

# THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE *RAISON D'ÊTRE*: ARISTOTLE'S *TELOS* AND KANT'S CATEGORICAL IMPERATIVE

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**ABSTRACT.** *Because philosophy /the scientific knowledge searches for the 'why' of things – as Aristotle has said –, and because it is about the reason of the existence of all things (and not only about the different causes giving impetus to their generation, movement and change), it is worth to understand the **raison d'être** of man, obviously living in society. Is there a basis for discussing together the reason of things and the reason of man? The paper answers by uniting Aristotle's theory of the **telos** with Kant's categorical imperative: just for the common holistic method shared by the two founding fathers of the philosophy of the **raison d'être**.*

*Both great thinkers have assumed a holistic approach and demonstrated that holism is an ontological characteristic, linking the logic of things, their reason of being, in a Russian dolls structure of the world. But the development of this approach concerns man, and the ethics of Kant is a pole, a Great Theory both explicative and normative because of its pylon, the **telos** of man. And for man exists only in society, the **telos** of man as such cannot be understood only at the individual level. Indeed, the realisation of the individual **telos** depends on such social relationships as to consider every human being as an end, and not only as a means.*

*The paper reveals the common/continuous aspects of Aristotle's and Kant's conceptions, as well as the discontinuity brought by the historical evolution of the philosophical thinking, opposing the unitary logic of the Aristotle-Kant theory presented here as the philosophy of the **raison d'être** to the mainstream ideologies of nowadays.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Aristotle, Kant, **telos**, categorical imperative, holism, present mainstream ideologies*

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### Instead of introduction

The paper builds a single theory relating Aristotle's concept of *telos* and *holistic* view and Kant's ethical construction of the *categorical imperative*, as a coherent and unitary philosophical construct promoting the idea of man's ultimate reason of being, from both the ontological and epistemological standpoints, and within the framework given by the ultimate criterion of things: the integration of their parts and basic constituents for the sake of their superior organisation. To unite the above philosophical innovations of the two great thinkers is not an arbitrary demarche: both have moved around the idea of *telos* and both have had philosophical answers – linked to man's rational and social specific – to the cardinal question about the existence of the individual within society; both have confronted – though in different proportions, since Kant has lived 2000 years after Aristotle, in the era of nascent modernity when the individual became the last explaining brick, model and end of society, whilst during Aristotle the integrative standpoint still was not negligible – with the dialectic of the individual and society. Consequently, the aim of my interpretation uniting Aristotle's and Kant's philosophical supplies is to sketch a dialectics of holism that may be opposed efficiently to the present fragmentary (anti-holistic) ideologies.

Therefore, what is fundamental in the relations of man with things is their understanding. What kind of understanding? As it was specified by the teacher of Aristotle – and the young Stagyrite has assumed Plato's formula – to understand means to know, and not only to have an opinion about anything. To know? Obviously, people see the intertwining of contiguous things and must and can discern which of them would be the cause of that which follows; and they can discern the cause-effect sequence not only at the level of contiguous things: because without this science the human beings would not manage their existence in a so huge and mysterious world. But a man wanting to understand more deeply what is repeating in all these successions and why and if there would be something common within them should devote his time and energy just to questioning the apparent order of things.

This man is/in fact, tries to be a philosopher. And his first duty is to deduce from the coloured, varied and changing phenomena a picture of the scheme on which these phenomena do not move in a chaotic manner. The scheme is that of the *causes* or *reasons* as universal concepts explaining the movement and existence of things. And when the philosopher arrives to understand the causes, he does also the *reason* of things: the rules of the movement of his mind in search of the reason of things<sup>2</sup>. And

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<sup>2</sup> Letting here aside that Aristotle too has analysed the logics of thinking and the subjective level from which things appear as they do appear, the difference between Aristotle and Kant is that the former has discussed the ultimate reason of things at the *objective* level (the concept of *telos* as reflecting the objective reason of things and the concept of difference between potentiality and actuality – the two latter being also concepts – as reflecting the objective states of things from the standpoint of their existence), whilst the latter did at the *subjective* level (the possibility and the reality of things being valid only subjectively, as representations of the possibility of things towards our concepts about them, see [Kant 1914: § 75, p. 312]: “since we do not, properly speaking, observe the purposes in nature as designed, but only in our reflection upon its products think this

he wonders and, at the same time, is triumphant contemplating the concordance of the reason of his mind and that of things: the first – being proven by the concrete development of things in the world as man faces it, while the second appearing through the effort of mind.

To understand the reason of things means to have/to come nearer the *science* man is able to acquire. To have the reasons of our opinions about the world is to profess this science. Thus, science is more than a description of an immediate concrete causality, or of that which *is* or *is spoken of*: *science is reason*, a method to arrive to the ordered interconnection of things (method manifested in the functioning of our reason, and method of the unfolding of things: backwards till the ultimate bricks of their constitution, and forwards to their integration within comprising wholes).

But besides being this complex method, what does reason mean? It certainly means always the *ultimate reason* of the existence of things (“the ‘why’ of this existence [Aristotle 1990: B (II), 3, 194b 18-21]) since the immediate and intermediary causes always demand to go further and further (and since, as later on Kant observed, “we can follow up these things in their causal combination only under the Idea of purposes, and cognise them only according to their conformity to law, we are thereby justified in assuming this as a condition necessary for every thinking and cognising being—a condition consequently attaching to the Object and not merely to our subject” [Kant 1914: § 75, p. 311]). And in this way, science/philosophy has not only an epistemological side – when we reproduce the manner and intellectual tools we bear up to the understanding of things –, but at the same time an ontological one: from cause to effect that is cause of another effect, and so on and so forth, it appears that the reason of science is just the grasping of the *ultimate causes* of our world and of the world comprising us. And not ultimate bricks as material particles or fundamental naïve forces like love and strife, but rather as theoretical *concepts/categories* or *principles* of existence and movement – explaining even the above-mentioned naïve forces and the ultimate material substratum as semi-abstraction (that which persists, said Aristotle [1990: B (II) 193b]) existing only as concrete substances – as well as of thinking these complex problems.

