



# Is there a conflict between Faith and Science?

October 2018 'Faithful Questions' Seminar  
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**NO!**

# Misconception overview

- Limited view of rationality
- Only one method of discovery
- Scientism
- Christian fundamentalism
- The Galileo incident
- Catholics limiting scientific research
- Evidence vs. Proof



# Bishop Barron Quote



For many people today, scientific and rational are simply equivalent or co-extensive terms. And therefore, since religion is obviously not science, it must be irrational. Without for a moment denigrating the sciences, we have to show that there are non-scientific and yet eminently rational paths that conduce toward knowledge of the real. Literature, drama, philosophy, the fine arts—all close cousins of religion—not only entertain and delight; they also bear truths that are unavailable in any other way.

*(10/4/18 Synod on Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment)*

# Rationality - Definitions

*(From Merriam-Webster)*

- Rational
  - Relating to, based on, or agreeable to **reason**
- Reason
  - the power of comprehending, **inferring**, or thinking especially in orderly rational ways : **INTELLIGENCE**
- Intelligence
  - The ability to **apply knowledge** to ... think abstractly as measured by objective criteria



# Rationality – Assumptions

- Reason requires a starting point
- All reason is based on starting assumptions
- Yes, really!
- Even science



# Rationality – Science definitions

- Science

- A system of knowledge covering general truths or the operation of general laws especially as obtained and tested through **scientific method**

- Scientific method

1. Make an **observation** or **observations**.
2. Ask questions about the **observations** and gather information.
3. Form a hypothesis — a tentative description of what's been **observed**, and make **predictions** based on that hypothesis.
4. Test the hypothesis and **predictions** in an experiment that can be **reproduced**.
5. Analyze the data and draw conclusions; accept or reject the hypothesis or modify the hypothesis if necessary.
6. **Reproduce** the experiment until there are no discrepancies between **observations** and theory.

*(Definition from LiveScience.com)*



# Rationality – Science assumptions

- Our observations are real and trustworthy
- We live in an ordered universe
- The order does not change over time
- God does not frequently interfere with the order



# Methods of discovery

- Science
- Mathematics
- Philosophy
- Religion/theology/meta-physics

All are exercises in the use of reason



# Scientism

- Definition from Merriam-Webster
  - An exaggerated trust in the efficacy of the methods of natural science applied to all areas of investigation (as in philosophy, the social sciences, and the humanities)
- Scientists who assume that the only truths are those that come from the observable universe, believe in the ‘religion’ of Scientism.



# Limits of science

- Questions science can never answer
  - Any 'Why' question
  - Whether anything exists outside the observable universe
  - Prove a miracle (caveat: It can disprove a false one)
  - Validity of any moral judgment



# Christian Fundamentalism

- **Definition from Merriam-Webster**
  - A movement in 20th century Protestantism emphasizing the literally interpreted Bible as fundamental to Christian life and teaching
- **Literal understanding of Genesis**
  - Literal 7 days of creation
  - Literal Adam and Eve
  - Literal Eve made from literal rib of literal Adam
  - View 1<sup>st</sup> few chapters of Genesis as effectively a scientific explanation of the origins of the universe



# Catholics are not fundamentalists

- Scripture must be understood in the context in which it was written
  - Genesis is not trying to describe the physics of the creation of the universe
  - It is a description of the nature of creation
    - God is the creator of everything one could imagine (and more)
    - Creation is good
    - God made mankind in His image
- Catholics respect scientific inquiry and discovery
  - We expect scientists to restrict their conclusions to the observable universe
  - We also expect scientific research to respect moral limitations



# Genesis 1 – Day 1 & 2

1. In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth—
2. and the earth was without form or shape, with darkness over the abyss and a mighty wind sweeping over the waters—
3. Then God said: Let there be light, and there was light.
4. God saw that the light was good. God then separated the light from the darkness.
5. God called the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.” Evening came, and morning followed—the first day.
6. Then God said: Let there be a dome in the middle of the waters, to separate one body of water from the other.
7. God made the dome, and it separated the water below the dome from the water above the dome. And so it happened.
8. God called the dome “sky.” Evening came, and morning followed—the second day.



