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Beyond Pragmatism? Continental Answers to Transatlantic Challenge

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Subject Area:*Educational Studies**Abstract*

Our aim is to evaluate if American pragmatism, especially John Dewey's instrumental pragmatism, has the potential to solve the "shortcomings" of German philosophy and pedagogy. The often-heard claim is that, finally, it is time to take pragmatism seriously also in the German philosophical and pedagogical tradition and to build a bridge to a transatlantic discourse; and that these moves are crucial to developing a better theory of education. The line of argument leading to the claim is "legitimized" by an alleged weakness of German philosophical and pedagogical tradition. This is put forward by the contemporary interpreters of pragmatism, who faithfully follow Dewey's writings about German philosophy and mentality. The argument is, thus, not purely philosophical but given wider currency as the evidence of German mentality. In this paper, we claim that the Deweyan critique is groundless. Hence, the crucial question needs to be faced: Does the compulsive rejection of the dualistic frame of reference have some possible and even dangerous consequences not only for the possibility of philosophy but also for the definition of the concept of education?

Keywords: Pragmatism, German idealism, Kant, Dewey, educational philosophy

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Introduction

John Dewey (1859-1952) is undoubtedly one of the most important thinkers of the 20th century. Above all, he is known about his concerns related to humanism, progressivism, morals and the possibilities of democracy as a life form in the modern societies. Also, Dewey's concept of education is deeply rooted in these noble ideas, which contours the whole of his intellectual career.

Recently, some prominent continental scholars (Tröhler and Oelkers, 2005; Tröhler, et. al. 2010) have made an important intellectual contribution by bringing the Deweyan ideas into the international discussion in the fields of history-, philosophy-, and theory of education. The most intellectually stimulating aim has been the attempt to "build a bridge" for transatlantic educational philosophical discourse concerning American pragmatism's (especially Dewey's instrumental pragmatism's) potential to open up new theoretical and practical horizons in Europe and, in this way, challenge the supposed self-sufficiency of the European (especially German) pedagogical tradition (Tröhler and Oelkers, 2005; Tröhler, et. al. 2010). Accordingly, the pragmatism must finally be taken seriously and the "insurmountable continental rift" between European and American traditions must be forgotten.

The alleged rift has a long history. Starting from the Third International Congress of Philosophy, in Heidelberg in 1908, the history of pragmatism's reception in Europe is one of hostile rejections and misunderstandings. The European dogmatic reluctance to critically reflect on its own tradition has prevented its recognition of the possible benefit of pragmatism, and, ultimately, obstructed the chance for developing "better theories". (Tröhler and Oelkers, 2005: 1; Tröhler et al. 2010: 1.) The reason for this historical deficiency does not, however, arise from European tradition in general but specifically from the German philosophical and pedagogical tradition's reluctance to take pragmatism seriously. This thesis is supported by the interpretation of the German philosophical and pedagogical tradition as a tradition with dogmatic and antidemocratic tendencies (Tröhler & Oelkers, 2005: 4).

Behind this thesis is the often-heard promise that pragmatism can be seen as a philosophy that corrects the philosophical failures of German idealism, and the failures of its "heritage", the modern tradition of *Bildung*. The failure is especially related to the perceived rigid dualistic thinking – where "the priority of spirit over matter or thought over action was given" (Tröhler and Oelkers, 2005: 1; Tröhler et al., 2010: 1-2) – characteristic of the both German idealism and the tradition of *Bildung*. Moreover, this claim is so self-evident that the assumed paucity of discussion is introduced as evidence of a missed opportunity, which is a consequence of the arrogant refusal of German tradition to reflect critically on its own "blind spots". Pragmatism, with its emphasis on anti-dualism, was seen as a threat to German cultural identity, its inward purity and its national hegemony against the Western world. (Tröhler and Oelkers, 2005: 2-5; Tröhler et al., 2010: 2-3.)

However, if one takes a look at the vast amount of the contemporary transatlantic scholarly and philosophic discussion about German idealism, one notices that this interpretation of German idealism hardly exists at all. Thus, the question arises: if not from the scholarly motivated philosophical sources, from where do the contemporary interpreters of pragmatism draw the motivation and the legitimation of their claims?

The answer can be found when one notices that there is nothing original in the critique exposed above. The recurrent main argument, with the specific mixture of German philosophy, dualism and national character, originates from Dewey's *German Philosophy and Politics* (orig. 1915). It echoes Dewey's consistent critique of "traditional philosophies" where one archetype of the philosophy against which the paradigm of instrumental pragmatism was targeted was German idealism, especially Kant's philosophy.

We claim that Dewey's critique is groundless. Because of this failure, the crucial question needs to be faced. Does the compulsive rejection of the dualistic frame of reference have potential and even dangerous consequences not only for the possibility of philosophy but also for the definition of the concept of education? The critique introduced in this paper is philosophical. The aim is not to deny the progressive and moral dimension of Dewey's thought recognized widely by Dewey scholars. There is no need to mistrust Dewey's intentions in this respect. The question is, rather, whether there are some epistemological and ontological undercurrents, which contradicts the positive intentions Dewey originally had.

