

# DOWNLOAD PDF REASON AND FEELING IN HUMES ACTION THEORY AND MORAL PHILOSOPHY

## Chapter 1 : Kant and Hume on Morality (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)

*-EGON AND FEELING IN HUME'S ACTION THEORY The Humean might reply-coming back to our missionary-case-that the cannibal's very participation in the reasoning Process, being itself a stretch of motivated activity, must have been.*

Biography[ edit ] Early life and education[ edit ] Hume was the second of two sons born to Joseph Home of Ninewells , an advocate, and his wife The Hon. Throughout his life Hume, who never married, spent time occasionally at his family home at Ninewells in Berwickshire , which had belonged to his family since the sixteenth century. His finances as a young man were very "slender". His family was not rich, and, as a younger son, he had little patrimony to live on. He was therefore forced to make a living somehow. At first, because of his family, he considered a career in law , but came to have, in his words, "an insurmountable aversion to everything but the pursuits of Philosophy and general Learning; and while [my family] fancied I was poring over Voet and Vinnius , Cicero and Virgil were the Authors which I was secretly devouring". Due to this inspiration, Hume set out to spend a minimum of 10 years reading and writing. He soon came to the verge of a mental breakdown , suffering from what a doctor diagnosed as the "Disease of the Learned". Hume wrote that it started with a coldness, which he attributed to a "Laziness of Temper", that lasted about nine months. Later, some scurvy spots broke out on his fingers. Hume wrote that he "went under a Course of Bitters and Anti-Hysterical Pills", taken along with a pint of claret every day. Hume also decided to have a more active life to better continue his learning. Career[ edit ] At 25 years of age, Hume, although of noble ancestry, had no source of income and no learned profession. Hume described his "love for literary fame" as his "ruling passion" [24] and judged his two late works, the so-called "first" and "second" enquiries, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* and *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* , respectively, as his greatest literary and philosophical achievements, [24] asking his contemporaries to judge him on the merits of the later texts alone, rather than the more radical formulations of his early, youthful work, dismissing his philosophical debut as juvenilia: Hume was just 23 years old when he started this work and it is now regarded as one of the most important in the history of Western philosophy. However, the position was given to William Cleghorn [31] after Edinburgh ministers petitioned the town council not to appoint Hume because he was seen as an atheist. However, it was then that Hume started his great historical work *The History of England*. This took him fifteen years and ran to over a million words. During this time he was also involved with the Canongate Theatre through his friend John Home , a preacher. Often called the *First Enquiry*, it proved little more successful than the *Treatise*, perhaps because of the publishing of his short autobiography, *My Own Life*, which "made friends difficult for the first Enquiry". It was necessary in the s for his friends to avert a trial against him on the charge of heresy. However, he "would not have come and could not be forced to attend if he said he was not a member of the Established Church". He had published the *Philosophical Essays* by this time which were decidedly anti-religious. Even Adam Smith , his personal friend who had vacated the Glasgow philosophy chair, was against his appointment out of concern public opinion would be against it. In the following year "the Faculty of Advocates chose me their Librarian, an office from which I received little or no emolument, but which gave me the command of a large library". Once in England, Hume and Rousseau fell out. Here he wrote that he was given "all the secrets of the Kingdom". Anyone hankering for startling revelations or amusing anecdotes had better look elsewhere. Hume told him he sincerely believed it a "most unreasonable fancy" that there might be life after death. In his will he requests that it be inscribed only with his name and the year of his birth and death, "leaving it to Posterity to add the Rest". Get into the boat this instant". According to the logical positivists, unless a statement could be verified by experience, or else was true or false by definition i. Hume thought that we can form beliefs about that which extends beyond any possible experience, through the operation of faculties such as custom and the imagination, but he was sceptical about claims to knowledge on this basis. For example, experiencing the painful sensation of touching

## DOWNLOAD PDF REASON AND FEELING IN HUMES ACTION THEORY AND MORAL PHILOSOPHY

the handle of a hot pan is more forceful than simply thinking about touching a hot pan. Similarly, a person experiences a variety of taste-sensations, tactile-sensations, and smell-sensations when biting into an apple, with the overall sensation again being a complex impression. Thinking about an apple allows a person to form complex ideas, which are made of similar parts as the complex impressions they were developed from, but which are also less forceful. Hume believes that complex perceptions can be broken down into smaller and smaller parts until perceptions are reached that have no parts of their own, and these perceptions are thereby referred to as being simple. For example, a person looking at an illustration of a flower can conceive of an idea of the physical flower because the idea of the illustrated object is associated with the idea of the physical object. The principle of contiguity describes the tendency of ideas to become associated if the objects they represent are near to each other in time or space, such as when the thought of one crayon in a box leads a person to think of the crayon contiguous to it. Finally, the principle of cause and effect refers to the tendency of ideas to become associated if the objects they represent are causally related, which explains how remembering a broken window can make someone think of the baseball that caused the window to shatter. Hume elaborates more on this last principle of cause and effect. As Hume wrote, induction concerns how things behave when they go "beyond the present testimony of the senses, or the records of our memory". With regard to demonstrative reasoning, Hume argues that the uniformity principle cannot be demonstrated, as it is "consistent and conceivable" that nature might stop being regular. As this is using the very sort of reasoning induction that is under question, it would be circular reasoning. According to Hume, we reason inductively by associating constantly conjoined events. It is the mental act of association that is the basis of our concept of causation. Matters of Fact are dependent on the observer and experience. They are often not universally held to be true among multiple persons. In these three branches he explains his ideas, in addition to comparing and contrasting his views to his predecessors. Next, Hume uses the Constructive Phase to resolve any doubts the reader may have while observing the Critical Phase. Associating ideas has become second nature to the human mind. This leads Hume to the third branch of causal inference, Belief. Belief is what drives the human mind to hold that expectancy of the future based on past experience. Throughout his explanation of causal inference, Hume is arguing that the future is not certain to be repetition of the past and the only way to justify induction is through uniformity. The logical positivist interpretation is that Hume analyses causal propositions, such as "A caused B", in terms of regularities in perception: Shall we rest contented with these two relations of contiguity and succession, as affording a complete idea of causation? Philosopher Simon Blackburn calls this a quasi-realist reading. This view is forwarded by, for example, positivist interpreters, who saw Hume as suggesting that terms such as "self", "person", or "mind" referred to collections of "sense-contents". They argue that distinct selves can have perceptions that stand in relations of similarity and causality with one another. Thus, perceptions must already come parcelled into distinct "bundles" before they can be associated according to the relations of similarity and causality. In other words, the mind must already possess a unity that cannot be generated, or constituted, by these relations alone. Instead, it is suggested by Strawson that Hume might have been answering an epistemological question about the causal origin of our concept of the self. According to his view, Hume is not arguing for a bundle theory, which is a form of reductionism, but rather for an eliminative view of the self. That is, rather than reducing the self to a bundle of perceptions, Hume is rejecting the idea of the self altogether. On this interpretation, Hume is proposing a "no-self theory" and thus has much in common with Buddhist thought. Hume is mainly considered an anti-rationalist, denying the possibility for practical reason as a principle to exist, although other philosophers such as Christine Korsgaard, Jean Hampton, and Elijah Millgram claim that Hume is not so much of an anti-rationalist as he is just a skeptic of practical reason. Reason of itself is utterly impotent in this particular. The rules of morality, therefore, are not conclusions of our reason. His views on ethics are that "[m]oral decisions are grounded in moral sentiment. Morals excite passions, and produce or prevent actions. Reason itself is utterly impotent in this particular. He wrote in the Treatise that in every system of morality he has read, the author begins with stating facts about the world, but then suddenly is always referring to what ought to be the case. Hume

## DOWNLOAD PDF REASON AND FEELING IN HUMES ACTION THEORY AND MORAL PHILOSOPHY

demands that a reason should be given for inferring what ought to be the case, from what is the case. This because it "seems altogether inconceivable, how this new relation can be a deduction from others". His views are rooted in the work of Joseph Addison and Francis Hutcheson. However, a reliable critic of taste can be recognised as being objective, sensible and unprejudiced, and having extensive experience. Hume was concerned with the way spectators find pleasure in the sorrow and anxiety depicted in a tragedy. He argued that this was because the spectator is aware that he is witnessing a dramatic performance. There is pleasure in realising that the terrible events that are being shown are actually fiction. Hume, to this end, was influenced greatly by the scientific revolution and by in particular Sir Isaac Newton. For if our actions were not necessitated in the above sense, they would "have so little in connexion with motives, inclinations and circumstances, that one does not follow with a certain degree of uniformity from the other". But if our actions are not thus connected to the will, then our actions can never be free: Once this has been abandoned, Hume argues that "liberty and necessity will be found not to be in conflict one with another". Actions are, by their very nature, temporary and perishing; and where they proceed not from some cause in the character and disposition of the person who performed them, they can neither redound to his honour, if good; nor infamy, if evil. Human beings assess a situation based upon certain predetermined events and from that form a choice. Hume believes that this choice is made spontaneously. Hume calls this form of decision making the liberty of spontaneity.

