

# SCIENCE AND RELIGION: COMPATIBLE OR INCOMPATIBLE?

The fundamental issues demarcating compatible and incompatible aspects.

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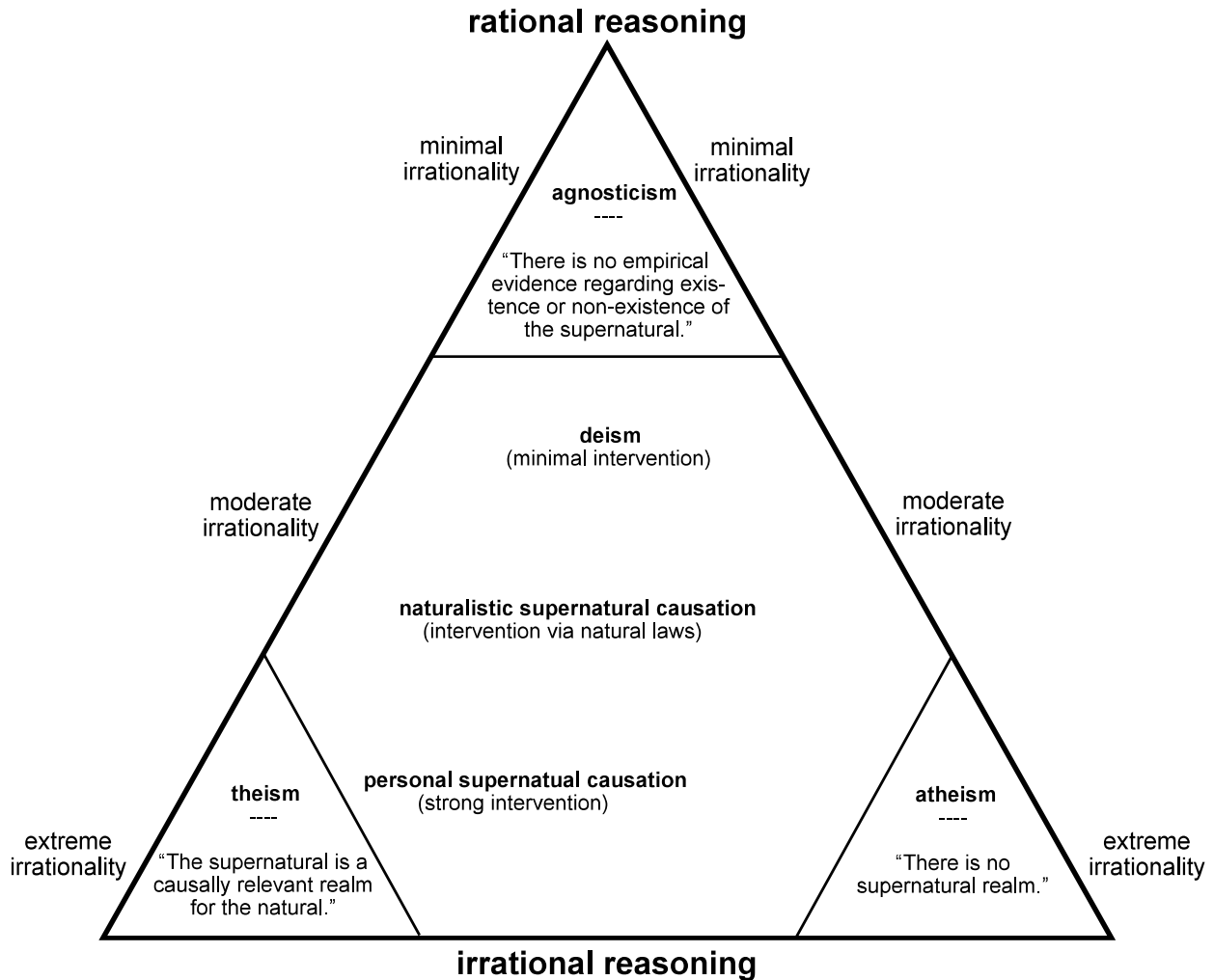
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<b>Compatibility</b>	<b>Incompatibilities</b>
<p>(i) Science and Religion both seek to acquire causal understanding of the objects / events we encounter.</p>	<p>(i') The methods of critical evaluation in Science cannot be applied to supernatural theories / hypotheses.<sup>1</sup></p> <p>(ii') Religion provides for no rational methods to critically evaluate competing theories / hypotheses, supernatural or otherwise.</p> <p>(iii') Science seeks to maximize rational causal understanding, while understanding by way of the supernatural will be irrational (cf. Fig. 1).</p> <p>(iv') Differential beliefs in scientific (i.e. successfully tested) and supernatural theories / hypotheses will lead one to a position of understanding that is ultimately contradictory.<sup>2</sup></p>

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<sup>1</sup>See my articles available from this web site: *Evolutionary Biology versus Intelligent Design: Resolving the Issue*, and *The Mechanics of Testing a Theory: Implications for Intelligent Design*.

<sup>2</sup>Point (iv') addresses what is probably the most common predicament, where one is willing to accept theories and hypotheses that have been critically evaluated in the sciences, but also willing to interject the supernatural into explanations of particular events / objects. At the point philosophical naturalism is waived for explaining a particular instance, one has to accept that theories that have been scientifically established, and applied, are capable of being arbitrarily violated in lieu of invoking supernatural theories. But, as supernatural theories are not available to being critically evaluated [per (i')], one puts themselves in the position of accepting a contradiction. The contradiction is incurred because the introduction of supernatural theories to explain events / objects will result in one having to suspend application of one or more naturalistic theories. The problem with such a contradiction, if left unresolved (which will be the case if supernatural theories are immune to testing), is that it impedes the continued, critical acquisition of causal understanding. The only option for resolution, if one wishes to maximize rational understanding, would be to forgo supernatural theories.



**Figure 1**

The distinctions between theism, atheism, and agnosticism relative to rationality. Notice that rational versus irrational is not a pejorative comparison. Rather, a rational belief or action is one based on all evidence that is relevant to the formation of that belief or basis for action. Theism and atheism are the extremes of irrationality in that both are positions devoid of empirical support. The minimally irrational position would be agnosticism, as one would be compelled to conclude that neither theistic nor atheistic positions are necessary for the ongoing rational acquisition of causal understanding. As was noted in point (iv') in the table, there can be differential applications of scientific and supernatural theories. These are indicated as positions ranging between extreme and minimal irrationality, e.g. 'personal supernatural causation,' 'naturalistic supernatural causation,' and 'deism,' among others.