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'Total Transformation': Why Kant Did Not Give up on Education

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Abstract

In this essay I argue that Kant remained committed to the necessity and fundamental importance of education throughout his career. Like Johann Bernhard Basedow (1724–90), Kant holds that a 'total transformation' of schools is necessary, and he holds this view not only in the 1770s but in his later years as well. In building my case I try to refute two recent opposing interpretations – Reinhard Brandt's position that Kant's early 'education enthusiasm' was later replaced by a politics enthusiasm, and Manfred Kuehn's view that the increasing importance of autonomy in Kant's mature ethics leads him to de-emphasize education.

Keywords: Kant, education, autonomy, destiny, dispositions

> If we had well-appointed schools everywhere where young people could be properly taught, within twenty years we would have a new world and would need no police or executioners. (J. B. Schupp, *Ambassadeur Zipphusius aus dem Parnaß wegen des Schulwesens abgefertigt* (1667; in Rutschky 1997: 59)

Over the years, many commentators have drawn attention to Kant's striking language[1] in describing the kind of fundamental change that he believes is needed in schools: 'They must be transformed (*Sie müssen umgeschaffen werden*) if something good is to come out of them because they are defective in their original organization. … Not a slow *reform*, but a swift *revolution* can bring this about' (AP, 2: 449).[2] Kant's demand that schools must be transformed echoes remarks made earlier by Johann Bernhard Basedow (1724–90) – an unsurprising fact, once we remind ourselves that Kant's demand occurs within a 1777 fund-raising appeal he wrote in support of Basedow's experimental school in

Dessau, the Philanthropin. Basedow had long been on record as claiming that 'a complete change in the whole state of education and instruction' (Lang 1891: 3) is necessary, and his own educational critique is itself one of the clearest illustrations of the transformative ambitions of Enlightenment thought. For as many have noted, 'the Age of Enlightenment was also an age of pedagogy'; indeed, the very term 'Enlightenment' implies a process of education.[3] For instance, in Basedow's 1768 work, *Vorstellung an Menschenfreunde,* one section is titled: '*Proof, that the Improvement of Schools and Instruction is important, and cannot happen through small Change or mere Decree* … Not through salves and plaster will wounds be healed, which because of all-consuming pus have a bottomless depth' (Basedow 1965: 12). And in a later section title we even see the noun form of the same German verb *umschaffen* (to transform) that Kant uses: '*Necessity and Method of the total Transformation* (*gänzlichen Umschaffung*]) *of Schools and Instruction*' (Basedow 1965: 28).

However, as Reinhard Brandt notes, this was all back in the mid-1770s, when Kant was suddenly

> seized by an education euphoria: if the educational forms and institutions are improved, not slowly and partially, but suddenly and radically, then the condition of the world will change. The Philanthropin of Johann Bernhard Basedow in Dessau, for whose support Kant worked, shall be the nucleus of a revolution of humanity. … [But] in 1784 one finds no more trace of it, and in 1798 the idea is officially shelved. (Brandt 2007: 184–5)

Brandt singles out 1798 because, in *The Conflict of the Faculties*, Kant, in response to the question 'in what order alone can progress toward the better be expected?' writes: 'to expect that this will eventually happen by means of education (*durch Bildung*) of youth in the home, then in schools on both the lowest and highest level … is a plan which is scarcely likely to achieve the desired success' (SF, 7: 92).[4] In Brandt's view, 'Kant radically turned away from his education enthusiasm' (Brandt 2007: 189) in his later years, replacing it with a new politics enthusiasm – specifically, the belief that human progress would be achieved not through transformed schools but rather through peace-loving republics aligned with each other in an international federation.

More recently, Manfred Kuehn, while agreeing with Brandt and others that education has much less significance in Kant's later works, has defended a very different hypothesis to explain the alleged shift. In

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Kuehn's view, the correct explanation is not that Kant came to see politics as a more effective method for transforming the human condition, but rather that he gradually moves from a naturalist to an anti-naturalist perspective on character and eventually embraces an ethics of autonomy:

> early on Kant is a naturalist about character. … [W]hereas there is a very close connection between all aspects of character and education for Kant until 1781–82, his mature view seems to exclude such a close connection. … [T]he importance of education in ethics decreased between 1772 and 1798, just as the importance of autonomy in ethics increased. … (Kuehn 2012: 59, 63)

In what follows I shall argue against both of these positions. Contra Brandt, Kant does not replace his early education enthusiasm with a later politics enthusiasm, his remark at *Conflict,* 7: 92 notwithstanding. Rather, he shifts his support from private education to public education – he argues for more public oversight of, and financial support for, education. Education itself is thus to be brought under the larger purview of government. Also, Kant's faith in republicanism as a key vehicle for achieving human progress is not something he subscribes to only in his later years. We also find clear evidence of this commitment back in the mid-1770s, when he was supposedly seized by an obsessive enthusiasm for education. And contra Kuehn, while it is true that we find an increased emphasis on autonomy in Kant's mature ethical theory, Kantian education is consistent with autonomy; indeed, at least in the case of human beings, autonomy *requires* education. For humans are not born as autonomous agents. Rather, they develop their moral reasoning capacities slowly over a number of years, and, particularly in the early stages of their development, they need an education *toward autonomy* (see Louden 2009: especially 68, 79). In Kant's view, a primary goal of educational institutions is to promote autonomy – 'to develop more effectively the valuable ability to reflect rationally and reasonably about personal, social, and political decisions' (Hill 2013: 30).

