

Thursday, August 13, 2009

RazorsKiss on the Christian God as the Basis of Knowledge - Part 1: Overview of RK's Epistemology

Recently there was a debate between presuppositional apologist "RazorsKiss" and non-Christian Mitch LeBlanc on the topic "Is the Triune God of the Scriptures the Basis for Knowledge?" A transcript of the debate is available [here](#).

Mitch LeBlanc himself brought his debate with RazorsKiss to my attention, and he and I have carried on a lengthy discussion of the debate, particularly RazorsKiss' statements, via electronic correspondence.

While I do not know what RazorsKiss' real name is, I do know that he is part of the team over at the [Choosing Hats](#) blog. [Choosing Hats](#), as some of you may recall, is the home of Chris Bolt, with whom I have on several occasions, with limited success, attempted to have a dialogue (see for instance [here](#) and [here](#)). RazorsKiss also has [his own blog](#), and has posted a transcript of his debate with LeBlanc [here](#). This version of the transcript also includes a question and answer section following the debate, which is interesting to read.

Interestingly, on [RazorsKiss' own blog](#), there is a list of links to non-Christian internet sites, including [my blog](#). The section including these links is labeled with a "content warning," which advises readers to "read at your own risk." I'm not sure whether to be amused or flattered, but I admit I'm a bit of both.

RazorsKiss' Opening Concerns

Presumably because RazorsKiss ("RK" hereafter) is a Christian and believes that the Christian god has something to do with the foundations of knowledge, he chose to defend the affirmative position in response to the question on the floor, "Is the Triune God of the Scriptures the Basis for Knowledge?" Mitch LeBlanc took up the negative.

In reviewing RK's opening statement, I was reminded of Greg Bahnsen's [opening statement](#) in his celebrated debate with Gordon Stein, in that, like Bahnsen, RK seems to present no argument at all for his position. Rather, like Bahnsen, RK prefers simply to repeat what his position affirms without providing any rationale for supposing any of it is true. In this way RK presents in his opening statement little more than a lengthy description of what his position advocates, with no case defending the claim that what he describes is true.

RK divides his opening statement into four subtitled sections:

- 1) Introduction
- 2) Epistemology
- 3) Proper Epistemology
- 4) The Impossibility of the Contrary

In the beginning of his opening statement, RK expresses concerns about issues which do not seem at all germane to a defense of an intellectual position, such as his compulsion as a Christian to be humble, to avoid pride and to resist looking down on others, accusations of arrogance from others, etc. In the same breath, he expresses an attitude which is hard to distinguish from "I'm right and everyone else is wrong" when he states:

if I am correct, there is a fundamental problem with the way the entire world thinks about the basis for their own knowledge... I claim to have a basis for my knowledge which is utterly higher, and transcendentally greater than I, or any other human being can ever hope to be.

So RK's expectations to be accused of arrogance are understandable.

RK also announces that, on his view, everyone is "owned" by his god. Note how RK segues into this from his expressed worries about being charged with arrogance:

It is conceivable I suppose, to call a perfect Being arrogant for claiming to be your Creator; to own you and the dust of the earth man was formed from It is another thing to assert that His claim to ownership is unwarranted. If what I say is true - God owns you. He owns me. He owns every particle of matter, every joule of energy; established every law we think in accordance with, and ordained every law which governs the world we exist in, at His good pleasure.

So not only is every human being a piece of property belonging to RK's invisible magic being, everything else is too, and whatever happens in the world originates from its "good pleasure." Apparently RK's god finds "good pleasure" in destructive earthquakes, tsunamis which level entire cities, babies being miscarried or aborted, the rise of dictators and the path of blood they carve into human communities, cancer, traffic accidents, etc. Since it owns all of us, RK's god can do whatever it wants with us. And since it couldn't possibly need us, it finds "good pleasure" in sending threats against our values.

RK has elected to defend the view that human knowledge finds its proper basis in such a being.

