

Saturday, July 24, 2010

## Is the Christian God's Existence "Self-Evident"?

Below are some comments I left over at [a blog post on Choosing Hats](#). They are presently awaiting moderator approval. I do not know if they will be published on that site, but I wanted to share them with my readers here. Don't worry, I won't be moderating any comments on my blog. Feel free to have your say if you have a response to what I've written.

\* \* \*

Agreus: "There is no need to provide an argument justifying the existence of logic and in fact such an endeavor would be pointless. The same does not hold true for the existence of God."

Zao Thanatoo responded: "Special pleading fallacy."

Agreus' position could occasion the special pleading fallacy only if the word "God" refers to some cognitive aspect of man's consciousness, just as the concept 'logic' does. In this sense, logic is self-evident (at least its fundamental principle of identity) in the same sense that consciousness is self-evident. Consciousness is axiomatic, just as the law of identity is (i.e., the most fundamental law of logic).

But the Christian god is supposed to be an independently existing entity, not a cognitive aspect of man's consciousness. So there is a fundamental distinction here which Zao is missing, and the fact that he's missing it tells us something that Christians do not want to admit.

The reason why Chris Bolt thinks there's "an opportunity to reply with the same statement substituting 'God' for 'Logic'" is because the Christian god is actually imaginary, not real. It's all in the believer's mind, not an independently existing entity. This is precisely why apologists continually point to cognitive phenomena - such as logic, universals, moral principles, and the like - as if they were in the same class of objects as the Christian god. While logic, universals, moral principles, etc., are components of conscious operations, the Christian god seems so close to these in the believer's understanding precisely because it is imaginary - i.e., residing in the believer's mind.

The only way that "God" would be "self-evident" in the same sense as logic is, is that if "God" were cognitive or psychological in some sense, available to man's awareness by means of introspection. But Christians tell us that it is a real entity, existing independent of human conscious operations. So Zao's charge of fallacy here doesn't stick. In fact, it is a tacit admission of the fact that the Christian god is imaginary in nature.

Agreus: "God's existence is not self-evident."

Zao Thanatoo: "Ipse dixit fallacy."

I think Agreus is simply making an honest observation here. After all, by what means is he supposed to have direct awareness of the Christian god? Even the bible tells us that it is invisible, that it has no body, that it is incorporeal, immaterial, non-physical, etc. Certainly Agreus cannot perceive the Christian god through his senses. But, Agreus could \*imagine\* it, just as Christians do. Then it might seem "self-evident" if one subscribes to a metaphysics which allows for the distinction between the real and the imaginary to be blurred (as Christianity does).

Agreus: "The fact that Christian apologists attempt to argue for the existence of God seems to indicate that God's existence is not self-evident."

Zao Thanatoo: "Enthymeme suppressing premise to conceal unsoundness."

I would agree with Agreus here, and find no compelling reason to agree with Zao's unargued counter-retort. Agreus is right: the apologist's own actions speak louder than his words. We do not need to argue for the existence of something which we can perceive directly - i.e., for that which is self-evident. Argument is a vehicle for articulating inference from what is ultimately directly perceived to that which is not directly perceived. So just by trying to argue for the existence of their god, Christians are in effect conceding that its existence needs to be established by means of argument, and

this would not be necessary if it were in fact self-evident. Again, by what means is Agreus supposed to be directly aware of the Christian god, if not by means of imagining it (as Christians do)? By "faith"?

Agreus: "I would have no problem with the theist stating God is self-evident, if that is how they desire to express their belief in God."

Zao Thanatoo: "God is self-evident."

Ipse dixit fallacy. Just by saying that "God is self-evident," along with all the other characteristics that Christians attribute to their god, Christians are in fact conceding that their god is imaginary in nature.

by Dawson Bethrick

Labels: [imagination](#), [Presuppositional Gimmickry](#)

posted by Bahnsen Burner at [3:30 PM](#)

#### 7 Comments:

[Yog Sothoth](#) said...

Zao Thanatoo accusing Agreus of Ipse Dixit and then committing it himself in the next exchange is the sort of lack of awareness one only expects to see on sitcoms.

[July 25, 2010 11:41 AM](#)

[Anonymous](#) said...

Missing that Agreus wrote, "I would have no problem with the theist stating God is self-evident..." just prior to Zao's stating such is the sort of lack of awareness I would expect to see on sitcoms - or this blog. ;p

Chris

[July 26, 2010 10:36 AM](#)

[Bahnsen Burner](#) said...

