

## ON KANT'S CONCEPT OF THE PUBLIC USE OF REASON: A REHABILITATION OF ORALITY

### *SOBRE O CONCEITO KANTIANO DE USO PÚBLICO DA RAZÃO: A REABILITAÇÃO DA ORALIDADE*

*Roberta PASQUARÊ*<sup>1</sup>

#### INTRODUCTION

In his 1784 *An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?* Kant defines the public use of reason as “that use which someone makes of it *as a scholar* before the entire public of the *world of readers*” (WA, AA 08: 37)<sup>2</sup>. With this definition Kant rejects the spoken word and designates the written word as the sole medium of the public use of reason.

Despite this and additional pieces of textual evidence attesting that Kant disqualifies the spoken word as medium of public reasoning, Kant's concept of the public use of reason is commonly employed to descriptively and normatively study subjects like freedom of speech and political deliberation precisely from the point of view of oral discourse.

With this paper I intend (a) to reconstruct the reasons why Kant rejects the spoken word as medium of the public use of reason and (b) at the same time justify the application of Kant's concept of public reason to the spoken word. More precisely, my objective is to show that there is a letter and a spirit to Kant's concept of the public use of reason. According to the letter, the only medium of the public use of reason is the written word, but according to the spirit, the spoken word can under specific conditions qualify as medium of the public use of reason just as well.

<https://doi.org/10.36311/2318-0501.2020.v8n1.08.p101>

Before developing my arguments, I will provide a brief overview of both the primary literature designating the written word as the sole medium of the public use of reason and the secondary literature applying Kant's concept of public reasoning to the spoken word.

## 1. THE MEDIUM OF THE PUBLIC OF REASON: WRITTEN WORD VS. SPOKEN WORD

Kant describes the activity of communicating to the public one's thoughts by employing expressions such as 'speaking to the public' or 'delivering a speech to the public', thereby employing a language which suggests a relation between an orator and his or her listeners. Yet, this terminology should not detract from the fact that by the terms speaking (*reden*) and speech (*Rede*) Kant also means the written word. For instance, in the *Metaphysical First Principles of the Doctrine of Right*, Kant defines a book as "a writing [...] which represents a discourse [*Rede*] that someone delivers to the public by visible linguistic signs" (RL, AA 06: 289) and then reiterates that a "writing is [...] a discourse [*Rede*] to the public" (RL, AA 06: 289-290).

What is more, when Kant employs the terms speaking and speech with regard to the public use of reason, these terms are to be read as exclusively indicating the written word and explicitly excluding the spoken word. That expressions like 'speaking to the public' and 'delivering a speech to the public' indicate the activity of communicating one's thoughts by means of the written word emerges most clearly in Kant's 1785 journal article *On the Wrongfulness of Unauthorized Publication of Books*. There Kant equates bringing an author's "speech as such to the public [*Publikum*]" with letting the author "speak publicly [*öffentlich reden*]" (VUB, AA 08: 81) and specifies that it is in a book that "the author speaks to his readers" (VUB, AA 08: 80). Thus, whenever Kant uses the terms speaking and speech in combination with the terms public (both as the noun *Publikum* and the adjective *öffentlich*) and publicly, i.e. with reference to his concept of public use of reason, he is to be interpreted as discussing an act of communication which takes place by means of the written word.

Kant spells out the notion that speaking to a public, i.e., making public use of one's reason, means addressing the public exclusively through the written word and not through the spoken word when he finally defines the medium of public reasoning as a "mute instrument":

A book is the instrument for delivering a *speech* to the public [...]. This is what is essential here: that what is thereby delivered is [...] *speech* [...]. By calling it a mute instrument I distinguish it from one that delivers speech by sounds, such as a megaphone or even the *mouth* of another (VUB, AA 08:81n)<sup>3</sup>.

This definition makes two claims. The first claim is that a book is not just *one* possible instrument for delivering a speech to the public but, as underscored by Kant's use of the determinate article, *the* instrument, i.e., the only instrument of public reasoning. The second claim is, as a corollary, that making public use of one's reason means addressing the public exclusively by means of the written word. And indeed, building upon recent studies on Kant's attitude toward popular philosophy and examining both Kant's stances on the public use of reason and his activity as university lecturer, Sean Franzel maintains that on Kant's view only the written word qualifies as medium of public reasoning: "Kant denies that a scholar speaking

to an audience or *Publikum* of listeners can be seen as engaging *the* public as a whole” (Franzel 2013: 3).

