Kant Studies in Brazil

How do you analyze the present situation of Kant studies in Brazil?

Kant studies are passing through a transition. They certainly are a major field of philosophical investigation in Brazil and will continue to be. A very good picture of the kind of work we are doing can be found in a volume edited by Fred Rauscher and Daniel Perez, *Kant in Brazil*, published in 2012 by the University of Rochester, in a series of the North American Kant Society. But from a kind more scholarly perspective, centered mainly on internal aspects of Kant’s philosophy, i.e., internal consistency, apparent contradictions and so on, Kantians so to speak are more open to discuss real problems – which happen to be also philosophical ones. Thus, the idea is not only to understand a bunch of a priori concepts and to try to make sense of them, but to orient us in a world that is at the same time meaningful but also senseless. Especially in terms of the analysis of Kant’s practical philosophy we were always open to our own historical experience, our historical situation.

The work of Ricardo Terra, *A Política Tensa*, is probably the best example I can provide. Written during the period of our transition from dictatorship to democracy, the book tries to understand Kant’s political philosophy pointing to the centrality of the concept of transition (Übergang) and how this concept helps to workout the tension between the ideal and the real, the normative and the empirical, etc. Of course, Kant was just a pretext to understand what could be a political reason or a politics in the limits of reason alone. This kind of work will definitely keep going. For sure, the works of Rawls and Habermas gave a considerable impulse on Kant studies, and both, especially Habermas, called for a sort of joint venture between philosophy and law.

In your opinion, how will the situation likely evolve over the next five years?

I really think – and hope – that this rawlsian and habermasian tone will be left behind in the following years. Both Rawls and Habermas are more Kantians than Kant himself. Maybe Habermas less, but anyway too Kantian. Both stress too much on the idea of construction – or reconstruction in the case of Habermas. The idea for the future would be to refer to a Kant less worried with a transcendental deduction and more focused on schematism and amphiboly - so to speak, a more realistic Kant. But this realism cannot be in the form of a naturalism or neuroscience, neuroethics. This is a way of doing philosophy and reading Kant, that will probably dominate the scenario for the next ten years.
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I think that we should be moving into different direction, away from naturalism. The idea to try to understand Kant’s demands for the unconditional as natural makes no sense to me, and this comes from the American philosophical tradition, i.e., from a Sidgwickian perspective of ethics and philosophy. Now, it makes much more sense to understand Kant’s demand for the unconditional and as a demand for expanding the limits of our thoughts and action, but recognizing, at the same time, our very conditional character. We can have pure function, but whenever this functions come to concepts, even practical concepts, they always come under particular circumstances, i.e., forms come always with matter, and so on. So the that Kant’s practical reason delivers us concepts and norm without any presence of historical experience is not Kant’s own understanding of rationality.

What are the structural long-term perspectives?

Looking at the Brazilian philosophical scenario, Kant studies are definitely the most important field of research – at least in terms of the number of people working on it. And this should not change in the short or medium term. I think that new joint ventures should take place, with political science and sociology. But all of this is very unpredictable, specially if we have in view the enormous change in our university system. In the last 10 years our university system has grown in a very important number, after year of stagnation. In 2000 we had about 15 graduate courses in philosophy, while now we have about 35. In the past, all our philosophical research was concentrated in São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Minas Gerais and Rio Grande do Sul. Of course these places are still the most important ones, but now our research is much more spread out. However, the University of São Paulo will keep its leadership.

Another very important point is our internationalization. Since 2005, when we had the X International Kant Congress, the Brazilian Kant community has made an important number of academic agreements and exchange with Italians, Spaniards, North Americans, and of course with Germans and French. But this is not something particular to Kant Studies; it is a general movement of the Brazilian research community. One thing I know for sure: if you are looking for a place to work with academic research (not only in Kant, not only in Philosophy), Brazil is a great place, a place in a great moment.

**Daniel Peres** is Professor of Philosophy at the Universidade Federal da Bahia in Salvador da Bahia, Brazil.
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