

A Response to Vytautas

A Christian who wears the moniker “Vytautas” has sought to engage me in a debate on the existence of his god. Below I provide a response to his [most recent comments](#).

I wrote: This is irrelevant. Anyone can make this kind of claim about something that is imaginary. Anyone imagining Blakko can say it cannot be imaginary, since no one’s finite imagination can contain it. Would it follow from such claims that Blakko exists in reality? Who would believe this?

Vytautas responds: “If God is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, then God is necessary because a being that has those properties does not depend on anything else for his existence, so that God is not contingent. A necessary being must exist in reality because a necessary being exists in every possible world including ours. You should believe this, since it is true that the God of the Bible is there.”

Again, this is all imaginary stuff, Vytautas. You simply assert that your god is there, that it has all these properties, and that possession of these properties means it necessarily exists. As I’ve pointed out several times now, one can say this about anything he imagines. Sorry, you’re just not scoring any points here.

Everything you’re saying about your god can be said about something that is not real, Vytautas. Do you not recognize this simple fact? I can imagine an invisible magic being, call it “infinite, eternal and unchangeable,” stipulate that it is “necessary,” and on this basis affirm that it exists, that it is real, that it did whatever I imagine it to have done. But at the end of the day, all these assertions are worthless, for they are merely assertions. There’s no objective backing to them. And, they can be said about anything one imagines. The history of the world shows that almost every culture has invested in some imaginary conscious being which supposedly explains the things we find existing in the world, things which are not imaginary. The result is a most perverse reversal: the non-imaginary is being explained by the imaginary.

Ever wonder why even within Christianity proper, there are so many different constructs of the Christian god? Some say the Christian god is one way (e.g., Arminians), others say it is another way (e.g., Catholics), and yet others say it is another way (e.g., Calvinists). Some say it wishes (e.g., the bible, Van Til, etc.), others say it does not wish (e.g., [Paul Manata](#)). How can this be? Obviously we have rival imaginations going on here. The problem is that believers are afraid to be honest and come out and admit the fact that their god is the product of human imagination.

I wrote: And I’ve asked how I can reliably distinguish between what you call “God” and what you may merely be imagining. You’ve not given me anything which speaks to this point.

Vytautas: “But you don’t know what I imagine unless I tell you what it is.”

You’ve been telling me what you imagine all along. If you don’t want to admit that your god is imaginary, then I challenge you to show me how I can reliably distinguish your god from what you are simply imagining. You’ve not done this yet.

Vytautas: “I think you are asking how we know that God exists.”

No, I’m asking how I can distinguish your god (which you say is real) from what you may simply be imagining.

Vytautas: “By knowing what God means we recognize that such a being must exist, since you cannot only imagine a necessary being because a necessary being must exist. God is necessary because he does not depend on any other thing for his existence.”

Here you reveal another epistemological reversal: the meaning of the term in question is supposed to determine that its referent is real. That’s backwards. We don’t do this with any other idea. In all other cases, we discover the existence of the existing thing first, by means of perception or by some instrument which expands our perception (e.g., microscopes, telescopes, amplifiers, etc.), and then we have awareness of an object which we then set about identifying and classifying and understanding. We don’t start with the “

meaning” of a concept - for instance, clouds - and then say, “well the meaning of ‘cloud’ is [X], and because of this, clouds must exist!”

As for what I can and cannot imagine, how do you know that I “cannot only imagine a necessary being”? I can say anything I imagine is a necessary being. This is a volitional exercise. I imagine Alokutsura. What is Alokutsura, you ask? Alokutsura is a necessary, infinite, eternal and unchangeable being! Because of the properties which I assign to it, it must exist! That’s your whole argument, Vytautas. It can be used to “prove” the existence of anything I imagine. And still you make no progress in producing some process by which I can distinguish between what you call “God” and what you are simply imagining.

I wrote: **Same with anything that is imaginary. You’re simply conceding that your god has a lot in common with imaginary things. This is on top of the fact that you’ve not explained how I can reliably distinguish what you call “God” from what you may simply be imagining. That doesn’t bode well for your defense.**

Vytautas: “A material god does not bode well for my defense because a material god would depend on other things for his existence, since matter over time breaks down.”

No, that’s not the reason why it would “not bode well for [your] defense.” The reason why a “material god” would not bode well for your defense is that a material god would be perceptually demonstrable. But you want your object of worship to lie beyond the access of our perception. This allows you to have control over it: it is whatever you say it is. In the end, it’s all your word, but you want to appeal to the word of your god for authoritative backing. That doesn’t help, for it’s all imaginary anyway.

