Kant's Pragmatism

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Abstract

This paper offers a definition of the term "pragmatic", as it is used in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. The definition offered does not make any reference to the affinities between Kant's pragmatism and the philosophies of the American or other pragmatists but draws its *definiens* entirely from the Kantian conceptual framework. It states that the term "pragmatic" denotes imperatives, laws and beliefs of a specific type: an imperative is pragmatic if and only if it is concerned with the choice of means to individual or universal happiness; a law is pragmatic if and only if our willingness to presuppose it results from our obedience to a pragmatic imperative; and a belief is pragmatic if and only if it relates to the objective validity of pragmatic laws. This paper also discusses two rival definitions of the term "pragmatic" (as used by Kant) that have been brought forward by Sidney Axinn and Nicholas Rescher.

I   Introduction

It is well known that Peirce stated that reflection on Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* led him to his pragmatic maxim.[1] It is also commonplace to note that Kant uses terms such as "pragmatic belief" and "pragmatic law" in his transcendental doctrine of method. And most commentators correctly identify the laws referred to by Kant as "pragmatic" with the theoretical hypotheses that are dealt with in the appendix to the transcendental dialectic.

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[1]   Cf. Peirce (^{3}1965) 5.3.

But to date there has not been any successful attempt to define the term "pragmatic" within the Kantian conceptual framework. Authors have sometimes defined this term by pointing out affinities between Kant's conception of theoretical hypotheses and Peirce's pragmatic maxim or James' and Dewey's pragmatic conception of truth.[2] Defining this term by pointing out such affinities, however, is an anachronistic maneuver that does not necessarily capture the sense in which Kant meant to speak of pragmatic laws and pragmatic beliefs. The only notable attempts to define the term "pragmatic" within the Kantian conceptual framework have been undertaken by Nicholas Rescher and Sidney Axinn. But both attempts fail, because the term is given too wide a meaning. While Rescher believes that "pragmatic" is largely synonymous with "practical" and that the practical realm is effectively included in the moral realm, Axinn equates "pragmatic" with "regulative". Believing that the practical realm is effectively included in the moral realm, however, misses Kant's point that there are other than categorical imperatives operative in the practical sphere. And equating "pragmatic" with "regulative" leads to the unwelcome consequence that not only the theoretical hypotheses but also the dynamical principles of the understanding would have to be seen as pragmatic.

I will argue below that a Kantian definition of the term "pragmatic" states that this term denotes imperatives, laws and beliefs of a specific type: an imperative is pragmatic if and only if it is concerned with the choice of means to individual or universal happiness; a law is pragmatic if and only if our willingness to presuppose it results from our obedience to a pragmatic imperative; and a belief is pragmatic if and only if it relates to the objective validity of pragmatic laws. Obviously, this definition is very much alive in much of what the American pragmatists say about truth and science. But the affinities between Kant's pragmatism and that of the American pragmatists are not of our primary concern here. What shall be attempted instead is a search for the systematic location of pragmatic laws within the

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2   A neat overview of these affinities is given in Axinn (2006).

Kantian architectonic, a clarification of the Kantian notions of hypothetical and pragmatic imperative as well as a more detailed account of why the definitions spelled out by Rescher and Axinn fail. It will turn out Kant's pragmatism is more limited in scope than both authors try to make us believe.

II   The location of pragmatic laws within the Kantian architectonic

We all know that according to Kant, a critique of pure reason has a negative as well as a positive utility (*CpuR* Bxxiv, A795/B823). While its negative utility lies in the restriction of the range of all objects of secure knowledge to the range of empirical and mathematical objects, its positive utility consists in a defense of certain practical rational beliefs against objections to the justifiability of these beliefs. The negative utility is pursued by a metaphysical and transcendental deduction of the subjective conditions of the possibility of our experience (intuitions a priori, pure concepts of the understanding and transcendental principles) and by a demonstration of the claim that the use of transcendental ideas transcends the range of all objects of secure knowledge, because it does not satisfy these conditions. By contrast, the positive utility is pursued by the specification of conditions under which the use of transcendental ideas may be justified. As it turns out, for Kant the use of transcendental ideas is justified as long as it is expressed by the formulation of theoretical hypotheses and moral postulates.

