

Chapter 7

Positive Economics From the Perspective of Kant's Thought

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ABSTRACT

Departing from Kant's thought, we could argue that the portrait of homo economicus drawn by positive economics corresponds to a homo phaenomenon as a heteronomous person of concrete economic reality. In addition, we could try to show that economics could not get rid of naturalism, materialism, and fatalism, justifying Kant's concerns. We could also emphasize that, while in the beginning the aim of being a positive science to be able to produce synthetic a posteriori propositions, positive economics tried to continue its way by the method of synthetic a priori. Finally, we must also point out the possibility for an autonomous or free homo noumenon to establish an original ethos by setting goals for itself.

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INTRODUCTION

Immanuel Kant, the great thinker of the age of enlightenment, made a very important contribution to the rational delineation of human thought. He has developed a striking approach not only to the characteristics of knowledge, but also to the nature of man. Departing from his anthropological vision, Kant aimed to avoid the danger of falling into materialism, naturalism or fatalism. In this context, economics, like other sciences, has been exposed to these dangers. Will it be possible for economics, to escape the Kant's trilemma by generating synthetic a posteriori knowledge? Or aiming to obtain the physics of human behavior, will economics find itself in a situation drowned in mathematics? From this point on, it will be appropriate to find answers to these complicated questions.

KANT'S CONTRIBUTION

Kant has made important distinctions, which are often used today, revealing where the boundaries of knowledge began and where they ended. The distinction between analytic propositions and synthetic propositions, and the other distinction of *a priori* and *a posteriori* knowledge were used to reach a specific taxonomy in Kant's epistemology.

Analytic propositions, used to express reality, do not extend our knowledge and are insightful. In other words, the inclusion of the predicate in the concept are discussed. In contrast, synthetic propositions extend our knowledge of reality. The predicate is not included in the concept and may be true or false.

When it comes to the other distinction that Kant had used; it should be emphasized first that *a priori* knowledge is information that is not based on experience. From this point of view, we do not know the source, but we think that it contains information. The knowledge obtained from the experience is *a posteriori* knowledge. Kant does not doubt that our knowledge begins with experience.

As it is known, Kant considered these two differentiations together, and explored the ability of pure mind to produce knowledge and reach judgments. In this context, he has reached a classification that includes four different judgments:

Analytic a posteriori

Analytic a priori

Synthetic a posteriori

Synthetic a priori

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