

KANT'S HUMAN BEING

Essays on His Theory of Human Nature

ROBERT B. LOUDEN



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*For my daughters, Elizabeth and Sarah
(who have also taught me about human nature)*

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Preface and Acknowledgments



THIS BOOK IS a collection of some of my essays on interrelated aspects of Kant's theory of human nature. With one exception, each of the essays was written after the publication my book *Kant's Impure Ethics: From Rational Beings to Human Beings* (Oxford University Press, 2000). In that book, I examined the underexplored second or impure part of his ethics, an empirical part which does not always fit easily with the better-known first or pure part, but one which Kant himself viewed as a necessary and important constituent of his project in practical philosophy. The essays included in the present volume continue and deepen avenues of exploration initiated in *Kant's Impure Ethics*—i.e., they explore different branches of his empirical work on human nature, with special reference to the connections between this body of work and his ethical theory.

This volume also includes one of my earliest Kant essays—"Kant's Virtue Ethics," first published in 1986, long before I started work on the *Kant's Impure Ethics* project. In hindsight, it is clear to me that my early attempts to make sense out of Kant's unorthodox theory of virtue were largely responsible for my later efforts to track his empirical work on human nature, and this is why I have chosen to include the early essay in the present volume. Behind, around, and in Kant's theory of virtue are many assumptions and commitments about the nature of human beings, but it took me longer to locate the latter.

In preparing the essays for republication in the present volume, I have (with two exceptions) made only minor stylistic revisions, partly in order to establish a uniform citation system and ensure consistency in style. (The two exceptions are chapters 3 and 11. In both cases, I have restored some deletions that were made in the first published

versions. In chapter 11, I have also adopted a new title.) In rereading these essays, I was occasionally tempted to iron out some youthful indiscretions, but have refrained from doing so. As a result, there are a few inconsistencies in the text, but they are meant to indicate that I have changed my mind on a few issues over the years. There is also some occasional overlap in several of the essays, for which I beg the reader's indulgence.

Many different individuals, organizations, and institutions have helped to bring the following essays into existence—often by way of a generous invitation to contribute a piece on a specific Kantian theme for a conference, book, or special journal issue, but sometimes by way of extended conversation on issues of mutual interest and puzzlement. Heartfelt thanks to each of the following: Warner Wick, Jerry Schneewind, Mary Gregor, Otfried Höffe, Onora O'Neill, Ludwig Siep, Marcia Baron, Johns Hopkins University, the National Endowment for the Humanities, Manfred Kuehn, Heiner Klemme, Dieter Schönecker, Phillips-Universität Marburg, Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, Thomas Pogge, Xu Xiangdong, Peking University, Jeanine Grenberg, Patrick Frierson, American Philosophical Association Pacific Division, Joshua Gert, Victoria Costa, Claudia Schmidt, Nancy Gish, Florida State University, North American Kant Society, Zeljko Loparic, Maria Borges, Brazilian Kant Society, Universidade Estadual de Campinas, Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, Brian Jacobs, Patrick Kain, Graham Bird, Isabell Ward, United Kingdom Kant Society, University of Hertfordshire, Alix Cohen, University of Cambridge, Marquette University, Jens Timmermann, Andreas Vieth, Norbert Mertens, Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, Universität Münster, Sharon Anderson-Gold, Pablo Muchnik, Aarhus University, Anders Moe Rasmussen, Carsten Nielsen, Eduardo Mendieta, Stuart Elden, Durham University, Werner Stark, Eric Watkins, Joseph S. Wood, Steven M. Cahn; Richard L. Velkley, Susan Meld Shell, University of Leeds, American Philosophical Association Central Division, Peter Ohlin, and the staff at Oxford University Press.