Theoretical hypotheses and moral postulates have in common with the transcendental principles of the understanding that they are principles: propositions serving as major premises in syllogistic derivations of cognitions, as Kant has them (*CpuR* A300/B357). The transcendental principles are either mathematical principles (axioms of intuition or anticipations of perception) or dynamical principles (analogies of experience or postulates of

empirical thought in general). While the former are constitutive of empirical perceptions, the latter are only regulative, i.e. regulating perceptions that are already constituted (*CpuR* A179f./B222f.). Just like the dynamical principles among the transcendental principles, the theoretical hypotheses are only regulative (*CpuR* A509/B537, A561f./B589f., A619/B647, A642ff./B670ff.). Unlike the former, however, they do not regulate empirical perceptions but the understanding and its empirical concepts: they serve to obtain for the concepts of the objects of experience "the greatest unity alongside the greatest extension" (*CpuR* A644/B672). By contrast, the moral postulates are constitutive as are the mathematical principles among the transcendental principles. They are obviously not involved in the constitution of empirical perceptions. But they are constitutive in the sense that their validity is sufficient for the existence of the objects that they are concerned with (*CprR* A3-6, 239, 242-6).

According to Kant, the transcendental principles as well as the theoretical hypotheses and moral postulates can be justified, i.e. transcendentally deduced. The transcendental principles are justified by disclosing them as necessary conditions of possible experience (*CpuR* A176/B218). The theoretical hypotheses are justified by arguing that there would not be any greatest systematic unity in experience if the mind were not "a simple substance that (at least in this life) persists in existence with personal identity, while its states [...] are continuously changing"; if nature were not "infinite in itself and without a first and supreme member"; and if the sum total of all appearances (the world of sense itself) did not have "a single supreme and all-sufficient ground outside its range, namely an independent, original, and creative reason" (*CpuR* A672/B700). Finally, the moral postulates are justified by exhibiting the supreme moral law (the categorical imperative) as a fact of reason that imposes the duty on all rational agents to pursue the highest good. For the highest good presupposes the possibility of the highest good. And the possibility of the highest good requires that the soul be immortal, that rational agents be free (in the transcendental sense of the term), and

that there be a God creating an intelligible world in which the highest good is realized (*CprR* A219-240).

The transcendental deductions of the transcendental principles, theoretical hypotheses and moral postulates do not lead to the same sort of evidence, though. Only the transcendental principles are the object of a priori knowledge. By contrast, the theoretical hypotheses and moral postulates express only practical beliefs (*CpuR* A823/B851). As expressions of practical beliefs they share the characteristic that other than paralogisms, antinomies and conclusions from traditional proofs of God's existence they do not express doctrinal beliefs (*CpuR* A825/B853). They differ only with respect to the specific sort of practical belief expressed by them.

Theoretical hypotheses are practical in the sense of "pragmatic", i.e. expressions of pragmatic beliefs (*CpuR* A824-5/B852-3). Pragmatic beliefs are beliefs that we are willing to accept when obeying a certain type of hypothetical imperatives, i.e. commands prescribing the actions that rational agents would have to carry out when following particular practical ends (*GW* 39-40). If the end is a practical purpose (like that of producing bread), the hypothetical imperative is a technical imperative or imperative of skill (*GW* 41, 44): e.g. 'You ought to construct a mill' (cf. *CprR* 47). But if the practical end is one's own happiness, the hypothetical imperative is "an imperative concerned with the choice of means to one's own happiness" (*GW* 42), i.e. a pragmatic imperative or imperative of prudence (*GW* 42, 44). Concepts of one's own happiness are intra- and intersubjectively different (cf. *CprR* A46). Depending on the concept of individual happiness that one happens to choose, there are thus a great number of pragmatic imperatives recommending themselves: if happiness is associated with riches, knowledge, a long life or health, the respective imperatives are "empirical counsels […] diet, frugality, politeness, reserve, and so on" (*GW* 46-7), i.e. imperatives such as 'You ought to be frugal', 'You ought to study hard', 'You ought to diet' etc.

On the other hand, moral postulates are practical in the sense of "moral", i.e. expressions of moral beliefs. Contrary to what one might expect, moral postulates cannot be thought of as a species of categorical imperatives, i.e. of commands prescribing actions that rational agents have to carry out no matter what technical purposes or pragmatic ends they are inclined to follow (*GW* 52, 66-67; *CprR* A54). The objective validity of categorical imperatives is known *a priori* (*CprR* A5); it is a "fact of reason" (*CprR* A56, 81). By contrast, a moral belief is acquired as a result of a subjective need to assume the objective reality of the concepts of God, freedom, and the immortality of the soul (*CprR* A226-7, 255-7, 262-3). Moral postulates, that is, are not expressions of (*a priori*) knowledge but expressions of pure rational (practical) belief (*CprR* A227, 263).

