

# THE HUMAN BEING AS AN END IN ITSELF

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SUMMARY: 1. Introduction. 2. Two poles of the process of “overcoming ‘the human’” in the philosophy of the most recent times. 3. Paradoxes and dead ends of “inhuman” thinking. 4. The non-metaphysical interpretation of the Kantian concept of the human. 5. Conclusion.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

IN the treatise *Towards Perpetual Peace*, Immanuel Kant identifies the indispensable requirement for establishing a lasting peace between states – in contrast to “truce” as the actual state of politics obtaining in the late 18th century. This condition is the determination of both statesmen and citizens to follow the formal principle “[...] based merely on freedom in its external relation”.<sup>1</sup> In the *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant justifies this formal principle, known as the “categorical imperative” (“act in such a way that the maxim of your will could become a universal law”<sup>2</sup> by means of a postulate that “[...] the human being, and in general every rational being, exists as end in itself, not merely as means [...]”.<sup>3</sup> However, in the first decades of the 21st century, humanity remains as far from the state of “eternal peace” as it was in the time of Kant. Does this mean that the Kantian interpretation of the human being as “an end in itself” is not justified? It seems that such a conclusion is justified if this interpretation is considered as part of the history of metaphysics, i.e. that which is to be “overcome”.

The categorical imperative, according to which a human being should see in his or her own human – as well as in the human of the Other – an *end in itself, and not a means*, can be interpreted as a thesis completely belonging to the metaphysical epoch. According to Martin Heidegger, metaphysics always disregards the biaxiality or distinction between Being and beings.<sup>4</sup> The requirement to see the human being as an end in itself is in this case based on

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<sup>1</sup> I. KANT, *Towards Perpetual Peace*, M. Campbell Smith (transl.), Swan Sonnenschein & Co, London 1903, p. 175. <sup>2</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>3</sup> I. KANT, A. W. WOOD, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Yale University Press, London 2002, p. 45.

<sup>4</sup> M. HEIDEGGER, *Overcoming Metaphysics*, in *The End of Philosophy*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 2003, p. 84.

the metaphysical affirmation of some “essence” or “inherent nature” of the human being. However, in view of Nietzsche’s “philosophising with a hammer”, such a statement looks like an unacceptable naivety.

Meanwhile, the interpretation of the Kantian idea of the human as an end in itself as one of the variants of metaphysical anthropology is not entirely obvious. The *purpose of this article* is to demonstrate the possibility of an alternative, non-metaphysical interpretation of the above-mentioned Kantian categorical imperative.

This interpretation is based on the following thesis: the human is not a finite being that belongs to an immanent (social or biological) reality and acts as a subject of knowledge. On the contrary, the human “is” an event of transformation of the immanent into the transcendent, or of finite ends into the infinite.

This sense of “the human” cannot be represented in the form of knowledge; that is, it does not belong to the sphere of competency of theoretical reason (in the Kantian sense of this concept). The meaning of the “human” is only actualised in the event itself, i.e. the event of overcoming finite aims and motives. Emerging as an act of faith, this event opens up the possibility of human understanding not in the theoretical “space” of knowledge, but in the practical “space” of striving towards absolute meaning.

The methodological basis of the study is the ontology of the event, initiated by Heidegger and developed in the philosophy of the late 20th and early 21st centuries. The principal methodological provisions of the ontology of the event can be formulated as follows:

- No philosophical problem can be understood other than in an extremely concrete context, which also presupposes comprehensibility itself;
- The given context as the *function of the event* cannot be fully accessible to the thinking subject; in the words of Heidegger, we can only “make everything we do answer to whatever essentials address themselves to us at the given moment”;<sup>5</sup>
- The comprehension of the problem is in this case achieved via a return to its event-related source (beginning). In its maximum concreteness, this beginning inevitably proves every time to be *other* (Heidegger) and has the structure of a question;
- Dialogue with the philosophical tradition is conducted only in the context of this question;
- The main task of comprehension consists in a clarification of the question of the nature of the event itself.

The question that guides this investigation can be preliminarily formulated

<sup>5</sup> M. HEIDEGGER, *What is Called Thinking?*, F. D. Wieck and J. Glenn Gray (transl.), Harper&Row, New York 1968, p. 8.

as follows: how is the failure of the substantialisation of the human possible, allowing the preservation of human unity?

The object in view is to understand the most important ideas of Kant's ethics and anthropology in the context of the philosophical processes taking place in the 20th and 21st centuries.

## 2. TWO POLES OF THE PROCESS OF "OVERCOMING 'THE HUMAN'" IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE MOST RECENT TIMES

One of the most important characteristics of philosophical thought of the 20th-21st centuries (at least, in a number of its most important directions) is the desire to free philosophy from the "human, all too human" (F. Nietzsche). The basis of this aspiration is the conviction held in the metaphysical nature of the very concept of "human", masking some other – non-human – reality. Let us emphasise once again that this process can be interpreted as an unfolding and concretisation of Friedrich Nietzsche's radical calling into question of *the human*. In posing the question: "What in us really wills the truth?",<sup>6</sup> Nietzsche forms an algorithm for a liberation of thought from 'the human', which is accomplished by selecting the "subject" of striving for truth – i.e. will. 'The human' appears here only as an occasional bearer of this will and therefore requires to be overcome.

Somewhat roughly, we can distinguish between two main ways in which the overcoming of 'the human' takes place in post-Nietzschean philosophy. The first of these methods is based on the idea of human freedom, which, when purified from 'the human', becomes an abstraction. Jean-Paul Sartre's conception of the human can be considered as among the most revealing examples of such a development of Nietzsche's ideas. In the work 'Existentialism is Humanism', Sartre considers Kant as among those thinkers who affirm a human being as possessing a certain 'essence' or 'inherent nature'.<sup>7</sup> In contrast to this position, Sartre formulates, with reference to the human, his well-known thesis that "[...] it is true that existence is prior to essence, man is responsible for what he is[...]"<sup>8</sup> Denying both inherent human nature and any divine purpose appertaining to this nature, the French thinker opposes to such approaches the understanding of a human being as a "subjectively experienced project".<sup>9</sup> In affirming the human being as pure freedom, Sartre does indeed overcome any "all too human" givens: as the situated circumstances in which a person exists together with his or her subjective ("inner") world. In

<sup>6</sup> F. NIETZSCHE, *Beyond Good and Evil*, J. Norman (transl.), Cambridge University Press, New York 2002, p. 5.

