

## The Imaginative Basis of Vytautas' God-Belief, Part 5

Continued from [Part 4](#).

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I wrote: **If your god exists, and wants me to know it exists, it is up to your god to make its existence knowable to my consciousness. Arguments which are laden with fallacy and threats of doom will not suffice.**

Vytautas: "What is the fallacy in the arguments that I gave? The fallacy usually given to these arguments that look at the idea of God is that one should not predicate existence to a subject. But you predicate existence to existence, so you think that predicating existence is not a problem."

I see you do not address the first part of my statement. That's because you can't. Your god cannot make its existence knowable to my consciousness, since it is not real. Only a real god could do this. Deep down you do realize this, but you're afraid to admit it. Why? The only alternative is that your god does not want me to know it exists, which would mean that you are acting against its will by telling me it exists and insisting that I believe it.

Now, as for your question, the problem with the argument you gave is that it assumes the validity of the concept "God" without objective basis. Indeed, as I've pointed out, it is wrong even on the Christian worldview's own basis to treat "God" as a concept. The argument seeks to prove the existence of something by beginning with the concept which denotes it, which constitutes a fundamental reversal. As for whether existence is or is not a predicate is not the problem. My position on the matter is even more exacting: existence is not a \*property\*. In other words, an entity does not consist of all these various properties, among them being 'existence'. In fact, I prefer the concept 'attribute' when speaking of entities, as it causes less confusion. The concept 'properties' has been so misused by the academic philosophical establishment that it is typically unclear whether thinkers using the term have attributes of specific measure in mind, or a concept which denotes such attributes. In the case of any entity, all of its attributes exist, so 'existence' is not simply one among many of its attributes. This corrects the erroneous but time-honored tradition in academic philosophical community of treating essence as if it were metaphysical, when in fact it is epistemological.

Regardless, the argument you have proposed does attempt to draw the conclusion that your god exists by starting with a definition or description of it which, laden with a magic recipe of just the right descriptors (e.g., "necessary," "infinite" and "eternal"), compels its existence in some vague but undefinable manner. The argument fails to indicate how we can reliably distinguish between what you are calling "God" and what you may merely be imagining, and with trivial variation can be used to "prove" the existence of any imaginary being.

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I wrote: **As I said, threats of doom will not suffice. If you have something intellectual to offer, then I would expect to see it instead of threats. But by bringing out threats like this, you concede that your god-belief is not at all rational. Knowledge is not validated by threats, and we do not acquire knowledge by means of threats. Also, knowledge is what I prize, while clearly Christianity prizes "belief." There is a profound difference, but typically Christians fail to make this distinction, just as they do between the real and the imaginary. I'm not afraid of your imaginary deity, Vytautas. Sick him on me all you want.**

Vytautas: "Knowledge is what I prize is a value judgment and cannot be found in the material world."

Value judgments are conceptual. So is knowledge. To say that value judgments and knowledge "cannot be found in the material world" sets up a false antithesis: "material world" as opposed to what? An "immaterial world"? Again, I have already pointed out the deficiency of such expressions. The notion "immaterial" only suggests what something is not, it says nothing about what the thing to which it is applied actually is. It is a negation used in place of a positive, and when we identify things, it is positives that we need, not negations. The dichotomy between the so-called "material world" vs. the "immaterial world" (or "immaterial realm" as it were) is an attempt

to mask the subject-object relationship which is the issue with which we really need to deal when defining a worldview. In terms of the subject-object relationship, we have the knower on the one hand (the subject), and what he knows on the other (the object). Both exist in reality, both exist in the universe. What the expression "immaterial realm" attempts to smuggle into the relationship is a third element, one which does not actually exist but which seems valid in the minds of those who do not understand the world and their own minds in terms of the subject-object relationship.

Now, if you are saying that value judgments cannot originate in "this world" (as opposed to some realm that you imagine), then you're conceding that whatever you consider to qualify as "value judgments" have no relevance in "this world," while mine do. So you're again at a disadvantage here. You're on my territory because my worldview takes this world on its own terms, while your worldview holds as its standard an imaginary realm which contradicts everything we find in this world.

