

CHAPTER 5: PRAGMATIC ANTHROPOLOGY

The previous four chapters examined the transcendental and empirical “anthropologies” expressed in various written works and unpublished lectures composed by Kant over his lifetime. At the end of his life, however, when Kant wrote the only published work he entitled *Anthropology*, this book was neither *Transcendental Anthropology* nor *Empirical Anthropology* but *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*. And throughout his life, Kant taught “Anthropology” courses that cannot be described as either transcendental or empirical. Instead, what Kant sought to do, throughout his life and especially in *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, was to develop a *new* approach to thinking about human beings, one that combined theoretical insight into human nature with humans’ fundamental practical concerns, and one that avoided stale, metaphysical debates about such things as the relationship between mind and body, while providing a useful, philosophically sophisticated, systematic answer to the question “What is the human being?” In his “pragmatic” anthropology, Kant pulls together his transcendental and empirical anthropologies into a coherent whole that can help his readers “properly fulfill [our] station in creation” (20:41). While not the arena within which Kant answers all the questions of philosophy, pragmatic anthropology marks a culmination of Kant’s anthropology where he most fully combines philosophical insights with empirical-psychological observations of human beings in order to *improve* humans’ cognition, feelings, and actions.

1. The Scope of Pragmatic Anthropology

Kant discusses “anthropology” in various published works, most famously in his *Groundwork* and *Metaphysics of Morals*, where he explains that “ethics” will have an “empirical part” called “practical anthropology,” which will “deal ... with the subjective conditions in human nature that help or hinder in fulfilling the laws of a metaphysics of morals” (6:217). Kant’s discussion of humans’ radical evil also requires some explanation for how one can work to undo and arm oneself against self-wrought evil tendencies, an explanation that one would expect from moral anthropology. One might think, then, that Kant’s *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* would provide this much-needed supplement for his pure moral philosophy.

Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View provides this moral supplement, but goes further, aiming to “disclose the basis of ... everything that pertains to the practical” (10:146). This broad understanding of pragmatic as “practical” shows up early in Kant’s published *Anthropology*. Kant distinguishes “pragmatic” anthropology from “physiological” ones because whereas the latter emphasize “what nature makes of the human being,” pragmatic anthropology attends to “what *he* as a free-acting being makes ... or can and should make of himself” (7:119). More specifically, while the physiological anthropologist looks at the neurophysical bases of mental powers, “he must admit that in this play of his representations he is a mere observer and must let nature run its course, for he does not understand how to put [these neurophysical bases] to use for his purposes” (7:119). In contrast, the pragmatic anthropologist focuses on that “knowledge of the human being” that is *useful* for, say, improving memory; this anthropologist

“uses perceptions concerning what has been found to hinder or stimulate memory in order to enlarge it or make it agile” (7:119).

Kant’s particular example of memory is important for clarifying what exactly is meant when Kant refers to the subject matter of pragmatic anthropology as something that “concerns ... the investigation of what he as a free-acting being ... can and should make of himself.” In particular, Pragmatic anthropology need not take the free subject of transcendental anthropology as its *topic*. In the rest of Kant’s *Anthropology*, not only through his stated methodology (7:120-22) but in practice, the information about human beings that makes up the content of pragmatic anthropology is empirical.¹ In an important sense, then, pragmatic anthropology has no distinctive content of its own. Elsewhere, Kant even refers to its principles as mere “scholia” of empirical “knowledge of [human] nature” (20:199). But pragmatic anthropology is concerned with free-acting human beings in that it is *addressed to* human agents who can *make use of* empirical knowledge for accomplishing (freely-chosen) goals.