What RazorsKiss Hoped to Accomplish

In his opening statement, RK emphasizes the exclusivity of Christianity. For instance, he claims that

every possible foundation for every way of thinking not in accordance with [the Christian god's] perfect ordinance is utter, absolute folly

It is easy to make such assertions. As they say, "talk is cheap." But fortunately RK gives us an indication of what he hopes to accomplish in his debate with LeBlanc:

My intent is to demonstrate that there is no other epistemological basis that can possibly compare to that possessed by a Christian holding the self-revelation of the Triune God. My goal is to show that my that any worldview attempting to argue from other than the Christian foundation is, in fact, borrowing from that foundation to do so. That any worldview asserting some sort of "objective" basis for the laws of logic specifically, but for nature and morality as well - is pure subjectivism wrapped up in an objective shell consisting of concepts stolen from their Creator.

By "concepts stolen from their Creator," RK indicates what he means:

Concepts like universals. Universals which are abstract, binding, have inherent meaning, and apply to every person - whether they like them to, or WANT them to or not. They apply nonetheless.

Note here that RazorsKiss is not only drawing attention to the topic of concepts - in which case I would expect to find in his defense of the claim that the Christian god is the proper basis of knowledge, some indication of what his theory of concepts may be - but also what is clearly an expression of the primacy of existence - that something is the case independent of what anyone likes or wants. All of this is most interesting to me, especially coming from a Christian, since Christianity has no theory of concepts (see [here](#)), and its metaphysical foundations are entirely incompatible with the primacy of existence (see [here](#)). If anyone were to dispute this last point, let us ask: Would RK affirm that universals apply to a person if his god did not want them to? I very much doubt it.

Telltale Statements

A number of statements which RK makes throughout the course of his opening statement can be classed into three distinct categories. For instance, RK makes several universally negative statements about non-Christians without any argumentative back-up to support them, such as:

- "[non-Christians] do not have a justification for their beliefs"
- "An unbelieving man has no justification for his predication."
- "He has no basis for his use of logical laws."

- "There is no area in which [a non-Christian's] thoughts, ideas or concepts can be said to be properly grounded."

RK clearly has a low opinion of non-Christians, especially in regard to their understanding of things pertaining to knowledge. Again, RK takes the attitude that he is right and everyone else is wrong. If RK could support this position by validating the kinds of claims he makes in a credible manner, this might be forgivable. Unfortunately, what we find is that these statements are affirmed as if by fiat, in the manner of someone who expects reality to conform to his pronouncements.

Next, RK makes several autobiographical statements which tellingly expose his own ignorance on certain key matters. For instance:

- "I have yet to see an epistemological basis which accounts for universals in any satisfying manner."

- "The fundamental disconnect I see in secular epistemology (and Christians who use that same epistemology) is the universal lack of a solution from unbelieving philosophy for problems like that of induction, the one and the many, whether the will is free, and the like."

- "If the unbeliever thinks he is the ultimate, not simply the immediate basis for epistemology - I see no possible way for that assertion to be justified."

Statements like these tell us what RK does not know, and/or where he's not been looking. Specifically, they indicate a lack of familiarity with his subject matter, which includes the content of non-Christian teachings on epistemology. Is RK suggesting that, since he has "yet to see an epistemological basis which accounts for universals in any satisfying manner," that there isn't one? Of course, this does not follow. What does he mean by "satisfying manner"? He does not explain this. But what he does imply by such statements is that Christianity *does* provide "an epistemological basis which accounts for universals in [a] satisfying manner." Again, this tells us about RK, not about the quality of such "accounts." For all we know, "satisfying manner" for RK may be any treatment on the issue in question which plays to his confessional investment in the Christian god-belief program. Thus any treatment which does not do this would automatically be dismissed as "unsatisfying." So long as the "account" ultimately says "God did it," it has a chance of meeting the grade. Without this, it dies on the vine.

