

Thursday, July 02, 2009

## Does Logic Presuppose the Christian God? Part II: Reasons Why Logic Cannot Presuppose the Christian God, #1: Christianity's Lack of Objectivity

In my [previous entry](#) on this topic, I examined numerous statements by noted presuppositionalists in defense of the claim that logic presupposes the Christian god. The conclusion of my investigation was that the presuppositionalist case for logic presupposing the Christian god is muddled with an abundance of confusions and inconsistencies, and that it provides no clear reason why one should suppose that the fundamentals of logic have any relationship to the Christian god.

I had originally intended to post one sequel to [my initial blog](#) on this topic, but as I worked through the material I had, my reasons for why logic *cannot* presuppose the Christian god grew and grew, so much so that I have decided to post separate blogs elaborating on each one.

In this entry, I will focus on Christianity's lack of objectivity as a significant reason for why logic cannot presuppose the Christian god. My overall point here is as follows: Logic is an objective method and as such it requires an objective foundation. But since Christianity is inherently subjective, as a worldview it is fundamentally at odds with logic's need for an objective foundation. Consequently logic cannot presuppose the Christian god due to its incompatibility with logic's requirement for objectivity.

One of the points that came up in my [examination of the presuppositionalist view of logic](#), is the fact that logic does not vary according to an individual's preferences, wishes, ignorance or other intentional attitudes. For instance, it would not be logical to surrender a five dollar bill for something that costs four dollars and expect three dollars in return as change simply because one *wants* it. Logic is very much like mathematics in this sense: as a system of relationships and principles, it is *objective* in nature, which means its truths obtain regardless of what one might think, know or not know. The law of identity, for example, does not apply only when we wish it to; it applies regardless of anyone's wishes, independent of anyone's particular intentions.

In order for logical principles to be objective, logic as such must have an *objective* basis, namely the [Objectivist axioms](#). This is most unfortunate for Christianity in general, and presuppositionalism in particular, for the fact that logic requires an objective basis poses a fundamental challenge for Christianity which I do not think it can overcome. Specifically, logic is not compatible with the metaphysical underpinnings of any theistic or supernatural worldview, including Christianity. I have already shown that theism, Christian or otherwise, is inherently subjective in my blog [The Inherent Subjectivism of God-belief](#). In this blog I pose two fundamental questions for Christians to consider for the purpose of making theism's subjective basis clear for all to see, so I encourage those who have not yet read it to examine it.

It is important to keep in mind that objectivity has ultimately to do with the *relationship* between a subject of consciousness and its objects. In metaphysics the *objective* position is the view that the objects of consciousness are what they are *independent* of any subject's conscious activity, while the *subjective* position is the view that the objects of consciousness *depend* in some way on a subject's conscious activity, either for their nature, the actions they perform, their very existence, etc. Given this explicit understanding of these two antithetical metaphysical viewpoints, it should not be difficult to see how theism rests on the subjective orientation in the subject-object relationship, particularly in the case of its object of worship, a universe-creating, reality-ruling consciousness which sovereignly calls all the shots. The notion that the universe as a whole is a cosmic king's whipping boy, obediently conforming to its commands and dutifully carrying out its wishes, undeniably assumes the metaphysical primacy of consciousness.

Consequently, the claim that the Christian god has any association with the foundations of logic, is essentially claiming that logic has a subjective basis, for it seeks to align logic with what is ultimately a subjective worldview.

But the proper relationship between the subject of consciousness and the objects of its awareness, seems to be of no concern to presuppositionalists when they assert that logic presupposes the existence of their god. Although it is an underlying precondition to any logical inference (since logical inference is the activity of some consciousness with

respect to some object(s) of its awareness), the question of the proper relationship between a subject and its objects is ignored in every case put forward by presuppositionalists for the view that logic presupposes the existence of a god that I have examined.

But notice how the Objectivist account of the law of identity, having its basis in the undeniable and ever-present, unchanging and universal fact that existence exists, answers the presuppositionalist's own basic representation of logic requiring an objective starting point. In [his response to atheist philosopher Michael Martin](#) in a debate on the claim that logic presupposes the existence of the Christian god, Christian apologist John Frame writes:

The chain of justification, of course, must end somewhere. Else we justify A by reference to "independent standard" B, B by "independent standard" C, ad infinitum. My chain ends in the personal God of the Bible. Martin's ends in an abstract law of contradiction or abstract system of logic. Or does that too require an "independent standard?"

