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Articles

The Duty of Knowing Oneself as One Appears: A Response to Kant's Problem of Moral Self-Knowledge

Pareiga pažinti save kaip empirinį individą: atsakymas Kanto moralinės savižinos problemai

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Abstract: A challenge to Kant's less known duty of self-knowledge comes from his own firm view that it is impossible to know oneself. This paper resolves this problem by considering the duty of self-knowledge as involving the pursuit of knowledge of oneself as one appears in the empirical world. First, I argue that, although Kant places severe restrictions on the possibility of knowing oneself as one is, he admits the possibility of knowing oneself as one appears using methods from empirical anthropology. Second, I show that empirical knowledge of oneself is fairly reliable and is, in fact, considered as morally significant from Kant's moral anthropological perspective. Taking these points together, I conclude that Kant's duty of self-knowledge exclusively entails the pursuit of empirical self-knowledge.

Keywords: Kant, Self-knowledge, Empirical anthropology, Moral duty.

Summary: Mažiau dėmesio sulaukusiai Kanto savižinos pareigai iššūkį meta paties filosofo tvirtas įsitikinimas, jog žmogus savęs pažinti negali. Šiame straipsnyje ši problema išsprendžiama traktuojant savižinos pareigą kaip tokią, kur žinojimo apie save siekiama save suprantant kaip empiriniame pasaulyje pasireiškiantį žmogų. Pirmiausia teigiama, kad nors Kantas stipriai apriboja galimybę žmogui pažinti save tokį, koks jis yra, filosofas pripažįsta esant galimybę žmogui, naudojantis empirinės antropologijos metodais, pažinti save tokį, koks jis pasireiškia. Antra, straipsnyje parodoma, kad empirinė savižina yra pakankamai patikima ir netgi laikytina morališkai reikšminga remiantis Kanto moralinės antropologijos požiūriu. Sujungiant abu šiuos punktus, straipsnyje daroma išvada, jog Kanto savižinos pareiga reiškia ne daugiau negu empirinės savižinos paieškas.

Keywords: Kantas, Savižina, Empirinė antropologija, Moralinė pareiga.

Kant claims that the moral worth of an action depends on whether the underlying intention is solely to do the right action and not on whether the action gives good results (GMS, AA 4: 399-400). Given this emphasis on *internal* deliberation and motivation, it is not surprising to come across the moral duty to know oneself as a part of Kant's taxonomy of duties. In fact, we see Kant placing a special emphasis on the pursuit of self-knowledge as a foundational duty to all the other moral duties that one must perform for oneself. Yet, the main challenge to this duty comes from Kant's own stance on the limits of epistemic access that one can have into oneself. Despite stressing on the primacy of the duty to know oneself, Kant consistently maintains that the knowledge of oneself *as one is* in the practical realm is impossible to be attained. Commentators of Kant have paid relatively less attention to the contradiction in simultaneously arguing for the duty to know oneself and the impossibility to fulfil it[1]. Among the scholars who have touched upon it, Onora O'Neill (1998) and Jeanine Grenberg (2005) argue that Kant's fundamental duty of self-knowledge is never fully attainable due to the wide limitations in knowing oneself[2]. Against this sceptical trend, Owen Ware (2009) and Emer O'Hagan (2009) maintain that it is possible to perform the duty of self-knowledge despite a restricted epistemic access into oneself. Ware (2009: 690-697) argues that Kant's duty of self-knowledge refers to the possibility of evaluating one's moral progress using conscience. O'Hagan (2009: 533-534), on the other hand, argues that Kant's moral self-knowledge refers to the descriptive understanding of one's moral condition in comparison with the moral law.

Against this background, in what follows, I show that Kant's duty of self-knowledge involves the pursuit of knowledge of oneself *as one appears* in the empirical world. I arrive at this interpretation by recognizing that Kant, not only allots a positive space for the possibility of empirical self-knowledge, but also considers it to be morally significant. Given the lack of any other way to perform the duty of self-knowledge, the moral relevance of pursuing the knowledge of oneself *as one appears* resolves the issue at hand. In the two sections that follow, I introduce Kant's duty of self-knowledge and discuss the difficulty to perform it. Then, I critically assess Ware's and O'Hagan's attempts to resolve the problem of moral self-knowledge. Following this, I show that, although it is impossible to know oneself *as one is*, Kant's discipline of empirical anthropology allows us to know oneself as an individual and as a member of human species. In the next section, I show that pursuit of self-knowledge from within empirical anthropology is reliable enough to guard against self-deception and, in addition, Kant considers it to have a moral relevance to human agents. If so, it follows that the duty of self-knowledge solely involves the pursuit of knowledge of oneself *as one appears* in the empirical world. In the last section, I briefly explore the possible objects of the pursuit of empirical self-knowledge and the moral implications of doing it as a duty.

