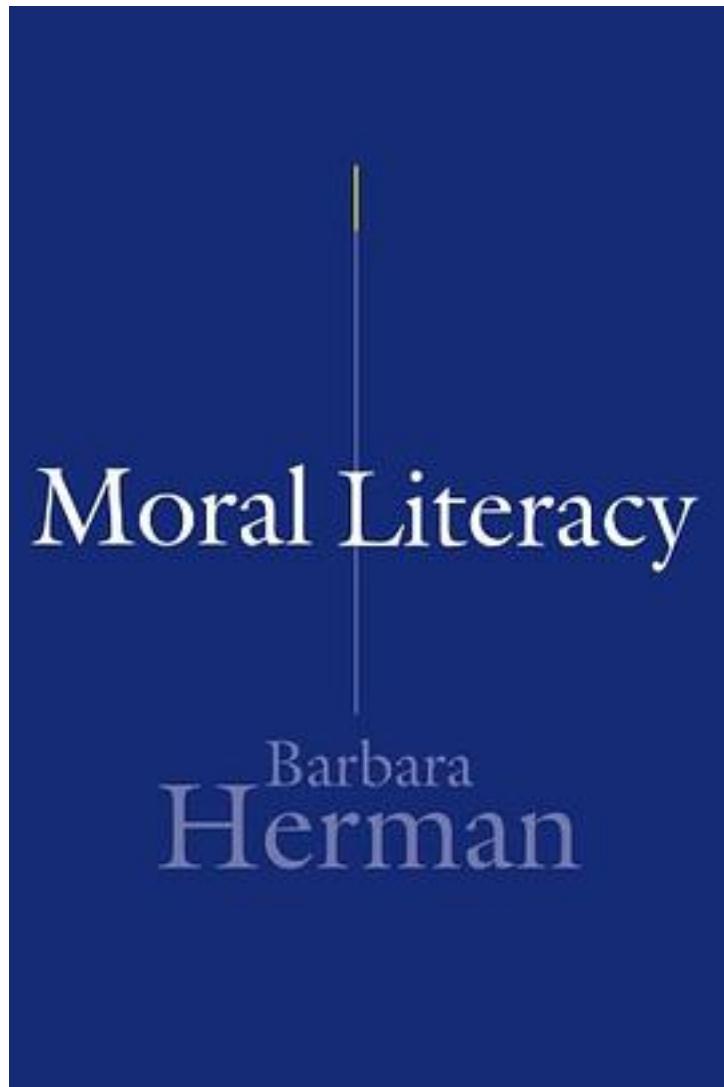


Moral Literacy



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著者:Barbara Herman

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A distinguished moral philosopher and a leading interpreter of Kant's ethics, Barbara Herman draws on Kant to address timeless issues in ethical theory as well as ones arising from current moral problems, such as obligations to distant need, the history of slavery as it bears on affirmative action, and the moral costs of reparative justice. Challenging various Kantian orthodoxies, Herman offers a view of moral competency as a complex achievement, governed by rational norms and dependent on supportive social conditions. She argues that the objectivity of duties and obligations does not rule out the possibility of or need for moral invention. Her goal is not to revise Kant but to explore the issues and ask the questions that he did not consider. Some of the essays involve explicit interpretation of Kant, and others are prompted by ground-level questions. For example, how should we think about moral character given what we know about the fault lines in normal development? If ordinary moral life is saturated by the content of local institutions, how should our accounts of moral obligation and judgment accommodate this? Steven Darwall says of this rich and multilayered book: "If system-building and construction are the metaphors one associates most with Kant, Herman's approach is more that of an improvisational musician or weaver."

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