

Friday, August 28, 2009

## RazorsKiss on the Christian God as the Basis of Knowledge - Part 9: Supernatural Deception

In this, my final installment of my examination of [RazorsKiss' debate](#) on the proper basis of knowledge, I explore the responses which RazorsKiss ("RK") gave to LeBlanc's question:

What if God is deceiving you?

LeBlanc asked RK this question in the cross-examination section of their debate.

RK's response was predictable. He insists that he could not have been deceived by his god because "God cannot lie." This in itself suggests that truth-telling is not a choice which RK's god can make (it has no choice but to speak truthfully), which in turn suggests that man has an ability which the Christian god does not have (we can choose to tell the truth or not to tell the truth). It has always been unclear to me just how it could be the case that a consciousness which can distinguish between truth and falsehood, would be so constrained in the range of choices open to it that it is unable to lie. But Christians insist this is the case with their god.

To back up his response that "God cannot lie," RK quoted the bible:

"...in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago, but at the proper time manifested, [even] His word, in the proclamation with which I was entrusted according to the commandment of God our Savior..." (Titus 1:2-3)

Not surprisingly, LeBlanc did not find this very convincing. Essentially, RK has said he has learned things from a source, and when he is asked whether or not he could have been deceived by that source, he responds by saying that the source in question cannot deceive, because the source itself says it "cannot lie."

How does he know that the source is true?

Because it says so?

I'm reminded of the question which Cornelius Van Til famously asks:

Who wishes to make such an elementary blunder in logic, as to say that we believe something to be true because it is in the Bible? (*A Survey of Christian Epistemology*, p. 12)

Apparently the answer to this question is: Christians do!

What RK's response to LeBlanc essentially amounts to is the confession "that's what I read in the bible and I believe it" (and therefore it must be true), and models nothing more than utterly indiscriminate gullibility, such as we would find in the following:

**Boy:** Mom, I met a man after school today and he promised to give me a million dollars if I go fishing with him on Saturday.

**Mom:** What? I find that really hard to believe. Who was this man? You shouldn't talk to strangers.

**Boy:** No, Mom, he's totally legit and trustworthy. He's not lying. A million dollars!

**Mom:** Now how can you be so sure he's not lying?

**Boy:** Well, he told me that he never lies. So he must be telling the truth!

Naturally, RK would likely say in response to this that he's talking about "God," not about some man whom a boy meets on the street. Consequently, the above scenario would not be representative since it does not take into account the nature of the Christian god.

In his response to RK's answer, LeBlanc stated:

But God was the author (or inspiration) of those very words. If his intent was to deceive, he has just succeeded. I ask again, what if God is deceiving you?

RK's answer to this was even less convincing:

For if [the] dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith [is] futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. ~ 1 Cor 15:9

RK again recites the bible (i.e., the very source in question), and this time quotes a passage which merely appeals to consequentialism, as if to say: "If I've been deceived, then I'm still in my sins, and everyone else who has died, died in their sins, so if our only hope throughout our lives has been Christ, we are to be most pitied among men." This of course does not give us any confidence that what RK calls "God" cannot and has not deceived him. If the veracity of a source is in question, it does no good to appeal to that source to answer that question, especially if the intent is to confirm its veracity. To do so is known as *begging the question*, for it assumes the veracity of that source, which is what is in question to begin with.

LeBlanc, still not satisfied with RK's answer (and rightly so), pressed the question yet again:

Again, all scripture and proposed action of God are immediately discounted if the motivation in fact was to deceive. Can you show that God is not deceiving you in all your knowledge of him?

How did RK respond to this? He stated:

If God intended to deceive, He would not be God. He would be Satan. Therefore, you would likely have to use the TANS argument. A God of that character is not God at all, and therefore, yet again, another impossible (redefinition) advanced as an argument. If we could win by redefining things, debates would be fairly short affairs.