<sup>7</sup> J.-P. SARTRE, *Existentialism is a Humanism*, in W. KAUFMANN, *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*, Meridian Books, New York 1956, p. 290.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 291.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*.

fact, even the opposition of the “external” and the “internal” loses its habitual meaning here due to the fact that “givenness” itself disappears as such. Only the responsibility and guilt remain: when considering oneself as freedom, a person is forced to move away from all givenness in order to “appropriate” it: “To live this war is to choose myself through it and to choose it through my choice of myself”.<sup>10</sup> More precisely, for Sartre a person is “suspended” in this moment of “appropriating a given”, never reaching the end of this appropriation. “Loneliness”, “guilt” and a sense of “abandonment” are here inevitable precisely because the second “pole” of human existence is missing. This “pole” in classical philosophy (metaphysics) is always the Absolute as the object of desire and the criterion of truth. Sartre acknowledges the necessity of this “pole” in the structure of human action, defining the human being in terms of the “desire to be God”.<sup>11</sup> This desire, however, condemns a person to eternal dissatisfaction for a simple reason: the very concept of God as *ens causa sui* [existing because of oneself] is contradictory. Consequently, “[...] man is a useless passion”.<sup>12</sup> Hence it is comprehensible why the Kantian requirement “to see the human as an end in itself and not a means to an end” is unacceptable for Sartre. In his work *Existentialism is Humanism*, Sartre indicates this point directly, emphasising that existentialism could never regard a human as an end due to his or her fundamental incompleteness.<sup>13</sup> The sense of humanism in this case lies in the fact that “there is no other universe except the human universe, the universe of human subjectivity”.<sup>14</sup> Paradoxically, however, Sartre’s position of human subjectivity being the only reality results in the *disappearance of “the human”*. Within the Sartrean concept, a human cannot be qualified as *existing*, but is always only *aspiring* towards realisation, never achieving it.<sup>15</sup>

Under what conditions is this conclusion inevitable? It seems that such a condition appears as Sartre’s identification with *of the human with freedom and (self) consciousness*. Since “condemned to freedom”, a human being is forced to constantly choose him- or herself. By the same token, choice and consciousness are, for Sartre, one and the same thing: “Choice and consciousness are one and the same thing”.<sup>16</sup> Hence it is clear why “anxiety, helplessness and responsibility” make up “the quality of our consciousness in so far as this is pure and simple freedom”.<sup>17</sup> Pure consciousness as a transcendence of being, as a constant “negation” in relation to a simple given, is in reality doomed to incompleteness and incongruity with itself. In other words, consciousness (and, therefore, a human) *is not*, but only *desires to be*; however, such desire is

<sup>10</sup> J.-P. SARTRE, *Being and Nothingness*, H. E. Barnes (transl.), Washington Square Press, New York 1993, p. 555.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 567.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 616.

<sup>13</sup> J.-P. SARTRE, *Existentialism Is a Humanism*, cit., p. 310.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>15</sup> J.-P. SARTRE, *Being and Nothingness*, cit., p. 89.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 462.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 464.

in vain. For this “suspendedness” between being and nothingness, there is no longer any possibility of being called upon to act in accordance with duty: Sartre stresses the lack of any connection between the responsibility of a human “condemned to freedom” and “any good *à priori*”.<sup>18</sup> In the absence of an external (transcendental) authority, it is really impossible to talk about *duty*, at least in the Kantian sense of the word. However, this means that the space in which people can enter into communication (the space of common sense) also disappears. Thus, the corollary of the human, the boundaries of whose consciousness are experienced as pure negativity, results in the disappearance of the human and concomitant impossibility of sociality.

Nevertheless, the inevitability of this conclusion cannot yet serve as a pretext for quibbling with Sartre’s conception of the human. In other words, we cannot speak in terms of the “acceptability” or “unacceptability” of this concept. The author of “Being and Nothing” constantly emphasises the need to resist the temptation of “self-deception”. This temptation arises whenever someone is unable to accept the truth according to which his or her main aspiration is doomed to failure. This inability causes a human to turn to faith: “The true problem of bad faith stems evidently from the fact that bad faith is faith”.<sup>19</sup> However, we may ask: is the Sartrean concept of the human as an “indefinite project” consistent with his own methodological guidelines? In other words, what is the basis of Sartre’s main thesis, according to which a human being is a free and conscious choice of him- or herself and the world? Is not this thesis itself a kind of metaphysical (dogmatic) attitude, which, in terms of its meaning, contradicts the interpretation of the human as “consciousness of freedom”?

As is well known, this reproach to Sartre in terms of a metaphysical attitude was voiced in Heidegger’s *Letter on Humanism*, which came to be seen as a kind of response to Sartre’s manifesto *Existentialism is Humanism*. Heidegger also affirms and substantiates the inseparable connection between all humanism and metaphysics.<sup>20</sup> This connection is inevitable because humanism always affirms the “essence” of the human as something that does not require justification: “The first humanism, Roman humanism, and every kind that has emerged from that time to the present, has pre-supposed the most universal ‘essence’ of man to be obvious”.<sup>21</sup> Sartre’s conception provides no exception to this rule. As Heidegger points out, merely inverting the metaphysical thesis of “essence precedes existence” does not help Sartre to succeed in going beyond the limits of metaphysics: “But the reversal of a metaphysical state-

<sup>18</sup> J.-P. SARTRE, *Existentialism Is a Humanism*, cit., p. 294.

<sup>19</sup> J.-P. SARTRE, *Being and Nothingness*, cit., p. 67.