When one asks where the ends served by pragmatic anthropology arise, one must look to transcendental anthropology in the broadest sense. It is only from-within the standpoints of thinking, feeling, and willing that one comes to discover – at least in outline – what the human being *should* make of himself. As freely-acting beings, human beings find themselves with two main orienting principles of volition: happiness and duty. And from the start, Kant recognized that these orienting principles require considerable empirical knowledge for their application. Happiness is “such an indeterminate concept that although every human being wishes to attain this, he can still never say determinately and consistently with himself what he really wishes and wills” (4:418) and even moral laws require “a judgment sharpened by experience ... to distinguish in what cases they are applicable and ... to provide them with access to the will of the human being” (4:389). Kant’s pragmatic anthropology fills in the empirical knowledge of human nature that is required to discern not only the means for pursuing one’s ends but even to what ends free but finite human agents should devote attention.

2. Moral Anthropology

For Kant, the one end “good without limitation” (4:393) is the good will, so Kant’s pragmatic must include *moral* anthropology. This “moral anthropology” is a necessary empirical supplement to “pure” moral philosophy. Precisely what moral anthropology contributes is disputed and even seems to shift between Kant’s earlier *Groundwork* and later *Metaphysics of Morals*. We can distinguish two ways empirical anthropology might supplement moral philosophy. First, and most obviously, we might need what Kant, in *Groundwork*, refers to as a “judgment sharpened by experience ... to distinguish in what cases [moral principles] are applicable” (4:389). For generating specific principles from the categorical imperative, we need empirical information about human beings. For example, the obligation not to make false promises applies to only beings like ourselves, not, for instance, to the extra-terrestrials Kant imagines in his *Anthropology*, “who could not think in any other way but aloud” (7:332). We

¹ For a detailed defense, see Frierson 2003. Consistent with his empirical anthropology, Kant’s pragmatic anthropology treats human beings as “free” in the sense that they have faculties of desire capable of acting for the sake of ends and a *higher* faculty of desire capable of acting from principles (cf. Cohen 2009). But what makes the anthropology *pragmatic* is not the way humans are treated teleologically-biologically rather than mechanically, but the fact that Kant emphasizes those aspects of human nature that free human beings can *use*.

might also use empirical facts about human desires to specify and apply our general obligation to promote others' happiness, and we can use facts about human limitations to set boundaries for various human interactions. As we will see at the end of the next section, Kant does see pragmatic anthropology as playing important roles in this sort of application of moral principles to human life. But this role is not the role of "moral anthropology" strictly speaking.

Instead, "moral anthropology" is concerned with a second way of putting empirical anthropology to use for moral philosophy: "Moral anthropology ... deal[s] with the development, spreading, and strengthening of moral principles" (6:217). Empirical insight is needed to "make human beings ready to follow [moral laws]" (27: 244) and even to "give duties the power of inclinations" (25:1437, cf. 25:471-2, 734-5). That is, one can use empirical knowledge about how human volition actually works in order to help human beings – both oneself and others – act on the basis of the moral law. This task of putting empirical knowledge to use for moral improvement is particularly important, for Kant, because of the problem of radical evil diagnosed in chapter three. Human beings not only perform evil acts but also cultivate tendencies to do more evil. In response to the problem of human evil, Kant proposes both a theological solution – God's grace – and a new practical orientation. In chapter three, we emphasized Kant's practical focus on human *historicity* and *ethical community*. But this focus is supplemented by moral anthropology. Given radical evil, the best human beings can do with respect to morality is to "remain forever armed for battle," "under the leadership of the good principle, against the attacks of the evil principle" (6:93). This arming involves an unending effort to *strengthen* the good principle and *weaken* the evil principle in one's empirical character, an effort facilitated through empirical knowledge of how human volition actually works.

