Ezulike Benjamin Ofodile

Kant's pragmatic anthropology and the question of the perfectibility of human nature

Introduction

In his article: "Seeking Perfection: A Kantian Look at Genetic Engineering", Gunderson[1] makes a scholarly attempt to assess how scientific efforts at the improvement of the human specie, specifically, genetic engineering, can be supported from the Kantian perspective. He highlighted the basic tenets of Kant's moral philosophy and from these, affirmed that genetic engineering finds support in the Kantian perspective even though limits abound. In this essay, our interest is to dwell on the issue of perfectibility of human nature which includes but is not limited to genetic engineering. We intend to explore Kant's anthropology with the view to ascertaining the extent to which it could be said to provide fertile ground, not just for genetic engineering but to the broader question of the perfectibility of human nature. If Kant's moral philosophy offers supportive grounds for genetic engineering as Gunderson argues, can the same claim be made for his (Kant's) anthropology with regard,

[1] M. Gunderson, *Seeking Perfection: A Kantian Look at Genetic Engineering*, "Theoretical Medicine and Bioethics" 28 (2007), p. 87-102.

not only to genetic engineering but also to the perfectibility of human nature in its entirety?

Kant's anthropology is distinguished from his moral philosophy not only in terms of content but in methodology and approach. According to Louden[2], while Kantian anthropology is a descriptive and empirical undertaking, his ethics is a prescriptive and normative one founded on *a priori* principles. In a qualified affirmation of this distinction, Stack notes that "in Kant, anthropology and ethics must be separated, and yet, at the same time neither can be thought independently of the other"[3]. Though the two disciplines share a common subject matter: human behaviour; yet they differ in what constitutes the focus of their specific interest:

Anthropology considers the actual behaviour and these actions in so far as they establish and ground criteria for judgment[4].

1. The Pragmatic Nature of Kant's Anthropology

The title of Kant's major anthropological work – *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* already indicates clearly the contextual direction of his anthropology. In his letter to Hertz, Kant disclosed that he did not intend his anthropology to be a speculative exercise but rather one that is practical:

> I intend to use it (Lectures on Anthropology) to disclose the sources of all the [practical] science of morality, of skill, of human intercourse, of the way to educate and govern human beings, and thus of everything that pertains to the practical[5].

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2 Cf. R.B. Louden, *The Second Part of Morals*, in: *Essays on Kant's Anthropology,* eds. B. Jacobs, P. Kain, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2003, p. 63.

3 W. Stack, *Historical Notes and Interpretative Questions about Kant's Lectures on Anthropology*, in: *Essays on Kant's Anthropology*, p. 25.

4 Ibid, p. 24.

5 I. Kant, *Correspondence,* ed. and trans. A. Zweig, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1999, p. 141.

Allen Wood[6] offers a somewhat broad and exhaustive account of what makes the designation – 'pragmatic' appropriate for Kant's anthropology.

1. *Pragmatic versus Physiological*: Kant opts for an approach to anthropology that is different from the physiological approach, which focused only on what nature makes of the human being. His pragmatic approach focuses rather on what the human being as a free agent makes, or can make of himself.
2. *Pragmatic versus Scholastic*: Pragmatic knowledge is distinguished from scholastic one in the sense that, while the latter involves knowing or being acquainted with the world, the former has to do with being part of the world. That means then that pragmatic anthropology situates the individual as part of the world and not existing outside of it; "it is supposed to involve the oriented sort of knowledge of human nature that people gain through interacting with others rather than the theoretical knowledge of a mere observer"[6].
3. *Pragmatic as Useful*: Kant emphasizes the fact the knowledge about human nature which forms the subject matter of his pragmatic anthropology is one that is for utility. He underlines the fact that it is knowledge about human nature acquired with the aim of using it in action.
4. *Pragmatic as Prudential*: Kant aligns the pragmatic with prudence – with a knowledge that furthers our happiness, especially through the use we make of other people. It is pragmatic in that the idea is to use others to advance our own end.