Nonetheless, despite Kant's own discussions and the solidity of studies such as Franzel's, numerous scholars employ Kant's stances on the public use of reason to reflect upon oral speech situations and design oral speech practices. Yet, in so doing they commonly imply but not explicitly justify that Kant's concept of public reasoning can be extended to some forms of orality. Prominent examples of this are the established fields of Discourse Ethics and Rawlsian Deliberative Democracy as well as recent studies reassessing Kant's attitude toward rhetoric as the discursive relation between and orator and his or her listeners (Stroud 2014; Ercolini 2016). Peter Niesen presents his thorough study *Kants Theorie der Redefreiheit* clarifying that “the expression ‘speech’ [*Rede*] here is not limited to oral communication but rather employed neutrally with regard to the medium [*medienneutral verwendet*]” (Niesen 2005: 28)<sup>4</sup>. This methodological choice is very representative of the common tendency to implicitly extend Kant's concept of public reasoning to the spoken word without explicitly justifying this extension.

My intention is precisely to explicitly justify the commonly practiced and usually not accounted for application of Kant's concept of the public use of reason to the spoken word. I shall do so by showing that Kant's limitation of the public use of reason to the written word hinges upon contingent conditions which are not essentially tethered to Kant's concept of public (both as the noun *Publikum* and the adjective *öffentlich*). The second section of my paper will be devoted to reconstructing the reasons why Kant designates the written word as medium of the public use of reason. Conversely, the reasons why Kant rejects the spoken word as medium of the public use of reason will be the subject of the third section. Finally, in the fourth and last section, I will account for the possibility to remain within Kant's normative framework and nevertheless extend his concept of public reasoning to the spoken word.

## 2. THE POTENTIAL OF THE WRITTEN WORD

To show why Kant designates the written word as the sole medium of the public use of reason, I shall as a first step reconstruct the conditions that must obtain for reasoning to be public in the Kantian sense and as a second step show why the spoken word do not meet such conditions.

As seen in the *Introduction*, Kant defines the public use of reason as that use which someone makes “before the entire public of the *world of readers*” (WA, AA 08: 37). He then specifies that reasoning is public insofar as it reaches “the public [*Publikum*] in the strict sense, that is, the world” (WA, AA 08: 38). With these two definitions Kant presents the concept of public reasoning as to its medium and scope. By limiting the public to “the world of readers” Kant defines the written word as the medium of the public use of reason. By extending the public to “the world” he then defines all human beings as the scope of the public use of reason. Thus, to make public use of one's reason means using the written word to reach all human beings. Since the public use of reason is limited to the written word and at the same

time extended to all human beings, two questions arise. The first question is how it is possible to extend the scope of the public use of reason to all human beings while at the same time limiting its medium to an instrument, the written word, accessible only to the literates. The second question is what requirements reasoning should satisfy in order to reach the world, i.e., all human beings.

In my reconstruction, in order for reasoning to reach “the public in the strict sense, that is, the world”, two conditions must be fulfilled, i.e., a technological and an epistemic one. The technological condition answers the first question on the limitation of the public use of reason to the medium of the written word, and the epistemic condition answers the second question on the extension of the scope of the public use of reason to all human beings.

As for the technological condition, when Kant in *VUB* contrasts a book with “a megaphone or even the mouth of another”, he shows to be well aware of the possibility that thoughts can be disseminated by media other than the written word. As such he explicitly mentions an instrument capable of increasing the volume and hence the reach of the voice (a megaphone) and dissemination by word of mouth (the mouth of another). I think that the reason why Kant rejects these media and restricts the public use of reason to the medium of the written word is that these possible alternatives exhibit decisive deficiencies. However powerful a megaphone can be or whatever other tool one can employ to increase the reach of one’s voice, the contents thus conveyed cannot materially reach “the world”. In the case of dissemination by word of mouth, thoughts are conveyed to an audience not by their author but, with or without the author’s authorization, by an intermediary. However accurate or competent the intermediary may be, neither the audience nor the author can be sure that the thoughts are conveyed precisely in the way that preserves the meaning intended by the author. Whoever is even minimally acquainted with Socrates or Christian scholarship knows, on the one side, how widely disseminated Socrates’ and Jesus’ thoughts are but, on the other side, how many disputes exist on which tenets are to be attributed to Socrates and Jesus, i.e., the thoughts’ authors, or to the interpretation of Plato and the evangelists, i.e., their intermediaries. So, the only way for the author to retain control over the dissemination of his thoughts, i.e., to make sure that they reach the public the way he intends them, is to communicate them directly through the written word. In sum, the written word is in Kant’s time the only medium capable of widely disseminating one’s thoughts (which a megaphone cannot accomplish) without incurring the possibly distorting effects of oral dissemination (which the mouth of another can hardly avoid).

