

Justification, skepticism, irreverence: or why science is different from faith and rhetoric

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This essay is the text of a lecture the author was invited to give at the Department of Philosophy of Uppsala University in February, 2004. The main points of the essay are as follows. (1) There is no justification for the opinion that science too, like ideologies, religions, and mystical philosophies, is based on articles of faith. (2) The working logic of scientific justification is inescapable, in the sense that any deviation from its norms leads to a complete loss of one's ability to accept some propositions while rejecting others. (3) It is possible to demonstrate the difference between scientific justification and non-scientific justification by means of a quasi-Turing game in which a skeptical listener is allowed to pose questions to the originator of a position. The essence of the game is this: if P is a stated position, and E is a position designedly excluded by stating P ; if furthermore justification J (anything ranging from logical derivation to divine inspiration) is being presented in support of P , then J cannot be valid if it can be used to justify E as well.

Key words: science, faith, rhetoric, justification, skepticism, irreverence.