have portrayed matters of religion as the focal point of enlightenment, i.e. of man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity. This is firstly because our rulers have no interest in assuming the role of guardians over their subjects so far as the arts and sciences are concerned, and secondly, because religious immaturity is the most pernicious and dishonourable variety of all (Kant, *An Answer to the question: What is Enlightenment?*, p.5)

¹² Bristow, ‘Enlightenment’

According to Kant's doctrine of moral autonomy, a choice is right if it conforms the moral norms that derive not from religion but from human reasoning capacity which distinguishes human beings from other animals. This is arguably the most important principle of Kantian ethics as it is designed to substantiate the idea and ideal of freedom. Human beings must be understood as fully self-conscious and morally autonomous beings who can exercise their will freely. This understanding evidently considers all human beings immune to change and persistent against so-called external historical events such as wars, starvation, famine, disasters and thereby potentially moral. Will, according to Kant, is always internal, and practical-moral principle is internally legislated. As aforementioned, Kant uses the term *Überlegenheit* or the state of being superior to the external, natural, bodily, historical and contextual factors that may influence the ethical decision, judgment and action of the "subject". Treating human beings as ends-in-themselves, and acknowledging that human reason is to be valued in and for itself, things that are important to us such as science, art and philosophy are also to be valued in-themselves. All human desires, needs and wants must be transcended for the overarching *telos* of an ideal human community based on human rationality conceived above and beyond the contingent realm of nature¹³. This is also because Kant considers human nature as completely separate from nature by means of positing moral autonomy as against externally imposed laws of nature, God, or state (which are, according to Kant, contingent on the level of maturity of the given culture, society, tradition). This once more brings us back to Kant's idea(l) of the fully autonomous moral human subject who imposes his own legislation and rules on the world while respecting others' right to impose their own reasoning. This in turn reveals his pre-destined zeal to overcome his animal nature and establish his enlightened humanity (or namely the kingdom of ends¹⁴) through the principle of moral autonomy that underlies Kant's universalism and cosmopolitanism.

According to Kant, the good will is the only thing to which we attribute unconditional worth. Kant uses "good will" to substantiate his duty principle. This

¹³ Korsgaard, 'Introduction', p.xxx-xxvi

¹⁴ Kant describes the kingdom of ends as follows: "The concept of every rational being that must consider itself as universally legislating through all the maxims of its will, so as to judge itself and its actions from this point of view, leads to a very fruitful concept attached to it, namely that of a *kingdom of ends*. By a kingdom, however, I understand the systematic union of several rational beings through common laws. Now, since laws determine ends according to their universal validity, it is possible...to conceive a whole of ends (of rational beings as ends in themselves, as well as ends of its own that each of them may set for itself) in systematic connection, i.e. a kingdom of ends, which is possible according to the above principles. For all rational beings stand under the *law* that each of them is to treat itself and all others *never merely as a means*, but always *at the same time as an end in itself*" (Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Cambridge University Press, 2012, p.45)

principle is essentially based on Kant's fondness with the idea of genuine morality that originates from his attempt to preserve purity, innocence and good-heartedness of human will against potentially corrupting inclinations, desires and needs (one of the most important doctrines of the Judeo-Christian asceticism). According to Kant's Categorical Imperative, one ought to act according to that practical law (maxim) whereby one can, at the same time, will that it should become a universal law. This categorical imperative can only be cognized and willed by a rational, freethinking individual whose judgment, choice, decision, action is not conditioned by the "contingent" factors of the "external" nature (essentially consisting of objects of pleasure or displeasure and suffering or happiness). To prove that such objective and rationally acquired imperatives potentially exist for all human beings, Kant resorts to the principle of universalizability and argues that we ought to follow the practical laws based not on higher conditions (such as the will of God) but rather solely on the possibility to provide universal justifications for their validity. For, according to Kant, only within a will purified from all impulses and other possible contingent factors remains nothing but its conformity with the principle of universalizability¹⁵.

