

Pauline Kleingeld, born in Rotterdam in 1962, is Professor of Ethics and its History at the University of Groningen's Faculty of Philosophy and one of the leading philosophers of our age. She has earned wide acclaim as an eminent academic with a charismatic personality and a collaborative leadership style. This bridgebuilder par excellence is an inspiration to many. Her own source of inspiration is Immanuel Kant, one of the greatest and most influential philosophers of all time, on whose work she has founded ground-breaking contributions to a better, more nuanced understanding of the ideals of the Enlightenment. Her exceptional work represents both a strong endorsement of the significance and relevance of Kant's thoughts on human dignity, autonomy, free will, world citizenship, morality, and reason and an important step towards a modern formulation of Kantian ethics.

Ground-breaking contributions to the debate surrounding ethical and moral principles

Kleingeld's research centres around the philosophy of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). Her remarkable talent lies in her skilful reinterpretation of his concepts. For example, she postulates that the concept of moral universalism, one of the pillars of Kantian ethics, can – and indeed should – continue to be defended. The idea behind moral universalism is that rather than being subject to personal preferences and desires, moral principles should be universally valid. In philosophical circles, there is much debate on whether there is a sound justification for moral laws that can be deemed universal, based on human rights such as equality, freedom, justice, and human dignity for all, regardless of ethnicity, gender, age, etcetera. Her contributions to this debate and to the development of ethical theory are globally acknowledged to be nothing short of ground-breaking.

Discoveries about racism in Kantian thought

Kleingeld has also opened up new avenues in the understanding of eighteenth-century political thought. She won the prestigious Biennial Senior Scholar Book Prize awarded by the North American Kant Society for her book *Kant and Cosmopolitanism: The Philosophical Ideal of World Citizenship* (2012). In this authoritative work, she exposes republicanism, a powerful current in political thinking that was influenced by Kant to no small degree. Of particular significance are her insights into how Kant's thinking about society, race, and slavery changed over time. She explains that he spent many years defending and disseminating a repugnant racial doctrine, but rejected it following the French Revolution and developed in its place a form of egalitarian cosmopolitanism, the concept of world citizenship. Kleingeld highlights how significant this concept is for today's society. Her research on this theme has been embraced worldwide as the new gold standard for the interpretation and analysis of Kant's work. Her work has also strongly influenced modern thinking on the importance of cosmopolitanism in this age of burgeoning populism and the role cosmopolitanism can play in the battle against all forms of racism and sexism.

Kant the die-hard sexist

Kant may have had second thoughts about race, but he remained a staunch sexist to the end. Kleingeld's work reveals how difficult it is to apply gender-neutral language when discussing Kant. For example, he tended to use the word 'Mensch' to refer not to humankind as a whole but to white male persons. This implies an inconsistency in his moral universalism. Kleingeld has made important contributions to the philosophical debate about how we relate to 'wrong' thinkers and 'wrong' ideas from the past, including in her article

Kant's Second Thoughts on Race, that was selected for the jubilee edition of the top journal *The Philosophical Quarterly*.

In a class of her own

Kleingeld's colleagues describe her as being at the very top of her field, in a class of her own. Fourteen of her articles have been translated or re-printed, her work has been published in seven languages and quoted more than three thousand times, which is phenomenal in the field of philosophy. In 2020, she was awarded the Spinoza Prize, one of the highest academic awards in the Netherlands, in recognition of her ground-breaking work. She has also been awarded no fewer than three research grants by the Dutch Research Council (NWO), as well as being one of the co-applicants for a largescale interdisciplinary project on Sustainable Cooperation. She is frequently approached to edit internationally renowned journals, organizes conferences and workshops on a regular basis, and has an exceptional reputation as a keynote speaker at international conferences. She has been appointed as a member of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) and the Royal Holland Society of Sciences and Humanities (KHMW) in recognition of her outstanding scholarly achievements.

Active member of the academic community

Kleingeld plays an active role within the academic community, both in the Netherlands and abroad. She became the first female dean of the Faculty of Philosophy in Leiden and chair of the Department of Ethics, Social, and Political Philosophy within the Faculty of Philosophy in Groningen. The department she heads up in Groningen was awarded the highest possible score in 2019 by an international research assessment panel. As a mainstay of the faculty, she is actively involved in all aspects of faculty life and plays a prominent role in various committees. She is also much in demand as a member of a wide range of juries, committees, and societies, such as the KNAW, the North American Kant Society, and the Kant Committee of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities.

Much-loved teacher, supervisor, and role model

As a teacher, Kleingeld is valued by her students for the clarity with which she explains complex texts, her friendly, open, and constructive manner, and her detailed feedback. She is inspiring and enthusiastic and encourages active participation in her lectures. In her role as supervisor and coach to junior researchers, PhD students, and colleagues, she is also much-loved. Young international researchers and students choose to come to Groningen especially in order to learn from her. Younger women in particular see her as a role model: a woman who has reached the top of the academic ladder without compromising her integrity, empathy, respect, or commitment to teamwork. PhD students praise the way in which she gives valuable feedback and the collegiality and generosity with which she shares her considerable knowledge and experience. In her department, in the faculty and among sister institutions at home and abroad, she is appreciated for the respect and integrity with which she treats colleagues, her constructive attitude during debate and the energy she invests in making academia more inclusive and pluriform. She monitors workload closely and stands up for her colleagues, without losing sight of the interests of the organization.

Layman's terms

Kleingeld is also keen to share her knowledge with a broader public. For example, she frequently gives lectures for secondary-school teachers of philosophy and enjoys entering into debate with anyone who is genuinely interested in human dignity, autonomy, free will, and other ethical notions. Using clear, accessible language, she explains how important critical thought is when it comes to considering moral issues.