

Reveling in Reversals

We continue now with some of my thoughts in response to Paul Manata's "[Bethrick Burner](#)." Readers will recall that Paul had tried to "burn" me, but here I am, alive and kicking, enjoying life as much as ever, and ready to correct Paul where he's wrong (a very time-consuming task!).

In this post, I focus on some more of Paul's "more substantive" criticisms of the Objectivist axioms. If what he provided in this section of his post qualify in his mind as "substantive," Objectivism has nothing to worry about. But I'm supposing that readers who are already familiar with Paul's position and the ploys he utilizes in defense of it, already know this, too.

Paul wrote:

"Existence," as such, has not always "existed" in Dawson's worldview. "Existence" is a concept, concepts, according to Bethrick, is the creations of human minds. Dawson means "existENTS" have always existed.

Paul's charge here, like others he has presented, trades on equivocating between metaphysics and epistemology, a confusion which Objectivism avoids by explicitly distinguishing the role of the subject and the status of its objects. To correct Paul's confusion, we only need to right the reversal his statement commits by recognizing the difference between the *concept* 'existence' and *what* that concept *denotes*, i.e., the objects to which it refers. The concept 'existence' denotes anything and everything that exists. As Peikoff explains,

"Existence"... is a collective noun, *denoting the sum of existents*. (OPAR, p. 4, emphasis added)

The axiom "existence exists" is not making a statement about the *concept* 'existence'. Rather, it is merely an affirmation stating that *what the concept denotes* (namely "the sum of existents") exists. Paul's contention above blurs a crucial distinction that should be obvious to any honest thinker. His mistake is no different than if, upon being welcomed into his home and invited to sit in a chair, I remarked "I can't sit in a concept!" If I did that, he'd be right to think me a smartass.

Paul says that I mean "'existENTS' have always existed." However, the concept 'existence' is used to denote "the *sum of existents*" as a whole, as a unit, thus providing for a single-term axiom, while the expression "existents exist," while true, is not necessarily plenary, and invites the unnecessary question "Which existents?" Thus "existence exists" is preferred because it is broader, more general, and does not overstep the level of knowledge available at the point of an initial recognition by affirming plurality, which is a higher-level concept.

Paul then wrote:

Indeed, since "existence" is a concept then it appears that in Dawson's little worldview "existence" was created by a form of consciousness!

Paul's sarcasm simply demonstrates how unserious he is as a thinker. Again we need to distinguish between the concept 'existence' and what that concept *denotes*. Objectivism nowhere teaches that *what the concept 'existence' denotes* "was created by a form of consciousness." But this fact is lost in Paul's interpretation. Indeed, what about the affirmation "existence exists independent of consciousness" does Paul not understand? Does Paul cite any Objectivist source which affirms that reality was created by a form of consciousness? No, he doesn't. Rather, he relies on distortion and sleight of hand to wring out such a characterization. But it's a misrepresentation either way you slice it. The question is: if Paul's position is so true, why does he so find it necessary to misrepresent a rival position so frequently?

The statement that "existence has always existed" is just another way of saying that existence is eternal, and really only means that existence as such is timeless - i.e., concepts of time do not apply to existence taken as a whole. On the Objectivist view, time is a measurement of motion or action, and thus presupposes that things exist. I.e., existence is preconditional to time. (More details are given [here](#).) So in terms of my worldview, I have the conceptual justification to affirm the eternity of existence. Thus, since existence is eternal, it did not need a creator. Therefore, I have sufficient justification to reject any view which affirms such a creator as irrational.

I asked:

We all have to start somewhere. What is your starting point?

Paul responded:

Depemds [sic] on what we mean by "starting point." "Starting point" for me has notions of preeminence. It has notions of "epistemological authority." God's word is my epistemic starting point in this sense. But, I suspect Dawson's confusing the order of knowing with the orde rof [sic] being.

