

Faith and Epistemic Principles: Why Religious Belief Should Seem Unreasonable to
Scientists, Review

Introduction:

The words “many” and “some” are not strong in your first sentence because they are vague and generalizations. The phrase “taught to go about thinking” is wordy; “because of how scientists think and form beliefs” would be more concise. The phrase “that is” in the third sentence is distracting when you are defining “epistemic.” You could try, “science is founded on fundamental epistemic principles, ways that we claim to know about the universe.” The fourth sentence (“in affirming...”) is rather long and a little confusing. You could take out “of a sort” and add “religious” before principles to clarify. Your thesis statement is clear and concise. Overall, your introduction supports your thesis statement well, but I think you could introduce an example that you will later write about in your body paragraphs in your introduction. Without this example, a reader is slightly lost as to what the principles are to which you refer and what specifically you are going to discuss.

Paragraph 1:

In the first sentence, I recommend removing “statement and.” In the second sentence, “it as” can be removed. I do not see how the opening of this paragraph relates to your argument. You say yourself that Sir Isaac Newton has a “clearer statement... as it applies to science.” So where does Occam’s razor fit in? You jump from Newton’s quote, which does work with your argument, to parsimony. Why do you define this word? As a reader,

I am confused and think your argument would be stronger without it. I like your point that science is an inductive discipline, but I think that your card example has nothing to do with your main idea nor does it help to explain inductive reasoning. Inductive reasoning is not a foreign idea and your example about the Law of Gravity explains it enough. Moreover, I think you should be careful with the word “intuition.” Is intuition synonymous with inductive reasoning? Making a sound explanation that one thinks is correct or “safe” is not the same thing as using intuition.

Your paragraph becomes much clearer after the Newton’s Law of Gravity quotation. The sentence that begins “indeed, sometimes...” claims that it is “simpler” to believe in God’s existence than to make “naturalistic explanations.” Is there proof that anyone thinks this is simpler? Certainly, this argument supports your thesis, but is it true? Who believes this? You go on to argue that believing in God is actually extremely complex, the opposite of simple in fact. Dawkin’s quotation supports this complexity claim well. Your second example, however, is a little convoluted. The sentence that begins “secondly...” is seven lines long and could be shortened by editing out some unnecessary words and/or splitting the sentence into two or three more concise and clearer statements. You say that these religious arguments that (Jesus was born of a virgin etc.) are “without any evidence.” Isn’t this your personal belief. Some people believe the Bible is “evidence” and others believe these ideas without evidence. Who is to say that we need evidence to believe something? Scientific theories grow from ideas that have no “evidence” and if no one believed in them, then wouldn’t science never progress?

Paragraph 2:

Your argument in this paragraph is strong. The sentence that begins “notice that the same would be...” contains a rather broad generalization. If God did interact with the physical world, why could we not prove his existence? Wouldn't God's hypothetical interactions with humans prove that God existed? These arguments could be used against your claim. In the sentence that begins “however, again...” you use the word intuition. I think that this word choice is incorrect. Some people's intuition tell them that God exists and how is that intuition any less legitimate than someone's intuition that tells them that God does not exist?

Conclusion:

In general, using “I” in formal essays is not accepted. Your ideas are very interesting, persuasive, and clear, but using “I” almost detracts from the validity of your argument. Your point that it is unreasonable to uphold ideas such as Russel's teapot is unreasonable for anyone is the strongest point in your paper. This idea is very important because it goes beyond the realm of science and religion. Perhaps you could weave this idea into the rest of your paper, because for me, it was the strongest part.