Vytautas: “God is spirit and does not depend on the material world for his existence.”

What would stop someone from making assertions like this about something he is only imagining?

Vytautas: “Since you are a materialist,”

Where have I identified myself as a materialist? You are unfamiliar with my worldview.

Vytautas: “you would have to say that imaginary things are sense objects, since they are the chemical and electrical thoughts in your physical brain, unless you believe you have an immaterial mind.”

Wrong again. I don’t say that imaginary things are sense objects, and not for the reason that you suggest, either.

I wrote: **This objection is essentially no different from the one you provided above. And it fails for the same reason: anyone can make this kind of claim about something that is imaginary. I can call Blakko “a necessary being.” Does that make Blakko real? According to the reasoning you offer here, it does. For you claim that “a necessary being must exist in all possible worlds including the actualized world we are apart of.” By this reasoning, Blakko “must exist in all possible worlds including the actualized world we are apart of,” for Blakko is “a necessary being.” And yet, Blakko is something that I have imagined. See? I can make the kind of claim you make about your god about anything I imagine.**

Vytautas: “It seems you are giving an argument by contradiction, but you call God by the name Blakko. Since there is only one God any other thing that is equal to God is God. You are just using a different name for God, but both are essentially the same. Now we move to the historicity of the New Testament gospels.”

The thing I imagined is imaginary. If you want to say that what I have imagined is “equal to God,” then clearly you’re conceding that your god is imaginary as well. No matter what name we give to that which is imaginary, it is still imaginary.

I wrote: **It’s a storybook. The stories it contains are no more historical than the stories we read in a Harry Potter novel.**

Vytautas: “J. K. Rowling does not claim that Harry Potter is real, but the authors of the gospels claim Jesus is real.”

That’s irrelevant and misses the point. A storybook is still a storybook, regardless of whether or not its author claims its contents are historical.

I wrote: **Simply "because of what is claimed"? That's your test for historicity? Anything better than this? What if someone said that a Harry Potter novel is history "because of what is claimed" in it?**

Vytautas: "Show where J. K. Rowling claims that Harry Potter is a real character if you really believe that."

I don't believe she does. But that would be irrelevant. Someone reading it and thinking it's true could claim Harry Potter is a real person. Someone who invests his imagination in what he reads in a Harry Potter novel, and operates, as Christians do, on an epistemology which fails to provide the necessary mental tools needed to distinguish between the actual and the imaginary, the real and the fictitious, could easily succumb to the impression that what he is reading is "historical." All the more if he *wants* it to be true, and even more if he's fallen for various psychological sanctions (which are present in the bible, but absent in the case of Harry Potter books) which manipulate one into being afraid to recognize it's all fiction. It wouldn't be the first time (Christians and Muslims have been doing this for centuries), and it wouldn't be the last time.

Vytautas: "If Harry Potter is either real or fantasy, then that does not say anything if the New Testament is historical."

It doesn't have to in order for my point to stick.

Vytautas: "Also the claim a person makes about an event is not the only criterion for what is historical, but it is one of the criterions for historical events which eliminates Harry Potter."

So what are these other criteria which the New Testament has going for it that Harry Potter novels do not have going for them? Is it simply the part about the author of one storybook claiming his storbook is true, while the author of the other acknowledges hers to be fiction?

I wrote: **So, if the places I write about are in the real world, then anything I claim in writing took place in those places must have really happened, simply because those places are real? My garage is real - it is a real place. I now write a story about my encounter with a magic leprechaun in my garage. In my story about my encounter with the magic leprechaun I describe what he was wearing, how he climbed on top of my washing machine and started talking to me about a pot of gold he hid in my neighborhood. Is my story about the leprechaun true because it takes place in a place that is in the real world? Are you going to start looking for this hidden pot of gold now?**

Vytautas: "When I give a single criterion for history, then that does not mean it is the only criterion for history, but all the criterions work together to give a method for history."

Understood. But you see how weak this one criterion is, don't you? It is so weak that it does not work in concert with others. It would be silly to think it does.

Vytautas: "Another criterion is of many witnesses testifying to an historical event."