Simply put, Kant's anthropology is pragmatic because it emphasizes the practical against the speculative and theoretical. It is an anthropology that is oriented towards utility. In its object, method and aim, Kant's anthropology is evidently pragmatic as Cohen rightly observes:

> [...] its object is pragmatic insofar as it studies man in terms of his actions in the world, and thus as a freely acting being; second, its method is pragmatic in that it involves interaction rather than

[6] A.W. Wood, *Kant and the Problem of Human Nature*, in: *Essays on Kant's Anthropology*, p. 40-41.

> observation; and third, its aim is pragmatic inasmuch as it is not only descriptive but prescriptive[7].

The pragmatic nature of Kant's anthropology has a very deep teleological dimension. It presents man as a being whose capabilities are all geared towards propelling him to some definite ends. Such is the 'teleological directedness toward the goal of perfection'[8] that one finds in Kant's anthropology. Wilson identifies four elements that make up this teleological directedness. The first element has to do with what nature is and what human beings have the tendency to make out of it. Nature is not chaotic; it is rather ordered and is guided by a providential plan. But nature does not compel human beings to bend to its ways: "Human beings still have free will to respond to nature's organization"[9]. This first element underlines the fact that human beings are free agents in the world and whose freedom has the tendency towards making a preference for civilization.

The second element which is directly related to the first one is that human beings are imbued with natural predisposition that they tend to develop in a purposive way. Kant does not therefore understand human beings as finished products. What nature offers human beings is only the capacity for a purposive development. Kant therefore prefers to understand human beings as *rationable* animals that have the capability to perfect themselves.

> [...] he [human being] is capable of perfecting himself according to ends that he himself adopts.

By means of this the human being, as an animal endowed with the capacity of reason, can make out of himself a rational animal[10].

The third element of the teleological dimension of Kant's anthropology is the fact that the possibility of the full realization of the potentials

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7 A.A. Cohen, *Kant's answer to the question 'what is man?' and its implications for anthropology*, "Studies in History and Philosophy of Science" 39 (2008), p. 506-514.

8 H.L. Wilson, *Kant's Pragmatic Anthropology: Its Origin, Meaning and Critical Significance,* Albany: State University of New York Press 2006, p. 36.

9 Ibid., p. 38.

10 I. Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, ed. and trans. R.B. Louden, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2006, p. 226.

of reason is not within the reach of the individual but is only attained by humanity at large. The plan of nature, which is the development of the entire predisposition in human beings in a purposive way, can never be achieved fully in the individual alone but only in the species.

> Reason cannot achieve its fullest expression in any one individual; rather, the individual is always a member of society, and the society is always a step toward perfection, but never perfection itself. Therefore, no individual could possibly reach its own perfection[11].

The fourth element is the tension that exists between the unsociable nature of human beings and their tendency towards sociability. This is referred to as Kant's doctrine of unsociable-sociability. The human specie shows the tendency of needing to be sociable while at the same time preserving the tendency towards unsociability. Kant describes this tension in these words:

> [...] the characteristic of the human species is this: that nature has planted in it the seed of discord, and has willed that its own reason bring concord out of this, or at least the constant approximation to it. It is true that in the idea, concord is the end, but in actuality the former (discord) is the means, in nature's plan, of a supreme and to us inscrutable wisdom: to bring about the perfection of the human being through progressive culture [...][12].

That seed of discord which nature planted in human specie is responsible for man's tendency towards evil, the tendency towards unsociability. What is clear from our discussion so far is that as far as Kant is concerned, man's realization of perfection must be understood as interplay between what nature endows him and what he actively makes of these natural endowments himself.

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11 H.L. Wilson, *Kant's Pragmatic Anthropology*, p. 40.
12 I. Kant, *Anthropology*, p. 226.