From the theory of four causes Aristotle has erected in order to theoretically construct the world and its understanding, the first three describe the constitution and functioning of things in their interrelatedness and the internal functionality of this functioning. Namely, if the *material* cause of a statue is the bronze it is made of [Aristotle 1990: B (II), 194b 23], the *formal* cause is the form or archetype the statue has to have in order to be a statue [*ibidem*: 194b 27-28] /that statue [see: Bazac 2014],

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concept as a guiding thread for our Judgement, they are not given to us through the Object... This alone is in conformity with the maxim of our reflective Judgement”, and [§ 76, p. 315]: “signifies the positing of the representation of a thing in respect of our concept, and, in general, in respect of the faculty of thought”).

while the *efficient* cause is the sculptor<sup>3</sup>. The result of his endeavour is the statue, and the fourth cause, the *telos* of the statue, is both the sculptor's intention and design of the statue (the statue existing in his mind before he even realises it) ("health is the cause of walking about" [Aristotle 1990:194b 33], but also the inner reason of the already realised object: its reason is just its *integral* essence, the fact that it is a statue ("for the sake of which"<sup>4</sup> does this special object exist) and that it has all the characteristics of a statue, thus approaching to the good/aim existing in every and all things: "they must be for an end...therefore action for an end is present in thing which come to be and are by nature"<sup>5</sup> [Aristotle 1990:198b 37, 199a 7-8].

However, as in the *Metaphysics*, the ends appear easier in the intentional teleology, though just this teleology is much difficult. The more so as it concerns both the individuals and the wholes they are integrated within.

### 1. The moment Aristotle

Aristotle's concept (*telos*), since it refers to both the un-intentional development of unanimated things and the intentional actions of man, corresponds to the most fundamental "cause" of every manifestation of the existence; it is the basic *reason* of its parts and aspects, supporting the constitution of things and explaining how they exist as formation of the substrate able to receive the form and, obviously, as a result of direct, immediate impulses. Aristotle has elevated a contradictory theory of *telos*, this one being the *premise* of the mentioned process of formation – as if the individual substances would be created on the basis of the design of an absolute and omniscient being – and at the same time, it being the *result* of the process of constitution, generation and change.

The *telos* gives to things the *reason* upon which they exist. Obviously, they may be explained through their ultimate elements they are made of, and not (only) as naïve representation of the material bricks they are erected with, whatever would be the meaning of these material bricks: but through *philosophical abstract concepts* – as the material, formal and efficient causes – deduced from the coloured world of the infinite number of individual substances (the only appearance of the real world), and covering this world. But since the combination of different types of relations between elements is infinite, since there are accidental relations and combinations and alterations leading to accidents in the order of nature (and in the order of man/ this order of man being included in the order of nature), the *criterion* [Aristotle 1989: 1 (A), 988b(1)] to distinct the normal/necessary things from the accidental ones is just the reason they exist as to they fit to the general order of things.

<sup>3</sup> I took the same example, though Aristotle has jumped from one example to another (the efficient causes being "the man who gave advice", and the father towards the child [Aristotle 1990: B. (II), 194b 30-31].

<sup>4</sup> Firstly, this expression appears in *Physics*, 194a 27; "the sense of end or 'that for the sake of which' a thing is done" [Aristotle 1990: 194b 32-33].

<sup>5</sup> The *telos* explains that things having it are better fit for survival [Aristotle 1990: B (II), 8, 198b 17-19].

If a thing is, it is because of the end it tends to/it intends: all the other aspects explaining/determining the things – the material, the formal, the efficient – are indeed causes, but the scope of things is their *reason*, matching to the reason of the entire environment containing them: their *raison d'être*, meaning the good/their highest realisation “for the sake of them” [*ibidem*] and “the *end* and *good* of the others” [Aristotle 1989: 5 (Δ), 1013b(1)].

More: since things in their potentialities may lead to contrary actualisations and actualities concern different potentialities, it results that only *actuality is good* in the true sense of the word [Aristotle 1989: IX (Θ), 1051a(1)], i.e. the substances/the being (or things – everything that matters) are actual: and that the presence of the good/its highest realisation is the sign that *things exist and are integrated within the good concert of the world*.

From an epistemological point of view: Aristotle wanted to surpass the explanation reducing things to their basic bricks; these bricks exist, of course, but when we explain things from this standpoint, we reduce them to the *uniformity* of these ultimate elements: as when we “can affirm that chalk and cheese are both composed of electrons” [Huxley 1946: 13], but this composition does not realise their different taste that makes us to like eat cheese but not chalk. By considering the individual substances – and not their ultimate elements – as the ontological constituents of the world, Aristotle raised the glove thrown by the diversity of things: just this *diversity* was the aim of a more difficult explanation than that of the uniformity. And the *telos* was thus the cause/reason – resulted from the action of the formal and efficient causes over the material one – but synthesising them as the cause of diversity.

Therefore, in this framework of philosophical explanation through abstract concepts, it is clear that, especially in the case of animated objects/living beings/animals, things cannot be conceived of in the mechanical way of necessity (for example, by discussing only the imprint of form on the material cause/or of potentiality and actuality, as the only explanation), but only by including and subordinating the necessity within the finality.