HERACLITEAN CRITIQUE OF KANTIAN AND ENLIGHTENMENT ETHICS

Kant replaces the purely metaphysical and teleological idea of God with the anthropocentric idea of subject or the idea of the "I". In other words, he replaces the static theology with static teleology, in the sense that the free, autonomous and fully self-conscious human subject (who is fully persistent and thereby immune to change) is the ultimate purpose of the Kantian/Enlightenment ethics. And this very construal of human being, I argue, hinders Enlightenment's purpose to generate a rupture from the traditional medieval theology and metaphysics as a whole. The idea of the "enlightened self" has been construed as the central *telos* of humanity since Enlightenment and this is problematic since the idea itself is a mere offshoot of the dualist Christian-Protestant metaphysics. Enlightenment remains to be as purpose-oriented as the religious dogmas it is trying to overcome. The idea of change, which was essential to the 17th and 18th century philosophy that initiated the very idea of a rupture, was not followed to the end. Kant makes it clear that one should not appeal to any empirical source to justify a course of action and that such contingent and changing standards cannot constitute an objective categorical ground. But then, how can one be morally motivated solely on the basis of the universalizability of a rationally acquired ethical rule/law/norm? This problem arises in ethical studies not because it is supposed to arise and needs to be resolved, but rather because of the alleged

¹⁵ Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, p.17

separation between external nature and internal human reason that derives from the Cartesian and Christian dualistic understanding of human nature. On this Bristow says,

“Through the postulation of a realm of unknowable noumena (things in themselves) over against the realm of nature as a realm of appearances, Kant manages to make place for practical concepts that are central to our understanding of ourselves even while grounding our scientific knowledge of nature as a domain governed by deterministic causal laws.”¹⁶

As Bristow argues, Kant does this to make room for faith in such transcendental ideas as God, freedom and the soul by positing them over and against the realm of nature as a realm of appearances, which suddenly become separate from human rationality and the ideas generated by human reason¹⁷. Due to this, the appearances (which are essentially integral to the perception of the phenomena of nature) were reduced to their Cartesian dualistic definition. By the dualistic reconstruction of noumenal and phenomenal realms, Kant uses transcendentalism and the idea of *Überlegenheit* to pave the way to systematically justify the necessity to posit such intelligible ideas as God, freedom and the soul. This teleological move, however, renders his philosophy dualistic and thereby undermines his initial zeal to break away from Cartesian definitions and to mediate between rationalism and naturalism.

According to Kant, morally autonomous individuals (potentially everyone) can transcend their contingent reality and reclaim their freedom. However, this teleologically constructed transcendence from contingent to pure realm of free-thinking and willing (which originates from Judeo-Christian metaphysics as well as Buddhism) considers nature and freedom as completely separate realms that can never be reconciled. This is also because transcendence requires immunity to change. Therefore, Kantian ethics fails to situate humanity within the senseless motion of the cosmos and merely substitutes the Cartesian dualism of body and soul with its new dualism of nature and freedom¹⁸ instead of providing a real solution to overcome the

¹⁶ Bristow, ‘Enlightenment’

¹⁷ “Kant means his system to make room for humanity's practical and religious aspirations toward the transcendent as well. According to Kant's idealism, the realm of nature is limited to a realm of appearances, and we can intelligibly think supersensible objects such as God, freedom and the soul, though we cannot have knowledge of them” (Bristow, “Enlightenment”)

¹⁸ In the third *Critique*, Kant compares these two domains as follows: “All facts belong either to the *concept of nature*, which proves its reality in the objects of the senses that are given (or can possibly be given) prior to all concepts of nature, or to the *concept of freedom*, which sufficiently proves its reality through the causality of reason with regard to certain effects in the sensible world possible by means of it, and which are irrefutably postulated in the moral law. The concept of nature (belonging merely to theoretical cognition) is either metaphysical and completely *a priori* or physical, i.e. *a posteriori*, and necessarily

dualisms inherent in Western philosophical tradition since Plato and the Judeo-Christian metaphysics. Korsgaard argues, “a free person is one whose actions are not determined by any external force, not even by his own desires. This is merely a negative conception of freedom. But Kant thinks it points us towards a more positive conception of freedom”¹⁹. This understanding of nature as something “external” and as something that needs to be transcended echoes the Christian doctrine that pursuing strong desires/pleasures deprive one of having free will to follow God’s laws. And it is negative because our will becomes free only if we manage to overcome natural determination and our desires deriving from *external* causes. However, Kant then confesses the unavoidable flaw in his argumentation by admitting that the connection he tries to establish between free-willing individual and universal moral law is essentially circular and thereby cannot be used to explain the motivation behind our actions in-itself. To overcome this problem, Kant appeals to his famous distinction between the noumenal (the world as it is in itself) and phenomenal world (the world as it appears to us) essentially claiming, “the world is given to us through our senses, it *appears* to us, and to that extent we are passive in the face of it. We must therefore think of the world as generating, or containing something which generates those appearances – something which is their source, and gives them to us. We can only *know* the world in so far as it is phenomenal, that is, in so far as it is given to the senses. But we can *think* of it as noumenal”²⁰. Here, Kant evidently appeals to the Cartesian dualism between sense-perceptions (that constitute the phenomenal world) and rational ideas (that constitute the noumenal world), and as Descartes does, Kant also declares the latter to be the real world (and thereby the former to be the illusory one). This, Kant explains, is because the sense-perceptions, through which we perceive the world as it appears to us, are essentially passive and the subject simply finds himself surrounded and affected (*Empfindung*) by worldly phenomena. He also adds that the *good* based on practical laws needs to be distinguished from the *agreeable*, “as that which influences the will only by means of sensation from merely subjective causes, which hold only for the senses of this or that one, and not as a principle of reason, which holds for everyone.”²¹ By distinguishing between these two worlds (the phenomenal and noumenal realms), Kant aims to establish that human beings, as the members of the noumenal world, are or at least have the potential to become free and autonomous.