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The following German shortened titles and abbreviations are used to refer to specific works of Kant:

Anfang	<i>Mutmaßlicher Anfang der Menschengeschichte</i> (<i>Conjectural Beginning of Human History</i>), 8: 107–23
Anth	<i>Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht</i> (<i>Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View</i>), 7: 117–333
Aufklärung	<i>Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?</i> (<i>An Answer to the Question: What Is Enlightenment?</i>), 8: 33–42
Beob	<i>Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen</i> (<i>Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime</i>), 2: 205–56
Ende	<i>Das Ende aller Dinge</i> (<i>The End of All Things</i>), 8: 325–39

<i>Frieden</i>	<i>Zum ewigen Frieden (Toward Perpetual Peace)</i> , 8: 341–86
<i>Gebrauch</i>	<i>Über den Gebrauch teleologischer Principien in der Philosophie (On the Use of Teleological Principles in Philosophy)</i> , 8: 157–84
<i>Gemeinspruch</i>	<i>Über den Gemeinspruch: Das mag in der Theorie richtig sein, taugt aber nicht für die Praxis (On the Common Saying: That May Be Correct in Theory, But It Is of No Use in Practice)</i> , 8: 273–313
<i>Geo</i>	<i>Physische Geographie (Lectures on Physical Geography)</i> , edited by Friedrich Theodor Rink, 9: 151–463
<i>Gr</i>	<i>Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten (Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals)</i> , 4: 385–463
<i>Idee</i>	<i>Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht (Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim)</i> , 8: 15–31
<i>KpV</i>	<i>Kritik der praktischen Vernunft (Critique of Practical Reason)</i> , 5: 1–163
<i>KrV</i>	<i>Kritik der reinen Vernunft (Critique of Pure Reason)</i> , references are to the standard A and B pagination of the first and second editions
<i>KU</i>	<i>Kritik der Urteilskraft (Critique of the Power of Judgment)</i> , 5: 165–485
<i>Logik</i>	<i>Logik (Lectures on Logic)</i> , edited by Gottlob Benjamin Jäsche, 9: 1–150
<i>MAN</i>	<i>Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaft (Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science)</i> , 4: 465–565
<i>MdS</i>	<i>Metaphysik der Sitten (Metaphysics of Morals)</i> , 6: 203–493
<i>Menschenrace</i>	<i>Bestimmung des Begriffs einer Menschenrace (Determination of the Concept of a Human Race)</i> , 8: 89–106
<i>Nachricht</i>	<i>Nachricht von der Einrichtung seiner Vorlesungen in dem Winterhalbjahre von 1765–1766 (Immanuel Kant's Announcement of the Program of His Lectures for the Winter Semester of 1765–1766)</i> , 2: 303–13
<i>Naturgeschichte</i>	<i>Allgemeine Naturgeschichte und Theorie des Himmels (Universal Natural History and Theory of the Heavens)</i> , 1: 215–368
<i>Päd</i>	<i>Pädagogik (Lectures on Pedagogy)</i> , edited by Friedrich Theodor Rink, 9: 437–99
<i>Pro</i>	<i>Prolegomena zu einer jeder künftigen Metaphysik die als Wissenschaft wird auftreten können (Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics That Will Be Able to Come Forward as Science)</i> , 4: 253–383
<i>Racen</i>	<i>Von den verschiedenen Racen der Menschen (Of the Different Races of Human Beings)</i> , 2: 427–43
<i>Refl</i>	<i>Reflexionen (Notes and Fragments)</i> , 14–23, references are first to the Academy Reflexion number, followed by the Academy volume and page number
<i>Rel</i>	<i>Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft (Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason)</i> , 6: 1–202
<i>Streit</i>	<i>Streit der Fakultäten (Conflict of the Faculties)</i> , 7: 1–116

Träume *Träume eines Geistersehers, erläutert durch Träume der Metaphysik*
(Dreams of a Spirit-Seer Elucidated by Dreams of Metaphysics), 2:
 315–73

Other texts cited from the Academy edition—particularly lecture transcriptions—are referred to either by the name of the transcriber (e.g., *Collins*) or the traditional title (e.g., *Menschenkunde*), followed by volume and page number.

