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978-1-107-02491-5 - Kant's: Lectures on Anthropology: A Critical Guide

Edited by Alix Cohen

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## Introduction

*Alix Cohen*

Kant intended his lectures on anthropology to teach students how to apply what they learnt at university to their future profession as well as to the conduct of their life in general.<sup>1</sup> As he writes to Markus Herz toward the end of 1773, his

lecture course on *Anthropologie* . . . [will] disclose the sources of all the [practical] sciences, the science of morality, of skill, of human intercourse, of the way to educate and govern human beings, and thus of everything that pertains to the practical. (C 10:145)<sup>2</sup>

The pedagogical aim of this course was to help his students become citizens of the world by showing them how to make their knowledge relevant, applicable and useful. Famously, these lectures were popular not only in terms of their style but also in terms of their audience. One of Kant's amanuenses, Reinhold Bernhard Jachmann, reported that they were 'an extremely pleasant instruction' that commanded the most attendance of all of Kant's lectures, including from outside the University of Königsberg.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Volume 25 of the Academy edition of *Kant's gesammelte Schriften* (Göttingen, 1997), as well as its English translation (Cambridge University Press, 2013), contains extremely useful introductions detailing the nature of the transcripts, their historical background and composition (Brandt and Stark (1997), vii–cli, and Wood (2013), 1–10). Due to restrictions of space, I refer to them for a presentation of Kant's *Lectures* as well as to Werner Stark's contribution in this volume. See also Lestition (1985), 752–66; Brandt and Stark (1997), vii–cli; and Wilson (2006), 7–26 for a presentation of the lectures and their reception, and Zammito (2002), 293–302; and Wilson (1991) for an account of their genesis.

<sup>2</sup> See also 'This knowledge of the world serves to procure the pragmatic element for all otherwise acquired sciences and skills, by means of which they become useful not merely for the school but rather for life and through which the accomplished apprentice is introduced to the stage of his destiny, namely, the world' (VvRM 2:443). As Lestition summed up, Kant intended his lecture course to 'provide a sort of "plan" or "general knowledge" which facilitates a subsequent broadening of the factual learning acquired at school, and to stimulate a broader reading public – that is, amateurs who enjoyed cultural concerns – to reflect upon the suitability of any given set of ordering principles for the study of men as they exist in the world' (Lestition (1989), 757).

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Jacobs and Kain (2003b), 13. As Kuehn notes, 'the lectures on anthropology . . . were to become the most accessible of all his lectures. While students dreaded his lectures on logic and

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

Their popularity led students to produce transcripts that were traded and handed down from year to year, and they eventually formed the basis of the published *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* in 1798.

Yet their legacy was short-lived and since then they have been largely ignored.<sup>4</sup> On the few occasions they have been mentioned, they were deemed a peculiar collection of more or less pointless remarks on a variety of random topics vaguely related to human beings – starting from Schleiermacher's 1799 review, which describes the *Anthropology* as a 'collection of trivialities' (Schleiermacher (1998), 16).<sup>5</sup> This disappointing reception can be partly accounted for by their often unexpected, at times odd, and occasionally incongruous character. Their subject matter ranges from entertainment to marriage, bodily functions, fashion, humour, sex, smoking and sleeping patterns – topics that seem a far cry from Kant's more familiar transcendental concerns.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the most charitable interpretative tools have remained powerless in the face of his repeated discussions of human races, gender differences or national characteristics, where stereotyping, prejudice and bigotry abound.<sup>7</sup> As a result, until recently, the *Lectures on Anthropology* have generally been viewed as peculiar, uncritical

metaphysics, they seem genuinely to have enjoyed his lectures on anthropology' (Kuehn (2001), 204–5).