# DOWNLOAD PDF REASON AND FEELING IN HUMES ACTION THEORY AND MORAL PHILOSOPHY

## Chapter 2 : Hume: Normative Ethics - Bibliography - PhilPapers

*Based upon a study of arguments in the Treatise and the Enquiry, this work proposes a theory of motivation and of the making of moral judgments which is Humean in two important ways: it defends (1) Hume's anti-rationalist claim that reason alone cannot either motivate action or lead to the making of moral judgment, and (2) Hume's.*

Moral Philosophy and its Subject Matter Hume and Kant operate with two somewhat different conceptions of morality itself, which helps explain some of the differences between their respective approaches to moral philosophy. The most important difference is that Kant sees law, duty, and obligation as the very heart of morality, while Hume does not. Kant believes that our moral concerns are dominated by the question of what duties are imposed on us by a law that commands with a uniquely moral necessity. Like most eighteenth-century philosophers, he also believes that our moral lives are preoccupied with the question of how to be virtuous over the course of a life, but he defines virtue in terms of the more fundamental concepts of law, obligation, and duty. By contrast, these concepts certainly figure into morality as Hume understands it, but they are far less central. Our moral concerns are dominated by the question of which motives are virtuous, and we answer this question by looking to the responses of our fellow human beings, who “when viewing things properly” approve of those motives and character traits that are useful or immediately agreeable EPM 9. These are the terms that characterize duty and obligation for Hume, rather than the other way around. Two other differences are worth noting for the purposes of this article. First, Kant draws a bright line between moral and non-moral phenomena, such as prudence, politics, or art. For Hume, the line between the moral and non-moral is far blurrier. According to Hume, the strict separation of moral and non-moral virtues marks one way in which modern moral thought is inferior to ancient ethics; he also seems to suspect that it reflects an unhealthy fixation on responsibility and guilt inherited from Christianity Darwall A second important difference is closely related to the first. For Kant the moral is distinguished from the non-moral not only by a special form of obligation but also by its elevation above the rest of life. One of our chief moral concerns is to protect this status, which requires respecting the rational autonomy at its source and avoiding behavior or patterns of thought and desire that dishonor or degrade persons by treating ourselves or others as mere things. We see it also in the priority given to duties to self cf. Hume does not see things this way. For Hume, the domain of morality is not particularly pure, special, or elevated. It sometimes shows us at our most benevolent or most magnanimous, but morality is continuous with the rest of life, including politics and the pursuit of wealth and status in modern commercial society. Moral virtue is undoubtedly pleasing to us, sometimes powerfully so, but it does not command a unique form of respect or reverence. Neither do the rules and ideals of morality, which spring from the same propensities, ideas, and passions that drive the rest of human behavior. Morality has us far more concerned with promoting pleasure and utility. Hume and Kant both believe that philosophy should dig beneath the surface of morality and present a theory of its foundation. Second, it cannot be found in mind-independent facts about the world. Yet they disagree about the rest of the story. Hume locates the foundation of morality in human nature, primarily in our emotional responses to the behavior of our fellow human beings. By contrast, Kant locates the foundation of morality in the rational nature that we share with all possible finite rational beings. According to Kant, the will of a moral agent is autonomous in that it both gives itself the moral law is self-legislating and can constrain or motivate itself to follow the law is self-constraining or self-motivating. A heteronomous will, on the other hand, is governed by something other than itself, such as an external force or authority. These rival conceptions of morality and its foundation correspond to two very different approaches to moral philosophy. His moral philosophy is part of his larger endeavor to provide a naturalistic explanation of human nature as a whole. Hume often seems more interested in explaining morality as a natural phenomenon than in setting out a normative ethical theory, treating moral action as part of the same physical world in which we explain things in terms of cause and effect EHU 8. On this view, everything we do is open to empirical investigation and explanation. In fact,

## DOWNLOAD PDF REASON AND FEELING IN HUMES ACTION THEORY AND MORAL PHILOSOPHY

Hume often compares humans with other animals, tracing the bases of human morality to features of the mind that human beings and other animals have in common T 2. His detailed treatment of virtue and moral judgment draws heavily on observations and ideas about human nature. But Kant makes explicit that morality must be based on a supreme moral principle, which can only be discovered a priori, through a method of pure moral philosophy G 4: We could never discover a principle that commands all rational beings with such absolute authority through a method of empirical moral philosophy. An empirical approach, he argues, can tell us how people do act, but it cannot tell us how we ought to act. Moreover, we must keep the pure and empirical parts of moral philosophy clearly distinguished, since if we do not we could find ourselves confusing conditional truths, such as what is prudentially good for certain individuals or species, with unconditional truths about fundamental moral requirements G 4: Once one has in hand the supreme principle of morality, however, one requires an understanding of human beings in order to apply it to them MM 6: One can say little about what the supreme moral principle requires as duties human agents have to themselves and to one another without knowing such things as the sorts of ends people may be inclined to adopt and the conditions under which human agency will characteristically thrive or wither. Early in his career Kant endorsed an idiosyncratic form of sentimentalism. But he often indicated that he saw Hutcheson as more significant to ethics than Hume. He seems to have associated Hutcheson more with the positive insights about the role of sensibility in ethics, whereas he seems to have associated Hume more with skepticism about practical reason Kuehn In *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*, which often reads like the work of a mid-eighteenth century British thinker, Kant notes and analyzes the various feelings of pleasure or displeasure, and attraction and aversion, people feel to different traits and temperaments in themselves and others and to different types of literature, objects in nature, kinds of relationships, and other things. His statements about the foundation of morality and its principles convey a commitment to some form of sentimentalism, however idiosyncratic. He claims, for example, that the principles of morality are not speculative rules, but the consciousness of a feeling that lives in every human breast and that extends much further than to the special grounds of sympathy and complaisance. Kant expresses a similar line of thought in another work from the period, *Inquiry Concerning the Distinctness of the Principles of Natural Theology and Morality*, where he distinguishes between the faculty for representing truth and the faculty for experiencing the good, identifying the latter with feeling. For example, in the announcement of his lectures for the winter semester of 1783, he explains one difference between ethics and metaphysics by remarking that the distinction between good and evil in actions, and the judgment of moral rightness, can be known, easily and accurately, by the human heart through what is called sentiment, and that without elaborate necessity of proofs. If Kant was genuinely trying out a version of sentimentalism in the 1780s, this phase did not last long, nor was it a simple adoption of the theories of Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, or Hume. Morality imposes unconditional requirements, and he became increasingly convinced that sentimentalism could not explain or justify such requirements. In a number of works, Kant creates taxonomies of misguided, heteronomous ethical theories based on material determining groundsâ€”in contrast to his theory of autonomy, in which the moral motive constitutes an objective, formal determining ground see Wood b [Other Internet Resources]; Irwin Kant distinguishes among these theories based on their accounts of the basis of moral obligation or the fundamental moral principle G 4: Such theories may assume either subjective empirical or objective rational determining grounds for the moral principle; and within each of these categories, there are theories that assume these determining grounds are external, and others that assume they are internal. Objective, internal grounds include perfection e. Objective, external grounds include the will of God e. Subjective, external grounds include education e. Subjective, internal grounds can include physical feeling, such as self-love e. Thus, Kant locates moral sense theories among those theories that assume a subjective, empirical, internal determining ground of moral feeling as the principle of morality cf. From the *Groundwork* on, Kant registers a number of complaints against sentimentalism, all of which cluster around what he takes to be the core insight into its inadequacy. No empirical principles can ground moral laws, because moral laws bind all rational beings universally,

## DOWNLOAD PDF REASON AND FEELING IN HUMES ACTION THEORY AND MORAL PHILOSOPHY

necessarily, and unconditionally; empirical principles are contingent in various ways, for example, on aspects of human nature G 4: Variance in moral feelings makes them an inadequate standard of good and evil G 4: Moral feelings cannot be the source of the supreme moral principle, because the supreme moral principle holds for all rational beings, whereas feelings differ from person to person M If duty were grounded in feeling, it would seem that morality would bind some people e. Even if people were in complete agreement regarding their moral feelings, the universality of these feelings would be a contingent matter, and thus an inadequate ground for the unconditionally binding moral law. Indeed, if morality were grounded in feeling, it would be arbitrary: God could have constituted us so that we would get from vice the pleasurable, calm feelings of approval that we now allegedly get from virtue M So for Kant, the contingency of the ground of obligation offered by moral sense theories renders those theories inadequate; only a priori determining grounds will do. In his notes Kant remarks that moral sense theories are better understood as providing a hypothesis explaining why we in fact feel approval and disapproval of various actions than as supplying a principle that justifies approval or disapproval or that guides actions NF For this [compassion] is still one of the impulses that nature has implanted in us to do what the representation of duty alone might not accomplish MM 6: Reason and Emotion in Morality Kant, as discussed above, underwent a decisive change of mind about the views of Shaftesbury and Hutcheson. We can see this opposition at work in their respective accounts of moral judgment and moral motivation. According to Hume, moral judgments typically concern the character traits and motives behind human actions. To make a moral judgment is to detect, by means of a sentiment, the operation of a virtuous or vicious quality of mind. Reason and experience are required for determining the likely effects of a given motive or character trait, so reason does play an important role in moral judgment. For example, a person might hate or envy the courage of her enemy but this is not necessarily a moral response. On the contrary, rather than eliminating her sentiments, the judicious spectator enlarges them by means of sympathy, which enables her to resent the misery of others or rejoice in their happiness. Regarding the mechanism of sympathy, see Taylor Kant offers a very different account of moral judgment. He focuses on the first-person judgments an agent not a spectator must make about how to behave. In his view, the primary question is whether a particular mode of conduct is permissible, required, or forbidden in light of the moral law, and sentiment or emotion has no authority in this matter. It is an imperative because it commands and constrains us; it is categorical because it commands and constrains us with ultimate authority and without regard to our personal preferences or any empirically contingent ends G 4: Scholars disagree about the relationship between these two formulations of the CI, as well as their relationship to the other formulations Kant provides. Kant claims that FUL is the standard everyone actually does employ in moral judgment G 4: Others argue in favor of FEI, emphasizing, in particular, its role in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, where FEI seems to play the fundamental role in guiding judgment about specific ethical duties e. A rational being equipped with a purely formal procedure for testing maxims has all she needs. Yet such passages are misleading when read in isolation. Second, Kant frequently emphasizes that no formal procedure could specify all the principles for applying higher-order principles. The wider the duty, the more latitude for individual judgment and experience MM 6: For example, without these, one might be unable to determine whether a particular act of beneficence is more condescending than kind MM 6: Proper moral judgment in such circumstances requires attunement to the feelings of others, but also facility with the social conventions that shape the dynamics of personal interaction. Kant and Hume are clearly opposed on the question of whether reason or feeling has the final say in moral matters. Hume assigns reason to a subordinate role, while Kant takes reason to be the highest normative authority. However, it is important not to misunderstand the nature of their opposition. This is his main focus. He says relatively little about what is going on in our heads or the surrounding social environment when we actually make moral judgments. As noted above, Kant at least entertained the possibility that sentimentalism provides the correct empirical explanation of why human beings tend to approve or disapprove of the actions and motives that they do NF A similar contrast between Hume and Kant can be found in their respective accounts of moral motivation. The claim is not that reason has

