

Kant's pragmatic teleology
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Kant opposes pragmatic knowledge of the world to theoretical knowledge of a mere spectator. Whereas the latter, resting on the understanding's concepts explores the products belonging to nature, the former is a knowledge of the human being as a citizen of the world. The difference between „theoretical” and „pragmatic” is like the difference between „to know the world” and „to have the world”, to watch the play of nature and to participate in it. This pragmatic orientation was an inherent part of Kant's philosophical standpoint, even during his work with pure philosophy (he had for thirty years given lectures on anthropology, published in 1798 as *Anthropology from a pragmatic standpoint*).

Dealing with human actions, pragmatic knowledge considers „what the human being as a free agent makes, or can and ought to make, of himself”¹. As a pragmatic anthropologist, Kant tries to know the human being according to what can be made of him. The process of „self-making” – the development of human predispositions and capacities, application of acquired knowledge and skill, acting and interacting with others, coping with affects and passions – needs teleologically oriented sort of knowledge. As the human being is his own final end, anthropology with a pragmatic purpose is not the investigation of nature itself (the final purpose of nature) or of what nature makes of the human being.

In *Metaphysics of Morals* Kant discusses „man's duty to himself to develop and increase his natural perfection” (for a pragmatic purpose) and „man's duty to himself to increase his moral perfection” (for a moral purpose only)². These duties cannot be taken separately (what is *pragmatically* ruinous is also *morally* reprehensible³). To develop both morally and pragmatically is to become a supersensible subject with a transcendent principle ascribed to it and the real person, who would make his way in life.

Kant speaks about pragmatic predisposition to act purposefully and to form regulative principles. The question is whether resting on pragmatic considerations there is a possibility to go beyond subjective intentions of imperatives belonging to the lower level of hypothetical imperatives with limited validity and qualified goodness? Whether pragmatic *telos* can transcend an animal tendency to conform passively to the impulses of comfort and good living (so-called happiness)? Is there a possibility for a pragmatic doctrine of ends, for a teleology in the domain of *antropon pragmata*, where „pragmatic” doesn't denote the functional, technical, strategic but, reconciling moral and pragmatic interests, it brings out all conditional melioristic potential, which cannot be realised on principles given *a priori* in pure practical reason? Whether self-effectiveness of constitutive moral maxims and strictly rational justification determines the right of being as a human being? Is there primacy of teleological propositions and regulative principles applicable to physics, to biology; and those applicable to the kingdom of ends?

For Kant himself there is an active pragmatic idea of human vocation, of a destination of man to make himself worthy of humanity, actively struggling with the barriers in continual progress toward the better. This is, according to Kant, the sum

1 I. Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, translated and edited by R. B. Louden, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2006, p. 3.

2 I. Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, translated by M. Gregor, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1991, p. 239-242.

3 See I. Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View...*, p. 166.

total of pragmatic anthropology, in respect to the vocation of the human being. „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. No matter how great his animal tendency may be to give himself over passively to the impulses of comfort and good living, which he calls happiness, he is still destined to make himself worthy of humanity by actively struggling with the obstacles that cling to him because of the crudity of his nature”⁴.

Man's pragmatic duty to himself regarding his natural potentiality, duty to make natural perfections his end, consists in continual progress (*only* in continual progress and *only* in individual person). This duty, being itself wide and imperfect, must be confronted with the moral doctrine of ends, based on principles given *a priori* in pure practical reason. There is one important characteristic which pragmatic duty has in common with moral duty: no contentment during life is attainable for the human being: „neither from the moral point of view (being content with his good conduct) nor from the pragmatic point of view (being content with the well-being that he intends to secure through skill and prudence)”⁵.

In transcendental *Weltanschauung* reality as known, interpreted and judged in reflexion, is both mechanistic and teleological; the will, acting according to maxims and being motivated by respect for universal laws, is both free and teleological. The solution of this *aporias* is to be found in the Kant's concept of transcendental teleology, a domain of reflective judgment, which is a means of combining the two kinds of reason (pure theoretical and pure practical) and two parts of philosophy into a whole. Pragmatic anthropology is concerned to investigate the source of principles and ends which are not to be found *a priori* in the reason or in the power of judgment. From pragmatic point of view teleology is seen not as the unique interpretive principle of reflective judgement, interpreting the world of nature and supplementing formal categories. It expresses the ideal of *Bildung*, of forming human existence rooted in the concrete culture, in common or ordinary moral knowledge, education, and social status; this is not transcendental view from nowhere focused on ideas, purposes and values derived independently in the investigation and establishment of the supreme principle of morality.

