

Introduction

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INTRODUCTION

Robert B. Louden

Kant scholars throughout the world are familiar with the high quality of Brazilian Kant research. In 2005 the Xth International Kant Congress was held in São Paulo – the first time this event was held outside of Germany and the United States. The publication of *Kant in Brazil* in 2012, co-edited by Frederick Rauscher and Daniel Omar Perez and supported by a grant from the North American Kant Society (NAKS) – a collection of essays by leading Brazilian Kant scholars translated into English – gave English-speaking Kantians the opportunity to better appreciate the work of their Brazilian colleagues.¹ And in recent years Kant scholars from many countries have received generous invitations to present papers at various colloquia in Brazil, to conduct research, and to lecture and teach at different Brazilian universities.

One of the primary venues for recent Kant scholarship in Brazil has been the ongoing series of Marília Kant Colloquia, organized by Ubirajara Rancan (a former President of the Brazilian Kant Society), with occasional help from his former colleague Clélia Martins. Beginning in March 2004, nine different Colloquia have been held thus far, each one focusing on a specific Kantian theme – e.g., Kant and Kantianism (August 2006), Kant and Music (November 2009), Kant and Biology (August 2010), Kant and Rousseau (August 2012), and Kant’s Lectures (August 2013). Revised versions of the papers presented at several of these conferences (viz., Colloquia II, IV, V, VIII) were also later published in books. Over the years, prominent Kant scholars from many different countries have shared their research with each other at these Colloquia, and – due in part to the many different nationalities represented – the papers have often been

presented in multiple languages chosen from the following list: Portuguese, Spanish, French, German, Italian, and English.

The most recent Marília Kant Colloquium – IX Colóquio Kant: “Pensar (o) A Priori: Tema e Variações/Thinking [the] A Priori: Theme and Variations” – took place in August 2015, and was dedicated to Professor Martins, who died of cancer in July 2014. Most of the papers collected in the present volume are revised versions of talks that were originally given at this conference.

For Kant, a priori knowledge is contrasted with empirical or a posteriori knowledge. Empirical knowledge is based on the experience of particular objects, while a priori knowledge rests on the internal faculties of rational subjects themselves. In the “Introduction” to his *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant states that “necessity and universality are . . . sure signs [*sichere Kennzeichen*] of an *a priori* cognition, and also belong together inseparably” (KrV B 4), and in each of his three Critiques he argues that human beings employ a variety of different a priori principles in making judgments not only about the external world, but also about morality and art.

While not all of the essays in the present volume place the Kantian a priori at the center of their concerns, most of them do. Taken together, they offer the reader an edifying tour through the varied terrain of the Kantian a priori, as revealed not only in the three *Critiques* but also in other central areas of his philosophy, including the philosophy of history, the *Opus postumum*, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, and *Toward Perpetual Peace*. Herewith, a brief summary of each contribution:

In Part I (*Razão Pura/Pure Reason*), seven authors explore the role of the a priori within Kant’s theoretical philosophy. Günter Zöllner (University of Munich, Germany), in “Possibiliser l’expérience. Kant sur la relation entre le transcendantal et l’empirique”, seeks to elucidate the complex relation between the a priori and the a posteriori in Kant’s critical theoretical philosophy. Focusing on Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*, he uncovers six different aspects of this relation.

Juan Bonaccini (Federal University of Pernambuco, Brazil – Juan, one of Brazil’s best contemporary Kant scholars, died of cancer just as this book was going to press), in “Analítica e Ontologia: Sobre a Teoria Kantiana dos Objetos A Priori”, argues for an ontological interpretation of the *Critique of Pure Reason* and against competing logical, epistemic, and semantic interpretations. The Analytic of Kant’s first *Critique*, on Bonaccini’s reading, presents a genuine theory of

objects, a theory that enables us to correctly think about the objects that make up the inventory of the world.

Edmilson Menezes (Federal University of Sergipe, Brazil), in “Kant’s Idea of Philosophy”, working primarily with Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*, argues that we find three different characterizations of philosophy within Kant’s writings: philosophy as wisdom, philosophy as critique (a philosophy of limits), and philosophy as metaphysics. This third characterization of philosophy, Menezes also argues, is in effect a synthesis or merger of the first two characterizations.

Daniel Omar Perez (University of Campinas, Brazil) in “Ontologia, Metafísica e Crítica como Semântica Transcendental desde Kant”, reinterprets Kant’s criticism of traditional metaphysics as a program of transcendental semantics, which in turn leads to a different understanding of Kant’s question, “how are synthetic a priori judgments possible?”