After presenting my criticisms of Brandt's and Kuehn's positions, I shall conclude with a brief alternative account of how Kant – in his early as well as his late writings – views the fundamental role of education in human life. In my view, Kant's philosophy of education is guided by his philosophy of biology, the main features of which are also clearly present in both his philosophy of history essays of the 1780s and *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1798). And this gives us yet another reason to doubt the 'Kant gave up on education' reading favoured by

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both Brandt and Kuehn. For if it is indeed true that Kant's later writings are marked by an official shelving of the education idea, then we would also need to set aside these writings. But few readers are willing to take such a drastic step, for Kant's philosophy of history and anthropology works constitute essential components of his corpus.

In short, Kant does not give up on education in his later years. Rather, throughout his career he holds to the conviction that 'the human being can only become human through education', and that it is by means of education that we can 'make it happen that the human being reaches his destiny (*Bestimmung*)' (Päd., 9: 443, 445).

1. Politics? (Contra Brandt)

As indicated earlier, Brandt holds that in his later years Kant turned away from education and towards politics as a more effective method for transforming the human condition. The key to Kant's conversion was allegedly the French Revolution – 'a *historical sign*' (he notes in *Conflict*) that '*will not be forgotten*, because it has revealed a tendency and faculty in human nature for improvement (*zum Besseren*) such that no politician, affecting wisdom, might have conjured out of the course of things hitherto existing' (SF, 7: 84, 88). Brandt contrasts two texts to support his interpretation. The first is from the Friedländer anthropology transcription (WS 1775–6), which is based on lectures that Kant finished shortly after he published his first 'Essay Regarding the Philanthropin' on 28 March 1776. In addressing the question of how to create a better civil society where human talents will develop appropriately, Kant asks,

> What then serves to be able to produce such [a state]? One is still uncertain whether one should begin from the bottom, or from the top. Should such a [political] state first be established, so that every single individual could be made perfect, or should every single individual first thus be made perfect through education [?] … It seems as if the education of every single human being should constitute the beginning. (V-Anth/Fried, 25: 691; cf. Päd., 9: 448)

In Friedländer Kant appears to advocate a bottom-up strategy. Start by transforming the schools, in order that everyone (including future teachers and politicians) receives a good education. The perfection of the state depends on the perfection of its individual members.

But later in *Conflict*, in a passage that seems to echo the earlier Friedländer citation, the order appears to be reversed: now a top-down

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strategy is advocated. As we saw earlier, in addressing the question, 'in what order alone can progress toward the better be expected?' Kant writes: 'to expect that this will happen by means of education … is a plan scarcely likely to achieve the desired success' (SF, 7: 92). Rather, 'The answer is: not by the movement of things *from bottom to top*, but *from top to bottom*' (SF, 7: 92) – i.e. progress must come from government, not from education.

However, contrary to what Brandt and others have claimed, there are several reasons for doubting that Kant has 'radically turned away from his education enthusiasm'. First, there is still ample room for education enthusiasm within the top-down strategy if education itself is brought under the purview of government – i.e. if one argues that the particular type of education needed is public rather than private. And second, a closer look at other relevant passages in *Conflict* strongly suggests that this in fact is what Kant is doing. For instance, in the sentence immediately following his alleged 'don't expect progress to be achieved via education' remark (see SF, 7: 92), Kant writes: 'For while the people feel that the costs for the education of their youth ought to be borne, not by them, but by the state, the state for its part has no money left (as *Büsching* complains)[5] … since it uses all the money for war' (SF, 7: 92–3).

While Kant is not unequivocally asserting here that governments ought to bear the costs of education, there are several factors that support this interpretation. First, it has been well documented that during the second half of the eighteenth century the German government was gradually becoming much more involved in education, and Kant himself was certainly aware of this fundamental trend. As Friedrich Paulsen notes:

> The principal innovation during this period was the taking over of the primary school from the Church by the State, the compulsory attendance of all children being recognized and enforced as a civic duty. Up to the sixteenth century primary school was little more than an annex of the Church. At the end of the eighteenth century it was, in all German countries, no longer an ecclesiastical but a political institution. (Paulsen 1908: 136; cf. Bowen 1981: 161–9)

Second, Kant's earlier frustration as a fund-raiser for Basedow's school also strongly suggests that he had gradually become convinced of the need for greater government involvement in education. Insufficient financial support was an ongoing issue at the Philanthropin, and Kant's

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repeated efforts at fund-raising seldom achieved their desired effect. In summer 1778, he finally found a way out of his uncomfortable fund-raising role by convincing clergyman William Crichton to take his place. In his letter to Crichton of 28 July 1778, Kant appeals to the preacher's vanity by stating that while 'I am heartily ready and willing' to continue as fund-raiser, 'it seems to me that the influence would be much greater if Your Reverence would be willing to espouse this cause and lend your name and pen to its furtherance' (Br. 10: 218; see also Louden 2012a: 48–9).

