

The Imaginative Basis of Vytautas' God-Belief, Part 1

Again Vytautas has attempted [a response to me](#), but unfortunately he has managed to ignore [my challenge](#) throughout it. In spite of the length of his most recent response to me, and the apparent point-by-point nature of that response, he has failed to address the essence of my challenge: he has not indicated how I can reliably distinguish between what he calls "God" and what he may merely be imagining.

This is not surprising, as I do not think he or any other theistic apologist will be able to meet my challenge. Regardless, a review of his many accompanying errors will be educational for readers who are ready to learn.

Below I begin with the first part of a comprehensive response to Vytautas, and I thank him for the opportunity to showcase the many points which are relevant to my challenge and develop them for field-ready application. It is because of my gratitude to Vytautas for this opportunity that I direct my response to him. However, readers should bear in mind that my responses to Vytautas' statements can serve as models for responding to other defenders of theism who are afraid to admit the fact that their god-belief rests ultimately on imagination.

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I wrote: **Again, this is all imaginary stuff, Vytautas. You simply assert that your god is there, that it has all these properties, and that possession of these properties means it necessarily exists. As I've pointed out several times now, one can say this about anything he imagines. Sorry, you're just not scoring any points here.**

Vytautas: "By imaginary stuff, you mean only things conceived in the mind and not in reality. When you say God is imaginary, then you say that you can only think of God and he does not exist in the world outside my mind."

It's a fantasy. Fantasies are not reality. There is a difference between what is imaginary and what is real. The religious view of the world blurs this fundamental distinction in the mind of its adherents such that they have a hard time discerning what is real as opposed to what is imaginary. Religion encourages such confusion.

Vytautas: "But if you start with the definition of God, you know that you cannot predicate the incommunicable attributes of God to a contingent being such as a chair because we can see the chair is finite. Thus, we see a distinction between one sense object on the one hand and God on the other."

I have [already pointed out the error in attributing definition to a specific entity](#). Definition is a property of concepts, not of entities which exist independent of man's consciousness. Also, man's mind does not begin with definitions; it begins with *perception*. Since definition is the final step in concept-formation, there's a lot that goes on in the mind before we get to the definition of any concept. Moreover, while those who ascribe to analytic philosophy may be impressed with the necessary-contingent dichotomy which drives much of your defenses, it is a dichotomy which I reject. (See Peikoff, *Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology*, pp. 88-121.) Lastly, the important "distinction" which I "see" between a "sense object" like a chair on the one hand, and your god on the other, is that the former is real, and the latter is imaginary.

I wrote: **Everything you're saying about your god can be said about something that is not real, Vytautas. Do you not recognize this simple fact? I can imagine an invisible magic being, call it "infinite, eternal and unchangeable," stipulate that it is "necessary," and on this basis affirm that it exists, that it is real, that it did whatever I imagine it to have done. But at the end of the day, all these assertions are worthless, for they are merely assertions. There's no objective backing to them. And, they can be said about anything one imagines. The history of the world shows that almost every culture has invested in some imaginary conscious being which supposedly explains the things we find existing in the world, things which are not imaginary. The result is a most perverse reversal: the non-imaginary is being explained by the imaginary.**

Vytautas: "You are saying that an infinite, eternal, and unchangeable being does not exist since there is no objective backing for the being."

What I said is that everything you say about your god can be said about anything one might imagine. As for whether something that is “infinite, eternal, and unchangeable” can exist, I did not speak on this directly, but I will now. I do think that something eternal and unchangeable exists, which is reality proper. But reality proper is not “infinite,” it is finite. I do not accept the view that an entity or group of entities can be “infinite.” To exist is to be something specific. The concept ‘infinite’ refers merely to the potential to extend a series beyond any specifically designated point, such as the number series. And even this would have to be qualified, because no one has the time to continue such an exercise forever, nor would it be useful to do so. At any rate, by saying that an entity is “infinite,” you have already excluded it from the realm of existence by denying it a specific identity. What lacks objective backing is not the “being” that you claim exists, but your *claim* that such a being exists. You’ve offered nothing objective to support the claim that your god is real, and you’ve not shown how one can reliably distinguish between what you call “God” and what you are imagining. In fact, in reviewing your comments, it seems you do not even understand the nature of this challenge.

Vytautas: “But God does not require the creation in order for God to exist because he does not depend on the world which we experience in our every day lives.”

One can make claims like this about anything he imagines. So this point is useless in meeting my challenge.

Vytautas: “Once you have defined a subject with the properties of infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, this cannot be the properties of anything one imagines, since the description that is given is well defined.”

