

Saturday, April 28, 2007

### Pike's Pique

As I expected he would do, Peter Pike has [posted a response](#) to [my gutting](#) of [his initial, poorly considered reaction](#) to my blog [Would an Omniscient Being Have Its Knowledge in Conceptual Form?](#)

Even as he opens his response, he's overcome with fluster:

It's difficult to know how to respond to him now. I'd try to explain it, but this is probably best simply demonstrated.

Pike is one of those fish who was too slow-witted to elude the fishers' nets. Now that he's been hoisted up onto the deck, deveined and decapitated, he thinks he's in demand in the intellectual marketplace. He knows he gaffed big time, and now he's trying to recover himself before his fellow Triaboogers.

After pointing out that his reaction completely backfired on account of the fact that he failed to distinguish between the object of knowledge (what is known) and the form in which it is retained, Pike confesses:

I must have fallen victim to the notion that Dawson was trying to present an argument that was relevant.

The question Pike needed to ask at the beginning is: "...relevant" to exactly what? What I was presenting is in fact relevant, but not to something that Pike intimately understands. But simply because he does not see its relevance, does not mean that it has no relevance at all.

No, Pike fell victim to his own insidious anxiety to strike out against his adversary before understanding what he was striking out against. The lesson for Peter is: Look before you leap. Otherwise, stay out of the water, it may be too deep for you.

Pike:

Since I assumed that Dawson was trying to interact with the position he was critiquing, I read it in that manner.

This is just too delicious! Did Pike really read what he tried to critique before he critiqued it? Obviously not very well. He ended up agreeing with my paper's conclusion! Now he's trying to cover his tracks. This is priceless! There are some days Peter should just stay home in bed. Wednesday April 25, 2007 was one of those days.

Pike:

But I suppose I needn't bother myself with such "trivialities" in the future.

Here's some advice for Peter Pike: Decide **BEFORE** you post a critique whether or not you think what you're critiquing is trivial. Don't wait until after you've publicly planted both feet in your own mouth to make such determinations.

Pike still tries to recover the honor he sacrificed for the sake of impressing his peers:

Now Dawson's argument is simply that God does not hold knowledge in the form of concepts. To which I respond: so what?

That was always my argument. It has not changed. But in spite of this, on Pike's April 25 reaction to my paper was that it "demonstrates [my] inability to grasp basic Christian concepts." On that day he was determined to come across to his readers as confident in his position as one could be, but it turned out that he was so unfamiliar with his own position that he didn't see that he would end up affirming my conclusion. Now his response to my argument, after he's realized what it is, is "so what?" Why was it any different before I had to rescue him from his repetitive mistakes?

Pike writes:

This obviously does not cause "ruinous implications for the presuppositionalist approach to Christian apologetics" since God can still use concepts.

Then why did Pike get his panties in a bundle in the first place?

Pike:

Surely Dawson is bright enough to realize this.

I spoke to this point already when I wrote:

I did not say that Pike's god could not have the ability to form concepts. I'm fully aware that someone who believes there's a god can attribute any abilities to it he imagines, since in the end imagination is what he has to go on.

Apparently Pike still hasn't gotten the message.

Pike:

Surely, he meant more by his post than just the above.

In [my original post](#)? No, that was about the extent of I was trying to accomplish. Christians call "knowledge" something that could not be conceptual. Pike may say I'm wasting my time, but it is my time to waste. But look at what Pike gave us in return! This is a boon even I didn't expect. Even if I never end up incorporating what I have proved in my paper in future arguments, it's been well worth my while already, thanks to Pike. So if Pike thinks I'm wasting my time, what's he doing with his when he spends his time writing a reaction that he has to retract in the spirit of a sore loser?

Pike wanted to clarify the purpose of his citation of Isaiah 55:9 and I Corinthians 2:11:

Back the truck up, Dawson. I quoted those verses in response to YOUR CLAIM that: "Many believers might think that, since Christianity teaches that man was created in the Christian god's image, man's thinking in the form of concepts would indicate that their god thinks in the form of concepts as well." I responded with those verses and concluded: "Given these passages, it would be very foolhardy indeed for a believer to argue, 'I think this way, therefore God does too.'" I wasn't quoting those passages as "an alternative rationale for supposing" that "[G]od's knowledge is not conceptual." I was pointing out by those passages that a Biblical believer would be stupid to assume God thinks conceptually on the basis that they think conceptually.

