

# “Contributions to a Kantology”. Schleiermacher’s Critical Assessment of *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*

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**Abstract:** The paper examines Friedrich Schleiermacher’s 1799 review of Immanuel Kant’s *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*. Schleiermacher’s critique, published anonymously in the *Athenaeum*, adopts a harsh and ironic tone, deeming Kant’s work as trivial and flawed. Schleiermacher argues that Kant’s attempt to reconcile systematic and popular elements within his anthropology led to its failure, coining the term “Kantology” to refer to a superficial study of Kant’s personality rather than a substantive contribution to anthropology. Schleiermacher contends that Kant’s anthropology is internally inconsistent and overly reliant on a rigid distinction between physiological and pragmatic anthropology. According to Schleiermacher, this distinction oversimplifies human nature by neglecting the necessary unity between bodily and mental aspects. The paper highlights how Schleiermacher’s review is an important critique of Kant’s *Anthropology*, providing insights into both Kant’s and Schleiermacher’s philosophical views. Schleiermacher criticizes Kant’s approach as falling into “lower realism,” missing the transcendental and “higher realism” that he associates with religion and human freedom. Despite its acerbic tone, the review is seen as a valuable contribution to the study of Kant’s anthropology and Schleiermacher’s philosophical development. Schleiermacher’s review raises fundamental questions about the compatibility of Kant’s anthropology with his broader critical philosophy and offers a re-evaluation of how Kant’s ideas on human nature, freedom, and history are integrated into his system of thought.

**Keywords:** Kant, Schleiermacher, Review, Anthropology, Realism

## 1. “One of the most heinous things published in the *Athenaeum*.”

In 1799 the journal *Athenaeum* published an anonymous review of Immanuel Kant’s *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht*, which had appeared the previous year. The reviewer, Friedrich Schleiermacher, uses unusually harsh tones. The book, we read, consists of a “collection of trivia” and is the “negation of all anthropology,” in place of which it may offer some “contributions to a Kantology,” whose object is the everyday idiosyncrasies of the man Immanuel Kant, for whom “affects and much else that comes to the mind are properly treated as means of digestion.”<sup>1</sup> August Wilhelm Schlegel, editor of the journal with his

<sup>1</sup> RPA, *passim*. I will refer to the English translation of Schleiermacher’s review as RPA (= Review of Pragmatic Anthropology), and to Kant’s reviewed book as Pragmatic Anthropology (PA). This paper is a modified and expanded version of Martinelli 2023.

brother Friedrich, spoke in this regard of “one of the most heinous things published in the *Athenaeum*.”<sup>2</sup> Wilhelm Dilthey, who was undoubtedly empathetic towards Schleiermacher, asserts that the aforementioned review constitutes an “inexcusable and unjustified offense” which “adds personal insinuations to a judgment that is not supported by scientific evidence” (1970, 490). No doubt that the harshness of tones disturbs the admirers of Kant – or perhaps uncritically galvanize those who cultivate a negative image of the Prussian philosopher. In either case, this is an unfruitful way to approach this review. In order to impartially verify the extent to which Schleiermacher’s judgment of the work is, or is not, well-founded, and useful for modern readers, it is necessary not to be swayed too much by the heavy-handed “personal insinuations” of which Dilthey spoke. At the same time, however, style cannot be entirely separated from content, especially in a review and least of all in this review. The text is a dazzling philosophical *tour de force*, as Schleiermacher conceived it. It forces the reader to make an effort of interpretation of the review that is unusually disproportionate to the text under review. Manuel Bauer (2019, 245) has shown how Schleiermacher was massively influenced, at the time, by Friedrich Schlegel’s style and approach to the genre of the book review. Schleiermacher presents himself as an “ironic, disrespectful” reviewer who proceeds with “immense self-assurance” and “distinguishes himself from the crowd of embarrassed critics” insofar he is the sole scholar unafraid to present “a harsh reckoning with a work of the aging philosophical grandmaster from Königsberg, which is regarded as unsuccessful.” (Bauer 2019, 245–46).

Those with a philosophical inclination would then be well advised to delve beyond the surface-level observations on the harsh tone of Schleiermacher’s review and instead focus their attention on the interpretative structure that underlies it. In terms of the current state of research, two principal areas of study can be identified: that of Kant research and that of Schleiermacher studies.

The dismissive tone of the review undoubtedly contributes to its unfavorable standing among Kant scholars, as evidenced by the paucity of studies dealing with this text.<sup>3</sup> As a consequence, the review has not been sufficiently capitalized upon for an interpretation of Kant’s anthropology. From this perspective, two key elements deserve particular attention. Primarily, Schleiermacher perceives the reviewed work as a coherent and integral component of the Kantian system of thought.<sup>4</sup> This assertion is in stark contrast to the long-dominant interpreta-

<sup>2</sup> Quoted and translated from Auerochs (2017, 92). Schleiermacher replied (*ibid.*): “I am wholly blameless. I perceive no impropriety in a news regarding an anthropological study.” In fact, the review is anything but mere “news.”

<sup>3</sup> Among the exceptions, cf. Frierson 2003; Cohen 2008b. There is a mention in Louden (2011, 77), with reference to Cohen 2008b.

