

CHAPTER 2: KANT'S EMPIRICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

In the previous chapter, we examined Kant's "transcendental" anthropology, his examination of the cognitive, volitional, and affective dimensions of the human being from the standpoint of a priori, normative, autonomously-given laws governing those faculties. But Kant also engaged in empirical debates about human beings. The next three chapters focus on different dimensions of Kant's empirical anthropology. In this chapter, I examine Kant's overall empirical anthropology of the human mind, that is, his empirical psychology. This psychology includes Kant's accounts of the different faculties of human beings, the causal laws that describe the activity of those faculties, and the bases of such faculties in "natural predispositions" found in humans' biological nature. In chapter three, I turn to two more specific aspects of Kant's empirical anthropology, his treatments of human evil and of the historical nature of the human species. In chapter four, I examine Kant's accounts of human diversity.

1. The Possibility of Empirical Psychology

Given the importance of Kant's transcendental anthropology, he might seem merely to dismiss empirical anthropology. But in fact, one of the key claims that Kant establishes in his transcendental account of cognition is that human beings are capable of having empirical knowledge of their world, and he emphasizes that such knowledge *includes* empirical knowledge *of human beings*. Although a human being cannot cognize itself "in accordance with what it is in itself," Kant adds "that through inner sense we intuit ourselves ... as we are internally affected by ourselves ... [and thus] we cognize our own subject ... as an appearance" (B156, cf. B69, 153). Like everything else we cognize, human beings can be cognized as appearances, as "homo phenomenon" (MM 6:418). Even where the *Critique of Pure Reason* most emphasizes the possibility of human freedom, Kant insists that "all actions of a human being are determined in accord with the order of nature ... [I]f we could investigate all the appearances ... there would be no human action we could not predict with certainty" (A549/B577, cf. 20:196). Kant gives a striking example to illustrate this general point.

Let us take ... a malicious lie First, we endeavor to discover the motives to which it has been due, and secondly, we proceed to determine how far the action ... can be imputed to the offender. As regards the first question, we trace the empirical character of the action to its sources, finding these in defective education, bad company, in part also in the viciousness of a natural disposition insensitive to shame *We proceed in this enquiry just as we should in ascertaining for a given natural effect the series of its determining causes.* (A554-55/B 582-83, emphasis added)

In the *Groundwork*, too, Kant reiterates that "everything which takes place [is] determined without exception in accordance with laws of nature" (4:455), and in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, he goes so far as to say that if we knew the relevant preconditions, "we could calculate a human being's conduct for the future with as much certainty as a lunar or solar eclipse" (5: 99)

Despite Kant's insistence on empirical study of human beings, many call into question whether Kant can really allow for empirical anthropology. First, it seems impossible for Kant to admit that humans are susceptible to truly "scientific" study, since any such study must provide *universal* claims about its objects: "The empirical doctrine of the soul can ... never become ... a science of the soul, nor even a psychological experimental doctrine" (4:471). Moreover, a completely empirical anthropology might seem to conflict with Kant's very strong claims about human freedom (see chapter one). Finally, empirical anthropology just seems fraught with practical problems. Kant discusses epistemic challenges such as the fact that "if a human being notices that someone is ... trying to study him, he ... either ... cannot show himself as he really is or ... does not want to be known as he is" (7:121) and moral dangers of self-study: "self-observation ... is the most direct path to illuminism or even terrorism, by way of a confusion in the mind of supposed higher inspirations and powers flowing into us ... from who knows where" (7:133). These comments suggest that even if empirical human science is possible in principle, it is unreliable and dangerous in practice.

In fact, however, none of these concerns preclude an empirical anthropology suitably construed. To start with the first point, Kant rejects the possibility of an empirical human science in the very strict sense of "science" that refers only to a priori knowledge (4:471). Newton's laws count as science, for Kant, because "outside of what lies in [the empirical] concept [of matter], no other empirical principle is used" (4:470). By contrast, even if one starts with empirical, psychological concepts – such as the existence of a mind – one cannot derive further substantive claims about the mind a priori. And unless one can derive claims about human psychology a priori, one cannot make *strictly* universal claims (A1-2, B3-4, A91/B124, A196/B241). But Kant's rejection of a scientific and strictly universal status for empirical anthropology does not preclude what he calls a "historical systematic natural doctrine of the inner sense" (4:471), a "natural science ... improperly so called, ... [which] would treat its object ... according to laws of experience" (4:468; cf. 25: 472-3, 577). Empirical anthropology will not be a science precisely like physics, since it will lack a mathematical, a priori foundation for strictly necessary claims. But even in the first *Critique*, Kant admits that "empirical rules ... can acquire through induction ... comparative universality, that is, extensive applicability" (B124/A91). While not "science" strictly speaking, empirically-grounded laws of human beings constitute a comparatively-universal, systematic presentation of human mental and social life.

A second concern arises from Kant's account of human freedom. Many commentators have rightly pointed out that the account of free action in Kant's transcendental anthropology of volition offers a different conception of moral psychology than the traditional empiricist belief-desire model according to which human beings are simply motivated by their strongest active desire. But those who take this insightful alternative approach to conflict with Kant's empirical account of human action (e.g. Reath 1989: 290-91) are misguided. As noted in chapter one, Kant's transcendental idealism aims to show how an empirical and even causal model of human behavior leaves room for real freedom, not within the empirical model but as something distinct from (and grounding) humans' empirically-knowable character. Kant's transcendental anthropology of cognition shows that humans experience everything – including themselves – in terms of a structure of cognition that interprets change in terms of causal relationships. But this metaphysics of the empirical world leaves room for a different standpoint from which freedom is possible, and Kant's transcendental anthropology of desire – his moral philosophy – makes clear that human agents must see themselves as free causes of their actions. This implies, of course,

that Kant's empirical anthropology is only empirical; it does not provide access to what Kant will call the human being as it is in itself, the "homo noumenon" (MM 6:418, cf. 7:397-400). It is possible to have access to what the human being is like in itself (as we saw in chapter one), but empirical anthropology provides no such access.

The final challenge for rigorous empirical investigation of human beings is the set of specific difficulties with self-study that make empirical anthropology – as Kant put it at the opening of his first course in anthropology – a "hard descent into the Hell of self-knowledge" (25:7). In his published *Anthropology*, Kant presents several "difficulties ... inherent in human nature itself" (7:120-1) and in a draft of his anthropology even adds that "psychology has plenty to do in tracing everything that lies hidden in it" such that it "may not ever hope to complete this task and answer satisfactorily the question: 'What is the human being?'" (7:398-99). For Kant, empirical study of human beings proceeds by introspection and observation of others, both of which face serious problems: mental life is intrinsically complex, human beings typically act differently when being observed, self-observation is inhibited by the fact that many of the most interesting and important activities in human life preclude the calm and attentive work of introspection, and human beings can develop contingent characteristics – habits of time and place – that seem essential. The result of all of this can be desperation about ever answering the question, "What is the human being?"