Whose finality? Of course: not of a “divine *ousia*” [Frede 2000: 5; also Menn], and not of the thoughts about things – although the thought is the best of all existence [Aristotle 1989: L, VII, 1072b18-b30] and thus is the “first mover” moving things without being moved, in this way producing motion “as being loved”/good/beautiful [Aristotle 1989: L, VII, 1072a23-24 and 1072b4-13], thoughts must respect the real constitution of things and the world [Aristotle 1989: L, VII, 1072a26; X, 1075a25] whose presentation they organize [Aristotle 1989: L, VII, 1075a15-a25]) – but of the good *and* the *nous* (reason, understanding) as the first principle, or unmoved mover, or final efficient cause of things: all things existing as the realisation of the good/for the sake of their goodness, the realisation itself being done by the *energeia* things have according to their *nous* [Menn 1992].

But since everything can be understood in this way, how do we explain the composition of things from their parts, aspects and characteristics? Well, Aristotle was the promoter of the *systemic* pattern of thinking – somehow continuing the old

representation of man about the integration of all beings within the universe – and has emphasised that even though every existent thing, be it a little part of a complex entity, has its reason of being, i.e. its formation where one can detect the material, formal and efficient bases and causes, in fact all these parts of the universe they belong to are explained only in relation with this universe, only from the standpoint of the connections of these parts within their comprising system.

The most important and clear *examples* of this *holistic* pattern of explanation and, at the same time, of constitution of the existence were Aristotle's *organicism*, and *sociologism*/the political character of man.

According to the first, the elements (as water etc.), the homogeneous/uniform parts/homeomerics (as blood, sinew, flesh etc.), and the non-uniform parts/organs/an-homeomerics (hand, brain etc.) are relating each other and working together for the preservation of the whole body [Aristotle 1961: II/B, 1, 646a 12-24, p. 106/107]. The understanding of the parts is impossible without integrating them in the whole comprising them, because “the order of things in the process of formation is the reverse of their real and essential order... Just so bricks and stone come chronologically before the house, although the house is the purpose which they subserve, and not vice versa” [Aristotle 1961: 25-30, p. 108/109]. The parts are not independent, while the wholes are.

This happens not only because we perceive the wholes (things which interest us and on which our conscience focuses on, as if they having a conscious intentionality; but we can focus on the brain, the hand etc., can we?), but also because in nature the simplest and smallest parts/the elements – though chronologically may be anterior to the latter formation – exist only subordinated to the uniform and non-uniform parts, thus to the whole organism: namely, to the *process of formation of the wholes*. The elements exist “for the sake” of the immediate superior parts, these ones – “for the sake” of their immediate superior parts, and all of these “for the sake” of the formatted whole. Therefore, even though chronologically<sup>6</sup> everything departs/generates from the smallest parts, the final moment of generation and formation is that which is important/gives the essence of things [Aristotle 1961: 646b 1-10, pp. 108 and 110, 109 and 111].

For Aristotle, every individual thing/substance has its *telos*/ the logic of its existence. But just this logic sends to the integration of individual things in comprising wholes that “define” them: not (only) as having functions in the wholes, but, simply, as parts having the significance they have just because they are the parts within the wholes. Aristotle's *holism* – not so much as a subjective perspective determined by the contemplation of the world of intertwined functions and causes, but as a scientific panorama of the objective environment proven with observations

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<sup>6</sup> This difference between the chronological and the logical/structural shows once more the theoretical greatness of Aristotle: since not only common people but also thinkers did and do not understand that, for example, the precedence is not synonymous with the cause (and do not legitimate the present/that which is ulterior), this early explanation/epistemological deconstruction is once more valuable. (And in any way it was taken over by the series of non-conformist philosophers).

and experiments – meant that the ultimate explanation of an individual thing, its *raison d'être*, its axiom, is always outside of it (as in Gödel). In contradistinction to the first three causes which aimed at and allowed the *fragmentary* understanding of reality, of individual things as such, the fourth one, the *telos*, had in view not only the fragments, the parts, but also the wholes. The holistic organicism has emphasised that the parts fulfil their functionality not in an abstract manner – as potentiality – but always within the organism, namely in a *concrete* manner. Why? Because “we call a thing something, when it is that thing in actuality, rather than just potentially” [Aristotle 1990: II, 1, 193b7]. The somethingness of the thing /of the concrete substance is the essence of the thing, and thus the essence is the *telos* and always it is related to the existence of concrete things. And always these concrete things are related to the systems they are parts of, just for the *telos* of the systems is the ultimate reason of their parts [Aristotle 1990: II, 2, 194a 27 and 28-9].

The second example of holism is the theory of man as a *social* animal within the organised political community. The ultimate *telos* of the human organism is not health – this one being only an intermediary *telos*, though *sine qua non*: of the animal/living aspect of man, since life has its end within itself – but the realisation of the *differentia specifica*, the *rational* aspect of man. And since this aspect means that people have intentional objectives, and that there are many objectives – consistent with each other or divergent, but – followed for the sake of the pleasures they provide, ultimately for the happiness every man desires (namely not for (only) the sake of each of them, but of happiness), it results that all of these are aimed at for a superior end, *happiness*, “that which is always desirable in itself and never for the sake of something else” [Aristotle 1934: 1097a30-34]. Happiness is the ultimate *telos* of the human individual as such.