But even more important than the issue of government financing for education is that of public oversight. And Kant addresses this key point in the next sentence of *Conflict*: 'the whole mechanism of this education has no coherence if it is not designed in agreement with a well-considered plan of the highest state power, put into play according to the purpose of this plan, and steadily maintained therein' (SF, 7: 93). Here too, while Kant is not unequivocally asserting that education should be 'designed in agreement with a well-considered plan of the highest state power', his earlier experience with Basedow's Philanthropin (as well as the previously noted general trend in Germany toward greater government involvement in education in the late eighteenth century) adds interpretative weight to the claim that this is now his considered view. For in addition to its ongoing financial problems, the school also floundered due to unsteady leadership. Between the school's founding in 1774 and 1778, the directorship position changed hands four times (see Louden 2012a: 42). Although Kant always maintained that 'the set-up of the schools should depend entirely on the judgment of the most enlightened experts' (Päd., 9: 449), between the mid-1770s and 1790s his position seems to have slowly evolved from the belief that education should depend 'mainly on private efforts' (Päd., 9: 448) to the conviction that it should depend mainly on public efforts.[6]

As other commentators have noted, one of the main ways in which Kant's educational theory differs from Rousseau's is that 'Kant endorses public education in schools over private and domestic education'[7] (home schooling). In *Conflict* Kant is advocating not just 'state financial support of schools' (Johnston 2013: 209) (which Basedow's Philanthropin initially received through the patronage of Prince Friedrich Franz Leopold II of Anhalt-Dessau) but also some degree of public oversight and control of schools. Although he does not offer any specifics here (or, alas, elsewhere), his reference to a well-considered plan of the highest state power clearly implies much more than public financial support.

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Although Kant does not explicitly and unequivocally advocate free public education in any of his own published writings, there are several Kant-inspired texts on this theme that deserve mention. In 1801, Johann Adam Bergk, an energetic popularizer of Kant's philosophy who published two commentaries on the *Metaphysics of Morals* in addition to editing (under the pseudonym Friedrich Christian Starke) several of his lectures on anthropology and geography, published an essay titled 'Ueber die Einschränkung der Freiheit zu Studieren durch den Staat', in which he argues in defence of free higher education for all qualified applicants. It is the duty of the state to protect 'the freedom of all according to the same laws' (Bergk 1801: 7), and to exclude students from universities because of their social backgrounds or lack of financial resources is inconsistent with this fundamental obligation. 'All right (*Recht*) rests on equality of action. What one citizen as such is allowed to do, all must be allowed to do' (Bergk 1801: 7). 'Money and class (*Geld und Stand*) are the most inappropriate and ignoble criteria that the state can choose for conferring permission to study' (Bergk 1801: 10). As Bergk sees it, the argument for free university education is derivable from Kant's 'universal principle of right' (which in turn is quite similar to the first formula of the Categorical Imperative): 'Any action is *right* (*recht*) if it can coexist with everyone's freedom in accordance with a universal law' (MS, 6: 230).

Similarly, Fichte, in his *Reden an die deutsche Nation* (first presented as public lectures in Berlin in 1807–8), argues that the state has an obligation to make 'education universal throughout the length and breadth of its domain for every one of its future citizens without exception (*für jeden seiner nachgebornen Bürger ohne alle Ausnahme*)' (Fichte n.d.: 185). Like Bergk, Fichte holds that any attempt to make access to education dependent on 'the resources of well-disposed private persons' (Fichte n. d.: 185) is inconsistent with a fundamental principle of justice. We cannot universally will a maxim of exclusive private education (i.e. in contexts where there are no public alternatives), for not everyone has the financial means to pay the costs for private education. For this simple but powerful reason, private education is thus at odds with Kantian moral and political philosophy.[8]

But there are still further reasons for doubting Brandt's claim that Kant officially shelves his education euphoria by 1798, once we look beyond the *Conflict of the Faculties*. First, there are other late Kantian texts that explicitly advocate the necessity and fundamental importance of education. The most obvious one is *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, published in 1798 – the same year that *Conflict* was published.[9]

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Toward the end of this text, Kant states: 'The sum total of pragmatic anthropology, in respect to the destiny (*Bestimmung*) of the human being … is the following. The human being is destined by his reason to live in a society with human beings and in it to *cultivate* himself, to *civilize* himself, and to *moralize* himself by means of the arts and sciences' (Anth., 7: 324). But to moralize oneself by means of the arts and sciences necessarily implies education, as Kant himself explicitly notes a few lines later when he writes: 'the human being must therefore be *educated* to the good (*muß also zum Guten erzogen*)' (Anth., 7: 325).

Second, when we turn to Kantian texts from the mid-1770s – when Kant was supposedly in the grip of education euphoria and did not consider alternative avenues of human improvement – we also see him stressing the importance of *political* reform. It was not the 1789 French Revolution – 'historical sign' though it was – that first stimulated Kant's thinking in this area. For instance, towards the end of the *Kaehler* lecture on moral philosophy (1774–5), Kant states: 'Saint-Pierre's proposal for a general senate of nations would, if carried out, be the moment at which the human race would take a great step toward perfection' (Kant 2004: 366; cf. V-Mo/Collins, 27: 470). Granted, Saint-Pierre's peace proposal – unlike Kant's in *Zum ewigen Frieden* – does not include the proviso that all member states in the senate of nations be republics.[10] But other Kantian texts from this same time period show that Kant was already leaning in this direction. For instance, in the Pillau anthropology lecture (WS 1777–8) he asks:

> On what does the attainment of the final destiny of human nature rest? The general foundation is the civil constitution; the uniting of human beings into a whole, which serves to achieve the cultivation (*Ausbildung*) of all talents, and also for one person's giving the other the freedom for that cultivation – through this it happens that the predisposition to talents is developed; through this the human being is elevated out of his animality. (V-Anth/Pillau, 25: 843; cf. V-Anth/Mensch, 25: 1199, V-Anth/Mron, 25: 1427)[11]

When Kant made the above remarks to students in his anthropology course, he was still working in an unofficial capacity as a fund-raiser for Basedow's Philanthropin, and still very committed to the belief that 'an entirely new order of human affairs' (AP, 2: 447) would commence in this school – the only school with a curriculum that 'is wisely derived from nature itself and not slavishly copied from old habit and inexperienced

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ages' (AP, 2: 449). And given the multiple texts and arguments presented in this section, we should conclude neither that Kant pinned all his hopes for human progress on education in the mid-1770s, nor that he replaced his early education euphoria with a politics euphoria by the late-1790s.[12] The story is much more complicated than this.