The argument here seems to be: “since the description that [I have] given [to God] is well defined,” the object so described “cannot be the properties of anything one imagines.” Why? How does this follow? We can test this: let’s imagine Drod’tl, which I describe with the properties of infinite, eternal, and unchangeable. Is Drod’tl now real because I have attributed these properties to him? I trow not, as Jesus would say. All you have done is given us the claim that his god possesses these properties and that it is real. Now you seem to be suggesting that the knowledge that his god is real follows from your attribution of these properties to what you call “God.” How does that follow? As my test shows, one can make this kind of claim about anything he imagines; one can attribute any properties he wants to something he has imagined. So again, it is another useless point. Indeed, it appears that you are so deeply mired in the confusion between what is real and what is imaginary that you do not understand the significance of the challenge that I have raised against your god-belief.

Vytautas: “That is, there is no other being other than God that fits the above criteria.”

This too could be said about something one is merely imagining. And I would expect him to say it, too. The religionist wants his fantasy to be real, so he will make all kinds of claims of exclusivity here. But again, these are nothing more than idle assertions.

Vytautas: “If you change the subject name God to any other name and do not change the predicate, they you do not change the proposition as a whole since God is unique. There is nothing else in creation that you can compare to him.”

These are more claims that one can make about something he is merely imagining. I can imagine Drod’tl, and claim that Drod’tl is a unique, infinite, eternal and unchangeable being, that these properties which I have ascribed to Drod’tl guarantee Drod’tl’s existence. I can say that anyone who wants to make the claim that a unique, infinite, eternal and unchangeable being exists must be talking about Drod’tl, even if he gives it a different name (like “Yahweh” or “Elohim,” for instance). Again, this is all imaginary stuff.

Vytautas: “If God only exists in the minds of men, then it is problematic that the history of the world shows that almost every culture has believed in some conscious being that cannot be sensed directly. If the belief in God is the popular position, then this would be evidence that God exists because the nearly universal belief would show men know God innately in their minds. That is, the wide spread belief of distorted views of God demonstrates that man have an idea of God within them. However, the belief is not another mass-hallucination that most men have, since hallucinations are personal experiences and not collective experiences.”

Belief in invisible magic beings is nothing new. But the widespread popularity of such belief is not an indicator that those invisible magic beings are real, as you seem to think. (Notice how you are resorting here to an ad populum fallacy: “so many people throughout history have believed, therefore it must be true!”.) You ignore the fact that while people throughout history have believed in invisible magic beings, they did not believe in the same invisible

magic being. The names, descriptions and careers of the invisible magic beings worshipped by people throughout history have varied from culture to culture. The Egyptians worshipped Horus, Osiris, Isis, etc., while the Canaanites worshipped El, Anat, Asherah, etc., the Norse worshipped Odin, the Hindus worship Brahma and Shiva, the Lahu worship Geusha, etc. It is only later, when for instance Rome adopts Christianity and spreads it by means of force, that a particular religious belief takes on international adherence.

In fact, the widespread popularity of such beliefs indicates how desperately human beings need rational philosophy. What you do not understand (and thus fail to integrate into your understanding of the world and the human mind) is the fact that the underlying root to all god-belief (including your own) is [the primacy of consciousness metaphysics](#). Since the vast majority of philosophers have historically failed to grasp the nature of worldviews in terms of the subject-object relationship and the implications this relationship has for thought and philosophy, it should be no surprise that many worldviews throughout human history have been susceptible to blurring the real with the unreal, the actual with the imaginary, the objective with the fictitious. Early religion most likely had its origin in a most primitive situation like [this](#). It is quite easy to imagine a conscious being lurking behind the things we perceive in the world, a conscious being which not only “created” those things that we see in nature (such as mountains, trees, bugs, clouds, raindrops, etc.), but also “uses” them to meet certain “ends.” We can imagine many invisible magic beings manipulating reality, or claim that there is only one. But even those who claim that there is only one such invisible magic being inevitably dream up rival invisible magic beings which vie against the one held as the supreme invisible magic being. Hence in Christianity you have not only the Christian god, but also innumerable devils and demons lurking in dark places and in other people’s minds, manipulating the places they haunt and causing all kinds of mischief intended to thwart the purposes of the supreme invisible magic being. In the end, however, it is all imaginary stuff. What makes this all possible, philosophically speaking, is the failure to observe the subject-object relationship in one’s view of the world. I have documented this failure in specifically the Christian religion in many of my writings. You have not interacted with those writings, nor do you give me the impression that you have any serious understanding of these points. Your present remarks indicate this.