Despite these cautions, Kant insists that "an anthropology ... that is systematically designed" is possible and "yields an advantage for the reading public," including the promotion of "the growth of [this] science for the common good" (7:121-2). Kant maintains that anthropology begins with a "general knowledge of human beings" (7:120) that "is provided ... by inner sense" (7: 398, cf. 25:252, 863-5) and enriched by good literature (e.g. Shakespeare, Montaigne, and Fielding), travel and travel literature (7:120), and careful "observ[ation] of human beings and their conduct" (25:472). While Kant doubts the possibility of a wholly satisfactory empirical anthropology, he aims to develop as full an empirical account as possible, or at least a sufficient account "from which a prudent use in life can ... be drawn" (25:472, cf. 7:119).

Kantian empirical anthropology, then, is general rather than strictly universal, and thus a science only in a loose sense. Even as such a science, it is vulnerable to error given humans' tendencies to get ourselves wrong. But a fallible quasi-science laying out empirically-justified general laws of human beings is, for Kant, possible, interesting, and useful. The rest of this chapter lays out the overall framework of this empirical anthropology.

2. Kant's Faculty Psychology

When Kant began working on empirical anthropology, the dominant empirical approach to human beings in Germany (promoted by Christian Wolff and Alexander Baumgarten) involved laying out different human mental states in terms of various "faculties of soul" and then showing how these faculties could be reduced to a single faculty of "representation." The idea was that rational cognitions were the clearest and most distinct representations of the world, and sensory cognitions, feelings, and desires were representations with varying degrees of obscurity and indistinctness. Against this view, many philosophers and emerging psychologists (most prominently, Moses Mendelssohn, Johannes Tetens, and August Crusius) argued that mental states were irreducibly distinct; the main alternatives suggested were either a very wide diversity

of human mental states, a bi-partite model within which belief and desire are irreducible to each other, or some combination of these within which irreducibly distinct mental states can be classified broadly into beliefs and desires. Although he lectured from a textbook (Baumgarten's) that promoted the single-faculty approach, Kant's own work defended mental state pluralism. Unlike his compatriots, however, Kant insisted upon combining a broad mental state pluralism with a fundamentally tri-partite structure. For Kant, there are a large number of irreducibly distinct sorts of mental states that can be grouped into three irreducible types: cognition, feeling, and desire.

Kant's argumentative strategy for this view is two-fold. First, he develops a general philosophy of science according to which one should seek to "deriv[e] diverse powers, which we know only through observations, as much as possible from basic powers" (28:564, cf. A648-9/B676-7). One should assume as many basic powers as are really necessary, a point Kant emphasizes by comparing Descartes, who "explains all [physical] phenomena from the shape and the general motive power of bodies," with Newton's "more satisfactory" method that allows the assumption of "certain basic powers ... from which the phenomena are derived" (29:935-6.). The phenomena one finds in both the physical and mental worlds require more than a single basic power. So while Kant seeks to reduce powers as much as possible (for instance, by showing that memory is a form of imagination), his focus is on not overly reducing mental powers. Second, Kant lays out specific arguments to show that particular mental powers are irreducible to one another. For example, Kant emphasizes his isolation of feeling as a state distinct from both cognition and desire, noting that feeling is not merely a confused cognition of a thing, and emphasizing that aesthetic pleasures, no matter how intense, do not give rise to volitions (29:877-8). He points out that while cognition is "related merely to the object and the unity of the consciousness of it," a volition is "the cause of the reality of this object" (20:206). More generally, Kant argues that one can only reduce distinct powers if one can find a power from which they "could be derived" (8:181n). In the end, Kant insists, "there must be several [basic powers] because we cannot reduce everything to one" (29:773-822).

For Kant, the set of distinct basic powers includes each of the five senses; an "inner sense" by virtue of which we are aware of our own mental states; the imagination; higher cognitive powers of reason, understanding, and judgment; a power of feeling pleasure and displeasure; and various powers of volition. Kant groups these distinct powers into the general faculties of cognition, feeling, and desire, and further sub-divides them between "higher" and "lower" faculties. "Lower" faculties are primarily receptive, while "higher" faculties are "self-active" (28:228, 29:880), by which Kant does not mean the transcendental freedom of the homo noumenon but a "comparative concept of freedom" according to which "actions are caused from within" (5:96). We can lay out Kant's overall taxonomy of mental powers as follows:

Faculties of soul

	Cognition	Feeling	Desire/Volition
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Higher	Judgment, Understanding, Reason	“satisfactions or dissatisfactions which depend on the manner in which we cognize the objects through concepts”	“Motives” based on practical principles
Lower	Sight, hearing, taste, smell, feeling, inner sense, imagination (including memory)	“satisfactions and dissatisfactions which depend on the manner in which we are [sensibly] affected by objects” (28: 254)	“Stimuli,” impulses rooted in instinct or inclination.

3. Causal Laws Governing Human Beings

Kant did not discuss the structure of human mental faculties simply to argue against Wolff’s reduction of the mind to a single faculty of representation. Getting clear on different mental faculties is crucial for developing a full empirical anthropology because “the concept of cause lies in the concept of power” (28:564) and in empirical human science we seek “natural laws of the thinking self” based on “observations about the play of our thoughts” (A347/B405). Each distinct mental power is governed by its own causal laws (including laws governing how it relates to other mental powers), and a complete empirical anthropology describes these laws.

For Kant, faculties of soul are causally ordered such that “pleasure precedes the faculty of desire, and the cognitive faculty precedes pleasure” (29:877-8). Moreover, “all desires have a relation to activity and are the causality thereof” (25:1514); desire plays the same role in psychology that motive forces like momentum play in physics (25:577). In fact, desire is defined as a representation that is the ground of an action that brings about some state of affairs (6:211, 399), so there are no actions not preceded and caused by desires, and no desires that do not lead to actions (in the absence of external impediments). For any human action, a sequence of causes can be traced as follows:

Cognition → Feeling of pleasure (or pain) → Desire → Action

At any step along this progression, the causal chain could be cut off. For example, when a normal human being tastes a mango (cognition), that taste gives pleasure (feeling), that pleasure causes a desire for the mango, and that desire leads one to eat (or continue eating) the mango. But one’s mango might be snatched away, preventing one from eating (or continuing to eat) the mango. Or one might see a beautiful flower (cognition) and experience a “disinterested” pleasure that gives rise to no subsequent desire. Or one might learn that the capital of Iceland is Reykjavik and thus have a cognition, but without this cognition giving rise to any pleasure or desire.

