



<http://doi.org/10.23925/1764-0892.2021.v1.n2.e60697>

## REVIEW

### **GABRIEL, GOTTFRIED. *KANT: EINE KURZE EINFÜHRUNG IN DAS GESAMTWERK.* PADERBORN: BRILL SCHÖNINGH, 2022. <sup>1</sup>**

BRUNO BUENO POLI

*Master's Student - PUC-SP - Brazil*

*brunopolibueno@gmail.com*

Gottfried Gabriel's concise introductory book aims, in his own words in the preface, "to offer a clear and at the same time problem-oriented presentation of Kant's philosophy with a view to the architectonics of the complete work" (p. 9). To this end, the book is divided into twenty-one short chapters, which offer an overall picture of Kant's philosophy, ranging from the central themes of epistemology, ethics, and aesthetics to the more peripheral ones of his

---

<sup>1</sup> A presente resenha contou com o apoio da FAPESP (processo nº 2021/01185-0)

philosophy of religion and philosophy of history. Despite this comprehensiveness, Gabriel's presentation revolves especially around the three critiques (*Critique of Pure Reason* [KrV], *Critique of Practical Reason* [KpV], and *Critique of the Power of Judgment* [KdU]) and how they integrate with each other. The large number of other Kantian works cited throughout the book – pre-critical or otherwise – are mainly, although not exclusively, mentioned in reference to the critiques and the system they encompass. Our purpose is to offer a descriptive analysis of the book, focusing on the main doctrines of Kant – we will thus omit many of the standard comments regarding the connection of Kant to the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Chapters 1 and 2 focus on Kant's biographical information and pre-critical work, showing some of its developments and central themes. Gabriel seeks to counter from the beginning "the common preconceptions about Kant's 'philosophy of reason'" (p. 13), namely, that his philosophy supposedly underplays the role of experience in general. In reference especially to the works of the 1760s', he shows that this is not the case, and that experience was regarded from this moment on to be indispensable for the formation of reason (p. 16).

Chapters 3 and 4 can be seen as prefatory to the book's exposition of the three critiques. Gabriel begins by noting two structural features that accompany all three works. First, each deals with a "central theme of philosophy", the true, the good, and the beautiful. These are not taken as objects, as in the Platonic tradition, but are connected to judgments and independent faculties of the soul, thus resulting in knowledge judgments (understanding), moral judgments (will), and aesthetic judgments (feeling) (p. 28). Since, as he stresses, philosophy is for the critical Kant a reflection about the validity (*Geltung*) of these judgments, and not their genesis (*Genese*) (p. 26), what we might expect from the three critiques is a reflection about the main *a priori* principles of the three faculties, and not their empirical properties – the latter belonging to the *Anthropology*, Kant's version of empirical psychology. Second, he states that their structure follows the division of general logic in the doctrine of elements (concepts, judgments, and inferences)

and doctrine of method (p. 27), even if in some cases this proves to be artificial. Accordingly, his presentation of the three critiques also follows this structure.

Chapter 5 deals with Kant's concept of metaphysics and the main problem of the first critique. In general, metaphysics is the discipline of knowledge that goes beyond experience. But, in the rationalist tradition, Wolff divided it into *metaphysica specialis* and *metaphysica generalis* (ontology), the former being further split into *rational* psychology, cosmology, and theology. These disciplines dealt with particular objects, respectively, the immortality of the soul, freedom, and God's existence, and claimed to prove them independent of experience, that is, "rationally" (p. 34). Kant affirms, on the one hand, that the claims of rationalist metaphysics are obscure and contradictory, and thus metaphysics is yet to be a science, and, on the other hand, that these claims are unavoidable for us rational human beings, i.e., we have a natural disposition towards it. In virtue of this particular status, the main *problem* of the first critique is the examination of the possibility of metaphysics as a science (p. 36). We thus see an instance of the "problem-oriented" approach mentioned in the preface.