I wrote: Ever wonder why even within Christianity proper, there are so many different constructs of the Christian god? Some say the Christian god is one way (e.g., Arminians), others say it is another way (e.g., Catholics), and yet others say it is another way (e.g., Calvinists). Some say it wishes (e.g., the bible, Van Til, etc.), others say it does not wish (e.g., Paul Manata). How can this be? Obviously we have rival imaginations going on here. The problem is that believers are afraid to be honest and come out and admit the fact that their god is the product of human imagination. And I've asked how I can reliably distinguish between what you call "God" and what you may merely be imagining. You've not given me anything which speaks to this point.

Vytautas: “Show where the Arminians, Catholics, Calvinists, the Bible, Van Til, or Paul Manata define God differently than I do. When Paul Manata says God does not wish, then Paul Manata means that God does not merely hope that his plan will be executed, but that God will certainly accomplish all of his holy will, since by wish you mean hope with little chance of success.”

Paul Manata was quite adamant in his affirmation that his [god does not wish](#), and both Van Til and the bible are quite clear in affirming that their god *does* wish. Since neither point to anything objective to confirm or verify their respective claims, we have no choice but to take them at their word or, as I have proposed, recognize that they are retailing in the imaginary. At any rate, a god which does wish and a god which does not wish could not be the same god. As for the theological conflicts between Arminians, Catholics, Calvinists and other rival sects, I see no need to present a survey of these here. They are well documented and the rivalries continue to this day unheeded.

Vytautas: “God has revealed himself, so that men are able to think about God.”

By “God has revealed himself,” Christians typically mean we need to consult a storybook to get our information about their imaginary being’s identity. And it is true: “men are able to think about” this imaginary being; incidentally, so are women. And “think about” it they have. They have poured so much mental effort into developing this imaginary being that no single library could possibly contain one tenth of all the literature that collective effort has produced. There’s a god to suit every taste in the theological marketplace, for in the end personal taste is the final defining arbiter. Some prefer a god which wishes, for instance, while others prefer a god

which does not wish. Some prefer a god which controls everything, others prefer a god whose control is less draconian. Sometimes individual believers flip-flop on which taste delimits their own god-belief program. The “nature” of their god often hinges on their mood swings, and yet still insist that their god is “unchangeable.” In a sense, everyone’s god is unchangeable, for change is only possible to something that exists. Things which do not exist don’t do anything, including change.

Vytautas: “If I imagine one thing that is not God, and show how this image is different from God, then it is shown that I distinguished between God and the image.”

The word of interest here is “show.” How do you propose to *show* the distinctions you have in mind here? You do not say. Now, of course, one can *assert* that there are differences, and I suspect that is what you would do, just as you have up to this point. But this is quite different from *showing*. You have not shown us your god, nor have you identified the means by which we could have awareness of it. In fact, in your last posting, it was clear that you need to *infer* its existence rather than possess direct awareness of it. So again, lost in the blurry confusion between reality and imagination, you fail to affirm a consistent position here. You’re all over the place, and apparently don’t realize it.

Vytautas: “Consider the natural numbers. They do not have the property of love, since love requires a will, but the natural numbers do not have a will, since they are not a person, but God is love, so that the natural numbers and God are not identical to each other.”

Numbers are conceptual; they are the form in which we understand the fundamental values of measurement. And you are correct here: Numbers do not possess consciousness. But why suppose that anything we conceive with our minds itself has consciousness? Well, if we imagine it has consciousness, then we can claim that what we imagine is a conscious being, that it has a will. Take god-belief for example. The believer imagines a god, ascribes various properties to it, such as “infinite, eternal, and unchangeable,” affirms that because it possesses these properties (on his say so, mind you) it must exist, and give it its own personal will. But it’s still imaginary nonetheless.

Vytautas had written: “By knowing what God means we recognize that such a being must exist, since you cannot only imagine a necessary being because a necessary being must exist. God is necessary because he does not depend on any other thing for his existence.”

I responded: **Here you reveal another epistemological reversal: the meaning of the term in question is supposed to determine that its referent is real. That’s backwards. We don’t do this with any other idea. In all other cases, we discover the existence of the existing thing first, by means of perception or by some instrument which expands our perception (e.g., microscopes, telescopes, amplifiers, etc.), and then we have awareness of an object which we then set about identifying and classifying and understanding. We don’t start with the “meaning” of a concept - for instance, clouds - and then say, “well the meaning of ‘cloud’ is [X], and because of this, clouds must exist!”**

Vytautas: “God is non-contingent because he does not need to be derived from another being.”