This sketch requires filling in. Kant needs to explain what gives rise to cognitions in human beings, how and when those cognitions give rise to pleasures, and how and when those

pleasures give rise to desires. As Kant offers the details of these causal laws, his account gets extremely detailed, so here I only highlight aspects of his account. With respect to the lower faculty of cognition, Kant distinguishes between the five traditional senses, “inner sense” (our ability to “observe” our own inner mental states), and imagination (including memory). About the five senses, Kant lays out only the most general descriptions, such as that “the sense of touch lies in the fingertips and the nerve endings (papillae) and enables us to discover the form of a solid body by means of contact with its surface” (7:155) and that sight, touch, and hearing are “mechanical” while taste and smell are “chemical” (25:495). Kant speculates about “a faculty of the nerves [that] underlies the mind” and even suggests some “water of the brain” encountered by the “ends” of the “stimulated optic nerve” or “auditory nerve” (12:34). But Kant’s dominant approach is not to try to explain how light, for instance, causes a visual sensation by stimulating the optic nerve, but simply to classify what physical causes bring about this mental state. Just as Newton does not solve the “problem” of gravitational action at a distance but instead names and classifies the phenomenon, Kant does not try to “solve” the so-called “mind-body problem” of how states of the brain cause mental states, instead merely classifying the basic powers that underlie these connections.

The most extensive psychological discussion of lower cognitive faculties comes with the imagination, which is governed by three fundamental laws: affinity, forming intuitions in space, and association. Association, for example, is the principle that “empirical ideas that have frequently followed one another produce a habit in the mind such that when one idea is produced, the other also comes into being” (7:176). Hearing a particular song may trigger thoughts of the person with whom one often listened to that song, or the thought of a certain book may cause one to think of the place where one read that book. The imagination also figures centrally in Kant’s account of language: it is by virtue of customary association between sounds and thoughts that those sounds (and eventually written words) come to stand as symbols for those thoughts.

The higher faculty of cognition is subdivided into three basic powers: reason, the understanding, and judgment. Most generically, “Understanding draws the general [i.e., concepts] from the particular Reason draws the particular from the general The power of judgment is the subsumption of one concept under others [or of particulars under concepts]” (29:890). The power of judgment operates according to the principles governing analogy – “things ... which ... agree in much, also agree in what remains” – and induction – “what belongs to many things of a genus belongs to the remaining ones too” (9:133, see too 24: 772). The understanding generates certain concepts as an immediate consequence of sensory perceptions, but most concepts of the understanding are generated through chains of comparison, reflection, and abstraction. With respect to the former, Kant argues that “on the occasion of experience” certain “concepts have arisen through the understanding, according to its nature” (28:233), such as the basic concepts of causation and substance that make it possible for our experience to be intelligible as experience of an objective world. In other cases, sensory cognition leads to empirical concepts, such as when seeing “a spruce, a willow, and a linden” leads one to

compare these objects with one another [and] note that they are different from one another in regard to the trunk, the branches, the leaves, etc.; but next ... reflect on that which they have in common among themselves ... and ... abstract from the quantity, the figure, etc. of these; and thus ... acquire a concept of a tree. (9:95)

Reason, finally, operates through principles of logic: the cognition of the premises of an argument give rise to a cognition of the conclusion of that argument. When I think about the facts that “Socrates is a human” and “All humans are mortal,” I am led to the thought that “Socrates is mortal.”

Thus far, Kant’s account of how higher faculties work tracks how they ought to work, but Kant knows that people’s higher faculties often do not function according to these ideal laws, and he develops an account of how “other activities of the soul ... are connected with the judgments of the understanding” to generate a “mixed effect” that can be mistaken for “a judgment of the understanding” (16:283-4). Such mixed effects result from what Kant calls “prejudices,” which primarily arise from “imitation, custom, and inclination” (9:76) and function as alternative principles by which some cognitions give rise to others according to causes distinct from the understanding strictly speaking. For example, “the prejudice of the prestige of the age” leads some to favor the writers of antiquity more than they should, thereby “elevating the relative worth of their writings to an absolute worth” (9:79). For those affected by this prejudice, cognitions of claims associated with a particular ancient writer will immediately give rise to affirmation of those claims, a transition inexplicable in terms of properly functioning higher cognitive powers alone. Prejudices do not wholly displace higher cognitive faculties, but they provide a way for Kant to make sense causally of transitions between beliefs that are not actually justified, and thus cannot be explained in terms of the higher cognitive faculties alone. This account of prejudice, supplemented with detailed accounts of various prejudices and an account of how the higher and lower faculties of cognition relate, complete Kant’s account of the faculty of cognition.

Kant’s account of the faculty of the feeling of pleasure and displeasure is the most original, complex, and confusing aspect of his faculty psychology. The originality lies in Kant’s claim – based on his account of aesthetic pleasure – that the faculty of feeling can be reduced to neither cognition nor volition. Even those who argued against Wolff’s attempt to reduce all the basic powers of the soul to a single one generally ended up describing pleasure as either a subjective form of cognition like color or scent or as a constitutive part of desire. But for Kant,

We have pleasure or displeasure without desiring or abhorring, e.g. if we see a beautiful area, then it enchants us, but we will not on that account wish at once to possess it. Pleasure or displeasure is thus something entirely different from the faculty of desire. (29:877)

The difference between pleasure and volition cannot be explained merely in terms of strength. Even a mild pleasure in the thought of a sweet treat brings with it a desire to eat (more of) that treat, while the most intense purely aesthetic pleasure gives rise to no volition at all. Because there can be pleasures unconnected with volition, Kant argues, pleasure cannot be seen as merely a component of volition. But pleasure is also not mere cognition. Someone could understand everything there is to know about an object that pleases me and still not find pleasure in it. Pleasure indicates something about *me*, not necessarily anything about the object. So while many feelings might be linked with cognitions and volitions, feeling in general cannot be reduced to cognitive-volitional aspects.

On Kant’s general account of feeling, there can be very different kinds of feelings, but all feelings are, in some sense, feelings of satisfaction (pleasure) or dissatisfaction (displeasure). Because pleasure is not a kind of cognition, Kant rejects the dominant Leibnizian-Wolffian

definition of pleasure as “the [obscure] sensible representation of the perfection of an object” (20:226). Instead, Kant offers two “definitions” of pleasure:

(1) “The consciousness of the causality of a representation with respect to the state of the subject for maintaining it in that state can here designate in general what is called pleasure” (5:220)

(2) “Pleasure is the representation of the agreement of an object or of an action with the subjective conditions of life” (5:9n).

First, pleasure is defined simply as a mental state (a “representation”) oriented towards preserving itself. But Kant relates this feeling oriented to persisting in one’s state with the concept of “life,” which he connects with self-activity and sometimes defines as a “faculty of a being to act in accordance with laws of the faculty of desire” (5:9n). For human beings, “life” involves the full set of mental powers of cognition, feeling, and desire. When something seems to promote the activity of one’s powers, a distinctive mental state – “pleasure” – arises that reflects this advancement of activity. In a lecture on metaphysics, Kant connects his two definitions:

The feeling of the promotion of life is pleasure, and the feeling of the hindrance of life is displeasure. Pleasure is when a representation contains a ground for being determined, for producing again the same representation, or for continuing it when it is there. (28:586)

When one feels pleasure, one feels like continuing in one’s state because one’s state seems conducive to the activity of one’s powers. When one feels displeasure one feels like ending one’s state because one’s state feels like an inhibition of activity.

