

What Makes A Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ?

The Criteria of Authenticity (1)



General Points (1)

The Hadith Corpus includes a vast collection of statements attributed to the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace), his companions, and their successors. That corpus was eventually gathered in collections (books).



General Points (2)

The Hadith Corpus can be studied in a number of different ways, from a number of different vantage points. All of said methods fall under the broad category of, Hadith Studies.



General Points (3)

This course is focusing on one path, one vantage point of studying said corpus, namely what hadith scholars have termed, *diraya*.



General Points (4)

Diraya focuses on the study of the rules through which hadith scholars assess the truth/falsehood of the attribution of a given statement to its source.

In the case of hadith, the source is usually the Prophet, and at times a companion or a successor.



General Points (5)

The aforementioned method of analysis is used to investigate all reports that are numerically below the level of *mass-transmission*.

Mass-transmitted reports are excluded from said investigation because they yield certainty before one even begins to engage in analysis and investigation.

Furthermore, it is important to keep in mind that the number of *mass-transmitted* reports is few in relation to the vast Hadith Corpus.



General Points (6)

Hadith Scholars named reports that did not reach that level of *mass-transmission*: *ahad* reports.

They then categorized said *ahad* reports according to the degree of probability of their attribution.

They classified the first group as acceptable to attribute to the source and they classified the second group as unacceptable (rejected) to attribute to the source without some type of qualification.