2. The Natural Predispositions

In Kant's anthropology, the predispositions can be viewed as the endowments that nature placed at the disposition of man; endowments that sets the stage for the realization of man's teleological directedness. The predispositions can be classified under two broad divisions: the predisposition to animality, which the human being shares with other animals; and the predisposition to humanity which is unique to man. This predisposition to humanity is further classifies under technical, prudential (pragmatic) and moral predispositions. However, all the four predispositions share an intimate link as given that the actualization of the end of each presupposes the actualization of the ends of the preceding predisposition.

2.1. The Predisposition to Animality

Kant's discussion of the predisposition to animality featured prominently in the *Religion Within the Limits of Reason* more than it does in his anthropology. In the *Anthropology* however, there is abundant implicit references to this predisposition. The natural ends for the predisposition to animality include: self-preservation, propagation of species through sexual drives, community with other human beings, i.e. social drive. These are the very things human beings share in common with other animals. At the level of animality, Kant identifies two dorminant natural inclinations in human beings – that of sex and freedom.

It is not difficult to understand that human beings share the inclination to sex with other animals. However, that of freedom needs clarification. The kind of freedom being referred to here is not freedom considered from the perspective of willful adherence to moral law; it is rather 'the inclination to sensuous outer freedom'[13] which is different from the inner freedom of the moral disposition. This sensuous freedom is freedom from rule of others. It has to do with the tendency to reject

[13] H.L. Wilson, *Kant's Pragmatic Anthropology*, p. 63.

all forms of external constraint and external determinations as well as the freedom to be the source of one's own decisions.

The ends of the predisposition to animality - self-preservation, preservation of the species, interaction with members of the specie – are all given by nature but man needs discipline as necessary means to accomplish these ends. This is the difference that exists between man and animals even within the context of their shared animality. For human beings therefore, discipline is the means towards the realization of the ends of their predisposition to animality. Discipline 'changes animal nature into human nature'[14] by putting in check the tendency in human beings to go against rules of sociability put in place for the assurance of self-preservation, social well-being, and preservation of the species. Thus, the ends of the predispositions to animality are such that they are put in check by the demands made on the individual by civil society. Kant gives an example with the fact that a young man must first learn a skill and acquire means for sustenance before he can maintain his family in a civil society. As a natural being, the young man has all the sexual drives and is naturally able to fulfill the end of propagation of species. However, he will not be able to contribute to the preservation of the species without having as well the means to cater for his basic needs.

2.2. The Technical Predisposition

This is the predisposition for skills. Different from other lower animals, human beings possess skill that arises from their rationality which enables them to pursue ends they set for themselves. Unlike animals, man has the technical ability to manipulate and produce things, and thus to secure his subsistence by cultivating nature. Kant understands this human ability as corresponding to a natural imperative to make provisions for his survival. However, skillfulness is not survival specific. It is not just the ability to manipulate things physically. Being the development of one's natural talents, skill belongs to the natural perfection of the human

[14] Ibid.

being in contrast with his moral perfection. It is from the development of the abilities which is essential to skill that science and art arise.

The end of the technical predisposition is culture. Culture goes beyond particular skills. It is a determination of human nature and individuals participate in culture as members of human species. Like the ends of all the natural predispositions, Kant argues that the end of the technical predisposition is not what individuals alone can achieve:

> The drive to acquire science, as a form of culture that ennobles humanity, has altogether no proportion to the life span of the species. The scholar, when he has advanced in culture to the point where he himself can broaden the field, is called away by death, and his place is taken by the mere beginner who, shortly before the end of his life, after he too has just taken one step forward, in turn relinquishes his place to another[15].

The transient nature of human life is such that no individual ever actualizes the technical predisposition perfectly. Therefore the full development of culture of science and arts result, not from the effort of a single individual but rather the accumulation of inputs of several actors through so many years.