Because Dewey's argument seems to constitute the starting point for the contemporary European reception of pragmatism and a more or less a programmatic critique of Continental philosophy and pedagogical thought, in the first section, we shall introduce the focal points of Dewey's critique of German philosophical tradition and especially his critique of Kant's philosophy. After this, we introduce Kantian answers to Dewey's critique. Finally, we ask whether Deweyan instrumental pragmatism can offer not only a fruitful orientation to the philosophy but also an adequate normative basis for the development of the "better theories" of education; or, we ask, is the question rather that in order to fulfill the demands for a transatlantic discourse, philosophy and theory of education should take a step "beyond pragmatism" and accept the limitations of the Deweyan instrumental pragmatism?

Dewey's critique on Kant's Philosophy and German mentality

Dewey's philosophical project had a revolutionary objective: to establish a new paradigm of philosophy that can serve the needs of the future of America (MW 8: 202). This new paradigm, the experimental philosophy of life (MW 8: 200) is consciously set apart from two philosophical traditions: the continental *a priori*-philosophy and the traditional empiristic philosophy (MW 8: 200-201). Moreover, Dewey not only wanted to reject the European philosophy as a whole – and in fact, reject the possibility for a transatlantic discourse – but also the previous American philosophy that had borrowed its principles and motives from the older philosophy in a "half-hearted way" (MW 8: 203). Thus, the task of the "new philosophy", as Dewey declared in 1946, is to clean its own house and do a certain amount of refurbishing (LW 15:167, see also e.g. MW 10: 3-5, 37-48, MW 12: 77-201, 256-277, Dewey, 2012).

Dewey's critique of traditional philosophy is, indeed, radical. It aims to undermine the foundations of the traditional conceptions of philosophy. The traditional philosophies have certainly had a historical importance but they remained relatively impotent in intellectual dealings with the present problems of the industrial era (see MW 12: 257, 274). According to Dewey the fundamental constraint of traditional philosophies was their ultimate dogmatism. Traditional empiricism was trapped with the preformed beliefs of sense-perception and *a priori* philosophy with the concept of "ready-made reason" (MW 12: 258-259). Instead of orientating the human life in the "present scene" (MW 12: 274) with the help of the traditional, conservative philosophies, the true societal progression and genuine human growth presumed the revolution in philosophy. The core of this revolution is the naturalization of philosophy, the refutation of the traditional demarcation between science and morals. (MW 12: 258, 261.)

Moreover, the reactionism of traditional philosophies has served, according to Dewey, ideological purposes. The denial of the application of the scientific method in the field of morals and relying rather to immutable, extra-temporal principles has led to the situation where a function of

philosophy was actually only to maintain and legitimize the feudal, hierarchical moral order. In addition, when the dualism between the realms of “physical” and “moral” is understood hierarchically, i.e. that the “moral realm” represents the “higher, spiritual and ideal realm” that goes beyond spatially and temporally determined human experience (MW 12: 271), this kind of a “two-world philosophy” represents an attitude of authoritarianism and despises the humanity itself because it tells us that the solution for all the social and moral problems human being encounters are solved only by relying authorities outside of human experience.

When it comes to Dewey’s critique of continental *a priori* philosophy, the main target is Kant’s philosophical architecture, its assumed rigid dualistic structure. From Kantian philosophy, Dewey found a necessary opponent against which his own instrumental pragmatism was targeted. Dewey clearly recognized Kant’s importance in modern philosophy (EW I; 34, MW 8, 147) and, thus, the reconstruction of modern philosophy – the formulation of the truly modern philosophy – needed to be based on the critique of Kantian philosophy (see Dewey, 1990: 229-250). Moreover, Kantian philosophy represented the archetype of characteristically dualistic German thinking, so, the object of the critique is, in the end, the whole German thinking with its variations of Kantian “two-world theory” (see Honneth, 2001: 323).

Dewey introduces the basic ideas of his critique of Kant’s philosophy already in 1884 in his essay *Kant and Philosophic Method*. It looks like, indeed, that no matter how much Dewey’s philosophical views may have altered during the years, his critique of Kantian philosophy remains consistent throughout his intellectual history. To put it shortly: Dewey repeats the orthodox Hegelian critique related to the continuity thesis - i.e. “from Kant to Hegel” cliché – according to which Kant’s philosophy was a turning point of modern philosophy in a sense that it gave the promise of the critical philosophy but eventually failed to fulfill the critical function of the philosophy. The failure is related to the fact that Kant’s philosophy remains trapped in dualism between the reason and the nature, a dualism that is overcome later by Hegel. Thus, it was not Kant but Hegel who succeeded in fulfilling the Ideal of critical philosophy (EW I: 43.) If Dewey later rejected this Hegelian solution, he would not reject the basic ideas of his critique of Kant.

