I value morality. The meta-ethic is emotivism. Morality stems from primitive emotive states. Hume ONE:[[1]](#footnote--1)

A passion is an original existence, or, if you will, modification of existence, and contains not any representative quality, which renders it a copy of any other existence or modification. When I am angry, I am actually possest with the passion, and in that emotion [has] have no more a reference to any other object, than when I am thirsty, or sick, or more than five foot high. It is impossible, therefore, that this passion can[t] be opposed by, or be contradict[ed]ory to [by] truth and reason; since this contradiction consists in the disagreement of ideas, considered as copies, with those objects, which they represent. What may at first occur on this head, is, that as nothing can be contrary to truth or reason, except what has a reference to it, and as the judgments of our understanding only have this reference, it must follow, that passions can be contrary to reason only so far as they are accompanyed with some judgment or opinion. According to this principle, which is so obvious and natural, it is only in two senses, that any affection can be called unreasonable. First, When a passion, such as hope or fear, grief or joy, despair or security, is founded on the supposition or the existence of objects, which really do not exist. Secondly, When in exerting any passion in action, we chuse means insufficient for the designed end, and deceive ourselves in our judgment of causes and effects. Where a passion is neither founded on false suppositions, nor chuses means insufficient for the end, the understanding can neither justify nor condemn it. It is not contrary to reason to prefer the destruction of the whole world to [an itch] the scratching of my finger.

Our primitive emotive states lead us to contracts. Hume TWO:

’twill first be requisite to examine the natural virtues, before we can give a full and satisfactory account of it. After men have found by experience, that their selfishness and confin’d generosity, acting at their liberty, totally incapacitate them for society; and at the same time have observ’d, that [we need] society is necessary to the satisf[y]action of those very passions, they are naturally induc’d to [so people] lay themselves under the restraint of such rules, as may render their commerce more safe and commodious. To the imposition then, and observance of these rules, both in general, and in every particular instance, they are at first induc’d only by a regard to interest; and this motive, on the first formation of society, is sufficiently strong and forcible. But when society has become numerous, and has encreas’d to a tribe or nation, this interest is more remote; nor do men so readily perceive, that disorder and confusion follow upon every breach of these rules, as in a more narrow and contracted society. But tho’ in our own actions we may frequently lose sight of that interest, which we have in maintaining order, and may follow a lesser and more present interest, we never fail to observe the prejudice we receive, either mediately or immediately, from the injustice of others; as not being in that case either blinded by passion, or byass’d by any contrary temptation. Nay when the injustice is so distant from us, as no way to affect our interest, it still displeases us; because we consider it as prejudicial to human society, and pernicious to every one that approaches the person guilty of it. We partake of their uneasiness by sympathy; and as every thing, which gives uneasiness in human actions, upon the general survey, is call’d Vice, and whatever produces satisfaction, in the same manner, is denominated Virtue; this is the reason why the sense of moral good and evil follows upon justice and injustice. And tho’ this sense, in the present case, be deriv’d only from contemplating the actions of others, yet we fail not to extend it even to our own actions. [Ergo] The general rule reaches beyond those instances, from which it arose; while at the same time we naturally sympathize with others in the sentiments they entertain of us. Thus self-interest is the original motive to the establishment of justice: but a sympathy with public interest is the source of the moral approbation, which attends that virtue. Tho’ this progress of the sentiments be natural, and even necessary, ’tis certain, that it is here forwarded by the artifice of politicians, who, in order to govern men more easily, and preserve peace in human society, have endeavour’d to produce an esteem for justice, and an abhorrence of injustice.

What we care about is stability since that’s what people agreed to. Util doesn’t link. Hume THREE:

The only difference betwixt the natural virtues and justice lies in this, that the good, which results from the former, arises from every single act, and is the object of some natural passion: Whereas a single act of justice, considered in itself, may often be contrary to the public good; and it is only the concurrence of mankind, in a general scheme or system of action, which is advantageous. When I relieve persons in distress, my natural humanity is my motive; and so far as my succour extends, so far have I promoted the happiness of my fellow-creatures. But if we examine all the questions, that come before any tribunal of justice, we shall find, that, considering each case apart, it would as often be an instance of humanity to decide contrary to the laws of justice [sometimes requires] as conformable them. Judges take from a poor man to give to a rich; they bestow on the dissolute the labour of the industrious; and put into the hands of the vicious the means of harming both themselves and others. The whole scheme, however, of law and justice is advantageous to the society; and it was with a view to this advantage, that men, by their voluntary[il]y conventions, established it. After it is once established by these conventions, it is naturally attended with a strong sentiment of morals; which can proceed from nothing but our sympathy with the interests of society. We need no other explication of that esteem, which attends such of the natural virtues, as have a tendency to the public good. I must farther add, that there are several circumstances, which render this hypothesis much more probable with regard to the natural than the artificial virtues. It is certain that the imagination is more affected by what is particular, than by what is general; and that the sentiments are always moved with difficulty, where their objects are, in any degree, loose and undetermined: Now every particular act of justice is not beneficial to society, but the whole scheme or system: And it may not, perhaps, be any individual person for whom we are concerned, who receives benefit from justice, but the whole society alike.

Thus, the standard is maintaining a stable social contract.

I contend this sort of mutual agreements would create a guarantee that we continue resource extraction. It’s necessary to have stable property rights. Hume FOUR:

Tho' the establishment of the rule, concerning the stability of possession [is], be not only useful, but even absolutely necessary to human society, it can never serve to any purpose, while it remains in such general terms. Some method must be shewn, by which we may distinguish what particular goods are to be assign'd to each particular person, while the rest of mankind are excluded from their possession and enjoyment. Our next business, then, must be to discover the reasons which modify this general rule, and fit it to the common use and practice of the world. `Tis obvious, that those reasons are not deriv'd from any utility or advantage, which either the particular person or the public may reap from his enjoyment of any particular goods, beyond what wou'd result from the possession of them by any other person. Twere better, no doubt, that every one were possess'd of what is most suitable to him, and proper for his use: But besides, that this relation of fitness may be common to several at once, `tis liable to so many controversies, and men are so partial and passionate in judging of these controversies, that such a loose and uncertain rule wou'd be absolutely incompatible with the peace of human society. The convention concerning the stability of possession is enter'd into, in order to cut off all occasions of discord and contention; and this end wou'd never be attain'd, were we allow'd to apply this rule differently in every particular case, according to every particular utility, which might be discover'd in such an application.

1. Title: A Treatise of Human Nature Author: David Hume Release Date: February 13, 2010 [EBook #4705] Last Updated: November 10, 2012 Language: English Character set encoding: ASCII \*\*\* START OF THIS PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A TREATISE OF HUMAN NATURE \*\*\* Produced by Col Choat, and David Widger www.gutenberg.org/files/4705/4705-h/4705-h.htm [↑](#footnote-ref--1)