

Are Science and God Compatible?

June 27, 2018

The issue

- Conflict between the Bible and the accepted wisdom of our society, is often portrayed as a conflict between reason and faith.
- This claim goes back to the 18th Century “Enlightenment.”
 - “The Age of Reason,” published by Tom Paine, 1794, defending deism.
- Is faith opposed to reason?
- Is science an exercise of reason, while faith is not?
- If science is correct, then is faith incorrect?
- Are Christians illogical?
 - “Fundamentalists can’t be reasoned with.”
- Are humanists logical?

Objective for this class

- Be more confident and persuasive in
 - Defending our faith in God against claims that science disproves it
 - Discussing faith, logic, and the limits to science

Strategy

Discuss the characteristics, capabilities, and limitations of:

- Logic
- Faith
- Science
 - And “scientism”

And then put the three together to see how they relate.

Reasoning (logic)

What is logic?

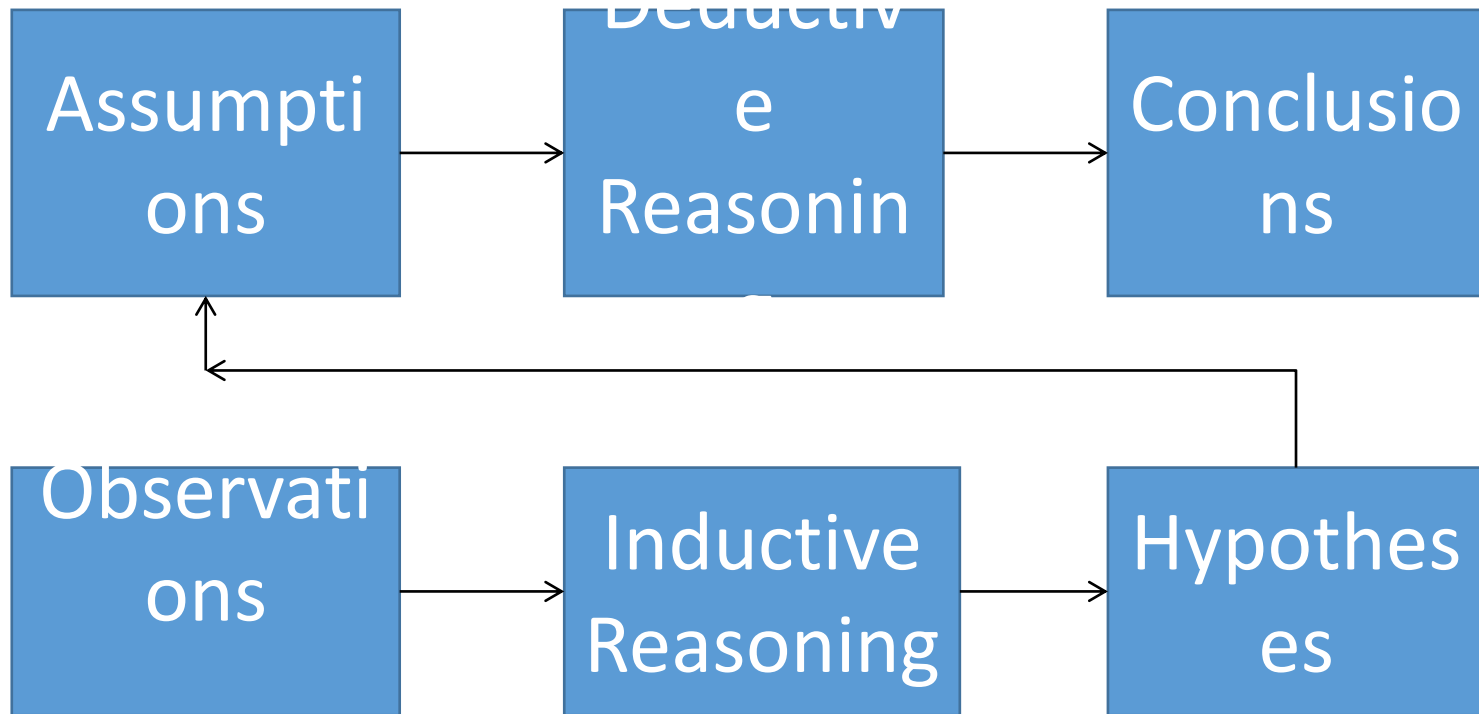
- What is logic? “Reasoning conducted according to strict principles of validity (Merriam-Webster).”
- Consider the Aristotelian syllogism (deductive logic):
 - All cows eat grass (major premise)
 - Elsie is a cow (minor premise)
 - Therefore, Elsie eats grass (conclusion)
- The deduction is true, if the premises are true.
- How do we know that all cows eat grass?
- How do we know that Elsie is a cow?

