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Kant the Naturalist

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Abstract: Kant is widely admired – and sometimes also widely criticized – as the founding father of transcendental philosophy. But in much of my own writing, I have been concerned with a very different Kant: an impure rather than a pure Kant, an *a posteriori* rather than an *a priori* Kant, a naturalistic rather than a transcendental Kant. This other Kant has often been overlooked by professional philosophers, and when not overlooked, he is often regarded as shallow and unoriginal. My aim in this paper is to demonstrate not only the existence but also the importance and originality of Kant, the naturalist. Without Kant’s naturalism, we lack what he called the empirically-informed “eye of true philosophy” that gives its possessors a necessary “broadened way of thinking” and provides philosophy with “dignity, i. e., an absolute worth.”

Keywords: Basedow, Rousseau, humans-only norms, naturalism and Kant.

Kant is widely admired (and sometimes also widely despised) as the founding father of transcendental philosophy. But in much of my own writing on Kant, I have been concerned with a very different Kant: an impure rather than a pure Kant, an *a posteriori* rather than an *a priori* Kant, an empirical rather than a rationalist Kant, and, yes, a *naturalistic* rather than a transcendental Kant. This other Kant has often been overlooked, particularly by professional philosophers who, (to borrow from Hume) when they think of Kant, “can scarcely forbear reflecting on” (Hume 2005/1748, p. 24) the huge wave of transcendental philosophy which starts with him and follows in his wake. And in those relatively rare cases where the other Kant is not overlooked, he is often belittled and accused of being “shallow and unoriginal,” a “minor scribbler”¹ in comparison with what Moses Mendelssohn called the “all-destroying [*alles-zermalmende*]” (Mendelssohn 1971-98/1785, 3.2: p. 3) philosopher of the first *Critique*.

In what follows I hope to convince you not only that Kant – the naturalist – does indeed exist, but that he is also a philosophical force to be reckoned with.

¹ Fleischacker (2018). Fleischacker’s comments occur in his remarks about my contribution to the volume that he is reviewing; viz., *Kant and the Scottish Enlightenment* – see Loudon (2017b).

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While there are admittedly new problems that arise once one sets out on this journey (e. g., how do these two Kants relate to each other? How can one be both a naturalist and a transcendental philosopher?), my own view is that Kantian studies become much richer and more substantive when the other Kant is brought into the picture. Two Kants are better than one.

1 Naturalism in the Philosophy of Education²

Let's start with a few texts. Perhaps the clearest example of Kant's naturalism is to be found in his philosophy of education. In the second of his two short essays on Johann Bernhard Basedow's (1724–1790) famous experimental school in Dessau, the Philanthropin, founded in 1774, Kant praises the school in part because its “educational method... is wisely derived from nature itself [*aus der Natur selbst gezogen*] and not slavishly copied from old habit and unexperienced ages” (AP 2: 449).³ All other schools, Kant asserts, “were spoiled at the outset, ... because everything in them works against nature [*der Natur entgegen arbeitet*]” (AP 2: 449; cf. 447). Small wonder then, that Kant elsewhere (viz., in the *Friedländer* anthropology lecture) singles out Basedow's school as “the greatest phenomenon that has appeared in this century for the improvement of the perfection of humanity” (V-Anth/Fried 25: 722; see also V-Mo/Collins 27: 471, Päd 9: 451).

Although Kant never went west to Dessau to observe Basedow's new school firsthand (he was not a traveler, and spent his entire life in the vicinity of his hometown of Königsberg), he was well acquainted with at least some of Basedow's voluminous writings.⁴ For instance, he used one of Basedow's most famous works – *Das Methodenbuch für Väter und Mütter der Familien und Völker* (1770, 2nd ed. 1771, 3rd ed. 1773) [*The Method-Book for Fathers and Mothers of Families and Nations*] – as his text for his first course on practical pedagogy at the University of Königsberg in the winter semester of 1776–77. And Basedow also repeatedly emphasizes his naturalistic teaching method in many of his own publications. For instance, the second chapter of his *Magister* thesis for the University of Kiel, written

² In this section, I borrow a few points from Louden (2017a, pp. 724f. and 2011, pp. 144f.).

