

Thursday, May 24, 2012

Presuppositionalism's Finest?

Below is my transcription of two excerpts from [Fundamentally Flawed's Episode 47: Hezekiah Ahaz, Round Two](#)
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In the first excerpt, beginning around 16:25 and running to about 18:46, we have about two minutes and 20 seconds of show hosts Jim Gardner and Alex Botten doing their level best to help Nide (aka "Hezekiah Ahaz") literally come to his senses about reality. As you can see, Nide has thrown up an impenetrable wall of faith blocking out the light of reason such that he can't be sure of anything other than that he simply wants to start with his presumption that his god is real. In Christianity, such devotion to faith is considered a virtue. Observe what it does to the human mind:

Nide: [excited] "G-... You... Jim, you just told me you were no fr... How do you know you're real, Jim, you can't even, you can't even account for your own existence!"

Alex: [calmly] "Okay, well, let me ask you a question. Let me ask you a question, Hezekiah."

Nide: "Okay." Alex: "Can you hear somebody called Jim speaking to you?"

Nide: "Yeah." Alex: "Okay, are you real?" Nide: [pause] "Ummmmmm... yeah.... but..."

Alex: "Do you trust your senses?"

Nide: [pause] "I do."

Alex: "Do you trust that Jim is real?"

Nide: [pause] "Ummm... that's what I'm trying to establish."

[Alex and Nide talking over each other]

Alex: "Just let me finish. You've admitted that you can hear somebody called Jim speaking. You've admitted that you accept that your senses are giving you correct information. So, you've got two alternatives: either Jim is real, or you're imagining him."

Nide: "And and and and that's... [nervous giggling] and that's the whole..."

Jim: "Which is more likely to be true based on the empirically valid evidence for my existence? Which is more likely to be true, that you are imagining this entire conversation, or that I really am sitting here up in this conversation..."

[Jim and Nide talking over each other]

Nide: "I just take it for... I just take it for granted. I don't have... I h... I don't have any evidence that you're real, Jim. I just take it for granted."

Jim: "So that's twice now that you've admitted that your entire worldview is based on something which is taken for granted, and yet you are the one which..."

Nide: [flustered] "But we've been saying that the whole time!"

[Jim and Nide talking over each other]

Jim: "Is that what you're saying?"

Nide: [drowning in his own flustered words]

Jim: "If you took more time to listen to the reply, then you might be able to provide more coherent answers."

Nide: "Okay, go ahead."

Jim: "Are you essentially saying that you're entire worldview is based upon a presumption?"

Nide: "We've [nervous giggling] When have... when I... When have I ever denied that? When have I ever denied that?"

Jim: "So therefore you've finally admitted that the very next valid question to ask, is can you give an example of when that is a bad way of viewing the world, and when a much better way of viewing the world is to make objectively valid observations?"

Nide: "But en... that's when problems arise because we all... we all assume things, and then we go from there. So you're... you're... Whatever you start with, you assume it too."

Jim: "When you present evidence for things, they're no longer assumptions, they're empirical observations."

[Jim and Nide talking over each other]

Nide: "You could be imagining the evidence. And how is it that you're not? That's the whole point."

[deafening silence]

Nide: "See... So, it... it... it... We're at..."

Alex: "You see, this is the thing. The reason why we're going quiet there is not because it's a good question, it's because it's actually incomprehensible practically."

Nide: [limp and defeated] "Okay, if you say so."

It's quite amazing to me that this fellow Nide really carries on as if he had no empirical evidence that Jim exists, especially when he just got done admitting that he could hear a fellow called Jim speaking to him. Apparently Nide does not understand that any evidence of which we have awareness by means of any of the sense modalities, is empirical evidence. Or, he simply denies, on a pick-and-choose basis, what empirical evidence he will accept, and what empirical evidence he won't accept, given the expedience of his apologetic aims. For Nide, the possibility that he is simply imagining the entire conversation is a possibility that he cannot wipe off the table, because he has no defeater for it. And he has no defeater for it precisely because he's abandoned reason in preference for faith.

In the very last few minutes of the podcast, Alex and Jim pulled out the "Ghost that Never Lies" parody of the Christian god in order to demonstrate the circularity of the presuppositionalist apologetic. The result was literally a show-stopping touchdown which would send any self-respecting presuppositionalist (if there are any) recoiling in chronic embarrassment. Beginning at marker 14:22, we have the following exchange:

Nide: "And how is it that you're not imagining this ghost?"

Jim and Alex: "Because the Ghost that Never Lies revealed it to me such that I can be certain of it."

Nide: "And how do you know that you're not imagining that?"

Jim and Alex: "Because the Ghost that Never Lies revealed it to me such that I can be certain of it."

Nide: "But now you're reasoning in a circle. [giggling] Now you're reasoning in a circle."

Jim and Alex: [rejoicing] "Exactly! Yay! We have a goal!"

Nide: "But see, but, but, look..."

Is Nide the new Greg Bahnsen? Does this represent the state of the art in presuppositional apologetics? Nide

certainly does not convince either of the FF hosts that he's in possession of all his faculties, let alone proving the existence of his god or the truth of the Christian worldview. Far from it. But we must keep in mind that even presuppositional apologists admit that their "arguments" are not intended to persuade non-believers; they maintain that only supernatural force can make a person accept the alleged "truth" of their religious beliefs. So their "truths" are "known" by means of force (which grants moral validity to the initiation of the use of force), not by means of *reason* (and theists say that reason and faith are compatible!).

We must remember that presuppositional apologetics is primarily geared toward securing the believer within the fold, toward keeping him ever bamboozled, toward ever deepening the canyon which separates him from rational individuals (i.e., people who accept reason as their only means of knowledge, their only judge of values and their only guide to action).

At any rate, the entire podcast is fascinating to listen to, not so much from a philosophical standpoint (since the issues that come up are so basic, and Nide has desperate difficulties in even grasping them), but from a psychological angle as we observe a mind stubbornly defying reason with virtually every breath. We watch in action a man under the influence of presuppositionalism.

Also, on [Alex Botten's blog](#), there's been some [interesting reactions and discussion](#) about Nide's performance in the podcast. Several who frequent my blog are already aware of this and in fact have contributed to the discussion. Others may find it of interest as well.

by Dawson Bethrick

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