



Kant's Search for the Supreme Principle of Morality

Samuel J. Kerstein

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At the core of Kant's ethics lies the claim that if there is a supreme principle of morality, then it is not a utilitarian or Aristotelian perfectionist principle, or even a principle resembling the Ten Commandments. The only viable candidate for the supreme principle of morality is the Categorical Imperative. This book is the most detailed investigation of this claim. It constructs a new, critical reading of Kant's derivation of one version of the Categorical Imperative: The Formula of Universal Law. This reading shows this derivation to be far more compelling than contemporary philosophers tend to believe. It also reveals a novel approach to deriving another version of the Categorical Imperative, the Formula of Humanity, a principle widely considered to be the most attractive Kantian candidate for the supreme principle of morality. Lucidly written and dealing with a foundational topic in the history of ethics, this book will be important not just for Kant scholars but for a broad swath of students of philosophy. Samuel Kerstein is Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of Maryland, College Park

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