Thus Kant develops moral anthropology, which applies empirical anthropology to the problem of how to cultivate virtue in human agents. Throughout his moral philosophy, Kant emphasizes the *practical-pedagogical* importance of presenting the moral law in all its purity (e.g. 4:390, 5: 156), and not only offers a "moral catechism" (6:480), but sketches a model of how to use stories of moral heroes to bring a "ten-year old boy ... to a lively wish that he himself could be such a [virtuous] man" (5:155-6). Kant's lectures on pedagogy discuss how to cultivate the moderation and self-discipline that support virtue. And Kant's lectures on ethics attend to how "a person may be compelled to duty by others" (27:521) through careful articulation of moral responsibilities. Unsurprisingly, then, Kant's *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* includes substantial attention to empirical features of human beings that are particularly salient for the cultivation of moral virtue and even ends with an impassioned reiteration of humans' moral vocation (see 7:330-3). The rest of this section highlights four examples from *Anthropology* that show Kant's moral emphasis: politeness as an aid to virtue, passions and affects as hindrances to virtue, character as a necessary ground for virtue, and understanding diversity to cultivate morals properly.

For Kant, politeness is a "duty to oneself as well as to others" (6:473), but also a "permissible moral illusion" (7:151). Against philosophers like Hume and Smith, Kant emphasizes how politeness is significantly different in kind from truly moral action; it is a "mere external ... which give[s] a beautiful illusion [merely] resembling virtue" (6:473). But against Rousseau, Kant insists that this merely external show of virtue can, over time, "promote a virtuous disposition" (6:474). *Anthropology* uses empirical facts about human beings – such as the "tendency to willingly allow himself to be deceived" – to show how engaging in shows of

virtue can, over time, help a person combat the evil principle and cultivate genuine virtue (see Frierson 2005).

While politeness aids virtue, passions and affects are prime examples of moral hindrances. Both are “illness[es] of mind” (7:251), degrees of emotional agitation that prevent reflection. Both preclude a good will, since the reflection necessary to be motivated by the moral law is absent, but how they preclude the good will is different. Affects, such as sudden rage or shock, are an extreme and passing form of weak or frail will, where one is simply overcome by feeling and engages in no reflection at all. Fortunately, affects are passing, and one afflicted by affect can, during cool, calm hours, take steps to prevent further outbursts. Passions, such as vengeful hatred or lust for power, are akin to depraved wills but focused, not on overall happiness, but solely on a single end. Kant’s taxonomy of mental faculties and overall empirical account of human action explain the difference between these mental illness and why passions are “incurable” (7:266) and “properly evil” (6:408) while affects are merely a passing “lack of virtue” (6:408).

Kant follows his discussion of affects and passions with an account of “character” that pulls together his empirical treatment of character with his moral philosophy. Character – the “property of the will by which the subject binds himself to definite practical principles” (7:292) – is the surest antidote to passions, affects, and even ordinary human emotional fluctuations that can be problematic to moral life. And character is necessary in order to have a will that is stably and purely bound to the moral law as its principle. Thus Kant’s *Anthropology* devotes considerable attention to cataloging measures that one can take to cultivate genuine character.

After discussing individual character – the sort so prominent in his empirical theory of the higher faculty of desire – Kant also discusses other sorts of “character,” including the character of different nations and races, and various “influences on character,” including temperament. Kant’s moral anthropology, especially when it comes to the matter of character, absorbs his interest in diversity. And in this context, his treatments of diversity take on a special moral importance. In particular, Kant often highlights the diverse “struggles against the evil principle” that different people will have. In describing the sanguine as “not ... evil ... but ... a sinner hard to convert [because] he regrets ... much but quickly forgets this regret” (7:288) or the phlegmatic as one who “proceeds from principles” even when lacking “wisdom” (7:290), Kant highlights different emphases for moral cultivation in these two sorts of people. And Kant’s claims that French “vivacity is not sufficiently kept in check by considered principles” (7:313) or that Germans “have a tendency to imitation . . . [,] a mania for punctiliousness and ... a need for methodical division” (7:318-9) show that these two nations face different challenges in the cultivation of (moral) character (7:293). Kant’s pragmatic attention to empirical differences between human being often focuses on just those “subjective conditions” relevant for moral anthropology.

