Saturday, December 26, 2009

The Argument from Predication

In his essay "Van Til and Transcendental Argument" (*Revelation and Reason: New Essays in Reformed Apologetics*, pp. 258-278), apologist Don Collett is at pains to defend the distinctiveness of Van Til's "transcendental argument for the existence of God" (i.e., "TAG"). Throughout his paper, he refers to Van Til's argument as an "argument from predication" (cf. pp. 262, 265, 266, 273, etc.). Whenever I read the phrase "argument from predication" in a presuppositionalist context, I'm extremely interested in seeing precisely what this argument looks like. What specifically are its premises, and what conclusion are those premises intended to support?

I have to admit that I lose confidence that such an argument has any merit when its defenders make statements such as the following:

> A transcendental argument, theistically constructed, begins all argument upon the premise that predication requires for its possibility the necessary truth of God's existence. In this manner the concept of God's existence is brought into a necessary relation with predication from the outset of argument itself, thereby precluding any future possibility of using argument to falsify God's existence. (*Revelation and Reason*, p. 262)

Statements like this tell me that, whatever TAG is supposed to look like, it takes for granted "the premise that predication requires for its possibility the necessary truth of God's existence," and that "the concept of God's existence" is simply *stipulated* by means of personal fiat "into a necessary relation with predication from the outset of argument itself."

Much of Collett's energy is focused on answering John Frame on the scandalous controversy revolving around so-called "direct" vs. "indirect" arguments. Van Til famously referred to his "method of reasoning by presupposition" as " indirect rather than direct" (*The Defense of the Faith*, 3rd ed., p. 100). John Frame has published his own skeptical commentary on the matter, such as the following:

> Are indirect arguments really distinct from direct arguments? In the final analysis, it doesn't make much difference whether you say "Causality, therefore God" or "Without God, no causality, therefore God." Any indirect argument fo this sort can be turned into a direct argument by some creative rephrasing. The indirect form, of course, has some rhetorical advantages, at least. But if the indirect form is sound, the direct form will be too – and vice versa. Indeed, if I say "Without God, no causality," the argument is incomplete, unless I add the positive formulation "But there is causality, therefore God exists," a formulation identical with the direct argument. Thus, the indirect argument becomes nothing more than a prolegomenon to the direct. (*Apologetics to the Glory of God*, p. 76)

Now, this is not the first time we find individuals within the presuppositionalist camp (who claim to be "spirit-led") finding themselves mired in petty debate over matters which both sparring parties consider highly important. (Consider, for instance, the profound disagreement between Greg Bahnsen and Jason Whipps ("RazorsKiss") on whether or not "natural revelation" is inferred or "directly apprehended.") And it surely will not be the last.

Contrary to Frame who holds that "there is less distance between Van Til's apologetic and the traditional apologetics than most partisans on either side (including Van Til himself) have been willing to grant" (*Apologetics to the Glory of God*, p. 85), Collett argues that there is a deeper distinction between "direct" arguments and "indirect" arguments than Frame seems to recognize. Citing the work of philosophers Peter Strawson and Bas van Fraassen on transcendental arguments, Collett makes much ado about the supposed distinction between two different types of " semantic relation," namely that of implication on the one hand, and presupposition on the other. Collett complains:

> The failure of traditional argument forms to capture what is meant by the concept of presupposition points up the need for a more precise way of construing the semantic relation between statements related by it. The most promising option to emerge is arguably that of Peter Strawson. According to Strawson, a statement *A* may be said to *presuppose* a statement *B* if *B* is a necessary precondition of the truth-or-falsity of *A*. Strawson's interpretation of the concept of presupposition has been restated in succinct fashion by Bas van Fraassen as follows: *A* presupposes *B* if and only if *A* is neither true nor false unless *B* is true… This may also

be stated as follows:

> (1) *A* presupposes *B* if and only if:
> (a) if *A* is true, then *B* is true.
> (b) if ~*A* is true, then *B* is true.

