Kant on Anthropology and Alienology: The Opacity of Human Motivation and its Anthropological Implications[1]

ALIX COHEN
Newnham College, Cambridge

According to Kant, the opacity of human motivation takes two distinct forms – a psychological form: man 'can never, even by the most strenuous self-examination, get entirely behind [his] covert incentives'[2] – and a social form: 'everyone in our race finds it advisable to be on his guard, and not to reveal himself completely'.[3] In other words, first, men's 'interior' (i.e. their intentions, motives, thoughts, etc.) cannot be entirely revealed to themselves and, second, they tend not to reveal their 'interior' to others. A number of Kant scholars have acknowledged the importance of the first form of opacity in Kant's thought and have attempted to draw out from it implications for moral deliberation and ethics in general.[4] The aim of this paper is to examine the second, social form of opacity and draw out its anthropological implications, an issue that has been overlooked in the literature. To do so, I focus on Kant's contrast between men and beings that I would like to call 'sincere aliens'. These sincere aliens are beings who have the opposite features of man's opacity, namely beings who cannot but reveal their 'interior' both to others and to themselves.

> It could well be that on another planet there might be rational beings who could not think in any other way but aloud. These beings would not be able to have thoughts without voicing them at the same time, whether they be awake or asleep, whether in the company of others or alone (*Anthropology*, 250 [7: 332]).[5]

Through this thought experiment, Kant portrays beings for whom there is no mediation and no distinction between their interior and

their exterior. What I want to suggest is that contrasting men and sincere aliens discloses central features of Kant's thoughts about man's social opacity, its role and its implications for our understanding of human nature.

At first sight, it seems that the opacity of human motivation can only have disadvantageous and even damaging implications for the human species. For in its social form, it amounts to the capacity to conceal one's thoughts, which turns into the capacity to deceive and in this sense it can be understood as a condition of the possibility of evil. And in its psychological form, it entails that agents as well as spectators can never know with certainty the motives, intentions and thoughts behind one's actions. The workings of the human mind are to remain hidden behind a veil of interpretative inferences.

However I will argue that, on the contrary, the contrast between men and sincere aliens reveals that the social form of the opacity of human motivation is not only useful but in fact necessary for the survival of the human species. In the first section, I will show that, for Kant, the capacity to conceal one's thoughts is of crucial benefit to the survival of humankind. Far from being the condition of the possibility of evil, it is in fact the condition of the possibility of civil – and civilized – society: through pretence, man promotes polite society and peaceful companionship. In the second section, I will argue that although social opacity is necessary to the survival of the human species, individuals can nevertheless benefit from seeing through other people – thus showing that what is necessary from the perspective of the species can be counterproductive from the perspective of the individual. In fact, I will argue that seeing through other people is decisive for the success of human relations. And this is possible, I will suggest, because some of the epistemic limitations occasioned by the opacity of human motivation can be compensated for, most notably by anthropology, and so despite its interpretative nature. In particular, I will show that it has a significant pragmatic role to play in helping men make better judgements about each other and thus in fostering successful human relations. I will conclude by reflecting on the role of alienology in Kant's works.

1. Sincere Aliens vs. Deceitful Humans

Rousseau famously diagnoses the gap between 'being' and 'seeming' as the source of evil: 'To be and to seem became two totally different things; and from this distinction sprang insolent pomp and cheating trickery, with all the numerous vices that go in their train'.[7] At first glance, Kant seems to take a similar route, in particular when he writes that the 'behavior [of not revealing oneself completely] betrays the tendency of our species to be evil-minded towards one another'.[8] More precisely, he describes the human tendency to conceal one's thoughts as follows:

> Since foolishness combined with traces of evil . . . cannot be ignored in the moral physiognomy of our species, it is obvious from the concealment of a good part of our thoughts, which every clever person deems essential, that everyone in our race finds it advisable to be on his guard, and not to reveal himself completely. (*Anthropology*, 250 [7: 332])

The gap between motives and thoughts on the one hand, and behaviour and appearances on the other hand, seems to lead to the possibility of evil and deceit: it 'does not fail to deteriorate gradually from pretence to intentional deception, and finally to lying'.[9]

> He would like to discuss with someone what he thinks about his associates, the government, religion and so forth, but he cannot risk it: partly because the other person, while prudently keeping back his own judgments, might use this to harm him, and partly because, as regards disclosing his faults, the other person may conceal his own, so that he would lose something of the other's respect by presenting himself quite candidly to him. (*MM*, 586–7 [6: 472])[10]

By contrast, the problem of deceit and distrust would not seem to emerge in a society made of sincere aliens – they simply would not be able to keep back their feelings and conceal their thoughts. Everything would be literally out in the open, and truthfulness and trust would be given features of these aliens' relationships. A reference to Rousseau can once again be useful in this respect, for, as he shows in the second *Discourse*, it was precisely when men were 'transparent' beings that humanity had its golden age and that human societies were most peaceful.[11] Similarly, the society of which the young Rousseau was part, along with the Lamberciers and his cousin Bernard, was ruled by an ideal of transparency. Their face,

far from being a mask that concealed their feelings, was the mirror of their soul: there was no distance between their being and their seeming, and they could trust what they saw.[12] It was, in Rousseau's view, the appearance of a gap between being and seeming that led to the first instances of evil behaviour in human society.[13] Thus for him, sincere aliens might seem to embody a form of moral purity and virtuousness that deceitful humans lack.