Of course, nothing in Kant’s anthropology dictates empirical causes of good wills since a good will cannot be empirically caused. But Kant lays out empirical causes of and practical advice for cultivating character, highlights particular moral challenges that will be faced by those of varying temperaments and national origins, and describes resources for progress in the species as a whole. Because all of these considerations are empirical, they cannot ultimately determine whether one’s free, noumenal choice is for good or evil. But a person who recognizes radical evil and earnestly seeks every resource to combat the “evil principle” within her knows that merely

choosing rightly in a particular case is insufficient for moral progress. For radically evil human beings, virtue requires taking one's life as a whole to be a battlefield between one's evil tendencies to self-deceptive moral complacency and one's moral struggle to revolt against those tendencies. Knowing that one's friendliness or even principled actions are merely matters of temperament can help one focus on those areas of life that require greater moral attention (being more principled if one is naturally sanguine, or being less imitative if one is naturally phlegmatic). And given how lack of character leads to moral failings, knowledge of how to cultivate character, properly used, can arm one against the evils of frailty and impurity of will. Even if moral anthropology does not teach how to effect a noumenal revolution against radical evil, it gives one tools to live out that revolution in a life of constant progress towards greater and greater conformity to morality's demands.

3. Pragmatic Anthropology

While Kant's emphasis on the good will in his moral writings might lead some to think that there is little more to life than doing one's duty, Kant's pragmatic anthropology encompasses "everything that pertains to the practical" (10:146). Kant is adamant that excellent human lives include not only duty but also happiness and the increasing perfection of the whole range of human predispositions. In fact, while moral anthropology is an important part of Kant's pragmatic anthropology, Kant consistently downplays the moral importance of his anthropological claims. Politeness is important not merely for moral ends but for the sheer pleasure of polite company. Affects and passions are dangerous, and character beneficial, not merely for virtue but for happiness as well. Kant discusses how an "evil character" can inspire "admiration" (7:293) and his main examples of affects and passions show how these prevent people from reflecting on "sum of all feelings of pleasure" (7:254) or the "sum of all inclinations" (7:265). Even Kant's account of diverse national characters is oriented towards discerning "what each can expect from the other and how each could use the other to his own advantage" (7:312). Anthropology is full of applications of Kant's empirical anthropology towards helping human beings cultivate skills and capacities or become happier through better knowledge of human nature (both one's own and those of others). For this chapter, four examples of this non-moral "pragmatic" anthropology suffice: memory, distraction, "the highest physical pleasure," and "the highest ethico-physical good."

Kant's discussions of memory and distraction highlight his application of empirical anthropology to the perfection of predispositions that are neither moral nor a direct part of human happiness. With respect to memory, Kant advocates "*judicious* memorizing [of] a *table* of the *divisions* of a system" and various mnemonic "tricks" such as "maxims in verse" (7:184). Distraction, which Kant warns can lead to "forgetfulness" (7:185) or even "dementia" (7:207) if overused, is recommended in moderation as a sort of mental cleansing agent:

[O]ne can also *distract oneself*, ... as, for example, when the clergyman has delivered his memorized sermon and wants to prevent it from echoing in his head afterwards. This is a necessary and in part artificial precautionary procedure for our mental health. Continuous reflection on one and the same object leaves behind it a reverberation, so to speak (as when one and the very same piece of dance music that went on for a long time is still hummed by those returning from a festivity . . .). Such a reverberation ... molests the mind, and it can

only be stopped by distraction and by applying attention to other objects; for example, reading newspapers. (7:207)

While both good memory and the “mental health” referred to here may be helpful for happiness and/or virtue, Kant’s emphasizes using empirical anthropology for the “pragmatic” purpose of perfecting cognitive powers *as such*, regardless of moral or hedonic purposes to which these might be put. These examples also elegantly show the interplay of empirical-causal description with pragmatic purposes. With distraction, for instance, Kant assumes that people are free in that he directs this advice to someone he takes to be capable of acting upon it. But the advice is based on a picture of human cognition that traces empirical causes of cognitive changes, from the way continuous reflection on a single object causes “reverberation” to ways one can undo this reverberation by reading newspapers.

