

\*Penultimate version. Final version published in:

*The Cambridge Kant Lexicon*. Ed. J. Wuerth. Cambridge University Press, 2021, pg. 249–50

<https://doi.org/10.1017/9781139018159.010>

**Instinct (*Instinkt*).** Kant’s clearest definition of instinct comes from the 1797 *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, where he claims “the inner *necessitation* of the faculty of desire to take possession of this object before one even knows it, is *instinct*” (A, 7:265/CEAHE:367; and see also Rel, 6:29n [1793]/CERRT:77; CBHH, 8:111 [1786]/CEAHE:164; LP, 9:441 [1803]/CEAHE:437; and AB, 25:1518 [1788-9]). In the first instance, instinct therefore belongs under the heading of the faculty of desire. Kant is careful, however, to point out that instinct is a particular kind of desire. First and foremost, instinct belongs with “inclination [*Neigung*],” “propensity [*Hang*],” and “passion [*Leidenschaft*]” under the heading of the “lower,” i.e. sensible, faculty of desire, i.e. “states of *mere passivity* in the faculty of desire” (A, 7:269/CEAHE:370). Indeed, Kant specifies what is unique about instinct in *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* by distinguishing it from both “propensity [*Hang*] and “inclination [*Neigung*]”; whereas a propensity is “the *predisposition* to desire an enjoyment which, when the subject has experienced it, arouses *inclination* to it” and an inclination is a desire that “presupposes acquaintance with the object of desire” (Rel, 6:29n/CERRT:77), an instinct, by contrast, “is a felt need to do or enjoy something of which we still do not have a concept” (ibid.). What is characteristic of an instinct, then, is the fact that it is a desire that is operative prior to a being having been acquainted with or having a concept of the object of desire. In this sense, instincts are innate desires that, in a sense, blindly seek out their objects. Kant provides a number of examples of various instincts: “the drive in animals to build” (ibid.), “the sexual instinct” (A, 7:265/CEAHE:367; A, 7:325/CEAHE:421; Rel, 6:29n/CERRT:77; LP, 9:453/CEAHE:447), the instinct of children “to test their powers” (A, 7:263/CEAHE:365), “the parental instinct of the animal to protect its young” (A, 7:265/CEAHE:367; APi, 25:797, 1113, 1518 [1777-8]), the “sucking instinct” of infants (AM, 25:1339, 1514, 1518 [1784-5]), the instinct for nourishment (CBHH, 8:111/CEAHE 165), and the instinct of natural sympathy (AB, 25:1518). Many of these examples, along with the fact that instinct belong under the heading of the lower faculty of desire, point out an important aspect of instincts, namely that they belong to animal nature. Kant claims, for example, that animals “behave merely instinctually” (IUH, 8:17 [1784]/CEAHE:108-9) and are guided by “the go-cart [*Gängelwagen*] of instinct” (CBHH, 8:115/CEAHE 168; see also A, 7:196/CEAHE:304 and A, 7:269/CEAHE:370). Indeed, Kant even

says that instincts are the “*voice of God* which all animals obey” (CBHE 8:111/CEAHE 164), which suggests Kant conceives of instincts teleologically (on this point see A, 7:166/CEAHE:276; A, 7:175/CEAHE:285; A, 7:190/CEAHE:298; and G, 4:395-6 [1785]/CEPP:50-1). That instinct belongs to animal nature is significant, for Kant, because human beings possess reason in addition to instinct: “Reason in a creature is a faculty of extending the rules and aims of the use of all its powers far beyond natural instinct, and it knows no boundaries to its projects” (IUH, 8:18/CEAHE:109). As such, Kant claims that while an “animal is already all that it can be because of instinct ... the human being ... must work out the plan of his conduct for himself” (LP, 9:441/CEAHE:437) For Kant, it is therefore precisely because human beings possess a faculty beyond instinct, namely reason, that they both require education (see LP, 9:441/CEAHE:437) and are capable of directing their own lives (ibid.). It is important to remember, however, that insofar as human beings are both rational and sensible, they also occasionally act instinctually, and instincts are, in fact, “the first impulses according to which a human beings acts” (AB, 25:1518).

*Related terms: action, animal, animality, anthropology, desire, inclination, propensity, passion, reason, receptivity, teleology*

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