(*Revelation and Reason*, p. 269)

As an example, Collett offers the following syllogism (Ibid., p. 270):

> C presupposes G (premise 1)
> ~C (premise 2)
> Therefore G (conclusion)

To inform his syllogism with referential content, Collett has "C = causality, and G = God's existence" (Ibid.), which, when plugged into the above, gives us the following argument:

> Premise 1: Causality presupposes God's existence.
> Premise 2: Not causality (i.e., causality is denied)
> Conclusion: Therefore, God exists.

Now, it may be unclear to you how it follows that a consequent *B* can be true *both* in the case that its antecedent *A* is affirmed *and* in the case that the antecedent *A* is negated. You're not alone. Apparently, Collett would say that confusion on this is likely due to missing the semantic distinction between implication and presupposition. Perhaps " follows" is the wrong connective to have in mind when evaluating transcendental arguments. For the conclusion is said to be true regardless of whether the minor premise is affirmed or negated. Then again, perhaps having the major premise framed in the scaffolding of an *if… then…* statement only adds to the tendency to misunderstand this sacred distinction. Indeed, Collett himself warns that

> the truth value of the conclusion is *not* a function of the truth value of the antecedent minor premise (i.e., premise 2), since the conclusion remains true whether C or ~C obtains (Ibid.).

Similarly, he also states:

> To qualify as a transcendental conclusion, the truth of the conclusion in a direct argument would have to be in some sense independent of the truth value of its antecedent premise… In the nature of the case, the truth of a "transcendental conclusion" does not depend upon the truth value of its antecedent premise, regardless of whether this premise affirms causality or any other principle, since a transcendental conclusion constitutes the very ground for the proof of that premise. (Ibid., p. 271)

In other words, whatever the argument affirms or denies in its minor premise, the "transcendental conclusion" is somehow said to be affirmed, since (so the reasoning goes) "a transcendental conclusion constitutes the very ground for the proof of that premise." Given these liberal disclaimers, the presuppositionalist could produce the following argument:

> Premise 1: Peanut butter sandwiches presuppose God's existence.
> Premise 2: There are no peanut butter sandwiches.
> Conclusion: Therefore, God exists

since it does not seem to matter "whether [premise 2] affirms causality or any other principle." The conclusion " Therefore, God exists" is certainly "in some sense independent of the truth value of" the premise that "there are no peanut butter sandwiches." With such leeway, it seems that one could affirm *any* conclusion as a "transcendental conclusion," and regardless of what "principle" he affirms or denies in his argument's premises. Then he can say he has produced a "transcendental argument" for that conclusion. For instance, following the model which Collett has given, one could "argue" as follows:

> Premise 1: Causality presupposes the existence of Blarko.
> Premise 2: There is no causality.
> Conclusion: Therefore, Blarko exists.

We could call this "TAB" – the "transcendental argument for the existence of Blarko."

While I expect presuppositionalists to interject a "Wait a minute!" at this point, I see no *prima facie* difference *in principle* between TAG and TAB. Indeed, it seems that such a contraption would be necessary to "prove" the existence of something which is in fact merely imaginary.

The operative presumption underlying the presuppositionalist viewpoint behind all this, is the claim seen above, that predication as such "requires for its possibility the necessary truth of God's existence" (Ibid., p. 262). Indeed, Collett admits that "a transcendental argument, theistically construed, *begins all argument* upon [this] premise" (Ibid.). By Collett's own admission, TAG *starts out* assuming this to be the case. But how is this premise itself established? Establishing the supposed truth of this premise appears to be beyond the scope of Collett's essay. Indeed, when Collett comes close to considering this question, he writes:

> One may, nevertheless, object that the argument begs the question, inasmuch as it assumes that a certain semantic relation between God and causality obtains from the outset. However, other commonly accepted forms of argument, for instance arguments based upon material implication, also begin with a semantic relation that is assumed. (Ibid., p. 276)

Notice that Collett does not deny the fact that his argument scheme begs the question. Essentially, he's saying "Well, all these other people do it, so why can't we?" which strikes me as a very weak defense. Don't presuppositionalists have a reasoned defense for assuming that causality presupposes their god's existence? If so, why not produce it for all to see?