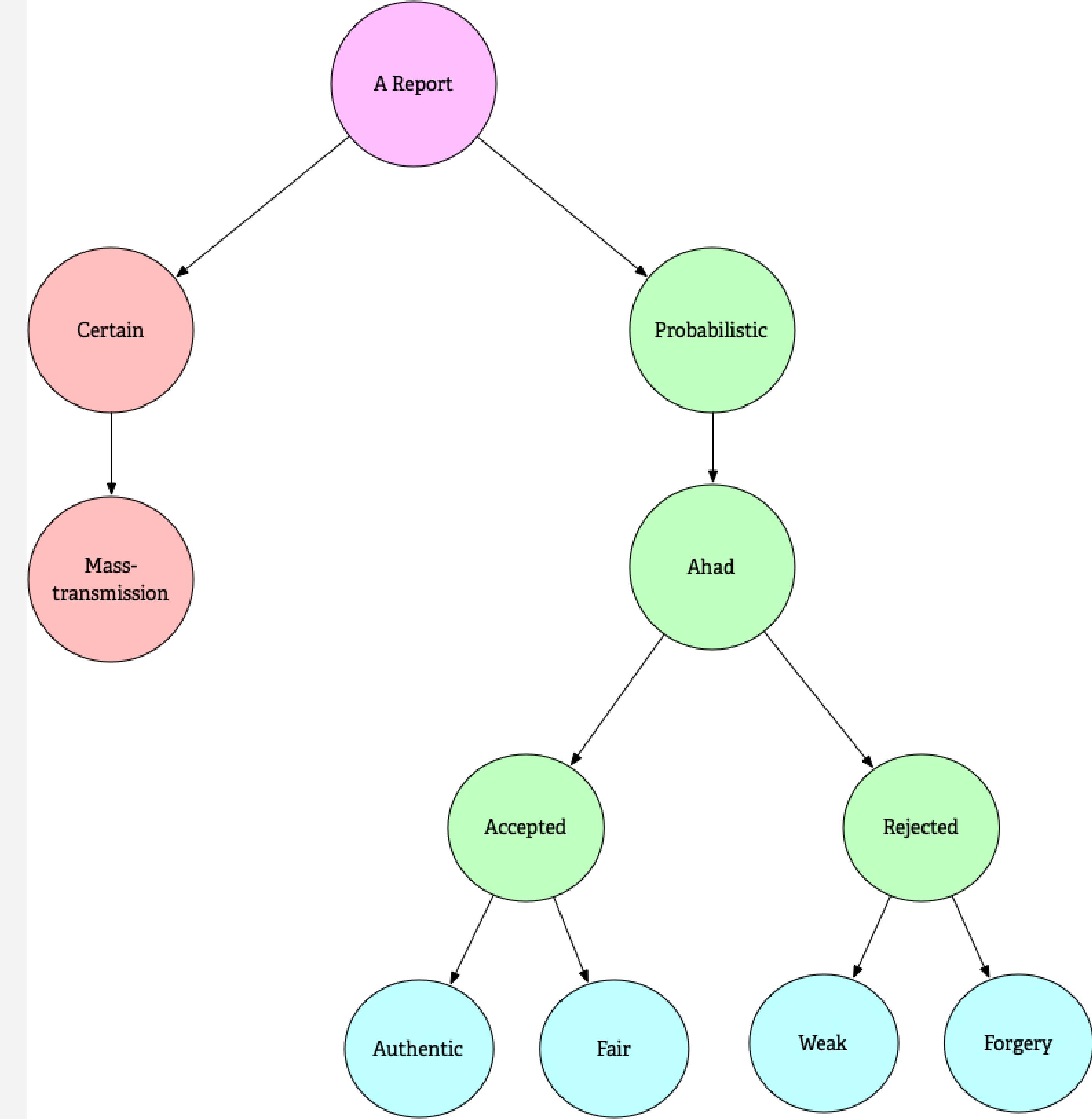
Degrees of Probability

Degrees of probability lay at the very heart of the method and critical apparatus of hadith scholars.

However, in our day, we tend to think of probability in numerical value. Hadith scholars did not use numerical values when speaking about the probability of a report's attribution.

Rather, they used various terms and concepts to specify the probability of the truth/falsehood of any given statement to its source.

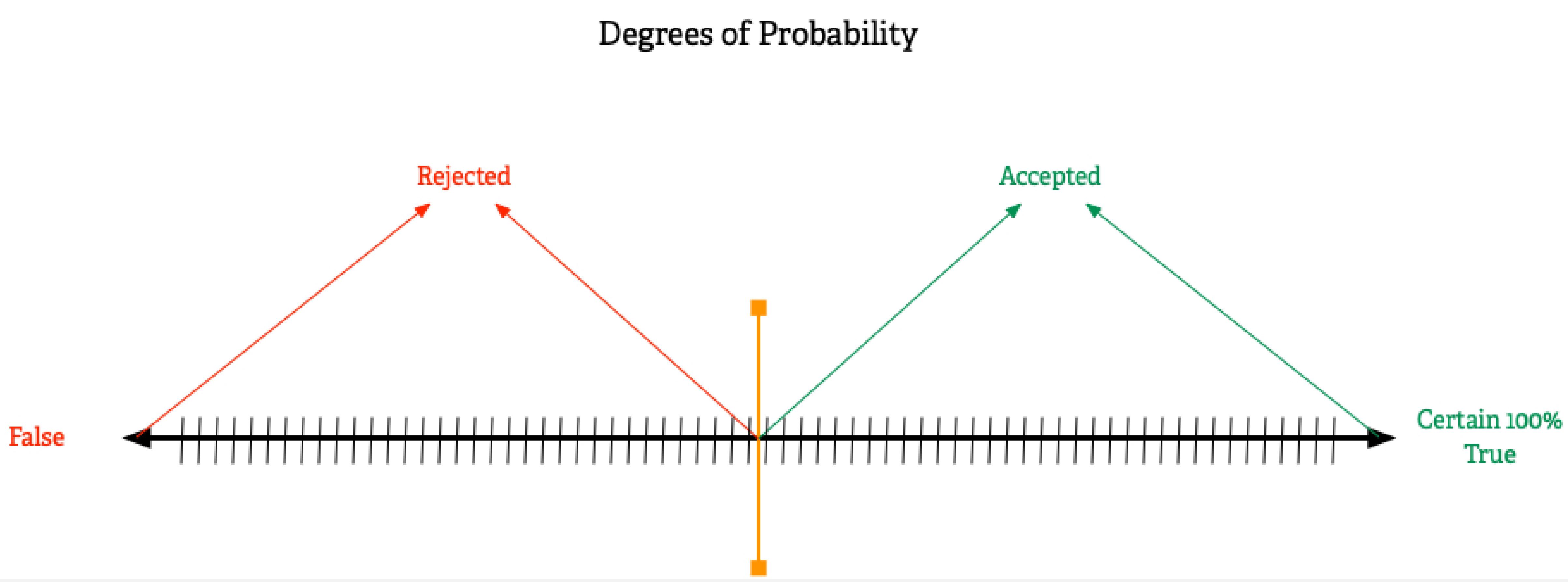




Degrees of Probability

We want to focus on the fact that said categories of acceptance/rejection fall on a sliding scale of probability...