However, contrary to Rousseau's portrayal of humanity's golden age of transparency, Kant's imaginary sincere alien state turns out to be far from peaceful and idyllic. And this suggests that man's capacity to conceal his thoughts is in fact not only advantageous but even necessary for the survival of the human species. For a society constituted of sincere aliens is in effect an unviable society.

> Unless they are all as pure as angels, we cannot conceive how they would be able to live at peace with each other, how anyone could have any respect for anyone else, and how they could get along with each other. (*Anthropology*, 250 [7: 332])

One can easily see how this could be the case. A society made of non-angelic sincere beings, in which everyone literally spoke his mind, would lead to humiliations, embarrassments and quarrels. As suggested in the preceding quotation, such a society would have no peace, no respect and no companionship – three crucial features of a good society for Kant. The alien's incapacity to keep quiet thus proves to be even more destructive for his society than man's capacity to deceive. It may be the case, however, that the sincere aliens' society would differ, at least eventually, from human societies in a number of ways so as to allow for its survival. For instance, rules of etiquette would have to differ so that telling someone he is ugly or fat, for instance, would not be considered rude or mean. Nevertheless, Kant's point is that if we assume these aliens are identical to humans in every respect but their lack of opacity, their society cannot be viable. And crucially, the feature that Kant highlights as the one making men's opacity necessary, and not merely helpful, for the survival of the species is their actual moral nature – note the decisive opening of Kant's remark: 'unless they are all as pure as angels'.[14] If sincere aliens were as pure as angels, their sincerity would be not only tolerable but perhaps even beneficial. And if human beings were as pure as angels, their opacity would not be necessary to their survival.

As a result, Kant does not in fact reject Rousseau's claim that opacity is a human evil; rather, he makes a complementary and equally valid point, namely that opacity is at once an expression of the evil in human nature and part of the necessary palliative for it. For, given the human species' other moral failings, what appeared as a moral flaw turns out to prevent it from self-destruction and allow peaceful relations amongst its members. As Kant notes, the rules of social intercourse such as 'courtly gallantry' are admittedly a 'play of pretences', but a necessary one in so far as it allows polite society and even mere society itself: 'Collectively, the more civilised men are, the more they are actors [...] and it is even a good thing that this is so in this world'.[15]

This remark would certainly surprise readers familiar with Kant's moral philosophy. For does not Kant repeat endlessly in his works on ethics that the moral duty to tell the truth is universal in any circumstance?[16] Does this passage imply that Kant is being inconsistent? I do not think so. For the crucial point here is that the pretence of virtue is taken for what it is, namely pretence.[17]

> Politeness is an appearance of affability which instills affection. Bowing and scraping (compliments) and all courtly gallantry, together with the warmest verbal assurances of friendship are not always completely truthful. 'My dear friends,' says Aristotle, 'there is no friend'. But these demonstrations of politeness do not deceive because everyone knows how they should be taken. (*Anthropology*, 39 [7:152])

Someone who pretends virtue in fact fosters polite society and peaceful companionship. For instance, in so far as all the participants of a dinner party are aware of the fact that, in order for them to spend a nice evening, they have to pretend virtue (or at least conceal vice), they are not being immoral but pragmatic: they pursue the purpose of a sociable interaction between the guests, and for Kant,

> These are, indeed, only *externals* or by-products (*parerga*), which give a beautiful illusion resembling virtue that is also not deceptive since everyone knows how it must be taken. *Affability*, *sociability*, *courtesy*, *hospitality*, and *gentleness* (in disagreeing without quarrelling) are, indeed, only tokens; yet they promote the feeling for virtue itself by a striving to bring this illusion as near as possible to the truth. (*MM*, 588 [6: 473])[18]

A lie that everyone knows to be a lie is not in this sense a 'true lie': men 'assume the appearance of attachment, of esteem for others, of modesty, and of disinterestedness, without ever deceiving anyone, because everyone understands that nothing sincere is meant'.[19]

Consequently, first, what we thought to be deceit is not in fact deceit but pretence, and thus it is not morally reprehensible. Kant's approval (or at any rate toleration) of social pretence is entirely compatible with his condemnation of falsehood and deception. For the imperative of truth-telling should be distinguished from that of telling the *whole* truth.[20] In this sense, men's capacity to deceive does not merely consist in the capacity to lie, but also in the capacity not to tell the whole truth. Men can hold secrets whilst sincere aliens do not possess this peculiar capacity – the capacity not to speak one's mind; they cannot but mean what they say and say what they mean.[21]

And second, if we go back to Kant's claim regarding our capacity 'to explore the thoughts of others, but to conceal one's own', we can now understand why he writes that it is a 'nice quality' which then 'deteriorate[s] gradually'.[22] This quality is nice as long as it is applied to 'the manners one is obliged to show in social intercourse' and restricted to the purpose of fostering polite and civil society; as soon as it becomes the means to mislead others, it turns into 'intentional deception and finally [. . .] lying'.[23]