conceivable only by means of determinate experience. The metaphysical concept of nature (which presupposes no determinate experience) is therefore ontological.” (Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p.339)

¹⁹ Korsgaard, ‘Introduction’, p.xxix

²⁰ Korsgaard, ‘Introduction’, p.xxxi

²¹ Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, p.27

This is the point of argumentation where Kant's definition of noumenal, autonomous, moral and free *subject* acquires the characteristics that are originally attributed to the Judeo-Christian God. Kant says, "...whence do we have the concept of God, as the highest good? Solely from the *idea* that reason a priori devises of moral perfection, and connects inseparably with the concept of a free will"²². However, if we accept this rather stipulated argumentation, there arises another problem: how are we to ground the *world of sense* (phenomenal world) and its laws on *the world of understanding* (noumenal world)? In other words, how can the laws of *physis* (nature) be grounded on the principles/laws/imperatives of *ethos*? I argue that this so-called necessary dualism derives from Kant's teleological misinterpretation of the so-called phenomenal world in which our actions are determined. This was Kant's attempt to prove the necessity of imposing a rational order on the natural world of sense through our higher universalizable and moral principles. But here, because of his dualistic definition of nature and freedom, once more Kant's proof falls rather short of proving his main argument that moral laws of the noumenal realm of ideas ground the phenomenal realm of nature, which requires us to neglect nature's dynamic, unpredictable, changing, irrational and overabundant character. Everything acquired through our senses such as our experience of change and life itself is therefore considered in Kantian ethics as impure and non-intellectual, and it is our responsibility as rational morally autonomous beings to purify our thoughts and ideas from our outer/external needs, desires and experiences so as to reach an *a priori* higher consciousness of our inner/internal noumenal world through transcendence. This thought is evidently reminiscent of the Judeo-Christian idea of purity and asceticism which Kant uses to found his principle of good will.

But, how can an ethically correct judgment be by its nature erroneous just because it does not stem from good will? This can only be justified if and when we consider willing as something entirely isolated from the action itself and this perspective derives from the very dualism between nature and freedom. However, once we reinstate freedom and human ability of reasoning back on where they originally derive from, namely nature itself, acting and willing can no longer be considered as entirely disparate. This is because while conduct may affect and change the will of the person doing it, the will of the person can also regulate and determine not only the outcome but also the very execution of the conduct itself. Therefore, once we obliterate the dualism between nature and freedom (or contingency and free-will), thinking, willing and acting can be intertwined into one good or bad way of conduct, and they are subject to change while the action is being conducted. Here, the most obvious example

²² Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, p.23

we can provide is the action of “living” itself. One cannot possibly plan out one’s life based on a certain free-will or categorical principle (to have a good life) and expect each and every event to turn out exactly as expected. So, during the conduct of living, one has to think, rethink, will and act spontaneously on the dynamic background of life itself, and goodness of the life led by one is determined by how well one links, balances and brings together his thoughts, intentions and actions into a whole. This viewpoint would also tie in with the Heraclitean principles of *panta rhei* and “it is in changing that things find their purpose” as it considers the thought “I” as part of the action of “living” itself instead of assuming it to have a superior (elevated) existence of its own outside of nature or *phusis*. While living and thereby changing, human beings not only find their purpose in life but also reconsider their wills, thoughts and judgments during which they become not objective nor universal nor free but rather wise. This brings us to another problematic principle of the deontological ethics, namely the Categorical Imperative.

