

# Twelve Months for Kant's Tercentenary

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The year 2024 has provided us with an opportunity to celebrate the life and work of Immanuel Kant. In the wake of the tercentenary of his birth, many cities around the world have become philosophical stages for exhibitions, workshops, lectures and major conferences. They have done so against the backdrop of a turbulent year, the scene of geopolitical tensions which—as an unfortunate counterpoint to Kant's peace-oriented philosophy—have been reflected in all this. I would like to showcase some of those initiatives here. I apologize in advance for the possible absence—due to my unawareness—of any others that would deserve to be remembered. But courtesy does not detract from bravery: it is worthwhile to provide an overview of what the twelve months of this Kantian year have come to be.

The *Kant-Jahr* had several highlights in the final months of 2023. On 23 November, the Bundeskunsthalle in Bonn inaugurated an exhibition that remained open until 17 March 2024 and aimed at informing the younger generation. Curated by Agnieszka Lulińska and Thomas Ebers, it included a virtual recreation of Königsberg in Kant's time. A few days earlier, the international colloquium of doctoral students of the Kant-Gesellschaft, which I had the honour of organizing, took place. This was held from 8 to 10 November 2023 at the University of Valencia and brought together thirty young people from nine countries. Their contributions

have been published together in an edited volume: *Immanuel Kant, Three Hundred Years Later* (Valencia: Tirant lo Blanch, 2025), and are accessible, thanks to a Gold Open Access licence, via this link [forthcoming].

But let us now turn to the twelve months of the Kantian year. The first major event took place from 11 to 14 February in the philosophical and musical city of Halle: the international conference «Forms of Rationality: Kant and Modernity», held at the University of Halle-Wittenberg and the Christian Wolff House Museum. Under the direction of Heiner F. Klemme, it was sponsored by the Christian-Wolff-Society and the Interdisciplinary Centre for Research on the European Enlightenment established at the Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg.

This conference was flanked and followed by several events in different cities: Luxembourg («Kant's Actuality», on 21 February), Brussels («Kant's Dynamic Theory of Matter», on 7-8 March), Baltimore («Kant and the World Today», on 8-9 March) and Ferrara («Dare to Know! What Is the Point of Still Talking About Kant and the Enlightenment?», a series of activities that began on 19 March and lasted until 22 May). In parallel, the Virtual Kant Congress with a Cosmopolitan Purpose was launched, organized by Andrew Chignell, Karin de Boer, Luis Felipe Garcia and Alexander Quanbeck with the support of the North American Kant Society and the Leuven Research Group in Classical German Philosophy. From 4 March to 20 November, speakers appointed by Kantian Societies around the world spoke, and the opening session was organized by the International Society for Kantian Studies in the French Language.

From 11 to 12 March, an international conference took place in Lisbon: «Kant, Art, and Beautiful Art». Organized by João Lemos, it was held at the Universidade NOVA in Lisbon with the support of the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology and the Lisbon Kant Group. During the following weeks, and in the month of Kant's anniversary, a frenzy of activities unfolded across the globe: in Baltimore («Perpetually Toward? Revisiting Kant on Global Peace», on 4-6 April), Berlin («*Opus Postumum*: Senile Work of Old Age or the Keystone of Kant's Philosophy?»,

on 11 April; «300 Years of Kant», on 22 April), Frankfurt («Kant: Republic and Kingdom of God», on 22 April), Milan («Kant in Progress: New Research Perspectives on Kant's Thought», on 22-23 April), Valencia («Translating Kant», on 24-25 April) and Cambridge («Philosophy of Art and Aesthetic Normativity», on 10-11 May).

In coincidence with the anniversary, the broadcasters ZDF and ARTE released the biopic *Kant: The Experiment of Freedom*. Directed by Wilfrid Hauke, this film traces the stages of the philosopher's life through dramatized scenes and digital recreations of Königsberg. It premiered on 16 April at the Ostpreußische Landesmuseum in Lüneburg, which also opened an exhibition, which remained open until 10 October, focusing on Kant's life journey: «A Life in Königsberg».