From his long and detailed “pragmatic” discussion of cognition (which takes up more than half of his published *Anthropology*), Kant turns to the faculties of feeling and desire, and there devotes attention to “pragmatic” advice about how to make human beings happy. Those familiar with Kant’s moral philosophy may recall his periodic despair about the possibility of “imperatives of prudence” ever “presenting actions ... as practically necessary” because “the concept of happiness is such an indeterminate concept” (4:418, cf. 5:36). One might not expect Kant to offer empirically-rooted rules of prudence, but his *Anthropology* not only lays out a general discussion of pleasure and pain (7:231), but also gives detailed analyses of inclinations that show reveal how they are often self-defeating from the standpoint of human happiness. Even while discussing the cognitive faculty, Kant emphasizes implications for happiness. For example, after distinguishing “attention” from “abstraction,” Kant notes, “Many human beings are unhappy because they cannot abstract. The suitor could make a good marriage if only he could overlook a wart on his beloved’s face, or a gap between her teeth ... But this faculty of abstraction is a strength of mind that can only be acquired through practice” (7:131-2). Kant diagnoses a source of unhappiness and suggests means for cultivating cognitive powers to have a happier life. The peak of *Anthropology*’s emphasis on happiness comes in specific accounts of “the highest physical good” and “the highest moral-physical good,” *both* of which, despite the terms “good” and “moral,” are suggestions for how to best be *happy*.

The “highest physical good” is that “greatest sensuous enjoyment” found in “*resting after work*” (7:276). Kant identifies psychological features that interfere with this enjoyment, especially “laziness” (“the propensity to rest without having first worked” (7:276)) and he uses his account to explain phenomena as diverse as the appeal of “a game,” the tendency of “a love story [to] always end with the wedding,” and the nature of “boredom” (7:232-3). The “highest moral-physical good” is the way to unify “good living with virtue in *social intercourse*” and is found in “*a good meal in good company*” (7:277-8). Kant details the importance of such dinner parties and how they should be conducted, including advice about the number of guests (ten), the order of conversation, and even the proper roles of “small ... attacks on the [female] sex” (acceptable as long as they are “not shameful”) and dinner music (“the most tasteless absurdity that revelry ever contrived”) (7:277-82). Such dinner parties please by virtue of humans’ innate sociability, and they even channel unsociability into conversation and “dispute ... which stirs up the appetite” but which, because it avoids excessive seriousness, is consistent with “mutual respect and benevolence” (7:280-1). Unlike vain luxury and chasing after superiority over others, “the art of good living” is a skillfulness of choice in social enjoyment, which ... mak[es] pleasure mutually beneficial, and is calculated to last” (7:250). The end result is a “stimulating play of

thoughts” that “promotes sociability” and thereby “dresses virtue to advantage” (7:279-82). While seemingly “insignificant ... compare[d] to pure moral laws,” the graces of “social good living” are not only enjoyable in themselves but also serve virtue by preventing it from becoming distorted into a cold “mortification of the flesh” (7:282), and the social interactions of a well-run dinner party help pave the way for polite and enjoyable moral exhortations amongst members of an ethical commonwealth. In the end, *Anthropology* enriches the austere conception of human life one might find in Kant’s transcendental anthropology with details that are not moral, epistemic, or aesthetic.

Why does Kant devote so much attention to how human beings can be happier? In part, Kant may be using empirical anthropology to specify duties required by pure moral philosophy. Since the two “ends that are also duties [are] *one’s own perfection* and *the happiness of others*” (6:386), learning what makes people happy and best facilitates the perfection of “natural powers” (6:444) specifies, in empirically-informed and concrete ways, how to work towards these obligatory ends. But Kant also emphasizes that human beings “unavoidably want” happiness (6:386) because of “predispositions to animality ... [and] humanity” that are ultimately parts of our more general “predisposition *to good*” (6:26). Even the perfection of non-volitional capacities is “pragmatic” (6:444) because “these capacities “serve and are given ... for all sorts of possible purposes” (4:423). In contrast to monkish moralists who decry basic desires and Rousseauian moralists who decry socially-created inclinations, Kant endorses *as good* a wide range of human inclinations – for food, sex, social life, fine wine, good conversation, and so on. While not “good without limitation” (4: 393), these important if “limited” goods should be pursued well. So an important part of pragmatic anthropology is discerning, through careful empirical investigation, what sorts of activities best satisfy and delight human beings over the long term. *Groundwork*’s apparent despair about rules of prudence is mitigated in *Anthropology* by a serious effort to provide the best, empirically-informed, practical advice for improvement and well-being.

