

Foundations of Knowledge

Part 2: Empiricism in Science and Christianity

- Introductory discussion: How is Christian “faith” different than the common usage of “faith”?
- Review: three “levels” of revelation:
 - God’s existence is self-evident from experience (Experiential revelation, week 1)
 - God’s attributes revealed through nature (Natural Revelation, week 2)
 - God’s precise nature and will revealed through his word (Special Revelation, week 3)
- Week 1 take-away: Experience gives enough for us to infer God’s existence.
- "Natural Revelation"
 - God reveals Himself through creation, what He has made. (Ps. 19, Ps. 111)
 - Extrinsic knowledge of God
 - Indirect: nature does not give proposition statements.
 - Empiricism: from "data" to "knowledge"
 - truth gives data
 - data is perceived (sense perception)
 - induction generalizes data into a universal concept
 - universal concept formed as propositional statements (T/F)
 - If concept matches reality = knowledge, belief

Empiricism—a rational chain from "data" to "knowledge"

truth → data → perception → induction → prop. statements (T/F) → **concept of truth** (knowledge/belief)

Caveat: Cannot *deductively prove* that empiricism is a valid path from truth to knowledge.

- Science—the intellectual and practical activity encompassing the systematic study of the structure and behavior of the physical and natural world through observation and experiment. (google)
 - Tenet: empiricism is a valid means of obtaining truth
 - Tenet: cause and effect relationships are absolute
 - Tenet: the existence of immutable, consistent, and discoverable “laws” or natural rules
 - Tenet: inductive reasoning preserves truth
 - Yet, scientists have faith that science *does lead to truth*. Is this reasonable?

===== got to here =====

- Christian empiricism
 - Does spiritual knowledge require the same foundation of empiricism?
 - What extra-scriptural “prior knowledge” is required to interpret scripture? Does this weaken *sola scriptura*? (see John MacArthur, “What Does Sola Scriptura Mean?” Aug. 7, 2015 on Ligonier Ministries blog)
 - Empiricism in scripture: John 20:29-31; Lev. 5:1; Isa. 41:18-20; Matt. 24:32-33; Rom. 1:18-21; 1 Cor. 13:12
- Discussion
 - What are the foundational, required, unprovable, tenets of Christianity?
 - What is the minimum requirement for a human to come to salvific knowledge?

Next week: Rational belief in the propositional truths of scripture (Special Revelation) as the actual word of God.