According to Kant's own words „pragmatic belief” is a belief, which doesn't express *a priori* knowledge yet underlies the actual employment of means to certain actions⁶. Pragmatical virtues are based not upon man's pure cognitive faculties nor upon principles which are speculative rules. As the pragmatic anthropologist, Kant is concerned to establish positive ends which are not ultimate ends that are admirable in themselves. The presence of teleology at this level of Kant's thinking is limited to different scattered purposes.

The kingdom of ends is, from the point of view of the pure moral consciousness, the common final end. This formal structure of the final harmonisation of moral orders (the concept of rational being as one who must regard himself as legislating universal law and the concept of kingdom of ends) must be given in pragmatic anthropology some definite content of the work of becoming human: different

4 I. Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View...*, p. 229-230.

5 I. Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View...*, p. 130. „To be (absolutely) contented in life would be idle rest and the standstill of all incentives, or the dulling of sensations and the activity connected with them. However, such a state is no more compatible with the intellectual life of the human being than the stopping of the heart in an animal's body, where death follows inevitably unless a new stimulus (through pain) is sent” (*ibidem*).

6 I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, translated and edited by P. Guyer and A. W. Wood, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1998, p. 687 [B 852].

characteristics of his formation, both individual (such as skill, prudence, egoism, self-observation, sensibility, the senses of taste and smell, *facultas signatrix*, the weaknesses and illnesses of the soul with respect to its cognitive faculty, mental illnesses, comparative, argumentative and productive wit, sagacity, genius, boredom and amusement, sensuous pleasure, passions, mania for possession, taste, highest moral-physical good) and generic ones (character of the sexes, peoples, races and species). In this sphere what is discussed and analysed are not products of pure reason but pragmatism belief in different degrees, varying in proportion to the interests at stake and pragmatism laws of free action presented to us by reason for our guidance towards the aims set up by the senses⁷. Pragmatic doctrine of ends (contrasted with moral and objective doctrine of ends) is the doctrine of ends which man does adopt in keeping with the sensible impulses of his nature (contrasted with objects of free choice under its laws, which man ought to make his ends) and it contains „the rules of prudence in the choice of one's ends”, whereas the moral doctrine of ends, which treats of duties (ends that are also duties are one's own perfection and the happiness of others), is based on principles given *a priori* in pure practical reason⁸. In other words, anthropology is a doctrine of nature and is based on empirical principles. Kant's pragmatic anthropology, as Charles Sanders Peirce puts it, is practical ethics⁹.

Kant's pragmatic doctrine of ends, were it based on social principles (where *the social* – in Deweyan sense – is not reduced to empirical principles nor founded on reason's concept of freedom), would be more realistic than the idea of spontaneous moral order which emerges as the result of the voluntary and rational activities under unconditional law. And surely Kantian deposit in the thought of classical pragmatism would be a bigger one.

Kant uses his version of pragmatic teleology to imperfect human nature in general („crooked wood of which humankind is made”¹⁰), and its „unsociable sociability”. He doesn't share the optimism of Rousseau, due to belief in man's natural goodness. Of course, he had no reverence for „wisdom of sentiment”, which in Peirce's conservative sentimentalism is the basis of „generalised conception of duty”¹¹. In his academic spirit, Kant is a „formal optimist”; and this optimism is due to his belief in a general *a priori* principle of the purposiveness or finality of Nature and in universal claims of teleological judgments. What is the ground of the unity of empirical laws of nature – the *a priori* regulative idea of purposive unity and design in nature – plays the crucial role not only in scientific inquiry. This conceived purpose or end of nature is fulfilled by the practical ideal of development toward perpetual peace. In Kant's own words, „[t]he mechanical course of nature visibly reveals a purposive plan to create harmony through discord among people, even against their own will”¹².

7 See I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, translated and edited by P. Guyer and A. W. Wood, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1998, p. 674 [B 828].

8 I. Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals...*, p. 190. As an end, one's own happiness can never without self-contradiction be regarded as a duty.

