

Knowing in Part: The Demands of Scientific and  
Religious Knowledge in Everyday Decisions  
or  
“She Blinded Me With Science!” and Deciding Whether to Wear  
Checks With Stripes

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# Outline

- Evaluating everyday decisions.
- How do we know.
- How does science and religion know.
- What does science and religion know.
- Connecting what we know to everyday decisions.
- Pastoral implications and conclusions.

# What we will and will not do

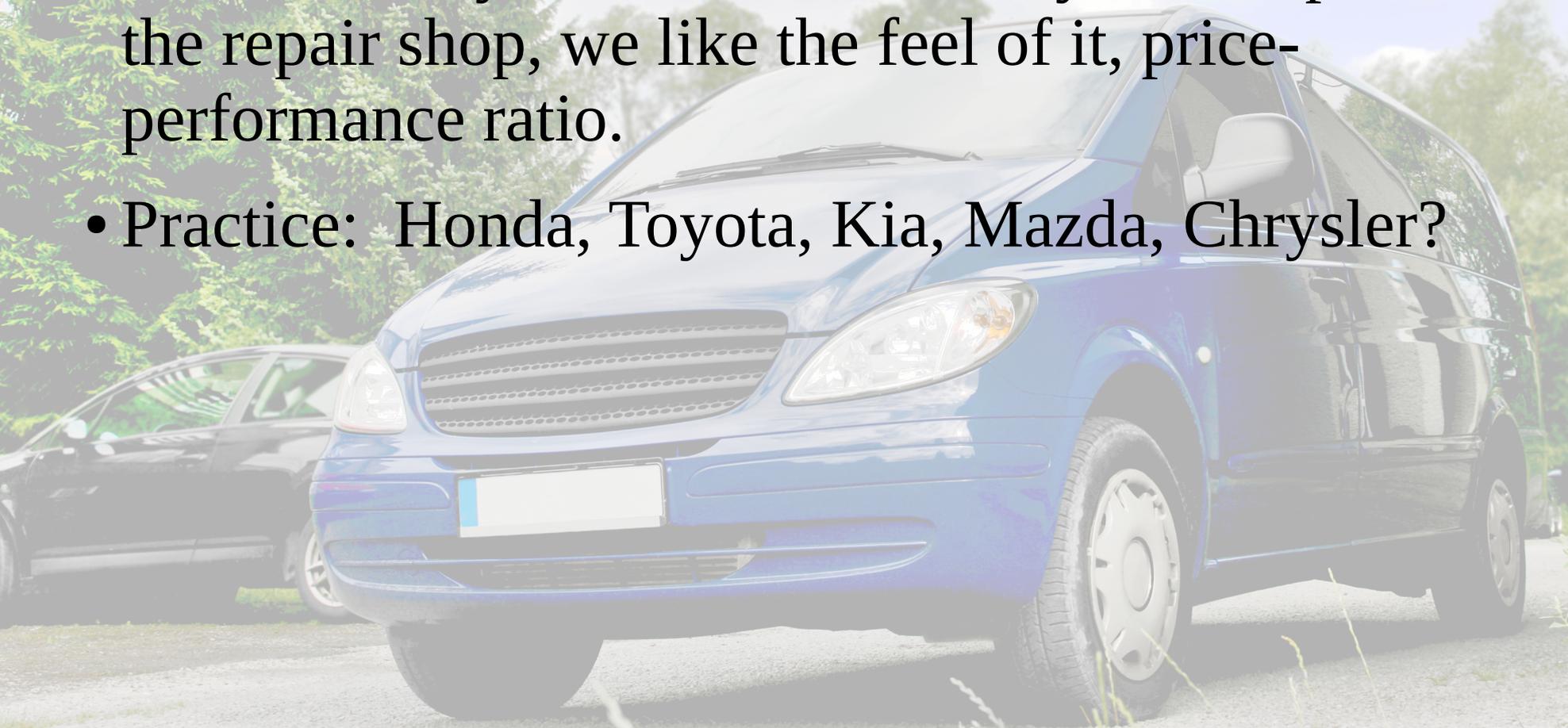
- We're **not** going to provide a checklist of how to figure out everyday decisions.
- We **will** analyze what goes into making an everyday decision.
- We **will** describe key ways how scientific and religious knowledge compare when making everyday decisions.