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Introduction



“WHAT IS THE HUMAN BEING?”

KANT ASSERTS IN three different texts that the question “What is the human being?” is the most fundamental question in philosophy, one that encompasses all others (*Logik* 9: 25; cf. letter to Stäudlin of May 4, 1793, 11: 429; *Pölitz* 28: 533–34).¹ And he adds that the question is “answered by . . . *anthropology*” (9: 25), a subject on which he lectured annually beginning in 1772 and continuing up to his retirement from teaching in 1796. In 1798 he published *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, a work that he modestly describes as “the present manual for my anthropology course” in a footnote at the end of the preface (7: 122n). So this particular text is the most obvious place to look for Kant’s own answer to the question “What is the human being?” However, Kant’s views about anthropology were far from static. Over the years, many different student and auditor transcriptions from his twenty-four-year cycle of classroom lectures on anthropology have also been published. The most substantial and authoritative collection of these lectures is in volume 25 of the German Academy edition of *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, translated excerpts of which are also included in a volume in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*.²

But finding Kant’s answer to the question “What is the human being?” is not simply a matter of attending to his numerous lectures on anthropology, for several reasons. For instance, the anthropology lectures themselves are partly an outgrowth of his lectures on physical geography, which date back to 1756 and which Kant also revised regularly until his retirement from teaching in 1796.³ In the introduction to the best-known version of these lectures, edited and published by his former student Friedrich Theodor

Rink in 1802, Kant describes geography and anthropology as two interconnected parts of a greater whole: “Experiences of *nature* and of the *human being* together make up *knowledge of the world*. We are taught *knowledge of the human being* by *anthropology*; we owe our *knowledge of nature* to *physical geography* or *description of the earth*” (9: 157; see also *Racen* 2: 443).

Kant’s essays on the philosophy of history, written in the mid-1780s, comprise yet another important source for his answer to the question “What is the human being?” Kant holds that human beings (like other living creatures, and unlike machines) must be studied teleologically in terms of their natural purposes. In the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790), he writes:

an organized being is . . . not a mere machine, for that has only a *motive* power, while the organized being possess[es] in itself a *formative* power, and indeed one that it communicates to the matter, which does not have it (it organizes the latter): thus it has a self-propagating formative power, which cannot be explained through the capacity for movement alone (that is, mechanism).

(5: 374, see also 398)

Strictly speaking, in Kant’s view this assumption of natural purpose should be understood only as a heuristic device, but it is one that strongly influences his reflections on both history and human beings. A substantial portion of his answer to the question “What is the human being?” is concerned with what he calls the *Bestimmung* (vocation, destiny) of the human species. Our *Bestimmung* differs from that of other terrestrial creatures. And this future orientation or focus on where we as a species are headed is also a prominent feature in his writings on history, all of which seek to “discover an *aim of nature* in this nonsensical course of things human” (*Idee* 8: 18).

Kant’s writings on education constitute another principal source for his answer to the question “What is the human being?” “The human being is the only creature that must be educated,” he announces in the opening sentence of his *Lectures on Pedagogy* (1803); “the human being can only become human through education” (9: 441, 443).⁴ Other creatures are able to use their natural predispositions more or less instinctively; we alone require extensive help from others in order to employ ours effectively.

But while geography, history, education, and above all anthropology are certainly among the most significant Kantian sources for locating his answer to the question “What is the human being?” his remarks in these four groups of texts by no means constitute his complete answer. Reflection on human nature is the most pervasive and persistent theme in all of Kant’s writings, and as a result it is no exaggeration to say that *all* of his works are relevant to this question. But as we will see shortly, it is also no exaggeration to say that Kant’s answer to the question “What is the human being?” ultimately remains somewhat tentative. He offers no complete or final answer to the question, because he does not think that it is possible to do so.