## DOWNLOAD PDF REASON AND FEELING IN HUMES ACTION THEORY AND MORAL PHILOSOPHY

no role in human action, but rather that its role is subordinate to passion. Hume offers three main arguments for this claim in *A Treatise of Human Nature*.

# DOWNLOAD PDF REASON AND FEELING IN HUMES ACTION THEORY AND MORAL PHILOSOPHY

## Chapter 3 : David Hume on Morality

*Reason and Feeling in Hume's Action Theory and Moral Philosophy Daniel Shaw Hume Studies, Volume 18, Number 2, November , pp. (Article).*

Hume is an empiricist, and his ideas about the passions are said to have influenced Kant in his rationalist argument for the Categorical Imperative. Rationalism says that reason and sentiment also known as the passions are in a constant fight against one another to control our actions and that, in the end, it is reason that triumphs over the transient nature of the passions our emotions and feelings. Thus it is reason that is the source of our justification for actions and in our determining which actions are moral. In direct contrast, Empiricism says that experience, especially that gained by the senses, is the main method used in the formation of ideas. As such, says Hume, morals are derived from sentiments "feelings or approval or disapproval that are felt towards some action or person. Others hold that it is by reflection on our conscience and the structure of human nature that we are required to act morally. Hume agrees that it is down to our nature as human beings the ability to feel both pleasure and pain, the interdependence on other people such as our family, friends and co-workers that makes us have moral obligations. Furthermore, Hume distinguishes between morality being something that is forced upon us by society politicians or governments in order to keep us in line and the natural inclination to act in a moral manner. He says that it must be the latter, because otherwise where would such concepts of virtues and acting in a correct manner come from? If we do not have the natural inclination to act humanely as part of a community to begin with, we would not be able to conceive of further social rules to govern societies. He goes on to assert that reason is motivationally inert; while it may help us with a great many things, from mathematics to logic, probability and other abstract relations of ideas and the causal relations of real objects in the world, it does not cause any action. Because reason cannot produce a motive, neither can it oppose a motive. This is because, in order to oppose a motive, there must be another motive which acts against it. But we have said that reason does not produce any motive, so be the same token it cannot produce an opposing motive. There are two instances where our passions may be called unreasonable: He goes on to make another famous claim: Here Hume is saying that reason does have a subordinate role in our actions; it tells us how we can satisfy our passions. In other words, we make errors in our judgements about situations we are only human after all , and this gives rise to feelings that attempt to avoid those causes that will make us feel pain. Similarly, for pleasure, we judge that an action will give rise to pleasure and our emotion naturally extends itself to attain the pleasure. For example, I see a a glass of clear liquid and conclude that it is water and want to quench my thirst. But you convince me that it is actually ethanol and would not be advisable to drink it. Hence, my passion the desire to drink the liquid is based on a false supposition. As soon as I realise this falsehood, my reason directs me to a different passion, the desire not to drink it. So it is not reason that motivates me not to drink, it merely convinces me of my mistake. The motivation not to drink come from a different desire that urges me not to drink. But what stops me from acting immorally or satisfying my many selfish desires if it is not reason that does so? These are our obvious passions, but there are others: Even though they do not produce much emotion in our minds, they are there in our nature, such as the general willing to live harmoniously with others and the propensity for pleasure over pain. He goes on to talk of the motivation of morals: Reason of itself is utterly impotent in this particular. Reason cannot motivate us to act, as we have seen, but moral judgements do cause us to act, so reason cannot be the source of moral good and evil. To elaborate on this, consider that we think of moral judgements as being worthy of praise and blame, but factual statements derived from reason do not incite such emotions. In other words, moral mistakes do not seem to be in the same domain as factual errors because we do not ascribe emotive responses like praise and blame to factual errors. Therefore moral judgements are not truth apt "they are not capable of being true or false because they are not facts or realities. They are all down to the passions, volitions and motives of individual agents. Virtue and vice are found by considering the thoughts and feelings we have as people and in

## DOWNLOAD PDF REASON AND FEELING IN HUMES ACTION THEORY AND MORAL PHILOSOPHY

the thoughts and feelings of other individuals. They may not be properties in objects, but dependent on the views of different people and our perspective as human beings in the same way colours might be – see Moral Realism. In a famous passage Hume says: Examine it in all lights, and see if you can find that matter of fact, or real existence, which you call vice. In whichever way you take it, you only find certain passions, motives, volitions, and thoughts. There is no other matter of fact in the case. The vice certainly escapes you, as long as you consider the object. For example, as mentioned in my lecture: But clearly convicting animals or trees of immorality is insane, so it seems to point to the need for motives, or passions, in our actions for them to hold moral worth. But we might reply to this by saying that reasons are limited only to beings that are capable of making judgements about situations. Animals and trees clearly are not. Moral Sense Hume later goes on to talk more about our moral sense and discrimination. Very basically, it is because of the very feeling we have when we take action in a particular situation that we call it virtue a pleasurable feeling or vice an uneasy feeling. But this view seems troublesome. Is acting on our feelings really a reliable way of viewing situations? We may see a man wearing black glasses and wearing a long overcoat hanging around a bank and feel threatened thinking he might be ready to rob the bank, but actually it turns out he is the security guard. Are feelings free from partiality and are they fine-grained enough for the wide variety of moral judgements there are? So to solve the problems above, Hume is saying that we must consider the person or situation in general, not just focussing on the feelings that we have in one particular situation. The praise and blame that we attribute to an action are decided by the moral quality of the action. In other words, the motives behind the action: But such motives must be natural motives, or principles. They must have something general, or independent of the situation at hand that makes them morally worthwhile. However, what about in the case of lending someone money. What reason or motive do we have to repay the money? We cannot just say because it is the honest action to take because there seems to be no natural motive of honesty in the same way that there is for other motives. Natural virtues are, by nature, better because they give us a sense of satisfaction, but artificial virtues benefit people with their widespread implications in a community. Hume says that the rules of justice arise from the selfishness and limited generosity of human beings and the tendency for situations to change and scarcity of external resources. As such, the motive of self-interest is switched for a motive of duty in these larger public situations due to the public good needed to be served. Lastly, a brief note about what Hume says on Freedom. Hume is traditionally seen as a compatibilist about freedom. He argues that all human actions are products of causal necessity, but at the same time, we are all free. Just as the movements between material bodies are causally connected a billiard ball striking another, so too are the connections between human motives and circumstances and behaviour causally linked. Consider an individual who has killed another person. If the person did so on purpose, then according to Hume, they have an some enduring passion or character trait that is bad and that is the cause of their committing murder. But if they did so by accident, then the individual will not incur blame. As individuals, we have choice as to whether or not we act in a given situation, but are still causally affected by our passions and the determinations in our will. Problems for Hume Hume seems to suggest that reason is theoretical reason – it can only give rise to our beliefs about the world, but not reasons for action. Passions are not like beliefs because they are not based on facts are not truth-apt – they motivate us to act. But why do we have to assume that reason is restricted to the purely theoretical domain? Why not say that there is a practical form of reason? We have unmotivated desires like those of appetite and stretching, and also motivated desires which are the results of considerations about different things, for example, thinking about going on strike opposing a war. We are not motivated to go on strike in the same way we are to stretch out our arms when we wake up in the morning. Also, what about cases of depression and people who do not have a strong will, or worse are apathetic and cannot actually feel emotion. Are we to label them as immoral because they do not have the correct passionate responses to circumstances? Instrumentalism Some people have labelled Hume as an instrumentalist, but it is debatable as to whether or not he was. But as a theory, instrumentalism looks more plausible than following Hume and denying reason any role in our moral judgements. An instrumentalist says that: Hume does not account for this when he says

## DOWNLOAD PDF REASON AND FEELING IN HUMES ACTION THEORY AND MORAL PHILOSOPHY

that: But if reason is supposed to be the slave of the passions, why does a discovery of a flaw in our judgement by reason cause our passions to change? Lecture handouts written by my lecturer Dr.