Hernán Pringe (CONOCET-UBA, Argentina and Diego Portales University, Chile), in “Acerca de la función regulativa del principio de correspondencia de Bohr,” explores twentieth-century quantum physicist Niels Bohr’s notion of correspondence from the perspective of Kant’s transcendental philosophy, arguing that this notion is what Kant calls “regulative” rather than “constitutive”.

Henny Blomme (University of Leuven, Belgium), in “Wer steht an höchster Stelle? Die Idee ‘Gott’ in der *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* und in *Opus postumum*”, examines the place of the idea of God in both Kant’s first *Critique* as well as in his last major (but incomplete) work, the *Opus postumum*. In the *Critique of Pure Reason* the idea of God is the highest idea (God is “a concept which concludes and crowns the whole of human cognition” – A 641/B 669). However, later in the *Opus postumum*, “God and the world” (OP 21: 10) appear at first to occupy the top rung together. But since “God and the world are ideas of moral-practical and technical-practical reason . . . [and are] not substances outside my thought” (OP 21: 21), in the end it is the “I” that stands in the highest position.

Ubirajara Rancan de Azevedo Marques (São Paulo State University, Brazil), in “Considérations philologiques sur un possible néologisme kantien”, focuses on the important but odd term “*Selbstgebärung*”, rendered in English as “parthenogenesis” in the recent Wood/Guyer translation, and as “spontaneous generation” by Kemp Smith – though Rancan argues that neither of these translations fully captures Kant’s intended meaning. This term occurs only once

in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (see A 765/B 793) and nowhere else in any of Kant's other writings. Rancan argues that the term is a neologism coined by Kant which may have resulted from the condensation of two terms used earlier by the German Protestant mystic Jakob Boehme (1575-1624).

In Part II (*Razão Prática/Practical Reason*), three authors examine the role of the a priori in Kant's practical philosophy. Robert Louden (University of Southern Maine, USA), in "The A Priori in Ethics: Why Does Kant Want It? (and Do We Need It?)", argues that the strong role of the a priori in Kant's ethical theory reflects his belief not only in the supreme importance of morality within human life, but within the life of all rational beings throughout the entire universe. Wherever rational beings exist, they will be subject to moral norms.

Julio Cesar Ramos Esteves (North Fluminense State University, Brazil), in "A Primazia da boa Vontade e o Interlúdio Teleológico na *Fundamentação I*", argues not only that Kant is right in maintaining his thesis regarding the primacy of the good will with respect to gifts of nature and fortune at the beginning of Section I of the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (contra the interpretations of Allen Wood and Onora O'Neill), but also that his subsequent discussion at *Groundwork 4*: 394-96, far from being an insignificant digression or interlude, is fundamentally important because it shows that the possession of a good will as the ultimate condition of goodness cannot be merely a natural gift.

Maria de Lourdes Borges (Federal University of Santa Catarina, Brazil), in "Many Shades of Evil", explores Kant's three stages of evil (frailty, impurity, depravity) as well as his more controversial distinction between radical and diabolical evil (Kant denies that human beings are capable of the latter). She also defends Kant's conception of radical evil against the popular "explanatory impotence" criticism – viz., that ultimately it does not explain anything.

The four essays in Part III (*Razão Reflexionante/Reflective Reason*) examine different aspects of the place of the a priori in Kant's third *Critique*. Leonel Ribeiro dos Santos (University of Lisbon, Portugal), in " 'A Problem Which Nature Has Made So Involved': The Power of Judgment and the Peculiar Apriority of its Transcendental Principle", focuses on a short text from the Preface to Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment* where Kant discusses the a priori principle for judgments of taste. Santos seeks to explain the reasons for the difficulties and obscurities in this principle in a manner that neither suppresses the obscurities nor solves the difficulties.

Christian Hamm (Federal University of Santa Maria, Brazil), in “Über das Geschmacksurteil und sein apriorisches Prinzip”, seeks to unravel some of the paradoxes behind judgments of taste as presented in Kant’s *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Drawing on material from both the first and second *Critiques* as well, Hamm maintains that – first appearances to the contrary – Kantian judgments of taste do indeed rest on an a priori principle.

Ulisses Razzante Vaccari (Federal University of Santa Catarina, Brazil), in “The A Priori of Poetry: Hölderlin as Kant Reader”, explores poet Friedrich Hölderlin’s (1770-1843) intellectual debts to Kantian aesthetics – in particular by showing that in Hölderlin’s interpretation of modern poetry, the necessity of an a priori principle is clearly present. And at least on this fundamental point, Hölderlin is “following Kant strictly”.