As for the epistemic condition, what makes reasoning public is its capacity to pass the universalizability test that Kant lays out in his 1786 essay *What Does It Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?* Strictly speaking, the immediate subject of *WDO* is not so much public reasoning as it is correct thinking, more precisely the right way to think about supersensible objects, i.e., objects for which there can be no possible experience. Nevertheless, the essay is essential to any comprehensive understanding of Kant’s concept of the public use of reason. In fact, posing the rhetorical question: “How much and how correctly would we *think* if we did not think as it were in community with others [...]!” (*WDO*, AA 08: 144), Kant subjects both the quantity and quality of thinking to its taking place publicly. Since Kant singles out publicity as the

necessary condition for both the activity and correctness of thinking, all he says about thinking in *WDO* can be read as specifying his concept of public reasoning. Kant concludes the essay with a footnote whose content is commonly referred to as a universalizability test, and thereby establishing the criterion that reasoning must uphold to be suited for public use:

To make use of one's own reason means no more than to ask oneself, whenever one is supposed to assume something, whether one could find it feasible to make the ground or the rule on which one assumes it into a universal principle for the use of reason (*WDO*, AA 08:146n).

On Katerina Deligiorgi's interpretation, this passage illustrates the requirements that thoughts should satisfy in order to

address the world at large [...] in the form of a universalizability test to which we ought to submit our criteria for accepting or rejecting an argument [...]. When we examine the merits of an argument, Kant maintains, we should at the same time examine what sort of criteria we use in our judgment and whether these can be considered as universally valid (Deligiorgi 2005: 65).

Thus, a thought is suitable for public use, when the criteria of its validity can be considered as universally valid. What criteria can be considered as universally valid and, consequently, as making the thoughts derived from them suitable for public use is most clearly defined by Onora O'Neill. According to O'Neill, by means of the universalizability test Kant is establishing reason as the ultimate authority of thinking and stating that only a communication that does not presuppose any authority other than reason qualifies as public:

A communication that presupposes some authority other than that of reason may fail to communicate with those who are not subject to that authority [...]. But a communication that does not presuppose such an authority [...] is in principle accessible to the world at large [...] (O'Neill 1989: 34).

Thus, the grounds on which one assumes something cannot be made "into a universal principle for the use of reason", when they are not universally shareable from individual to individual and from group to group, i.e., when they consist in something other than reason<sup>5</sup>. As for individuals, such grounds are both personal preferences, namely everything that, either in the moral or in the aesthetic field, refers to inclinations, and *Schwärmerei*, namely the delusion of having sensible experience of objects for which no such experience is possible. As for groups, non-shareable grounds are either religious teachings assumed only for the authority or traditional value attached to them or political principles assumed only by virtue of their pragmatic value<sup>6</sup>.

From both Kant's definitions and his interpreters' readings, it emerges that *Publikum* and *öffentlich* are not descriptive but rather normative concepts. They do not describe the mere act of communicating one's thoughts to a multitude of persons but establish the requirements that thoughts must satisfy to be public, i.e., universally valid and thereby capable of reaching the public, i.e., all human beings<sup>7</sup>. Before all actual communication, thoughts qualify as public insofar as their grounds are universally valid, namely shareable by all human beings committed to judging contents setting aside their personal preferences and the framework of their particular religious and political affiliation. In other words, to make public use of one's reason does not mean, descriptively, the act of expressing one's thoughts to however many persons. To make

public use of one's reason rather means, normatively, successfully performing the epistemic task of deriving one's thoughts from grounds which can be potentially shared by all human beings. The potentiality involved in Kant's concept of public reasoning (the accessibility in principle stressed by O'Neill) speaks to the two additional requirements that the thoughts in question be actually disseminated and that their recipients assess them according to the same criteria of universalizability upon which the thoughts have been made by their author suitable for public use. Thus, the adjective public (*öffentlich*) conveys the normative requirement that thoughts must meet in order to be shareable by potentially all human beings, and the noun public (*Publikum*) encompasses all human beings insofar as they are able to communicate with one another because both the thoughts that they communicate and their assessment of the thoughts communicated to them comply with such normative requirement.

