

## PRESENTATION OF THE SPECIAL ISSUE

### INTERSUBJECTIVITY, ALTERITY AND GENDER IN KANT

#### INTRODUCTION

The examination of intersubjectivity on the epistemological, ethical, aesthetic and political dimensions of Kant's philosophy has been a desideratum of Kantian scholarship. Interpretations focused on these issues are exceedingly diverse and range between the accusation of methodological solipsism (cf. for example, Apel 1973; Habermas 1983, 1988), which assumes the self-sufficiency of reason in pre-communicative separation, and the conceptual interpretation of reason as public reason (cf. Keienburg 2011), which requires communication. An investigation on cognitive otherness, or foreign thought (cf. Simon 2003 for more on this), is required in both theoretical and also practical philosophy, similarly to the way in which judgement in the 'Critique of Judgement' requires the community of taste and the possibility of public aesthetic agreement. So one should ask, in fundamental terms the 'I think' actually a 'We think'? (Cf. Keienburg 2011: 95) In this context, what role does the 'sensus communis' with its theoretical, practical and aesthetic dimensions play?

Moreover, Kant's critical examination of race throughout his career is an indication of his interest in the diversity of humanity, which is, however, interpreted in a normative manner and, as is known, leads to racial hierarchization. This particularization and the denigration of certain 'races' makes Kant's interest in universality and equality appear obsolete. For these reasons, among others, it is important to investigate the issue of human alterity in Kant's philosophy. Kant states: "The opposite of egoism can only be pluralism, that is, the way of thinking in which one is not concerned merely with oneself as the whole world, but rather regards and conducts oneself as a mere citizen of the world." (ApH AA7: 130). When considering differing viewpoints and plurality, do we already denote the other's distinctiveness and otherness, or does the other remain more abstract when viewed from the intra- and intersubjective perspective?

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Furthermore, the contradiction of Kant's gender-polarizing thinking and his view of gender in the context of his concept of enlightenment must also be subjected to a critical analysis.

As demonstrated by the preceding considerations, the main objective of this thematic issue is to inspire a re-evaluation and re-interpretation of Kantian philosophy by placing a special emphasis on intersubjectivity, alterity and gender.

In the first part of the thematic issue, Soledad G. Ferrer, Virginia De Araujo Figueiredo, Joãozinho Beckenkamp, Marita Rainsborough, Ileana Beade, Maria Betania Parodi and Holly Wilson examine the aspects of Kant's writings mentioned above. In the second part, Helga Varden's book 'Sex, Love and Gender: a Kantian theory' (2020) is critically examined using the 'author meets critics' format. Researchers Ann Cahill, Jordan Pascoe and Alice McLaughlin critically appraise Helga Varden's book in their essays, taking their own research positions as the starting point for this. This is followed by Helga Varden's response.

In the first part of the thematic edition Soledad G. Ferrer's essay 'El cisne negro. Amistad y política en Kant' investigates the characteristics of friendship in Kantian texts. Her aim is to discover in what sense the theory of friendship – building on Derrida in this regard – combines the key characteristics of ethics and politics, specifying both "the topos and also the tropes of both fields".

Following this, Virginia De Araujo Figueiredo explores the link between universalism and particularism in Kant's work as regards the question of human diversity in her text 'Efeitos do universal a partir da Estética de Kant'. She defends the validity of the Kantian concern to integrate the 'critique of judgement' into the transcendental critical system vis-à-vis Meg Armstrong's theories in the essay "The Effects of Blackness: Gender, Race, and the Sublime in Aesthetic Theories of Burke and Kant" (1996). When doing so, De Araujo Figueiredo's critique attempts to make a strong argument for the importance of Kant's universalism and what she terms 'perspectivism' in his radically revised attitudes, without rejecting Armstrong's criticism of how race and gender are addressed in Kant's aesthetic theory.

In his essay 'Ensaio de fundamentação do direito à diferença a partir da filosofia moral kantiana' Joãozinho Beckenkamp argues that Kant provides a solid foundation for the right to be different, namely through his deduction of every individual's permission to have free will and to decide for everything which does not harm the free will of another. Conversely, this brings with it the moral necessity that everyone else respects such a decision. Kant's moral philosophy thus provides a possible way of dealing with various forms of alterity in ethical-moral viewpoints.

