

KANTIAN ANTHROPOLOGY AND THE FEMININE TASK OF MORALITY

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Abstract

Despite Kant's unfriendly descriptions about women in works such as *Anthropology from a pragmatic point of view* and *Observations on the feeling of the beautiful and sublime*, the characteristics attributed to them with regard to their "character" and dispositions could serve much more noble purposes than the mere caprice of a "weak" sex which has no autonomy and is nearly amoral. One of these noble purposes would be related to the natural end of mankind towards its progress and perfection, especially with regard to the highest level of its "moralization", yet far from being achieved. The characteristics of such womanlike functions are obviously connected with the preservation of human species but also with the development of culture and civilization of mankind in general; these very characteristics would be those of an anthropological (empirical) discipline from a pragmatic point of view. In this sense, as well as philosophy and any other deep and hard study are appropriate for men, for they are rationally closer to moral understanding in a formal way, what is appropriate for women is the anthropological observation aimed to the application of what constitutes the practical part of pure ethics: the pragmatic anthropology, so as it is defined by Kant, is a feminine task *par excellence*.

Keywords Anthropology, feminine task, morality, education.

The *Anthropology from a pragmatic point of view*, as part of the results of the 1798 anthropology lessons from Immanuel Kant at Königsberg's University, if thought as the practical part of pure ethics, this last established with his "critical phase"¹ as the applied part of *a priori* principles, as the empirical part of ethics, which widens itself from the rational life until the ordinary life of the most clumsy human beings, it could be thought as that part of moral philosophy, which cares most directly for the general human nature, in what this one offer to morality as a possibility to its effectiveness, even if in a distant horizon of centuries; it could be thought as the ethical activity and, because activity, then "empirical" which is no more the philosopher's task, the theoretician's task the moral theoretician who intended to show human beings the *a priori* principles of a morality which institutes itself as a duty regarding the inevitable ends of nature; it could be thought, then, as the task which is up to the most dignified feminine ability in the kantian writings (since, from his point of view, women has very little in their nature that can really be dignified): the task of helping humanity to overtake its mere cultivated and civilized stage in direction to its moralized one.

Omitting the discussions about what Kant's *Anthropology* itself achieves as that second empirical part of ethics, if it really achieves something in this sense, the proposal of this paper is to think which things anthropology could embrace as science, in the way defined by Kant, in its applied ethical role, here assumed as a true ethical role beginning with the descriptions and characterizations of the *Anthropology* itself and of what would remain there for women to do respective human moralization,

according to this noble charge as much as their limited space for action – be it political, scientific or, even, moral. The first clue for the hypothesis that anthropology is a womanlike task, in its scientific and moral sense, is in Kant's pre-critical own words, in the “*Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen*”, a work that's very close in spirit to *Anthropology*, and which we could take beside in the analysis of the empirical part of ethics. Opposed to the deep and hard study of philosophy, women's science is “rather, the human being, and, among the human beings, the man” (KANT 1968: p.230). Being anthropology the empirical science which deals with the knowledge of the world and the man that is inside this world, his human nature and what can in it be found for the fulfillment of what humanity must make of itself, – the moralization as last end – anthropology is *exactly* the feminine science.

1. About the Moralization of the Humanity

In the last and long paragraph of the *Beobachtungen*, Kant analyses the taste of men from a historic point of view, when this assumes now the qualities of the beautiful, now of the sublime, now in the considerations of one people, now of the other. This fluctuation of the taste in this historical view has, yet, an evolutionary sense, this being a *moral* evolution. According to Kant, the rise and refinement of taste is accompanied by the rise and refinement of everything else round about. The culture of a people and/or of a time shows itself in the bigger or smaller refinement of a complex chain of things, exactly those which constitute the culture: the arts, the sciences, the habits, the suitability of all the roles of each part of society, in order that it can also be, then, civilized. In the increasing refinement of culture, society grows also *morally* up; or, at least, this is the direction the taste *must* follow. And here, there is certainly a normative content in Kant's desire for the moral evolution brought about with culture, cosmopolitanism and education: “(...) and there is nothing more desirable that (...) the secret not yet revealed of education be pulled out from the ancient illusions, in order that the moral feeling soon raises an active feeling in the breast of each of the young citizen of the world (...)” (KANT 1968: p. 256).