What I understand Frame essentially to be saying here, is that a true system of logic requires an objective starting point. But of course the notion of "the personal God of the Bible" utterly defies such a requirement, given its inherent subjectivism. It is true that an infinite regress would be unproductive in "grounding" logic. But this poses no problem for Objectivism. The law of identity is the most fundamental law of logic. Given that the task of consciousness is to *identify* reality, Objectivist philosopher Leonard Peikoff points out that:

the law of identity acts as a bridge linking existence and consciousness, or metaphysics and epistemology. The law acts as a bridge in a second respect also. The law defines the basic rule of method required for a conceptual consciousness to achieve its task. In this regard, the law tells man: identifications must be *noncontradictory*. (*Objectivism: The Philosophy of Ayn Rand*, pp. 118-119.)

So what, then, is the objective basis of the law of identity? Its basis is the perceptually self-evident fact that existence exists, a fact which obtains independent of anyone's consciousness (i.e., it is objective), a fact which does not change (i.e., immutable), a fact which is literally universal (since 'universe' is the sum total of everything that exists, the concept 'existence' applies to everything in the universe). The human mind is neither omniscient nor infallible, but it is capable of acquiring knowledge of reality. (To say that the human mind is not so capable, would assume knowledge of something that is real, namely the human mind, and thus refute itself.) But because man's means of acquiring knowledge is not automatic, he needs a method suited to his type of consciousness which can guide his quest for knowledge. Thus Peikoff points out that "objectivity requires a method of cognition," and that method is logic: "the art of non-contradictory identification" (Ayn Rand, *Atlas Shrugged*). The reason why is simple enough to grasp:

Existence has primacy; it sets the terms and consciousness obeys. To be is to have a nature; that is the law of existence - which defines thereby the function of consciousness: to discover the nature of that which is. (Peikoff, *Op cit.*, p. 118)

Since the task of consciousness is to identify reality, consciousness requires a method which maintains fidelity to the fact that existence has primacy - that the objects of consciousness are what they are independent of consciousness. Thus:

Whenever one moves by a volitional process from known data to a new cognition ostensibly based on these data, the ruling question must be: can the new cognition be integrated *without contradiction* into the sum of one's knowledge? (*Ibid.*, p. 119)

Because logic's task is to safeguard the non-contradictory sum of our knowledge, it must have an objective basis. Therefore, its basis cannot be anything which defies the primacy of existence, which means: its basis cannot be the Christian god or the Christian worldview.

So to recap, we have the following points:

- (i) Logic requires an objective basis
- (ii) Objectivity is the application of the primacy of existence to human cognition
- (iii) Theism is inherently subjective (because it assumes the primacy of consciousness)
- (iv) The most fundamental law of logic is the law of identity
- (v) The law of identity has its basis in the axiom of existence
- (vi) The axiom of existence is a perceptually self-evident fact

This shows that logic has its basis in the Objectivist axioms, which for the theist means not only that logic does *not* presuppose the existence of the Christian god, but also that its basis is incompatible with *any form of theism* (including Christianity). As a result, the theist's very use of logic (even in arguing for his theistic falsehoods) in principle confirms the truth of Objectivism.

by Dawson Bethrick

Labels: [Axioms](#), [Logic](#), [Presuppositional Gimmickry](#), [Primacy of Existence](#)

*posted by Bahnsen Burner at [8:00 AM](#)*

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[Justin Hall](#) said...

like, eh, I meant a URL link to your old email

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[Bahnsen Burner](#) said...

Hi Justin,

"...i wrote a post to this article but it is over the 4,096 charactor limit..."

Yeah, I know, Blogger recently incorporated a character limit in their comments. I don't know why, and I wish they didn't do this.

Feel free to post multiple comments if you like. You wouldn't be flooding my blog (I don't get that much activity anyway), and far from being rude, I'm always grateful when people leave comments.

So post away!

Regards,  
Dawson

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