

Reason, Intuition, and Freemasonry

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There have been many philosophical discussions about the interaction between reason and intuition and the relative value of each.

The German Philosopher Immanuel Kant said that “all human knowledge thus begins with intuitions, proceeds thence to concepts, and ends with ideas.” In *Morals and Dogma*, Albert Pike writes that “Socrates believed, like Heraclitus, in a universal reason pervading all things and all minds, and consequently revealing itself in ideas... He believed true wisdom to be an attainable idea, and the moral convictions of the mind, those eternal instincts of temperance, conscientiousness, and justice, implanted in it by the gods, could not deceive, if rightly interpreted.” Our intuitive thoughts provide instinctive wisdom towards this universal reason, the truth pervading all things. Intuition can provide an innate feeling of right and wrong, love and hate, and universal morality. All of these are moral principles displayed through the Craft’s archetypal symbolism and allegories, which transcend time, religion, and culture. Masonry’s teachings may be studied and understood as part of a universal reason and divine will. The light obtained from the lessons of the Craft form the edifice of the mind’s temple that every Freemason is urged to develop using his own intuition and reasoning.

Pike notes “the absolute is the very necessity of being, the immutable law of reason and of truth... God himself is not without a reason of existence. He does not exist accidentally. He could not, not have been. He can exist only in virtue of a supreme and inevitable reason. That reason, then, is the absolute; for it is in it we must believe, if we would that our faith should have a reasonable and solid basis... Saint Thomas Aquinas said, a thing is not just because God wills it, but God wills it because it is just. If he had deduced all the consequences of this fine thought, he would have discovered the true Philosopher’s Stone; the magical elixir, to convert all the trials of the world into golden mercies... therefore, according to the idea of Saint Thomas, the moral laws are the enactments of the divine will, only because they are the decisions of the absolute wisdom and reason, and the revelations of the divine nature... Faith begins where reason sinks exhausted. Beyond the human reason is the divine reason, to our feebleness the great absurdity, the infinite absurd, which confounds us and which we believe. For the Master, the compass of faith is above the square of reason; but both rest upon the Holy Scriptures and combine to form the blazing star of truth.”

Pike explains that the blazing star of truth is the union of faith and reason. Faith is said to be conviction of truth without tangible proof. One could interpret this as knowing without knowing why, a blind trust, which could translate to divine intuition.

You may not have proof, but you know deep within you that it is right. This intuition harmonized with reason forms the blazing star providing light to the lodge. Reason may lead to logical proof, but intuition sparks the intrinsic understanding of the absolute with faith. Intuition may be the “Eureka!” moment of an idea or answer that seemingly appears out of nowhere. When reason and human understanding is

exhausted, intuition gives way for faith to take us by the hand and guide us through the darkness when we are blind. Thus, one should trust their instincts and fear no danger when intuition is their guide.

Intuition has always guided humans in the face of danger and darkness. It has been called the 6th sense or the third eye. Intuition serves as a divine, internal instinct that gives us fear, faith, and hope among other things. It warns us of danger and guides the way in the darkness with our innate feelings. Gavin De Becker wrote a book titled *the Gift of Fear*. In his book, De Becker elaborates on how intuition and the gift of fear allows us to avoid dangerous situations. De Becker provides examples of when victims innately knew danger was afoot. He discusses scenarios and situations where intuition prevented or would have prevented one from danger. An example of this where a woman gets into an elevator with a man she intuitively felt was dangerous. Although she had a gut feeling she should not enter, she did so anyways because she did not want to seem rude having the elevator door close and not entering. These types of situations can lead to assaults, rapes, and other dangerous events that should have been avoided by following our intuition. He writes “you have the gift of a brilliant internal guardian that stands ready to warn you of hazards and guide you through risky situations.”

While intuition has always been vital to keeping us safe in survival situations, cultural bias, the phenomenon of interpreting and judging phenomena by standards inherent to one's own culture can also lead us astray. For instance, think of the role intuition plays in your daily life. Every time you meet someone your intuition makes an instant judgment on the person's character. You intuitively make judgements about whether or not the person is trustworthy, intelligent, honorable or dangerous, and these initial intuitive impressions are long lasting. The problem is that these insights are as often wrong as they are right, particularly when we judge people on superficial characteristics rather than on their intellect or moral worth. As humans evolved from a hunter-gatherer lifestyle, the primitive goal of survival lessened, and reason played an increasingly more important role in the development and understanding of ourselves and society. Then, as we evolved from an agrarian to an industrial society, empiricism, experimentation, observation, and the scientific method led to technological advances that transformed the way we live. Despite these transformative inventions, cultural, religious, and other societal biases – based on fanatical reasoning – have persisted, and these judgments have skewed our inherent intuition and moral compasses.

Freemasons benefit from the use of both intuition and reason in their pursuit to become better men, so how can we better integrate the two? Freemasons are freethinkers and believe that knowledge should be grounded in facts, scientific inquiry, and logic. The application of reason involves freedom from the intellectually limiting effects of confirmation bias, cognitive bias, conventional wisdom, popular culture, prejudice, and sectarianism. A freethinker is a person who forms his own ideas and opinions rather than unquestionably accepting those of other people. Reason is the power of the mind to think, understand, and form judgments by a process of logic. It is how we try to understand and explain the cause of an event. The use of reason allows us to make informed decisions and avoid hasty reactions.

However, it also is true that sometimes reason leads to overthinking and inhibition of action. In some cases, reacting to a gut feeling, or intuition, may provide a better outcome than by the analytical process of reason, especially in situations requiring an instantaneous reaction. Intuition can pave the way

through obstacles when one cannot find a clear way forward. Intuition is the power or faculty of attaining direct knowledge or cognition without evident rational thought and inference. Basically, it is knowing without knowing why you know. Intuition manifests as instantaneous feelings, reactions, and insights. Thus, as we learn from the Royal Secret, the use of reason and intuition should be balanced. A Mason must develop the valuable skill of finding equilibrium and harmony in our application of both modes of thinking, using the strength of both intuition and reason, but neither to intemperance nor excess.

In sum, a Mason understands that an intuitive idea can be developed by reason and logic into the search for more light. An intuitive spark may lead an initiate on a pilgrim's journey where he utilizes reason to continuously discover knowledge and wisdom. Properly joining the two forces keeps Masons from jumping to conclusions based on biases or societal norms and explains why men of all cultures and faiths can meet on the level and be called Brother, and how Masons who hold different viewpoints can have civil discussions on difficult subjects. It is the lack of an equilibrium between intuition and reason that leads to fanaticism, despotism, intolerance, suppression of thought, and superstition, which in turn has led to the degradation of cultures, the destruction of books and temples, and many other atrocities.

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Fraternally,

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