Given his definition(s) of pleasure, Kant divides possible objects of pleasure into different categories. Most fundamentally, and central to Kant’s insistence that pleasure is not merely an aspect of desire, Kant claims that pleasures can be distinguished into those that give rise to desires and those that do not. Generally, preserving pleasurable states involves acquiring objects or objective states of affairs that bring pleasure. Pleasure in a mango depends upon actually eating the mango. Such pleasures, in order to “produce again the same representation or ... continue it” (28:586), give rise to desires, mental states that actually affect the world by causing one to act (e.g. eat the mango). Kant calls such pleasures “interested” or “practical.” Other pleasures – aesthetic ones – are not interested: “[A] judgment about beauty in which there is mixed the least interest is very partial and not a pure judgment of taste” (5:205). Kant takes this point quite far, claiming that if “the palace that I see before me [is] beautiful” I will feel a distinct pleasure in the contemplation of it, even if “were I to find myself on an uninhabited island ... and could conjure up such a magnificent structure through my mere wish, I would not even take the trouble of doing so” (5:204-5, cf. 29:878). Aesthetic pleasures arise from reflection, and the actuality of the object of one’s reflection is not necessary in order to promote the “free play of the powers of representation” (5:217) that grounds the feeling of pleasure. Kant’s aesthetics (discussed in chapter one) focuses on a transcendental account of these disinterested pleasures. For the purpose of his empirical account, his main purpose is to show that there are such pleasures and thereby distinguish the faculty of feeling from that of desire.

With the exception of aesthetic feelings, pleasures sustain themselves by means of the faculty of desire. The faculty of desire is the most complicated faculty in terms of its causal laws, and explaining it fully requires a discussion of the biological roots of causal laws in Kant’s account. In general, though, the faculty of desire is “the faculty to be, by means of one’s

representations, the cause of the objects of those representations” (5:9n, 6:211). That is, desire is a mental state by which one becomes a cause of the objects of that mental state. Whereas cognition merely thinks about its objects and feeling merely enjoys its objects, desire actually brings about what it represents. To desire something is to have the requisite mental state for bringing that thing about. Even when desire is not fully self-conscious (as in animals, or as with bare urges) or when it is merely a response to sensory stimuli, it is still a mental state directed towards an object as a cause of bringing that object about. When desire is more deliberate and self-conscious, following from the higher faculty of cognition such that we want something because we understand it, then such desire is “a faculty to do or to refrain from doing as one pleases” (6:213). A desire, for Kant, always involves a volitional commitment to an object, but when one is committed to bringing about the object while still recognizing that one lacks the power to actualize that commitment, one’s desire is called a mere “wish” (6:213). When one desires an object and is also aware of one’s power to bring about that object, one “chooses” it (6:213). It should be clear, here, that “desire” is in some ways closer to what we consider “choice” than it is to what we typically consider “desire.” When a person “desires” something in Kant’s sense, it means that they have the sort of mental state that will bring about its object if it can. Thus what we might consider a mere “desire” would for Kant be an inactive *ground* for a possible desire. “Concupiscence (lusting after something) must be distinguished from desire itself, as a stimulus to determining desire. Concupiscence is always a sensible modification of the mind but one that has not yet become an act of the faculty of desire” (6:213).

Beyond this general description of desire, Kant must explain why it is that desires arise for certain objects and not others. Given a cognition that gives rise to a practical pleasure, one will experience a desire for the object of that pleasure. The problem is explaining why certain cognitions give rise to practical pleasures while others do not. Kant’s solution to this problem is, justifiably, extremely complex. He distinguishes between higher and lower faculties of desire based on whether they are moved by pleasures in higher cognitions (principles informed by concepts or ideas) or lower cognitions (brute sensations or imagination). But within these classifications, Kant must explain the variety of forms of human desire, and he articulates that account in the context of a description of biological and environmental factors that characterize human beings. To get a fuller empirical anthropology, then, we need to turn to Kantian human biology.

4. Natural Predispositions

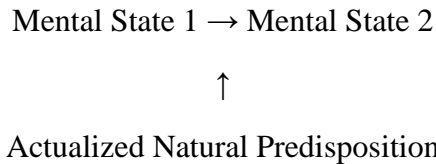
A central claim of Kant’s biology is that “it would be absurd ... to hope that there may yet arise a Newton who could make comprehensible even the generation of a blade of grass according to natural laws that no intention had ordered” (5:400). In rejecting a “Newton of a blade of grass,” Kant denies theories of mechanistic “epigenesis” that explained life in terms of purely physical forces. But Kant also rejects the dominant alternative, “preformationism,” which assumed that all humans (and other animals) pre-existed in the egg or sperm of their most distant ancestors, formed in miniature and waiting to emerge. The dominant concept in Kant’s biology is the “natural predisposition,” which combines important aspects of both epigenesis and preformationism. Natural predispositions are “grounds of a determinate unfolding which are lying in the nature of an organic body” (2:434). Kant argues that “chance or universal mechanical laws could not produce such agreements [adaptive homologies], [so] we must

consider such arrangements as preformed,” but “outer things can well be occasioning causes” for the development of these predispositions (2:435, cf. 2:126). Like epigenesists, Kant wants to explain natural variety using the smallest number of explanatory principles, but like preformationists, he allows that some elements of biological structure cannot be explained by mechanism alone. Moreover, the way in which Kant suggests that outer things affect the development of natural predispositions ends up being selective rather than purely mechanical. That is, natural predispositions “lie ready ... to be on occasion either unfolded or restrained, so that [an organism] would become suited to his place in the world” (2:435). For Kant, organisms are born with a set number of predispositions that develop in response to various environmental conditions based on what is needed to thrive within those conditions.

Kant’s appeal to “predispositions” does not commit him to any particular metaphysical conception but rather effects an epistemic and methodological shift. Unlike epigenesist attempts to account for the emergence of biological structures from simpler processes, Kant argues that investigation of living beings proceeds best when one seeks to discover the minimal number of predispositions from which one can best explain the full range of biological phenomena one finds in the world. Kant’s pessimism about a Newton of a blade of grass is not a denial that the generation of a blade of grass may in fact be causally determined according to mechanistic laws, but only an admonition to distinguish biology from physics and allow forces in the former that might be inadmissible in the latter (see 5:411, 415, 422). This distinction from physics supports a further aspect of Kant’s biology that we highlighted in chapter one. Given that organic predispositions serve purposes within organisms, Kant can a “heuristic” “principle of final causes” (5:411, 387). In Kant’s biology, one can legitimately ask, about any biological structure, what purpose that structure serves, and answers to such questions are legitimate parts of biological investigation.

