

Kant's Critique of Pure Reason

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I. Texts

A. *Critique of Pure Reason* (CPR), by Immanuel Kant; tr. by Norman Kemp Smith, St. Martin's Press

B. *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics* (PFM), by Immanuel Kant; tr. by Paul Carus, rev. by J. Ellington; Hackett Publishing.

II. Assignments and Grading

A. Kant is a writer of extreme difficulty. Comprehending the assigned material requires several readings. To help you with this, I would like you to prepare three questions for each session, several of which will be discussed in class.

B. Two 5 - 7 page papers are required. The first will be due at the end of the 8th week of the semester, the second on the last day of class. Topics for the first paper will be distributed by the end of the fourth week.

III. Supplemental reading

A. Familiarity with major early modern thinkers such as Descartes, Leibniz, Locke, and Berkeley is helpful but not required. Reading Hume, however, is strongly recommended, for Kant tells us that his "work in the *Critique of Pure Reason* was occasioned by Hume's skeptical doctrine."

B. Secondary literature on Kant is sometimes as difficult as Kant himself. Differences of approach are often great, with the result that the more you read, the more apt you are to be confused. Still, I will be happy to provide recommendations to anyone who is interested

C. A brief but excellent general introduction is *Kant's Critical Philosophy* by Gilles Deleuze. Outlines of Kant's philosophy in historical context can be found in *Early German Philosophy* by Lewis White Beck, and *Kant's Life and Work* by Ernst Cassirer. There is also a recent biography by Manfred Kuehn.

IV. Immanuel Kant: 1724-1804

- an exemplar of the Age of Enlightenment, generally acknowledged to be the most important and influential philosopher since Aristotle, and considered by many the greatest of philosopher of all time;
- spent entire life in or near Königsberg, the capital of the province of East Prussia, a detached eastern outpost of the Kingdom of Prussia (later part of Germany, now in Russia), then ruled by Frederick the Great (d. 1786) whose less tolerant successors pressured Kant to keep quiet on politically and religiously sensitive matters during the 1790s;
- born into a poor family, lost parents while still young, educated under the auspices of the Pietists (a Protestant sect akin to the Quakers, which Kant soon turned against, practicing no religion thereafter);
- did brief stints as a live-in tutor, then held a series of posts at the Königsberg university, becoming professor only in 1770 (having turned down offers elsewhere in order to remain in Königsberg)
- lived a secluded life: never married, never travelled, avoided controversy and publicity, was well liked but generally restricted his social activities to a small circle;
- physically slight of stature and sickly, occupied his spare time with reading, walks, card-playing, and conversation;
- wrote all his major works in German (the one exception is the *Inaugural Dissertation* of 1770 in Latin [not assigned]);
- expert in the physical sciences and mathematics, knowledgeable in many other fields;
- made significant contributions in virtually every area of philosophy, including metaphysics and epistemology, ethics and morality, aesthetics, rational theology, philosophy of physics, law politics and society, philosophy of history, philosophy of education;
- Kant's masterpiece is the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781; rev. 1787), supplemented by the two later critical tracts: *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788) and *Critique of Judgment* (1790). Other major works include his *Inaugural Dissertation on the Sensible and Intelligible World* (1770); *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics* (1783); *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785); *Metaphysical First Principles of Natural Science* (1786); *Religion within the Limits of mere Reason* (1792); and *Metaphysics of Morals* (1797). Kant also wrote a number of important essays on philosophical and scientific topics; many of his drafts and jottings have been published (some translated); and there are extensive students notes of Kant's lectures (now mostly translated).

V. Topics and Readings (each topic normally occupying two class sessions)

1. Kant's philosophical project and his strategy for realizing it: Prefaces to the A and B editions of the CPR (*Critique of Pure Reason*), and the Preface and Preamble of PFM (*Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics*).
2. Transcendental Aesthetic – *the ideality of space and time and the inscrutability of the thing in itself*: CPR A19-49/B33-73, PFM Part I (280-94) and Appendix (371-383).
3. Transcendental Analytic through the metaphysical deduction of the categories – *the anatomy of human understanding*: A50-83/B74-116; PFM §39 (322-226)
4. The 1781 edition of the transcendental deduction of the categories – *understanding as the author of nature*: A84-A130; PFM §§ 14-23 (294-306)
5. The 1787 version of the transcendental deduction – *self and world*: B116-169.
6. The analytic of principles through the transcendental schematism – *transcendental truth*: A131-147/B169-187; PFM §§ 24-31 (306-314)

7. The Principles through the Axioms of Intuition and Anticipations of Perception – *why reality must conform to mathematics*: A148-176/B187-218
8. The Analogies of Experience – *the subjective foundations of objective reality*: A176-218/B218-265; PFM §§ 32-8 (314-322)
9. The Postulates of Empirical Thought through the conclusion of the principles – *the bounds of human cognition*: A218-235/B266-294
10. Phenomena and Noumena + The Amphiboly of the Concepts of Reflection – *the impossibility of ontology*: A235-292/B294-349
11. The Transcendental Dialectic – *can our knowledge of reality exceed what experience is capable of teaching us?*: A293-340/B349-398; PFM §§ 40-45 (327-333)
12. The Paralogisms – *the being of the mind*: A341-405, B399-B432; PFM §§ 46-49 (333-337)
13. The Antinomies – *the possibility of freedom*: A405-567/B432-595; PFM §§ 50-54 (338-348)
14. The Ideal of Pure Reason, critique of proofs of the existence of God, and the regulative role of reason – *reason's true cognitive calling*: A567-794/B595-822; PFM §§ 55-60 (348-371)
15. The Methodology – *the dawn of the age of criticism*: A707-856/B735-884