# Evaluating everyday decisions

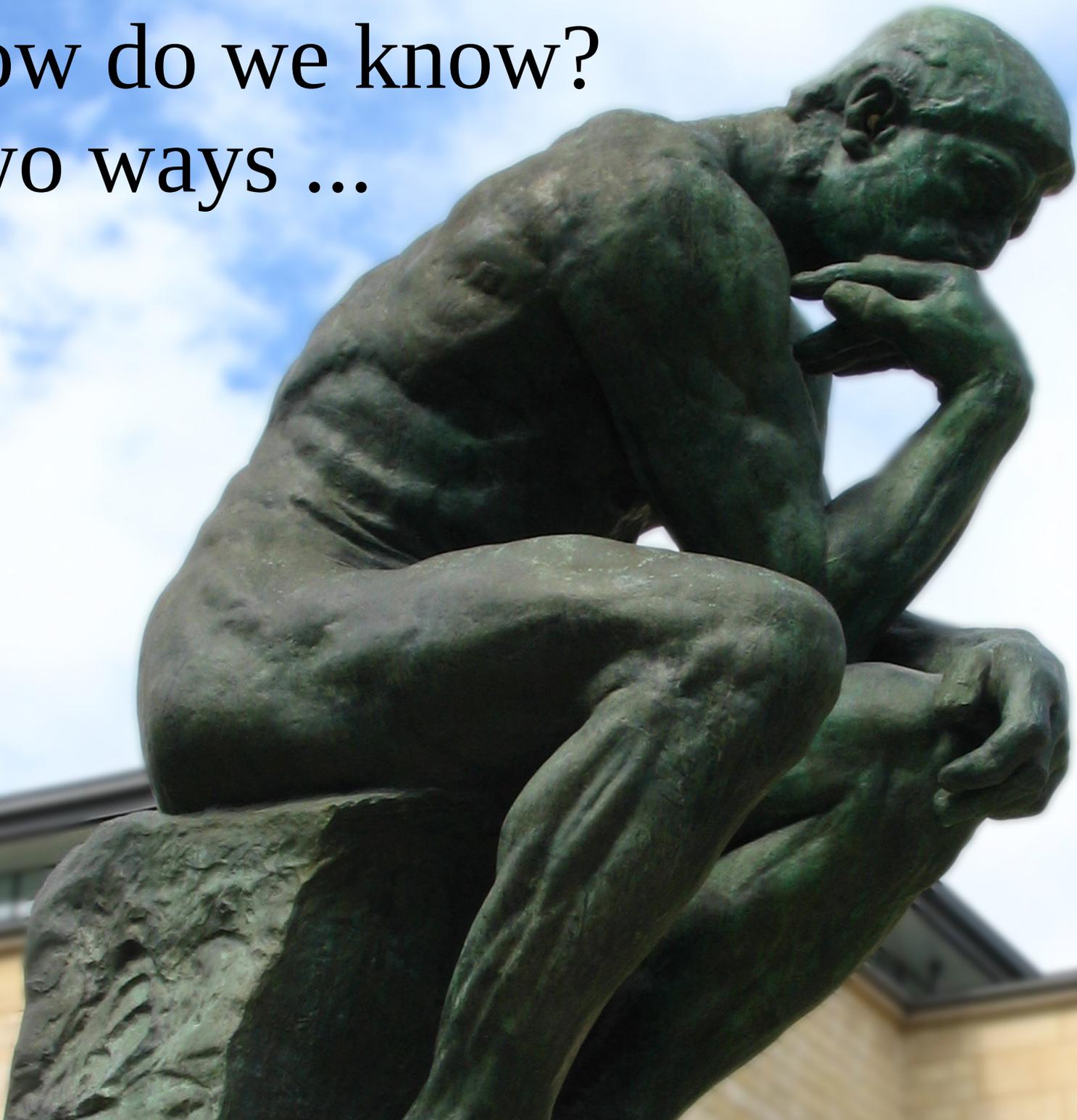
Knowledge {  
Importance  
Goals  
Practice

# What minivan should I buy?

- Importance: All five of us aren't taking the bus.
- Goals: Family all in one car, family road trips, avoid the repair shop, we like the feel of it, price-performance ratio.
- Practice: Honda, Toyota, Kia, Mazda, Chrysler?



How do we know?  
Two ways ...



Someone tells you ...



... or you figure it out  
yourself



A woman with long brown hair, wearing a dark long-sleeved shirt and blue jeans, is sitting cross-legged on a wooden dock. She is looking out over a calm lake towards a forested shoreline in the distance. The scene is peaceful and serene.

Someone tells  
you (revelation):

