

The Making of a Thought in the Flow of History

Manuel Fiori

Kant verstehen, heiße hinter ihn zurückgehen

Lothar Kreimendhal¹

This monographic issue of «dianoia» comes out on the third centenary of Immanuel Kant's birth. To commemorate the author of the *Critiques*, we have chosen to focus on the relationship between Kantian philosophy and its sources, taking a stand in a *querelle* that has been vividly developing in recent decades.

The importance of the study of sources, and, more generally, of Kant's relationship to the authors and debates of his time, in order to understand his work, has long been questioned within the *Kantforschung*. As asserted in a recent study by Andree Hahmann and Stefan Klingner, especially in the Anglo-American tradition, the «dogma» that «Kant's philosophy should be understood solely from within itself»² – regardless of the cultural context in which it developed – was strongly established. Related to this, in particular, was the idea (or, should we say, the prejudice) that the influence of contemporary thinkers would be essentially irrelevant or at any rate negligible, to the point that none of Kant's albeit numerous and prolific interlocutors could have given a veritable contribution to the extraordinarily innovative enterprise of Critical philosophy.

As Corey Dyck and Falk Wunderlich point out, the heavy underestimation of the post-Leibnizian German philosophical tradition is traceable, at least in part, to the Hegelian interpretation of Wolffism (in his *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie* Hegel considers Wolff's philosophy as a mere «systematizing of Leibniz»³). Another reason given by the scholars, with reference to the uniqueness of

¹ Lothar Kreimendahl, *Kant – Der Durchbruch von 1769*, Dinter, Köln 1990, p. 266.

² Andree Hahmann, Stefan Klingner, *Kant in the Context of Eighteenth-Century German Philosophy: Some Preliminary Reflections*, in Id., *Kant and Eighteenth-Century German Philosophy: Contexts, Influences and Controversies*, De Gruyter, Berlin-Boston 2023, pp. 1-9: p. 2.

³ Robert F. Brown (ed.), *Hegel: Lectures on the History of Philosophy (1825-6)*, Vol. 3: *Medieval and Modern Philosophy*, University of California Press, Berkeley-Los Angeles 1990, p. 198.