

Unreasonable Doubt

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I will make a case that doubting some propositions is unreasonable. This is not to say that that an intellectual understanding of reasons for belief in them is useless, but rather that doubting the propositions themselves is useless.

One such proposition is that there are laws of nature. This cannot be established without the assumption of another proposition which is equally dubious. It might be thought that it could be established by induction. However, there could be laws of nature without induction being true. In fact, Karl Popper believed induction was not really a method used in science, although he did believe in laws of nature. If there were no minds to use induction, induction would not be true, but there could still be laws of nature.

Another case is the axiom (only one is needed) for propositional logic. You cannot prove it without the assumption of other propositions. Also, you cannot

prove deductive logic consistent, without already assuming it is consistent, as anything can be proven in an inconsistent system. If it is inconsistent, it can be proven that it is consistent. Still doubt is unreasonable.

Willard Van Orman Quine argued that necessity, synonymy, analyticity are interdefinable, and each assumed all the others. He cast doubt on all these concepts because of this. However, doubting the applicability of these concepts is unreasonable.

I have observed a tendency of intellectuals to believe in determinism, although the best evidence of physics is for indeterminism. I find Karl Popper's arguments (not proofs) for indeterminism convincing. If determinism is true, what is the point of arguing? Again, doubt seems unreasonable.

Intellectuals sometimes, also, often, struggle with whether there are moral or ethical facts. They believe it wrong to believe such facts without proof. But believing that itself is such a fact. So, doubt is unreasonable.

One might wonder whether Pascal's wager is another case where doubt is unreasonable. What is there to lose? What if there is a God that punishes you for believing without evidence? If there is no evidence for or against the existence of God, what does the proposition mean? The previous examples have practical consequences. One needs a practical definition of God. Pascal's argument relies on there being no practical consequence in this life, and a reward in an unobservable future, for an arbitrary belief, rather than an opposite (equally plausible) belief.