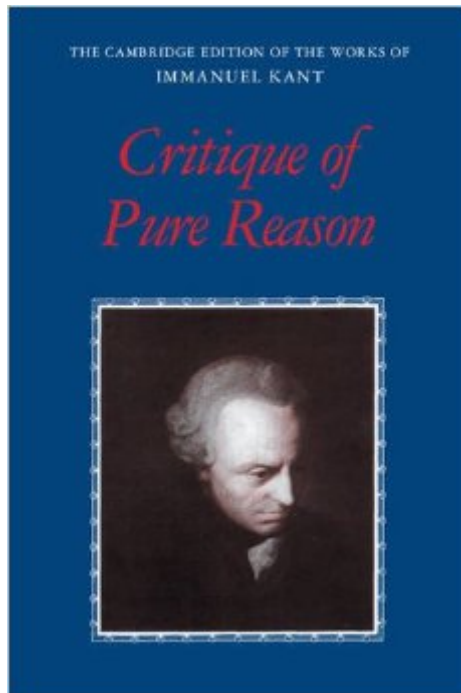


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Critique Of Pure Reason (The Cambridge Edition Of The Works Of Immanuel Kant)



Synopsis

This entirely new translation of Critique of Pure Reason is the most accurate and informative English translation ever produced of this epochal philosophical text. Though its simple, direct style will make it suitable for all new readers of Kant, the translation displays a philosophical and textual sophistication that will enlighten Kant scholars as well. This translation recreates as far as possible a text with the same interpretative nuances and richness as the original.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Many people have trouble reading the Critique of Pure Reason, and it truly is a very difficult book. But the fact is that it does all make sense, not just in some facile verbal way but logically -- and once you're used to certain idiosyncrasies (especially the old-fashioned scholastic terms and the seemingly artificial organization of the text), you'll be well able to find out for yourself what Kant's points were, and whether or not he really made them. So I won't talk about that here, I'll just give you some tips to help you get started with a minimum of pain and bafflement:1. Read the Prolegomena first, or at the same time. That book, which is both clear and SHORT, is Kant's own account of what the Critique was meant to accomplish and what prompted him to write it. If you read the Prolegomena and think he's barking up the wrong tree, put off the Critique... until you change your mind. (The last bit doesn't apply to people taking a class, of course.)2. Kant's lecture notes on Logic can also be useful because they show how he believed philosophical thought should be organized and expressed. Regardless of whether you take his so-called "logical method" seriously,

no one denies that *Kant took it very seriously*, and once you can recognize it in the Critique, many passages become much easier to follow.³ Don't expect a profound spiritual or aesthetic experience. I value this book as the first really satisfying rational explanation of why the world makes sense (turns out it has to!), but I won't claim it's any good as a guide to meditation, as a substitute Bible, as poetry, or even as prose. Contrary to his reputation, Kant is an excellent writer, but he's not trying to take you to a higher level here, or even to entertain you. At all.

Because of the very negative reviews of the Guyer/Wood translation on this page, I have been conflicted in determining which edition of Kant's first critique I should purchase. I recently saw the Max Muller translation re-released by Penguin, and was tempted to purchase that based on the recommendation by one of the reviewers here. Before I made a decision, however, I still wanted to do more research; this work is obviously of immense importance in the history of thought, making it crucial to acquire the best edition possible. After much futile searching, I was informed that my university harbors a scholar of Kant and Schopenhauer who carries, at some level, international recognition. In fact, he is the translator of Schopenhauer's *THE WORLD AS WILL AND REPRESENTATION*, published by Prentice/Longman, a translation I would encourage you to pick up. You can find his name if you search for it here at [. To get to the point, I contacted him](#) expressing my concern over which translation of Kant's critique would be best, and this is what he said: "I have to confess that I have not paid any attention to the Muller translation, probably because it is never cited by scholars working on Kant. That doesn't mean it's not good, but I just can't comment on that. I will say that, unless one is working at the deeper levels of Kant scholarship - where one would presume at least some familiarity with German and sensitivity to spots in the translation where there are at least likely to be possible questions of translation - it almost certainly won't make much of a difference which of the translations you use. They are all at least that good.

Please note that I am reviewing only the Guyer-Wood translation, not the work itself. There are four previous English translations of this work: Francis Haywood (1838, revised 1848); JMD Meiklejohn (1855); F Max Müller (1881, revised 1896); and NK Smith (1929). All of these (save the first) have considerable merit. Meiklejohn shows considerable skill in making Kant speak idiomatic English. As Müller points out, however, Meiklejohn not infrequently flounders in Kant's monstrous gothic sentences, and loses the thread of meaning. As a native German speaker and scholar of language, Müller's 1881 version set the standard for this work for intelligibility, clarity, and readability. Smith's version has been standard for many years, but even a cursory comparison of Müller with Smith

will show that MÄ ller often has a clearer grasp of the German, and provides a better expression of the key concepts. Smith had also come under the influence of the radical neo-Kantians, and his translation suffers severely from that. Prospective readers of a great philosopher's work come to the work with certain expectations. They have the right to expect - nay demand - prose that reflects that greatness. Kant's great work is a work of literature, and must be respected as any other work of literature. He often employs literary devices (such as metaphor) to make his point clearer. Sensitivity to idiomatic English style must be paramount in the translation of so difficult a work as this. In short: Translating a work of this kind calls for special talents. Guyer and Wood, unfortunately, do not possess these talents. They have no credentials in literary translation, translation theory, or semiotics.

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