

Kant's Moral Anthropology
The Ethics of Character and Sociability

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This book aims to construct Immanuel Kant's moral anthropology by bridging his theories of character and sociability.

Chapter 1: The Prospect for Moral Anthropology

This chapter deals with Kant's prospect for moral anthropology. Kant's moral philosophy is primarily the metaphysics of morals. Kant, however, had a conception of moral anthropology as an empirical part of moral philosophy distinct from the metaphysics of morals as a pure part. The latter is directed at rational beings in general, whereas the former is directed at human beings as beings with as-yet undeveloped reason. Moral anthropology is a methodology to develop human beings into rational beings to enable them to follow the moral laws provided by the metaphysics of morals. Many of the criticisms frequently directed at Kant's moral philosophy can be answered from the perspective of moral anthropology. However, it is said that Kant never wrote a work on moral anthropology. This chapter, therefore, will partially demonstrate that Kant's *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* can be interpreted as an attempt at moral anthropology. However, the substantive proof will be given only through the examination from Chapter 2.

Chapter 2: The Fundamental Theory of Character

This chapter deals with the fundamental theory of character. Having character means giving unity to possible maxims, governing them, and following them persistently through time, originating from originality in the way of thinking or thinking for oneself. Character is defined for the moment as morally neutral, that is, as something that can be morally good or bad. On the other hand, establishing this character requires a purely moral motive. Kant supports a nonmoral interpretation as a definitional claim and a moral interpretation as a methodological one. However, if establishing character requires a moral motive, as dictated by the methodological claim, then the adoption of nonmoral interpretations in definitional claims still makes character impossible without moral motives. Thus, this chapter makes a distinction between developing and perfected characters and argues that it is possible to establish developing character through the act of prudence without

incorporating moral motives. Furthermore, this chapter emphasizes the importance of character by giving an interpretation of Kant's decisive thesis that character has dignity, and seeking an interpretation that reconciles the theory of dignity in *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* and *Anthropology*. Finally, this chapter points out the uniqueness of character by comparing it with the concept of virtue. Character, along with virtue, is peculiar to human beings, but character is the basis of virtue. Therefore, Kant's thesis that the first effort in moral education is the establishment of character remains persuasive.

Chapter 3: The Theory of Character Formation

This chapter deals with the theory of character formation. Following the statement of *Pedagogy* as a guiding thread, this chapter examines how obedience and truthfulness contribute to the formation of character and highlights the problem. The problem was that they either presuppose or nullify, rather than foster, originality in the way of thinking on which character is based. The second half of this chapter examines what it means to think for oneself and how it is cultivated. To think for oneself is to think independently of the guidance and prejudices of others, placing the touchstone of truth upon one's own reason. However, the logical egoist is incapable of thinking for himself, even though he places upon him the very touchstone of truth. This is because he is preoccupied with the prejudice of self-love. Then, Kant argues that only the exchange of thoughts with others enables one to think for oneself. It is the other who breaks down our logical egoism and enables us to think for ourselves. In the end, this chapter argues that the above theory of character formation corresponds to the three maxims of wisdom, that these maxims are the maxims of ordinary understanding, and that they are possible for every human being.

Chapter 4: The Theory of Sociability

This chapter deals with the theory of sociability, interpreting social interaction as an opportunity for thought exchange, as hinted in *Pedagogy*. First, this chapter discusses the theory of the public use of reason in *What is Enlightenment?* and points out the problem that it cannot give people enough motivation for thought exchange. Second, this chapter discusses the theory of "unsocial sociability" in *Ideas for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim* and *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*. Unsocial sociability in human nature does indeed bring about culture and even moral culture. Nevertheless, the problem is that unsocial

sociability does not disappear, even in legal situations, and can lead to vice; therefore, moral culture by unsocial sociability seems problematic. The second half of this chapter focuses on the theory of sociability in *Anthropology*. Here, Kant argues that the exchange of thoughts with others through social conversation contributes to moral culture. It is in this context that Kant's thesis in *Pedagogy* that sociability serves to establish character should be understood. Furthermore, according to Kant, social conversation is a play (*Spiel*) distinguished from labor (*Arbeit*), and must be such. Conversation can be a play only with certain coercive mechanisms. The rules and order of conversation suggested by Kant are precisely the mechanisms that make conversation into play. Thus, conversation, being merely a play, enables even those who are still unenlightened to participate in it and unwittingly enlighten themselves through others. In other words, through the exchange of thoughts in conversation, thinking for oneself, that is, originality in the way of thinking, is ensured.

Chapter 5: The Theory of Social Manners

This chapter deals with the theory of social manners. Some of the aforementioned rules of conversation are understood as social manners. This chapter first shows that social manners are not a moral practice, but rather, the practice of worldly prudence to hide one's own weak or bad parts and look better than one is, that they constitute a hypothetical rather than a categorical imperative, and that social manners are the foundation of sociability. Furthermore, this chapter discusses Kant's thesis that social manners can moralize oneself and others. To explain this moralizing process, this chapter focuses on Kant's distinction between an illusion, which persists even if one knows that the supposed object is not real, and deception, which does not persist when one knows that the supposed object is not real, and argues that social manners are an illusion, rather than a deception. On one hand, social manners teach the subject self-mastery and self-compulsion by deceiving the deceptive inclination to make oneself look good, which is a permissible illusion; this represents a step toward virtue. On the other hand, social manners cultivate the moral feelings of others by being an illusion of beauty to them, because as stated in *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, beauty is a symbol of moral goodness.

Chapter 6: The Theory of Trust

This chapter deals with the theory of trust. As stated in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the practice of using social manners to disclose one's faults makes a difference even

when one reveals one's own speculative way of thinking. Unsocial sociability encourages people not to disclose their thoughts, but to keep them secret. The unsocial sociability of human beings, which was first raised in *Ideas for Universal History*, is inherited in his later works. To address this problem, Kant appeals to trust (*Vertrauen*). Namely, trust makes it possible to uncover oneself to and exchange thoughts with others. This chapter then examines a wide range of texts and constructs two models of trust: "trust as a duty of virtue (sensuous trust)" and "trust as prudence", with the latter complementing the former. Finally, a question concerning the relationship between trust and belief (*Glaube*) is raised. This chapter refers to Kant's famous trichotomy of opinion, knowledge, and belief, and argues that it is appropriate to take trust as faith, more specifically in practical faith. Insofar as social manners and trust are conditions for conversation and thought exchange, the theory of social manners (Chapter 5) and the theory of trust (Chapter 6) belong to the theory of sociability.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the theories of character and sociability developed in this book are situated within Kant's moral anthropology. These theories do not presuppose rational beings in general, but human beings with as-yet undeveloped reason. They teach human beings how to develop reason in order to qualify as "rational beings". Furthermore, the criticism against Kant's metaphysics of morals is answered from the standpoint of moral anthropology, although with qualifications. In the end, the significance of moral anthropology is emphasized in terms of its relationship with the metaphysics of morals.