<sup>4</sup> Similarly, Kant's anthropological work has received only superficial attention within the history and philosophy of the social sciences. This is partly due to the fact that it has not been perceived as being in continuity with the discipline as social scientists know it. As Brandt has noted, 'The *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* remained a stray piece in the history of sciences' (Brandt (1999), 43). Similarly for Zammito, 'There is reason to question whether Kant's vision of what anthropology as a discipline should become had any sustained impact on the subsequent development of that field. I have taken the view that it was far less influential than rival versions – both at home and abroad' (Zammito, this volume, 248; see also Zammito (2002), 301 ff.). As Barnard sums up from the perspective of the history of anthropology, 'While Lévi-Strauss once argued that Rousseau was the founder of the social sciences, Radcliffe-Brown gave that honour to Montesquieu; and the styles of the later structuralist and structural-functionalist traditions do owe much to the respective rationalism of Rousseau and empiricism of Montesquieu' (Barnard (2000), 23).

<sup>5</sup> Amongst many others, Hinske argued that for Kant, anthropology is 'a science of questionable thoroughness and [therefore] subordinate' (Hinske (1961), 410); Kaag talked about it as one of 'Kant's lesser works' (Kaag (2005), 535); and Eze often referred to its 'peculiar nature' (Eze (1997), 105); whilst for Brandt, they do not belong 'to philosophy in a strict sense' (Brandt (1999), 7).

<sup>6</sup> Respectively in VA-Friedländer 25:568–9, 25:703, 25:706, VA-Mrongovius 25:1247–8, 25:1328–9, VA-Friedländer 25:518–9, 25:601, 25:714, VA-Mrongovius 25:1336, VA-Friedländer 25:528.

<sup>7</sup> The lectures on anthropology are not alone in this unfortunate position. As far as stereotyping is concerned, it occurs in other lecture notes, including the *Lectures on Geography*, as well as the *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*, the essays *Of the Different Races of Human Beings*, *On the Use of Teleological Principles in Philosophy*, and *Determination of the Concept of a Human Race*, and of course the published version of the lectures on anthropology, the *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*. For a nuanced and insightful analysis of the relationship between Kant's views on race and the rest of his philosophy, see Frierson (2013), 104–7. See also Eze (1995); Larrimore (1999); Loudon (2000), 93–106; Boxill and Hill (2001).

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-02491-5 - Kant's: Lectures on Anthropology: A Critical Guide

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Excerpt

[More information](#)*Introduction*

3

and possibly anomalous works that do not belong to the Kantian system as such.

However, since the publication of the *Lectures on Anthropology* in the German Academy edition of Kant's *Gesammelte Schriften* (1997), the new English translation of the *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (CUP, 2006) and the publication of the volume *Anthropology, History and Education* (CUP, 2007), this situation has started to change. In the Anglo-American tradition for instance, the first substantial works dedicated to Kant's anthropology date from the year 2000, with Robert Louden's *Kant's Impure Ethics*; 2002, with John Zammito's *Kant, Herder, and the Birth of Anthropology*; and 2003, with Patrick Frierson's *Freedom and Anthropology in Kant's Moral Philosophy*, as well as Brian Jacobs and Patrick Kain's *Essays on Kant's Anthropology*.<sup>8</sup> Since then, studies have multiplied, including Wilson (2006), Cohen (2009a) and Sturm (2009). This surge of attention among Kant scholars has finally established the *Lectures on Anthropology* as worthy of study in their own right and hence makes the appearance of this Critical Guide very timely.

This collection of essays sets out to offer the first comprehensive assessment of Kant's *Lectures on Anthropology*, their philosophical importance, their evolution and their relationship to his critical philosophy. It is based on the belief that they lie at the intersection of many core Kantian concerns and thus offer an ideal standpoint for the exploration of a wide range of topics, from the epistemological and the psychological to the moral and cultural. The thematic approach of the Critical Guide series is particularly well suited to the *Lectures*, for it enables the emergence of common themes from what may appear at first to be disparate areas of anthropological discourse. But before summarising individual contributions, I would like to show that, taken in its entirety, this volume provides us with a whole range of reasons why paying close attention to the *Lectures on Anthropology* will enrich current debates within Kant scholarship.

