

# The New Criterion

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## From Kant to cant

by Roger Kimball

A review of *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880-1918: With a New Preface* by Stephen Kern

### BOOKS IN THIS ARTICLE



*Stephen Kern*

*The Culture of Time and Space, 1880-1918: With a New Preface*

Harvard University Press, 372 pages, \$32.00

In *The Culture of Time and Space: 1880-1918*, Stephen Kern sets out to show how the burst of technological, intellectual, and artistic innovation around the turn of the century “created distinctive new modes of thinking about and experiencing time and space.” This challenging task will attract anyone who is interested in modernism, though it is worth noting at the outset that Mr. Kern’s “distinctive new modes” of experience are not really new but have their foundation in the revolutionary view of man’s relation to nature that Descartes crystalized in the seventeenth century.

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The model is the artisan’s  
knowledge of his craft: we really  
know something when we know

how to make it.

Near the end of the *Discourse on Method*,  
Descartes notes that his study of philosophy has

led him to a “knowledge that is most useful in...

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