KANT

This is the first full-length biography in more than fifty years of Immanuel Kant, one of the giants among the pantheon of Western philosophers as well as the one with the most powerful and broad influence on contemporary philosophy.

It is well known that Kant spent his entire life in an isolated part of Prussia, living the life of a typical university professor. This has given rise to the view that Kant was a pure thinker with no life of his own, or at least none worth considering seriously. Manfred Kuehn debunks that myth once and for all.

Kant’s life (1724–1804) spanned almost the entire eighteenth century, and the period of his adulthood coincided with some of the most significant changes in the Western world, many of which still reverberate in our lives today. This was the period in which the modern view of the world originated, and this biography reveals how Kant’s philosophy was an expression of and response to this new conception of modernity. His intellectual life reflects the most significant intellectual, political, and scientific developments of the period, from the literary movement of Sturm und Drang to such distant events as the French and American Revolutions.

Taking account of the most recent scholarship, Professor Kuehn allows the reader (whether interested in philosophy, history, politics, German culture, or religion) to follow the same journey that Kant himself took: from being a scholar narrowly focusing on the metaphysical foundations of Newtonian science to emerging as a great thinker expounding the defense of the morality of an enlightened citizen of the world.

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Kant
A Biography

Manfred Kuehn
Philipps-Universität Marburg
To
Margret
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The founding of the North American Kant Society in 1986 was a significant event not only for Kant scholarship in the United States but also for me personally. I have been lucky to be able to serve as the society’s bibliographer since its inception, and I am glad to observe that Kant scholarship has become a more cooperative enterprise since that time. Indeed, I have benefited greatly from the help of many friends and colleagues whom I might never have known without this institution. I cannot thank all of those who have had an influence on my work over the years, but I would like to give a special thanks to the late Lewis White Beck, who was the founding father of the society. Like many, I owe him a great debt. I am sure this book would have been greatly improved if it could have benefited from his advice, but unfortunately that was not to be.

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I am also grateful to the staffs of the University Library and the Library
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Cast of Characters

Borowski, Ludwig Ernst (1740–1832), one of Kant’s first students; he remained friendly with Kant throughout his life. During his later years, Borowski was a high official in the Lutheran Church of Prussia. He was a frequent dinner guest during Kant’s last years. He wrote one of the three “official” biographies of Kant, but did not attend his funeral.

Baczko, Adolph Franz Joseph von (1756–1823), a student of Kant’s during the seventies (and a friend of Kraus). Although he lost his eyesight, he was a capable historian. A professorship at the University of Königsberg was denied him because he was a Catholic.

Beck, Jacob Sigismund (1761–1840), one of Kant’s most famous early followers. He studied in Königsberg, where he was as much influenced by Kraus as by Kant. He published between 1793 and 1796 a volume of explanations of Kant’s critical philosophy. Early on, he was an orthodox follower of Kant’s; in his last book, The Only Possible Point of View from which Critical Philosophy Must Be Judged, Beck went his own way, much to Kant’s chagrin.

Fichte, Johann Gottlieb (1762–1814), famous idealist philosopher. He came to Königsberg, where he wrote the Critique of All Revelation (1792). Kant used his influence to see that it was published. This work, which appeared anonymously, was first viewed as Kant’s own. Kant’s revelation of Fichte’s authorship made him famous. Later, Fichte went “beyond” Kant. He severely criticized Kantian philosophy and thus drew Kant’s ire.

Funk, Johann Daniel (1721–1764), a very popular professor of law in Königsberg and a close friend of the young Kant. He led a loose life, and he had a decisive influence on Hippel.

Goeschen, Johann Julius (1736–1798), came to Königsberg in 1760, where he soon became a friend of Kant and the Jacobis. He was first the master and then the director of the mint in Königsberg. He and Maria Charlotta Jacobi became lovers and married after she got a divorce. After the marriage Kant remained friendly with Goeschen, even though he never entered their house.

Green, Joseph (1727–1786), British merchant in Königsberg and the closest friend of Kant. Hippel is said to have used Green as a model for his Man of the Clock, a char-
acter who lives by inviolable maxims and strictly by the clock. Later writers transferred these characteristics to Kant.

Hamann, Johann Georg (1730–1788), one of Kant’s (and Green’s) close friends. Born and educated in Königsberg, Hamann was also known as the Magus of the North. He was one of the most important Christian thinkers in Germany during the second half of the eighteenth century. Advocating an irrationalistic theory of faith, he opposed the prevailing Enlightenment philosophy. He was the mentor of the literary movement of Sturm und Drang. Herder popularized these ideas after leaving Königsberg in 1764.