- Experts
- Leaders
- Authorities
- God

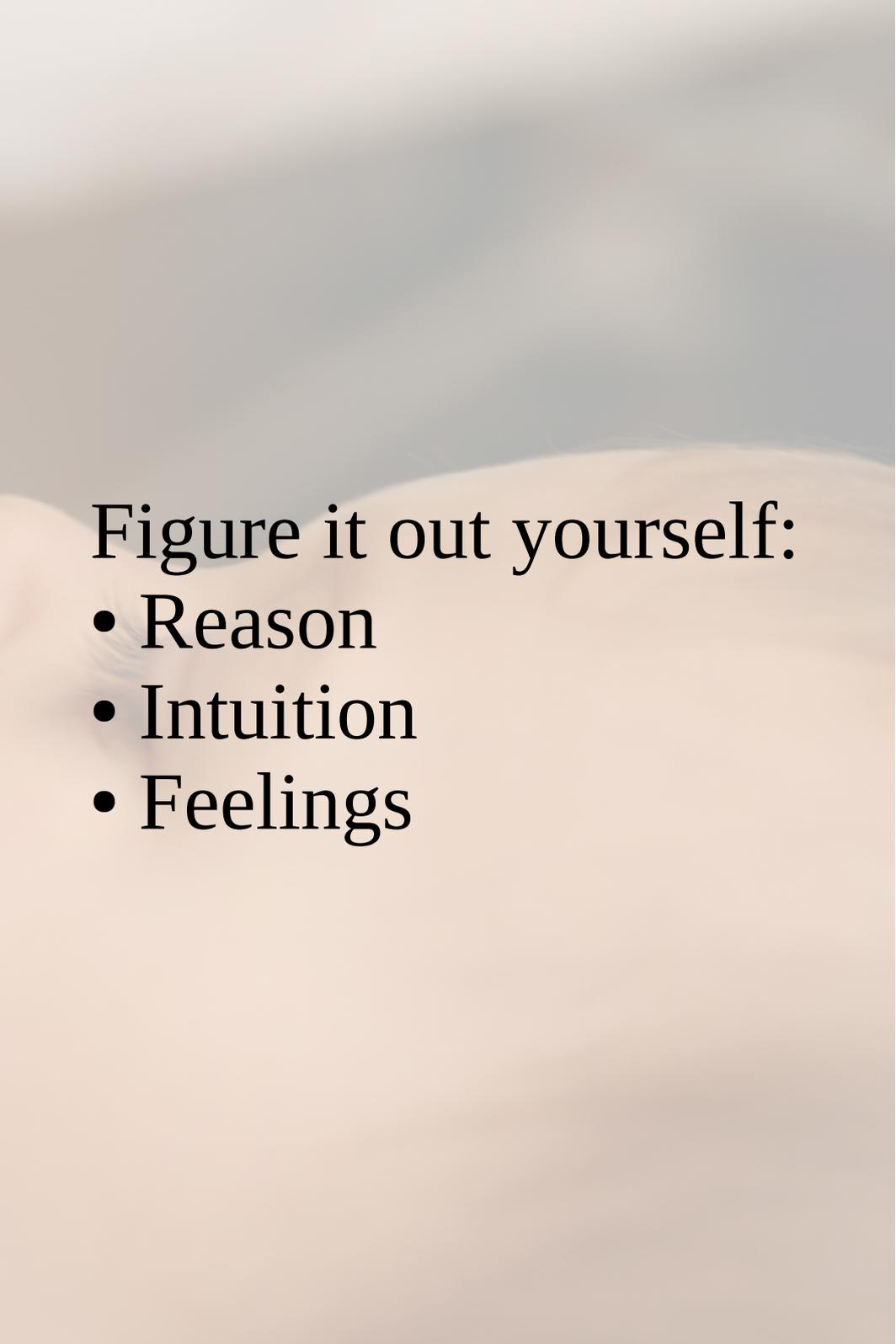
A close-up, slightly blurred image of a person's face, showing their eyes and nose. The person appears to be in deep thought or listening intently. The background is a soft, out-of-focus landscape.

Figure it out yourself:

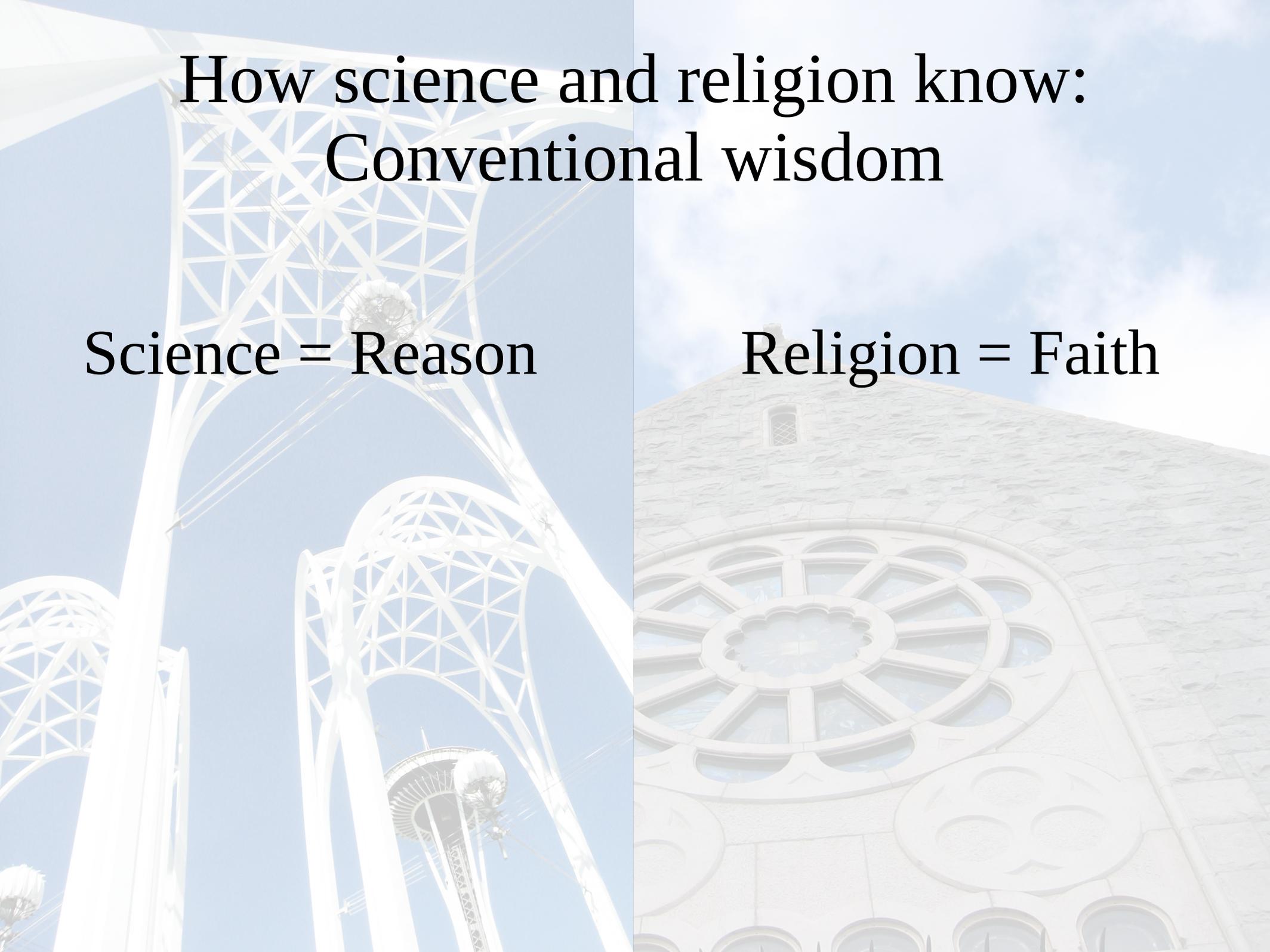
- Reason
- Intuition
- Feelings

# Knowledge for my decision?

- Revelation: *Consumer Reports*, my mechanic, prayer.
- Reason: Analysis of costs, options, repair records, test drive, etc.
- Intuition: Test drive, gut sense.
- Feeling: Do I like it?

Feels like science determines most of the decision.

Is the religious knowledge only in prayer?



# How science and religion know: Conventional wisdom

Science = Reason

Religion = Faith

# How science and religion know: Critique of conventional wisdom

Religion:

- Revelation
- Reason
- Intuition
- Feeling

# How science and religion know: Critique of conventional wisdom

## Science:

- Revelation
- Reason
- Intuition
- Feeling

## Religion:

- Revelation
- Reason
- Intuition
- Feeling

# What science and religion know of the world

## Science:

- Material aspects that exhibit regularity.

## Religion:

- Material aspects that do or do not exhibit regularity.
- Non-material aspects (including relational aspects).

What does science tells us about a wetland? ...



# Science seldom provides its own meaning

- Impacts on a wetland:
  - Science can say: Extent of wetland loss, changes in species population, etc.
  - Science cannot say: Is the impact desirable or not?
- Science describes material states.
- Science seldom describes meaning of those states.
- Meaning comes from religion, ethics, etc.

# Science needs religion and philosophy

- Science better than religion at describing material aspects that exhibit regularity.
- Religion (and philosophy) describe the **meaning** of the science.

# Knowledge for my decision? (revisited)

- Revelation: *Consumer Reports*, my mechanic, prayer.
- Reason: Analysis of costs, options, repair records, test drive, **assumption that utility is the primary decision-rule**, etc.
- Intuition: Test drive, gut sense.
- Feeling: Do I like it? **Assumption of a “right” to enjoy the purchase.**

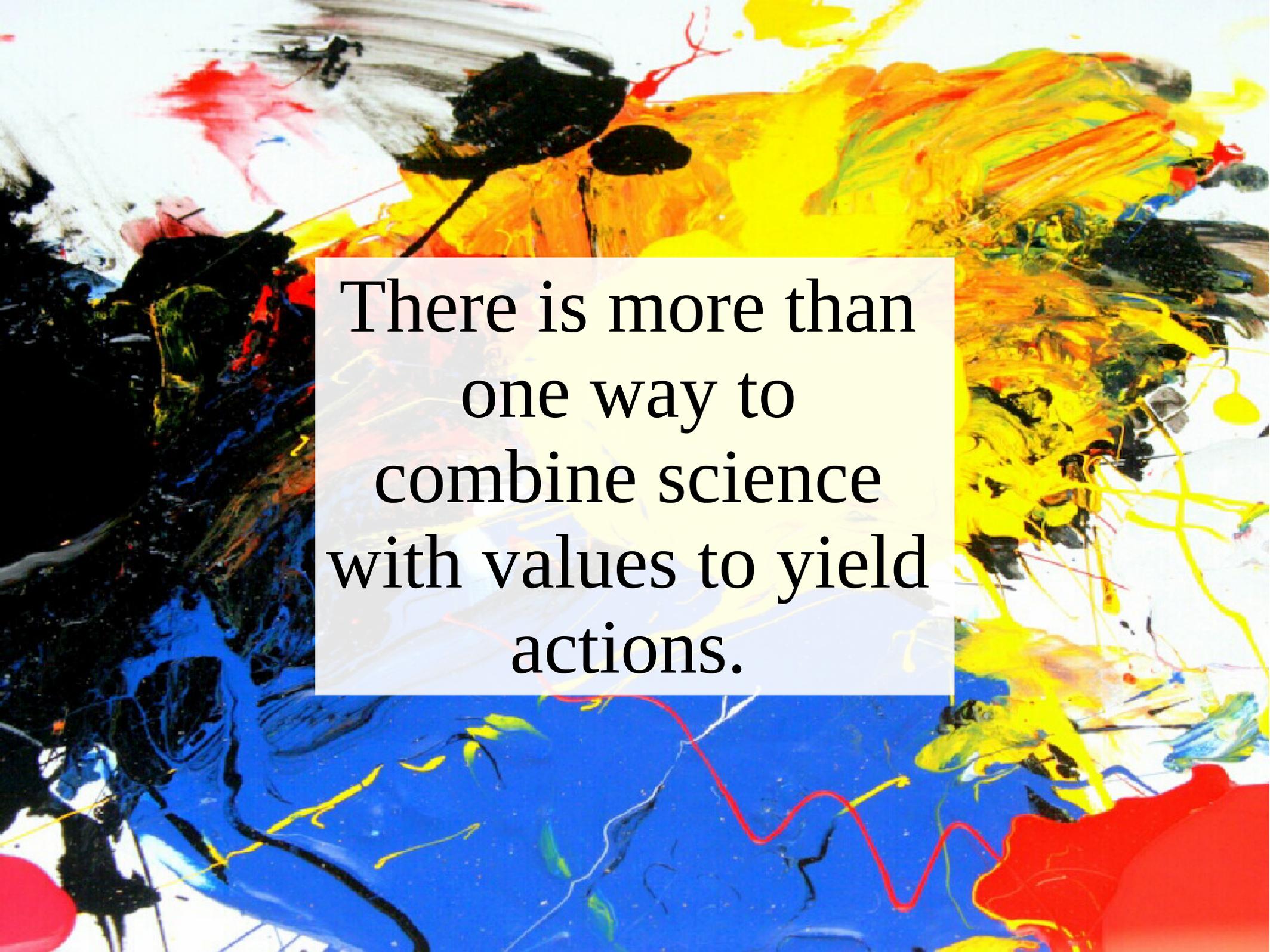
Religious (and philosophical) knowledge is contained in the metrics I evaluate my decision by.

