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# An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding

*An Enquiry Concerning  
Human Understanding*



David Hume



## Synopsis

David Hume, an empiricist philosopher, takes on perhaps one of the most challenging of conceivable problems in *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. Moving beyond Descartes classic statement, "I think, therefore I am," Hume addresses issues of knowing that fall outside the realms of active thought or incremental learning. While innumerable philosophers discuss various aspects of experience, Hume stands alone in his successful treatise on the nature of experience itself.

## Book Information

Paperback: 82 pages

Publisher: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform (July 1, 2017)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1461180198

ISBN-13: 978-1461180197

Product Dimensions: 8 x 0.2 x 10 inches

Shipping Weight: 8.5 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars 26 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #320,297 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #292 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Philosophy > Epistemology #20309 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Literary

## Customer Reviews

Peter Millican is founder and director of the Leeds Electronic Text Centre and editor of the journal *Hume Studies*. He recently edited *Reading Hume on Human Understanding*.

We are in 1748, Hume is defending the hypothesis that even when humans experience cause/effect our conclusions are NOT based on reasoning or understanding. What a STUPID species! Wait a second—there is a bit of hope. Given any text/article/book, he recommends two tests: a) does it contain abstract reasoning over quantity or numbers? b) does it contain any experimental reasoning over matter of fact? If NO for both, then burn the damn thing! Enlightening + delighting book.

This book takes human understanding and picks it apart bit by bit, differing from reason and belief and connecting matter of fact with cause and effect, without which it would not exist. He also introduces customs and experience which can affect human actions and speaks on miracles and

skeptics. It's a great follow up read to the likes of Descartes, but one that requires a great amount of focus in order to fully digest what is being said.

I recently read Outlines of Scepticism by Sextus Empiricus in order to gain a better understanding of the origins of modern skepticism. When I read Hume it felt like I was reading a direct sequel to Sextus' classic (written around 200 AD). Hume has some harsh words about "superstition" but overall here he is more concerned with exploring "how we know things" rather than debunking any particular mythology or religion. If you want to challenge your own thought-life give Hume a try. As others have stated, this book is quite accessible.

They say that your undergraduate is about understanding how philosophers think, and not how you can contribute to the philosophy field. I feel as though this book gives you a great foundation on the basis of Empiricism, and can lead to other modern thinkers. I recommend this book to anyone who wants an enjoyable and classic read.

Required for UNH

Great

Every critical reader should read this great piece of philosophical work.

Hume approached many areas -- morals, politics, religion, etc. -- with a unique and refreshing perspective. You will enjoy his way of thought.

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