First, the *Lectures* contribute to our understanding of the overall evolution of Kant's thought. As the lecture course that Kant gave most frequently (from 1772–3 to 1795–6), and as one of the few texts available from Kant's 'silent decade' (1771–81), they provide a record that is extremely useful in understanding the development of his views and in tracking their evolution. For instance, Susan Shell's detailed analysis of the *Friedländer Lectures* (1775–6) shows that a crucial shift takes place in this period. Kant's

<sup>8</sup> This is apart from Van de Pitte's relatively anecdotal *Kant as Philosophical Anthropologist* (1971), which offered an early study of Kant's anthropological project. For studies in other languages, see for instance Foucault (2008); Firla (1981); Manganoro (1983); Kim (1992); Ferrari (1997); Potesta (2004).

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

confident defence of vitalism, which takes the form of the unity of the biological and the moral is, according to her, one of the last remnants of his pre-critical commitments, soon after to be dropped as transcendental idealism emerges. Rudolf Makkreel's contribution also brings to light shifts that show an important transformation in Kant's thinking, from the early suggestion that we can intuit ourselves to the later claim that self-observation is fraught with difficulties. Likewise, Patrick Frierson observes striking changes in Kant's account of affects and passions. On this basis he argues that, from his early lectures right through to the *Anthropology*, Kant increasingly differentiates between them and their respective moral valuations. For his part, John Zammito deplores the lack of systematic integration of Kant's critical philosophy with his anthropology. The 'Anthropological Characteristics' section of the *Lectures* is remarkably stable in spite of changes both in his critical philosophy and in the wider anthropological discourse over the same period, which he interprets as a failure on Kant's part. Paul Guyer analyses the development of Kant's thought on the inclination to freedom, and concludes that his mature idea about freedom is not reflected in the *Lectures on Anthropology* of the period. Accounting for these discrepancies helps us make better sense of the unique point of view the *Lectures* adopt. This needs further elucidations since the use of the term 'pragmatic' to qualify Kant's anthropological project has been the subject of recent debates.

The intended function of the *Lectures* is to provide 'knowledge of the world' – knowledge that Kant calls 'pragmatic' from the *Friedländer Lectures* (1775–6) onwards.<sup>9</sup> For some commentators, the realm of the pragmatic is merely coextensive with happiness, prudence and skill, including the use of others to achieve our ends; for others it can include the realm of the moral.<sup>10</sup> The difficulty in demarcating its legitimate boundaries is a particular instance of a more general tension within Kant's transcendental framework, between his metaphysics, his account of freedom in particular, and his anthropology.<sup>11</sup> The possibility of the reconciliation, if not the integration, of Kant's anthropological work with the rest of his corpus is thus an ongoing task, and one to which this volume contributes in

<sup>9</sup> 'The second part of knowledge of the world is knowledge of human beings, who are considered inasmuch as their knowledge is of interest to us in life. Therefore human beings are not studied in speculative terms, but pragmatic, in the application of their knowledge according to rules of prudence, and this is anthropology' (VA-Friedländer 25:470).

<sup>10</sup> For the former, see Wood (1999), 203–5, Brandt (2003), 92; for the latter, see Frierson (2003), 80; Stark (2003), 21; and Cohen (2009a), 62.

<sup>11</sup> See Gregor (1974), xvii, 5; Wood (1999), 206; Loudon (2000), 19; Jacobs and Kain (2003a); Cohen (2009b), 114; Sturm (2011).

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-02491-5 - Kant's: Lectures on Anthropology: A Critical Guide

Edited by Alix Cohen

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Introduction*

5

significant ways. Insofar as they are Kant's 'anthropologising' in action, the *Lectures* contain an abundance of vivid, sometimes perplexing, but often instructive examples of what he has in mind when he talks about pragmatic anthropology as 'the investigation of what he as a free-acting being makes of himself, or can and should make of himself' (A 7:119).<sup>12</sup> For instance, as Gary Hatfield argues in his contribution, even the theoretical knowledge of the senses has a pragmatic function for Kant. Not only does he advise his students on how to use them, from choosing the colour of their clothes to cultivating the ability to overlook blemishes, he also shows that understanding how the senses work can help correct our unguided phenomenological impression of the direction of causation in vision (Hatfield (2014)). In this respect at least, anthropological knowledge is, if not essential, then at least helpful to the realisation of human endeavours, no matter how modest. This is why it is often described as map: 'a moral map that [human beings] can use to move toward their collective destiny' (Louden (2000), 106), 'a map-making venture' (Cohen (2009a), 105). Yet Zammito (this volume, 246) raises doubts about its supposed usefulness: it is 'almost a *contemplative* (academic?) wisdom, [rather than] a guide for action (in the world)'. His conclusion that Kant's *Lectures* seemed 'rather a vehicle for Kant to exercise his categorising propensity' (this volume, 239) will no doubt appeal to many reluctant readers of Kant.