Herder, Johann Gottfried (1744–1803), one of Kant’s students during the early sixties. Influenced as much by Hamann as by Kant, he became one of the most important writers of the Sturm und Drang movement and had an enormous influence on pre-Romantic thinkers in Germany. After Kant reviewed his Ideas anonymously and very critically, Herder turned against his teacher.

Herz, Markus (1747–1803), one of Kant’s most important students, a respondent at the defense of Kant’s Inaugural Dissertation and an important correspondent for Kant after moving to Berlin in 1770. Herz became a medical doctor in Berlin, where he gave lectures on Kant’s philosophy that influenced important government officials in favor of Kant.

Hippel, Theodor Gottlieb (von) (1741–1796), friend of Hamann and Kant who became the mayor of Königsberg. He wrote many humorous plays and novels. Like Kant and Schulz, he went to the Collegium Fridericianum, and he studied at the university during Kant’s earliest years as a lecturer there. Hippel and Kant were friends but always kept a “polite” distance.

Jachmann, Reinhold Bernhard (1767–1843), closely associated with Kant between 1783 and 1794. As his amanuensis or academic helper, Jachmann knew Kant well during the years in which he published his most famous works. Jachmann and his older brother (Johann Benjamin, 1765–1832) were closely associated with Joseph Green and Robert Motherby. Johann Benjamin, also one of Kant’s amanuenses, practiced medicine in Königsberg after studying in Edinburgh. Reinhold Bernhard Jachmann was one of the three “official” biographers of Kant.

Jacobi, Johann Conrad (1718–1774), banker in Königsberg and friend of Hamann and Kant. He was the husband of Maria Charlotta until their divorce in 1768. One of Kant’s close friends, he took care of some of Kant’s private business, such as the regular payments to his poor relatives.

Jacobi, Maria Charlotta (1739–1795), called “the Princess,” who divorced Johann Conrad Jacobi and married Johann Julius Goeßchen. Kant, who was a friend of both Johann Conrad Jacobi and Johann Julius Goeßchen, never went to the house of the Goeßchens after gossiping too much about the events leading up to the divorce.

Kanter, Johann Jakob (1738–1786), book dealer and publisher who was close to Kant, Hamann, and Hippel. Kant lived for a while in a building that housed his bookshop. Kanter was the publisher of many of Kant’s works.

Keyserlingk, Caroline Charlotte Amalie, Countess (1729–1791), Kant’s “ideal” of a woman, the wife of Count Heinrich Christian Keyserlingk. Kant was a close friend
of the family with a standing invitation to their table, where he almost always sat at the place of honor beside the countess.

*Keyserlingk, Heinrich Christian, Count* (1727–1787), the husband of Caroline Charlotte Amalie. Kant and the count seem to have shared many political views.

*Kraus, Christian Jacob* (1753–1807), perhaps Kant’s most talented student during the seventies. Kraus became his colleague in 1780 and taught moral philosophy. Today he is best known as one of the people who introduced Adam Smith’s ideas into Germany. Even though Kraus and Kant were good friends, even sharing a common household at one time, they had a falling out sometime before the third *Critique* was published. In some ways, Kraus was closer to Hamann than to Kant.

*Lambert, Johann Heinrich* (1728–1777), mathematician and philosopher. Lambert’s philosophical correspondence with Kant was an important source of inspiration for the latter.

*Lampe, Martin* (1734–1806), Kant’s servant throughout most of his life. He was a retired soldier. Lampe was rather limited in his intelligence, and Kant had constant problems with him. He had to let him go at the very end of his life because he drank so heavily that he neglected his duties as a servant.

*Mendelssohn, Moses* (1729–1786), famous Jewish philosopher who was Kant’s literary friend and supporter. Mendelssohn and Herz became friends in Berlin after 1770. Kant thought highly of Mendelssohn, and their correspondence was important to him.

*Motherby, Robert* (1736–1801), English merchant, partner of Green, and Kant’s close friend. Kant had a great deal of influence on the education of Motherby’s sons. He also had much of his money invested in the firm of Green and Motherby.

*Reinhold, Karl Leonhard* (1758–1823), one of the first popularizers of Kant’s philosophy. Though he never met Kant in person, he made Kant a household name. After becoming professor in Jena, he abandoned strict Kantian philosophy for his own philosophy of representation. Later, as a follower of Fichte he became critical of Kant, but Kant always remained grateful to Reinhold.

*Scheffner, Johann Georg* (1736–1820), a friend of Hippel, Hamann, and Kant. He published risqué poems “à la Grecourt” in 1761. He became secretary in the ministry of war in Königsberg in 1765 and 1766 but retired the next year.