³ Kant's works are cited in the body of the text according to volume and page number in the Academy Edition of his writings (Kant, 1902 –), using the standard German abbreviations for individual titles. Translations are my own. Citations from Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (K_rV) refer to the A (first) and B (second) editions of this work. I am currently working on an intellectual biography of Basedow (*Total Transformation: Johann Bernhard Basedow and the Philanthropin*) in which I explore Kant's debts to Basedow in greater detail.

⁴ Basedow published well over 100 works during his life. See the bibliography in Basedow (1965, pp. 267–274).

in Latin and defended on 7 June 1752 is entitled: “*The Unused and Natural Method of all Scholastic Studies, Chiefly Latin.*”⁵ And in the Preface of a 1774 publication intended to increase public awareness of his experimental school (viz., *Das in Dessau errichtete Philanthropinum, eine Schule der Menschenfreundschaft und guter Erkenntnis* – The Philanthropinum Established in Dessau, a School of Human Friendship and Good Knowledge), he writes:

Nature! [*Natur*] *School!* *Life!* Friendship is under these three; [and] so will the human being, what he should be, and cannot be right away; happy in childhood, cheerful and curious in adolescence, peaceful and useful as an adult. But when nature is whipped out of school, and school is mocked in the life of man, then in the end the human being grows into a deformity... (Basedow 1774, p. XIII)

Similarly, in another of his most influential publications, the four-volume *Elementarwerk* (1774, 2nd ed. 1785), which was accompanied by nearly one hundred copper engravings by Polish artist Daniel Chodowiecki (1726–1801), Basedow expresses the hope that his method of “natural education and instruction [*natürliche Erziehung und Unterweisung*]... will be introduced in public schools” (reprinted in Basedow 1965, p. 197). Many of the curricular innovations that Basedow introduced at the Philanthropin and for which it is justly famous – for instance, the conversational method of teaching foreign languages, the doctrine of learning through play, and the introduction of both physical education and sex education into the curriculum – have their roots in his naturalism.⁶

In Enlightenment pedagogical theory, this emphasis on a naturalistic educational method is most commonly associated with Rousseau’s *Émile* (1762). And as a result, Basedow is often dismissed as a “relatively mediocre thinker” (Parker 1912, p. 216), an unoriginal German Rousseau. For instance, Robert Quick, in his *Essays on Educational Reformers*, writes: “the root-ideas of Basedow put forth in his ‘*Book of Method*’ [viz., the *Methodenbuch*], and other writings, are those of Rousseau” (Quick 1896, p. 279). But while Rousseau in his *Émile* does advocate a general principle “of letting nature alone in everything,” and while he continually

⁵ Basedow (1752), cf. Basedow (1965, p. 267).

⁶ Commentators also frequently draw attention to the naturalist orientation of Basedow’s school. Friedrich Paulsen, for instance, in *German Education: Past and Present*, notes that Basedow’s principal aim “was to make room ... for an education that was in touch with real life and in accordance with human nature. The life of the pupils was arranged with a view to conformity with Nature” (Paulsen 1908, p. 134). Similarly, Frank Pierrepont Graves writes: “The unifying principle of the school was ‘everything according to nature’. The natural instincts and interests of children were only to be directed and not altogether suppressed. They were to be trained as children and not as adults, and the methods of learning were to be adapted to their stage of mentality” (Graves 1912, pp. 116f.).

criticizes humans for wanting “nothing as nature made it, not even man” (Rousseau 1979, pp. 131, 37; cf. 107), it should be noted that *Émile* was not published until 1762; i. e., ten years after Basedow began advocating his “natural method” of education in his 1752 *Magister* thesis at the University of Kiel. And the material in Basedow’s 1752 thesis is based on his earlier personal experience as a private tutor in the von Qualen family home in Borghorst from 1749–52. So it is clearly not the case that Basedow’s naturalistic pedagogical theory is borrowed from Rousseau. As Joseph Landschoof rightly remarks: “While the name of Rousseau, to whom undeserved credit long has been given for any influence he is said to have had upon Basedow, was still unknown and unheralded; ... Basedow, as a young and inexperienced teacher, was laying the foundations of [his own] method” (Landschoof 1933, pp. 53f.).