This is another appeal to consequentialism. Essentially RK is saying that if he has been deceived, then what he calls "God" is not really "God," but "Satan." He may reject this alternative because he doesn't like its implications, but that would not constitute an argument securing the case that his source of knowledge has not deceived him (cf. RK's statement: "I am making a claim that I have mediate knowledge from the only possible source that is justifiable. ie: It's not me, it's God in me, as Scripture says."). Indeed, how does RK know that what he calls "God" is really not "Satan"? He does not explain the basis of his stated certainty here, nor does he identify any epistemological steps by which he came to the conclusion that what he worships is in fact the Christian god as he conceives of it, rather than some malevolent supernatural being playing with his mind. This is most ironic, given the nature of the debate; earlier in the debate (in his [opening statement](#)) RK had emphasized the importance of epistemology:

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.

RK's ever-evolving response to LeBlanc's line of inquiry fails to outrun its inherent circularity, and only brings into question RK's identification of whatever it is he calls "God" as "God." It's clear that RK is anxious to rest his claims on someone's "authority" as the "standard" by which they are to be judged. But his responses to LeBlanc's question demonstrate that when the veracity of that "authority" is questioned, all he can do is appeal to that "authority" in order to put those questions to rest. We're again back to the boy trying to convince his mother that he's going to get a million dollars if he goes fishing with some stranger who promised it to him.

Note also that RK finds it necessary to shift the burden back to LeBlanc. By asking the question he has posed to RK, LeBlanc now needs to take up a defense of "TANS" - presumably the "transcendental argument for the non-existence of Satan." But this misses a most profound point which RK himself needs to deal with. It is not LeBlanc's, but RK's worldview which posits the existence of "Satan," a malevolent supernatural being which is known as "the father of lies" (Jn. 8:44) which "if it were possible" might "deceive the very elect" (Mt. 24:24). RK

is one who seems to be saying that it is *not* possible for himself to be deceived. But even this is not believable. Is he saying that he's never been deceived? I doubt even he believes this.

There is of course the concept of lying by omission. Christians insist that "God cannot lie" (which in itself seems rather incoherent), but at the same time they admit that their god does not reveal all it knows. In other words, it deliberately holds back knowledge. Bahnsen appeals to this very point in his defense of the problem of evil when he writes:

God does not always (indeed, rarely) provide an explanation to human beings for the evil which they experience or observe "The secret things belong to the Lord our God" (Deut. 29:29). We might not be able to understand God's wise and mysterious ways, even if He told us (cf. Isa. 55:9). Nevertheless, the fact remains that He has not told us why misery and suffering and injustice are part of His plan for history and for our individual lives. (*Always Ready*, p. 173)

RK himself made several references in his debate with LeBlanc to Bahnsen's book *Always Ready*, so I take it that he endorses its content and would agree with much of what Bahnsen says, such as the premise that the Christian god deliberately chooses not to distribute certain items of knowledge to believers. And going by what Bahnsen says here, and by the very premise that this supernatural being chooses not to divulge certain pieces of information to human beings, who could say what knowledge it has denied believers like RK? There may be many things about itself that this god has not revealed. That it can choose to withhold some information from believers, indicates that it chooses which information it does reveal to them. This means it has been selective in what it tells believers. It could feasibly choose to tell believers only part of the truth (which is what Bahnsen is essentially saying it does), and thereby concealing information which may bear on the matter significantly. It could, for instance, withhold certain information which would impact the proper definition of "God," the premise to which RK makes appeal in his insistence that "God cannot lie." In fact, that it withholds any information at all suggests that it could in fact be lying by omission, since this can only mean that it selectively filters what it will reveal to human beings. Why would it choose to withhold any information? Bahnsen suggests that even if it did, "we might not be able to understand God's wise and mysterious ways." But this did not keep it from revealing that it is a Trinity, a doctrine which has puzzled Christians from its inception. So to say that the Christian god chooses not to reveal certain things about itself or its plan because it will not be understood, is not consistent with the overall picture here.