Collett continues:

> The relation of presupposition, like the relation of implication, is a semantic relation. Thus there is no reason why, *prima facie*, an argument that begins with the premise "C presupposes G" [i.e., "Causality presupposes God's existence"] should be assigned a lesser status than an argument with the premise "C implies G" [i.e., "Causality implies the existence of God"]. (Ibid.)

In fact, I'd say both "arguments" have equally arbitrary status. I've seen no good reason for supposing that causality either "presupposes" or "implies" the existence of the Christian god.

Collett isn't finished yet. He goes on to say:

> Indeed, one may go further and raise the question whether finite creatures can begin any argument without making assumptions of some sort or other. (Ibid.)

This to me seems to be an altogether different matter, perhaps one to which Collett draws our attention in order to distract us from the fact that his response to the charge of begging the question is insufficient. Indeed, we do not begin our cognition by *arguing*, but by *perceiving*. And even from there, we would still have to form some initial concepts before *inference* would be possible, since inference is a conceptually relational operation.

As if to anticipate responses of this sort, Collett states:

> The real question is not whether initial assumptions can be avoided, but whether subsequent argument can demonstrate their *necessary* character. (Ibid.)

If the Vantillian "transcendental argument" as Collett has understood it, is intended to "demonstrate" the "necessary character" of the existence of the Christian god to, say, causality, presuppositionalists need to go back to the drawing board.

But Collett is right on at least one point: presuppositionalists do seem quite eager to begin their arguments with the assumption that the supposed truth of their god's existence is a necessary starting point. Perhaps it is because they really have no proof of their god's existence, that they feel a need to begin with the assumption that it is real in the first place.

As we saw above, Collett himself tells us what motivates such a move, namely the concern of "precluding any future possibility of using argument to falsify God's existence." And I can see why: those who have invested themselves

emotionally and confessionally in the view that the reality we perceive around us was created and is controlled by a figment of one's imagination, have a vested interest in "precluding any future possibility of using argument to falsify " such beliefs.

But there is another motivation behind this as well. It is the motivation of the apologist to position himself such that he can charge any opponent with begging the question for apparently denying both the starting point and the conclusion, however fallaciously they are conjoined, in any objection he might raise against his ruse-laden artifice.

In regard to "the matter of predication itself," Van Til writes:

> The question is as to what can and what cannot be intelligibly said about anything. Now when we take this question out of its limitation to physical objects, where it seems to have such an evident application, we find that there is no more fundamental difference between theism and anti-theism than on the matter of the basis of predication. (*Introduction to Systematic Theology*, chap. 4)

This is a most interesting admission on Van Til's part. In essence, Van Til is admitting that predication, when conducted within "its limitation to physical objects," has "such an evident application" in human cognition. In other words, when our predication is bound to *objective* reference, it is informed by evidence and has its most immediately substantive application. Van Til does not go into detail as to why this is, for to do so would be to give away too much. In order to explain why predication in relation to physical objects would have its most "evident application," Van Til would have to understand why this is, and in exploring why this is he would eventually have to come to terms with the fact that cognition bound by the primacy of the objects of awareness is the only possible formula for objectivity.

Unfortunately for defenders of the faith, objectivity is anathema to the Christian ideology, and it is because of this fact that Van Til is so eager to move the discussion away from predication in relation to physical objects. But in moving the discussion to "the matter of the basis for predication," Van Til fares no better. Observe:

> Theism holds that all predication presupposes the existence of God as a self-conscious being, while anti-theism holds that predication is possible without any reference to God. This at once gives to the terms ' is' and 'is not' quite different connotations. For the anti-theist, these terms play against the background of bare possibility. Hence 'is' and 'is not' may very well be reversed. The anti-theist has, in effect, denied the very law of contradiction, inasmuch as the law of contradiction, to operate at all, must have its foundation in the nature of God. (Ibid.)

