

Thursday, June 02, 2011

## Considering Tony's Offerings

A visitor to my blog named Tony recently posted a somewhat lengthy comment on my [previous blog](#). Although Tony made no attempt to defend Van Til's "argument from the unity of knowledge (which is the topic of the blog to which he posted his comment), I'm grateful that he did submit his thoughts on my blog. I'm always happy when new presuppositionalists seek to challenge me. It makes for such great sport!

I have written a response to Tony below.

Tony writes:

I find that you use the personal pronoun 'I' repeatedly in your blog as though it has genuine intrinsic meaning.

No, it has \*objective\* meaning. It does not have meaning apart from any referential context, and I don't use it as if it had meaning apart from any referential context.

But if you pause and think carefully—reflecting deeply and using only your naturalistic, materialistic worldview assumptions about the nature of reality

I'm an Objectivist, Tony, not a materialist or "naturalist" (which has numerous definitions). If you're going to critique Objectivism, it would be to your advantage to know a few things about it, especially the basics. It is certainly not a form of materialism. Materialism denies the axiom of consciousness. Objectivism explicitly affirms it from its foundations, and at no point denies it.

you will find that you cannot even validate, in terms of your own worldview, your own personal existence

I'm not even sure what this is supposed to mean. Existence is metaphysical. It exists regardless of what I can or cannot do epistemologically. Existence is not something that anyone needs to "validate." The concept 'validate' simply doesn't apply in such a context. Validation applies to epistemology, not to metaphysics. Specifically, we validate our \*identification\* of reality, not reality as such. Reality is what it is regardless of what we think, do, imagine, wish, command, or emote. That's the primacy of existence.

...let alone "incinerate" presuppositionalism.

If you think you can rescue presuppositionalism from the glowing embers you'll find in my archives, go ahead and knock yourself out.

In fact, you actually "incinerate"...yourself.

Can you elaborate on this point, Tony? How exactly do I incinerate myself? Identify the steps by which you think I've done this. Give me your point by point analysis.

It seems in blogging about metaphysical and epistemological matters, you should be able validate (in terms of your own materialistic worldview assumptions) the personal existence of you yourself, the blogger.

I've addressed this concern above. Not only have you made the mistake of ascribing a materialistic worldview to me (which means: you leapt before you looked), you've made the mistake of assuming that the concept 'validate' applies to existence. It doesn't. You don't even try to validate this assumption. Why not?

So consider. The next time you embrace a loved one, how do you know that 'he' or 'she' is actually there?

That's an easy question to answer. I know this by means of reason. Reason is the faculty by which we identify what we have awareness of by means of the senses. Would you propose that one could know this by some

means other than reason? If so, please explain.

Yes, matter is there. Neurons are there. Chemicals are there. But where is the loved one? What (not who) are you affectionately embracing?

So, you're supposing we can be sure that matter is there, neurons are there, and chemicals are there, but not the loved one we embrace? Why would you adopt such an absurd view of the world?

If you are honest, given your worldview assumptions, you are actually only embracing matter—any personal nuance in the understanding of, and relating to, your loved one can only be but an irrational figment of your materialistic worldview's imagination.

This reasoning commits the fallacy of the stolen concept. It explicitly denies the axiom of consciousness (by assuming materialism) while performatively making use of it (by granting my ability to imagine, which requires consciousness) at the same time. It does not describe my worldview at all, Tony. If you really think it does, you only show that you know next to nothing about it.

Think about it, Tony: you say that on my worldview's own assumptions, I'm "only embracing matter." Presumably on your view this is not enough for me to say I'm actually embracing a loved one. Something must be missing, right? So what besides matter is needed, if not consciousness? My worldview explicitly affirms the axiom of consciousness as one of its foundational recognitions. What else do you think is needed, and why? Why isn't consciousness sufficient to complement matter, if that's what you're implying?

Dawson, do you see it? You are living in world of make-believe—the very kind of world you accuse Christians of inhabiting.

What am I imagining as real that is not real, Tony? What "make-believe" am I living in? You make the charge, so please be specific, and cite some evidence for your indictment. Are you saying that my loved ones are not real? Are you saying I'm wrong for acknowledging the fact that my loved ones possess the faculty of consciousness? If so, I'd say you're the one who's imagining. If you're trying to say something else, you'll need to try again for clarity's sake.

Moreover, no amount of wordsmithing or verbal tap-dancing will cause wooden Pinocchio to become a real little boy.

I agree. Just as no amount of obfuscation, evasion, appeals to ignorance or arguments that essentially seek to lead one to throw up his arms and say "[Duh, I donno, must be God did it!](#)" will transform an imaginary deity into an actually existing thing. Indeed, any flaws in my worldview are irrelevant to a serious case for validating the claim that the Christian worldview is true or that a god exists. My worldview could have all kinds of flaws, and your god could still be imaginary. So if you want to validate your belief that your god is something more than just a figment of your imagination, you need to focus on presenting that validation, not on finding some fault in my worldview.