Vytautas: "If this [is] a claim about knowledge, then on your view of knowledge it is something that you identify by means of reason. But values are things that we aim for, and if history has no goal or propose [goal], then it is not a statement based on the objective world."

History is the written record of what has in fact happened over a span of time (e.g., between such-and-such date and such-and-such date) in a defined setting (such as a geographical area - e.g., the history of France, a field of study - e.g., the history of musical composition, or some momentous event - e.g., the history of the American Revolution). Goal-setting begins at the level of the individual; we each set our own goals. No one is setting goals for an entire compass of historical events; we simply do not have such control. So to apply "goal" to history as such commits the fallacy of the stolen concept: it ignores the genetic roots of the concept 'goal' by mischaracterizing the nature of any goal-setting consciousness.

Vytautas: "The beliefs that the Christian has depends on God,"

Actually, the Christian's beliefs depend on primitive philosophy, specifically including the reversal of the proper orientation between the subject and its objects (such that the subject has metaphysical primacy over its objects), acceptance of a long series of stolen concepts, package deals, frozen abstractions, anti-concepts, false projections, and failure to distinguish between fact and fantasy on a consistent basis. By claiming that these beliefs "depend on God" is an attempt to conceal its dependence on a smorgasbord of conceptual errors which the believer himself generally does not understand in the least.

Vytautas: "and the fear of him is the beginning of wisdom."

The "wisdom" which this expression has in mind is essentially nothing more than cowering before an imagined force of intimidation. It stems from the view that man needs to be intimidated into certain actions, which would only be needed if men were not freely choosing that action on their own uncoerced judgment. This is why Christians typically resent atheists, especially outspoken atheists - such as myself - who do not accept theism's false premises. They resent us because they envy us. We're free, enjoying our lives on our own terms, guilt-free and psychologically liberated. Christians can't stand this because they want to live this way, but are afraid something bad is going to happen to them if they allow themselves to stray long enough to taste the nectar of life which their religion denies them and from which its teachings require them to abstain.

Vytautas: "You would say that emotion is not a good foundation for knowledge,"

Emotion presupposes at least some knowledge, so to cast emotion as the foundation of knowledge would commit the fallacy of the stolen concept. The bible even says that "fear is the beginning of knowledge" (Prov. 1:7) only tells us how little its authors understood the nature of knowledge. That Christians today put any stock in such verses, only tells us that they have a long way to go in understanding how the mind really works.

Emotions change, and they change according to what we learn about the world in the context of how the things we learn relate to what we value. Even if emotion could serve as the foundation of knowledge (and it can't), it would be ever-shifting, and thus so would anything standing on top of it, and it would have no direct tie to reality (which is supposed to be the object of our knowledge).

Vytautas: "but I fear God and trust that he rewards those who diligently seek him, so that it seems we have different starting points."

Well, at least I have a starting point. I don't know what Christians think their starting point is. I've asked many. None come forward identifying their starting point or the means by which they have awareness of it in clear terms. So, I've stopped asking. But now that you bring it up, what is your starting point, and how does it not assume the truth of mine (the fact that existence exists)?

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I wrote: **And I have answered your responses above. And still, you offer nothing to answer how I can distinguish between your god and what you may merely be imagining. In short, you offer nothing to demonstrate that your god is real. And when pressed on the matter, you resort to threats. That tells me all I need to know about your god-belief.**

Vytautas: "By asking to distinguish between God and what I only imagine, then you think that God can only be imagined."

You affirm the existence of a conscious being which, for instance, created the universe by an act of will and guides human history by some "plan" it has authored. I find no facts in reality which suggests that such affirmations are true. But I can imagine something creating the universe by an act of consciousness. Ever see a cartoon? Cartoons are the product of some very inventive imaginations. In fact, I have pointed out numerous times that cartoons are the best analogy for the kind of world that Christianity envisions (see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#), for instance).