<sup>20</sup> M. HEIDEGGER, *Letter on Humanism*, «Global Religious Vision», 1/1 (2000), pp. 83-109, p. 87.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 87.

ment remains a metaphysical statement”.<sup>22</sup> This outcome only takes place if a human is able to hear the demand of Being: “man essentially occurs only in his essence, where he is claimed by Being”.<sup>23</sup> This requirement does not imply any answer insofar as the one who would be able to respond has here disappeared. The only adequate response to this requirement is “standing in the lighting of Being”.<sup>24</sup> The human in such a case “is” is nothing else than this very clearing, itself “there” (“Da-”) in “Dasein”.<sup>25</sup>

Such a comprehension of a human as the “lighting of being” is contrasted with the treatment of a human as actualitas<sup>26</sup> precisely because the latter presupposes the existence of subjectivity as an active agency. In terms of a “shepherd of Being”, the human, on the contrary, is not a source of activity, i.e. is precisely not *subjectivity*. In this sense, a human is no longer really thought of as “one who acts”, “one who chooses”, or “one who wants to be God”. The human “is” exactly insofar as he or she is ready to give the word to Being, which implies relinquishing not only one’s (previously given) “essence”, but also one’s subjectivity. Thus, Heidegger shifts the semantic emphasis toward the “pole” of Being. The human being, in contrast to Sartre’s understanding, is therefore not one who negates existence as the consciousness of being. On the contrary, a human finds his or her being only at the moment when saying “yes” to Being – or, rather, allows him- or herself to speak to Being. In other words, a human being becomes him- or herself only when renouncing him- or herself in favour of Being.

Such a transfer of emphasis, at first glance, indeed relieves the thought of metaphysical danger. However, we again have the right to pose the question as to the extent to which Heidegger’s approach to the comprehension of the human is consistent with his own methodological positions. This question can be formulated as follows: can the one who annihilated himself in the face of Being by renouncing all subjectivity, hear the “demand of Being”?

In claiming that thought is action – the meaning of which is to give the word to Being: “For thinking in its saying merely brings the unspoken word of Being to language”<sup>27</sup> – Heidegger seems to be talking about *duty*. However, this *due* does not go beyond the limits of Being speaking for itself. This is exactly what obscures the moment of the free pursuit of duty, which is the “core” of subjectivity in Kant’s thought. In Sartre’s conception, a human is the one who says “no” to being. For Sartre, a human being is the representative of “nothingness” as the source of freedom. By the same token, as noted above, *the asseveration of just such an interpretation of the human remains incomprehensible*. In insisting on this interpretation, Sartre transforms freedom into coercion. Heidegger, on the other hand, points out precisely the

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 90.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 88.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 89.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 107.

obligatory and non-alternative nature of being. However, by the same token, within the framework of this position, this *freedom* turns out to be impossible to apprehend. Any “no” is already preoccupied in advance with “yes”. Thus, the displacement of the source of action to the pole of “nothingness” (Sartre) and to the pole of “being” (Heidegger) leads in equal measure to the disappearance of the “human”.

We consider that any attempt to develop a *theoretical* concept of a person somehow gravitates to one of the two above-named poles. Not even the efforts of the creators of “philosophical anthropology” of the first half of the twentieth century are excepted from this tendency. In the concept of Max Scheler, a person is interpreted as a kind of meeting place for “spirit” and “life impulse”.<sup>28</sup> In the form of the “spirit” and the “impulse” we are again confronted here by a freely expressed “no” (as an essential manifestation of the spirit) as well as with a resounding “yes” (as a manifestation of the life impulse). Refusing to choose in favour of this or that pole, Scheler does establish a certain balance of activity and passivity, denial and acceptance in human existence. However, it is precisely *the asseveration concerning the “essence”* of a human as the meeting place of the spirit and rush<sup>29</sup> that again violates this equilibrium. A human is “inscribed” in a metaphysical scheme, within which his or her synthesising activity has a predetermined meaning. According to this meaning, a human is realised only in an act of personal devotion (Einsatz) of a person to a deity.<sup>30</sup> Thus, negation is once again assimilated in the statement. Thus, the disappearance of the human (as a reduction of the human to something else) does not depend on his or her place on the scale between “being” and “nothingness” within the framework of this or that concept. The decisive factor here is precisely the *determinacy of this place*. In other words, both the assertion and the negation of the essence of the human, when carried out *theoretically*, lead to the disappearance of “the human”. The latter, being the subject of knowledge, inevitably loses its *noumenal dimension*. As a result of this loss, the human being is reduced to the concept of a human having a certain value. The natural result of this operation is precisely the revelation of “the human” as a screen that disguises the Other – either positive (being) or negative (nothingness). The revelation is inevitable precisely insofar as a person is unable to make an object of him- or herself. Thus, the conception of the human in the literal sense of the word neither *means anything nor points to anything*. That is why the move on the part of a number of thinkers of the second half of the twentieth century who proclaimed the “end of the human” can be considered a natural consequence of the rejection of Kant’s “dualism” in his understanding of the human.

<sup>28</sup> M. SCHELER, *Man's Place in Nature*, in *The Problem of Man in Western Philosophy*, H. Mey-erhoff (transl.), Beacon Press, Boston 1961, pp. 35-95, p. 85.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 93.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 94.

In calling thought to awaken from the “anthropological sleep”,<sup>31</sup> Michel Foucault suggests that the anthropological disposition is the main obstacle to thought.<sup>32</sup> Contrasting his “archaeology of thought” with “[...]all those who still ask themselves questions about what man is in his essence, to all those who wish to take him as their starting-point in their attempts to reach the truth[...]”,<sup>33</sup> Foucault (quite legitimately) exposes the concept of the human itself. In refusing to see in himself a mystery (noumenon), a human cannot remain in the plane of the phenomenal, but inevitably becomes an epiphenomenon.

The main symptom of this transformation is the disappearance of the word “human” from the lexicon of modern philosophy. The human thus moves to a secondary or derivative area. Emerging in terms of a “strange empirico-transcendental doublet”,<sup>34</sup> a human is faced with the paradoxical necessity of comprehending the source of this duality. This essentially implies an impossible task: to witness and investigate *the process of one’s own inception*. Foucault himself clearly understands this impossibility. Opposing the “analytics of finite human existence” to the claims of metaphysics, Foucault points to the “unstability” of this position.<sup>35</sup> In discovering him- or herself as finite (implying secondary), a human being loses the ability to “to contemplate itself”.<sup>36</sup> Turning to the origins of his or her own finitude, a human discovers only a *spurious infinity*.