*Schulz, Johann* (1739–1805), a friend of Kant’s who studied at the University of Königsberg during Kant’s first years as a lecturer. He reviewed Kant’s Inaugural Dissertation and, during the seventies, became court chaplain in Königsberg and lecturer in mathematics. After becoming the first defender of Kant’s critical philosophy, he was appointed full professor.

*Wasianski, Ehregott Andreas Christoph* (1775–1831), studied theology at the University of Königsberg between 1772 and 1780. He took courses from Kant and was his amanuensis. He became a deacon in Königsberg in 1786 and took care of Kant during his last years. He was the executor of Kant’s will and the third of the three “official” biographers of Kant.
Chronology of Kant’s Life and Works

1724   April 22: Immanuel Kant is born.

1732   Fall: Kant begins to attend the Collegium Fridericianum.

1735   Birth of his brother Johann Heinrich (died 1800).

1737   Death of his mother (born 1697).

1740   September 24: Inscribed at the University of Königsberg.
       Death of Frederick William I; Frederick II (the Great) becomes king of Prussia.

1746   Death of his father (born 1682).

1748–54 Private tutor in Judtschen, Arnsdorf, and Rautenburg.

1749   First book, Thoughts on the True Estimation of the Living Forces (Gedanken von der wahren Schätzung der lebendigen Kräfte).

1751   Knutzen dies.

1754   Wolff dies.
       Two essays, “Whether the Earth Has Changed in Its Revolutions” (Ob die Erde in ihrer Um drehung ... einige Veränderung erlitten habe) and “On the Question whether the Earth is Aging from a Physical Point of View” (Die Frage, ob die Erde ver alte, physikalisch erwogen).

       June 12: Promotion to Magister, with the thesis “On Fire” (De igne).
       September 27: Acquires permission to lecture at the university with the thesis “A New Exposition of the First Principles of Metaphysics” (Principiorum primorum cognitionis metaphysicae nova dilucidatio).
Chronology

1756 January to April: Three essays on the earthquake in Lisbon.
April 8: Applies unsuccessfully for Knutzen's position.
April 10: Disputation on his Physical Monadology (Metaphysica cum geometria iunctae usus in philosophia naturalis, cuius specimen I. continet monadologiam physicam).
April 25: “New Remarks about the Explanation of the Theory of Winds” (Neue Anmerkungen zur Erläuterung der Theorie der Winde) (announcement of his lectures for the summer semester).

1757 Easter (announcement of his lectures): “Sketch and Announcement of a Lecture Course on Physical Geography, with an Appendix whether the Westerly Winds in Our Environments Are So Humid because They Blow over a Large Ocean” (Entwurf und Ankündigung eines Collegii der physischen Geographie, nebst Anhang . . . ).

1758 January 22: occupation of Königsberg by the Russians.
Summer semester (announcements of his lectures): “A New Doctrine of Motion and Rest” (Neuer Lehrbegriff der Bewegung und Ruhe). December: Applies unsuccessfully for Kypke’s position.

1759 Fall (announcement of his lectures): “Essay on Some Views about Optimism” (Versuch einiger Betrachtungen über den Optimismus).

1760 “Thoughts at the Occasion of Mr. Johann Friedrich von Funk's Untimely Death” (Gedanken bei dem frühzeitigen Ableben des Herrn Johann Friedrich von Funk).

1762 July: The Russian occupation of Königsberg ends.
“The False Subtlety of the Four Syllogistic Figures” (Die falsche Spitzfindigkeit der vier syllogistischen Figuren erwiesen). Herder becomes Kant's student (until 1764).
Rousseau, Emile and Contrat social.

1763 The Only Possible Argument in Support of a Demonstration of the Existence of God (Der einzige mögliche Beweisgrund zu einer Demonstration des Daseins Gottes).
Attempt to Introduce the Concept of Negative Magnitudes into Philosophy (Versuch den Begriff der negativen Größen in die Weltweisheit einzuführen).

1764 Declines professorship of poetry.
Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime (Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen).
Review of Silberschlag’s Theory of the Fireball that Appeared on July 23, 1762, in the same paper.
Chronology

Prize essay for the Berlin Academy: Inquiry Concerning the Distinctness of the Principles of Natural Theology and Morality (Untersuchungen über die Deutlichkeit der Grundsätze der natürlichen Theologie und der Moral).
Lambert, New Organon.

Begins correspondence with Lambert.
Application for the position of sublibrarian at the Schloßbibliothek.
Leibniz, New Essays on the Human Understanding.