2. Sincere Aliens vs. Opaque Humans

Although the opacity of human motivation is good in that it allows human beings to put up the pretences that make society possible and viable, it also seriously complicates Kant's attempts to develop an anthropology that would provide the knowledge needed to function well in that society. For, as already suggested at the beginning of this paper, the opacity of human motivation entails significant theoretical limitations for our knowledge of man; namely, we are unable to access reliable data through observation of the outer sense.[24] Anthropological observation is disrupted by the fact that, as shown in the preceding section, human beings have a strong tendency to conceal and disguise the truth about themselves. For instance, if someone notices he is observed, he will either be embarrassed

and hence unable to show himself as he really is, or deliberately dissemble and refuse to show himself as he is:

> When someone, who is being judged for this purpose, realises that someone is watching him and seeking to detect his inner nature, it goes without saying that his mind is not at rest but in a state of constraint, internal agitation, and indeed even in a state of annoyance at seeing himself under scrutiny by someone else. (*Anthropology*, 207 [7: 295])[25]

As a result, the possibility of anthropological observation seems to be threatened from the start in the case of human beings.

In a society made of sincere aliens however, the problem does not seem to emerge. In so far as there is no distinction between these aliens' interior and their exterior, 'alienologists' can take their behaviour at face value; nothing is hidden, everything is given and transparent.[26] These sincere aliens are in this sense ideal objects for the alien sciences.[27] For a science of sincere aliens would not be interpretative, as is the case for the human sciences, but purely descriptive and explanatory. There would be no room for inference to the best explanation from their behaviour to their intentions since their intentions would be transparent and spoken aloud. In other words, a society made of sincere aliens would allow constitutive – as opposed to interpretative – 'sincere alien sciences'.[28] By contrast, the opacity of human motivation leads to a crucial problem for anthropology, and for men's understanding of each other in general: how are we to account for their behaviour, assign meaning and motives to their actions, and judge their character?

Given the Kantian framework, one reliable means available to anthropology is to use man's exterior, his external appearance, as the basis of inferences and deductions about his interior.[29] In fact, Kant remarks that we naturally rely on this procedure in our everyday practices. For instance,

> If we are to put ourselves into somebody's hands, it is only natural that we first look him in the face and particularly in the eyes, no matter how well-recommended he comes to us. We want to find out what we have to be on guard against. His repelling or attractive gestures determine our choice, or also make us suspicious even before we have come to conclusions about his morals. (*Anthropology*, 207–8 [7: 295–6])

However, not everything exterior in man can serve as the basis for inductions regarding his interior, and we should distinguish,

within man's exterior itself, between what is meaningful and what is not, or, put slightly differently, between what reveals something of the interior and what does not. To illustrate this point, Kant discusses what he believes to be the disanalogy of the connection between the case of a watch and the watch on the one hand, and the connection between the body of a man and his soul on the other: 'If the case is badly constructed, one can conclude with reasonable certainty that the inside is not worth much either [. . .] However, it would be absurd to conclude that, by analogy to the human crafts-man, the same hold true for the inscrutable creator of Nature'.[30] For Kant, there is no reason to believe that God could have wanted to associate a good soul with a handsome body. For what pleases us in a handsome body is subjective; it depends on our taste, and thus it cannot be used to find the objective, meaningful purpose of certain natural qualities. In this sense, good looks should not be taken as the sign of a good soul and, reciprocally, unattractive looks should not be taken as the sign of an evil soul.

If mere physical appearance cannot be the basis of legitimate inferences about man's interior, bodily movement might offer better perspectives. However, within bodily movement itself, we have to distinguish between meaningful and meaningless ones. For example,

> When anybody who ordinarily is not cross-eyed tells a story and looks at the point of his nose and consequently looks cross-eyed, then the story he is telling is always a lie. But one must not count in this category anyone who squints because of defective eyesight. (*Anthropology*, 213 [7: 301])

Some human behaviour is significant and carries a meaning, that is, it undoubtedly *reveals* something of the character of a person (such as the liar's cross-eyed look), whereas some, such as mere bodily movement (like the squint of the short-sighted person), is not.[31] For instance, we have to distinguish between mere facial features and expressions, the former being meaningless whereas the latter are meaningful: 'Expressions are facial features put into *action*'.[32] The facial features put into action through expressions acquire a signification and can thus give rise to inferences about the interior. Consequently, to ascribe a particular intention to an agent – and therefore to 'characterize' his action – requires that we interpret the movement in a particular way; that is to say, to describe an action *qua* action, we must employ intentional terms which pick out the

intended meanings and rules which define the type of act it is.[33] This importantly suggests that the descriptions provided by anthropology are not in fact mere descriptions but rather 'thick' descriptions, as defined by Gilbert Ryle.[34]

Ryle imagines two boys whose eyelids rapidly contract in a way that is physically identical. But in one case the movement is a twitch while in the other it is a wink, and the difference between the two cases is fundamental.[35] According to Ryle, the twitch is not something that the boy did – it is not an action, but rather something that merely happens, a movement. The wink, on the other hand, is an action performed by the second boy – it is something he does deliberately for the purpose of communicating some message. Ryle says that to describe the boy's behaviour in terms of its physical movements alone is to describe it thinly; to describe it as an action is to describe it thickly – thickly because such descriptions involve mention not only of the physical movement itself, but also of the intentions of the person making the movement and the social rules which give it meaning. Thus, a thin description merely depicts the physical movements involved, whilst a thick description includes intentional concepts which signify the meanings and rules expressed through the physical movement. On this basis, for anthropology not to become trivial, its descriptions have to be thick and interpret the movement in terms of the intended meaning which defines the type of act it is.