Pursuit of Self-Knowledge as a Moral Duty

Although Kant did not write anything about moral self-knowledge in his well-known treatises like *Groundwork of the Metaphysics ot Morals* and *Critique of Practical Reason*, one can see a gradual development of this idea from a few hints about its practical importance in the lectures of his pre-Critical period to a full-fledged discussion of it as a primary duty in his *Metaphysics of Morals*. In one of his first accounts on moral self-knowledge composed as lecture notes by Herder in 1762, Kant stresses on the need and the importance of judging oneself impartially (V-PP/Herder, AA 27: 43). Such hints about the importance of self-knowledge begin to mature into emphases on the pursuit of self-knowledge as a duty in his Critical period. For instance, in a lecture given in 1784, we see Kant saying that the examination of oneself is a primary duty that must be constantly pursued. He writes that the "neglect of this does great harm to morality" (V-Mo/Collins, AA 27: 348). A year later, the idea of moral self-knowledge and its primacy as a duty culminates to its peak as a few explicit claims about it in his *Metaphysics of Morals*. In this book, he goes to the extent of arguing that the duty of self-knowledge is foundational to all the other moral duties.

In elucidating his theory of duties, Kant divides ethical duties into duties to others and duties to oneself. He claims that duties to oneself are the source and foundation of all the duties to others. They "take first place, and are the most important [duties] of all" (V-Mo/Collins, AA 27: 341). This is because every moral duty is a duty to oneself in the first place. Any duty to others stems from one's own rational faculty and is imposed upon one's own conative faculty for it to be performed towards others. That is, duties to others are primarily duties that one imposes upon oneself (to perform it to others). Thus, unless there are duties to oneself, there cannot be duties to others (MS, AA 6: 417-418). After giving priority to duties to oneself over duties to others, he calls the pursuit of self-knowledge as the first command of all the duties to oneself (MS, AA 6: 441). If the duty of self-knowledge is the basis of all the duties to oneself, then it has primacy over *all* the duties to oneself and others. Thus, for Kant, the duty of self-knowledge is fundamental to all the moral duties of an agent. This is why, he writes, "Moral cognition of oneself, which seeks to penetrate into the depths (the abyss) of one's heart...is the beginning of all human wisdom." He also notably asserts, "Only the descent into the hell of self-cognition can pave the way to godliness."

In addition to attributing prime importance to the duty of self-knowledge, Kant also briefly discusses what is entailed in it. He writes that the duty of knowing oneself has nothing to do with the knowledge of one's natural constitution because naturally inborn characteristics and tendencies lack moral worth. Instead, moral worth depends on how an agent employs and directs one's natural constitution to perform right actions in the practical realm. He writes, "This command is "*know* (scrutinize, fathom) *yourself*," not

in terms of your natural perfection…but rather in terms of your moral perfection in relation to your duty." Self-knowledge, therefore, refers to the knowledge of one's "heart", the ground of all actions, i.e. one's moral condition. He then divides moral self-knowledge into two types. The first type, substantial self-knowledge refers to the knowledge of one's moral condition "as belonging originally to the *substance* of a human being". The second type, derived self-knowledge refers to the knowledge of one's moral condition as an individual human agent with acquired tendencies, peculiarities and idiosyncrasies (MS, AA 6: 441)[3].

Impossibility of Knowing Oneself: A Problem

Let us now turn to a major problem concerning the duty of self-knowledge. Throughout his writings, Kant consistently places wide limitations on the knowledge that one could have of oneself. He expresses his doubts about the possibility of knowing ourselves as human beings very early in his *Universal Natural History and Theory of the Heavens* published in 1755. He writes, "We are not even properly familiar with what a human being actually is, even though consciousness and our senses should inform us about it" (NTH, AA 1: 366). Later in his *Metaphysics of Morals* published in 1785, he again writes that "The depths of the human heart are unfathomable" (MS, AA 6: 447). He maintains a sceptical position regarding the possibility of knowing oneself consistently throughout all his works. If so, the claim that the pursuit of self-knowledge is a foundational moral duty appears to be a contradiction.