And in fact this popular Enlightenment appeal to nature as a positive norm for human conduct extends far beyond the field of pedagogy. It is a key part of the Enlightenment’s break with pre-modern attitudes. For instance, Leopold Mozart (a.k.a. the father of Wolfgang Amadeus), in his famous treatise on the principles of violin playing, continually advises his readers to follow “nature herself [*von der Natur selbst*]” in determining how best to play their instrument.⁷ And Mozart’s book was published in 1756, also well before the appearance of Rousseau’s *Émile*.

So Kant, in his own appeals to nature as a norm for educational practice, is clearly part of a much bigger cultural phenomenon than either Basedow or Rousseau. For instance in the 1765 *Announcement of the Program of his Lectures*, he declares his intention “to make public education more adapted to nature [*nach der Natur mehr zu bequemen*]” (NEV 2: 305). However, this remark predates neither Rousseau’s *Émile* nor the intense admiration for Rousseau that Kant expresses in his Remarks in the *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime* (1764).⁸ To complicate matters further, in Herder’s notes on Kant’s moral philosophy lectures from 1763–64, Kant does briefly mention Basedow.⁹ So it’s not clear

7 Mozart (1756, p. 193; cf. p. 238 – “*aus der Natur selbst*”).

8 In a famous note that Kant wrote in the margins of his own copy of *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime* (1764), he states: “I am myself by inclination an investigator. I feel a complete thirst for knowledge and an eager unrest to go further in it as well as satisfaction at every acquisition. There was a time when I believed that this alone could constitute the honor of mankind, and I had contempt for the rabble who know nothing. Rousseau brought me around. This blinding superiority disappeared, I learned to honor human beings, and I would find myself far more useless than the common laborer if I did not believe that this consideration could impart to all others a value in establishing the rights of humanity (HN 20: 44)

9 “*Syncretism*: here one tries to develop contradictory doctrines as if they were in agreement. It seldom catches on; is usually futile and often damaging – Basedow is syncretic” (V-PP/Herder 27: 88).

to me whether Kant arrived at his own naturalist convictions in education independently of his familiarity with either Rousseau or Basedow. I would like to believe that he did, but I am not aware of any Kantian texts that can settle the matter. Again though, the Enlightenment appeal to nature as a positive norm for human conduct is clearly something much bigger and more fundamental than Rousseau, Basedow, or even Kant.

2 Humans-Only Norms

As Hume rightly remarks, “nature” is a term “than which there is none more ambiguous and equivocal,”¹⁰ and as a result care must be exercised in calling Kant a naturalist. There are many different kinds of naturalism. In applying this term to Kant, I do not mean to imply that he necessarily rejects all supernatural entities, that he thinks philosophical methods should not differ from the methods of the natural sciences, or that he believes natural science offers all the knowledge that is humanly possible. Rather, I mean primarily that in his discussions of human practices he frequently argues that many natural processes are good and departures from them are bad, and that human practices should therefore try to follow nature rather than resist it or overcome it (in those cases where nature is judged to be good). In earlier writings, I have called this “a species of *weak* naturalism” (Louden 2000, p. 145). Much that we find in nature is good, and when nature is good humans should emulate it rather than reject it. This weaker variety of naturalism is not quite as gung-ho as some of the more reductive naturalisms that have been popular in recent years, but that may not be a bad thing.

But calling nature “good” instantly raises the specter of naturalist doctrines regarding normativity. Am I claiming that Kant holds that the concept “good” can and should be *derived* from nature? To make such a claim would seem to fly in the face of some of Kant’s strongest-held commitments regarding the nature of moral norms. For instance, in the first *Critique* he asserts that the moral ought

expresses a species of necessity and a connection with grounds which does not occur anywhere ... in the whole of nature. In nature the understanding can cognize only **what exists**, or has been, or will be. It is impossible that something in it **ought to be** other than

¹⁰ (Hume 1978/1738, p. 474). For related discussion, see Fink (2006).

what ... it in fact is; indeed, the **ought**, if one has merely the course of nature before one's eyes, has no significance whatever. (KrV A 547/B 575)¹¹