Marita Rainsborough's text 'Intersubjectivity and alterity in the works of Kant' explores the question of the epistemic, ethical, aesthetic and political dimensions of intersubjectivity and alterity. She determines that Kantian theories such as 'pluralism', 'enlarged thinking', 'unsocial sociability', 'public', 'world public', 'sensus communis', 'publicity' and 'hospitality' and also epistemic, ethical and aesthetic basic assumptions provide fundamental starting points to understand Kant's aspects of intersubjectivity and alterity, whereby the intrasubjective must be considered as being linked to the intersubjective dimension. In Kant's world intersubjectivity

remains inter-subjectivity. It becomes clear that although Kant does justice to the otherness of the other in terms of approach, he does not, however, do so in his statements, which are often evaluative. One must therefore join Kant in thinking beyond Kant.

Ileana Beade's essay 'La cuestión del género en las Observaciones sobre el sentimiento de lo bello y lo sublime de Immanuel Kant. Un análisis desde la perspectiva (no filosófica) del observador' discusses the consequences of taking the observer position when exploring gender differences in Kant's text *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* and how this perspective differs from that of the philosopher. Taking her analysis as a starting point, Beade demonstrates the range and limits of Kant's position on the female nature and women's role in civic and political life.

In her essay 'Kant y el problema de las mujeres: una revisión feminista de las posibilidades de su inclusión cívica' María Betania Parodi examines the possibility of reconciling Kant's juridical-political thinking with a feminist perspective on female emancipation. Kant argues that women's inability to act according to principles of reason justifies their political or civic inferiority; an untenable position which Parodi wishes to overcome without calling Kantian philosophy in general into question.

Holly Wilson defends Kant against the accusation of 'sexism' in her essay 'Kant's Approach to Alterity and Women', categorising his writings on gender as popular philosophy and a layman's attempt to carry out empirical science, whereby he advocates traditional gender norms for men and women. Nevertheless, Kant does not dispute women's moral ability to act *per se*. His statements regarding female scholars and his treatment of Maria von Herbert are illustrations of his *gender policing* of women in particular. Wilson comes to the conclusion that Kant's experience with Maria von Herbert indicates that an individual's dignity lies neither in conforming to gender norms nor in submitting to moral law, but rathermore in working outside the home and gaining a meaningful identity.

Maria Borges analyses Kant's conception of the female gender by starting from the distinction between the beautiful and the sublime. She shows that the beautiful morality is based on moral feelings and implies an inability to act according to principles. The feminine virtues can be associated with the promotion of culture and social refinement. Finally, she will show in what sense the sensible morality that Kant attributes to women can be found in contemporary feminist philosophy, especially in the ethics of care.

The second part of this thematic edition of *Estudos Kantianos*, 'Author meets critics', on Helga Varden's book 'Sex, Love, and Gender: a Kantian theory' (2020) begins with a short introduction by Marita Rainsborough, followed by Ann Cahill's essay 'Vital Forces, Selves, and Consent: Responding to a Philosophical Love Letter', in which she criticises Helga Varden's characterisation of "postmodern approaches to sexual orientation and identity" and the asserted equation of social construction and reality. Cahill also argues against Varden's principle of 'consent' as a legal category to define what constitutes a sexual attack. This essay is followed by the text 'Friendship, Love, and Family: Comments on Sex, Love, and Gender by Helga Varden' by Alice McLaughlin, in which the author reflects critically on the obligation to be truthful in

the context of sexual identity; the absence of family and the consequences of abusive language. Jordan Pascoe continues the critical examination of Helga Varden's book with her essay 'On Being at Home in Ourselves and the World: Love, Sex, Gender, and Justice'. The author discusses to the extent to which Varden's analysis provides urgently needed resources to enable consideration of how taking a self-defensive position when confronted with oppression can violate our obligations to resist our own suppression. Following this, Pascoe turns her attention to two aspects of Varden's representation of a just state, which she considers to be problematic. Firstly, Varden's understanding of sexual consent and, secondly, her defence of the state's right to restrict abortions. Helga Varden's response, 'Responding to Ann Cahill, Alice MacLachlan, and Jordan Pascoe', which concludes this part of the thematic edition, addresses the authors' criticisms. When doing so, Varden focuses in particular on the topics of abortion; consent; family; human nature; sexual, gender and philosophical identities; the correspondence between Kant and Maria von Herbert; and the complexity of various forms of oppression.

The editing team of this thematic edition of *Estudos Kantianos* wishes all readers productive reading. We look forward to further articles on this topic in future editions of *Estudos Kantianos*, as the investigation of these aspects of Kant's philosophy is by no means over.

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