Although the general impressions the *Beobachtungen* offers about human nature aren't the most optimists, with a grumpy Kant talking about the faults, the vices and anomalies of human conduct, blaming society for the insanity and unhealthiness of the souls, – saying, for example, that “in human nature, it can never be found praiseworthy qualities without, at the same time, being led by their anomalies, through endless variations, until the most obvious imperfection” (KANT 1968: p.213) – Kant already talks of a nature's project, which uses everything on its purpose, even then the most ignoble expressions of human character. In some way, even the most selfish of the human beings is being useful for the common end in the project of improvement and perfection that nature keeps to humanity as a whole, even if for each individually morality doesn't happen but as disguise over the particular inclinations. Even at the diversity of vices and imperfections, it is to a kind of generality that, as a last resort, this

project aims: “With this, the different groups connect themselves in a picture of magnificent expression, where, amidst a great multiplicity, unity comes up, and the whole of moral nature shows, in itself, beauty and dignity” (KANT 1968: p.227).

Kant’s ideal of moralization is the last degree of fulfillment in a scale that he says is visible at the project of perfection to human nature. Even if everyone should achieve this project in the best use of his/her rationality, freedom and autonomy, it isn’t individually perfection that’s in question here. Of course, the achievement of majority to each of the human beings is also a condition to the achievement of moralization of human beings in general. But this doesn’t happen separately, as if the cycle should repeat itself at each one instant of a new birth and of a new time. This happens in an ascent, with each generation closer to perfection than its former. In this sense, only humanity as a whole can really hope the completeness of this project, in the achievement of life in a kingdom of ends. To Kant, at his time and now, we can fair well say we are still very far from this ideal, living in an intermediate kingdom of civilization, after we have made ourselves humanity in the culture. For these are the three necessary steps of growth: culture, civilization and moralization. As Louden explains, however, these three steps cannot be merely summed up, but must follow in progress; that is, it is not the joint of more or less of some of these elements that will show how much perfection we have already achieved, but the continuity from one to another, a “transition to morality” that, in some way, will happen: “Kantian moralization cannot be a simple adding together of culture and civilization – it involves rather some sort of qualitative leap into the realm of freedom, one that nevertheless necessarily presupposes the preparatory steps of culture and civilization” (LOUDEN 2000: p.41).

Saying that *in some way* will happen means saying that we doesn’t know exactly how this transition can be possible, since human nature still shows itself so faulty, corrupt and inadequate for a minimal glimpse of moralization. From there the importance Kant attributes to some elements which can contribute to the increasing of human dispositions. This being one of the roles of anthropology, when pragmatically defined, – as we will better see – that is, the empirical investigation of human nature in order to find in it what helps and what disturbs the actualizations of potentialities to the moral end, aiming a knowledge of the world and of the man who, as Kant says, aims also to know “what man makes, can or should make of himself as a freely acting being” (KANT 1996: p.03). That is to say, we doesn’t know exactly how will this transition to morality happen starting from civilization and culture, but we know that we have a duty as human beings: we must do something for it, we must make the most of the dispositions nature has inculcate on us for this purpose. Is in this sense that, as will be argued in the next points, the essentially womanlike inclinations should be used toward the moralization of the male sex. It is also here that all contributions of sociability come out, as opposed to the passionate human unsociability.

In *Anthropology*, Kant praises all the habits which can contribute to a higher intimacy between people, blacken the image of the poor ones that, for example, prefer eating alone for avarice, melancholy or misanthropy – “The good living which still seems to harmonize best with virtue is a good meal in good

company” (KANT 1996: p.186). He encourages, for example, the drink which can promote some degree of social integration, but not that which make someone so shy that he/she prefer to be alone (KANT 1996: p.59). This encouragement for sociability is connected with the mutual regulations with which everyone must count, not just as a restriction over absolute freedom – something about what we could have natural aversion to – but also as support for the correction of his/her own conduct. Although the human passions are still here pictured with grey colors, – similar to the pessimism of the *Beobachtungen* – they are also used in a way that can lead to realization of the purposes of nature. Nothing seems to be in vain. Nor the most selfish passions neither the most simple demonstrations. It is in the sociability that passions can be controlled by the necessity of a pacific living together or that they can be performed as roles which make possible the development of virtue and morality. One of the most tricking human characteristics which serve this end is what Kant calls “self-deception”: “Nature has wisely implanted in man the propensity to easy self-deception in order to save, or at least lead man to, virtue. Good and honorable formal behavior is an external appearance which instills respect in others” (KANT 1996: p.38). Together with self-deception and the formal behavior that’s necessary to performance in respect of others, Kant lists modesty, decency, politeness, the graceful women do allow men to show, the kindness of treatment which is similar to the friendly treatment, these all as illusions that everyone, in fact, know they are, but that they mutually perform and that, not being true are, however, better than nothing. Even so, Kant holds the appearances of sociability as beneficial, even if just in long term, with hope that they lead, finally, to “genuine dispositions”. From there his effort to encourage sociability, at least in the games for fun, because, as he says, “in the long run something serious can come from such a play with pretenses” (KANT 1996: p.39). It is in this sense that all predispositions must be taken, – the human discontent, the social antagonism, the self-deception and the tendency to delude also the others, the unsocial sociability – as means nature employ in the realization of its purposes. As explains Allen Wood: “The ends of morality are to be devised subsequently, with this natural end as something given” (WOOD 1999: p.215).