<sup>4</sup> According to Frierson (2003, 1), Schleiermacher would rather show that Pragmatic Anthropology “contrasts strikingly with the rest of Kant’s philosophy.” The reason for this misunderstanding is that Frierson analyzes only one part of Schleiermacher’s text (the one I will discuss in § 2), neglecting its remaining section.

tion. For an extended period, scholars have tended to isolate this work from the remainder of the *Corpus Kantianum* and to diminish its significance as an inadequately conceived late production, or even as a legacy of the traditional scholastic psychology that managed to survive – albeit in a somewhat enigmatic manner – the critical turn.<sup>5</sup> Schleiermacher’s strategy is wholly distinct from that of the aforementioned critics. Aligned with Kant’s philosophizing, Pragmatic Anthropology is particularly suited to the revelation of certain inherent limitations. These are manifest here with particular clarity due to Kant’s incorporation of the consequences pertaining to human beings that arise from critical philosophy. Secondly, Schleiermacher emphasizes Kant’s (PA, 233) unfortunate endeavor to reconcile the “systematic” aspect with the “popular” character of exposition. The “reciprocal destruction” [*wechselseitige Zerstörung*]<sup>6</sup> of these two aspects lies at the heart of the specific shipwreck of Pragmatic Anthropology. This particular failure, in his view, reinforces the inherent flaws that are derived from the First and Second Critiques.<sup>7</sup> This observation identifies a genuine issue. One of the reasons for the ongoing misunderstandings surrounding Kant’s Anthropology is the inherent tension between its systematic and popular aspects. This tension, I believe, should be resolved in favor of a systematic exposition of the ideas expressed in the work. It is not the purpose of this discussion to undertake such a complex analysis, but it is evident that Schleiermacher’s review provides an essential preliminary step in this process, as it calls for the fulfillment of this desired outcome.

Furthermore, the review is of considerable value in view of an analysis of the intellectual development of the young Schleiermacher and his confrontation with Kant’s ethics.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, the text is accorded less attention than might be anticipated.<sup>9</sup> It is only recently that some of the critical examinations

<sup>5</sup> The interconnection between Kant’s anthropology and German scholastic psychology has been overstated in the past decades. One of the most prominent figures in this discussion is Norbert Hinske (1996). For a more recent perspective on Kant’s anthropology, see Sturm (2009); for a discussion, Martinelli (2010). This paper will demonstrate how Schleiermacher’s perspective in the review serves to reinforce the argument that Kant’s anthropology is only loosely connected with scholastic psychology.

<sup>6</sup> RPA, 18. Cf. Schleiermacher (1984a, 368).

<sup>7</sup> The present study will demonstrate that Schleiermacher did not take into account Kant’s *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, which constitutes a shortcoming of his analysis of Pragmatic Anthropology in the review (see below, § 4).

<sup>8</sup> For a survey of the critical positions on this issue, cf. Bondi (2017, 209-212). Add to this the position of Robert Loudon (2000, x), who notes a certain ambiguity in Schleiermacher’s pronouncements on Kantian ethics.

<sup>9</sup> An exception to this is the work of Nowak (1986, 252), who, however, posits that Schleiermacher accorded “systematic priority” to a conception of man “thought of as a free agent”, while Kant’s concept of man “based on the doctrine of faculties” disregarded man as a free agent. This is a gross misrepresentation, that can be attributed to the adoption of the traditional interpretation (Nowak 1986, 249-250), which holds Kant’s anthropology to be entirely contingent upon the scholastic psychology of Wolff and Baumgarten. Schleiermacher explicitly rejects this type of interpretation and bases his critique of Kant’s anthropology on entirely different grounds, which Nowak is then unable to discern.

of Schleiermacher's thought have begun to consider this review.<sup>10</sup> It seems probable that the difficulties encountered in formulating a general interpretation of Pragmatic Anthropology may be a contributing factor to this apparent reticence. This undoubtedly presents the interpreter with a significant challenge in dealing with Schleiermacher's critique of the work.

In order to address this shortcoming, it is necessary to present now a number of fundamental concepts pertaining to Kant's anthropological perspective. Scholars are still engaged in efforts to define the identity of this work. As this is not the appropriate context for a detailed discussion of the various interpretive options, I will simply present the reading of the text that is currently being increasingly accepted as the correct one. In Kant, the discipline of anthropology emerges as a significant outcome of his critique of metaphysics. More precisely, the discipline follows on Kant's epochal divestment of the philosophical notion of the soul, which remained a dominant concept in the thought of Descartes, Leibniz and their followers. Once rational psychology has been dismissed, along with its associated paralogs, Kant was left with the task of avoiding two competing approaches to the study of the human mind: psychological empiricism, as exemplified by Locke, and the medical-physiological theories of his time, which were suspected of espousing materialist views. The combination of these starting conditions resulted in Kant's pragmatic approach to anthropology, which incorporated the traditional subject matter of empirical psychology but transformed it into a novel philosophical project. In the initial section of the text, entitled Anthropological Didactics, the author presents a comprehensive examination of the concepts of knowledge, feeling and desire. Rather than focusing on the faculties themselves, the analysis is concerned with the ways in which humans utilize these faculties, which are often inadequate and ineffective. The results of the preceding analysis converge in the second part (Anthropological Characteristics) around the concept of character, which elucidates the potential and responsibility of human beings. Kant draws here on his own philosophy of history to illustrate the positive implications of this concept, demonstrating how anthropology can contribute to the enlightenment and civilization of the "citizen of the world" by exposing the challenges and limitations that impede progress.