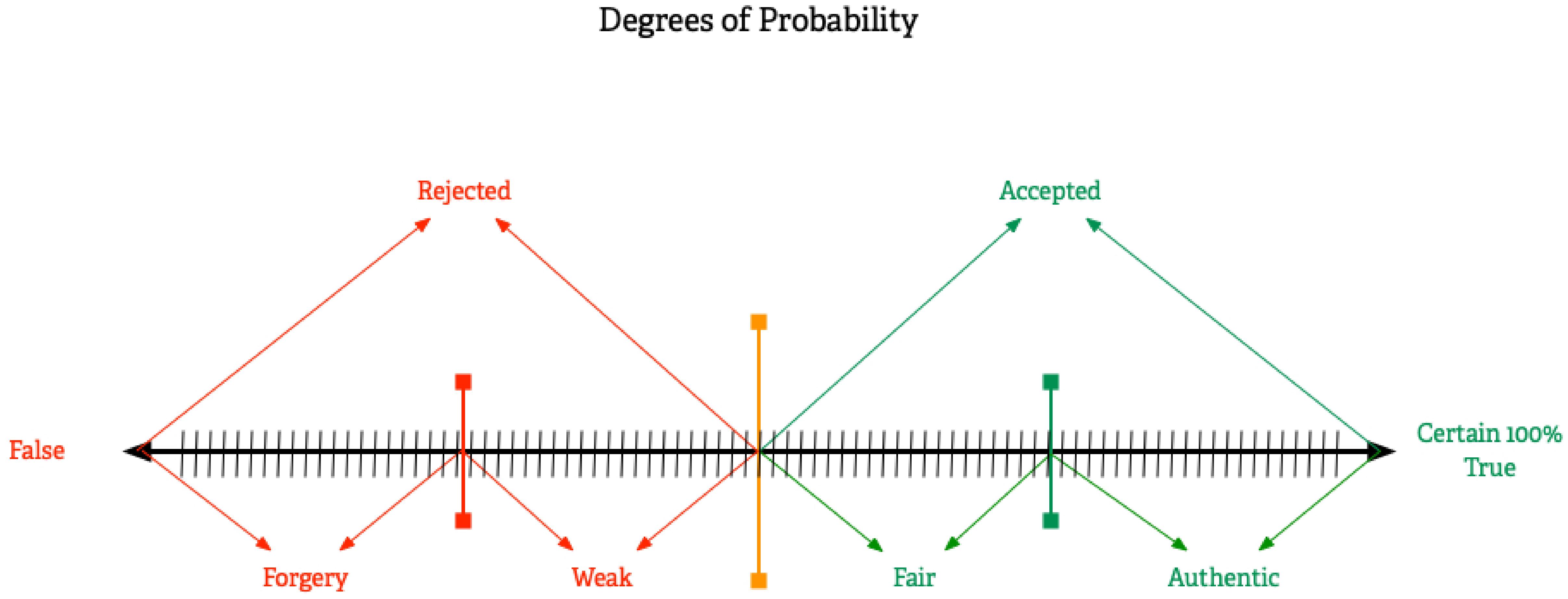




Degrees of Probability

Furthermore, even the subcategories of authentic, fair, weak, and forgery, themselves all fall on a sliding scale of probability...