Quite the opposite: my concern has consistently been to observe and safeguard the distinction and proper relationship between consciousness and its objects. And Paul's been resisting Objectivism precisely for this all along. And yet he accuses me of "confusing the order of knowledge with the orde rof [sic] being"? I can easily avoid such confusions because I have the axioms. Paul's worldview, however, plays fast and loose with the subject-object distinction, such that the believer never knows which is which.

My question had to do with starting points. Objectivism begins with the object of cognition, for it is only after we are aware of an object that we can identify ourselves as having that awareness. The conceptually irreducible axiom of existence identifies explicitly in the widest possible terms what we perceive directly. This is our starting point: the explicit recognition that things exist. Knowledge begins where awareness begins: with the *objects* of cognition. Hence "Objectivism." The alternative to this is subjectivism, i.e., beginning with the *subject* of cognition, such as something one imagines (e.g., "God created the universe by an act of will").

My question to Paul was intended to give him an opportunity to identify what he takes to be his starting point. Notice how he chooses to dance around the point, looking for a way to take another potshot at me (he suggests that I am confusing something that I've been very careful to keep distinct!), instead of treating the matter seriously. Paul's reaction to such questions suggests that he feels threatened by them, as if asking them constituted an invasion of some secret misdeed of his that he doesn't want people to discover. Mockery for Paul is more important than clearly explicating his position, for that is what he gives us - mockery - when an opportunity to present his position has been extended to him. It's important because it's his form of barking at intruders so they stay away. If they stay away, they won't discover what he wants to hide. But it's too late for that. His guilty little secret has been exposed.

He says that "God's word" is his "epistemic starting point," by which he means "epistemological authority." In other words, the say-so of an invisible magic being - as opposed to reason - is the final arbiter of what he accepts as knowledge. By "God's word," I suspect Paul means the entirety of the bible, from the first verse of Genesis to the last verse of Revelation, including everything in between (assuming the standard Protestant canon, of course). But obviously such an enormous mass of stories and tales is not conceptually irreducible, nor is their supposed truth perceptually self-evident. In fact, as I have pointed out before, to affirm "God's word" as his starting point, the Objectivist axioms would have to already be true. For to affirm "God's word" is to assume that something exists (there's the axiom of existence), that that something is something specific - i.e., "God's word" as opposed to Buddha's word (there's the axiom of identity), and that the one affirming all of this has awareness of what he is affirming (there's the axiom of consciousness). So again, we find religion [piggybacking its starting point](#) on the axioms of a worldview which religious believers are committed to rejecting.

To clarify the question "what is your starting point," consider the following question:

Of what are you aware *first*: the *object* which you perceive, or the *means* by which you perceive it?

Why no straight answers to this question? Why the dancing evasions? Why the pussyfooting? Why the smartalecky attitude?

Now Paul might say that the first thing he was aware of is his god, thus trying to assimilate an object-based starting point into his worldview (even though the bible never makes such epistemological claims). This would raise numerous questions which would need clear answers before such responses can be taken seriously. For instance, by what means did he acquire awareness of his god? How did he identify the object of his awareness as a god? How did he identify it as the Christian god? Is "God" a concept, or a proper name? If it is a concept, what units is it integrating? If it is a proper name, what is it naming? And how does a non-believer like myself distinguish between what believers call "God" and what they are merely imagining? After all, the non-existent and the imaginary look and behave quite alike. Unfortunately, Christians will spit and stammer to have their god-belief taken seriously, but they can never come through with clear answers to questions like these. And what's more, one Christian's answers to these questions very often conflict with another's, indicating a conspicuous lack of uniformity among Christian believers on

such matters. And they tell us their position is "absolute"? Hmm... couldn't fool us.

Meanwhile, I do recall [Paul once stating that](#) "God isn't 'one of my axioms'." So unless he has changed his position since stating this, I would not expect his "God" to be among anything he might list as his axiomatic foundations.

I wrote:

This question may be difficult to answer if one is reluctant to let go of sacred cow assumptions and beliefs that he's in the habit of accepting as true on faith.

Paul responded:

What does he mean by "accepting something as true on faith?" Does he think we must have evidence for all of our beliefs? Then what's his evidence for his belief in his axioms? If there's evidence for axiomatic beliefs then they're not axiomatic.