However, beyond the issue of the immediate value of Kant's particular anthropological recommendations, what is at stake in accounting for the function of the *Lectures on Anthropology* as a whole is the determination of their systematic connections with his critical philosophy. Some contributions in this volume emphasise the discrepancies between Kant's account in the *Lectures* and his critical philosophy. For instance, Catherine Wilson brings to light the paradoxes that are at the basis of Kant's thoughts about human nature as it develops historically and anthropologically. She claims that whilst his moral philosophy defends the normative demands of humanity as an end in itself, the account of human nature presented in the *Lectures* praises conflict, civil coercion and discipline as necessary for the progress of civilisation. Other contributions argue in favour of the complementarity of the *Lectures* with Kant's other writings. G. Felicitas

<sup>12</sup> As one of his students notes, 'His oral presentation was simple and without affection. In Physical geography and in anthropology he was lively. The former had a more general appeal, and it was well suited to his talent as a story-teller. The latter gained from his incidental observations of minute details either drawn from his own experience or from his readings – especially from that of the best English novelists. One never left his lectures without having learned something, or without having been pleasantly entertained' (quoted in Kuehn (2001), 274).

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

Munzel shows how reading them alongside each other allows us to see the continuity and development of his account of human nature, whether in its moral or cognitive dimensions. She argues, for instance, that whilst the former identify the problem of establishing and appropriately using the principles of judgment in relation to the world in which human beings find themselves, the articulation of the appropriate principles and their use is the ongoing work of the critical philosophy.

Going further in this direction, the *Lectures on Anthropology* contribute to our understanding of Kant's philosophy as a system in crucial ways. First by enabling us to flesh out its empirical dimension, a dimension that is usually understated, if at all present, in the rest of the corpus, they provide an opportunity to consider issues that remain relatively underexplored within Kant's thought – as Patrick Frierson shows for the nature of affective states, or Gary Hatfield illustrates for the role of the senses.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, as Janowiak and Watkins note, Kant's primary goal in the first *Critique* is not to offer a comprehensive account of cognition in general but merely to explain its necessary a priori structures. The *Lectures* are thus, they contend, an invaluable resource for attaining a fuller understanding of Kant's larger project. By accounting for the contingent, empirical modes in which our faculties operate, they illuminate Kant's understanding of the operations and functions of the human mind and thereby supplement the transcendental account presented in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. More generally, they offer untapped resources for those interested in everyday cognition, perception and philosophical psychology. They also contribute to the ongoing re-evaluation of Kant's practical philosophy. As Allen Wood argues, they comprise an account of affective states according to which they differ from each other in important respects, and these differences have implications for their relationship to reason, deliberation and value. In particular, Kant's supposed hostility to the emotions in the *Groundwork* sits uneasily with the account of feelings presented here since the latter comprise rational valuations. In addition, Robert Louden claims that Kant's anthropological assumptions have crucial ethical implications. First, Kant's exclusion of happiness from humanity's biological development explains his opposition to utilitarianism in ethics, since moral theories that encourage humans to aim directly at happiness contradict nature's plan for the species. Second, it is because nature's

<sup>13</sup> As Kain and Jacobs have noted in the Introduction to the *Essays on Kant's Anthropology*, 'Kant's anthropology lectures present the acting and knowing subject as fully constituted in human flesh and blood, with the specific virtues and foibles that make it properly human' (Jacobs and Kain (2003b), 6).

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-02491-5 - Kant's: Lectures on Anthropology: A Critical Guide

Edited by Alix Cohen

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Introduction*

7

distribution of the drive to work is uneven that he is committed to the claim that some peoples have the necessary inherent drives to progress and others do not.