It is somewhat ironic that Schleiermacher's review shares with the work under review a fate of marginalization, for similar reasons: it appears that scholars are unable to integrate these writings with the rest of the respective authors' works. More than the content itself, in both cases it is the style that presents a great obstacle to comprehension. The style of the Kant's book and of Schleiermacher's review represent two opposing extremes. Kant's "popular" prose is perceived as overly accessible, perhaps even too much, while Schleiermacher's is characterized by a sophisticated and nuanced approach, incorporating irony and multiple layers of subtlety. This ultimately results in a paradoxical situation, whereby the review may appear to be more challenging to comprehend than the original work itself.

<sup>10</sup> The topic has been discussed by Arndt (2013, 367-368). See also Giacca (2014, 148-53).

## 2. Kant the transcendentalist

Schleiermacher begins the review by noting the little interest raised among the public by the Kantian text, which would not have been reviewed until then.<sup>11</sup> This can be explained, he suggests, by the fact that reviewers mostly limit themselves to quoting excerpts from the volumes they review: except that the one in question is not much suitable, because it offers a "collection of trivia" as to content and the "most peculiar confusion" as to form. (RPA, 15) But even scrupulous reviewers, those who like to write *about* the book reviewed and not merely quote from it, have a justification for their silence. Precisely by considering the work from the point of view of a genuinely pragmatic anthropology it offers far less than the average individual already knows on the subject. Nevertheless, Schleiermacher suggests, there is a point of view from which the reviewed volume presents interest:

a book that has little worth when one takes it for what it professes itself to be, can be of significance when one takes it for its opposite, or as something else. And in this light the book appears to be excellent, not as anthropology, but rather as the negation of all anthropology. It is at once claim and proof that something like this, intentionally set up in the same way Kant often expressly sets forth and specially constructs empty subjects in his division of the sciences or of their objects, is impossible in accordance with the idea set forth by Kant, whether it be carried out by him or in terms of his line of thinking.<sup>12</sup>

The reviewer ironically insinuates that the book is, in fact, part of a subtle dissimulation strategy: Kant would have wanted to show what anthropology *is not*. Schleiermacher plays on the fiction that Kant deliberately intended to write a flawed work.<sup>13</sup> "Anyone who reads the preface with care – he writes – [...] will be easily convinced that such could have been the opinion of this worthy man alone" (RPA, 16). This highly sophisticated, and yet somewhat cheap rhetorical device is nonetheless important because, as will be seen, it is used by Schlei-

<sup>11</sup> For the record, this is incorrect. In fact, "within a year and a half of its publication, at least eleven reviews of Kant's *Anthropology* came out." Frierson (2003, 1).

<sup>12</sup> RPA, 15-16.

<sup>13</sup> Bauer (2019, 248-249) offers an exemplary explanation: "Kant is said to have deliberately arranged everything attributed to the book in order to show the impossibility of what is asserted. In this view, the divergence of text and author's intention is interpreted as part of the author's intention. Kant suddenly becomes a modern Socrates who consciously involves the reader or conversational partner in paradoxes in order to ultimately arrive at a resolution that he has always known. The audacity of this view shows that the review claiming this, itself proceeds with a great deal of irony. It is not just claimed that a paradox has been discovered. Rather, the claim itself is such a paradox, as Kant's text supposedly presents it. Schleiermacher's text performs what he claims. If Schleiermacher's critique of Kant's anthropology is that it only seeks to demonstrate its own impossibility, then the same applies to Schleiermacher's critique. It should be clear to the reader that the claim that Kant consciously constructed the contradiction, is an ironic claim by the reviewer. The supposed praise turns into bitter mockery by making use of the Socratic irony that was previously attributed to Kant."

ermacher to substantiate his rather unusual charge of *realism* leveled at Kant, which we shall have to deal with in the next section (§ 3).

Schleiermacher then comes to a more substantive claim: there is a fatal flaw in Kant's problematic approach. The basic distinction between anthropology in the "physiological" and "pragmatic" sense - a distinction (note) he believes to be grounded in Kant's "way of thinking" [*Denkungsart*] – makes both impossible. Given the importance of the issue, it is appropriate to first summarize Kant's pronouncement on the subject. Kant wrote:

a doctrine of the knowledge of the human being, systematically formulated (anthropology), can exist either in a physiological or in a pragmatic point of view. Physiological knowledge of the human being concerns the investigation of what *nature* makes of the human being; pragmatic, the investigation of what *he* as a free-acting being makes of himself, or can and should make of himself. (PA, 231)

In Kant's system, as noted above, anthropology follows from the critique of reason, which proves, prior to any empirical investigation, that man actually *is* a free being. This is out of the question in anthropology.<sup>14</sup> The discipline is not in the business of proving anything in this regard, either positively or negatively. The question then arises of how to configure empirical knowledge of man in light of the results of critical philosophy. According to Kant, the (transcendentally proven) fact of human freedom makes research into neurophysiological processes corresponding to acts of human thought futile. What matters is to see what use human beings make, as free beings, of their mental faculties, and how to procure improvement in this regard. Hence the need to knock out physiological anthropology and the consequent turn toward the pragmatic dimension.