9 „Pragmatic anthropology, according to Kant, is practical ethics” (Ch. S. Peirce, CP 5. 1).

10 I. Kant, *Idea for a Universal History*, [in:] idem, *Toward Perpetual Peace and Other Writings on Politics, Peace, and History*, translated by D. L. Colclasure, Yale University Press, New Haven and London 2006, p. 6, 9.

11 Peirce's conviction that „great respect should be paid to the natural judgments of the sensible heart” (CP 6. 292) is based on doctrine concerning the role, competence, and extent of „right sentiment” in matters of vital importance and „right reason” in theoretical matters. Peirce's argument is that „[...] pure theoretical knowledge, or science, has nothing directly to say concerning practical matters, and nothing even applicable at all to vital crises. Theory is applicable to minor practical affairs; but matters of vital importance must be left to sentiment, that is, to instinct” (CP 1. 637).

The list of great thinkers who exercised a marked influence on pragmatist philosophers is an impressive one. This fact is indicated by the title of William James' book: *Pragmatism. A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking*. Charles Sanders Peirce wrote that his list of categories grew originally out of the study of the table of Kant, „the King of modern thought”. According to Peirce in Kant's synthetic unity the idea of Thirdness is predominant. Peirce acknowledged his debt to Kant when he framed his pragmatic theory of meaning – the theory that „a conception, that is, the rational purport of a word or other expression, lies exclusively in its conceivable bearing upon the conduct of life”¹³. He recognized an affinity between his ideas and those of the great German philosopher, and when he invented the name „pragmatism (pragmaticism)” for his doctrine he was much influenced by Kant. „But for one who had learned philosophy out of Kant, as the writer, along with nineteen out of every twenty experimentalists who have turned to philosophy, had done, and who still thought in Kantian terms most readily, *praktisch* and *pragmatisch* were as far apart as the two poles, the former belonging in a region of thought where no mind of the experimentalist type can ever make sure of solid ground under his feet, the latter expressing relation to some definite human purpose. Now quite the most striking feature of the new theory was its recognition of an inseparable connection between rational cognition and rational purpose; and that consideration it was which determined the preference for the name pragmatism”¹⁴.

As Condillac says, „[...] when there is comparison there is judgment”. The task of reading Kant in the light of pragmatism (not to mention his pragmatism) is undoubtedly beset with difficulties. And there are many difficulties which confront both transcendental and synechistic philosophies in their pragmatico-teleological outline. However, resting on pragmatic considerations, it would be a fruitful endeavour to compare Kant's idea of *telos* as the attained unity (as Kant says: „We only *read* this concept *into* the facts as a guide to judgment in its reflection upon the products of nature”¹⁵) with Peircean *telos* of Thirdness („truly reasonable reasonableness”) and with the conception of developmental teleology¹⁶ of moral personality as a contribution of creative activity to the evolutionary play of nature. Their approach to the matter within a larger teleological framework can be clearly seen when we contrast Kant's dialectic of judgment which provides subjective ground („ineradicably bound to the human race”) for his transcendental conception of teleology with Peirce's metaphysical agapistic „universal endocosmic teleology”.

12 I. Kant, *Toward Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch*, [in:] idem, *Toward Perpetual Peace and Other Writings...*, p. 85.

13 Ch. S. Peirce, *CP*, 5. 412.

14 Ch. S. Peirce, *CP*, 5. 412. Peirce often uses his notions in the sense which is supported by good usage of „hundred authorities”. „The following – he writes – is from Kant: ‘An hypothesis is the holding for true of the judgment of the truth of a reason on account of the sufficiency of its consequents’” (*CP* 2. 511). Another Peirce's own words are worth quoting: „I [...] had come upon the threshing-floor of philosophy through the doorway of Kant” (*CP* 5. 12).

15 I. Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, translated by J. C. Meredith, Oxford University Press, New York 2007, p. 227.

16 According to Kant, it is a pure intuition which is the subjective condition (necessary because of the nature of the human mind) of coordinating all phenomena by a certain law. For Peirce „[...] the word coordination [...] implies a teleological harmony in ideas, and in the case of personality this teleology is more than a mere purposive pursuit of a predeterminate end; it is a developmental teleology. This is personal character. A general idea, living and conscious now, it is already determinative of acts in the future to an extent to which it is not now conscious” (*CP* 6. 156).