2. Autonomy? (Contra Kuehn)

Again, like Brandt and others, Manfred Kuehn also claims that education plays a much smaller role in Kant's mature writings. But unlike Brandt, Kuehn attributes this alleged shift not to Kant's belief that politics is a more effective agent for human progress, but rather to the increasing importance of autonomy in Kant's mature moral theory. As Owen Ware writes, in summarizing Kuehn's position:

> Kuehn argues that Kant's anti-naturalist turn sheds light on his changing attitude toward education. … If coming to acquire character requires an act of spontaneity, in which one freely gives rational principles to oneself, then educative practices can only have an indirect role in moral life. Kuehn suggests that the increasing importance of autonomy in Kant's ethics between 1772 and 1797 mirrors the decreasing importance of education … (Ware 2012: 3)

One complication that should be noted in comparing Brandt's hypothesis to Kuehn's is that while Brandt is concerned with education in general, Kuehn's primary concern is *moral* education. As Kuehn notes earlier in his essay: 'it is the education in the service of morality that is most important for Kant. … Accordingly, I will concentrate on the necessity of human beings to "be *educated* toward the good" (Anth. 7: 325)'.[13] In what follows, I will try to show that even when we adopt Kuehn's narrower focus on moral education, it is not the case that the late Kant views education as less important than the early Kant.

Working primarily with Kant's Lectures on Anthropology,[14] Kuehn cites from several different lectures delivered after Friedländer (1775–6) but before *Conflict* (1798) in an attempt to show that Kant's passion for education is gradually cooling. For instance, toward the end of Pillau (1777–8) Kant states: 'If human society (*menschliche Gesellschaft*) becomes more perfect, then humanity will come along with it' (V-Anth/Pillau, 25: 843). Here Kuehn finds Kant's answer to the question of whether to seek human improvement through the bottom-up strategy of education or the top-down one of politics already 'less definite' (Kuehn

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2012: 65) than it was in Friedländer. But Kant's allegedly less definite answer is in large part due to the ambiguity of 'human society'. Does this term refer only to government, or to educational institutions as well? If educational institutions are included as part of human society, then the sentence by no means suggests that Kant's faith in education is waning. Also, as argued earlier, if education is brought under the purview of government, then the top-down strategy for reform includes education. In *Menschenkunde* (1781–2) Kuehn finds Kant's answer 'more definite again' (Kuehn 2012: 65), for now Kant states that 'cultivated (*gebildete*) subjects' are necessary in order for 'a perfect civil constitution' to exist (V-Anth/Mensch, 25: 1201). However, this passage does not show that Kant's passion for education is waning – quite the contrary. First of all, Kant's phrase '*gebildete* subjects' could also be rendered as 'educated subjects' (from *Bildung*), which clearly suggests the bottom-up strategy of beginning with the transformation of individuals. But second, Kant also notes on the next page that

> whether a more perfect civil constitution will not some day with time come into being cannot be hoped for until human beings and their education (*ihre Erziehung*) have improved; however, this improvement does not appear to be able to happen until governments themselves become better. Which one will happen first cannot be guessed; perhaps both will meet each other, a point in time, however, that is still very far away. (V-Anth/Mensch, 25: 1202)

The phrase 'until human beings and their education have improved' clearly indicates that Kant continues to believe in the necessity of fundamental educational change in 1781–2. And the later phrase 'this improvement does not appear to be able to happen until governments themselves become better' strongly suggests, as I argued in the previous section, that Kant believes government must become more involved in education if meaningful change is to happen in this area. Finally, Kuehn also draws attention to the following passage from Mrongovius (1784–5): 'Now what are the means of improving the civil society and constitution? 1. Education (*Erziehung*) 2. Legislation 3. Religion. However, all three must be public and in conformity with nature' (V-Anth/Mron, 25: 1427; Kuehn 2012: 65–6). But here as well, Kant is not de-emphasizing education's role. Rather, he is asserting that education is a necessary but not sufficient means for achieving 'the final destiny of humanity' (V-Anth/Mron, 25: 1429). In sum, none of the anthropology texts Kuehn cites support his claim that education is of decreasing importance to Kant in his later years.

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The most obvious textual point that speaks against Kuehn's position is the fact that Kant continues to speak of the necessity and importance of moral education in a variety of texts published during the same time period in which he holds what Kuehn calls his 'mature' or 'anti-naturalist' view about character. Perhaps the most important example occurs towards the end of his last major work in moral philosophy, the *Metaphysics of Morals* (1797). At the beginning of a section titled 'Teaching Ethics (*Die ethische Didaktik*)', Kant argues that 'virtue can and must be *taught* (*gelehrt*)' (MS, 6: 477),[15] and later in this same section he offers a specific programme of moral education which he calls a 'moral catechism' – 'the first and most essential instrument for *teaching* the doctrine of virtue' (MS, 6: 478). Similarly, his defence of the necessity for 'a purely moral catechism' (KpV, 5: 154 – i.e. a non-religious catechism) in the second *Critique* (1788) is a second example of a text published during the critical period which shows that he still takes moral education very seriously. A third example is his discussion of aesthetic formation as a propaedeutic to moral education in the third *Critique* (1790). The cultivation of taste, Kant here argues, 'makes possible the transition from sensible charm to habitual moral interest without too violent a leap by representing the imagination even in its freedom as purposively determinable for the understanding and teaching us to find a free satisfaction in the objects of the senses even without any sensible charm' (KU, 5: 354). Last but not least, there is Kant's terse assertion in the 1798 *Anthropology* – a text which Kuehn himself ironically cites in support of his own position (see n. 13) – that the human being 'must be *educated* to the good' (Anth., 7: 325). There thus exist multiple published texts from Kant's mature period which clearly indicate that he remains committed to the belief that moral education is necessary and fundamentally important for human beings. This is a belief that he continues to hold 'throughout his career' (Moran 2009: 480, see also Moran 2012: 127–67) and not merely for a brief period in the mid-1770s.