The ideal of progress of humanity in order to achieve its moralization, goes also through the ideals of social development in the sense of an integration and of a reciprocal treatment of each one as an end in itself. Culture – the arts and sciences – and civilization must serve as improvement not only for specific abilities, in respect to a better life, more comfortable and more appropriate to the demands of nature, but must serve for the improvement of each moral character, so that the effect be seen as *moralization* of the whole. That’s the transformation of the talented and civilized human beings in rational agents, who make use of their freedom and autonomy with the ends and means established through principles. It is the historical sense of this evolution that’s being emphasized. That is to say, the sense of an evolution that happens through the history of humanity towards an end that, however, remains open; but that, in this way, makes possible, as Louden says, that “the entire species must eventually participate in progress toward perfection” (LOUDEN 2000: p.104), even if the human moralization and perfection couldn’t be lived for each one individually; and so, those moralization and

perfection that are naturally instituted, function also as a duty to the human beings who live in this world. Or, according to what Kant himself says in *Anthropology*, talking about the difficult task of ascribing human species a character, “since it is unique as rational and cannot be compared to any other for the purpose of this characterization – that his perfection is naturally instituted in man assuming “his place within the system of animate nature”; but also artificially and as a duty that man has to himself, since human being “has a character which he himself creates, because he is capable of perfecting himself according to purposes which he himself adopts” (KANT 1996: p.238). Again, that’s the most primary transformation of human being as merely sensible in autonomous, and in this way also capable of transforming the big project of nature in an end to himself: “Nature has willed that human species, through its reason, turn discord into concord or at least create a constant approximation of it” (KANT 1996: p.238), even when the institution of this concord – through a civil constitution, for example – limit the freedom for which human being is greedy, even when he must to sacrifice some immediate aims.

The ideal of moralization that, as we saw, makes use of some strategies which nature inculcate in *human* nature through its inclinations and passions, and that, as we will see, makes use of the abilities of each one, – each sex, race and people³ – presupposes an individual and collective *education* as another important mean. Although human beings have social tendencies, the tension of this tendency with that of unsociability and the horror for interdependence, demands that we be educated to a better development of morality. According to Louden, education is a demand to moralization together with culture, the laws, politics and religion (LOUDEN 2000: p.53). What anthropology as discipline aims, – as Kant himself taught – is to educate the students in the sense of a comprehension of the destiny of humanity towards moral perfection. Through the knowledge of the man and of the world, education – and, specially, in our case, anthropological education – must lead to comprehension of each one as a cosmopolitan citizen, capable of controlling that so called unsociability through the universalizing of his/her rational principles. We will talk about anthropology in the third point of the text, in order to explore better the question of its education. Just to conclude the part respective moralization as natural and proper ideal to rational human beings, remains saying, with Louden, that Kantian *Anthropology* and the scientific anthropology (as a discipline), both aims an universalizing education, exactly because it holds the species as a whole in what’s its end: “[universability] is primarily about re-structuring educational and cultural institutions so that children and students will learn to respect and care for all moral agents, particularly all human beings” (LOUDEN 2000: p.55). It is also this task that’s appropriate to women: they educate and moralize men and humanity as a whole.

2. About Women

It is not here intended to include all the discussions around the prejudiced treatment Kant grants women in his various texts (what, for a woman who read this author is, indeed, very unpleasant), nor to

defend either the feminist and equalitarian side – something that’s always valid, but doesn’t fit here – or the Kantian side. But we can here try to rescue some good function for the womanlike qualities described as they are in *Anthropology* and in the *Beobachtungen*, aiming to emphasize the noble task of moralization, which agrees with the anthropological discipline and with the natural end of human perfection, the main point of this paper.

What’s mainly blamed in the Kantian texts respective women’s position, are not his cruel descriptions about futility, talkativeness, sentimentality and even their smaller ability to deal with essentially male business of rationality. What’s blamed is what would result from such a conception, with women rejected not only intellectual and rationally but, then, also morally. The characterization of women would result, as a last resort, that they couldn’t be part of moral agents’ community and lesser of the human destiny in direction to perfectibility. Although Louden defends that this is not the case and that Kant’s ideal aims indeed humanity in general, including those human beings who are slandered by Kant, – women, blacks, non-europeans⁴ – Louden itself recognizes that the consequences could be fatal to women’s character, or better, to their lack of any kind of character, since practically amoral: “Since the ability to think for oneself is also a necessary part of Kant’s own conception of moral character, the charge of weak exercise of reason appears to entail not only a lack of legal rights but of moral character as well” (LOUDEN 2000: p. 85). However, the remaining question then, in thinking about the consequences of the lack of morality which would be an intrinsic part of the human beings that women are, is how to reconcile this with the task clearly expressed by Kant, a task given by nature, that of moralize society and humanity, as a vital force to perfectibility. It is Louden again who strengthens this idea: “Within the larger scheme of Kant’s philosophy of history, women in their influence on men thus play a role similar to that of education and culture on the species generally. All three function as preparatory steps in the ambitious *Übergang* from nature to morality” (LOUDEN 2000: p. 83).