Kant expresses the difficulty in having epistemic access into oneself as self-opacity and self-deception[4]. Self-opacity refers to the impossibility of gaining an objective knowledge about oneself *as one is*. This lack of cognitive access into oneself has its origins from Kant's arguments against paralogisms of pure reason expressed in his *Critique of Pure Reason*. For him, arriving at certain knowledge of oneself is always due to a transgressive employment of reason beyond the limits of possible experience. In simple words, objective self-knowledge is always beyond the scope of our faculty of reason (KrV, A381-382). In the practical context, this lack of epistemic access into oneself means that an agent cannot know for sure if she has performed an action because it is the right thing to do or because it gives the desired consequences. Kant writes, "The real morality of actions (their merit and guilt), even that of our own conduct… remains entirely hidden from us" (KrV, A551/B579). That is, one cannot know with any level of certainty if an action has been performed to satisfy the requirements of morality or to gratify the needs of sensible inclinations and tendencies. He writes, "it is absolutely impossible by means of experience to make out with complete certainty a single case in which the maxim of an action otherwise in conformity with duty rested simply on moral grounds and on the representation of one's duty" (GMS, AA 4: 407). Thus, we cannot know our "heart" as we can never have a reliable cognition

of the maxims underlying our actions "and of their purity and stability" (RGV, AA 6: 63).

Self-deception refers to our tendency to attribute false principles and motives to actions in order to deliberately show ourselves in a false light. When an agent observes himself, he "cannot show himself as he really is; or he dissembles, and does not want to be known as he is" (Anth, AA 7: 121). When we make an attempt to know ourselves, "we make supposed discoveries of what we ourselves have carried into ourselves" (Anth, AA 7: 133). On one hand, we could deceive ourselves by attributing moral principles and good motives to our actions in order to appear to ourselves in good light and to avoid moral blame (GMS, AA 4: 407). Kant observes that "one is never more easily deceived than in what promotes a good opinion of oneself" (RGV, AA 6: 68). On the other hand, we could deceive ourselves by attributing immoral principles and evil motives to our actions out of self-loathing and self-contempt[5]. Thus, it is impossible to know if our actions are driven by the demands to do what is right or by our needs stemming from our sensible nature.

Given these two forms of hindrances to self-knowledge, it would be a contradiction to ascribe primacy to the duty of self-knowledge. That is, Kant cannot argue that the pursuit of self-knowledge is the first command of all the moral duties and, at the same time, maintain that it is strictly impossible to know oneself.

Assessing Two Proposed Solutions to the Problem

As mentioned earlier, most scholars of Kant have given only peripheral importance to Kant's duty of self-knowledge. Among a handful of scholars who have paid attention to the problem of moral self-knowledge, Owen Ware (2009) and Emer O'Hagan (2009) stand out in their elaborate attempts to resolve it. In this section, I argue that their solutions to the problem of moral self-knowledge have shortcomings and are far from resolving it.

Ware (2009) interprets Kant's duty of self-knowledge as involving a comparative assessment of one's moral restoration in time using conscience. That is, it entails "assessing the perceived difference between my old and new ways of life" and then "condemning or acquitting me in my effort (or lack of effort) to examine this difference diligently" with the help of my conscience (Ware 2009: 696). Although Ware backs his position using Kant's claims, as a solution to the problem of moral self-knowledge, it falls prey to the threat of self-deception that he seeks to avoid in the first place. This is because Ware (2009: 694) argues that the ground of the verdicts of our conscience lies in belief and conviction rather than in knowledge and certainty. If this is so, how could we guarantee that, in carrying out our duty of self-knowledge, our 'inner judge' would not cast us in a positive light due to excessive self-love? Besides, if the basis of our conscience lies in a *belief* about ourselves, the obligation to evaluate one's actions and life in time would be a duty concerning one's *conviction* rather than a duty concerning one's *knowledge* about

