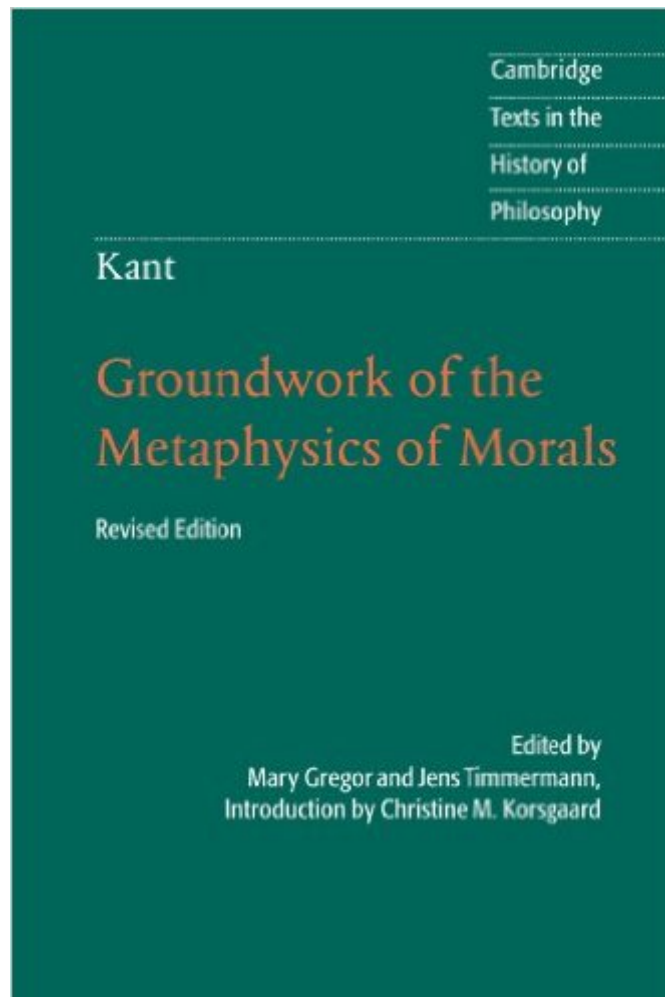


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Kant: Groundwork Of The Metaphysics Of Morals (Cambridge Texts In The History Of Philosophy)



Synopsis

Published in 1785, Immanuel Kant's *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* ranks alongside Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* as one of the most profound and influential works in moral philosophy ever written. In Kant's own words, its aim is to identify and corroborate the supreme principle of morality, the categorical imperative. He argues that human beings are ends in themselves, never to be used by anyone merely as a means, and that universal and unconditional obligations must be understood as an expression of the human capacity for autonomy and self-governance. As such, they are laws of freedom. This volume contains Mary Gregor's acclaimed translation of the work, sympathetically revised by Jens Timmermann, and an accessible, updated introduction by Christine Korsgaard.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Kant's *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* is probably the single most influential work of philosophical ethics since Aristotle's *Nicomachean 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 appreciated. 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 ordinary 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.

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