So if Pike did not reference Isaiah 55:9 and I Corinthians 2:11 as a biblical rationale for supposing that his god does *not* possess its knowledge in the form of concepts, what is his rationale for agreeing with my conclusion? I was charitable enough to grant that he supposed that the bible offered at least some rationale for supposing this (even though we have yet to see anything that does). But now that he's backing away from this, telling us that these passages do not offer an alternative rationale for supposing that his god's knowledge is something other than conceptual in nature, I take this as an admission on Pike's part that the verses he quoted were in fact not saying anything about concepts. But for Pike, this means he comes to the table even more empty-handed than I was willing to allow! Is he going to change his mind now and say that his god's knowledge *is* conceptual? Or is he going to stick to his initial agreement with my conclusion? I hope it's the latter, but let's wait and see.

As for how stupid biblical believers can be, well, we don't need to look far for examples of this. Thanks, Pete.

Pike asked:

Am I to suppose Dawson doesn't think the definition of a term is needed "to understand the essentials of" that term?

Of course a definition is needed. But as I mentioned, not all concepts are defined *in terms of prior concepts*. Axiomatic concepts are defined *ostensively*. Moreover, one of the primary essentials of consciousness, on my view, is that it involves an object. Another is that it has identity, a nature. I really don't see how Pike could think these are controversial positions, but I'm certainly willing to allow him to affirm their opposites.

Pike asks:

So, tell me Dawson—how in your argument is "consciousness" anything other than an empty label?

The concept 'consciousness' could not be "an empty label" because it denotes something that actually exists. It denotes the attribute belonging to a class of biological organisms, among them man, by which they perceive objects existing in their surroundings. Someone who is so much smarter than me as Pike thinks he is, should be able to understand this. Now the question we need to ask here is, *Is Pike asking so that he can learn something he doesn't already know, or is he just trying put the spotlight back on me in order to save face?* Anyway, if Pike is sincerely interested in learning more about consciousness, I suggest he consult the Objectivist sources I cited in my paper.

Pike:

You want to ignore all that and just assume "consciousness" as if consciousness could exist without a subject.

On the contrary, on my view consciousness *is* the subject. It can also be its own object (albeit secondary), in the case of those consciousnesses which can achieve self-awareness.

I had written:

Like other axiomatic concepts, it lies at the fundamental level of the conceptual hierarchy, which means: it is not defined in terms of prior concepts.

Pike continues to shove his foot deeper into his mouth:

So "consciousness" is meaningless in Dawson's world. Yet Dawson seems to know an awful lot about it. Dawson is giving us restrictions on what consciousness can do, etc. and yet he has acknowledged that he doesn't even have a way to define it.

It does not follow from the fact that a concept is axiomatic, and therefore not defined in terms of prior concepts, that it is therefore "meaningless" or that it cannot be defined at all. Watch:

Pike:

Remember, Dawson originally said: "Consciousness is consciousness of something." So what he's really saying is "An undefinable term is an undefinable term of something." Very helpful indeed.

No, that's not what I said, nor is it what I'm "really saying," either. I nowhere said or even implied that the concept 'consciousness' is "undefinable." It can be defined, but only ostensively. What I said was that it is not defined *in terms of prior concepts*, and I gave a reason for this. In his habitual mental lethargy, Pike inflates this to mean that it is "undefinable" on my view, even though I never affirmed this. It is painfully obvious that Pike is trying whatever he can at this point to discredit my position by inflating it beyond recognition. His confusions are his own doing, not mine. As I had stated in my last response to Pike, this is all Basic Concepts 101 stuff.

After I tore his precious thought experiment to shreds, Pike bristled:

No analogy is ever going to be a perfect one.

Not even if its creator is perfect? That's so disappointing! Anyway, Pike could have at least tried for better. That his analogy was too weak for the job is not my fault. There are stronger analogies that I have thought of, but I keep Pike in suspense for now.

