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Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*

Background Source Materials

This volume offers English translations of texts that form the essential background to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. Presenting the projects of Kant's predecessors and contemporaries in eighteenth-century Germany, it enables readers to understand the positions that Kant might have identified with "pure reason," the criticisms of pure reason that had been developed prior to Kant's, and alternative attempts at synthesizing empiricist elements within a rationalist framework. The volume contains chapters on Christian Wolff, Martin Knutzen, Alexander Baumgarten, Christian Crusius, Leonhard Euler, Johann Lambert, Marcus Herz, Johann Eberhard, and Johann Tetens. Each chapter includes a brief introduction that provides succinct biographical and bibliographical information on these authors, a concise account of their projects, and information on the importance of these projects to Kant's first *Critique*. Extensive references to the first *Critique*, brought together in a concordance, highlight the potential relevance of each text.

Eric Watkins is Professor of Philosophy at the University of California, San Diego. The recipient of grants from the Fulbright Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Science Foundation, the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, and the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, he is the author of *Kant and the Metaphysics of Causality*, which won the Book Prize in 2005 from the *Journal of the History of Philosophy*.

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Edited and translated by

ERIC WATKINS
University of California, San Diego

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Frontmatter
More Information

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978-0-521-78701-7 — Kant's Critique of Pure Reason
Eric Watkins
Frontmatter
More Information

Contents

Preface *page* ix
Abbreviations xiii

Introduction 1

1. Christian Wolff 5
Wolff, *Rational Thoughts on God, the World and the Soul of Human Beings, Also All Things in General* (1720) 7

2. Martin Knutzen 54
Knutzen, *System of Efficient Causes* (1735) 57
Knutzen, *Philosophical Treatise on the Immaterial Nature of the Soul* (1744) 75

3. Alexander Baumgarten 84
Baumgarten, *Metaphysics* (1739) 89

4. Christian August Crusius 132
Crusius, *Sketch of the Necessary Truths of Reason* (1745) 137

5. Leonhard Euler 180
Euler, *Letters to a German Princess* (1760–1762) 183

6. Johann Heinrich Lambert 231
Lambert, "Treatise on the *Criterion of Truth*" (1761) 233
Lambert, *New Organon* (1764) 257

7. Marcus Herz 275
Herz, First Letter (1770) 278
Kant, Second Letter (1771) 279
Herz, Third Letter (1771) 279
Herz, *Observations from Speculative Philosophy* (1771) 281
Kant, Fourth Letter (1772) 312
Kant, Fifth Letter (1776) 316

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CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-78701-7 — Kant's Critique of Pure Reason
Eric Watkins
Frontmatter
More Information

8. Johann August Eberhard 318
Eberhard, *Universal Theory of Thinking and Sensing* (1776) 320
9. Johann Nicolaus Tetens 353
Tetens, *Philosophical Essays on Human Nature and Its Development* (1777) 357

Concordance 392
Bibliography 401
Index 405

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978-0-521-78701-7 — Kant's Critique of Pure Reason
Eric Watkins
Frontmatter
More Information

Preface

It is obviously impossible to produce a single volume that includes all of the background texts that are minimally necessary for a reader to attain even a basic understanding of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. For when composing the first *Critique*, Kant was undoubtedly aware of and reacting to the views of numerous major thinkers such as Plato, Descartes, Locke, Newton, Leibniz, and Hume, and one must also keep in mind, especially in the cases of Newton, Leibniz, and Hume, that how their views were received and interpreted in eighteenth-century Germany may have been very different from our understanding today. Moreover, there are myriad "minor" figures whose views Kant would have been intimately familiar with. The scope of the relevant texts is simply too vast for all of them to be included in a single volume. Insofar as the texts of the major philosophers are currently available in high-quality English editions, readers of Kant are, comparatively speaking, already well served. The same cannot be said, however, of Kant's immediate predecessors and contemporaries, that is, eighteenth-century philosophers in Germany who wrote in Latin, French, or German.