RUDIMENTS OF KANT'S THEORY OF HUMAN NATURE

Each of the essays in this volume deals with one or another specific aspect of Kant's theory of human nature. Before proceeding, readers may find it helpful to first orient themselves by surveying the broader outlines of his account of human nature, and noting how his account differs from competing views. As Kant puts it, "he who wants to derive benefit from his journey must draw up a plan in advance" (*Geo* 9: 157). Without some preparatory orientation, any knowledge gained from a journey is likely to "yield nothing more than fragmentary groping around and no science" (*Anth* 7: 120).

First, Kant definitely subscribes to the view that there is a human nature—a set of common characteristics shared by all normal members of the human species in different times and places. This core commitment puts him in opposition to those who, like Sartre, assert that "there is no human nature. . . . Man is nothing but that which he makes of himself."⁵ However, as we will see later, the distance between Kant and Sartre on this particular point is not as great as Sartre implies. In their reflections on human beings, both thinkers place a strong emphasis on our capacity for free choice. On Kant's account as well as Sartre's, man "has a character, which he himself creates [*den er sich selbst schafft*]" (*Anth* 7: 321), and Kant specifically differentiates his own pragmatic anthropology from competing "physiological" ones that view human beings as causally determined entities when he states that pragmatic anthropology concerns the investigation of what the human being "as a free-acting being makes of himself, or can and should make of himself" (7: 119).

Kant's commitment to the existence of a human nature also puts him in opposition to historicists, such as Foucault, who hold that "man is an invention of recent date."⁶ On Kant's view, human beings have existed for a very long time. Nevertheless, his theory of human nature is certainly not ahistorical. He acknowledges that human life has changed profoundly over the course of centuries, but he also holds that a correct account of human nature is one that includes the conceptual resources to enable us to understand why change has occurred.

Insofar as Kant subscribes to "a context-independent concept of 'Human Nature,'" he is also at odds with "the relativist bent" that is "in some sense implicit in the field [of post-Kantian anthropology] as such."⁷ Anthropology as Kant conceives it should be "general" rather than "local": "In it one comes to know not the state of human beings but rather the nature of humanity, for the local properties of human beings always change, but the nature of humanity does not. . . . Anthropology is not a description of human beings, but of human nature" (*Friedländer* 25: 471).⁸

Humans and Nonterrestrial Rational Beings. While Kant is firmly convinced both that there is a human nature and that it is anthropology's job to inform us about this nature, he also believes—somewhat paradoxically—that it is impossible to state definitively what this nature consists in. His main reason for holding the latter view is that in order to know what (if anything) is unique to our species we would need to compare ourselves with other species of rational beings, and we humans have not

(yet) encountered any nonhuman rational beings. As he states toward the end of *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*:

It seems therefore that the problem of indicating the character of the human species is absolutely insoluble [*schlechterdings unauf löslich*], because the solution would have to be made through experience by means of the comparison of two *species* of rational being, but experience does not offer us this.

(7: 321)

In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant states confidently that he is “ready to bet everything [*alles*]” (A 825/B 853) he has in defense of the proposition that intelligent life does exist on other planets, and in his early work *Universal Natural History and Theory of the Heavens* (1755) he announces that “most of the planets are certainly inhabited [*gewiß bewohnt*]” (1: 354) and that “human nature . . . occupies exactly the middle rung” on the ladder between “the most sublime classes of rational creatures,” who inhabit Jupiter and Saturn, and the less intelligent ones, who live on Venus and Mercury (1: 359). So it is clear that Kant, like “many eminent philosophers—among others Aristotle, Nicolas of Cusa, Giordano Bruno, Gassendi, Locke, Lambert, . . . and William Whewell—believed that there is extraterrestrial life.”⁹ But in his more empirically sober anthropological writings he acknowledges that we have no reliable evidence for this claim. Nevertheless, the fact that Kant clearly does believe in intelligent extraterrestrial life also indicates that he does not subscribe to “the fantasy of human exceptionalism,”¹⁰ a fantasy allegedly fueled by our own narcissism. Kant is not in humanist despair over giving up “the specialness of being human”¹¹ because he does not think we humans know for sure that we are special. There may be others out there like us.