Back to the review now. Denouncing the one-sidedness of the distinction posited by Kant, Schleiermacher proclaims that "the physiological and the pragmatic are one and the same, only directed differently." (RPA, 16) In support, he notes that this is based on two conflicting assumptions: "all free choice [*Willkühr*] in human beings is nature, and all nature in human beings is free choice". In what follows I will return to the meaning of this puzzling formulation in more detail. For the time being, suffice it to note that Schleiermacher identifies the space of anthropology in the combination of the two indicated moments (physiologic and pragmatic): "anthropology should be just the unification of the two, and can exist only through their unification." (RPA, 16)<sup>15</sup>

Schleiermacher takes this formulation for granted and offers no explanation. However, its meaning and origin are far from obvious.<sup>16</sup> At first, one might think

<sup>14</sup> From the very first page, Kant defines Pragmatic Anthropology by stating that it investigates what the human being "as a free acting being makes [...] of himself." (PA, 231) Freedom is not demonstrated here: it is taken as a necessary condition for a sound treatment of anthropology.

<sup>15</sup> Many years after this review, Schleiermacher will emphasize the complementarity of soul and body in his Berlin lectures on psychology. Cf. Brino (2011, 131).

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Mariña (2008, 13). Andreas Arndt (2013, 363-364) shows how embarrassing is to point to Schleiermacher's contribution to anthropology. If one understands the discipline as a

of the broad set of tendencies referred to when speaking "of human being as a whole" [*der ganze Mensch*]: a scientific and literary *topos* in vogue at the time.<sup>17</sup> But the risk, at best, is to remain vague. That Schleiermacher's idea of anthropology could be traced back to a historiographical category in which the medical doctrines of the time play a key role is rather unlikely. In any case, this lineage cannot be taken for granted in the absence of some piece of evidence. A far more promising move is to consider the role of Schelling. Remarkd by Dilthey in the second volume (unpublished) of *Leben Schleiermachers* (Dilthey 1996, 468-469), the influence of Schelling on the Breslau theologian is now widely acknowledged.<sup>18</sup> In the *Lectures on the Method of Academic Study*, Schelling states that the "true science of man must be based on the essential and absolute unity of soul and body, i.e., the Idea of man; empirical man is but a relative manifestation of the Idea." (Schelling 1966, 65)<sup>19</sup> Needless to say, this attitude necessarily leads to an unappealing condemnation of Kantian pragmatic anthropology. In an altogether similar vein, with reference to the determining motives of action, Schleiermacher (1984c, 214) observed that "it is absurd to think that the human being can be divided. The entire entity is interconnected, and constitutes a unified whole." Later I will try to show, in the light of *On Religion*, how Schleiermacher tried to flesh out this insight and shed some more light on his idea of an anthropology, resulting from the union of the two principles mentioned above.

Before illustrating the *pars construens* of Schleiermacher's idea of human beings, we need to pause and reflect on his reasons for dissenting from the Kantian perspective in the review. In the terms of the previous quotation from Schelling, who speaks of the "essential and absolute unity of soul and body," we might ask whether, according to Schleiermacher, Kant's anthropology was guilty of neglecting the soul, or the body. Answering this question has paramount importance for the understanding of Schleiermacher's review. In light of the idea of transcendental freedom developed in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, one might think that Kant would neglect the *bodily* dimension. Indeed, Kant will be frequently accused of reducing the real individual to a mere transcendental function: devoid of flesh and blood, incurably alien to "life," the transcendental subject would ignore the dimension of the lived body altogether. "No real blood flows in the veins of the knowing subject" - Dilthey (1989, 50) famously wrote - "constructed by [...] Kant, but rather the diluted extract of reason as a

"foundational systematic recourse to a knowledge about the nature of man," then no concept of anthropology "can be discerned in Schleiermacher," since any "empirical description of human nature" detains a subordinate significance for him.

<sup>17</sup> For the concept in general cf. Schings (1994); with reference to Schleiermacher, Herms (2017, 214).

<sup>18</sup> Manfred Frank (2005, 18) insisted on the "connection with Schelling, affirmed by Schleiermacher himself (but never satisfactorily investigated)."

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Crouter (2005, 161), van Zantwijk (2002, 115). See also chapter five of Purvis (2016, 86-108).

mere activity of thought.”<sup>20</sup> Kant’s choice to neglect *physiological* anthropology is a move that seems to reinforce this accusation. Not only in the Critique of practical reason - where he could be justified - but even in approaching anthropology Kant would incredibly have managed to keep the corporeal out of the door, thus neglecting “the whole man.” However, care must be taken: even assuming the legitimacy of this criticism, it must be clear that this does not mean that Kant neglected the body *in favor of the soul*. Precisely this would have been inconceivable to him. Indeed, from the *Critique of Pure Reason* we know that Kant considered the concept of “soul” to be philosophically unserviceable. Kant could never have accepted Schelling’s formula of an “absolute unity of soul and body” as the foundation of anthropology, an idea that seems close to Schleiermacher’s thinking instead.

The question remains, therefore, whether Schleiermacher imputes to Kant the neglect of *the bodily dimension*, in light of the transcendental conception of freedom in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, or the neglect of *the concept of the soul*, in light of the doctrine of paralogsms in the dialectics transcendental of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. As we shall see, at different lines of the review he imputes *both* to Kant. Most critics draw attention to the moments where the first allegation, that of neglecting the body, is brought against Kant. However, I believe that in Schleiermacher’s eyes the greater fault is the other, that of neglecting *the soul*. Only in this sense can one explain the accusation against Kant of “realism”.

Let us begin with Schleiermacher’s first allegation, that of neglecting the body. In this regard it is useful to quote in full a long passage from Schleiermacher’s review, parts of which have already been anticipated.