As for the claim that there exists in secular epistemology a "universal lack of a solution from unbelieving [i.e., non-Christian] philosophy for problems like that of induction, the one and the many, whether the will is free, and the like," again RK simply announces his own ignorance. Where is RK's refutation of David Kelley's solution to the problem of induction, or Ayn Rand's theories of concepts and volition? Indeed, I have seen no evidence that he has any familiarity with these to begin with, let alone that he may be prepared to enumerate their presupposed deficiencies.

As for the final statement about the "unbeliever" thinking himself as "the ultimate.... basis for epistemology," it's not even clear what this is supposed to mean (similar statements in the presuppositionalist literature tend to be just as vague), or what exactly RK thinks is wrong with such suppositions (unless it's just that he "see[s] no possible way for that assertion to be justified," which again only tells us about RK). Presumably RK would say that his god is justified in thinking itself as "the ultimate... basis for epistemology," though this strikes me as utterly incoherent since said god is supposed to be omniscient and infallible, thus having no need for epistemology in the first place. (I'll develop on this point further below.) This would mean that, *in principle*, RK could have no beef with a person supposing itself as the "ultimate... basis for epistemology," he just wants to be able to say which persons are justified in this, and which persons are not. Of course, there is nothing to stop someone from imagining a god and claiming that it is "the ultimate... basis for epistemology" (however this is taken to mean) and consequently denying this role to any human being.

Lastly, RK makes a series of worldview claims which his readers are apparently expected to accept as truth on his say so (since they are presented without any support whatsoever):

- "God owns you. He owns me. He owns every particle of matter, every joule of energy; established every law we think in accordance with, and ordained every law which governs the world we exist in, at His good pleasure."

- “I have a Guarantor which is self-existent, self-sufficient, able to communicate, omnipotent, omniscient, immutable, and sovereign.”
- “I can say, with perfect certainty, that the Triune God of Scripture is not only the proper grounds for all knowledge - but the only possible grounds for all knowledge!”
- “there are no brute facts. Facts are not neutral entities, and they cannot be interpreted in a neutral fashion. This is because facts can only exist in relation to other facts;”
- “There is self-existence, which then guarantees all contingent existence.”
- “There is omnipotence, which can guarantee the absolute authority of God over all His creation, including willing and thinking creatures.”
- “There is the omniscience and self-knowledge of God, which guarantees that what His creatures can know is intelligible - that creatures can, in fact, derivatively know the facts about His creation, and those facts that He reveals about Himself.”
- “There is the internal ‘sense’, that Calvin calls the ‘sensus divinitatus’, which all men possess, as image-bearers of their Creator - and which allow them to recognize the God that they even sometimes deny.”
- “Can someone without the axioms that Christians hold ‘know’ anything? As defined, no. They can’t.”
- “What the Christian position alone can guarantee is any contribution to knowledge whatsoever.”
- “What my claim really entails is that an unbeliever, trying to start from a position of epistemic autonomy, is like a child who sits on his father’s lap - and uses that position for the purpose of slapping his father in the face.”
- “Christianity has an answer for [the problems of induction, universals, free will, etc.] - provided the Christian answers them from Scriptural revelation, and does not adopt the same principles that unbelieving philosophy does.”
- “Since it is impossible to have knowledge on any other basis, save that of God’s intrinsic nature and self-communication of the properties of that nature - it is impossible for any human system of reasoning to have justification at all.”
- “Christianity’s epistemology is the only epistemology possible - because it’s impossible to have any other coherent, true, and justified basis for thought, perception, knowledge, or understanding of ourselves, or the creation in which we dwell.”

I read all of RK’s statement several times and pored over it looking specifically for how he might support any of these claims, but I found nothing which does support them. Of course, in regard to this last batch of statements, RK does make an effort in his opening statement to preempt the assessment that we are expected to accept these claims on his own say so. Specifically, in his Introduction RK states:

I have heard the claim to “arrogance” before. If I ever state something on my own behalf, I will grant that such an accusation is justified. Should I comport myself rudely, as if I am superior, or as if I think myself to be who I am because I am somehow higher - I request that you point this out. However, as a creature - I claim to have a basis for my knowledge which is utterly higher, and transcendently greater than I, or any other human being can ever hope to be... Since my claim is not based on myself, but upon a self-revelation from the Triune God described in Scripture - the claim in this case is on the behalf of another.