One could say this about anything he imagines. For instance, Drod’t’l is non-contingent because he does not need to be derived from another being. See? What makes the Christian version of this claim true, but not the Drod’t’lian version?

Vytautas: “God does not depend on other beings since he is self-existent.” Another easily mimicked assertion: Drod’t’l does not depend on other beings since he is self-existent. You are still trying to use descriptors to meet my challenge. But mere descriptors are insufficient to meet my challenge. Vytautas: “On the other hand, clouds are contingent beings, since they may or may not exist and must be derived by another being since it depends on water for its existence.”

One could swap out ‘clouds’ in my statement with anything he imagines, and make the kind of claim that you make about your god in reference to what he imagines. Additionally, one could easily make the claim that clouds are necessary beings, in spite of your question-begging denial of this view. Indeed, one could say “name a time when no clouds have existed!” and we would be at a loss to point to such a time. Indeed, he may say that he has something other than the clouds in the earth’s atmosphere in mind when he speaks of necessarily-existing clouds.

Vytautas: "The definition of cloud does not guaranty certainty that they are in at least one cloud somewhere."

See, I was right. You expect descriptors to carry some kind of epistemological compulsion in affirming conclusions. They don't, not in the sense that you're attempting to use them. You appear not to have understood the points I raised in my above quote. In order to substantiate your claim that your god is real and not imaginary, you continually fall back on the description you attribute to your god, even though I have repeatedly shown this maneuver not only to be fallacious, but epistemologically backwards.

Vytautas: "The reason why we can look to the idea of God for his existence is because God is a necessary being unlike the cloud."

Not only does this beg the question against the idea of a necessary cloud, the approach you use here could be used to defend any idea based in the imagination, just as you do in the case of your god. Not only do you fail to demonstrate the verity you assume for the position that there can be no necessary cloud, you fail to demonstrate not only that your god is real as opposed to imaginary, you fail to identify the means by which I or any other onlooker can reliably distinguish between your god and what you may merely be imagining. Still my challenge goes unmet.

Vytautas: "We can understand what the meaning of the term God asserts, and then discover the existence of God. The argument is given below."

I'll look forward to reviewing any argument you intend to give. So far, you've given precious little argument. Specifically, I'm looking forward to learning the way by which you think we can "discover the existence" of your god. If you know of such a way, I don't know what's taking you so long to identify it. Why didn't you disclose this in the beginning? We'll see why when we get to it.

Anyway, notice how you confirm my point about your epistemological backwardness. You want to start with "what the meaning of the term God asserts, and then discover the existence of God." You start with a preconceived notion in mind, then try to make everything fit it. It's the oldest trick in the book, but the whole basic approach is still backwards.

I had written: **As for what I can and cannot imagine, how do you know that I "cannot only imagine a necessary being"? I can say anything I imagine is a necessary being. This is a volitional exercise. I imagine Alokutsura. What is Alokutsura, you ask? Alokutsura is a necessary, infinite, eternal and unchangeable being! Because of the properties which I assign to it, it must exist! That's your whole argument, Vytautas. It can be used to "prove" the existence of anything I imagine. And still you make no progress in producing some process by which I can distinguish between what you call "God" and what you are simply imagining.**

Vytautas responded: "You cannot only imagine a necessary being. That is, you cannot just say God is an idea in my mind and God is not real because then the being is not necessary because it does not exist in the present world. But if a necessary being exists then it exists in this present world, since present world is a possible world. If you eliminate the predicate exists from necessary being, it can be derived from the meaning of necessary being. If you deny that God is a necessary being, then you are not talking about God, but a contingent being that may or may not exist."

I then replied: **No, that's not the reason why it would "not bode well for [your] defense." The reason why a "material god" would not bode well for your defense is that a material god would be perceptually demonstrable. But you want your object of worship to lie beyond the access of our perception. This allows you to have control over it: it is whatever you say it is. In the end, it's all your word, but you want to appeal to the word of your god for authoritative backing. That doesn't help, for it's all imaginary anyway.**

Vytautas now states: "If I say God has a property that God does not have, then God does not have that property."

Again, this is unhelpful. How do we know what property an invisible magic being possesses? By what means do we discover the properties allegedly possessed by a being which is said to exist beyond the range our awareness? In the case of an imaginary being, the answer is easy: the imaginary being possesses whatever property its imaginer says it has. For instance, if you say that your imaginary being possesses the properties of infinity, eternity and

immutability, then by virtue of your sovereign control over your imagination, it must, at least in the confines of your imagination. This is the tyranny of the dreamer over his fantasies.

