Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View

Preface[1]

All cultural progress, by means of which the human being advances his [7:119]
education,[2] has the goal of applying this acquired knowledge and skill for the world's use. But the most important object in the world to which he can apply them is the human being: because the human being is his own final end. – Therefore to know the human being according to his species as an earthly being endowed with reason especially deserves to be called *knowledge of the world*, even though he constitutes only one part of the creatures on earth.

A doctrine of knowledge of the human being, systematically formulated (anthropology), can exist either in a physiological or in a pragmatic point of view. – Physiological knowledge of the human being concerns the investigation of what *nature* makes of the human being; pragmatic, the investigation of what *he* as a free-acting being makes of himself, or can and should make of himself. – He who ponders natural phenomena, for example, what the causes of the faculty of memory may rest on, can speculate back and forth (like Descartes)[3] over the traces of impressions remaining in the brain, but in doing so 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 know the cranial nerves and fibers, nor does he understand how to put them to use for his purposes. Therefore all theoretical speculation about this is a pure waste of time. – – But if he uses perceptions concerning what has been found to hinder or stimulate memory in order to enlarge it or make it agile, and if he requires knowledge of the human being

[1] The Preface and contents are missing in the *Handschrift* (*H*). [2] *seine Schule macht*.
[3] See, e.g., Descartes's *Passions of the Soul* (1649), Art. 42.

for this, then this would be a part of anthropology with a *pragmatic* purpose, and this is precisely what concerns us here.

[120] Such an anthropology, considered as *knowledge of the world*, which must come after our *schooling*, is actually not yet called *pragmatic* when it contains an extensive knowledge of *things* in the world, for example, animals, plants, and minerals from various lands and climates, but only when it contains knowledge of the human being as a *citizen of the world*. – Therefore, even knowledge of the races of human beings as products belonging to the play of nature is not yet counted as pragmatic knowledge of the world, but only as theoretical knowledge of the world.

In addition, the expressions "to *know* the world" and "to *have* the world"[4] are rather far from each other in their meaning, since one only *understands* the play that one has watched, while the other has *participated* in it. – But the anthropologist is in a very unfavorable position for judging so-called *high* society, the estate of the nobles,[5] because they are too close to one another, but too far from others.

Travel belongs to the means of broadening the range of anthropology, even if it is only the reading of travel books. But if one wants to know what to look for abroad, in order to broaden the range of anthropology, first one must have acquired knowledge of human beings at home, through social intercourse with one's townsmen or countrymen.[a] Without such a plan (which already presupposes knowledge of human beings) the citizen of the world remains very limited with regard to his anthropology. *General* knowledge always precedes *local* knowledge here, if the latter is to be ordered and directed through philosophy: in the absence of which all acquired knowledge can yield nothing more than fragmentary groping around and no science.

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[121] However, all such attempts to arrive at such a science with thoroughness encounter considerable difficulties that are inherent in human nature itself.

[4] *die Welt kennen und Welt haben.* [5] *die sogenannte große Welt aber, den Stand der Vornehmen.*

[a] A large city such as Königsberg on the river Pregel, which is the center of a kingdom, in which the provincial councils of the government are located, which has a university (for cultivation of the sciences) and which has also the right location for maritime commerce – a city which, by way of rivers, has the advantages of commerce both with the interior of the country and with neighboring and distant lands of different languages and customs, can well be taken as an appropriate place for broadening one's knowledge of human beings as well as of the world, where this knowledge can be acquired without even traveling.

1. If a human being notices that someone is observing him and trying to study him, he will either appear embarrassed (self-conscious) and *cannot* show himself as he really is; or he dissembles, and does not *want* to be known as he is.
2. Even if he only wants to study himself, he will reach a critical point, particularly as concerns his condition in affect,[6] which normally does not allow *dissimulation*: that is to say, when the incentives are active, he does not observe himself, and when he does observe himself, the incentives are at rest.
3. Circumstances of place and time, when they are constant, produce *habits* which, as is said, are second nature, and make it difficult for the human being to judge how to consider himself, but even more difficult to judge how he should form an idea of others with whom he is in contact; for the variation of conditions in which the human being is placed by his fate or, if he is an adventurer, places himself, make it very difficult for anthropology to rise to the rank of a formal science.

Finally, while not exactly sources for anthropology, these are nevertheless aids: world history, biographies, even plays and novels. For although the latter two are not actually based on experience and truth, but only on invention, and while here the exaggeration of characters and situations in which human beings are placed is allowed, as if in a dream, thus appearing to show us nothing concerning knowledge of human beings – yet even so, in such characters as are sketched by a Richardson or a Molière,[7] the *main features* must have been taken from the observation of the real actions of human beings: for while they are exaggerated in degree, they must nevertheless correspond to human nature in kind.

An anthropology written from a pragmatic point of view that is systematically designed and yet popular (through reference to examples which can be found by every reader) yields an advantage for the reading public: the completeness of the headings under which this or that observed human quality of practical relevance can be subsumed offers [122]

[6] *seinen Zustand im Affekt* (or, "his emotional condition").
[7] Samuel Richardson, 1689–1761: English writer whose epistolary novels include *Pamela; or Virtue Rewarded* (1740) and *Clarissa, or, the History of a Young Lady* (7 vols., 1747–1748). Jean-Baptiste Poquelin Molière, 1622–1673: French playwright, author of the comedies *Tartuffe* (1664) and *The Misanthrope* (1666).

readers many occasions and invitations to make each particular into a theme of its own, so as to place it in the appropriate category. Through this means the details of the work are naturally divided among the connoisseurs of this study, and they are gradually united into a whole through the unity of the plan. As a result, the growth of science for the common good is promoted and accelerated.[b]

[b] In my work with *pure philosophy*, at first freely undertaken, later included as part of my teaching duties, I have for some thirty years given lectures twice a year aimed at *knowledge of the world* – namely (in the winter semester) *anthropology* and (in summer) *physical geography*, which, because they were popular lectures, were also attended by people of different estates (*andere Stände*). This is the present manual for my anthropology course. As for physical geography, it is scarcely possible at my age to produce a manuscript from my text, which is hardly legible to anyone but myself. [Kant first offered his geography course in 1757. The anthropology course, which to a certain extent grew out of the geography course, was first offered in the winter semester of 1772–1773. A poorly edited version of Kant's physical geography lectures was eventually published by Friedrich Theodor Rink in 1802 (9: 151–436).]

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