According to Kant’s principle of the Categorical Imperative, the purity of our respect for the relevant practical law (maxim) can be assessed based on the principle of universalizability which determines whether or not an action is purely motivated by our respect for humanity. Kant provides several scenarios in the *Groundwork* to explain this principle such as borrowing money on the strength of a false promise. One problem that immediately arises with such scenarios is that the individual ‘subject’ imagines them as if isolated in a timeless and spaceless box (a realm where all other temporal and spatial factors are considered irrelevant). However, in reality in a constantly changing world, there are several judgments, decisions, actions, and factors that constantly affect each other. It is possible to provide unlimited versions of flow of events that take place (or may potentially take place) in real worldly life. This would make it impossible to have such set of rules, norms, and maxims. From a Heraclitean point of view, we can resolve this problem by opting for flexible principles that can be and should be open to interpretation (and reinterpretation) while according with *phusis* and the principle of change which would in turn allow for diverse cultural-ethical (spatial and temporal) perspectives. Moreover, willing the world of the universalized maxim itself makes an action (acted in accordance with the Categorical Imperative) teleological or purpose-oriented thus contradicting Kant’s principle of non-consequentialism. Since the rational individual is supposed to will the world in which everyone acts according to the universalizable laws of human reason, achieving this ideal realm of pure reason itself becomes the very *telos* of humanity (idea of human community that transcends all needs, desires and pleasures above and beyond the contingent realm of nature), and of all autonomously judged, decided, conducted

actions of free-willing individuals. Therefore, Kant becomes obliged to posit this *telos* of enlightened community of free and moral autonomous human beings guided by universalizable principle in order to justify his doctrines of good will, moral autonomy and categorical imperative. Since this teleological approach is essentially structured on the dualism between nature and freedom, it also fails to revolutionize the traditional metaphysics but rather reforms it by replacing God with noumenal realm of rational and moral individual subjects, religious willing with rational/intellectual willing, and the *telos* of achieving (through good deeds) the pure realm of God with the *telos* of achieving (through good will) the kingdom of ends.

PHILOSOPHICAL ROOTS OF ETHNOCENTRISM OF THE POST-ENLIGHTENMENT COLONIALISTS AND MISSIONARIES IN FIJI BASED ON THE HERACLITEAN CRITIQUE OF ENLIGHTENMENT ETHICS AND THE FIJIAN *ETHOS*

On the Enlightenment's teleological and universalistic understanding of humanity and the concept of progress versus the Fijian concepts of the continuity of life, regeneration, and reproduction.

Kant, giving an example on the duties of human beings deriving from the universal law of nature (namely the Categorical Imperative, 'act as if the maxim of your action were to become your will'), indirectly demeans the cultural values of the South Sea Islanders (namely the people of the South Pacific) thereby revealing his ethnic prejudice:

"A third (man) finds himself a talent that by means of some cultivation could make him a useful human being in all sorts of respects. However, he sees himself in comfortable circumstances and prefers to give himself up to gratification rather than to make the effort to expand and improve his fortunate natural predispositions. Yet, he still asks himself: whether his maxim of neglecting his natural gifts, besides its agreement with his propensity to amusement, also agrees with what one calls duty. Now he sees that a nature could indeed still subsist according to such a universal law, even if human beings (like South Sea Islanders) should let their talents rust and be intent on devoting their lives merely to idleness, amusement, procreation, in a word, to enjoyment; but he cannot possibly **will** that this become a universal law of nature, or as such be placed in us by natural instinct. For as a rational being he necessarily wills that all capacities in him be developed, because they serve him and are given to him for all sorts of possible purposes"²³

²³ Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, p.35

This example reveals the philosophical roots of this prejudice based on the dualistic understanding of human nature, the supremacy of reason/rationality over life, and the idea of the universal truth. The very reasons behind the prejudice of the post-Enlightenment Europeans are the deified ideas like freedom and progress. In contrast, enjoyment, amusement and procreation are considered as sin by the Protestant morality and as wasteful and irrational by Enlightenment and Kantian ethics. Therefore, the cultures of the South Sea Islanders look barbaric or sinful to post-Enlightenment colonialists and missionaries. For instance, Brantinger, in his recently published book *Taming the Cannibals*, recounts the accounts of Wesleyan missionaries of Fijian culture as follows: "Atrocities of the most fearful kind have come to my knowledge, which I *dare* not record here". They called these the unspeakable and hellish misbehavior. Moreover, missionaries also referred to warfare, cannibalism, torture, infanticide, widow strangling, and treacherous murder in their drawings regarding the Fijian culture"²⁴. The Enlightenment's and Kant's zeal to establish the validity of the universal ethical standards, the dominance of the idea of progress over change, the understanding of freedom as an 'idea' as well as an 'ideal' which is and has to be detached from nature (*phusis*) and thereby from 'change', and the entailing teleological understanding of human life and *ethos* constitute the grounding for European ethnocentrism and prejudice towards indigenous cultures. According to Brantinger, Enlightenment thinkers did not stress cultural over natural factors, which is why they did not, and could not grasp the possibility of different understandings of such concepts as history (cyclical rather than progressive), life and change and instead believed in the progress of cultural refinement.²⁵ As Brantinger states, both Kant and Hegel thought that the people of Africa and South Pacific (alongside other indigenous cultures) had no sense of history simply referring to the Western idea of history based on progress.