But even the believer in Drodt'l can use the same approach you use here. For example, if I say Drodt'l has a property that Drodt'l does not have, then Drodt'l does not have that property. This conclusion "follows" for Drodt'l just as securely as it does for your god. How do we discover what properties Drodt'l possesses? By consulting a storybook purported to be its "special revelation" and allowing it to inspire our imagination? Why not?

Vytautas: "The concepts that we construct should be accurate."

So what method of concept-formation do you propose to safeguards the "accuracy" of your concepts? The bible presents no conceptual theory of its own. So where do you're your understanding of concepts? Or, do you even have one? From your comments (see below), it appears you have little understanding of concepts.

Vytautas: "If I create God in my image, I am engaging in idolatry which is a sin against God."

Is this supposed to be an argument for the "accuracy" of your theistic conceptions, or for the reality of the god you imagine? Again, you fail to grasp the issue at hand. What besides your imagination do you have to go on in contemplating your god?

And yes, the Judeo-Christian idea of "God" is very much modeled on human templates. Like human beings, this deity (like others in the historical pantheon) is aware, sees things, knows things, thinks and judges, gets angry, shows affection, reacts, plans, manipulates, devises, creates, acts on behalf of goals, etc., everything that human beings do. But this idea is not a legitimate concept, for it is not an integration based on objective inputs. "At best," says Rand, "it is a concept in the sense in which a dramatist uses concepts to create a character. It is an isolation of actual characteristics of man combined with the projection of impossible, irrational characteristics which do not arise from reality - such as omnipotence and omniscience." (*Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology*, p. 148)

Vytautas: "If God is just imaginary, then you are not thinking about God, but a contingent being."

This is quite an admission: you actually do think that the imaginary is real, just "contingent." You thus confirm my suspicion that the failure to distinguish between the real and the imaginary is systemic to your worldview.

Vytautas: "The creature cannot force God to do anything, since all of the creatures actions have been planned out from before the creation event, so that history is God's decree known after the fact."

This is another safe bet for theism, but for all the wrong reasons. In fact, one cannot force something that does not exist to do anything. But, we can imagine things which cannot be forced to do things, either. So on two points, your claim is "safe."

Vytautas wrote: "God is spirit and does not depend on the material world for his existence."

I asked: **What would stop someone from making assertions like this about something he is only imagining?**

Vytautas: "The Bible allows God to speak for himself, so that it is an objective standard for theology."

On the conception of 'objective' that you assume here, a Harry Potter novel could be cited as "an objective standard" for Potterology. Never mind the fact that neither the bible does not proffer a worldview which safeguards the integrity of the subject-object relationship, which is the basis of objectivity. Indeed, where does any biblical author show any awareness for the subject-object relationship, the most fundamental relationship in all thought and philosophy, let alone concern for understanding it?

Incidentally, if the bible serves as "an objective standard for theology," what can be said about Paul Manata's theology? He was very clear when [he affirmed explicitly that his god does not wish](#). And yet at numerous places the bible, [as I have pointed out](#), affirms that its god wishes. Clearly Manata must not be taking the bible as his theological standard. Or, one can claim it as his standard, and still say what he wants in order to evade criticism. No?

Vytautas: "The Bible would stop me from making claims that are not true. Since the Bible tells that God is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, then we understand that God is a necessary being that must exist in our real world."

This does not address my question above. In fact, it completely sidesteps it. So I'll ask it again: When someone says that the being he worships "is spirit and does not depend on the material world for his existence," as you say of your god, what would stop him from making this kind of assertion about something he is only imagining? Here's a hint: he may not even recognize the fact that he is only imagining his object of worship. He may be so deluded that he really thinks his object of worship is real, or even that the description he gives to it adheres to an objective standard.

When you say "the Bible would stop me from making claims that are not true," are you suggesting that you are controlled by the bible? Or, are you simply saying that you volitionally adhere to what you read in the bible (and how you have come to interpret its many ambiguities) as the standard for describing the deity you imagine? I suspect you meant the latter, though like other worshippers of imaginary beings, you resist admitting that your god is imaginary.

Personally, I don't think anything can stop someone who wants to believe in an imaginary being from giving any description to it he wants to give it. We are solely responsible for our use of our imagination, and nothing can compel an individual to conform his fantasies to some arbitrarily designated "standard." So in other words, nothing would keep someone from making the kinds of assertions that you make in regard to your god in regard to anything he imagines. The bible can say whatever it says, but this would not stop someone from making any kind of assertions he wants about something he has imagined, regardless of whether or not he has read any of it. Indeed, the bible is so self-convoluted that it can be made to endorse any imagination a believer invests his theism with.

