

"Do unto others..."

Happy Turkey Day, everyone!

I have been away on vacation and recently returned after two adventure-filled weeks in Thailand! I posted a few pictures online [here](#). It was sweltering hot, unlike the frigid temperatures that greeted me upon my return to the US. Much of central Thailand was flooded out due to heavy storms in the northern part of the country, so many people's homes were submerged under waist-deep waters. It was sad to see so much devastation. But the people there are very resilient and know to expect this kind of flooding every decade or so. For them, life goes on without skipping a beat.

Now that I am back, I have had a chance to see [Paul Manata's latest diatribe against me](#). It is a long post full of mockery, insults, mischaracterizations, contorted inferences, brazen evasions, etc. The usual fare.

I have made many notes in response to what Paul has stated, and some of them I will be posting on my blog over the next few weeks, as time allows.

In this post, I wanted to briefly explore the topic of pejoratives, as it was one of the sparks that initiated our recent volley of exchanges.

As anyone who may have been reading should already know, one of Paul's chief complaints in his recent messages concerning my blog, is that my use of the expression "invisible magic being" is "pejorative." This suggests to me that he finds this expression to be offensive when applied to his god, which in turn tells me that my use of this expression to refer to his god hurts his feelings. Indeed, he has made a big deal about this ever since [I explained to James Anderson](#), who [mentioned in a comment](#) that he did not understand why I use it, that I use this expression because of its open-endedness in referring to a whole smorgasbord of allegedly supernatural entities which, according to mystical worldviews, exist in some realm beyond the reach of our senses and influence the world in which we exist. I find it useful because it neatly subsumes not only the Christian god, but any god, deity, demon, devil, angel, gremlin, fairy, pixie, or the like. Believers in such mystical notions do not have to like the term, but their likes and dislikes are not my concern.

Now, while I have never denied that the expression "invisible magic being" may carry pejorative connotations for some readers, Paul is mistaken when he says that I "did write a post trying to argue that the expression was not 'pejorative'." I have no idea where he thinks I did this, for he does not link to a post in which I was "trying to argue that the expression [in question] was not 'pejorative'." When I grant that this expression may have connotations for some readers, Paul apparently interprets this as some kind of concession to a point he was trying to make. But most expressions carry connotations, many of which are determined by the contextual sum assumed by a reader or listener. Regardless, it's fine with me if Paul or anyone else wants to think that this expression is pejorative; they can think whatever they want. The term suits my purposes, and I am justified in using it as I have explained. Paul then wants to say that my "response to Anderson was false." But what exactly is he referring to? Specifically which statement in [my response to James](#) does Paul think was false? He does not point it out for us. To make matters even more tiresome than they already are, Paul treats the matter as if it were sandbox squabble: "You lost, I won," he writes. "Don't be a sore loser." Who is really sore here? Certainly not I.

Now, what I'm wondering is why Paul is so concerned with all this. Does Paul have something against the use of pejoratives? He does not come out and say explicitly one way or another whether he thinks using pejoratives is wrong. So if he does not tell us what he thinks in this regard, we have to infer his position from what he states.

For instance, he writes:

we see Dawson agree that he was being pejorative. He actually intends to use pejoratives.

This is interesting given the context of what has transpired between us, and given the fact that Paul professes to be a Christian. He accuses me of "being pejorative" and intending "to use pejoratives." Does Paul have a problem with the use of pejoratives? Does he think it is *wrong* to use pejoratives? Does he think it detracts from personal character, from one's message, from one's moral status perhaps? At one point he refers to my use of this expression

as "poisoning the well." So from what he has written, it strongly appears that Paul considers the use of pejoratives to be bad in some way.