Granted, autonomy involves giving the law to oneself (see GMS, 4: 440), and there is a sense in which education – as Kant himself notes at one point in his critique of earlier moral theories – seems to be 'external' (KpV, 5: 40) in a way that, at least on the surface, does not square with autonomy. Education is 'external' in the obvious sense that the teacher and the school are external to, or outside of, the student, whereas the act of giving the law *to oneself* is internal. At this surface level, the tension that Kuehn and others[16] have pointed to between autonomy and education is real. And if 'education' refers to a kind of brainwashing, the goal of which is to make sure agents no longer will for themselves, then

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the tension between autonomy and education is irremediable. But Kantian education is not brainwashing. Rather, it aims to help the pupil 'feel the progress of his power of judgment' (KpV, 5: 154) – i.e. to aid students in the actualization of their own natural capacity to act according to reason and to appreciate the force of reason in one's life by learning to take 'an *interest* in morality' (MS, 6: 484).

Kuehn's claim that Kant's anti-naturalism about character in his mature works leads him to view education as being less important than he did in his earlier writings is in fact a milder, developmental version of a fundamental objection raised by several earlier critics of Kant's philosophy of education. If, as Kant sometimes seems to claim, acquiring moral character is 'the result of an instantaneous rebirth or a decision to live only in accordance with self-imposed rational principles' (Kuehn 2012: 59) – a '*revolution* in the disposition (*Gesinnung*) of the human being' rather than its 'gradual *reform*' (RGV, 6: 47) – where is there any room for moral education within his theory of moral character? As Johann Friedrich Herbart remarks, in his 1804 review of Kant's *Lectures on Pedagogy*:

> How did Kant imagine moral education? As an effect of transcendental freedom? Impossible, for the concept of the latter comes to an end, as soon as one thinks it is not entirely free from every causal nexus. Transcendental freedom does what it does by itself; one cannot hinder it through anything, one cannot help it through anything. It discovers maxims; what the teacher says to it is immaterial. … [O]ne cannot influence transcendental freedom. … In this way Kant and his followers describe transcendental freedom to us; – and in this way they destroy all pedagogy. (Herbart 1804: 261)

Lewis White Beck issues a version of the same criticism over a century and a half later when he claims that Kant's 'moral philosophy has, and can have, no place for moral education' (Beck 1978: 201). The reason why moral education is 'impossible' within a Kantian framework, Beck explains in another text, is that 'morality is a product of a sudden inward revolution in the manner of willing, and each act must be regarded as if it were an entirely fresh beginning'.[17] What Kuehn adds to this well-known story is a developmental account of Kant's ethical theory, the move from a pre-critical, naturalist ethics to a critical, anti-naturalist position. Kuehn's supplement is correct, but it is also somewhat beside the point. For Herbart, Beck and others who endorse the 'no room for moral education' charge against Kant are referring to his *mature* ethical theory – not his pre-critical ethics.

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3. The Role of Education in Kant's Philosophy: A Primer

Thus far I have defended three interrelated claims: (1) Kant does not give up on education in his later years, his remark at *Conflict*, 7: 92 notwithstanding. Throughout his career, Kant holds that education is fundamentally important in human life. However, in his later years he does argue for more public oversight of, and financial support for, education. (2) Kant's faith in republicanism as a key vehicle for achieving human progress is not something that he subscribes to only in his later years. We also find clear evidence of this commitment back in the mid-1770s, when he was supposedly seized by an obsessive enthusiasm for education. (3) Although Kant's mature ethical theory does differ from his pre-critical ethics in several fundamental respects – one of which is the growing importance of autonomy in the later period – autonomy and Kantian education, correctly understood, are consistent with one another.

In this final section I wish to indicate briefly how Kant – in his early as well as his late writings – conceives the roles of both non-moral and moral education in human life, and why he thinks they are important. At bottom, Kant's philosophy of education is guided by his philosophy of biology.[18] Two key aspects of the latter are teleology (all living organisms, humans included, are to be understood as having inherent purposes – see, for example, KU, 5: 376, 379) and what I will call quasi-innatism or innatism à la Leibniz – by which I mean the view that while certain fundamental human capacities are inherent and genetically inherited, 'some labor' is required in order to polish these capacities 'into clarity' (Leibniz 1989: 294). The capacities themselves are innate, but education is needed in order for them to develop properly.

The teleological dimension of Kant's educational theory is on display in his frequent use of the German term *Bestimmung*, translated variously as 'destiny', 'vocation' and 'determination'. The human species has a *Bestimmung*,[19] and education is a necessary means towards the achievement of this fundamental goal. As he remarks in the opening pages of the *Lectures on Pedagogy*: 'it is our business … to make it happen that the human being reaches his *Bestimmung*' (Päd., 9: 445). What is the human being's *Bestimmung*? In a word, 'humanity (*Menschheit*)' (Päd., 9: 442), by which Kant means the proper development of all fundamental human capacities. As he remarks in his 1798 *Anthropology*: 'one can assume as a principle that nature wants every creature to reach its *Bestimmung* through the appropriate development of all predispositions (*alle Anlagen*) of its nature' (Anth., 7: 329).