Paul says that "if there's evidence for axiomatic beliefs then they're not axiomatic." It's not clear what he means by "axiomatic beliefs," nor is it clear why he thinks evidential support for a conceptually irreducible fundamental disqualifies it from being axiomatic. He just puts it out there - as he calls it, a "naked assertion." Paul needs to find some clothes for his assertions, because they're shivering in the chill air, susceptible to epistemological hypothermia. Where does he get these assertions? The bible nowhere discusses axioms and the nature of their evidential support, so he must be getting them from some other source. Is his god feeding these ideas directly into his head, in which case he expects his readers to accept what he says on faith, just as he accepted them? Is he going to begin insulting us when we do not accept what he asserts on his say so? To accept a claim as true on faith, is to accept it as true not only without evidence, but in spite of evidence to the contrary. For instance, all available evidence tells us that men cannot walk on unfrozen water. But faith can push such evidence aside in preference for storybook content which states otherwise: men can walk on water, goes the teaching, if one has sufficient belief in the preferred invisible magic being. Again, notice how this view grants metaphysical primacy to conscious functions: believing makes it so for the believer, just as wishing makes it so in the case of creation ex nihilo.

Paul also wrote:

Furthermore, this assumption fals [sic] prey to an infinite regress argument.

Not if one has an objective starting point and grasps that consciousness is consciousness *of something*. Ultimately our knowledge has its basis in perception. The subject-object relationship and the nature of our consciousness demonstrate this. Those who contest this are likely seeking to protect some illicit license that they have granted themselves to replace knowledge of reality with arbitrary notions (like belief in invisible magic beings). But even those who contest the objective point of view are making use of it in their rejection of it. They're saying X is the case, which is intended to mean that it is the case independent of their wanting X to be the case. So they borrow from the very view they deny.

I wrote:

It is important to notice how the theist's would-be starting point assumes the truth of mine.

Paul responded:

But I've already sliced and diced yours.

We've seen Paul's attempts to "slice and dice" the axioms (see for instance [here](#) and [here](#)). One thing that has remained constant in them is their allegiance to distortion, deception, context-dropping, and other anti-intellectual vices. Along with this, there are times when Paul seems to acknowledge their truth while claiming that they are not unique to Objectivism, then he says they're not true, then he says that Christianity affirms them in its affirmation of a god, then he says they're uninteresting, etc. We see back-and-forth desperation against a backdrop of cunning deceit. This tells me that the axioms accomplish precisely what I expect of them.

Paul continued:

Furthermore, notice that Dawson's "starting point" is not true. Concepts are not true or false. "Existence" isn't true or false.

See what I mean? Here Paul switched back to his mood where he denies the truth of the axiom "existence exists,"

which is my starting point. This is a complete statement. Either it is true, or it is not. Objectivism holds that it is true. Paul says it is "not true," but he has not shown that it is not true. Indeed, it would have to be true in order for him even to attempt to show it to be false, for to attempt to show it to be false, he would at the very least first have to exist, and by existing he would confirm its truth. And I have already shown how concepts of truth assume the axioms via the primacy of existence principle. As for Paul's "naked assertion" that "concepts are not true or false," see ITOE, pp. 48f.

Paul wrote:

I've also noted that the idea that "existence exists" is not axiomatic sicne [sic] it presupposes a consciousness which is required to create the universal "existence."

Again Paul misses the genius of the Objectivist axioms. It is true that "the *idea* that 'existence exists'" requires a consciousness to conceive and hold it qua *idea*, since ideas are mental, and mental means pertaining to a conceptual consciousness. But it must be borne in mind that the Objectivist axiom "existence exists" is concerned primarily with affirming the *fact* that existence exists, and this fact does not require consciousness. As Porter correctly observes:

Existence doesn't depend on awareness. A is A no matter what awareness does. (ARTK, 210)

Now, ever since I unrolled my [cartoon universe analogy](#) as a way of showing just how absurd Christianity (particularly Calvinism) is, apologists have predictably missed its point and figured that the analogy applies to non-theistic conceptions of the universe as well. Some have even gone so far as to deny any applicability to the theistic model, which has puzzled many because the analogy between a cartoon and the theistic conception of the universe is so obvious. But here's Paul, again right on schedule:

Dawson's the cartoonist illustrating his little world.