The present volume thus represents a first attempt at providing English translations of selections of those German, French, and Latin works that would most help us to put the *Critique of Pure Reason* in its fuller historical context. It would naturally be highly desirable if all of the major works of all of the relevant authors were translated in their entirety. Instead, I have chosen those figures whose works are least available in English while also being the most relevant to understanding Kant's first *Critique*. As a result, I have not included authors of only tangential relevance to the Critical Kant (such as Boscovich and Maupertuis), even though they are interesting in their own right, and Moses Mendelssohn, who was extremely influential at the time, was

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Eric Watkins
Frontmatter
More Information

not selected for this volume because Cambridge University Press has already made his most important philosophical works readily available in a recent volume. Insofar as many authors who were not included in this volume deserve to be, I gladly invite others to rectify on other occasions the injustices I have committed. For each author included in this volume, I have selected and translated those passages that either give a sense of the author's overall project or are most directly relevant to specific passages in the first *Critique*.

I have attempted to indicate the relevance of the texts translated below to Kant's thought by inserting footnotes that suggest which passages they would be related to in some way, whether it be by comparison or contrast. I have focused primarily on references to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, though not in a comprehensive and exhaustive way, which would have been neither possible (in light of the scope) nor even desirable (in light of the different views that readers might take on this issue). References will be either to specific passages, indicated by the standard A/B pagination of the first and second editions of the first *Critique*, or to sections of the first *Critique*, or, where appropriate, to both. The concordance provides a handy way to identify which passages are relevant to which particular sections in the first *Critique*. In addition, I have occasionally made reference to several of Kant's pre-Critical publications when the passage in question was especially pertinent. If the texts translated herein help us to appreciate their significance as well, this is a welcome bonus, but insofar as Kant's pre-Critical works shed light on the *Critique of Pure Reason*, their indirect contribution may be crucial too. All editorial actions are indicated with brackets. All footnotes marked by a number are the editor's. Any footnote marked by something other than a number is the author's.

For those looking for discussions that draw on the historical background to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* in attempting to determine his mature thought, the following books are especially helpful: Karl Ameriks's *Kant's Theory of Mind,* Michael Friedman's *Kant and the Exact Sciences,* Paul Guyer's *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge*, Manfred Kuehn's *Kant: A Biography*, Béatrice Longuenesse's *Kant and the Capacity to Judge,* Eric Watkins's *Kant and the Metaphysics of Causality*, and Allen Wood's *Kant's Rational Theology*.

I am grateful to James Messina and Tim Jankowiak for their help with proofreading the translations and to James for help with the references to the first *Critique* as well as with the preparation of the concordance.

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Frontmatter
More Information

I am indebted to Kimberly Brewer for assembling the index. I thank several of my German Philosophy Translation classes at the University of California, San Diego, for their input on select passages from Lambert and Herz. I thank Brandon Look for a series of helpful suggestions on the translation of one of Knutzen's difficult texts, and Manfred Kuehn, who was instrumental in helping to formulate the original project and get it started. I am also happy to acknowledge the general advice and particular suggestions of Daniel Garber, John Cottingham, Karl Ameriks, Paul Guyer, and Allen Wood.

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Frontmatter
More Information

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Abbreviations of Kant's works are as follows:

Dreams of a Spirit-Seer	*Dreams of a spirit-seer elucidated by dreams of metaphysics*
False Subtlety	*The false subtlety of the four syllogistic figures*
Inaugural Dissertation	*On the form and principles of the sensible and the intelligible world*
Inquiry	*Inquiry concerning the distinctness of the principles of natural theology and morality*
Metaphysical Foundations	*The metaphysical foundations of natural science*
New Elucidation	*A new elucidation of the first principles of metaphysical cognition*
The Only Possible Argument	*The only possible argument in support of a demonstration of the existence of God*
Physical Monadology	*The employment in natural philosophy of metaphysics combined with geometry, of which sample I contains the physical monadology*

Other abbreviations are as follows:

GW	*The Critique of Pure Reason*, edited and translated by Paul Guyer and Allen Wood

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(number:number)	The first number refers to the volume of the Academy Edition of Kant's works (*Gesammelte Schriften*), the second to the page number.
A[number]/B[number]	A refers to the first edition pagination of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, B refers to the second edition pagination.

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