4. Empirical, transcendental, and pragmatic anthropology

So far, this chapter has focused on details of Kant’s pragmatic anthropology, but it is time to ask how Kant saw his pragmatic anthropology in relation to his empirical and transcendental anthropologies. In other words, it is time to answer Kant’s question – “What is the human being?” in an integrated way. Throughout his life Kant distinguished what I have called “transcendental” from “empirical” anthropology, particularly insisting that the latter not corrupt the former. But Kant’s pragmatic anthropology brings the two sorts of investigation together, into what is at once “knowledge of the world” and “the investigation of what [the human being] as a free-acting being ... can and should make of himself (7:119). While this might seem to compromise Kant’s distinction, pragmatic anthropology actually offers a coherent and plausible model for how empirical and transcendental anthropologies should be integrated, and thus a model for a complete “doctrine of the knowledge of the human being” (7:119).

As we saw in section one, Kant’s claim that pragmatic anthropology attends to “the human being “as a free-acting being” distinguishes his “pragmatic” anthropology from the “physiological” anthropology of his contemporary Ernst Platner in that Kant’s (unlike Platner’s) focuses on knowledge of human beings that can be put to use. Kant uses the case of memory to explain that what makes an anthropologist pragmatic is that he “uses perceptions concerning

what has been found to hinder or stimulate memory in order to enlarge it or make it agile” rather than dwelling over purely theoretical claims about memory that are “a pure waste of time” (7:119). And so when he turns to discuss memory in detail in *Anthropology*, Kant uses his empirical anthropology to discern the best mnemonic strategies, rather than merely explaining the “nature” of memory as such. Similarly, when Kant recommends distracting oneself to avoid reverberation in imagination (7:207), he directs this advice to someone capable of freely acting on it, but the advice is based on various empirical causes of cognitive changes. And Kant’s accounts of how politeness cultivates good character, the nature of affects and passions, and even the general role of character in action are all *empirical-anthropological* claims, but ones that can be put to use. Kant *addresses* free agents, teaching empirical facts about human nature in order to show what free *human* beings can make of themselves, and how.

But pragmatic anthropology is not *merely* usable empirical anthropology. Kant also, implicitly recommends *how* to use this empirical knowledge. Pragmatic anthropology teaches both what human beings *can* make of themselves and what they *should* make of themselves. And these *norms* cannot be justified merely empirically but depend upon the from-within perspective that is the focus of Kant’s *transcendental* anthropology. The molestation of mind that calls for distraction appears only from-within, in one’s response to one’s cognitive state. And Kant’s discussion of cognition even ends with a series of “unalterable commands” that “lead to wisdom,” including the need “to think *for oneself*” and “Always to think *consistently*” (7:228), and with an exhortation to “exit from his self-incurred immaturity” (7:229). By providing free human thinkers with empirical knowledge about how cognition works, Kant can cultivate the autonomy of thought that is a normative requirement of thinking. Similarly, as we saw in section one above, Kant’s pragmatic anthropology puts empirical anthropology to use to cultivate *good character* in human beings. By understanding the aspects of our natures that tempt and lead us astray and by understanding how to cultivate character, we can better engage in the struggle towards the good will that Kant’s transcendental anthropology of desire reveals as the only thing good without limitation. Pragmatic anthropology thus unifies transcendental with empirical anthropology; transcendental analyses provide a priori normative principles for our human powers, and empirical anthropology shows how to cultivate powers that conform to those norms.

