

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-60416-1 - Kant's Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals: An Introduction

Sally Sedgwick

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

KANT'S *GROUNDWORK*
OF THE METAPHYSICS
OF MORALS

Immanuel Kant's *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* of 1785 is one of the most profound and important works in the history of practical philosophy. In this introduction to the *Groundwork*, Sally Sedgwick provides a guide to Kant's text that follows the course of his discussion virtually paragraph by paragraph. Her aim is to convey Kant's ideas and arguments as clearly and simply as possible, without getting lost in scholarly controversies. Her introductory chapter offers a useful overview of Kant's general approach to practical philosophy, and she also explores and clarifies some of the main assumptions which Kant relies on in his *Groundwork* but defends in his *Critique of Pure Reason*. The book will be a valuable guide for all who are interested in Kant's practical philosophy.

SALLY SEDGWICK is Professor of Philosophy and Affiliated Professor of Germanic Studies, University of Illinois at Chicago. She is editor of *The Reception of Kant's Critical Philosophy: Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel* (2000).

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-60416-1 - Kant's Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals: An Introduction

Sally Sedgwick

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE INTRODUCTIONS TO KEY
PHILOSOPHICAL TEXTS

This new series offers introductory textbooks on what are considered to be the most important texts of Western philosophy. Each book guides the reader through the main themes and arguments of the work in question, while also paying attention to its historical context and its philosophical legacy. No philosophical background knowledge is assumed, and the books will be well suited to introductory university-level courses.

Titles published in the series:

DESCARTES'S *MEDITATIONS* by Catherine Wilson

WITTGENSTEIN'S *PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS* by David G. Stern

WITTGENSTEIN'S *TRACTATUS* by Alfred Nordmann

ARISTOTLE'S *NICOMACHEAN ETHICS* by Michael Pakaluk

SPINOZA'S *ETHICS* by Steven Nadler

KANT'S *CRITIQUE OF PURE REASON* by Jill Vance Buroker

HEIDEGGER'S *BEING AND TIME* by Paul Gerner

HEGEL'S *PHENOMENOLOGY OF SPIRIT* by Larry Krasnoff

KANT'S *GROUNDWORK OF THE METAPHYSICS OF MORALS*
by Sally Sedgwick

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-60416-1 - Kant's Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals: An Introduction

Sally Sedgwick

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

KANT'S *GROUNDWORK*
OF THE METAPHYSICS
OF MORALS

An Introduction

SALLY SEDGWICK

University of Illinois at Chicago



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-60416-1 - Kant's Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals: An Introduction

Sally Sedgwick

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi

Cambridge University Press

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521604161

© Sally Sedgwick 2008

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
no reproduction of any part may take place without
the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2008

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Sedgwick, Sally S., 1956–

Kant's Groundwork of the metaphysics of morals: an introduction / Sally Sedgwick.

p. cm. – (Cambridge introductions to key philosophical texts)

Includes bibliographical references (p.) and index.

ISBN 978-0-521-84345-4

1. Kant, Immanuel, 1724–1804. *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik
der Sitten.* 2. Ethics. I. Title. II. Series.

B2766.Z7S43 2008

170–dc22

2008007735

ISBN 978-0-521-84345-4 hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-60416-1 paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or
accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to
in this book, and does not guarantee that any content on such
websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-60416-1 - Kant's Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals: An Introduction

Sally Sedgwick

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

For Peter

Contents

<i>Preface</i>	<i>page</i> ix
<i>List of abbreviations</i>	xi
1 Introduction	1
2 Kant's Preface	29
3 Section I: Transition from common rational to philosophic moral cognition	47
4 Section II: Transition from popular moral philosophy to metaphysics of morals	83
5 Section III: Transition from metaphysics of morals to the critique of pure practical reason	168
<i>Bibliography</i>	199
<i>Index</i>	203

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-60416-1 - Kant's Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals: An Introduction

Sally Sedgwick

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Preface

Immanuel Kant's *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* of 1785 is one of the most profound and important works in the history of practical philosophy. In this Introduction to the *Groundwork*, I provide a guide to Kant's text that follows the course of his discussion virtually paragraph by paragraph. I have aimed to convey Kant's ideas and arguments as clearly and simply as possible, without getting lost in scholarly controversies. I have tried to produce a guide that is easy to use. The organization of all but my first chapter mirrors that of Kant's discussion in the Preface and three sections of the *Groundwork*. I subdivide my chapters into topic headings that track the progression of his arguments. I frequently provide page references to the Academy edition of the *Groundwork*, so that the reader can match up my discussion with the relevant passages in Kant's text.

Although I have strived for accessibility throughout this work, the reader will discover that I have not always succeeded. In part, this reflects the fact that Kant's own narrative in the *Groundwork* is not uniformly accessible. He is particularly obscure when he turns his attention to methodological matters. Moreover, he sometimes relies on arguments he has provided in other texts. This is most obviously the case in the third and most challenging section of the *Groundwork*, where he sets out to demonstrate the reality of human freedom.

In my introductory chapter, I offer an overview of Kant's general project in practical philosophy. I try to give my reader some sense of the big picture. In addition, I review key assumptions that underlie Kant's argument in the *Groundwork*, assumptions he defends in the context of his theoretical philosophy. This is background material that I hope will aid my reader in understanding some of the more elusive arguments of the *Groundwork*, including the argument of Section III.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-60416-1 - Kant's Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals: An Introduction

Sally Sedgwick

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Unavoidably, every chapter of this guide touches upon matters of great complexity. The student should not be discouraged by this. It is possible to appreciate much of the basic project of the *Groundwork* without mastering each of Kant's argumentative moves. Likewise, it should be possible to benefit from much of this guide without comprehending every part of it. Although I have written this book primarily for the student who is reading the *Groundwork* for the first or second time, some of my discussions are likely to be of interest only to the more experienced reader.

I have accumulated a number of debts in connection with this work. First, I am indebted to Hilary Gaskin of Cambridge University Press for the invitation to take on the project, and for editorial assistance along the way. I owe thanks as well to the anonymous readers engaged by the Press who commented on my initial proposal, and years later, on the submitted manuscript. I am grateful to the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) for reducing my teaching responsibilities over these past three years, and to my department at UIC for providing an exceptionally collegial environment in which to work. In addition, I thank Rolf-Peter Horstmann and the Alexander von Humboldt-Stiftung for the support that made possible a research trip to Germany in the spring of 2004, when the book was in its early stages. During that visit, Manfred Baum gave generously of his time to explore with me the potential shape of the project and some of the challenges I would encounter. I have also benefited from the philosophical expertise of Stephen Engstrom, David Hilbert, Tony Strimple, and Rachel Zuckert, who either commented on drafts or discussed interpretative difficulties with me. I am grateful to Cameron Brewer for providing indispensable technical assistance in preparing the manuscript for submission. Finally, I owe special thanks to my most cherished consultant, Peter Hylton, who lived with and supported this project on a daily basis. Needless to say, the imperfections of this work are my responsibility alone.

Abbreviations of Kant's works

<i>CPR</i>	<i>Critique of Pure Reason</i>
<i>CPrR</i>	<i>Critique of Practical Reason</i>
<i>MM</i>	<i>Metaphysics of Morals</i>
<i>MM I</i>	<i>Metaphysics of Morals, Doctrine of Right</i>
<i>MM II</i>	<i>Metaphysics of Morals, Doctrine of Virtue</i>
<i>Prolegomena</i>	<i>Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics that Will be Able to Come Forward as a Science</i>
<i>Religion</i>	<i>Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason</i>