

Explaining Norms

By Geoffrey Brennan, Lina Eriksson, Robert E. Goodin, Nicholas Southwood

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Norms are a pervasive yet mysterious feature of social life. In *Explaining Norms*, four philosophers and social scientists team up to grapple with some of the many mysteries, offering a comprehensive account of norms: what they are; how and why they emerge, persist and change; and how they work. Norms, they argue, should be understood in non-reductive terms as clusters of normative attitudes that serve the function of making us accountable to one another--with the different kinds of norms (legal, moral, and social norms) differing in virtue of being constituted by different kinds of normative attitudes that serve to make us accountable in different ways. Explanations *of* and *by* norms should be seen as thoroughly pluralist in character. Explanations of norms should appeal to the ways that norms help us to pursue projects and goals, individually and collectively, as well as to enable us to constitute social meanings. Explanations by norms should recognise the multiplicity of ways in which norms may bear upon the actions we perform, the attitudes we form and the modes of deliberation in which we engage: following, merely conforming with, and even breaching norms. While advancing novel and distinctive positions on all of these topics, *Explaining Norms* will also serve as a sourcebook with a rich array of arguments and illustrations for others to reassemble in ways of their own choosing.

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Explaining Norms By Geoffrey Brennan, Lina Eriksson, Robert E. Goodin, Nicholas Southwood Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #2417735 in Books
- Published on: 2013-11-15
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 6.20" h x .20" w x 9.30" l, 1.35 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 304 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

"Already by picking up this book, the reader knows she is in for an unusual treat... the present book represents joint work of no fewer than four philosophers, each bringing to bear their personal expertise... The outcome is an extremely rich and comprehensive study of norms, their nature, function, genealogy, and explanatory significance; it puts forward an account that is as careful in detail as it is impressive in scope... In the introduction, the authors state rather modestly the purpose of the book as producing 'a sourcebook for social scientists and philosophers of social science, offering them the tools they need to fit an account of norms into their own preferred models of social life' (p. 10). Clearly, they have achieved this goal and much more besides." --*Mind*

"There is no doubt that Explaining Norms is the work of a very smart band of philosophers.... There are insightful discussions throughout, which include nice observations about bad norms, and how we might model internalizing and following norms. It is certainly a significant contribution to the emerging, and important, literature on norms."--Gerald Gaus, *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*

"*Explaining Norms* offers a rich guide to previous work in this area by other scholars over the last 30 to 40 years."--R. Hudelson, *CHOICE*

"Given the wide range of literatures discussed, readers are likely to find much of interest." -- *Ethics*

About the Author

Geoffrey Brennan is an economist who works at the intersection of economics, political science, and moral and political philosophy. He is the author of five books including two with Nobel Laureate James Buchanan. He has served as editor of *Economics and Philosophy* and *Economic Record*; and as the President of the international Public Choice Society. His work covers a wide range of topics from 'expressive' voting theory (*Democracy and Decision* [CUP, 1993] with Loren Lomasky) to *The Economy of Esteem* (OUP, 2004) with Philip Pettit; and he now describes himself as a scholar in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics. He is currently working on a book on Philosophy and Economics. He holds regular Professorial positions in Philosophy at the Australian National University and in the Political Science Department at Duke University and the Philosophy Department at UNC-Chapel Hill, where he directs the joint Duke/UNC PPE program.

Lina Eriksson is a philosopher and political scientist, with a background in mathematics. After her PhD in political science at Gothenburg University, and a year at Harvard as a Fulbright Visiting Scholar, she spent five years at the Australian National University as a post doctoral researcher. She is now Lecturer in

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Robert Goodin is a philosopher and political scientist. He is Distinguished Professor of Social & Political Theory and Philosophy in the School of Philosophy at Australian National University, as well as Professor of Government at the University of Essex. A Corresponding Fellow of the British Academy, Goodin is founding editor of *The Journal of Political Philosophy* and of the Cambridge University Press series of books on 'Theories of Institutional Design'. He served as general editor of the eleven-volume series of Oxford Handbooks of Political Science. His own work straddles democratic theory (e.g. *Reflective Democracy* [OUP, 2003]), empirical welfare-state studies (e.g., *The Real Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* [CUP, 1999]; *Discretionary Time* [CUP, 2008]), and theoretical reflections on public policy (e.g., *Social Welfare as an Individual Responsibility* [CUP, 1998]; *What's Wrong with Terrorism?* [Polity, 2006]).

Nicholas Southwood is a research fellow in the School of Philosophy at Australian National University. He works primarily in moral and political philosophy with a particular focus on normativity and practical reason. He is the author of *Contractualism and the Foundations of Morality* (OUP, 2010) and many articles in journals including *Mind*, *Ethics*, *Nous*, and *Philosophical Studies*. He has been a co-editor of the *Journal of Political Philosophy* since July 2012.

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