Both points here - that RK cannot be deceived, and that the Christian god cannot lie by omission - would need to be established beyond reasonable doubt if RK wanted to present a convincing case that he has not in fact been deceived. But instead of addressing these points, he foolishly makes the issue a matter of definition. Presumably, his "God" *by definition* cannot lie. This not only fails to take into account the fact that definitions are a property of concepts rather than of specific entities (he might know this if his worldview had a theory of concepts), but also implies that his "God" is merely psychological, on a metaphysical par with concepts as such (i.e., integrations we form by a mental process). It also begs the question, for it assumes that he has accurately identified what he calls "God" as "God," and this is the very issue which LeBlanc has inquired on. What is the source of RK's "definition" of "God," if not the "God" whose truthfulness itself has been questioned?

Saddam Hussein could easily have claimed that he never lies or deceives. But would RK accept this? I highly doubt it. Saddam was a human being, he would say, not "God." But this would again beg the question by assuming the very point in question, namely that the being RK has identified as "God" has not deceived him.

Personally, I would put the question to RK a little differently. The focus of the question needs to be widened a bit so as to get to the heart of the matter, and understand the issue in terms of a general *principle*. This would also serve to block off expedient corridors of evasion on the claimant's part. On his own premises, RK believes the claims of a supernatural being, since "God" is supposed to be a supernatural being. So RK is someone who takes at face value the claims of a supernatural being. Is it possible that this supernatural being might be deceiving RK? There's nothing on RK's premises which inherently preclude a supernatural being from lying and deceiving. After all, "Satan" is supposed to be a supernatural being, and it's "the father of lies" according to Christianity. So according to RK's worldview, there are supernatural beings running loose which are capable of deceiving human beings, and which are bent on doing so. So how does RK know that the supernatural being which has allegedly revealed itself to him is "God" is not some supernatural being which has deceived him? Here it becomes all the more clear that he's begging the question if he responds by saying "God cannot lie," for this assumes that what has allegedly revealed itself to him cannot deceive him. It assumes that whatever has been revealing itself to him is what he defines as "God."

But if a supernatural being has deceived him, this means that his identification of said supernatural being as "God" cannot be trusted.

So he's assuming a premise which the question has effectively brought into doubt. That he can "answer" it only by affirming that it can't be so, is (as LeBlanc rightly points out) simply evasive. When pressed on the matter, RK became visibly miffed in his response, saying that he was not "going to change [his] answer because [LeBlanc] continues to ask it." But the issue is not about RK *changing* his answer, but actually producing an answer to the question *on its own terms* rather than on his question-begging assumptions.

That RK would claim that it is "impossible" for his god to lie, seems to violate what Christianity itself teaches. Matthew 19:26 tells us that "with God all things are possible." It does little good to say on the one hand that "all things are possible," only then to start defending against certain uncomfortable questions by saying they are "impossible" on the other.

But RK still tries to construe the question as an attempt to "redefine" his god:

A God who is evil instead of good, who is a liar rather than the truth, is mutable rather than immutable, and imperfect rather than perfect, unjust rather than just... we could go on. Your questions all seem to entail redefinitions. "if God had an impossible definition for any being claiming to be the God you believe in, or any god at all, could he do \_X\_". To claim that the antithesis of the self-existent and omnipotent God that I believe in is possible - seems to be.. a stretch.