According to Kant, women decidedly lack the basic characteristics which make possible the involvement with the deepest and hardest faces of rationality, such as with sciences and philosophy. They have a *beautiful understanding* comparatively to the *deeper understanding* of men (KANT 1968: p. 229). But this means saying that women have, then, some degree of understanding, although differently qualified. Of course this can contradict some other parts of Kant’s works, as in the *Anthropology*, where is said that women don’t act according to principles, but according to what men give them, arising from *their* understanding (KANT 1996: p. 222), women lacking rational autonomy; or as he says in the *Beobachtungen* itself: “It is hard to believe that the beautiful sex be capable of principles”, adding, nevertheless, that “I hope not to offend it with this, for they are also very rare by the male sex” (KANT 1968: p. 232). Here it can be argued, then, that this characteristic of inferiority makes perhaps more damage at the possibilities of performing freely in the male environments, but not respective moral capacity. Women have in their nature an inclination which places them immediately closer to morality. Next to the passage cited above, Kant declares: “On the other hand, providence put in their breast kind and benevolent sensations, a refined feeling for honesty and a diligent soul”. The

feminine sensibility in front of the evil and the unjust is an innate part of their delicate, kind, merciful feelings, naturally acute to dignity and virtue. In the *Beobachtungen* Kant already emphasizes that is the woman who has, “in the human nature, the main foundation to contrast between the beautiful and the noble qualities, rendering more refined even the male sex” (KANT 1968: p. 229), leading it so to a cultivation of culture and politeness which the nobility and sublimity of the strong sex couldn’t achieve, in its more brutal and cold eagerness. To men only fits the hardest and deepest studies of sciences, of politics and of everything that demands an effort which overpasses the limits of beauty and ease, and of mere passiveness which observes and approves and delights with the superficialities men let women show sometimes in the spreading of their deeds. To women, it doesn’t fit and it doesn’t match with their dispositions of grace and the sentimental dispositions related to morality, to be part of the social environment which goes beyond the halls, the receptions, the balls and the household chores. To women, it is inappropriate to pass the gardens of their houses, unless to make politeness’ visits or demonstrations of warm compassion, but not to search male knowledge. The knowledge and erudition in a woman serves only to break her spell and her attractive sexual force, so that she seems rather a man, whom “just lack having a beard” (KANT 1968: p. 230), which is something that endanger her power over the male sex. And, after all, these feminine knowledge and erudition cannot be of any use, since, as Kant says in *Anthropology*, “as for scholarly women, they use their books somewhat like a watch, that is, they wear the watch so it can be noticed that they have one, although it is broken or does not show the correct time” (KANT 1996: p. 221). To women, it cannot be allowed the kind of activities which put at risk the essential traits of femininity and which are contrary to their task of attract male sex (what can, in our case, be a double (natural) task): the procreation and the moralization, as we shall further see; but they must preserve all possible delicacy, even in the most painful situations — such as that of widowhood, for example; they must preserve the appearances of weakness with the same purpose of attractiveness, as much as the appearances of coquetry, laughter, cry, refined taste, patience, vanity. Nothing being in vain, but being used and showed as favourable dispositions in front of the necessities of their real weakness and their natural and social roles; even, indeed, those characteristics which are mere appearances — self-deception, illusion, sadness — and which, as said in the former topic, are pretences that may lead to legitimize what is beings pretended or, if this is ask too much, they may lead, at least, to a growth of sociability as necessary to moralization. And, according to Kant, all this is so naturally, not for a kind of male evil (although, of course, the naturalization of feminine conditions is itself already prejudice); the dispositions and abilities of each sex are given by nature and are, as such, indisputable traits. Even if no more in a state of nature, but instituted in civil state, these traits are turned up as signs of nature’s wisdom, which distributed very well the roles, according to its purposes: “Civilization does not establish these feminine characteristics, it only causes them to develop and become recognizable under favourable circumstances” (KANT 1996: p. 216).

