

## Reading Questions: Hume I, “Of the Social Contract” and *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*

1. Whose account of the social contract does Hume most clearly target? Does his argument apply to all social contract theories?
2. Does Hume claim that the consent cannot serve as a just foundation of government? If not, what is his claim about consent?
3. What are the implications of Hume’s claims about tacit consent for accounts like that of Locke or Plato in *Crito* which rely heavily upon this idea?
4. Is Hume right that if the people do not think they are obligated to obey their rulers due to their consent but because of dynastic succession, etc., then the social contract is invalid as a justification of government?
5. What are the two kinds of moral duty according to Hume? Why is the civil or political duty of allegiance like the latter of these? On this account, why do people obey the government?
6. What is the controversy between reason and sentiment? How does Hume view reason and sentiment working in our moral decision making?
7. What is Hume’s method in the *Enquiry*? Why does he choose this method? Does this method make references to God or other transcendent standards irrelevant for understanding how individuals make moral decisions?
8. What does Hume mean by “utility?” What is the role of utility in Hume’s account of justice? What about in that of benevolence?
9. What is the object of all particular laws, such as those regarding property?
10. Why does Hume think we must renounce the theory that accounts for all morality (“moral sentiments,” pp. 42-3) in terms of self-love?
11. Does Hume think we can truly consider the interests of others in a wholly indifferent way? Why or why not?
12. What does it mean to claim that “every thing, which contributes to the happiness of society, recommends itself directly to our approbation and good-will” (43)?
13. Does linking justice to utility weaken our obligation to obey it? What does Hume think?
14. Where does the merit of the social virtues ultimately come from?