

# Nietzsche's late Pragmatic Anthropology

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## **Abstract:**

The aim of this paper is to shed light on Nietzsche's late investigation of the Western human being, with particular reference to *Twilight of the Idols*. I shall argue that this investigation can be seen as a "pragmatic anthropology," according to the meaning that Kant gave to this notion in 1798. Although the paper focuses on Nietzsche's thought, an analysis of Kant's anthropology and the comparison between and Nietzsche's late views of the human being, will show both their differences and similarities on the topic.

Nietzsche's *Twilight of the Idols*<sup>1</sup> only appears to be a collection of “philosophical *heterodoxies*,”<sup>2</sup> of scattered thoughts on several topics. Rather, it is focused on a fundamental aim, i.e. the diagnosis of a well defined type of man peculiar to the Western European worldview: the *décadent*. Nietzsche's idea is that the social and cultural development which started with Socrates and Plato generated a declined type of life (TI, *The Problem Socrates* 3; “Reason” in *Philosophy* 6). By dealing with the attributes of the European human being, Nietzsche is aimed at showing to his contemporaries that it is possible to generate another type of human – a “higher” man; it all depends on the perspective from which one interprets the world. This claim plays an important role in Nietzsche's late philosophy, since his projected *Revaluation of All Values* was supposed to lay the foundations of a new worldview, explicitly contrasted with the old (Christian) view (see e.g. BGE, Preface and GM III 27). Although Nietzsche's mental collapse made impossible the conclusion of that project, at the end of 1888 he announced that its first part was ready to be published.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, Nietzsche explicitly wrote TI with the aim of preparing his readers for his main work. In that book we find the *pars destruens* of Nietzsche's project. In dealing with the attributes of the European human being, with the prejudices and the errors of the Platonic and Christian worldview, Nietzsche shows us what we must abandon, if we want not to be *décadents*.<sup>4</sup>

The main aim of this paper is to stress Nietzsche's dealing with the question “What is (Western) Man?” in TI, a question which is mainly anthropological, since it involves cultural and historical investigations and not only a psychological investigation of the human being. Moreover, I shall show that Nietzsche's aim in TI can be understood by referring to Kant's notion of “pragmatic anthropology,” i.e. “the investigation of what [man] as a free-acting being makes of himself, or can and should make of himself” (Anth., AA VII: 119). In his late writings, Kant contrasts this way of investigating man with both transcendental anthropology and empirical psychology and claims that a pragmatic anthropology can complete the image of the human being drawn in his critical writings. Moreover, as I shall show in detail, in his *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, Kant explicitly distinguishes between a knowledge of the “nature” of the human being (a “physiological anthropology”) and a knowledge of the practical side of human life – of man seen as a citizen of the world – and thus placed in a well defined historical and cultural context. According to Kant, we must deal with this latter perspective, in order to properly answer the question “What is Man?”

As a final introductory remark, I must say that the comparison of Kant's view with that of Nietzsche which I will provide is only aimed at showing that the former's notion of “pragmatic anthropology” fits in many senses Nietzsche's late investigation. Therefore, it can shed some light on TI, with particular reference to Nietzsche's dealing with the notions of *I* and *freedom* (they both play an important role in Kant's *Anthropology*, too). In particular, despite the clear fundamental

differences between Kant's and Nietzsche's philosophical views, we can find a similar approach to the investigation of the human being, and argue that they both consider the anthropological question to be answered not on the pure theoretical plane, but rather with reference to the practical, historical side of human life and the concrete forms of man's self-observation. In order to sustain this claim, I will deal with Kant's "pragmatic anthropology" by examining the two words one by one. I shall therefore show a) in which sense it is possible to talk about an "anthropology" (in the Kantian sense of the word) with regard to the late Nietzsche, and b) why the investigation carried out in TI can be defined as a "pragmatic" anthropology.

## I. ANTHROPOLOGY

Anthropology is usually defined as the investigation concerning the nature of the human being, i.e. an attempt to answer the question: "What is Man?" According to this general definition, it would be easy to accept that both Kant and Nietzsche pursued an anthropology. Indeed, they both have been concerned with the human being and they both considered this as an important aim of philosophy (see Gerhardt 1989: 281). Unfortunately, the issue is more complicated than this, since in Kant the question concerning the nature of the human being involves some problems that must be taken into account.

It is well known that Kant explicitly refers to the question "What is Man?" (*Was ist der Mensch?*) as pertaining to anthropology in his *Logic*. In that book Kant adds this question to the other three he first published in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, which represents the core of his critical investigation ("What can I know?"; "What ought I do?"; "What may I hope for?". KrV A 805/B 833). As for these questions, Kant argues:

The first question is answered by metaphysics, the second by philosophy, the third by religion, and the fourth by anthropology. But they at bottom might all be considered as pertaining to anthropology; because the three first questions refer to the last one. (Log., AA IX: 25)

Even though the scholars still discuss the role that Kant attributed to anthropology<sup>5</sup>, it is its relationship with the critical works that properly defines this discipline. In his *Introduction to Kant's Anthropology* Michel Foucault stresses this point and argues that after the critical period the anthropology becomes, for Kant, the peak of a good philosophical investigation. According to Foucault, in the late Kant the investigation of the nature of the human being loses its empirical

value, but gains a much higher one (Foucault 1964: 46 ff. See also Schmidt 2007: 166). Foucault makes particular reference to the development of Kant's thought and focuses on the way that thought goes from the *Architectonic of pure reason* (where Kant argues that anthropology only belongs to empirical philosophy) to the *Anthropology*, getting through the observations just quoted from the *Logic*. Concerning this last work, although Kant claims that the questions concerning what man can know, ought do, and may hope for pertain to anthropology, he does not argue that this discipline simply sums up the aims of the critical investigation. On the contrary, the anthropology takes place out of the theoretical plane and thus completes what the three *Critiques* have left undefined: the image of the human being (see Manganaro 1978: 24). This claim will be clearer after the analysis of the notion of "pragmatic" that I will provide in section II. For now, it is important to consider that in Kant the investigation of the human being is not limited to the "transcendental anthropology" that he carries on in his critical philosophical works. According to what Kant writes after the critical period, the transcendental investigation needs to be reinforced and supplemented with a discussion of the empirical side of the human nature – that is precisely the aim of his *Anthropology* (see Schmidt 2007: 165 f).

If we now turn to Nietzsche, it is possible to see both that he pursued an anthropology (i.e. an investigation of the nature of man) and that his view on this topic is in principle not far from that of Kant. In the opening of this section I've argued that the description of the human being is one of the main topics of Nietzsche's philosophy (maybe *the* main one). Indeed, Nietzsche dealt with it during his whole working period, from the moment he devoted himself to a philosophical investigation, onward. During his last stage of thought, his interest in the nature of the human being focused on a particular type of man: the declining one, the *décadent*, which is the product of Western metaphysics. In TI this interest is particularly evident, all the more so because that book was supposed to show to Nietzsche's readers which effect the metaphysical worldview had on them. According to Nietzsche, to become aware of the "declining" character of the type of life that followed from both the Socratic rationality and the Platonic (Christian) metaphysics – i.e. from the Western *Weltanschauung* –, can help people to get rid of that cultural tradition. Furthermore, it can have a *transformative* effect on them, and thus make possible the genesis of a new human type.

What characterizes the description of the human being that Nietzsche presents in TI is the attention paid to the practical plane of human agency. Nietzsche has always been concerned with the problem of morals. Nevertheless, in several books in which he deals with the anthropological question (from *Human, all too Human* on), many of his observations directly concern the theoretical plane. More precisely, for a long time Nietzsche has been particularly interested in the physiological side of the human being in order to understand what a man can see, know, and feel.<sup>6</sup> Even in *Dawn*,

which is mostly devoted to morals, Nietzsche deals with some theoretical problems, since he is first interested in investigating the physiological ground of men's beliefs and moral prejudices. One of Nietzsche's main aims, at least until *Thus spoke Zarathustra*, was thus to draw a theory of knowledge in order to give stable grounds to his philosophy.<sup>7</sup> The aim of the last work is only partly different. In *On the Genealogy of Morals*, and in the fifth book of *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche's attempt is mostly to provide some principles of action to his readers, to help them orient in the world.<sup>8</sup> He focuses on Christian morality – the ground of the 19<sup>th</sup> century European society –, and investigates its genesis in order to show that the basic principles to which it makes reference have lost their value after two millennia of cultural development. According to Nietzsche, man could finally get rid of them, but this “freedom” can be achieved only by admitting – and properly understanding – the “death of God.”<sup>9</sup> In TI, then, Nietzsche's interest is even more focused on the anthropological plane, since his attempt in that book is to provide a description of the specific type of man generated by Western metaphysics and its morality. Nietzsche's investigation on the *décadence* which characterizes his era is particularly led by the idea that this is a physiological phenomenon, not only a cultural one.<sup>10</sup> Thus, in his late work Nietzsche makes something more specific than what he did in both the *Genealogy of Morals* and *Gay Science V*: he focuses on the concrete forms of Western European morality, which in TI are defined in physiological terms as a “pathology” of the 19<sup>th</sup> century man.

