

Hume-faith and reason



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Order 322764 Topic: Hume-Faith and Reason

Introduction:

Faith and reason are competing traits. Hume recognizes virtues of these two important traits of human beings and the same is reflected in his writings.

The problem with all the mind-level intellectuals is they are aware that every argument has the seed of an impressive counter-argument in it, and yet they argue. Faith transcends reason. Reason gets stuck up at the last hurdle and knocks desperately at the portals of faith. But the doors of faith will never open, so far as an individual sticks to reason. When logic surrenders, the true nature of faith can be experienced by an individual generally. Faith is necessarily an internal asset, which lies beyond the comprehension of the sensory organs.

In his book “ An enquiry concerning human understanding,” David Hume observes, “ Our most holy religion is founded on faith not on reason; and it is a sure method of exposing it to put to such a trial as it is, by no means fitted to endure.”(Hume 1999, p. 98) Instead of beating about the bush, Hume expresses his views clearly when he explains, “ Divinity of theology, is it proves the existence of a Deity, and the immortality of souls, is composed partly of reasoning concerning particular, partly concerning general facts. It has a foundation in reason, so far as it is supported by experience. But its best and most solid foundation is faith and divine revelation.”(Hume 1999, p. 122)

Howsoever brilliant may be the rational justification for beliefs and disbeliefs, they open the door to more questions. This is the problem with the revealed knowledge that leans heavily on faith. But even for the scientist, the starting rules of the game, and the initial syllabus, are based on faith. “ Each solution

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still gives rise to a new question as difficult as the foregoing, and leads us on to farther enquiries. When it is asked, what is the nature of all our reasoning concerning matter of fact? The proper answer seems to be, that they are founded on the relation of cause and effect. When again it is asked, what is the foundation of all our reasoning and conclusions concerning that relation? It may be replied in one word, Experience.” (Hume, 1910)

Human mind accepts nothing beyond the evidence of one’s senses. It works on the foundation of reason. But again the problem is, who is to judge, or where are the resources available that one’s way of thinking is accurate representation of the operation of the external world? As many minds, so many opinions and options! The detailed analysis of this issue made by Hume and its corollaries makes one accept the conclusion that one can never know the external world with certainty and the basis for religion is thus challenged by reason. Man has compulsions to lean against some other force-- the miracles. Hume opines, “[U]pon the whole, we may conclude that the Christian Religion not only was at first attended with miracles, but even at this day cannot be believed by any reasonable person without one....

Whoever is moved by Faith to assent to it is conscious of a continued miracle in his own person, which subverts all the principles of his understanding, and gives him a determination to believe what is most contrary to custom and experience. (Hume, 1748, p. 145)

Conclusion:

Mind (Reason) can never tap the extent of external knowledge and therefore faith needs to step in to the rescue of the human being. According to Hume empirical thought needs skepticism, but the question remains without resolution, as to what one needs to accept with regard to reason and

understanding. This is the unreasonable stand of Hume as for reason!—
leaving it un-rescued! According to scholar Eric Steinberg, A view that
pervades nearly all of Humes philosophical writings is that both ancient and
modern philosophers have been guilty of optimistic and exaggerated claims
for the power of human reason. To sum up, David Hume makes his readers
believe that faith and reason are alternative beats of the same heart; but the
discerning one can clearly see that Hume’s scale tilts in favor of reason!

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