# DOWNLOAD PDF REASON AND FEELING IN HUMES ACTION THEORY AND MORAL PHILOSOPHY

## Chapter 4 : Hume's Analogy between Material Bodies and Human Action | Free Will in Early Modern Philosophy

*Hume Studies Volume XXV, Numbers 1 and 2, April/November , pp. DANIEL J. SHAW. Reason and Feeling in Hume's Action Theory and Moral Philosophy: Hume's Reasonable Passion (Studies in the History of Philosophy, vol. 49).*

You can read four articles free per month. To have complete access to the thousands of philosophy articles on this site, please Ethics Are There Any Moral Facts? In fact, it was disgusting; downright revolting. But would they all mean the same thing? The first two expressions say something, quite obviously, about what the fellow did. It was morally unacceptable. Both of these expressions claim to tell us moral facts about the action. But the second two expressions "that it was disgusting, and that it was revolting" tell us something about the person speaking. She was disgusted, and felt revulsion. This distinction is important because of an ongoing debate amongst philosophers. All of these propositions claim to report facts, which might be expressed: They are real, and we can consult them as we would a reference book. What is the moral fact? On the other hand, there are those who believe that there are no moral facts. What we are doing when we call something right or wrong, they say, is simply expressing our approval or disapproval, or urging our own preferences on others. If everyone agrees "and acts on their agreement" then it will be a much more emotionally safe world for this nervous person, in the absence of peer and media pressure to break with his own conservative moral practices. After all, if these values are generally pursued, then insecure persons will live in a world where it is easier, or at least more socially acceptable, to cling to the emotional matrix of that micro-community which is the family. And, of course, if moral statements are subjective, the rich man will want to claim that stealing is morally reprehensible, whilst the poor man will think unequal distribution of wealth is a moral scandal. One reason why we are not conscious of doing this may be that we are not actually expressing our own personal preferences, but those of the society we live in. Our community has long since decided it approves of certain things and disapproves of others, and will call them right and wrong, respectively. More soberly, we are inclined to call them Noncognitivists, or perhaps Subjectivists, since they think that moral theory is not a matter of cognition, i. David Hume expresses this subjectivity very clearly. You never can find it till you turn your reflection into your own breast, and find a sentiment of disapprobation which arises in you towards this action. It lies in yourself, not the object. So that when you pronounce any action or character to be vicious, you mean nothing but that from the constitution of your nature you have a feeling or sentiment of blame from the contemplation of it. He claims that we can account for everything we do in terms of the interplay of two factors: An action begins with desire. We desire to do something. Our nature is such that we have desires. Reason is then consulted. How shall I do what I desire? If I do it, will it satisfy me? Will it be prudent? Desire initiates the course of action; reason enables me to undertake it, by giving me instruction as to the means, and as to how I will justify myself in doing it. Reason, here, serves desire, as its counsellor. On this view, all human action, including that which we would call moral action, can be completely accounted for by desire and reason. There is no need to consult any alleged moral facts. Facts belong in the realm of reasoning, not passion. So at what point do we encounter moral facts? Suppose I hear that my mother is ill, in Birmingham, and I am here in Edinburgh. I feel that I ought to go and see her. I therefore desire to go to Birmingham. Consulting my reasoning faculty I find that the train is at such a time, when I can be free, and that I can afford the fare. However, reason also reminds me that my mother has always been a bit demanding, and I suspect that she may have little more than a cold, so there is a bit of a tussle going on in my mind. What tilts the scale? An uncomfortable feeling that I ought to go, just in case she really needs me. How do I account for this uncomfortable feeling? I am suggesting that there are beliefs which arouse our feelings in such a way as to create the desires which Hume sees as the beginning of the road to action. I am encouraged to suggest this more complex picture by a lecture I heard recently. However, he did show us some interesting diagrams of the interaction between cognition, emotion and action as understood by psychology. He began with a diagram of Humean simplicity, containing only three terms; emotion, cognition and action. The gist of it is, though, that

## DOWNLOAD PDF REASON AND FEELING IN HUMES ACTION THEORY AND MORAL PHILOSOPHY

the relations between cognition, emotion and action are best represented as a complex web of interactions. The model I would suggest can again be expressed by a couple of diagrams. In the latter case, of course, the diagram would have to be more complex, since desire would be seen as rejecting the belief which motivates us to do right. If a moral realist believes a certain action to be right, he might say: I feel in this way because I think the action right. Professor Jonathan Dancy puts it like this: I experience no desire; I m just looking for a gap in the traffic before I cross. Why insist that there must have been a desire in there somewhere? All that is happening here is that I take a fact there is a bus coming now as a reason for me not to step out yet. This is what we call being prudent; prudent people are people whose beliefs about safety and danger are enough to motivate them. The same is true in ethics. Singer If I am not mistaken, and the desires which, Hume thinks, initiate the process of action, are at least sometimes preceded by motivating beliefs, then it seems to me that these motivating beliefs could themselves, at least sometimes, be true beliefs about moral facts. Have I stumbled on something new and pathbreaking? The work I want it to do can, I think, be done by concepts we already know. We are looking simply for some faculty that enables us to recognise moral facts, and there are already candidates. Far from expecting to join the philosophical immortals as a result of this essay, I would just suggest a couple of already familiar possibilities. One of them is conscience, well-known in religion, commonsense morality and the writings of men such as Butler. Considering the moral sense, I at one time found this concept very hopeful, but I have second thoughts. Its weakness, in my mind, is that it is part of an aesthetic analogy. Both Shaftesbury and Hutcheson think that the moral sense identifies a kind of beauty in good actions, a peculiar fitness of the act in its relation to the circumstances in which it is performed. If I see a poor beggar and give him a fiver I might be doing something so appropriate to the occasion that it is morally beautiful, just as the splash of light illuminating an otherwise dim canvas gives a Rembrandt its unique beauty. If I bludgeon him to death, Shaftesbury and Hutcheson et al would be horrified at the moral ugliness of such an inappropriate act – like someone coming on stage and blowing a raspberry in the middle of a Beethoven string quartet. Sadly, the analogy with aesthetics fails, in my view, to capture the force of moral obligation which I would expect from a moral fact. Likewise, if it is filled with incongruities, we might say it is ugly and we are not interested in looking at it. The beautiful picture may attract us, impress us, take our breath away, and the ugly one might repel us, but neither of them demand or forbid, in the way that moral imperatives do. I realise that what we are speaking of is only an analogy, but the analogy requires us to make a great leap from the relatively weak idea of what is beautiful or ugly, to the idea of what we must do, or what is wicked, in order to talk of the moral sense. A theory of conscience, on the other hand, claims that we have a faculty which is capable of directly recognising and impressing upon us that certain acts are wrong, and other acts are right; that some are good, some evil. It makes no analogy, but speaks directly of what it claims are facts. Conscience puts us in possession of certain beliefs; beliefs which make such a strong impression upon us as to arouse desires; motivating beliefs. If there are moral facts, a theory of conscience commends itself because of its explanatory power. It helps to explain why we have such strong intuitions of obligation to do certain things, and such a sense of shame after we do other things. If we want to know moral facts we need to be told: He is a former clergyman turned philosopher and writer.

# DOWNLOAD PDF REASON AND FEELING IN HUMES ACTION THEORY AND MORAL PHILOSOPHY

## Chapter 5 : Are There Any Moral Facts? | Issue 26 | Philosophy Now

*Hume's position in ethics, which is based on his empiricist theory of the mind, is best known for asserting four theses: (1) Reason alone cannot be a motive to the will, but rather is the "slave of the passions" (see Section 3) (2) Moral distinctions are not derived from reason (see Section 4).*