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Autonomy, as noted earlier, is itself one of these inherent human capacities, but humans require education in order to effectively exercise their autonomy. And this is why Kant claims – in what is probably the most famous sentence in his *Lectures on Pedagogy* – that 'the human being can only become human through education (*durch Erziehung*)' (Päd., 9: 443; cf. AP, 2: 449). Humans can only achieve their *Bestimmung* with the help of education.

The quasi-innatism in Kant's philosophy of education is evident in his frequent use of the two German terms (which, at least in his education writings, he uses interchangeably)[20] *Keime* (seeds) and *Anlagen* (predispositions). Humans, like other biological organisms, have certain distinct *Keime* and *Anlagen*. Once we discover what they are, we will know the inherent potential of *Homo sapiens* as well as what aspects of human life need to be cultivated in order to realize this potential. As Kant remarks on the first page of the *Pedagogy*: 'the human species is supposed to bring out (*soll … herausbringen*), little by little, humanity's entire *Naturanlage* by means of its own effort' (9: 441). And again, a few pages later: 'Many *Keime* lie within humanity, and now it is our business to develop the *Naturanlagen* proportionately and to unfold humanity from its *Keimen*, and to make it happen that the human being reaches his *Bestimmung*' (9: 445).

Keime and *Anlagen* thus both refer to inheritable tendencies within the species, and autonomy – 'a *capacity and disposition* to make decisions with *due reflection and independence* of mind' (Hill 2013: 24) – is itself one of humanity's inheritable tendencies. But in order to fully actualize this capacity, certain favourable environmental factors are necessary, one of which is education. However, Kant and Basedow both criticize the educational institutions of their day for failing to appropriately develop humans' *Keime* and *Anlagen*. As a result, schools also do not adequately help humans achieve their *Bestimmung*. As Kant remarks in the *Pedagogy*: 'the idea of an education which develops all *Naturanlagen* in the human being is certainly genuine. [But] with the present education the human being does not completely reach the end of his existence (*Zweck seines Daseins*)' (Päd., 9: 445). A gradual reform of existing educational institutions is inappropriate, 'because they are defective (*fehlerhaft*) in their original organization' and 'everything in them works against nature (*Natur entgegen*)' (AP, 2: 449). Humans' natural capacities (one of the most valuable of which is autonomy) are thus not appropriately developed in present-day schools. Instead, a 'plan of education more suited to the human being's purpose (*einer zweckmäßigern Erziehung*)' (Päd., 9: 445) is called for, and for this, a total transformation of schools is necessary.

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For those readers who are familiar with either Kant's philosophy of history or his anthropology, the elementary points I have drawn attention to in his educational theory concerning humanity's *Bestimmung* via the appropriate development of its *Keime* and *Anlagen* will sound familiar. These same core themes are repeatedly stressed in these other writings as well, for all three (i.e. anthropology, history, education) are part of what I have elsewhere called 'interconnected … fields of impurity' (Louden 2000: 29) within Kant's philosophy. They all deal with the empirical study of human nature. And this fact serves to further undergird my basic claim concerning the continuing importance of education throughout Kant's career. If the claims of Brandt, Kuehn & Co. regarding Kant's alleged sharply diminished enthusiasm for education in his mature writings were true, then we would have to also set aside the philosophy of history essays of the 1780s as well as the 1798 *Anthropology*. But most readers (including Brandt and Kuehn) are not willing to do this, for these writings constitute a substantial portion of Kant's corpus.

But what about *moral* education? As noted earlier, Kant repeatedly asserts in late texts that moral education is necessary for human beings: 'virtue can and must be *taught*' (MS, 6: 477 [1797]), and the human being 'must … be *educated* to the good' (Anth., 7: 325 [1798]). At the same time, there are other late texts which, according to Beck and (to a lesser degree) Kuehn, imply that Kantian moral education is impossible. The most frequently cited example of the latter is in *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* (1793), where Kant asserts that one cannot expect to become morally good 'through gradual *reform*' but only via 'a *revolution* in the *Gesinnung*' – one needs a '*change of heart*' rather than 'a change of *mores* (*Sitten*)' (RGV, 6: 47).[21]

In closing, I wish to briefly defend two points on this matter. First, Kant by no means asserts or implies in the 'change of heart' passage that moral education is impossible; rather, he is specifying what form it must take and what it must focus on. As he states on the next page: 'From this it follows that a human being's moral education (*moralische Bildung*) must begin, not with an improvement of *Sitten*, but with the transformation of his way of thinking (*Umwandlung der Denkungsart*)[22] and the establishment of a character' (RGV, 6: 48). Again, on Kant's view, a correct moral education will focus not on habituation but rather on the development of autonomy (see Herman 1998: 225–72). Similarly, in a related passage in a section of the *Anthropology* titled 'On Character as the *Denkungsart*', where Kant compares the acquisition of character to 'a kind of rebirth', 'making a vow to oneself', and 'the beginning of

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a new epoch', he states: 'Education, examples, and teaching [*Erziehung, Beispiele und Belehrung*] generally cannot bring about this firmness and persistence in principles *gradually*, but only, as it were, by an explosion which happens one time as a result of weariness at the unstable condition of instinct' (Anth., 7: 294). Here too, he is not asserting that moral education plays no role in the formation of character; rather, he is specifying how it should proceed. Educative strategies that seek to establish character gradually are generally unsuccessful. Rather, they must try to effect an 'explosion', a radical conversion experience. For instance (although his language here is not as dramatic), in one discussion of how 'to form a character in children' in the *Pedagogy*, Kant recommends that children give themselves rules of conduct which they must then promise to follow (Päd., 9: 481; cf. V-Anth/Fried, 25: 649, V-Anth/Mron, 25: 1385). In this manner, children learn to act in accordance with principles that come from their own reason.