Needless to say, I could list many more reasons to read Kant's *Lectures on Anthropology*. But I hope that the ones I have listed here will suffice to entice the reader to delve into this volume as well as into the *Lectures* themselves.

Whilst the volume engages with the central issues raised in the *Lectures*, exhaustiveness is impossible, as is unavoidable for such collections, and a number of issues are too briefly covered, if at all. For instance, Kant's treatments of race, gender or mental disorders, although discussed, have no thorough treatment here.<sup>14</sup> The structure of the volume mirrors that of the *Anthropology* and the *Lectures on Anthropology* themselves, starting from the Didactic, which tackles the cognitive faculty, the feeling of pleasure and displeasure and the faculty of desire, followed by the Anthropological Characteristics, with issues including education, culture and cosmopolitanism.

In 'Self-cognition and self-assessment', Rudolf Makkreel engages with the limits of introspective self-observation by examining the compensatory approaches that allow us to become aware of ourselves. He concludes that self-cognition is not learning what inner sense has passively assimilated but determining what reason can actively appropriate as part of a project of self-assessment and character formation.

In 'Kant on the phenomenology of touch and vision', Gary Hatfield sets out to situate Kant's remarks on touch and vision within the context of his pragmatic anthropology. He concludes that Kant's method of observation is drawn from everyday life, a kind of everyday phenomenology of sensory experience that partly relies on the theoretical apparatus of empirical psychology. Such intermixture of 'school learning' and theory with observations drawn from life is, he believes, characteristic of Kant's writing and lectures in anthropology.

In 'Meat on the bones: Kant's account of cognition in the anthropology lectures', Tim Jankowiak and Eric Watkins examine Kant's discussion of the empirical features of cognition in the *Lectures on Anthropology* and show that they add content to the view of cognition that emerges from the first *Critique*. Thus if the first *Critique* describes a bare-bones skeleton

<sup>14</sup> Kant's treatments of race, gender and mental disorders are discussed respectively in Loudon, Shell, Wilson and Zammito, Cohen and Wilson, and Janowiak and Watkins. For extensive discussions of these issues, see Eze (1995); Kleingeld (2007); Larimore (1999); Shell (1996); Schott (1997); Mikkola (2011); David-Ménard (2000); Makkreel (2001b); and Frierson (2009) respectively.



Cambridge University Press

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Edited by Alix Cohen

Excerpt

[More information](#)

of some of the necessary conditions of a priori cognition, Kant's *Lectures* puts a healthy amount of empirical meat on the bones of his a priori account.

In 'The anthropology of cognition and its pragmatic implications', I argue that it is because of our cognitive nature as embodied human beings that we need not only a critique of pure reason, but also an anthropology of empirical reason – a pragmatic account of how we can, should and ought to cognise insofar as we are embodied human beings. The function of Kant's anthropology of cognition is thus to illuminate the empirical, contingent and messy features of human cognition in order to help us become better, more efficient knowers.

In 'Affects and passions', Patrick Frierson argues that to make sense of Kant's claim that passions can only be conquered with difficulty whilst affects do not allow reflection (A 7:251), we need to provide a psychological account that explains them in terms of feeling and inclination. He concludes that passions are disordered inclinations while affects are disordered feelings.

Paul Guyer's contribution focuses on 'The inclination towards freedom' and its cultivation. His question is whether and when the development of Kant's central idea in moral philosophy became reflected in his *Lectures on Anthropology*. He argues that while Kant asserted the existence of a powerful inclination to one's *own* freedom as the condition of the possibility of one's own *happiness* early in the anthropology lectures, it was only later that he introduced the idea that freedom is more than this.

In 'Empirical desire', Allen Wood proposes a taxonomy of our affective states, including desire, inclination, feeling, passion and affect. On this basis, he argues that Kant's treatment of empirical desire in the *Lectures on Anthropology* emphasises the way these desires pose an obstacle to rational self-government. He concludes that an affect is an excess of feeling that temporarily overwhelms our rational self-control, while passion is empirical desire, developed and modified by free choice.