But given his worldview’s appeal to an invisible magic being which is accessible to the human mind exclusively by means of imagination, RK is on safe ground here. For he will always be able to say that whatever he affirms is not on his own behalf, but on behalf of an invisible magic being which is evidently unable to appear before all who are present and speak on its own behalf. If ever there were a formula for evading responsibility for the things one says, RK has cornered the market. In the question and answer section following his debate with LeBlanc, RK states, “God is

who works in me, and through me.” Of course, anyone imagining that an invisible magic being operates behind the scenes of the things we perceive in reality, would be able to make claims such as this. RK gives us no reason to suppose that what he is talking about when he points to his god is anything other than imaginary.

What RK Does *Not* Address

Since RK seeks to defend the claim that the Christian god is the proper basis for knowledge, I was hoping to find some discussion in his defense of this thesis regarding the means by which knowledge is acquired and validated, that is, the *how* of epistemology. Since presuppositionalists in general make it no secret that they think their god is the source of all knowledge, that the content of “revelation” is the *what* of epistemology, what they should focus their attention is on *how* man acquires knowledge, and how their proposed method of acquiring knowledge (if there is one) coheres with their god-belief claims. Unfortunately, I found that RK’s discussion of epistemology was limited to his concern for what he considers the proper basis of knowledge as well as the exclusivity of Christianity’s approach to knowledge, with no mention of anything substantive in regard to the *means* or *method* by which one *acquires* knowledge. So far as epistemology is concerned, this is a glaring oversight. He does speak of “justification” of knowledge, but even here he does not outline any process by which his epistemology recommends that we go about justifying what we believe to be knowledge, so he provides nothing to be evaluated on this matter as well. Besides, one cannot undertake the task of justifying knowledge without understanding how that knowledge is acquired in the first place. The *how* of epistemology seems not to concern RK at all.

Then again, presuppositional apologist John Frame makes a most telling admission on this very point when he writes:

How is it that people come to believe a Word from God which contradicts all their other normal means of knowledge? How did Abraham come to know that the voice calling him to sacrifice his son (Gen. 22:1-18; cf. Heb. 11:17-19; James 2:21-24) was the voice of God? What the voice told him to do was contrary to fatherly instincts, normal ethical considerations, and even, apparently, contrary to other Words of God (Gen. 9:6). But he obeyed the voice and was blessed. Closer to our own experience: how is it that people come to believe in Jesus even though they have not, like Thomas, seen Jesus’ signs and wonders (John 20:29)? ...I cannot explain the psychology here to the satisfaction of very many. In this case as in others (for we walk by faith, not by sight!) we may have to accept the fact even without an explanation of the fact. Somehow, God manages to get his Word across to us, despite the logical and psychological barriers. Without explaining how it works, Scripture describes in various ways a “supernatural factor” in divine-human communication. (a) It speaks of the *power* of the Word. The Word created all things (Gen. 1:3, etc.; Ps. 33:3-6; John 1:3) and directs the course of nature and history (Pss. 46:6; 148:5-8). What God says will surely come to pass (Isa. 55:11; Gen. 18:149; Deut. 18:21ff.). The gospel is “the power of God unto salvation” (Rom. 1:16; cf. Isa. 6:9-10; Luke 7:7ff.; Heb. 4:12). (b) Scripture also speaks of the personal power of the *Holy Spirit* operating *with* the Word (John 3:5; 1 Cor. 2:4,12ff.; 2 Cor. 3:15-18; 1 Thess. 1:5). Mysterious though the process may be, somehow God illumines the human mind to discern the divine source of the Word. We know without knowing how we know. ([Presuppositional Apologetics: An Introduction, Part 1](#))

So for Frame, the process of epistemology (at least so far as it concerns the believer’s “knowledge” of the divine) is “mysterious.” I’m not sure how well this bodes well with RK, who in his opening statement specifically expressed disagreement with the “tendency to make [things like epistemology] mysterious - to make it something only the initiated can truly understand.” Why, then, does Frame, when addressing the question of *how* one has knowledge of a supernatural being which Christians call “God,” throw his hands up and confesses, “We know without knowing how we know”? While it is hard to square RK’s concern to keep epistemological matters comprehensible, that he may privately agree with Frame’s position on this matter would explain why the *how* of epistemology garners no mention from him in his defense of the view that the Christian god is the proper basis of knowledge.