But as the organs are integrated within the organism – and they in themselves have any good, in fact they do not exist isolated, just their nature asking to be integrated within the organism because “all things are defined by their function and capacity” [Aristotle 1944: 1253a] and these function and capacity are and take place only within the system they are parts of – as the human individual is part of the *polis*: because only in the political community 1) the vulnerable human beings if they are taken isolated – not being self-sufficient – become members of a self-sufficient whole, and 2) man has the “perception of good and bad and right and wrong and the other moral qualities”, only thus becoming – from a savage and unholy animal lacking the sense of justice and virtue – the best of animated beings. The sociability of man is not analogous to the gregarious state of some animals, because it is related to the complex *meanings* issued from the capacity to speak man is endowed with: not only of pleasure or pain – as the other animals transmit – but of good, evil, justice, injustice. And these ones are not only individual feelings, but elements of the political community that has, as its own elements/characteristics/parts, the sense and instruments of justice. Man itself is a social animal just because is integrated within the social/political community.

These two examples – Aristotle’s organicism and sociology – may be considered as logical moments of the construction of the philosophy of the *raison*

*d'être*: suggesting a unitary theory of the principles of *telos* and *holism* in order to explain the human being.

Summarizing this philosophy: man has its *telos*, as everything of reality; the *telos* of the individual is its own happiness; but what would the *telos* of society be? Its proper functioning in view of the realisation of the *telos* of the individuals (obviously, of those who matter, but not this historical limit of the ancient thinker is important here).

## 2. The moment Kant

Now we pass to the modern moment of the philosophy of the *raison d'être*, to the enlightened Kantian *categorical imperative*.

The present paper is focusing only on the ethical theory, not on the relationship between this theory and its conditions of construction – i.e. explaining when all is told why and what from the *noumen* is known (and unknown) by people –. Consequently, it is worth to note that Kant has continued the dialectical position of Aristotle concerning the interdependence between the *telos* of the individuals and the *telos* of society.

The ultimate aim of the individual is its *happiness*. And happiness is a subjective state determined by many factors and in different conjunctures, and manifested through different aspects. But since man is a social being, it is very important that when it tracks the means conducing to its happiness it does not harm the other fellow men/society as such. How could this requirement be realised, or more precisely is there a basis for the realisation of this requirement? There is and it is the human rational nature as the stake towards which nature has meanings/without which there are no meanings at all<sup>7</sup>. How does this human reason manifest in order to behave in a non-harmful manner towards the other individuals and society? Philosophy is explaining this and philosophy is all the more important as it surpasses the sociological analysis and categorisation of concrete facts, causes and results and as it focuses on the logical structures of the human moral reason/ the structures of human /moral reasonableness.

Now, happiness (as, similarly to Aristotle, the good in itself or a synthetic concept “in accordance with a natural necessity” [Kant 2002:32] surpassing all the empirical elements belonging to the concept of happiness with the idea of “an absolute whole, a maximum of welfare...in my present and in every future condition” [Kant 2002: 34]) is not the end of nature – if it were so, it “could be obtained far more safely through it (instinct, AB) than could ever happen through reason” [Kant 2002: 11] – but of *reason*. People have *representations* about all their actions, thoughts and reasons of their actions and thoughts. Just these representations are the sign of reason and thus they are structural in the logic of behaviours: “only a rational

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<sup>7</sup> [Kant 1914: § 86, p. 370]: “Without men the whole creation would be a mere waste, in vain, and without final purpose”; p. 371: “it is only as a moral being that man can be a final purpose of creation”; p. 372: “now it is only as a moral being that we recognise man as the purpose of creation, we have in the first place a ground (at least, the chief condition) for regarding the world as a whole connected according to purposes, and as a system of final causes”.



being has the faculty to act *in accordance with the representation* of laws, i.e., in accordance with principles, or a *will*" [Kant 2002: 29].

In other words, they are *universal* and command every human will, irrespective of the concrete contents of the wills or whether these ones respect or not the rational representations, namely the "good" [Kant 2002: 9] in every action and thought, or the genus/the form/the concept of these concrete goods: the good in itself or the good without limitation as the aim of the will [Kant 2002: 10]. Indeed, "the pure representation of duty and the moral law in general, mixed with no alien addition from empirical stimuli, has, by way of reason alone (which thereby for the first time becomes aware that it can for itself be practical), an influence on the human heart so much more powerful than all other incentives" [Kant 2002: 27]. Thus the moral representation, governing everything taking place within the human relationships, is *imperative*, "insofar as it is necessitating for a will, is called a 'command' (of reason)" [Kant 2002: 30].

The moral representations can be deconstructed, i.e. analysed not only after their concrete aims, but also from the standpoint of the *moral structures* which constitute a specific level of reality (as the biological structures constitute another level of reality). This is the analysis of philosophy, presented as a specific and "perilous standpoint" that, "regardless of anything either in heaven or on earth from which it may depend or by which it may be supported" [Kant 2002: 43], has the "purity" of the investigation of "the idea and principles of a possible *pure will*" [Kant 2002: 6]. Therefore, philosophy/the practical philosophy/ethics occupies itself with the schemes of moral reason, as if these ones could be cut out from the concreteness of the human reason and life. "The analysis of these schemes seems to provide only compulsory norms or moral standards which would be too abstract for and far enough from the real life": this objection was heard during Kant's life and even more today. In fact, the schemes and their elements, structures of the human moral reason, were and could be emphasised by a *metaphysical* outlook – "a pure philosophy of morals (metaphysics)", distinguished from "the 'applied'(just as 'pure' mathematics and 'pure' logic are distinguished from 'applied')" [Kant 2002: 27] concerning the principles, and the "possible" "pure" models of moral behaviour – that is not at all speculative but reveals a level of reality as it exists within the social relationships; not only the level of the concepts/ideas/representations, but also the level of their influence on man and his social relationships, the moral level.

