

KANT 1724-2024. AN INTRODUCTION

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The essays collected in this special issue of «Verifiche» originated from a series of lectures held at the Department of Philosophy, Sociology, Pedagogy, and Applied Psychology (FISPPA) at the University of Padova during the autumn and winter of 2023. The occasion, *il va sans dire*, was the approaching tercentenary of Kant's birth, a milestone celebrated worldwide through workshops and conferences, reaching a sort of climax at the 14th International Kant Congress, organized and hosted by the Institute of Philosophy at the University of Bonn. We felt it was important to contribute to these celebrations ourselves, while also paying tribute to the longstanding tradition of Kantian scholarship at our Department. Over the years, both past and recent, scholars such as Franco Chiereghin, Pietro Faggiotto, Ludovico Gasparini, Francesca Menegoni, Giuseppe Micheli, and Giovanni Santinello have made foundational contributions to Kant studies, and their work has inspired the intellectual environment in which this initiative was conceived.

The idea behind the project was to invite contemporary Kant scholars to present themes drawn from their most recent research¹. The aim was to cover some of the principal domains of Kant's philosophy – theoretical, practical, aesthetic, anthropological, religious – while also highlighting innovative perspectives for research and re-interpretation. We deliberately employ the term 're-interpretation'

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¹ The lecture series featured more contributions than those included in this issue. Regrettably, for a variety of reasons, we were unable to include the texts of four outstanding lectures delivered by Stefano Bacin (University of Milano), Alfredo Ferrarin (Scuola Normale Superiore, Pisa), Fiona Hughes (University of Essex), and Barbara Santini (University of Padova).

because it resonates with one of Italo Calvino's definitions of a classic: «*The classics are those books about which you usually hear people saying: 'I'm rereading...' , never 'I'm reading...'*»². While Kant himself maintained that there are no classics in philosophy in the sense of works possessing indisputable authority, his writings nonetheless qualify as philosophical classics in the sense that we have been continually rereading them for three centuries. We continue to reread them not only because of the richness and complexity of their content but also because the questions we bring to them and the perspectives from which we approach them evolve over time.

The structure and ambition of the lecture series were guided by precisely this insight: that it is always possible to approach Kant's texts from new angles, to uncover further aspects, and to develop innovative theoretical perspectives. Moreover, this reflection on the ongoing challenges of Kant's work inspired us to expand the series beyond the original lectures, incorporating additional contributions that further enrich the scope of the issue.

The resulting collection embodies both a celebration of Kant's philosophical legacy and a testimony of the productive, critical engagement that his writings continue to provoke in our time.

Drawing on methodological and historical considerations about the formation of Kant's critical project, Zdravko Kobe offers a close reading of the first paralogism of rational psychology, claiming that the A-edition's argument for the substantiality of the soul is logically valid and thus unintentionally commits Kant to defending the I as a phenomenal substance. The decisive move occurs only in the B-edition, where the shift from an object-oriented to a formal, subject-oriented conception of the I reveals that the failure of rational psychology stems not from the lack of self-intuition but from the absence of a concept capable of expressing the I in its logical form.

² I. Calvino, *Perché leggere i classici*, in Id., *Perché leggere i classici*, Milano, Mondadori, 1991, pp. 11-19, p. 11; Eng. trans. by M. McLaughlin, *Why Read the Classics?*, in Id., *Why Read the Classics?*, New York, Pantheon Books, 1999, pp. 3-9, p. 3.

Gabriele Gava examines the regulative principles of cognition, focusing in particular on the *Critique of Judgment* to clarify what the assumption of the principle of purposiveness entails for the extension of empirical knowledge of nature. Reconstructing Kant's argument, he introduces a new form of taking-to-be-true, termed practical opinion, which he proposes adding to the classification outlined in the Canon of the first *Critique*. On this basis, Gava argues that the development of Kant's notion of belief must be reconsidered, since in the third *Critique* moral belief no longer appears as the only form of taking-to-be-true justified on practical grounds.