A Fundamental Disconnect

In the second section of his opening statement, subtitled “Epistemology,” RK acknowledges that epistemology is the branch of philosophy which addresses questions such as

Why do we know what we know? How do we know? How is this knowledge acquired? What is this knowledge? On what basis do we know it? By what standard? On what (or whose) authority? Those questions are the realm

of our discussion.

And RK is correct: it is these kinds of questions which epistemology is supposed to address, specifically what knowledge is, and how is it acquired and validated. Unfortunately, as mentioned above, when RK gets to a point where he starts talking about his theistic epistemology, he seems preoccupied with aligning knowledge as such with his god-belief as its proper ground and authoritative basis, and says essentially nothing about the *method* by which knowledge is acquired and validated. Since he acknowledges that “those questions are the realm of our discussion,” I found this oversight rather disappointing. If the Christian god is considered to be the proper ground and standard of knowledge, by what means does one acquire and validate knowledge? Since, as we will see, RK claims that knowledge is based specifically on axioms which clearly assume the existence of the Christian god, his knowledge of his god must somehow be immediate, such as when the rest of us (in the real world) see a tree or speeding car. But how? That’s what I want to know.

This question has vital importance, for just in considering it we should be aware of a fundamental disconnect on the part of the Christian position which RK seeks to defend. Claiming that the Christian god is the ground and standard of knowledge suggests that the Christian god’s own cognition in one way or another serves as the model for human cognition, that there is an analogous relationship between man’s knowledge and the knowledge allegedly possessed by the Christian god. As Bahnsen puts it,

man’s thinking must follow after or replicate God’s thinking on the level of a creature, thus being ‘analogical’ and recognizing two levels of knowing (original and derivative, absolute and subordinate). (*Van Til’s Apologetic: Readings & Analysis*, p. 100n.31)

Elsewhere Bahnsen states that

man knows anything he knows (whether the world or God Himself) by thinking ‘analogously’ to God’s thinking” (*ibid.*, p. 169n.40).

These and similar assumptions are the basis behind Van Til’s infamous dictum that “man thinks God’s thoughts after him” (Van Til, “Nature and Scripture,” p. 278; quoted in *Van Til’s Apologetic: Readings & Analysis*, p. 225). As Van Til explains:

Since the human mind is created by God and is therefore in itself naturally revelational of God, the mind may be sure that its system is true and corresponds on a finite scale to the system of God. That is what we mean by saying that it is analogical to God’s system. (*Introduction to Systematic Theology*, p. 181)

Given the fundamental disparity between the nature of man’s mind and that attributed to the Christian god by the Christian worldview, I find this thesis utterly incredible. Man is neither omniscient nor infallible, and must develop his knowledge of reality through his own fallible efforts by applying a method to the data he gathers through his senses (i.e., an operation of his sense organs, which is a biological activity). It is through his senses that man has awareness of objects distinct from himself, and it is of these objects that he seeks to develop his knowledge. His knowledge is thus not automatic, nor is there any guarantee that he will discover any particular fact. On the other hand, however, the Christian god is said to be both omniscient and infallible, possessing all knowledge for all eternity, without error, gap or need of correction, as an inherent part of its alleged existence, not as a product of some procedure it elects to undertake. Its knowledge is not the result of a methodological process which it performs on data it discovers independent of itself through a biological process. Contrary to man’s knowledge, the Christian god’s knowledge would be automatic. It “just knows.” Naturally, anyone could imagine a being which “just knows” everything, and it is no secret that this is what Christians are doing when they claim that their epistemology has such a standard. But in so doing they ignore crucial distinctions which have direct bearing on the nature, method and basis of man’s knowledge. The Christian god’s “knowledge” would be automatic, inalterable and infallible, while man’s knowledge is procedural, developing and open to correction. Given these facts, how can the former at all serve as any kind of standard for the latter? What possible relevance could it have, since regardless of what some invisible magic being may know, man still needs to go through the motions he needs to go through in order to acquire and validate his knowledge? RK certainly does not anticipate this question, even though it is wholly relevant to the position he advocates.