Putting together the discussions of the technological and epistemic conditions attached to Kant's concept of public (both as the noun *Publikum* and the adjective *öffentlich*), the following upshot can be drawn: in order to make public use of one's reason, one has (1) to prepare one's thoughts so as to render them shareable by all human beings and (2) to communicate them through a medium which both disseminates them as widely as possible and reproduce them so as their author intends them. In other words, reasoning is public if it satisfies the epistemic condition of universalizability and the technological condition of appropriate dissemination.

### 3. THE SHORTCOMINGS OF THE SPOKEN WORD

After reconstructing the conditions that reasoning must meet in order to be public and showing why Kant designates the written word as medium of the public use of reason, I shall now reconstruct the reasons why the spoken word, on Kant's view, does not meet the conditions required to reach "the public in the strict sense, that is, the world".

The orators referred to by Kant, namely the persons who orally address listeners, are the clergyman and the university teacher, and both are limited by two conditions, a technological and a juridical one.

The technological condition is the one illustrated in the previous section: in Kant's time the only available technology widely to communicate contents without relying on dissemination by word of mouth and incurring its possibly distorting effects is the written word. As a consequence, the technological condition of the orator precludes him materially from communicating his thoughts to "the world" and from communicating them exactly the way he conceives them.

The juridical condition consists in the orator's being a state employee under an absolute ruler, and hence in his contractual obligation only to communicate the contents prescribed by his employment contract with the state. Kant famously qualifies the use that a state official makes of his reason in his capacity as a state employee as private: "What I call the private use of reason is that which one may make of it in a certain *civil* post or office [*in einem bürgerlichen Posten oder Amte*] with which he is entrusted" (WA, AA 08: 37). The orator, insofar as he is considered in his role as a state official, is forbidden from expressing his own thoughts "since he is carrying out another's commission" (WA, AA 08: 38), i.e., since he is bound only to

communicate the teachings that are set out in his employment contract with the state and constitute his terms of engagement. Accordingly, when he addresses his listeners, Kant's orator does not speak in his own person but in the state's person. As a consequence, he is obliged "to deliver [what he teaches] as prescribed and in the name of another [*nach Vorschrift und im Namen eines andern*]" (WA, AA 08: 38), namely the state, "for he was employed by it on that condition" (WA, AA 08: 38). On Kant's view, the contents conveyed by the orator do not meet the normative requirements expressed by the noun *Publikum* and the adjective *öffentlich*, because they are not universalizable. They are not universalizable because they are not derived from the ultimate authority of reason. Rather, they are meant to serve the particular interests of the absolute ruler with regard to the particular community of his subjects. According to O'Neill, such contents only address

*bounded pluralities*, defined by civic or social institutions, practices, and ideologies, whereas for Kant public reason requires thinking and acting that address an *unrestricted plurality*, the world at large (O'Neill 2001: 45).

Echoing O'Neill's reading, Fleischacker maintains that

"private" derives from a Latin word meaning "set apart," "lacking," or "deprived" [...]. Kant takes the term [...] to describe individuals insofar as they are "deprived of" their common humanity – insofar as they are limited to some specific aspect of themselves, which links them to just one community among others, rather than to humanity at large (Fleischacker 2013: 16).

Consequently, the juridical condition of the orator violates the epistemic condition expressed by the concepts *Publikum* and *öffentlich*.

Thus, on my reconstruction, Kant rejects the spoken word as medium for the public use of reason because the orator he considers acts under a technological and a juridical condition which prevent him or her from satisfying the technological and the epistemic condition required by the concept of public, both as a noun and as an adjective.

#### 4. A REHABILITATION OF THE SPOKEN WORD

Although it is impossible for Kant's orator to make public use of his or her reason because of the technological and juridical conditions under which he or she acts, it is nevertheless possible to place the orator under conditions that allow for a public use of reason in the strong normative Kantian sense.