Of course, if the Christian uses the word "good" to refer to his god, it has lost its meaning to begin with. And to call everything opposite of the Christian god "evil" does little more than this. But from RK's standpoint, which will insist that "God" is "good" and not a liar, immutable, perfect and just instead of mutable, imperfect and unjust, it seems that he has simply defined his way to his preferred answer. Anything that challenges it is considered an attempt to "redefine" his god, and for whatever reason this is considered "impossible." All this misses the point of the question, while in fact begging it outright, namely whether or not RK has received knowledge from a supernatural source which has fraudulently passed itself off as what he has defined as "God." Since RK grants validity to the notion of the supernatural, he needs to explain why this is not the case, while the answers which he has been giving simply assume that the supernatural source in question is in fact what he calls "God" - i.e., a being which cannot lie and does not deceive. If I were a Christian, I don't see how I could find any solace in such responses. If one is entirely dependent upon a supernatural being for the information one learns about it, and that supernatural being says "Yes, I am wholly good, I cannot lie," how would one know whether or not this is true? How could one know that it has truthfully represented itself? How could one be certain that it is not an evil being posturing itself as something it is not? Saying essentially that it's true by definition may cut the cheese, but it surely doesn't cut the cake. In the end, I don't see how RK's response is fundamentally any different from, "it's true because I want it to be true," since in the end he is in control of which attributes apply to the supernatural being which has allegedly communicated to him. He says it's impossible for whatever this supernatural being is to lie, and we have nothing other than his word to take on this.

In the Question and Answer section following the debate, RK was once again asked to explain how it could be that he has not been deceived by what he calls "God." It is in this Question and Answer section that RK provided some further description of the "sensus divinitatus," which he described in his opening statement as an "internal 'sense' ... which all men possess, as image-bearers of their Creator - and which allow them to recognize the God that they even sometimes deny." According to RK, this "internal 'sense'" plays an active role in the believer's mental life:

As the Spirit is also, per Scripture, the author of the revelation, 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.

When RK was asked,

if God intended to deceive, from what standard would you contrive that he is not God if your standard IS God? IF God deceives, from what standard do you derive lying as wrong for God? If it is God, and he lies, why is it wrong? What makes lying immoral if God were to do it? To me, this seems as if you are asserting a personal standard.

he no doubt had this idea of the “sensus divinitatus” in mind when he responded:

That was precisely why I said that such questions are impossibilities, as they attempt to redefine a being that is self-existent, self-sufficient, immutable, unchanging, and etc. Such a thing is an impossibility. The point that is missed is that my relationship with God is not merely intellectual. It is personal. I know God, in my creaturely way, as Persons. I communicate, I am acted upon, and act on behalf of. In short, the question seeks to divorce God’s attributes, and to redefine God as a different sort of being - one which I do not know, do not communicate with, and do not have relation to.

It is strange to say that questions which have just been presented are “impossibilities.” Moreover, the question is not whether or not it is possible to “redefine” a being which is said to be “self-existent, self-sufficient, immutable, unchanging, and etc.” (which RK says is “impossible”), but whether or not RK can reliably explain how it could not be the case that the supernatural being with which he has communicated may have deceived him. I suspect that RK shifted the question onto the former matter because he doesn’t have a good answer to the question which was actually posed to him, for his attempts thus far to address the matter have simply begged the question.

Obviously it is not impossible to pose or consider such questions (for they were just posed), nor is it impossible for a man to be deceived. Also, since Christianity in fact posits the existence of supernatural beings such as “Satan” and “demons” which are thought to employ devices of deception and trickery, even RK should acknowledge the possibility, on Christianity’s own grounds, of the existence of a supernatural being which may have deceived him, since he claims to have received knowledge from a supernatural being. And since the being which allegedly communicates to RK is supposed to be supernatural, it no doubt could have highly refined ways of effectively deceiving a mere human being, who is by nature (according to Christianity) incapable of judging right judgment on his own without supernatural guidance in the first place.

What RK fails to consider is the possibility that the being with which he claims to have this close relationship is not really “God” as he has come to define it, but something else which has deceived him into thinking that it is “God” as he defines it. To simply say that this is not possible, does not tell us why it is not possible. We know from our experiences with other human beings, whom we can see, touch, listen to, accompany in our mundane experiences, etc., that we can be deceived by people we know very intimately. If RK has a close relationship with a supernatural being, and he has no independent way of confirming what it tells him about itself (it’s supposed to be the ultimate source and standard of RK’s knowledge, right?), why suppose that it is impossible for it to have deceived him? The question seems all the more pertinent when we take into account the fact that Christianity insists on complete trust and surrender on the part of the believer, to accept what the supernatural being tells the believer on its say so, without question, without critical analysis, without any hesitation at all. Making the issue into a matter of “redefining God” only diverts the question without considering this context or satisfying what it is asking.