III   Hypothetical imperatives

In order to see what a pragmatic law expressing a pragmatic belief amounts to, it is necessary to elaborate a bit on the notion of hypothetical imperative. What a hypothetical imperative has in common with categorical imperatives is the grammatical form of the sentence "You shall φ" or "You ought to φ". But while the necessitation expressed by a hypothetical imperative depends on a particular practical end, the necessitation expressed by a categorical imperative does not depend on any such end. Hypothetical imperatives apply only to those rational agents who have chosen the practical ends on which the necessitation expressed by these imperatives depends: imperatives like 'You shall construct a mill' or 'You ought to be frugal' only apply to those rational agents who happen to have chosen as their practical ends the production of bread or individual happiness in terms of riches; they do not apply to rational agents who have chosen to produce ships rather than bread or to become learned rather than rich. Categorical imperatives, by contrast, apply to all rational agents regardless of what

practical ends these agents happen to have chosen: they apply to millers, shipwrights, billionaires and scholars alike Categorical imperatives, that is, command categorically, while hypothetical imperatives command only hypothetically.

Kant mentions another difference when he states that while hypothetical imperatives are analytic, categorical imperatives are synthetic. The justification of the latter statement is the objective of large parts of the *Groundwork* and the *Critique of Practical Reason* and cannot be looked into here. But also the former statement has given rise to some perplexity. At one point, Kant claims that "the proposition 'If I fully will the effect, I also will the action required for it' is analytic" (*GW* 45). Commentators have concluded from this claim that for Kant hypothetical imperatives had the grammatical form of sentences such as 'If you will the practical end y and φ-ing is necessary for achieving y, then you will φ'. And some have pointed out that sentences of this form do not represent and do not even contain any imperatives but represent hypothetical judgments in the sense of the transcendental analytic instead: judgments consisting of two judgments related to each other as ground and consequence (*CpuR* A73/B98).

However, Kant's claim that "the proposition 'If I fully will the effect, I also will the action required for it' is analytic", need not be taken to be synonymous with "the hypothetical imperative 'If I fully will …' is analytic". His claim may also be interpreted as an abbreviated version of an explanation of an inference of the following style:

(H$_1$)   You will the end y.

(H$_2$) φ-ing is necessary for achieving y.

(H$_3$)   You will φ.

(H$_4$)   You are a human being.

(H$_5$)   You ought to φ.

This inference is governed by two principles of which the first is akin to Kant's 'If I fully will …': the principle that if you will y and φ-ing is necessary for achieving y, then you will φ. It

is easy to see that this principle licenses the inference from (H_1) and (H_2) to (H_3). The second principle governs the inference from (H_1), (H_2) and (H_4) to (H_5). It states that if you will y, φ-ing is necessary for achieving y and you are a human being, then you ought to φ. The formulation of this principle is necessary since it takes into account that, for Kant, it is only human beings that ought to do something. Angels and saints, i.e. entities who are incapable of willing an action and of still acting otherwise, cannot be given commands (*GW* 39).

It is true that Kant also claims that the proposition 'If I fully will …' is analytic in the sense that "in my willing of an object as an effect there is already conceived the causality of myself as an acting cause" (*GW* 45). This claim may also be interpreted as an abbreviated version of the claim that hypothetical imperatives, as expressed by sentences like (H_5), are analytic in the sense that they can be inferred from premises such as (H_1), (H_2) and (H_4) via the second principle mentioned above. But two problems remain. The first problem relates to hypothetical and categorical imperatives alike and stems from the fact that when introducing the analytic/synthetic distinction in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant intends to differentiate between judgments. The second problem can be stated as follows: When the two principles mentioned above are included in the premises of the above inference, (H_5) is inferred via *modus ponens* and becomes a categorical imperative.[3]

The first problem can be dealt with by noting that imperatives in a Kantian sense qualify as judgments. It has been suggested that imperatives and judgments differ in that the latter are capable of being either true or false whereas the former are not.[4] But is this suggestion accurate? Do imperatives, i.e. commands necessitating human beings to do something, not qualify as being either true or false? It may be true that sentences such as 'Practice the piano!' or 'Catch the ball!' are neither true nor false. But such sentences are orders rather than imperatives in a Kantian sense. Imperatives in a Kantian sense are