Chapter 6 addresses Kant's analysis of theory of knowledge. Rationalist metaphysics claims knowledge as other sciences like mathematics and physics. For Kant, knowledge is propositional knowledge, that is, a claim to truth, and the bearer of truth is judgment (p. 37). Judgment, in its turn, has the traditional form "S is P". Within this framework Gabriel explains the distinctions between analytic and synthetic judgments, *a priori* and *a posteriori* – an epistemological (*Geltung's* relative) and not genetic-temporal (*Genese's* relative) distinction–, and why the formulation of synthetic *a priori* judgments constitutes a philosophical novelty (p. 41). According to Kant's view, metaphysics, as well as mathematics (Euclidian geometry and arithmetic) and (Newtonian) physics knowledge claims are synthetic *a priori*, because their truth cannot be known through conceptual analysis (they are not analytical, grounded on the principle of contradiction) nor can they be grounded in experience (they are not synthetic *a posteriori*). But what distinguishes the knowledge claims of both the latter sciences from the former is their recourse to and foundation on the *a priori* intuitions of space and time,

something which Gabriel shows by selecting judgments of each and analyzing them ("5+7=12", "causal law" etc.) (p. 43-5). This is why synthetic *a priori* judgments are possible in mathematics and physics, but not in metaphysics.

*A priori* intuitions, in turn, depend on the distinction between phenomena and the thing in itself. Kant argues that if space-time data were related to things in themselves, there would be no *a priori* intuition, thus, since they are employed in mathematics and physics, they must be related to phenomena. Space and time hence are *a priori* forms of phenomena, of our sensible perception of objects (p. 46). As Gabriel stresses, from a strict epistemological point of view, Kant could have halted his analysis of the dependence of mathematics and physics on *a priori* intuitions. That he goes further, relating it to the thing in itself-phenomena distinction shows that his theory of knowledge is a means to an end, namely, to his practical philosophy, in which the distinction plays a central role (p. 37, 47).

Chapters 7 and 8 deal with, respectively, the nature and structure of logic, as presented in the Jäsche Logic, and in the *KrV*. The intent here is to show the overlap of their structures in accordance with the claims of chapter 4. Kant divides logic into the doctrine of elements and method: the former deals with the doctrine of concepts, judgments and inferences, and the latter with how those pieces cohere in science (p. 48). The *KrV* is likewise so divided, the difference being the addition of Transcendental Aesthetics inside the doctrine of elements (p. 56). Besides the structural coincidence, some of the first critique's content also has its starting point in logic. Logic is a *normative* science of the necessary laws of thinking, i.e., it has nothing to do with psychology, and it is *formal*, i.e., it has nothing to do with the material truth of knowledge claims (p. 49). Since it is normative, one cannot think or judge contradicting it, but since it is formal, it is not sufficient to guarantee the material truth of judgments. Thus, *formal* or *general* logic has to be complemented by *epistemological* (transcendental) logic, whose primary goal is to investigate the *a priori* foundation of knowledge of experience (objects). This complementarity is seen when Kant derives the latter's *categories* of understanding, which are concepts that, applied to the sensible intuitions of

space and time, constitute experience, from the former's table of judgments (p. 57).

The distinction between intuition and concept having been introduced, chapter 9 considers the correlated distinction between sensibility (faculty of intuitions) and understanding (faculty of concepts) as two different sources of knowledge. Gabriel first stresses how this division drives Kant away from both the empiricist and the rationalist traditions, for which there was a continuity between these faculties (p. 60). By contrast, they are different in nature but complementary to Kant: they work together to produce knowledge. The ground of their difference is to be sought in space and time, which, being a form of our sensible intuitions, confers a different structure to its representations. Intuitions are in accordance with the part-whole logic, while the concepts of the understanding are in accordance with the logic of superordination and subordination of concepts (p. 61-3). Because of this difference, there is no perfect correspondence between the structure of logic and the structure of the *KrV* mentioned in chapter 8.

Chapter 10 deals with the Transcendental Dialectic. To it corresponds the doctrine of inferences; however, not of *valid* inferences, since these are only formal in nature, and hence dealt with by general logic (they are not within the scope of *transcendental* logic), but of *fallacious* inferences (p. 64). Gabriel begins by explicating what is a syllogism and how from prosyllogism (the connection between syllogisms) Reason goes from particular conditioned judgments to always more general ones, conceiving the series thus formed as complete, and itself unconditioned. Applied to the metaphysical domains of rational psychology, cosmology, and theology, Reason *naturally* develops three types of fallacious inferences (paralogisms, antinomies, and the ideal of pure reason), which respectively give rise to the Ideas of the soul, world, and God (p. 67). In accordance with the propositional conception of truth, Kant denies them any epistemic value because they do not correspond to any intuition. Their only legitimate use is regulative or heuristic, to organize science (p. 71). The fallacy that especially concerns Kant is the third antinomy because the possibility of

freedom depends on its resolution. Its prosyllogisms deal with causes and their conditions: either causal explanations lead to an uncaused cause, and hence freedom, the initiation of something by itself, is possible, or it leads, in accordance with the principle of causality, to an unbroken chain of causes *ad infinitum*, and hence there is no freedom. Kant resolves it by stating that the former one is valid for the thing in itself and the latter for phenomena (p. 73).