But you, Vytautas, tell us that you won't do this because you're guided by the contents of a storybook. And since you operate on a worldview which systematically fails to distinguish between what is real and what is imaginary, you take what the bible says as truth, even though you identify no objective basis for doing so. The bible could say anything, and since you suspend your rational judgment in preference for the imagery you read in the sacred storybook, you'll affirm it as truth.

I asked: **Where have I identified myself as a materialist? You are unfamiliar with my worldview... Wrong again. I don't say that imaginary things are sense objects, and not for the reason that you suggest, either.**

Vytautas: "Ok, you say you are a possessor of an immaterial mind."

Where did I say this?

Vytautas: "I thought objectivists were materialists,"

Objectivists are Objectivists.

Vytautas: "but you do say there are two fundamental types of being: matter and consciousness."

Man is an integrated being of matter and consciousness. So are many other living organisms. I don't know what "immaterial" refers to; it only tells us what something is not, so it is not useful in identifying the nature of something real. Also, while consciousness is epistemologically fundamental (in that it is an inescapable axiom), it is not metaphysically fundamental. It clearly depends on the physical make-up of the biological organism possessing it.

Vytautas: "Was there ever time we there was no consciousness?"

I don't know. Also, not only do I not know how one would prove a yes or no answer to such a question, I don't see why it would be important. We exist, we possess consciousness. These facts are absolute, and these are the facts we need to deal with.

Vytautas: "If yes, then matter changed into minds at some point in the past. So then the immaterial mind can be explained in physical terms, if minds were derived from matter."

Even if this were true (and only science could tell us if it is), it would be irrelevant to my challenge and your inability to meet it: you still indicate no way for us to reliably distinguish between what you call “God” and what you may merely be imagining. Also, even if it were true that “matter changed into minds at some point in the past, ” it would still be possible any of us today to imagine a god and claim it is real, just as you do.

Vytautas: "If the answer to the question is no, then man has always existed."

Why? Man is not the only animal which possesses consciousness.

I wrote: **The thing I imagined is imaginary. If you want to say that what I have imagined is “equal to God,” then clearly you’re conceding that your god is imaginary as well. No matter what name we give to that which is imaginary, it is still imaginary.**

Vytautas: "An infinite, eternal, and unchangeable being can be conceived in the mind."

In other words, it can be imagined. We certainly cannot perceive it; Christians have already told us that it is beyond the reach of our senses. So what alternative do we have to imagining the Christian's god? Christians do not tell us. And even though we have no alternative to imagining the Christian god (we have to assemble it in our imagination from the descriptions Christians use to "define" their god), Christians insist that it is real and not imaginary. And yet, their descriptors can be applied to anything anyone imagines.

Vytautas: "We see that this is a possible being, since it is non-contradictory to assert in the mind."

Notice the frail standard which you need to consult in order to determine whether or not something is possible: the idea is, in your estimation, non-contradictory. This supposition alone is sufficient, on your view, to secure the claim that the proposal in question is "possible." Positive evidence in support of the supposition is not required. I have already pointed out in our discussion that the god idea fails even in the non-contradictory department, since it is as internally incoherent and as absurd as the notion of a [square circle](#).

Vytautas: "We also see that this is non-contingent being, since contingent beings are finite, temporal, and changeable things."

“We... see” this? Who’s we? What exactly do they “see”?

Vytautas: “A non-contingent or necessary being does not depend on other contingent beings for being real.”

Why not simply recognize that existence does not depend on any alternative to it (like non-existence)?

Vytautas: “If there is not a necessary being at all, then it is possible for there to be no being. But nothing is not a possible world, since a possible world must contain at least one thing, otherwise it could not be described as a world.”

Since the universe is necessary, there’s no problem from my standpoint.

Vytautas: “Even if nothing is a possible world it would be unknowable since it could not be described. Therefore, God is necessary and thus must exist in our world.”

Where’d you get the “God” part? If not from a storybook, then from where?

Stay tuned for Part 2.

by Dawson Bethrick

Labels: [imagination](#), [Invisible Magic Being](#)

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

7 Comments:

[Martin Wagner](#) said...

If the belief in God is the popular position, then this would be evidence that God exists because the nearly universal belief would show men know God innately in their minds.

I can't believe Vytautas said this bullshit with a straight face. Go back in time to the Roman Empire, replace "God" in the above passage with "Jove," and note how it applies equally well. And has the guy never heard of mass hallucinations and shared delusions? He's so stuck in the quicksand of his own rhetoric that all he ends up revealing is that he doesn't *know* much of anything.

