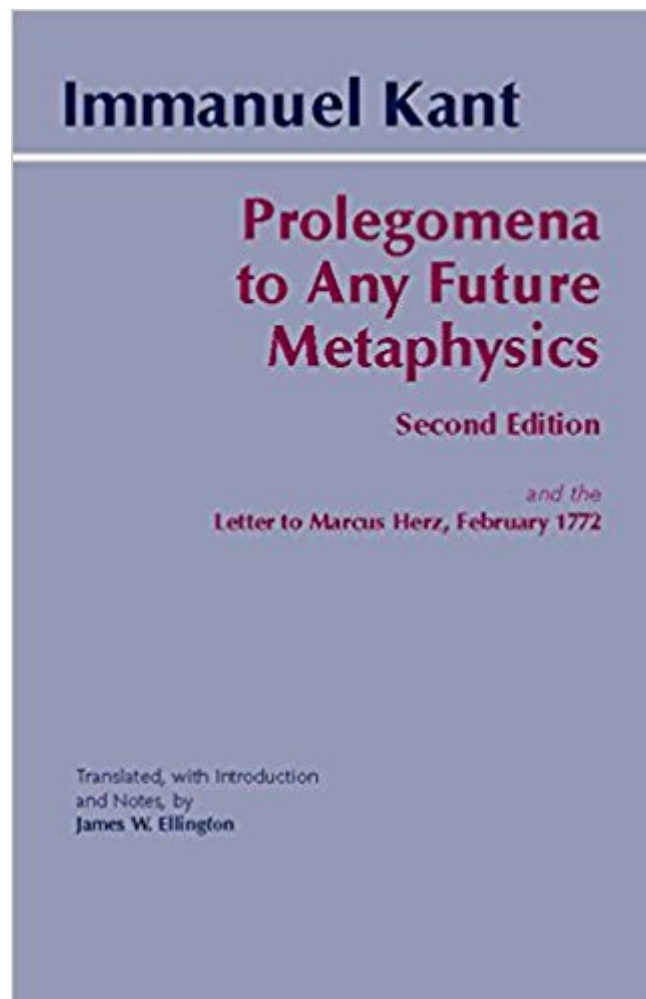


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Prolegomena To Any Future Metaphysics: And The Letter To Marcus Herz, February 1772 (Hackett Classics)



Synopsis

This edition of Prolegomena includes Kant's letter of February, 1772 to Marcus Herz, a momentous document in which Kant relates the progress of his thinking and announces that he is now ready to present a critique of pure reason.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Simply put, modern philosophy begins with Kant. If anyone wishes to understand the development of philosophy after the 18th century, you must have some grounding in Kant. That said, his works are not easy to read, nor are they well-suited to leisurely reading. While most individuals try a stab at the Critique of Pure Reason, many seem to get lost in his argument. For all you such individuals, the Prolegomena offers a handy guide to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason. This work is relatively short and far more accessible compared to the Critique. However, for a serious understanding of Kant, you must read this alongside the Critique of Pure Reason. Whereas the Prolegomena gives us a taste of the whole picture, the Critique provides us with all the details and nuances of his argument. Lastly, the Hackett edition of this is quite nice in that it provides, at the end, a list of major words/phrases and the corresponding German.

Kant wrote the Prolegomena to assist readers who were having trouble understanding his Critique of Pure Reason. Nevertheless, the Prolegomena itself is difficult reading. In contrast to much of contemporary philosophy, however, it is worth the effort. One comes away from the Prolegomena

with a different world view. This alternative perspective is not something that one need accept or reject, but a point of view that one may consider, part of our conceptual wherewithal for trying to make some sense of life. Though commonly cast in the role of a philosophical idealist, Kant emphatically agrees that all knowledge is experientially determined. He parts company with philosophical materialists such as Marx, however, when he posits the existence of mind as organized a priori in a specific though unknowable way. Mind, thus, is not a tabula rasa on which our first experiences are inscribed and then used in making sense of what follows. Mind, instead, shapes all our experiences in terms of its inherent organization. This leads Kant to the distinction between noumena, things as they actually are, and phenomena, things as we apprehend them upon their encounter with the organization of mind. This means that we can never know the world as it actually is. Since there is no way to test this claim, we are left in the realm of speculative philosophical thought as an end in itself. Nevertheless, it is worth pointing out that modern linguistics, especially as practiced by Chomsky, makes a comparable assumption. Chomsky observes that the remarkable thing about the world's many languages is not that they are so different, but that in crucial ways they have a great deal in common. This suggests that the functioning central nervous system -- mind -- has a specific and universal structure, that it is organized in much the same way from time to time and place to place. In addition, though Garfinkel might reject this assessment, his ethnomethodological notion of interpretive procedures which enable us to make the social world intelligible for ourselves and each other seems to presuppose a pre-existing cognitive structure. In the words of one critic, they are "psychologisms," mental artifacts that are used by all of us and not socially learned. Again, they seem to be inherent a priori in the structure of the mind. There is, no doubt, a good deal in the Prolegomena that I've missed or forgotten or misunderstood. If, however, I've gained nothing but insight into the possibility of mind as something other than a primordial blank slate, something that has a structure of its own, I've gained a great deal.

This text is essentially a concise summary of the work accomplished by Kant in his Critique of Pure Reason, in which the great thinker answers the following: 1) How is pure mathematics possible? 2) How is pure natural science possible? 3) How is metaphysics in general possible? 4) How is metaphysics as a science possible? These are of course the most crucial topics in all transcendental thought, and this volume is possibly the most successful microcosm of Kant's thought. However, for all real students of Kant, the Critique must be read in its entirety.

"easy" read in the sense that the book is concise, follows a very logical and explicitly laid out progression, and Kant -as he does- repeats points multiple times. The content is actually quite clear and straightforward too, the main difficulties I had were related to his sentence structure and figuring out which pronouns referred to what. Totally accessible for an interested layman once you understand the context of the work. Must read for before the critique

As far as conciseness goes, you won't find much better, and I love that this series of philosophy texts is so inexpensive. However, that doesn't make Kant any easier to comprehend. It's tough stuff that requires ample thought while reading, and it doesn't help that this is a translation; as anyone will tell you, things sometimes get lost in translation.

A must read, great for philosophy majors. A awesome basis for learning philosophy. Buy it now you won't regret it.

This book is a very good overview of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason and a very good introduction to Kant's thought.

Another insight into metaphysics.

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