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[3] The first to note this problem appears to have been Hare. Cf. Hare (1971) 81-97.
[4] Cf. Ludwig (2006) 144.

sentences like 'You ought to shift gears', 'You ought to become rich' and 'Thou shalt make no false promises'. These sentences are not only true or false. Claims of their truth or falsity can also be challenged under the right circumstances. Claims of the truth of the first sentence can be challenged by someone with a different opinion of the appropriate way of driving. Claims of the truth of the second sentence can be challenged by someone who is afraid of the anxiety, envy and pestering that he might bring on his head when getting rich (cf. *GW* 46). And according to Kant, even claims of the truth of the third sentence can be challenged – but only if it is read as an imperative of prudence, not as an imperative of morality.

The second problem is a more serious threat to our attempt to work out the details of Kant's account of hypothetical imperatives and pragmatic laws. But there are two solutions that recommend themselves. The first relates to the observation that the two principles mentioned above function as inference rules and do not enter the set of premises. The second solution can be articulated as follows: Even if the two principles entered the set of premises, Kant would still be able to withdraw to a type of argument that he applies when justifying his distinction between universal and singular judgments: he says that while this distinction may be unjustified in terms of formal logic, it would be justified in terms of cognition (*CpuR* A71/B96). In a similar vein, Kant could say that even if the two principles entered the set of premises and if, as a consequence, there was no formal difference between hypothetical and categorical imperatives, there would still be a substantial difference between the two with respect to their cognitive content: while we would accept the necessary truth of categorical imperatives, we would be prepared to challenge claims of the truth of hypothetical imperatives when these are applied to the wrong people.

IV   Pragmatic imperatives

Now, what is a pragmatic law expressing a pragmatic belief, and to what extent do Kant's theoretical hypotheses qualify as pragmatic laws? A pragmatic law is a law that we are willing to adopt when obeying a pragmatic imperative. As was mentioned earlier, a pragmatic imperative is an imperative prescribing particular actions to rational agents who have chosen as their practical end their individual happiness. The kind of happiness chosen by scientists who set up the theoretical hypotheses is not quite the same as individual happiness: it is, as Kant tells us, "universal happiness" (*CPuR* A851/B879). But the imperative leading to the formulation of the theoretical hypotheses can still be inferred in accordance with a scheme that is similar to the one above:

(P$_1$)   You will universal happiness.

(P$_2$)   Believing T_1, T_2 und T_3 is necessary for achieving universal happiness.

(P$_3$)   You will believe T_1, T_2 und T_3.

(P$_4$)   You are a human being.

(P$_5$)   You ought to believe T_1, T_2 und T_3.

As in the scheme depicted above, the inference from (P$_1$) and (P$_2$) to (P$_3$) is governed by the principle that if you will universal happiness and believing T_1, T_2 und T_3 is necessary for achieving universal happiness, you will believe T_1, T_2 and T_3. And the inferential rule that licenses inference from (P$_1$), (P$_2$) and (P$_4$) to (P$_5$) is the principle that if you will universal happiness, believing T_1, T_2 und T_3 is necessary for achieving universal happiness, and you are a human being, then you ought to believe T_1, T_2 and T_3. Needless to say, T_1, T_2 and T_3 denote the propositions that there is a simple substance that (at least in this life) persists in existence with personal identity, while its states are continuously changing, that nature is infinite and without a first and supreme member, and that the world of sense has a single supreme and all-sufficient ground outside its range (an independent, original, and creative reason).

Whether (P$_5$) can be taken to represent a pragmatic imperative depends on whether universal happiness qualifies as a pragmatic end in the strict sense of the term. What seems to

be clear is that universal happiness cannot be seen as a practical end the pursuit of which requires the solution of a technical problem. Hence (P₅) certainly does not represent a technical imperative. But according to Kant, universal happiness does not qualify as practical end of an action that is commanded by a categorical imperative either. The rules given by the principle of happiness, he says, "will on average be most often the right ones" (*CprR* A63). But knowledge of individual or universal happiness "rests on mere data of experience, as each judgment concerning it depends very much on the very changeable opinion of each person" (*CprR* A63). Therefore, the "principle of happiness can indeed give maxims, but never maxims which are competent to be laws of the will, even if universal happiness were made the object" (*CprR* A63). By elimination of alternatives one will thus come to the conclusion that universal happiness indeed qualifies as a pragmatic end in the strict sense of the term and that, consequently, (P₅) represents a pragmatic imperative.