As for the technological condition, in the second section of this paper, I termed appropriate dissemination the condition that allows thoughts to be communicated so as to reach "the public in the strict sense, that is, the world". On my reconstruction of the technological condition of Kant's notion of public use of reason, the dissemination of thoughts takes place in an appropriate manner if the thoughts in question meet two requirements: they must be able to materially reach the world (at least potentially) and be conveyed precisely how the author conceives them. I shall term the former the requirement of wide dissemination and the latter the requirement of faithful dissemination. Present-day mass and personal media satisfy

both requirements: allowing the even worldwide dissemination of contents, they satisfy the requirement of wide dissemination, and allowing the reproduction of contents, they satisfy the requirement of faithful dissemination. For example, if disseminated through audio and/or mass or personal media, even a speech held in one's room before one's laptop is capable of being widely and faithfully disseminated. As a consequence, under possible technological conditions different from those existing in Kant's time, the spoken word can be as suitable as the written word as medium of the public use of reason. The normative requirements of wide and faithful dissemination remain in place, but communication technologies not available in Kant's time allow the extension of this aspect of his concept of public reasoning to the spoken word.

As for the juridical condition, as seen in the previous section, the orator considered by Kant is a state official contractually obliged only to disseminate the contents prescribed by the state. Since such contents do not rest on the authority of reason but serve the particular interest of a ruler with regard to the particular community of his subjects, they are not universalizable. Since they are not universalizable, they do not qualify as public use of reason. Accordingly, since Kant equates the orator with a state employee entrusted with the dissemination of non-universalizable contents, the spoken word does not meet the epistemic condition of universalizability required by Kant's concept of public reasoning. Nonetheless, if a state official acts under a juridical condition which does not bind him only to convey the contents prescribed by the state, the state official, and with him or her the orator, can also be considered as being able of making public use of his or her reason. For example, in a legal system which guarantees university teachers freedom of teaching, the teacher namely, remaining within the framework of Kant's examples, the orator is allowed to make public use of his or her reason, i.e., to communicate thoughts which stand the universalizability test. Accordingly, under possible juridical conditions different from those obtaining in Kant's Prussia, the spoken word can qualify as medium of the public use of reason just as well as the written word. The epistemic condition of universalizability remains in place, but the framework of a different legal system allows the extension of this aspect of Kant's concept of public use of reason to the spoken word.

It emerges from this discussion that Kant's concept of what constitutes a public use of reason entails both a normative and a contingent aspect. On the normative side, Kant's concept of public (both as the noun *Publikum* and the adjective *öffentlich*) places on the subjects the conditions that their reasoning be universalizable and appropriately disseminated. On the contingent side, only the written word qualifies as medium of public reasoning, i.e., as reasoning that can be universalized and appropriately disseminated. This aspect of Kant's concept of public use of reason is contingent, because it hinges upon technological and juridical conditions which can be modified without compromising the fulfillment of the requirements that reasoning be widely disseminated and universalizable.

Thus, according to the letter of Kant's discussions of the public use of reason, a specific set of media (the media of orality) and a specific set of subjects (the orators) are not suitable for public reasoning. Nevertheless, since the technological and juridical conditions which produce this exclusion can be modified without detriment to the normative core of Kant's concept of public use of reason, it is possible to rehabilitate orality as medium of public reasoning: under technological conditions which satisfy the requirements of appropriate dissemination and



juridical conditions which do not compromise the epistemic condition of universalizability, the orator can make public use of his or her reason as well as the writer and the spoken word can serve as medium of public reasoning as well as the written word.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

References to Kant's works are to the volume and page number of the *Akademie Ausgabe*: Immanuel Kant, *Gesammelte Schriften*, edited by the Königlich-Preußische (now Deutsche) Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin 1900–.

References to *The Critique of Pure Reason* are to the pagination in the (A) and (B) editions.

For the citations I have used, if not otherwise specified, the *Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*.

|            |   |
|------------|---|
| <i>Br</i>  | Briefe (AA 10)  |
| <i>KrV</i> | Kritik der reinen Vernunft (AA 03, AA 04)             |
| <i>RL</i>  | Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Rechtslehre (AA 06)   |
| <i>VUB</i> | Von der Unrechtmäßigkeit des Büchernachdrucks (AA 08) |
| <i>WA</i>  | Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung? (AA 08)   |
| <i>WDO</i> | Was heißt: sich im Denken orientieren? (AA 08)        |

**ABSTRACT:** With this paper I intend to rehabilitate the status of orality as medium of the public use of reason in the normative Kantian sense. As a first step, I reconstruct the reasons why Kant rejects the spoken word and designates the written word as the sole medium of public reasoning. As a second step, I argue for the possibility of employing the spoken word as medium of public reasoning while remaining within the normative framework of Kant's concept of the public use of reason.

