

God, science and purpose

Discussion series

Welcome to session 1
“How do we Know *anything*”



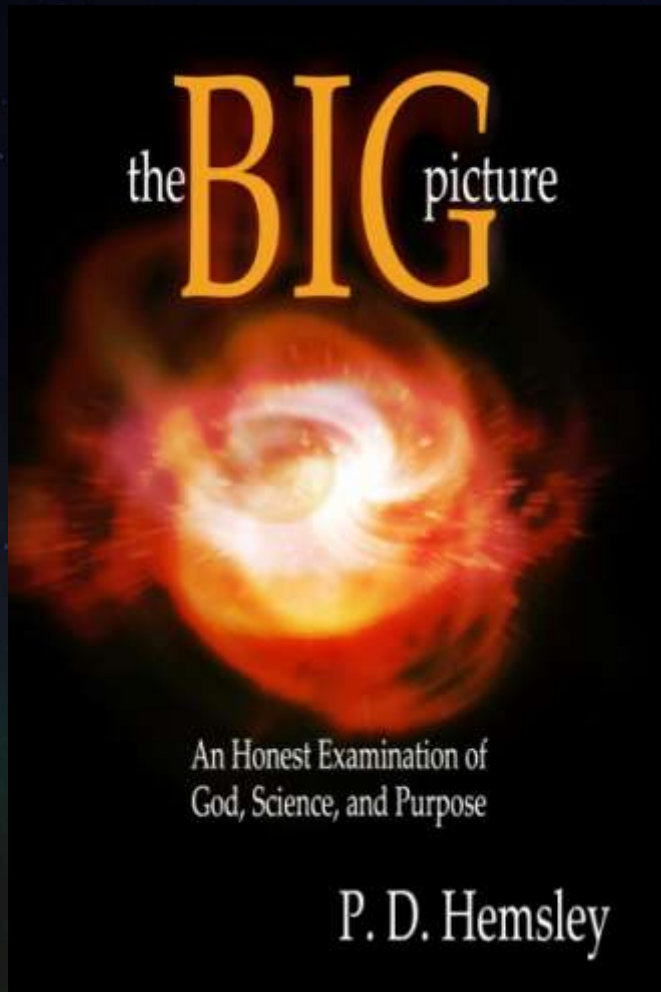
Format

- Get settled with a drink
- Welcome and introduction
- Overview of all the sessions
- Logical fallacy for the day
- Introduce today's topic
 - Presentations
 - Video clips
- Discuss in groups
- Share feedback from groups
- Arrangements for next time

Sessions

1. How do we know *anything*?
2. What does science tell us: The Physical sciences
3. What does science tell us: The Biological sciences
4. Is the universe purposeful?
5. Is there anything that cannot be explained by science?
6. What does reason tell us about God?
7. Did Jesus speak for God?
8. Where can we find our purpose?

Supporting reading:



Author P.D.Hemsley
CEng FIMechE

Logical Fallacy for the day

Appeal to authority

- Get someone to agree with us by claiming that a respected figure has the same opinion as ourselves.
 - A respected authority in a given field is worth serious consideration within that field
 - Their opinion outside their own field cannot be treated as authoritative.
- An example might be that of quoting the opinion of a well known biologist expressing his views on theology, they may be of interest but they are not authoritative. Or one might be swayed to believe something because a well known celebrity claims to believe it.