# Recap: Scientific and religious knowledge and decisions

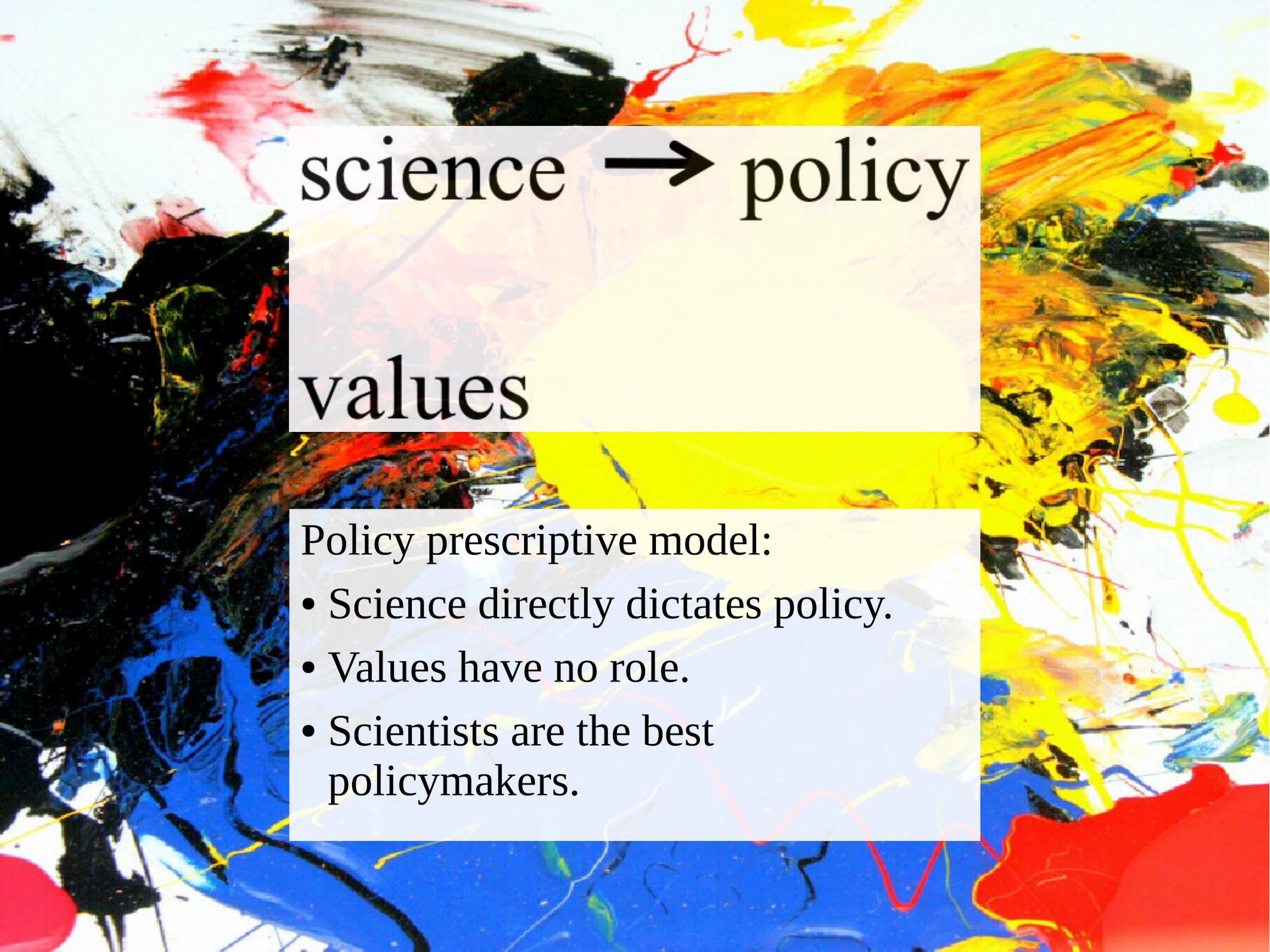
- Religion and philosophy specify the meaning of scientific knowledge.
- Apparently non-religious decisions have religion (or philosophy) implicitly present.
- Your assumptions of what matters are themselves knowledge that is input into your decision.
- **Everyday decisions are not “mere calculation.”** All decisions are in some way value-driven.

# Connecting what we know to everyday decisions

- What does the knowledge say.
- Time constraints increase the importance of intuition and feeling.
- Handling risk and uncertainty.
- Multiple ways of connecting values and science to formulate policy.