Although it seems at first sight, according to Dewey, that Kant overcomes the shortcomings of intellectual- and empiricist philosophical methods (EW I: 34-35), the solution is troubled by the strict separation between “two-worlds” the worlds of reason and nature. In Dewey’s reading of Kant, synthetic thought is understood to be possible only in a sense that the pure thought is *applied* to the foreign material given to it in an experience. This is to say that although Kant succeeds in his transcendental logic to explain, by the synthetic use of categories, how experience is primarily possible (EW I: 37-38), the solution remains purely formal. Moreover, categories have themselves a higher condition through which categories constitute experience. This is called by Kant the synthetic unity of apperception or self-consciousness. In this respect, Dewey repeats the mundane critique of the Kantian philosophical method according to which the method fails because of its logical difficulties. The notion of self-consciousness cannot serve as a philosophical foundation because nothing else can be known except the external material brought to our self-consciousness through our sensibility and in order to achieve knowledge of self-consciousness is to define it as an object and this is logically impossible. (EW I: 39-40.)

Kant’s method fails, thus, in two respects. First, attributable to its strict dualism it cannot offer us the knowledge of reality or reveal the truth because *a priori* reason or categories force the foreign material i.e. nature insensitively in a rigid and inflexible mode, which denies every modification by further experience (see MW 12: 134, 136-137). Kantian epistemology represents, thus, the violent epistemological view where knowing itself is already an act of repression according to which (Dewey

quotes Hegel's words here) one could not see the truth, only untrue. (EW I: 41; MW 8: 43; see also Johnston 2006: 521, 541.) Secondly, because of the logical difficulties the method is itself – the theory of self-consciousness – impossible. So, Kant's failure is that it does not eventually introduce either the criterion of truth or the method. Dewey's concludes that although Kant clearly saw the shortcomings of the previous philosophical methods – intellectualist's and empiricists – he nevertheless, because of the dualistic architecture of his philosophic system, formally retains their errors. (EW I: 39-41.)

When this analysis is applied to Kant's theory of phenomenon, it follows that phenomenal world is referred to something *outside* of experience, not something *within* the experience and becomes, thus, forced into the rigid mode of *a priori* reason. We acquire objective knowledge only when human reason imprints the phenomenal world with its inner and preceding structure based on the innate categories (see EW I: 39, 40-41, 45). Because of this, subjective mind rises above the realm of nature, and actually represses it under human reason. The unavoidable consequence is that the act of knowing does not reach the world of phenomena in its plurality and manifests, thus, the despotism of "ready-made reason".

Naturally the problem of dualism also bothers Kant's practical philosophy. Already in *Outlines of a Critical Theory of Ethics* (1891) and later in *Ethics* (1908) Kant's practical philosophy is seen as a one of the influential historical examples of non-critical ethics. Analogously to the collapse of the possibilities of critical philosophy in the case of epistemology also in practical philosophy Kant does not succeed in fulfilling his original intention to formulate critical ethics. Again Dewey's critique echoes Hegel: Kant's ethics fail because it is purely formal: it demands to obey the law simply because it is law (EW 3: 300). The law given us by practical reason *a priori* is liberated, thus, from any content present in our experience. Because the moral law i.e. duty is a law of reason it demands us to act unconditionally it leads to, again, kind of a non-human attitude where our sensual, lower being – our desires and appetites – has no moral value (MW 8: 38). Duty can be filled by any substantive definitions, which measure what happens to be rational according to the current doctrines and social practices deeply rooted in the given historical, political and societal reality (e.g. MW 10: 226-228). The notion of duty is made a fetish (Dewey, 1989: 232). This pedantic and formal view of morality sacrifices all the human affections in the altar of *a priori* reason and destroys eventually, according to Dewey, the morality itself. (Dewey, 1983: 314; see also Dewey, 1988: 122; 168-170; Dewey, 1989: 219-221.) Kantian idealism represented the type of idealism Dewey later calls "intellectual somnambulism" (MW 12: 161.) that in its tendency to favor theory as a separate and nobler region than practice remained impotent and indifferent in the face of the actual sufferings of humanity.

Dewey recognized that Kant's original intention was to develop the critical ethics that could serve the purposes of the critique in the present historical situation. Nevertheless, because its formal character it eventually proved to be solely a form of conventional ethic, a feudal relic without critical power. However, Dewey does not end his analysis here. He goes on to build an explicit link between the Kantianism and authoritarian concept of State typical to German thought: "From the laws of reason, regarded as the laws of man's generic and hence sociable nature, all the principles of jurisprudence and individual morals can be deduced. But a man also has a sensuous nature, and appetitive nature, which is purely private and exclusive. Since reason is higher than sense, the authority of the State is magnified." (Dewey, 1983: 205-206.) Kant's philosophy, finally, legitimizes the tendency of fanaticism and the idealization of authority (Dewey, 1983: 316-317; see also Dewey, 1989: 221).