Again Paul ferries out one of his "naked assertions," giving no "substantive" explanation for why states things like this. When reading his posts, one gets the impression that he takes too literally the advice, found in many an apologetic primer, that he should try to turn every criticism and objection raised against Christian mysticism back on those who have raised them. Others have tried this in the case of the cartoon universe analogy (see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#), for examples). The problem for these theists is that a non-theistic worldview typically does not conceive of the universe as something whose content was "created" by a devising, planning mind (such as a cartoon) which "controls whatsoever comes to pass" (Van Til, *Defense of the Faith*, p. 160) within that universe. Consequently there is nothing in the non-theistic conception of the universe that is analogous to either a cartoon or a cartoonist, while there is in the theistic model. So there's a major disconnect going on here for these theists, which calls into question their ability to integrate simple points in a rational manner. Now Paul did list five links to blog postings which supposedly deal with my "cartoon worldview argument." I hope my readers have had a chance to look at them. I have pasted those links below for their benefit:

<http://triablogue.blogspot.com/2006/06/incinerating-bethrick.html>

<http://triablogue.blogspot.com/2006/06/seeing-thru-bethrick-wall.html>

<http://triablogue.blogspot.com/2006/06/dawsons-mickey-mouse-philosophy.html>

<http://triablogue.blogspot.com/2006/06/dawsons-loony-tunes.html>

http://triablogue.blogspot.com/2006/05/bethricks-blunders-or-up-dawsons-creek_14.html

After having read these, I wonder what Paul found so compelling about them. If these are the best that theists can produce against the overt cartoonish implications of their conception of the universe, then non-theists should be encouraged to use the cartoon universe analogy all the more. Oh, and yes, the concerns raised in those blogs have already been addressed. For instance, [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#). Selah.

I wrote:

If we begin with the fact of existence, then it should be obvious that it is nonsensical to ask for an explanation of existence. There goes the cosmological argument.

Paul responded:

But of course, this is ridiculous. The cosmological argument doesn't seek to show how any existing entity came to be, it seeks to show how the existence of "contingent" entities came to be. So, it's entirely appropriate to ask for an "explanation" for the existence of contingent things."

All models of the cosmological argument that I have examined nowhere seek to "show how" any entities "came to be." While the express goal of such arguments may be to validate the idea that the universe had a beginning, for instance, the real goal behind such arguments in a theistic setting is to affirm the idea that the universe is the product of some form of consciousness. But no model of the cosmological argument that I have examined successfully does this, for their defenders typically begin arguing in mid-stream, having taken for granted all kinds of assumptions (most notably the primacy of consciousness) and thus ignore certain key burdens which they would have to make good on in order for their arguments to really work. It is because theists are so prone to starting their inferences mid-stream, having already accepted all kinds of dubious assumptions without critically examining them, that calling them to identify their starting point is so effective. They aren't prepared to identify their starting point, because they don't know what it is. True to Rand's razor, challenging theists to identify their starting point effectively slashes off a whole category of invalid and useless ideas. That's why we get attitude instead of intelligence when we challenge them to identify their premises. It's not because we've done something wrong, it's because we're doing something right. It is they who have done something wrong, and now they're caught redhanded. Resentment is to be expected.

Now if the cosmological argument "seeks to show how the existence of 'contingent' entities came to be," then it suffers from the fallacy of deriving its conclusion by stipulation of contrived definition. For instance, a defender of the cosmological argument for the existence of an invisible magic creator can simply define everything that is "finite" or "material" or "physical" as "contingent," and since "contingent" things (allegedly) need to be explained in terms of something prior (such as a magic consciousness which wished them into existence), then the conclusion that God or Wod or Geusha or Blarko exists seems to follow rather naturally. Typically (and what I had in mind when I wrote the above statement), the cosmological argument seeks to argue that the universe had a beginning and thus needed to be caused. But what is the "universe"? The universe is the sum total of all that exists. So the cosmological argument asserts causality prior to the sum total of existence, which is a blatant stolen concept. Such nonsense is unnecessary if we begin with the fact that existence exists.