Excellent responses.

[January 12, 2008 11:05 AM](#)

[Vytautas](#) said...

Martin Wagner: I can't believe Vytautas said this [] with a straight face. Go back in time to the Roman Empire, replace "God" in the above passage with "Jove," and note how it applies equally well. And has the guy never heard of mass hallucinations and shared delusions? He's so stuck in the quicksand of his own rhetoric that all he ends up revealing is that he doesn't know much of anything.

Vytautas: Notice that I said the majority of humanity has distorted views of God, so that not all of the majority of humanity has the orthodox view of God. Notice I also said that I considered the possibility of mass-hallucinations, but I reject this because hallucinations are a personal experience. There is no example of a mass-hallucination that covers a good size of the world.

[January 12, 2008 2:05 PM](#)

[Citrus](#) said...

Vytautas: *"If the belief in God is the popular position, then this would be evidence that God exists because the nearly universal belief would show men know God innately in their minds."*

Or... many people could have come up with similar ideas independently. How? By reasoning from similar premises, like this: It's very easy and seems very natural to ascribe personal motivation to inanimate objects to explain phenomena. Say, my computer isn't working because it hates me and wants me to suffer, etc. Almost everyone does it, even if they don't take these ideas seriously. But some people did take it seriously, and bam, we got spirits. Amplify these, perhaps merge them together, and you've got things that look quite like gods.

And I don't think this volition-projecting habit we humans have is a sign of an innate spirit concept. Again, independent reasoning from similar premises. Consider these two universal things: 1) we notice unexplained events 2) We are intimately aware of our own conscious decision-making. We're curious and we want explanations. Lightning struck and killed my goat because Thor decided to do it? Understandable! Volition is the form of causality with which we are most familiar and close, it's a part of us. It's comfortable and acceptable. This is the stuff gods are made from.

regards

Jason

[January 12, 2008 6:28 PM](#)

[Martin Wagner](#) said...

Notice that I said the majority of humanity has distorted views of God, so that not all of the majority of humanity has the orthodox view of God.

This is irrelevant to my critique. The point was that the claims you make about your God can with ease be applied exactly to any other god humanity has worshiped down the ages. There is nothing to distinguish your particular choice of theistic belief from any that has been practiced throughout history. Also, your point is fairly bizarre, in that it implies Jove (and, perhaps, every other god not explicitly the Christian God) is simply a distorted

misunderstanding of Christianity's God. Not only is this false, it fails to take into account things like goddesses, demigods, and polytheism. I don't think too many Christian scholars would agree with your postmodern attempts to claim Artemis or Bastet or Isis were "distorted views" of Christianity's God. And why would God allow such distortions to run rampant among the human race for millennia until the early Judean tribes suddenly figured him out?

[January 14, 2008 4:54 PM](#)

[Vytautas](#) said...

Martin Wagner: The point was that the claims you make about your God can with ease be applied exactly to any other god humanity has worshiped down the ages. There is nothing to distinguish your particular choice of theistic belief from any that has been practiced throughout history.

Vytautas: The God described in the Westminster Confession cannot be applied to the finite gods of Rome and Greece. These are very different ideas of Deity. And then you say that the view of the pagans are in fact different.

Martin Wagner: Also, your point is fairly bizarre, in that it implies Jove (and, perhaps, every other god not explicitly the Christian God) is simply a distorted misunderstanding of Christianity's God. Not only is this false, it fails to take into account things like goddesses, demigods, and polytheism. I don't think too many Christian scholars would agree with your postmodern attempts to claim Artemis or Bastet or Isis were "distorted views" of Christianity's God.

Vytautas: So view such as goddesses, demigods, and polytheism are not distorted view of God. However, since they are some view of deity and they are not the Christian God, then they are distorted views. What other option is there?

Martin Wagner: And why would God allow such distortions to run rampant among the human race for millennia until the early Judean tribes suddenly figured him out?

Vytautas: It is in order to give the pagans up to the blindness of their own hearts. They did not want to worship the Christian God, so they are left to their own desires and thus perish.

[January 14, 2008 8:08 PM](#)

[Bahnsen Burner](#) said...

Martin Wagner: "And why would God allow such distortions to run rampant among the human race for millennia until the early Judean tribes suddenly figured him out?"

Vytautas: "It is in order to give the pagans up to the blindness of their own hearts. They did not want to worship the Christian God, so they are left to their own desires and thus perish."