The antithesis between physiological and pragmatic anthropology, grounded in Kant’s way of thinking and quite originally set up here, makes both impossible. Indeed, at the root of this division lie two correct but opposing claims: all free choice [*Willkühr*] in human beings is nature, and all nature in human beings is free choice. However, anthropology should be just the unification of the two, and can exist only through their unification; the physiological and the pragmatic are one and the same, only directed differently. The old psychology, which thank God is no longer at issue now, abstracted from the latter of these two propositions, and could therefore not answer the question of how it is then possible to reflect on the mind, if in this reflection there is no freedom, and hence no guarantee of its truth. Kant wants to ignore the first proposition, since, as is well known, the “I” has no nature for him. This gives rise to the question: Where do the “observations about what hinders or promotes a mental faculty”<sup>21</sup>? come from, and how are these observations to be used for the mind’s expansion, *if there are no physical ways to consider and treat this expansion* in terms of the idea that all free choice is at the same time nature? (RPA 16)

<sup>20</sup> In the omitted part of the quote, Dilthey also refers to Hume and Locke in this regard.

<sup>21</sup> With this quote, Schleiermacher refers to PA, 231.



Considering the argument analytically, Schleiermacher's two theses are:  
 (1) *free choice in human beings is nature*, and  
 (2) *nature in human beings is free choice*.<sup>22</sup>

In this passage, Schleiermacher adopts the critical line consisting in imputing to Kant the neglect of the bodily dimension, and laments that for Kant "there are no physical ways to consider and treat this expansion" in terms of proposition n. (1), that is, "the idea that all free choice is at the same time nature." It is affirmed that Kant neglects n. (1), while scholastic psychologists instead neglected n. (2), precluding themselves from understanding man as a free being. Schleiermacher is adamant that Kant's pragmatic anthropology has nothing in common with scholastic psychology: rather, the two disciplines have diametrically opposed points of view. He is certainly right about that.

It seems unlikely, however, that Schleiermacher's primary concern was Kant's apparent neglect of the bodily dimension. Even a cursory examination of Schleiermacher's writings suggests that this is an implausible hypothesis. A comprehensive analysis of the review reveals that this is not the case. The passage quoted above represents merely the initial portion of a more intricate argument, which ultimately culminates in the diametrically opposed assertion that Kant neglected the soul. This allegation is considerably more integrated with the remainder of Schleiermacher's oeuvre than the aforementioned claim. Thus far, Schleiermacher's critique merely asserts that Kant's arguments are internally inconsistent when viewed through the lens of his own premises. This does not imply, however, that the premises in question can be accepted unreservedly.

### 3. Kant the realist

In order to comprehend Schleiermacher's subsequent assertions, it is essential to keep in mind the above illustrated distinction between the two opposing propositions: in human beings, free will is intrinsic to nature, and nature is intrinsic to free will. Schleiermacher asserted that the discipline of anthropology is concerned with the reconciliation of these two aspects. He proceeds to elaborate further:

No one will marvel at the misunderstanding of this antithesis, united here in an anthropology, in virtue of which Kant throughout refers nature to the corporeal, to the body, and to the mysterious relation of the mind [*Gemeinschaft des Gemüths*] to it. Rather, one sees here more than before how that which appears

<sup>22</sup> The concept of free choice [*Willkühr*] requires elucidation. Schleiermacher (1984c) identifies three forms of specification of the faculty of desiring: instinct, free choice and will. The will is the sole faculty that reflects a rational approach (that of responding to certain maxims), whereas free choice encompasses a determination with regard to an array of potential alternatives. Cf. Blackwell (1982, pp. 40–41). It seems probable that Schleiermacher considers "free choice" to be the most appropriate term when discussing anthropology in RPA.

to be but a pure deification of free choice is at bottom quite *closely related to a hidden realism*, to which Kant still pays secret and idolatrous homage after he himself had overturned and demolished it. (RPA 17, *emphasis added*)

In contrast to the aforementioned criticism of Kant's disregard for the bodily element, sacrificed on the altar of his abstract transcendentalism, Schleiermacher now laments that "Kant throughout refers nature to the corporeal, to the body". From a formal standpoint, this dialectical transition is substantiated by the aforementioned rhetorical device, which posits that this non-anthropological discourse is a kind of fiction of Kant: in a manner reminiscent of a consummate illusionist, he reveals and conceals elements according to his purposes. However, Schleiermacher's argument concerning "realism" is substantial.

Schleiermacher's accusation of realism does not make much sense unless we contextualize it. In this respect, it is particularly important to compare the review in question with his contemporary work *On Religion. Speeches to its Cultured Despisers* (Schleiermacher, 1988a). This is especially relevant given that the section 'Notizen' (Book reviews) in this issue of the *Athenaeum* opens with a comprehensive review of Schleiermacher's book written by Friedrich Schlegel, but unsigned. The text is immediately followed by Schleiermacher's equally anonymous review of Kant's *Pragmatic Anthropology*, which invites the reader of the journal to make a comparison and observe a striking contrast between the two books reviewed.<sup>23</sup> In *On Religion*, Schleiermacher introduces the concept of 'higher realism' [*höherer Realismus*], which is supposed to represent the summit and true culmination of idealism, whereas Kant's lower form of realism in *Pragmatic Anthropology* misses this level entirely.