At one point Kant briefly compares humans with “the idea of possible rational beings on earth in general,” conjecturing that what distinguishes the human species is “that nature has planted in it the seed [*Keime*] of discord, and has willed that its own reason bring concord out of this, or at least a constant approximation” (*Anth* 7: 322, see also 331). This is an allusion to what he elsewhere refers to as humanity’s “unsociable sociability” (*Idee* 8: 20)—our bidirectional propensity both to associate with others (sociability) and to compete and fight against each other (unsociability). Kant seems to think that the implanted seed of discord distinguishes humans from other rational beings, but (again) strictly speaking this is speculation on his part. There may also be other rational beings that relate to each other in a similar manner.

Humans and Terrestrial Beings. A definitive statement concerning what is unique about human nature is not possible, in part because we lack empirical evidence of the specific natures of other rational beings. But we can at least compare humans to other terrestrial beings, noting their similarities and differences. Broadly speaking, Kant’s comparison of humans to animals is naturalistic and biologically based. Indeed, I am not sure that he would quarrel with E. O. Wilson’s pronouncement (issued as a challenge to traditional humanists and social scientists) that “biology is the key to human nature, and social scientists cannot afford to ignore its rapidly tightening principles”¹²—with

the caveat that Kant's biology is fundamentally different from Wilson's. Kantian biology is teleological and (when applied to human beings) carries a strong presumption of free choice, whereas Wilson's is mechanistic and deterministic throughout.¹³ Also (in part as a result of the former), while Wilson and other contemporary biology-oriented theorists of human nature tend to see only continuities between humans and other animals,¹⁴ Kant does see some fundamental discontinuities. Kant is primarily interested in what human beings can make of themselves, given their natural predispositions (*Anlagen*). On his view, the nature of each species is explainable by reference to its own unique set of predispositions. As he notes in *On the Use of Teleological Principles in Philosophy* (1788): "I myself derive all organization from *organic beings* (through generation) and all later forms (of this kind of natural things) from laws of the gradual development of *original predispositions* [*ursprüngliche Anlagen*], which were to be found in the organization of its phylum" (8: 179). Kantian *Anlagen* are inheritable tendencies passed on to each individual member of a species through reproduction.

In comparing humans to other animals, Kant sees the following basic differences:

Rationality. Humans, he believes, are the only rational terrestrial beings. But two points about his ascription of rationality to humans are worth noting. First, he puts a slight twist on the traditional definition of man as an *animal rationale*. The human being, on Kant's view, is "an animal endowed with the capacity of reason (*animal rationale*)," and thus "can make out of himself [*aus sich selbst . . . machen kann*] a *rational animal* (*animal rationale*)" (*Anth* 7: 321). Humans have the ability to become rational animals if they exercise their capacities appropriately, but they are not automatically or necessarily rational. As Allen Wood notes: "Human beings are capable of directing their lives rationally, but it is not especially characteristic of them to exercise this capacity successfully. Rather, rationality must be viewed as a *problem* set for human beings by their nature."¹⁵ In characterizing human beings' relationship to rationality in this more qualified manner, Kant adds a further tentative note to his account of human nature. Humans are not inherently rational, but they have the capacity to become rational. And some of us may succeed more than others. Second, what Kant means by "rationality" in this context is not instrumental rationality (choosing efficient means toward goals or ends that one desires) but substantive rationality (deliberating about and freely determining one's ends). An animal that strategizes about how to satisfy its hunger exhibits instrumental rationality; an animal that reflects on and then renounces its hunger (say, in protest over an injustice) exhibits substantive rationality. Kant grants that animals have instrumental rationality—like humans, "animals also act in accordance with *representations* (and are not, as Descartes would have it, machines)" (*KU* 5: 464n; cf. *Pöhlitz* 28: 274). Animals have desires, and many of them think about how to realize their desires. But Kant also holds that only humans—at least among the class of terrestrial beings—have substantive rationality: "in order to assign the human being his class in the system of animal nature, nothing remains for us than to say that he has a character, which he himself creates, insofar as he is capable of perfecting himself according to ends that he himself adopts" (*Anth* 7: 321). In emphasizing human beings' capacity to pursue ends of their own choosing (substantive rationality), Kant