oneself. In fact, Kant (MS, AA 6: 437-440) briefly discusses a duty to serve as one's own innate judge (conscience) as another moral duty in its own right and does not subsume it under the duty of self-knowledge. Furthermore, since one's conscience is one's own, Ware's position fails to explain how evaluating oneself with the aid of conscience will provide the knowledge of oneself as a member of human species (substantial self-knowledge). Finally, it is hard to explain, with Ware's solution to the problem of moral self-knowledge, how an evaluative assessment of one's moral restoration would improve our performance of right actions and enable us to lead morally better lives. This is crucial because Kant (MS, AA 6: 441) clearly considers the moral cognition of oneself to have a functional role in our moral improvement by dispelling the "*fanatical* contempt for oneself as a human being" and counteracting our individual "*egotistical* self-esteem".

Unlike Ware who interprets moral self-knowledge as an evaluation of one's moral progress in time, O'Hagan (2009) looks at it as a descriptive knowledge of oneself in the light of the requirements of duty. He (2009: 534) claims that Kant's duty of self-knowledge entails "coming to know what one is like in comparison with the moral law". For him, the point of this duty "is to develop objectivity and to bring the will into line with what respect for rational autonomy requires." Although O'Hagan is right in attributing moral significance to it, the act of judging oneself against the moral law cannot be considered to be the same as fulfilling the duty of self-knowledge. This is because, for Kant, comparing oneself with the moral law is a part of the process of performing any moral action. He (KpV, AA 5: 74) writes that when moral law becomes the determining ground of an agent's will, "he compares with it the sensible propensity of his nature". Such a comparison of one's own constitution against the moral law leads to a negative feeling of humiliation about oneself and a positive feeling of respect towards the moral law. By eliciting these two feelings (together referred to as 'moral feeling') in an agent, the moral law serves as an incentive to enable the performance of moral actions (KpV, AA 5: 75-76). Thus, the act of comparing one's moral constitution with the moral law is not a standalone duty, but belongs to the process of performing actions in accordance with the moral law. In fact, Kant (MS, AA 6: 441-442) explicitly writes that the act of "appraising oneself in comparison with the law" *follows* "from this first command to cognize oneself." This means that carrying out the duty of self-knowledge *aids* an agent to judge oneself impartially against the moral law during the process of performing moral actions. Hence, O'Hagan is mistaken in identifying the act of comparing one's moral constitution against the moral law as the duty of self-knowledge.

Thus, attempts to provide solutions to the problem of moral self-knowledge by Ware and O'Hagan suffer from difficulties. Hence, there is a need to provide an alternate solution that will defend the possibility of pursuing self-knowledge as a duty without disregarding Kant's stance on the difficulties in knowing oneself as one is.

Possibility of Self-Knowledge via Empirical Anthropology

In this section, I argue that one way to resolve the contradiction between the moral self-knowledge and the impossibility of it is to look at the duty of self-knowledge as involving a pursuit of knowledge of oneself as an individual human agent and as a member of human species in the empirical world. Despite severe restrictions to objective self-knowledge, Kant leaves room for one's appearances in the empirical world to be possible objects of knowledge from a third-person's perspective. That is, although knowledge of oneself *as one is* is impossible to attain, knowledge of oneself *as one appears* in the inner sense and in the external world is attainable[6]. Kant assures the possibility of acquiring certain and predictable (substantial and derived) knowledge of ourselves as we appear in the empirical world throughout his published works. For instance, in his *Critique of Pure Reason* he writes that, with investigations into agents' appearances in the empirical world, "there would be no human action that we could not predict with certainty, and recognize as necessary given its preceding conditions" (KrV, A549-550/B577-578). Again in his *Critique of Practical Reason*, he writes that with an empirical understanding of an agent's "cast of mind, as shown by inner as well as outer actions", "we could calculate a human being's conduct for the future with as much certainty as a lunar or solar eclipse" (KpV, AA 5: 99).