True to his own style, Van Til never shows any moral compunction against broadbrushing all would-be opposition in the same color. For Van Til, "the anti-theist" is essentially anyone who is not a Christian, and for Van Til, all non-Christians "have an axe to grind" (*The Defense of the Faith*, p. 200). Since I am a non-Christian, then, according to Van Til, the terms "is" and "is not" in my worldview "play against the background of bare possibility." But this is false. The concept of possibility is not a starting point in my worldview; it is not a fundamental precondition upon which all actuality rests. On the contrary, Van Til has the priority here reversed, probably because he's projecting at this point. In my worldview, there is no "possibility" apart from actuality, for the concept 'possibility' presupposes existence as such. Consequently, the terms "is" and "is not" are not reversible in my worldview as Van Til would have his readers believe. Therefore, he is wrong to say that my worldview, as one belonging to a non-Christian, "has, in effect, denied the very law of contradiction." Indeed, while for Van Til the law of contradiction "must have its foundation in the nature of" a being which is accessible to human cognition only by means of *imagining*, the law of contradiction on my worldview is based on objective axioms which Christians assume to be true, but are happy to consider "incoherent." Meanwhile, for the theist, the terms "is" and "is not" play against the background of an invisible magic being's *pleasure* (cf. Ps. 115:3). There's no room for objectivity on such a basis. "Is" and "is not" can swap places just as easily as water can be turned into wine (cf. John 2:1-11).

An Anti-Apologetic Argument from Predication

In spite of the willful mischaracterizations of non-Christian positions and failure to produce solid support for their assertions, presuppositionalists insist, as if they were robots indiscriminately following commands, that their god's existence is a necessary precondition for predication. As Collett affirms:

> Argument cannot proceed without predication, and predication necessarily presuppose the existence of God. (

Revelation and Reason, p. 262)

I would agree that argument cannot proceed without predication, but I would hasten to point out that *predication cannot proceed without concepts*. And this very fact spells certain and insurmountable trouble for the presuppositionalist's claim that "predication necessarily presupposes the existence of God."

Thus I present the following argument, my very own "argument from predication":

Premise 1: If predication is a conceptual operation, then predication does not presuppose the Christian god.

Premise 2: Predication is a conceptual operation.

Conclusion: Therefore, predication does not presuppose the Christian god.

Now anyone familiar with basic logic should recognize that this argument is formally valid. But this in itself is not very impressive. Even theists can produce arguments which are formally valid. The question at this point is whether or not the argument is *sound*. To demonstrate a valid argument's soundness, we need to show that the premises in that argument are *true*. And below I do just this.

Defense of Premise 1:

Premise 1 of my argument states:

If predication is a conceptual operation, then predication does not presuppose the Christian god.

My defense of this premise is broader than the specific statement affirmed in it. My defense of this premise is that it is entailed in the broader fact that *conceptual operations as such necessarily presuppose non-omniscience*. Consider the following points:

i. An omniscient being would not have its knowledge in the form of concepts. I have already presented an argument for this conclusion in my paper Would_an_Omniscient_Mind_have_Knowledge_in_Conceptual_Form? (2007). While the details for this position are competently laid out in my paper, the primary reason for this view is to be found in the task which concepts fulfill, namely to economize cognition in accommodating the limited awareness of a non-omniscient mind. In essence, concepts are a cognitive tool of a mind which does not see all, does not perceive all, does not know all. This brings us to my second point:

ii. Human beings are non-omniscient, and they are capable of forming concepts and retaining their knowledge in the form of concepts. To deny this, either one would need to make use of concepts, and thus performatively contradict his own denial, or he would merely be grunting, in which case he could offer only meaningless vocalizing.

Consequently, not only is omniscience not a precondition for concepts and conceptual operations, (per ii, human beings wouldn't be capable of conceptual cognition if omniscience were a precondition for concepts), omniscience would render concepts obsolete (per i). The inescapable reality here is that conceptual operations presuppose, not an omniscient mind, but a *non*-omniscient mind capable of performing the process of abstraction in order to economize the data it perceives and gathers from the world. Given these points, then, if predication is a species of conceptual operation, it would not presuppose the Christian god, since the Christian god is characterized as a mind which is supposed to be *omniscient*, i.e., as a mind whose own attributes would render conceptualization completely obsolete.

