

## Preface

The *Preface* is very important for understanding Kant's groundbreaking motivation and purpose. Kant develops some themes from the Preface to the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (the A-Preface), and he develops some of the present *Preface's* themes in the B-Preface, especially the thought of a revolution. Questions with asterisks (\*) are optional, or a little more difficult.

1. What is Kant's intention? (§3)
- 2.\* In §§ 4–6, Kant mentions the current state of metaphysics, and the potential reaction to any criticism of metaphysics. What strikes you most about these thoughts?
3. What is Kant's 'prediction' in §7?
- 4.\* In a long passage (§§ 8–11, see also §13), Kant mentions Hume as having 'struck a spark'. What is it, according to Kant, that Hume saw?
- 5.\* What is the analogy that involves a hammer and an etching needle? (§12)
- 6.\* What is 'the Humean problem'? (§§14–5)
7. How does Kant (self-)assess the *CPR*? (§15) And how does he justify the book's (i.e. *CPR*) weaknesses? (§§18–20)
8. What is Kant's point about the 'plan'? (§§20–2)

*Background Information.* (a) In §1, Kant makes clear that the *Prolegomena* are an invitation to think for oneself (see also §7). This is an echo, perhaps, of his 1784 essay *What is Enlightenment*, which opens thus: '*Enlightenment is the human being's emergence from his self-incurred minority [Unmündigkeit]. Minority is inability to make use of one's own understanding without direction from another. This minority is self-incurred when its cause lies not in lack of understanding but in lack of resolution and courage to use it without direction from another. Sapere aude! Have courage to make use of your own understanding! is thus the motto of enlightenment.*'<sup>1</sup> (b) The allusion in §2 to those 'for whom the history of philosophy is itself their philosophy' aims at those who like to categorise theories, e.g., as empiricist, or rationalist, or whatever. (c) Kant critically mentions 'ordinary common sense' (*der gemeine Menschenverstand*) in §12. Beattie defines it thus, "that power of the mind which perceives truth, or commands belief, not by progressive argumentation, but by an instantaneous, instinctive, and irresistible impulse; derived neither from education nor from habit, but from nature; acting independently on our will, whenever its object is presented, according to an established law, and therefore properly called Sense; and acting in a similar manner upon all, or at least upon a great majority of mankind, and therefore properly called *Common Sense*" (*An Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth*, p. 40.<sup>2</sup> (c) For Kant, a 'deduction' (§14) is a justification.

1 From *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant, Practical Philosophy*, transl. and ed. by M. J. Gregor and A. Wood. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp. 17–22.

2 For more information, see <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/scottish-18th/>

