

FACT: a thing that is indisputably the case.¹

If a person is unable to identify what a fact is in the context of an investigation (*any* investigation), he will have no objective basis for evaluating the reliability/explanatory power of any truth claims or theories.

Inferences, interpretations, claims, theories, and testimonies are fallible and easily incorporate error. If a person uses any of these as the basis for evaluating truth claims, he will be attempting to discern what is true based on information that may very well be false.

Only when facts are used as the basis for evaluating truth claims and theories can objective criteria be properly applied (logical consistency, coherency, external correspondence, etc.).

A few examples of facts: Celestial bodies move. Humans congregate. Living organisms reproduce and eventually die. Humans experience pain and pleasure.

Three counter-arguments:

Argument # 1: Science has proven certain theories; therefore, these theories should be counted as factual.

Response: All conclusions that are reached inductively—such as those reached via the scientific method—are falsifiable. In inductive reasoning, the conclusions move beyond the information that is contained within the premises, rendering the conclusions uncertain. Inductive reasoning is helpful for generating ideas and hypotheses, but is not capable of proving ideas/hypotheses. Proof is not a currency of science. Proofs are only possible within closed systems such as math and logic.

Argument # 2: Absolute certainty is never possible. Even observation and experience might be hallucinatory or illusory. The scientific

¹ <http://googledictionary.freecollocation.com/meaning?word=fact>

method brings us as close to knowing the truth as possible. Therefore, a scientific theory should hold as much weight as fact.

Response: This argument is self-refuting. The claimant begins by arguing that sensory observation is unreliable. In his final statement, however, the claimant argues that theories, which are based on observation, are reliable.

Argument #3: Observation and experience can be doubted as hallucinatory or illusory, so there are no facts (i.e. we can't know anything with certainty).

Response: Only a Creator God could identify the true limits of human perception and, if he so desired, work within those limits to reveal truths to humanity. A Creator God would have the upper hand in such an exchange, having engineered human mental faculties and language.