But the fundamental distinctions do not stop there. There is also the issue of the orientation between the respective subjects of knowledge and the objects of knowledge which needs to be taken into account. In the case of man, the orientation between subject and object is known as the *objective* orientation. This means that the *objects* of man’s

consciousness exist and are what they are *independent* of his conscious activity. For instance, the flower that a man sees is the kind of flower it is, has the number of petals it has, and is located where it is, regardless of whether he perceives it, identifies it as a flower or as a motor vehicle, likes it, wishes it were someplace else, etc. His conscious activity has no causal bearing on the flower's identity qua flower. This is the primacy of existence principle, the very basis of the concept of objectivity. It is on the basis of this principle that we can affirm such truths as *wishing doesn't make it so* and *believing a claim will not make it true*.

But this is not the orientation between subject and object which the Christian god, as described by the Christian worldview, is thought to have with respect to the objects of its alleged knowledge. The orientation between subject and object which the Christian god is supposed to enjoy is the *subjective* orientation. Unlike the relationship between man's consciousness and its objects, the relationship between the Christian god's consciousness and its objects is characterized by the primacy of consciousness. In this case, the *subject* holds metaphysical primacy over its objects. That is, the objects of the Christian god's consciousness are what the Christian god chooses them to be. Their existence, nature and capacity for action are dependent on the Christian god's conscious activity. Christian apologist Mike Warren made this crystal clear when he wrote the following:

In knowing a flower, for example, God knows everything about the flower. Humans can have that flower as an object of their knowledge as well, so there is a similarity in the knowledge; but a difference is that humans cannot know the flower exhaustively. Not only is there a quantitative difference between divine and human knowledge of the flower, but there are qualitative differences. God knows the flower originally. *Everything about the flower originates from His own consciousness*. Indeed, God's thinking about the flower *makes it so*. In contrast, humans know the flower as something originating external to them. Their thinking about the flower does not make it so. Human knowledge claims about the flower can be incorrect, unlike God's perfect knowledge. (Post to the [Van Til List](#) dated February 26, 2004, quoted in [Confessions of a Vantillian Subjectivist](#); italics added)

The orientation assumed here between subject and object in the case of the Christian god's consciousness is precisely the opposite of that belonging to man. While the objective orientation identifies the proper relationship between the subject of man's consciousness and any object of his awareness, theism is inherently characterized by a fundamental subjectivism. The influence of theism's inherent subjectivism has a direct bearing on epistemology, as Bahnsen unwittingly acknowledges:

In God's thinking, there are no facts that are newly discovered or contingent (or, as Van Til sometimes put it earlier in his career, God's knowledge is exclusively analytical, not synthetic). This is because God is the Creator of all facts, and the facts are what they are in terms of God's sovereign plan; thus, to know anything "outside" Himself, God need only "analyze" or consult his own mind. (*Van Til's Apologetic: Readings & Analysis*, p. 165n.33)

For the Christian god, [wishing](#) does make it so. And unlike man, who must discover facts which exist independent of his conscious activity and conform his knowledge of them to their nature by applying an objective method, the Christian god creates facts out of the exercise of its own will. To put it succinctly, for man (i.e., in reality) facts are *objective* (since they are what they are independent of man's conscious activity), but for the Christian god (i.e., in the believer's imagination) facts are *subjective*, (since they are what the Christian god *wants* them to be). Consequently, to claim that man's knowledge finds its basis in the Christian god is to affirm that objectivity is grounded in subjectivism. But this is absurd.

