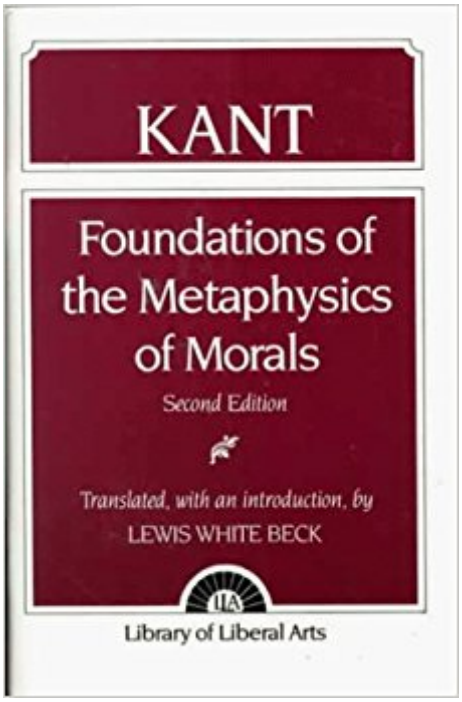
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Foundations Of The Metaphysics Of Morals



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Synopsis

Library of Liberal Arts title.

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Customer Reviews

Text: English (translation) Original Language: German

Library of Liberal Arts title.

Nice and new.

One of the greatest books on morals and ethics ever written in western literature. Kant provides greater understanding why the Golden Rule and similar moral imperatives are ageless and important.

Bought for class

school

good :)

I Kant believe I am writing a review about this book as it brings back some bad memories of late

night crams and caffeine withdrawal. Enough about college, the book is very lightweight and the pages are thick enough to highlight without bleeding through.I will let you decide whether or not you like the Kant-ent of the book. (ok ok, enough of the puns)

Kant's Groundwork (or Foundations) of the Metaphysics of Morals is probably the single most influential work of philosophical ethics since Aristotle's Nichomachean Ethics. While Kant himself considered this a sort of introduction to ethical thinking, it's come to be his most influential and widely read work on ethics. Despite its length--it's less than a hundred pages--this is a work of remarkable depth and intellectual insight.This isn't an easy work, however. It needs to be read and re-read (and, I suppose, re-read) to be fully understood and appeciated. I've never found Kant as difficult and obscure as his reputation would suggest, but as a writer of philosophical prose he's certainly not the caliber of, say, Hume or Descartes. As many have noted, Kant is the first great philosopher of the modern era to have been an academic, and it shows. He writes long, meandering sentences, and the organization of his works leaves quite a bit to be desired. Furthermore, his penchant for arcane terminology and architechtonic can make his work seem more forbidding than it is. Still, Kant's ideas in the Groundwork, while subtle and sometimes elusive, are profound and original, and this book is a must-read for anyone interested in philosophical ethics. I should also note that the importance of this book isn't solely historical since there has been a recent resurgence of Kantian moral thinking in the English-speaking world.Kant's aim in the Groundwork is to discover the fundamental principle of morality. In the first section he attempts to derive this fundamental principle from odinary moral thought. In particular, he attempts to derive this principle from considerations concerning what is unconditionally good. Kant claims that the only thing that is unconditionally good is a good will. Moreover, its goodness is not a matter of the results of acting on a good will; it is good in itself. As a matter of fact, Kant claims that the results of an action done with a good will and the aims and inclinations of the agent with the good will are morally insignificant.What, then, is it to act with a good will? It is, Kant argues, a matter of doing one's duty for duty's sake, regardless of one's feeling and the results of doing so. What is it to act from duty's sake? It is to act from principles that accord with the fundamental principle of morality. And here we get the first formulation of the fundamental principle of morality: act only on maxims that you can consistently will to be universal laws. In other words, if one is unable to will the principle of one's action to become a universal law, the action is morally impermissible.In the second section of the Groundwork Kant attempts to draw the same conclusion from some philosophical points about the nature of duty. He begins by claiming that our knowledge of our duty is a priori and based on the

exercise of reason. He then argues that facts about our duties are necessary facts, and that this shows that they must be based on a categorical imperative: that is, that our duties apply to us insofar as we are rational beings, irrespective of the contingent aspects of their nature. And, Kant argues, the one categorical imperative is the fundamental principle of morality mentioned above. He then applies this principle to some examples in order to display just how it grounds our duties in particular cases.The rest of the second section is filled with lots of interesting, ableit abstruse, ideas. First, Kant attempts to ground the categorical imperative in something that is of unconditional worth. What is that something? The existence of rational beings, which, he says, is an end in itself. And this leads to a second formulation of the categorical imperative: (ii) act only in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in the person of yourself or someone else, as an end and never merely as a means.This section also includes a third formulation of the categorical imperative: (iii) act only on maxims that you could will to become universal laws legislated by your own will. This formulation encapsulates Kant's claim that we can achieve autonomy only by acting in accordance with the moral law. Conformity with the moral law does not constrain our freedom since we legislate the moral law for ourselves. The moral law is not forced on us from without; its source is to be found in our own rational nature. Indeed, it is only by acting morally that we are able to achieve genuine freedom by transcending the contingent desires and inclinations that are beyond our control.Of course, that doesn't come close to summing up the Groundwork. But it's a start.This edition of the Groundwork, which has been translated by Lewis White Beck, is a readable one. It is, perhaps, easier to read than many other editions of the Groundwork, though it may provide for this readability at the cost of some accuracy. Beck's edition also includes a copy of Kant's essay "What is Enlightenment?" along with some slight editorial material. There's a short, albeit useful, introductory essay in which Beck sketches the main outlines of the argument of the Groundwork's three sections and considers and dismisses some common objections to Kant's moral theory. The editorial also material includes a very short biographical sketch and a slight and out-of-date bibliography. Neither of these is very helpful. There are better editions of the Groundwork out there--see, for example, the editions published by Cambridge (translation by Gregor) and by Harper (translation by Paton)--but this is fine edition for the student and the general reader. And it comes at a good price.

For those of you who may be philosophy majors or have another reason to be particular about the translation you receive be aware that this title as a kindle e-book is not translated by Lewis White Beck as each of the photos of the book suggest. Instead when i ordered it as an e-book I received a Thomas Kingsmill Abbott translation. This to some may not seem important, but translations hold

important differences also the Thomas Kingsmill Abbott translation is abundantly available for free rather than paying $5.

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