

Hume philosophy paper

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David Hume was an early 18th century philosopher that is best known for covering a variety of theories. He covered that reason alone cannot be a motive to the will, moral distinctions are not derived from reason and moral distinctions are direct from the moral sentiments [Treatise of Human Nature, 11]. “ Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them” [T 2. 3. 3 p. 414] in his work A Treatise of Human Nature.

Reason alone cannot motivate or oppose passion. “ Reason is perfectly inert and can never either prevent or produce any action or affection” [Book 2, 265]; moral distinctions are not derived from reasons. Reason does not by itself constitute grounds for an action of desire. Reason only “ intervenes to explain passion’s impulses to actions proceedings” and thus connecting between two elements [Book 3, pg. 296]. Passion can influence or even disregard reason on purpose to serve goals behind actions.

Moral distinctions are “ derived from feelings of pleasure and pain and not from reason”. Reason itself “ cannot produce or prevent any action or affection and morals concern actions” and affections and therefore cannot be based on reason [Book 3, pg. 301]. Due to the idea that distinctions are not based on reason, Hume states that they are based on sentiments that are felt by moral sense This can be related to the study of how we are motivated to act morally and the role of practical reason in moral motivation.

The role of reason is only to find out which means help achieve a given goal. Our goals are set by what Hume calls the passion and what today is mostly called desires. Reason is the “ slave of passion” in the sense that it practical reason alone cannot give rise to moral motivation, but dependent on

motivational force. Hume claims that “ passions do not refer to external things” [Book 3 pg. 336], but that they are an original existence. In other words, passions are the very substance of the self.