On Kant's official view, genuine moral principles cannot be derived from empirical facts, regardless of how firmly established the latter may be. Any attempt to derive moral principles from empirical facts results in something much too parochial and flimsy. You cannot get to the categorical imperative merely from empirical facts. As he writes in the *Groundwork*:

Empirical principles are not fit to be the foundation of moral laws at all. For the universality with which they are to hold for all rational beings regardless of difference [*ohne Unterschied*] – the unconditional practical necessity that is thereby imposed upon them – vanishes if their ground is taken from the *particular arrangement of human nature*, or the contingent circumstances in which it is placed. (GMS 4: 442)

But in the remainder of this section, I wish to take a second look at Kant's position on moral normativity. Does he in fact – as the above citations from the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* seem to imply – completely reject any and all naturalistic strategies to ground moral norms in nature? Or is his considered position actually a bit more complicated than this? In what follows, I shall argue that Kant, contrary to received doctrine, frequently does rely on a type of norm that I call “humans-only norms.”¹² Humans-only norms are impure, *a posteriori*, and empirical – they are based on general facts about human nature and the world they live in. And because they are based on general facts about human nature and world in which they live, these norms are also naturalist norms in the sense indicated earlier: they are norms based on natural processes which Kant believes are good. Furthermore, some of these humans-only norms, or so I shall argue, can also legitimately be called a type of *moral* norm, even though they are not categorical imperatives that “must hold not merely for human beings but for *all rational beings in general* [*alle vernünftige Wesen überhaupt*]” (GMS 4: 408; see also 410n., 412, 426,

¹¹ A related concern about discussing normativity from a naturalist perspective, which, due to space limitations, I mention only in passing, is the assumption that naturalism implies causal determinism. Kant, in *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* (1793), alludes to this issue when he writes: “But lest anyone be immediately scandalized by the expression *nature*, which would stand in direct contradiction to the predicated *morally* good or *morally* evil if taken to mean (as it usually does) the opposite of the grounds of actions from *freedom*, let it be noted that by ‘the nature of the human being’ we only understand here the subjective ground ... of the exercise of the human being’s freedom in general” (RGV 6: 21). Needless to say, in the present discussion of Kant’s naturalism, I am not using the term “naturalism” in a manner that implies determinism or rules out responsibility for voluntary behavior.

¹² Some of the following material was first presented in Louden (forthcoming-b) and Louden (2018b).

431), and even though they have not been “completely cleansed of everything that may be only empirical and belongs to anthropology” (GMS 4: 389).

For the most part, Kant’s humans-only norms are located in what he calls “the second part” of morality, “moral anthropology, to which the empirical principles belong” (V-Mo/Mron II 29: 599). The second part of morality remains to this day under-explored territory in Kant scholarship, because most philosophers, as Richard Rorty observed, are intent on “keeping philosophy pure” (Rorty 1982). And so they tend to focus exclusively “the metaphysics of morals, or *metaphysica pura*.” But *metaphysica pura*, Kant notes, “is only the first part of morals” – the second part, again, is “moral anthropology, to which the empirical principles belong ... Moral anthropology is morals that are applied to human beings” (V-Mo/Mron II 29: 599).

Some examples of humans-only norms (or what Kant might call “*Menschenpflichten*” – see KpV 5: 8) taken from his own texts include the following:

- 1) *Politeness*. Humans ought to practice politeness because politeness promotes virtue. The practice of politeness “enables us to deceive the deceiver in ourselves, the inclinations” (Anth 7: 152). If we are able to practice politeness successfully, we may be able to trick our inclinations into following the demands of practical reason. And if this trick is performed successfully, we are on the road to moral virtue. As Kant states in his *Anthropology*: “In order to save virtue, or at least lead the human being to it, nature has wisely implanted in him the tendency to allow himself willingly to be deceived” (Anth 7: 152; cf. MS 6: 473–4). Part of his point here is that humans are built in this specific way, while other types of rational agents might not be. It is (or so he claims) a contingent, empirical fact about normal members of the human species that they are able to trick their inclinations into doing reason’s bidding by acting politely. Other rational beings might be built differently. And part of the Kantian anthropologist’s job is to alert readers to this general feature of human nature.¹³
- 2) *Education*. In the opening sentence of his *Lectures on Pedagogy*, Kant proclaims: “the human being is the only creature that must be educated [*das einzige Geschöpf, das erzogen werden muß*]” (Päd 9: 441). Granted, the claim may be false – perhaps other creatures, terrestrial or otherwise, must also be educated. Not all of the empirical generalizations made by anthropologists (Kantian or otherwise) turn out to be true. But that’s another story. Kant’s main point is that it is the anthropologist’s job to inform us about our shared nature,¹⁴ and to do so