Of course, although after 1885 his interest mostly shifted to the practical plane, Nietzsche did not ignore the theoretical questions with which he was concerned during the previous years. In *Beyond Good and Evil* he indeed refers to them once more and develops some of his earlier ideas concerning the theory of knowledge.<sup>11</sup> Of course, this is only one of the several topics treated in that book and Nietzsche's general aim is clearly not only theoretical. Nevertheless, in *Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche still deals with a description of the “nature” of the human being, with all likelihood for his interest has been excited by new readings on that topic, and he therefore has something to add to his previous treating epistemological questions. What is new in 1888 is in fact Nietzsche's interest in the phenomenon of *décadence*. When Nietzsche “gathers together” the material left unemployed after the editing of the *Antichrist* (see Montinari 1988 and Gori and Piazzesi 2012: 13-16), he chiefly aims at investigating a particular social and cultural context, and at describing the type of man which is peculiar to it. The description of the declined human being provided in TI focuses on the practical plane, and in that book Nietzsche leaves the theoretical observations in the background, making reference to what he previously wrote without adding anything new to it.<sup>12</sup> In his view, the theoretical investigation of man is useful and unavoidable, but it's not enough to answer the anthropological question. On the contrary, in order to understand what man is, Nietzsche

needs to carry on an investigation of the effects that the Western worldview had on the human being. He thus needs to consider what the European man has become after two thousand years of metaphysical thought, and in order to do so he must look at him as the product of an historical and cultural developing context.

Thus, in some sense in TI Nietzsche completes what he provided in his previous books. His diagnosis of the declined type of life moves from his earlier theoretical investigations and goes on in showing what a man that sees, knows and feels in a certain way, actually does. This is similar to what Kant aimed at doing with his *Anthropology*. As I very briefly showed, Kant thought that the anthropological question must be added to the other three concerning what man can know, ought do, and may hope for, although they already give some important information about the nature of the human being. According to Kant, in order to provide a good description of man and satisfactory answer the anthropological question, it is necessary to take into account the practical, historical side of the human being. To define man in terms of what he “is” is not enough, for Kant. What must be done, rather, is to define him in terms of what he “does” (see Cohen 2008: 506), and consider how he relates to other human beings. This new way of investigating man, and especially its difference with a theoretical inquiry into the human being, is the core of Kant's *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, to which I shall now turn. What characterizes the attribute “pragmatic” is indeed the reference to a knowledge of the practical side of human life, which Kant explicitly distinguishes from a knowledge of the “nature” of the human being (Anth., AA VII: 120). Moreover, in the first part of his *Anthropology* Kant deals with some epistemological statements, taking them into account only as the background of his late investigation, in a way comparable with what Nietzsche does in TI.

## II. PRAGMATIC

In the *Preface* to his *Anthropology*, Kant makes an important distinction:

A doctrine of 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. (Anth. 119)

This definition has one fundamental aim, since Kant here distinguishes his approach to the knowledge of the human being from “the manifold eighteenth-century endeavors to establish a new empirical science of the human domain” (Sturm 2008: 495). Thomas Sturm’s study on this topic is explanatory, in particular when he argues that

[Kant’s] choice to develop a “pragmatic” anthropology constitutes a move beyond two competing approaches, which are in his time – especially within the German context – the leading options of a general empirical investigation of human cognition, feeling, and desire. On the one side, there is the conception called, especially but not only in the school of Christian Wolff, “empirical psychology.” On the other side stands the conception of a “physiological” or “medical” anthropology, defended prominently by the Leipzig professor of philosophy and medicine Ernst Platner. These approaches differ, among other things, over the question of whether it is possible to study and explain mental states in physiological terms. (Sturm 2008: 495)<sup>13</sup>

I am not interested here in Kant’s relationship with the philosophical and medical tradition concerning the empirical psychology, but the context of the *Anthropology* cannot be neglected, in order to properly understand in which sense Kant defines some concepts. In particular, the reference to both “empirical philosophy” and “physiological anthropology” in this excerpt is useful to see that “pragmatic” in Kant’s sense is first of all contrasted with two well defined disciplines. But that does not exhaust the meaning of this word, all the more so for it does not show its relevance on the philosophical plane. “Pragmatic” in Kant is related to the practical side of human life, to a knowledge whose aim is not only to increase a mere erudition concerning the human being, but rather to organize and guide his daily life, to help him orient to the world.<sup>14</sup> As I’ve argued, Kant’s anthropology is planned to be a knowledge of what man *does*, and not of what man *is* (of “what nature makes of the human being”). This view involves a specific relationship with Kant’s theoretical writings; in particular, it confirms the inadequacy of the questions concerning what man can know, ought do, and may hope for in providing a satisfactory description of the human being.

To answer these questions can only help in drawing an image of man that is purely theoretical, and which concerns the human being “in itself.” Although they give us a good description of the nature of the human being, Kant seems not to be satisfied with them and argues that the critical philosophy does not completely describe the empirical-practical side of the human being.<sup>15</sup> That does not mean, however, that Kant rejects his previous investigations. In fact, in the *Anthropology*, he makes reference to some metaphysical statements concerning the human being in order to stress the difference between an investigation of the “pure” man and a study of the “empirical” man. According to Kant, the latter should deal with man’s self-representation and that’s why he particularly stresses the fact that man’s worldview is a phenomenal one. Kant in particular argues

that the human being does not look at himself as a subject of pure intuition, nor does he refer to himself as the pure I of the apperception. Rather, Man takes as ground of his agency the image that he can draw of himself, which is actually a purely phenomenal one.

What can also be argued from the *Anthropology* is that in Kant's view the critical philosophy is helpful in order to draw an image of the human being, but not to guide his life. Moreover, the practical side of human life is so important that it is not possible to satisfactorily describe the human being by taking him out of his historical and cultural context. Thus, in order to answer the anthropological question properly, one must complete the image of man provided by the critical philosophy with a description of his reaction to a specific historical and cultural background.<sup>16</sup>

All these elements will be treated in what follows. Since what is peculiar to Kant's anthropology is the "pragmatic" point of view, an investigation of this concept shall characterize his view of the "doctrine of knowledge of the human being, systematically formulated," thus providing the necessary elements to carry on a comparison between this view and Nietzsche's late philosophy. In particular, this analysis involves the two ground-concepts of Kant's definition of pragmatic anthropology: a) the "I" as empirical object of self-observation and subject of human agency; b) "freedom" as the reference point of any human activity.

### A. The "I"

The relationship between the *Anthropology* and Kant's critical works (chiefly KrV) is particularly evident in the first part of that book: the *Anthropological Didactic*. In that section (which, according to Kant (AA VII: 412), actually concerns the question "What is Man?") Kant deals with the cognitive faculty (book 1), the feeling of pleasure and displeasure (book 2), and the faculty of desire (book 3). Although his investigation of the human being is carried on from a pragmatic point of view, Kant cannot avoid making reference to some conclusions of his work devoted to the theory of knowledge. In talking about the "I", for instance, he clearly moves to the empirical plane and takes as the subject of his inquiry the concrete forms of man's self-observation (see Foucault 1964: 24). According to Kant, a pragmatic anthropology must start from there, since "the fact that the human being can have the 'I' in his representations rises him infinitely above all other living beings", and makes him "a *person*" (Anth.: 127). The "unity of consciousness" in particular makes possible man's agency, for in order to do anything he needs to look at himself as subject of his own deeds (ibid.). The problem of self-consciousness was also one of the main topics of Kant's critical philosophy; it was actually the ground of his description of the phenomenal character of human



knowledge. Although Kant dealt with this topic in both the *Analytic* and the *Dialectic* of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, his investigation did not get beyond the boundaries of a transcendental analysis. The subject of Kant's study was the pure I of the apperception, whose metaphysical value had to be put up for discussion, while the pragmatic anthropology concerns the empirical I, "an I that is an 'object', and that can be known only in his phenomenal truth" (Foucault 1964: 23). We can thus argue that the *Anthropology* "fulfils a task that the transcendental investigation could not carry out; i.e. to show *in concrete terms* the phenomenal character of "man's" knowledge, of the human nature, that the critique of both the pneumatology and the relative substantiality of the soul that Kant carried out in the paralogisms first revealed" (Manganaro 1978: 24).

Moreover, we must say that in his late investigation of man Kant focuses on what is peculiar to the human being: his making reference to objects as they *appear* to him, not as they *are* (Anth.: 141). Kant stresses this point, and considers the unavoidable phenomenal character of the I:

It is true that I as a thinking being am one and the same subject with myself as a sensing being. However, as the object of inner empirical intuition; that is, in so far as I am affected inwardly by experiences in time, simultaneous as well as successive, I nevertheless cognize myself only as I appear to myself, not as a thing in itself. (Anth.: 142)

Even though on the theoretical plane the existence of the I can be debated, his value on the empirical plane is undisputable. For what concerns the anthropology, this is what really interests Kant, since a pragmatic description of the human being must face the way he looks at himself, i.e. it must concern the characters of the human being's self-representation. Thus, in 1798 Kant focuses on the phenomenal side of human knowledge, with little interest in what lies "behind" it.<sup>17</sup> That obviously has to do with Kant's aim in that year to provide a description of man as a "citizen of the world" (Anth.: 120). If anthropology concerns the practical side of human life, then it must deal with the reference points of agency and evaluate them only on the basis of their practical usefulness.

