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### **A Potential “Kantian” Reasoning For Accepting Refugees**

The famous 18<sup>th</sup> century German philosopher Immanuel Kant judged that humans inherently had a right to hospitality and a right to visit other lands. He outlined hospitality as, “the right of a stranger not to be treated with hostility because of his arrival on another’s land”. As well, he expressed the right to visit as, “the right to present oneself and try to establish contacts with people and states in other parts of the world”. He delineates his reasoning for these “inherent” rights in his stellar book, *Towards Perpetual Peace*.

Alas, let’s contemplate the following statement: “The US government can only prevent a foreign refugee whose life is in danger from entering the country if there is specific reason to believe that s/he poses a threat to the rights of US citizens.”

This assertion is vastly pertinent to the ongoing political debate about dealing with refugees, which has alienated differing political philosophies sharply. So how would Kant argue in favor of this statement? I shall examine the contentions that Kant offers in his book, *Towards Perpetual Peace*, to conclude that Kant himself would find this paragraph’s introductory statement as irrefutably truthful.

Furthermore, I shall commence by posing the explicit propositions Kant would employ and successively illustrate the flow of reason towards realizing the conclusion. Subsequently, I will object to a premise that Kant contributes to his argument and demonstrate that it is erroneous.

Therefore, let’s start by exploring the line of reasoning.

1. People have a right to hospitality.

“hospitality (hospitableness) means the right of a foreigner not to be treated with hostility because he has arrived on the land of another.” (Kant, Towards Perpetual Peace 8:357-8:358)

2. This right to hospitality exists so long as the visitor does not violate the rights to safety and security of the people of the visiting land.

“The other can turn him away, if this can be done without destroying him, but as long as he behaves peaceably where he is, he cannot be treated with hostility.” (Kant, Towards Perpetual Peace 8:358)

- C1. A visitor to the US has a right to hospitality so long as they do not violate the rights of the people of the visiting land. (1,2)

3. All humans have a right, which is also equal in degree between all humans, to possession of the Earth's sphere.

“to make use of the right to the earth's surface, which belongs to the human race in common,” (Kant, Towards Perpetual Peace 8:358)

4. This is because people are going to be near one another on Earth since the space of the planet is not infinite. (3)

“belongs to all human beings by virtue of the right of possession in common of the earth's surface on which, as a sphere, they cannot disperse infinitely but must finally

put up with being near one another; but originally no one had more right than another to be on a place on the earth. (Kant, Towards Perpetual Peace 8:358)

5. Tacit: It is valid for a person at any point in time to be in any different area of land whether by natural circumstances or purposefully. (3,4)

C2. All humans have a right to visit another country. (5)

C3. All humans have a right to visit the US, which is a country. (C2)

C4. A refugee is a human with the right to hospitality (so long as s/he does not violate the rights of the people of the visiting land) and the right to visit another country.

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C. The US government can only prevent a foreign refugee whose life is in danger from entering the country if there is a specific reason to believe that s/he poses a threat to the rights of US citizens. (C3, C4)

Nevertheless, an explicit premise in this argumentation is defective. As is emblematic of Western intellectuals, Kant bears anthropocentric prejudice made dreadfully evident in his literature. The premise in query here is number 3 stating, “All humans have a right, which is also equal in degree between all humans, to possession of the Earth’s sphere”. Not only do humans not have a right to proprietorship of the Earth’s sphere, but also it would not be equivalent amongst all humans either way.

Hence, let us contemplate why humans do not boast a right to ownership of the Earth’s sphere. The ensuing paragraphs will lay out the objection, citing historical and scientific concepts.

To begin, the Earth has been existent for virtually 4.54 billion years. With our modern-day comprehension of science, we have established precisely that humans (*homo sapiens*) have been on Earth for 200,000 years. Our species has subsisted for less than half a percent of all the time that has elapsed since the Earth was molded. How can we allege, as a species, that existing for as little as we have, that we have some self-understood right to the land of the Earth. Not only that, what makes us so significant and why would we be the solitary species that have such a farcical “right”?

With this context in mind, did no species prior to us have a “right” to the Earth’s surface and terrain? If that is the case, why are we the first? Or is it the case that this right has been handed from former species to newer species? These are some of the shortcomings and obscurities never elucidated in this audacious hypothesis that Kant imagines.

On a distinct note, science has established that humans (like all contemporary species) have come into existence due to speciation events, whereby one species’ population diverges and converts into two discrete species. The original species (an ancestor of humans) that forked off into two species is no longer present. Nonetheless, we recognize that we are utmost related to additional primates such as apes. Humans and apes share a common ancestor indicated compellingly by genetical statistics. So why is it that we do not recognize and respect the living primates (apes, gorillas, and monkeys) “rights” to land on this Earth?

Accordingly, all biological life on this globe shares a communal ancestor. All species are interrelated. So, doesn’t that mean we should regard all organisms “rights” to land?

That is indeed the solution. Yet, it will never occur. Since the beginning of time, till the present day, there is no case of unlike species in the state of nature exhibiting morality in

respecting another species claims to use a portion of nature. This is against biology. This is against the state of nature. Individuals do only what is obligatory, in a selfish manner, to sustain their life. For the sake of persistence in the unforgiving actuality of nature, individuals of any species must go to any length to avert the torture of not realizing their basic needs, which ultimately leads to their demise.

Conversely, let us suppose the case where purportedly humans have a “right” to possession of the Earth’s surface/land. It would never be an equivalent “right” amongst all. This has been the situation throughout history. Countless humans, in the last few millennia, have toiled/slaved away under more commanding beings all while never accomplishing proprietorship of land. The lesser peasants “rights” are never acknowledged by anyone. If it was an inherent right, there would be mutual understanding that peasantry/slavery is an arrangement of labor that does not guarantee a necessary “right” to land, which we “all” have “equal” ownership to. Yet, unlike most other apparent rights, this “right” to land shared equally between all has never been a part of any bureaucratic system in human history.

Given these points, it arises that like other organisms, humans possess whatever belongings we can craft and safeguard. We have no pre-defined “rights” to actual objects, or pieces thereof, of this Earth. We must struggle and strive to survive.

In conclusion, Immanuel Kant would utilize the notions he furnishes in his book, *Towards Perpetual Peace*, to argue for the following statement: “The US government can only prevent a foreign refugee whose life is in danger from entering the country if there is specific reason to believe that s/he poses a threat to the rights of US citizens.”

He would discover the overhead declaration to be irrefutably true, the reasoning for which, I have provided in a delineated manner. The above statement comes to us in a time of much political strife over what we, as a country, should do in managing refugees.

Just as important, Kant has a flawed understanding of certain “rights” that only humans have and the causes for which they have it. I have dissected and objected the idea that humans have an intrinsic “right” to the usage of the entirety of the Earth’s sphere/land and that this right is collective between all humans.