Let us see how this happens in more detail. In the second speech of *On Religion*, Schleiermacher (1988a, 23) contrasts the viewpoint of religion with that of metaphysics and morality, which "see in the whole universe only humanity as the center of all relatedness, as the condition of all being and the cause of all becoming". Metaphysics "proceeds from finite human nature and wants to define consciously, from its simplest concept, the extent of its powers, and its receptivity, what the universe can be for us and how we necessarily must view it"; morality "proceeds from the consciousness of freedom; it wishes to extend freedom's realm to infinity and to make everything subservient to it." By contrast, religion "breathes there where freedom itself has once more become nature; it apprehends man beyond the play of his particular powers and his personality, and views him from the vantage point where he must be what he is, whether he likes it or not". (Schleiermacher 1988a, 23) The terms of the dichotomy used in the review of Kant are presented in a less cryptic form here. In religion, as Schleiermacher writes here, "freedom itself has once more become nature." Accordingly, from the perspective of religion, the conjunction of nature and freedom

<sup>23</sup> As Bauer (2019, 245) puts it: "The differences between the author being reviewed and the reviewer are blurred, as are those between the reviewers, especially as Schleiermacher is obviously trying to adopt Schlegel's style of writing."

is actualized. In contrast, as has been demonstrated, the absence of this union is precisely what renders Kant's anthropology unsuitable.<sup>24</sup>

Schleiermacher builds upon his argument concerning the function of religion in relation to the domain of theoretical systems.

And how will the triumph of speculation, the completed and rounded idealism, fare if religion does not counterbalance it and allow it to glimpse a *higher realism* than that which it subordinates to itself so boldly and for such good reason? Idealism will destroy the universe by appearing to fashion it; it will degrade it to a mere allegory, to an empty silhouette of our own limitedness (Schleiermacher 1988a, 24; *emphasis added*)

It is Spinoza who provides Schleiermacher with the inspiration for this higher realism. While metaphysics and morality adopt a perspective that is finite in nature, religion takes a stance that is infinite. Indeed, religion is willing to posit the existence of a "system of intuitions" of the universe (Schleiermacher 1988a, 26). Nevertheless, it would be wrong to assume that religion negates the existence of metaphysics and morality. Rather, it coexists with them, providing a potential for transformation. This allows for the culmination of idealism, both moral and metaphysical, in the hoped-for higher form of realism.

This elementary analysis allows us to gain a deeper insight into Schleiermacher's review of Kant, and to interpret correctly what he means when he states that the aforementioned *deification of freedom*, as he puts it in the review (see above), leads to Kant's hidden realism. Schleiermacher and Kant both concur that the supersensible world is unknowable. Schleiermacher, however, differs from Kant in his refusal to endorse the latter's covert reinstatement of the supersensible world and the revaluation of the transcendental ideas as postulates of practical reason. In fact, then, Kant's celebrated worship of human freedom is underpinned by a realist perspective: *Kant's anthropology is guilty of occupying, as it were, the theoretical space that should belong to religion*. But there is a stark contrast in perspectives. As an anthropologist, Kant fails to recognize the connection to the "higher" realism and instead falls into an impoverished "lower" realism, which is a grotesque anthropological parody of religion.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Arndt (2013, 367-368).

<sup>25</sup> Against this reading, it has been argued that Kant's concept of "nature" is employed in Pragmatic Anthropology in two distinct senses. On the one hand, it is utilized to denote the set of cerebral conditioning factors that fall within the purview of "physiological" anthropological inquiry, which results in a misguided perspective. Conversely, however, throughout the text and especially in the Anthropological Characteristic, Kant (e.g., PA, 198-199, 224) also refers to "nature" in a teleological sense. In doing so, he is consistent with his analysis of teleological judgment from the third Critique and with his writings on the philosophy of history. The distinction between these two aspects is pivotal to Alix Cohen's (2008, 5) response to Schleiermacher, in which she proposes to distinguish between 'natural' anthropology (in the sense outlined above) and 'physiological' anthropology. Kant rejected only the latter, not the former. This is an important point, and one that should be the subject of agreement.

Schleiermacher considers Kant's system of philosophy to be fundamentally flawed. Once religion and the higher dimension is overlooked, Kant's realism becomes simplistic and reductionist. This is evident in his approach to anthropology, which is then "completely alienated from its natural tendency to be ascetic, in the highest sense of the word (a goal that must be somehow achieved in every real treatment of it), and, to the contrary, in a very meager sense, becomes 'dietary' [*diätetisch*]" (RPA 17). It seems likely that Schleiermacher is referring to the conclusion of the *Metaphysics of Morals*, the *Ethische Methodenlehre*, whose second section is entitled Ethical Ascetics. In this text, Kant (1996, 597) posits that ascetics "is a kind of regimen" [*Diätetik*] for keeping a human being "[morally] healthy".<sup>26</sup> However, he goes on, "health is only a negative kind of well-being: it cannot itself be felt" unless something is added. In this way, Kant's "moral dietetics" rehabilitates Epicurus, offering a more optimistic perspective that counters the somber attitude of the Stoics. Kant's prescription for maintaining an "ever-cheerful heart" is an important contribution to his discourse on asceticism. It suggests that asceticism, when practiced with a positive outlook, can avoid becoming a gloomy and severe discipline, which could otherwise lead to unhealthy outcomes. With this in mind, Schleiermacher offers the ironic observation that Kant's anthropology fails to recognize the elevated concept of moral dietetics, as articulated in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, and instead becomes a simplistic doctrine of physical health. In the event, then, Kant "comes back to the physiological": accordingly, "rest after work and the joys of a good table always recur as important", while "affects and much else that comes to the mind are properly treated as means of digestion" (RPA, 17). Schleiermacher reiterates here the aforementioned rhetorical device, positing that Kant deliberately developed this part of his doctrine to illustrate the opposite of what he says explicitly, that is, to show the inextricability of pragmatic and physiological realities. For the reviewer, Kant's emphasis on the physiological simply makes evident that his objective was to "make a contradiction graphic." (RPA 17) In fact, however, Schleiermacher draws attention to the sections of Kant's work (PA 377) where the pinnacle of "highest moral-physical good" is identified in the dinner party, meaning that engaging in pleasant conversation among the guests serves to elevate the bodily experience of the meal itself.