His views on morality are tied to his theory of the passions, so the new book is a natural progression in her research, Radcliffe said. She framed the book within the context of contemporary motivational psychology, which she said Hume has greatly influenced. How did you choose this topic? Hume gives us a theory of motivation that in contemporary philosophy is called the Humean theory of motivation – that in order to have a motive to action, a person has to have both a belief and a desire. And so there are these two competing models of motivation. These are in discussion and in debate in contemporary philosophy. The Humean model of course is the one that everyone says Hume inspired. He gives detailed arguments why we should look at motivation in that way rather than in the rationalist way. These commentators also argue that Hume never meant to put forward the belief-desire model. I argue that the traditional way of looking at the issue is the proper way. I defend the traditional way of looking at the matter, which gives backing to the contemporary Humean theory of motivation. What is new here? So my book discusses the theory of the passions broadly, which has been neglected. I have a chapter in the book on what I call motivational dynamics, how various passions opposed to each other in certain respects, like fear and joy, can interact and produce new passions, or how they might temper each other. I discuss how certain passions that make our lives difficult, like anxiety, frequent disappointment, sadness could be tempered by other passions. The focus is on their connection to action, and a key part of it is the theory of motivation, defending a certain theory of motivation. What can we learn from this? These are simple points, but they ring true. He talks about, for example, two principles – features of human nature – that he thinks everyone possesses. The two principles are sympathy and comparison. Comparison produces the feelings that are evoked in you when you start comparing yourself to other people. Comparison often yields negative feelings. For sympathy, it depends. But it could also produce emotions in you that prompt you to help them. So sympathy is generally thought of as a positive sort of principle and comparison a negative one. The reason I bring that up is you asked what we take away from this study that could help us deal with our own situations, either positive or negative. Now all this seems really simple, but what Hume really emphasizes are habits of mind. We have to make this habitual. He actually thinks that we can divide our passions into the calm and the violent passions. That sounds kind of odd. But he thinks some of the passions are calm ones, and they are the ones that lead to a better life if we can make them predominant in our lives. So among calm passions would be benevolence, kindness to children and moral and aesthetic pleasures. If we could cultivate those, our lives go better. The violent passions like resentment and anger are the ones that are accompanied with a great deal of internal upheaval. And if we want to avoid that, we have to work on cultivating habits such that the calm passions become dominant in us. So Hume offers this whole theory of the passions, a psychological theory that I do think resonates with contemporary psychology. And the flip side of that? This is because he really does think that our emotions are rooted in individual constitutions. Even though we have a shared human nature, you and I have different things that appeal to us, either due to heredity, biology, upbringing, just the way that we are made. Some things are harder for me and are easier for you. And we have to deal with that on an individual basis. And I think that his view implies that some people simply are going to have a hard time dealing with what is called self-regulation in the literature. Hume has a theory that explains emotions, motivation, behavior and well-being that appear to me to be common sense. His theory nicely inter-weaves them in a systematic way to produce a picture of human nature.

# DOWNLOAD PDF REASON AND FEELING IN HUMES ACTION THEORY AND MORAL PHILOSOPHY

## Chapter 6 : David Hume - Wikipedia

*Abstract. Volume XXV, Numbers 1 and 2, April/November, pp. DANIEL J. SHAW. Reason and Feeling in Hume's Action Theory and Moral Philosophy: Hume's Reasonable Passion (Studies in the History of Philosophy, vol. 49).*

There is heated debate about what Hume intends by each of these theses and how he argues for them. He articulates and defends them within the broader context of his metaethics and his ethic of virtue and vice. In part the moral Enquiry simply recasts central ideas from the moral part of the Treatise in a more accessible style; but there are important differences. The ethical positions and arguments of the Treatise are set out below, noting where the moral Enquiry agrees; differences between the Enquiry and the Treatise are discussed afterwards. One is a question of moral epistemology: Ethical theorists and theologians of the day held, variously, that moral good and evil are discovered: Hume sides with the moral sense theorists: Hume maintains against the rationalists that, although reason is needed to discover the facts of any concrete situation and the general social impact of a trait of character or a practice over time, reason alone is insufficient to yield a judgment that something is virtuous or vicious. Moral rationalists of the period such as Clarke and in some moods, Hobbes and Locke argue that moral standards or principles are requirements of reason – that is, that the very rationality of right actions is the ground of our obligation to perform them. The moral sense theorists Shaftesbury and Hutcheson and Butler see all requirements to pursue goodness and avoid evil as consequent upon human nature, which is so structured that a particular feature of our consciousness whether moral sense or conscience evaluates the rest. Hume sides with the moral sense theorists on this question: Closely connected with the issue of the foundations of moral norms is the question whether moral requirements are natural or conventional. Hobbes and Mandeville see them as conventional, and Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, Locke, and others see them as natural. If there were nothing in our experience and no sentiments in our minds to give rise to the concept of virtue, Hume says, no lavish praise of heroes could generate such a concept. Thus he takes an intermediate position: While even so law-oriented a thinker as Hobbes has a good deal to say about virtue, the ethical writers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries predominantly favor a rule- or law-governed understanding of morals, giving priority to laws of nature or principles of duty. The chief exception here is the moral sense school, which advocates an analysis of the moral life more like that of the Greek and Hellenistic thinkers, in terms of settled traits of character – although they too find a place for principles in their ethics. Yet he insists on a role for rules of duty within the domain of what he calls the artificial virtues. Hume roundly criticizes Hobbes for his insistence on psychological egoism or something close to it, and for his dismal, violent picture of a state of nature. Yet Hume resists the view of Hutcheson that all moral principles can be reduced to our benevolence, in part because he doubts that benevolence can sufficiently overcome our perfectly normal acquisitiveness. While for Hume the condition of humankind in the absence of organized society is not a war of all against all, neither is it the law-governed and highly cooperative domain imagined by Locke. It is a hypothetical condition in which we would care for our friends and cooperate with them, but in which self-interest and preference for friends over strangers would make any wider cooperation impossible. In the realm of politics, Hume again takes up an intermediate position. He objects both to the doctrine that a subject must passively obey his government no matter how tyrannical it is and to the Lockean thesis that citizens have a natural right to revolution whenever their rulers violate their contractual commitments to the people. He famously criticizes the notion that all political duties arise from an implicit contract that binds later generations who were not party to the original explicit agreement. On his view, human beings can create a society without government, ordered by conventional rules of ownership, transfer of property by consent, and promise-keeping. We superimpose government on such a pre-civil society when it grows large and prosperous; only then do we need to use political power to enforce these rules of justice in order to preserve social cooperation. So the duty of allegiance to government, far from depending on the duty to fulfill promises, provides needed assurance that promises of all sorts will be kept. The duty to

## DOWNLOAD PDF REASON AND FEELING IN HUMES ACTION THEORY AND MORAL PHILOSOPHY

submit to our rulers comes into being because reliable submission is necessary to preserve order. Particular governments are legitimate because of their usefulness in preserving society, not because those who wield power were chosen by God or received promises of obedience from the people. In a long-established civil society, whatever ruler or type of government happens to be in place and successfully maintaining order and justice is legitimate, and is owed allegiance. However, there is some legitimate recourse for victims of tyranny: The indirect passions, primarily pride, humility shame, love and hatred, are generated in a more complex way, but still one involving either the thought or experience of pain or pleasure. Intentional actions are caused by the direct passions including the instincts. Of the indirect passions Hume says that pride, humility, love and hatred do not directly cause action; it is not clear whether he thinks this true of all the indirect passions. Hume is traditionally regarded as a compatibilist about freedom and determinism, because of his discussion in the Enquiry concerning Human Understanding, where he argues that if we understand the doctrines of liberty and necessity properly, all mankind consistently believe both that human actions are the products of causal necessity and that they are free. The two treatments, however, are entirely consistent. Hume construes necessity to mean the same as causal connection or rather, intelligible causal connection, as he himself analyzes this notion in his own theory of causation: In both works he argues that just as we discover necessity in this sense to hold between the movements of material bodies, we discover just as much necessity to hold between human motives, character traits, and circumstances of action, on the one hand, and human behavior on the other. He says in the Treatise that the liberty of indifference is the negation of necessity in this sense; this is the notion of liberty that he there labels absurd, and identifies with chance or randomness which can be no real power in nature both in the Treatise and the first epistemological Enquiry. Human actions are not free in this sense. This is the sense on which Hume focuses in EcHU: Hume argues, as well, that the causal necessity of human actions is not only compatible with moral responsibility but requisite to it. To hold an agent morally responsible for a bad action, it is not enough that the action be morally reprehensible; we must impute the badness of the fleeting act to the enduring agent. Not all harmful or forbidden actions incur blame for the agent; those done by accident, for example, do not. The Influencing Motives of the Will According to Hume, intentional actions are the immediate product of passions, in particular the direct passions, including the instincts. He does not appear to allow that any other sort of mental state could, on its own, give rise to an intentional action except by producing a passion, though he does not argue for this. The motivating passions, in their turn, are produced in the mind by specific causes, as we see early in the Treatise where he first explains the distinction between impressions of sensation and impressions of reflection: An impression first strikes upon the senses, and makes us perceive heat or cold, thirst or hunger, pleasure or pain, of some kind or other. Of this impression there is a copy taken by the mind, which remains after the impression ceases; and this we call an idea. This idea of pleasure or pain, when it returns upon the soul, produces the new impressions of desire and aversion, hope and fear, which may properly be called impressions of reflection, because derived from it. Not just any ideas of pleasure or pain give rise to motivating passions, however, but only ideas of those pleasures or pains we believe exist or will exist T 1. More generally, the motivating passions of desire and aversion, hope and fear, joy and grief, and a few others are impressions produced by the occurrence in the mind either of a feeling of pleasure or pain, whether physical or psychological, or of a believed idea of pleasure or pain to come T 2. These passions, together with the instincts hunger, lust, and so on, are all the motivating passions that Hume discusses. The will, Hume claims, is an immediate effect of pain or pleasure T 2. The will, however, is merely that impression we feel when we knowingly give rise to an action T 2. The causes of action he describes are those he has already identified: Hume amously sets himself in opposition to most moral philosophers, ancient and modern, who talk of the combat of passion and reason, and who urge human beings to regulate their actions by reason and to grant it dominion over their contrary passions. His view is not, of course, that reason plays no role in the generation of action; he grants that reason provides information, in particular about means to our ends, which makes a difference to the direction of the will. His thesis is that reason alone cannot move us to action; the impulse to act itself must come from passion. The first