This leads us to the main point of this paper, about what women are and what they are for inside Kant’s idealized project for human progress. In the section of the *Anthropology* named “The

character of sexes”, Kant indicates from time to time that women, by nature’s design, have a fundamental role in the improvement of culture and civilization, and that the own creation of the female sex is insert in the ends of nature, with everything which characterizes it⁵ – the elements already mentioned of simplicity, delicacy and refinement, but also of attractiveness and sexual force. Kant suggests that the “feminine” can only be qualified and, even, justified – in its most strong sense of moral utility – in agreement with nature’s wisdom, in front of which humanity and men can do nothing, but rather accept it as principle and do participate of the execution of its aims. That is, even if the male superiority would reject women’s self-important tasks, this rejection would be as vain as sign of lack of character, something that a free rational being like a man, possessing his autonomy, couldn’t ever conceive. On the other hand, women can’t as well refuse the means used by nature in the fulfilment of its ends and, therefore, must give themselves very kindly to their destiny. Although entangled in kantian prejudice, however, the sentences of this section sound not as if one of the two sexes would really put itself apart this destiny, what leads also to the fact that, maybe, none of them be completely conscious of it. The duty of bringing this end to conscience and of acting for the sake of it is as well part of the moral development of each human being, while each one is capable of getting out of his/her state of minority to enter in that of majority. But, meanwhile, is just nature which leads this growth, making use of worldly inclinations and passions, instilling dispositions and abilities and, even, responsibilities regarding what human beings do of themselves. So, reinforcing what we said at the former paragraph, nature is not only wise in what it does, as it is coercive. As explains Louden: “Progress on Kant’s view is achieved largely through the invisible hand of our unsocial sociability; nature forces us to progress whether we want to or not” (LOUDEN 2000: p.60), nevertheless the ideal really be to progress with *reason*, choosing the principles and the ends, these last only and always good ends. It is in this direction that the moralization to which women contribute must follow.

The ends designed by nature’s wisdom are said by Kant this way: “1) *the preservation of the species*, 2) *the improvement of society and its refinement by women*” (KANT 1996: p.219). Related to the first are all those conditions and dispositions women perform in front of men, a lot instinctively: the feminine weakness legitimizing their demands of preservation of the species. Related to the second, which interest us more here, it’s worth writing down the whole passage of the *Anthropology* where Kant explains it:

Since Nature also wanted to instill the finest sensations, such as sociability and propriety, which belongs to the culture, she made this sex the ruler of men through modesty and eloquence in speech and expression. Nature made women mature early and had them demand gentle and polite treatment from men, so that they would find themselves imperceptibly fettered by a child due to their own magnanimity; and they find themselves brought, if not quite to morality itself, then at least to that which cloaks it, moral behavior, which is the preparation and introduction to morality” (KANT 1996: p.219-220).

Women have immense influence over men's behavior. Not just over their apparent behavior, which could also be pretended and which would attend the feminine appeals as mere caprice of spoiled people, to whom it's needed a lot of patience; but, specially, over the improvement of taste, culture, science and morality, which cannot be pretended, under penalty of producing their contraries: the grotesque, the uncultured, the futile and the evil. So, women educate men to behave well socially and to respect the manners which can promote the welfare, the sociability itself and the good living together; benefiting, therefore, their refinement of treatment respective to others; leading them to perform virtues which, if not yet genuine, are possibly on the way of becoming real dispositions; in this sense, women benefit themselves with an autonomy in front of men which, we can think, □ contradicting Kant's own sentences spread in his works⁶ □ makes possible their own way out of minority in direction to enlightenment, when they finally, then, can make use of understanding and freedom. This probably helps us to solve that incial tricky question, about how to reconcile the consequence of feminine moral lack with the feminine moralizing task, in agreement with Louden, that the project of human perfection includes all human beings, even those who still must be morally and rationally educated according to principles. If women can educate men to find the way of moralization, thus educating also themselves, – and Kant says in the *Beobachtungen*, contrary to other passages, that women are capable of “generally educating very well by themselves” (KANT 1968: p.231) □ they place themselves more and more closer to their own autonomy. Moreover, this is an unended project, open to an infinite time for everyone who be at present alive⁷. And, then, the hard criticism of Kant over feminine dependence respective to alien opinions, over futility and their little effort to deserving a character, could maybe be a matter of fact, historical and dated, but of fact. Of course, that for a change of the moral autonomy conditions it was also necessary, above all, a change of social and economical conditions □ and this can be applied even today.