However, the use of man's (meaningful) exterior as the basis for inferences and deductions about his interior can in fact be done in two ways: as was just shown, through an interpretation of one's (intended) actions, that is to say by inference from these actions to the intentions and motives behind them; and through an analysis of one's (unintended) bodily movements. Kant identifies the latter procedure with physiognomy, 'the art of judging a person's disposition or way of thinking by his visible form, [. . .] the interior by the exterior', 'through external, involuntary signs'.[36] This suggests that physiognomy is concerned with borderline behaviour, behaviour that is strictly involuntary but reflects something about one's character, intentions or motives. For instance,

> It is difficult to hide the impact of emotion from facial expression; emotion betrays itself by the careful restraint from gesticulation, or in the tone itself. And he who is too weak to control his emotions, will

reveal his inner emotions through facial expression (much against his will). (*Anthropology*, 213 [7: 300])

Kant believes that physiognomy, however, 'can never become a science'.[37] For as he records in the case of blushing, knowing 'whether [it] betrays consciousness of guilt, or rather a delicate sense of honor, or just a response to the imputation of something of which one would have to be ashamed, is quite uncertain in particular instances'.[38] And this limitation of physiognomy seems to apply equally to anthropology. For it seems to suggest that the thickness of the descriptions put forward by anthropology is precisely what stops it from ever acquiring the status of a genuine science: in so far as it has to do with ascribing motives and intentions, and given the opacity of human motivation, it is condemned to remain interpretative, contrary to alienology, which can be constitutive.[39]

Yet for Kant, the fact that physiognomy cannot lead to genuine knowledge does not entail that it is superfluous. For as he makes clear in the following quote, it is nevertheless useful: it increases our knowledge of man and fosters sociable human relations, thus leading to the civilization and moralization of mankind.

Nothing is left of it [physiognomy] but the art of cultivating taste, not taste in things, but rather in morals, manners, and customs, in order to add to the knowledge of man through a critique which would enhance human relations and the knowledge of man in general. (*Anthropology*, 209 [7: 297])

This remark can be best understood through the analysis of Kant's theory of 'anthropological characterization', which consists in an analysis of human varieties according to four criteria: person, sex, nation and race. I will argue that, although physiognomy in particular, but even anthropology in general, are both interpretative (the former even more so than the latter), they have crucial pragmatic uses for man.

Table 1: Kant's classification of human types[40]

Category	Person	Sex	Nation	Race
Criterion	Temperament	Gender	Civil whole united through common descent	Hereditary transmitted features

Types	Sanguine, melancholic, choleric, phlegmatic	Male and female	French, English, Spaniard, etc.	White, Negro, Hindu, Hunnish-Mongolian-Kalmuck

One of the purposes of anthropological characterization for Kant is that it 'gives an exhaustive account of the headings under which we can bring the practical human qualities we observe', and thereby 'the human form in general is judged according to its varieties, every one of which is supposed to point to a special inner quality of the person'.[41] What Kant is interested in here is classifying the variety of human phenomena under certain categories on the basis of anthropological observation so as to be able to determine which type a man belongs to.[42]

And this knowledge of human types has a decisive pragmatic role to play in human interactions. For, anthropological characterization for Kant can be used to deal with others as well as to adjust our judgements and responses accordingly: 'these examples . . . permit judgment about what each has to know about the other, and how each could use the other to its own advantage'.[43]

Anthropological characterizations can thus be used in a number of ways. Negatively, having a better understanding of the connection between man's exterior and his interior stops us from making unwarranted judgements, as in the case of the ugly, the shape of the skull or sheer unfamiliarity.[44] And positively, they provide us with means of 'figuring out' the people we deal with and acting appropriately – for instance, they allow us to determine someone's temperament.

> The sanguine, who 'is carefree and full of expectation; he attributes great importance to everything for the moment, and at the next moment he may not give it another thought'; the melancholic, who 'attributes great importance to all things that concern him'; the choleric, who 'is hot-tempered, and . . . quickly ablaze like a straw fire'; finally, the phlegmatic, who has 'a tendency to inactivity'. (*Anthropology*, 198–201 [7: 288–290])[45]

Such an anthropological familiarity with human temperaments is useful in the most straightforward way, both prudentially and morally. In its prudential dimension, if we know who we are dealing with (namely, what temperament a person has), we will know what

to expect from him: if we are dealing with a sanguine man, we should not expect him to keep his promises; whilst if we are dealing with a melancholic man, we can count on him since keeping his word is dear to him.[46]