## DOWNLOAD PDF REASON AND FEELING IN HUMES ACTION THEORY AND MORAL PHILOSOPHY

is a largely empirical argument based on the two rational functions of the understanding. The understanding discovers the abstract relations of ideas by demonstration a process of comparing ideas and finding congruencies and incongruencies ; and it also discovers the causal and other probabilistic relations of objects that are revealed in experience. Demonstrative reasoning is never the cause of any action by itself: Probable or cause-and-effect reasoning does play a role in deciding what to do, but we see that it only functions as an auxiliary, and not on its own. Our aversion or propensity makes us seek the causes of the expected source of pain or pleasure, and we use causal reasoning to discover what they are. Once we do, our impulse naturally extends itself to those causes, and we act to avoid or embrace them. Plainly the impulse to act does not arise from the reasoning but is only directed by it. Probable reasoning is merely the discovering of causal connections, and knowledge that A causes B never concerns us if we are indifferent to A and to B. Thus, neither demonstrative nor probable reasoning alone causes action. The second argument is a corollary of the first. It concludes that reason alone cannot prevent action or resist passion in controlling the will. It takes as a premise the conclusion of the previous argument, that reason alone cannot produce any impulse to act. What is requisite to arrest a volition or retard the impulse of an existing passion is a contrary impulse. If reason alone were to resist a passion, it would need to give rise to such a contrary impulse. But could it do that, it would have an original influence on the will a capacity to cause intentional action, when unopposed ; which, according to the previous argument, it does not have. Therefore reason alone cannot resist any impulse to act. Therefore, whatever it may be in the mind that offers resistance to our passions, it cannot be reason of itself. The third or Representation argument is different in kind. It looks as if Hume is about to give another argument to show that reason alone cannot provide a force to resist passion or volition. Yet the Representation Argument is not empirical, and does not talk of forces or impulses. Therefore, a passion or volition or action , not having this feature, cannot be opposed by truth and reason. Hume says the argument, as applied to actions, proves two points. First, it shows that actions cannot be reasonable or unreasonable. The point here is not merely the earlier, empirical observation that the rational activity of the understanding does not generate an impulse in the absence of an expectation of pain or pleasure. It is a conclusion about the relevance of ratiocination alone to action. Because passions, volitions, and actions have no content suitable for assessment by reason, reason cannot assess prospective motives or actions as rational or irrational, and therefore reason cannot, by so assessing them, create or obstruct them. By contrast, reason can assess a potential opinion as rational or irrational; and by endorsing the opinion, reason will that is, we will adopt it, while by contradicting the opinion, reason will destroy our credence in it. The Representation Argument, then, makes a point a priori about the relevance of the functions of the understanding to the generation of actions. Hume allows that, speaking imprecisely, we often say a passion is unreasonable because it arises in response to a mistaken judgment or opinion, either that something a source of pleasure or uneasiness exists, or that it may be obtained or avoided by a certain means. In just these two cases a passion may be called unreasonable, but strictly speaking even here it is not the passion but the judgment that is so. And there is no other instance of passion contrary to reason. Either way, Hume denies that reason can evaluate the ends people set themselves; only passions can select ends, and reason cannot evaluate passions. Instrumentalists understand the claim that reason is the slave of the passions to allow that reason not only discovers the causally efficacious means to our ends a task of theoretical causal reasoning but also requires us to take them. The classificatory point in the Representation Argument favors the reading of Hume as a skeptic about practical reason; but that argument is absent from the moral Enquiry. Ethical Anti-rationalism Hume claims that moral distinctions are not derived from reason but rather from sentiment. His rejection of ethical rationalism is at least two-fold. Moral rationalists tend to say, first, that moral properties are discovered by reason, and also that what is morally good is in accord with reason even that goodness consists in reasonableness and what is morally evil is unreasonable. Hume rejects both theses. Some of his arguments are directed to one and some to the other thesis, but ambiguities in the text make it unclear which he means to attack in certain places.

# DOWNLOAD PDF REASON AND FEELING IN HUMES ACTION THEORY AND MORAL PHILOSOPHY

## Chapter 7 : David Hume's Morality Theory -

*Based upon a study of arguments in the "Treatise" and the "Enquiry", this work proposes a theory of motivation and of the making of moral judgements which defends much of John Hume's sentimentalism.*

Of sensation external 2. Of reflection internal Hume begins by dividing all mental perceptions between ideas thoughts and impressions sensations and feelings , and then makes two central claims about the relation between them. That is, for any idea we select, we can trace the component parts of that idea to some external sensation or internal feeling. This claim places Hume squarely in the empiricist tradition, and he regularly uses this principle as a test for determining the content of an idea under consideration. For example, my impression of a tree is simply more vivid than my idea of that tree. One of his early critics, Lord Monboddo " pointed out an important implication of the liveliness thesis, which Hume himself presumably hides. Most modern philosophers held that ideas reside in our spiritual minds, whereas impressions originate in our physical bodies. So, when Hume blurs the distinction between ideas and impressions, he is ultimately denying the spiritual nature of ideas and instead grounding them in our physical nature. In short, all of our mental operations"including our most rational ideas"are physical in nature. Hume goes on to explain that there are several mental faculties that are responsible for producing our various ideas. He initially divides ideas between those produced by the memory, and those produced by the imagination. The memory is a faculty that conjures up ideas based on experiences as they happened. For example, the memory I have of my drive to the store is a comparatively accurate copy of my previous sense impressions of that experience. The imagination, by contrast, is a faculty that breaks apart and combines ideas, thus forming new ones. Hume uses the familiar example of a golden mountain: As our imagination takes our most basic ideas and leads us to form new ones, it is directed by three principles of association, namely, resemblance, contiguity, and cause and effect. By virtue of resemblance, an illustration or sketch, of a person leads me to an idea of that actual person. The idea of one apartment in a building leads me to think of the apartment contiguous to"or next to"the first. The thought of a scar on my hand leads me to think of a broken piece of glass that caused the scar. As indicated in the above chart, our more complex ideas of the imagination are further divided between two categories. Some imaginative ideas represent flights of the fancy, such as the idea of a golden mountain; however, other imaginative ideas represent solid reasoning, such as predicting the trajectory of a thrown ball. The fanciful ideas are derived from the faculty of the fancy, and are the source of fantasies, superstitions, and bad philosophy. By contrast, sound ideas are derived from the faculty of the understanding"or reason"and are of two types: He dramatically makes this point at the conclusion of his Enquiry: When we run over libraries, persuaded of these principles, what havoc must we make? If we take in our hand any volume; of divinity or school metaphysics, for instance; let us ask, Does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number? Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence? Commit it then to the flames: For it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion Enquiry, Principles of reasoning concerning relations of ideas involving demonstration: In his analysis of these issues in the Treatise, he repeatedly does three things. First, he skeptically argues that we are unable to gain complete knowledge of some important philosophical notion under consideration. Second, he shows how the understanding gives us a very limited idea of that notion. Third, he explains how some erroneous views of that notion are grounded in the fancy, and he accordingly recommends that we reject those erroneous ideas. Space On the topic of space, Hume argues that our proper notions of space are confined to our visual and tactile experiences of the three-dimensional world, and we err if we think of space more abstractly and independently of those visual and tactile experiences. Following the above three-part scheme, 1 Hume skeptically argues that we have no ideas of infinitely divisible space Treatise, 1. He accounts for this erroneous notion in terms of a mistaken association that people naturally make between visual and tactile space Treatise, 1. The idea of time, then, is not a simple idea derived from a simple impression; instead, it is a copy of impressions as they are perceived