2.3. The Pragmatic predisposition

Kant describes the pragmatic predisposition as the human beings tendency "to become civilized through culture, particularly through the cultivation of social qualities, and the natural tendency of his species in social relations to come out of the crudity of mere personal force and to become a well-mannered being destined for concord"[16]. Whereas predispositions to animality and technicality depend on discipline and skills respectively, development of the pragmatic predisposition depends on the social civilization of human beings. The pragmatic predisposition prepares human beings for the capacity to become civilized through the cultivation and refinement of social qualities like eloquence and polite-

[15] I. Kant, *Anthropology*, p. 231.
[16] Ibid.

ness. It is a predisposition that enables human beings to overcome the natural tendency of employing the use of brute force for the attainment of their ends.

The nature of the technical predisposition is such that the attainment of its ends creates some imbalance as some tend to be more skillful than others. The natural consequence of culture and skill among human being is a situation of inequality and competition. What follows this competition is the rising of antagonism which in turn leads to loss of harmony. But then, Kant argues that since human beings long for peace and harmony, they learn to be civilized in their relationship with one another. In a sense therefore, civilization becomes a child of necessity of the disharmony and antagonism that naturally arises from the imbalance created by the predisposition to technicality. Thus, 'culture, and its consequence of rivalry and antagonism, is the spur to the development of the pragmatic predisposition, and civilization is the species' end in this predisposition"[17].

As the end of the pragmatic predisposition, civilization aims at developing socializing tendencies in human beings for the purpose of attainment of happiness. The means towards the realization of this end is prudence which refers to the ability to use other human beings for the purpose of attainment of our own happiness. The use of others referred to here should not be misunderstood as act of taking undue advantage of others or exploiting them selfishly. For Kant, there is nothing immoral about prudence as the means to the realization of the goal of the pragmatic predisposition. Within the social context of human interactions and dealings, our quest for happiness often runs into conflict with the interest of others. We therefore need to know how to use others in a way that makes it possible for us to realize our happiness. To underline that the use implied here is not an ill-intentioned one, Kant makes it clear that the prudent person's use of others is quite different from that of a cunning person: "The cunning person uses others without their consent or informed consent, while the prudent person knows how to gain the cooperation of others in her endeavours"[18]. This cooperation with others

17 H.L. Wilson, *Kant's Pragmatic Anthropology*, p. 77.
18 Ibid., p. 80.

is of utmost importance for individuals to achieve their well being and happiness. However, Kant argues that no matter how much he may try, the individual is not able to realize this happiness fully since there is no way it can be guaranteed that we can get all the cooperation we need from others to assure our own well being. By becoming civilized, the entire human specie therefore would have the potentiality of realizing what does not lie within the power of a single individual to achieve.

2.4. The Moral Predisposition

Of all the natural predispositions, Kant considers the predisposition to morality as the highest. It is all about the development of a good character achieved through education. Indeed for Kant, the ultimate aim of education is the development of a good character. The basic question to be clarified here is whether human beings have innate capacity for good or evil or whether they are susceptible to both by virtue of their education. Kant strongly affirms the tendency to continual progress of the human specie. This cannot be consistent with having an ambivalent human nature; ambivalence in this sense would imply that nature intends human being to develop both evil and good equally. Moreover, we need to differentiate between tendency and predisposition in order to understand what exactly Kant ascribes to human nature. The two terms – tendency and predisposition - do not have the same meaning. Human beings have a tendency to evil in their sensible character whereas the predispositions are towards the good. While human beings cannot necessarily exist without the predispositions, evil is a contingent tendency that can be done away with.

For Kant, the natural end of the predisposition to morality is the development of a good character, which must be drawn out of the human being by education. While it belongs to nature to supply the natural talents, temperament and dispositions, it is the duty of human beings to develop them through education and the highest point in education is the acquisition of wisdom. Wisdom bears affinity to prudence, even though it is not the same as prudence, in the sense that it concerns the way in which one makes use of the other predispositions for the sake of

life. While prudence relates the individual to the society, wisdom relates the individual to the whole destiny of the human specie. Wisdom knows the limits of the ends of the other predispositions as well as the purposes they serve. Above all, wisdom consists in the knowledge that it is in the specie and not in the individual that the full actualization of the natural predispositions is achieved.