Interestingly, Kant subsumes the process of acquiring knowledge of oneself *as one appears* under a systematic empirical study of human self called empirical anthropology[7]. Empirical anthropology is study of human agents "through experience, which in part happens internally in myself, or externally, where I perceive other natures, and cognize according to the analogy that they have with me" (V-Met-L1/Pölitz, AA 28: 224). It employs different methods of knowing ourselves (individually and collectively) as we appear in the practical realm in order to arrive at a body of knowledge about human beings in general. One can arrive at an empirical knowledge of oneself as an individual human agent (derived self-knowledge) through introspection followed by reflection. Introspection refers to observing one's psychological states inwardly to know what is driving us to perform certain actions. The reflection that follows introspection involves a cross examination of the psychological states of our past actions with their rightfulness over time (V-MS/Vigil, AA 27: 608). One can also empirically know oneself individually through inference. By inference, one can arrive at the knowledge of principles and fundamental dispositions underlying one's actions in the practical realm (RGV, AA 6: 68). Derived self-knowledge through introspection and inference can serve as a basis for arriving at knowledge of oneself as a member of human species (substantial self-knowledge). Substantial self-knowledge can be acquired by observations of others in accordance with the content provided by

inner sense, outer sense and social interactions. This knowledge about oneself as a member of human species can further be enriched by other sources like history, novels, biographies, travel literature etc. (Anth, AA 7: 120-121; V-Anth/Pillau, AA 25: 734). This observation must be accompanied by reflection to systematise knowledge about human beings in general. About the general method of acquiring empirical self-knowledge, Kant writes, "it is advisable and even necessary to begin with observed *appearances* in oneself, and then to progress above all to the assertion of certain propositions that concern human nature" (Anth, AA 7: 143).

Given these considerations, it would not be wrong to associate Kant's duty of self-knowledge with the empirical knowledge of the derived and substantial human self that can be acquired using the methods of Kant's empirical anthropology. That is, the only way out of Kant's restriction to have an objective knowledge of oneself is to pursue knowledge of oneself *as one appears* using the means suggested by empirical anthropology. Although there are no clear-cut claims of Kant establishing this connection, in a lecture in 1793 as recorded by his student Vigilantius, Kant hints that the duty of self-knowledge "consists in examination of our past state" (introspection) and "comparison of our actions with their dutifulness, insofar as we *fulfil* or *transgress* the same" (inference) (V-MS/Vigil, AA 27: 608). Thus, Kant's moral self-knowledge can be considered as a process of acquiring empirical knowledge of oneself as an individual and as a member of human species from within empirical anthropology.

Defending the Moral Value of Empirical Self-Knowledge against Objections

The idea of resolving the problem of moral self-knowledge using the possibility of acquiring empirical self-knowledge has been criticized by a few scholars of Kant. A readily apparent objection to such an idea is that although the method of introspection and inference could break the barriers of self-opacity, it is still tied with the problem of self-deception. That is, during the process of knowing oneself via introspection and inference one could show oneself in a positive light out of vanity or in a negative light out of self-loathing. In other words, empirical self-knowledge could involve ascription of false reasons for acting in particular ways due to self-illusion and moral confusion (O'Neill 1998: 93; Ware 2009: 674, 5fn). Another objection levelled against inferential self-knowledge is that, even if one gets a picture of one's moral character by inferring it from a set of actions over time, there is no guarantee that the same set of actions would be performed in the future to maintain the same character of the agent (Ware 2009: 687). In other words, it is hard to attribute consistency to the knowledge that one acquires about one's appearances in time.

These two objections raised against the process of acquiring empirical self-knowledge are actually manifestations of a serious issue concerning the lack of reliability of empirical self-knowledge (O'Neill

1998: 90; Ware 2009: 674, 7fn; O'Hagan 2009: 527). Unreliability of empirical self-knowledge is due to the lack of *a priori* reasoning within the methodology of empirical anthropology. In other words, since Kant's discipline of empirical anthropo- logy investigates the subject matter that experience gives us (i.e. knowledge about oneself *as one appears* in the empirical world), the knowledge that it produces always lacks strict universality and objective necessity. Kant writes that experience "tells us, to be sure, what is, but never that it must necessarily be thus and not otherwise. For that very reason it gives us no true universality..." (KrV, A1). Since strict universality and objective necessity are significant attributes of sciences based on *a priori* reasoning, the study of human self (derived and substantial empirical self-knowledge) loses its status of science. Kant himself writes that "the empirical doctrine of the soul can never become...a science of the soul, nor even, indeed, an experimental psychological doctrine" (MAN, AA 4: 471; cf. EEKU, AA 20: 238). Since the significance of Kant's general account of scientific knowledge lies in the ascription of strict universality and objective necessity (as criteria of validity and reliability) (KrV, B4), the very undertaking of the pursuit of self-knowledge through empirical anthropology seems useless. Thus, the lack of scientific status to the knowledge of oneself through empirical anthropology means that it is unreliable to carry out the pursuit of empirical self-knowledge as a moral duty[8].

