

Anthropology from a Kantian Point of View

1

1 Origins

There is no greater or more important investigation for human beings than the cognition of the human being.

– Kant, V-Anth/Pillau 25: 733¹

¹ Kant's works are cited by volume and page number in the German *Akademie-Ausgabe* (AA) of his writings, using the abbreviations employed by the journal *Kant-Studien*. When available, I follow (with occasional slight modifications) the translations in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*. Other translations are my own. The following specific abbreviations are used in this study:

Anth	<i>Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht</i> (AA 7) (<i>Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View</i>)
BBGSE	<i>Bemerkungen über die Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen</i> (AA 20) (<i>Remarks on the Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime</i>)
BBMR	<i>Bestimmung des Begriffs einer Menschenracen</i> (AA 8) (<i>Determination of the Concept of a Human Race</i>)
Br	<i>Briefe</i> (AA 10–13) (<i>Correspondence</i>)
EACG	<i>Entwurf und Ankündigung eines Collegii der physischen Geographie</i> (AA 2) (<i>Plan and Announcement of a Series of Lectures on Physical Geography</i>)
GMS	<i>Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten</i> (AA 4) (<i>Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals</i>)
GSE	<i>Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen</i> (AA 2) (<i>Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime</i>)
IaG	<i>Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht</i> (AA 8) (<i>Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim</i>)
KrV	<i>Kritik der reinen Vernunft</i> (cited by the original pagination in the A and B editions) (<i>Critique of Pure Reason</i>)
KU	<i>Kritik der Urteilkraft</i> (AA 5) (<i>Critique of the Power of Judgment</i>)
Log	<i>Logik</i> (AA 9) (<i>The Jäsche Logic</i>)
MAN	<i>Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaften</i> (AA 4) (<i>Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science</i>)
MS	<i>Die Metaphysik der Sitten</i> (AA 6) (<i>The Metaphysics of Morals</i>)
NEV	<i>Nachricht von der Einrichtung seiner Vorlesungen in dem Winterhalbjahre von 1765–66</i> (AA 2) (<i>Announcement of the Program of His Lectures in the Winter Semester of 1765–66</i>)
NTH	<i>Allgemeine Naturgeschichte und Theorie des Himmels</i> (AA 1) (<i>Universal Natural History and Theory of the Heavens</i>)
Päd	<i>Pädagogik</i> (AA 9) (<i>Lectures on Pedagogy</i>)
PG	<i>Physische Geographie</i> (AA 9) (<i>Physical Geography</i>)
PhilEnz	<i>Philosophische Enzklopädie</i> (AA 29) (<i>Philosophical Encyclopedia Lectures</i>)
Prol	<i>Prolegomena zu einer jeden künftigen Metaphysik</i> (AA 4) (<i>Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics</i>)
Refl	<i>Reflexionen</i> (AA 14–19) (<i>Notes and Fragments</i>)
RezHerder	<i>Recensionen von J. G. Herders Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit</i> (AA 8) (<i>Reviews of J. G. Herder's Ideas for the Philosophy of the History of Humanity</i>)
SF	<i>Der Streit der Fakultäten</i> (AA 7) (<i>The Conflict of the Faculties</i>)
ÜGTP	<i>Über den Gebrauch teleologischer Principien in der Philosophie</i> (AA 8) (<i>On the Use of Teleological Principles in Philosophy</i>)
V-Anth/Busolt	<i>Vorlesungen Wintersemester 1788–89 Busolt</i> (AA 25) (<i>Anthropology Busolt</i>)

2 *Elements in the Philosophy of Immanuel Kant*

In a broad sense, reflection on the nature of human beings has been a key part of philosophy since its birth.² Within the Western tradition of thought, for instance, Socrates is a notable paradigm of a thinker for whom philosophical anthropology was central. As Cicero famously remarks in his *Tusculan Disputations*, “Socrates was the first to call philosophy down from the heavens and set her in the cities of men and bring her also into their homes and compel her to ask questions about life and morality and things good and evil” (Cicero 1971, p. 435). Socrates’ exclusive focus on questions concerning human nature led Ernst Cassirer to remark that the only universe Socrates knows, “and to which all his enquiries refer, is the universe of man. His philosophy ... is strictly anthropological” (Cassirer 1944, p. 19). And Plato, in his *Theaetetus*, at one point uses Socrates’ singular concentration on human nature to characterize philosophy itself: “The question he [viz., the philosopher] asks is ‘What is the human being?’ What actions and passions properly belong to human nature and distinguish it from all other beings? This is what he wants to know and concerns himself to investigate” (*Theaetetus* 174b, in Plato 1997, p. 193).