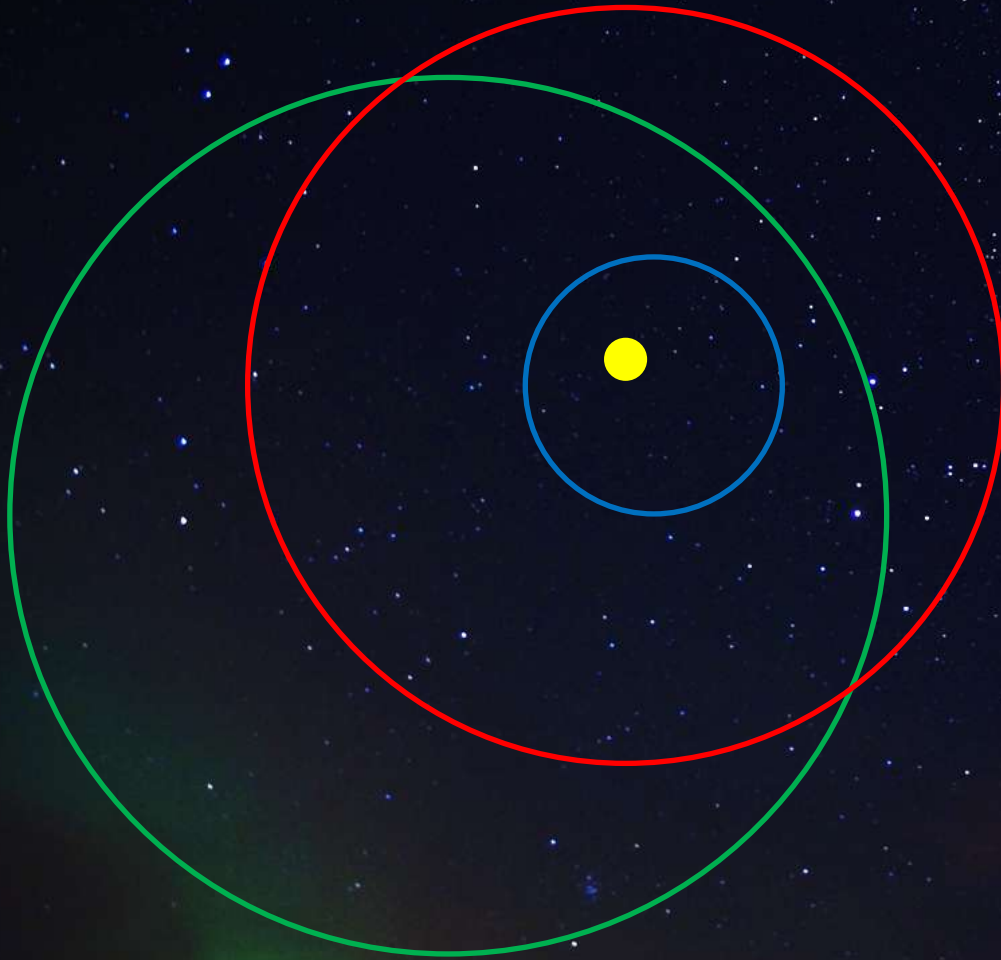
Session 1

HOW DO WE KNOW ANYTHING?

Sources of knowledge

- Personal experience and experiment
- What our friends and family tell us
- Books, lectures, internet
- Thinking

Truth, belief, evidence



Our own personal evidence

What others tell us is evidence

What we believe

What is actually true

Deception

- Do we believe everything we read or are told?
- How do we decide?
- How much do we 'read between the lines'?
 - Beware of logical fallacies
 - Make sure we are talking about the same thing

What is reality anyway?

- Something you can touch?
- Something that you can perceive?
- Are YOU real? How do you know?
- Is money real?
- Is mathematics real?
- Is science real?

Reality beats theory

Bumblebees fly!



- If your mathematical model says they don't, the model is wrong.
- How far can we trust our mathematical models?

Scientific statement of faith?

“We believe that the universe behaves in a consistent and repeatable way, and that by experiment and reasoning it is possible to mathematically model the behaviour of the universe”

Scientism is not science

Scientism is a philosophical position that exalts the methods of the natural sciences above all other modes of human inquiry. . . . Such a doctrinaire stance associated with science leads to an abuse of reason that transforms a rational philosophy of science into an irrational dogma.

Ethics in science, Technology, and Engineering: An International Encyclopedia. Belmont, CA: Cengage Learning, forthcoming (2013). Edited by Carl Mitcham and Britt Holbrook.

http://carbon.ucdenver.edu/~mryder/scientism_este.html accessed 10/6/13

Scientism statement of faith?

“We believe that the universe behaves in a consistent and repeatable way, and that by experiment and reasoning it is possible to mathematically model the behaviour of the universe”

“We believe that even if science has not yet found the correct models, it is possible for science to find them.”