Asesela Ravuvu's book, *The Fijian Ethos* is based on a research focusing on the *vanua* of three inland villages in Viti Levu (Lutu, Matainasau and Laselevu). It is one of the few academic studies that try to understand the Fijian worldview, philosophy and way of life by looking at the ethical, social, political and religious concepts and ideas used in traditional Fijian ceremonies. Drawing on one of the ceremonies he recorded, Ravuvu underlines the importance of unity, solidarity, regeneration (fertility) and continuity of life in Fijian culture as well as the human beings and their relationships that constitute and secure this continuity by quoting the speech of a junior chief of Nakoidrau offering *sevusevu* to the men of Navunitivi:

²⁴ Patrick Brantinger, *Taming Cannibals: Race and the Victorians*, Cornell University Press, 2011, p.231

²⁵ Brantinger, *Taming Cannibals: Race and the Victorians*, pp.4-5

“We are only requesting that human beings will flourish in our establishment, and that life, with us, be preserved. Let our noble abode be strongly established, your abode, siblings, parents and your progeny, the holding together of our mutual existence...I, your child, continually say, that the *magiti*, like everything else, is of no substance. The thing which is of great importance is the person. When the chief has little material wealth, it is the people who will make up for it. The *vanua* must be strengthened and affirmed.”²⁶

From this speech Ravuvu derives the conclusions that according to Fijian *ethos*, human beings are to be valued not in and for themselves but rather as the members of the *vanua* and through their relations with each other as long as the continuity of life and *vanua* maintained through unity and regeneration. The people that constitute it must continually strengthen the *vanua* in order to preserve their values not as individuals but as the members of the *vanua* which gives them their identity. This idea radically contrasts the Kantian idea of human beings as free-willing rational individuals who have the capacity to rationalize and universalize and who must therefore be valued in and for themselves. Moreover, this also shows how unimportant the ideas of progress and freedom are with regard to Fijian *ethos* which is rather centered on the continuity of life and preservation of *vanua* through regeneration and unity. As long as the needs of the present situation are fulfilled and difficulties are handled unitedly and with care, *vanua* remains united and all its members are provided with prosperous life. On the other hand, as the junior chief of Nakoidrau says, if the unity among members of the *vanua* is not maintained, reaffirmed and redefined to accommodate changing circumstances, and the new forces are not handled properly, the *vanua* is doomed to suffer²⁷. Therefore, the ultimate purposes of the Fijian *ethos* are not progress and individual independence but rather the continuity of life, interdependence of the people and preservation of the identity of *vanua*.

On the Enlightenment's ideal of the free-willing and independent individual subject versus the Fijian ideas of "the cord", reciprocity, and vanua

Another Enlightenment thinker, Locke argued that the indigenous people did not have a sense of property (as they did not cultivate their lands) and thereby their lands could be considered as wastelands. This argument allowed the colonizers to declare these lands *terra nullius* thereby formally denying the very existence of Aborigines' rights over

²⁶ Asesela Ravuvu, *The Fijian Ethos*, Institute of Pacific Studies, University of South Pacific, Suva, Fiji, 1987, p.248

²⁷ Ravuvu, *The Fijian Ethos*, p.248

Australian land²⁸. On the other hand, as against Locke's argument, the Fijian concept of *vanua*, generally translated in English as "land", stands not only for the physical/phenomenal concept of land and its people but also for the values, beliefs and customs that have been cultivated on the land for the sake of achieving prosperity, solidarity and harmony. While *vanua* belongs to the people living on and through it, people and their customs and identity are the extensions of their *vanua* on which they dwell, live, regenerate and reproduce. In other words, *vanua*, as a cultural and philosophical concept, shapes and is in turn shaped by the *ethos* of the people dwelling on and living through it. These links or "cords" between people and *vanua* (also between different *yavusa* and *mataqali*) are constantly mentioned in Fijian ceremonies. With his continuous affirmation of the need to revitalize and strengthen the existing kinship bonds, the junior chief of Nakoidrau emphasizes "the socio-economic interdependence in terms of reproduction for the sake of the *vanua*". Thus, continues Ravuvu,