An abstract painting with vibrant colors including yellow, orange, red, black, and blue. The brushstrokes are expressive and layered, creating a complex, textured composition. A semi-transparent white box is centered over the painting, containing the text.

There is more than  
one way to  
combine science  
with values to yield  
actions.

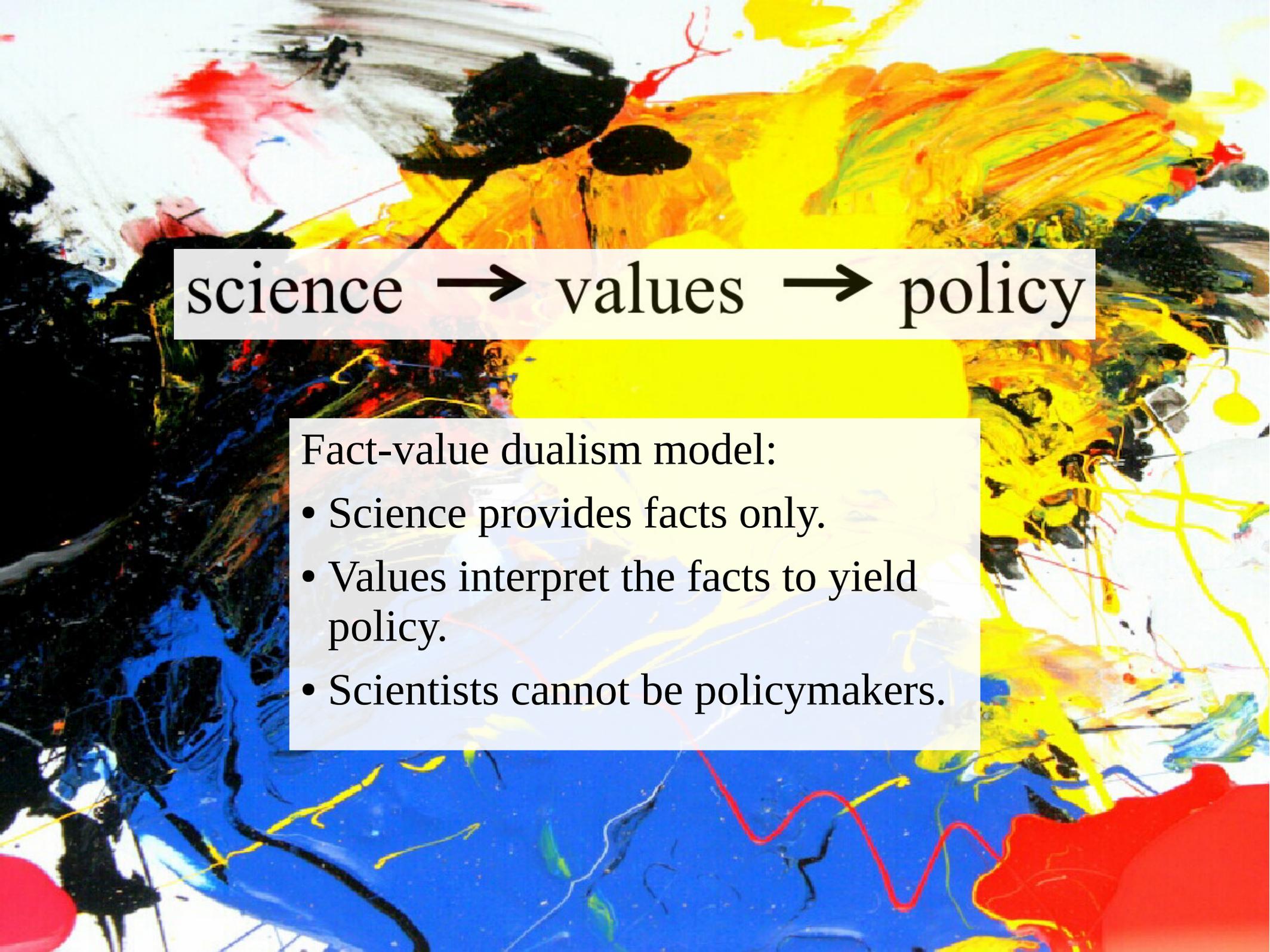


science → policy

values

Policy prescriptive model:

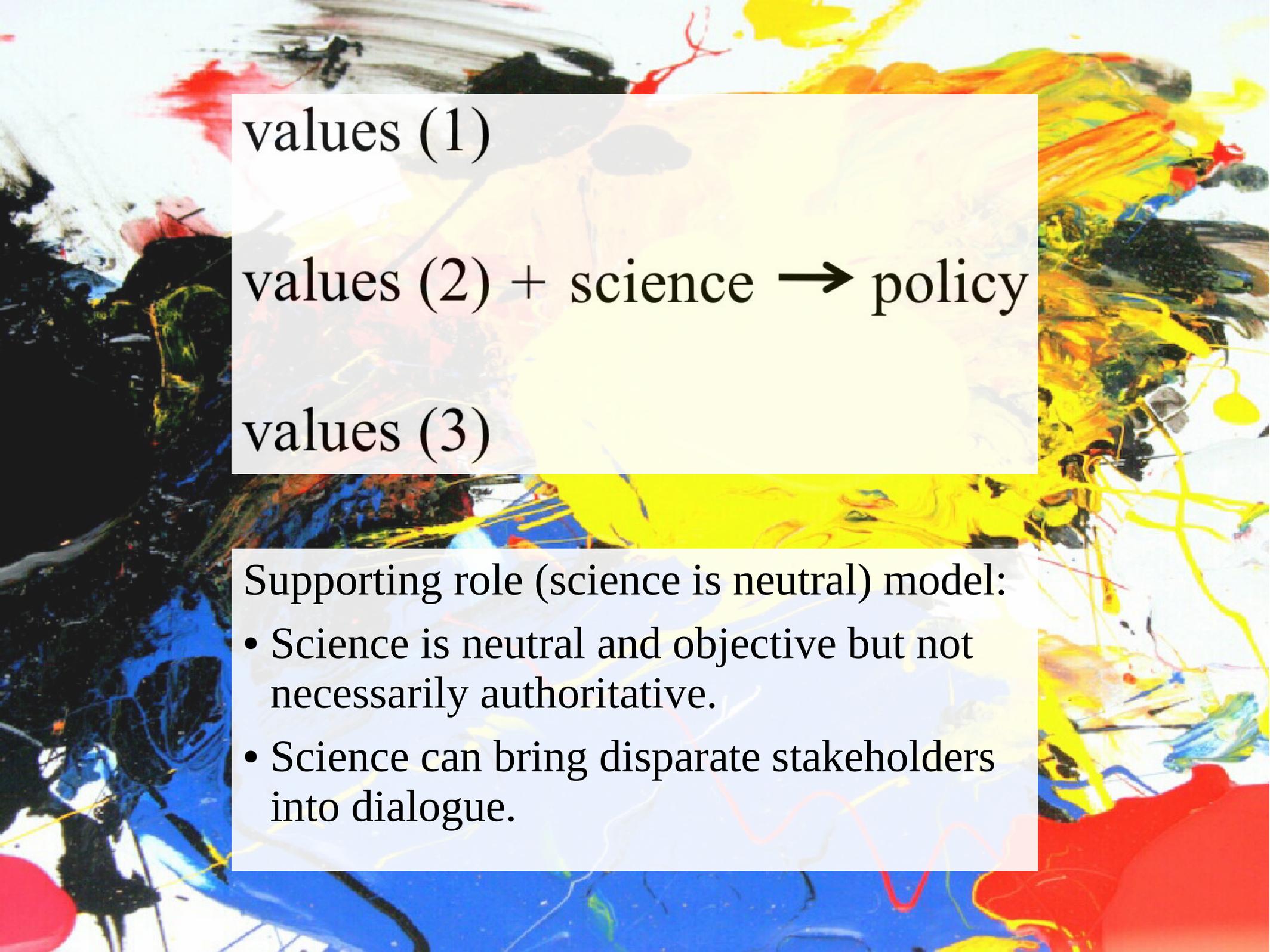
- Science directly dictates policy.
- Values have no role.
- Scientists are the best policymakers.



science → values → policy

Fact-value dualism model:

- Science provides facts only.
- Values interpret the facts to yield policy.
- Scientists cannot be policymakers.



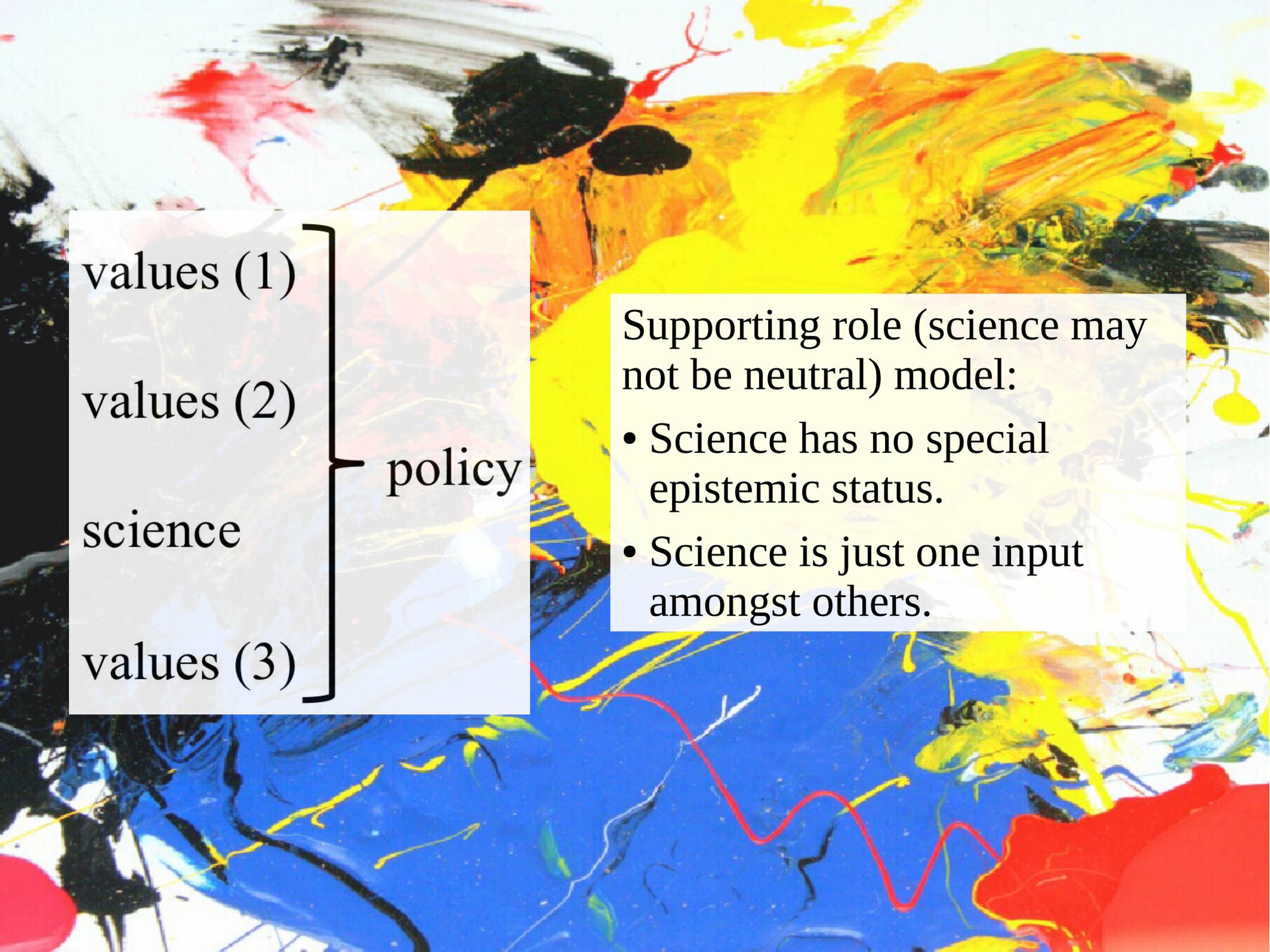
values (1)