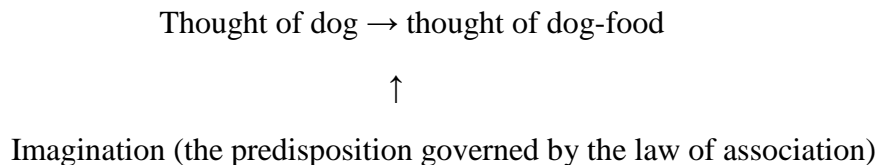
Kant’s preformationism has several important implications for his empirical anthropology. First, it allows Kant to forego describing how human predispositions came into existence: “we begin with something that human reason cannot derive from prior natural causes – that is, with the existence of human beings,” including all of their natural predispositions (8:110). Kant’s empirical anthropology reduces given powers to as few natural predispositions as possible, explaining environmental factors that allow certain predispositions (but not others) to flourish in (certain) human beings and using this small number of natural predispositions to explain what we observe of human beings. Second, Kant’s emphasis on teleological explanation of these predispositions gives him additional resources for “explaining” predispositions without mechanistically explaining them. Kant gives teleological explanations of phenomena as diverse as sleep (7:166, 175, 190), laughter (7:261), and distinctions between the sexes (7:305). Third, Kant’s preformationism contributes to his general disinterest in giving materialist explanations of psychological predispositions. Kant contrasts his approach to the empirical anthropology of his contemporary Ernst Platner, which Kant identified with “subtle, and ... eternally futile inquiries as to the manner in which bodily organs are connected with thought” (10:145). Through positing predispositions as fundamental concepts in biology, Kant’s empirical anthropology can focus on explaining diverse mental phenomena in terms of as few basic powers as possible, tracing these basic powers back to purposive natural predispositions and the environmental influences that cause these predispositions to unfold, without being preoccupied with finding the physical structures that underlie those predispositions.

In his empirical anthropology, then, basic powers are developed forms of natural predispositions. We can describe the connection between any two mental states in terms of a causal law that is grounded in a basic power, which is itself the determinate unfolding of a natural predisposition.



The concept of natural predisposition allows Kant to expand the sense of “basic power” beyond the limited and abstract structure of his empirical psychology. Especially in the context of the faculty of desire, Kant develops a vocabulary for natural predispositions that provides the flexibility and variety needed to make sense of the myriad different ways in which human beings are motivated.

With respect to the faculty of cognition, Kant’s treatment of natural predispositions is fairly straightforward. The senses, inner sense, the imagination, and the higher faculties of judgment, understanding, and reason are all different natural predispositions in the human being (A66, 6:444-5). Humans have natural predispositions to sense, imagine, and think in accordance with the laws described in section three. Thus in explaining the connection between one cognition and another, one appeals to the natural predispositions active in effecting that transition. For example, when the transition from the thought of one’s dog to the thought of dog food is effected by the imagination, one can describe this transition as follows:



By contrast, the transition from the thought of one’s dog to the thought “animal” would be effected by the understanding, a different predisposition. In both cases, however, a complete explanation of the origin of a particular cognition must include, for Kant, not only the prior state that caused the cognition and the causal law according to which that state caused that transition, but also the natural predisposition that is the ground of that law.

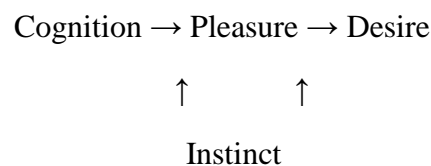
Human beings vary in terms of the exercise of natural cognitive predispositions. Some variations are in predispositions themselves, such as certain forms of mental illness. Others involve a deficiency in the development of natural predispositions. And others, including all prejudices, involve circumstances in which some predispositions (linked either to imagination or to the faculty of desire) override the understanding and reason, leading to erroneous judgments.

There are also positive variations in cognitive powers, such as wit or originality of thought, which Kant calls “talents,” a sort of “excellence of the cognitive faculty which depends not on instruction but on the subject’s natural predisposition” (7:220). Altogether, Kant’s account of cognitive predispositions identifies basic powers of cognition as predispositions and accounts for variations in cognitive abilities through either hereditary or acquired defects in predispositions or their expression.

Predispositions become more important and complex with respect to faculties of (practical) pleasure and desire. As noted in the last section, the causal structure that determines whether particular cognitions give rise to desires or aversions can be exceedingly complex. Many things that give rise to desires in one person do not do so in others, things can give rise to desires sometimes and not others, and humans – even as objects of empirical study – seem capable of a kind of freedom of choice that might seem to preclude causal explanations. In every case, desires are preceded by cognitions that provoke feelings of pleasure. But to explain why some cognitions can cause pleasure, others displeasure, and others no feelings at all, Kant trace our volitional structure to two kinds of natural predispositions: instincts and propensities.

(a) *Instincts*

The nature and role of instincts is fairly straightforward. Among natural predispositions present in human beings are a set of instincts that ground connections between various cognitions and practical pleasures (or pains) that give rise to desires (or aversions) for objects of those cognitions. Given the distinctness between the faculties of feeling and desire, there would be, strictly speaking, separate predispositions underlying the connection between, on the one hand, a particular cognition and subsequent feeling, and, on the other hand, that feeling and its consequent desire. But because all practical pleasures give rise to desires and Kant offered an account of non-practical desires that explains how they cause feelings without subsequently generating desires, his detailed account of human motivation conflates the power that grounds a connection between cognition and feeling and the power that grounds the connection between the feeling and desire. Kant ascribes the transition from cognition to desire to a single basic natural predisposition. (For ease of presentation, I often drop the reference to the intermediary practical feeling in Kant’s account and simply describe the role of natural predispositions as relating cognitions to desires.) In the case of instinct, Kant’s model of motivation maps straightforwardly onto his account of predispositions in general.



For example,

Sweet smell of a ripe mango → Pleasure → Desire for that mango



Instinct for sweet foods

Often, instincts become operative when one is in the presence of the object that one's instinct predisposes one to desire (or avoid): "little chicks already have from nature an instinct of aversion to the hawk, of which they are afraid as soon as they merely see something fly in the air" (28:255). With respect to human beings, Kant explains how smell, by means of "its affinity with the organ of taste" and "the latter's familiar sympathy with the instruments of digestion," serves as an "instinct" that "guided the novice ... allow[ing] him a few things for nourishment but for[bidding] him others" as though it were a kind of "faculty of pre-sensation ... of the suitability or unsuitability of a food for gratification" (8:111). Central to these operations of instinct is that instincts ground connections between cognitions and anticipatory pleasures that give rise to desires. And these connections occur even before any experience of pleasures that might follow from the satisfaction of the desire. In cases where the objects of instincts are not present, Kant even suggests that instincts can be "directed to an indeterminate object; they make us acquainted with the object" (25:584), such as the sucking instinct or even, in some cases, the sexual one (25:584).

Moreover, the power of imagination can greatly expand the scope of instinct. Kant describes a scene where "a fruit which, because it looked similar to other available fruits which he had previously tasted, encouraged him to make the experiment" of eating it (8:111). Given an association between a particular visual experience and a particular olfactory experience, a similar visual experience will – by virtue of the laws that govern the imagination – give rise to an imaginative idea that corresponds to that olfactory experience. Given a sufficiently strong instinctual connection between that olfactory experience and practical pleasure, the mere sight of a similar fruit will give rise to a desire to consume that fruit.

