

**KANT'S ETHICS. A
CRITICAL
EXPOSITION**

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Kant's ethics. A critical exposition by Noah Porter

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NOAH PORTER

**KANT'S ETHICS. A
CRITICAL
EXPOSITION**

GERMAN PHILOSOPHICAL CLASSICS

FOR

ENGLISH READERS AND STUDENTS.

EDITED BY

GEORGE S. MORRIS

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KANT'S ETHICS.

A CRITICAL EXPOSITION.

BY NOAH PORTER,

PRESIDENT OF YALE COLLEGE.

CHICAGO:
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1886.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO



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THIS VOLUME IS INSCRIBED

TO

PRESIDENT MARK HOPKINS, D.D., LL.D.,

IN GRATEFUL RECOGNITION OF HIS EMINENT SERVICES TO

ETHICAL SCIENCE,

AND

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION.

PREFACE.

THE essay now given to the public has been promised for several months, but was written for the most part as a vacation exercise during the last summer. Its theme is Kant's *Theory* of Ethics, as contrasted with his practical teachings, so far as the former is distinctive of his school. For this reason it is chiefly concerned with the two treatises in which this theory is explained and defended, viz.: *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, 1785; *Kritik der Praktischen Vernunft*, 1788.

As its title imports, this treatise is both expository and critical. In expounding Kant's ethical theory to English readers, the writer has thought it best to state this theory very largely in Kant's own language, with such comments as might be required to make it intelligible. He has done this for two reasons: that he might be entirely just to Kant himself, and that he might aid the unpractised student in the somewhat discouraging task of interpreting the German philosopher. For both these reasons he has

often retained Kant's peculiar and frequently highly technical phraseology in order that, by mere repetition, it might become familiar, while yet he has sought to give its meaning in current English, that the student might acquire facility in interpreting the Kantian dialect by its English equivalents. He does not assert that in every case he has been successful in the last-named attempt. The English text, which he has invariably used, is that of the generally approved translation of Professor Abbott, of Trinity College, Dublin.*

The critical remarks of the author are usually given as a running commentary upon the text with the important exception of §§ 21-33, in which the exposition covers §§ 21-26 and the criticism §§ 27-33. These comments suppose some familiarity with ethical theories, and the criticisms and schools to which they have given rise, although the writer has scrupulously avoided all personal and partisan references, and endeavored to confine himself to his appropriate functions as the expounder and critic of his author.

Besides the expository and critical matter thus

* Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason* and other works on the *Theory of Ethics*. Translated by Thomas Kingsmill Abbott, M. A., etc. London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1879.

described the reader will find a brief general introduction, together with a summary or condensed review of the distinctive positions taken by Kant upon the most important topics as compared with those of other—principally English—writers, and some brief strictures upon Kant by a few German critics.

The preparation of this essay has cost the writer some labor, but the labor has brought its own reward. He trusts that the result will be useful as an aid to those students who are interested in the study of ethical theories, and who appreciate the practical significance of such theories at the present time.

N. P.

YALE COLLEGE, Dec. 1, 1885.