values (2) + science → policy

values (3)

Supporting role (science is neutral) model:

- Science is neutral and objective but not necessarily authoritative.
- Science can bring disparate stakeholders into dialogue.



values (1)

values (2)

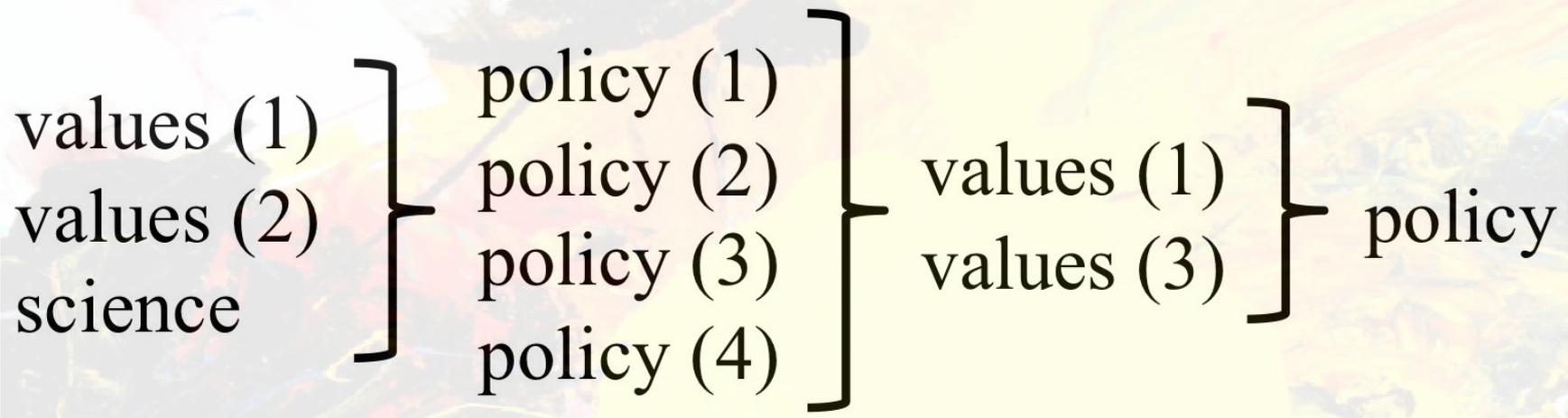
science

values (3)

} policy

Supporting role (science may not be neutral) model:

- Science has no special epistemic status.
- Science is just one input amongst others.



### Honest Broker model:

- Advocates narrow policy options.
- Science works to expand policy options.

# What multiple science-policy models tell us

- There's more than one way of integrating science and values.
- Different models fit better with different understandings of the epistemic value of science.

# Pastoral implications and conclusions

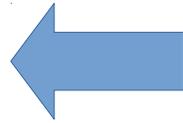
- Religion and philosophy more important than science in many everyday decisions because it determines the meaning of science.
- Better to use and be aware of multiple ways of knowing and combining knowledge for decision-making.
- Evaluatory framework formulation governs everyday decisions. We need our pastors to train us in forming these frameworks (cf. virtue ethics).

Johnny Wei-Bing Lin



The Nature of  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
STEWARDSHIP

Understanding  
Creation Care Solutions  
to Environmental Problems



# Two shameless commercials

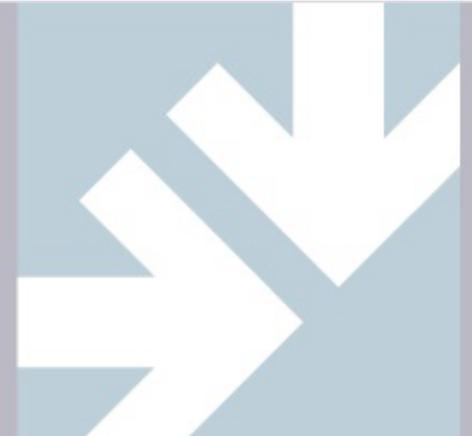
- <http://nature.johnny-lin.com>.
- Sample chapter on website.
- Amazon: Print, Kindle.

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