Hello Anonymous Chris,

It's not clear what you're saying here. Perhaps you might want to explain yourself.

Are you suggesting that the very fact that Agreus' statement to the effect that \*he\* (Agreus) "would have no problem with the theist stating God is self-evident" is sufficient justification for Zao's claim that "God is self-evident"? If so, that seems miserably weak - indeed, mere sitcom material. If the Christian god did not have a problem with Saddam Hussein butchering tens of thousands of Kurds, would that be "sufficient justification" for Saddam's murderous pogroms in your mind?

Your sitcom-based sense of justification is quite perplexing. Perhaps you could explain.

By the way, you're not the same Chris who lives at 1835 73rd Ave NE, Medina, WA 98039, are you?

Regards,  
Dawson

[July 26, 2010 11:17 AM](#)

[Tim](#) said...

*In this sense, logic is self-evident (at least its fundamental principle of identity) in the same sense that consciousness is self-evident.*

You have probably read Sciabarra's book "The Russian Radical" where he explains Rand's view on Ontology and Logic.

*...the Law of Contradiction has... a twofold epistemological character: it is at once an experiential inductive principle and an intuitive first principle.*

Logic, for Rand, was a union of the rational and empirical. Logic seems to be valid methods known intuitively. In addition, one also experiences these because contradictions in reality do not exist - Identity.

[July 27, 2010 6:52 AM](#)

[Bahnsen Burner](#) said...

Hi Tim,

Thanks for your comment. Yes, I have Sciabarra's book, but it's been a while since I've read it. I marvel at this work as it contains a mountain of research.

I tend to think of the axioms of existence, identity and consciousness as the initial point where the perceptual and the conceptual levels of cognition meet. Taking the axiom of identity as its fundamental point of departure, logic as a system of integrated principles is essentially the formal mechanics of connecting one set of concepts to another set of concepts which are related by one or more relevant common denominators. It is through the application of logic that we move from that which is perceptually self-evident to that which is not perceptually self-evident, and that process is called inference, whether deductive or inductive. The important point to keep in mind when interacting with presuppositionalists is the fact that logic is *conceptual* in nature, as I explain in a post devoted to this issue which I published last year [here](#). This is a major stumblingblock for the presuppositionalist apologetic.

In the present case, where Christian apologists want to say that their god's existence is "self-evident," they are essentially saying that they have *\*direct awareness\** of their god. I frankly do not know how else to interpret such a statement, though they typically do not put it these terms (exacting qualifiers such as "direct awareness" invite too many obvious problems for Christian apologetics, so they are typically avoided). My question for them, then, is: by *\*what means\** do they claim to have awareness of their god? Christians are continually reminding us that their god is invisible, incorporeal, non-physical, immaterial, supernatural, beyond the reach of our senses, etc. So clearly they cannot have awareness of their god by means of *sense perception*, by which we have direct awareness of mountains, driveways, fence posts, trees, automobiles, babies and other persons. At this point it is incumbent upon the theist making the claim that he has direct awareness of his god, to explain how we can reliably distinguish between

- (a) the means by which he claims to have this awareness, and
- (b) his own imagination as the means of interfacing with what he calls "God."

Typically apologists will have already attempted an array of evasions before allowing the discussion to get to this point, but if it does get to this point, they typically check out of the discussion and aren't heard from again on the matter. It's like pulling the cork from his popgun - it disarms him in a most decisive manner.

Try it sometime - you'll find that it works like a charm.

Regards,  
Dawson

[July 28, 2010 9:03 AM](#)

[?????](#) said...

[?????--???????](#).....

[July 28, 2010 9:21 PM](#)

[The Secular Walk](#) said...

@Dawson Bethrick

Can you take a look at the following argument, and tell me if you think it is strong evidence for the existence of God. If not, why do you think it fails:

- 1] Given the fine-tuning evidence, the existence of a life-permitting universe is very unlikely under a naturalistic single-universe hypothesis.
- 2] Given the fine-tuning evidence, a life-permitting universe is not unlikely under a theistic hypothesis.
- 3] The theistic hypothesis was advocated prior to the fine-tuning evidence [therefore it cannot be ad hoc].
- 4] Therefore, by the Likelihood Principle, a life-permitting universe strongly supports theism over any naturalistic single-universe hypothesis.

[July 31, 2010 7:14 PM](#)

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