Granted, there are counterexamples to this anthropologically oriented style of philosophy. Socrates himself, for instance, was reacting against many of the early ancient Greek philosophers who preceded him, whom he described as students “of all things in the sky and below the earth” (*Apology* 18c, in Plato

V-Anth/Collins	<i>Vorlesungen Wintersemester 1772–73 Collins</i> (AA 25) (<i>Anthropology Collins</i>)
V-Anth/Fried	<i>Vorlesungen Wintersemester 1775–76 Friedländer</i> (AA 25) (<i>Anthropology Friedländer</i>)
V-Anth/Mensch	<i>Vorlesungen Wintersemester 1781–82 Menschenkunde</i> (AA 25) (<i>Anthropology Menschenkunde</i>)
V-Anth/Mron	<i>Vorlesungen Wintersemester 1784–85 Mrongovius</i> (AA 25) (<i>Anthropology Mrongovius</i>)
V-Anth/Parow	<i>Vorlesungen Wintersemester 1772–73 Parow</i> (AA 25) (<i>Anthropology Parow</i>)
V-Anth/Pillau	<i>Vorlesungen Wintersemester 1777–78 Pillau</i> (AA 25) (<i>Anthropology Pillau</i>)
VKK	<i>Versuch über die Krankheiten des Kopfes</i> (AA 2) (<i>Essay on the Maladies of the Head</i>)
V-Lo/Dohna	<i>Logik Dohna-Wundlacken</i> (AA 24) (<i>The Dohna-Wundlacken Logic</i>)
V-Met-L2/Pölitz	<i>Metaphysik L2 Pölitz</i> (AA 28) (<i>Metaphysics Pölitz, Second Set</i>)
V-Met-N/Herder	<i>Nachträge Metaphysik Herder</i> (AA 28) (<i>Metaphysics Herder</i>)
V-Mo/Collins	<i>Moralphilosophie Collins</i> (AA 27) (<i>Moral Philosophy Collins</i>)
V-Mo/Mron II	<i>Moral Mrongovius II</i> (AA 29) (<i>Ethics Mrongovius, Second Set</i>)
V-MS/Vigil	<i>Die Metaphysik der Sitten Vigilantius</i> (AA 27) (<i>The Metaphysics of Morals: Vigilantius’s Lecture Notes</i>)
V-PP/Powalski	<i>Praktische Philosophie Powalski</i> (AA 27) (<i>Practical Philosophy Powalski</i>)
VvRM	<i>Von den verschiedenen Racen der Menschen</i> (AA 2) (<i>Of the Different Races of Human Beings</i>)
ZoF	<i>Zum ewigen Frieden</i> (AA 8) (<i>Toward Perpetual Peace</i>)

² Some of the material in this opening section draws on Louden (2021 a, forthcoming a).

1997, p. 19). But the counterexamples have not prevented some authors from venturing “to characterize philosophy itself as a search for ‘a definition of man,’ and to interpret the great philosophers of the past as each providing a different account of the powers essential to man” (Hampshire 1960, p. 232).³

However, during the Enlightenment anthropological reflection came into its own as an autonomous discipline and briefly achieved a higher status than it has enjoyed before or since. Scores of writers became convinced that “the science of man” should either replace philosophy entirely or at least become the main research project of an enlightened era, and they competed against one another in repeated efforts to shape the discipline in accordance with their own personal visions and concerns. A product of the larger effort to emancipate the empirical study of human nature from theologically based inquiries, best captured by Alexander Pope’s⁴ famous remark, “Know then thyself, presume not God to scan: The proper study of Mankind is Man” (*An Essay on Man*, in Brinton 1956, p. 57), Kant’s own work in anthropology is properly situated within this larger anthropological turn of the Enlightenment.