1766 Dreams of a Spirit-Seeker Elucidated by Dreams of Metaphysics (Träume eines Geistersuchers, erläutert durch Träume der Metaphysik).
Begins correspondence with Mendelssohn.
(April 1766 to May 1772): Sublibrarian at the Schloßbibliothek.
Mendelssohn, Phaedo.

1768 "Concerning the Ultimate Ground of the Differentiation of Directions in Space" (Von dem ersten Grunde des Unterschiedes der Gegenrichten im Raume).

1769 October: Offer from Erlangen.
December: Rejection of the offer from Erlangen.

1770 January: Offer from Jena.
March: Application for professorship at the University of Königsberg.
March 31: Appointment to professor of logic and metaphysics.
Inaugural Dissertation, De mundi sensibilis atque intelligibilis forma et principiis, defended on August 21.

1770–81 “Silent years”; origin of the Critique of Pure Reason (Kritik der reinen Vernunft).

1771–88 Karl Abraham von Zedlitz serves as minister of education in Prussia.

1771 Review of Moscati, Of the Essential Difference in the Structure of the Bodies of Humans and Animals.
Lambert, Architectonic.

1775 Easter (announcement of his lectures): “Of the Different Human Races” (Von den verschiedenen Rassen der Menschen).
Crusius dies.

1776 An essay on the Dessau Philanthropinum (Königsbergische Zeitung).
Hume dies.
Summer semester: Kant becomes dean of the faculty of philosophy.
Declaration of Independence and the Virginia Declaration of Rights.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year(s)</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1778</td>
<td>Declines an offer to become professor in Halle. Voltaire and Rousseau die. Lessing, <em>On the Education of the Human Race</em>.</td>
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<td>1779–80</td>
<td>Winter semester: Kant serves as dean.</td>
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<td>1780</td>
<td>Becomes permanent member of the university senate (until 1804).</td>
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<td>1781</td>
<td>May: <em>Critique of Pure Reason</em> (<em>Kritik der reinen Vernunft</em>).</td>
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<td>1782</td>
<td>Announcement of the publication of Lambert’s <em>Correspondence</em>. “Information for Medical Doctors” (<em>Nachrichten an Ärzte</em>).</td>
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<td>1782–83</td>
<td>Winter semester: Kant serves as dean.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1785–86</td>
<td>Winter semester: Kant serves as dean. Mendelssohn–Jacobi dispute (also knows as the pantheism dispute).</td>
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<td>Year</td>
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Easter: *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* (*Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaft*).  
Summer semester: Kant for the first time serves as rector of the university.  
August: Frederick the Great dies.  
Review of Hufeland’s essay on *The Principle of Natural Right* (*Grundsatz des Naturrechts*).  
“Observations on Jakob’s Examination of Mendelssohn’s Morning Hours (Bemerkungen zu Jakobs Prüfung der Mendelsohnschen Morgenstunden).  
October: “What Does ‘Orientation in Thinking’ Mean?” *(Was heißt, sich im Denken orientieren?)* in *Berlinerische Monatsschrift*.  
September: Inauguration of Frederick William II. Kant organizes the university’s role in the festivities.  
December 7: Kant becomes external member of the Berlin Academy of the Sciences.  
Schmid, *Extract from Kant’s Critique of Reason*. |
| 1786–87 | Reinhold’s “Letters on the Kantian Philosophy” in *Der teutsche Merkur*. |
| 1787 | Second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. |
| 1788 | Beginning of the year: *Critique of Practical Reason* (*Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*).  
January: “On the Use of Teleological Principles in Philosophy” *(über den Gebrauch teleologischer Prinzipien in der Philosophie)* in *Der teutsche Merkur*.  
Summer semester: Kant becomes rector for the second time.  
Schmid, *Lexicon for the Easier Use of the Kantian Writings*.  
Hamann dies.  
July 9: The Edict on Religion.  
December 19: New Edict on Religion. |
| 1789 | Beginning of the French Revolution.  
Johann Schulz, *Examination of the Kantian Critique of Pure Reason*.  
Toward the end of the year: Kant begins to have difficulties concentrating on intellectual work for extended periods of time. |
| 1790 | *Critique of Judgment* (*Kritik der Urteilskraft*).  
Against Eberhard, “On a New Discovery, which Makes All New Critique of Pure Reason Unnecessary Because of an Older One” *(Über eine Entdeckung nach der alle neue Kritik der reinen Vernunft durch eine ältere entbehrlich gemacht werden soll)*.  
“On Enthusiasm and the Means against It” *(Über die Schwärmerei und die Mittel dagegen)* in Borowski’s *Cagliostro*.  
Maimon, *Essay on Transcendental Philosophy*. |
Chronology

1791
September “On the Failure of All Attempts at a Theodicee” (über das Mißlingen aller philosophischen Versuche in der Theodicee) in Berlinische Monatsschrift.
Summer semester: Kant serves as dean.