This statement should not be regarded as a theoretical rebuke or attempt at refutation. The process of overcoming the human in philosophy can be interpreted as a natural development and clarification of the position of transcendentalism established in the modern European thought. Within the framework of this process, the analysis and detailing of the position of the transcendental subject is carried out at both the above-mentioned poles: freedom (nothingness) and being. With a certain degree of conventionality, we can state that the concepts of Emmanuel Levinas and Jean-Luc Nancy incline towards the “pole of freedom”. Thus, Levinas affirms the source of human freedom “in an infinite exigency with regard to oneself, in the overcoming of all good conscience”.<sup>37</sup> This self-exigency is primary in relation to impersonal being, whereby the ethical position is freed from the power of ontology. At the same time, Levinas’ position is characterised by the same ambiguity as Sartre’s: it is precisely the *categorical nature* of this “infinite self-exigency”

<sup>31</sup> M. FOUCAULT, *The Order of Things. An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, Tavistock/Routledge (transl.), Taylor & Francis E-Library, 2005, p. 372.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 347.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 373.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 342.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>37</sup> E. LEVINAS, *Totality and Infinity. An Essay on Exteriority*, A. Lingis (transl.), Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, London 1979, p. 304.



statement that contradicts any self-exigency that might otherwise be possible. The imperative addressed to me myself (the demand to recognise the “Other”, or “thou”), loses its force in the absence of the Absolute. The attempt to establish freedom by rejecting the pole of absolute necessity (being) inevitably leads to a dogmatisation of the original claim.

A conceptualisation of a human as the “being of the singular plural”, carried out in the works of J.-L. Nancy expresses precisely this unavoidable duality of finite existence. However, the attempt to make the duality the *content of consciousness* once again leads to a statement that excludes negation. Here the human is already no longer the end, substance, or value “of Being, nature, or history”.<sup>38</sup> The human being is a *place in which meaning is performed*,<sup>39</sup> always simultaneously different and the same. Thus, meaning arises only in precisely an orientation towards the “other”. However, this “other” is not transcendental to the world (i.e. not the “capitalized Other”,<sup>40</sup> but always “one of many”.<sup>41</sup> This explains why a human being is not “I”, but “we”.<sup>42</sup> Existing as an “orientation”, a person cannot be conceived as an end: “orientation” does not imply the achievement of an end, but is rather to be seen in terms of a beginning, a setting-out that will never reach its destination. Nancy explicitly states that “the origin is not an end”,<sup>43</sup> since such an end presupposes the Other to be the Absolute. Thus, a person as “being single plural” has no chance of attaining to the fullness of being. In our “orientation”, we can only accomplish “a coming” or “access”.<sup>44</sup> From this position, it is not difficult to see the same ambiguity as in Sartre’s “phenomenology of freedom” or in the “ethics” of Levinas. The thesis, by means of which the human is defined as “orientation” or “being singular plural”, *turns out to be outside the framework of this “orientation”*. In other words, this thesis claims to be the transcendent foundation of a concept that denies transcendence (like the Other with a capital letter).

This ambiguity also characterises those concepts that in their understanding of the “human” gravitate towards the pole of being; more precisely, to the pole of some ontic necessity that generates the illusion of freedom. Such an inconceivable necessity may consist, for example, in “the first supplementarity”, i.e. substituting the signifier for the signified in the grammatology of Jacques Derrida.<sup>45</sup> This elusive substitution manoeuvre, which runs ahead of any given, precludes our any longer being able to speak about freedom (consciousness) or about being. Both denial and affirmation thus become equally

<sup>38</sup> J.-L. NANCY, *Being Singular Plural*, R. D. Richardson and A. E. O’Byrne (transl.), Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA 2000, p. 1.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 11.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 1-2.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 13.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 14.

<sup>45</sup> J. DERRIDA, *Of Grammatology*, G. Chakravorty Spivak (transl.), Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore-London 1997, p. 166.

impossible. To the pole of “ontic necessity” can be attributed the pre-individual singularities of Gilles Deleuze, producing selfhood and “I”,<sup>46</sup> as well as the generic (truthful) procedures of Alain Badiou, in whose final moment the subject is generated.<sup>47</sup> Thus, this is not a question of opposing the positions of “rationalism” and “irrationalism”. “Platonism” (Badiou) and “anti-Platonism” (Deleuze) are characterised by a common desire to subordinate the “human” (personal) to the “inhuman” (anonymous, impersonal).<sup>48</sup>

Thus, one can draw the following conclusion: any attempt to comprehend a person and “the human”, undertaken within the framework of a position (using the Kantian terminology) of theoretical or speculative reason is necessarily self-contradictory. In other words, the very desire for complete knowledge of a person requires going beyond this knowledge – that is to say, occupying a *non-human* position. In turn, the overcoming of “the human” in philosophy (and in cognition in general), acting as a natural development of the transcendentalism of the Modern era, gives rise to a whole series of theoretical and practical difficulties.

### 3. PARADOXES AND DEAD ENDS OF “INHUMAN” THINKING

Paradoxically, the undermining of the position of the cogito (transcendental subject) came about as a result of the realisation of the claims of the subject itself. This primarily concerns the claim as to *completeness of knowledge* about the world as well as concerning the subject itself. This claim requires the cognitive mind to itself be included in the theoretical picture; in doing so, this mind becomes the object of representation. This paradoxical problem translates into the necessity for what Jurgen Habermas calls “detranscendentalisation”. However, a refusal to “limit knowledge” (Kant) unavoidably leads to a loss of the grounds of knowledge. It turns out that these grounds are only valid in the context of an opposition of “external” and “internal”, “experience” and “reason”. This very opposition turns out to be constitutive for the cognitive approach. However, the “detranscendentalisation” [transl. mine] associated with deep penetration into the architectonics of the main assumptions, according to Habermas’ own testimony, calls into question these initial oppositions.<sup>49</sup> As a result, the very boundaries of knowledge lose their clear

<sup>46</sup> J. DELEUZE, *The Logic of Sense*, M. Lester with C. Stivale (transl.), The Athlone Press, London, 1999, p. 103.

<sup>47</sup> A. BADIOU, *Manifesto for Philosophy*, N. Madarasz (transl.), State University of New York Press, Albany, NY 1999, p. 108.

<sup>48</sup> The author acknowledges the somewhat declarative nature of this thesis. Not being able to carry out in this article a more detailed analysis of the works of the above-mentioned authors, we propose to undertake this analysis in our subsequent works.