adds yet another tentative note to his account of human nature. Because humans can freely choose their own ends rather than simply pursue the goals that they instinctively desire, their mode of life is radically indeterminate—open rather than fixed.

Freedom. Closely related to Kant's ascription of substantive rationality to humans is his position on human freedom. On his account, a crucial turning point in human development occurred when our distant ancestors first became aware of their capacity to make free choices. At some point in the distant past, the human being "discovered in himself a faculty of choosing for himself a way of living and not being bound to a single one, as other animals are." At this juncture the human being "stood, as it were, on the brink of an abyss; for instead of the single objects of his desire to which instinct had up to now directed him, there opened up an infinity of them" (*Anfang* 8: 112). Here as well, indeterminacy is injected into his account of human nature. Like the great Renaissance humanist philosopher Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, Kant views human beings as chameleons—creatures with a self-transforming nature who, in virtue of their capacity of free choice, can fashion themselves in whatever shapes they may prefer.¹⁶

Culture, Civilization, Morality. Human beings' interrelated capacities to determine their own ends and to make free choices among equally compelling alternatives in turn contribute to several additional differences between humans and other animals. In his famous summary of pragmatic anthropology "in respect to the vocation [*Bestimmung*] of the human being and the characteristic of his formation," Kant writes: "The human being is destined by his reason [*durch seine Vernunft bestimmt*] to live in a society with human beings and in it to cultivate himself, to civilize himself, and to moralize himself by means of the arts and sciences" (*Anth* 7: 324). Kant has been repeatedly challenged on two of these claims (viz., culture and morality), but once the competing definitions of "culture" and "morality" employed by each side are factored into the dispute, it is far from clear that he has been refuted.

For instance, in a frequently cited article entitled "Cultures in Chimpanzees" published in *Nature* in 1999, the nine co-authors describe "39 different behavior patterns, including tool usage, grooming, and courtship behaviours [that] are customary or habitual in some [chimpanzee] communities but are absent in others where ecological explanations have been discounted,"¹⁷ all of which in their view provide ample support for the claim that chimpanzees have culture. A few weeks after the article appeared, Stephen Jay Gould published an op-ed column in the *New York Times*, asserting that the study "published in . . . *Nature* proves the existence of complex cultures in chimpanzees," and that one more "favored candidate for a 'golden barrier' to separate humans from animals" had been decisively refuted.¹⁸ Kant, while explicitly acknowledging that the chimpanzee "has many similarities with the human being" (*Geo* 9: 337; cf. *Holstein* 26: 126), also defines "culture" tersely as "the production of the aptitude of a rational being for ends in general (thus those of his freedom)" (*KU* 5: 431). According to this definition, only creatures that have the capacity to set ends for themselves and to freely choose from among these ends can be said to have culture. By contrast, the conception of culture employed by the authors of the article in *Nature* is a minimalist one that makes no reference to substantive rationality or free choice. Rather, "a cultural behaviour is one that is transmitted repeatedly

through social or observational learning to become a population-level characteristic.”¹⁹ According to the latter definition, any behavior that is not merely instinctual or caused by external environmental factors counts as cultural, while on Kant’s view it counts as cultural only if (in addition to not being merely instinctual or ecological) it involves (at least at its inception) both substantive rationality and free choice. One prominent example discussed by both parties in this dispute is dialects in songbirds. Because these phenomena are maintained by “social transmission mechanisms,” they count as cultural according to the definition employed in the *Nature* article. Kant readily agrees with the nine co-authors and allows that such birds “do not sing by instinct, but actually learn [*wirklich lernen*]” (*Päd* 9: 443) to do so from their parents. One bird imparts the song to another “through instruction [*durch Belehrung*] (like a tradition)” (*Anth* 7: 323n). Nevertheless, such behavior does not count as cultural according to his definition, since it occurs in the absence of substantive rationality and free choice.²⁰