In its moral dimension, this knowledge is useful in two respects: for moral self-assessment and for one's moral improvement. Firstly, it implies that if I act in accordance with duty on the basis of my temperament rather than duty, I cannot be morally satisfied with myself. For instance, the sanguine person who 'is good-natured enough to give help to others' should not be morally satisfied with himself for being beneficent if he does so on the basis of his temperament. And conversely, a choleric, who is by temperament 'avaricious', can count his beneficence to his moral credit, since doing so goes against his sensible nature.[47]

Secondly, anthropological characterisation establishes that certain temperaments are more prone to passions than others. For instance, the melancholic has no passions whilst the sanguine has a tendency to emotional volatility. And since passions hinder our ability to rationally choose our purposes, it recommends the exercise and strengthening of the sanguine's self-control in order to overcome, or at least refine, his passions.[48] To take another example, someone endowed with an unsympathetic temperament (for instance, the melancholic who 'attributes great importance to all things that concern him') will be naturally insensitive to human distress, and thus unable to detect situations where he ought to exercise his duty of benevolence.[49] However, although sympathy does not have moral worth in itself, cultivating sympathy will help the melancholic to realize his moral duty.

As a result, the fact that anthropology is condemned to an interpretative status when it deals with human intentions and meanings does not entail that it is superfluous. On the contrary, it has a decisively pragmatic role to play in helping man to make better judgements about themselves and others and thus in fostering successful human relations.

Conclusion

This paper set out to contrast men and sincere aliens in order to disclose central features of Kant's thoughts about the nature of

man's social opacity and its anthropological implications. In the first section I have suggested that this contrast brings to light the fact that the social implication of this opacity, namely social pretence, is in fact not only beneficial, but even necessary for the survival of the human species given its non-angelic moral nature. In the second section, I have argued that the attempt to compensate for this opacity, through anthropology and physiognomy, in order to 'see through people', is nevertheless decisive in helping us to make better judgements about each other and in fostering successful social relations.

This argumentative structure, which uses the contrast with aliens or 'others' to legitimate and even rehabilitate certain seemingly negative or damaging features of mankind, is in fact a recurrent feature of Kant's works.[50] Kant uses it most notably in his account of what he calls the human unsociable sociability, that is to say 'tendency to enter into society, combined, however, with a thoroughgoing resistance that constantly threatens to sunder this society'.[51] He argues that without unsocial sociability, man would remain a being who is and does not become, that is to say a being without a history.

> Without those characteristics of unsociability . . . man would live as an Arcadian shepherd, in perfect concord, contentment, and mutual love, and all talents would lie eternally dormant in their seed. (*Idea*, 32 [8: 21])[52]

To the Arcadian shepherd who does not develop his talents can be added the South Sea Islander who lets his talents rust and the American who has no prospect.[53] What these figures have in common is that in so far as they did not confront – or did not have to confront – the problem of antagonism, they neither cultivated nor civilized themselves, and thus never entered the domain of humanity properly speaking. This suggests that man's antagonism, far from being a hindrance to the survival of the human species, is a decisive driving force for the development of his natural dispositions in that it leads to culture and civilization:

> Thanks be to nature for the incompatibility, for the distasteful, competitive vanity, for the insatiable desire to possess and also to rule. Without them, all of humanity's excellent natural capacities would have lain eternally dormant. (*Idea*, 32 [8: 21])

In this sense, and perhaps unexpectedly, sincere aliens are far from being a one-off in the Kantian corpus. The figure of 'alien-hood' or 'otherness', which populates it in various disguises, is in fact crucial for Kant, for it is the gauge by which man can measure his own humanity.[54]

> In order to sketch the character of a certain creature's species, it is necessary that the species be compared with and referred to in terms of other species already known to us. What makes the species different from each other has to be quoted and referred to as the differentiating reason for its properties. But if one kind of creature which we know (A) is compared to another kind of creature which we do not know (non-A), how, then, can we expect or demand to sketch the character of A, when we have no middle term for the comparison? The highest concept of species may be that of a terrestrial rational being, but we will not be able to describe its characteristics because we do not know of a nonterrestrial rational being which would enable us to refer to its properties and consequently classify that terrestrial being as rational. (*Anthropology*, 237–8 [7: 320–1])

Human beings are creatures without compare, and yet Kant does not hesitate to imagine what he cannot experience in order to compensate for this empirical shortfall.[55]

Notes

[1] In as much as as the following works by Kant are cited frequently, I have identified them by these abbreviations:

   Anthropology: Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View
   Idea: Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmological Intent
   Groundwork: Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals
   MM: The Metaphysics of Morals

   For the sake of clarity in the references to Kant's writings, I have chosen to use titles rather than the author–date system. I have also included a citation to the English translation in parentheses, followed by a citation to the German text of the Prussian Academy edition (volume and page reference) in brackets.

[2] *Groundwork*, 61–2 [4: 407].
[3] *Anthropology*, 250 [7: 332].