"Kinship was used to culturally define an interdependence (of the two *vanua*)...related to human reproduction and the regeneration of other resources which enhance the continuity of life and prosperity of the two *vanua*. Intergroup marriages, adoptions and the reciprocal transfer of resources keep such relationships alive. The children from previous marriages between the members of the two groups provide the link among them from one generation to the next. Historical and mythological relationships are revitalized to enable current problems to be faced jointly"²⁹.

This idea of "interdependence" very much resembles one of the principles of the universal theory of care ethics according to which all individuals are interdependent for achieving their interests. For human beings are social animals who cannot and should not prioritize their self-interest, and their well-being is determined by the well-being of those around them including the well-being of their environment animals, plants, rivers, oceans and lands. Similarly, in Fijian *ethos*, while positive relationship is defined by such concepts as reciprocation, recognition, respect, appreciation, strengthening of the bond, incorporation, unity, continuity, the negative relationship may be caused by and/or lead to non-reciprocation, non-recognition, lack of respect and appreciation, weakening and breaking of the bond, separation and disunity and eventually discontinuity³⁰. In Fijian culture, the concept-object that represents the characteristics of positive relationship such as reciprocation, respect, strengthening of the bond and continuity is *the cord* or namely *tabua* (whale's tooth). Such chiefly

²⁸ Brantinger, *Taming Cannibals: Race and the Victorians*, pp.4-5

²⁹ Ravuvu, *The Fijian Ethos*, p.247-8

³⁰ Ravuvu, *The Fijian Ethos*, p.250

ceremonial objects as *tabua* symbolize the wishes, goodwill and feelings of their donors as well as the respect and appreciation between two parties (individuals or groups). *Tabua* with a cord is the most sacred ceremonial offering that not only embodies all chiefly values but also possesses a mystical power, as it is believed to be endowed with *mana* or power to effect good or ill when offered and accepted. It is thus believed by the Fijians that each *tabua* has an intrinsic value that changes in accordance with the circumstances as well as the relation between the two parties offering and receiving it. Other names often used to represent *tabua* are *kamunaga* (valuable), *vatu* (stone or rock), and *wawa* (cord)³¹. Here, the concept of the cord among others is conceptually crucial as it reveals the nature of *tabua* as the symbol of reciprocity that not only attaches one *mataqali*, *yavusa*, *vanua* to another but also the members of *the vanua* to life and their ancestral past to their prosperous future. Thereby, *tabua* also represents a sense of temporal and spatial interdependence and unity as opposed to individuality and free-will. For instance, in formally accepting the *qalovi* (whale's tooth for welcoming), Navunitivi chief makes the following speech:

“Cord for life, the *qalovi* for the *vanua*...May this truly be heard by the *yavutu* (house-site of founding ancestor), do truly listen to it siblings, parents and your offspring. These siblings have been entreating that there should be a second to the child of Visala, the reason for the cord which being proffered today...Through this *tabua*, it is being requested that the progeny for the *vanua* shall flourish. It is a cord for existence, cord for co-operation. Let us be of one spirit only, siblings, parents, and your progeny. May the path of the *vanua* continue to be clear”³²

It is apparent in this speech that *tabua* or the “cord for life” represents not only the oneness of the members of the *vanua* through cooperation but also their spatial links to the underlying life-force through their very existence, and this existence can only be secured if the path of the *vanua* continue to be clear which requires not independence of its members but rather the affirmation of their interdependence. Moreover, *tabua* also functions as the temporal link between the founding ancestors (who are believed to be present and observing every ceremony) and the present and future (parents and offspring) of the *vanua*. Evidently, the belief in these temporal and spatial links are not founded on a dualistic understanding between the physical environment or nature and metaphysical concept or human mind or soul, but rather on life and *vanua* itself as both physical and metaphysical idea-object.