Christians of all stripes claim to be in direct personal contact with their god, to have the “indwelling” of the “Holy Spirit” in them guiding their lives and encouraging their faithfulness. If we are to take RK’s claim seriously, then it seems that we would expect all Christians to have “the equivalent of having the author of the [bible] standing over [their] shoulder[s], and correcting [their] faulty understandings, and continually adjusting [their] noetic ‘issues’.” But if that were the case, how could all of Christendom be so internally fractured as it is by schisms, debates, petty squabbling, and sometimes outright animosity between factions, with the problem only getting worse as the centuries pass? If the Holy Spirit were truly playing an active role in the mental lives of Christians, it seems we’d see a lot more uniformity in their interpretations of the biblical texts. But we do not see this. Far from it in fact, what we do find within Christianity is endless division, on virtually every doctrinal issue that has ever been proposed. Could it be that the Holy Spirit delights in such division, or that it is powerless to control it? Or should we suppose that internal conflicts among Christians are intended by the Holy Spirit as part of “God’s plan”?

If A is A, however, then truth is uniform with itself. It would be absurd then to suppose that the Holy Spirit, via the “sensus divinitatus,” is guiding one believer’s interpretation and understanding of “Scripture” one way, another another way, and yet another another way, such that the result is different believers walking around with conflicting interpretations and understandings of what the bible really means. But this is what this last alternative would have us believe.

Finally, a last question was posed to RK on this point:

if God has freewill, why are hypotheticals not possible? Free will would denote all things are possible for

God.

RK responded to this by saying:

Because there is a lack of distinction made between creation/creator, their disparate natures, and the relationship between them. God is free in that He does whatever He wills. Whatever God wills, on the transcendent level, is the determiner for what is possible - on the created level. It's like trying to ask why a child can't make his parent do whatever they think is possible. What the child is capable of doing is whatever is possible for the child - but in this case, the parent can, and has, determined all possible events, whatsoever, that will come to pass. So there isn't any frame of reference, aside from God's self-description, to tell us this. If His word is accurate, there are no free atoms, there is no free energy - there is only God's determination of all causal events.

RK's reference to the "creator/creature" distinction appears to be nothing more a complete red herring. Either the Christian god is free to do what it chooses, or it is not. If the hypothetical in question is the choice to deceive another mind, why is this choice possible to man, who is neither unlimited by extraneous factors nor omnipotent, but not possible for the Christian god, which is supposed to be both omnipotent and unlimited by extraneous factors? Nothing in RK's response here seems even to come close to dealing with this. RK says that it is "because there is a lack of distinction made between creation/creator, their disparate natures, and the relationship between them." But if anything, the nature of the "creator" - it is said to have free will, omnipotent, unconstrained by extraneous factors, etc. - would make it just as capable (if not more so) to deceive, as human beings are. This seems especially the case given the additional factors that (a) the believer relies *entirely* on what the supernatural being in question divulges about itself to him, and (b) Christians admit that it withholds information from them. Thus it seems that if anyone is ignoring distinctions here, it is RK, not the questioner.

RK says that "whatever God wills, on the transcendent level, is the determiner for what is possible - on the created level." But if whatever it is that RK has identified (either correctly or incorrectly) as "God" wills that RK be deceived, what's to stop it? RK's "definition" of "God"? Again, if RK got this definition from the supernatural being itself, and it is deceiving him, how does this prevent it from deceiving him? The deception would already have taken place at that point.