<sup>49</sup> J. HABERMAS, *Between Naturalism and Religion*, Suhrkamp Frankfurt am Main 2005.

outlines and “become blurred”. This is manifested, in particular, in the phenomenon of *theoretical pluralism*, characteristic of modern science. Irrespective of a positive or negative evaluation of theoretical pluralism, it is possible to state at least one serious methodological problem related to this phenomenon. Here we refer to the loss of the criterion allowing the correlation of various theories used to describe and explain a particular set of phenomena. The cognising subject as the “strange empirico-transcendental doublet” (Foucault) can neither appeal to experience nor to “evidence of reason” as incontrovertible criteria for the truth of knowledge. As a result, knowledge (in the first instance – theoretical) acquires an increasingly conditional character. The role of theory in modern science is increasingly seen as a more or less convenient (in terms of specific research or pragmatic tasks) interpretation schema, which can, if necessary, be easily replaced by any other.

*Under these conditions, it is precisely due to the disappearance of the limit itself that the very status of scientific knowledge is becoming less and less certain.* In classical philosophy as well as the science of the Modern era, this limit is comprised by the transcendental subject. Once the latter is called into question, the grounds and nature of knowledge (including scientific knowledge) become subject to doubt. Attempts undertaken in modern epistemology to give a theoretical explanation of knowledge itself also typically gravitate toward one of the poles designated above: “being” or “nothingness”, “nature” or “freedom”. The first of these poles is represented, in particular, by evolutionary epistemology. Science and human cognition as a whole are treated here as an evolutionarily justified mode of existence.<sup>50</sup> However, such concepts inevitably face the problem of self-justification. As Grigory Gutner has noted, epistemological concepts, when proceeding from naturalistic assumptions, must thereby assume the limitations that characterise the formation of scientific constructions. These restrictions are primarily due to the inability to explain *whatever*.<sup>51</sup> This impossibility refers principally to the grounds of one’s own position. Otherwise, the claim to a total explanation of any knowledge brings such a concept back to the dogmatic position of pre-Kantian metaphysics. This position is inevitably affirmed in terms of Absolute Reason. However, consistent theoretical reflection inevitably reveals the internal contradiction in the concept of “Absolute Reason” itself, which in modern epistemology is discussed under the term “global observer”. As Diana Gasparyan notes, the very notion of a “global observer” turns out to be incoherent: “to be global”

<sup>50</sup> Russian edition of G. VOLLMER, *Evolutionary Theory of Knowledge. Evolutionary Epistemology. Anthology*, Moscow-St. Petersburg 2012, pp. 189-204, p. 191. Translations mine.

<sup>51</sup> G. B. GUTNER, *Science in Context of Human Practices. Constructionism and Evolutionary Epistemology about the Beginning of Science*, «Questions of Philosophy», 7 (2016), pp. 147-157, pp. 152-153.

and “to be an observer” are incompatible properties.<sup>52</sup> In this situation, it is either necessary to return to *faith* in the “global observer” (which cannot be thought of in a consistent way) or to relinquish the theory of absolute Truth and Reality.<sup>53</sup>

The second possibility is realised, in particular, within the framework of social epistemology, which comprehends scientific knowledge as a product of certain social conditions. Due to the fact that these conditions are largely arbitrary, one can relate such a position to the pole of “freedom” or “nothingness”. In this case, the foundations and sources of a particular scientific theory cannot be traced “to the end”. Scientific concepts and even empirical knowledge (because always “theoretically loaded”) are considered within the framework of social epistemology as phenomena caused by factors external to science. Such a position calls into question the very possibility of a rational assessment of the scientific “product”. In this context, Steve Fuller’s concept of “Protestant science” has a quite organic character. According to this concept, the “Protestant” or “customer” science, named by analogy with the religious Reformation of the 16th-17th centuries, is the last phase of the “secularisation of knowledge”.<sup>54</sup> This essentially democratic process creates a situation in which scientific knowledge loses its status as a direct “guide to action”. Accordingly, everyone now has the right to decide how to use (or not to use) particular scientific knowledge. Thus, from a simple “consumer” of knowledge, the individual human being is transformed into a “customer”. The latter participate in a market for scientific information, purchasing it in order to dispose of it at their discretion.<sup>55</sup> In other words, it is the “customer”, and not the scientist him- or herself, who now decides which of the products of scientific knowledge should be included in his or her (the customer’s) daily life. Considering the fact that this decision is made *freely*, that is to say, it is not regulated by some “epistemic authority” (universal Mind), it should be obvious in this case that the salient point concerns *faith in this or that knowledge*.<sup>56</sup>

Thus, we can state a striking circumstance: both on the “pole of nothingness (freedom)”, as well as on the “pole of being”, the cognising subject, in being deprived of the noumenal dimension, is faced with the necessity of an *appeal to faith*. In other words, a disavowal of the “unknowable remnant” in the human does not lead to the total dominance of knowledge. The latter still needs reinforcement by faith – either in a “global observer” as a guarantor of

<sup>52</sup> D. E. GASPARYAN, *Epistemological Constructivism and the Problem of Global Observer*, «Epistemology and Philosophy of Science», 47/1 (2016), pp. 84-101, p. 95. Translations mine.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 99.

<sup>54</sup> S. FULLER, *Customized Science as a Reflection of “Protoscience”*, «Epistemology and Philosophy of Science», 4 (2015), p. 56.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 57.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 59.

the truth of knowledge, or in knowledge itself, the sources of which necessarily remain unknown (arbitrary). As a result, the *boundary* between faith and knowledge itself turns out to be indeterminate. Unlike a more clearly defined and meaningful transcendental boundary, this new boundary does not fall into the “field of reflection” of the thinking subject.