Vytautas: "But what you imagine is a picture or impression of the material world, but God should not be thought of as image that has forms or colors."

Imagination is a selective rearrangement of things that one has perceived and encountered in reality, sometimes resulting in grotesque distortion upon grotesque distortion. Of course, I must rely on things that make sense to me in order for me to imagine something coherent, so of course whatever I imagine will never be faithful to what Christians describe as their god. What I imagine is probably not far from what you might find in a [Chick tract](#). Jack Chick's renditions of the Christian god have a faceless being indicated only by an outline seated in a giant thrown looming over minuscule little angels which look like rodents cowering in its shadow. It is a bleak, empty picture, void of anything actually approaching life, personality, warmth, love and fatherliness, characteristics which Christians have historically applied to their god in tandem with the descriptors which undermine those characteristics.

But as far as trying to understand what Christianity claims about its god, I have only my imagination to go on, for they offer no alternative to this.

Vytautas: "If you think of God by conjuring an image in your mind, then that is sinful because you are fashioning an idol."

Of course, this doesn't address my challenge. In fact, it misses an important point, namely that Christians give me no alternative to relying on my imagination in any effort to comprehend what they describe as their god. If just trying to comprehend your god results in "sin," that's all the more reason to dismiss your religion as a jumble of hopeless contradictions and psychological boobytraps. It also shows how double-minded Christianity is. Jesus is "the word made flesh," according to Christian mytheology. And certainly anyone reading the gospel narratives, for instance, can imagine the Jesus they describe doing what they describe him doing in the context of those narratives. If "conjuring an image" of the Christian god is "sinful because [it is tantamount to] fashioning an idol," what about imagining Jesus, such as when he's walking on the waters of the lake with Peter? I can conjure this image in my mind. Is that "fashioning an idol" in my mind? According to the creeds, Jesus is "wholly God," right? So anyone who imagines Jesus walking on the waters of the lake when they read the gospel of Mark, for instance, is "sinning" because he's "conjuring an image" of his god? Yes, this is one very absurd worldview.

Vytautas: "But God is not an idol that cannot speak, since he has spoken in his word, so that we may know him."

Of course, what I imagine is something that can speak, too. So if the hallmark of an idol is that it cannot speak, then what I am imagining is not an idol. Of course, you say that your god "has spoken in his word," but I've not heard its voice. Have you? Now, I have read from a book which purports to be its word, but anyone can write a book and claim it is the word of an imaginary being. So again, your question-begging assumptions do nothing to

move you closer to meeting my challenge.

Vytautas: "The Bible claims to be the word of God unlike Harry Potter or other fiction novels, and it gives an explanation of how we can be saved from the wrath to come."

And like Harry Potter novels, the bible describes things that we never see in reality, things which we can only imagine by ignoring what we know about reality (such as that young boys can fly on broomsticks or men can walk on unfrozen water, etc.).

If you believe the bible's claims about "the wrath to come" and are frightened by such attempts to psychologically coerce its readers, have at it - it's all yours. Meanwhile, if your Jesus is real and wants to make a personal appearance before me, like the book of Acts says he did for Saul on the road to Damascus, he knows where to find me. If he doesn't, then either he simply doesn't want me to believe (and therefore doesn't deserve anything remotely approaching devotion from me), or he doesn't exist. If he wants me to know him, he'll have to meet me on my terms. I cannot meet him on his terms, for he nowhere makes his terms clear.

Vytautas: "It tells of Jesus Christ who attests to the claim that he is God."

Yes, there are many stories about Jesus. Christians give me no good reasons to suppose it is anything other than a bunch of myths and legends.

Vytautas: "If you think Jesus never existed, then why are there four gospels testifying to this fact?"

You beg the question by assuming it's a fact that Jesus existed. Suppose someone asked, "If you think Harry Potter never existed, then why are there books testifying to this fact?" Like me, you would probably respond by pointing out that Harry Potter stories are fictional in nature. There you have my answer. Fiction sells. It sells today, it sold 2000 years ago, too.