Contra Aristotle, moral virtue is not 'the result of habit', and we do not become just simply 'by doing just things' (Aristotle 1890: 23, 24/II.1 1103a17, 1103b1). Rather, acquiring moral virtue is a process of 'developing the student's understanding not only of what principles are consistent with virtue, but also why those principles are consistent with virtue' (Surprenant 2012: 8). This is the central focus of Kant's positive remarks about moral education in both the *Metaphysics of Morals* and the second *Critique*. The teacher tries to show the student that the principles of morality lie in the student's own reason: 'your own reason (*deine eigene Vernunft*) teaches you what you have to do and directly commands you to do it' (MS, 6: 481). Through the discussion of concrete moral cases drawn in part from 'the biographies of ancient and modern times', the student (as noted earlier) learns to 'feel the progress of his power of judgment' (KpV, 5: 154) and to thereby acquire 'an *interest* in morality' (MS, 6: 484). Finally, because the depths of each human being's heart 'are to him inscrutable' (RGV, 6: 51), it follows that no human being can ever know for sure whether he or she has successfully undergone the revolution in the *Denkungsart* that Kant holds is necessary (see RGV, 6: 47). The best we can do is to try to cultivate the moral strength needed to master those inclinations that oppose the law ('he is a good human being only in incessant laboring and becoming' – RGV, 6: 48), and for this too moral education is necessary.

Second, and more fundamentally, I wish also to challenge the dualism assumed by some of Kant's critics between education in general and moral education specifically. On Kant's view, *all* education – non-moral

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as well as moral – should be education towards autonomy. 'Have courage to make use of your *own* understanding! is … the motto of enlightenment' (WA, 8: 35), and, as noted earlier, enlightenment itself implies a process of education. As Kant remarks elsewhere, 'it is not *thoughts* but *thinking* which the understanding ought to learn … so that in the future it will be capable of *walking* on its own, and doing so without stumbling' (NEV, 2: 306). Learning to think for oneself (rather than merely memorizing facts or learning the thoughts of others) is intellectual autonomy as well as moral autonomy. Both aspects of autonomy are fundamentally important, and education, properly conceived, plays a necessary role in the development of each. Additionally, the proper cultivation of thinking implies not simply developing the capacity to grasp facts but also learning to love knowledge for its own sake rather than for its utility. For '*truth* (the essential and first condition of learning) is the main thing, whereas … *utility* … is merely of secondary importance' (SF, 7: 28; cf. NEV, 2: 308). And once we remind ourselves how few human beings – not only in Basedow and Kant's day but also in our own – have actually managed to cultivate thinking in this more fundamental sense, perhaps it is time to take a second look at their criticism of educational institutions: 'they must be transformed if something good is to come out of them'.[23]

Notes

1 See e.g. Raumer (1843: 4. 279), Quick (1896: 275), Brandt (2007:185), Louden (2012a: 46) and Johnston (2013: 209).

2 Quotations from Kant's works are cited in the body of the text by volume and page number in *Kants gesammelte Schriften* (Kant 1900–). When available, I use – with occasional modifications – the English translations in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant* (Kant 1992–). Otherwise, translations are my own. Abbreviations used: Anth. = *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht,* AP = Aufsätze, das Philanthropin betreffend, Br. = *Briefe*, GMS = *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, IaG = Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht, KpV = *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, KU = *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, RGV = *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft*, MS = *Die Metaphysik der Sitten*, NEV = Nachricht von der Einrichtung seiner Vorlesungen in dem Winterhalbenjahre von 1765–6, Päd. = Über Pädagogik, SF = Der Streit der Fakultäten, V-Anth/Fried = Vorlesungen Wintersemester 1775–6 Friedländer, ZeF = Zum Ewigen Frieden, V-Anth/Pillau = Vorlesungen Wintersemester 1777–8 Pillau, V-Anth/Mensch = Vorlesungen Wintersemester 1781–2 Menschenkunde Petersburg, V-Anth/Mron = Vorlesungen Wintersemester 1784–5 Mrongovius, V-Mo/Collins = *Moralphilosophie* Collins, VvRM = *Von den verschiedenen Racen der Menschen*, WA = Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?

3 Parry (2000: 25). See also Parry (2006: 1. 608), and Munzel (2012: 5–81).

4 Werner Stark also refers to this same passage from SF to support his claim that Kant's early 'education optimism' stands 'in clear contrast to the political perspective in the late work *The Conflict of the Faculties* of 1798' (Kant 2004: 366, n. 242).

5 Büsching (1776: 131) writes: 'Because the governments of European states have no money left over for schools, it is therefore extremely gratifying on all sides when wealthy private

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persons of the same states help out, and thereby become benefactors of the human race. Thank God that from time to time and also from here and there there still are such charitable people.' Sixteen years earlier, at the end of his second 'Essay Regarding the Philanthropin', Kant also refers to this same remark of Büsching's: 'For since, as Herr O. C. R. Büsching says (*Weekly Reports* 1776, No. 16), the governments of our time seem to have no money for the improvement of the schools, it will in the end depend on private persons of means to promote by generous contribution such an important, universal concern, if such improvements are not to remain completely undone' (AP, 2: 451–2; cf. Karl Vorländer's note to SF at 7: 346). In his 1777 essay, Kant is still appealing to private benefactors to support progressive private school experiments such as Basedow's Philanthropin. But as I argue above, by the time *Conflict* is published, he is convinced that the costs of education 'ought to be borne … by the state'.