This marks the advent of a transformation of anthropology into a "Kantology," as perceived by the reviewer. Biographers have demonstrated that even in his advanced years, Kant continued to receive visitors in the manner he had done on a regular basis in the past. (cf. Kuehn 2001, 334, 421) This provided him with a brief interlude of diversion from the sustained periods of concentration he applied himself to during the working day. However, this respite was not merely a source of relaxation; it was an intellectually rewarding diversion that

<sup>26</sup> The translation of this sentence was integrated with the word 'morally' from the German original "*moralisch gesund*" (Kant 1914: AA VI, 485). In this context, we need to distinguish clearly between the *moral* dietetics of the *Metaphysics of Morals* and the *physiological* attitude of Pragmatic Anthropology, lamented by Schleiermacher.

was firmly embedded within his broader philosophical pursuits and imbued with a profound moral significance. Clearly, Schleiermacher regarded the concept of a "highest moral-physical good" as spurious and reprehensible.<sup>27</sup> In a paper devoted to the concept of the *supreme good* in and of itself, he criticized Kant for admitting the feeling of happiness into it, thereby paving the way for an improper conceptual promiscuity: the "connection of highest good and happiness undermines the entire Kantian moral philosophy at its foundations." (Schleiermacher 1984b, 95). It is therefore unsurprising that he reacted negatively to the notion of happiness being represented almost as a prandial satisfaction in the above mentioned chapters of Kant's book.

Finally, Schleiermacher's critique extends to the *style* adopted by Kant. He criticizes the failure to reconcile the systematic approach with the prevailing popular style of the work: systematics "has been ruined by striving for what is popular" (RPA 18). Indeed, at least within the field of Anthropological Didactics, Kant adopts the overarching framework of the traditional scholastic psychology, loosely following the order of topics set forth by Baumgarten in his *Metaphysics*. Nevertheless, this systematic arrangement does not align with Kant's conceptual framework "precisely because this deeper thinking and farther seeing author understands the mind from another perspective, and separates its different modes of action otherwise", meaning not in accordance with the psychology of the faculties, "so that his divisions do not at all agree with this traditional framework and thus his observations also cannot be integrated with it". The unfortunate consequence is that the popular style prevails in this work.<sup>28</sup>

Consequently, Schleiermacher concludes by identifying a number of shortcomings that further exacerbate the issues previously outlined. Kant's "admiration of wit" and of "mannered wordplays", the "complete lack of knowledge of art, and especially of poetry", the treatment "of the female as a deviation of the male, and thoroughly as a means," and a "description of peoples, which smacks much of the joys at the table": all of these are "contributions to a Kantology" which are recommended only to the "blind admirers of this great man" (RPA 18).

In this prediction, Schleiermacher was incorrect. Pragmatic Anthropology would instead provide the greatest source of embarrassment for Kant's followers, and most of all for his "blind admirers". It seems likely that they would concur with many of Schleiermacher's criticisms, but would attribute the shortcomings of the work to Pragmatic Anthropology alone, viewing it as an unfortunate consequence of the philosopher's advanced age.

<sup>27</sup> In fact, Kant (PA 377) makes it clear that "the two kinds of good, the *physical* and the *moral*, cannot be mixed together": they would neutralize themselves. But since it is difficult to "prevent mixing in practice," we need to break down the "end of happiness" by "counteracting agents (*reagentia*)", in order to ascertain "which elements in what proportion can provide, when they are combined, the enjoyment of a *moral happiness*."

<sup>28</sup> In his coeval review of Fichte's *Destination of Man*, Schleiermacher (1988b) also expresses reservations about the "popular" style in philosophy. A parallel analysis of these two reviews must be postponed to another occasion.

#### 4. An evaluation of Schleiermacher's review

Schleiermacher's interpretation is of significant interest to modern readers. He explicitly recognizes the fundamental integration of Pragmatic Anthropology with Kantian philosophy as a whole and is thus able to grasp the large extent to which the book diverges from traditional scholastic psychology. It is noteworthy that several contemporary scholars would refute both of these claims. Schleiermacher's dismissive review takes an alternative direction. The concept of freedom as defined by Kant in his transcendental philosophy is not readily compatible with empirical observations of human behavior. In other words, Kant is consistent with his own philosophical position when he characterizes anthropology as a pragmatic discipline, yet he is unable to fully implement this approach. In addition to this, Kant's approach to Pragmatic Anthropology is misguided, as the Didactics formally follows the table of contents of the traditional faculty psychology, which results in the "popular" aspects becoming the primary focus, while remaining on a superficial level. As a result, the physiological dimension is reaffirmed and becomes even more dominant than the pragmatic one.