Now, despite a lack of strictly scientific status to it, I defend that idea that Kant's fundamental duty of self-knowledge entails the process of knowing one's appearances using the methods of empirical anthropology. This is primarily because Kant considers the empirical study of substantial and derived human self to have *some* reliability and, most importantly, *moral significance* to the agents undertaking it.

To begin with, the lack of strictly universal and necessary status does not preclude empirical anthropology from arriving at any *certain* knowledge at all. As opposed to strict universality and objective necessity, Kant also writes about comparative universality and subjective necessity as characteristics of knowledge arriving from experience. For him, one can arrive at comparative universality inductively by arbitrarily extending the applicability of something in many cases to its applicability to all the cases (KrV, B3-4, A91/B124). Subjective necessity refers to the necessary connection of empirical representations arising "from frequent association in experience" (KrV, A95/B127). Hence, Kant clearly does not neglect the possibility of acquiring knowledge of oneself from within empirical anthropo- logy with these two characteristics. Undoubtedly, he understates the epistemic value of comparative universality and subjective necessity in comparison with strict universality and objective necessity. Yet, empirical self-knowledge with comparative universality and subjective necessity surely has better stability, consistency and reliability than self-knowledge from belief or insights[9]. Further, the process of reflection, which essentially follows introspection and inference in empirical anthropology,

strengthens the reliability of empirical self-knowledge by "quieting" deceiving tendencies and "avoiding errors" (V-Lo/Blomberg, AA 24: 163). Thus, the pursuit of self-knowledge when undertaken as a duty from within empirical anthropology can largely avoid the problem of self-deception.

Next, there is textual evidence for arguing that Kant would have attributed moral significance to the pursuit of empirical self-knowledge. In his *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant briefly writes about moral anthropology as a systematic study of empirical resources that help (or hinder) human agents in acting on moral principles (MS, AA 6: 217). He considers it as uniting the study of morality with empirical knowledge about human self for better equipping human agents towards moral living (V-Anth/Fried, AA 25: 471-472). Thus, this discipline is founded on the presumption that empirical resources have moral value in assisting human agents to lead good lives. Given this, from a moral anthropological perspective, enquiries into oneself as an individual human agent and as a member of human species in the empirical world have moral significance to human agents. This is why Kant considers investigations within empirical anthropology to have moral relevance to ordinary human agents. He always made his lectures on anthropology unscholarly, popular and informal in order to appeal to the ordinary people. For him, empirical anthropology aims to be "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, AA 2: 443). Thus, for Kant, investigations into oneself from within empirical anthropology are morally significant from the viewpoint of his moral anthropology. If so, given Kant's strict restrictions to carry out the duty of self-knowledge otherwise, it is only logical to argue that the moral duty of self-knowledge exclusively entails the pursuit of empirical self-knowledge.

The Duty of Empirical Self-Knowledge: Contents and Implications

Let us now turn to explore the contents of the moral duty of empirical investigation into oneself as an individual and as a member of human species. As mentioned before, the derived knowledge of oneself as an individual human agent in an empirical world is to be acquired by introspection and inference, followed by a reflection. This examination of one's own idiosyncratic moral condition involves an analysis of one's own moral disposition, general character and practical faculties (cognitive, affective and conative). First, knowing about one's own moral disposition involves attribution of a moral value to one's choice of maxims in the practical realm. For instance, upon self-examination an agent may realize her own tendency to adopt moral maxims and, yet, fail to act on them.[10] This shows a weakness in her moral conviction as a result of her disposition towards evil. Second, knowledge about one's general character refers to awareness about one's consistency in wilfully