An additional fundamental disagreement concerning what counts as cultural is that culture on Kant’s view is cumulative or progressive, whereas the minimalist definitions of culture favored by primatologists make no reference to this feature. On Kant’s view, nature’s plan is “to bring about the perfection of the human being through progressive culture” (*Anth* 7: 322). In order to carry out this plan, nature “needs an immense series of generations, each of which transmits its enlightenment to the next, in order finally to propel its germs in our species to that stage of development which is completely suited to its aim” (*Idee* 8: 19). Culture in Kant’s sense is not merely behavior that is transmitted via social mechanisms, but substantively rational and freely chosen activity that can be improved upon by later generations. And here he sees another clear difference between humans and other animals:

[W]ith all other animals left to themselves, each individual reaches its complete destiny [seine ganze Bestimmung erreicht]; however, with the human being only the species, at best, reaches it; so that the human race can work its way up to its destiny only through progress in a series of innumerable many generations.

(*Anth* 7: 324, cf. 329; *Menschenkunde* 25: 1196; *Mrongovius* 25: 1417)

The claim that culture is cumulative is most frequently associated with Michael Tomasello’s idea of “the ratchet effect.” On Tomasello’s view, while we do find some components of culture present among nonhuman animals, the crucial ratchet effect is absent:

Many nonhuman primate individuals regularly produce intelligent behavioral innovations and novelties, but then their group mates do not engage in the kinds of social learning that would enable, over time, the cultural ratchet to do its work. . . . The basic fact is thus that human beings are able to pool their cognitive resources in ways that animal species are not.²¹

Insofar as Tomasello sees no evidence of cumulative culture in nonhuman animal social life, his position is quite Kantian. But it should also be noted that his notion of

the ratchet effect contains far stronger assumptions than Kant's Enlightenment idea of cultural progress. The internal machinery of a ratchet is designed to allow motion only in an upward direction. When we carry this part of Tomasello's metaphor over to culture, the implication is that human cultural progress is both unilinear and causally determined. But on Kant's view, humans are by no means causally determined to achieve unilinear cultural progress. Rather, we pursue cultural progress as free beings who can and do change our minds. Therefore, both cultural regress and nonlinear cultural change are always possibilities. As he notes in the *Conflict of the Faculties* (1798):

[N]o one can guarantee that now, this very moment, with regard to the physical disposition of our species, the epoch of its decline would not be liable to occur. . . . For we are dealing with beings that act freely, to whom, it is true, what they *ought* to do may be *dictated* in advance, but of whom it may not be *predicted* what they *will* do.

(7: 83)

When Kant's strong underlying commitment to human freedom is kept in mind, the resulting picture is that culture on his view is a product of rational agency that is potentially (but not necessarily) cumulative.

Kant's attribution of a predisposition to morality in the human species (and his denial that we find this predisposition in other animal species) has also been repeatedly challenged by Darwinian theorists of human nature. But here as well, once one takes into account the competing definitions of "morality" employed by each side in the debate, the actual extent of the disagreement may be smaller than first assumed.