The focus on the phenomenal side of human knowledge in man's looking at himself also characterizes Nietzsche's dealing with the anthropological question in TI. Even though the aim of his investigation is different from Kant's, Nietzsche is interested in providing a description of how a human being looks at himself, too. In order to do this, Nietzsche considers several aspects of the Western worldview, starting from its basic grounds, i.e. the principles of man's self-representation. The notion of "I", in particular, is one of these principles, and Nietzsche deals with it in order to show how erroneous are the reference points of human agency. In BGE 16 Nietzsche criticized Descartes' notion of "I think," with special reference to the claim that it must be an "immediate certainty". In that section, Nietzsche stressed the fact that it is not possible to have an idea of what the "I think" is, beyond our representation of it:

When I dissect the process expressed in the proposition “I think,” I get a whole set of bold claims that are difficult, perhaps impossible, to establish, – for instance, that *I* am the one who is thinking, that there must be something that is thinking in the first place, that thinking is an activity and the effect of a being who is considered the cause, that there is an “I,” and finally, that it has already been determined what is meant by thinking, – that I *know* what thinking is. Because if I had not already made up my mind what thinking is, how could I tell whether what had just happened was not perhaps “willing” or “feeling”? (BGE 16)

Any statement concerning the “I think” as an “immediate certainty” involves “a whole assortment of metaphysical questions, genuinely probing intellectual questions of conscience” (ibid.) facing the fact that no one can really know who is the subject of “his own” activity. The idea that *I* am an acting being, that *I* am the cause of my own actions, is far from being an “immediate certainty;” it is rather a belief, a groundless faith that people do not want to give up.<sup>18</sup> In *Twilight of the Idols* Nietzsche deals once more with that topic, in order to show that the Western worldview is grounded on a “prejudice of reason” that “forces us to make *use* of unity, identity, permanence, substance, cause, objectification, being” (TI, “Reason” in *Philosophy* 5). In doing this, Nietzsche refers to what he previously showed in BGE (whose first book was also devoted to the basic “prejudices” of the philosopher’s world-interpretation). In particular, he stresses the role of language in man’s representation of his inner-world, and focuses on his believing in an acting “I”:

We enter into a crudely fetishistic mindset when we call into consciousness the basic presuppositions of the metaphysics of language – in the vernacular: the presuppositions of *reason*. It sees doers and deeds all over: it believes that will has causal efficacy: it believes in the “I”, in the I as being, in the I as substance, and it projects this belief in the I-substance onto all things. (TI, “Reason” 5)

We must read these observations in the context of the whole TI. In both the sections “Reason” in *philosophy* and *The Four Great Errors*, Nietzsche’s aim is to provide a description of the psychology that lies beyond Western morality, with particular reference to Christian Europe. Pure epistemological questions and other statements concerning the existence of a substantial I are therefore the background of his investigation and Nietzsche refers to them in order to carry on his diagnosis of the “declined” human type. According to Nietzsche, the “I” is one of the basic concepts of human self-representation (another one is that of “free will”, which I will address in sec. II.B); a concept whose existence can be discussed – and probably rejected – on the metaphysical plane, but that still remains an important reference point of human agency. Man *needs* it, in order to act. That is something that Nietzsche never denies, but rather stresses in many passages devoted to the usefulness of the substantial entities we daily presuppose.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, the belief in an “I” as the

subject of our own actions lies on the ground of Christian morality. That will be clearer after my dealing with the idea of “free will,” but one can easily understand that without the reference to an I, no guilt can be ascribed to anyone. Nietzsche clearly shows this in the section on *The Four Great Errors*, which particularly concerns the concepts of “false causation” and “imaginary causes,” to which belongs “the entire realm of morality and religion” (TI, *The Four Great Errors* 6. See also *ibid.*, §§ 1 and 3). As regards causation, Nietzsche stresses that “people have always believed that they knew what a cause was,” but they got this belief “from the famous realm of the ‘inner facts,’ none of which have ever proven factual” (TI, *The Four Great Errors* 3). Moreover, Nietzsche argues:

We believed that our acts of will were causally efficacious; we thought that here, at least, we had caught causality in the act. Nobody doubted that consciousness was the place to look for all the *antecedentia* of an act, its causes, and that you would be able to find these causes there as well – under the rubric of “motives”: otherwise the action could hardly be considered free, and nobody could really be held responsible for it. Finally, who could deny that thoughts have causes? That the “I” is what causes thoughts?... (*ibid.*)

The “I” therefore follows from the fundamental idea of a causality of the will and is one of the three unavoidable references of human agency, together with “the conception of consciousness as cause” and that of will. But “the ‘inner world’ is full of illusions and phantasms,” argues Nietzsche, along with claiming that “nowadays we do not believe a word of it.” Furthermore, Nietzsche states that the “I” (the “subject”) “has become a fairy tale, a fiction, a play on words: it has stopped thinking, feeling, and willing altogether!” (*ibid.*). Nevertheless, the claim that the “good Europeans,” Nietzsche’s imaginary readers, do not believe anymore in the fictions of I and will, does not mean that they must (nor even can!) stop acting by making reference to them. On the contrary, these concepts have a strong practical usefulness, and men still need them in order to orient themselves to the world.

Again, I shall develop this idea in what follows, after dealing with the notion of “will” in Nietzsche’s and Kant’s late investigation of man. For now, let me just go back to what I suggested in sec. I, in order to define Nietzsche’s late concern with the human being. In TI Nietzsche’s view of some topics with which he dealt in his previous works is different from his earlier investigations, since he is mainly (almost solely) interested in the consequences on the practical plane of men’s *believing* in the worldview provided by the Western Metaphysics. The “I” is part of this worldview and for what concerns this concept, Nietzsche is not interested in its erroneous character *in itself*. Rather, he deals with it because it is one of the reference points of man’s agency and therefore must be investigated in order to describe the *effects* on the human being of the “prejudices of reason.”<sup>20</sup>

Shortly,, it is already possible to say that in his late work Nietzsche asks himself and his readers: “What actually makes of himself a human being that looks at himself and his world in a well specified way? *How does he act?*”. In the same way as Kant rejects a physiological knowledge of man in the *Anthropology*, since that could be useful only to investigate his nature, in TI, Nietzsche is interested in defining man in terms of what he does, not in terms of what he is. That question, and consequently the way of dealing with the ground concepts of human self-knowledge, is what makes Nietzsche's late investigation a “pragmatic” anthropology.

### *B. Freedom and free will*

The I is the basic reference of human agency. Despite this, it does not explicitly appear in Kant's definition of “pragmatic anthropology.” What is actually mentioned is the concept of “freedom,” which is the other element that characterizes that definition. The idea that the human being can pursue a free action is simply fundamental in order to deal with his agency, and therefore, to show him how to become a good citizen. In the *Anthropology*, in particular, Kant stresses the practical value of freedom in man's everyday life,<sup>21</sup> and confirms the perspective of his late investigation of the human being. Moreover, his interest in the practical side of human life involves a specific attitude towards Kant's previous dealing with the notion of freedom, with special regards (once again) for the conclusions drawn in his critical writings.

During his critical period, even though he admitted that it was impossible to show the existence of human freedom on the theoretical plane, Kant presupposed it on the practical one. As Allen Wood argued,

we all know from the first two Critiques and the *Groundwork* that Kant regards human freedom as theoretically indemonstrable and empirically uncognizable. We know also that Kant regards the empirical world of nature as a strictly deterministic causal mechanism, in which no free agency could be found, and therefore that he locates our free agency in the noumenal world, inaccessible to empirical investigation. He therefore also infers that if human beings are considered merely as parts of the natural world that is accessible to our empirical cognition, human actions cannot be regarded as free. (Wood 2003: 43)

In several of his works Kant actually rejects the idea of a free-acting human being, or at least admits that it is not possible for us to demonstrate such an idea. For example, in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (KrV A 550/B 578) Kant puts forth reasons for the mechanistic development of human agency:

All actions of human beings in the domain of appearance are determined in conformity with the order of nature, (...) and if we could exhaustively investigate all the appearances of the wills of human beings, there would not be found a single human action we could not predict with certainty and recognize as proceeding necessarily from antecedent conditions. So far, then, (...) there is no freedom. (KrV A 550/B 578)

Even though Kant explicitly traits human behaviour as a mere part of the mechanism of nature, that does not exhaust his view of freedom during the critical period. According to Wood, in all the three Critiques and throughout his ethical works, Kant “expressed quite clear (...) that our coherent conception of ourselves, as moral agents or even as subjects of theoretical judgment, is one which presupposes from a practical standpoint that we are free” (Wood 2003: 44. See e.g. KrV A 546-547/B 574-575). This is what interests him the most in 1798 and is why Kant did not project the anthropology as a mechanistic natural science that excludes human freedom. The fact that the notion of freedom can be admitted only as one of the three postulates of pure reason does not seem to be crucial for Kant. In his *Anthropology* he deals with the empirical man, the man who acts “as a” free-acting being and his aim is to provide a useful description of his relationship with other human beings. As for this, Wood concludes that “although Kant never pretends to seek or find empirical proofs of human freedom, his empirical anthropology always proceeds on the fundamental presupposition that human beings are free, and throughout it interprets the empirical observations it makes on the basis of this presupposition” (Wood 2003: 44).