## DOWNLOAD PDF REASON AND FEELING IN HUMES ACTION THEORY AND MORAL PHILOSOPHY

by the mind at its fixed speed Treatise, 1. The psychological account of this erroneous view is that we mistake time for the cause of succession instead of seeing it as the effect Treatise, 1. Necessary Connection between Causes and Effects According to Hume, the notion of cause-effect is a complex idea that is made up of three more foundational ideas: If B were to occur before A, then it would be absurd to say that A was the cause of B. The broken window and the rock must be in proximity with each other. Priority and proximity alone, however, do not make up our entire notion of causality. For example, if I sneeze and the lights go out, I would not conclude that my sneeze was the cause, even though the conditions of priority and proximity were fulfilled. We also believe that there is a necessary connection between cause A and effect B. During the modern period of philosophy, philosophers thought of necessary connection as a power or force connecting two events. When billiard ball A strikes billiard ball B, there is a power that the one event imparts to the other. In keeping with his empiricist copy thesis, that all ideas are copied from impressions, Hume tries to uncover the experiences which give rise to our notions of priority, proximity, and necessary connection. The first two are easy to explain. Priority traces back to our various experiences of time. Proximity traces back to our various experiences of space. But what is the experience which gives us the idea of necessary connection? We have no external sensory impression of causal power when we observe cause-effect relationships; all that we ever see is cause A constantly conjoined with effect B. Neither does it arise from an internal impression, such as when we introspectively reflect on willed bodily motions or willing the creation of thoughts. These internal experiences are too elusive, and nothing in them can give content to our idea of necessary connection. This produces a habit such that upon any further appearance of A, we expect B to follow. He explains this mistaken belief by the natural tendency we have to impute subjectively perceived qualities to external things Treatise, 1. His explanation is lengthy, but involves the following features. Perceptions of objects are disjointed and have no unity in and of themselves Treatise, 1. We then conflate all ideas of perceptions, which put our minds in similar dispositions Treatise, 1. Consequently, we naturally invent the continued and external existence of the objects or perceptions that produced these ideas Treatise, 1. Lastly, we go on to believe in the existence of these objects because of the force of the resemblance between ideas Treatise, 1. Although this belief is philosophically unjustified, Hume feels he has given an accurate account of how we inevitably arrive at the idea of external existence. The psychological motivation for accepting this view is this: Appealing to both forces, we ascribe interruption to perceptions and continuance to objects Treatise, 1. Because of the associative principles, the resemblance or causal connection within the chain of my perceptions gives rise to an idea of myself, and memory extends this idea past my immediate perceptions Treatise, 1. These motives produce actions that have the same causal necessity observed in cause-effect relations that we see in external objects, such as when billiard ball A strikes and moves billiard ball B. In the same way, we regularly observe the rock-solid connection between motive A and action B, and we rely on that predictable connection in our normal lives. Suppose that a traveler, in recounting his observation of the odd behavior of natives in a distant country, told us that identical motives led to entirely different actions among these natives. In business, politics, and military affairs, our leaders expect predictable behavior from us insofar as the same motives within us will always result in us performing the same action. A prisoner who is soon to be executed will assume that the motivations and actions of the prison guards and the executioner are so rigidly fixed that these people will mechanically carry out their duties and perform the execution, with no chance of a change of heart Treatise, 2. One explanation is that people erroneously believe they have a feeling of liberty when performing actions. In the Treatise Hume rejects the notion of liberty completely. In the Enquiry, however, he takes a more compatibilist approach. Nothing in this definition of liberty is in conflict with the notion of necessity. Skepticism In all of the above discussions on epistemological topics, Hume performs a balancing act between making skeptical attacks step 1 and offering positive theories based on natural beliefs step 2. In the conclusion to Book 1, though, he appears to elevate his skepticism to a higher level and exposes the inherent contradictions in even his best philosophical theories. He notes three such contradictions. One centers on what we call induction. Our judgments based on past experience all contain elements of doubt; we are then impelled

## DOWNLOAD PDF REASON AND FEELING IN HUMES ACTION THEORY AND MORAL PHILOSOPHY

to make a judgment about that doubt, and since this judgment is also based on past experience it will in turn produce a new doubt. Once again, though, we are impelled to make a judgment about this second doubt, and the cycle continues. One is our natural inclination to believe that we are directly seeing objects as they really are, and the other is the more philosophical view that we only ever see mental images or copies of external objects. The third contradiction involves a conflict between causal reasoning and belief in the continued existence of matter. After listing these contradictions, Hume despairs over the failure of his metaphysical reasoning: The intense view of these manifold contradictions and imperfections in human reason has so wrought upon me, and heated my brain, that I am ready to reject all belief and reasoning, and can look upon no opinion even as more probable or likely than another [Treatise, 1. He then pacifies his despair by recognizing that nature forces him to set aside his philosophical speculations and return to the normal activities of common life. He sees, though, that in time he will be drawn back into philosophical speculation in order to attack superstition and educate the world. However, during the course of his writing the Treatise his view of the nature of these contradictions changed. At first he felt that these contradictions were restricted to theories about the external world, but theories about the mind itself would be free from them, as he explains here: The essence and composition of external bodies are so obscure, that we must necessarily, in our reasonings, or rather conjectures concerning them, involve ourselves in contradictions and absurdities. When composing the Appendix to the Treatise a year later, he changed his mind and felt that theories about the mind would also have contradictions: Thus, in the Treatise, the skeptical bottom line is that even our best theories about both physical and mental phenomena will be plagued with contradictions. In the concluding section of his Enquiry, Hume again addresses the topic of skepticism, but treats the matter somewhat differently: He associates extreme Pyrrhonian skepticism with blanket attacks on all reasoning about the external world, abstract reasoning about space and time, or causal reasoning about matters of fact. Theory of the Passions Like many philosophers of his time, Hume developed a theory of the passions—that is, the emotions—categorizing them and explaining the psychological mechanisms by which they arise in the human mind. His most detailed account is in Book Two of the Treatise. Passions, according to Hume, fall under the category of impressions of reflection as opposed to impressions of sensation. He opens his discussion with a taxonomy of types of passions, which are outlined here: Calm reflective pleasures and pains 2.

# DOWNLOAD PDF REASON AND FEELING IN HUMES ACTION THEORY AND MORAL PHILOSOPHY

## Chapter 8 : Hume's Moral Philosophy (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)

*HUME STUDIES* Volume XXV, Numbers 1 and 2, April/November , pp. DANIEL J. SHAW. *Reason and Feeling in Hume's Action Theory Moral Philosophy: Hume's Reasonable Passion (Studies in the History of Philosophy.*

One is a question of moral epistemology: Ethical theorists and theologians of the day held, variously, that moral good and evil are discovered: Hume sides with the moral sense theorists: Hume maintains against the rationalists that, although reason is needed to discover the facts of any concrete situation and the general social impact of a trait of character or a practice over time, reason alone is insufficient to yield a judgment that something is virtuous or vicious. Moral rationalists of the period such as Clarke and in some moods, Hobbes and Locke argue that moral standards or principles are requirements of reason – that is, that the very rationality of right actions is the ground of our obligation to perform them. The moral sense theorists Shaftesbury and Hutcheson and Butler see all requirements to pursue goodness and avoid evil as consequent upon human nature, which is so structured that a particular feature of our consciousness whether moral sense or conscience evaluates the rest. Hume sides with the moral sense theorists on this question: Closely connected with the issue of the foundations of moral norms is the question whether moral requirements are natural or conventional. Hobbes and Mandeville see them as conventional, and Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, Locke, and others see them as natural. If there were nothing in our experience and no sentiments in our minds to produce the concept of virtue, Hume says, no lavish praise of heroes could generate it. So to a degree moral requirements have a natural origin. Thus he takes an intermediate position: While even so law-oriented a thinker as Hobbes has a good deal to say about virtue, the ethical writers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries predominantly favor a rule- or law-governed understanding of morals, giving priority to laws of nature or principles of duty. The chief exception here is the moral sense school, which advocates an analysis of the moral life more like that of the Greek and Hellenistic thinkers, in terms of settled traits of character – although they too find a place for principles in their ethics. Yet he insists on a role for rules of duty within the domain of what he calls the artificial virtues. Hume roundly criticizes Hobbes for his insistence on psychological egoism or something close to it, and for his dismal, violent picture of a state of nature. Yet Hume resists the view of Hutcheson that all moral principles can be reduced to our benevolence, in part because he doubts that benevolence can sufficiently overcome our perfectly normal acquisitiveness. While for Hume the condition of humankind in the absence of organized society is not a war of all against all, neither is it the law-governed and highly cooperative domain imagined by Locke. It is a hypothetical condition in which we would care for our friends and cooperate with them, but in which self-interest and preference for friends over strangers would make any wider cooperation impossible. In the realm of politics, Hume again takes up an intermediate position. He objects both to the doctrine that a subject must passively obey his government no matter how tyrannical it is and to the Lockean thesis that citizens have a natural right to revolution whenever their rulers violate their contractual commitments to the people. He famously criticizes the notion that all political duties arise from an implicit contract that binds later generations who were not party to the original explicit agreement. On his view, human beings can create a society without government, ordered by conventional rules of ownership, transfer of property by consent, and promise-keeping. We superimpose government on such a pre-civil society when it grows large and prosperous; only then do we need to use political power to enforce these rules of justice in order to preserve social cooperation. So the duty of allegiance to government, far from depending on the duty to fulfill promises, provides needed assurance that promises of all sorts will be kept. The duty to submit to our rulers comes into being because reliable submission is necessary to preserve order. Particular governments are legitimate because of their usefulness in preserving society, not because those who wield power were chosen by God or received promises of obedience from the people. In a long-established civil society, whatever ruler or type of government happens to be in place and successfully maintaining order and justice is legitimate, and is owed allegiance. However,