Those who hold that nonhuman animals have morality typically define "morality" as "a suite of interrelated other-regarding behaviors that cultivate and regulate complex interactions within social groups. . . . Morality is an essentially social phenomenon."²² According to this conception, morality is a group-oriented phenomenon born out of mutual dependence that is exclusively other-regarding. As Frans de Waal writes: "A solitary person would have no need for morality, nor would a person who lives with others without mutual dependency."²³ In addition to this exclusively other-regarding focus, a second core assumption in the moral conceptions of those who attribute morality to nonhuman animals is that morality is primarily concerned with instincts and emotions rather than rationality and principles. Morality is "a direct outgrowth of the social instincts that we share with other animals. . . . [It] is neither unique to us nor a conscious decision taken at a specific point in time: it is the product of social evolution."²⁴

Kant would not deny that other-regarding instincts (e.g., helping and caring behavior, empathy, and benevolence) are important building blocks for morality. But when he attributes a moral predisposition to the human being and denies that one is present in other living inhabitants of the earth, he refers not to these phenomena but rather to "a being endowed with the power of practical reason and consciousness of freedom of his power of choice" (*Anth* 7: 324). The realization on our distant ancestors' part that they possessed these specific capacities for "normative self-government"²⁵ is what marks the real beginning of morality on Kant's view—a beginning that marks a

break rather than a continuity between humans and other animals. *When* exactly this happened seems fated to remain a matter of conjecture, but its occurrence marked a decisive turning point in human history (see also *Idee* 8: 112).

In his *Anthropology* and elsewhere, Kant also briefly discusses what he believes are several additional differences between humans and other animal species, which I turn to now. However, I believe the following alleged differences are best viewed as corollaries of the core capacities of rationality and free choice and/or as alternative ways of describing the other human predispositions discussed above.

Preservation, Education, Governance. For instance, after contrasting human beings' capacity to become rational beings with the lack of this capacity in other inhabitants of the earth, Kant distinguishes three tasks of human reason (*Anth* 7: 321–22). The first task, preservation, concerns the art of survival. Other terrestrial animals seem to master this art by instinct, but human beings “must invent their own relationship to nature, and Kant is struck by the wide variety of such relationships human beings have adopted in different climates and situations on the earth’s surface.”²⁶ In pursuing the art of survival, human beings also exercise their capacities of reason and freedom. Reason’s second task is education. As noted earlier, Kant is convinced that (at least among the living inhabitants of the earth) “the human being is the only creature that must be educated” (*Päd* 9: 441). The radical indeterminacy of our nature entails the necessity of education. In order to develop our predispositions appropriately, we need extensive and prolonged help from others. However, culture (see above) and education for Kant are overlapping tasks. In his *Lectures on Pedagogy* he states: “The human being must be *cultivated*. Culture includes instruction and teaching. It is the procurement of skillfulness. The latter is the possession of a faculty which is sufficient for the carrying out of whatever purpose” (9: 449, see also 441). Third, in virtue of their capacity for reason, humans also have the task of governing themselves “as a systematic whole (arranged according to principles of reason)” (*Anth* 7: 322). Here there is a parallel to Aristotle: “the human being is by nature a political animal,” and it is in virtue of his capacity for *logos* that he is a political animal (*Politics* I.2 1253a2–3, 9–10). But for Aristotle the ideal size of a human political entity is a *polis* that is not too small to be self-sufficient but also not too large to be “readily surveyable” (VII.4 1326b24)—perhaps 5,000–10,000 citizens. For “it is difficult—perhaps impossible—for a city that is too populous [*lian poluanthrōpon*] to be well governed” (VII.4 1326a26–27). Kant, on the other hand, like many other Enlightenment intellectuals, supports a version of the *cosmopolis* (in his case, a worldwide federation of sovereign states dedicated to peace). For instance, in the final sentence of the *Anthropology*, he expresses his hope for an eventual “progressive organization of citizens of the earth” into a system that is “cosmopolitically united” (7: 333; cf. *Frieden* 8: 341–86).

Technical, Pragmatic, and Moral Predispositions. Similarly, a bit later in the *Anthropology* Kant declares that human beings are “markedly distinguished [*kenntlich unterschieden*]” from all other inhabitants of the earth by their technical, pragmatic, and moral predispositions (7: 322). By “technical predisposition” Kant refers to our ability to devise appropriate means to achieve our freely chosen ends, and so this predisposition overlaps somewhat with our earlier discussions of rationality and culture. But here