A similar situation develops in the field of “practical reason”, if using Kant’s terminology. In this area, detranscendentalisation also leads to a problematisation of the grounds for moral and legal norms and actions. The consequence of a refusal to appeal to the unknowable “moral law in me” or the “voice of duty” is actions that are not fully rationalised. This refusal puts the subject of the action in the same dilemma that characterises the current situation in cognition. In the current situation of axiological pluralism, the subject of ethical action faces a choice: either to dogmatically affirm a particular “meta-value” position or be guided by arbitrarily formed values and norms. In other words, when engaged in practical action, the subject either has to commit to the “pole of nothingness” (arbitrary norms having no fixed basis) or to the “pole of existence” (there is a certain Supernorm, which must be accepted unconditionally). In the contemporary globalised society, it is often the demand for a recognition of *differences between people* that constitutes such a Supernorm. At the same time, the unified world becomes a “multiplicity of symbolic worlds”.<sup>57</sup> However, as Hans Jörg Sandkühler convincingly shows, this multiplicity itself is supported by a norm that goes beyond all differences. For Sandkühler, such a norm becomes positivistic human rights.<sup>58</sup> The author recognises the controversial nature of this norm, both in terms of its inconsistency and indeterminacy,<sup>59</sup> but does not see an alternative to it. In this respect Sandkühler defends the Kantian idea of a human as a free and “adult” being, capable of forming valid judgements.<sup>60</sup>

However, any attempt to combine this idea with the current situation, in which there is a real pluralism of “symbolic worlds”, would seem problematic. Here the question of whether the very idea of the *human as an autonomous and rational being* is part of one of the above-mentioned “symbolic worlds” remains open. Even if the answer to this question is negative, the very concept of human rights requires a universal interpretation of the “essence” or “nature” of the human. However, it is precisely by the demand for pluralism as recognition of differences that the existence of such a unity is called into question. At the moment when the interpretation of a person as an autonomous individual becomes *knowledge* (acquires a theoretical status), it automatically becomes a *dogma*. The paradox here is that it is only by refusing to acknowl-

<sup>57</sup> Russian edition of H. J. SANDKÜHLER, *Democracy, the Universality of Law and Real Pluralism*, «Questions of Philosophy», 2 (1999), pp. 35-50, p. 36. Translations mine.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 49.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 49-50.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 50.

edge the power of a theoretical (speculative) mind – like Kant’s – that a person may remain an autonomous and rational being. This paradox is revealed, in particular, by Jean Baudrillard. As the French thinker points out, human rights are deprived of meaning at a time when “the individual is no longer an alienated being, deprived of his own being”.<sup>61</sup> Do basic human rights include rights to “an accident”, “a crime”, “an error”? This question, posed by Baudrillard,<sup>62</sup> despite its seeming absurdity, makes sense. The meaningfulness of this question is due precisely to the unknowable remnant of “the human”, which cannot be absorbed by the theoretical mind. Any attempt to completely subordinate practical reason to the theoretical ends with the “brave new world” of Aldous Huxley. However, it is this precisely this subordination that forms the basis of the demand for ethical and religious pluralism as the *universal norm*. In this case, the relation to another person is determined not by *faith* in the sense of respect for the mystery (in oneself and in the other), but rather by *knowledge* (for example, the knowledge that all people are different). However, it precisely when it attains to the status of knowledge that this thesis inevitably yet again becomes dogmatic.

Thus, in the practical sphere, the refusal to recognise the noumenal “core” of the human can also be interpreted as one of the manifestations of the overcoming of “the human” in philosophy. This process is inevitably connected with the problematisation of the foundations of morality and law. In one case, these grounds are lost in the “spurious infinity” of the social, cultural, historical conditions that underlie the emergence of norms. However, in another case, the absence of such grounds and the abstract “equality of differences” are asserted dogmatically. Recognition of the inevitability of this polarisation in the absence of a transcendental border (between faith and knowledge; between the thing-in-itself and the phenomenon) gives a new salience to the Kantian conception of the human. In what follows, we will try to identify those (in many ways hidden) possibilities of this concept, which are devoid of metaphysical limitations.

#### 4. THE NON-METAPHYSICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE KANTIAN CONCEPT OF THE HUMAN

The refutation of the “essence” and “nature” of the human being in the philosophy of the 20th-21st centuries is carried out, as noted above, in the framework of the strategy of “overcoming metaphysics”. One of the key concepts of this strategy is that of the *event*, as opposed to the traditional metaphysical concept of *being*. In contrast to the idea of being, the concept of the event

<sup>61</sup> J. BAUDRILLARD, *Whatever Happened to Evil?*, in *id.*, *The Transparency of Evil*, J. Benedict (transl.), Verso Books, London-New York 1993, pp. 81-89, p. 87.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibidem*.

in one way or another indicates the absence of an eternal and unchanging foundation of existence. In turn, this foundational negation is often associated with a denial of *the transcendent* as belonging to metaphysical thinking. Thus, the rejection of “the human” in this context is a special case of the rejection of the recognition and understanding of the eternal transcendental “essences”. Thus, Alain Badiou, in considering the event as something plural and random,<sup>63</sup> emphasises the incompatibility of such an understanding of the event with the “transcendence of the One”, stating the purely immanent nature of the truth of the event.<sup>64</sup> Such an interpretation of the event establishes a direct connection between the impossibility of *knowledge* of the transcendental and *the absence of the transcendent*.

However, such a connection is not the only possible one that can be made. It seems that in the philosophy of Kant there is a hidden possibility for a different interpretation of being as an event. In the context of this interpretation, the impossibility of knowing about the source or basis of things does not lead to a restriction of thought to the sphere of the immanent, but rather permits a way of thinking negatively about the transcendental (and, above all, the transcendental dimension of “the human”). Thus, the priority of practical reason in relation to the theoretical in Kant’s philosophy can be interpreted as a recognition of the event-related “nature” of the transcendent. The latter cannot be the object of knowledge, but opens only in a moral act as a transcendent event.

The consistent confirmation by Kant of the unknowability of the sources of practical reason is sometimes treated as a concession to religiosity.<sup>65</sup> However, this rejection of full knowledge (concerning the sources of freedom, and – consequently – concerning a person as an autonomous individual) can be interpreted without going beyond philosophy. The irreducibility of the noumenal dimension of the human being to this or that *knowledge of the human* can be understood from the position of phenomenological ontology of being. In this case, the object of comprehension is not the *concept* of moral law, which testifies to the reality of the autonomy of the person, but the *experience* referred to by Kant in terms of *moral feeling*. This experience is prior to all knowledge concerning the human and in this regard can be interpreted as an event of discovery and recognition of oneself by oneself, i.e. not only as a phenomenon, but also as a noumenon.