This is why I put these questions on the table: because Paul seems pretty handy with a pejorative peppermill of his own. Just glancing through [his response to me](#), you will see him routinely referring to *me personally* (as opposed to something I have merely affirmed) with words like "monkey," "bafoon," "baboon," "hack," "joker," "fool," "goof ball," etc. Now, it does not bother me that Paul chooses to "pepper" his postings with words of this nature. In fact, I realize that he has no alternative, since his worldview is indefensible and his contentions against mine are untenable (more on this in later postings). But we should ask: are the expressions that Paul peppers throughout his post not pejorative in nature as he has used them? Is he not intending them as personal insults? Is he not using them as a shortcut to discredit me personally? To "poison the well," as it were? If not, why does he use them? If he admits that they are pejoratives, then why is he getting all into a fuss when I use expressions that he considers pejorative, especially when they are not the personal insults he has used against me?

Can you say *hypocrite*?

It is important for us to remember that, as a self-professing Christian, Paul implicitly affirms the teachings of the bible. That's well and good, for we have a standard to refer to in evaluating Paul's behavior, to see if his choices and actions match his stated commitments. But it's one thing to preach something, and entirely another to actually abide by it. For instance, Matthew 7:12 has Jesus give the following, what is commonly called "the Golden Rule":

Do unto others whatever you would like them to do to you. This is the essence of all that is taught in the law and the prophets.

Now, I could be wrong in supposing that Paul wants to try to following the teachings with the New Testament ascribes to Jesus. But I'm willing to give the benefit of the doubt and assume that Paul really means it when he aligns himself with orthodox Christianity. After all, Christian apologists, even amateurs like Paul Manata, love to make a lot of hay when it comes to matters of morality. It is an issue that is apparently close to their heart.

So by this token, we can infer, based on the teaching given in Mt. 7:12 and Paul's profession as a Christian, that his behavior toward me is indicative of how he wants me to behave toward him. Whatever he does to me, must be what he wants me to do to him. But I'm not going to follow his example. I am not going to call Paul "monkey," "bafoon," "baboon," "hack," "joker," "fool," "goof ball," or any of the other slanderous names he has used on me. If Paul feels a need to use abusive language, then I leave that choice up to him. Personally, I don't think it adds any merit to one's case when he resorts to such childish forms of ridicule. Perhaps Paul disagrees.

Sadly, I have not seen any of Paul's "brothers in Christ" call him on his behavior. So far as what I know (and I admit that I am far from "all-seeing"), none of his fellow Christians have made an effort to correct him on this. By not doing so, other Christians who have read Paul's writings tacitly condone his behavior. In fact, many seem to encourage it by praising his voluminous writing ventures. Indeed, James Anderson made it a point to raise a question on why I use the expression "invisible magic being," but I have not seen him raise any question on why Paul uses words like "monkey," "bafoon," "baboon," "hack," "joker," "fool," "goof ball," et al., when responding to his opponents.

Of course, I have no doubt that Paul or any other Christian will not have a hard time trying to find a way to excuse the name-calling and condescending tone that characterizes so much of Paul's writing. The religious mind is one that is constantly looking for a backdoor to sneak through. This is the kind of "righteousness" we can expect Christians to model before non-believers. Their contempt for people who do not profess belief in their invisible magic beings prevents them from raising themselves to the demands of civility and honor in their dealings with them. As apologists hoping to vindicate their faith commitments, they should realize how their behavior speaks louder than any arguments they may think they have. But will they? Not if they follow Paul down the path that he has paved with constant wear.

by Dawson Bethrick

posted by Bahnsen Burner at [6:00 AM](#)

6 Comments:

[Paul Manata](#) said...

Dawson, if you don't like the way I write to you, then stop doing it to others. I "Bethrickized" my post. I learned these tactics from you. If you have a problem with my posts, you have a problem with your own. If you don't like my "reasoning" by which I showed you believe in Momma Nature, then you can tell why we don't like your "reasoning" by which you conclude that we believe in invisible magic beings.

If you are bothered by my saying that you "think monkey's thoughts after them," then maybe you now feel how we do when we see you try to apply the "thinking God's thoughts after Him" insults to us.

So, Bethrick, I copy you. I play up or down to the level of competition. You want to get in the mud, fine by me. We can get dirty.

