

## Did Hume confuse frequent occurrences with evidence?

David Hume essentially argued that if dead men stay dead you cannot believe there was an exception Jesus for the evidence that people stay dead overrides any for Jesus rising from the dead. It is a fact that what is naturally possible does override anything that is against it. We may know a person found guilty of murder and decide that the evidence needs a fresh look no matter how convincing it is. We feel there is something wrong with how the evidence is deemed to point to this person's guilt when we know they are innocent.

Hume is supposed to have thought than an event such as death and people staying dead happens an awful lot that how often it happens is the same as having a lot of evidence for it. Christians say evidence is evidence no matter how much or little it happens. A lot of our beliefs are based on once offs.

So lets weigh the arguments.

"We can dismiss the resurrection of Jesus with the evidence for it because sometimes we do ignore evidence and sometimes should."

"A lot of our beliefs are based on once offs."

The two are correct. Believers should say, "But notice how with Jesus you can choose one or the other." Then in that case unbelief is justified. It does not fit the view that believing in the resurrection is necessary for our salvation and living a good life in this world.

And believing in some things that are once offs does not mean we should believe in a miracle because it is a once off. How much a miracle happens or how little is irrelevant. What matters is if it is really supernatural.

But we know natural once-offs happen. Not just anyone can be the winning athlete. But natural once offs does not mean we may believe in supernatural events. You can believe in natural once offs and say that claimed supernatural once offs are nonsense. You can believe in eating brown bread but that does not mean you believe in eating white bread.

So the once off argument for miracles is nonsense but the good thing about it is that WANTS miracles to be rare and uncommon. That shows some kind of fear or embarrassment about miracles or perhaps even subliminal unbelief.

*The Common Ground - both believers and unbelievers deny a man can naturally rise from the dead*

No human being can manage to come back naturally from the dead. Believers in miracles and unbelievers both agree on that. The former say nature did not raise Jesus but God's supernatural power did and the latter says too that nature did not raise Jesus and in fact nobody did and he is dead.

But if Jesus came back from the dead then why not say he rose naturally and the exception proves the rule which is, "Dead men cannot naturally rise from the dead so they stay dead"? One problem is that the person saying this is trying to make you assume nobody rose but Jesus. It is dishonest if they use arguments to show the person rose was Jesus and nobody else for they only care about what they assume. If you assume x then arguing for x is dishonest for arguments and assumptions are opposed to each other.

If Jesus rose you would be entitled to assume that he was the exception to men not rising naturally from the dead not that anybody magically or supernaturally brought him back from the dead. So believers in miracles have no right to say its a miracle. Often they are using the language of miracle to hide the fact that they are saying, "Jesus alone could rise naturally from the dead. Or Krishna naturally was able to lift a hill with one hand."

Believers accuse sceptics like Hume of thinking they know what can happen when they don't but they do it too. They assume that there are no exceptions to natural law just like the sceptics do.

What if the believer says it is a valid belief that nobody naturally rises from the dead and the evidence says it cannot happen. It is not an assumption then. Anybody who contradicts it is irrational. They neither understand nature and end up with no grounds for considering a man returning from the dead to be a miracle or supernatural. Miracle sceptics admire these ideas. If an exception appears such as a man seeming to have risen from the dead there are only two choices: one it did not happen or two you can say it is supernatural. What is clear from this is that if you choose to say it did not happen you are recognising that some things are not as they seem. There is nothing biased or unfair about that.

If you have two equal options and one is natural and the other is supernatural then which do you choose? Choose the natural. The supernatural only can be chosen when really needed and it is not when the two views are equal.

Religion makes it an obligation to assume its supernatural - that obligation is immoral and the real obligation is to condemn religion for saying it.

### *Science*

Hume's view is scientific. Science is based on the assumption that if an effect is reported and it cannot be replicated when it should be then it did not really happen. His stance is the bedrock of science. Science rejects the view: "The effect is a miracle so it may have happened even if not repeatable." It does not matter how many times the effect is reported. If it cannot be repeated it did not happen. Science does not mind a thing being a once off as long as it can be tested.