(b) Inclination

Even with this expanded conception of instinct, however, most of human desire is not instinctual, for two important reasons. First, human desires for things like the company of one's friends, wearing fashionable clothes, resting on comfortable sofas, watching one's favorite television programs, attending baseball games, and even for things like smoking cigarettes and eating fine foods, cannot be explained by appeal to brute instincts. These are all, in varying degrees, connected with *habits* that give rise to desires for certain objects. Second, even when we pursue objects for which we have instincts, humans typically do not pursue those objects *directly* from instinct. Instincts give rise to what we might call a desire, but we have a capacity to reflect on whether or not to pursue the object of that desire. Humans frequently decide not to follow through on instinct for the sake of something else, often something for which they do not have particularly strong instinctual desires at that moment. When I decide not to eat delicious ice, I do not act from any instinctual desire for long-term health. If humans acted only from instinct, the task of explaining human motivation would require merely a catalog of relevant instincts and

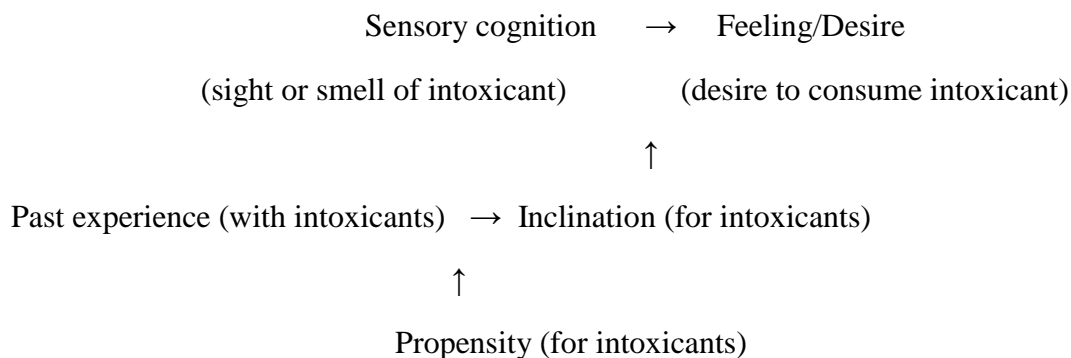
Careful descriptions of environments in which those instincts play out. But human behavior is, as Kant recognized, much harder to explain.

One might be tempted, at this point, to appeal to human freedom as a reason for the difficulty of explaining human behavior. And many have thought that the complexity of human motivation provides some support for Kant's account of freedom. But within his empirical anthropology, Kant takes the complexity of human action not as a reason to posit transcendental freedom, but rather as a basis for a more complicated but still empirical anthropology. Kant adds the requisite complexity through a generous use of the category of "propensity." In one lecture, Kant defines a propensity as a "natural predisposition" that provides "the inner possibility of an inclination" (25:1111-2; cf. 7:265). More generally, a propensity is a natural predisposition that does not itself provide a ground for connections between cognitions and practical pleasures, but that makes it possible for the human being, in the context of environmental factors, to develop a ground for such connections. Having introduced this notion of a propensity, Kant uses it to address the two problems mentioned in the previous paragraph.

First, Kant focuses on propensities for "inclinations," which he identifies as "habitual grounds of desire" (25:1114) and which, for the purposes of his empirical anthropology, are distinguished from instincts. Like instincts, inclinations provide bases for connections between cognitions and desires. Unlike instincts, however, inclinations are not natural predispositions but tendencies brought about through certain experiences. For example,

[S]avages have a propensity for intoxicants; for although many of them have no acquaintance ... with intoxication, and hence absolutely no desire for the things that produce it, let them try these things but once, and there is aroused in them an almost inextinguishable desire for them. (6:29; cf. 25:1112, 1339, 1518)

Sometimes one needs only a single experience of an object for an inclination to be awakened. Generally, however, inclinations require "frequent repetition" (25:1514). There is also a generic propensity to develop habits, such that when one experiences something consistently over a long period of time, one develops an inclination for it (cf. 9:463-4). In any case of inclination, however, it is not enough to simply have exposure to something to develop an inclination for it. Experiences give rise to inclinations only when human beings already have requisite propensities. The model for explaining human action in those cases looks like:



In these cases, the immediate explanation for why a particular cognition gives rise to a practical pleasure and thereby a desire will be similar to the case of instinct, but because inclinations are not themselves innate, the account requires an extra level of complexity. And this complexity provides for much of the richness and diversity that one finds in human desires. Fancy clothes, comfortable sofas, cigarettes, and baseball are all possible objects of inclination, even when we have no instinctual desire for them. And because humans differ in their experiences, even those with the same propensities (and Kant allows for some, but not much, variation in basic human propensities¹) end up with very different patterns of desire. A general propensity for competitive sport (or, even more generally, for esteem and physical exertion), leads to widely varying inclinations depending on the particular sports to which one is first exposed. Because propensities are natural predispositions, Kant does not give mechanical accounts for them, but he does aim to reduce the number of posited propensities to as few as possible; ideally, he would also provide teleological explanations for each propensity.

Kant also suggests that inclinations generally involve pleasure in ways that differ from instinct. For both instinct and inclination, experience of the object of desire brings a subsequent pleasure distinct from the practical pleasure that causes the desire. For instincts, this subsequent pleasure plays no explanatory role in the development of the instinct. The instincts for nursing or for sex motivate human beings to seek milk or sex innately, not because one has experienced their pleasures already. Instincts ground pre-sensations (8:111) of pleasure. But in the case of inclinations, the anticipatory practical pleasure that gives rise to desires generally follows from past experiences of the pleasure that one experienced upon attaining the objects of desire. One accidentally experiences some object, gets pleasure from the experience, and forms an inclination that grounds future connections between the cognition of that object and the desire to experience it. One might taste an intoxicating beverage out of thirst or conformity (rather than a desire for intoxicants) or might literally fall into a pleasantly cool pool of water on a hot day. When the experience of such objects brings pleasure, one will seek intoxicating beverages even when one is not thirsty, or one will intentionally seek out and immerse oneself in cool pools of water. In these cases, we might specify the past experience as an experience of pleasure in the objects. One need not always experience pleasure in order to form an inclination. One who has started smoking can find herself craving cigarettes even while the actual experience of smoking is still generally unpleasant, and one who develops a habit of acting in a particular way can develop an inclination to continue acting in that way, even if it is not, in itself, particularly pleasurable. Generally, however, a propensity brings about a corresponding inclination at least in part through pleasure in attaining its object.