Gualtiero Lorini (currently a Humboldt Research Fellow at the Technical University, Berlin), in “The Practical Purposiveness in the Determination of a Free Will: The Paradoxical Character of Kant’s A Priori”, focuses on Kant’s discussion of practical purposiveness in the second Introduction to the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, arguing that it sheds light on what other commentators have regarded as paradoxical features of Kant’s conception of the a priori.

Cinara Nahra (Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte, Brazil), in “The Purposiveness of Nature, Life, and ‘What Are things in the World There For?’” examines the reflective principle of purposiveness of nature in Kant’s philosophy, showing how and why this teleological principle is yet another example of the a priori in Kant’s philosophy.

Finally, in Part IV (*Filosofia da História, Filosofia do Direito e Filosofia Política/Philosophy of History, Philosophy of Right, and Political Philosophy*), we present five pieces which examine the place of the a priori in Kant’s philosophy of history, philosophy of right, and political philosophy. Joel Thiago Klein (Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte, Brazil), in “The Practical-Regulative Teleology and the Idea of a Universal History in the *Critique of Pure Reason*”, working primarily with Kant’s first *Critique* and his 1784 essay, *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim*, explores the role of what he calls “practical-regulative teleology” in Kant’s philosophy of history. Practical-regulative teleology (unlike its counterpart, theoretical-regulative teleology), is a teleology that exclusively fosters moral ends and does not “take the place of empirical research regarding

the theoretical interest of reason”. When applied to Kant’s philosophy of history, the result is a theory which is “theoretically useless” and does not belong as a part of the philosophy of nature, but only as a part of the philosophy of freedom. Kant’s project of universal history presents an image not of the world as it is but rather of the way it “may be if we act as we should”.

Sandra Zákutná (University of Presov, Slovakia), in “A Priori Principles of Freedom, Equality, and Independence in Kant’s Philosophy of History”, examines the place of a priori principles in Kant’s philosophy of history. She argues that at bottom there are three such principles (freedom, equality, and independence), each of which is operative in the three different areas of public right: *Staatsrecht*, *Völkerrecht*, and *Weltbürgerrecht*.

Marita Rainsborough (University of Hamburg, Germany), in “Theme and Variation: Foucault’s Historical Apriority as Criticism of Kant’s Concept of the A Priori”, focuses on Michel Foucault’s criticism of the Kantian a priori, arguing that in the end his own counter-concept of the historical a priori (which, she suggests, also bears a striking resemblance to Thomas Kuhn’s well-known views about paradigms and paradigm shifts) gives insufficient attention to Kant’s concept of the a priori.

Luigi Caranti (University of Catania, Italy), in “Kant’s A Priori Foundation of Human Rights”, argues that contemporary Kantian as well as anti-Kantian theories of rights have often misidentified the proper foundation of a truly Kantian theory of rights. Caranti sees this proper foundation as lying in the concept of ‘humanity’, which in turn grounds an innate right to external freedom.

Bernd Dörflinger (University of Trier, Germany), in “O ideal do homem político na concepção kantiana do direito das gentes”, examines the role of the a priori primarily in Kant’s famous essay, *Toward Perpetual Peace*. He examines Kant’s contrast between two different types of political thinker – the moral politician and the political moralist – showing how and why the first type is best equipped to help realize the ideal of world peace.

At first, Kant’s philosophy may appear startlingly different when viewed under Brazil’s bright sun (enhanced, perhaps, by a caipirinha and some churrasco or feijoada – or even a café puro with papaya and pão de queijo at café da manhã). But once we regain our bearings and remind ourselves that we are dealing with a philosopher who believes that “the human being was destined

for all climates and for every soil” (VvRM 2: 435) and that our collective destiny lies in “cosmopolitical unity” (Anth 7: 333) – i.e., in the gradual achievement of “a civil society that administers justice universally” (IaG 8: 22-23) – we realize that underneath these intriguing environmental, cultural, and gastronomical differences there is a common bond that unites all human beings. And this, in my view, is also the underlying goal of the Marília Kant Colloquia: to remind us of (and to help us celebrate) our common humanity.²

NOTAS / NOTES

¹ Within this volume, see especially Frederick Rauscher, “Introduction” (1-13) and Daniel Omar Perez and Juan Adolfo Bonaccini, “Two Centuries of Kantian Studies in Brazil” (26-55).

² I would like to thank Bira Rancan for his help and advice on this Introduction.