



# Practical Judgments: Essays in Culture, Politics, and Interpretation

*Mark Kingwell*

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What does it mean to be both a professor of philosophy and a public intellectual in an age when every CEO is hailed as an intellectual, every adman a visionary? When the opinions of TV pundits and 'fast thinkers' seem to carry the day? When academics bemoan the loss of critical engagement and dialogue?

The essays and book reviews collected in *Practical Judgments* represent popular Toronto philosopher and cultural theorist Mark Kingwell's negotiation of the space where academe collides with the world outside the ivory tower. Kingwell considers cricket and consciousness, dandies and television, the ethics of books and lifestyles, and the possibility of critical theory. He looks to Nietzsche, Husserl, and Adorno for inspiration, but also to Cary Grant, Bruce Mau, and Jorge Luis Borges.

Throughout, Kingwell shows a deep respect for the philosophical enterprise in its peculiar current conditions and a commitment to think sharply and with self-awareness about these conditions. Intended as both a philosophical examination of the commonplace virtues of wonder, civility, and common sense, and a realistic illustration of how Kingwell sees them working, *Practical Judgments* calls attention to the process of thinking and, by example, encourages the reader to engage in similar philosophizing. The book itself is structured to show the arc of thought, from the more abstract, scholarly examinations of people and ideas, to critical reflections on the impetus for philosophy and its possibilities as a force for change in the world around us.

*Practical Judgments* reveals the sources and developments of Kingwell's thought and examines the nature and limits of intellectual engagement. It displays Kingwell's political commitment to a hermeneutic form of social democracy by revealing a careful attention to the texture of daily cultural affairs. Arguing for a form of critical engagement without which political action is impossible, Kingwell shows that attention to everyday life is worthwhile both in itself and as part of a larger philosophical endeavour.

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