RK says "it's like trying to ask why a child can't make his parent do whatever they think is possible." Exactly! If RK is the child and his "God" is his parent in this case, why suppose that he could make his parent do whatever he thinks is possible? Or, why suppose that RK can make his god not be able to do whatever he thinks is not possible? To say that "what the child is capable of doing is whatever is possible for the child" while "the parent can, and has, determined all possible events, whatsoever, that will come to pass," in no way justifies RK's insistence that his god cannot deceive. If his god has determined that RK be deceived, how can RK as the child in this relationship prevent it? Unless RK fashions himself the master of his god, he would have to admit that he cannot prevent it from doing what it as determined to do. RK only concedes the matter all the more by pointing out that "there isn't any frame of reference, aside from God's self-description, to tell us this." Which can only mean: if RK's god has deceived him, RK would not know this, since he takes whatever his god allegedly tells him at its word, in complete trust, in complete surrender, in complete resignation of any right to reserve judgment. To assert on this basis that "His word is accurate," only begs the question.

Unfortunately, none of RK's responses to the question of whether or not he has or could be deceived by the supernatural being he claims to be in contact with, is at all convincing or persuasive. On the contrary, he seems only to be evading the matter by interpreting this question into asking something it is not asking, or simply by diverting attention away from the issue at hand.

For believers like RK, this is something they need to deal with on a daily basis. A believer who really tries to take seriously all the teachings of Christianity will have to contend with all the "spiritual" inputs he believes he's receiving throughout any given day in his "walk." As Philippians 2:12 puts it, the believer is urged to "work out [his] own salvation with fear and trembling." His psyche is thus on overload as he struggles to discern the "good spirits" from the "evil spirits," the "moving of the Spirit" from his own impulses and desires. He may be waiting for a bus, for instance, and anxious for it to come because he needs to get to work, to church, or go home, anything but sitting there waiting for a bus to come. As he waits and the bus doesn't show, he's internally dialoguing with what he wants to believe is his god. He's being "prayerful." "Lord, where's the bus? Why do you make me wait?" He may identify at this point with the psalmist, feeling persecuted by a world which is at enmity with his god and therefore

with him. Are evil forces trying to thwart his goals, or is he being tested by his god, or both? How can he know either way for certain? RK tells us that, for Christians, certainty is only a privilege, not a rightful possession one earns through his own mental efforts. And this "certainty" is "based on the most fundamental guarantor of truth" that the believer allows himself to have. But this "guarantor of truth," the Christian god itself, deliberately withholds information from the believer, keeping him in the dark to an extent that the believer cannot know. So when he is confronted with dilemmas which have no empirical avenue of verification open to informing them, such as whether evil forces are trying to hinder him (in which case he should resist - cf. James 4:7), or the impediments he encounters are his god testing or chastising him (in which case he should submit - cf. Heb. 12:6-8). If it is the devil trying to have its way with the believer, is it prevailing? Is it setting the believer up for a fall which he cannot foresee? Isn't his god there to protect him?

In an effort, then, to keep himself from thinking that his god has abandoned him, the believer will try to convince himself that his faith is being tried, which puts his god right back where he wants him, right there alongside him as he endures the frustrating situation. Then he starts to wonder, "Why am I being tried, O Lord?" and then quickly shoos this thought away because it is essentially questioning his god's actions, which can be counted as sin. Or, he may wonder if he has accurately identified what is going on: "Am I right to attribute these influences to God, when in fact they could be coming from Satan?" He dare not confuse the two, but when the behaviors which his worldview requires him to attribute to each are essentially indistinguishable from one another, how can he have any certainty? Try as he may to affect in his mind "the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding" (Phil. 4:7), his worldview sets him up for failure. So his mind cannot rest.

He needs resolution. Unfortunately, this "peace" which the bible mentions is the most fleeting thing in the believer's private mental life. As he realizes that this "peace" is difficult to achieve and ultimately impossible to preserve, he chooses to revise his understanding of what it is. It's a fact that he's anxious, worried that he's crossed his god somehow and therefore on the outs with the divine. But then he recalls the verse commanding him to "be anxious for nothing" (Phil. 4:6 NASB). So in an effort to avoid this sin, he tries to reaffirm his faith in whatever his god's "plan" may be for the given moment, even though he has no idea of what the details of that plan may be. Regardless, he's supposed to "let go, and let God," and forego his need for certainty about anything that is to come. This is as difficult as allowing yourself to drop from the top of a skyscraper. So he switches gears back again, blaming the devil for the anxieties he's experiencing in an effort to salvage the "glory" which he wants his god to enjoy in his mind.