The conditional meaning of the “as” that Kant uses in referring to the (presupposed) free agency of man has been stressed by Hans Vaihinger. In his work on *The Philosophy of “As-if”*<sup>22</sup> Vaihinger does not actually deal with the *Anthropology*, but his observations concerning the concept of freedom in Kant are useful to draw a more detailed view of what interests me in this paper. The fundamental idea of Vaihinger is that Kant conceived freedom as a fiction, a concept whose reality cannot be proved, but whose usefulness on the practical plane is undeniable. Vaihinger finds evidence for this idea in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (A 550ff./B 583ff.):

In the doctrine of antinomies (...) we find the following: In judging any action of a man we can disregard all the psychological conditions of his act; we can “completely put aside” these empirical conditions “and consider the series of conditions that have occurred as not having taken place and the deed itself as entirely unconditioned, so far as any anterior situation is concerned; *as if* the performer of the deed thereby himself originated a series of effects.” Again and again he repeats that it can, may, and must be so regarded but that objectively it is not so. And this does not imply “the reality of freedom.” “Freedom is here treated as a transcendental idea” – in other words only as a heuristic fiction. (Vaihinger 1925: 274)

Vaihinger is obviously interested in showing that Kant made massive use of the “as-if” method, in order to find historical confirmation to his own investigation. The emphasis he puts on that must therefore be seen in the right perspective, but it is nevertheless possible to say that Vaihinger highlighted some important features of Kant’s thought. His stressing the fact that for Kant the concept of freedom remains a pure transcendental idea, and thus that it is only possible to attribute a heuristic value to it, is one of them. It is easy to see that this statement is of the greatest importance for what concerns Kant’s ethics and moral philosophy. Moreover, it plays a fundamental role in his *Anthropology*, since in that book Kant deals with the consequences for human agency of man’s believing in freedom. I’ll turn to this soon. First, I need to say something more concerning Vaihinger’s reading of Kant.

In order to support his thesis, Vaihinger shows that Kant stressed the idea of a pure heuristic value of freedom also in his writings devoted to practical philosophy. For instance, Vaihinger writes that in the final section of the *Groundwork*

the “concept of freedom” is treated as “the key to the explanation of the autonomy of the will.” In the fourth paragraph we read: – “Every being who can act only under the notion that he is free is, for that very reason, also in practice free (...). I therefore claim that every rational being possessing a will must necessarily also be endowed with the idea of freedom, in virtue of which alone he acts (...).” This is only a short passage but it is of far-reaching importance; for here Kant clearly and unambiguously declares freedom to be but a mere idea without reality. The heading of the whole passage runs: “Freedom must be *presupposed* as an attribute of the will of all rational beings.” (Vaihinger 1925: 289)<sup>23</sup>

In this passage, Vaihinger brings out another important element, which is the connection between freedom and will. This connection will be crucial for my later comparison between Kant’s view of men’s agency and that of Nietzsche, since the belief in free will is one of the most important topics of TI. Apart from this, Vaihinger once again aims at showing that Kant did not believe in the reality of freedom, but also that he presupposed the freedom of the will of any human being. Vaihinger dealt with this topic in a previous work, making reference to what Friedrich A. Lange wrote against Kant’s idea of freedom:

Lange criticizes Kant’s mystic *concept of freedom*, according to which, in order to avoid the contraposition between “ideal and life,” the *reality* of freedom is shifted in the realm of the “thing in itself.” Kant stated this, because he believed that freedom was a necessarily ground for Morals, a necessarily postulate of the Practical Reason: we know that we are free, as far as we are rational beings. Lange disagrees with this claim, and writes: it is not true, that we know that we are free-acting beings. *We rather only conceive ourselves as free-acting beings.* (Vaihinger 1876: 185)

Lange focuses on a crucial point: the usefulness of the concept of freedom for human agency does not involve its reality. Moreover, it is not necessary to postulate this reality, in order to act. What man needs is only to *conceive* himself he is a free-acting being, to *believe* in his freedom and therefore in the autonomy of his will. This is the ground of human agency and what lies beyond the plane of human actions is only matter for metaphysics.

In the *Anthropology* Kant makes no reference to the nature of freedom, since his aim is different from that of the critical period. In his previous writings, Kant was interested in the foundations of morality and he therefore *needed* a metaphysical reference point for human agency. In his late work, he only needs to state what Lange argues, i.e. that human beings can only conceive themselves as free-acting beings. As I have suggested for what concerned the concept of “I”, in the *Anthropology* Kant focuses on man’s self-representation and the basis of his investigation is the phenomenal side of the human being. According to this view, there is nothing to say about man’s believing in freedom, since this is a matter for metaphysics, not for anthropology. The fact that in his *Anthropology* Kant never deals with the concept of freedom, and his making no reference to any of his previous discussions of that topic, is therefore not a sign of a changed view. Kant probably always believed that it was necessarily to provide a stable ground for human agency and the only way he had to do that was to postulate the Ideas of Pure Reason. Those Ideas play an important role in Kant’s system and with all likelihood he holds that without them any attempt of making men “happy” would miserably fail.<sup>24</sup> But all these questions do not find a place in the *Anthropology*. Kant’s aim in this work is to give men some useful indications to become good citizens and he does not need to discuss the grounds of human agency in order to deal with it. We could thus draw an imaginary line and make this distinction: while Kant’s treatment of the concept of freedom during the critical period aims at providing a definition of it – of what lays “beyond” our conceiving us as free-acting beings – his anthropology merely deals with men’s use of this concept on the practical plane. Vaihinger’s statement, according to which Kant actually considers freedom as a mere fiction, is probably too strong to be supported. Nevertheless, Vaihinger focuses on a problematic point, since, as Wood also argues, during the critical period Kant dealt with the impossibility of showing the metaphysical existence of freedom. Despite this, it is arguable that in his *Anthropology* Kant investigated the consequences for the human being of his believing in that concept, and that he does not need of (and has no interest in) dealing with its being real or not.

The concept of freedom is one of the old “truths” with which Nietzsche deals in TI<sup>25</sup>, and whose presumed reality he criticizes by stressing its fictional character.<sup>26</sup> Nietzsche actually deals chiefly with men’s belief in “will as causal agent,” an “inner fact” that is strongly bounded with the conception of “consciousness (‘mind’) as cause, and then [with] that of the I (the ‘subject’) as

cause” (TI, *The Four Great Errors* 3). As I argued, Nietzsche claims that all these notions are mere “illusions and phantasms,” whose metaphysical existence has been rejected in the history of Modern thought. “Meanwhile – he writes – we have thought better of all this. (...) The will does not do anything more, and so it does not explain anything any more either” (ibid.). Nietzsche dealt more exhaustively with this topic in BGE, in the same section in which he criticized the notion of “I think” and the other prejudices of Western philosophers. For what concerns the concept of will, Nietzsche argues that “philosophers tend to talk about [it] as if it were the most familiar thing in the world,” but in his opinion they are only “adopting and exaggerating a *popular prejudice*” (BGE 19). Nietzsche’s idea is that the concept of will is something much more complicated than what one can infer from his “inner sense.” In particular, that single word actually hides many things and the will must indeed be regarded as “a complex of feeling and thinking,” and moreover as “the affect of the command” (ibid.). Nietzsche carries on this idea, and then argues that

a whole chain of erroneous conclusions, and, consequently, false evaluations have become attached to the will, – to such an extent that the one who wills believes, in good faith, that willing *suffices* for action. Since it is almost always the case that there is will only where the effect of command, and therefore obedience, and therefore action, may be *expected*, the *appearances* translates into the feeling, as if there were a *necessity of effect*. In short, the one who wills believes with a reasonable degree of certainty that will and action are somehow one; he attributes the success, the performance of the willing to the will itself, and consequently enjoys an increase in the feeling of power that accompanies all success. “Freedom of the will” – that is the word for the multi-faceted state of pleasure of one who commands and, at the same time, identifies himself with the accomplished of willing. (ibid.)

“Freedom of the will” is therefore only a word, a label denoting the surface of an elaborate process involving feelings and thoughts. Its value is merely logical, which means that people act by making reference to their “free will”, but any metaphysical investigation of it reveals its ontological lack of content.<sup>27</sup> The reason of the birth of the concept of “freedom of the will,” and the role that it plays in human life, are explained in BGE 21:

The *causa sui* is the best self-contradiction that has been conceived, (...) but humanity’s excessive pride has got itself profoundly and horribly entangled with precisely this piece of nonsense. The longing for “freedom of the will” in the superlative metaphysical sense (which, unfortunately, still rules in the heads of the half-educated), the longing to bear the entire and ultimate responsibility for your actions yourself and to relieve God, world, ancestors, chance, and society of the burden – all this means nothing less than being that very *causa sui* and, with a courage greater than Munchausen’s, pulling yourself by the air from the swamp of nothingness up into existence.