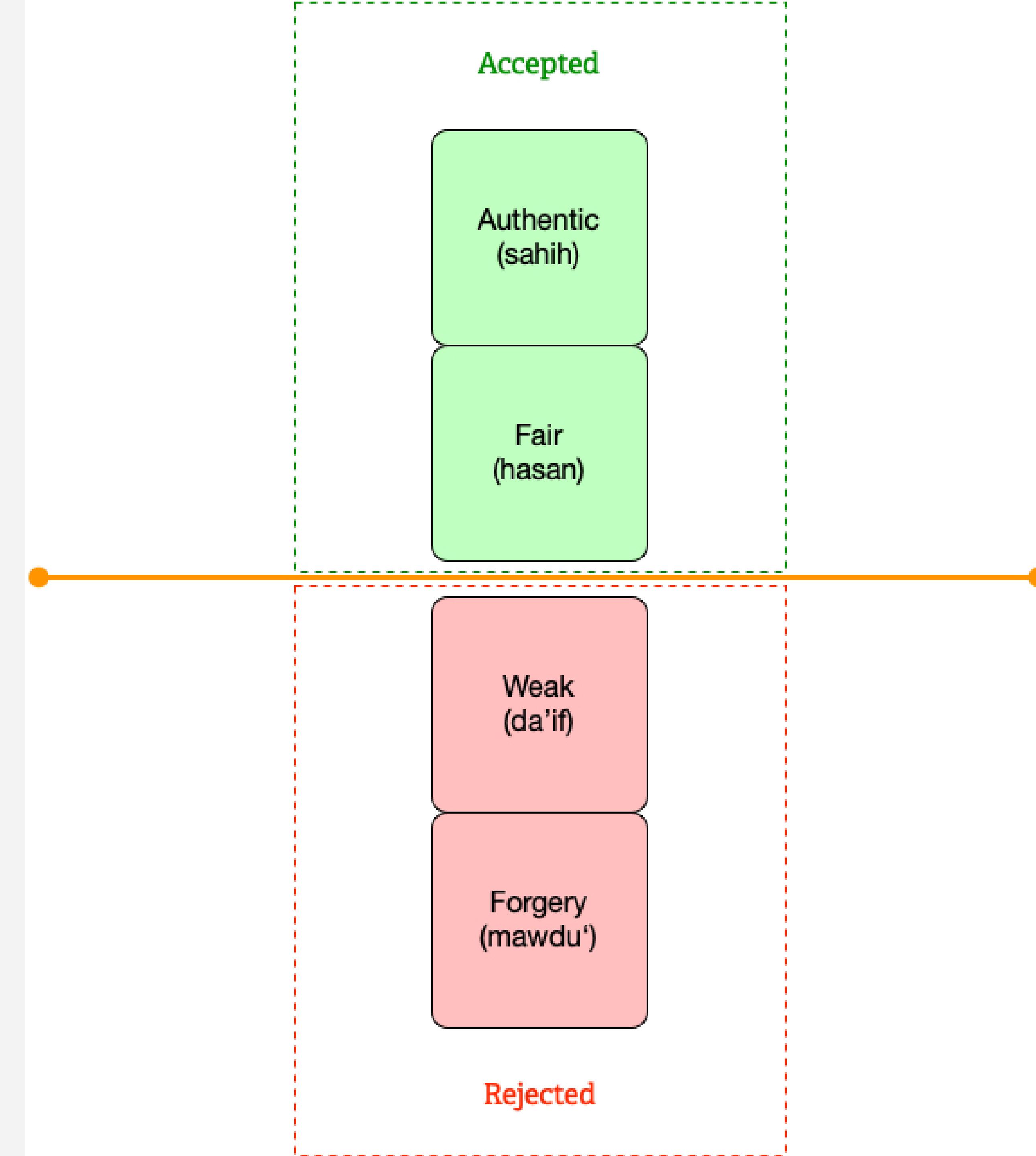




The Question of Demarcation

What distinguishes reports that are accepted from those that are rejected?