One aspect of Kant’s pragmatic anthropology, however, goes beyond the mere application of empirically-given means to transcendently-given ends. Kant’s discussions of happiness, which play a particularly important role in his “pragmatic” anthropology, make use of empirical anthropology to specify ends for human beings. Happiness is a universal end, one we observe all humans seeking and that we can discover, from-within, to be naturally necessary for ourselves. But happiness is “such an indeterminate concept” (4:418) that it requires empirical content to be action-guiding *at all*. Whereas there can be a priori cognitive and moral principles, the best that humans can do regarding the pursuit of happiness is to carefully study, through introspection as well as the investigation of others, what actually gives the most pleasure over the long term. In that sense, the pursuit of happiness is the special domain of pragmatic anthropology, the domain within which pragmatic anthropology specifies not only means but also – because “happiness” is *so* indeterminate – the end itself.

There is one further important aspect of Kant’s “pragmatic” anthropology that has not yet received sufficient attention. So far, this chapter focused on the importance of pragmatic anthropology for fostering *one’s own* capacities, happiness, and virtue. But for Kant, one of the

primary reasons for developing a pragmatic anthropology is to learn how *others* respond to various empirical conditions in order to appropriately navigate within a world defined largely by other people. Thus Kant claims “all pragmatic instruction is instruction in prudence” (25:471), and in *Groundwork* identifies “prudence” with “the skill of ... influencing others so as to use them for his own purposes” (4: 416n., see too 7:322). Thus in laying out characteristics of different nationalities, Kant claims, “In an anthropology from a pragmatic point of view, ... the only thing that matters to us is to present the character of [each] ... in some examples, and, as far as possible, systematically; which makes it possible to judge what each can expect from the other and *how each could use the other* to his own advantage. (7:312, emphasis added). By understanding human nature, one not only knows how to influence *oneself* in order to improve memory, attain happiness, or cultivate character; one also knows or can quickly assess the strengths and weaknesses of others in order to influence their development and behavior.

This way of approaching others can sound sinister when Kant speaks of “using” others “to one’s own advantage,” but Kant’s point is more benign, and, properly understood, even an affirmation of human dignity. Regardless of how free people might be from-within, human beings have empirically-knowable tendencies that enable prediction of how different people respond to various situations. One *might* put this knowledge to use to manipulate others as *mere* means to one’s ends. But one might also put this knowledge to use in order to best achieve one’s ends *without* treating others as mere means. If I know that the sanguine “attributes a great importance to each thing for the moment, and the next moment may not give it another thought” (7:287-8) while the melancholy “finds cause for concern everywhere” (7:288), I know to treat social commitments with these two types of people differently. If I have agreed to go to a movie with someone but feel like going to a concert instead, I will suggest this change to my sanguine friends (who are likely to be thrilled by my spontaneity, and in any case will tell me if they still want to go to the movie) but not to my melancholic ones (who are likely to silently take offense while reluctantly agreeing to the change of plans). Knowing how others are affected by empirical conditions can make me *more* respectful of their humanity, rather than less. Thus “we are taught anthropology” so that, as we seek to influence others, “we are neither too hard nor too offensive” (25:1436). One uses anthropological knowledge *rather than* manipulation or force to accomplish one’s ends in relation to others while still respecting their humanity.

Even this level of interest in others, of course, might still focus merely on *not* offending others while pursuing “one’s own advantage.” But Kant makes clear that his ambitions with respect to others are higher. In one lecture, Kant laments that “the reason that morals and preaching that are full of admonitions ... have little effect is the lack of knowledge of man” (25:471-72). In another, he explains the “great uses” of anthropology as including “pedagogy ... morals and religion” (25: 1437). And Kant’s published *Anthropology* ends with an inspiring allusion to the ethical commonwealth of Kant’s *Religion*:

[Anthropology] presents the human species not as evil, but as a species of rational beings that strives among obstacles to rise out of evil In this ..., achievement is difficult because one cannot expect to reach the goal by the free agreement of *individuals*, but only by a progressive organization of citizens of the earth into and toward the species as a system that is cosmopolitically united. (7:333)

Learning how other people are affected by empirical influences is crucial for “morals and preaching,” “pedagogy ... [and] influences on morals,” and ultimately “a progressive

organization of citizens are earth.” In these ways, pragmatic anthropology is the science needed to actively promote an ethical commonwealth.