“Responsibility” is the key-word for understanding Nietzsche’s view of freedom in TI, for that is the point he is interested in stressing in that book. His observations concerning both the concepts of



will and I are in particular aimed at drawing the worldview that generated the “declined” human type. As I suggested, Nietzsche’s interest is not purely metaphysical, i.e. he does not want to show the fictional character of these notions in order to reject them. On the contrary, he is aimed at describing the consequences on the practical plane of man’s *faith* in these notions and thus shows their role in the development of Western Europe. In particular, Nietzsche states that the belief in both the will as causal agent and the I as subject of this will (the two concepts are bounded together in that of “free will”) are the ground of Christian morality:

*Error of free will.* – People have lost sympathy for the concept of “free will”: we know all too well what it is – the shadiest trick theologians have up their sleeves for making humanity “responsible” in their sense of the term, which is to say *dependent on them*... I am just describing the psychology that comes into play whenever people are held responsible. – Whenever responsibilities are assigned, an instinct to *punish and judge* is generally at work. Whenever a particular state of affairs is traced back to a will, an intention, or a responsible action, becoming is stripped of its innocence. The notion of will was essentially designed with punishment in mind, which is to say the desire to *assign guilt*. The whole of ancient psychology, the psychology of will, was conditioned by the desire of its architects (the priest at the head of the ancient community) to establish their *right* to inflict punishment – or to assign the right to God... People were considered “free” so that they could be judged and punished – so that they could be *guilty*: consequently, every act *had* to be thought of as willed, every act *had* to be seen as coming from consciousness. (TI, *The Four Great Errors* 7)

What must be stressed is that, in Nietzsche’s view, it is not only the “prejudice” of the free will that generated a declined type of life, but rather the *belief* in that prejudice. The idea that man can represent himself only as author of some actions that he “wants” to perform is something that depends on his nature and therefore, it is not possible for him to get rid of it. According to Nietzsche, since our knowledge developed during the long evolution of human beings, our interpretation of the world must be evaluated in terms of adaptation. There is no “truth” and “false” in itself, but rather an evaluation that considers the usefulness of every concept for the struggle for life. In the *Gay Science*, for example, Nietzsche states that “through immense periods of time, the intellect produced nothing but errors; some of them turned out to be useful and species-preserving; those who hit upon or inherited them fought their fight for themselves and their progeny with greater luck” (GS 110). These “erroneous articles of faith” are actually the categories of reason, which makes us believe “that there are things, kinds of material, bodies; that a thing is what appears to be”, and “that our will is free”<sup>28</sup> (ibid.). Nietzsche carried on this epistemological view all along his life, always stressing that these “truths” play an important role in human life since they are useful in order to pursue an action. Moreover, they are the reference points of man’s orientation to the world, even though they provide only a “falsification” of it.<sup>29</sup> The fundamental role of the

“erroneous” character of our world-interpretation is also stressed in BGE 34, where Nietzsche argues that “life could not exist except on the basis of perspectival valuations and appearances.” In that paragraph Nietzsche also suggests not to assume “truth” and “false” as intrinsically opposed, but rather “to assume that there are levels of appearance and lighter and darker shades and tones of appearance.” Moreover, he complains that “someone wanted to completely abolish the ‘world of appearances’,” claiming that both truth and falsity belong to that realm. They are indeed a product of human intellect and therefore, there cannot be any “truth” out of the world-picture that it generates (*ibid.*).

According to Nietzsche, the greatest error made by the Western philosophers has been to have trusted in the “prejudice of reason” (TI, “*Reason*” in *Philosophy* 5) and consequently to have turned mere useful fictions into “idols”. Since these “articles of faith” have a strong practical usefulness for human life, people trusted in their reality and believed them to be not just a falsification of the world, but rather its “true” representation. In 1888 Nietzsche sums up all of this in an extremely plain note:

The aberration of philosophy is that, instead of seeing in logic and the categories of reason means toward the adjustment of the world for utilitarian ends (basically, toward an expedient falsification), one believed one possessed in them the criterion of truth and reality. The “criterion of truth” was in fact merely the biological utility of such a system of systematic falsification; and since a species of animal knows of nothing more important than its own preservation, one might indeed be permitted to speak here of “truth.” The *naïveté* was to take an anthropocentric idiosyncrasy as the measure of things, as the rule for determining “real” and “unreal”: in short, to make absolute something conditioned. And behold, suddenly the world fell apart into a “true” world and an “apparent” world: and precisely the world that man’s reason had devised for him to live and settle in was discredited. (PF 1888, 14[153], KSA 13)

We must see Nietzsche’s late dealing with the concept of “freedom” in the light of these statements. According to him, “freedom” is only a fiction, but a very useful one on the practical plane. Since this concept is a product of the human mind, it is not possible to imagine a man who does not represent himself as a free-acting being. That does not mean, however, that one must believe in the metaphysical existence of freedom of the will. Therefore, it is possible to assume that Nietzsche never rejected freedom as a necessary reference of human agency. On the contrary, he aimed at showing how strongly that notion is bounded with the development of man, on both the theoretical and the cultural plane<sup>30</sup>, but in doing this he stressed the fact that one should consider freedom only as a skill<sup>31</sup> and nothing more. The result of Nietzsche’s investigation of freedom isn’t, therefore, a non-free action, but rather an action pursued on the basis of man’s self-representation of himself as a free-acting being, which includes the awareness of the mere practical value of this notion. According to John Richardson, Nietzsche’s “aim isn’t to view freedom solely in a

naturalistic or scientific spirit, to strip the practice or concept of all valuative implications whatsoever. Nietzsche still wants a practice of pursuing and desiring freedom, in which the concept counts as an ideal” (Richardson 2009: 131-132).

Let me briefly sum up my observations, in order to draw some conclusions. In TI Nietzsche deals with the *décadent*, who is the product of a specific historical and cultural context. According to Nietzsche, this context determines the way in which the human being represents himself (for example, as responsible for his actions), and therefore what he does of himself – what he becomes. Nietzsche's interest in the fictional character of both the concept of “free will” and that of “I” is thus aimed at highlighting the erroneous ground of the Western worldview in order to provide a description of the type of man that this worldview generated. The faith in reason has indeed generated a declined human being, a man who devaluates the “world of appearances” and believes in the existence of a “true world.”<sup>32</sup> Therefore, in TI a) Nietzsche's interest in the basic “errors” of human knowledge (such as “free will”) is not purely theoretical, and b) he does not aim to reject the practical usefulness of those errors. Rather, Nietzsche only deals with the consequences for the human being of the *faith* in the *truthfulness* of those errors.

As I have suggested at the end of section II.A, Nietzsche's main question in his late work concerns what a human being who represents himself in a very specific way actually does. This question, formulated in the light of Nietzsche's criticism to the prejudices of reason, becomes: “How does the human being *who trusts the prejudices of reason*, act?” More specifically, the question can be re-formulated, with regard to the topic of this paragraph: “How does the human being *who trusts in the free will*, act?” Finally, in Kantian terms, it is possible to say that Nietzsche's aim in TI is to answer the question: “What makes of himself the human being as a free-acting being?” This last formulation shows the similarity between Nietzsche's late view on the human being and Kant's investigation of man in his *Anthropology*, i.e. it shows the pragmatic character of Nietzsche's late anthropological investigation. Of course, this is only a similarity, and the comparison between Kant and Nietzsche on this topic concerns only the perspective of their investigations of the human being.<sup>33</sup> One important difference between them can be shown by stressing the conditional “as” in Kant's definition of “pragmatic anthropology” and therefore by re-writing it as follows: “investigation of what the human being makes of himself *as if he were* a free-acting being.” This formulation does not actually change the definition, since although Kant doesn't explicitly admit the fictional character of freedom (as Nietzsche does), his view on that topic is focused on the practical value of that notion, given the impossibility of showing its existence. On the other hand, this formulation emphasizes the role played by this conditional in both Kant's and Nietzsche's dealing with the human being, thus showing the basic difference between their

philosophical views. I will deal with it in my conclusions. As for now, I want to very briefly stress just another element of comparison between Kant's *Anthropology* and Nietzsche's TI, that is, their remarks on the role of the senses in human knowledge.

