

# Intention Anscombe: A Comprehensive Guide to the Philosopher's Eponymous Virtue

G. E. M. Anscombe was a renowned British philosopher who made significant contributions to the fields of philosophy of language, action, and ethics. One of her most influential concepts is that of intention, which she developed in her seminal work, *Intention* (1957). In this book, Anscombe argues that intention is a central concept in moral philosophy and that it is essential for understanding human action.



**Intention** by G. E. M. Anscombe

★★★★☆ 4.7 out of 5

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Anscombe's theory of intention has been influential in a wide range of philosophical disciplines, including ethics, philosophy of mind, and philosophy of language. It has also been used to shed light on a variety of practical issues, such as the nature of responsibility and the justification of punishment.

In this guide, we will explore Anscombe's theory of intention in detail. We will begin by examining the nature of intention and its relationship to other

mental states. We will then discuss the significance of intention in moral philosophy and its implications for our understanding of human action.

## **The Nature of Intention**

Intention is a mental state that is directed towards the future. It is a state of mind in which we are aiming to bring about some future outcome.

Intentions can be either specific or general. A specific intention is directed towards a particular outcome, such as the intention to eat a sandwich for lunch. A general intention is directed towards a more general outcome, such as the intention to help others.

Intentions are often contrasted with desires. Desires are states of mind in which we are simply feeling a lack of something. Intentions, on the other hand, are states of mind in which we are actively striving to bring about a desired outcome.

Anscombe argues that intentions are essential for understanding human action. She claims that we cannot understand someone's action unless we understand their intention. This is because our intentions are what give our actions their meaning.

## **The Significance of Intention in Moral Philosophy**

Intention is a central concept in moral philosophy. It is essential for understanding the nature of moral responsibility and the justification of punishment.

According to Anscombe, an action is only morally wrong if it is done with the intention of being wrong. This means that we cannot be held morally responsible for actions that we did not intend to do. For example, if we

accidentally bump into someone, we are not morally responsible for their injury, because we did not intend to harm them.

Anscombe's theory of intention has implications for the justification of punishment. She argues that punishment is only justified if it is deserved. And punishment is only deserved if the person who was punished intended to do wrong.

### **Implications for Understanding Human Action**

Anscombe's theory of intention has important implications for our understanding of human action. It shows that human action is not simply a matter of stimulus and response. Rather, it is a complex process that involves intention and deliberation.

Anscombe's theory also shows that human action is not always rational. We often act on our intentions without fully considering the consequences of our actions. This can lead to mistakes and even moral wrongs.

Despite the challenges that it poses, Anscombe's theory of intention is essential for understanding human action. It provides us with a framework for thinking about the nature of our actions and their moral significance.

G. E. M. Anscombe's theory of intention is a profound and influential contribution to moral philosophy. It has shed light on the nature of human action and the basis of moral responsibility. Anscombe's work continues to be a source of inspiration for philosophers and scholars today.

### **Further Reading**

- Anscombe, G. E. M. *Intention*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957.

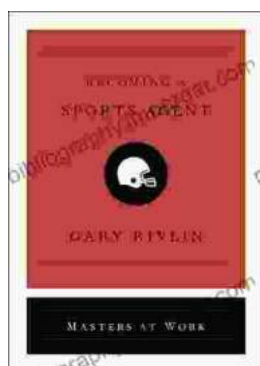
- Hursthouse, Rosalind, and Gavin Lawrence, eds. *Virtue Ethics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Mele, Alfred R. *Intentions and Agency*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.



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