Further on, an element of the moral level of man is *duty*. Obviously, the first duty – do not forget, it is about representations/ideas – is towards one's own person (one's own person's happiness), but it is never the only duty since man lives in society: and thus the many duties may compete each other. How does a man know if his idea of duties is good/ what does explain the game of duties? Duty arises from the human will and this one transfigures in a moral *maxim* – "the subjective principle of the volition" [Kant 2002: 16] and "action" containing "the practical rule that reason determines in accord with the conditions of the subject (often its ignorance or also its inclinations), and is thus the principle in accordance with which the subject *acts*" [Kant 2002: 37] – that reflects the rational characteristic of man. Namely and

certainly letting aside the good effects of the actions wanted by the humans<sup>8</sup>, “an action from duty has its moral worth *not in the aim* that is supposed to be attained by it, but rather in the maxim in accordance with which it is resolved upon” [Kant 2002: 15]. (Do not be scared of the abstract appearance of the above phrase: as we will see, the moral worth of the action is realised if it is based consciously on the moral law / if the concrete aims do not contradict the moral law that demands that all men be treated as ends, and not only as means).

The concrete maxims of the individuals – responding to the question: is the intended action necessary or possible to “furthering happiness” [Kant 2002: 32] – are the reasoning putting in an intelligible form the subordination of the intended actions towards the good aims for the happiness of the individual and of the world<sup>9</sup> –. This type of reasoning emphasising the principle of matching the concrete intentions with the aim of happiness is called a *hypothetical imperative*, and its observation is prudence<sup>10</sup>.

Yet the subjective principle of volition is not sufficient to explain the moral conduct. There is also the objective principle of the volition, “i.e., that which would serve all rational beings also subjectively as a practical principle if reason had full control over the faculty of desire” [Kant 2002: 16] – “the practical law” “*which obviously occurs only in the rational being*” [Kant 2002: 16, 17] “and the principle in accordance with which it *ought to act*, i.e., an imperative” [Kant 2002: 37].

In fact, the moral law concerns *all* the rational beings, because it is just the manifestation of the “good sense (AB, that) is, of all things in the world (among men), the most equitably (equally) distributed” [Descartes 1958: Part I, p. 93], as another forerunner of Kant has said. Therefore, the moral law is *universal*: since the will of every human being has as stakes and criteria not the moral values as such – which are historical and contextual – but the *reason* able to measure the means and the ends of actions on oneself and on the others, on short and long term, the subject of the moral law is *every man/every rational being*, and the moral law as such may be formulated as a *categorical imperative* of actions corresponding to mutually substitutable individual maxims leading to much more than an individual happiness. “I ought never to conduct myself except so *that I could also will that my maxim become a universal law*” [Kant 2002: 18] / “*Act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law*” [Kant

<sup>8</sup> One certainly needs to know – including at the level of sciences – the effects of different actions, but the object of philosophy as metaphysics is not the analysis of these effects.

<sup>9</sup> [Kant 2002: 33]: “A *history* is written ‘pragmatically’ when it makes us *prudent*, i.e., teaches how the world could take care of its advantage better than” before; a suggestion for the present policies which did not learn too much from the history, did they?

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*: “The word ‘prudence’ is taken in a twofold sense; in the first it can bear the name of ‘worldly prudence’ and in the second that of ‘private prudence.’ The first is the skill of a human being to have influence on others, in order to use them for his aims. The second is the insight to unite all these aims to his own enduring advantage”. As we see, the two meanings are in fact one: the first being not able to integrate the different aims, hence the subject manifesting as a contradictory moral being who does not solve/annul the contradictions but it follows them (once being prudent, another time not).

2002: 37] / “So act as if the maxim of your action were to become through your will a universal law of nature” [Kant 2002: 38] / “Act in accordance with maxims that can at the same time have themselves as universal laws of nature for their object” [Kant 2002: 55]: one formula following from another and all being interconnected.

But what does this principle of universalisation mean? It means that from all the human ends – the realm of ends – which may be reciprocally means, and thus may be considered simple means (of happiness, the ultimate end of man), “the human being, and in general every rational being, *exists as end in itself, not merely as means* to the discretionary use of this or that will, but in all its actions, those directed toward itself as well as those directed toward other rational beings, it must always *at the same time* be considered as an *end*” [Kant 2002: 45]. From this standpoint, on the one hand the moral practical principle contains “the idea of the will of every rational being as a will giving universal law” [Kant 2002: 49]. In this framework, the human will “is not solely subject to the law” but it is also the subject “legislating to itself” [*ibidem*] as a *universally legislative will*” [Kant 2002: 50], the only autonomous conscious subject on the earth.

On the other hand, since every human person is an end in itself, the practical imperative demands that every human person must be considered an *end*, and not only a means: “Act so that you use humanity, as much in your own person as in the person of every other, always at the same time as end and never merely as means” [Kant 2002: 46–47].

Here is the point: *to treat others – and certainly, oneself too – as an end, and not only as a means* is the principle of the *telos* of the human society. This principle is not an abstract moral lament starting from the real asymmetrical social relations of domination-submission and opposing to them the moralising wishful thinking, but a *theory* (of the universal and imperative character of the moral law) working with philosophical concepts beyond the empirical appearance of those rules of wisdom as the golden rule<sup>11</sup>, and demonstrated by the method of *reductio ad absurdum*.