¹³ For related discussion, see Loudon (forthcoming-a).

¹⁴ Kantian anthropology differs from much contemporary cultural anthropology in its focus on universal rather than culturally relative traits. In Kant’s view, a proper or correct anthropology “is not a local, but a general anthropology. In it one comes to know the nature of humanity, not the condition of human beings.... Anthropology is not a description of human beings, but of human nature” (V-Anth/Fried 25: 471; cf. V-Anth/Pillau 25: 734).

with an eye toward helping us to better meet morality's demands. As he states in the *Metaphysics of Morals*:

The counterpart of a metaphysics of morals, the other member of the division of practical philosophy as a whole, would be moral anthropology, which, however, would deal only with the subjective conditions in human nature that hinder people or help them in *carrying out* [Ausführung] the laws of a metaphysics of morals. It would deal with the development, spreading, and strengthening of moral principles (in education, in schools, and in popular instruction) and with similar other teachings and precepts based on experience [auf Erfahrung gründende Lehre und Vorschriften]. (MS 6: 217)

In other words, what is it about this particular species that makes it difficult for them to act on moral principle (= “hindrances”)? Additionally, what empirical features in our nature might make morality easier for us (= “helps”)?

A second humans-only norm (or rather, an *allegedly* humans-only norm: Kantian anthropologists, like other humans, are fallible creatures, and they do not always have their facts straight) articulated in the *Lectures on Pedagogy* is Kant's claim that “the human species ought [soll] to bring out, little by little, humanity's entire natural predisposition by means of its own effort” (Päd 9: 441). The underlying claim is that this gradual unfolding of predispositions over the course of many generations does not happen with other species. With us it is a collective achievement known as “culture,”¹⁵ something we do not see in other terrestrial creatures. As he remarks in the *Anthropology*:

With 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. V-Anth/Mensch 25: 1196, V-Anth/Mron 25: 1417)

- 3) *Aesthetics*. In the third *Critique* as well as in several anthropology transcriptions, Kant proclaims that beauty – the central concepts of aesthetics – “is valid only for human beings [nur für Menschen], i.e., animal but also rational beings” (KU 5: 210; cf. V-Anth/Collins 25: 175, V-Anth/Mensch 25: 1108, V-Anth/Busolt 25: 1513). And he also argues that aesthetic experience helps humans to develop their capacity for moral judgment. “The culture of taste is a preparatory exercise [Vorübung] for morality”¹⁶ (Refl 993, 15: 438).

¹⁵ For more on Kant's concept of culture, see Loudon (forthcoming-c).

¹⁶ Paul Guyer, who heard a version of this paper presented at the University of Catania, Sicily in October 2018, remarked during discussion afterward that not all humans who are exposed to art become morally good agents. I agree. My point is simply that Kant believes that this art–morality connection holds. But his belief may of course be false.

Beauty is – for humans, but perhaps not for other creatures who are built differently than us – a symbol of morality, for the human experience of “the beautiful prepares us to love something, even nature, without interest” (KU 5: 267). “Without interest” – that is, for its own sake, rather than as a means to something else. Aesthetic experience teaches us how to freely love something for its own sake, and this is a crucial aspect of moral judgments. The proper appreciation of works of art, at least for humans, is thus a means to morality.