(c) Character

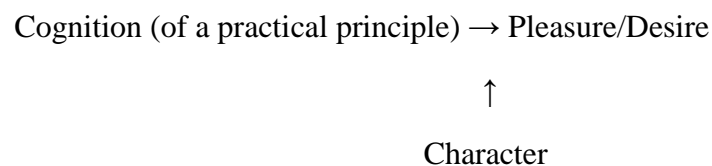
The addition of inclinations to Kant's account of human motivation greatly enriches that account, and it makes it possible to explain why there is such a wide range of divergent human interests. But inclinations, like instincts, still do not involve the reflective desires that

¹ Even with intoxicants, Kant's reference to the propensity of "savages" is more likely an assertion of the *universality* of this propensity than a limitation of it to a particular group. Kant's view seems best captured by his claim in a lecture on anthropology that "Human beings across the whole world have a propensity to drink [alcohol]" (25:1112).

characterize much human action. Kant captures this limitation by ascribing both instinct and inclination to the “lower” faculty of desire. Both affect human beings insofar as we are motivated by sensory or imaginative mental states, but not insofar as we govern our actions by means of concepts, principles, or maxims (the “higher” faculty of desire). For Kant, the higher faculty of desire, to which Kant assigns the term “choice” (6:213), “cannot be determined to action through any incentive except so far as the human being has incorporated it into his maxim” (6:24).² To explain how “maxims” give rise to volitions and thereby actions, Kant cannot merely appeal to instincts or inclination. Instead, he appeals to yet another propensity, a propensity to what he calls “character.”

Kant uses the term character in several senses throughout his writings. In the broadest sense, a thing’s character is the “law of its causality, without which it would not be a cause at all,” such that “every effective cause must have a character” (A539/B567, cf. 25:634). In this sense, gravity reflects the “character” of matter, and one’s instincts are part of the “character” of one’s lower faculty of desire. In a quite different sense, Kant uses “intelligible character” to refer to the free ground – “which is not itself appearance” – of one’s appearances in the world (A539/B567). Character in this sense has no role to play in empirical explanations of action, although Kant argues that intelligible character grounds the empirical character of the higher faculty of desire. The character that plays an important role in Kant’s empirical theory of the higher faculty of desire is distinct from though grounded in intelligible character, and more specific than the character of an efficient cause in general. Kant defines this sense of character as “that property of the will by which the subject has tied himself to certain practical principles” (7:292) or “a certain subjective rule of the higher faculty of desire” (25:438, cf. 25:277). This character plays the same role for the higher faculty of desire that instincts and inclinations play for the lower. As Kant explains, “the man of principles, from whom we know for sure what to expect, not from his instinct ... but from his will, has character” (7:285, cf. 25:1514).

One can describe such motivations as follows:



“Character” involves commitment to principles or “maxims” of action. Thus, one may have a commitment to the principle “early to bed, early to rise.” In such a case, one’s actions might be explained as follows:

² This passage is typically, and rightly, used to analyze the practical perspective from which we are transcendently free vis-à-vis all of our actions. Kant’s specific language in this passage confirms that he primarily has this transcendently free power of choice in mind, rather than the specifically empirical faculty of choice. But the claim about acting on the basis of maxims here has an empirical correlate, as this section will show.

“Early to bed...” → Desire to go to bed

↑

Fixed commitment to “Early to bed, early to rise”

Of course, this example is too simple in several respects. For one thing, the cognition of the principle “Early to bed, early to rise” is not in itself sufficient to generate the desire to go to bed, since one must also have awareness of the fact that it is evening – time for bed – rather than morning or afternoon. In order for one’s character to ensure that the principle will be efficacious in generating its corresponding action, one requires both perception of one’s situation and consciousness of the relevant principle.

Moreover, commitment to the principle “early to bed...” is itself the result of other causes. Kant needs an account of the causes of character as such, that is, the ability to act in accordance with principles at all, and an account of the origins of the particular principles upon which individuals act. Regarding the first, Kant’s account of character development is similar to his account of the development of inclinations. There is a “propensity to character” (25:1172) that is actualized by various experiences (7:294, 25:1172). In the case of character, habit plays no positive role. Instead, Kant emphasizes education (25:1172), examples (7:294), and “moral discourses” (25:1173n1), and he gives specific recommendations regarding the kinds of education that are most effective, such as avoiding “imitation” (25:635). Beyond direct influences, Kant suggests oblique factors that support character cultivation, such as stable and just political regimes, peace, and even progress in the arts and sciences. And finally, Kant points out how other natural predispositions (especially temperament) facilitate character development (cf. 7:285, 290). All these elements work together to transform a mere propensity into an active ability to govern oneself with conscious principles rather than reactive instincts and inclinations.

Many of the influences responsible for the development of character as such also foster specific practical principles, but Kant emphasizes that most of these principles still “rest on sensibility, and ... merely the means for arriving at the end are presented by the understanding” (28:589). For example, one might learn “early to bed . . .” through instruction, but this instruction is effective because it proposes a plausible principle for satisfying instincts and inclinations. Even in the absence of specific instruction, one with experience forms principles of action based on what best promotes desired ends. Such principles are intellectual rather than sensible, but they still “rest on sensibility” because one formulates them for the sake of “lower” (i.e., sensible) inclinations and instincts. Even actions described in Kant’s moral philosophy as following “from inclination” are generally grounded in a character committed to principles that make objects of inclination its ends. Generally, inclinations for sweets do not directly cause one to eat them; rather, one understands that eating this food will satisfy a felt inclination, and (because of one’s character) this thought causes one to eat it.

Actions motivated by these “impure” principles of character are explained by an extremely complicated motivational picture. Through natural higher cognitive powers, sensory data are transformed into a conceptual understanding of one’s situation. At the same time, by

virtue of instincts and inclinations, sensory awareness of one's situation gives rise to various lower desires (or, more strictly, proto-desires). The understanding then provokes the thought of one or more practical principles based on how reason connects its conception of one's situation with one's felt lower desires. Thus one who recognizes the darkening sky under the concept of "early evening" might be led to think of the principle "early to bed..." by virtue of understanding this as the time at which going to bed will best facilitate the satisfaction of various inclinations over the long term. These practical principles give rise to practical pleasures and thereby desires – which Kant, in these cases, calls "choices" – by means of a character that has been formed through education, social-cultural influences, one's own past behavior, and the cooperating or hindering influence of inclinations and instincts. Both character in general and the inclinations that largely determine the content of the principles on which one acts are grounded in natural propensities. Thus human beings, due partly to different natural predispositions but largely to different past experiences, are motivated by similar sensory data to behave in different ways.