acting according to principles (Anth, AA 7: 285). For instance, when an agent infers her character from her actions, she may realize that she acts impulsively at times. Third, knowing about one's own practical faculties involves inferring the strengths and defects of one's cognitive, affective and conative capacities. For instance, when carrying out the duty of self-knowledge, an agent may realize that she often gets consumed by intense feelings (such as anger, fright, enthusiasm etc.) without any space for reflection.[11] Next, as we saw earlier, the knowledge of oneself as a member of human species is to be acquired by a careful observation of other human beings, followed by a reflection. An investigation into the moral condition of human beings in general results in the knowledge of certain predispositions and moral proclivities that are common to all the human agents in the practical realm. For instance, upon an empirical investigation about human nature, one may arrive at the knowledge of evil propensity that is inherent in human agents. This is because evil propensity in human agents can be demonstrated by "the multitude of woeful examples that the experience of human *deeds* parades before us" (RGV, AA 6: 32-33).

The pursuit of empirical self-knowledge as a moral duty is essential for a better performance of other moral duties and, ultimately, for a better moral living. The knowledge we acquire about ourselves individually and as a member of human species prepares us to perform right actions and lead good lives. Pursuit of empirical knowledge of oneself as an individual human agent leads to an awareness of the morally aiding and hindering aspects of one's own beliefs, emotions, desires, character and disposition. With such awareness, an agent can draw advantages from the aids and overcome hindrances of her moral condition to satisfy the other requirements of morality. For instance, if an agent knows that she has a tendency to get carried away by her need for pleasure, then she can work on cultivating and strengthening the feeling of respect for moral law to avoid transgressions from acting morally (MS, AA 6: 399). Similarly, if an agent realizes that she does not consistently act on principles, then she can work on developing a character to perform moral actions. Likewise, pursuit of empirical knowledge of oneself as a member of human species leads to an awareness of the morally aiding and hindering aspects of the general moral condition common to all human agents. This awareness paves way for the agents to make use of the aids and overcome hindrances for gradually improving one's moral condition as a human agent. For instance, empirical observation and reflection on our evil actions would result in an understanding about our natural propensity to evil (RGV, AA 6: 26-29). With an awareness of our evil nature, we could put conscious efforts to strengthen our good will and weaken the force of evil within us in order to reform our general moral attitude (RGV, AA 6: 47).

Conclusion

I have shown in this paper that the only way to interpret Kant's duty of self-knowledge is to look at it as a pursuit of knowledge of oneself as one appears in the empirical world. Firstly, although he does not attribute a strictly scientific status to it, Kant allows space for knowing oneself as one appears through methods of empirical anthropology. Secondly, from Kant's moral anthropological perspective, knowledge of oneself as one appears can be considered as an empirical resource that aids an agent's moral living. Since there is no other way to know oneself, I have argued that Kant's fundamental duty of self-knowledge refers to the pursuit of empirical self-knowledge.

This interpretation of Kant's moral self-knowledge can be seen in the light of a broader discourse on empirically informed ethics. In a prominent review of fin de siècle ethics, Darwall et al. (1992: 189) urge that an "infusion of a more empirically informed understanding of psychology, anthropology, or history must hurry" for any real revolution to happen in ethics.[12] From within Kant scholarship, I situate this paper amidst the recent trend in the study of empirical influences that are morally important to human agents from a moral anthropological perspective. Robert B. Louden (2003), a proponent of this trend, discusses general empirical influences like education, law, art, culture and religious community. Another scholar, Patrick Frierson (2003) discusses specific empirical influences like politeness, affects, passions and character. My view regarding the moral implications of pursuing empirical self-knowledge supplements both Louden's and Frierson's view. Substantial and derived empirical self-knowledge can be added to their list of morally relevant empirical influences from a moral anthropological perspective. Further work can be done on how empirical knowledge about oneself permeates into our practical realm to assist us in doing right actions and lead good lives.