If the link between Kant's philosophy and German mentality remained cursory in *Ethics* (1908) the argument with the specific mixture of German philosophy, dualism and national character is furthered by Dewey in one of the most obscure writings in the history of American pragmatism and, *German Philosophy and Politics* (1915). Dewey's argument consists mainly of two theses. First, Dewey suggests that as a nation the Germans have a specific national character. The German mind (Sic) is predestined to nationalism; authoritarianism and militarism (see also Westbrook, 1991: 198–199). Accordingly, the Germans are “unwilling to give up a conviction formed” and have “tendency to mysticism” (MW 8: 32-33). On *Understanding the Mind of Germany* (1916) Dewey continues his critics of the German mentality by making American culture and thought presents democracy, freedom and the legacy of French revolution and its struggle for “Liberté” whereas Germany and the German mentality is predetermined to the obedience of duty (MW 10: 228). Between these two cultures or mentalities, is a great divide. Hence the American and German ways of thinking are incompatible; and for Dewey this great divide hardly allows any changes for mutual understanding and transatlantic discourse which would lead to a learning experience for both sides.

Second, Dewey squarely targets Kant and his philosophy. The drawback of Kantian philosophy is, as seen above, that – when based on a dualism between empirical and noumenal world – it places reason and freedom in a realm beyond sense. It is precisely this “two-world theory” which is notoriously responsible for the German mentality and which drove Germans, in the end, to nationalism and militarism, and eventually to Nazism, as Dewey claims in the introduction to the new edition of *German Philosophy and Politics, The One-World of Hitler's National Socialism* (1942).

So, Dewey supposes that Kantian dualism is not just a philosophical problem but also has an impact on social life and is embodied in social pathologies and disturbances (Honneth, 2001: 323). Dewey's writing on *German philosophy and politics* can be understood as a case study of the claim that the “subordination of empirical reality under *a priori* reason” leads unavoidably to the feelings of national superiority typical for German mentality (Honneth, 2001: 324). The separation of nature and morals causes the tendency toward exerting power, which eventually leads into the German politics of war and its involvement in the Great War (Johnston, 2006: 541). The rise of the Third Reich eventually meant the “completion of idealism” (Honneth, 2001: 332), which had its roots in German philosophy and German mentality and its inherent and quasi-natural propensity.

Things are not changed in Dewey's later writings. The fundamental failure of Kantian philosophy is related to its strict dualism between reason and nature, and this thesis served obviously one of the most fundamental motivational factors behind Dewey's own project (e.g. Dewey 2012). When Dewey speaks, for example in *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (1929), about the changed conceptions of experience and reason the central target of the critique is Kantianism. In order to open up the possibilities for a societal progress Kantian concept *a priori reason* has to be replaced with the more flexible mode of rationality what Dewey calls intelligence.

Dewey's interpretation of German philosophy has never been accepted without question, not even among the pragmatists themselves. For example, Sidney Hook, one of the editors of Dewey's collected papers, raised an issue of whether Dewey's critique against Kant and the whole German philosophy is acceptable. According to Hook, Dewey's argument fails to show how and why Kantian dualism “[...] should have led to campaign of imperialistic aggression coupled with assertions about the majesty of the moral law as interpreted by spokesmen for the Hohenzollern dynasty” (MW 8: xxviii) and because of this even those who are the most sympathetic with Dewey's philosophy and opposed to the national policies of Germany before I WW “are likely to regard the argument as a tour de force” (MW 8: xxviii).

In spite of these commonly-voiced reservations, contemporary European reception of pragmatism seem to ignore the criticism raised against Dewey's lectures on German philosophy. Instead, contemporary pragmatism reception attempts to secure its identity on the discontinuity thesis, according to which classical American pragmatism represents itself as the genuine form of American philosophy, which must abandon the old world ideas, especially idealism. Hence the programmatic vision is strongly and irrevocably involved with Dewey's own personal political agenda and his vision of two competing world views. As Hein Retter expressed it: contemporary interpreters have dragged Dewey's "war lyrics" out of grave and try to continue it in the new historical situation (Retter, 2009: 86, 2007, 2010: 281-283).

Dewey's critique of German philosophy, politics and even mentality or spirit seems to base itself on one basic assumption: the alleged dualistic structure the Kantian philosophy. This raises, however, the crucial questions: in what way can Kant's philosophical architecture be considered dualistic? And what role did dualism actually play in Kant's thought?