Chapter 11 concerns the Doctrine of Method. Gabriel's main preoccupation, however, is with the status of philosophical knowledge in the *KrV* – which relates to the later discussion of Kantian aesthetics. Kant states that philosophical knowledge is “rational cognition from concepts”. Now, if knowledge, in general, involves concepts and intuitions, and philosophical concepts do not relate to the latter, how are they to count as knowledge? The judgments of the *KrV* itself would not be such (p. 77). That, however, is not the case, because this criterion is only applied to knowledge of objects, and hence does not hold for philosophy. But then what type of judgments are those of philosophy? Not referring directly to objects, *KrV*'s propositions cannot be synthetic; but neither can they be analytical in the Kantian sense, because they are of a second-order investigation (reflection about the sciences), and so, says Gabriel, extend knowledge. Its meta-judgments thus must be of a second analytical type: conceptual in nature, not realizable in intuition, but also expansive knowledge-wise (p. 78). This approximates it to the Ideas mentioned in chapter 10 insofar as both are conceptual and not realizable in intuition. Hence, for both emerges the problem of their cognitive value. Relating philosophical judgments to what Kant says about the Ideas of Reason in the *KdU*, that they can be sensualized and *indirectly* intuited through images, parables, and metaphors, Gabriel claims that Kant concedes cognitive value to figurative expressions and suggests that this could be applied to philosophy (p. 79).

Chapters 12 and 13 begin the presentation of Kantian ethics. Gabriel, in accordance with his overall exposition strategy, starts introducing the overlap of *KpV*'s structure with that of logic. Here, however, the Transcendental Aesthetic is dropped and there is an inversion of order inside the doctrine of elements: the

doctrine of principles (judgments) comes before the one of concepts. That is because, for Kant, the moral law antecedes and determines the concept of good, and not the other way around (p. 81). In line with that, Kant's ethics is deontological, it offers, through the categorical imperative, a formal, universal, and prescriptive assessment standard according to which individual cases are to be examined (p. 84). Thus, Kantian ethics is neither grounded in happiness (eudemonic) nor in love nor in God (Christian) nor in the consequences of an action (utilitarianism), but rather on *duty*, and the good becomes the will acting according to reason's universal moral grounds (p. 91). Consonant with that and the issue over Kant's "philosophy of reason" posed in chapter 1, Gabriel puts forward the question about Kant's rigorism and the role of sentiments in moral action. Although Kant concedes little room for love, he endorses the view that some sentiments like guilt and sympathy can act as *motivations* for moral action (p. 88). Nonetheless, they cannot *ground* it, only reason can, which explains why there is no Transcendental Aesthetics in the *KpV* (p. 81). Gabriel ends the chapter by analyzing Kant's takes on the dignity of human beings, marriage, and racism.

Chapters 14 and 15 deal with the doctrine of the will and the postulates of reason, both of which are connected to the thing in itself-phenomena distinction. Grounded on duty, Kant's ethics demands, for it to be satisfied, that there be freedom, which consists, on the one hand, of the capacity to do what one should (and not what one will), and, on the other, in freedom from sensual impulses. Thus, from the point of view of the recognition (*Genese, ratio cognoscendi*) that one *should*, one derives that one *can*, and from the point of view of the foundation of ethics (*Geltung, ratio essendi*), *freedom* is the necessary presupposition of the *moral law* (p. 96). That was why it was so important for Kant to resolve the third antinomy and guarantee *at least* the possibility of freedom through the distinction between the thing in itself and phenomena. Now, freedom was one of the metaphysical objects that theoretical reason tried to know and was not able to do because no intuition or object corresponded to it. That was valid for knowledge. Ethics, on the other hand, deals with moral judgments, which are not about objects, and in this sense not factual, but rather normative about actions; thus,

what reason could not deal with alone in its theoretical side it can in the practical one (p. 97). Hence, rationalist metaphysical claims, natural to us as disposition, that were groundless in theoretical philosophy can reclaim their validity in practical philosophy (p. 98). This is what was indicated by saying that Kant's theory of knowledge is a mean to an end: the metaphysics of morals. Therefore, one can understand why Kant says that there is a "primacy of practical reason", that freedom is the "keystone" to his philosophical system, and why Mendelssohn errs when he says that Kant is "the all-destroyer" of metaphysics, as Gabriel had noted in chapter 6 (p. 42).