### *C. Apology for Sensibility*

In sections 8-11 of the *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, titled *Apology for Sensibility*, Kant offers a summary justification of the *Sinnlichkeit*.<sup>34</sup> His aim in doing this is to contrast older positions, such as those of Leibniz and Wolff, according to which sensibility has only a negative role in the process of knowledge. On the contrary, Kant always considered the importance of this faculty for human knowledge and thus stressed its role with special regard to its relationship with the intellect (see Caygill 2003: 182 ff). In the *Anthropology*, in particular, Kant deals with the fundamental value of sensibility, claiming that it actually makes the empirical cognition out of appearance.<sup>35</sup> Thus, he argues that “sensibility is not at fault, rather it is much more to its credit that it has presented abundant material to understanding, whereas the abstract concepts of understanding are often only glittering poverty” (§ 9, Anth.: 145). In his *Apology for Sensibility* Kant also writes:

*The senses do not confuse [verwirren]. (...) Sense perceptions (empirical representations accompanied by consciousness) can only be called inner appearances. (...) The understanding is neglecting its obligations if it judges rashly without first having ordered the sense representations according to concepts, and then later complains about their confusion, which it blames on the particular sensual nature of the human being. (§ 9, Anth.: 144)*

*The senses do not deceive [betriügen]; (...) not because they always judge correctly, but rather because they do not judge at all. Error is thus a burden only to the understanding. (§ 11, Anth.: 146)*

These observations sound very similar to what Nietzsche writes in TI, a few lines before his dealing with the prejudice of reason:

When all the other philosophical folk threw out the testimony of the senses because it showed multiplicity and change, Heraclitus threw it out because it made things look permanent and unified. Heraclitus did not do justice to the senses either. The senses do not lie the way the Eleatics thought they did, or the way Heraclitus thought they did, – they do not lie [lügen] at all. What we do with the testimony of the senses, that is where the lies begin, like the lie of unity, the lie of objectification, of substance, of permanence ... “Reason” makes us falsify the testimony of the senses. The senses are not lying when they show becoming, passing away, and change. (TI, “Reason” in *Philosophy 2*)

I'm not suggesting any direct influence between these texts, all the more so because there is no evidence to support this hypothesis.<sup>36</sup> My aim is rather to show that both Nietzsche in TI and Kant in his *Anthropology* are interested in dealing with that side of the human knowledge that is sensibility. Moreover, they both do this in order to argue that, if there's something "at fault" of the erroneous character of man's world-representation, it is the intellect, and not the senses. This claim has been stressed by several scholars interested in Nietzsche's and in Kant's thought<sup>37</sup>. As for the latter, it is arguable that Kant dealt with sensibility in the *Anthropology* for that faculty is the real ground on which it is possible to build a "pragmatic" knowledge of the human being (of the human being seen as a "phenomenon").<sup>38</sup> Moreover, Kant was interested in dealing with this topic, since anthropology is the only discipline that can provide human sensibility with its rules, like the logic does with respect to the intellect. According to Paolo Manganaro, the anthropology indeed "specifies all the human activities, and the many functions concerning the sensibility (...): hearing, eyesight, imagination, pleasure, desire, and creativity" (Manganaro, 1978: 124).

The *Apology for Sensibility* thus confirms what I suggested earlier in this paper, i.e. that in the *Anthropology*, Kant was concerned with the phenomenal character of the human being. This approach is exactly what Kant's and Nietzsche's late investigations have in common. In TI, Nietzsche is interested in investigating man on the empirical plane and in dealing with it he also stresses the fundamental role of sensibility.<sup>39</sup> Nietzsche's view on this topic is of course different from that of Kant. Although they both emphasize the "innocence" of the senses on the epistemological plane, Nietzsche's dealing with the reason and its "prejudices" is clearly stronger than Kant's ascribing faults, confusion, and errors to the intellect. This deceiving character of reason plays in particular a very important role in TI and Nietzsche clearly shows this at the end of the paragraph in which he deals with the testimony of the senses. Here – for the first time in that book – he contrasts the "apparent world" with the "true world," claiming that "the "apparent world" is the only world; the "true world" is just a lie added on to it..." (TI, "Reason" in *Philosophy* 2). I will not deal with this well-known contraposition. I only want to stress that in Nietzsche's view the "true" world's being a lie should cause man to stop *believing* in it and to finally get rid of it. The only "real" world is, for Nietzsche, the phenomenal one, the world of appearances that the declining type of man devalues. On the contrary, "the reasons people give for calling 'this' world an illusion argue much more convincingly in favour of its reality, – no *other* reality could ever be proven" (TI, "Reason" in *Philosophy* 6).

As for Kant, his attitude towards reason is of course not so negative. In particular, the role of the intellect in human knowledge is never rejected as a "falsification" of the world. Nevertheless, we can say that in the *Anthropology* Kant is especially interested in the "apparent world" as the

reference of human agency and that is why he writes an “apology for sensibility.” Thus, despite the marked differences between Kant’s and Nietzsche’s philosophical views, their dealing with the “innocence” of the senses confirms the similarity between their views on the human being. In particular, it emphasizes the fact that, in order to answer – with very different aims – the question “What is Man?”, both Kant and Nietzsche carry on an analysis of the concrete forms of man’s self-observation.

### III. CONCLUSIONS

The main aim of this paper has been to show that the definition of “pragmatic anthropology” given by Kant in 1798 can be applied to the investigation of the Western European type of man that Nietzsche carries on in TI. In order to support this statement, I stressed the similarities between Kant’s concern with what a human being can make of himself as a free-acting being and Nietzsche’s investigation of the type of man generated by the Platonic and Christian worldview. At the end of sec. II.B, I suggested modifying Kant’s definition, in order to make it better fit Nietzsche’s view. In particular, I emphasized the conditional implied in that definition, and I therefore defined the pragmatic knowledge of the human being as an “investigation of what human being makes of himself, *as if he were* a free acting being.”

As I have argued, this formulation does not change the essence of the definition, since for both Kant and Nietzsche what is crucial is the practical role of freedom in human agency. Despite this, the conditional “as if” can show an important philosophical difference between the two thinkers. In particular, Kant neglects this conditional, for he thinks that there cannot be any human action with no reference to the concept of freedom. Although he cannot demonstrate it on the metaphysical plane, Kant postulates freedom as the very ground of man’s agency. Therefore, in his view the fictional character of freedom plays no role in human life and man actually acts “as a free-acting being.”

In Nietzsche thinking things are quite different. Just as with Kant, Nietzsche thinks that freedom is a very useful idea for human agency and with all likelihood he also considers it as an unavoidable reference point of man, but only on the practical plane. On the other hand, indeed, his “diagnosis” of the realized human being also suggests that the worldview which sustains this idea generated a declined type of man. I.e. the human being who *believed* in the value of freedom (and of the other substantial entities such as “I”, “will” etc.) out of the mere practical plane, finally becomes

“smaller,” *décadent*. Thus, since on the metaphysical plane freedom can be defined as a mere fiction, Nietzsche stresses that the awareness of all this can modify the type of man. According to him, it makes a big difference for the human being to think that he is acting “*as a free-acting being*” or “*as if he were a free-acting being.*” This is actually crucial for Nietzsche, since on this little difference lies the possibility of generating a higher human type.

More specifically, as regards the anthropological question (“What is Man?”), Nietzsche’s approach to it strongly focuses on how man evaluates the ground concepts of his self-representation. According to him, the type of man is strictly related with a specific worldview, i.e. Nietzsche thinks that what man becomes follows from how he interprets himself and the world – *and* from how he evaluates this interpretation. In other words: the belief that the “truths” that human intellect creates are “eternal idols” generates a type of man, whereas from the idea that these are nothing but a falsification of the world for practical purposes, follows another human type. The most important thing is that in both cases the practical value of these “truths” for human agency is not denied and therefore, the “higher” type of man also keeps on acting by making reference to them. As regards the free will, for example, it is arguable that, according to Nietzsche, the *Übermensch* is the one who rejects the metaphysical value of freedom, but not its practical value. His agency, together with his attributes (that is: “what he does of himself”), follow from his awareness of the fictional character of his reference points. More widely, this means that in order to avoid the nihilistic drift of Western metaphysics, the 19<sup>th</sup> century man should admit that there is only the “world of appearances,” the world of the useful fictions, while the “true world” is only a lie, a “fable.” As Nietzsche puts it, the “true world” is “an idea that is of no further use, (...) an obsolete, superfluous idea, *consequently* a refuted idea: let’s get rid of it!” (TI, *How the “true world” finally become a fable*).<sup>40</sup>

At the end, the main difference between Nietzsche’s and Kant’s anthropology lies on this statement. They both seem to take note of the failure of any attempt of metaphysics to properly describe the principles of human agency. But while Kant, in order to make man a good and happy citizen, tries to give a stable ground to it by postulating the existence of man’s practical reference points,<sup>41</sup> Nietzsche exhorts man to *face* the ontological void of the substantial entities. In doing this, Nietzsche makes a step beyond Western metaphysics and shows the way to a new, “higher” type of man.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Quotations from, and references to, Nietzsche's works and letters make use of the following abbreviations: 'HAH' for *Human, all too Human I*, 'GS' for *The Gay Science*, 'BGE' for *Beyond Good and Evil*, 'GM' for *On the Genealogy of Morality*, 'TI' for *Twilight of the Idols*, 'EH' for *Ecce Homo*, 'PF' for *Posthumous Fragments*, 'KSA' for *Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe*, and 'KSB' for *Sämtliche Briefe: Kritische Studienausgabe*. Quotations from, and references to, Kant's works make use of the following abbreviations: 'AA' for *Gesammelten Werke Immanuel Kants, Akademie Ausgabe*, 'KrV' for *Kritik der Reinen Vernunft*, 'Anth.' for *Anthropologie im pragmatischer Hinsicht*, and 'Log.' for *Logik*. Full bibliographic references for these works are given at the end of this essay.

<sup>2</sup> See Nietzsche an H. Köselitz, 12 September 1888, KSB 8: 417.

<sup>3</sup> See Nietzsche an P. Deussen, 26 November 1888, KSB 8: 491.

<sup>4</sup> On the genesis of TI, and its aims, see Gori and Piazzesi 2012.

<sup>5</sup> Many books and papers have been written on this topic. See e.g. Brandt 1999 (with special regards to the introduction, p. 7-48), Wilson 2006, Frieson 2003, Manganaro 1978, Martinelli 2010, Cohen 2008, Loudon 2008, and Schmidt 2007.