Despite its harsh tones, Schleiermacher's review can facilitate a reappraisal of Pragmatic Anthropology, albeit in a paradoxical manner. Indeed, it is my contention that Schleiermacher's two primary critical assertions are accurate. First, Pragmatic Anthropology is entirely independent of scholastic psychology. Second, it is fundamentally aligned with Kant's philosophy. It represents exactly the kind of anthropology that must follow on the fundamental tenets of Kant's philosophy: the rejection of transcendental ideas, in particular of the concept of the soul (First Critique), the unwavering affirmation of human freedom (Second Critique) and the conviction in a regulative order of nature, manifesting itself in human history as well (Third Critique). Schleiermacher, along with numerous subsequent critics, fails to acknowledge the significance of this orientating source of Pragmatic Anthropology: the *Critique of the Power of Judgement* together with Kant's philosophy of history. The fact that the review concludes with an analysis of the character of the people is highly significant. Schleiermacher omits the extensive concluding section of the work on the Character of the species, in which Kant addresses a multitude of issues pertaining to his philosophy of history, morals, and politics.<sup>29</sup> Schleiermacher's neglect of this section has wide-ranging implications. The reviewer fails to recognize the particular form in which Kant's 'realism' – that is, the anthropological examination of corporeal constraints that interact with human capabilities and concerns – becomes 'higher' in its own way. Kant repeatedly demonstrates, as he has elsewhere, that the natural world, understood in a providential sense, offers a range of incentives that can compensate for human shortcomings, including laziness, mediocrity, foolishness, and evil. It should be noted that this is a regulative principle and not a matter of scientific certainty. However, this discrepancy between the in-

<sup>29</sup> The tendency to overlook the Anthropological Characteristics persists until recent times. Cf. Sturm (2009, 509). This holds particularly for the concluding section.

dividual's destination and the nature of the whole is pivotal for an understanding of Kant's Pragmatic Anthropology.

A comparison with the reading – which is somewhat cautious, but far more measured – of Pragmatic Anthropology offered by Goethe is instructive. In a letter to Schiller dated 19 December 1798, Goethe notes that the work is of considerable value but must be sampled gradually, in small doses. When taken together, it is unedifying. Goethe (1890, 145) primarily takes issue with Kant's portrayal of humanity in a "pathological" state. However, he acknowledges that the approach, characterized by its "spiritual richness," offers a "stimulating" treatment under the specified circumstances. Schiller (1890, 146) responds that Kant's writings often exhibits a pervasive "pathological" quality, that imbues his practical philosophy with a "gruff" [*grämlich*] aspect. However, Schiller suggests that this pathological aspect may be appropriate in an anthropology. Consequently, there are authoritative contemporary responses that, while identifying some critical elements of the Kantian approach, do not dismiss it, as Schleiermacher did, on the grounds of its incompatibility with an alternative conception of anthropology.

Schleiermacher's review not only offers a stylistic update for the art of reviewing books, but also provides an insight into the potential for a new approach to philosophical discourse. From this perspective, Schleiermacher's critique of Kant's "Kantology" can be seen to prefigure several of the later unmasking of the *allzumenschlich* aspect of philosophical knowledge, as exemplified by Feuerbach<sup>30</sup> – who was Schleiermacher's auditor – or Nietzsche and beyond, extending to prominent new critics of Kantian anthropology with considerable followings, including Heidegger and Foucault. The fact that the reagent capable of triggering this process was precisely Kant's Pragmatic Anthropology is not a mere coincidence. The introduction of an anthropological moment into philosophy, to which Kant makes a significant contribution (in this respect he thinks of the *Weltbegriff* of philosophy), will arouse controversy among many thinkers as an improper lowering of the level of philosophizing – as an "inferior" realism, in the sense explained above. For example, Schleiermacher observes that Kant "irrevocably proved that it is impossible to reflect on the particulars that are found in inner experience if one does not somehow begin the business at a higher level." (RPA, 18) He regards Pragmatic Anthropology as a concept that is as novel as it is unwelcome. In a manner that is critical of Kant's observations on the subject (PA, 369), he ironically refers to the book as the "newborn's cry" of this particular form of philosophy. Nevertheless, Schleiermacher observes that, in a physical exercise, the configuration of muscles and the extremities of the limbs

come to light more strongly the more nearly it approaches the limits of physical strength, so too in the case of this effort (expressly undertaken with such an intention) the form of the mind and the limitation of its individual parts was presented in manifold ways more exactly than otherwise. (RPA 19)

<sup>30</sup> Andreas Arndt insists on the process whereby authors close to anthropology such as Feuerbach and (later) Dilthey were inspired by Schleiermacher. See Arndt (2013, 363).

Although he acknowledges this function in Kant's 1798 book, namely, demonstrating 'the form of the mind' and 'the limitation of its individual parts', Schleiermacher questions the fundamental connection between such an endeavor and the domain of philosophy.

Such arguments will inevitably result in a growing disillusionment with the field of anthropology and the emergence of an anti-humanist discourse characterized by disdain. This perception of anthropology as a formidable and potentially lethal challenge to philosophical thought is a misguided and simplistic view. It is not my intention to ascribe a pivotal historical significance to Schleiermacher's review. It would be erroneous to propose that such a brief publication could have initiated such extensive historical and philosophical processes. Rather, Schleiermacher's review of Kant's book represents the initial manifestation of a pattern that will subsequently recur throughout the history of philosophy. Once again, the reviewed text is attributed a feature that is in fact characteristic of the review itself, which may be regarded as the "newborn's cry" of a philosophical genre. This pattern is revealed with a clarity and precision that are rare to encounter, thus enabling the identification of the distinctive features that render a re-reading of the review both fruitful and meaningful in the present context.

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