Kantian Answers to the Deweyan Critique

Dewey's criticism of the alleged dualisms between reason and nature can be dismissed easily if Kant's own definition of the concept of nature is kept in mind. In *Prolegomena* (P: A 72) Kant defines nature as follows: "Nature is [...] the existence of things, insofar as that existence is determined according to universal laws". Since the universal laws are actually based on the *a priori* concepts of our cognitive faculty, what appears as nature for us is already constituted by human reason. A little later (P: A 74), Kant specifies the meaning of the concept of nature in his epistemology, as follows: Nature is nothing more than the set of things, from which we can have an experience. While we can have an experience only when our *a priori* categories are "drawn on" (McDowell, 1996: 12) in the sensual intuitions, our conceptual capacities are actually already actively involved (McDowell, 1996: 9) in the way the nature appears to us in our own cognition.

So, the case is not – as Dewey claims – that human reason cognizes a pre-existing nature and after that subsumes it under the universal laws originated from the *a priori* reason itself. Rather, nature is, for Kant, the appearance in our cognition and thus primordially imposed by *a priori* reason. For human cognition there is no nature mystically preceding or waiting for the application of *a priori* categories. Nature as appearance is, instead, initially and already constituted by those *a priori* categories. From this follows that the dualism between nature and reason is not the necessary condition for the Kantian epistemology and the understanding of human cognition in general. (P: A 72-78; KrV: B 146-148, A 114, A 127-128.)

Dewey's two-world hypothesis has led to serious misunderstandings of Kant's epistemology because it fails to see the fundamental role and importance of the distinction between concepts and intuitions (Guyer, 2006: 49-53; Pinkard, 2008: 26-36; McDowell, 1996: 3-9). Dewey wrongly suggests that Kantian epistemology implies that the ideal mental concepts (for example, categories) define the reality or even imprint the objective reality almost violently. This reading is based on a misunderstanding of the Kantian distinction between intuition and concept. By this distinction Kant does not mean that there is a "pre-established harmony between our *a priori* representations and reality (Guyer, 2006: 48; KrV: B 166-168). Instead, he suggests that knowledge and inquiry emerge from the far more complex interplay between conceptual understanding and a non-conceptual immediate sensual intuition (KrV: B 148; McDowell, 1996: 4).

Kant actually maintains that human knowledge results from experience, which is neither simply the product of the subjective mind nor caused by the material entities outside it. Kant merely suggests that mind and world are fused together in an experience, so that mind – which is a philosophical principle rather than a substance – consists merely of concepts and perceptions, which run simultaneously together. To have a mind simply implies the human capability to use concepts to organize sensual data and make cognitive judgments based on both concepts and intuitions. (Brandom, 2009; McDowell, 1996; Pinkhard, 2008: 39.)

Kant argues that sensibility and understanding are those central cognitive faculties which together constitute human knowledge (KrV: A 124-125). Human knowledge cannot be reduced to either of these elements. Sensations are evoked by the objects in reality, but human knowledge emerges only when an *a priori* structure of conceptual understanding makes those sensations experienced consciously by the epistemic subject. However, the *a priori* structures of understanding or transcendental subjectivity cannot be operative without sensations. There must be, so to speak, already something which can be brought into consciousness by the activity or spontaneity of the mind. Knowledge emerges in the process where the faculties of sensibility and understanding jointly form “the unity of the structure through which knowledge is possible. Thus, understanding cannot obtain knowledge without sensibility. Sensibility, in turn, must be so structured that the understanding is able to determine it according to the conditions of its unity i.e., the categories.” (Henrich, 1994: 31.) Kant stresses the mutual interdependence or the interweaving between concepts and intuitions is constitutive to our knowledge (KrV: A 50/ B 74, KrV: A 51-52/B75-76.).

Kant does not ground his epistemology on the dualistic conception of the human mind and nature, but instead emphasizes the interplay between concepts and intuitions, which are the equally primordial elements or faculties of human cognition. Every act of knowing results from the process where these two elements mediate with each other. Kant called this process “synthesis”, which remarkably describes the very nature of human consciousness. Consciousness becomes actual only when these faculties come together (Pinkard, 2008: 34-37). We cannot have partial consciousness which is intuitive based on sensual information; nor we can have a partial consciousness which would be solely based on the mind’s inner activity using *a priori* concepts. We can only have something which might be called “synthetized intuitions”. We are never aware of sensual intuitions immediately, but only when those intuitive sensations are brought into the consciousness while they are combined with the conceptual forms delivered by the activity of the mind. On the other hand, conceptual schemata cannot be known as such. For example, we cannot know anything like causality as such or immediately. It can be known only then when the concept of causality is already applied to such sensual intuitions, which are available and can be judged under the concept of causality.

Dewey largely misreads Kant, and, as Johnston (2006:546) states, he does not “pay sufficient attention to Kant’s overcoming” of dualisms in his epistemology. For Kant, there is no gap or void between the conceptual activity and sensual intuitions. They exist together only in the synthesizing process of the cognizing consciousness. Nature is appearance, rooted in *a priori* concepts and sensual intuitions, not something which already exists independently from human reason and its *a priori* structures. Hence, the Deweyan claim that Kant inevitably suggests the existence of two diverse, even opposite, realms - namely reason and nature - is simply false. The Deweyan claim that reason would imprint on existing nature is also false, because nature appears for us first and foremost only at the moment when *a priori* concepts (i.e. reason) constitute it. Hence it could be even be claimed that reason is already, initially and originally, within nature, not outside of it.

