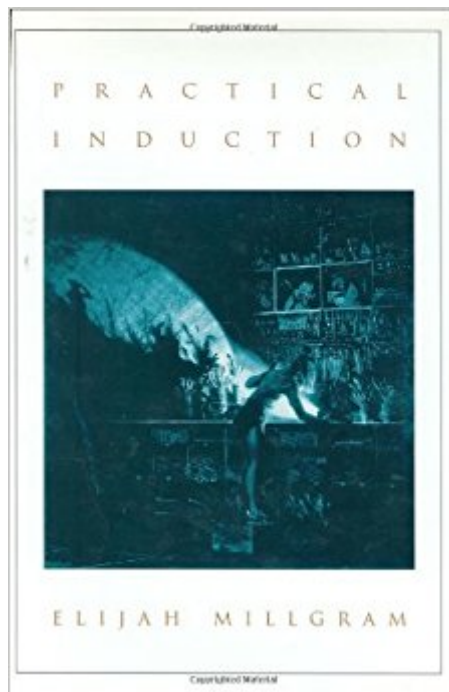**The book was found**

Practical Induction

PRACTICAL
INDUCTION

ELIJAH MILLGRAM

Synopsis

Practical reasoning is not just a matter of determining how to get what you want, but of working out what to want in the first place. In Practical Induction Elijah Millgram argues that experience plays a central role in this process of deciding what is or is not important or worth pursuing. He takes aim at instrumentalism, a view predominant among philosophers today, which holds that the goals of practical reasoning are basic in the sense that they are given by desires that are not themselves the product of practical reasoning. The view Millgram defends is "practical induction," a method of reasoning from experience similar to theoretical induction. What are the practical observations that teach us what to want? Millgram suggests they are pleasant and unpleasant experiences on the basis of which we form practical judgments about particular cases. By generalizing from these judgments--that is, by practical induction--we rationally arrive at our views about what matters. Learning new priorities from experience is necessary if we are to function in a world of ever-changing circumstances. And we need to be able to learn both from our own and from others' experience. It is this, Millgram contends, that explains the cognitive importance of both our capacity for pain and pleasure and our capacity for love. Pleasure's role in cognition is not that of a goal but that of a guide. Love's role in cognition derives from its relation to our trusting the testimony of others about what does and does not matter and about what merits our desire. Itself a pleasure to read, this book is full of inventive arguments and conveys Millgram's bold thesis with elegance and force. It will alter the direction of current debates on practical reasoning.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Written with panache and vigor, boldly confident in laying out its argumentative strategy, and full of colorful examples, this book gives us a good time while plying us with its central positive theses: that, in order to remain unified agents capable of carrying out any serious plans, we must be able to learn from experience about what is desirable, and that, accordingly, this learning should be counted as a kind of inductive practical inference that plays a legitimate role in our thinking. (Henry S. Richardson Ethics)Elijah Millgram's Practical Induction is a graceful, tightly-argued essay built around the thought that figuring out what one should seek is intimately related to determining what things matter and why, and that this, in turn, requires learning as one goes along...The argument goes by way of entertaining and thoughtful examples which are both original and given very much in the spirit of the style of practical reasoning Milgram christens practical induction...The approach is refreshing and the result is a finely-argued good read. The detail of the argument, moreover, gives both substance and the philosophical bite to the point that people learn what matters and why in life through living, and that one hallmark of practical rationality must be letting this wisdom guide action without eroding one's ability to respond to change appropriately. (Candace Vogler Mind 2000-07-01)Millgram's argument has as a consequence that psychology is as impotent to predict our responses to new circumstances in the practical sphere as it is to predict the shape of new theories in science--only one, but not the least, of the surprising things one finds oneself thinking about anew when one puts down this very surprising book. (John Robertson Philosophical Quarterly)

Millgram argues for an intriguing set of conclusions, and some of the arguments are ingenious. The manuscript is full of fine writing, with richer, more nuanced examples than is usual in philosophical writing. Millgram situates his arguments in a wide range of relevant literature within analytic philosophy. He has a fine mastery of the craft of philosophy, of how to construct arguments. Most of all, he does provide arguments where the philosophers he most closely agrees with too often resort to vague assertion and rhetoric. (Allan Gibbard, University of Michigan)

Original and thought-provoking

I picked up this book because I am interested in decision making theory. I was not disappointed. Millgram forced me to think about how I decide what to do, and especially how I involve pleasure in the process.I can see how others consider the author a clear writer -- compared to other

philosophers. However, I still struggled with the reading a bit. There are two problems. The first, is that I lost the overall picture of Millgram's arguments while he examined details and refuted objections. And second, there is the philosophical jargon. If you do not know what "backward-directed inferential committments" are, you had better learn.The greatest achievement of the book are the sections in which Millgram shows the importance of experience in a constantly changing world. He proves that an agent that cannot learn is doomed to suffer defeat when presented with surprising challenges. In addition, he refutes the idea of a "super Talmud" -- a book of wisdom that speaks on every topic.Millgram also wrote a nice section toward the end on how we make and maintain friendships. This part was fascinating, because, like philophy in general, it makes us think about a familiar area in a new way.If you are new to philosophical writing, be prepared to look some words up and struggle a bit to keep on track. However, it will be worth it as you gain insights into human nature through reading this fine book.

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