

Roger Scruton

# KANT

A Very Short Introduction

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## Kant: A Very Short Introduction



**KANT**

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**A Very Short Introduction**

**Roger Scruton**

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# **Preface to the revised edition**

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In revising this short introduction I have tried to take account of recent scholarship, and to offer a more reliable guide to both primary and secondary sources. I have also amended the text where it seemed to me to be inaccurate or misleading, and added a chapter on Kant's political philosophy – a subject that has attracted increasing attention in the twenty years since this book first appeared. The interpretation of Kant that I offer is by no means the only one, and I have had to take sides in controversies that are of ever-increasing intricacy. In the guide to Further Reading I indicate books that will help to rectify the inevitable one-sidedness of a short introduction.

*Malmesbury  
January 2000*



# **Preface to the first edition**

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I have tried to present Kant's thought in a modern idiom, while presupposing the least possible knowledge of philosophy. Since Kant is one of the most difficult of modern philosophers, I cannot hope that I have made every aspect of this thought intelligible to the general reader. It is not clear that every aspect of his thought has been intelligible to anyone, even to Kant. The depth and complexity of Kant's philosophy are such that it is only after complete immersion that the importance of its central questions, and the imaginative power of its answers, can be understood. Kant hoped to draw the limits of the human understanding; he found himself compelled to transcend them. Readers should therefore not be surprised if they have to read this introduction more than once in order to appreciate Kant's vision. To share that vision is to see the world transformed; to acquire it cannot be the labour of a single day.

The first draft of this book was written in Prague. I am grateful to Dr Ladislav Hejdánek, not only for the invitation to speak to his seminar on the topic of the categorical imperative, but also for the example he has set in obeying it. I have benefited from Ruby Meager, Mark Platts, and Dorothy Edgington, who commented on a later draft, and from the students of London University who have, over the last decade, made the teaching of Kant's philosophy so rewarding. I have also benefited, in more ways than I can express, from the kindness of Lenka Dvořáková, to whom this book is dedicated.

*London  
May 1988*





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# Abbreviations

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Quotations are mostly from the English translations referred to in the Further reading. However, where these translations have seemed to me to be misleading or inelegant, I have used my own.

- A. *Critique of Pure Reason*, first edition
- B. *Critique of Pure Reason*, second edition
- P. *Critique of Practical Reason*
- J. *Critique of Aesthetic Judgement*
- T. *Critique of Teleological Judgement*
- G. *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*
- F. *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics*
- M. *The Metaphysics of Morals*

Page references to those works are to the standard German edition, or else, in the case of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, to the original pagination of the first and second editions. For English translations, see Further reading.

I have also occasionally referred to the following:

- I. 'Inaugural Dissertation', contained in G. B. Kerferd, D. K. E. Walford, and P. G. Lucas (eds), *Kant: Selected Pre-Critical Writings* (Manchester, 1968)
- K. *The Kant–Eberhard Controversy*, by H. E. Allison (Baltimore and London, 1973)
- L. *Lectures on Ethics*, tr. L. Infield, new edition (New York, 1963)
- C. *Kant's Philosophical Correspondence: 1759–99*, ed. and tr. Arnulf Zweig (Chicago, 1967)  
Hans Reiss (ed.), *Kant: Political Writings*, tr. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge, 1970). This contains three works that I refer to: *An Answer to the Question: 'What is Enlightenment?'* (What is Enlightenment?, for short); *On the Common Saying: 'This may be true in theory, but does not apply in practice'* (Common Saying, for short), and *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch* (PP for short).

All italics that appear in quotations from Kant are his own.





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