

Pragmatism and the ‘Other Kant,’ Kant as Public Intellectual and Political Theorist

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This paper will explore affinities between Kant’s thought especially as expressed in *The Critique of Judgment*, his work, *Perpetual Peace*, his writings on Anthropology and especially his public essays and letters on political issues and his work *The Contest of Faculties*. This ‘other Kant’ has been extensively revealed through work in contemporary Philosophy of Communication and on rhetoric as understood today as well as in the work of Hannah Arndt as exemplified in her *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy* edited by Ronald Beiner. Another valuable source of insight on this ‘other Kant’ is *The Politics of Truth* by Michel Foucault and his *Introduction to Kant’s Anthropology*. Finally, we will also rely somewhat on Kant’s *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* and the volume of works on Kant entitled *Anthropology, History and Education* edited by Günter Zoller and Robert B. Louden.

Viewing Kant through these various sources reveals an important complex of Kantian ideas and claims that are clearly relevant to any discussion of the relationship of Kantian thought to Pragmatism. Exploring these ideas will allow us not only to reveal new insights on Kantian thought but also will allow us to discover a number of affinities with the thought of the Pragmatists, particularly the ideas of John Dewey and Josiah Royce

One of the first important complex of Kantian ideas concerns the role of philosophy and the role of the philosopher as a public intellectual as well as one obligated to critique underlying assumptions, beliefs, and prejudices of one’s times and society. A central concept for Kant was the notion of ‘publicity,’ a concept explored extensively by the contemporary theorists of communication as well as by Arendt and Foucault. Kant, perhaps unknown to many, gave extensive treatment to the concept of ‘popularity,’ or rendering technically meticulous philosophical work accessible and engaging to the broader reading public. [Both Dewey and Royce critique philosophy for being an ‘ivory tower’ and esoteric affair.]

Indeed, at the core of Kant’s definition of “enlightenment was the duty to exercise the public use of reason at every point. Freedom to speak as a scholar (in a public role, where vigilant interrogation is not only possible, but obligatory) requires the

courage to use one's reason in a widely accessible form rather than relying on an apparatus to outsource one's judgment to others.¹ For Kant, notes Foucault, Enlightenment was less a content, or a time frame and more a flexible and reflective attitude of perpetual critical examination and inquiry.² In his essay on the Enlightenment. Kant defends the freedom to examine issues publicly, devoid of censorship on theological and political matters.

This strong argument for freedom to speak and publish and for the obligation to make public use of one's reason obviously has major implications for political philosophy as Arendt has made clear and it certainly allows us to explore affinities between Kant and the work of John Dewey and Josiah Royce and their arguments concerning deliberative democracy.³ Both Dewey and Royce were committed public intellectuals and believed the central role of philosophy was to enlighten everyday experience and critique the society and the time. Related to this is Kant's argument for the necessity of critical thinking and his views on the dependence of thinking critically on community and the public exchange of ideas. Hannah Arendt argues that Kant "believes that the very faculty of thinking depends on its public use."⁴ Kant writes "without the test of free and open examination no thinking and no opinion formation are possible. Reason is not made to isolate itself but to get into community with others."⁵

Community, of course, is a central theme for Royce and for Dewey and both believe and argue for the claim that human are social beings from the start. To be human is to be a social being. The new views on Kant find a very similar view. Thus, Arendt explores in some detail Kant's notion of *sensu communis*, common sense, which is the same for everybody; it is an extra human sense that fits us into community. The maxims of common sense for Kant are (1) The maxim of enlightenment- 'Think for oneself; (2) The maxim of enlarged mentality – 'Put oneself in thought in the place of everyone else' and (3) The maxim of consistency- 'Be in agreement with yourself.' (See *The Critique of Judgment* §40).

Sociability and Communicability play a key role for Kant. Thus, he argues in his *Conjectural Beginning of Human History* that the highest end intended for man is 'sociability.'⁶ Kant further argues in *The Critique of Judgment* that the impulse to society is natural to man and that *sociability* even may be seen as a property belonging to human and humanness. The arguments of *Perpetual Peace*, then, seem to follow, i.e. that the "right of temporary sojourn, a right to associate is one of the inalienable human rights" that that "the law of world citizenship should be limited to universal hospitality."⁷ Exploring aspects of Kant's thoughts on man

as a social being and on world citizenship allow us to explore the emphasis of both Dewey and Royce on community and to explore the relationship of Kant's ideas in *Perpetual Peace* with Royce's thoughts in his 1916 *The Hope of the Great Community*.⁸ And this should also allow some comments on issues of hospitality in today's world.

A final area of exploration would be to relate Kant's work on imagination and his concept of beauty and judgment in *The Critique of Judgment* to John Dewey's 1934 work, *Art as Experience*.⁹

1 See: Scott Stroud, 2014, *Kant and the Promise of Rhetoric*. University Park: Penn State University Press.

2 See Michel Foucault, 1997. 2007. *The Politics of Truth*. Edited by Sylvère Lotringer; Introduction by John Rachman, translated by Lysa Hochroth & Catherine Porter, Semiotext(e). See also Immanuel Kant, *Was ist Aufklärung?* ("What is Enlightenment?") 29-37.

3 I have explored the ideas of Dewey and Royce regarding these issues in several essays including in [*Persuasion and Compulsion in Democracy*](#). Jacquelyn Kegley & Krzysztof Piotr Skowronski (eds.) - 2013 - Lexington Books.

4 Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*. Edited with an Interpretive Essay by Ronald Beiner. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992, 39.

5 Immanuel Kant, "Refleionen zur Anthropologie," no. 897, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Prussian Academy ed. 15:302.

6 Immanuel Kant, in *On History*. Ed. Lewis White Beck, tans. L. W. Beck, R.E. Anchor, and E.L. Fackenheim. Library of Liberal Arts. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill. 1963., p. 54.

7 Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace*, in *On History*, 102.

8 Josiah Royce, 1916, *The Hope of the Great Community*, New York: Macmillan.

9 John Dewey, 1934, *Art as Experience*. Penguin Publishers.