So to go back to Van Til's claim above, let us ask:

What "correspondence" could a mind geared with the objective orientation between itself as a subject and any objects it perceives or considers, have to a mind which enjoys precisely the opposite orientation between itself and anything distinct from it?

Of course, Van Til does not consider the issue from the perspective of the proper orientation between a subject and its objects, and from what I have seen, neither do any of his followers. Thus, given the implications which I have brought out here, it is not surprising that RK considers none of these distinctions in his comments about epistemology, even though it is undeniable that such distinctions would bear on those questions which he himself has raised.

The "Sensus Divinitatus"

Unfortunately for RK, however, since his worldview affirms a *subjective* basis for all knowledge (both in the case of his god's knowledge as well as man's), he cuts off from himself any *objective* means by which he can reliably distinguish between what is real and what he may merely be *imagining*. This failure to make such a critical distinction in human cognition, a distinction which is wholly germane to the matter at hand, brings into question all of RK's god-belief claims. This includes RK's appeal to the so-called "sensus divinitatus," to which he refers as an "internal 'sense'" through which his god presumably guides and communicates to him. The "sensus divinitatus" is associated in Christianity with "the indwelling of the Holy Spirit," and appeals to the "sensus divinitatus" tend to call to mind the notion of "the Force" in the *Star Wars* epic. It is an imperceptible phenomenon possessing great power with which the believer considers himself positively aligned and which, he claims, guides his thinking, choices and actions. In the post-debate question and answer session, RK describes the workings of this alleged faculty in the following manner:

it's the equivalent of having the author of the book standing over your shoulder, and correcting your faulty understandings, and continually adjusting your noetic "issues" as He also works to sanctify you in obedience to that revealed Word... It's not me, it's God in me... God is who works in me, and through me.

Since RK offers no argument to support his claim that he (and everybody else!) possesses such a faculty, we are presumably supposed to accept his claim that he benefits from such privy guidance courtesy of the supernatural on his say so. But his claim that every human being possesses this "internal 'sense'" indicates that, if each of us turns the focus of our attention inwards, into the internal workings of our psyche, we should find evidence of the faculty he's talking about. Curiously, however, if I introspect when reading a book and suppose that its author is standing over my shoulder and guiding my understanding of what I'm reading, I am certainly honest enough to acknowledge that all I am really doing is *imagining* at this point. If the "sensus divinitatus" has the same look and feel of imagination, RK's Christianity is in big trouble.

But I expect that Christians like RK would resist this identification. In so doing, of course, they would be implying that they have better knowledge of what's going on in my psyche than I do (and yet RK wants us to warn him when he's verging on arrogance). So I have some questions for RK.

Suppose RK thinks he has received input from his god through this faculty he calls "sensus divinitatus." How does he know it's not his imagination? What distinguishes the input coming to him through the "sensus divinitatus" from the products of his own imagination? Both are "internal," and if the "sensus divinitatus" can be referred to as an "internal 'sense'," I don't know why the imagination cannot also. What about deceiving spirits, such as those dispatched by the Christian devil? How would RK distinguish communications he claims to have received from his god through the "sensus divinitatus" from those originating from this nefarious personality? Here's another question: What kind of content is communicated to the believer by the "sensus divinitatus"? Its source is said to be omniscient, infallible and omnipotent. RK claims "It's not me, it's God in me." Thus he claims that he acquires his knowledge from an omniscient and infallible mind "who works in me, and through me." So presumably it could tell RK what I had for breakfast this morning, or who my boss was in June 1995. Surely his god knows these things. Why would it withhold this information from believers? Wouldn't the display of such knowledge be an impressive witnessing tool? Or is there some reason why the believer will never have access to this kind of information in spite of having direct lines to an omniscient mind?

We should also ask if the "sensus divinitatus" redundant in any way. Does it only provide knowledge to the believer which he can acquire through other means, such as by reading what Jesus said in Matthew chapter 5, or consulting an Almanac to learn how many people live in Tokyo? Does the "sensus divinitatus" deliver knowledge which could not possibly be accounted for in some other way, whether by imagination, consulting public records, using one's sense organs, or simply inferring conclusions from data gathered in a mundane manner?

