

# Scepticism versus human nature: david hume, enquiry concerning human understandin...

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Skepticism versus human nature: David Hume, Enquiry concerning human understanding While philosophers like Locke, Leibniz and Descartes have tried to advance various theories on sources of knowledge, David Hume in his work, Enquiry concerning human understanding punched holes on the works of proponents of skepticism school of thought like Descartes.

According to Hume, the only true source of all knowledge concerning matters of fact or existence is sensual experience. Human nature is therefore best placed to provide knowledge than skepticism. Hume questioned Descartes' work which showed that any attempt to base knowledge on sensory experience was wrong-headed, since a series of skeptical arguments could be mounted to call the reliability of the senses into doubt (Cottingham, 37). Hume questions the skepticism assertion of applying radical doubt as a first step before any science or philosophy can be applied. This he says cannot be entertained as doubts raised would be enormous and unsolvable. Hume then questions the second skepticism which comes after the radical doubt, that is, consequent to science and enquiry. It's absurd not apply science first only to use supposed results of science and philosophy to cast doubt on or ordinary beliefs about nature of the world around us. This to Hume just goes on to show that human nature is superior to skepticism in the search of knowledge.

Therefore, Hume suggests that attention should be on the power of human nature as opposed to abstract philosophical reasoning. He argues that men are carried by a natural instinct to repose faith in their senses as nature is always too strong for principle. Individuals should concentrate on this power since abstract reasoning of skeptics will always collapse when subjects to the

more powerful principles of our nature. Hume only tolerates mitigated or limited skepticism which warns against too readily accepting wild and extravagant doctrines. This is only accepted by limiting enquiries as are best adapted to the narrow capacity of human understanding as this are the bounds of conceptualizing knowledge.

List of references

Cottingham, John. *Western philosophy: An anthology*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 1996