I wrote:

Then, without explanation, Pike adds an "observer." Is this observer part of the universe? If so, then we're asked to contradict what we were first asked to suppose, namely that the entire universe consisted of one room with two objects. Now it's a room with three objects, one of which is an observer. How many more changes to the thought experiment are we to expect coming down the pike?

Pike responded:

Surely you are able to think better than this. No, the observer is not a physical object within the thought-universe, just as God is not a physical object within the real universe.

Who said anything about a *physical* object? Pike inserted an "observer" into his scenario. Can this observer be aware of itself? If not, then it is not self-aware - it wouldn't even *know* it's conscious of anything. If it can be aware of itself, then it is itself an object of its own awareness. Pike should have decided these things before deploying his precious and yet admittedly imperfect analogy. Also, since we are asked to consider the observer, the observer - regardless of what it's made of or not made of - becomes an object of our consciousness. At this moment, the observer is the object of our discussion.

Pike:

Since the analogy is linking the observer to the nature of God (that is, demonstrating that an observer can have full knowledge of all objects that exist within a universe and still be able to form concepts) then the only reason you have to assume I'm adding an object is because you're being willfully pedantic.

I'm simply not willing to smuggle assumptions into the mix, as Pike clearly wanted to do. And what's more, if the observer he inserts (without explanation, mind you) into his thought experiment is supposed to be analogous to his god, then - if it's the case that the knowledge which Pike's god allegedly has is "not conceptual," as he has openly affirmed - *what's his thought experiment intended to validate?* Pike provides a rationale which could only work against his own endorsement of my paper's conclusion. This is just too much! Pike is well on his way to prime time entertainment.

Pike wrote:

Which completely ignores the fact that we're talking about an omniscient being here. Dawson forgot that he's the one who posed the original question: [Would an Omniscient Mind Have Knowledge in Conceptual Form?](#)

So even though Pike [referred](#) to my paper as an "essay answering an age-old question," he did in fact offer his analogy to lend support to the view that his god's knowledge may in fact be conceptual after all! So then why did he agree with the conclusion of my thesis? In his initial reaction he affirmed unwaveringly that his god's knowledge is "not conceptual," and even though he implied that this is a long-settled issue in Christianity, he never provided any rationale for this position. Now it turns out that he meant his analogy to validate that an omniscient being could have its knowledge in the form of concepts. So why does he say that his god's knowledge is "not conceptual"? Blank out.

I wrote:

Again, Pike has missed what my paper argues. It argues that an omniscient being would not have its knowledge in the form of concepts. I did not say that Pike's god could not have the ability to form concepts.

In response, Pike asked:

So where's the problem with Presuppositionalism?

Oh, this is just too much! Peter needs to take a look in the mirror. Look how presuppositionalism leads Pike to embarrass himself. Isn't that enough? It's left him totally disarmed when it comes to philosophical discussions about the nature of knowledge itself.

Now I did conclude my response to Pike with a question, which Pike mistook as a "complaint," which asks:

But this does lead to a question: If the Christian god does not possess its knowledge in conceptual form, what is the form in which it possesses its knowledge?

In considering this question, I pointed out the fact that:

Pike did not speak to this.

Pike offers a slanted admission to my point:

Could that be because I was RESPONDING to your argument instead of presenting a positive one of my own?

I doubt it. It's more likely because Pike simply doesn't know. Indeed, he doesn't even answer my question in his nose-blowing follow-up. Perhaps he's still trying to think of an answer. Had Peter an answer to this question at the outset, I doubt he would have hesitated to present it. It would have been too irresistible to pass up another opportunity to say "See how stupid Dawson is?"

Pike:

In any case, Dawson has promised to use the concept that God doesn't think in concepts for another post. If it's anywhere near as torturous as this one, the Marquis de Sade would be well pleased.

Which can only mean: Pike will only read it if he's into self-abuse. So if he should offer a reaction to my future paper, we'll know what he's all about.

I suggest Pike stick to writing short stories about bus rides and beachside small talk.

by Dawson Bethrick

Labels: [Christian god](#), [Concepts](#), [Knowledge](#), [Peter Pike](#)

*posted by Bahnsen Burner at [12:30 PM](#)*

**0 Comments:**