Parallel events continued in Ferrara, and exhibitions and lectures were held in Worms («Exhibition and Lectures on the Occasion of Kant's Anniversary», from 14 April to 31 May). The Virtual Kant Congress continued its tour thorough the Kantian Societies of the world, giving the floor to the Korean Kant Society (on 18 March), the Chinese Kant Society (on 8 April), the North American Kant Society, Canada section (on 15 April) and the Italian Society of Kantian Studies (on 29 April). A virtual conference of the Romanian Academy, «Kant 300» was also held (on 22-25 April).

The Dublin Kant Fest, «Kant at 300 on Reason, Nature, and Freedom», took place on 20-21 May in the form of an international conference. Organized by Lilian Alweiss, John J. Callanan and James O'Shea, and supported by King's College London, it was held at Trinity College Dublin. In May and June, the Autonomous University of Barcelona hosted an exhibition curated by Àlex Mumbrú and produced by undergraduate students: «Kant After Kant». Meanwhile, the call for entries for the 7th edition of the «Universitat de València» essay competition, which opened on 12 March with the slogan «Kant Revolution», was still open.

By this stage of the year, the Kantian flame was burning in dozens of places, including Padua («Freedom of Research: The Dispute Between

the Faculties Today», on 21-22 May) and Kingston upon Hull («Immanuel Kant and Hull», on 15 June). The Virtual Kant Congress continued with the North American Kant Society, United States section (on 17 May), the Greece Kant Group (on 29 May), the Turkish Kant Society (on 13 June), the Israel Kant Group (on 24 June) and the Lisbon Kant Group (on 8 July), while the activities scheduled in Ferrara and Worms came to an end on 22 and 31 May respectively. This was followed by another international event: «Kantian Philosophy Today». Organized by Beate Roessler, Thomas Nys and Tijn Smits, it took place from 13 to 14 June at the University of Amsterdam.

Then came one of the biggest events of the year: the sixth conference of the Society for Kantian Studies in the Spanish Language (SEKLE). Under the title «Kantian Ways of Thinking», and organized by María Jesús Vázquez Lobeiras, it was held from 15 to 19 July at the University of Santiago de Compostela. Inspired by the metaphor of the road, linked to the history of the city, and sponsored by the Xunta de Galicia, the conference featured a rich academic programme. Eighty-five papers were given by people from eighteen different countries. During the conference, the SEKLE Prize for Young Researchers was awarded to Gustavo Cruz, with honorary mentions awarded to Marilú Martínez-Fisher and Marcos González García. Some of the papers presented at this conference will appear in an edited volume published by Olms Verlag; others will appear in special sections to be published in the April and October 2025 issues of the *Revista de Estudios Kantianos*.

During the summer months, the Kantian community tirelessly pursued its calendar of festivities. Among them was a session organized by the Kant-Gesellschaft at the World Congress of Philosophy in Rome (on 3-4 August). The Virtual Kant Congress gave the floor to the Brazilian Kant Society (on 22 July), the Group for Kant Studies in India (on 29 July), the Society for Kant Studies in the Spanish language (on 5 August) and the North American Kant Society, Mexico section (on 19 August). A series of events entitled «Kant and the Courage to Think for Oneself» took place in Worms (on 21-23 August).

September began with the Summer School «Kant: Digitalization – Europe – Sustainability». Organized by Karoline Reinhardt, it took place from 2-6 September at the University of Passau as part of the international and interdisciplinary Passau Summer School for Applied Ethics (PAS-SAE). Thirty doctoral students from ten countries and three continents took part. This initiative was promoted by the Passau International Centre for Advanced Interdisciplinary Studies (PICAIS), the Society for Analytic Philosophy, and the Kant-Gesellschaft.