What is the basis for such faith?

Quantum physics

Richard Feynman

“A philosopher once said that:

'It is necessary for the very existence of science that the same conditions always produce the same results'.”

Well, they do not.

You set up the circumstances, with the same conditions every time, and you cannot predict behind which hole you will see the electron.”

Meet Dr Quantum

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DfPeprQ7oGc>

What is faith?

Richard Dawkins:

“Faith is the great cop-out, the great excuse to evade the need to think and evaluate evidence. Faith is belief in spite of, even perhaps because of, the lack of evidence.”

“Faith is powerful enough to immunize people against all appeals to pity, to forgiveness, to decent human feelings. It even immunizes them against fear, if they honestly believe that a martyr's death will send them straight to heaven.”

What is faith?

Mohandas Gandhi:

“Faith... must be enforced by reason... when faith becomes blind it dies.”

“But for my faith in God, I should have been a raving maniac.”

“Unwearied ceaseless effort is the price that must be paid for turning faith into a rich infallible experience.”

What is faith?

Anglican priest, Michael Green:

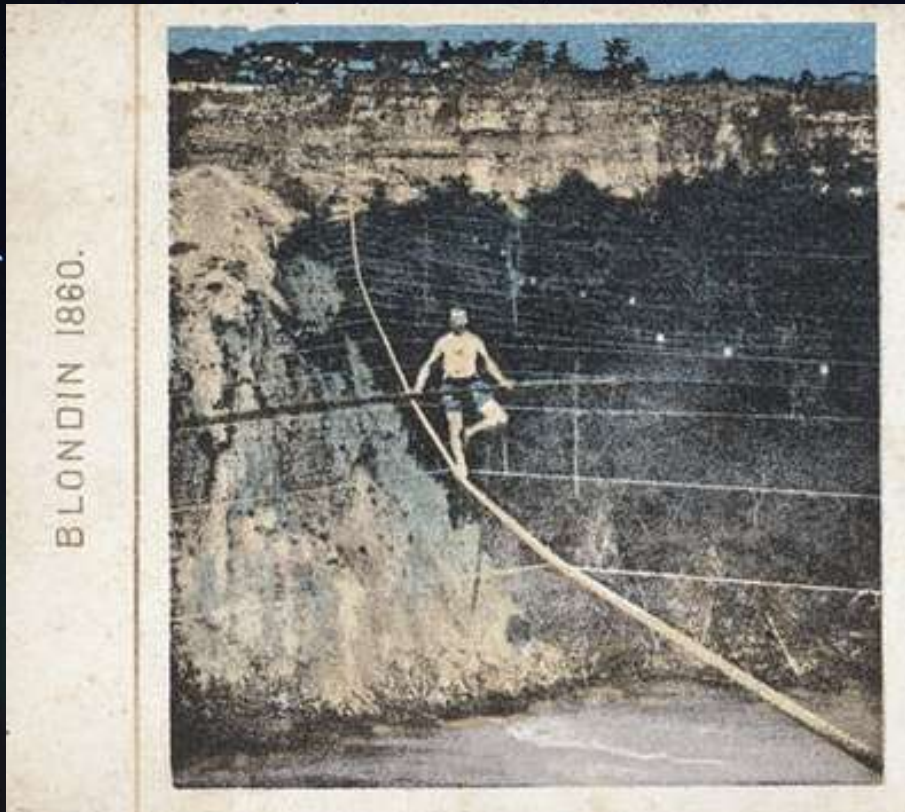
"Faith is to commit oneself to act based on sufficient experience to warrant belief, but without absolute proof. To have faith involves an act of will."

What is faith?

Anon

“The assent of the mind to the truth of what is declared by another, resting solely and implicitly on his authority and veracity”

Faith and belief




Belief is what one obtains from experience and evidence.

Faith bridges the gap between belief and action.

Possible discussion questions:

- How certain are you in what you know, and why?
- Can anyone live without 'faith'?
- Do you agree with any of the definitions of faith?
- Do we confuse 'belief', 'faith', 'faith in God' and 'religion'?



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