

Does All Rational Thought Involve 'Faith'?

It has become common—even among most religious people—to assume that there is a vast gulf between **reason** and **faith**.

Reason is seen as some sort of neutral, unbiased tool that men and women can use to arrive at truth, or perhaps only what some refer to as “facts.” Faith, on the other hand, is seen as essentially *irrational*—a blind leap that one makes in favor of a conclusion even though there might be piles of evidence to the contrary.

In [an earlier post](#), I pointed out that faith (including faith of the religious variety) is rarely as blind as most people usually assume, and often uses reason to arrive at its conclusions.

In this post, I wish to briefly introduce [author David Bentley Hart's argument](#)—which may seem shocking to some—that reason also requires faith.

According to Hart, the process of engaging in rational thought, and organizing our lives based on it, involves an assumption that our reason has the ability to accurately perceive reality outside of ourselves. And that assumption can properly be termed an “act of faith.”

In his words:

“All reasoning begins from a venture of trust whose truthfulness can be ascertained only at the end of the sequence of postulates and predicates and judgments to which it gives rise.

What, after all, warrants our belief in the power of rational consciousness to give us a true knowledge of reality? Whether

we wish to acknowledge it or not, there is a fiduciary moment within every act of reason, which allows for thought's first movement toward ends beyond itself. It is an implicit trust in an original accord between mind and world, mysterious but indissoluble... Every attempt of the rational mind to find the truth of things involves an implicit metaphysical presupposition..."

Hart's argument means that faith also lies at the foundations of the areas of knowledge most associated with "pure" reason. Engaging in mathematics implies a trust in a correspondence between the numbers we use and reality. Similarly, engaging in (natural) science implies a trust in the ability of human observation and a humanly devised method to tell us something about the world.

According to Hart's argument, then, every human being is in some sense a "believer."