6 There is one final passage in *Conflict* that deserves comment. In the sentence immediately following his appeal for public oversight of schools, Kant notes that, given 'the infirmity of human nature … the hope for its progress is to be expected only on the condition of a wisdom from above (*nur in einer Weisheit von oben*) (which bears the name of Providence if it is invisible to us)' (SF, 7: 93). Here he is making a starkly religious appeal, one that appears to challenge both Brandt's 'politics' reading as well as my own '(public) education' interpretation. Kant's remark may seem puzzling, but I suggest that he is hedging his bets. Human progress is precarious, and its success requires both effective secular strategies as well as divine help. For in the remainder of the sentence he adds that what 'can be expected and exacted from *human beings* in this area' is that they will eventually 'renounce war[s] of aggression (*Angriffskrieg*) altogether' (SF, 7: 93). If and when governments spend less tax money on military budgets, they will have more public funds to support education.

7 Reisert (2012: 22). One Kantian text that supports Reisert's interpretation is the following: 'in general, it appears that public education is more advantageous than domestic' (Päd., 9: 453).

8 For related discussion of Bergk and Fichte, see Louden 2012b: 283–7, 2007: 43–50.

9 Here one might also be tempted to turn to the *Lectures on Pedagogy*, which of course contain an abundance of statements concerning the transformative potential of education. While this text was not published until 1803, it was probably written between 1776 and 1787, when Kant taught his pedagogy course (WS 1776–7, SS 1780, WS 1783–4, WS 1786–7). Kant's lecture notes for this course were later edited by Rink for publication, and it is not clear that Kant did any work on them after 1787. Ultimately, this manuscript cannot be assigned a precise composition date. However, for an additional complication, see Louden (2012a: 49–50).

10 'FIRST DEFINITIVE ARTICLE FOR PERPETUAL PEACE. The civil constitution of every state shall be republican' (ZeF, 8: 349, cf. MS, 6: 354).

11 For related discussion, see Louden (2014).

12 Another text from the mid-1770s that might appear to support the interpretation by Stark (see n. 4, above) and Brandt is the following: 'The final destiny of the human race is the greatest moral perfection … How, then, are we to seek this perfection, and from where is it to be hoped for? From nowhere else but education (*Nirgends als durch die Erziehung*)' (Kant 2004: 364, 366; cf. 366, n. 242, V-Mo/Collins, 27: 470–1). But on the same page of this lecture Kant states that the establishment of a senate of nations would 'be the moment at which the human race would take a great step towards perfection' (Kant 2004: 366). The latter statement contradicts the 'nowhere else but education' claim.

13 Kuehn (2012: 57). While I agree with Kuehn that Kant is particularly concerned with moral education, I find it odd – given his position that Kant's mature view excludes a

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close connection between character and education – that he cites from Kant's 1798 *Anthropology* to support this position.

14 Kuehn holds 'that it is the anthropology (and its connection with ethics) that provides "the unifying thought of Kant's educational theory"' (Kuehn 2012: 57; cf. Beck 1978: 199–200). Accordingly, he also views the anthropology lectures as less important for Kant's mature ethics than for his earlier naturalist ethics: 'We may therefore say that the moral relevance of the lectures on anthropology decreased as Kant's thought on moral issues developed. It may appear that after 1785 anthropology lost all importance for morals proper' (Kuehn 2006: p. xx).

15 Kuehn cites this same passage towards the end of his essay (Kuehn 2012: 64). But he still maintains that education's importance is strongly diminished in Kant's mature works – it now plays 'a merely preparatory role' (Kuehn 2012: 64).

16 See e.g. my discussion of Herbart and Beck below.

17 Beck (1960: 235). In a footnote, Beck refers readers to RGV, 6: 47–8, in support of his interpretation (Beck 1960: 235, n. 77). But as I will argue in the final section of this essay, Kant is not asserting here that moral education is impossible. Rather, he is specifying what form it must take and what it must focus on.

18 In what follows I am applying some themes developed in Louden (2014: 213–22).

19 Kant holds that 'in the animal species each individual reaches its *Bestimmung*, however in the human race a single individual can never do this, rather only the whole human species can reach its *Bestimmung*' (V-Anth/Mensch, 25: 1196; cf. IaG, 8: 18, Anth., 7: 324, Päd., 9: 445).

20 In some of his more technical biological writings, Kant does distinguish between these two terms. See e.g. VvRM, 2: 434.

21 It is not clear that this is only part of Kant's 'mature view'. For example, in *Reflexion* 1113 we read: 'Character is not formed through instruction (*Unterweisung*)' (15: 496). Adickes's range of dates for this note is: '1769? 1770–71? 1773–75? 1776–78??'

22 For an extensive analysis of Kant's notion of *Denkungsart*, see Munzel (1999).

23 Earlier versions of this article were presented as invited lectures for a panel on 'Kant on Education' sponsored by the North American Kant Society at the American Philosophical Association Eastern Division Meeting held in Philadelphia December 2014, for a Philosophy Department Colloquium at Lehman College, CUNY, in March 2015, and as a keynote address at the Leuven Kant Conference in June 2016. I want to thank Pablo Muchnik, Michael Buckley and Karin de Boer for their invitations to present my work, as well as audience members for their helpful questions and comments after my presentations. Thanks also to Julian Wuerth for his encouraging remarks on an earlier draft. Finally, I would like to thank the two anonymous referees selected by *Kantian Review* for their very helpful suggestions for improving the article.

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