Did you mean "perish" here? Anyway, the response you give here about your god allowing distortions of the sacred storybook "in order to give the pagans up to the blindness of [their] own hearts" is hard to square with other things we're expected to believe. For instance, we're told that Saul (before he was Paul) was a ruthless persecutor of the early Christian church. Given this scenario, and given how you characterize the pagans being "blind" in "[their] hearts," why did Jesus treat Saul differently? The New Testament indicates in several places that the Christian god does not play favorites. According to how Saul is characterized before his conversion, he certainly "did not want to worship the Christian God," so why was he not "left to [his] own desires and thus [perish]"? Of course, Christians will want to say that their god wanted to make an example of Saul by appearing before him and effecting in him a conversion. Why didn't the Christian god do this for the pagans too? Indeed, why doesn't the Christian god do this for everyone? This would eliminate the need for apologetics, evangelizing, mission work, developing catechisms, Sunday school, etc., etc., etc. And if it were truly the case that Christianity were a religion of peace and love as so many of its adherents want to believe, it would make for a better world, wouldn't it? Indeed, if the Christian god, or Jesus, were in fact real, omnipotent, omnipresent, etc., etc., it would be possible for it to appear before all human beings. Doesn't it want to save people? Or does it enjoy having the unfaithful remain unfaithful, and the faithful constantly trying to outrun their own salvation doubts?

At any rate, your answer to Martin's question attributes to your god goal-oriented action. Why would your god allow distortions of the sacred texts to proliferate? "...in order to give the pagans up to the blindness of [their]

own hearts." Well, why do this? What does this accomplish? And why would an immortal, eternal, indestructible, and complete being elect to pursue such a goal? It doesn't gain anything by doing so, nor does it lose anything by not doing so. Attributing goal-oriented actions and decisions to such a being commits the fallacy of the stolen concept. Teleological concepts presuppose the biological nature of life. We set and pursue goals because our existence depends on it. Like other living organisms, man faces a fundamental alternative: to live or die. It is because we face this fundamental alternative that certain actions are chosen over others. This is concurrent with life - actual life, not "life" attributed to a non-biological thing that has as much life as a stone on the surface of the moon. Attributing the concept 'life' to an eternal, indestructible being would be a stolen concept, just as attributing 'life' to a rock would be a stolen concept. These fallacies invalidate the theistic worldview from its very roots.

Regards,
Dawson

[January 15, 2008 9:19 AM](#)

[Martin Wagner](#) said...

Vytautas: The God described in the Westminster Confession cannot be applied to the finite gods of Rome and Greece. These are very different ideas of Deity. And then you say that the view of the pagans are in fact different.

Doesn't matter. If Christianity's big innovation in monotheism was to pack a whole pantheon of gods into one omnific deity (and it wasn't, really), the point remains that claims of supernatural deities of one form or another have existed for millennia, and without some kind of standard by which Christian believers can help those they wish to convert to comprehend their God as a real (and not imaginary) being, then the claims Christians make are no better or more worth taking seriously than those of other faiths, active or defunct. Why should I be convinced your God exists, and Ahura Mazda doesn't? What evidence do you offer?

Vytautas: So view such as goddesses, demigods, and polytheism are not distorted view of God. However, since they are some view of diety and they are not the Christian God, then they are distorted views. What other option is there?

That they are simply different made-up gods than your own made-up god, with no origin in common. They aren't "distorted" views of your god, they're just different gods altogether (and *their* worshipers thought *your* God was a distortion), invented for the same reason all primitive peoples invented gods: a pre-scientific and unenlightened culture, seeking explanations for the universe, will do so simply by projecting human characteristics and designs upon the universe, hence gods.

Vytautas: It is in order to give the pagans up to the blindness of there own hearts. They did not want to worship the Christian God, so they are left to their own desires and thus parish.

Thus your god is evil. Any deity that would condemn a person to eternal suffering simply for not worshipping it to its satisfaction can hardly be called "good"; to do so would be to strip the concept of "good" of any intelligible meaning. A god that truly "loved" its subjects as the Christian God is alleged to do might well seek to guide us, provide us with moral precepts and the like. But it would not expect worship, especially under the guidelines of a sham concept of "free will" that in fact amounts to an ultimatum: "Yes, you have 'free will' to worship me or not as you please – just remember that if you don't, there's a nice little lake of fire with your name on it." That's more like a Mafia protection racket than "free will." "Nice little immortal soul ya got here – be a shame if somethin was ta happen to it! Souls *burn*, ya know..."

A being so narcissistic as to command worship and commit violence as punishment for non-compliance is not a being of love. At best it is an insecure bully, and at worst, evil incarnate. Fortunately, your god is imaginary, so no worries.

[January 15, 2008 2:30 PM](#)