Kant’s best-known anthropological work is *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1798), a late text that he describes as “the present manual for my anthropology course” (Anth 7: 122 n.). He began offering an annual lecture course on anthropology in the winter semester of 1772–3, a practice he continued up until his retirement from teaching in 1796, but his anthropology lectures (numerous transcriptions of which have also been published over the years) themselves draw on – and are in part outgrowths of – still earlier work, particularly his lectures on metaphysics and physical geography. Volume 15 of the Academy Edition of Kant’s writings also contains nearly 1,000 pages of additional material relevant to his anthropology lectures – viz., “*Reflexionen zur Anthropologie*” (Notes on Anthropology) and “*Collegentwürfe*” (drafts of the anthropology lectures from the 1770s and 1780s).

Kant began lecturing on metaphysics in the winter semester of 1755–6 when he was an unsalaried *Privatdozent*, and over the years his main text for this course was the fourth edition (1757) of Alexander Baumgarten’s *Metaphysica* (see Baumgarten 2013). The part of Baumgarten’s long text that is most relevant to the development of Kant’s anthropology is the “Empirical Psychology” chapter (§§ 504–739) in “Part III: Psychology” (§§ 501–799), for he also used this same material on empirical psychology as his text when he later began lecturing on anthropology in 1772. Essentially, the first part of Kant’s mature

³ For further discussion of the history of philosophical anthropology, see Louden (forthcoming b).

⁴ Pope was Kant’s favorite poet. For instance, in his early work, *Universal Natural History and Theory of the Heavens* (1755), he cites Pope’s *Essay* (from Barthold Heinrich Brocke’s German translation) six times (see NTH 1: 241, 259, 318, 349, 360, 365).

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anthropology – the “Didactic” – follows Baumgarten most closely, while the second part – the “Characteristic” – stems more from his lectures on physical geography. Although Baumgarten only explicitly uses the term “anthropology” in one passage in his *Metaphysics*,⁵ many of the specific topics that Kant discusses in the first part of his anthropology lectures (the cognitive faculty, the senses, pleasure and displeasure, memory, imagination, and so forth) reveal Baumgarten’s influence. (However, what Kant says about these topics often diverges from Baumgarten.) And we know that students in the earlier versions of Kant’s metaphysics course did at least hear something about the anthropological dimension of Baumgarten’s text. Herder, for instance, in his notes from the 1762 course, writes: “Metaphysics contains (1) anthropology” (V-Met-N/Herder 28: 911).

Kant develops his anthropology partly out of Baumgarten’s empirical psychology largely because – unlike Baumgarten – he believes that empirical psychology is not properly part of metaphysics⁶ and needs a new home. Metaphysics correctly conceived “has solely *Conceptus puri* [pure concepts] or concepts which are either given through reason or yet at least whose ground of cognition lies in reason as its theme” (V-Anth/Parow 25: 243), and therefore “empirical psychology belongs to metaphysics just as little as empirical physics does” (V-Anth/Collins 25: 7–8). As he writes toward the end of the *Critique of Pure Reason*:

Empirical psychology must therefore be entirely banned from metaphysics It is . . . merely a long-accepted foreigner, to whom one grants refuge for a while until it can establish its own domicile in a complete anthropology (the pendant to the empirical doctrine of nature). (KrV A 848–9/B 876–7; cf. Mensch 2018, p. 201)

The geographical roots of Kant’s anthropology are a bit different, in part because he did not use a text for his course on physical geography.⁷ He began

⁵ “Therefore, philosophical and mathematical knowledge of the human being is possible (§ 249), i.e. philosophical ANTHROPOLOGY and mathematical ANTHROPOMETRY, just as is empirical anthropology through experience” (Baumgarten 2013, § 747). For discussion of Baumgarten’s influence on Kant’s anthropology, see Lorini (2018).