Kant remained with showing the general possibility of freedom in the *KrV*. In the *KpV*, however, he displays the reality or effectiveness of the freedom of the will, which consists in the possibility of practical reason to determine an action through reasons (p. 99). Since what determines the will, in this case, are precisely reasons and not causes, the action will not be, from this point of view, part of the natural world, but of the intelligible one of things in themselves – one can, nonetheless, describe it, from another point of view, as determined by causes and hence also as a member of the natural world of phenomena (p. 100). Besides freedom, the other objects of rationalist metaphysics turn into postulates of practical reason and are used to resolve the antinomy between virtue and happiness, which in the phenomenal world do not coincide. The *hope* in their coincidence is a postulate of practical reason, and God and the immortality of the soul are its necessary presuppositions – they are objects of faith (p. 103). The chapter ends by noting the central importance of the thing in itself-phenomena distinction in Kant's philosophy.

Chapter 16 introduces *KdU*'s structure. It is divided into the *Critique of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment* and the *Critique of the Teleological Power of Judgment*. Common to both is that they deal with the concept of purposiveness and that they are divided, as the other Critiques, into Analytic, Dialectic, and Doctrine of Method. In this case, however, Gabriel notes that the division is artificial and that the *KdU* was not in Kant's long-term plan, since he considered at first aesthetic judgments to be empirical, thus not within the realm of philosophical



investigation, and he thought physics did not admit any sort of *telos* (p. 105). This is later developed by showing that the table of judgments in the Analytic of the *Critique of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment* is correlated to the one of the *KrV*, although it does not fit well (p. 112).

Chapter 17 deals with Kant's aesthetics. It is worth pointing out that this is the only chapter in the book further divided into two parts: one concerning aesthetic *judgments* (17.1), and another concerning aesthetic *knowledge* (17.2). Whereas in the first Gabriel's purpose is descriptive of Kant's theory, in the second his interests are systematic. The *Critique of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment* deals with aesthetic judgments, which are associated with the feeling of pleasure and displeasure and divided into judgments of taste (beautiful) and sublime. As was the case with moral judgments, none of them are about the objects that generate these feelings, but rather about the feelings themselves, thus making them subjective (p. 111). One can comprehend its subjectiveness through the notion of aesthetic Ideas: produced by the imagination, these are representations that are combined with a multitude of other partial representations and cannot be designated by a distinct concept – they are a kind of condensed and inexhaustible representation, as, for example, were the *perceptio praegnans* of Baumgarten (p. 117). Not capable of being entirely conceptualized, they cannot claim knowledge – we thus have here the opposite of the situation of Ideas of Reason and philosophical knowledge. Therefore, Kant denies them cognitive value (p. 116). Despite this explicit denial, Gabriel says that if one rejects the propositional conception of knowledge, one can say that the cognitive value of aesthetic Ideas consists in the condensation of many representations on the grounds of analogy, creating possible connections that were not known before – the opposite of logical analysis, in which one decomposes the concept in its characteristic marks. Thus, art could have cognitive value (p. 118, 135).

The former chapters constitute the gist of the book and of Kant's system. Chapter 18 deals with *KdU*'s second part, the one concerning teleology, in which Kant uses purposiveness as a regulative principle to account for organic nature (biology). Chapters 19, 20, and 21 deal with Kant's philosophy of religion and

history, contextualizing them at the moment they were written and establishing the appropriate connections with Kant's ethics.

Gabriel's book is enlightening in regard Kant's theories and how they are interconnected. Although we have decided to omit them, the text is also rich in references both to the pre-critical period, especially in its coincidences with the critical one, for example in the rejection of the mathematical method, the claim that existence is not a predicate and the conception of philosophy as a metalanguage, and to authors of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, e.g., Herbart, Frege, Wittgenstein, etc. The approach of the former conveys to the reader the importance of these texts to Kant's *corpus*, showing that they are not negligible, and the latter gives to the reader an initial knowledge of the reception of Kant and later developments and critiques directed at him. But because of this, coupled with the book's comprehensiveness and the systematic points Gabriel tries to advance, one cannot say that the book should be recommended to the absolute beginner in philosophy. Despite being an introduction, if one does not have *some* knowledge of the history of philosophy and perhaps even of Kant's doctrines, chances are that the reading will be difficult. The book is thus best recommended to those undergraduate and graduate students who have some previous knowledge of both. It might even be of help to professors in their assigned courses because the panoramic but concise view offered can aid in making accurate connections between the elements of Kant's system.

[Received: 26 January 2023. Editorial decision: 10 February 2023]