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Critique Of Pure Reason



Synopsis

Immanuel Kant's Critique of Pure Reason is one of the most rewarding and difficult of all philosophical works. Norman Kemp Smith's translation is immensely valuable, not simply because he rendered Kant's language into readable English, but also because his own extensive understanding of the Critique made him acutely aware of the pitfalls of translation. This text is that of the second edition of 1787, with an additional translation of all first edition passages which in the second edition were either altered or omitted. For this reissue of Norman Kemp Smith's classic 1929 edition, Howard Caygill has contributed a new Preface, setting this translation into the context both of Kemp Smith's own life and work, and of his influence on Kant scholarship.

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Customer Reviews

Norman Kemp Smith's translation seems to be one of the standard English translations of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason. Is it the best? I don't speak German, but it's certainly serviceable. This is a daunting work. It's also a necessary work, inasmuch as any understand of contemporary thought and intellectual history must encounter it. Kant has influenced nearly every major school of thought and cultural trend for the last 200 years. Below, I'll try to sketch his thought in this Critique. This is the story of Immanuel Kant, who found philosophy a mess and sought to fix it. Specifically, he was a former Rationalist who was disconcerted by the critique of British Empiricism (specifically the skeptical philosophy of David Hume). He sought to provide a grounding for the truths of empirical science and mathematics, establish the possibility of religious faith and practice, while at the same time avoid dogmatism in metaphysical reasoning. How did he seek to do this? By establishing a

critique of reason whereby he understands the validity of all mental constructs. Kant distinguishes between judgments which are a priori (prior to experience) and a posteriori (arising out of experience), and judgments which are "analytic" (trivial, tautological) and "synthetic" (where the predicate adds something that is not contained within the subject). Are synthetic a priori judgments possible? Kant answers yes, and much of this book deals with what follows from that. First Kant deals with how we have sense experience. He claims that space and time are necessary a priori conditions for sense experience -- not physical things in the world. The content of our experience is sense-data: raw sensation that arises outside ourselves or inside ourselves and is "given" in experience.

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