⁶ In his *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Sciences* (1786), Kant also argues that empirical psychology (along with chemistry, biology, and a host of other disciplines) is not a genuine science because “there can only be as much *proper* science as there is *mathematics* therein” (MAN 4: 470). As a result, “the empirical doctrine of the soul must remain even further from the rank of a properly so-called science than chemistry” (MAN 4: 471). For discussion of the scientific status of Kantian anthropology, see Louden (2014 c).

⁷ Minister of Education Karl Abraham von Zedlitz specifically exempted Kant’s geography course from the required textbook regulation of the time on the ground that “it is known that no entirely suitable textbook is yet available” (Vorländer 2003, 2: 57). For more detailed discussions of the relationship between Kant’s geography and anthropology lectures, see Louden (2011, pp. 121–35; 2014 a).

lecturing on physical geography in the summer semester of 1756, and from the start the study of human beings loomed large in the course. For instance, in his 1757 Announcement for the class, Kant explains that one of its main goals is “to explain the inclinations of human beings that spring from the zone in which they live, the diversity of their prejudices and way of thinking, insofar as this can serve to acquaint man better with himself” (EACG 2: 9). Similarly, in his 1765 Announcement, he notes that the second part of the course “considers the *human being*, throughout the world, from the point of view of the variety of his natural properties and the differences in that feature of man which is moral in character” (NEV 2: 302).

In Kant’s view, physical geography and anthropology form two parts of a larger whole. The overriding goal of each course was to provide students with *Weltkenntnis* – literally, “knowledge of the world,” but in Kant’s sense a practically oriented kind of know-how intended to help students find their way and feel at home in the world at large after they leave the cloistered life of academia. Already latent in this stress on *Weltkenntnis* is what will eventually become Kant’s primary marker for his own distinctive approach to anthropology; viz., “pragmatic.” As he writes in an essay on race first published in 1775 that also served as an Announcement for the geography course: “*Weltkenntnis* 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; cf. V-Anth/Collins 25: 9, V-Anth/Fried 25: 469, V-Anth/Pillau 25: 733, V-Anth/Mron 25: 1210, Anth 7: 120). Essentially, the study of physical geography helped students acquire *Weltkenntnis* regarding the external world of nature, while the study of anthropology enabled them to learn more about human nature. As Kant notes in the preface to Friedrich Theodor Rink’s edited version of the *Physical Geography* lectures: “The experiences of *nature* and the *human being* together constitute *knowledge of the world*. *Anthropology* teaches us *knowledge of the human being*, we owe our *knowledge of nature* to *physical geography*” (PG 9: 157).

For well over a century, German scholars have tried to locate the origins of Kant’s anthropology lectures exclusively in either his lectures on metaphysics or his lectures on physical geography, with neither side achieving a decisive victory.⁸ And this is not surprising, for the reductionist either-or strategy of the participants in the debate fails to do justice to the richness and diversity of Kantian anthropology. A third obvious source is Kant’s discussion of the differences of character between the sexes, races, and nations in the third and

⁸ For an overview and assessment of the debate, see Wilson (2006, pp. 15–26; 2018).

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fourth sections of his popular 1764 work, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* – topics that feature prominently in the second part (“Characteristic”) of the anthropology lectures.⁹ And the concluding section on education in the *Friedländer* anthropology lecture (1775–6), particularly its strong praise of Johann Bernhard Basedow’s experimental school, the Philanthropinum (“the greatest phenomenon which has appeared in this century for the improvement of the perfection of humanity” [V-Anth/Fried 25: 722–3; cf. V-Mo/Collins 25: 471]), reveals a further connection to Kant’s work in the philosophy of education; viz., his *Lectures on Pedagogy* (first published in 1803 but stemming from lectures first presented in 1776–7) and his two short *Essays Regarding the Philanthropinum* (1776–7). Finally (though here the causal connection proceeds from the anthropology outward), the strong teleological assumption concerning the destiny or vocation (*Bestimmung*) of the human species that is a major motif throughout the anthropology lectures also links them to Kant’s later publications in the philosophy of history. As others have argued, Kant’s “philosophy of history is a component of the anthropology” (Brandt and Stark 1997, p. liii), for “the origin of most of Kant’s assumptions concerning the historical development of humanity ... lies in his anthropology lectures” (Sturm 2009, p. 355).