Giving different examples of individual misconduct, Kant proceeds to the philosophical experiment overthrowing these examples: “*I ask myself*: Would I be content with it if my maxim (of getting myself out of embarrassment through an untruthful promise) should be valid as a universal law (for myself as well as for others), and would I be able to say to myself that anyone may make an untruthful promise when he finds himself in embarrassment which he cannot get out of in any other way? Then I soon become aware that I can will the lie but not at all a universal law to lie” [Kant 2002: 18–19]; “*I ask myself only*: Can you will also that your maxim should become a universal law? If not, then it is reprehensible, and this not for

<sup>11</sup> [Kant 2002: 48]: “Let one not think that the trivial *quod tibi non vis fieri, etc.* [What you do not want to be done to yourself do not do to another] could serve here as a standard or principle. For it is only derived from that principle, though with various limitations; it cannot be a universal law, for it does not contain the ground of duties toward oneself, nor that of the duties of love toward others (for many would gladly acquiesce that others should not be beneficent to him, if only he might be relieved from showing beneficence to them), or finally of owed duties to one another, for the criminal would argue on this ground against the judge who punishes him, etc.”.

the sake of any disadvantage impending for you or someone else, but because it cannot fit as a principle into a possible universal legislation” [Kant 2002: 19]; “*set up the question* thus: ‘How would it stand if my maxim became a universal law?’” [Kant 2002: 39; I underlined, AB]; “Yet a *fourth* – for whom it is going well, while he sees that others have to struggle with great hardships (with which he could well help them) – thinks: ‘What has it to do with me? Let each be as happy as heaven wills, or as he can make himself, I will not take anything from him or even envy him; only I do not want to contribute to his welfare or to his assistance in distress!’ – it is impossible to *will* that such a principle should be valid without exception as a natural law” [Kant 2002: 40].

Kant operated with the meaning of the *telos*: “that which serves the will as the objective ground of its self-determination is the *end*, and this, if it is given through mere reason, must be equally valid for all rational beings” [Kant 2002: 45]; while “the ends that a rational being proposes as *effects* of its action at its discretion (material ends) are all only relative; for only their relation to a particular kind of faculty of desire of the subject gives them their worth, which therefore can provide no necessary principles valid universally for all rational beings and hence valid for every volition, i.e., practical laws” [*ibidem*]; “Hence all these relative ends are only the ground of hypothetical imperatives” [*ibidem*]; therefore, *telos* does not mean motives of the human actions, no matter how reasonable are they, but the *reason*, the *raison d’être* of the human rational beings: to which one arrives only through the “use of our reason” driving to “the consciousness of its *necessity*” [Kant 2002: 79].

Just the *radical* character of Kant’s categorical imperative – to treat every human being always as an end, and not only as a means – has scared the modern opportunist thinkers who have objected against the substantiation of a different, potentially radical politics attacking the *status quo* of man-object/ man-means. If applied to reality, the ultimate consequences of the Kantian moral law would have overthrown all the suppositions of their thought. And since a theory is countered only by another theory, just the Kantian theory of the moral law has shown that the ideal constructs ultimately legitimising the *status quo* are shaky.

### 3. Recapitulation

The present representation uniting two historical theories – Aristotle’s *telos* and Kant’s categorical imperative – intends a synthesis of the *telos* and of *holism* in order to sketch a mirror or rather a possible stake for the present theoretical supplies driven by the *mainstream* ideologies.

Therefore, the parts, let say the organs, are integrated within the organism, as the human individual within society, the *polis* as both home and social structure. The end of the individual is its happiness through the exercise of virtues (said Aristotle), but since this cannot be realised alone, the individual end must converge with the end of society. Hence, this end would be such an organisation as to preserve the possibility of virtuous development of the people that matter, and at least of some men able to contemplate the making of the world.

But this tableau of the ancient thinker has needed to be completed with the answer to a question: what does the individual *telos* within society mean? Or how does the individual *telos* realise within society, beyond the concrete determining factors? From an epistemological standpoint, Kant has configured a superior ethical theory showing that, though the individual *telos* (happiness) is empirical, just because it is a subjective state determined by conjunctures and values considered from an individual point of view, the social *telos* cannot be subordinated to the realisation of *some* individual *teloi*. If this happens, neither the social *telos* is the sum of all the individual *teloi* – a normal requirement in the modern Enlightenment framing the liberal political philosophy – nor can the social *telos* as such be explained.

The moral theory can no longer extract its concepts only from the direct description of the social relationships: it needs a level resulting from the analysis of these empirically issued concepts. This level is that of the moral *laws*. Since they take place in society and not in the unanimated nature, these laws are only *tendencies* but they have a reasonable *substantiation* and, at the same time, they are the most fundamental *criteria* of the social behaviours. As criteria, they are *commands* and at the top of these commands is the imperative, the *categorical imperative*.

From this standpoint, the categorical imperative does not impose a general happiness and its components, but it expresses the *ethical conditions* in order to assure the individual *teloi*: these conditions negate the existing asymmetrical relations where people are treated as means, and consist in the demand to treat every human being as an end and not only as a means.

#### 4. Confronting the present situation

Kant has constructed a reasonable theory from both the epistemological and ontological viewpoints, a theory that is both normative/prescriptive and descriptive. Having in its subtext the Aristotle's *telos*, the theory of Kant should have been developed and considered: but, letting aside the criticisms, it was simply neglected as an idealistic view far away from the everyday *Realpolitik*.

In fact and since man is a moral animal, being determined by moral principles and having moral scruples, Kant's categorical imperative is only the application of an *all the way* rationalism: as imperative of the moral scruples *all the way*.

This imperative is basing on the theory of *telos* in the two meanings of this one (somehow applying the two meanings in Aristotle): as happiness as every man's end, and as end in itself as every man's being/essence. Only this logic of the *telos* can be added to the holistic view that both thinkers have developed: or, *only the holistic view is not sufficient*.