How are premises arrived at?

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- We observe a number of examples
- We make an assumption based on what we have observed.
 - “Hypothesis” –axiom, postulate, premise, assumption...
- We accept this assumption as true and depend on it to reason from it.
- Predictions fulfilled increase our confidence in the hypothesis.
- Any false prediction disproves the hypothesis.
- Therefore, inductive reasoning cannot conclusively be proved to be true...
- ...but it can be proved to be false.

Hypotheses from inductive reasoning become premises for deductive reasoning.



Reasoning--

- Characteristics:
 - A process
- Capabilities:
 - Provides deductions that are true if based on true premises/hypotheses
- Limitations:
 - Deductions are true only if the hypotheses are true.
 - Hypotheses are usually inferred, and inferences can never be proven to be true...
 - ...but they can be proved to be false.

Faith

What is faith?

- Firm belief in something for which there is no proof (Miriam-Webster).
- Strong or unshakeable belief in something, especially without proof or evidence (Dictionary.com).
- Faith simply means believing that something is true, and then committing our lives to it (Billy Graham).
- A belief in something, without, *or contrary to*, evidence and logic.

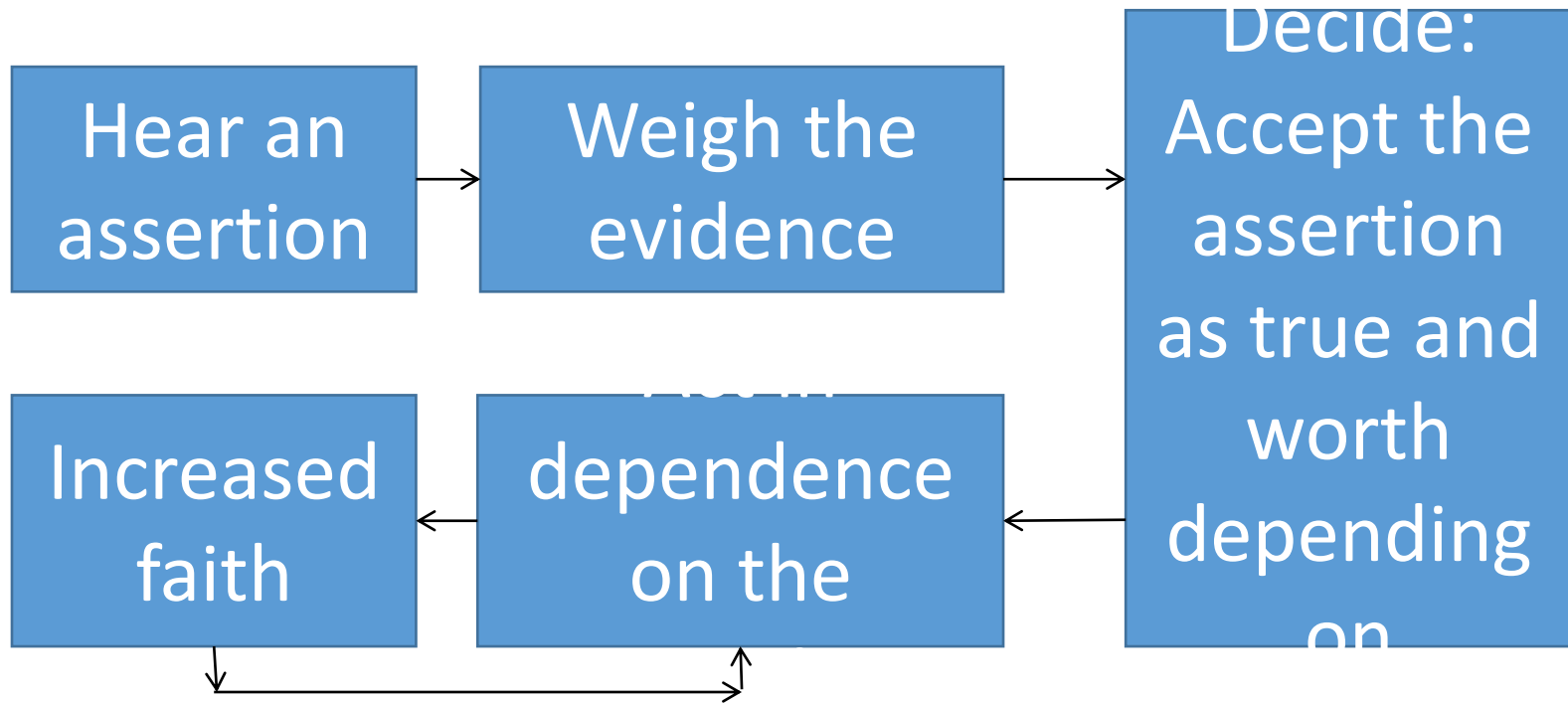
What is faith?