In sum, “Kantian anthropology is an eclectic venture – one that reveals different origins, competing concerns and aims, and multiple application possibilities” (Louden 2000, p. 64). And if one is concerned with the ideas and arguments within Kantian anthropology, it is best to consider them in conjunction with Kant’s related work in education, history, politics, religion, and still more “fields of impurity” (Louden 2000, p. 26), each one of which makes a key contribution to his extensive efforts to develop an empirically based theory of human nature.

2 Structure and Key Features

2.1 Structure

Kant usually divided his anthropology into two parts, and, as noted earlier, the influence of Baumgarten’s empirical psychology is most noticeable in the first part, where Kant discusses topics such as human cognitive powers, the feeling of pleasure and displeasure, and the faculty of desire (cf. Baumgarten 2013, § 519 ff., § 655 ff., § 663 ff.).¹⁰ The second part, particularly in its discussions of the character of the sexes, peoples, races, and species, reveals more the influence of Kant’s 1764 *Observations* and his lectures on physical geography.

⁹ For more on the relationship between Kant’s anthropology and the *Observations*, see Loudon (2011, pp. 150–63).

¹⁰ This section borrows a bit from Loudon (2000, pp. 70–1, 48–9).

However, over the years Kant labeled the two parts somewhat differently, and he was often rather loose with his terminology. In the 1798 *Anthropology*, Part I is called “Anthropological Didactic” (Anth 7: 123); Part II, “Anthropological Characteristic” (Anth 7: 124). In *Busolt* (1788–9, the shortest of the seven anthropology transcriptions published in volume 25 of the Academy edition), these terms are not used as subdivisions of anthropology, though in the prolegomena we read that “anthropology is properly a *characteristic*” (V-Anth/Busolt 25: 1437) and the final chapter is entitled “Of the Characteristic of the Person” (25: 1433). The Table of Contents for *Mrongovius* (1784–5) includes a “Second, or Practical, Part of Anthropology, which Concerns the Characteristic of the Human Being” (V-Anth/Mron 25: 1208), but no name for the first part. However, at the beginning of the second part the transcriber writes: “As the first part of anthropology contains the physiology of the human being and thus, as it were, the elements out of which the human being is composed, so the practical part of anthropology is the one that teaches us how human beings are constituted in their voluntary actions” (V-Anth/Mron 25: 1367). Similarly, the Contents for *Menschenkunde* (1781–2, first published in 1831) concludes with a “Characteristic” (though it is not labeled “Part II”), the first chapter of which is entitled “Of the Characteristic of the Human Being” (V-Anth/Mensch 25: 852), but the term “Didactic” does not appear. In the Contents for *Pillau* (1777–8) neither of the two terms appears, but Kant uses the term “Characteristic” for the first time later in this lecture transcription when he states: “The Characteristic. It serves to distinguish the characters [*Charactère*]. Character means nothing other than a general mark to distinguish people” (V-Anth/Pillau 25: 814). In the Contents for *Friedländer* (1775–6) there is a “Part II: Anthropology” (V-Anth/Fried 25: 468), but no Part I. However, at the beginning of Part II the transcriber writes: “After we have, in the general part, come to know the human being according to his powers of soul and his faculties, we must now, in the particular part, thus seek to apply the knowledge of the human being, and to make use of it” (V-Anth/Fried 25: 624). In the Contents for both *Parow* and *Collins* (1772–3), the lectures are not divided into two parts, and neither the term “Didactic” nor “Characteristic” appears.