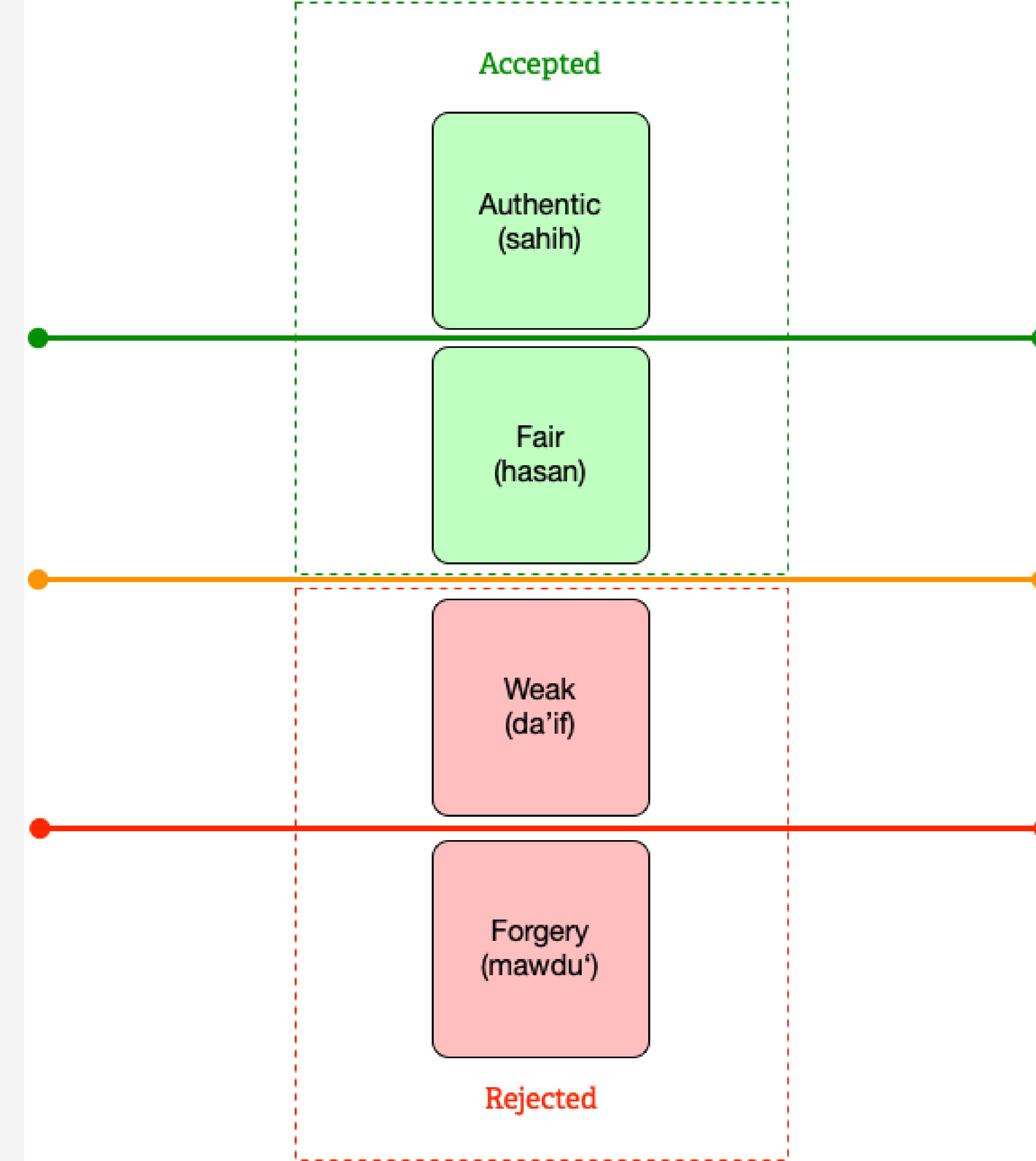




The Question of Demarcation

And furthermore, what distinguishes authentic reports from
fair reports?
And weak reports from forgeries?





What Does Disqualifies a Report?

What are the conditions of acceptability?

How do we assess said acceptability?

What are the axioms a hadith scholar must rely upon and what are the rules they must follow in said assessment and investigation?



The Hadith Method as a Tool of Precision

You can think of the hadith method as a set of precise tools to investigate the degree of probability that a given report can be attributed to its source.



Two Main Methods

You can classify the *critical methods* that hadith scholars engage in, into two main areas of investigation.

The first takes an *initial* look at the statements being transmitted and the narrators doing the transmitting and analyzes both.

The second compares the statement from said transmitters with other statements from other transmitters. By comparing and contrasting, it analyzes each in light of the other.



The First Method

While in principle, the first method takes an *initial* look at both the *statement* and the *transmitters*, in practice, the majority of the first method is concentrated on the *transmitters*.



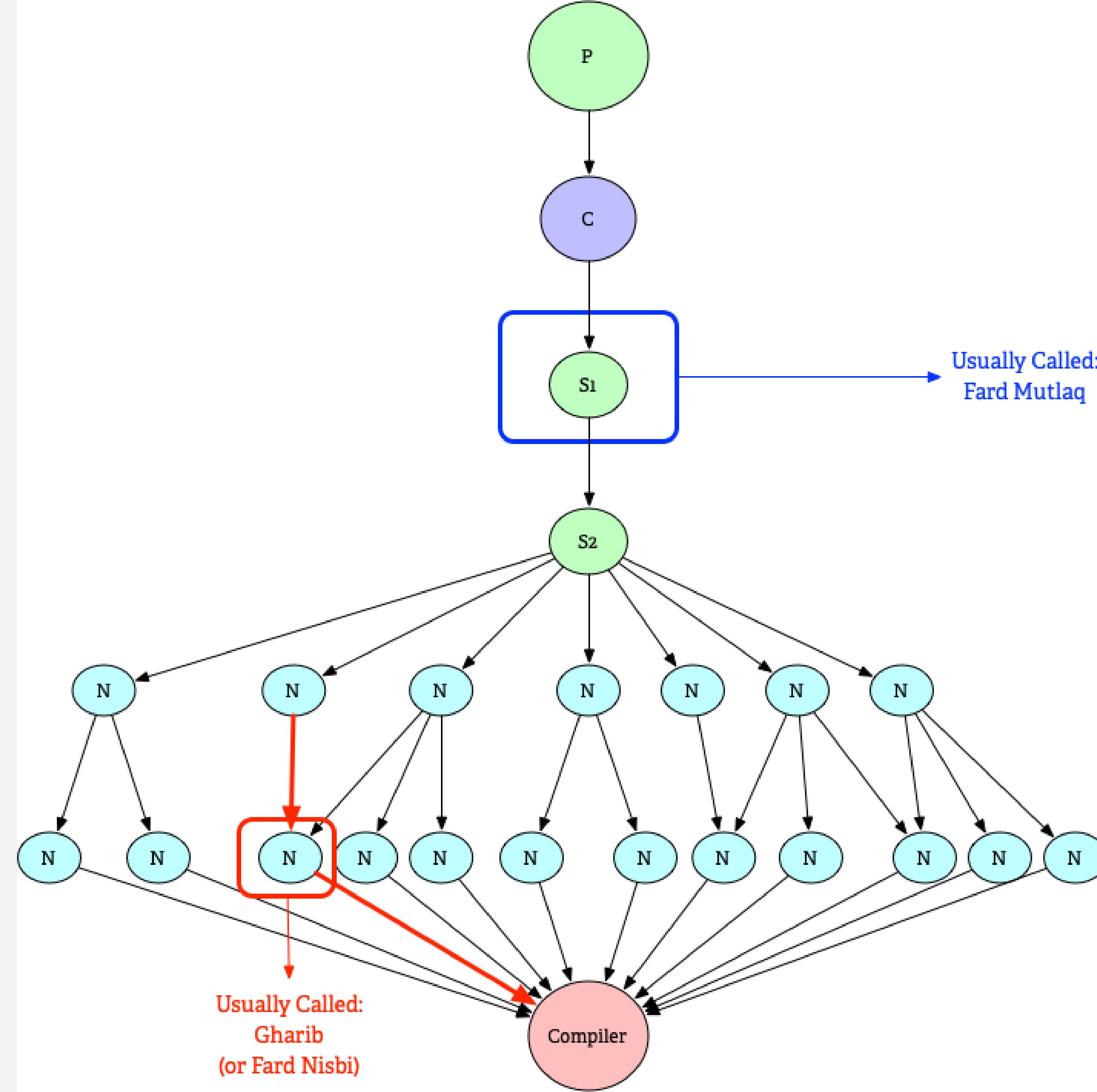
Second Method

Comparing a given report with other reports is the hallmark of hadith scholarship.

It is often both a subtle and difficult task.

When comparing reports, often what is being compared are different *paths* of the same hadith.





Important Point

One last important point of clarification:
While the work of hadith scholars is about judging whether any given report can be attributed truthfully to the Prophet or not, that includes getting the statement's wording right.



End
Part One