³¹ Ravuvu, *The Fijian Ethos*, pp.22-23

³² Ravuvu, *The Fijian Ethos*, p.253

On the Enlightenment's (and Christianity's) strict dualism between physics and metaphysics/nature and human mind/body and soul versus the Fijian bio-centrism, the sanctity of vanua and the cosmological concept of mana

I have so far discussed two important aspects of the concept of *vanua*, both in terms of its relevance and importance for the continuity of life, regeneration, and reproduction in Fijian *ethos* and in terms of its unifying character that renders the members of *vanua* interdependent and thereby ensures reciprocity and cooperation. Another important aspect of *vanua*, as a cultural and philosophical idea-object, is that it constitutes not only the physical land on which Fijians live, eat, dwell and regenerate but also their particular worldview (*Weltanschauung*). Ravuvu states that *vanua* also encompasses the common values and beliefs of a particular culture about life in natural and supernatural world. Therefore, he continues,

“An appreciation...of the cultural *vanua* permits insights into people’s actions and how they bear on their efforts to live and resolve the exigencies of existence both in this earthly world and in the world of the spirit beings who can protect and destroy, or direct and make possible what is required for life. For to live well in this world and in the other world, one has to live according to *vanua* beliefs and values. Thus the concept of *vanua* is an encompassing one; it is the totality of a Fijian community. Used in various contexts, it can refer alternatively to the social and physical environments, or to the supernatural world, or to all the elements which make life occur”³³

Accordingly, *vanua* is the representation of the unity of earthly-physical and spiritual-metaphysical life as well as the unity of all members of the *vanua*. However, this understanding does not construe *vanua* as a dualistic concept but rather it shows its cosmological character that encompasses not only the social-physical environments (e.g. lands, oceans, rivers) but also the elements of the supernatural world of spirits and life forces (e.g. spirits of the ancestors, deities) who are believed to have the power to affect, direct and sustain life in earthly realm. Ravuvu adds referring to the ceremonies he attended, the chief himself is believed to be the personification of the *vanua* (which embodies the *ethos* of the people). Every member of a *vanua* is identified with the chief, as the embodiment or representative of *vanua* and this, says Ravuvu, is epitomized in such proverbs as “*Na turaga na vanua; na vanua na turaga*” (the chief is the *vanua*; the *vanua* is the chief) and “*Na turaga na tamata; na tamata na turaga*” (the chief is of the people; the people are the chiefs). “These common Fijian aphorisms define the close relationship between the people and their chief. Each exists for the other, and both are the embodiment of their ancestral gods and spirits in earthly life and in ceremonial”³⁴. In some of the ceremonial gatherings, the visiting chief undergoes a process of

³³ Ravuvu, *The Fijian Ethos*, pp.14-15

³⁴ Ravuvu, *The Fijian Ethos*, p.234

transformation through a series of transitional rites in which he ceremonially dies or separates himself from the earthly life. These rites are performed to make sure that the visiting chief safely regenerates his life-giving power and to “prepare the chief for the final rites of incorporation (*qaloqalovi*, *sevusevu* and *yaqona vakaturaga* rites) under which he is to be ultimately transformed and reborn into a sacred being or god with supernatural qualities”³⁵. The dual (both mortal and immortal) character of the chief, who is seen as the embodiment of his ancestral gods among his people, is consistent with the concept of *vanua*. In the *qaloqalovi* ceremony for instance the ancestral spirit gods (as essential components of the present *vanua*) are invited to land to attend the ceremony together with their descendants by shifting of the anchor of their sacred canoe³⁶. Therefore, it would not be wrong to conclude that *vanua*, people and their chiefs are the earthly extensions of the underlying metaphysical entities that culminate in the idea-object of life (which is arguably comparable to the Heraclitean *phusis*) and this connection is revealed through the transitory events of ceremonial gatherings. However, Ravuvu states, “the belief in the chief as a god incarnate has been undermined by Christianity”³⁷. This is because while Christianity is based on the irreconcilable (or hardly reconcilable) duality between body and soul, or earthly and spiritual, the concept of *vanua* personified by the chief is founded on the very transition represented by ceremonial gatherings between the earthly and the spiritual through which the duality is overcome.