The two-world hypothesis leads also to serious misunderstandings when it is attached to Kant’s practical philosophy. Dewey’s fixation on the notion of duty is highly problematic; and his

understanding of the Kantian concept of duty is arbitrary and based on the misuse of the very concept which has a strict and technical meaning in the context of the Kantian moral philosophy. The concept of duty can be understood properly only by its connection to other concepts which Kant uses while describing moral agency (Wood, 1995: 169).

Kant defines duty as the necessity to act so that we respect the universal moral law (G: BA 14). Acting from duty means that we respect the moral law, rather than accept any other motives or volition for our action. According to Kant, acting from duty means that a subjective maxim of the action has moral content (G: BA 9 -10). The maxim has moral content only when it can be universalized in the sense of the categorical imperative. Kant defines the categorical imperative as follows: “handle nur nach derjenigen Maxime, durch die zugleich wollen kannst, dass sie ein allgemeines Gesetz werde“ (G: BA 52). After giving this definition Kant returns to the concept of duty, which can be deduced from the concept of the moral law itself.

Duty refers to the action based on an end which can universally obligate all possible rational agents. Furthermore, duty must be based on the autonomous will of the agent. Therefore the end or the aim of action must be set by the moral agent herself; and in addition to this, she has to prove her maxim for it to become universal law. (G: BA 73-74.) Duty is a subjective maxim –that is, personal volition which is set by the agent for herself, in such a way that other rational agents can accept this maxim as their own. It must be justified by and for all moral agents. (Guyer, 2006: 182.) If a subjective maxim does not fill these two conditions, the motive of action is based on impulse (*Reiz*) or coercion (*Zwang*), which has its cause outside of the agent's own reasoning. (G: BA 73.)

Hence duty implies strong autonomy, self-mastery and self-determination against the heteronomy of a moral agent (G: BA 71-72; Guyer, 2006: 204). As Korsgaard (1998: 70) emphasizes, both moral duty and the intrinsic normativity of moral law originate from autonomy. There are no other normative sources which could dictate our actions and thus posit external obligations. They are the moral laws we ourselves posit by judging the universability of our subjective maxim by using human reason. Only the will of a moral agent can make a moral law normatively binding for the moral agent herself. This requires that the will of the moral agent must be initially tested by its convertibility into universal law. (G: BA 83, BA, BA 98-99, 103-106.)

The ground of moral action (i.e. duty for the sake of duty) is based on the idea of reason, which defines our empirical will *a priori* (G: BA 34, BA 63). Duty bounds us to moral law, which in turn requires the principle of universalization and therefore implies a further formula of the categorical imperative: the kingdom or the realm of ends (G: BA 14, BA 73-74; Guyer, 1998b: 238-239, 2006: 204). Duty is a deed which can be adopted by every rational being who is able to legislate willingly her own maxims so that they can be accepted and followed by other rational beings (G: BA 84-85, BA 87). With this concept, Kant makes explicit the idea of reason as defining our will. Essentially, the realm of ends is the *a priori* ideal moral order, which is supposedly communally instituted by rational moral agents as they judge their moral commitments. Moral agents actually institute and sustain the realm of ends every time they judge their actions by their ability to become accepted and adopted by the community of all rational beings. (G: BA 74-77, BA 120.) Clearly, the kingdom of ends represents for Kant something that we should always strive to realize in our actions. Moral agents ought to act as if they were subjected to the kingdom of ends, which is, however, the merely counter-factual ideal to be realized in our actions. (G: BA 81, 84; Guyer, 2006, 205.)

Human rationality is not just subjective or individual or a monological disposition but implies, in the very formal sense, sociability (G: BA 77; 84) in which there is, inevitably, “the reciprocity involved in each autonomous agent legislating for herself and others that is to be considered as that which “institutes” the law, not the individual agent considered apart from all others nor the

community hypostasized into an existent whole of any sort” (Pinkhard, 2008: 54). Morals are not a natural or created order. Morals are not necessarily a part of every pre-existing community or society. They are, instead the independent formation of the will of individuals. Morals, then, are the order based on human reason and its continuous use in concrete situations alone (Pinkard 2008: 54, 62). No single individual, no divine authority, no community as a pre-established whole can give the ultimate ground for morals, save the implicit reciprocity of the moral reasoning itself. Thus duty as the duty towards the realm of ends actually transcends the rules, norms and institutions given in our lived context.

Acting morally becomes possible only when moral agents can separate themselves from their personal ends and particular empirical interests and see themselves as universal legislators who are members of the realm of ends. Only then are they able to make moral judgments which can become universally acceptable maxims. (G: BA 85; Guyer 1998b: 238 – 239.) Otherwise, they would have only individual ends and particular interests in the given situation, which cannot be accepted by other rational agents. From this it follows that moral duty can be regarded only as our obligation to the realm of ends and not to the normative coercion or the fear of whatever political authority (G BA 87: 113), as Dewey suggests.

