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KANT AND THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

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Kant and the French Revolution

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Abstract: To Kant, the French Revolution's central events were the transfer of sovereignty to the people in 1789 and the trial and execution of the monarch in the period 1792–3. Through a contextual study, this Element argues that while both events manifested the principle of popular sovereignty, the first did so in lawful ways, whereas the latter was a perversion of the principle. Kant was convinced that historical examples can help us understand political philosophy, and this Element seeks to show this in practice.

Keywords: Kant, French Revolution, popular sovereignty, revolution, reform

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