How many witnesses are testifying of the event which Paul records in I Cor. 15, which claims that the resurrected Jesus was seen by some 500 or so brethren? How many people have stepped forward to corroborate this event? What are the names of the 500 brethren? Where is their testimony? What exactly did they see? Did they see an apparition? That could be a mass hallucination. Did they see an actual human being? It could be a case of mistaken identification. Did it really even happen? We only have Paul saying in passing that it happened. Was Paul there? He does not claim to have been there. In fact, the way the passage reads as a whole suggests very strongly that Paul himself was not there. Also, if Paul is simply reciting a credal formulation, as many have suggested, then he's simply repeating hearsay. Robert Price argues quite persuasively that [I Cor. 15:3-11 is an interpolation](#), and is not even authentic to Paul's original letter.

Vytautas: "There are four gospels testifying to the historical events of Jesus, but you only give a short paragraph written only by one person about an event."

That's more than you've offered in response to my challenge. But it's moot anyway: if the gospels are fiction, then we cannot accept the claim that they are "testifying to [actual] historical events of Jesus." It's a storybook, just like Harry Potter.

Vytautas: "The more people testifying to the event, then the event has more reason to be believed than just

one person.”

It would be very easy for someone putting his imaginary story into writing to create characters who “witnessed” the events of the story. If he wanted readers to believe the story was actually historical, he would probably not hesitate to insert characters who are said to have witnessed the events in that story. So if the witnesses themselves are fiction, then they’re worthless as witnesses of an actual historical event.

So why accept the claim that there are witnesses to the events described in the bible? Who witnessed Paul’s conversion on the road to Damascus as recorded in the book of Acts for instance? Paul does not describe his own conversion in the same manner that Acts does in his own letters. So who witnessed this? The author Luke? Was he present then? Would you claim that he was reporting what Paul had told him? Where’s your proof? How do you know that Luke was infallibly reporting firsthand reports, especially when Paul himself, when he takes the opportunity to describe his own conversion, fails to corroborate what we read in Acts?

Who witnessed Jesus’ resurrection? It took place in a sealed tomb. You might say that people who knew Jesus saw him after he died on the cross and therefore must have been resurrected. Sounds like a made up story to me, and you’ve given nothing substantial to counter otherwise.

I wrote: I’m not sure why you think this is “a better explanation.” In fact, in reviewing all the defenses that believers have put forward in favor of the thesis that the New Testament records actual history, I’ve not found any evidence that legitimately secures that thesis.

Vytautas: “There are prophesies of the Old Testament that confirms the New Testament. Psalm 22 tells that a company of evildoers encircles Jesus; they have pierced his hands and feet-- Jesus can count all his bones-- they stare and gloat over him; they divide his garments among them, and for his clothing they cast lots. Matthew 27 says when the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they divided his garments among them by casting lots. And John 19 says when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. So the Old Testament gives evidence for the New Testament.”

Again this is all very weak. Anyone writing a biography about Jesus who wanted to give it the stamp of Old Testament authority, could (and would!) sprinkle that biography with allusions to the Old Testament, since the Old Testament was already held as an authoritative source. Much of the gospels read this way, and even suggest this explicitly when, for instance, Matthew writes things like “this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet...” (Mt. 1:22, see also 21:4, 26:56, et al.). If a passage in the Old Testament says that some people cast lots over a suffering servant’s garments, the obvious thing to do would be to say this happened in the case of Jesus’ garments after he was crucified, and PRESTO, the Old Testament passage becomes “prophetic.” It’s an easy trick, one which actually has precedent in many parts of the bible. The so-called “fulfillment” in the New Testament of so-called “prophesies” drummed up in the Old Testament, is so contrived as to give away the game.

I wrote: At the very most, the stories we read record what some people (e.g., their authors) believed, not “sensed.” Even the New Testament makes it clear that no one “sensed” Jesus rising from the dead, for according to the stories it took place in a sealed tomb.

Vytautas: “But there are accounts of post-crucifixion accounts of the resurrected Jesus who is alive. They could not be all false, because there could not be mass-hallucinations, since hallucinations are an individual experience and not a group experience. A better explanation is Jesus actually rose from the dead, and other people saw him and wrote about him.”

That’s not a “better explanation” by any rational measure. A better, rational explanation is that we’re reading a legend that has germinated from relatively more inert seeds. Are you saying that is not possible?

Besides, in the case of I Cor. 15, which refers to a large group of people who supposedly saw Jesus, it’s important to keep in mind that this one reference does not constitute mass corroboration. That Christian apologists seem to think it does only shows how silly their position is, and how desperate they are to defend it. It is the statement of one man artificially given the weight of many. So there’s really no need to assert mass hallucination here. Although mass hallucination has been shown to be possible (really, are you expecting me to accept that mass hallucination is not possible, but resurrection of the dead is?), if the very claim that the people in question is very shaky at best, as in the case of the anonymous 500 brethren in I Cor. 15, then it’s

moot to begin with.

