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Hume and the Problems with Induction – an Anekanta Discourse Towards Epistemic Humility

ABSTRACT

This research paper delves into the profound philosophical discourse surrounding David Hume's critique of induction and its implications for the concept of epistemic humility. Hume's examination of the problems inherent in induction serves as a foundational basis for questioning the limits of human knowledge and understanding. Drawing inspiration from the Jain philosophy of Anekantavada, which underscores the multifaceted nature of reality and encourages the consideration of diverse perspectives, this paper explores the parallels between Hume's skepticism regarding induction and the notion of epistemic humility while noting that Anekantavada is not skepticism. Through a comparative analysis of Hume's empiricist perspective and the Jain doctrine of Anekantavada, this paper elucidates how both philosophies challenge the notion of absolute certainty in empirical human knowledge. Hume's contention that induction lacks a rational foundation aligns with the idea that human understanding is inherently limited. Similarly, Anekantavada promotes an open-minded approach to diverse viewpoints and recognizes the complexity of reality. This paper also explores the role of skepticism and cautious reasoning in both Humean philosophy and Anekantavada, emphasizing the importance of acknowledging the fallibility of our beliefs. By examining the intersection of Hume's critique of induction and the principles of epistemic humility embedded in Anekantavada, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the challenges and uncertainties inherent in human cognition and knowledge acquisition. In conclusion, this philosophical discourse bridges the insights of David Hume's critique of induction with the principles of Anekantavada of Jain philosophy from the Indian tradition, shedding light on the shared emphasis on epistemic humility—the recognition of human limitations in the pursuit of knowledge. It invites contemplation on the intricate relationship between skepticism overcome by pluralism, and the quest for a more nuanced and humble approach to the complexities of human understanding.

Keywords: David Hume, Human Understanding, Anekantavada, Indian Philosophy, Jainism, Epistemic Humility