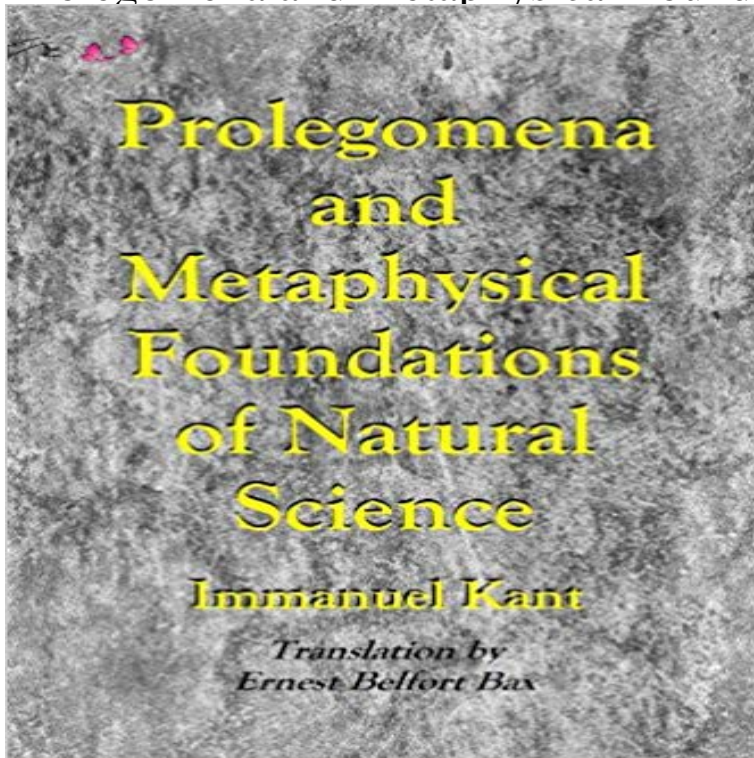


Prolegomena and Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science



Kant, in writing the Prolegomena, seems indeed to have had in his mind the same essentially negative view of the scope of his system we find expressed in the note in the *Anfangsgrunde* on pp. 144 et seq. of present volume. If his object was simply to demolish dogmatic metaphysics, by a limitation of speculation to experience, as its subject-matter, the Prolegomena are admirable, since they are in many respects clearer than the Critique. But if, on the other hand, this negative side of Kants labours was only a clearing of the ground for the original and constructive portion of his work, the formulation and attempted solution of the problem, How is experience itself possible? then we find in the Prolegomena the shortcomings of the Critique in an exaggerated form. The basis of this latter side of Kants system, it cannot be too much insisted upon, is the conception of (I.) consciousness-in-general or pure consciousness, as opposed to the consciousness or experience given directly through the individual mind, the object of empirical psychology; (II.) the unity of apperception, which indicates the first moment of the differentiation of form from matter (an important antithesis that Kant rehabilitated), that is, the first moment of the possibility of consciousness; and (III.) finally the immanent noumenon or fundamental agency of which consciousness itself with all its momenta, is the determination. This last, although tacitly assumed throughout, and frequently referred to in terms of psychology as the mind, (*das Gemuth*), it was reserved for Kants successors to definitively fix.***The *Metaphysische Anfangsgrunde der Naturwissenschaft* has never before appeared in an English form. The same remarks, as regards the aim and character of the translation, will apply to this work as to the Prolegomena. I must ask, however, for some indulgence in this case for an occasional barbarism (e.g., a plurality of

the real, outside one another,) owing to the difficulty of rendering Kants meaning adequately in all cases by good English. In the Anfangsgrunde Kant seems to have surpassed himself in clumsiness and obscurity of style. In several sentences the verb is wanting, and others by the omission of a negative particle or a similar carelessness, make precisely the reverse sense to that, judging by the context, obviously intended. The treatise in question is of especial interest in relation to modern speculation on the data of physical science, and particularly as to the ultimate constitution of matter, and may be profitably studied in conjunction with such works as Professor Wurtzs, Atomic Theory, Mr. Stallos Concepts of Modern Physics, and Mr. Herbert Spencers First Principles. Written in 1786, just one year before the publication of the second edition of the Critique, it belongs to the maturest period of Kants philosophical activity. It may be of interest to allude to the fact that since the introductory portion of the present volume was in the press the manuscript treatise of Kant entitled, Uebergang von den Metaphysischen Anfangsgrunde der Naturwissenschaft zur Physik, Transition from the Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science to Physics, has been disinterred and published in the Altpreussische Monatshefte for the year 1882. It should be added that the edition used, both in the case of the Prolegomena and the Anfangsgrunde, is that of the collected works by Kirchmann, which, although not without flaw, is probably on the whole the most accurate we possess.

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