<sup>6</sup> Among many texts, I find the notes from 1881 of particular interest. See on this topic Clark 1990 and Grimm 1977.

<sup>7</sup> Nietzsche's reading of Friedrich Lange's *History of Materialism* has been fundamental to develop this idea. See Stack 1983: 10-24.

<sup>8</sup> On this topic see the interpretation of GS V provided by Werner Stegmaier in Stegmaier 2012.

<sup>9</sup> See GS 343, and in general the whole fifth book of *The Gay Science*.

<sup>10</sup> In the *Preface to The Case Wagner*, Nietzsche states that "nothing has preoccupied [him] more profoundly than the problem of *décadence*," to which in the last years of thought he devotes his investigations concerning Western morality and nihilism. The word "*décadence*" appears in all Nietzsche's "1880s books" (*The Case Wagner*, *Nietzsche contra Wagner*, *Twilight of the Idols*, *The Antichrist*, and *Ecce Homo*) and reveals a specific research interest, which arose after Nietzsche's reading of Paul Bourget's *Essais de psychologie contemporaine*, in 1883. On this topic see Gori and Piazzesi 2012: 23 ff.

<sup>11</sup> For example, BGE 12 and 14 concern atomism and the world-description provided by 19<sup>th</sup> century physics; BGE 15 physiology and sensualism; BGE 16-17 the notion of "I"; BGE 54 what we can call "thought."

<sup>12</sup> In TI, "*Reason*" in *Philosophy* and *The Four Great Errors*, Nietzsche makes particular reference to what he stated in BGE, On the Prejudices of Philosophers. I will deal with this in section 2.1 and 2.2.

<sup>13</sup> See also Sturm 2008: 499, and Wood 2003: 40 f.

<sup>14</sup> See Anth. 120, and Foucault 1964: 20. See also Brandt 1999: 10 and 51-53. Brandt especially argues that the aim of Kant's *Anthropology* is to provide man with "eine Orientierung im praktisch-klugen Umgang mit anderen Menschen, aber auch mit sich selbst" (Brandt 1999: 10).

<sup>15</sup> This specific assumption chiefly concerns the reference points of man's agency, which cannot be only those of the *Practical Reason*.

<sup>16</sup> As Foucault argues, "man, in the *Anthropology*, is neither *homo natura* nor the pure subject of freedom; he is given within the already operating syntheses of his relation with the world" (Foucault 1964: 34).

<sup>17</sup> In an unpublished section of the manuscript of the *Anthropology* we find some interesting remarks on that topic. In talking about the only possible knowledge that a man can have of himself, Kant first refers to the theoretical (physiological) knowledge of the nature of the human being. Then, he argues that "the I in every judgment is neither an intuition nor a concept [...], but an act of understanding by the determining subject as such," and that "pure apperception itself therefore belongs merely to logic." Finally, Kant writes: "The I of inner sense, that is, of the perception and observation of oneself, is not the subject of judgment, but an object. Consciousness of the one who observes himself is an entirely simple representation of the subject in judgment as such, of which one knows everything if one merely thinks it. But the psychology has plenty to do in tracing everything that lies hidden in it. And psychology may not ever hope to complete this task and answer satisfactorily the question: 'What is Man?'" (this passage has been published by Foucault in his edition of Kant's *Anthropology*. See Kant 2008: 265).

<sup>18</sup> In BGE 17, Nietzsche goes on in criticizing that belief: “As far as the superstitions of the logicians are concerned: I will not stop emphasizing a tiny little fact that these superstitious men are loath to admit: that a thought comes when ‘it’ wants, and not when ‘I’ want. It is, therefore, a *falsification* of the facts to say that the subject ‘I’ is the condition of the predicate ‘think.’ It thinks: but to say the ‘it’ is just that famous old ‘I’ – well that is just an assumption or opinion, to put it mildly, and by no means an ‘immediate certainty’.” On this topic see Loukidelis 2005, Gori 2011, Gori (forthcoming), Lupo 2006: 236 ff. See also PF 1888, 14[79], KSA 13, where Nietzsche defines the “I” as “our oldest article of faith.”

<sup>19</sup> On this topic see Gori 2009: 140 ff.

<sup>20</sup> See Gori and Piazzesi’s introductory remarks to the section “Reason” in *Philosophy* in Nietzsche 2012: 160 ff.

<sup>21</sup> Reinhard Brandt argues that when Kant defines the human being as a free-acting being, he is not interested in the metaphysical problems of freedom and determinism. According to him, in the *Anthropology* Kant deals with “the notion of freedom provided by the Aristotelian ethics, and not with the concept developed by the Stoic metaphysics” (Brandt 1999: 39).

<sup>22</sup> Vaihinger worked thirty years on that book and published it only in 1911. The book is particularly interesting for my present research, since it also includes a section on Nietzsche. An account of Vaihinger’s view of Kant’s and Nietzsche’s epistemological “fictionalism” has recently been provided by Carlo Gentili (2013).

<sup>23</sup> A few pages onwards, Vaihinger writes: “That freedom is ‘merely an Idea of reason, whose objective reality in itself is doubtful’ is clearly repeated [in the *Groundwork*]: ‘All human beings think of themselves as free as far as the will is concerned’ – but they are not free, freedom being only an ‘as if’ assumption, a fiction” (Vaihinger 1925: 291).

<sup>24</sup> On the concept of “happiness” in Kant’s moral philosophy, see Guyer 2000: Part IV.

<sup>25</sup> See EH, *Twilight of the Idols* 1: “What the word ‘idols’ on the title page means is quite simply what had been called truth so far. *Twilight of the Idols* – in plain language: the end of the old truth...”.

<sup>26</sup> The concept of freedom to which I refer in this paper is that of the daily life, the freedom of the common sense. In Nietzsche’s writings we find several uses of the word “freedom” and the question concerning the free will in TI is mostly related with that common concept, which is burdened with a metaphysical value that does not belong to it. The concept of freedom with which I will deal in what follows, is particularly distinguished from that related with Nietzsche’s important notions of “free spirit” and “sovereign individual,” whose meanings involve another side of human agency (it concerns – so to say – a “higher” philosophical plane, that of culture and civilization). Over the past decades many interpreters dealt with these notions and discussed whether Nietzsche actually developed a positive view of freedom. As Brian Leiter (2011: 114) points out, in Nietzsche’s sense “freedom” often “does not mean ‘freedom from constraint’, but its opposite: being subject to ‘hard’ and ‘determinative’ laws.” This is the case of the artist’s “feeling of freedom” that we find in BGE 213, or of Goethe’s “spiritual freedom” from TI, *Skirmishes* 49. Here, “Goethe’s kind of ‘freedom’ (...) is equated to an attitude of ‘cheerful and trusting fatalism’ which, in turn, is equated with the Dionysian attitude that is clearly recognizable as *amor fati*” (Leiter 2011: 118). For what concerns the “sovereign individual,” the question is more subtle and open to debate. Nietzsche makes reference to that figure just once in his whole writings (both published and unpublished), in GM II 2, and considers him as the “product of a specific historical labour of civilization” (Ansell-Pearson 1991: 277). Given that, we can compare Nietzsche’s account of the cultural process that leads to the development of a free sovereign will in the *Genealogy* with Kant’s description of the task of becoming a sovereign individual in his *Anthropology*. In the second half of that book, Kant indeed sinks that account into a general account of the cultural development of autonomy in the human species. But particularly on Nietzschean and Kantian view of autonomy, we find a fundamental difference, as João Constâncio points out (2012: 156): “For Nietzsche, there is no ‘law’ in Kant’s sense (...). A sovereign individual gives itself its own law, but this ‘giving’ is a *creating* of its own law.” Now, the sovereign individual’s being capable of such a creation, and therefore his being actually free to make his choices, apparently contradicts Nietzsche’s rejection of a “free will” in BGE or TI. As many scholars have stressed (see e.g. Gemes 2009, Richardson 2009, Leiter 2011, and Constâncio 2012), the question is in fact subtle and we must first consider whether “freedom” has the same meaning in Nietzsche’s talking about “free will,” “free spirits”, and the “sovereign individual” as a “‘free’ man” and “master of the *free* will” (notice that in GM II 2 “free” is first placed in quotes and then emphasized by Nietzsche himself). For example, Leiter (2011) argues that when Nietzsche praises “freedom” in GM II 2, he is not really praising what we mean by this word. As for him, the sovereign individual’s “freedom” is nothing more than a *feeling* of freedom and Nietzsche never contradicts his “fatalistic” view and denial of “free will” (Leiter 2011: 102). In fact, that denial only concerns the metaphysical notion of freedom, while the sovereign individual is an “autonomous super-ethical individual” who has “freed himself from the ethics of custom [*Sittlichkeit der Sitte*]” (GM II 2). With no aim of having the last word in a too wide and complicated topic, we can just say that when Nietzsche claims that such exceptional people as Goethe act freely (TI, *Skirmishes* 38), he is talking about their role on the pure cultural plane: because of their strong spirit, these “sovereign individuals” direct the process of civilization and the development of the European spirit (BGE, Preface). If we make reference to the sovereign individual as an “ideal” (see Leiter 2011 and Constâncio 2012) we therefore reach a *positive* conception of freedom, but we must not confuse the “independent,” “durable” and “unbreakable will” of the sovereign individual (GM II 2) with the “free will,” the will as a causal faculty that Nietzsche criticizes in TI, *Errors* 7.