In 'Kant as "vitalist": The "principium of life" in *Anthropologie Friedländer*', Susan Shell provides a detailed analysis of the *Anthropologie Friedländer* through the prism of the concept of vitalism. She shows that it defends a conception of pragmatic anthropology that can unite the higher principles of activity and the lower principles of life, in contrast to Kant's mature conception of the dichotomy between reason and nature. Yet, she argues, this account of their relation is only provisional, soon replaced by an account of spontaneity that offers no apparent means of reconciliation between them.



Cambridge University Press

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Edited by Alix Cohen

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Introduction*

9

In 'Indispensable education of the being of reason and speech', G. Felicitas Munzel argues that the cultivation of reason is intrinsic to the very nature of the being of reason and speech. She bases her interpretation on the analysis of three sections of the *Friedländer Lectures*: 'On the Use of Reason with Regard to the Practical', 'On the Character of Humanity in General', and 'On Education'.

In 'Kant on civilisation, culture and moralisation', Catherine Wilson explores Kant's account of civilisation, culture and moralisation from the perspective of three issues, namely secularisation, animalism and historical pessimism. Whilst Kant is a proponent of secularisation, she argues, he rejects animalism and the historical pessimism that often accompany it, and this sets him apart in the wider context of the emergence of anthropology as a discipline in the eighteenth century.

In 'Cosmopolitical unity: the final destiny of the human species', Robert Loudon focuses on Kant's account of the character of the human species and in particular humanity's predisposition toward what he calls 'cosmopolitical unity'. He shows that Kant is far from naive about the inherent difficulties of establishing cosmopolitical unity, and that in this sense, he is not overly optimistic regarding humanity's future.

In 'What a young man needs for his venture into the world: the function and evolution of the "Characteristics"', John Zammito analyses the 'Anthropological Characteristics' section of the *Lectures on Anthropology* and concludes that in spite of slight changes of emphasis (in particular between predictability as a measure enabling effective negotiation with others and accountability as a measure of approval or disapproval of others), the invariance of Kant's pedagogical purpose permitted its relative stability.

Cambridge University Press

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

## CHAPTER I

*Kant's lectures on anthropology:  
some orienting remarks*

Werner Stark

Translated by Joshua Mendelsohn

Thanks to the diligence of Königsberg students and coincidences regarding the text's transmission, we have access to two largely independent sets of notes from Kant's first semester-long course of lectures on anthropology (1772–3). Allusions and direct citations in the text attest in multiple ways to the influence of the works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, particularly of *Émile* and the *Second Discourse*.<sup>1</sup> Wherever one finds Kant's method of a structured, even constructed, lecture, decisive points of contact with Rousseau become apparent. This is especially clear in the 'Introductions', which can also be read as a programmatic presentation of the course structure. As a teacher, Kant constantly strives to deliver what he promises. In the Collins transcript, we read:

[1] We will consider the human mind in all its conditions, in health and in sickness, in a confused and uncultivated condition, to establish the first principles [*principien*] of taste and the adjudication of the beautiful, the principles [*principien*] of pathology, sensitivity and inclinations. [2] We will mention the different ages and especially the sexes in their character, and seek to draw them from their sources. [3] From this will follow what is natural to the human being and what is artificial or habitual about him; that will be [a] the most difficult and our chief object, to distinguish the human being insofar as he is natural from the human being as he has been transformed by upbringing and other influences, [b] to consider the mind separated from the body, and [c] to seek, mediated by observations, whether the influence of the body is necessarily required for thinking. (VA-Collins 25:8 f.)<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Stark (2014). Due to the nature of the subject matter, some correspondence with formulations used in the present essay was unavoidable.

<sup>2</sup> The bracketed numbers and letters which I have introduced are to be understood as follows: the first part follows Baumgarten's textbook, *Metaphysica*, Pars II, Caput I: Psychologia empirica §§504–739. The second part of the lecture proceeds without reference to the *Metaphysica*; its construction is reminiscent of Kant's 1764 *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*. Third, a broader project is pursued, which permeates the entire text, arguing (a) for and against Rousseau, (b) and (c) against Ernst Platner and others (cf. C 10:145, A 7:119, 176, VA 25:085, 472, 856, 1211). The