

Facts Versus Evidence

When a detective investigates a crime scene, he looks for any and all evidence that may be relevant to the case. This includes eyewitness testimony, which he usually scribbles down in his book to evaluate later. The *facts* of the case, however, are what the detective continually returns to throughout his investigation. The facts—the pieces of information that are *directly* verifiable via the senses—become the basis for judging the accuracy and explanatory power of eyewitness statements. The facts do not require inference/interpretation.

When a person investigates the fundamental mysteries of our universe, literally *everything*--every facet of our world--qualifies as evidence. The solution to such mysteries will ultimately need to account for the full scope of human experience and all observations of the cosmos. This means that the evidence encompasses far more than the tangible, concrete evidence of our world and universe. General facets of life qualify as evidence—things like pain, pleasure, instincts, communication, aging, death, intelligence, sleep, humor, emotions, philosophy, aesthetics, war, morality, ethics, self-consciousness, etc.... Religious claims and claims of supernatural phenomenon also qualify as evidence.

When evaluating such claims, it quickly becomes apparent that there are *many* conflicting claims to divine revelation. Like eyewitness testimony in a criminal investigation, these claims should be evaluated on their internal consistency, coherency, alignment with the facts, and explanatory power. To this end, it is critical to distinguish the real facts. The *facts* are the indisputable things we see and experience day to day that do not require inference/interpretation: Celestial bodies move. Humans congregate. Living organisms reproduce and eventually die. Humans experience pain and pleasure. Etc.

Insisting that religious claims are not “real evidence” implies that one can simply throw them away without any real detriment to the investigation. Nothing could be further from the truth. If *any* of those religious claims to divine revelation are true, then they will reveal *far, far* more than a simple evaluation of the facts would. Just consider: those who rely on the scientific method alone could never hope to trump direct first-hand knowledge from a transcendent Creator.