This was followed by the largest of all conferences, organized by the doyen of Kantian societies, the Kant-Gesellschaft. This was one of the *Kant-Jahr* meetings in which the weight of geopolitics was heavily felt. Let us dwell on this.

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Kant was born on 22 April 1724 in Königsberg. Founded in 1255 as a settlement of the Teutonic order, this city became the capital of Prussia in 1525, but ceased to be so shortly before Kant's birth, when the capital was transferred to Berlin. During the Second World War, Königsberg was razed to the ground by bombing and fell into Russian hands. In 1946, it was renamed in honour of one of the founders of the Soviet Union, Mikhail I. Kalinin. The historic centre of the city was demolished, including the castle where Kant had been the librarian between 1766 and 1772. Today, Kaliningrad is an *oblast*, a heavily militarized Russian enclave between Poland and Lithuania.

Kaliningrad/Königsberg was to host the tercentenary conference organized by the Kant-Gesellschaft. For this purpose, a working team led by Nina Dmitrieva had been in charge for several years. However, following the invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 by Vladimir Putin's government—which in the meantime has resulted in thousands of victims and more than seven million refugees, in the largest humanitarian crisis in Europe since the Second World War—a discussion process was initiated in the board of the Society. The aim of the Kant-Gesellschaft is to contribute

to research into, and to the dissemination of Kantian thought; the philosophy of peace is at its core. Yet, already on 3 March, the University of Kaliningrad signed a manifesto declaring its institutional support for the invasion of Ukraine. Therefore the Kant-Gesellschaft's commitment to the cause of peace led to the decision not to hold its tercentenary conference in the city where the philosopher was born.

Thus another venue had to be found in record time. Thanks to the initiative of Christoph Horn and Rainer Schäfer and to a large and efficient team led by them, the conference took place from 8 to 13 September in Bonn under the motto «Kant's Project of Enlightenment». This was the 14th international conference of the Kant-Gesellschaft, supported by the Rhenish Friedrich Wilhelm University of Bonn, the Digital Kant-Zentrum Nordrhein-Westfalen, and organizations such as the Ministry for Culture and Economic Affairs of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia. A total of 845 participants registered and around four hundred presentations were given. A student conference with twenty papers was held in parallel.

At the opening ceremony, the international Kant Prize of the Kant-Gesellschaft, funded by the Fritz Thyssen Foundation, the Young Talent Award, funded by the Fondazione Silvestro Marcucci, and two Sponsorship Awards, funded by the Immanuel Kant-Stiftung, were awarded. The winners were Paul Guyer (the Kant Prize), Karoline Reinhardt (the Young Talent Award) and Sebastian Abel and Seniye Tilev (the Sponsorship Awards). This was also the occasion of the premiere of the composition *Homage to Immanuel Kant* by Vassos Nicolaou, performed by the Ensemble Musikfabrik. This was the appetizer for a rich cultural programme with music as its main focus. The work of the Bonn composer Ludwig van Beethoven and the contemporary dialogue between philosophy and music took centre stage.

The dramatic tension that was the background to the Kantian tercentenary was felt with particular intensity in one of the lectures. This was given by the Ukrainian philosopher Volodymyr Abaschnik. Following the destruction of his home in a bombing raid and the loss of his passport, he

had been unable to travel to Bonn. Even his participation by videoconference was threatened until the last minute.

Another geopolitical focus of 2024 was Gaza. On 7 October 2023, Hamas and other armed groups committed terrorist acts in Israel that resulted in more than 1,200 deaths. Benjamin Netanyahu's Israeli government then launched a disproportionate and brutal offensive, which has already claimed the lives of more than 45,000 victims. This is another of the current contrasts to the Kantian doctrine of and for cosmopolitan peace. Global justice for peace was the focus of a conference that began just before the Bonn conference had ended. The international conference «Critical Philosophy for Cosmopolitan Justice and Perpetual Peace» took place in Lisbon from 17 to 19 September. Organized by a team headed by Fernando Silva and Paulo Jesus, it was held at the University of Lisbon with the support of the Foundation for Science and Technology.