We see from the foregoing that for each of the four predispositions, there is a particular end to be achieved as well as the corresponding means towards achieving that end: preservation and propagation are the ends of the predisposition to animality and discipline is the means to the realization of these ends; the end of the technical predisposition is culture and this is achieved through the development of skills; happiness is the purpose or goal of the pragmatic predisposition and this is accomplished by virtue of the development of prudence and civilization; the moral predisposition aims at the development of character and does so through the acquisition of wisdom.

3. Implications of Kant's understanding of human nature for the question of perfectibility of human nature

From the discussion so far, it is clear that Kant advocated for a very practical and utility-based understanding of human nature. Such is the pragmatism inherent in his anthropology. Kant believes that nature offers human beings the basis and the capability to set ends for themselves and employ the means necessary to achieve those ends. This presupposes that man is not a finished product but rather a being open to self-improvement. Even though there is a natural tendency in human beings for evil, Kant argues that nature at the same time imbues them with the predisposition for the good. In his intelligible character, man feels in himself the innate duty to aspire towards self-improvement. In the *Metaphysics of Morals,* Kant makes reference to this innate predisposition towards the good and shows how it inspires man's inclination towards self-

-improvement. In that work, Kant argues that the quest for perfection is a duty and not an option. Man has the 'duty to raise himself from the crude state of his nature, from his animality, more and more toward humanity, by which he alone is capable of setting himself ends'[19]. The tendency towards evil or lawlessness is something that arises from that crude state of man's nature from which he has the duty to raise himself in his match towards humanity. It is this march towards humanity and the practical ways human beings go about it that formed the focus of Kant's pragmatic anthropology as we have seen in our discussion so far. From the predisposition to animality, through those of technicality and pragmatism to the predisposition to morality, Kant's interest was to show the practical ways that the capabilities of human beings can be cultivated so that the human specie can reach its highest goal which is civilization and moralization of humanity itself.

It is obvious that education has tremendous value in Kant's pragmatic anthropology. In contrast with animals, 'human being can only attain their destiny through education, which is the development of the predispositions'[20]. For Kant, education aims at the full development of all the natural predispositions of human beings. The four ends of education - discipline, culture, prudence and moral training – therefore correspond to the means of actualization of the four natural predisposition to animality, technicality, pragmatic and morality respectively. By virtue of discipline, man's tendency to act without rules, which is the hallmark of his predisposition to animality, is put in check. Culture ensures the development and passing on of skills which forms the focus of the technical predisposition. Prudence ensures proper and maximum use of others for our own ends, i.e. for the attainment of happiness. Wisdom facilitates moral training and the development of moral character for the formation of good will, which, for Kant constitutes the final end of education. Consistent with the pragmatism of his anthropology, development of moral character does not merely stop at acting on moral principles. The

[19] I. Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals,* trans. M. Gregor, Cambridge: University Press 1991, p. 191.

[20] H.L. Wilson, *Kant's Pragmatic Anthropology*, p. 87.

ultimate aim is to make individuals 'useful to society and useful to the furtherance of human destiny'[21].

From what we have seen in our discussion of Kant's teleological understanding of human nature and the natural predispositions, the emphasis is not so much on the individual but rather on the human specie at large. In Kant's anthropology, the perfection of the individual is only realized in the perfection of the human specie as a whole. Indeed for Kant, perfection of the individual in isolation is not even realizable as the individual cannot attain his ends outside of the specie of humanity. Kant states this fact clearly when he summarizes his discussion of the relation between the individual and the human society at large. He referred the human society as:

> [...] a specie of rational beings that strives among obstacles to rise out of evil in constant progress toward the good [...] one cannot expect to reach the goal by the free agreement of individuals, but only by a progressive organization of citizens of the earth into and toward the species as a system that is cosmopolitically united[22].