Now, what you could do is drop the sophistic rehetoric, address the meat of my post, and then we'll just see how "riggerous" and "rational" your mind and worldview really are.

No, I think you won't do that. I think you like to play it safe. Better get into a spat with pejoratives than actually debate the philosophical issues.

Hey, I understand, I'd do the same if I had your worldview.

-PM

p.s. Riddle me this: When Jesus called people vipers, whitewashed tombs, fools, dogs, etc., do you think he was or wasn't "doing unto others as one would have someone do to one's self?"

If yes: Then you can't say *I* wasn't.

If no: Then I was acting "Christian" and so how is it a critique to point out that I acted like Jesus?

Either way you lose.

[November 23, 2006 8:00 PM](#)

[Paul Manata](#) said...

oh, btw, are you ever going to get around to answering James' criticisms? Or, is picking on his question more important than debating your view of universals?

No, not "more important," more "safe."

[November 23, 2006 8:02 PM](#)

[beepbeepitsme](#) said...

Welcome back. I hope you enjoyed your trip - and- gimmie a turkey leg.

:)

Happy thanksgiving from australia.

[November 23, 2006 10:55 PM](#)

[Bahnsen Burner](#) said...

Paul wrote: "Dawson, if you don't like the way I write to you, then stop doing it to others. I "Bethrickized" my post. I learned these tactics from you. If you have a problem with my posts, you have a problem with your own. If you don't like my 'reasoning' by which I showed you believe in Momma Nature, then you can tell why we don't like your 'reasoning' by which you conclude that we believe in invisible magic beings."

What made you think that I "have a problem with [your] posts"? And when you say that you "learned these tactics from [me]," which "tactics" specifically do you mean? In my blog, I simply pointed out how you feel the need to rely on name-calling (I listed several examples from your post, e.g., "monkey," "bafoon," "baboon," "hack," etc.). It is

utterly dishonest for you to suggest that you picked up this habit from me, for I do not resort to these “tactics.” Indeed, below you quote the source that actually models this kind of behavior, and it's your own bible. Meanwhile, you make a big deal about the expression “invisible magic being” supposedly being “pejorative,” and yet look at how you saturate your posts with pejoratives of your own, which take the form of personal insults. You simply don't like being called on it, that's why you lash out at others and try to blame them for your own choices and actions. It has nothing to do with your “reasoning,” because reason is the one thing that is absent from your posts. In my message, I nowhere protested against your use of the expression “Momma Nature”; you use this expression simply because you're trying to one-up me on my use of “invisible magic being,” for which you've offered no sustainable criticism. It's just more juvenile tit-for-tat, which is all you have at your disposal. Regardless, I see no reason not to go on using “invisible magic being” to refer to the Christian or any other god. I have no problem with it. But if you do, well, that's your problem, Paul, not mine.

Paul wrote: “If you are bothered by my saying that you “think monkey's thoughts after them,” then maybe you now feel how we do when we see you try to apply the “thinking God's thoughts after Him” insults to us.”

Paul, nothing you say “bothers” me because I really don't take anything you say personally, even though it's clear you mean it personally. You are a specimen under my microscope, nothing more. Your problems are primarily with yourself; they spill over into and affect your interpersonal relationships, but this is not my problem.

Also, the idea of thinking someone else's thoughts after him, whether that someone else is either real or imagined, comes from your worldview, not mine. I think my own thoughts, something you can no longer do since you surrendered your mind to Christianity and joined a flock of sheep.

Paul wrote: “So, Bethrick, I copy you. I play up or down to the level of competition. You want to get in the mud, fine by me. We can get dirty.”

No, you don't copy me. You don't come close. You don't even try to, despite your attempt to excuse your behavior here. This is just what I predicted in my post: you would have no problem excusing your behavior. In fact, you show that you're not even willing to own your own behavior by trying to put the blame on me. You are like an adult who has refused to grow up and become a man.

Paul: “Now, what you could do is drop the sophistic rhetoric, address the meat of my post, and then we'll just see how ‘riggerous’ and ‘rational’ your mind and worldview really are.”

