

Philosophy and Religion: Faith and Reason – I

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My Interpretation on the Natures of Faith and Reason and Their
Relationship

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This is the first entry in which I have used this article-like style of having no headings or explicit structure. The reason is that I would like to keep this short, for the sake of it being concise. And so, without further ado, I shall enter into the main topic of this entry.

I wish to give a simple analogy for faith and reason. I have talked about faith and reason before, but I believe that I have now found a useful way of describing both.



Figure 1: The relationship between faith and reason as a base+process model of two ideas, **A** and **B**.

Figure 1 shows an illustration of the description which I have for faith and reason. Firstly, I think that reason is the tool/process by which we are able to develop/reach new ideas from another idea. Secondly, faith is the process by which we are able to hold the first idea (that is most basic/fundamental) which reason is applied to.

This is essentially the whole of my observation. In this way, faith without reason seems to not go anywhere (literally because you cannot develop any idea without reason). And furthermore, reason without faith is baseless (since without faith, you cannot hold any fundamental idea which you use reason to build upon).

I think that this framework holds for anything and everything we can think about, but most of all I think this framework is useful when communicating religious ideas. With this framework, whether someone is religious or not, faith is a necessity to hold any idea at all, and it makes sense to simply think of faith as the process by which you hold your most fundamental idea(s).

For example, one might go along this line of questioning with someone:

-Q: Why is murder bad?

-A: Because harming people is a bad thing.

-Q: Why is harming people bad?

- A: Because experiencing pain is bad.
- Q: Why is pain bad?
- A: Because it feels bad.
- Q: Why is something that feels bad, bad?
- A: Because it feels bad.
- Q: Why is something that feels bad, bad?
- A: I don't know—it just is okay.

And so, with such questioning, reason is 'reversed' so to speak, so that the person answering is going further back to their fundamental ideas (like going from **B** to **A** in Figure 1).

The way that something like this would end is also really important. Above, the person answering repeated their answer of "because it feels bad," just before abruptly ending with "it just is." If they didn't end it there, I imagine the last set of questions and answers would just continue repeating. Now, I think that the point at which you might say "it just is" in such a manner, or where you would repeat your answer, is the point at which you get close to something which you can only hold by 'faith'. It is in this way, whether you are religious or not, that I think everyone must have a measure of faith to hold an idea or conclusion (such as that murder is wrong, in our example).

I know some might feel tempted to say, "well, a bad feeling *is* just bad—it's common sense, not some vague notion like 'faith'." But here, I would like to ask why one might think that it is just 'common sense', and by what reason do you say so? If there is no reason, then I would say that you hold that very conviction by faith. I hope you might see, I'm not trying to make 'common sense' into some extraordinary or vague kind of 'faith'. I'm precisely trying to point out the opposite—that faith isn't extraordinary. In fact I think faith might just be ordinary, in such a way that what we think is mere 'common sense', is an expression of faith in the precise measure that reason is useless at such a fundamental level. In a broader manner, I'm not trying to say that the ordinary is actually in the extraordinary, but that what we think is the extraordinary might actually already be present in the ordinary.

An implication of this framework can be seen in interacting with people on more explicitly religious ideas. For example, if someone was religious, and

another was irreligious, we might assume that both have no common ground when talking about ‘faith’ or ‘religion’. But, with my framework, ‘faith’ is something that both must hold to fundamentally support each of their world views. It is only that these two people hold two different ideas with that faith, at the most fundamental level. And so, at least, maybe the idea of holding a faith is neither too wishy-washy, nor so extraordinary that it becomes alien.

Finally, I would like to conclude by acknowledging the mysterious side of faith, in that although I think it is a process, it is one which is ultimately a ‘black box’, since we don’t/can’t know how it works. But, we can nonetheless observe how faith is used in everyday life, which is the very basis of me writing this entry.

But anyway, I hope that this all makes some sense at least.

Thank you.

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