Paul wrote:

However, let me say, I am in full agreement that it's nonsensical to ask for an "explanation" of God's existence!

And I agree: it is nonsensical to ask for an explanation of something that does not exist.

I asked:

Where does Christianity explicitly affirm the axiom 'existence exists'?

Paul responded:

Taken as the idea that something has always existed, we affirm it in God.

But above, Paul said that "existence exists" is "not true." Now he wants to claim that the Christian worldview affirms this "in God." So again, he's trying to have it both ways: it's "not true" when my worldview affirms it, but it's true so long as the existence of his invisible magic being is part of the package. He goes backwards so that he can be going forward, which confirms the diagnosis of systemic reversalism.

Meanwhile, we have here a prime example of Christian assimilation caught in the act. At least Christians sometimes know a good idea when they see one. The trouble is, their worldview does not contribute any good ideas. On the contrary, it pilfers them from rival positions and tries to squeeze them into Christian costuming so that they can claim them as their own. But scratch the surface, you'll find that the idea was ripped off from a prior source.

The axiom 'existence exists' is not simply "the idea that something has always existed." The recognition that existence exists is not the same thing as affirming that existence has always existed, for this affirmation requires more information than is available at this stage of cognition. Incidentally, [we have already seen](#) how Paul himself tried to use this fact to argue that the axiom of existence is not sufficient to support the primacy of existence principle. The axiom did not provide enough knowledge, according to Paul's argument, to conclude that what exists, exists independent of consciousness. Now, however, the axiom provides enough information to infer that his invisible magic being is *eternal*. This constant flip-flopping is simply amazing!

The axiom of existence is the recognition of a conceptually irreducible fact of which we have direct, firsthand awareness. Where does Christianity identify existence as a conceptually irreducible fact of which we have direct, firsthand awareness? Where does the bible, as the primary source of Christian doctrine, address the issue of metaphysical primacy? Where does it teach its readers what the proper relationship between a subject and its objects is? From what I can tell, its primitive authors nowhere breathed a word of this matter, as if they were completely ignorant of an issue that is so crucial to knowledge. Why is that? Paul does not offer anything to support the idea that Christianity ever addresses these points. Instead of addressing them, Christians want to assimilate them in a parasitic orgy of consumption and demolition.

It's true that the claim that a god exists assumes the fact that existence exists, but [I've been pointing this out all along](#): my worldview's fundamentals would have to be true for them to assert their god-belief in the first place. Paul flip-flops back and forth, saying that "existence exists" is not true one moment, then claiming that this fact is packaged in Christianity's affirmation of an eternal invisible magic being, then he says that it's uninteresting, then he insinuates that Objectivism's identification of these facts is not unique (though he does not show any other philosophy which identifies them in the manner that Objectivism does), etc., etc. The ebb and flow of Christian psychosis is strong with this lad. He continually seeks ways to evade, mischaracterize, or drop context, while my position remains constant and sure. In the process of trying to discredit Objectivism's fundamentals, Paul seems aloof to the fact that he's constantly making use of those same fundamentals. This has been pointed out to him before. See for instance [Probing Mr. Manata's Poor Understanding of the Axioms](#). He's been corrected numerous times before. But he continues in his mistaken path. I can only suppose this is intentional, for he should know better by now. I do not think that Paul is stupid, or this thick-headed. Rather, he's got a confessional investment to protect, and he's willing to stoop to the lowest possible levels in order to do just that. In obeying the Christian directive to "deny himself" (cf. Mt. 16:24), Paul has denied his honor along with everything else.

Paul wrote:

Objectivism can't affirm this in this sense since "existence" was created by consciousness.

Objectivism does not hold that existence was created by consciousness. What part of the statement "existence exists *independent of consciousness*" does Paul not understand?