**KEYWORDS:** Kant; public use of reason; written and spoken word; orality; book.

**RESUMO:** Com este artigo pretendo reabilitar o status de oralidade como meio do uso público da razão no sentido normativo kantiano. Como primeiro passo, reconstruo as razões pelas quais Kant rejeita a palavra falada e designa a palavra escrita como o único meio do uso público da razão. Como segundo passo, mantendo-me no quadro normativo do conceito de Kant de uso público da razão, defendo a possibilidade de utilizar a palavra falada como meio do uso público da razão.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Kant; uso público da razão; palavra escrita, palavra falada; oralidade; livro.

## REFERÊNCIAS / REFERENCES

Deligiorgi, Katerina, *Kant and the Culture of Enlightenment*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005.

Ercolini, G. L., *Kant's Philosophy of Communication*, Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2016.

Fleischacker, Samuel, *What is Enlightenment?*, London/New York: Routledge, 2013.

Franzel, Sean, "A 'Popular', 'Private' Lecturer? Kant's Theory and Practice of University Instruction", *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 47 (2013), 1, pp.1-18. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/ecs.2013.0051>.

Kant, Immanuel [1781-1787], *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and ed. by Guyer P. and Wood A. W., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

\_\_\_\_\_. [1784], *An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?, Practical Philosophy*, trans. and ed. by Gregor M.; intr. by Wood A. W., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

\_\_\_\_\_. [1785], *On the Wrongfulness of Unauthorized Publication of Books, Practical Philosophy*, trans. and ed. by Gregor M.; intr. by Wood A. W., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

\_\_\_\_\_. [1786], *What Does it Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?, Religion and Rational Theology*, trans. and ed. by Wood A. W. and Di Giovanni G., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

\_\_\_\_\_. [1797], *Metaphysical First Principles of the Doctrine of Right, Practical Philosophy*, trans. and ed. by Gregor M.; intr. by Wood A. W., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Niesen, Peter, *Kants Theorie der Redefreiheit*, Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2005.

O'Neill, Onora, *Constructions of Reason: Exploration of Kant's Practical Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

\_\_\_\_\_., "Kant's Conception of Public Reason", in Gerhardt, Volker / Rolf-Peter Horstmann / Ralph Schumacher (Eds.). *Kant und die Berliner Aufklärung*, vol. 1, Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 2001, pp. 35-47.

Stroud, Scott R. (2014), *Kant and the Promise of Rhetoric*. University Park: Pennsylvania State of University Press.

Zöller, Günter (2009), "Aufklärung über Aufklärung. Kants Konzeption des selbständigen, öffentlichen und gemeinschaftlichen Gebrauchs der Vernunft", in: Klemme, Heiner (Ed.). *Kant und die Zukunft der europäischen Aufklärung*. Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 2009, pp. 82-99.

## NOTAS / NOTES

1 Roberta Pasquarè (PhD) is Visiting Scholar at the University of Graz. She currently works on Immanuel Kant's anthropology and practical philosophy, with special focus on the concept of public use of reason. After attaining a joint doctoral degree in Political Philosophy (University La Sapienza, Rome) and in Practical Philosophy (Humboldt-Universität, Berlin), she has worked on 18th Century German Philosophy, intersubjective reasoning, and contemporary European political systems.

2 All emphases in the present and following quotations are Kant's.

3 VUB appears in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift* in May 1785. In a letter to Kant dated June 5, the journal's editor Johann Erich Biester echoes Kant's discussion of the written word as the medium of public reasoning inviting Kant soon to "use our mouth to bring through us your speech to the public" (Br, AA 10: 404). My translation.

4 My translation.

5 Samuel Fleischacker reads Kant's universalizability test as ruling out as suitable for public reasoning all contents "that depend either on unshareable personal experience or on authoritative texts" (Fleischacker 2013: 24).

6 Cf. *KrV*: "Now there is nothing so important because of its utility, nothing so holy, that it may be exempted from this searching review and inspection, which knows no respect for persons" (*KrV*, A 738/B766).

7 Günter Zöller explicitly highlights the normative character of the adjective 'public' when, commenting on the universalizability test, he stresses that the task of performing the test amounts to a "commitment to the possible universality of epistemic reasons and rules" of thinking (2009: 90. My translation and emphasis).

---

Recebido / Received: 20 de abril de 2020; / 20 April 2020

Aceito / Accepted: 6 de maio de 2020 / 6 May 2020