The present history – my unitary interpretation of Aristotle's *telos* and Kant's categorical imperative being modern, appropriate only to the modernity of the last 200 years, long after Kant's creation but rather to the last 40-50 years – is full of actions and their legitimating by thinkers using scholarly sophistries in the name of superior, abstract and non-personal wholes. The value of the human person, of *every* human person – and this was the value promoted by modernity – was and is considered inferior and even non-interesting by the *mainstream* ideologies.

At the same time, only the individual *telos* – nowise understood as in Aristotle and Kant, but as the *telos* of *privileged* individuals, of the actors *deciding* the relations of domination-submission, of those who occupy the public space *speaking in the name of the others*– is inadequate. Still nowadays there are thinkers who imagine the real state of things after the present *dominant human models* (to which they belong too): for example, if these ones are the middle class man/the middle class/the Western type middle class<sup>12</sup> (and in an idealised form – corresponding rather to its state before the beginning of the attack on the post-war welfare capitalism) – they suppose that, on the one hand, this would be the human model as such, the best and only form of the human culture; and on the other hand, that the human development and future would be only that.

Still nowadays there are thinkers who consider things in a *separated* manner: for example, the upsurge of medical science and technology would guarantee the wellbeing of people, declare they, without taking into account the unequal affordability of the health care and the coexistence of that upsurge of medical means with the increase of medical problems of a big part of society because of social causes.

Remaining at the level of theory, the moral reasoning for the sake of the above idealised middle-class individual ignores the Others in two senses: the personal *telos* would be possible neglecting or even excluding the *telos* of the others, and for the personal *telos* to be fulfilled the sacrificing of the others would be normal and inevitable.

In front of the present *mainstream* ideologies and ethical theories *fragmenting* the social problems and considering only the empirical *telos* of rather neutral situations (as in the present analytical ethics), the unitary and holistic theory of Aristotle's *telos* and Kant's categorical imperative may well be a test for all of them. This unitary and holistic theory may be adjoined with the glorious tradition of the theory of choice<sup>13</sup> and responsibility<sup>14</sup>, and in fact our coherent representation of man in society presupposes and needs it, but not this aspect is developed here.

As we know, both the holistic perspective and the focusing on the *telos* were rejected by the modern thinkers, at least in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Obviously, this rejection had an *epistemological* reason: the modern *mechanistic* representations about the material causes of the natural phenomena and the inherent *fragmented* manner of research occurred with the development of modern science. At the same time here

<sup>12</sup> These models were created in special historical conjunctures and on the basis of structural and geographical domination-submission relations, and not as the single peak of the human culture and civilization.

<sup>13</sup> [Plato 1966: 99a and b]: “If anyone were to say that I could not have done what I thought proper if I had not bones and sinews and other things that I have, he would be right. But to say that those things are the cause of my doing what I do, and that I act with intelligence but not from the choice of what is best, would be an extremely careless way of talking”.

<sup>14</sup> [Sartre 1946: 37]: “Man is condemned to be free; because once thrown into the world, he is responsible for everything he does. Life has no meaning *a priori* ... It is up to you to give it a meaning, and value is nothing but the meaning that you choose”; see also [Bazac 2008].

was a *historical* reason: the history of philosophy has showed that this rejection was supported by the idealist philosophies which have given an ultimate transcendent external cause of the world, even in the frame of philosophical systems (Hegel). Teleology was thus regarded with reserve and to suspect a theoretical construction as being teleological meant its exclusion from the respectable scientific outlooks. Finally, there was also an *ideological* reason: if people would have been mindful at the reason of things within the ensemble, they would have questioned the motives and causes of many inadvertences between things and man's will and need, and this questioning did not fit with the social and ideological position of intellectuals. Therefore, the ideological reason was and is related to man and the images about him constituted from within the dominant social position of scholars. And since these images are the core of thinking, the pattern of analysis of all phenomena and things has generated a philosophical complex where theories were *as neutral as they could be* and at the same time *their dominant mark was idealism*.

On this historical basis, it is no wonder that both the idea of *telos* and the holistic standpoint were not popular among thinkers.

But on the one hand, in the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the accumulation of data and knowledge on the basis of the above fragmentary model of scientific thinking have reached a peak from which both the interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary standpoints were demanded, and on the other hand, the contradictions already emphasised in the fragmented views have required and suggested a holistic philosophical approach where the *telos* of things could no longer be neglected. However, still the dominant ethical theories are exterior to these requirement and suggestion.

### Instead of conclusions

1) Though we can extrapolate the logic of the *telos* to all things, Aristotle has given for explaining it (and the efficient cause also, as the physician as a cause of health [Aristotle 1989: Δ (V), 2, 1013b20] only examples from the artificial world whose meanings exist only for humans. If he would not have proceeded in this manner, he would have needed to depict a creationist and foredoomed natural world, and not this was his purpose. In the natural world, the *ultima ratio* consisted in the intertwining of things in a whole governed by laws, by *logos*. In Aristotle's view, these laws allowed/allow people – if they would know them fully – to foresee the future existence, relations and movement of the parts within the natural world with the precision of a deterministic mechanism. And just in order to better understand this mechanism has Aristotle considered the *telos* as the fourth cause/reason of all things (again letting aside the types of causes as the actual, the potential, the particular, the universal, the static, the dynamic).