1792
March 5: New and stricter edict concerning obedience to religious customs.
April: “Concerning Radical Evil” (Vom radikalen Bösen) in Berlinische Monatsschrift.
June 14: Failure to obtain permission to print “Concerning the Battle of the Good against the Evil Principle for Dominion over the Human Being” in Berlinische Monatsschrift.
Schulze, Aenesidemus.
Fichte, Critique of All Revelation (at first assumed to be Kant’s work).
France becomes a republic.
Easter: Religion within the Boundary of Mere Reason (Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft).
Beck, An Explanatory Extract from the Critical Writings of Kant.
Schiller, On Beauty and Dignity.
Louis XVI guillotined.

1794
Second edition of Religion within the Boundary of Mere Reason.
Spring and summer: Decisive actions against the “neologists” taken by the king.
May: “Something on the Influence of the Moon on the Climate” (Etwas vom Einfluss des Mondes auf die Witterung) in Berlinische Monatsschrift.
June: “The End of All Things” (Das Ende aller Dinge) in Berlinische Monatsschrift.
July: Membership in the Petersburg Academy.
October 1: Kant is censored by the king.
October 12: Kant’s response to the king.
Fichte, Grounding of the Entire Doctrine of Science (Wissenschaftslehre)
Maimon, Attempt at a New Logic.
Robespierre guillotined.

1794–95
Winter semester: Kant’s turn to be dean for the seventh time (Kraus stands in for him).

1795
On Eternal Peace (Zum ewigen Frieden).
Schiller, On the Aesthetic Education of Man and On Naive and Sentimental Poetry.
Schelling, On the Ego as the Principle of Philosophy.
Correspondence with Schiller.
Chronology

1796
Appendix to Sömmering's On the Organ of the Soul (Über das Organ der Seele).
May: “On a Newly Raised Noble Tone in Philosophy” (Von einem neuerdings erhobenen vornehmen Ton in der Philosophie) in Berlinische Monatsschrift.
July 23: Kant’s last lecture.
October: “Solution of a Mathematical Dispute Based on a Misunderstanding” (Ausgleichung eines auf Mißverständ beruhenden mathematischen Streits) in Berlinische Monatsschrift.
December: “Announcement of the Soon to Be Completed Tract on Eternal Peace in Philosophy” (Verkündigung des nahen Abschlusses eines Traktats zum ewigen Frieden in der Philosophie) in Berlinische Monatsschrift.
Fichte, Foundations of Natural Law.
Beck, The Only Possible Point of View.

1797
Metaphysical Foundations of the Doctrine of Right (Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Rechtslehre).
June 14: Königsberg students honor Kant's fiftieth anniversary as an author.
Metaphysical Foundations of the Doctrine of Virtue (Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Tugendlehre).
“On a Presumed Right to Lie from Philanthropic Motives” (Über ein vermeintes Recht, aus Menschenehr zu liegen) in Berliner Blätter.
November 10: Death of Frederick William II; Frederick William III becomes king.
Schelling, Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature.

1798
The Dispute of the Faculties (Der Streit der Fakultäten).
Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View (Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht).
“On Turning Out Books” (Über die Buchmacherei, zwei Briefe an F. Nicolai).
Declaration against Schlettwein.
Kant’s turn to be dean for the eighth time (Mangelsdorf stands in for him).
Schelling, Of the World-soul.

1799
August: Open declaration against Fichte.
Fichte, Appeal to the Public.
Herder, Metacritique.

1800
Last publication by Kant himself.
September: Kant’s Logic, edited by Jäsche.
Schelling, System of Transcendental Idealism.
Herder, Kalligone.

1801
November 14: Last official pronouncement.

1802
Physical Geography (Physische Geographie), edited by Rink.
Hegel, The Relation of Skepticism to Philosophy, Faith and Knowledge.
Schelling, Giordano Bruno.
<table>
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| 1803 | *On Pedagogy (Über Pädagogik)*, edited by Rink.  
April: Kant's last letter.  
October: Last illness.  
Herder dies. |
| 1804 | February 12: 11:00 A.M.: Kant dies.  
February 28: Kant is buried.  
April 23: Memorial service at the university.  
May: Prize essay, *On the Progress of Metaphysics since Leibniz and Wolff (Über die Fortschritte der Metaphysik seit Leibniz und Wolff)*, edited by Rink (written in 1790).  
Schelling, “In Memoriam: Kant.”  
Napoleon becomes emperor.  
Code civil is enacted. |