I wrote: **Are you saying that the author of the gospel according to Matthew “sensed” that Mary was a virgin when she gave birth to Jesus? What makes you suppose this?**

Vytautas: “Matthew did not see directly Mary give birth to Jesus, but he used other testimony to account for this event.”

What “other testimony”? Where is that “other testimony”? Essentially, you’re saying that the virgin birth is hearsay for the author who put it in his biographical narrative of Jesus. Historically speaking, that’s as unreliable as it gets. Yet you want people to believe this as if it held sway over their lives forever. You’re emotionally invested in the story, just as you’re emotionally invested in the outcome of our discussion.

Vytautas: “He sensed the people who witnessed the event that gave the testimony.”

So, what people did he sense? Who are these “people who witnessed the event that gave the testimony”? Why didn’t those people record their testimony themselves? And think of the time span here. Earliest dates for the writing of the gospel of Matthew put it to 70 AD, if not later. When was Jesus born? At least 70 years prior to Matthew’s writing. Whoever these “people who witnessed the event” of Jesus’ virgin birth would have been adults at the time it allegedly happened. So some 70 or 80 years later, they’re telling this guy Matthew that Jesus’ mother was a virgin when she gave birth to him? Come now, Vytautas, surely you don’t expect me to believe this, do you?

I wrote: **Who “sensed” the saints who according to the gospel according to Matthew (see 27:52-53) rose out of their graves and went walking through the city showing themselves to many? Only Matthew mentions this; no one else in all of history corroborates this story. Was Matthew the only one who “sensed” this? Perhaps he was on drugs, or hallucinating. We know that people take drugs and hallucinate. But you would prefer that we dismiss this possibility and accept, for apparently no good reason whatsoever, that this story is historical. Ain’t happenin’, Vytautas.**

Vytautas: “We know people witness events and record them.”

Yes, we do know this. We also know that people make mistakes, report things without investigating them firsthand, imagine things, fail to distinguish between imagination and reality, and write fiction.

Vytautas: “But you would prefer that we dismiss this and accept, for apparently no good reason whatsoever, that Matthew took drugs.”

Well, if I am expected to believe that dead people rose from their graves and walked around in a city showing themselves to many, and only one person reports this - in passing, to boot - with no corroboration whatsoever, why shouldn’t I at least entertain the possibility that the person who wrote this may have been under the influence?

Vytautas: “You have no historical evidence that Matthew took drugs.”

And likewise, we have no historical evidence whatsoever that a bunch of zombies crawled out of their graves, walked through a city and showed themselves to many. But if you want evidence that someone was taking drugs, look at what they say, do and write. There’s an indication there. Of course, it could be that the author of Matthew was not on drugs, and soberly invented his elaboration of Mark’s gospel.

Vytautas: “Matthew might be the only one that recorded the event, but he wrote that the saints went into the holy city and appeared to many.”

Matthew claims that this happened. But where’s the proof? If dead people rose out of their graves and showed themselves to a bunch of people, who were those people, and why don’t we have any of their firsthand testimonies? Was Matthew among these people? Even the author doesn’t claim to have seen this himself.

Vytautas: “If you can dismiss historical events because there is only one person that wrote about the event, then I can dismiss your stories that you tell me.”

Threatening to dismiss my stories will not make me suddenly believe what is written in the New Testament. You're free to dismiss my stories all you like. Besides, it is not simply because the stories in the New Testament are not corroborated that I do not accept them. There are other factors. For one, they all presuppose the primacy of consciousness metaphysics, which I know is false. I've demonstrated this time and time again on my blog. That's sufficient reason as any to dismiss them. Any position which reduces to a subjective foundation should be dismissed because of this. There's also the fact that the New Testament is riddled with evidences showing that the Jesus story was elaborated on over time, growing from faint glimmers in Paul's letters to full-blown legends in the gospels and the book of Acts. So there are numerous reasons why I "dismiss" the New Testament as unhistorical, not just the one reason you cite here.

I wrote: I simply point out that those who claim that there is a god fail to provide any way by which I can reliably distinguish between what they call "God" and what they may merely be imagining. Your response to my challenge is a prime example of this. I also point out that the traditional notion of "God" is internally incoherent, just as the notion of a square circle is. See my essay [Gods and Square Circles](#) for details.

Vytautas: "You seem to say that one cannot change the world by merely thinking something will change in the world, so that God cannot create the world because a mind cannot manipulate matter. But God is not a creature like you me, but he is the Creator that is able to create matter out of nothing."

Good. Let's see a demonstration of this ability. Give me more than just the claim that a being with such ability exists. Anyone can imagine such a being. But so far, you've not given me any good reason to suppose your god is something other than imaginary. And, I don't think you can.

I wrote: I've never argued "I do not sense God, therefore God does not exist." Nor are my criticisms of theism reducible to this. However, I would point out that, by describing their god as something non-sensible, and making the kinds of claims to knowledge that they do, Christians show how nonsensical their beliefs are. If you have no means of achieving awareness of your god, then by what means could you know that it exists?

Vytautas: "I know God exists by means of the creation he has made and the light of nature in man, since he is created in the image of God."

These "reasons" not only fail to address my questions, they beg the question for they assume that the god in question exists, which is precisely what you're called to validate. The notion of "creation" assumes a creator, which is your god (isn't it?), so affirming that there is a creation created by the creator in question gets you nowhere. Similarly with the notion that man was "created in the image of God." Man is nothing like the god which Christians describe, so it's unclear in what respect man is supposed to bear the Christian god's image. I've examined many attempts to validate this and will post some material on it soon on my blog, but nothing so far seems to answer the important questions. Rather, what we have here is a Christian slogan which doesn't really mean anything and has no objective basis whatsoever, a slogan which is asserted in order to stop inquiry rather than address legitimate questions.

Also, notice that "by means of the creation he has made" fails to address my question because it does not identify an alternative to sensation and perception as a means of knowledge. By pointing to "creation" you're suggesting that you had to infer your god's existence, that you do not have direct, firsthand awareness of it. Did you mean to say this? If you infer its existence, what is your starting point, and how did you end up with the conclusion that the Christian god is real? Assuming "creation" only begs the question, as I mentioned above. So hopefully you have something better than this? Now, if you claim to have direct, firsthand awareness of this thing you call "God," then by what means do you possess awareness of this object? You've identified how you do not have awareness of it when you say that your god cannot be sensed or perceived. So, how can one have awareness of it? Or, does no one have awareness of it? If no one has awareness of it, why believe it's real? Again, try to answer these questions with the distinction between the real and the imaginary in mind. So far, you've performed miserably in this respect.

Vytautas: "You say that you do not argue that God cannot be sensed, therefore God does not exist. But then you say that we are nonsensical to describe God as non-sensible. You cannot have it both ways, since you are giving the same argument."

Read it again: I wrote: "by describing their god as something non-sensible, *and making the kinds of claims to knowledge that they do*, Christians show how nonsensical their beliefs are."

The stipulation that your god is non-sensible, *coupled with other things Christians say about why they believe their god exists* (such as the question-begging appeal to “creation” that we saw in your own statement above), indicate how nonsensical Christianity is.

I wrote: **If you say that you infer its existence from things that you do perceive, then what is the rationale behind your inference? This is where arguments for theism come into play. I’ve not found one which is sound. If you say that you do possess a faculty by which you can achieve direct awareness of what you call “God,” what is that faculty, how does it work, and how do you distinguish that faculty from your imagination?**

Vytautas: “It is necessary for a creation to have a Creator.”

I take it by this response that you are affirming that you infer your god’s existence rather than have awareness of it directly. So unlike many Christians, you do not claim to have direct, firsthand awareness of your god. Otherwise I would expect to see you identify the means by which you have such awareness (such as when I point to my senses to identify the means by which I have direct awareness of my computer screen, the shirt I’m wearing, the amount I need to pay on a bill I receive in the mail, etc.).

You say that creation needs a creator. Okay, fine. Now you need to prove that what you call a “creation” was in fact created, that it is in fact a “creation.” Let’s see how effectively you can do this.

Vytautas: “The Creator gives meaning and purpose for creation which was created by God. If not, then you can have the creation without a Creator. But then you have no explanation for creation, and then say that existence exists.”

Existence exists, and only existence exists. Existence is an irreducible primary. It is not the result of something “prior” to existence; there is no “prior” to existence. Either you start with existence, or you start with non-existence. Implicitly this is what the theist does; he finds beginning with the irreducible fact that existence exists unsatisfying, typically for reasons that are unclear to himself, and that is why he wants to posit a form of consciousness which is responsible for bringing existence into existence. My analysis of the theist’s dilemmas is not inaccurate. Observe:

Vytautas: “But where does existence come from?”

I love this question - it confirms that my antiapologetic approach has been right on all along. Let’s consider it: “Where does existence come from?” Well, what is the alternative to existence, if not non-existence? If we accept the premise buried in your question, the only answer that would satisfy it would be: from non-existence. But you want to say that existence comes from your god (it created existence, right?), but also that your god exists. So your question leads you to a self-contradiction. You demand an explanation for existence, suggesting that existence “came from” something other than existence (i.e., non-existence), and yet say that it came from something that exists. In rational philosophy, your question commits what is known as the fallacy of the stolen concept. Incidentally, this fallacy is inescapable in the religious view of the world.

Vytautas: “If it was always here, then we could not come to this point of time because before this time an infinite amount of time had to pass before we got here. But then we would never get to this point in time because an infinite amount of time had to happen before we got here.”

This line of argument not only ignores the fact that time presupposes existence, it also ignores the fact that it is always *now* - i.e., the present is eternally continuous. We could not conceive of past or future times if the present did not exist. Challenges to this point will inevitably involve a false conception of time. A rational understanding of time does not lead to the conundrum you try to raise because time is conceptual, not metaphysical. This is a common mistake among thinkers, but it is a mistake nonetheless.

Vytautas: “But on the Christian position, God created time at the moment of creation and a finite amount of time can happen until this point in time.”

It is true that I can *imagine* this happening. But again, the imaginary is not real. You can claim that “God created time,” but simply claiming this to be the case does not make it true. And notice that it is posited in answer to a fallaciously conceived problem. “God” is asserted as the solution to a problem that simply does not exist. If this is how you infer your god’s existence, no wonder so many people reject it.

Vytautas: “If you say that all that is real must be capable of being sensed, then do you know this claim about all of reality?”

Careful not to make a category mistake here. My knowledge is not an object that exists independent of me, so it is not bound to conditions that attend objects which exist independent of me. I know what I know by a means of knowledge. It’s called reason. It is the faculty which identifies what I perceive and integrates what I perceive into the sum of my knowledge. You want me to accept as knowledge something which I cannot perceive and integrate into the sum of my knowledge without contradicting it. Why should I do this? You offer no good reasons for this.

I wrote: I have not made this claim, so I do not need to defend it. My sensing something is not a prerequisite for it to be real. But if I am going to accept as knowledge the claim that something exists, that claim needs to have some kind of evidence to support it, it must be coherent, and it must be capable of being integrated with the knowledge that I have validated without contradiction. Christianity’s god-belief claims fail on all three points. Christians can’t even show me how I can reliably distinguish their god from what they may merely be imagining! I’m simply being honest to these facts. Would you prefer that I be dishonest and affirm the existence of a god anyway? Well, that would be dishonest. And I made the choice earlier in my life to be honest, and I’m sticking to that choice.

Vytautas: “I think you do not want to believe in God because if you did then, you have to worship him by the commands that he gives in Scripture.”

You ignore the fact that at one time I was a Christian and in fact wanted Christianity to be true. I demonstrated with my whole life at that time that when I thought it was true, I devoted my life according to Christianity’s dictates. There were many problems, but they all reduced ultimately to the fact that I was being dishonest to myself. When Christians urge me to return to Christianity, they are in effect urging me to be dishonest to myself. I won’t do that. When I was young, impressionable and philosophically defenseless, I was conned into such self-dishonesty. But now I know better. So it ain’t gonna happen, regardless of who disapproves.

Vytautas: “You do not want to have anything to do with God and detest him because you want to live in darkness and not come to the light.”

I’ve matured in many ways since my sojourn into Christianity. One way in which I have matured is morally. Today, if I thought the god of the bible were real, I would certainly not worship it. It is most worthy of contempt. But I realize that it is a fiction, that it does not really exist, that it is an imagination which has captured the fixation of millions of people. I’ve observed how this fixation on such a detestable construct degrades individuals to defending the most abhorrent evils imaginable.

Vytautas: “You are suppressing the truth in unrighteousness by choosing not to bow yourself to Jesus Christ.”

You accuse me of “suppressing” something that you’ve not been able to show is even true. So you affirm two falsehoods here in one breath: 1) that I am suppressing some truth, and 2) that your Jesus Christ is real. If you’re god-belief had something more substantial than baseless accusations, why do you resort to them when the going gets rough?

Vytautas: “You choose to dismiss the New Testament not for intellectual reasons but for moral reasons.”

I do not accept the dichotomy here that the moral is non-intellectual. In fact, I would say that moral reasons (assuming the morality of rational philosophy) are intellectual.

Vytautas: “It is idolatrous and sinful to deny God exists, so I counsel you to be reconciled to God by Jesus Christ who gave witness to his work that he did for those that believe.”

If your god exists, and wants me to know it exists, it is up to your god to make its existence knowable to my consciousness. Arguments which are laden with fallacy and threats of doom will not suffice.

Vytautas: “It would be most unwise to remain under the wrath of God, by not believing on the Son of God.”

As I said, threats of doom will not suffice. If you have something intellectual to offer, then I would expect to see it instead of threats. But by bringing out threats like this, you concede that your god-belief is not at all

rational. Knowledge is not validated by threats, and we do not acquire knowledge by means of threats. Also, knowledge is what I prize, while clearly Christianity prizes “belief.” There is a profound difference, but typically Christians fail to make this distinction, just as they do between the real and the imaginary. I’m not afraid of your imaginary deity, Vytautas. Sick him on me all you want.

I wrote: **No. But do I need to have “sensed all of reality” to know that the unreal is unreal, that the imaginary is imaginary? I don’t think so. Are you trying to find gaps in my knowledge? There are many; I was born ignorant, and I learn at my own, slow pace. Are you suggesting that I’ll discover your god in the gaps of my knowledge? That would constitute a blatant appeal to ignorance. To claim knowledge on the basis of ignorance would be dishonest. Remember my commitment? Ain’t happenin’.**

Vytautas: “I gave reasons for God’s existence and defended the historicity of the New Testament. You gave Harry Potter, a story of a leprechaun, and Blakko in response, and I have answered these things above.”

And I have answered your responses above. And still, you offer nothing to answer how I can distinguish between your god and what you may merely be imagining. In short, you offer nothing to demonstrate that your god is real. And when pressed on the matter, you resort to threats. That tells me all I need to know about your god-belief.

Vytautas: “But you do know God exists, since you try to deny him and say that you can imagine Blakko who has all the essential properties of God and say that he is only apart of your imagination.”

I can imagine your god, yes. But again, the imaginary and the real are not the same thing. What I imagine is imagination; it is not real. To “know” your god, it would have to exist, and you’ve not shown that it exists. You’ve simply asserted that it exists, while failing to distinguish between your god and what you are imagining. I am right to dismiss it, even if you don’t like it, even if you want to threaten me with some kind of eternal cosmic doom. Such a move only discredits your position.

Vytautas: “But if you allow for the possibility that God exist, then he exists necessarily, since he does not depend on anything for his existence.”

And you’ve given me no reason to grant the possibility that your god exists. Is it possible that fallaciously derived conclusions are true? Not on their fallacious context. Is it possible that the imaginary and the real are the same? I certainly don’t think so. Perhaps you do? Again, you give me no alternative to my own imagination as the means by which I can “know” your god. If I have to imagine it, then why would I accept as a possibility the idea that it actually exists? Blank out.

Vytautas wrote: **You will say no, but that everything that you have experienced is capable of being sensed.**

I responded: **Actually, I didn’t say that. Put it this way. Suppose we had 150 different sense modalities instead of 5 (vision, hearing, taste, touch, smell). With 150 different sense modalities, we’d most likely perceive a lot more about our world than we do with the 5 we have now. But what would prevent someone from coming along and positing the existence of a being which we’d need a 151st sense modality to perceive? Since we don’t have that missing 151st sense modality, we can’t perceive it. So on what basis would we accept the claim that it exists? Simply because someone claims it is there? I’m not that gullible. Do you think I should be?**

Vytautas: “It does not matter how many senses you have because God cannot be sensed directly.”

Exactly my point! No matter how many modes of sensation we might have, it will always be possible to posit the existence of something that exists beyond the reach of those sense modalities. We will always be able to imagine that there is something beyond the reach of our senses. And no matter what I imagine, I can say it exists beyond the reach of your consciousness, and on the basis of this supposition say you have no basis to dismiss its existence - for how could you know it doesn’t exist if “by definition” it cannot be sensed? You have fallen for a big lie, Vytautas.

Vytautas: “We can look to creation, the Bible, and the light of nature in man to understand God.”

I’ve already dealt with each of these points. And meanwhile, you’ve not provided an answer to my challenge which preserves any credibility on behalf of your god-belief.

Vytautas: “We should not deny the revelation that God has given to his creatures, since that would be immoral and against the law of God.”

I have no problem “denying” the “revelation” of an imaginary being. It’s good for the soul!

Vytautas wrote: **But God can be known to be real because by definition he is a necessary being, so God must exist.**

I responded: **So you’re trying to define your god into existence now. You grant much power to your consciousness, Vytautas. I’m too honest to claim possession of such powers. Besides, your statement here is incoherent. Definition is a property of concepts, not of independently existing entities. Your god, if it were real, would not be a concept, but an independently existing being. Concepts are formed by human minds by integrating inputs perceived by their senses. By saying that your god can be defined, you’re implicitly conceding that it is a construct of your mind, like concepts are. That is understandable if your god is imaginary. But if your god is real, you’ve just sold him out.**

Vytautas: “I am not claiming that once I define God, then God exists and comes into a point in time, since God is timeless.”

No, I wouldn’t expect you to make the error quite as blatant as this. But in terms of epistemological principles, as I explained, this is essentially what you are doing. You have stated in more ways than one that the meaning of the term ‘God’ is sufficient to indicate its actual existence. As I pointed out above, this is a perverse reversal. We don’t do this with anything else that we discover in reality. Discovery comes first, and always by some objective means. Then we identify what we discover, and only then it can be integrated into the sum of our knowledge without contradicting it. But even here we sometimes make mistakes. In the case of your god, you performatively concede that it is imaginary because you’ve shown that you have the whole process bass-ackwards. You see, if you could explain how you have awareness of your god, how you discover its existence (not simply imagining it from the inputs found in a storybook), then we can investigate whether or not you’ve accurately identified what it is you call “God.” You’ve identified it with several properties. If we can determine that what you’ve applied these properties to is actually real, then we can check out whether or not it actually possesses the properties you’ve attributed to it. So you’re far from done, Vytautas. In fact, you’ve not even gotten started. You simply claim that something exists. You don’t even explain how you have awareness of it; in fact, it’s not even clear whether or not you think you have awareness of it, since you’ve not made this point clear in your case.

Consider the case of [Christian believer Canon Michael Cole](#), who claims to have had a firsthand experience with his Jesus. No one else could see Jesus, but Cole was certain that Jesus was standing right there next to him. Where above you stated that “God cannot be sensed directly,” Cole claims to have had direct awareness of his god. Of course, he does not identify the means by which he had this awareness. But he claims it nonetheless. For Cole, Jesus is a mood that came over him. He personifies this mood as if it were a living being existing independent of him, something he’s somehow perceiving, even though he can identify no means by which he or anyone else could perceive what he claims to be perceiving. What we have here is an active imagination.

Vytautas: “My consciousness is just recognizing what has been revealed by God and to think analogically as God would want me to think, since we are made in his image.”

Your consciousness is not guided by an epistemology which reliably distinguishes between the real and the imaginary. That is why you’re having such a hard time with this.

Vytautas: “The concepts that we have are analogies to what actually exists.”

Concepts are not analogies, they are integrations. Your “God” is neither concept nor analogy, but a fiction, a fantasy, a figment of your imagination which you have enshrined as an alternative reality to the reality which actually exists and which you perceive with your senses.

Vytautas: “If you say that a chair can be defined, you are implicitly conceding that it is a construct of your mind, like concepts are.”

You need to be a little more careful here. When you say “a chair” here, are you referring to a specific concrete, such as the chair you’re sitting on? That is not something we define. Are you referring to the

concept 'chair' which denotes not only the chair in which you're sitting, but also every chair that you've sat in, the chair I'm sitting in, and every chair that exists now, has existed, and will exist? That is what we define - the *concept* - not the concrete.

Vytautas: "But it does not follow that the chair is only imaginary and not real."

The chair I'm sitting in obviously not imaginary; I wouldn't be able to sit on it if it were imaginary. It is a physical object, it exists, it is real. Also, I perceive it by means of my senses, which interact with the chair physically. None of this applies to your god, for it is imaginary. We do not perceive what is imaginary, we imagine it.

by Dawson Bethrick

Labels: [Christian Psychopathy](#), [imagination](#), [Knowledge](#)

posted by Bahnsen Burner at [5:00 PM](#)

2 Comments:

[Vytautas](#) said...

I have responded to your blog post.

<http://privyfisherman.blogspot.com/2008/01/all-imaginary-stuff.html>

[January 09, 2008 7:24 PM](#)

[Samonedo](#) said...

God is so great he can do anything, even create existence in order to exist.

The only thing he apparently can't do is make Christians think coherently.

[January 10, 2008 9:21 AM](#)