4   See for instance O'Neill (1989: 85ff), Wood (1999: 196ff) and Frierson (2003: 102).
5   The fact that these aliens are from 'another planet' is in effect irrelevant to Kant's argument. What makes these beings 'aliens' is, rather, their natural sincerity.
6   *Anthropology*, 237–8 [7: 320–1].
7   Rousseau (1973: 86). As a result, 'we never know with whom we have to deal' (Rousseau 1973: 6).
8   *Anthropology*, 250 [7: 332].
9   *Anthropology*, 250 [7: 332]. This is akin to Rousseau's point: wit, beauty, strength or skill, merit or talent 'being the only qualities capable of commanding respect, it soon became necessary to possess or to affect them. It now became the interest of men to appear what they really were not' (Rousseau 1973: 86). For Rousseau's criticism of politeness as a source of evil and a social veil on vice, see Rousseau (1973: 6).
10   See also: 'Every human being has his secrets and dare not confide blindly in others, partly because of a base cast of mind in most human beings to use them to one's disadvantage and partly because many people are indiscreet or incapable of judging and distinguishing what may or may not be repeated' (*MM*, 587 [6: 472]). As Wood writes, men 'must constantly protect themselves from each other by concealing their faults, and they can prudently advance their interests only by pretending to merits they do not have; as a result, minimal prudence requires that we distrust others, and behave towards them in ways which will inspire their distrust' (Wood 1991: 334).
11   For a detailed account of Rousseau's ideal of transparency, see Starobinski (1988).
12   Rousseau (1995: 11–13).
13   See Cohen (1999).
14   'Experience also shows that in man there is an inclination to desire actively what is unlawful, although he knows very well that it is unlawful. This is the inclination to evil which arises as unavoidably and as soon as man begins to make use of his freedom. Consequently the inclination to evil can be regarded as innate. Hence, according to his sensible character, man must be judged as being evil (by nature)' (*Anthropology*, 241 [7: 324]).
15   *Anthropology*, 37 [7: 151].
16   See for instance 'To be *truthful* (honest) in all declarations is therefore a sacred command of reason prescribing unconditionally, one not to be restricted by any conveniences' (Kant 1999: 613 [8: 427]).
17   For a good analysis of this distinction, see Frierson 2005: section III. On the basis of the *Lectures on Anthropology* [25: 502–3], he argues that since the illusion does not depend on making another believe in falsehood, it is not morally wrong.
18   See also 'no matter how insignificant these laws of refined humanity may seem, especially if you compare them with purely moral laws, then everything that furthers companionship, even if it consists only

of pleasant maxims or manners, is a dress that properly clothes virtue' (*Anthropology*, 190–1 [7: 282]). A number of passages from Kant's *Anthropology* seem to go even further and suggest that the pretence of virtue is not only the necessary condition of civil society, but also the means to the moralization of man (*Anthropology*, 37–8 [7: 151–3]; *MM*, 588 [6: 473]). This would imply that the pretence of virtue can somehow become a disposition for virtue itself. Unfortunately, this issue falls outside the scope of this paper.

19 *Anthropology*, 37 [7: 151].

20 This is supported by the distinction between sincerity, candour and naivety: 'Candid behavior (a manner which causes no such suspicion) is called natural behavior [. . .]. Such behavior pleases because of its simple truth in expression. But when sincerity appears to proceed from simplicity, that is, from the lack of an art of dissimulation that has already become the rule, then simplicity is called naïveté' (*Anthropology*, 16 [7: 132]; translation modified). Someone who is candid has a natural, good-hearted temperament that causes him always to tell the truth; but this truth telling is amoral since based on his nature rather than moral deliberation. The naive volunteers all the truth – as in 'The naïve manner of revealing one's self as evidenced when a girl is approached by a man for the first time, or when a peasant, unfamiliar with urbane manners, enter[s] the city for the first time', which is the sign of an 'inexperience based on the evil art of pretence' (*Anthropology*, 16 [7: 133]). The naive is thus amorally truthful, but this truthfulness differs from that of the candid because it is grounded on his simple-mindedness and his general ignorance of the art of pretence rather than his good nature. Finally, candour and naivety differ from human sincerity since the latter alone is properly moral – it is a moral attitude which prescribes always to tell the truth whilst not always revealing all of the truth. By contrast, alien sincerity is amoral since their telling of the whole truth stems from their natural constitution. However, I have chosen to call them 'sincere' rather than 'candid' because candour conveys an impression of natural good-heartedness which, as already shown, these aliens lack in so far as they are not as pure as angels.

21 As Onora O'Neill remarks, 'for them moral relations would be quite different (presumably they would have almost no prospect of deliberately deceiving one another)' (O'Neill 1989: 74).

22 *Anthropology*, 250 [7: 332].

23 *MM*, 588 [6: 473] and *Anthropology*, 250 [7: 332].

24 The psychological form of the opacity of human motivation entails that we cannot know man's ultimate thoughts and intentions – the fact of the matter about man's interior is indeterminable from a scientific, third-person perspective as well as from a first-person perspective, the agent having no privileged access to his maxims: 'we can never, even by the most strenuous self-examination, get entirely behind our covert incentives' (*Groundwork*, 61–2 [4: 407]). The issue of introspection and its relationship to psychology has been analysed at length in the literature, and it falls beyond the scope of this paper to discuss it (see for

instance Sturm 2001, Makkreel 2001 and Westphal 1995). My discussion is limited strictly to the possibility of third-person knowledge of others' interior and the epistemic implications of social opacity.

25 The role of self-deception should also be noted: 'we like to flatter ourselves by falsely attributing to ourselves a nobler motive' (*Groundwork*, 61 [4: 407]).

