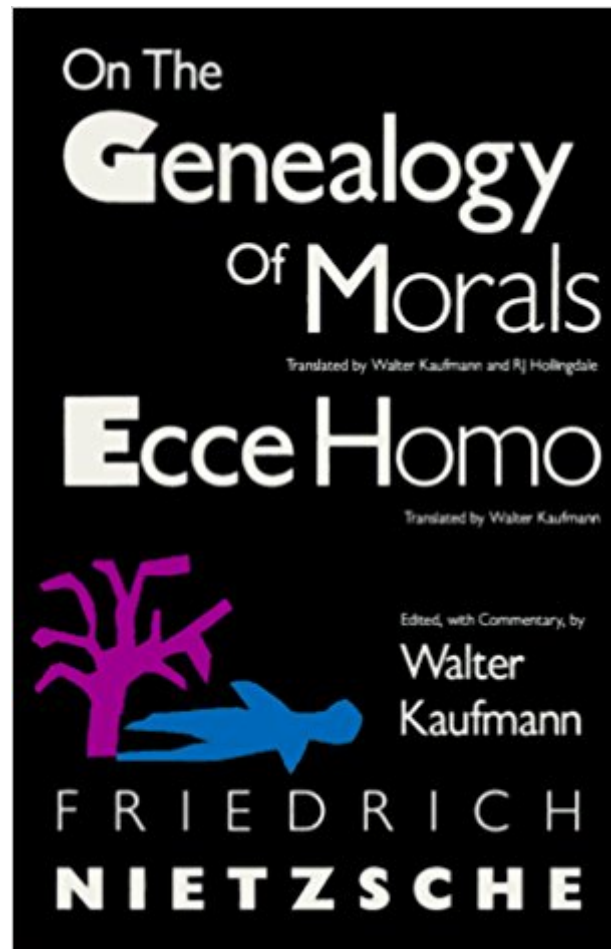




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On The Genealogy Of Morals And Ecce Homo



Synopsis

The great philosopher's major work on ethics, along with ECCE HOMO, Nietzsche's remarkable review of his life and works. Translated by Walter Kaufmann.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Nietzsche's complex sequel to *Beyond Good and Evil* is a remarkable achievement of philosophy, philology, and history. It laid the groundwork for such 20th century thinkers as Foucault and Deleuze, though they would never reach Nietzsche's complexity and moral sophistication. In the preface to the book, Nietzsche proposes the project of investigating the origins of morality on the grounds that human beings are unknown to themselves. He is ultimately concerned with the development of moral prejudices, and the value of morality itself. He criticizes mankind in its acceptance of moral principles, and writes: "we need a critique of moral values, the value of these values themselves must first be called in question-and for that there is needed a knowledge of the conditions and circumstances in which they grew, under which they evolved and changed" (456). Nietzsche begins the essay (*Good and Evil, Good and Bad*), with a philological examination of the words and roots of the words related to good and evil, and a delimitation of their evolution. He makes a connection between the creations of words and places them within the historical context of rulers and nobility. Linguistically, Nietzsche has discovered that the 'good' is linked with nobility. He writes: "everywhere 'noble,' 'aristocratic' in the social sense, is the basic concept from which 'good' in the sense of 'with aristocratic soul,' 'noble,'" (464). Alternatively, words associated with the 'bad' invariably were linked with the 'plain,' 'simple,' and 'low.' In this way, morality as a human

construction is an extension of power, wealth, and civilization. The origin of evil is intertwined with priestly aristocracies.

I should note up front that my review refers to the Vintage edition--the review and the rating pertain to Kaufmann's translation only, not to Nietzsche's text. Nietzsche's work is a classic and should be read by anyone with an interest in philosophy or related fields. That point, I think, goes without saying. What does need to be said is which translation you should choose to read it in. Kaufmann's is, pretty much, the standard translation. And, for the most part, his translation is true to Nietzsche's German. But it suffers in one important way, and that is how it conflates Hegel's idealism and Nietzsche's thought through the use of a Hegelian, idealist vocabulary. To be sure, Nietzsche draws on Hegel a lot, but Kaufmann's translation misleads the reader into thinking that there are more similarities than there actually are. It also makes this translation unbearably difficult to read. The second problem I have with this particular edition is that Kaufmann's notes are so shallow, and not really helpful at all. A perfect example is on the first page of the first essay, where Nietzsche abandons his native German for a moment and refers to the English Psychologists pushing the "partie honteuse" of our inner world into view. Kaufmann leaves the phrase untranslated, as he ought, and lets a note do the work of translating it. His note says simply, "shame." In my view, it may be as if he had just omitted the note altogether, because this tells me almost nothing about what Nietzsche means, and doesn't even attempt to get at his metaphor. If one were to turn to Clark and Swenson's translation, put out by Hackett (

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