Another important distinguishing idea present in the Fijian and all Melanesian and Polynesian cultures in contrast with the Enlightenment and Christian thought is the idea of *mana*. According to Blust, *mana* originally referred to the physical forces of nature such as storm winds and thunder but then, especially in the islands of the South Pacific, it became detached from these dynamic forces of nature and began to represent a supernatural or supersensible idea³⁸. There were many academically failed attempts by scholars to conceptualize *mana* as a universal idea representing sacred life-force which can be found in all cultures. The Melanesian (hence Fijian) concept of *mana* represents a sacred impersonal energy that can exist in (and can be transmitted to/from) all living and lifeless objects including people, animals, plants, charms and amulets and that determines success and luck of the person, family or community (*mataqali*, *yavusa*, *vanua*). As aforementioned, in Fijian culture, *mana* also plays an

³⁵ Ravuvu, *The Fijian Ethos*, pp.240-1

³⁶ Ravuvu, *The Fijian Ethos*, p.242

³⁷ Ravuvu, *The Fijian Ethos*, 254-5

³⁸ Robert Blust, ‘Proto-Oceanic *Mana* Revisited’. *Oceanic Linguistics*, Volume 46, Number 2, December 2007, p.404

important role in the transformation (elevation) of the chief to the spirit world of the ancestral gods. As Ravuvu states, once installed as a chief, “his words and acts become charged with *mana* (power to effect) and henceforth he has the power to satisfy the wishes of those who petition him...”³⁹. As the chief drinks the first cup of *yaqona* or as Ravuvu calls, *the elixir of immortality*, he “was reborn and embodied with *mana* to effect life”⁴⁰. *Yaqona*, in this sense, by initiating the transition, completes the act of communion between the mortal and immortal world and bestows *mana* to the previously pacified guest chief and this process of transition must be handled with utmost care, caution and apprehension to make sure that the chief is actually prepared to bear the flow of life-force or *mana* he garners from the immortal world⁴¹. The life-force gathered by the chief (who experiences a two-way transition between mortality and immortality) during the process of transition is believed to bring strength and integrity to the person and harmony and prosperity to his community and environment. Therefore, the concept or idea-object of *mana* acquires a cosmological meaning irrespective of the dualities between the natural and supernatural, phenomena and noumena. Such cosmological ideas as *mana*, *vanua*, *tabua*, *reciprocity* and *the continuity of life* exemplify so-called “amoral” and “irrational” elements (as coined by the Enlightenment and secular thought) of the indigenous worldviews including the Fijian *ethos* that managed or at least attempted to posit humanity and human conduct on the constantly changing and recurring landscape of *phusis*.

CONCLUSION

Although unsuccessful, Kant’s attempt to mediate between the Cartesian dualisms still stands as one of the most important attempts to situate humanity and human freedom in cosmos and justify human existence (as morally free, perfectible and self-conscious) in nature. Yet, this is thanks to Kant’s quasi-scientific critical methodology rather than his teleological doctrines. On the other hand, as aforesaid, the answers Kant provides do not suffice to fuel the Enlightenment thought to break free from the pre-established notions of the medieval theology and teleology. And this is one of the reasons why Enlightenment was limited both temporally and spatially, as it had to end as a historical period in the 19th century and it remained to be Euro- and anthropocentric until now. This also explains the overt and covert ethnic prejudices displayed by the colonialists and missionaries against Fijian and other indigenous cosmologies. Rationalism inherent in Enlightenment did not manage to define a new *ratio* according

³⁹ Ravuvu, *The Fijian Ethos*, p.239

⁴⁰ Ravuvu, *The Fijian Ethos*, p.242

⁴¹ Ravuvu, *The Fijian Ethos*, 243-4

to which new concepts and ideas could be generated and change or rupture could be achieved. It rather got stuck in such teleological ideals as “enlightened self”, individual freedom, persistent, disinterested and rational subject as well as reformed Protestantism and secularism, thereby failing to understand the philosophical significance of ancient indigenous concepts and ideas. Therefore, alongside all its reactionary ideals, the Enlightenment failed to overcome its reactionary identity against Christian metaphysics, ethics and politics. This, I argue is partly because Kant (arguably the most successful ethicist of the Enlightenment) simply failed to overcome the inherent pre-established contradiction between naturalism and rationalism. He did not manage to discover an approach that would not only reconcile these approaches but also generate a new *Weltanschauung* that would stop thinking through such dualisms as nature and reason, body and soul which would in turn help Enlightenment achieve its main goal of overcoming the exhausted metaphysical, teleological and theological ideas such as God, truth and progress. For only then, he could have managed to provide a new answer to the question “how does humanity itself fit into the cosmos?” Finally, only if we try to replace the purpose-oriented teleological methods of questioning (seeking truth, certainty, provability of God or destination), with not-yet-metaphysical, non-teleological and rather cosmological understanding, will we be able to provide satisfactory answers to this question, which would be acceptable both on rationalist-metaphysical and on empiricist-naturalist grounds by disregarding their alleged independence.

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