Of greatest significance in this respect is the apophatic moment of Kant’s analysis of moral feelings. In the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant explicitly states that the answer to the question of how moral law turns into a motive

<sup>63</sup> A. BADIOU, *Manifesto for Philosophy*, cit., p. 105.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 106.

<sup>65</sup> J. HABERMAS, *Between Naturalism and Religion*, cit.

(the basis for determining will) is a task “insoluble for the human mind”.<sup>66</sup> The answer to this question is equivalent to the question of the possibility of free will.<sup>67</sup> Both these questions contradict the meaning of freedom, which cannot be based on any theoretical grounds, but always finds itself *only in the experience of freedom itself*. In turn, this experience itself consists primarily in the felt necessity to overcome sensory impulses and inclinations that are incompatible with the requirements of moral law. In this respect, as Kant emphasises, the effect of the moral law as a motive is only negative.<sup>68</sup> This action is manifested primarily in the fact that moral law “restrains every human who compares this law with the sensual attractions of his nature”.<sup>69</sup> Thus, the moral sense has a quite definite localisation: this is the “place” *between* demands of the moral law (having a purely formal sense of universality) and the pathological drives that characterise the human as a natural being. However, this point, which simultaneously connects and divides the “pathological” and “practical” in a human, does not exist as a given, but is solely revealed *in the act of practical reason*. Kant unambiguously affirms the independence of moral feeling from any prior conditions.<sup>70</sup> Moral feeling (like respect for moral law) paradoxically combines negative and positive moments, comprising “humility in the sensory sphere”<sup>71</sup> and the “elevation” of the human (as a finite rational being) in the sphere of reason.<sup>72</sup> The most important thing is that humility and exaltation cannot here be thought of sequentially; rather, it is a single, indivisible moment in a person of “pure practical law”.

It seems that it is this paradoxical moment, incomprehensibly combining the negative and positive, sensual and intellectual dimensions of human existence, that is to one degree or another ignored in the philosophy of the most recent times. However, a recognition of this paradox can be the answer to the question formulated in the introduction about the possibility of a non-substantive understanding of a human while maintaining human unity.

In the context of the interpretation of Kantian anthropology and ethics proposed above, a moral feeling (as respect for the moral law) can be considered as the *criterion of due action*, without contradicting human freedom. Emerging as the moment of an event – an act of practical reason – the “moral feeling” consists *at the same time* in the experience of overcoming “pathological” impulses and obeying the requirements of duty. Accordingly, duty itself is revealed only in the form of a negative image, such as that which does not coincide with any of the content of the subject’s motivation. Duty is what always and inevitably transcends the content of all human desires, perceptions

<sup>66</sup> I. KANT, *Kritik Der Praktischen Vernunft*, *Philosophischen Bibliothek Band 38*, L. Vorländer (ed.), Felix Meiner, Leipzig 1922, p. 94.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 96.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 98.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 102.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibidem*.



and goals. Hence it is clear why duty cannot be discerned in a purely theoretical way, since the *reality of the due itself* only opens in the lived experience of the human (or, according to Kant, the ultimate rational being) *in the mismatch* between his pathological motives and the requirements of moral law. However, it is precisely the reality of this lived experience that emerges as the only possible basis for talking about a “higher good” without encompassing a person with the framework of a single theoretical system.

This conversation takes place not within the sphere of generally accepted (unquestionable) knowledge, but rather *against the background* of that lived experience, which, being unique (like any experience), at the same time *unites* the finite rational being with other subjects of the action as well as with the world as a whole. Being devoid of any content, this connection *is not given*, but emerges each time from the action. Thus, the very nature of the connection between beings possessing autonomy of will is paradoxical: it is only in the unique experience of one’s freedom and “pure love of the law”<sup>73</sup> that the subject of morality acquires unity with other subjects. Therefore, speech concerning moral feeling as a criterion of *the due* is addressed to a being that opens to the speaker solely in the unique experience of freedom. In other words, this speech is addressed to the person *as a noumenon and not as a phenomenon*. Therefore, those reproaches of Kant, according to which he fails to comprehend the empirical and intelligible dimensions of human existence as “elements of a single ontological space”,<sup>74</sup> appear not to be entirely well-founded. It is the incommensurability of phenomenal and noumenal being that characterises a person.

In this context, the very requirement of Kant to see each other human as “an end in itself” can be interpreted in a non-metaphysical sense, i.e. in a unique act of practical reason, with the end consisting not in the being that belongs to the world, but rather as the being *through which* the transformation of the sensory into the intelligible takes place – the pathological to the moral, the lower to the higher. In this case, in the Kantian expression “[...] the human being, and in general every rational being, exists as end in itself, not merely as means [...]”,<sup>75</sup> the emphasis will be shifted: it is not the human (as a certain being) who is the goal, but rather the *very “essence” of the human that consists in serving as an end in itself*. In other words, such an end, which has no specific content, is not exhausted by any desires and motives. Moral feeling here

<sup>73</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 109.

<sup>74</sup> D. STURMA, *Was Ist Der Mensch? Kants Vierte Frage Und Die Ubergang Von Philosophischen Antropologie Zur Philosophie Der Person In Warum Kant Heute? Systematische Bedeutung Und Rezeption Seiner Philosophie*, in D. H. HEIDEMANN, K. ENGELHARD (eds.), *Den Gegenwart*, De Gruyter, Berlin-New York 2004, pp. 264-285, p. 283.

<sup>75</sup> I. KANT, *Kritik Der Praktischen Vernunft*, cit., pp. 112-113.

serves as an internal criterion of that boundary within which every finite (that is, meaningfully determined) end becomes an *end in itself*. Thus, a human being is nothing other than the transformation of finite ends into endlessness;<sup>76</sup> in this capacity, the human being is not an existent, but rather an *event of being*.

In the opinion of the present author, this interpretation of Kant's position allows the difficulties caused by the process of the overcoming of "the human" in philosophy to be resolved. The problem of the absence of a single basis for cognition and action is decided here by appealing to the single criterion of *the due*. This criterion is the experience of moral feeling as a pure form that reveals *the supreme good* to the person in the overcoming of all content of desires. Due to this experience being interpreted as an event, and not as a substance, its alienation and transformation into an abstraction proves to be impossible. Thus, the second difficulty connected with the process of the overcoming of "the human" in philosophy, i.e. the problem of dogmatising the bases of practical and theoretical reason, is also resolved. Moral feeling as the foundation is not *given*, but it must be actualised each time, engendering a thinking and acting subject in this event. The possibility of this engendering persists to the extent that a person is recognised and affirmed as a noumenon. While the Absolute cannot be banished human existence, at the same time, it cannot be appropriated by the theoretical mind. The Absolute as *the highest* is rediscovered each time in the event-experience of freedom as a moral law.