Paul, if you read my post, you would have noticed that I mentioned that I took many notes while reviewing your post, and that I plan to post more in response in the coming weeks. Specifically, I wrote:

I have made many notes in response to what Paul has stated, and some of them I will be posting on my blog over the next few weeks, as time allows.

As for “the meat of [your] post,” why don't you take this opportunity to specify what exactly you consider that to be.

In the meantime, why don't you address one of the points I raised in my present post, namely: **what is your position on the use of pejoratives?** Is it right to do this, or is it wrong to do this? Do you not have a moral position on this? Or is this something you allow others to decide for you? The question was an opportunity for the world to see how consistent your choices and actions are with the positions you affirm. As I pointed out, you have made a great big deal about “invisible magic being” supposedly being pejorative. But then look at your own writing, and tell me you do not “pepper” it with pejoratives of your own. Why do you avoid answering this question in your comments? Instead of answers, you only come through with attitude. Why? Is that what Christianity teaches to you?

Paul wrote: “p.s. Riddle me this: When Jesus called people vipers, whitewashed tombs, fools, dogs, etc., do you think he was or wasn't ‘doing unto others as one would have someone do to one's self’?”

Since I think the gospels are storybooks written by people who probably never knew the Jesus they wrote about in the first place, I think these passages are a reflection on their authors more than anything else. They had their own “reasons” for inserting the name-calling into their Jesus' mouth. It would have been more instructive if they had chosen instead to put logical arguments into Jesus' mouth instead of painting him as a name-caller, just like you. See, Paul, above you suggested that you picked up the name-calling habit from me. Now you point out exactly where you got it! Paul, I am not your “savior.” You didn't learn these tactics from me. Get your facts right.

Paul wrote: "oh, btw, are you ever going to get around to answering James' criticisms? Or, is picking on his question more important than debating your view of universals?"

If you recall, Paul, James insisted that I assumed the Conceptualist view of universals. When I corrected him on this, explaining that I assume the Objectivist theory of concepts, he wouldn't listen and again insisted that I assumed the Conceptualist view of universals. I suspect he's too unfamiliar with Objectivism to understand the differences. But I do have a lot of notes on this as well, so if time allows in the future, I do intend to post plenty more material on this and related matters. In the meantime, I suggest you check yourself when you want to draw the hasty conclusion that, if I do not post a response immediately, then I don't have a response at all. That's simply not true, and to attempt to draw such conclusions (indeed, from silence) reflects your reliance on wishful thinking, something your religion encourages.

Regards,
Dawson

[November 24, 2006 5:57 AM](#)

[Not Reformed](#) said...

Dawson,

Welcome back, cool pics! I'd love to go to Thailand...one of my favorite ladies of all time hails from there...sigh....

Paul,

Buddy...just stop. You're bigger than this. You have great potential, but you keep getting caught up in this silliness. I've read your stuff for going on 2 years now...and seen the cycle repeat itself over and over. You know what I'm talking about.

NR

[November 25, 2006 6:00 PM](#)

[Aaron Kinney](#) said...

Paul,

Your latest post aimed at Dawson is nothing new in terms of "tactics," as it is the same way you always write: full of insults, etc. which you have proudly trumpeted as a legitimate tactic among your christian internet friends numerous times in the past.

I would even dare to bet that you have used these "tactics" since before you even met Dawson.

You're just extra pissy at the moment cause he is better at writing and arguing than you are. And when one reads his works, perjorative or not, they come off well mannered and gentlemanly.

Yet when one reads your works, they come off as if you are frothing at the mouth. I verified this on accident when I sent a Christian friend/coworker links to both your and Dawson's works. The first thing he asked me why that Dawson guy reads so calmly and matter of fact, yet that Paul guy reads like he is really pissed off!

Im hoping to turn him into an agnostic soon, and I think you are helping my cause with him, Paul. ;)

[November 27, 2006 4:27 PM](#)