The next international event was in Valencia. This was the conference «Kant, Then and Now: On the Sciences and Arts». Held from 14 to 18 October, it took place at the University of Valencia with the sponsorship of the Generalitat Valenciana. A large team of organizers, which I had the good fortune to lead, put together an academic and cultural programme that was visited by one hundred participants from twenty countries and three continents, and a large public from the city. The cultural programme included receptions, concerts, guided tours of historical-artistic sites and a philosophical-musical evening. The contributions to the academic programme will appear, in 2025, in two collective trilingual volumes published in the Philosophical Cartographies series of the Tirant lo Blanch publishing house.

From the end of September to November, workshops were held in Berlin («Immanuel Kant: Philosopher-Scientist», on 4-6 September), Catania («Immanuel Kant, 300 Years From Now», on 17-19 October) and Trier (XIII. Trierer Kant-Kolloquium: «Kant und die Aufklärung», on 24-26 October). At the same time, the Virtual Kant Congress continued to give the floor to representatives of the Kantian Societies: the Kant Society of Egypt (on 2 September), the Norwegian Kant Society (on 17 September),

the Australasian Kant Group (on 3 October), the Romanian Kant Society (on 7 October), the Kantian Studies Group of Argentina and the Critical Idealism Study Group of Chile (on 23 October), the group Kant Scholars From Sub-Saharan Africa (on 4 November), the Kant Society in Ukraine (on 20 November), the Japanese Kant Society (on 27 November), the German Kant Society (on 5 December), and the United Kingdom Kant Society (on 19 December).

The last few weeks have seen a dazzling succession of events. From 4 to 5 November, the international workshop «Conversations with Kant» was held in Madrid. Organized by Alba Jiménez, it was promoted by the Complutense University and the Schematismus-Project. From 14 to 15 November, the workshop «Kant and His Times» was held at the Centre for Education and Cultural Initiatives in Olsztyn. From 16 to 19 November, the University of Tehran was the epicentre of the virtual conference «Kant on the Contemporary World». From 2 to 3 December, organized by Alberto Voltolini and Cristina Amoretti, the international conference «Orientation and Disorientation: Kantian Themes in Analytic Philosophy» was held at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia. From 12 to 13 December, the workshop «Kant on Reason; Metaphysics and Morality» took place. From 16 to 18 December, the conference «Maimonides, Kant, Cassirer: Kantianism and Judaism» was held in Potsdam. The last international event was in Linz: the conference «Personal God or 'I-less' Fundament? Kant's Arguments and Henrich's Interpretation», organized by Michael Hofer and held from 19 to 20 December.

With these final fireworks, the Kantian year came to an end. Thus ended an impressive calendar that included more than five major international conferences, thirty workshops and twenty-five virtual lecture series, as well as exhibitions, concerts, competitions, television and radio broadcasts, press coverage in the world's leading newspapers, and *ad hoc* websites. All of this was developed—against a dense background of monographs, edited volumes, special issues and scientific articles—in dozens of countries on almost every continent. The contribution of new generations



of researchers from countries that have recently joined the work of the international Kantian community has been particularly welcome.

Much of this has been captured in two global calendars. As a result of the cooperation between the Kant-Gesellschaft and the Kant-València research groups, the «Kant-2024» calendar was launched at the end of 2023. This is a website where information about Kantian events is centralized and updated. It will be available until the end of 2025 in three languages (German, Spanish and English). The other major international calendar was organized by the Kant Research Centre in Mainz (Veranstaltungen/Announcements) under the leadership of Margit Ruffing. This will be continued beyond the tercentenary, as part of the dissemination of events there.

These have been twelve months of a Kantian year. Those of us who have had the opportunity to experience them can only remember them with gratitude. With our remembrance goes a wish: that reflection on Kant may spur on work for concord and pave humanity's way to a lasting peace.

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