Or does RK expect us just to accept his claim that he and everyone else possesses such a faculty on his own say so and forego such inquiries such that we never learn about how it functions and what its capacities are? RK does understand how it works, does he not? If so, he should be able to explain it. If not, then how can he claim that what he "knows" as a deliverance through such a faculty is at all reliable and sourced in the divine? Unless he can explain how one can reliably distinguish between what he calls the "sensus divinitatus" and what he may merely be imagining, why should we believe it's the former and not the latter? RK does acknowledge that he has the ability to imagine, does he not?

If I cannot distinguish the “sensus divinitatus” which RK says I have within me, from my own imagination, how does RK distinguish it from his own imagination? Of course it would do him no good to appeal to the “sensus divinitatus” itself to address this question, since if “sensus divinitatus” is in fact his own imagination, he would be appealing to his imagination instead of to a divinely inspired portal of communication from the supernatural. So this would get him nowhere. Besides, it would only perpetuate the mysteriousness of RK’s epistemology insofar as its recommended *method* of acquiring and validating knowledge is concerned (which is of central importance to epistemology). So again, since RK is capable of imagining things, and people are generally capable of confusing what they imagine with reality, RK needs to address this matter, and he needs to address it seriously, with a detailed explanation of just how one (anyone, since he claims we all possess this elusive faculty) can reliably distinguish it from what may really only be one’s own imagination. Failing this, his case for knowledge finding its basis in the Christian god, since it makes appeal to the “sensus divinitatus,” will never get off the ground.

by Dawson Bethrick

Labels: [Christian god](#), [imagination](#), [Knowledge](#)

posted by [Bahnsen Burner](#) at [4:30 AM](#)

5 Comments:

[Jay](#) said...

Just posting to say I really enjoyed your most recent postings here. I used to be moderately-to-heavily involved in the apologetics/atheology Internet forum scene. But now, Incinerating Presuppositionalism is the only blog on the topic I still check and read.

[August 18, 2009 11:03 AM](#)

[madmax](#) said...

More excellent material Dawson. Your interaction with RazorKiss looks to be an interesting one.

OT: I'd like to ask if you have dealt with the theistic claim that one must have "faith in reason"? A site search didn't bring up anything which looked on target.

[August 18, 2009 1:48 PM](#)

[Bahnsen Burner](#) said...

Hi Jay and Madmax,

Thanks for your comments. Sorry for my delay in responding... It's been unpredictably busy for me this week.

In regard to question about one having to have "faith in reason," I think you're right, MM - I don't think I've addressed this claim specifically on my blog. I've encountered it myself numerous times in the past - perhaps in a forum which is no longer on the net???

Was there anything else said in tandem with this claim to support it? Any definitions of terms stated, any argument proposed in defense of this conclusion? Without these, the objector essentially concedes the matter to those who do provide definitions. Of course, the detractor at that point could always claim that his position has been misrepresented. Then again, if the opportunity to provide an informed defense of his claim has been forfeited, then he doesn't have much ground to stand on.

I've made some notes on the matter, but would prefer to address the claim in the detractor's own words, especially if he does define his terms and/or presents an argument for this claim. Anything more you can add?

Let me know, and I'll be happy to address it.

Regards,
Dawson

[August 21, 2009 10:37 AM](#)

[madmax](#) said...

Dawson,

I'm going to get the argument from a religionist I know and I will get back to you.

MM

[August 21, 2009 10:08 PM](#)

[Bahnsen Burner](#) said...

Okay, MM, I'll be keeping an eye out for it. If it can fit in the comments section, go ahead and post it here if you like. If it's too big for a comment post (Blogger now has a size limit), you can e-mail it to me at: sortion@hotmail.com.

Thanks in advance! I'm looking forward to it - a great topic for a blog entry.

Regards,
Dawson

[August 21, 2009 11:04 PM](#)

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