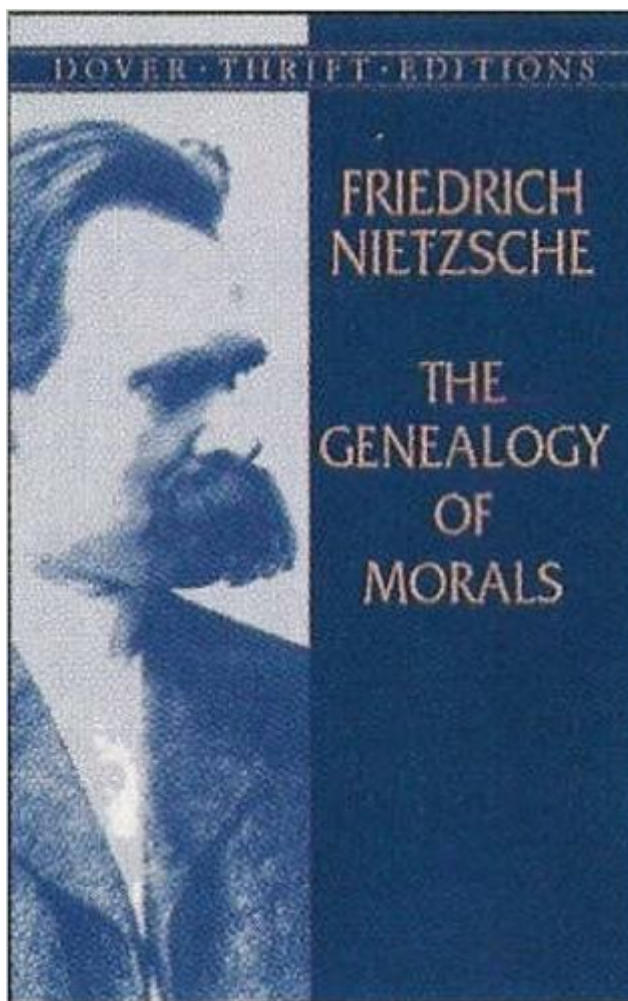


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The Genealogy Of Morals (Dover Thrift Editions)



Synopsis

Written in response to a book on the origins of morality by his erstwhile friend Paul Rée, the three essays comprising *The Genealogy of Morals* — all three advancing the critique of Christian morality set forth in *Beyond Good and Evil* — are among Nietzsche's most sustained and cohesive work. In the first essay — starting from a linguistic analysis of words such as "good," "bad," and "evil" — Nietzsche sets up a contrast between what he calls "master" morality and "slave" morality and shows how strength and action have often been replaced by passivity and nihilism. The next essay, looking into the origins of guilt and punishment, shows how the concept of justice was born — and how internalization of this concept led to the development of what people called "the soul." In the third essay, Nietzsche dissects the meaning of ascetic ideals. It is not Nietzsche's intention to reject ascetic ideals, "slave" morality, or internalized values out of hand; his main concern is to show that culture and morality, rather than being eternal verities, are human-made. Whether or not you agree with all of his conclusions, his writing is of such clarity and brilliance that you will find reading *The Genealogy of Morals* nothing short of exhilarating.

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Customer Reviews

This particular piece of Nietzsche's writing is a marvelous work - it is interesting and lively, much as Nietzsche's own writing and tendency toward the dramatic was noted by his contemporaries. Nietzsche's father was a Lutheran minister, but he died five years after Nietzsche's birth in 1844. Nietzsche was raised by his mother, grandmother and aunts; later in his life, his sister

would become executor of his estate (after Nietzsche had become incapable of managing his own affairs) and reshape his philosophy and writings in her own idea - this becomes a running motif in later anthologies of Nietzsche; editors can quote and clip to fit their own agendas. In some ways, that is true of the text here, but in much less inappropriate ways than others, particularly Nietzsche's first editor, his sister. Nietzsche was a star pupil from his earliest days at university in Bonn and Leipzig. His formal study was in classical philology, but his attentions turned in various directions quickly during his writing and professional life - he had an intense interest in drama and the arts, with Wagner's music and Greek drama in principal interest. His first book was devoted to these topics - 'The Birth of Tragedy'. It was not highly regarded at the time, but has since become much more appreciated as an anticipation of later developments in philosophy and aesthetics. Nietzsche's life after this period was a very choppy one - he left the university, claiming illness, and while this developed later to be a true situation, at the time it was probably academic politics and difficulties fitting in with the establishment he was trying to break.

Nietzsche is one of my favorite philosophers to read. Nietzsche's polemic on the genealogy of morals, as a response to the work of Dr. Paul Ricoeur, offers an alternative to the viewpoint that the moral genealogists of his day offered as an explanation of what we consider good and bad. Nietzsche sets out to question the value of values, to prove that our conceptions of morality are man-made, absolutely without Absolutism, and absolutely with a religious conspiracy that spans thousands of years. The Genealogy of Morals is comprised of three essays. The first deals with the origin of the concepts of good and bad, where good was embodied by the noble and powerful people, and bad was embodied by the poor in means and spirit. The lower sort, the impotent because of their lack of power and means, hated the noble people so much that they reverted the good-bad dichotomy and used Christianity to give the poverty of their situation virtue, esteeming humility and meekness over power. The second essay deals with the origin of conscience in civilization, when mankind was obligated to take all of the violence they practiced outwardly and suppress it, eventually turning it against themselves for the sake of the community. The third essay contains Nietzsche's thoughts on asceticism. For all of his assertions to have a superior interest in history, Nietzsche isn't keen to give a lot of historical evidence for some of his bombastic claims, which leaves a few holes in his argument. However, this bold quality is what makes his writings so refreshing in comparison to some of the more pedantic philosophers, and Nietzsche knows it (and likes to brag about it a little).

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