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Abbreviations are used according to Kant-Forschungsstelle of the Johannes-Gutenberg Universität, Mainz: AA=*Academy Edition*, Anth=*Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, EEKU=*First Introduction to the Critique of Judgment*, GMS=*Groundwork to a Metaphysics of Morals*, KpV=*Critique of Practical Reason*, KrV=*Critique of Pure Reason* (A=1781 ed. & B=1787 ed.), MAN=*Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*, MS=*Metaphysics of Morals*, NTH=*Universal Natural History and Theory of the Heavens*, RGV=*Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, V-Anth/Collins=*Lectures on Anthropology (Collins)*, V-Anth/Fried=*Lectures on Anthropology (Friedländer)*, V-Anth/Parow=*Lectures on Anthropology (Parow)*, V-Anth/Pillau=*Lectures on Anthropology (Pillau)*, V-Lo/Blomberg=*Lectures on Logic (The Blomberg logic)*, V-Met-L1/Pölitz=*Lectures on Metaphysics (Pölitz)*, V-Mo/Collins=*Lectures on Moral Philosophy (Collins)*, V-MS/Vigil=*Lectures on Metaphysics of Morals (Vigilantius)*, V-PP/Herder=*Lectures on Practical Philosophy (Herder)*, VvRM=*On the Different Races of Human Beings*.

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Notes

1 Owen Ware (2009: 675, 9fn) rightly notes that the tension between the duty of self-knowledge and the impossibility to know oneself "often remains a peripheral issue in the philosophical literature." Few scholars who have touched on Kant's duty of self-knowledge in their works include Jeanine Grenberg (2005: 217-241), Paul Guyer (2000: 384-385), Allen Wood (1999: 196-202), Nancy Sherman (1993: 55-59), Brian Jacobs (2003: 110-111) and Onora O'Neill (1998). Owen Ware (2009: 671-698) and Emer O'Hagan (2009: 525-537) have devoted a paper each discussing Kant's duty of self-knowledge in its entirety.

2 O'Neill (1998: 94-97) argues that it is not only impossible to acquire self-knowledge, but it is also practically irrelevant for moral living. Although Grenberg (2005: 217-241) agrees that pursuing self-knowledge is impossible to be carried out as a duty, unlike O'Neill, she insists that our inability to know ourselves brings humility in us to make a steady moral progress.

3 Ware (2009) uses the terms "generic self-knowledge" and "particular self-knowledge" to refer to the knowledge about oneself as a "substance of a human being" and knowledge of oneself as "derived".

4 Both Ware (2009) and O'Hagan (2009) recognize these two forms that the problem of self-knowledge takes. Ware (2009: 674-675) refers to self-opacity and self-deception as 'type-1 opacity' and 'type-2 opacity' respectively. O'Hagan (2009: 527-529) calls the former as the 'epistemological problem' and does not subsume the latter under any specific term.

5 O'Hagan (2009:528) identifies this form of self-deception as equally important and rightly notes that Kant is "overly concerned with our capacity to see ourselves in a good light" and misses out the moral confusion caused due to self-loathing and self-contempt.

6 Faculty of sensibility, through which we begin to know things as they appear, is divided into outer sense and inner sense. Outer sense refers to the five external sense organs and their property of receiving representations in space (Anth, AA 7: 153-154; KrV, A22/B37). Inner sense refers to the "soul" (or mind) and its property of receiving representations in time (Anth, AA 7: 161; KrV, A31/B46). Kant argues that, just as objects affect our outer sense for the knowledge of their appearances to be possible, we affect ourselves inwardly by means of our inner sense and acquire knowledge of ourselves as we appear (KrV, B156).

7 Although he often uses 'empirical psychology' and 'empirical anthropology' to refer to the empirical study of individual human agents (i.e. derived self-knowledge) and the general empirical study of human species (i.e. substantial self-knowledge) respectively, in Collins' and Parow's lecture notes we see that the subject matter of psychology is not different from what anthropology studies. Both are empirical studies on human self in general (V-Anth/Collins, AA 25: 8; V-Anth/Parow, AA 25: 243).

8 This is why Ware (2009: 678) writes, "...it is vacuous to place me under obligation to know something that by virtue of experience I know or will know easily enough."

9 Hence, the idea of pursuing empirical self-knowledge as a moral duty is a better solution to the problem of moral self-knowledge than Ware's (2009: 694) solution involving conscience, the foundation of which lies in belief.

10 This is Kant's case of frailty. He defines frailty as "the general weakness of the human heart in complying with the adopted maxims". "What I would, that I do not!" represents a frail will (RGV, AA 6: 29-30).

11 This is Kant's case of affects. Along with passions, affects are "illnesses of mind" that negatively influences the way we act in the moral realm. (Anth, AA 7: 251; V-Anth/Fried, AA 25: 589).

12 Also see: Markus Christen et al. (2014) and Doris, J. M. et al. (2005: 114-152).