In his essay, Gabriele Tomasi addresses Kant's conception of moral belief to analyze the inner tension that defines its status, suspended between claims to universal validity and an irreducibly private character. He argues that this tension is only apparent, since both dimensions in fact coexist. Drawing on the non-epistemic grounds of belief and on the distinction between the act of believing and its content, Tomasi shows that the supposed conflict ultimately dissolves.

Giovanna Luciano's contribution reinterprets Kant's critique of culture by highlighting the ambivalence of reason's awakening from nature, between instrumental domination and moral emancipation. Within this tension, autonomy is reconceived not as an accomplished state but as a fragile, educable critical capacity rooted in the subject's constitutive non-coincidence with its cultural determinations and moral vocation. On this basis, the article advances an immanent account of moral normativity that emerges through ongoing critical engagement with the present.

Beginning from Kant's claim that judgments of beauty rest on a feeling of pleasure that nonetheless demands universal assent, Alberto L. Siani's article discusses this subjective universality as an exemplary expression of the human capacity to orient itself within the contingent. The paper reexamines the distinction between free and adherent beauty to show how aesthetic judgment negotiates the interplay between natural forms and culturally mediated purposes, thereby blurring rigid oppositions between nature and culture. On

this basis, Siani advances a pragmatist and deflationary reinterpretation of that divide.

In her essay, Serena Feloj addresses the problem of aesthetic shareability in Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, beginning with an analysis of the normative character of aesthetic judgment. She then compares three theoretical approaches – Arendt's aesthetics of sociability, Fleischacker's aesthetics of freedom, and Bourdieu's popular aesthetics – to assess the extent to which they provide resources for resolving the problems left open by Kant. Drawing on key insights from Ginsborg and Cavell, Feloj ultimately argues that the justification of the aesthetic community should be grounded in the concept of humanity.

Giuseppe Motta takes §76 of the *Critique of Judgment* as a privileged site for addressing the question 'Was ist der Mensch?'. Motta reconstructs Kant's account of the human being through three constitutive distinctions – possibility and existence, freedom and nature, mechanism and technique of nature – that structure both cognition and agency. Reconstructing the meaning and development of the Kantian notion of truth, Motta defends Kant's explicit rejection of any such standpoint beyond discursive understanding, against Romantic interpretations that read Kant's reference to intellectual intuition as gesturing toward an alternative, absolute mode of knowledge.

§76 of the *Critique of Judgment* is likewise central to Giulia Bernard's article, which examines its peculiar formal status as a Remark (*Bemerkung*) rather than a demonstration, intervening only episodically and for purposes of clarification. Situating the section within the broader framework of Kant's transcendental philosophy, the paper reconstructs Kant's refusal of proof in favor of an account of the functioning of reflective judgment and the higher faculties. Bernard thus argues that it is precisely this episodic form that fulfils a systematic function, reworking and expanding the table of faculties outlined in §IX of the *Introduction*.

Georg Sans turns to Kant's discussion of the invisible church and the true visible church in *Part Three of Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, tracing the historical development of these notions back to their roots in the theology of the Reformation

and the Enlightenment. Against this background, he shows how Kant brings the two strands together in the concept of ethical community. This concept, Sans argues, combines the emphasis on moral conviction associated with the Enlightenment's invisible church with the biblically grounded religious faith characteristic of the Reformation's visible church.

Starting from a textual reference in *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, Enrico Benà reassesses the relationship between Kant and Gottlob Christian Storr, challenging the common view that Storr was a careful reader of Kant's writings on religion. Through a close analysis of Storr's *Annotationes quaedam theologicae ad philosophicam Kantii de religione doctrinam*, Benà identifies significant misunderstandings of Kant's theses and shows that references to the *Religionsschrift* play only a marginal role. Benà concludes that Storr's reflections on key issues such as the relation between morality and religion and the issue of revelation stem primarily from engagement with Kant's earlier works rather than from any substantive reception of the book on religion.

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