Either way he slices it, the believer is convinced that there is a supernatural entity which is trying to rock his boat, either one who is trying to deceive him into disobedience, into a breach of faith, or another who is trying to get his ass in order with the program. There's a war between two (or more) supernatural entities, one which is supposed to be all-good, and the other which is supposed to be all-evil. And his mind is the battlefield. At the same time, the believer is commanded to be at peace. How can you be at peace when two supernatural entities are waging war inside your mind, and you can't tell which is which?

The problem at this point is that it becomes impossible for the believer to reliably distinguish between psychological inputs supposedly originating from the all-good supernatural being on the one hand, and those supposedly originating from the all-evil supernatural being on the other. He's supposed to "try the spirits" (1 John 4:1), but honestly, how is he supposed to do this except by allowing his mental life to venture ever deeper into the battlefield? He believes that he's being pushed and pulled in various directions by different supernatural beings influencing his thoughts, but he can't tell them apart. How does he know which influences are from which supernatural being? There's nothing objective, nothing verifiable, nothing certain to go by. The only thing he has is faith, which is an expression of his own determination remain in the battle and participate in the role that he believes his god has for him to fill, a role about which he knows nothing specific, because it's all part of a "plan" which is bigger than him, a plan which has been unfolding for millennia, and while he supposedly has a place in that plan, it's in his god's hands, not his own. He really doesn't know what to do. And he can't.

So how can RK know that his god is not deceiving him? Only by faith. Essentially, by simply insisting that any deception is of ungodly origin. This of course defies all the standards which Christians put on validating beliefs (so-called "warrant"), but he will not admit this. He will again point to "the Scriptures," as if somehow they settle the matter, but in fact it is by going by this source which causes all the turmoil in the first place.

Labels: [Knowledge](#), [Presuppositional Gimmickry](#), [Supernatural Deception](#)

posted by [Bahnsen Burner](#) at [9:00 AM](#)

## 2 Comments:

[madmax](#) said...

Reading through these essays and especially reading the arguments that all these Presuppositionalists make clearly shows me that all theistic apologists do, ultimately, is play games with metaphysics. I think an expert in Objectivist epistemology and the logical fallacies could go through every element of theistic philosophy and list every cognitive error being made. It would be a Herculean task but it could be done.

Also, RK used the term "noetic" at least once. I've encountered this before from theists. Noetic consciousness is supposed to have some non-rational access to knowledge, ie a form of intuition. Would the technical answer to this be that while man can get sensory input in different ways, he can only get \*knowledge\* one way - through conceptual thought? What exactly could a "non-rational means" to knowledge refer to? Could intuition ever bring you knowledge or something which could lead to knowledge after it is subjected to the rigors of logic? I think all of these assertions are examples of context dropping or concept stealing although I haven't worked out the details.

Oh and BTW, you've pumped out a tremendous amount of content recently. Its greatly appreciated, at least from me.

Regards,

MM

[August 29, 2009 4:23 PM](#)

[madmax](#) said...

Correction, a sentence I wrote should read:

"Could intuition ever bring you conceptual knowledge or is it the case that at best it can lead you to knowledge only after whatever was the product of intuition was subjected to the rigors of logic?"

Also it would be good to ask what exactly is intuition? I think intuition refers to the phenomenon when something suddenly pops into your brain. But this would just be an example of conscious/subconscious interactions which is the realm of the as yet unborn science of psycho-epistemology. It seems that mystics always want to make brain phenomena like consciousness or intuition something spooky. I guess it is to their benefit.

[August 29, 2009 5:51 PM](#)

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