So Kant settled on the terms “Didactic” and “Characteristic” as a way of describing the two parts of his anthropology rather late. But what does he mean by these terms? In the margins of the *Handschrift* (his handwritten manuscript) for the 1798 *Anthropology*, there is a note at the beginning of Part II that reads:

Anthropology 1st Part Anthropological *Didactic* What is the human being?
 2nd Part Anthropological *Characteristic* How is the peculiarity of each human being to be cognized?

The former is as it were the doctrine of elements of anthropology, the latter is the doctrine of method. (Anth 7: 410)

This note indicates that Kant is employing the same “Doctrine of Elements/Doctrine of Method” division that he also uses in his three *Critiques*, the second half of the *Metaphysics of Morals*, as well as several of the lectures on logic (see, e.g., Log 9: 89, 137; V-Lo/Dohna 24: 701, 779). And in the *Dohna* transcription of Kant’s anthropology lecture (1791–2 – only a few passages from this transcription are included in volume 25 of the Academy edition), anthropology is explicitly divided into two parts – “The Doctrine of Elements” (Kowalewski 1924, p. 69) and “The Doctrine of Method or Characteristic” (Kowalewski 1924, p. 70; cf. 289–90). In *Busolt*, the penultimate chapter is also entitled “Doctrine of Method” (V-Anth/Busolt 25: 1433).

In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant explains that a doctrine of elements is concerned with estimating and determining the “building materials” of thought and with figuring out “what sort of edifice, with what height and strength” (KrV A 707/B 735) these materials are best suited for. A doctrine of method, on the other hand, is more concerned with the practical application of the materials – how to make them effective in real life. More generally, Kant’s doctrine of elements/doctrine of method distinction is a “theory/practice” contrast, and it “might indeed provide a better indication of the structure of the *Anthropology* than the published headings” (Schmidt 2007, p. 169).¹¹

2.2 Key Features

2.2.1 Pragmatic

In *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* and elsewhere, Kant uses the adjective “pragmatic” to describe his own approach to anthropology, and while other German Enlightenment authors such as Wolff, Mendelssohn, and Herder all used this term earlier (for references, see Brandt and Stark

¹¹ Brandt and others draw skeptical conclusions regarding Kant’s different ways of dividing up anthropology: “Kant is not successful in finding a satisfactory conceptual solution for the relation of the two parts of anthropology” (Brandt 1994, p. 26; cf. Brandt and Stark 1997, p. xxx; Hinske 1966, p. 426). I concur that Kant’s organization of the lectures is sometimes a bit of a “hodgepodge” (Zammito 2014, p. 238), but I do think the theory/practice division described earlier that Kant employs in many of his best-known works is also used to structure the anthropology, and that this provides a clearer sense of what he is up to. However, it is important to remember that even in the opening “theoretical” part, the topics are treated pragmatically. For example, the discussion of memory in the *Didactic* is intended “to stimulate memory in order to enlarge it or make it agile” (Anth 7: 119). And in the discussion of mental illness, Kant’s main goal is to strengthen “human theoretical and practical faculties through knowledge about the sources of their own flaws” (Sánchez Madrid 2018, p. 147).

1997, 25: pp. xiv–xv), “pragmatic” is by far the most famous marker for Kantian anthropology.¹² But what does Kant mean by it?

One thing he is trying to do is differentiate his anthropology from the physiological anthropology championed by Ernst Platner and other philosopher-physicians such as Julien Offray de la Mettrie. In 1772 – the same year that Kant began lecturing on anthropology – Platner published *Anthropology for Physicians and Philosophers*, and Kant’s former student Marcus Herz (himself a physician) reviewed the book. Kant, in an often-cited 1773 letter to Herz, emphasizes that his own approach to anthropology is “quite different” (Br 10: 145) from Platner’s, and he criticizes Platner’s “futile inquiries into the manner in which bodily organs are connected to thought” (Br 10: 146). Although Kant himself was a frequent contributor to medical approaches to the study of human nature,¹³ even commenting at one point, “I see nothing better for me than to imitate than the method of the physicians” (VKK 2: 260), he was firmly convinced that their perspective was too reductionist, since it did not take proper account of human freedom. In the preface to his *Anthropology*, he describes the differences between the two approaches as follows: 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, what *he* as a free-acting being makes of himself, or can and should make of himself” (Anth 7: 119).