Paul wrote:

If Dawson means this to mean that unconscious bits of matter have always existed, then where's the argument? I certainly don't assume that "unconscious bits of matter has always existed" when I deny it.

Does Paul think that conscious bits of matter have always existed? I see nothing problematic with the view that matter has always existed. I already understand that it is not created by an act of consciousness.

Paul had written:

Christianity teaches that God exists and has existed eternally.

And I responded:

And just to entertain such a teaching, the Objectivist axioms would have to be true: something would have to exist, that something would have to be itself as opposed to something other than itself, and you would have to be conscious in order to have awareness of such teachings.

Paul now responds:

See, Christianity taught the axiom that "something exists" before Objectivism did!

But above Paul said that my axiom is "not true," just after saying that he has "already sliced and diced" it. Now he says that Christianity taught this same axiom "before Objectivism did!" He wants it both ways, and then some. I don't even find the word "axiom" in any of my bibles. Nonetheless, an opportunity has been extended to Paul to show where Christianity explicitly affirms the axioms of Objectivism. He has not shown where it does this, and yet he still wants to claim that Christianity taught these axioms before Objectivism did. Where's the evidence for this? I simply pointed out that Objectivism's axioms would have to be true for Paul to entertain Christianity's "naked assertions." It does not at all follow from this that Christianity taught Objectivism's axioms before Objectivism did. The primitives who contributed to the bible took many assumptions for granted. Among these are fundamental truths which all thinkers must take for granted. Objectivism is the only philosophy which has come out and named them explicitly and

integrated them consistently into a working philosophy fit for man and his needs.

Paul then wrote:

Dawson confuses my ability to entertain the idea with God's eternal existence.

Here's another of Paul's signature "naked assertions." I think he pulled this whamo out just so he could feel like he had a response to one of my points. But let's consider: have I confused Paul's "ability to entertain the idea" of his god "with God's eternal existence"? No, I haven't done this. A man's ability to entertain ideas is real, but the invisible magic beings he imagines are not. I think what happened was that Paul simply did not grasp what I had stated above. Let me explain so that he gets it going forward. He stated that "Christianity teaches that God exists and has existed eternally." And in reply to this I pointed out that "just to entertain such a teaching, the Objectivist axioms would have to be true." I explained what I meant by listing the basic facts that would have to obtain in order for Paul to be able to entertain *any* teaching, whether it is Christianity's or anything else. The axioms "identify the preconditions of knowledge: the distinction between existence and consciousness, between reality and the awareness of reality, between the object and the subject of cognition." (ITOE, p. 57) Just to consider a certain teaching, something needs to exist (such as the person doing the considering), that thing would have to be distinct from other things (such as what is being considered), and the one doing the considering would have to be conscious (since considering is a conscious exercise). These facts are identified by the axioms. They are more fundamental to any claim Paul wants to make about the teaching he has accepted on faith. On the contrary, rather than confusing Paul's "ability to entertain the idea with God's eternal existence," I observe the proper conceptual hierarchy involved. Paul did not grasp this point because the biblical worldview does not equip him with knowledge of concepts, so he views all ideas as if they were primaries, which not only short-circuits any conceptual relationships he might claim for his ideas, but also logical inference as a means of arriving at them. While the objective theory of concepts enables thinkers to develop their ideas by building upwards from a solid foundation, like a city full of skyscrapers, the primitive worldview of the bible treats knowledge "like a village of squat bungalows, with every room huddling down against the earth's surface" (OPAR, p. 130), enslaving the believer's cognition to the level of contextless concretes and debilitating their capacity for conceptual thought. It is because mystical worldviews like Christianity do not grasp the hierarchical nature of knowledge, that their adherents do not recognize the importance of a *conceptually irreducible* starting point (which Paul has not been able to identify on behalf of Christianity) or see any intellectual problem in accepting and affirming stolen concepts (since those who do not understand that knowledge has a logically hierarchical structure will not know when that hierarchy has been breached). But simply because a problem is not seen, it does not mean that the problem does not exist. Stolen concepts are the carbon dioxide of cognition: tasteless, odorless, virtually undetectable without the right equipment.