- Hebrews 11:1
 - Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen (KJV).
 - Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see (NIV).
 - Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen (ESV).
- “Substance,” *hypostasis*: that which stands under, a title deed, a firm assurance...
- “Evidence,” *elenchos*: a proof, test, persuasion
- So, what makes what we don’t have, as if we had it? What makes what we can’t see, as if we saw it?

What is faith?

- Faith is a decision, not a feeling.
- Faith is a decision to accept an assertion as true, and depend upon it as true, based on convincing -- but not conclusive -- evidence.
- We get faith by
 - hearing an assertion (Rom. 10:17), and...
 - weighing the evidence (John 20:31), and...
 - making a decision to accept the assertion, indicated by action (James 2:18).
- Our faith grows as we depend upon it and find it to be true (Luke 17:5-10).

The process of believing (faith):



Is faith only a “religious thing”?

Is faith only a “religious thing”?

- Faith (belief) is something everybody uses every day.
- How many of the assumptions we depend on daily, can be proven to be true?
- Things unseen, things hoped for:
 - Red light, green light
 - Work now, get paid later
 - “This is the car for you!”
- Every day, people accept assertions as true, and depend upon them to be true, which they cannot prove.

Faith--

- Characteristics:
 - A decision
 - To accept a proposition as true and depends upon it as true
 - Based on evidence that is persuasive but not indisputably conclusive
 - An everyday process: belief, conviction, assumptions, hypothesis...
- Capabilities:
 - It's how we function in a world of uncertainty.
 - Faith grows with exercise.
- Limitations:
 - We can have faith in things that are not true.

Science

What is science?

- A methodology
 - Experiment->inference->prediction->experiment->validation or falsification of inference
- A collection of “facts:” data based on objective, reproducible observations
- Inferences from a body of facts that explain the data
 - Hypothesis -> Theory -> Law
- Predictions based on the established body of inferences

What is science?

- What's in: objective, reproduced observations of the physical world and inference based on those observations
 - Reproducible: any observer of the same conditions will observe the same result.
- What's out: anything not objective, physical, reproducible.
- History, love, beauty, justice, wonder, anything spiritual or miraculous, anything dealing with eternity.
- God refuses to be reproducible (Deut. 6:16).

Science and Scientism

- Science is a methodology for understanding the physical world -- a quite successful one.
- Science excludes the non-objective as a matter of method.
- Scientism is the belief that only what science includes, matters.
 - “Science, modeled on the natural sciences, is the only source of real knowledge.”
- Therefore scientism excludes a belief in God, by faith.
- Not all scientists are scientism-ists, and not all scientism-ists are scientists.

What can science tell us about God?

- God – as all things spiritual – is not reproducibly observable.
- Science cannot prove God. Science cannot disprove God.
- Scientism and atheism reject God by faith, not by logic.

Science--

- Characteristics:
 - A process, a body of data, an accepted set of inferences from the data, and predictions from the data.
- Capabilities:
 - Highly effective in dealing with the physical world
- Limitations:
 - By design, the process deals only with the objective and verifiable
 - The subjective and the supernatural are excluded from consideration

Scientism--

- Characteristics:
 - A faith that truth is only derived by the scientific method from the objective and verifiable.
- Capabilities:
 - Hopes to be a path to truth superior to those that consider the subjective and supernatural.
- Limitations:
 - By faith, the process deals only with the objective and verifiable
 - The subjective and the supernatural are excluded from consideration
 - Since the conscience is also excluded, the prospects appear dark.

