

International Conference

Kant and Cassirer

Legacy – Interpretation – Frontiers

Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz

Thursday 22/Friday 23_September 2022

Organization: Dr. Luigi Filieri, Prof. Dr. Konstantin Pollok

Local staff: Dr. Margit Ruffing, Lucia Volontè, MA.

Conference aims and themes

The topic of this conference is a philosophical and comparative reevaluation of central aspects of Immanuel Kant and Ernst Cassirer's philosophical systems. Bringing together leading scholars who share the relevant expertise in both Kant and Cassirer studies will foster a philosophical discourse at a number of yet unexplored hermeneutic frontiers: from the status and consistency of our cognitive means to their relationship with the positive sciences, from the nature and value of moral agency to the political and institutional challenges of the contemporary world, from the dialectic between knowledge and morality to the need of a comprehensive perspective on the whole of human practices. This conference aims to restore and revive a dialogue that has been far too long left pending and thus deprived of the attention it deserves.

The research interests of the conference revolve along three main axes.

1) Kant's legacy and its presence and role in Cassirer's philosophy. Kant is undoubtedly one of the most discussed authors in the contemporary philosophical landscape, yet his contribution to the philosophical account of culture developed in the 20th century has been acknowledged and discussed only peripherally. The conference aims to fill this gap by examining the legacy of critical philosophy and its driving force within a different system that redefined and moved the domains of reason (i.e., nature and freedom) into a unified domain of cultural life.

2) Cassirer's interpretation, appropriation and development of Kant's critique of reason. The fact that Cassirer is the best known and most important exponent of Neo-Kantianism has often been taken as a mere historiographical remark. Far less attention has been paid to the fact that Cassirer appropriated Kant's transcendental method in order to generate original results. Moreover, Cassirer's appropriation is peculiar, for it is also a hybridization of Kant's method with at least two other idealistic standpoints: Hegel and Goethe. From a third perspective, Cassirer succeeded in productively intertwining Kant's philosophy and scientific disciplines such as linguistics and physics. His dealing with the work of W. v Humboldt and A. Einstein is as unprecedented as unduly ignored by commentators. The conference will provide a specific soil to cultivate these dialogues and reaffirming the importance of Cassirer's innovations starting from Kant's philosophy.

3) A philosophical confrontation between two figures bound by a very peculiar *Leitfaden*: the idea that our rational capacities shape the world we live in and that this shaping brings about a moral standpoint. In the recent past, Cassirer's philosophy has been meritoriously brought back to the center of a number of philosophical inquiries concerning art, cognition, science and even politics. The width of Cassirer's philosophical horizon almost matches

with Kant's. Yet we currently face a quite paradoxical interpretive situation: two giants who both dealt with basically any ramification of philosophical inquiry and provided us with views of epochal significance are subjects to almost no critical comparison. The conference aims to establish, feed and foster a theoretical dialogue between Kant and Cassirer in order to highlight points of convergence and divergence. However, the idea is not just to compare two different views on a given theme (say, art or science). Rather, the conference aims to discuss two different ways of unifying some of the most fundamental human rational and practical interests, i.e., to display two different views on the constitutively human necessity to let knowledge and morality (theoretical and practical reason) interact on the very same field of experience – as they sprout from a common root and belong to a single philosophical system.

In effect, this international conference is meant to provide a new incentive for further studies in the legacy, interpretation, and new frontiers of the relationship between the philosophical systems of Kant and Cassirer, not only in terms of a revival of Cassirer's philosophy of culture but also, and more importantly, in a complementary way, by bringing contemporary Kant scholarship in dialogue with one of the most committed, albeit unfairly neglected, interpreter and innovator of critical philosophy.

Keynote speakers:

Sebastian Luft (Marquette University)

Samantha Matherne (Harvard University)

Anne Pollok (Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz)

Ursula Renz (Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz)

Conference plan

Thursday 22	Friday 23
Inaugural Address	<u>Keynote 3:</u> Anne Pollok (Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz)
<u>Keynote 1:</u> Sebastian Luft (Marquette University)	Discussion
Discussion	Pause
Pause	Speaker 5
Speaker 1	Speaker 6
Speaker 2	Discussion
Discussion	Lunch
Lunch	<u>Keynote 4:</u> Samantha Matherne (Harvard University)
<u>Keynote 2:</u> Ursula Renz (Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz)	Discussion
Discussion	Pause
Pause	Speaker 7
Speaker 3	Speaker 8:

	Luigi Filieri (Johannes Gutenberg- Universität Mainz)
Speaker 4: Konstantin Pollok (Johannes Gutenberg- Universität Mainz)	Discussion
Discussion	Closing Remarks
Dinner	Conference Dinner