Because Dewey fails to see the conceptual connections between duty, the categorical imperative and its implications for autonomy and universality, the concept of duty turns eventually into the obligation to resign oneself to higher political or militaristic authorities or diverse social institutions which have a suggestive power to individual actors in the lived empirical and historical context (Johnston, 2006: 543). However, The Kantian definition of duty clearly rules out Deweyan misreading. Duty is not an obligation dictated by some authority or a form of heteronomy caused by unreflected inclinations, impulses or coercion. As we have seen above, an act is done out of duty only when it is motivated by the universal moral law. This however implies that an action must be self-determined so that a moral agent herself must autonomously set an aim or end for her action; and that moral agent must reflect on her aims and prove whether they can be accepted by all possible rational beings. Action is a duty only when these two conditions of the categorical imperative are fulfilled. In other words: the morality of action, (i.e. duty) is not based on the experience in the empirical historical context, social practices, institutions or authorities and the suggestive power and coercion rooted in them as Dewey assumes. Instead, as seen above, what Kant himself says about duty is directly in contradiction to this. Duty does not mean the heteronomy of the will. It has its origins in freedom and autonomy. Duty obligates us to follow no other authority except our own reason while setting the aims for our actions and judging their moral worth.

In the above, we have aimed to show how Dewey crudely misinterpreted Kant’s philosophy and did not properly understand the main arguments and motives of Kantian epistemology and ethics.¹ Thus, the question must be faced: If the necessary precondition for the establishment of the truly critical philosophy, transatlantic discourse and, also, for the development of the “better theories of education” was the naturalization of the philosophy and, thus, the rejection of the dualistic frame of reference does this, eventually, encounter some serious or even dangerous side-effects that vitiate Dewey’s original intentions?

¹ Unfortunately there is no room to discuss Dewey’s charge of Kantian formalism. Dewey repeats the critique originally expressed by Hegel. This charge has been widely discussed by the contemporary Kant-scholars (e.g, Korsgaard 1998; Guyer 1989a; Wood 1989, 1995) and also by the philosophers doing systematic work on ethics (Habermas 1995). The conclusion is overwhelmingly: the charge that formal moral law could be filled virtually by any act or authoritative policy is simply a crude misconception of the Kantian ethics. Such a procedure would violate the Kantian concept of morality itself.

Concluding Remarks: Beyond Pragmatism?

From the point of view of educational theory, the most significant strength of pragmatism is, according to Oelkers, (2001: 265-270), its experimental logic and its related presumption for the necessity of problem-solving. This offers, in fact, a substantial definition for human action (see e.g. Dewey, 1990, 80-86). From the pedagogical point of view a pragmatist definition of human action simply means that in everyday pedagogical situations, the educator attempts to find the means to achieving her goals. Education as problem-solving is to be understood specifically as an instrumental action. Its efficiency and success rest on whether the educator manages to find a solution to achieving the goal. From this point of view, pedagogical rationality and the legitimacy of the pedagogical acts depend solely upon their efficiency in solving the observed problem in a given learning- or teaching-situation. From this it follows that the educator need not rely on any given metaphysical or traditional mode of thinking, but instead, on her own experimental problem-solving (Oelkers, 2000, 6). This experimentalism has, anyway, potential consequences. This has to do with the problem that pragmatism – at least its Deweyan version – inevitably encounters: the danger of reducing reason to instrumental reason.

Problem-solving alone does not describe the core of pedagogical acts i.e. teaching, education, child-rearing. Experimental logic and the notion of problem-solving, expanded to the description of human learning and growth processes, lead also to the instrumentalization of learning and growth. Learning and growth are defined as processes through which the organism continuously develops the kinds of habits that enable it to survive in its environment (see e.g. MW 12: 127-138; Dewey, 1988: 89-90; Dewey, 1990: 80-86.) Thus, learning and growth are narrowed to processes in which the organism attempts to take care of its self-preservation, as efficiently as possible. Learning and growth has only, in this framework, an instrumental value.

From the point of view of Deweyan instrumentalism, the human agent does not necessarily need to judge whether the other rational subjects can accept her actions or not. A sufficient basis to evaluate the meaningfulness and legitimacy of the action is by the subject solving the problems she encounters in a way that benefits her, regardless of whether the other subjects accept her actions or not. Deweyan instrumentalism is characterized as “the individualistic conception of subjectivity and intentionality” (Popp, 2015). A sufficient criterion for rational action is the subject's personal situational experience and the need arising from this to successfully solve the problems restricting her action. There is no difference between sentient and sapient: rather, Deweyan pragmatism reduces intellectual activity to a skillful action, common to all sentient animals (Brandt, 2009: 175). The instrumentalism characteristic of pragmatism is the consequence of its naturalism, which blurs the “bright line between sapience and sentience” (Brandt, 2009: 175). If the criterion of rationality is defined as a skillful action and, at the same time, “knowing that” is reduced to the “knowing how”, then both instrumentalism and the individualistic conception of intentionality are accepted. So, learning and growth as problem solving are fundamentally nothing more than an instrument for self-preservation and adaptation to the given environment. (Habermas, 2004: 268-270.)

According to Jürgen Habermas, the Deweyan epistemology can be criticized for its instrumentalism implied by the inherent strong naturalism. Accordingly, the pragmatist concept of truth is based on the “neodarwinian” and naturalistic description of human being as a living organism, which develops tools or instruments for surviving and optimal adaptation in the environment so that the basic needs for the self-preservation of the species can be secured. However, if the only criterion for the truth and intelligent behavior is the most efficient adaptation to natural and social environment

in the given context, then there is no guarantee that human actions would lead towards the democracy and mutual recognition of the needs of the others. With the criteria drawn from contextually restrained (i.e. egocentric or ethnocentric) perspective only those actions are rational or good, which serve as tools for the adaptation. The adaptation can also happen in the cost of the other human organisms or human groups. Eventually, Deweyan pragmatism has no conceptual and intellectual tools to explain how democracy should be possible and even the obligatory form of life. Eventually, Deweyan epistemology clashes with the good willing democratic and humanistic intentions from which the American pragmatism is widely known for. In order to prevent ourselves from falling into the instrumentalization of education, learning and growth, we should, instead, reconcile ourselves with the Kantian concept of reason. (2004: 266-270, 295-298.)²

For Kant, human action based on natural needs and inclinations is also instrumental. It is an act of influencing of the environment in order to satisfy those needs. However, Kant specifically demonstrates that the human being is not only sentient but also sapient – a being who is competent to critically judge its personal maxims based on natural inclinations and hence able to self-critically limit the use of instrumental reason. We, as human beings, have the possibility to judge the legitimation and the validity of our actions from a wider perspective; not solely from the perspective of personal-situational experience. Kant emphasizes that rational subjects ought to be able – at least in principle – to judge their intentions which stem from subjective inclinations in otherwise than from the purely egoistic perspective of utility. This presumes, however, that the subject transcends her own egoistic perspective and judges her maxims from the generalized point of view of other rational subjects.

This mindset culminates in Kant's pedagogical lectures. For Kant education was always moral education (*Moralisierung*). The task for education is not only to enable skillful action in the sense of Deweyan instrumentalism, but also to enable the kind of character that is able to judge the aims of the action and, based on these, to choose only the good ones. "Good" refers here to aims which every rational being can accept as its own (ÜP: A 23-24). In other words, education should help us avoid acting solely from our own egoistic perspective, and, instead, critically reflect whether our intentions can be universalized and accepted by other rational beings, and therefore made entirely moral.

The philosophical horizon opened by Kant's philosophy goes beyond an instrumental rationality specific to Deweyan pragmatism. It attempts to affirm that we are, as sentient beings, not only part of organic nature but in addition, sapient beings. When pragmatism blurs the difference between sentient and sapient, it precludes us from seeing this option in philosophy and education. From the point of view of Deweyan naturalism and instrumentalism, it is evidently not possible to deduce the presumption that we ought to have a duty to judge our aims also from the point of view of other beings. This would require the acceptance of at least some kind of quasi-transcendental argument that justifies the possibility of morality otherwise than the naturalistic frame of reference. Therefore, while judging Dewey's critique of Kant, the question whether Dewey's accusation against Kantianism is in fact unjustified or not is only one side of the coin. The other issue must be raised, namely whether it is impossible or not to do philosophy without such a distinction between reason and reality (Honneth, 2001: 335). Kant's answer is clear: practical philosophy is not possible without a kind of a dualistic frame of reference (see also Habermas, 2005: 166-171). Without this, the critical function of the

² Habermas's critique is analogous with the critique of Deweyan pragmatism introduced by Max Horkheimer in the *Eclipse of Reason* (1947).

philosophy cannot be maintained. The whole motivation of Kant's philosophy, therefore, represents a philosophical attitude that can be described with an expression "beyond pragmatism".

If we are ready to take Kant's philosophical challenge seriously, then a dialogical bridge between traditions is possible. However, Dewey himself, with his prejudices and American hubris (Stone, 2002), rejected this possibility. Perhaps the crucial question is not so much the reconciliation between Kantian transcendental philosophy and some sort of naturalism in order to achieve the updated, "more modern" version of transcendental philosophy. Instead, the ongoing de-transcendentalization of philosophy, of which pragmatism is one example should maybe take a step back. So, maybe it can be claimed that pragmatism – at least in the Deweyan sense – is in need of transcendentalization. With this, it could learn to critically reflect the instrumentalistic tone arising from naturalism and Darwinism.

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