The above examples of humans-only norms taken from Kant’s texts are all based on empirical generalizations about our distinct nature. And because they contain norms about how we ought to behave that are based on our nature, they are a type of naturalist norm. The ought comes from our nature, or rather, we are calling an aspect of our nature good, and then saying that we ought to follow it rather than work against it. (Note that I am making a distinction here between *calling* nature good and *deriving* good from nature. The Kantian weak naturalist prefers the former route; the strong naturalist, the latter.)

But what makes humans-only norms *moral* norms? Not all norms are moral norms. There are also legal norms, social norms, norms of etiquette, linguistic norms, etc. (As Hilary Putnam supposedly says somewhere, “normativity is ubiquitous in our thought and talk.”)¹⁷ However, I think it is clear that some of Kant’s humans-only norms, including each of the examples discussed above, are in fact moral norms – even though they are impure rather than pure, *a posteriori* rather than *a priori*. Why is this so? Those humans-only norms that are necessary means to obligatory ends are also *moral* norms because, as Kant states in the *Groundwork*, “whoever wills the end also wills (insofar as reason has decisive influence on his actions) the indispensably necessary means to it that are in his control” (GMS 4: 417). Granted, “skill in the choice of means” (GMS 4: 416) is often associated merely with prudence¹⁸ rather than morality, and thus with hypothetical rather than categorical imperatives. But in Kant’s view, not all ends are optional – we also have “ends that are also duties” (MS 6: 385) – viz., “*one’s own perfection and the happiness of others*” (MS 6: 385). And in cases where we are pursuing nonoptional, morally obligatory ends, we are also obligated to pursue the necessary means toward these ends – it is irrational not to do so; a sign of “volitional inconsistency” (O’Neill 1989, p. 91).¹⁹ And in each of the examples discussed

¹⁷ See De Caro and Macarthur (2010, p. 9). (They attribute the remark to Putnam without indicating its source). For discussion of different types norms, see Brennan et al. (2013).

¹⁸ As Kant himself remarks in the *Mrongovius* anthropology lecture, “prudence [*Klugheit*] is a proficiency or knowledge in reaching one’s aims” (V-Anth/Mron 25: 1210).

¹⁹ For related discussion, see Loudon (2003, pp. 85–90).

earlier, we are dealing with a norm that tells humans what they must do to promote a necessary moral end. Politeness is (for humans) a means to virtue, for it enables us to fool our inclinations. Aesthetic experience is (for humans) a means toward moral judgment, for it teaches us how to love something for its own sake. And the two examples of humans-only norms in the sphere of education are means toward a moral end because humans must be educated into morality. We are not born as autonomous moral agents. Rather, we develop our moral reasoning capacities slowly over a number of years, through a complex and extensive process of moral education.

So while not all humans-only norms are moral norms (some might be norms restricted to other spheres of human life such as language or etiquette), the ones described above are. But these norms are not quite categorical, for they apply only to humans and not to rational agents in general, and Kant is adamant that all genuine moral laws apply to rational beings throughout the universe. “Everyone must admit [*Jedermann muß eingestehen*] that a law, if it is to hold morally, ... does not just hold for human beings, as if other rational beings did not have to heed it; and so with all remaining genuine moral laws [*alle übrige eigentliche Sittengesetze*]” (GMS 4: 389). However, they are also not quite hypothetical. Hypothetical imperatives are desire-based commands (“if you want X, then you must do Y”). But in the examples discussed above we are dealing with norms that have the following structure: “if you’re a human being, then you must do Y.” Because the antecedent does not describe a subjective desire, one cannot evade the consequent simply by changing one’s desires. (“I no longer desire X. Therefore, I’m not obligated to do Y.”) Those humans-only norms that are also necessary means to moral ends are – for humans but not for other types of rational being – inescapable duties. We can’t escape from them for the simple reason that we can’t escape from our humanity.²⁰ This is who we are.

3 The Eye of True Philosophy²¹

Although my remarks have, for the most part, focused on the contested issue of normativity and naturalism rather than on naturalism, *überhaupt*, it should be clear by now that Kant the naturalist does indeed exist. Kant is not just a transcendental idealist. He wears at least two hats, and a great deal of his teaching and research was in fact devoted to empirical work. His empirical work deals not just with nonhuman nature but also with human nature, and when writing on the latter topic he frequently appeals to a kind of naturalist norm that applies only to

²⁰ Or at least we can’t quite escape from our humanity at present. If the dreams of posthumanism come true, this claim might become falsifiable in the future. For discussion, see Wolfe (2010).