But society is different from nature: it develops through the initiatives of the conscious human beings, and although there are many similarities between them – which generate a first level order (the order of “naturalness” of the humans) that permits the beginning of the understanding of man – there are also dissimilarities. These ones may also be somehow understood, and the principle of *telos* and the

concrete *teloi* of people show that both the interpretation and the causality related to people are human: not only more or less subjective, but simply human. If so, people – at least, some ones (the free male Greek citizen of the *polis*) – could change/better, being predetermined by the human *telos*, the reason. Thus, Aristotle has put<sup>15</sup> in front of the subsequent thinking the problem of the *mixed* character of man: of being predetermined and of being free. Because the concrete *teloi* of people are different, and not many can attain the supreme manifestation of the power of reason; in order to being able to contemplate the world and to be a philosopher, one needs shoemakers, cooks, even slaves: people-means, if we use Kant's word.

2) Already Aristotle has sketched a unitary theory of holism and the *telos* in order to explain man. Within the organism, the *teloi* of the parts are *subordinated* to the *telos* of the whole. This is what counts – as in the whole Hippocratic thinking familiar to the Stagyrite –. But this does not mean that the parts would not have their limited autonomy, allowing for example to cure a broken hand without treating the whole body (of course, letting aside that the benefit of a healthy body is helpful for the healing). But since the hand cannot be separated from the body – if separated, it is no longer a hand, but a dead matter – it seems better to say that the parts are *integrated* within the organism, and that the *teloi* of the parts are absolutely depending on the whole body/are *subordinated* to the whole body.

Well, but in society, the individual *telos* – happiness through the exercise of virtues – is not subordinated to society, it only integrates within. Since at least some people can choose (and certainly for the human beings are rational), they have a bigger autonomy towards society than the parts and organs towards the organism. Aristotle has solved the big epistemological problem – the contradictory situation of man as an *individual* and as a *part of society* – by asserting that the *telos* of society (a good organisation) has to subordinate itself to the *telos* of the individual (quite differently from Plato). The Aristotelian model was that of a better organised society for the sake of a virtuous man and at the same time for the sake of its own lasting as society.

In a different era, Kant has continued the unitary view of holism and *telos*: through a *radical* ethical theory, a founding one, a metaphysic of the most profound causes, structures and reasons of the human behaviour. Since the individual *telos* – happiness – is not natural but the result of reason/of the rational representations (thus it is a concept and is depending on the rational criticisms chosen by people), it determines the social *telos*: in such a way as to assure the moral conditions of the individual happiness of all; within the social relationships, *all people should be treated as end, and not only as means*.

The interdependence society-the individual is stronger than in Aristotle. The individual happiness is no longer a question of choice of virtue, but is depending on society. Indeed, how can people choose the virtue if they are treated only as means?

The ethical condition put by Kant was the quite revolutionary theoretical supply of the Enlightenment. This revolutionary supply was despised and ignored by the

<sup>15</sup> He was not the first and from this standpoint he was his teacher's follower.



latter liberal dominant ideology legitimating the modern market-driven domination-submission relations with the form of the Western type representative democracy, and ignoring and despising the price paid by the Western and non-Western “collateral damages”. In fact, the liberal dominant ideology has excluded every ethical development of the philosophy of the *raison d'être* inaugurated by Aristotle and Kant, opposed to few non-conformist thinkers as for example the Sartre’s definition of man as a *project*<sup>16</sup> [Sartre 1946].

But the inexorable social antagonisms of this market-driven domination-submission organisation have required and still require a continuation of the Aristotle-Kant line. This continuation is not a speculative idea arising from a mechanistic model of social evolution and destiny, but just the process issued from both the *telos* of man and its holistic existence within society. And even though this process means pragmatism, the surpassing of both the moral laments about the state of affairs, and the theoretical resignation in front of it – describing the *status quo* and regulating it “in order to alleviate it” –, the practical demarche must never ignore the huge input brought by the big philosophical creation of the coryphaei of the philosophy of the *raison d'être*.

This philosophy is constituted around the idea and method of *anticipation*, and since anticipation means first of all *confrontation*, it results that, from the one hand, the end/reason of things arises differently in the non-human world (as the consequence of the natural process of constitution, generation and change) and the human one (as a premise of the consciousness and actions), and on the other hand, these different types of ends forge different dialectics of holism/ of the individual-the whole relationships: in the non-human world the dialectic is a natural integration of the parts within the wholes that bear the ultimate end of the structures, whilst in the human one neither the integration of the individuals is sufficient – thus the reduction of the ends to that of the comprising structures – nor the neglecting of the wholes in the name of the individuals. The historical analysis shows that neither the happiness of the structures is enough nor that of the *always some* individuals (on the expense of the misery of the others). The modern mainstream liberalism has excluded those others from its logic of the “human” rights (i.e. the rights of the modern private owners towards the rights of the pre-modern dominant strata), and when the structures (like the state) have promoted the rights of the “multitude” (as Spinoza has called the people) – as in the post-war *welfare state* – these structures were and are considered abstract and non-important, as in the present neo-liberalism/neo-conservatism.

But – from the standpoint of the normative ethic of the philosophy of the *raison d'être*, the human dialectic of *holism and teleology* tends to exceed the above reductionist standpoints. Indeed, the ideas and actions which do not subordinate the

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<sup>16</sup> Though this extremely important idea of man as a project belongs to Heidegger [(“pro-jected”) *Sein und Zeit*, 1927], I did not remind above his philosophy but that of Sartre because this one better enrolls in the philosophy of the *raison d'être*; or it enrolls within differently, subordinated to the possibility to transform the human life in a human manner (and not, as in Heidegger, to the impossibility of this transformation because of the ontological limit posed by death).

wholes to the human realisation/happiness of *all* the individuals and which accept that the individuals may not contribute to the human *telos* of society are morally objectionable and politically dangerous: as we see today.

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