# Genesis 1 – Day 3 & 4

9. Then God said: Let the water under the sky be gathered into a single basin, so that the dry land may appear. And so it happened: the water under the sky was gathered into its basin, and the dry land appeared.
10. God called the dry land “earth,” and the basin of water he called “sea.” God saw that it was good.
11. Then God said: Let the earth bring forth vegetation: every kind of plant that bears seed and every kind of fruit tree on earth that bears fruit with its seed in it. And so it happened:
12. the earth brought forth vegetation: every kind of plant that bears seed and every kind of fruit tree that bears fruit with its seed in it. God saw that it was good.
13. Evening came, and morning followed—the third day.
14. Then God said: Let there be lights in the dome of the sky, to separate day from night. Let them mark the seasons, the days and the years,
15. and serve as lights in the dome of the sky, to illuminate the earth. And so it happened:
16. God made the two great lights, the greater one to govern the day, and the lesser one to govern the night, and the stars.
17. God set them in the dome of the sky, to illuminate the earth,
18. to govern the day and the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. God saw that it was good.
19. Evening came, and morning followed—the fourth day.



# Genesis 1 – Day 5 & half of 6

20. Then God said: Let the water teem with an abundance of living creatures, and on the earth let birds fly beneath the dome of the sky.
21. God created the great sea monsters and all kinds of crawling living creatures with which the water teems, and all kinds of winged birds. God saw that it was good,
22. and God blessed them, saying: Be fertile, multiply, and fill the water of the seas; and let the birds multiply on the earth.
23. Evening came, and morning followed—the fifth day.
24. Then God said: Let the earth bring forth every kind of living creature: tame animals, crawling things, and every kind of wild animal. And so it happened:
25. God made every kind of wild animal, every kind of tame animal, and every kind of thing that crawls on the ground. God saw that it was good.



# Genesis 1 – 2<sup>nd</sup> half of 6<sup>th</sup> day

26. Then God said: Let us make human beings in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the tame animals, all the wild animals, and all the creatures that crawl on the earth.
27. God created mankind in his image; In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.
28. God blessed them and God said to them: Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that crawl on the earth.
29. God also said: See, I give you every seed-bearing plant on all the earth and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit on it to be your food;
30. and to all the wild animals, all the birds of the air, and all the living creatures that crawl on the earth, I give all the green plants for food. And so it happened.
31. God looked at everything he had made, and found it very good. Evening came, and morning followed—the sixth day.



# Genesis 2 – 7<sup>th</sup> Day

1. Thus the heavens and the earth and all their array were completed.
2. On the seventh day God completed the work he had been doing; he rested on the seventh day from all the work he had undertaken.
3. God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work he had done in creation.



# What about Galileo?

- **Concession: The Church is not perfect**
  - Throughout its history the Church has made plenty of mistakes
  - Similarly, the Church's actions with Galileo were not ideal, particularly as we view things today.
- **Key question: Why Galileo and not Copernicus?**
  - Galileo's research build upon Copernicus' research
  - Copernicus was a priest in good standing with the Church
- **Answer: Galileo didn't limit himself to science**
  - He had an uncontrolled temper.
  - He demanded that his hypothesis be accepted as fact.
  - He meddled in the Scriptures.
  - He disrespected the authorities of the Church.
- **Again, the Church wasn't perfect, but it wasn't just about science**



# Moral limits on research

- Conclusions of science never explicitly have moral implications
- Experiments can be immoral
  - Anything that violates the dignity of the human person
  - Anything that tortures animals
  - Anything excessively destructive



# Examples of Catholic Scientists

- **William of Ockham**
  - Created Ockham's Razor
- **Copernicus**
  - Catholic priest who first discovered heliocentrism
- **Christopher Clavius**
  - Jesuit who drove Pope Gregory XIII to promulgate the Gregorian calendar
- **Gregor Mendel**
  - Augustinian Friar who is the father of modern genetics
- **George Lemaitre**
  - Catholic priest and father of the Big Bang theory



# Evidence vs. Proof

- Science has a method to “prove” it’s truths
- Meta-physics does not
  - This does not mean it is merely “blind faith”
  - There is much evidence for our faith
- Rational Religion
  - Revelatory evidence
  - Reason



# Conclusion

- Science and theology should work in concert with one another
- Movie ‘Contact’
  - “As a person of faith I'm bound by a different covenant than Doctor Arroway. But our goal is one and the same: the pursuit of Truth. I for one believe her.”
- Pope Leo XIII
  - “There can never, indeed, be any real discrepancy between the theologian and the physicist, as long as each confines himself within his own lines, and both are careful, as St. Augustine warns us, ‘not to make rash assertions, or to assert what is not known as known.’”



# Next month

- 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday – November 20<sup>th</sup>
  - Yes, that is Thanksgiving week
- 7:30 PM in the Morris Hall
  - As always
- Topic
  - Did God change between the Old and New Testaments?



# Materials

- <http://deaconken.org>
- Slides  
[http://deaconken.org/presentations/Faithful\\_Questions\\_Faith\\_and\\_Science.pdf](http://deaconken.org/presentations/Faithful_Questions_Faith_and_Science.pdf)
- Audio/Video may be available at a later date. Check <http://deaconken.org/blog>