Being women part of the species, which evolve like a whole, performing a role in direction of moralization together with other elements, as culture, civilization, □ elements which they also improve from their dispositions □ religion, politics and education in general, their lack of self-determination can be thought of as a stage that can be surpassed, as well as the lack of self-determination of everyone who is still in a minority stage, even, then, men. The task of moralizing humanity itself, as a kind of participation in the big plan of nature, suggests this inclusion. In this sense, it doesn't seem that Kant denies women the possibility of being a moral agent, even if only alongside male roles and even if, at the beginning, performing their morality much more by inclination than by reason. The differences of functions between the sexes, including the differences about the possible sciences each one could hold, would also be necessary steps for human perfection. We aren't here in no way trying to justify kantian prejudice, □ for any prejudice is indeed justifiable □ but, as will be seen in what follows, the feminine characteristics given by Kant seem going well together with his definition of anthropology as a knowledge of the world and of the human being, which is also essential to moralization, as the practical part of pure ethics. It is exactly this application of morality women should teach and live.

3. About Anthropology

In the *Anthropology* Kant defines the “science” in question – although he also speaks of it as “doctrine” – as *knowledge of the world*. This knowledge of the world is the most complete as possible, in the sense that it must enclose the two fundamental determinations of human being as one of its creatures: on the one hand, what nature made of it, the part Kant defines as physiological anthropology; on the other hand, what human being can and must do of himself as a rational being capable of acting freely according to principles, being this part of anthropology properly called pragmatic. The pragmatic part has, so, deep ethical implications related with the ends which, again, nature intends for humanity. What human being can and must do of himself is not something arbitrary, as could at first sight suggest his freedom, but is something normatively given, as indicates the word *must* in the sentence. And the duty is, then, to follow moralization, starting from the increasing culture and civilization, widen the sociability until the cosmopolitanism: “It is properly pragmatic only when it incorporates knowledge of Man as a citizen of the world” (KANT 1996: p.04). This knowledge of *Man* (the human being) is the aim of anthropology as a discipline in the way proposed by Kant – therefore the work be called an *Anthropology from a pragmatic point of view*. Kant isn’t interested in the physiological branch of anthropology, but in the complement the last one would represent to the pure ethics of his critical writings. Wood and Loudon discuss to what extent Kant’s work itself achieve its *application*. We can’t retake this question here, although an important point to Kantian exegesis. We will take for granted, however, the fact that this was really Kant’s understanding about the aims of anthropology, – based upon textual information the authors cited above do supply in their works used here as support – that is, we will take for granted that the necessary discipline to education and cultural background of human beings and the investigative science which makes this pragmatic knowledge possible, must be the second part of pure ethics, must be the application of *a priori* principles to human beings of flesh and blood. That is, an anthropology must necessarily be *practical*: “that study which is supposed to form the empirical part of moral philosophy” (WOOD 1999: p.198).

Here, two main points can help us to understand anthropology as educational discipline and as science, inserted in the feminine task: first, the characterization of anthropology and its cognitive contents which are given under the titles of *knowledge of the man* and *knowledge of the world*, as much as the means and possible resources of the empirical investigation; second, the way this knowledge is related with the ideal of human progress and the role of women respective the vocation of human species in direction to moralization.

In the introduction of the *Anthropology*, Kant lists some of the difficulties the anthropologist finds in the execution of his investigations. Such difficulties are said to be inherent when what is intended is to observe human nature as it is; but these difficulties themselves already show something proper to this nature, elements Kant explores in the work and which provide that pessimist picture of human

inclinations and passions. Briefly, these difficulties concern the embarrassment of people who recognize themselves observed and, then, can no more act as they really are, pretending and hiding (“because he does not want to be known as he really is”), this being even so with the observations someone does of him/herself; at distinct moments, at which he/she expresses his/her passions, when isn’t capable of observing him/herself, or at which he/she is calm, when isn’t capable of seeing his/her passionate expressions. Moreover, there is the difficulty of everything that has become an habit to us, as a “second nature” which disguises the true performances of the first human nature. Given all this, Kant asserts that anthropology can hardly be one of the formal sciences, although it can still be a *science*, which makes use of truly empirical elements of search. However, these elements themselves seem to be placed far away, being little valued at some passages of his empirical descriptions:

Finally, although there are no real sources available for anthropology, there are such aids as world history, biographies, and even plays and novels. Since the last two are not based upon experience and truth, but upon fiction, permitting the preservation of man as if in a dream through exaggeration of character and situation, they seem to teach nothing of the knowledge of man. But such character (...) still had to be derived in their basic traits from observance of the actual doings of Man. Exaggerated as these may be in degree, they must still conform to human nature (KANT 1996: p.06).