But there is also a more substantial argument in favor of the pragmatic nature of the practical end of universal happiness and the hypothetical imperative expressed by (P₅). Rational psychology, cosmology, and theology use theoretical hypotheses as constitutive principles. According to Kant, this use is dogmatic: it takes place without an antecedent critique of pure reason. And dogmatism, he tells us, "is the true source of all unbelief conflicting with morality" (*CpuR* BXXX). A critique of pure reason "secures […] the well-being of the scientific community, and prevents its cheerful and fruitful efforts from straying from the chief end, that of universal happiness" (*CPuR* A851/B879). But what kind of science is it that is engaged in by a scientific community whose cheerful and fruitful efforts pursue the chief end of universal happiness?

For Kant, this is a science striving for systematic unity: a unity that is approached by the application of the principles of homogeneity, specification and continuity (*CpuR* A657/B687), but "that the empirically possible unity seeks to approach […] without ever completely reaching it" (*CpuR* A568/B596). Necessary conditions of the possibility of this

systematic unity are the objects of rational psychology, cosmology, and theology: a transcendental subject, an infinite nature, and an independent, original, and creative reason. But since the systematic unity of science is itself only projected (*CpuR* A647/B675), the objects of rational psychology, cosmology, and theology cannot be more than only projected entities either. The theoretical hypotheses referring to these objects cannot be regarded as constitutive of these objects but must be understood as principles regulating the understanding and its empirical concepts so as to yield the greatest unity alongside the greatest extension.

For Kant, principles regulating the understanding and its empirical concepts are pragmatic laws: laws belief in the objective validity of which is only pragmatic belief. As already mentioned, a transcendental deduction of these laws does not lead to the same sort of evidence as a transcendental deduction of transcendental principles or moral postulates. One could also say that the degree of certainty reflected by pragmatic belief is smaller than that inherent in the pure rational belief expressed by the moral postulates and still smaller than that reflected by the *a priori* knowledge of logical, mathematical and transcendental principles. But the degree of certainty of pragmatic belief is not equal to nothing either. It is the degree of certainty of beliefs that we are willing to accept on the grounds that our chief end is individual or universal happiness, i.e. when obeying pragmatic imperatives.

V   The limited scope of Kant's pragmatism

In his "The First Western Pragmatist, Immanuel Kant", Axinn offers a rich and interesting account of the affinities between Kant's pragmatism and that of the American Pragmatists. He also attempts to give a definition of the term "pragmatic" within the Kantian conceptual framework. But his attempt cannot be regarded as satisfactory. After an exposition of the context in which the term appears in the transcendental doctrine of method, he wonders:

"Does Kant's use of the term 'regulative' permit us to take this as a synonym for 'pragmatic'?"[5] He then investigates Kant's use of the term 'regulative' as it is manifest in the appendix to the transcendental dialectic and comes to the following conclusion: "If we replace the word 'regulative' by the word 'pragmatic' in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, there will be no change in meaning."[6]

What Axinn misses is that, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the term 'regulative' is not only applied to the theoretical hypotheses but also to the dynamical among the transcendental principles. And the dynamical principles are not regulative in the sense of regulating the understanding and its empirical concepts but regulative in the sense of regulating perceptions. As regulative in the sense of regulating perceptions, the dynamical principles are transcendental principles, i.e. necessary conditions of the possibility of experience. And transcendental principles are principles of which the objective validity is known *a priori* and not only believed pragmatically. Therefore, the term 'regulative' cannot be regarded as synonym for 'pragmatic'.

In another attempt to give a definition of the term "pragmatic" within the Kantian conceptual framework, Rescher argues that there are two sorts of transcendental deductions in the *Critique of Pure Reason*: while the first demonstrates that forms of sensibility and categories "constitute *necessary conditions* for an experiential knowledge of objects on the part of any finite intellect", the second shows that the transcendental ideas of a transcendental subject, infinite nature and independent, original, and creative reason "are *functionally conductive* to reason's accomplishment of its proper work."[7] Rescher then goes on to claim that "while the first sort of justifying deduction is *presuppositional*, the second is *pragmatic*

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5 Axinn (2006) 84.
6 Axinn (2006) 86.
7 Rescher (2000) 310.

(or practical)."[8] There are two mistakes in this claim. At first glance, both of them represent mere lapses. But it is only the first mistake that turns out to be of only minor importance.