Reason, Faith, and Science

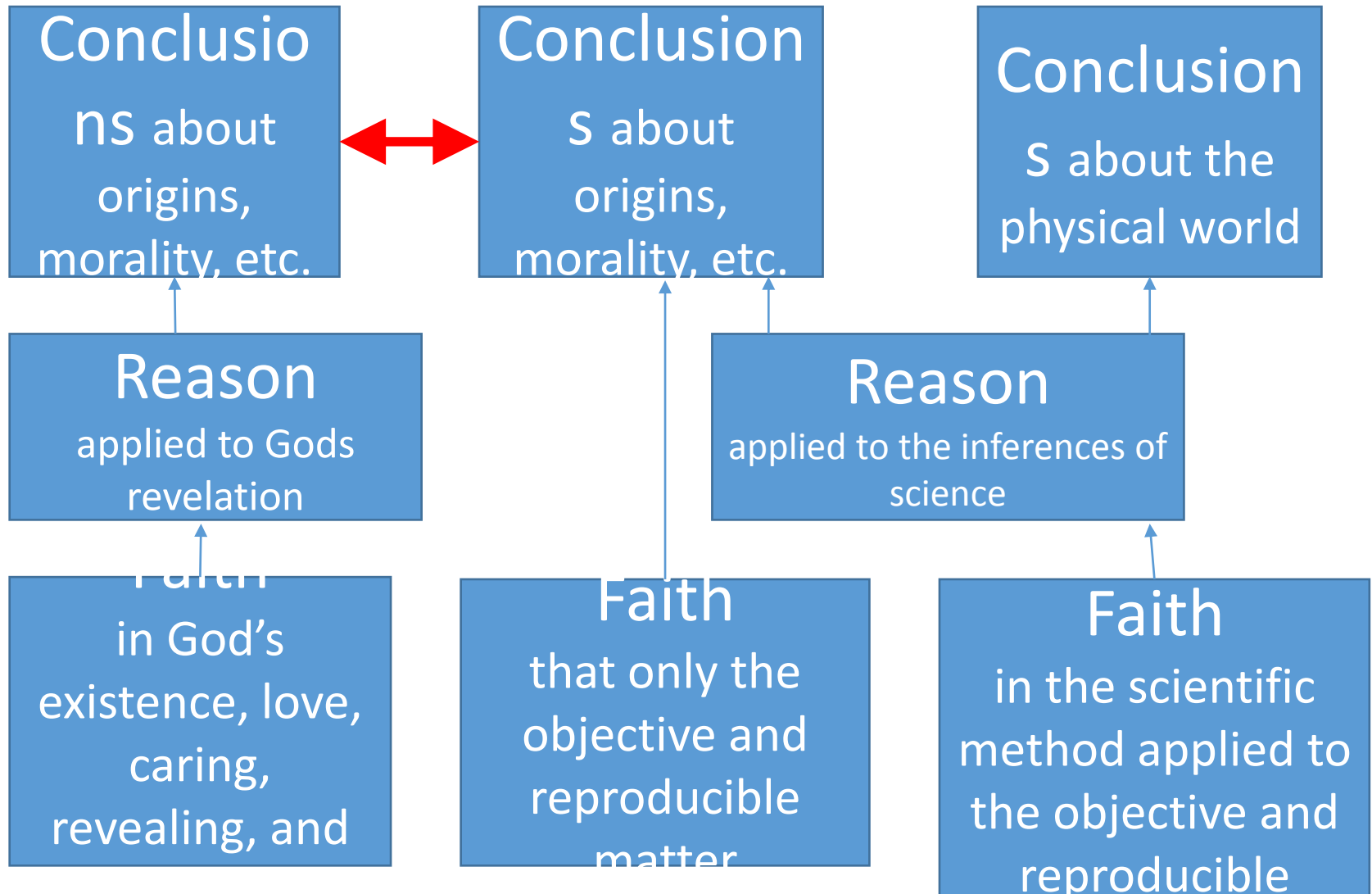
Summary: the faith of Christianity

- Based on convincing, but not conclusive evidence, we accept as true the existence of God, of Jesus as His Son and our Savior, and of the Bible as His revelation of Himself to mankind.
- Based on these convictions, we accept the revelation of our origins in Genesis 1:1 ff.
- Therefore we reject conflicting accounts of our origins because we reason logically from our basic assumptions..

Summary: the faith of humanism

- Based on convincing (to them) but not conclusive evidence, they accept as true that only human reasoning based on objective reproducible observations leads to knowledge.
- Based on these convictions, they accept the account of our origins inferred by scientific methods from the observations of scientists.
- Therefore they reject conflicting accounts of our origins because they reason logically from their basic assumptions.
- We reach different conclusions because we start in different places.
- The conflict is not faith vs. logic, but of two faiths.

Faiths in conflict



Conclusions

- Faith is not the opposite of reasoning, any more than science.
- Faith and logic are not in conflict, two faiths are in conflict: revelation and scientism.
- Reasoning from these two very different starting points leads to very different end points.
- Who can logically deny that God's own revelation contains more truth than man's tentative inferences from experience?