### *Question begging?*

Hume like other sceptics of miracles have been accused of saying, "Natural law doesn't change therefore miracles don't happen." This would seem to be begging the question. It seems to be refusing to look honestly at the evidence. But the sceptics are not begging the question. They are merely saying that most testimony says nature is uniform so we should listen to it rather than testimony to the contrary. That is as far from begging the question as one can get. It is only giving nature's testimony its proper place.

"Natural law doesn't change therefore miracles don't happen" looks like it is begging the question. It looks like something as silly as, "John proves he has 100 euro for he says he has it and John does not lie." But it only appears to be a tautology. It is not really begging the question. It is simply an assertion that nature does not change WHICH MEANS that miracles do not happen. "Antibiotics kill bacterial infections therefore they cure people" looks like a tautology but it is definitely not.

### *Bertrand Russell*

Bertrand Russell tried to give a case against Hume's inductive reasoning against miracles. Hume said that nature is regular thus we must assume miracles do not happen. The turkey according to Russell think the farmer is going to bring him grain every day. And he does. Then on Christmas morning the farmer comes with the axe instead and that is the end of the turkey and the end of its induction that it will get the nice grain every day just because it was getting it every day before.

This is different from Hume's treatment of inductive reasoning as regards miracle for the axe wielding is not the same as a miracle. The turkey is still being reasonable and nobody says what is reasonable is never misleading. To say the dog vomits is hardly in the same league as saying a cancer will vanish without medical intervention.

### *Too Sweeping in its Scope?*

Is Hume's argument against miracles too sweeping in scope. Does it prove things to be false that we know in fact are correct and true and probable?

Some say yes. And that some is religious believers.

Unbelievers could reject the argument if it meant rejecting things we know are true but which seem very unlikely. But it does not deal with those. Those things are still natural. Miracles are not. Even if it goes too far it would have to be right at its core. If it eliminates magic and miracle that is not it being too sweeping. And dismissing them is at the heart of it.

There is a difference between saying very unlikely things are sometimes known to be true and saying that very unlikely miracles are believable. One is natural and the other is not. Hume's argument is only too sweeping if you want to believe in miracles but it is not about what you want.

They say Hume's problem with miracles is how they cannot be repeated to see if they are real miracles or not. They say the reasoning here is that if an event cannot be replicated, if it cannot be made to happen again, it is foolish to believe that it really happened. The logic Hume is accused of holding is that it is better to believe in a miracle because of an experiment than because of the testimony of others. But he is clearly right.

They say that the big bang has not been repeated and yet we know it happened.

That is a ridiculous juvenile argument for the purpose of experiments is to perceive the truth and experiments are not always needed for that. We see the universe and that is enough and is better than any experiment.

Plus a God could decide, "I have to do a miracle to make this universe but I will not be doing any others." There is a

difference between a miracle that is the only way to make a universe and one that brings a dead man back to life. One is essential for things to exist and the other is not. God creating all things does not mean God will create miracles. A man fathering one child does not mean he will father another or wants to or needs to.

They seem to mean that the miracle of creation has happened and cannot be repeated and so we know it happened. They mean creation out of nothing. But as we cannot make sense of the idea of something coming from nothing we should not use it as an example. We do not know and cannot know what we are talking about.

They say that you are born and that event cannot be replicated. And you know you were born. Yawn! What has that to do with miracles?

We conclude that Hume did not think that if a report is once off and cannot be repeated that it is necessarily unbelievable. And if once offs happen and we believe in them that does not open the door to believing in miracle once offs. Hume did not confuse frequent occurrences with evidence. His belief in evidence is based on the fact that evidence frequently appears for different things. It is with us every minute of every day. To say evidence for something is around you all the time does not mean you only regard it as evidence if it happens enough. Once would do.