

# 'Reason'

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## **Abstract:**

One sense of the word 'reason' appears in Hume's remark "'Tis not contrary to reason to prefer the destruction of the whole world to the scratching of my finger'. Here 'reason' means the same as 'rationality'; it is the name of a property that can be possessed by people. A quite different sense of 'reason' appears in 'David has no reason not to prefer the destruction of the whole world to the scratching of his finger'. Here 'reason' is a mass noun that corresponds to the count noun 'a reason'; it is used to describe a normative relation that can obtain between a person (such as David) and an action or an attitude (such as a preference).

Philosophers frequently confuse these two senses of 'reason': the rational sense and the normative sense. Indeed, the distinction between rationality and normativity is not well understood. I aim to clarify it.