||||| This passage is of crucial importance to us, since it reveals the (amoral) character of anthropology and its connection with the characteristics (not at all amoral) of women, as found in the section about the character of the sexes in the *Anthropology* and at some parts of the *Beobachtungen*. It is from this last one we can see the greatest evidence for taking the feminine task as an anthropological task: “The content of the great science of women is, rather, the human being and, among the human beings, the man. Her universal wisdom doesn’t consist of thinking, but of feeling” (KANT 1968: p.230). As we saw, anthropology is, to Kant, an empirical science, but has not the same formal status of other sciences; it makes use of means of search which would be disqualified at other levels and which are even seen as ridiculous, as easy to cheap fiction, daydreams and childish dreams of women who are not able to deeper philosophies⁸. In a passage which follows the one above cited, Kant shows the trait of this feminine science, one which wouldn’t bring any risk to their beauty and their attractive dispositions: “It will be sought to enlarge on them not the memory, but the moral feeling as a whole and this not through universal rules, but through certain judgements about the behavior they observe around” (KANT 1968: p.230), that is, through a knowledge of human nature keeping with their informal, unconcerned and non-contemplative characteristics. To observe the behaviors around, to investigate curiously the habits of other people, their histories and ways of life, their tastes and feelings, their virtues, their interpersonal relations, but nothing much political or fundamentally complicated, there is what fits women’s science, something which doesn’t demand so much as the philosophical readings, but which can be deliciously search, as at the reading of a novel. And, as said above, the results of this science will never

be so precise as those of sciences design to the male abilities, what makes also easier the execution of the search itself, without the eagerness for perfection and accuracy – since this is the spirit of anthropology, which this way justifies it. From there Kant also saying that “our anthropology can be read by everyone, even by women getting dressed, because it contains a great deal that is entertaining (Menschenkunde) (Apud LOUDEN 2000: p.64). Of course here arises another kind of questions, as Louden himself puts it, concerning the validity of a science like this, – which serves the purpose of the limited feminine capacities – being said to be an empirical science in a strong sense, closer to what we today understand as “empirical science”: “Can a systematic Wissenschaft still be entertaining to women [getting dressed *[bei der Toilette]*?” (LOUDEN 2000: p.66). But, the validity we can retain here, leads us to the second part of the argument, keeping even the elements Louden holds as more appropriate to a science, or even closer to philosophy itself.

As Kant says at the end of the introduction in the *Anthropology*, the development of such a science, which provides the necessary material to the background of a knowledge of the man and the world, will be of extreme benefit to human community (KANT 1996: p.06). It is fundamentally this knowledge of what human being is and, from there, also of what it is capable and, therefore, of what must do of himself as a moral agent, that anthropology as women’s science is related with its moralizing task. The pragmatism of anthropology⁹ demands that the knowledge of the world and of its rational and free creatures be applied to them in such a way that, in agreement with the practical part of ethics, it can rise until morality or, at least, it can show how and by which means it is possible to walk the first step which leads, finally, from civilization to moralization as the last stage of human progress. So, it is clear that the accumulated knowledge of what women observe around can’t be mere amusement and chattering or mere entertaining and seduction play. The function of this knowledge must to achieve the improvement of culture and civilization and lead to the discernment about what is good and bad, about what is our duty to do on behalf of our own humanity and dignity. A knowledge which would be mere accumulation – and here we can relate this necessity with the kantian critical phase concerning the task of philosophy itself respective its own history, so as market in the *Critique of Pure Reason* – couldn’t serve the purposes of nature. As cited above, the feminine knowledge about the man and the world constitutes itself not as memory, but must do it as application and education. Like recognizes Louden, morality can’t exist without anthropology (LOUDEN 2000: p.73); but the contrary is also valid concerning its end. It is only the knowledge of the empirical science – that constitutes anthropology as such – which allows a correct “deduction” of duties we have to ourselves, specially regarding the coercion of the ends of nature: “(...) that such a moral anthropology is necessary for the proper application of ethical theory (...)” (LOUDEN 2000: p.74). It is at understanding human nature over its most serious hindrances to morality – the tendencies and inclinations to evil and the much damaging passions, which can be very well noticed when looked around at sociability, at the whole of people we can collect as data, at the stories which can mirror the own life in novels and plays and, even, in illustrious biographies of the most noble characters – that anthropology can educate in order to lead to freedom, to autonomy, to the good

use of reason, to moral self-consciousness, to the improvement of good abilities and dispositions; in order to reject those yet uncultured and uncivilized performances; in order to lead, finally, to moralization of the species as a whole. The women's work is, so, to make of moral anthropology also an educational anthropology, for the sake of perfection of humanity.