<sup>27</sup> On this topic see Gori 2009: 145 ff.

<sup>28</sup> Nietzsche dealt with the origin of metaphysical faith in “freedom of the will” in *Human, all too Human*: “We are hungry, but originally do not think that the organism wills to sustain itself, but that feeling seems to make itself valid *without cause or purpose*, it isolates itself and considers itself *voluntary*. Thus: belief in freedom of the will is an original error of everything organic” (HAH 18).

<sup>29</sup> On Nietzsche’s “falsificationism” see Clark 1990, Hussain 2004 and Riccardi 2011.

<sup>30</sup> John Richardson dealt with this “naturalization” of freedom in Richardson 2009 and made comparison between Nietzsche’s conception of freedom and that of Kant in Richardson 2004: Chapter 4.

<sup>31</sup> See Richardson 2009: 130: “Freedom [...] is a certain skill or capacity, a *dunamis*, passed on from organism to organism as an instinct or habit. This capacity has evolved, by biological and by social processes, through different forms in different historical settings. And in each case the skill is associated with a certain view of itself, an idea of what is being done, of what this freedom is it’s achieving. The skill itself involves a certain perspective, most importantly the perspective on itself, of what it is and is trying to be. Freedom is a skill aimed at an idea of freedom.”

<sup>32</sup> In TI, “Reason” in *Philosophy* 6, Nietzsche argues that “to divide the world into a ‘true’ half and an ‘illusory’ one, whether in the manner of Christianity or in the manner of Kant (an *underhanded* Christian, at the end of the day), is just a sign of *décadence*, – it is a symptom of life *in decline*...”.

<sup>33</sup> As I stated at the beginning of this paper, my aim is to contribute to an interpretation of Nietzsche’s TI in the light of Kant’s *Anthropology*. Thus, I am not concerned with a comparative study of Nietzsche’s and Kant’s view, although that is a very interesting topic. In this passage I talk of “similarity”, since there are no proofs of a direct influence of Kant on Nietzsche and there are fundamental and strong differences between their views which must be investigated in order to give a final word on that topic. But that, I repeat, is a question for a comparative study, whereas my present research focused only on Nietzsche’s and Kant’s views concerning two different concepts of freedom. In his *Anthropology*, Kant makes reference to a concept of freedom which is undeniable for the human being as a citizen and in so doing he leaves his previous metaphysical investigations apart. Contrary to what one might think, in TI Nietzsche is not concerned with a metaphysical conception of freedom only. His primary interest is to provide a *diagnosis* of his time, of the type of man from the 19<sup>th</sup> century Western Europe, and this is his anthropological concern. In a way very close to Kant, Nietzsche makes reference to the concepts of I and freedom as the basis of human self-understanding, i.e. he deals with them as practical, *unavoidable*, reference points of our agency. Nietzsche’s focus on that practical plane is what interests me at the most in this paper.

<sup>34</sup> Kant here develops what he briefly argued in the *Transcendental Dialectic* of the *Critique of Pure Reason*: “Truth and illusion are not in the object, insofar as it is intuited, but in the judgement about it insofar as it is thought. Thus it is correctly said that the senses do not err [*irren*]; yet not because they always judge correctly, but because they do not judge at all” (KrV A 293/B 350). See also KrV B 151, on the relationship between imagination and sensibility. An investigation of these sections of the *Anthropology* has been carried out by Howard Caygill (2003).

<sup>35</sup> “Without sensibility there would be no material that could be processed for the use of legislative understanding” (Anth.: 144). See also Manganaro 1978: 123.

<sup>36</sup> As regards Nietzsche, it is arguable that the source of this section of TI is Gustav Teichmüller, whose book *Die wirkliche und die scheinbare Welt* Nietzsche read in 1883 (see Small 2001: Chapter 3, and Hussain 2004). The title of Teichmüller’s book in fact echoes in the final lines of the paragraph just quoted, where Nietzsche makes the distinction between “true world” and “apparent world” (for some philological remarks on this passage, see Nietzsche 2012: 168). In his work, Teichmüller makes no reference to any “apology for sensibility.” Nietzsche’s statement on the “innocence” of the sense organs is all the more surprisingly since it apparently supports direct representationalist theories of perception, while the most influential scientists of his time (e.g. Hermann von Helmholtz and Ernst Mach) provided arguments against these theories. Moreover, also in Friedrich Lange’s *History of Materialism* (a book that strongly influenced Nietzsche’s epistemological view) we find several claims supporting the idea that the sense organs do not show us how the world really is (Lange 1875/1925, III: 205-19). The question, here, is whether we can interpret this “registration” of reality as a “lie”, or whether we must talk of a “falsification” only with reference to the judgemental activity of Reason. It is worth noting that Lange’s statements were grounded on Helmholtz’s scientific investigation of the physiology of the sense organs and that Lange argues that these investigation provided partial confirmation of Kant’s fundamental claims.

<sup>37</sup> Nietzsche’s “sensualism” has been studied, between the others, by Robin Small (1999) and Mattia Riccardi (2013). As for Kant, see e.g. Caygill 2003 and Manganaro 1978.

<sup>38</sup> See Manganaro 1978: 124. Foucault indirectly agrees with him and stresses the fact that Kant gave that topic so much space in his late work (see Foucault 1964: 22).

<sup>39</sup> In BGE 15, Nietzsche suggested to adopt “Sensualism, at least as a regulative principle, if not as a heuristic principle” (see Small 1999).

<sup>40</sup> In this section of TI, Nietzsche concludes that the world of appearance also needs to be, or rather is, abolished once the true world goes by the board, but that does not mean that the former loses its character of being a product of both our sense organs and our intellect. Indeed, according to Nietzsche, we cannot call the *only* world we know “apparent” just because we deny the possibility of reaching the realm beyond our senses, and we therefore do not have a “true” world to contrast with the former anymore. This claim leads us to the open debate on Nietzsche’s “falsificationism” to

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which I referred above (see Clark 1990, Hussain 2004 and Riccardi 2011), since it is controversial whether Nietzsche rejects the *existence* of the Kantian “thing in itself”, or simply claims that we must not – and in fact cannot – cross the boundaries of our knowledge. My view of this topic is that it is hard to accept the idea that Nietzsche defended a strong metaphysical claim such as the non-existence of a thing in itself. On the contrary, I am inclined to interpret Nietzsche’s view in the light of the epistemological debate of his time. As Nadeem Hussain pointed out (2004:328): “Nietzsche’s understanding of [the Kantian] framework is shaped by neo-Kantians like Friedrich Lange, Afrikan Spir and Gustav Teichmüller. Once we understand what they meant by the ‘apparent world’, we come to see that a rejection of the thing-in-itself would lead Nietzsche to the kind of position represented by one of his contemporaries: the physicist Ernst Mach’s neutral monism (...). Such a view allow Nietzsche both to be science-friendly and to accept a falsification thesis.” Mach in fact rejects the Kantian thing in itself by stressing “the superfluity of the role played” by it (Mach 1886/1914: 30), but he never commits himself to stronger metaphysical arguments about its actual non-existence. According to Hussain, as I also have elsewhere stressed (see Gori 2012), we can thus compare Nietzsche’s epistemological view with that of Mach and claim that the former has been in some sense a “phenomenalist”. This reference to Mach and the neo-Kantian framework leads to a second question, i.e. whether we can make Nietzsche a “fictionalist”. Vaihinger gave that concept its most complete expression and referred it also to Nietzsche. Nietzsche himself, as we have seen, talks about “fictions” especially in TI. However, we must notice that “fictionalism” is nowadays related with a specific philosophical view in ethics. Whereas over the last decade some scholars discussed the possibility of ascribing a fictionalist interpretation of value judgements to Nietzsche (e.g. Hussain 2007), an investigation of Nietzsche’s epistemological fictionalism (to be intended as a study and discussion of Vaihinger’s view) is something that has never been provided. Given that we can see fictionalism as a logical conclusion to the 19th century positivism, which is the framework of Nietzsche’s epistemological view, a good starting point of that investigation can be that framework itself. A contextualization of Nietzsche’s view of truth is indeed the fundamental basis for a comparison of his epistemology with other fictionalist views of his time, e.g. William James’s pragmatic theory of cognition, which is especially grounded on Ernst Mach’s neutral monism (see Gori 2013).

<sup>41</sup> Nietzsche sums up Kant’s view in the third step of the “history of an error”: “The true world, unattainable, unprovable, unpromisable, but the very thought of it as a consolation, an obligation, an imperative” (TI, *How the “True World” Finally Become a Fable*).

<sup>42</sup> The topic of this paper was first discussed during the *Kant & Nietzsche International Conference/Workshop*, which took place in Lisbon in April, 2012. I would like to thank João Constâncio for having invited me to the conference, as well as all the participants for their sharp remarks about my talk. I also thank Paolo Stellino and Mattia Riccardi for having read the first version of this paper, and for their useful corrections.