Vytautas: "Did people make up the story in order to control others?"

It's quite possible, for religious belief is a very effective device for mind-control. If a person wanted to control others, what is the most effective way to accomplish this? If the goal is to bring people's wills into submission, which is what the bible is expressly all about, what better way than to break their will and their spirit by convincing them that they are evil and depraved.

Think of the imagery which the New Testament itself uses to characterize evangelists and proselytizers - it characterizes them as "fishers of men." You especially should be able to relate to this since you refer to yourself as "[the Privy Fisherman](#)." Fishing involves effort applied to the task of catching fish, and requires luring them with bait. Characterizing proselytizers as "fishers of men" is no accident. Believers hoping to find converts need to lure people with the intention of entrapping them in their snares, thus depriving them of their freedom. And once the fish is caught, the fisher will gut it and package it as a uniform product. This is what happened to the believer himself, and now he wants to do it to others.

Vytautas: "But if bad people wrote the Bible, then how come it condemns man as evil and depraved?"

To break his will and his spirit, and thus make him easily dominated. It's all about subordinating man to something he is supposed to fear in his imagination. Convince a man that the fearsome thing he imagines is real, and he will break. "Faith in the supernatural always begins as faith in the superiority of others." (Rand)

Vytautas: "The better explanation is God has spoken to us by means of the words written in Scripture."

No gods have spoken to me. Even the bible says there is no private revelation.

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I wrote: I can imagine your god, yes. But again, the imaginary and the real are not the same thing. What I imagine is imagination; it is not real. To "know" your god, it would have to exist, and you've not shown that it exists. You've simply asserted that it exists, while failing to distinguish between your god and what you are imagining. I am right to dismiss it, even if you don't like it, even if you want to threaten me with some kind of

eternal cosmic doom. Such a move only discredits your position. And you've given me no reason to grant the possibility that your god exists. Is it possible that fallaciously derived conclusions are true? Not on their fallacious context. Is it possible that the imaginary and the real are the same? I certainly don't think so. Perhaps you do? Again, you give me no alternative to my own imagination as the means by which I can "know" your god. If I have to imagine it, then why would I accept as a possibility the idea that it actually exists? Blank out.

Vytautas: "I don't think we can know our imaginations, since knowledge must be propositional, and an image is not a statement put into word format."

You confuse the object of knowledge with the form in which you possess your knowledge. And there is an important correction here: knowledge is conceptual, not "propositional." Propositions are not primaries - they are constituted by concepts. Concepts are the form in which we retain what we discover and identify in our experience. We can know what we imagine because imagine is volitional and as such it is something we can cognitively regulate.

Vytautas: "Images are the direct imprints of light entering through the eye."

Again, this is representationalism, and it has been refuted. Images are perceptible recreations using some kind of medium (such as a projection screen or print paper).

Vytautas: "Images have to be given an interpretation in order for them to be intelligible."

Interpretation applies to language, code systems and art. Before we can interpret an image, say like Bosch's Garden of Delights, we have to perceive it, and then we need to identify it. For instance, do you try to interpret an image before you know it's an image? I would suppose not. So how do you identify things? Not by means of interpretation. That comes later.

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I wrote: Exactly my point! No matter how many modes of sensation we might have, it will always be possible to posit the existence of something that exists beyond the reach of those sense modalities. We will always be able to imagine that there is something beyond the reach of our senses. And no matter what I imagine, I can say it exists beyond the reach of your consciousness, and on the basis of this supposition say you have no basis to dismiss its existence - for how could you know it doesn't exist if "by definition" it cannot be sensed? You have fallen for a big lie, Vytautas.

Vytautas: "If you must sense everything to know that it exists, then you could not know your mind exists."

I have not argued that one "must sense everything to know that it exists." But our senses are our contact with the world of entities which exist independent of us. This does not mean that I cannot infer the existence of things that I do not perceive from things that I do perceive. But such is a conceptual process, so to draw conclusions on such basis, it's best to have a good understanding of how concepts are formed and how we utilize them in the inferential process.