So, despite all Kant's prejudiced expressions about women, we can still think, according to the implications of his own words, that the feminine task of moralization very well agrees with his definitions of anthropology, both in the *Anthropology* itself and also in other works – in the *Beobachtungen*; and the anthropology could be thought of as a womanlike disposition, both in its most scientific sense – of establishing it as empirical science, the one which makes use of instruments and abilities properly feminine, from women most acute, refined and open to expression moral feelings, until their most unusual human materials, the novels and mere observation of social behavior – and in its most strong pedagogical sense. And this education serves not only to the individual improvement of culture and civilization (even if it is necessary to educate people individually for a collective result), but serves to maximize human dignity, which is the moral development in agreed with the ends of natural wisdom. From there, women must educate the species through educating themselves – and, as we saw it is possible, through overcoming their own minority – and the men with whom they share the world; through controlling unsocial passions; through inserting moral feelings in the human inter-relations; through a moralization which also happens even if we don't want it. So, thinking a feminine anthropology, in both the important senses, is already think about a possible improvement of women regarding their devalued situation – even if this still be not the allowance to a philosophical femininity, but just an anthropological allowance, which is, however, a necessary condition to the advent of human morality from now to ever, endlessly. So, if anthropology can be an entertainment with which women educate the species, it will be very pleasant becoming morally better.

Notes

¹ That this is the case is said by Kant himself in various places. Authors like Allen Wood and Robert Louden discuss the role attributed by Kant to anthropology and the coherence or not of his own work respective this role, that is, how much Kant himself fulfils the execution of the second part of ethics, being this “applied ethics”: is it the *Anthropology* really an application of pure ethics concerning human nature in general? (See, for example, WOOD 1999: p.193-195; LOUDEN 2000: p.33, 71-74).

² Because we couldn't get the English version of this work, we'll call it here by its original title. So the quotations will be translated directly from German to English: KANT, I. *Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1968. p.205-256. From now on the “*Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen*” will be named only *Beobachtungen*, as the *Anthropology from a pragmatic point of view* is just named *Anthropology*.

³ Despite the inherent prejudice of Kant's words about each one character, he would see the differences between people, race and sexes as a sign of the natural distribution of characteristics and dispositions which each one would display in the project of human perfection. See LOUDEN 2000; p.93: “*Essentially, Kant holds that sexual and racial differences are preprogrammed into the species in order to help insure that the race as a whole achieves its collective destiny*”. In this paper we will deal only with the differences between sexes concerning their ends.

⁴ Louden offers some arguments which allow including them all, specially for understanding that Kant's project is universalizing and holds “the whole human race”, even if in very long term. We can summarize his position citing the titles of the sections in which he argues for that inclusion: “*the unity of the human family*” (both in biological and moral sense), “*the whole human race*” (with the project, then, still unfinished), “*the spreading over all peoples of the earth*” (gradually over all and each human being). (LOUDEN 2000: p.99-106).

⁵ Of course that, in this same section, Kant speaks also about the other elements which characterize women, with descriptions very similar in spirit to those made in the *Beobachtungen*, concerning what make them ready for criticism; moreover, he also offers notes and considerations about marriage, social behavior, jealousy e other fool things women would be capable of doing.

⁶ Louden examines some of these sentences comparing them from one work to another, sentences such as this: “*women, whatever her age, is declared to be civilly immature; the husband is her natural curator*” (LOUDEN 2000: p.85).

⁷ As Louden says: “*This participation in the promotion of an ideal is all that any human individual or group at any time can experience. But it does connect everyone directly to the final end of the species*” (LOUDEN 2000: p.58).

⁸ Nancy Sherman gives an account of the tension between attention and concentration on the one hand, and the daydreams on the other, to which Kant gives an unfavourable tone with reference to our rational self-control, concerning here, specifically, the daydreams of literature: “*In a simplistic way, we might say Kant objects to novel reading for the very reasons that someone like Proust celebrates it – namely, that it encourages us to jump back and forth from fiction into our own lives*” (SHERMAN p.173).

⁹ We use here the word “pragmatism” in a very simplified and summarized way, but not at all unaware of the differences of use within Kantian texts – and then, even, of the ethical implications they could result, but which we can't emphasize due to the shortness of this paper; we are indeed aware about the interesting followings, which can also indicate new future papers. Allen Wood dedicates a section in his sixth chapter of *Kant's Ethical Thought* (p.202-205) to the four senses of “pragmatic”: the one opposite to the physiological, which indicates what human being must do of himself as a free rational being; the one opposite to the scholastic, with the comparison between the knowledge of the world in its cosmopolitan range and a most passive and limited knowledge; the one which institutes itself as useful, in the sense that it can be used in human actions; and, finally, the one related to prudence, or the way we make use of other peoples on our own purposes. Louden has a similar division of four types of “pragmatic” (LOUDEN 2000: p.68-70). Our sense of “pragmatic” holds more or less all four in one, understanding them as interdependent; somehow like what we can read at the first definition in the introduction of Kant's own *Anthropology*: “[a] pragmatic knowledge of man aims at what man makes, can, or should make of himself as a freely acting being” (p.03).

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