This thesis, of course, cannot guarantee the event itself; in other words, a human cannot theoretically assume or "design" a moral feeling. However, the Kantian conception of the human as an end in itself is not simply an impotent statement of something that may not occur. Rather, the concept offers the *criterion of the event of authentic being*. This criterion acquires strength and significance whenever a human poses the question of *the due*. The fact of inquiry itself testifies to the event that takes place when a human realises his freedom – or, alternatively expressed, concerning the event of a human's encounter with the Absolute. In the context of this event, the Kantian formula of "the human as an end in itself" becomes an unshakable fulcrum. The event-related interpretation of this formula largely eliminates the shortcomings of Kantian ethics, to which, in particular, Thomas Gutmann has pointed. As Gutmann points out, Kantian ethics do not allow the moral rights of insufficiently reasonable people to be substantiated.<sup>77</sup> However, if this reasonableness is considered *as a function of the event*, Gutmann's rebuke is no longer valid. Turning the requirement "to see in each human an end, and not a means" towards him- or herself, the subject is acting in the noumenal dimension. Since in this dimen-

<sup>76</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 157.

<sup>77</sup> T. GUTMAN, *Wurde Und Autonomie. Überlegungen Zur Kantischen Tradition*, preprints of the Centre for Advanced Study in Bioethics, Munster 2010/2, p. 16.

sion, the operative force it is not knowledge, but moral feeling (“pure love of the law”), it is the experience of moral feeling that unites the human with all other people, regardless of their empirically realised ability to attain subjecthood.

Thus, this interpretation of the human allows the Absolute and freedom to be reconciled by designating the *situational criterion of the due*. A “finite rational being” can only decide what is the content of the highest good in relation to a specific situation (event). Examples of such solutions can be found in Kant himself, including in the treatise *Perpetual Peace*. Distinguishing between the concepts of the *moral politician* and the *political moralist*,<sup>78</sup> Kant points towards the respective modes of action of both. The first (the moral politician) is guided by the goal dictated by duty, but operates in a specific situation. Given the specifics of this situation, a moral politician would strive to implement a better system of government (based on the idea of law), but “[...] it would be absurd indeed to demand that every imperfection in political matters must be violently altered on spot[...]”.<sup>79</sup> Such a demand could threaten the possibility of anarchy,<sup>80</sup> which would not bring society closer to the ideal state. Conversely, the political moralist, who is guided in his actions by his own (selfish) interests, relying on his knowledge of “human nature”, is not capable of good.<sup>81</sup> Thus, the distinction between a moral politician and a political moralist has not a substantive but rather a formal character, consisting not so much in *what* is done but rather *how* it is done. In other words, what do the motivations of the subject of political action consist in? The latter can only be recognised in *the due* in the event that, in Kant’s language, “pure love of the law” is manifested. The value consists only in the *vector of action*, which is expressed by the words “the end in itself”. However, this vector can only be recognised “from within” the actualisation of practical reason.

Of course, such an event-related criterion of the *due* cannot provide the subject with an external (theoretical) guarantee as to the authenticity of the motive or correctness of the action. However, such a criterion fully corresponds to the Kantian exhortation “*Sapere aude!*” [think for yourself], addressed to an adult human.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The hope for “eternal peace” in the Kantian sense resides in the possibility of searching and discovering the foundations of human unity. In the philosophy of the last century, the search for these grounds has mainly been carried out in the direction of the development of transcendentalism. As has been shown

<sup>78</sup> I. KANT, *Towards Perpetual Peace*, cit., p. 165.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 168.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 166.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibidem*.

above, this quest in the philosophy of the 20th-21st centuries has consisted primarily in a variety of attempts to overcome the transcendental position. Exposing the claims of metaphysics to knowledge of the “human essence” naturally leads to a dehumanisation of thought. In going beyond the limits of the “human”, philosophy tries to find its source either in “prehuman” freedom (nothingness), or in “prehuman” being. These paradoxical attempts ultimately reveal the impossibility of locating the foundations of the “human” in theoretical terms; in other words, the inability *to know* these grounds. It is not possible to talk about grounds beyond an appeal to the *Absolute*. The latter, by definition, cannot be the subject of knowledge.

In this situation, the reactivation of Kant’s philosophy in the context of post-metaphysical thought is justified precisely due to its opening up new opportunities for the Kantian opposition to “thinking-knowing”. Due to its finiteness, a “finite rational being” cannot *know itself*; however, it can *think itself*. The extremely precise formula of this thought is the Kantian expression “the human as an end in itself”. This formula gives the human an event-related (situational) criterion of *the due*, having an *absolute* meaning. Because of its non-metaphysical nature, this criterion can be applied by a human (“a finite rational being”) primarily *to him- or herself*. In discovering a creature belonging to the “kingdom of ends”, one human acquires the capacity of absolute acceptance of another human. Due to this criterion belonging to the noumenal dimension, it does not guarantee unity. However, it leaves open the possibility of unity, clearing the place for it. In realising his or her freedom as a “end in itself”, a human is freed from “self-love” and “self-conceit” (Kant), making unity impossible. Thus, this ostensibly negative function (in accordance with the task of criticism of the mind) has a completely positive meaning. This sense is exhaustively expressed by the creator of critical philosophy himself: “[...] I had to deny knowledge in order to make room for faith [...]”.<sup>82</sup>

ABSTRACT · The article explores the problem of the foundation of human unity in the present situation in which the idea of the human being having an essence or inherent nature is essentially denied. In this situation, new heuristic possibilities of the Kantian position of human beings as “ends in themselves” are revealed. A non-metaphysical interpretation of this thesis makes it possible to reveal the basis of “the human” in its noumenal dimension.

KEYWORDS · Kant, end in itself, human being, consciousness, freedom, phenomenon, noumenon.

<sup>82</sup> I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, P. Guyer, A.W. Wood (transl.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1998, p. 117.