In the preamble to *Friedländer*, Platner’s approach to anthropology is also criticized for being overly speculative and bearing “no relation to the prudent conduct [*klugen Verhalten*] of human beings” (V-Anth/Fried 25: 472). In Kant’s own approach, by contrast,

human beings are not studied in speculative terms, but pragmatic, in the application of their knowledge according to rules of prudence [*Klugheit*], and this is anthropology [W]e must therefore study humanity, not however psychologically or speculatively, but pragmatically. For all pragmatic doctrines are doctrines of prudence [*Klugheits Lehren*], where for all our skills we also have the proper means to make proper use of everything. (V-Anth/Fried 25: 470–1; cf. V-Anth/Mron 25: 1211)

This prudential dimension of pragmatic anthropology emphasizes the acquisition of skill in choosing appropriate means toward human happiness, a skill that

¹² For related discussion, see Louden (2011b, pp. 67–70, 81–3).

¹³ See *Essay on the Maladies of the Head* (1764), *Review of Moscati’s Work: On the Essential Corporeal Differences Between the Structure of Animals and Human Beings* (1771), *Note to Physicians* (1782), the third essay in *Conflict of the Faculties* (1796 – “The Conflict of the Philosophy Faculty with the Faculty of Medicine”), and *From Soemmerring’s “On the Organ of the Soul”* (1796).

presupposes knowledge of human nature. As he remarks in *Parow*: “The capacity to choose the best means to happiness is prudence” (V-Anth/Parow 25: 413; cf. GMS 4: 416, KrV A 800/B 828).¹⁴

A second sense of prudence emphasized in Kant’s lectures on anthropology concerns reasoning not in the employment of happiness but rather in using other people to achieve one’s ends, whatever these ends may be. In *Mrongovius* he states: “prudence is a proficiency or knowledge in reaching one’s aims, and making use of this skill or using other human beings for one’s aims” (V-Anth/Mron 25: 1210). And in *Menschenkunde*: “Prudence is ... based merely on knowledge of the human being, by virtue of which we are in a position to direct others according to our purpose” (V-Anth/Mensch 25: 855; cf. Anth 7: 322). This “skill in using others” sense of prudence is also a key part of Kantian anthropology: “Anthropology teaches us ... how we can use human beings to our end. The rules of prudence are taught not in the schools but in knowledge of the world” (V-Anth/Busolt 25: 1436).

But doesn’t learning how to rationally manipulate other people violate one of the most famous tenets of Kantian ethics; viz., never to treat human beings merely as means (see GMS 4: 429)? Kant probably meant that anthropology teaches us how to skillfully use other people to achieve our aims *under moral constraints*, but he does not explicitly say this. And in principle, nothing seems to prevent successful students of Kantian anthropology from using their newly acquired prudence for immoral ends.

2.2.2 Empirical (Mostly)

In virtually all of Kant’s descriptions of his anthropology, he stresses its empirical nature.¹⁵ For instance, in his 1773 letter to Herz in which he discusses the new course with his former student, he describes it as a “*Beobachtungslehre* [observation-based doctrine]” (Br 10: 146). In the opening sentence of the *Collins* transcription, he states that anthropology is a “science” in which “the grounds of cognition are taken from observation and experience [*Beobachtung und Erfahrung*]” (V-Anth/Collins 25: 7). In the opening section of the *Parow* transcription, where anthropology’s connection to empirical psychology is stressed, Kant states that anthropology “deserves a special set of lectures, in part because it does not at all belong to metaphysics” (V-Anth/Parow 25: 244). In the preamble to *Friedländer*, he asks: “How does anthropology arise? Through the collection of many observations [*Beobachtungen*] about human beings by those authors who

¹⁴ For further discussion of the place of prudence in Kant’s anthropology, see Wilson (2018, pp. 15–26) and Kain (2003).

¹⁵ This section borrows a bit from Loudon (2018 a).