Defense of Premise 2:

Premise 2 of my argument states:

Predication is a conceptual operation

By this, I essentially mean that the process of predication is at root *conceptual* in nature.

To defend this, let us first understand what is meant by "predication." Here I will quote Bahnsen, who writes:

> "Predication" is the mental or verbal act of attributing or denying a property or characteristic (a "predicate") to a subject – as when someone affirms, "The sky is blue" or "George Washington fought at Valley Forge," or "Driving seventy-five miles per hour is no longer permitted by law." (*Van Til's Apologetic: Readings & Analysis*, p. 22n.67)

Surely Bahnsen recognizes that predication is a function which human beings are capable of performing. Indeed, he himself writes in the same passage, "people readily engage in predication without difficulty." So by itself, the act of predication per se does not require that the mind performing it be omniscient. Even Bahnsen would have to agree that non-omniscient minds are capable of predication. This tacit acknowledgement makes defending the claim that predication necessarily presupposes an omniscient mind all the more difficult if not impossible.

Bahnsen informs his view of what is involved in the act of predication as follows:

> Predication requires one intelligibly to differentiate and select individual things (particulars), to make sense out of general or abstract concepts (universals, classes, definable sets), and to distinguish them (so as *not* to make them identical) while in some sense *identifying* or relating them to each other. (Ibid.)

When Bahnsen has the opportunity to inform his readers about how predication takes place, he lists a few features but fails to provide any detailed account of the process. What he provides doesn't go very far, and what is given in what he provides is vague and unhelpful.

But notice the cognitive features which Bahnsen identifies in the process of predication: differentiation, selection, concepts, distinguishing, identification. These are all aspects of the conceptual level of cognition.

Notice the first statement in chapter one of Ayn Rand's *Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology*:

> Consciousness, as a state of awareness, is not a passive state, but an active process that consists of two essentials: differentiation and integration. (p. 5)

Differentiation between objects takes place on the *perceptual* level. Since, on a *rational* approach to philosophy, the *conceptual* level of cognition *depends on* the *perceptual* level of cognition, the active differentiation between objects is already a means by which discriminated consciousness organizes and integrates what it perceives. Consciousness does not stop differentiating once it matures to the conceptual level. In his Metaphysics of Consciousness, philosopher Harry Binswanger refers to consciousness as a "difference detector." He's right: it is an integral part of the nature of consciousness to detect differences in some manner, whether on the level of sensations, perceptions, or concepts.

The second key term in Bahnsen's description of predication is the word "select." Rand eloquently explains how selection is a key aspect of the abstraction process in developing her theory of the concept 'concept':

> A *concept* is a mental integration of two or more units which are isolated according to a specific characteristic(s) and united by a specific definition… The units involved may be any aspect of reality: entities, attributes, actions, qualities, relationships, etc.; they may be perceptual concretes or other, earlier-formed concepts. The act of isolation involved is a process of *abstraction*: i.e., a selective mental focus that *takes out* or separates a certain aspect of reality from all others (e.g., isolates a certain attribute from the entities possessing it, or a certain action from the entities performing it, etc.). (*Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology*, p. 10)

Selection is involved in the very process of forming concepts, not only in applying them (such as in predication). But do we ever learn this from Bahnsen? Of course not. Like his mentor Van Til, Bahnsen has essentially zero to say on the topic of concept theory.

Which brings us to the next key word in Bahnsen's list of factors involved in predication: *concepts*. Bahnsen himself acknowledges that concepts (he calls them "abstract concepts," which is in fact a redundancy) are involved in predication. Indeed, the examples he himself gave – "The sky is blue" or "George Washington fought at Valley Forge, " or "Driving seventy-five miles per hour is no longer permitted by law" – all make use of concepts.