## DOWNLOAD PDF REASON AND FEELING IN HUMES ACTION THEORY AND MORAL PHILOSOPHY

there is some legitimate recourse for victims of tyranny: The indirect passions, primarily pride, humility shame, love and hatred, are generated in a more complex way, but still one involving either the thought or experience of pain or pleasure. Intentional actions are caused by the direct passions including the instincts. Of the indirect passions Hume says that pride, humility, love and hatred do not directly cause action; it is not clear whether he thinks this true of all the indirect passions. Hume is traditionally regarded as a compatibilist about freedom and determinism, because in his discussion in the Enquiry concerning Human Understanding he argues that if we understand the doctrines of liberty and necessity properly, all mankind consistently believe both that human actions are the products of causal necessity and that they are free. The two treatments, however, surprisingly enough, are entirely consistent. Hume construes causal necessity to mean the same as causal connection or rather, intelligible causal connection, as he himself analyzes this notion in his own theory of causation: In both works he argues that just as we discover necessity in this sense to hold between the movements of material bodies, we discover just as much necessity to hold between human motives, character traits, and circumstances of action, on the one hand, and human behavior on the other. He says in the Treatise that the liberty of indifference is the negation of necessity in this sense; this is the notion of liberty that he there labels absurd, and identifies with chance or randomness which can be no real power in nature both in the Treatise and the first epistemological Enquiry. Human actions are not free in this sense. This is the sense on which Hume focuses in ECHU: Hume argues, as well, that the causal necessity of human actions is not only compatible with moral responsibility but requisite to it. To hold an agent morally responsible for a bad action, it is not enough that the action be morally reprehensible; we must impute the badness of the fleeting act to the enduring agent. Not all harmful or forbidden actions incur blame for the agent; those done by accident, for example, do not. The Influencing Motives of the Will According to Hume, intentional actions are the immediate product of passions, in particular the direct passions, including the instincts. He does not appear to allow that any other sort of mental state could, on its own, give rise to an intentional action except by producing a passion, though he does not argue for this. The motivating passions, in their turn, are produced in the mind by specific causes, as we see early in the Treatise where he first explains the distinction between impressions of sensation and impressions of reflection: An impression first strikes upon the senses, and makes us perceive heat or cold, thirst or hunger, pleasure or pain, of some kind or other. Of this impression there is a copy taken by the mind, which remains after the impression ceases; and this we call an idea. This idea of pleasure or pain, when it returns upon the soul, produces the new impressions of desire and aversion, hope and fear, which may properly be called impressions of reflection, because derived from it. Not just any ideas of pleasure or pain give rise to motivating passions, however, but only ideas of those pleasures or pains we believe exist or will exist T 1. More generally, the motivating passions of desire and aversion, hope and fear, joy and grief, and a few others are impressions produced by the occurrence in the mind either of a feeling of pleasure or pain, whether physical or psychological, or of a believed idea of pleasure or pain to come T 2. These passions, together with the instincts hunger, lust, and so on, are all the motivating passions that Hume discusses. The will, Hume claims, is an immediate effect of pain or pleasure T 2. The will, however, is merely that impression we feel when we knowingly give rise to an action T 2. The causes of action he describes are those he has already identified: Hume famously sets himself in opposition to most moral philosophers, ancient and modern, who talk of the combat of passion and reason, and who urge human beings to regulate their actions by reason and to grant it dominion over their contrary passions. His view is not, of course, that reason plays no role in the generation of action; he grants that reason provides information, in particular about means to our ends, which makes a difference to the direction of the will. His thesis is that reason alone cannot move us to action; the impulse to act itself must come from passion. The first is a largely empirical argument based on the two rational functions of the understanding. The understanding discovers the abstract relations of ideas by demonstration a process of comparing ideas and finding congruencies and incongruencies; and it also discovers the causal and other probabilistic relations of objects that are revealed in experience. Demonstrative reasoning is never the cause of any action by itself: Probable or cause-and-effect reasoning does play a role in

## DOWNLOAD PDF REASON AND FEELING IN HUMES ACTION THEORY AND MORAL PHILOSOPHY

deciding what to do, but we see that it only functions as an auxiliary, and not on its own. Our aversion or propensity makes us seek the causes of the expected source of pain or pleasure, and we use causal reasoning to discover what they are. Once we do, our impulse naturally extends itself to those causes, and we act to avoid or embrace them. Plainly the impulse to act does not arise from the reasoning but is only directed by it. Probable reasoning is merely the discovering of causal connections, and knowledge that A causes B never concerns us if we are indifferent to A and to B. Thus, neither demonstrative nor probable reasoning alone causes action. The second argument is a corollary of the first. It takes as a premise the conclusion just reached, that reason alone cannot produce an impulse to act. Given that, can reason prevent action or resist passion in controlling the will? To stop a volition or retard the impulse of an existing passion would require a contrary impulse. If reason alone could give rise to such a contrary impulse, it would have an original influence on the will a capacity to cause intentional action, when unopposed ; which, according to the previous argument, it lacks. Therefore reason alone cannot resist any impulse to act. Therefore, what offers resistance to our passions cannot be reason of itself. The third or Representation argument is different in kind. One might suppose he means to give another argument to show that reason alone cannot provide a force to resist passion. Yet the Representation Argument is not empirical, and does not talk of forces or impulses. Therefore, a passion or volition or action , not having this feature, cannot be opposed by truth and reason. The argument allegedly proves two points: The point here is not merely the earlier, empirical observation that the rational activity of the understanding does not generate an impulse in the absence of an expectation of pain or pleasure. The main point is that, because passions, volitions, and actions have no content suitable for assessment by reason, reason cannot assess prospective motives or actions as rational or irrational; and therefore reason cannot, by so assessing them, create or obstruct them. By contrast, reason can assess a potential opinion as rational or irrational; and by endorsing the opinion, reason will that is, we will adopt it, while by contradicting the opinion, reason will destroy our credence in it. The Representation Argument, then, makes a point a priori about the relevance of the functions of the understanding to the generation of actions. Hume allows that, speaking imprecisely, we often say a passion is unreasonable because it arises in response to a mistaken judgment or opinion, either that something a source of pleasure or uneasiness exists, or that it may be obtained or avoided by a certain means. In just these two cases a passion may be called unreasonable, but strictly speaking even here it is not the passion but the judgment that is so. And there is no other instance of passion contrary to reason. Either way, Hume denies that reason can evaluate the ends people set themselves; only passions can select ends, and reason cannot evaluate passions. Instrumentalists understand the claim that reason is the slave of the passions to allow that reason not only discovers the causally efficacious means to our ends a task of theoretical causal reasoning but also requires us to take them. The classificatory point in the Representation Argument favors the reading of Hume as a skeptic about practical reason; but that argument is absent from the moral Enquiry. Ethical Anti-rationalism Hume claims that moral distinctions are not derived from reason but rather from sentiment. His rejection of ethical rationalism is at least two-fold. Moral rationalists tend to say, first, that moral properties are discovered by reason, and also that what is morally good is in accord with reason even that goodness consists in reasonableness and what is morally evil is unreasonable. Hume rejects both theses. Some of his arguments are directed to one and some to the other thesis, and in places it is unclear which he means to attack. Demonstrative reasoning discovers relations of ideas, and vice and virtue are not identical with any of the four philosophical relations resemblance, contrariety, degrees in quality, or proportions in quantity and number whose presence can be demonstrated. Nor could they be identical with any other abstract relation; for such relations can also obtain between items such as trees that are incapable of moral good or evil. Furthermore, were moral vice and virtue discerned by demonstrative reasoning, such reasoning would reveal their inherent power to produce motives in all who discern them; but no causal connections can be discovered a priori. Causal reasoning, by contrast, does infer matters of fact pertaining to actions, in particular their causes and effects; but the vice of an action its wickedness is not found in its causes or effects, but is only apparent when we consult the sentiments of the

## DOWNLOAD PDF REASON AND FEELING IN HUMES ACTION THEORY AND MORAL PHILOSOPHY

observer. Therefore moral good and evil are not discovered by reason alone. Hume also attempts in the Treatise to establish the other anti-rationalist thesis, that virtue is not the same as reasonableness and vice is not contrary to reason.

# DOWNLOAD PDF REASON AND FEELING IN HUMES ACTION THEORY AND MORAL PHILOSOPHY

## Chapter 9 : Hume's Moral Philosophy - Gakuranman

1. For Stroud's version of these worries, see Hume (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, ), 2. "The Normativity of Instrumental Reason," in Garrett Cullity and Berys Gaut, eds., *Ethics and*.

David Hume on Morality April 20, by aaron David Hume, an 18th century philosopher, stated that morality is based on sentiments rather than reason. He immediately found that he could not find the vice within the facts of the situations. For example, let us examine a boy who steals a toy at a store. A matter of fact about this situation is that a young human male has taken an item from a store. This is what happened. The senses and reason tell us a few other things too: Hume argued that no matter what we find about the situation with our senses and our reason, we will never find the actual existence or quality of vice. So then, if morality is not intrinsic to objects in a situation, what is morality? Hume said that morality can be found within. When you observe an immoral act, you do not find any right or wrong about the situation when you consider only the objects involved in the act. Hume said that this was only a feeling or sentiment though. Therefore morality is not something of our reason, for we could not find the existence of good or bad while examining the situation with our reason. Our reason only told us facts about what happened and how it happened. Morality then must be a sentiment or feeling. Hume says that modern philosophy considers such things as colors, heat and sound as simply perceptions and not definite qualities of any object. Colors and heat are objects of our observation, to be sure, but it can not be said for sure that such things are properties of an object. Take an apple for example. We see red, but red is our perception and is not necessarily an actual quality of the apple. To go even further we cannot even say for fact that an apple exists, and if the apple does not exist than surely red can not be a quality of it. All we really know is that we perceive an apple and in our perceptions it is red. This does not also imply the existence or qualities of the apple. Hume compares this type of thought to morality. Hume is trying to show that like observations of color and heat, morality is not something that can be found, for us, in an object, but instead morality is something which only exists within our world and comes from the sentiments in us. Hume seems to be correct in declaring morality cannot be judge through the senses. We can only know what is afforded to us by our senses and our senses do not tell us when something is wrong or right. Something only becomes wrong or right when someone applies their feelings about certain actions to what they have seen or heard. While many people believe it is morally offensive to commit suicide in any situation, but in many cultures thought it more honorable to kill oneself than to admit defeat in a battle. These people did not see suicide in that situation as immoral. Morality is not something that is intrinsic in the objects or the action, since two different people would come to two different conclusions about the action of suicide. Instead it must be as Hume says; morality must be within us as a personal sentiment Categorized as: