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Rozum praktyczny
w filozofii Kanta i Fichtego.
Prymat praktyczności w klasycznej myśli niemieckiej

(Summary)

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SUMMARY

PRACTICAL REASON IN KANT AND FICHTE'S PHILOSOPHY THE PRIMACY OF THE PRACTICAL REALM IN CLASSICAL GERMAN THOUGHT

Practical reason plays a fundamental role in the classical German philosophy. It is neither only an extension nor an appendix to the theoretical reason, nor a mere application of already defined, theoretical notions. Understood as a sphere of manifestation of human freedom, the practical reason gains outstanding significance from the standpoint of Immanuel Kant, as well as from that of Johann Gottlieb Fichte. The idea of freedom is a leading thought of both philosophers, an underlying principle of their systems. Taken this into consideration, it is no wonder that the practical reason becomes the privileged form of rationality for both of them. The practical reason is thus not a subsequent type of rationality, following the theoretical reason, as Aristotle suggested. Nor is it just equivalent to it. Because it constitutes the domain of human freedom, the practical reason has clear advantage over the theoretical reason; it becomes primary to its theoretical counterpart. To quote the classical Kant's formula, that has proven to be decisive for the whole development of German idealism, including Hegel and Schelling: the practical reason holds *primacy* over the theoretical reason.

This work is devoted not only to the practical reason in the classical German philosophy, but, in a more accurate formula, to *the primacy of the practical reason* in Kant and Fichte's philosophy. By proclaiming this "primacy", Kant attributed a distinguished status in human reflection to the pure (unconditioned) practical reason, i.e. to the considerations and aims of primarily *moral* nature. Nevertheless one has to be aware of the fact that both for Kant and Fichte the philosophy of politics also constitutes the domain guided by the practical reason.

Every chapter of my work is an analysis of one of Kant's or Fichte's texts. By doing this, I unfold the multitude of meanings of the notion of "primacy of the practical reason". The sequence of texts does not always reflect their chronology. The part of the work devoted to Kant opens up with an attempt to interpret the basic, narrow meaning of the thesis of the "primacy of the pure practical reason", as it is presented in the argumentative structure of the *Critique of Practical Reason*. What I highlight in this first chapter is that Kant would not accept the principle of mere coordination of the practical and theoretical use of reason. I also try to show the basic meaning of the hierarchy of different uses of reason, as it is proposed by Kant. What does it exactly mean, that "every interest is eventually practical"? The answer that we get by analyzing the second *Critique* is that the practical reason delivers a "broader frame" for interpretation, which also covers the perspective of the theoretical reason.

This reading finds its continuation in the second chapter, where I discuss the idea of the “two standpoints”, as it is described in the *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*. In this chapter I try to explain more precisely how the primacy of the practical reason is being turned into reality. The analysis is mostly devoted to the notion of autonomy as the universal lawgiving of the will. The idea of the “kingdom of ends” sheds particularly interesting light on the meaning of the “primacy”-thesis. It turns out that the non-instrumental nature of stating universal laws, which one at the same time obeys, is the source of human dignity. The interest in realizing the reason’s own ends is distinguished from any empirical interest.

The issue of interest is developed more precisely in the following chapter, devoted to the *Metaphysics of Morals*. In that chapter I reflect on the necessity and general nature of the interest of reason. The over-sensual sphere, which constitutes the object of reason’s interest, is interpreted not as an ontologically separated domain, but as a form of sensual world, that should be given to it through the actions of finite rational beings. The positive law is shown to be an area of realization of the primacy of the pure practical reason. I also investigate the notion of an end, which at the same time is an obligation (such an end consists of one’s own perfection and the others’ happiness). It is also demonstrated how Kant’s understanding of the outer freedom relates acting persons to other rational beings by means of the notion of reciprocal coercion.

The question of tension between the empirically conditioned and the pure practical reason returns in the next chapter. In his essay *On the Old Saw: ‘That May Be Right in Theory, But it Won’t Work in Practice’* (but also in *Perpetual Peace* and in the essay *What Is Enlightenment?*) Kant defends the belief that the pure practical reason should be seen not only as powerless moral consideration. The pure reason can be practical and the practice can and should be a domain of rationality – the explication of this statement is the subject matter of the fourth chapter. Not only the morality, but also the domains of state and international law are turned by Kant into the field submitted to the principle of the primacy of the pure practical reason in its broad meaning. This chapter shows that Kant’s practical philosophy is beset with the problem of tension between the law apodictically dictated by the pure practical reason on the one hand and the nature, understood as a field of the realization of that law, on the other hand.

The last chapter of this part of my work describes Kant’s attempt to get rid of the tension mentioned above, as this attempt is made in the third *Critique*. The idea of purposive character of nature is meant to bring about the reconciliation of the consequences of free actions and the consequences of natural processes. It is probably in this work that Kant comes most closely to Fichte and the whole tradition of German idealism grounded by him. Nevertheless, as I try to show, Kant consequently attributes only a regulative status to the idea of purposive character of nature. It is first Fichte who transforms that idea into a constitutive principle.

Out of the part of my work devoted to Kant there emerges a concept of reason as an active power, ordered by rules posited from the standpoint of community of all finite rational beings. This is the concept of reason as a power which is able to set

goals and which is interested in achieving them. A power which is intersubjective in its nature, open for the impact of the ethics, law and history. At the same time, I try in every chapter to explain which motives of Kant's philosophy could have motivated Fichte not only to adhere to Kant's thesis of primacy of the practical reason, but also to transform it radically.

In the part of my work devoted to Fichte I begin with depicting his philosophical programme, as it is presented in both *Introductions* to the *Science of Knowledge*. The heart of this programme is a radically reinterpreted thesis of the primacy of the practical reason. Fichte's new understanding of that thesis transforms the practical reason into a source of the whole domain of both cognition and action. I consider the *Foundations of Transcendental Philosophy (Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo)* to be an excellent example of fulfilling this programme, because this text marks the disappearance of division into the theoretical and the practical part of philosophical investigations, a division still valid in the classical version of *Science of Knowledge (Foundations of the Entire Science of Knowledge)*. Having analysed Fichte's complex reconstruction of the whole domain of human action and cognition, I pass on to discuss the main proposals of a work particularly devoted to questions of moral philosophy: Fichte's *System of Ethics (1798)*. Already in this early work one can observe a tendency to make reason an absolute power. This tendency has its distant grounds in some statements of Kant's philosophy; it is vibrant in the thought of Fichte from the beginnings of his reflection. The strengthening of the above mentioned tendency is shown on the example of changes and notion shifts between *System of Ethics (1798)* and *The Way Towards the Blessed Life*. The part of my work devoted to Fichte ends up with the attempt to reconstruct the conception of action and the description of world, as it is depicted in the *Way Towards the Blessed Life*. The above mentioned tendencies lead to a departure from the initial Kantian inspiration. In Fichte's notion of practical reason one can trace a clear motif of activist self-cognition that is accompanied by the conception of an absolute and abstract practise. This conception finds its expression especially in Fichte's postulate of self-deconstruction of the phenomenal sphere as a way to make place for an Absolute itself.

There are in fact some elements – at least implicitly – present in the writings of Kant that could have inspired Fichte to choose this way of transforming a reason into an absolute power. Nevertheless there also arises an alternative philosophical project out of the Kantian notion of practical reason: the relation of rational beings and their mutual recognition as the condition of rationality itself. This motif can be traced in Kant's notion of categorical imperative (with its idea of considering the possibility of the consent of other rational beings for a proposed rule), in his ideal of the kingdom of ends, but also in Fichte's concept of the existence of other rational beings as the necessary condition of explaining the structures of mind; and – what should be stressed – also in the concept of the communicative reason, which is still important today.

In both parts of my work there appear motifs that build a kind of guiding line of the whole interpretation. These are: 1) "primacy", i.e. the fundamentally practical

nature of the “pure reason” as interested in realization of its own goals; 2) the tendency to aim at the unity of reason, which in the course of time becomes also a tendency to make reason an absolute power; 3) the relation between the individual’s freedom and the freedom of other individuals, as well as the relation between the human freedom and the freedom of the Absolute; and 4) the intersubjective relation, that determines the notion of reason and rationality. Especially important role is played by the distinction between two contradictory tendencies: the tendency to transform reason into the Absolute, to build a substantial theory of the reason and the opposing (or rather: alternative) tendency to understand reason as debate. In the conclusion of my work I point at the great significance of the notion of communicative reason, i.e. rationality understood from the standpoint of the debate, for contemporary discussions in social and moral philosophy. Taking part in actual philosophical disputes, Jürgen Habermas, John Rawls, and Marek J. Siemek in Poland developed the concept of rationality as conditioned by the debate and agreement. The idea of intersubjectivity that originates in the tradition of German idealism proves to be not just a relic out of history of philosophy. It constitutes an inspiration, an important concept, also for contemporary discussions.

The underlying idea of my whole work is a deep conviction that the understanding of reason as debate can be an effective antidote for all dilemmas which emerge out of the process of transforming the rationality and the practise into something “absolute”. The more modest concept of Kant may fail to reach the dramatic level of Fichte’s philosophy. On the other hand, it can surely appeal to everyone that identifies his human condition far more with “crooked wood”, to quote Kant, than with Fichte’s “Absolute”. The aim is obviously not to denounce Fichte’s thinking in any way, but to point at the idea that is clearly vital in his philosophy, i.e. at the idea of intersubjectivity. This is the heritage that can prove inspiring for the contemporary philosophy, which wants to remain open for signals coming out of the social reality of the world.