The first mistake is to relate the term "pragmatic" to transcendental deductions and not (as intended by Kant) to laws, beliefs or imperatives. The second mistake is to hold that "pragmatic" and "practical" are synonyms. While for someone like Peirce it is absolutely evident that the terms "pragmatic" and "practical" are "as far apart as two poles"[9], for Rescher they are synonymous in the following sense. Kant, he says, "construes the moral realm […] as effectively including the whole realm of practical reason."[10] Therefore, the only imperative that is operative in the realm of practical reason is the categorical imperative. Rescher's version of the categorical imperative is a rationality-enjoining generalization that runs as follows: "Do the things that are appropriate to a being of the sort you are by nature. Act as a being of the kind you by nature are ought to act in view of its nature."[11] This rationality-enjoining generalization, he says, "absorbs the proprieties of the cognitive enterprise into practical domain. […] [O]n this basis our experientially based knowledge of the world is rounded off in systematic coherence by a complex of pragmatically based convictions regarding its nature."[12]

Rescher's mistaken identification of the meaning of "pragmatic" and "practical" results from a failure to see that Kant does not construe the moral realm as effectively including the practical realm but the other way around. If the moral realm is construed as including the practical realm, there won't be any space left for the operations of the non-moral, i.e. hypothetical (technical or pragmatic) imperatives among the practical imperatives. One might feel tempted to argue that hypothetical imperatives become categorical imperatives when inferred from premises like 'if you will y and φ-ing is necessary for achieving y, then

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[8]   Ibid.
[9]   Peirce ([3]1965) 5.412.
[10]   Rescher (2000) 318.
[11]   Rescher (1991) 380.
[12]   Rescher (2000) 319.

you ought to φ' and 'you will y and φ-ing is necessary for achieving y'. But it has already been shown that both sentences function as inference rules and not as premises.

Kant construes the practical realm as including the moral, the technical, and the pragmatic realm. It is true that the proprieties of the cognitive enterprise are partly absorbed into the practical domain. But the subdomain that they are absorbed into is the pragmatic subdomain and not the moral subdomain of the practical domain. Therefore, the transcendental deduction of the transcendental ideas (or the theoretical hypotheses containing them) leads to a pragmatic belief in the objective validity of the theoretical hypotheses. This pragmatic belief is not to be confused with the pure rational belief expressed by the moral postulates or the *a priori* knowledge of transcendental principles. It is a belief that we are willing to accept when obeying a pragmatic and not a categorical imperative.

Thus, Kant's pragmatism is more limited in scope than Axinn and Rescher try to make us believe. It does not extend to the dynamical principles of the understanding but is restricted to the theoretical hypotheses. And belief in the objective validity of the theoretical hypotheses does not reach the degree of certainty that is reflected by a belief in the objective validity of the moral postulates or transcendental principles. Taken together, Axinn's and Rescher's definitions of "pragmatic" amount to a pragmatism of the sort of James' and Dewey's.

At the core of James' and Dewey's pragmatism is a theory of truth, according to which a proposition is true only if it is verified.[13] For James and Dewey, 'verification' does not mean the same as for the logical positivists. They take it to be largely synonymous with 'correspondence' and 'coherence' but attach a meaning to these terms that is very different from the one attributed to the same terms by traditional correspondence and coherence theorists of truth. While James says that a true proposition corresponds or coheres in the sense that it leads toward "other parts of experience with which we feel all the while […] that the

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[13]   This theory of truth is developed e.g. in Dewey (1911) and James (1975) Lecture VII.

original ideas remain in agreement,"[14] Dewey has it that a true proposition corresponds or coheres in the sense that its utterance fulfills a practical purpose that corresponds to or coheres with practical purposes fulfilled by utterances of other propositions.[15]

James and Dewey do not restrict their theory of truth to a particular class of propositions but extend it to all sorts of propositions: to mathematical and scientific propositions as well as to propositions about God's existence.[16] They, accordingly, reject the idea that the truth or objective validity of a privileged class of propositions can be known *a priori*. They also dismiss the notion of different degrees of certainty reflected by beliefs in the truth or objective validity of different classes of propositions. Kant, by contrast, insists that the objective validity of the dynamical principles of the understanding can be known *a priori*. He also holds that belief in the objective validity of the postulate of God's existence reflects a higher degree of certainty than belief in the objective validity of the theoretical hypothesis of the infinity of nature. His pragmatism might have been the role model for the philosophies of the American and other pragmatists. But it is also a lot less radical than the pragmatisms of philosophers like James and Dewey.

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[16]   Cf. James (1975) 100-101, 103-104 and James (1979).

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