²¹ In this section, I borrow a few points from Louden (2018a, pp. 29–31).

humans and in some cases is also a *moral* norm – his occasional pronouncements that there are “no oughts in nature” notwithstanding (see KrV a 547/B 575).

But what about the earlier-mentioned charge²² of “shallowness and originality” – viz., the acknowledgment that while Kant the naturalist does exist, his work in this area is the product of a “minor scribbler” who is philosophically uninteresting and unimportant, and who pales in comparison with the transcendental Kant of the three Critiques? In this final section of my paper, I shall challenge this popular assumption. Kant the naturalist does not just exist. He is also a philosophical force to be reckoned with, an important and original thinker whose insights add value to the significance of his overall system.

In a much-discussed *Reflexion* that has recently become the subject of an entire book (see Tommasi 2018), Kant criticizes an increasingly familiar kind of scholar who lacks humanity and as a result “misjudges himself and trusts his own powers too much” (Refl 903, 15: 395). Max Weber calls such a person a “specialist without spirit” (1958, p. 182), but Kant says: “I call such a person a Cyclops” (Refl 903, 15: 395). This one-eyed giant (Kant is referring to a famous passage from Homer’s *Odyssey*),²³ he adds, “needs another eye, so that he can consider his object from the point of view of other human beings” (Refl 903, 15: 395). This necessary second eye, which is precisely what the scholarly Cyclops lacks, is what “grounds the humanity of the sciences; that is, gives them the affability of judgment [*die Leutseligkeit des Urteils*], through which one submits to the judgment of others” (Refl 903, 15: 395).

The one-eyed scholar, a.k.a. the Weberian specialist without spirit, thus needs to cultivate some humanity by cultivating what Kant elsewhere calls “the broadened way of thinking;” viz., “thinking from the position of everyone else [*an der Stelle jedes andern denken*]” (KU 5: 294; cf. Log 9: 57, Anth 7: 200). This broadened way of thinking, he adds, though by no means easy to achieve, is nevertheless one of the three most fundamental “maxims of common understanding [*Maximen des gemeinen Menschenverstandes*]” (KU 5: 294).

Kant also invokes his Cyclops and second eye metaphors in several other texts, but here his advice to the one-eyed scholar is slightly different. For instance, in his discussion of genius in the *Anthropology*, he writes:

There is also *gigantic* erudition, which is nevertheless often *cyclopean*, that is to say, missing one eye: namely the eye of true philosophy [*das Auge der wahren Philosophie*], by means of which human reason appropriately [*zweckmäßig*] uses this mass of historical knowledge, the load of a hundred camels. (Anth 7: 227)

²² See n. 1, above.

²³ In the *Odyssey*, Odysseus escapes from the Cyclops by seizing a “fire-point-hardened timber” and twirling it the giant’s eye socket until “the roots of his eye crackle” (Homer, 1965/8th c. BC, p. 147).

Similarly, in one of his logic lectures, he states:

Mere polyhistory is a *cyclopic* learnedness, which lacks one eye, the eye of philosophy [*das Auge der Philosophie*], and a Cyclops among mathematicians, historians, natural historians, philologists, and linguists is a scholar who is great in all these matters, but who for all that holds philosophy to be dispensable. (Log 9: 45)

The underlying message in these passages is that one-eyed scholars (who are unfortunately all too well represented in academic philosophy and elsewhere at present) need to acquire a broader, more humanistic way of thinking, one which Kant elsewhere calls “philosophy in the *cosmopolitan* sense [*in sensu cosmopolitico*]” and “the science of the ultimate ends of human reason” (V-Met-L2/Pölitz 28: 532; cf. Log 9: 23). This “high concept” of philosophy in the cosmopolitan sense, he adds “gives philosophy dignity [*Würde*], i. e., an absolute worth” (Log 9: 23; see also GMS 4: 434–35), and it also “gives worth to all other sciences” (V-Met-L2/Pölitz 28: 532; cf. Log 9: 24).