As complicated as this picture is, Kant thinks that human motivation is even more complicated, for three important reasons. First, the account given above assumes that for any given set of sensory data, there is only one way in which one's natural powers can conceptualize that content and, more importantly, that this conceptualization only lends itself to a single practical principle. But it might well be that the recognition of the darkening sky is conjoined with a recollection of an invitation to a social gathering that promises to be particularly enjoyable. Here one may be led to think of the principle "early to bed, early to rise" but also "don't forgo opportunities for enjoyable social gatherings" (cf. 6:473, 7:277-82), when one cannot in fact follow both principles. Even one with a well-formed character can have conflicting grounds of action. From within practical reflection (transcendental anthropology), what one does is a matter of free choice. But empirical anthropology must provide a psychological explanation. Kant first insists, "in empirical psychology, wholly equal incentives cannot be thought" (28:678) because in the case of equal incentives, there would be no choice and thus no action (29:902). As a result, Kant distinguishes "living" and "dead" grounds of desire, where one acts on the "living" ground, while the "dead" ground results in what Kant calls a "wish," where the "ground determining one to action ... is [not] joined with one's consciousness of the ability to bring about its object" (6:213). Thus one goes to bed because one's overall character subordinates the principle of socialization to that of prudent rest, but one falls to sleep wishing that one could somehow both go to bed early and partake in the enjoyable party.

The second added complication is that very few people have character in the fully developed sense that requires commitment to *consistent* principles. In a lecture, Kant specifically mentions difficulty with the maxim to rise early:

[one] who is not steadfast in this, often lays hold of a resolve, of which he knows for sure that nothing will come, because he knows that he has already often broken resolutions. Then the human being is in his [own] eyes a wind-bag. He no longer has any confidence in himself ... This is how it is with things for which one wants to break one's habit . . . , such as sleeping in; for it is always said, just one more time, but then no more, and thus one again philosophizes oneself free of one's plan ... (25:624)

Sometimes inclinations directly overpower one's higher faculty of desire, such that in the strict sense, one acts on the inclination alone, without the reflection that characterizes choice. But such cases are rare. More often, inclination corrupts grounds of choice and one "philosophizes oneself

free of one's plan" by acting on a maxim that differs from what one had resolved. For Kant, this tendency is quite common. Truly firm character "is fixed very late," only "com[ing] at a ripe old age" (25:654, 1385). Most people have a kind of "bad" or "flawed" character (25:650, 1172). Such "character" is a "constitution of one's higher powers" (25:227) according to which, rather than acting from fixed principles, one allows principles of choice to vary based on inclinations active at the time of choice. Here inclinations and instincts not only affect to which practical principles one commits oneself but also determine whether and to what extent those principles affect deliberation at particular moments. One with a firmly established character decides, by assessing the impact of various principles on her life as a whole, how to prioritize such principles. When the time comes for action, which practical principles determine action are set by this prioritization. One with flawed character might similarly rank practical principles, resolving, for instance, to prioritize an early start to the day over satisfying the inclination to sleep in, but inclinations of the moment, rather than resolved-upon rankings, determine which principles become effective.

A final, crucial component of Kant's account is that humans are capable not only of "impure" principles of action that are "intellectual ... in some respect," but also of purely intellectual principles of action. Human beings have a "predisposition to the good" (6:26), a "moral predisposition" (7:324) that gives motivational force to a principle that is "purely intellectual without qualification" because it is an "impelling cause" that "is represented by the pure understanding" (28:589). A purely intellectual principle is not based in any way on instincts or inclinations but proceeds solely from practical reason. Like other natural predispositions, the predisposition to the good is simply posited in human nature. Like instincts, this predisposition is innate in human beings (6:27-8, 7:324), and Kant even offers empirical evidence for it (7:85). But like all predispositions of the faculty of desire (including instincts), experiential factors determine the extent to which the moral predisposition is living and efficacious or amounts to mere wish. Thus, for example, when one person "confronts [another] with ... the moral law by which he ought to act ... , this confrontation [can] make an impression on the agent, [so that] he determines his will by an Idea of reason, creates through his reason that conception of his duty which already lay previously within him, and is ... quickened by the other ... [to] determine himself accordingly to the moral law" (27:521). And Kant discusses various ways in which, for instance, moral education (5:155, 6:479), polite society (6:473, 7:151), and moral-religious communities (6:94ff.) can enliven one's innate moral predisposition.

From the standpoint of the environmental and predispositional bases of moral motivation, Kant's account of moral motivation thus fits well into his general empirical anthropology. Because of the importance of moral motivation for his transcendental anthropology, however, and especially the importance of making sense of how a finite, empirically situated being can be motivated by a pure moral law, Kant adds detailed specific accounts of the nature of the "feeling of respect" that serves as the anticipatory "pleasure" causing choice in accordance with the moral law. Kant's account of respect for the moral law is notoriously difficult to interpret. Kant says that "there is indeed no feeling for this [moral] law" (5:75), but he proceeds to give a detailed analysis of the "feeling of respect for the moral law," the "moral feeling" that is "produced solely by reason" (5:75-6). Understandably, then, readers of Kant are largely split into those that favor a "cognitivist" reading of respect – for whom mere cognition of the moral law, independent of

feeling, motivates action in accordance with it – and those that favor a “sentimentalist” reading of respect within which the feeling of respect plays an essential motivational role.³

Given that Kant posits both a transcendental and an empirical anthropology, it is understandable that he might give different accounts of the role of pleasure in moral motivation. From the standpoint of transcendental anthropology, pleasure cannot play any role in grounding decisions to act in accordance with the moral law. If I choose to do what is right because it is pleasurable, I do not choose autonomously, and hence do not really choose to do what is right (5:71). Kant rightly adds that, from this transcendental perspective, “how a law can be of itself and immediately a determine ground of the will ... is ... insoluble ... and identical with ... how a free will is possible” (5:72). But the fact that one must see oneself as free, and as bound to freely adopt the moral law as the law of one’s will, does not preclude an empirical analysis of what such a free choice “effects ... in the mind insofar as it is an incentive” (5:72). That is, Kant can still explain how it appears when a person freely chooses to follow the moral law. And in this context, Kant posits an “intellectual pleasure” that arises from “representation of the [moral] law” (29:1024) and that serves as the motivational transition from cognition of that moral law to action in accordance with it. Kant thus provides a framework for empirically describing what, from the standpoint of transcendental anthropology, are free choices of a morally good will.

Summary

As objects of empirical study, humans are biological beings with complex mental lives. As biological beings, we have predispositions best discussed in terms of purposes they serve, and these predispositions ground causal laws that determine how our environment shapes our three faculties of cognition, feeling, and desire. The result is a complex causal account of mental powers and prejudices, instincts, inclinations, and characters, all of which allows for significant differences between individuals while still situating these differences in the context of universal laws of human psychology.

So far, this account of human beings has been relatively free of moral implications. As a strictly *empirical* anthropology, there is no direct basis for ascribing moral value to any particular psychological structures over others. But Kant uses his empirical anthropology to argue for an important moral claim about human beings. As we will see in the next chapter, Kant argues that there is good empirical evidence that human beings have a predispositional structure that can rightly be called “radically *evil*.” Moreover, this chapter has emphasized humans’ empirical nature as both universal and fixed. But Kant’s empirical anthropology also includes accounts of the *historical change* of the human species and of significant *diversity* in humans’ make-up. The next chapter investigates Kant’s account of human historicity, and we turn to Kant’s account of human diversity in chapter five.

³ See Allison 1989, Beck 1960, Grenberg 2005, McCarty 1993 and 1994, and Reath 1989.