The emphasis Kant places on the larger humanity than on the individual has enormous implication for his understanding of man's perfectibility. By perfectibility, we understand the desires for and tendency towards self-improvement. In their very nature, human beings possess inexhaustible capacity for amelioration and improvement of their being. The idea of Perfectibility underlines man's capability to depart from the state of nature and match towards self-development empowered by reason. This capability constitutes the chief characteristic that distinguishes man from other animals as it draws him out of his original condition, and is responsible for his extraordinary adaptability. Perfectibility does not necessarily imply perfection. For man to 'perfect himself" is not necessarily for him to become perfect, but rather for his physical and mental capacities to be remolded, time and time again, to fit his environment and to make him better disposed towards the realization of his goals. Perfectibility implies an openness to improvement and to amelioration.

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21 Ibid.

22 I. Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, p. 238.

There is no doubt that Kant's pragmatic anthropology, its teleological nature and the practical implications of the natural predispositions developed by Kant naturally provide a solid justification to arguments for the perfectibility of man especially from the perspective of scientific progress and advancement. At this point, we come back again to Gunderson's article which we already made reference to in the introduction. Even though Gunderson was considering the justifiability of genetic engineering from the perspective of Kant's moral philosophy, it is obvious that Kant's pragmatic anthropology more than his moral philosophy easily provides the justification Gunderson was arguing for. In the said article, Gunderson argues that:

> Kant was concerned with moving toward humanity through education and the cultivation of understanding and morally beneficial character traits. Although Kant could not have imagined genetic engineering, I argue that insofar as genetic engineering can supplement these efforts we have a Kantian reason for pursuing it[23].

Two salient points are easily discernible in the above citation: Kant did not directly engage himself with the question of genetic engineering; as a matter of fact, Kant could not even have been aware of such thing as Gunderson rightly noted. Yet, his views which, from all indications, favour the perfectibility of the human species, provide valid reasons for genetic engineering. If we understand genetic engineering as one of the contributions of science towards improvement and amelioration of the human specie which aims at the enhancement of 'talents and capacities that enable one to pursue morally justifiable goals'[24], there is not doubt that it would find enormous support in Kant's pragmatic anthropology, after all, the latter emphasizes the cultivation of human beings and the full realization of their potentials and their natural predispositions in the specie, not in the individual. Perhaps another way of making this point clearer is to consider whether Kant's pragmatic anthropology could be said to support or oppose the two major arguments against genetic engineering which Gunderson discussed in his article.

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[23] M. Gunderson, *Seeking Perfection*, p. 87-102.
[24] Ibid.

The first argument is about the claim that genetic engineering exploits the individual in preference for the larger society; that it 'treats those who are subject to it as merely a means to another's end – the goals of the parents or the state'[25]. In his pragmatic anthropology, Kant argues that perfection is fully realizable only in the specie and not in the individual; 'that although each man must do what he can to perfect himself, this is only as a means to the perfection of mankind'[26]. From such Kantian perspective therefore, genetic engineering remains acceptable as it aims at improving the human specie. Kant did not advocate for the treatment of individuals as merely means. His pragmatic anthropology respects the right and autonomy of the individual. On this issue, we recall Kant's clarification of the right meaning of prudence – the use of the other to realize our own ends. Kant says that such use of the other necessarily presuppose the consent of the one being used; it has to be an informed use differentiated from an exploitative and cunning one.

The second argument is that genetic engineering has the tendency of dividing humanity between those with richer and more improved genes and the Naturals who do not have such improved genes. For Gunderson, this does not pose any problem when considered from the perspective of Kant's moral philosophy, which, according to him, is built on egalitarianism: that 'Kant, after all, holds that all humans have dignity and are therefore equal in having worth beyond price.'[27] While we do not intend to go into analysis of the justifiability of the claim for egalitarianism in Kant's moral philosophy, our interest is to find out whether such claim can also be made of his pragmatic anthropology. One may ask: "Is Kant's pragmatic anthropology built on egalitarianism considering Kant's demeaning views about women and remarks about the qualities of peoples of different races? Frierson rightly observed that 'some of the most well-known and most embarrassing parts of Kant's anthropology are his reflections on women and various races'"[28]. Take for instance Kant's