26 In this context, the transparency comprises merely that sincere aliens reveal to others what they know about themselves rather than radical transparent (self-)knowledge. Some degree of interpretation is required if alienologists are interested in the latter rather than the former.

27 David Clark interestingly sees Kant's sincere aliens as uncanny precursors of what Henri Lefebvre calls the 'cyberanthrope', the (negative) ideal of man that is the dream of the human sciences: as transparent to themselves as they are to each other (Clark 2001: 218). See also Vattimo (1992: 14).

28 This claim undoubtedly raises issues about the type of knowledge at play here – is it scientific? Universal? Mathematizable? Answering this question would call for another paper. For my present purpose however, it is sufficient that contrary to anthropology, alienology is not interpretative in so far as it can gather its data about the aliens' interior directly from the aliens' exterior, thus requiring no interpretation or induction from behaviour to intentions and motives as they are articulated by the agents themselves. Of course, it nevertheless requires some level of interpretation in the context of inferences from the aliens' intentions and motives to their overall character. But this does not threaten the contrast between anthropology and alienology in so far as conscious intentions and motives are concerned.

29 *From now on when I refer to anthropology, I mean the part of anthropology that deals with inferences from man's exterior to his interior.* There are of course other dimensions to anthropology for Kant. For instance, it includes empirical psychology. As Wood remarks, Kant refers to empirical psychology as the part of anthropology that deals with inner sense (Wood 1999: 197). This section is concerned only with the part of anthropology that deals with outer sense.

30 *Anthropology*, 207–8 [7: 296].

31 In this context, I use 'character' in a broad sense – it encompasses both man's way of sensing (what Kant usually calls his temperament) and his way of thinking (i.e. the 'property of the will by which the subject has tied himself to certain practical principles which he has unalterably prescribed for himself by his own reason' [*Anthropology*, 203 (7: 294)]). In this sense, we are discussing the art of judging 'what lies within man, whether in terms of his way of sensing [temperament], or of his way of thinking [character]' (*Anthropology*, 207 [7: 295]; translation modified).

32 *Anthropology*, 213 [7: 300]; my emphasis. It is in this sense that Kant remarks that '[t]he observations concerning only the skull and its structure which constitutes the basis of its shape . . . belong more to physical geography than to pragmatic anthropology' (*Anthropology*,

211 [7: 299]). The shape of a skull is meaningless; as it does not reveal anything of the character of a person, it cannot be of any use to pragmatic anthropology. Thus, if Kant acknowledges pragmatic uses for physiognomy, he discards what was going to become 'phrenology' as permitting 'only inconclusive interpretation' (*Anthropology*, 212 [7: 300]).

33 As Makkreel writes of the act of 'characterization', it goes 'beyond description by pointing to more than what is directly given' (Makkreel 2001: 197). See also Munzel (1999: 236ff) and Jacobs (2003: 119ff).

34 Ryle (1971).

35 As a referee of this journal pointed out, although Ryle's example bears a striking resemblance to Kant's remarks on cross-eyed people, there is a strong disanalogy between them. In Ryle's, the wink is voluntary and meaningful and the twitch is not; whilst in Kant's, both cross-eyed looks are involuntary, but one is meaningless (the short-sighted) and the other meaningful (the liar). This disanalogy does not go against my use of Ryle's argument however, since my aim is simply to show that for Kant, anthropology is made of thick rather than thin descriptions.

36 *Anthropology*, 207 [7: 295] and 209 [7: 297]. The most famous proponent of physiognomy in Kant's time is Johann Caspar Lavater. He is actually mentioned twice in the *Anthropology* (209 [7: 297] and 214 [7: 301]). For an account of the reception and the influence of Lavater's works, see Shookman 1993. For a historical study of physiognomy, see Gray 2004 and Courtine and Haroche 1994, especially chapter 3.

37 *Anthropology*, 208 [7: 296].

38 *Anthropology*, 86 [7: 193].

39 Of course, one could think of many ways anthropologists can attempt to overcome this limitation – by thorough interview and cross-examination of the participants under observation, by a critical attitude towards their data, etc. However, in so far as (1) the object under study is intentions and motives, and (2) these can only be reached indirectly through inferences from the exterior (by examining either voluntary or involuntary behaviours), it remains that anthropology is de facto limited to an interpretative status. Introspection could certainly offer better prospects in so far as it would provide access to one's own intentions that is as good as what alienologists would have in general, but this would have no direct impact on one's anthropological insight into others' intentions.

40 This aspect of Kant's account has been widely criticized for licensing various kinds of stereotyping and prejudice (see for instance Louden 2000: 82 and Eze 1995). The aim of my argument is not to defend him against these charges, but merely to expose his thoughts on this issue. For a more detailed account of Kant's anthropological types, see Cohen (2006: section 3).

41 *Anthropology*, 6 [7: 121] and 208 [7: 296]. In this sense, my analysis of Kant's anthropological characterization goes against Zammito's interpretation of Kant's project. Zammito writes that 'Kant did not propose to *discover* human nature through a consideration of human

variety' (Zammito 2002: 299). Contrary to this claim, I believe that Kant is very much aware of, and interested in, human variety.