But philosophy in this essential cosmopolitan and humanistic sense is also necessarily empirical and historical – and, in the qualified sense in which I have been using the term in the present paper, *naturalistic*. For it includes an awareness of those humans-only norms which help us to achieve our essential ends. In other words, it is what Kant himself calls the “worldly concept [*Weltbegriffe*] of philosophy” (Log 9: 23) that is informed by moral anthropology, through which we learn about our species’ destiny (*Bestimmung*) and the ultimate ends of human reason. And in order to avoid the fate of the Cyclops (who, in Homer’s account, had his eye burned out when Odysseus twisted a burning stick in it – but, like Kant, I am only speaking metaphorically at present!), it is necessary that one-eyed scholars in all disciplines (philosophy included) cultivate this empirically-informed eye of true philosophy. Only then will their science have dignity; i. e., an “inner worth” (GMS 4: 435) beyond all price.

A more mundane way of putting some of these points is to remind ourselves of Kant’s remark in the Preface to the *Groundwork* that “natural as well as moral philosophy each have their empirical part” (GMS 4: 387). Since Kant’s day, philosophers have increasingly abandoned the empirical parts of natural and moral philosophy to their younger colleagues in the natural and human sciences. However, this was not Kant’s wish, even though he himself (due to the growing interest in the transcendental side of his philosophical system) is partly the cause of this unfortunate development.²⁴ Throughout his career, Kant displayed a strong

²⁴ The good news is that there are some recent signs of resistance to this development – e. g., in the experimental ethics movement. The bad news is that these philosophers often see themselves as anti-Kantian. For discussion, see Lütge et al. (2014).

interest in empirical work, particularly empirical work on human nature.²⁵ And, as I have shown, he worried that philosophy and science generally would be taken over by one-eyed scholars (or what William Blake calls “single vision”²⁶ theorists) unless its practitioners cultivate “the eye of true philosophy.” This eye of true philosophy is an empirical eye that gives its possessors a “broadened way of thinking;” one which includes a knowledge of human nature and of humanity’s essential ends.

So, in conclusion, Kant is both a transcendental philosopher and a naturalist. Granted, he was adamant that pure philosophy “must come first” (GMS 4: 390), and because of this, pride of place should always be given to the transcendental side of his project. But it is time to give the naturalist side its due. How these two different sides of Kant’s philosophical system fit together is a thorny question that lies beyond the scope of the present paper, but in closing perhaps a few very brief words are in order. The general strategy for reconciling the two Kants – and I think Kant himself follows this strategy – is simply to insist that the transcendental and naturalist sides not encroach on each other’s territory. Each side needs to respect the property rights of the other. Kant’s transcendental philosophy deals with concepts and principles that are allegedly necessary conditions for the possibility of experience; while his naturalism, in the manner presented here, deals with the more modest task of analyzing and evaluating nature, with the goal of determining which aspects of it should be judged good and embraced as models for human living. In principle, these are two very different tasks that need not conflict with one another. Indeed, there is a reason to believe that they can be good neighbors. At any rate, they need to at least believe that it is possible for them to live together amicably, for true philosophy has both a transcendental and a naturalist side, and it is important to sustain both.²⁷

²⁵ For discussion and documentation of this claim, see Loudon (2000).

²⁶ Now I a fourfold vision see,
 And a fourfold vision is given to me;
 ‘Tis fourfold in my supreme delight
 And threefold in soft Beulah’s light
 And twofold Always. May God us keep
 From single vision & Newton’s sleep!
 (Blake 1946/1802, pp. 209f.)

²⁷ *Grazie* to Andrea Staiti for his invitation to present an earlier version of this paper at the conference on “*Transcendental Philosophy and Naturalism*,” held in beautiful Parma, Italy in May 2018. Later versions of the paper were also presented as invited lectures at Roma Tre University in May 2018, at the Eighth Multilateral Kant Colloquium, University of Catania, Sicily in October 2018, and at the University of Hawaii, Manoa in February 2019. I would also like to thank the *Journal of Transcendental Philosophy*’s two anonymous reviewers for their helpful suggestions and comments on an earlier version of the written text.

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