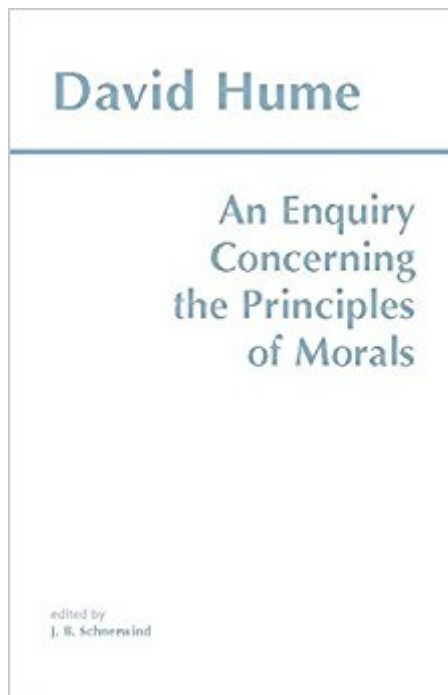


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# An Enquiry Concerning The Principles Of Morals (Hackett Classics)



## Synopsis

A splendid edition. Schneewind's illuminating introduction succinctly situates the Enquiry in its historical context, clarifying its relationship to Calvinism, to Newtonian science, and to earlier moral philosophers, and providing a persuasive account of Hume's ethical naturalism. --Martha C. Nussbaum, Brown University

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David Hume (1711-1776) was a Scottish philosopher, economist, and historian, as well as an important figure of Western philosophy and of the Scottish Enlightenment. Tom L. Beauchamp is at Georgetown University.

cheap and what needed.

Amazing book. Would recommend to anyone

For the scholars out there....

David Hume (1711-1776) was a Scottish philosopher, historian, economist, and essayist; the companion volume to this book is *An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, and his other writings include *A Treatise of Human Nature Volume 1*, *A Treatise of Human Nature Volume 2*, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, *The Natural History of Religion*, etc. [NOTE: page numbers below refer to the 158-page Bobbs-Merrill paperback edition.] He notes, "We may observe that in displaying the praises of any humane, beneficent man there is one circumstance which never fails to be amply insisted on---namely, the happiness and satisfaction derived to society from his intercourse and good offices.... As these topics of praise never fail to be employed, and with success, where we would inspire esteem for anyone, may it not thence be concluded that the UTILITY resulting from the social virtues forms, at least, a PART of their merit, and is one source of that approbation and regard so universally paid to them?" (Sec. II, pg. 11) He suggests, "Thus the rules of equity or justice depend entirely on the particular state and condition in which men are placed, and owe their origin and existence to that UTILITY which results to the public from their strict and regular observance. Reverse, in any considerable circumstance, the condition of men: produce extreme abundance or extreme necessity, implant in the human breast perfect moderation and humanity or perfect rapaciousness and malice; by rendering justice totally USELESS, you thereby totally destroy its essence and suspend its obligation upon mankind." (Sec. III, pg. 19) He observes, "Those who ridicule vulgar superstitions and expose the folly of particular regards to meats, days, places, postures, apparel have an easy task, while they consider all the qualities and relations of the objects and discover no adequate cause for that affection or antipathy, veneration or horror, which have so mighty an influence over a considerable part of mankind... Such reflections as these, in the mouth of a philosopher, one may safely say, are too obvious to have any influence, because they must always, to every man, occur at first sight; and where they prevail not of themselves, they are surely obstructed by education, prejudice, and passion, not by ignorance or mistake." (Sec. III, pg. 28-29) He points out, "even in common life, we have every moment recourse to the principle of public utility and ask, What must become of the world, if such practices prevail? How could society subsist under such disorders? Were the distinction or separation of possessions entirely useless, can anyone conceive that it ever should have obtained in society? Thus we seem... to have attained a knowledge of the force of that principle here insisted on, and can determine what degree of esteem or moral approbation may result from reflections on public interest and utility. The necessity of justice to the support of society is the SOLE foundation of that virtue; and since no

moral excellence is more highly esteemed, we may conclude that this circumstance of usefulness has, in general, the strongest energy and most entire command over our sentiments." (Sec. III, pg. 33-34) He argues, "it is impossible for men so much as to murder each other without statutes and maxims, and an idea of justice and honor. War has its laws as well as peace; and even that sportive kind of war, carried on among wrestlers, boxers, cudgel players, gladiators, is regulated by fixed principles. Common interest and utility beget infallibly a standard of right and wrong among the parties concerned." (Sec. IV, pg. 40) He states, "Whatever is valuable in any kind, so naturally classes itself under the division of USEFUL or AGREEABLE... that it is not easy to imagine why we should ever seek further, or consider the question as a matter of nice research or inquiry. And as everything useful or agreeable must possess these qualities with regard either to the PERSON HIMSELF or to OTHERS, the complete delineation or description of merit seems to be performed as naturally as a shadow is cast by the sun, or an image is cast not broken or uneven, nor the surface from which the shadow is reflected disturbed and confused, a just figure is immediately presented without any art or attention." (Conclusion, pg. 96) In the Appendix, "Concerning Moral Sentiments," he observes, "attend to Cicero while he paints the crimes of a Verres or a Cataline... But if you feel no indignation or compassion arise in you from this complication of circumstances, you would in vain ask him in what consists the crime or villainy which he so vehemently exclaims against; at what time or on what subject it first began to exist; and what has a few months afterwards become of it... No satisfactory answer can be given to any of these questions upon the abstract hypothesis of morals; and we must at last acknowledge that the crime or immorality is no particular fact or relation which can be the object of the understanding, but arises entirely from the sentiment of disapprobation which... we unavoidably feel on the apprehension of barbarity or treachery... It appears that the ultimate ends of human actions can never, in any case, be accounted for by REASON, but recommend themselves entirely to the sentiments and affections of mankind without any dependence on the intellectual faculties." (Pg. 110-111) Surprisingly (to us), Hume said of this book in his autobiographical "My Own Life," that "in my own opinion ... [it] is of all my writings, historical, philosophical, or literary, incomparably the best." But while Hume's main philosophical arguments are actually presented more effectively in the Treatise, this is still "must reading" for anyone seriously studying philosophy.

It was pretty standard. Feel like it is kind of over charged. Consider getting an e-book for it. My professor just did not let me

Interested in books by Hackett, a bit worn, interesting material with some historical relevance to the study of Ethics... would use in a classroom setting.

good book

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