Paul continued:

So, since Dawson affirms that Christianity taught this before Objectivism did, then Dawson must [sic] presuppose the Christian worldview to "understand" what he said.

Now really, does Paul actually think that one must presuppose all the stories and tales of the bible to understand the axioms? This is why he is so unteachable: his commitment to division for its own sake chokes any hope of him actually considering the merits of a position which does not bow to his invisible magic being. It's all a game to him at this point. He has no choice but to resort to this kind of childishness because he has no hope against the axioms.

Paul had written:

The Objectivist makes a mountain out of molehill with this one.

And in response I asked:

How so? Objectivism is simply making the rational thinker's conceptually irreducible starting point explicit.

Paul responded:

Because in the uninteresting sense, "things exist" isn't unique to you.

The issue is not whether it is "unique" to any individual or another. Objectivism holds that it is universally unavoidable anyway. So I don't know where Paul gets this concern for vanity. The issue is that it is *unavoidable*, even if only implicitly, and that failing to grasp the fact that things exist independent of consciousness has adverse consequences for philosophy.

Now if Paul can cite another philosophy which explicitly affirms the primacy of existence as Objectivism understands it, and remains loyal to this principle throughout its development, then I would like to know what it is.

Regardless, I never claimed that "things exist" is "unique to [me]." I pointed out that my axioms, which Paul is continually trying to discredit and then assimilate, would have to be true for him to assert the existence of his supernatural pet.

Paul writes:

As you poured meaning into the term, e.g., "uncreated, unconscious stuff," we saw that this wasn't "axiomatic."

Where did I "pour meaning into the term" such that "things exists" really means "uncreated, unconscious stuff"? Paul does not quote me doing this. Why? Because I never stated this. Nor have I implied it. Paul is projecting his own fears into my mouth; he is the one who has poured these meanings into the axiom, in order to say it isn't axiomatic, in order to evade it. It's nowhere in the original. All this caricature is quite unnecessary, and only serves to get Paul's blood pressure up.

He writes:

Remember, "existence exists" doesn't tell us anything about the nature of what exists.

Yes, and we should remember also that "existence exists" is not the only axiom, *and* that the mind does not stop with the axioms anyway. Anyone who doubts the primacy of existence principle has a wealth of material available to confirm it. I [even suggested simple experiments](#) that anyone can perform anytime to check it. Paul ignores all of these points because they get in the way of his apologetic. He cannot deal with Objectivism on its own terms, so he has to "slice and dice" it, e.g., ignoring context, failing to integrate its points, insisting on stolen concepts, and indulging other nefarious misrepresentations in order to keep his head above water. The gap that Paul creates in his own understanding is so big that he thinks he can fit his god into it. Watch him stuff it.

Paul wrote:

And so the uninteresting claim, "something exists" isn't problematic,

Then why all the fuss from theists when Objectivists point it out in their foundations? I know why. The reason for all the fuss is when the axiom of *consciousness* is introduced, thus indicating the proper relationship between consciousness and its objects. *This* is what theists do not like to be reminded of, *this* is what theists want to ignore, *this* is what spoils their fantasy. And that is why Paul focuses only on the first axiom and ignores the rest. And that is why Paul feels the need to make a mountain out of a mole hill. He figures that if he can keep the focus of the discussion on the axiom of existence exclusively, then he'll never have to deal with the issue of metaphysical primacy because that issue pertains to the relationship between existence and consciousness, and this exposes the lie behind theism. If the axiom of consciousness can be ignored, then so can the issue of metaphysical primacy. But all along, Paul is making use of his own consciousness to participate in the discussion (and deliberately misinterpret the axiom of existence), which means that even he cannot ignore this issue. Paul needs to deal with *all* the axioms, rather than pick and choose one and ignore the rest. But he doesn't do this because his theism will not survive it, and he knows this.