SUMMARY

In a sense, Kant’s *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* provides his answer to the question “What is the human being?” For Kant, the question is a pressing practical one about humans’ place in the universe, about who we are but also, crucially, about what we can and should make of ourselves. Many aspects of Kant’s answer to this question come in his transcendental anthropology, where he develops his metaphysical account of humans’ free and finite natures and lays out norms that should govern cognition, feelings, and volitions. Many aspects of Kant’s answer show up in his empirical anthropology, where he provides detailed descriptions of how human beings actually think, feel, and choose. But Kant’s pragmatic anthropology integrates these two sets of answers to help human beings better satisfy norms of cognition, feeling, and volition and live happier, more virtuous, and more socially-beneficially lives. This chapter has looked at some examples of this integration, in the roles of politeness, passions and affects, and character on promoting the achievement of both moral and prudential norms, and on the concrete recommendations Kant makes for improving our cognitive powers and making ourselves happier.

Pragmatic anthropology also helps complete Kant’s accounts of human evil and human history, showing what we can do here and now, given the natures that we actually have, to improve ourselves and others. Human beings get into moral trouble both by prioritizing non-moral incentives over moral ones, and simply by being inconsistent, foolish, excessively passionate, and inept. The second problem can rise to the level of a genuinely moral problem, especially given our evil tendency to cultivate ineptness to excuse our failings. But it is also a broader problem for living well. And Kant’s pragmatic anthropology provides specific suggestions for overcoming general problems that make us both vicious and miserable. This approach also puts Kant’s accounts of diversity in a new light, showing tools to *improve* humanity, rather than excuses for dismissing or exploiting others.

This model of pragmatic anthropology provides a useful model for how philosophical investigation of human nature might interact with human sciences today. Transcendental philosophy articulates and provides conditions of possibility for norms governing human life. Empirical sciences show the best ways to cultivating human beings who can achieve those norms, and they specify the one human end – happiness – that is genuinely empirical. In the end, the answer to the question “What is the human being?” is provided by philosophical accounts of the from-within, norm-governed perspectives of free and finite beings like us engaged in thinking, feeling, and choosing, along with empirical-scientific accounts of the characteristics and causal laws governing *homo sapiens*, combined into pragmatic knowledge that helps us become better-functioning, happier, more virtuous citizens of the world.

FURTHER READING

Kant’s pragmatic anthropology is increasingly studied and discussed. The best general treatments are Cohen, Frierson, Jacobs and Kain, Loudon, Munzel, and Zammito. Wood’s book,

while focused on Kant's ethics, does so with an eye towards pragmatic anthropology. Moran discusses moral cultivation with a particular focus on moral community.

Alix Cohen, *Kant and the Human Sciences* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2009)

Patrick Frierson, *Freedom and Anthropology in Kant's Moral Philosophy* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2003)

Brian Jacobs and Patrick Kant, *Essays on Kant's Anthropology* (Cambridge University Press, 2003)

Robert Louden, *Kant's Impure Ethics* (London: Oxford University Press, 2000)

Kate Moran, *Community and Progress in Kant's Moral Philosophy* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2012)

G. Felicitas Munzel, *Kant's Conception of Moral Character: The "Critical" Link of Morality, Anthropology, and Reflective Judgment* (University of Chicago Press, 1999)

Allen Wood, *Kant's Ethical Thought* (Cambridge University Press, 1999)

John Zammito, *Kant, Herder, and the Birth of Anthropology* (University of Chicago Press, 2002)