Circumstantial (Indirect) and Direct Evidence / Dogmatism vs Skepticism

Post by “DaveT” of March 9, 2026 at 4:01 PM

> Quote from Kalosyni
>
> And if among the mental images created by your opinion you affirm both that which awaits confirmation, and that which does not, you will not escape error, since you will have preserved the whole cause of doubt in every judgment between what is right and what is wrong."

I appreciate your observations. I do not take issue with your prior thoughts on how different people might not understand consensus. And I find the quote from PD 24 highly appropriate here. An opinion affirmed only in part will not escape error. However, you can affirm all of an opinion by consensus.

I think there is a better way to treat the idea of presenting truth confirmed by consensus than the problems you saw.

Looking at the scientific method, and I hope anyone will correct my knowledge on the scientific method, once certain evidence (by opinion) exists, it must be tested by others, i.e. experts, to see if the evidence can be falsifiable, or disproven. If it can be, it will not be accepted as true. Therefore, we can choose to rely on the scientific method to know the world, and why religions, to my understanding, never try to disprove their “evidence” qua myths and dogmas.

So, my approach is to challenge myself whether there is high confidence via consensus in the evidence supporting any opinion, theory, faith, or belief. To the believer in divine providence, I can challenge their evidence. I can show evidence that nature can come into existence with no divine first cause. Can I prove what occurred before the Big Bang? Personally? No. But cosmologists are uncovering evidence every day, giving them an idea of what existed before then.

My opinion on the creation of everything is based on a consensus of scientists on that topic, that the universe as we understand it came to be without divine providence. And I see no evidence of divine creation. For example, evolution is true and creation in Eden is not. If someone proves some part of evolution is false by a scientific method of consensus, then I have to yield. Another example, Einstein’s theories of relativity are not accepted as 100% true in the face of new discoveries proven by consensus. But until that time (and there have been times) scientists will accept every specific part by consensus as true.

Most of us know that sunrise will occur tomorrow, and I bet every astrophysicist will acknowledge that to be true. But they know there is a possibility, however slight, that something we do not understand might occur and sunrise will not happen.

And this brings me to the words possibility versus probability. If I may for the moment rely on my legal training; a probability of something occurring is that it is more likely to happen than it will not happen. The degree of probability can always be contestable, but we can choose to rely on the probability as a proven fact if it is over 50% probable, but certainly a far higher degree for scientists, unless we see acceptable opposing evidence.

Someone may ask, “Is it possible that Einstein was wrong about (something) and Steven Hawking disproved it?” In that case, scientists will set to work trying to disprove Hawking's new idea. And if after years of testing Hawking’s idea may become so probably correct that by consensus it is accepted as a fact. There is no need to say Hawking is possibly or probably right. It is not false to say to anyone, regardless of their educational level, that Hawking’s idea is true because it has been “proven".

So, I think knowing that nothing can be 100% proven now and forever is not a barrier to my beliefs. And everyone has their own probability level of belief.

The faithful believer may stay with his faith because there is not sufficient evidence it is false, that even a small proof of the existence of their god(s) is enough to accept it as fact. And just the same, an Epicurean can ignore the possibility that they are wrong about divine providence since they may regard the small probability of error to be enough to disregard it.