42 In this sense, Kant's anthropological characterisation can be understood as the anthropological counterpart of Schutz's phenomenological 'typification'. In his *Phenomenology of the Social World*, Schutz is concerned with the way we build up typifications of other people by classifying them into types from which typical courses of action can be expected (see Schutz 1972, in particular sections 37–39, pp. 181–201). This, he believes, gives us common-sense knowledge about the social world which guides us in our everyday actions: we know things about human beings in general, and what typically distinguishes them from cows, monkeys and trees, just as we know certain facts about particular types of human beings – men, women, blacks, melancholics, Germans – which enable us to distinguish them from each other.

43 *Anthropology*, 227 [7: 312].

44 '[W]e should not charge any face with ugliness if in its characteristics it does not betray the expression of a mind degraded by vice or by a natural, though unfortunate, tendency to vice' (*Anthropology*, 210 [7: 298]); 'whether a hump on the nose reveals a satirist; whether the peculiarity of the shape of the Chinese face . . . is an indication of their rigid minds; or whether the forehead of the American Indian, overgrown with hair on both sides, is a sign of an innate mental weakness, and so forth; all these are conjectures which permit only inconclusive interpretation'; and 'Generally, people who have never left their country make fun of unfamiliar faces of strangers from other nations' (*Anthropology*, 211–12 [7: 299]).

45 There is no doubt that a number of these claims are not based on interpretation but rather on straightforward observation (for instance, the fact that the phlegmatic has a tendency to inactivity). It is clear, however, that some of them can only be grounded on interpretation (for instance, the fact that the sanguine is full of expectation). For a detailed account of Kant's concept of temperament, in particular relative to the historical tradition of the temperaments, see Larrimore (2001).

46 See *Anthropology*, 198 [7: 288] and 199 [7: 288]. Of course, the knowledge at stake here is interpretative in so far as it is based on approximations and inferences to the best explanation. In this sense, one may be mistaken in one's ascriptions of temperament. And mistakes of this sort could lead to a number of moral problems. For instance, as a referee of this journal pointed out, one might find oneself complacently expecting charity from someone and even providing opportunities for them to help you, on the assumption that they are sanguine, when in fact they are melancholic and helping you despite its enormous personal cost. However, Kant's point is that despite their epistemic limitations and the moral pitfalls associated with it, human beings cannot but rely on these inferences when they interact with others. For, as suggested by the Schutzian model of typification, classifying human beings in sets of categories, however simplistic, ties

in with the capacity of agents to anticipate others' responses to their actions.

47 *Anthropology*, 198–9 [7: 288–9]. However, even the beneficent choleric should not be morally complacent since he can never be certain he acted from duty even when he did so against his temperaments and inclinations.

48 'Passions are cancerous sores for pure practical reason' (*Anthropology*, 173 [7: 266]), and the despotism of desires 'rivets [man] to certain natural things and renders [him] unable to do [his] own selecting' (Kant 1987: 319 [5: 432]).

49 *Anthropology*, 199 [7: 288].

50 These positive aspects, which have to do mostly with the development of man's natural dispositions, are counterbalanced by certain negative aspects that have been highlighted by a number of commentators (for instance, Louden 2000). Part of my aim here is to compensate for previous treatments that have neglected the more positive aspects of Kant's views on these issues, the thought being that what appears to be negative or damaging from the perspective of the individual can turn out to be positive or beneficial from the perspective of the species. I have argued this point in Cohen 2008a.

51 *Idea*, 31–2 [8: 20]. Note that Kant discusses this human feature independently of the issue of human opacity. Other 'alien' figures that I cannot examine here are aristocrats and non-white races (as spelt out in Cohen 2008b: section 1) and non-Christian Europeans and women (as spelt out in Clark 2001: 262ff).

52 After a certain point in man's development, his unsocial sociability needs to be kept within bounds in order not to become counterproductive – namely, a law-governed civil society and a peaceful federation of nations is required (see *Idea*, 33–5 [8: 22–5]).

53 The South Sea Islander 'finds himself in comfortable circumstances and prefers to give himself up to pleasure than to trouble himself with enlarging and improving his fortunate natural predispositions . . . [He] let[s] his talents rust and [is] concerned with devoting his life merely to idleness, amusement, procreation – in a word, to enjoyment' (*Groundwork*, 74–5 [4: 423]). ' "Insensitive" Americans with no prospects; even the people of Mexico and Peru cannot be cultivated' (*Reflexion 1520* [15: 877]; my translation).

54 Indeed, I believe that Kant's anthropological use of aliens parallels the transcendental use he makes of beings endowed with different cognitive apparatuses (see for instance Kant 1929: 155 [B 135], 161 [B 145], 250 [B 283]).

55 Of course, I do not mean to argue that alienology solves the problem of our lack of acquaintance with other rational creatures. It is certainly not a substitute for the empirical knowledge we lack; but it is an alternative that Kant is undoubtedly willing to explore amongst others (for instance, the comparison with potential rational beings on earth (*Anthropology*, 238 [7: 322]), perfect humanity (*Anthropology*, 287 fn108 [7: 321]) or even bees and beavers (*Idea*, 29 [8: 17])).

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