Paul wrote:

but your qualified claim is [problematic] since it's not axiomatic not acceptable given what else you say. [sic]

How is "existence exists" not axiomatic? Paul's explanation is that "it's not axiomatic... given *what else* you say," which confirms my earlier assessment: he wants cognition to stop with the initial axiom. And he wants it to stop there because he doesn't want to deal with what comes next, namely the issue of metaphysical primacy. But herein lies Paul's problem: cognition does *not* stop with the initial axiom. Cognition *begins* with the axioms, it doesn't discover one and then come to a halt. There's still the relationship between what is known and the means by which it is known that must be dealt with and understood. Paul isn't ready to go there yet. He wants to stall the discussion because of apologetic hesitation, which short-circuits his mind's conceptual capacity entirely. He insinuates that I have inserted additional meaning into the term beyond what is available at the axiomatic level, but again this charge is based on sheer context-dropping: the knowledge I integrate into my view is available at a later stage of cognition, one which I came to long ago, but which Paul never wants to visit. Meanwhile, I have already shown that he continually fails to integrate the axiomatic concepts into a foundational principle suited for a rational epistemology.

Paul writes:

If your claim doesn't say anything about the nature of what exists then it doesn't say that what exists is "an eternally existing conscious God."

It is true that I do not "say that what exists is 'an eternally existing conscious God'." Indeed, there are no objective inputs that I have discovered in reality to support such a claim. I renounced the god-belief of my youth for good reasons.

Paul wrote:

If that is denied, then your claim does tell us "something" about the nature of what exists.

It's not clear which claim of mine Paul has in mind; I suppose he's still talking about the axiom "existence exists" or some basic recognition close to this. If so, I have already dealt with this sophomoric attempt to refute the primacy of existence (indeed, it refutes itself). But this much is certain: to affirm that the Christian god exists, Paul needs to assume the core premise central to such an idea, which is: the primacy of consciousness. It is clear enough that he senses this need, and it's also clear that he senses the impossibility of validating this premise. He senses that I am right in showing that concepts of truth assume the primacy of existence principle, for the alternative to this principle - ultimately the view that wishing makes it so - is simply too bold an expression of metaphysical subjectivism to defend. So he finds that he needs to constantly shape-shift his position, doubling back on his own words at every turn as he seeks to cover his evasions under a blurry mass of poorly executed reversals. He's evading the encounter between the axiom of existence and the axiom of consciousness, for it is the relationship between these two fundamentals that worries him the most. This is why he treats the axiom of existence as if it were the only axiom and ignores the axiom of consciousness altogether. This habit of evasion is what remains constant throughout Paul's apologetic as he tries to play a game of catch-me-if-you-can, which is hardly indicative of a position held in confidence and conviction. Paul's antics demonstrate that he fails to recognize the fact that he's a one-man show who's taken his act to what he considers "the big time" - the whiz kids of Triablogue, whose other members tolerate him because they, like Paul, need the comfort of a group huddle and the ostentatious security of traveling in numbers.

Paul tried it on his own for a while, but he rightly recognized that he was in over his head and that he would be better off as Hays' & Engwer's court jester, indulging in self-abasing bafoonery in the hope of eliciting range-of-the-moment reactions of "at-a-boy, Paul!" and other back-slapping gestures from fellow doom-wishers as he deploys his brand of sick-'em-Fido apologetics.

As a spokesperson for Christianity, Paul shows how he chooses to represent his god - through condescension, pettiness and hypocrisy. No doubt these are "virtues" in the book of "aren't-you-stupid" contentiousness that characterizes much of Paul's writing. If I were inclined to accept the stolen concepts assumed by the religious view of the world, and persuaded that an invisible magic being created the world and "controls whatsoever comes to pass," I could not bring myself to believe in Paul's god. If this god is anything like its earthly representatives, I want nothing to do with it. They can have it, and it can feast on its own. May we each get what we deserve. I'm sure counting on it.

by Dawson Bethrick

Labels: [Axioms](#), [Metaphysics](#), [Objectivism](#), [Paul Manata](#), [Primacy of Existence](#)

posted by Bahnsen Burner at [6:00 AM](#)

0 Comments: