

Notes on *Pragmatism, Kant, and Transcendental Philosophy*. Edited by Gabriele Gava and Robert Stern.  
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**P**ragmatism, Kant, and Transcendental Philosophy offers a substantial contribution to a recent trend in pragmatist scholarship: an increasing focus on the complex relationship between pragmatism (both “classical” and “neo”) and Kant’s intellectual legacy. The exact nature of the relationship between pragmatism and Kant has been in question from the beginning; the problem is seemingly birthed out of Peirce’s own complicated debt to Kant, but careful observation shows roots reaching even further back, as Kant is already entangled in the Transcendentalism of Emerson and Thoreau, having been earlier “shipped” across the Atlantic thanks to English Romanticism, and in particular Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s 1825 *Aids to Reflection*. Despite this heritage, for many years the relationship between pragmatism and Kant was treated either as a damaging inheritance that all true pragmatists must disavow (i.e. James’s assertion that we must “go around” Kant), or as a matter of curious but ultimately inconsequential history (170). Rarely was the pragmatist-Kant relationship taken seriously as a fruitful connection that might be, if not fully embraced, then at least cautiously welcomed. The essays collected in this volume show that this state of affairs has finally, perhaps, begun to change.

The editors of *Pragmatism, Kant, and Transcendental Philosophy* articulate the aims of the book in five general categories: (1) To consider explicit statements (both favorable and critical) made by the pragmatists concerning Kant; (2) to consider what implicit influences Kant may have had that were not acknowledged by the pragmatists; (3) to consider what similarities exist between Kant and the pragmatists, even if no historical influence can be established; (4) to articulate what aspects of Kant’s thoughts are pragmatic or proto-pragmatic; and (5) to consider the relationship

between pragmatism and modern thinkers inspired by Kant, especially modern instances of “transcendental” argumentation (2).

Each article in the volume falls under one of these five categories. In the first category, for example, we find two articles that evaluate the pragmatist’s response to Kant’s “Copernican Revolution”—James O’Shea’s “Concepts of Objects as Prescribing Laws: A Kantian and Pragmatist Line of Thought” and Jean-Marie Chevalier’s “Forms of Reasoning as Conditions of Possibility: Peirce’s Transcendental Inquiry Concerning Inductive Knowledge.” Also under this heading the editors note three contributions dealing with Kant’s notion of regulative principles—Cheryl Misak’s “Peirce, Kant, and What We Must Assume,” Sebastian Gardner’s “German Idealism, Classical Pragmatism, and Kant’s Third *Critique*,” and Daniel Herbert’s “Peirce and the Final Opinion: Against Apel’s Transcendental Interpretation of the Categories.”

All three papers falling under the third category have to do with William James—Robert Stern’s “Round Kant or Through Him? On James’s Arguments for Freedom, and their Relation to Kant’s,” Marcus Willaschek’s “Kant and Peirce on Belief,” and Graham Bird’s “Consciousness in Kant and William James.” Stern challenges James’s claim to have gone around Kant, positing that James’s arguments for freedom are relevantly similar to Kant’s approach to practical reason. Along these lines, Willaschek argues (in the midst of a point concerning Peirce), that James’s position of allowing action to warrant belief is similar to the Kantian position. Bird argues that James’s criticism of Kant for failing to see the role of psychology in understanding consciousness is misplaced; he believes that James has failed to account for the importance of the *Anthropology* in Kant’s system. James scholars may find the contrasting positions of Stern and Willaschek on the “evidentialism” of Kant and James to be interesting.

Papers dealing with the fourth category include David Macarthur’s “A Kant-Inspired Vision of Pragmatism as Democratic Experimentalism” and Gabriele Gava’s “The Fallibilism of Kant’s Architectonic.” The remaining three articles deal with the fifth category—Sami Pihlström’s “Subjectivity as Negativity and as

Limit: On the Metaphysics and Ethics of the Transcendental Self, Pragmatically Naturalized,” Wolfgang Kuhlmann’s “A Plea for Transcendental Philosophy,” and Boris Rähme’s “Transcendental Arguments, Epistemically Constrained Truth, and Moral Discourse.”

Together, these thirteen articles do an admirable job demonstrating the complexity and relevance of the pragmatist-Kant connection. If I had to point to a weakness in the volume, it would be that no article seems (per the editors own reckoning) to *explicitly* address aim number two (i.e., Kant’s implicit influence on the pragmatists)—an omission that is not fully acknowledged or explained. Even if some of the articles touch on this aspect tangentially, it would have been nice to find a more explicit articulation of this concern, considering that it is listed by the editors as one of the five major aims of the volume. Nevertheless, the volume remains excellent. Finally, those scared off by the three digit hardcover list price will be happy to know that Routledge plans to release a considerably less expensive paperback edition by the end of this calendar year.

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