25 Ibid.

26 J. Passmore, *The Perfectibility of Man*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons 1970, p. 217.

27 M. Gunderson, *Seeking Perfection*, p. 87-102.

28 P.E. Frierson, *Freedom and Anthropology in Kant's Moral Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2003, p. 34.

view that 'the woman should dominate and the man should govern'[29]. Could such view not be held as an indication of lack of commitment to egalitarianism on the part of Kant? Addressing this question, Wood offers this clarification in defense of Kant:

> Kant does not doubt that there is a single nature common to human beings. Nor does he have any doubt that the investigation of this nature is the proper object of the branch of human knowledge he calls "anthropology". Kant argues against doing what he calls a merely "local anthropology" studying only the behaviour or characteristics of human beings as they are found in a particular time and place[30].

Kant's interest was to project an understanding of man that is utility based and not merely to judge the innate qualities for the purpose of stratification of gender or race. His comments on gender and racial differences should not therefore be treated in isolation. Within the context of the pragmatic anthropology he advanced, the right meaning of those comments must be found in his overall interest in seeking an understanding of the other with the view to maximize one's opportunity to realize one's goal. Besides, we recall again that such individual aspiration for realization of the ends of the natural predispositions comes to its fullest attainment, not in the individual but in the human specie at large. In arguing for the human specie as the point of full realization of the natural predisposition, Kant makes no distinction between gender or between races. The general slant of his pragmatic anthropology therefore is belief in the perfectibility of the human specie universally and from every indication, genetic engineering and indeed other scientific endeavour aimed at amelioration and improvement of the human specie would find in such anthropological thoughts a fertile and supportive ground.

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29 I. Kant, *Anthropology*, p. 211.
30 A.W. Wood, *Kant and the Problem of Human Nature*, p. 39.

Conclusion

Kant offers us a clear indication that his anthropology is built on faith in the perfectibility of man as a goal-directed being. According to him:

> The sum total of pragmatic anthropology, in respect to the vocation of the human being and the characteristic of his formation, is the following: the human being is destined by his reason to live in a society with human beings and in it to *cultivate* himself, to *civilize* himself, and to *moralize* himself by means of the arts and sciences[31].

It can rightly be said that in his pragmatic anthropology, Kant proposed an understanding of human nature that is very accommodative of progress and improvement. In this understanding, human beings have the natural predisposition to cultivate and develop themselves as their 'natural vocation consists in continual progress towards the better'[32]. Kant's pragmatic anthropology, considering this progress-inclined understanding of human nature, provides strong support for the perfectibility of human nature and consequently, could be said to favour whatever would promote the improvement of the human specie, not excluding of course genetic engineering.

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31 I. Kant, *Anthropology*, p. 231.

32 Ibid., p. 230.

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Streszczenie

Poszukiwanie sposobów podnoszenia jakości ludzkiego życia i pytanie o to, co konstytuuje zakres i granice, w których obrębie nauka może ułatwiać doskonalenie ludzkiej natury, wciąż prowokują liczne intelektualne dyskusje i kontrowersje. Doskonalenie to zakłada i pociąga za sobą otwartość na poprawianie i ulepszanie samego siebie, czyli samodoskonalenie. Artykuł nie rości pretensji do wyczerpujących analiz przebiegu dyskusji nad doskonaleniem natury ludzkiej. Naszym celem jest raczej poszukiwanie i analiza podstaw usprawiedliwienia i potwierdzenia takiego poszukiwania sposobu doskonalenia ludzkiej natury wyłącznie z perspektywy Kanta, a w szczególności jego antropologii. Optując za podejściem, które jest raczej pragmatyczne, Kant rozwinął antropologię, która kładzie nacisk na praktyczny i teleologiczny wymiar ludzkiej egzystencji i która oferuje bogate implikacje w kwestii doskonalenia natury ludzkiej.

Słowa kluczowe: pragmatyczny, samodoskonalenie, antropologia, teologia, predyspozycja