Predication, then, in a nutshell, is the cognitive act of making explicit the information one has gathered and retained in his conceptualization of the objects he is relating in the act of predicating. And this process of making explicit that information which has been gathered and retained in one's conceptualizations, itself requires concepts to inform and make it manifest in any propositional form, whether verbal or literary. To predicate the color blue to the sky is to make explicit by means of concepts that information which one has identified and retained from the world he has perceived by means of concepts. Predication, then, is undeniably a conceptual operation. And as such, it presupposes a mind which is capable of (a) perceiving the world, (b) forming concepts based on what it perceives, and (c) applying the concepts in relation to each other in a manner that is consistent with what it has perceived and the process by which it formed those concepts. Therefore, since predication presupposes a mind which organizes its knowledge in conceptual form, predication presupposes a non-omniscient mind rather than an omniscient mind, and therefore does not presuppose the Christian god (since the Christian god is said to be omniscient).

I could go even further than the argument which I have presented above, and argue that predication *cannot* presuppose the Christian god. This argument would incorporate the following facts:

> **Fact 1:** Predication presupposes the primacy of existence.
> **Fact 2:** Christian theism presupposes the primacy of consciousness. (See for instance here.)
> **Inference:** Therefore, predication cannot presuppose Christian theism.

None of the points which I would raise in defense of these proposed arguments appears to have occurred to Van Til, Bahnsen, Frame, or Collett. Yet, here they are, publishing works which make unfounded claims like "Causality presupposes God" and "predication presupposes God." If the law of causality and predication have an objective basis, it simply could not, never in a bazillion years, "presuppose" the Christian god.

So what's behind all this?

Bahnsen indicates the apologetic value of predication as a debating point in the following manner:

> In the ordinary affairs of life, people readily engage in predication without difficulty – until they are called upon to give an analysis or philosophical account of just what it is that they are doing, what it assumes about reality, and how anyone could know. (Op. cit.)

True enough: people generally do not have an explicit grasp of what takes place in human cognition when they predicate characteristics, attributes or actions to an object (or "subject," as in a sentence). And I don't think they'll learn such things in Sunday school or by reading the bible. In this general ignorance, presuppositionalists like Bahnsen smell blood. Their apologetic is expressly predatory in nature, seeking to bamboozle unsuspecting prey on matters that they have not likely studied explicitly. This points to the tendency of presuppositional apologetics to rely on argumentum ad ignorantiam, to corner non-Christians in the hope of extracting a confession of sorts, namely the confession "Duh, I donno!" in response to the question, "How do you account for predication, an operation which you perform routinely and without difficulty?" It is into this chasm of "I don't know" that the apologist seeks to wedge his god-belief, the "answer" which magically fills the void of any ignorance while keeping those who accept it as such immovably uninformed.

by Dawson Bethrick

Labels: Predication, Presuppositional Gimmickry, Theistic Arguments

posted by Bahnsen Burner at 11:00 PM

7 Comments:

Bahnsen Burner said...

To NAL, who requested that I incorporate the "Continue Reading" function into my longer blog entries...

I'm sorry. I tried incorporating the code for this function into this blog entry, but it did not work. Perhaps I'm doing something wrong, but I believe I followed the directions to the letter. At any rate, it is not working, so I had to

remove the code from the HTML version of my blog in order to reduce the blank space it caused. Readers will simply have to "muscle through" with another of my "lengthy, arrogant posts."

Regards,
Dawson

December 26, 2009 11:53 PM

Dan Doel said...

One wonders what the presuppositionalists would come up with if they actually studied logic (a subject they claim to be quite interested in, although it isn't obvious given their arguments).

For instance, the claims about "presupposes" in the article indicate that it is some sort of binary modal operator, and a weird one at that. For instance, we might formulate our logic as some system of natural deduction where we have different sorts of judgments. In such a system, you might have judgments **prop** that some formula is a well-formed proposition, and **true** that some proposition is true. So, typically you'd have rules like (pardon the messiness, but blogger doesn't give a lot of formatting horsepower):

P **prop** Q **prop**

_____

P ? Q **prop**

And you might have hypothetical judgments in some context, so:

G , P **true** ? Q **true**

_____

G ? P ? Q **true**

(where the **prop**-ness of P and Q is assumed to hold). But, the interpretation of "presupposes" in the article indicates that we need to have a logic where **prop** may only hold hypothetically. So we might have:

G, P **true** ? Q **prop**

_____

G ? P ? Q **prop**

G, P **true** ? Q **prop** G, ¬ P **true** ? Q **prop**

_____

G ? P ? Q **true**

Where ? is the presuppositional modality. Then the argument that both C and ~C imply their presupposition would look more like:

G ? P ? Q **true** G ? Q **prop**

_____

G ? P **true**

Which at least is a somewhat sensible set of rules (inasmuch as they express what the presupper wants to happen, not that they make sense in themselves; and perhaps I shouldn't have used the **prop** judgment of well-formed propositions like above, but some other similar judgment, but you get the idea). But I've not seen a logic quite like this before.

Of course, it's my suspicion that presuppers are allergic to drawing up rules like this to make their arguments precise, since Logic (TM) was created by god, and my activities above make it look like logics are just systems of rules a mere human like me can pick out to formally model some particular (bizarre) form of argumentation.

December 27, 2009 7:00 AM

NAL said...

To Dawson,

On the create post page, click on the "Settings" tab. Down at the bottom under "Global Settings" is the "Select post editor" option. Click on "Updated editor", and "Save Settings".

Then, under the "Compose" option for creating posts, you'll see a torn page icon all the way on the right. Just click this with the cursor in the desired position.

December 27, 2009 7:52 AM

Bahnsen Burner said...

Hi Nal,

Thanks for clarifying. I found the place where I could update the post editor (didn't know that was available!), and I did just as you suggested. I placed the jump break after the first paragraph. Curiously, it is not showing up on my blog, even though I can see it in the editor (both in the compose mode, as a grey bar, and in the HTML mode - as a "more" tag. Not sure why it's not behaving.

I did make some other edits to my paper, though. Caught a few typos and clarified a few points.

Regards,
Dawson

December 27, 2009 5:21 PM

NAL said...

Hmmm. If you're using a third-party customized template, you'll have to add some code. Check the bottom of this page.

December 27, 2009 8:08 PM

C.L. Bolt said...

Dawson,

Four brief comments/questions:

1. This is a good read, though I am not quite finished yet. I appreciate that the argument is evaluated on its own terms followed by an argument from Objectivist principles rather than having the two squished together.

2. Might we expect a book coming from you at some point?

3. What is the name of the book wherein David Kelley deals specifically with the Problem of Induction and what other books might you recommend now that I have better access to a library?

4. A late Merry Christmas and an appropriately timed Happy New Year to you.

December 29, 2009 11:26 AM

Bahnsen Burner said...

Nal,

Thanks for the link. I reviewed that page and have confirmed that the proper code is inserted in the desired spot in my blog. It's still not behaving. I'm surmising that it's because I updated to the new editor *after* I originally published my post. Supposing that's the reason for the issue, I'll just have to wait for my next lengthy post to experiment with

the "read more" function. T'is a pity, I do look forward to using this function.

Chris,

Greetings to you too!

In response to your thoughts/questions:

1. Glad you're enjoying it!

2. A book? I'd love to. Got any spare time you could donate?

3. I don't know whether or not Kelley deals specifically wiht the problem of induction in any of his books, as I've not read them all. He has published a lecture which he gave on the topic back in 1986 in which he interacts directly with Hume's conception of the problem. If Kelley figured that was sufficient treatment of the topic, I could see why. By correcting many of Hume's own errors in framing the problem, and showing how the Aristotelian conception of causality and Rand's theory of concepts work together in justifying inductive generalization, Kelley shows that the problem really doesn't exist so long as one does not accept Hume's errors and adopts a rational approach to philosophy. I'd say a good place to start would be with Rand's *Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology*. It's brief, but packed with a lot of content.

4. Likewise to you and everyone else reading this: Happy New Year! I think it's going to take a little extra effort in 2010 to achieve and maintain happiness... There are some profound forces attacking our ability to be happy for the foreseeabel future.

Regards,
Dawson

December 30, 2009 6:30 AM