Put it this way: the conclusion that your god is real does not logically follow from the premise that my worldview is somehow flawed. You need an argument. But you don't present one.

Sadly, in embracing loved ones, you embrace the metaphysical ashes of your own (and their) incineration.

You grant far too much power to mere assumptions, Tony. Whether my worldview can or cannot support the view that my loved ones are fully functioning human organisms possessing consciousness (ostensibly the indispensable requirement for personhood), its failure - whether real or merely supposed - to support this view would not be sufficient to turn them into ashes. They would still continue to be real; they would still continue to be what they are, in spite of my worldview's faults. Reality does not revise itself to conform to a thinker's philosophical errors. Again, that's the primacy of existence. Why is this principle so hard for people to grasp?

Other than the existence of the personal, Triune God of the Bible, how do you account for your personal relationships, much less your own personal existence?

I guess this is where I'm expected to throw my hands up in defeat and exclaim, "[Duh, I donno, must be God](#)

did it!” But that’s not what I do, nor do I need to. No one needs to surrender his intellect in this manner.

In answer to your question, I must point out that I have no need to “account for” my existence. Any attempt on my part to provide such an “account” would require that I exist in the first place. So it’s unclear why such effort would even be expected, let alone needed. Even if my account were flawed, my effort to provide one could only indicate that I do in fact exist, since my very existence is preconditional to my applying effort to anything. So unless you can clarify your question in such a way that avoids such obvious absurdity as it implies, given the way you have stated it, I submit that it is a non-issue.

Now In regard to my personal relationships, I “account for” them by referencing the axioms, the primacy of existence and the objective theory of concepts. If you want to present some case to the effect that these three platforms are insufficient to the task, please go right ahead. But make sure you don’t assume their truth in the process, for that would only undercut your case and bolster mine.

Yet, He indeed does exist, and that is the only reason you do not intellectually, and relationally, implode...by unconsciously borrowing from the capital of Christian theism.

By “unconsciously borrowing from the capital of Christian theism,” I’m guessing you mean that I am unknowingly or even surreptitiously making use of specifically Christian assumptions - assumptions that can be only Christian in nature, for whatever reason - in order to sustain my intellectual interaction with the world around me. Is that at least close to what you’re saying?

If so, can you cite for me what those specific Christian assumptions are, and explain how they must necessarily be Christian in nature, and also point out where you think I’m making use of them in my intellectual interaction with the world around me? In other words, don’t just make the charge, Tony, follow through with it and provide some relevant support for it.

You have been created in His image, Dawson, and that is something that is not changing...no matter what part of the world you visit.

I can imagine that some invisible magic being has created me in its image, Tony. Your task is to show that what I am imagining when I imagine this, is actually real. How are you going to do that? For until you do this, why shouldn’t I acknowledge that the imaginary is in fact merely imaginary, and not real? Got any good guesses here?

But more than merely existing, God loves you Dawson,

I can imagine this with you all day, Tony. But that won’t make it real. If you want me to think that your god is real, you’ll need to explain how I can reliably distinguish it from something you’re merely imagining. Until then, you offer no reason for me to suppose that it is not imaginary. Even in my case, I know of no alternative to imagining your god. I cannot perceive it, I cannot deduce its existence from rationally informed premises, I cannot infer it from what I do know to be factual. So you have your work cut out for you if you want me to “believe.” Pointing out errors in so-called “non-Christian worldviews” does nothing to meet these challenges. One may be a non-theist and his worldview may be full of holes. But it would not logically follow from this that Christianity is true and/or that the Christian god is real. Surely you must understand at least this, no?

and sent His Son, in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, to conquer sin and death personally on your behalf

And people have been sinning and dying ever since. Some conquest!

—so that you may find true Life in Him.

The “true Life” you speak of is a life lived on the basis of imagination, Tony. I can imagine your god gives me “true Life,” or that Blarko the WonderBeing gives me “true Life.” Both fantasies are on equal footing, metaphysically speaking. Neither have any truth value, neither have any basis in reality.

By the way, Tony, a couple questions for you, since you bring this matter up. Can you tell me how the Christian worldview defines the concept ‘life’? Also, how does the Christian worldview account for life in the first place?

Consider these questions for extra credit.

I pray that you find Him in SE Asia...perhaps that is why He has directed your pathway there.

Two things. For one, as the old song goes, nothing fails like prayer. In fact, prayer is the refuge of those who have given up on the ability of their own minds. It's like hoping - on its own, it accomplishes nothing.

Second, I was not directed to SE Asia by the will of a being that is merely imaginary, but by my own choices and actions. See how you have to deny reality in order to treat the imaginary as if it were real?

by Dawson Bethrick

Labels: [Christian Psychopathy](#), [Presuppositional Gimmickry](#)

*posted by Bahnsen Burner at [10:00 PM](#)*