

Aisthesis



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Foreword

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As it is well-known, despite the vast amount of Kantian literature, Kant's *Physical Geography* remains perhaps the least studied branch of his thought. It is only thanks to the volume edited by Stuart Elden and Eduardo Mendieta in 2011 and the publication of Kant's *Vorlesungen über Physische Geographie* by Werner Stark in the volume XXVI of the Akademie-Ausgabe that any significant attention has been given to this area of Kant's thought over the last years. Stark's edition of the *Geographie Vorlesungen* did indeed provide the necessary philological tools to reconstruct what we might call "Kant's Geography". The volume by Elden and Mendieta established an initial framework for the theoretical research.

In celebration of the 300th anniversary of Kant's birth, we decided to dedicate this issue of *Aisthesis* to a closer examination of this framework. The presence of geographical metaphors and, more generally, of an entire geographical

terminology was taken as a perspective from which to pose a twofold question concerning criticism as a whole. Namely, what is the relationship between the transcendental and the empirical? *To what extent* is the latter – the most effective, *concrete* reality – “constituted” by the former?

As a part of the knowledge that Kant calls *Welterkenntnis* (“knowledge of the world”), physical geography constitutes a distinctive setting for addressing such questions. On the one hand it represents the form of access to reality that unfolds its historical, pragmatic and effective dimension. As Kant puts it, the object of geography is the *Schauplatz*, «the stage on which the play of our ability is performed». On the other hand, however, the very name “*Welterkenntnis*” defines such a stage, such a *theatre of human actions as the world*. This definition inevitably involves the question concerning the relationship between such a “knowledge of the world” and the transcendental analysis. Indeed, what is the relationship between geography as *Welterkenntnis*, and philosophy as *Weltweisheit*?

From the ‘empirical’ point of view, the connection between physical geography and the transcendental critique of reason (and its cosmic dimension) is evident, since geography presupposes a plan or idea (the very idea of reason), on the basis of which our experiences must be organised. We can observe the same link from the ‘rational’ point of view, if we consider the ‘cartographic matrix’ of the critical instance. The critique of pure reason, in fact, does not merely project ideas and vanishing points, but proceeds by tables, establishes boundaries, indicates borders, marks territories and domains.

The four sections of this issue of Aisthesis attempt to illustrate the connection between geography and transcendental philosophy within Kant’s thought, starting with the question of geography. Secondly, the issue examines the ‘cartographic matrix’ of the critique, the space of reason and, finally, the analysis of the role and position of the subject in that space.

The first section of the issue – *Introduction to Kant’s Geography* – opens with an Italian translation of the *Introduction* and *Preliminary Mathematical Concepts* from Rink’s edition of *Physical Geography*. The decision to translate this ‘Kantian Geography’ was dictated by the intention to provide the Italian reader with at least one example of Kant’s approach to the problem of geography.

Despite the reprint published by Farinelli in 2004, the Italian translation of the Vollmer edition produced by Eckerling between 1807 and 1811 is not only too difficult to find, but also rather obsolete. Consequently, we decided to translate the Prolegomena into the Rink edition in order to provide a minimum textual basis in Italian for the study of Kant’s geography. In making this choice, we have considered two factors: on a theoretical level, the comparison between the *Geographie Vorlesungen* and the Rink edition shows that the first

sections of the latter answer a genuinely Kantian problem; on a philological level, such a comparison is unavoidable, since we do not possess a text written by Kant. In his article, Antonio Branca, as translator, addresses both issues, providing an account of the *Introduction* and *Preliminary Mathematical Concepts*, as well as a theoretical problematization of Kant's geography in relation to the Critique and the *Opus postumum*.

The second section – *Geography, Cartography* – then addresses the cartographic matrix of Kant's discourse. Franco Farinelli provides fundamental insights into this 'matrix', offering not only a historical contextualisation of Kant's Geography within the geographical revolution of the 18th century, but also a further problematization of the relationship between cartographic representation of the world and criticism. Tommaso Morawski pursues a similar line of investigation, focusing on the cartographic imaginary of the European Enlightenment and the role of the cartographic representation of the Earth in the construction of planetary space. Two fundamental issues emerge in his article. The first question concerns the representation of the globe, while the second concerns the role played by cartographic pictures within the transcendental instance. The former is the subject of Anna Enström's essay, which uses the analysis of the connection between the spherical form of the Earth (as well as pure reason) and the bodily situation of the subject to demonstrate – even against Kant – that the critical concept of the sphere can serve as a potential alternative to colonial models of thought. The second issue emerged from Morawski's analysis constitutes, instead, the core of Francesco Valagussa's effort to reread the transcendental constitution of experience through the cartographic lens, using the interdependence between map, territory and mind to provide a theoretical account of the dynamic through which reason shapes reality, yet is itself in turn re-shaped by it.

The third section of the issue – *Spaces of Reason* – deals with the analysis of this dynamic. Comparing Kant and Bergson, and responding to the latter's criticism of the former, Alessandra Campo examines how the mediality of space determines the simultaneous genesis of matter and intelligence. Giulio Goria explores the status, tasks and functions of reflection as a tool for orientation in thought. In doing so, he demonstrates the importance of the methodological moment for transcendental philosophy, as well as the inextricability of reflection from the practical use of reason. In the last article of this section, Stelios Gadris finally addresses the role of feeling and its reflexive importance in Kant's conception of philosophy, as a way not only of situating ourselves in the world, but also of differentiating space and going beyond our private sphere.

The last section of the issue – *Subject and World* – therefore focuses on the position of the subject within its concrete space of action. Edoardo De Sanctis

clarifies the practical value of Kant's reflection on space in relation to the dynamic between state jurisdiction and subject autonomy. Gualtiero Lorini discusses the universality of Kant's anthropology and its peculiar form of objectivity and normativity, offering valuable insights into Kant's conception of history and the cosmopolitan horizon. In his article, Felix Duque addresses, finally, geopolitical issues and, above all, the geopolitical relevance of Kant's thought in the present time. He thus provides a significant account of both the problem of the political constitution in Kant and its contemporary perversions.

In this sense, the final section links up with the first, returning to the geographical problem in its most concrete and historically urgent form.