Remember also that consciousness is an axiom. If I know that I sense things, then I know that I sense things. Basic truths are tautological, so I do not need to infer the existence of my consciousness.

Vytautas: "But we know we have a mind because knowledge requires a person to form beliefs."

I know I have a mind because first I perceive things, and also because I can identify the fact that I sense things. And what's more, I identify this fact by means of concepts. A mind is essentially the ability of a conscious organism to do just this. It is not about "forming beliefs." We need concepts to do this in the first place, which means: we need to have already developed a storehouse of conceptual integrations in order to place confidence in various proposals. Belief is a sub-certain degree of confidence in a proposal. This is how we use the concept 'belief' in our day-to-day lives. For instance, if my co-worker asks "Where's Charlie?" I might respond, "I believe he's gone to lunch." I'm not certain that he's gone to lunch, but I do know that Charlie tends to go to lunch at this time everyday. However, I didn't see him go to lunch, and he didn't tell me he was going to lunch. By stating that "I believe Charlie went to lunch," I am implicitly alerting my co-worker to the fact that I'm not certain, that I could be wrong here.

Now ask yourself this question, Vytautas, since you believe your god is real and that it is omniscient and infallible. Do you ever say that your god “believes” something to be the case? Typically you probably don’t. In fact, I can’t recall any passage in the bible which says its god “believes” such-and-such to be the case, but I could be wrong. It would, however, seem strange to say this about an omniscient and infallible mind. Rather, such a mind would “know” rather than “believe.”

Vytautas: “If you say a necessary being is only imaginary, then you are saying the being is not necessary, but then you are only thinking of an idol and not God.”

This is wordplay, and does not serve as an argument, nor does it help meet my challenge at all. You continue to endow descriptors with some kind of magic which is supposed to make whatever they’re applied to real. That’s not how we discover the existence of anything else that is real, so why would this be a valid cognitive operation in the case of your god? It is the kind of gimmick we would expect someone to use if what he worshiped is in fact only imaginary.

Besides, I’ve already pointed out that on my worldview, existence is necessary. And I know that existence is not imaginary. To say that existence is imaginary would commit the fallacy of the stolen concept. Do you understand this point? It is akin to saying “Consciousness does not exist.” To make such a statement, one would have to possess consciousness. In other words, the statement denies one of the preconditions which makes utterance of the statement possible in the first place.

Vytautas: “God is necessary because without him you could not have contingent beings, since creation necessarily has a Creator.”

One can easily replace “God” in this statement with anything he imagines, and it would carry the same force. Melissa, for instance, can easily say “Drodt’l is necessary because without him you could not have contingent beings, since creation necessarily has a Creator.” Again, notice the circularity here: it assumes that whatever is classed as “contingent” (which is arbitrarily applied to anything distinct from the “Creator”) was “created,” thus necessitating a creator. And yet, there’s no reason to suppose that the universe as such is “contingent.” To suggest that it is, would commit the fallacy of the stolen concept, the same error one makes when he affirms the statement “Consciousness does not exist.” Don’t you see this?

Vytautas: “If you have matter without God, then it would not obey laws of nature.”

Why? If it’s the case that to exist is to be something, then nature is concurrent with existence. Existence is identity. To affirm otherwise is to embrace another stolen concept. If something exists, it is itself, simple as that. It does not require some consciousness to come along and give it identity or force it to act in accordance with its identity. This is at best superfluous, and there is no objective basis for supposing it. If something exists, it is its own identity, and it acts in accordance with its own identity by virtue of its existence. That’s the law of causality: entities act in accordance to their own identity.

Vytautas: “But God preserves and upholds all of his creation by his power,”

Again this is all imaginary. We can imagine an invisible magic being controlling everything that we see in the universe, but the imaginary is not real. And what compels us to suppose that there is some consciousness controlling everything in the universe, if not the primacy of consciousness metaphysics? This view has been shown to be invalid. Why? Because it commits the fallacy of the stolen concept.

Vytautas: “so that in him we move and have our being.”

Correction: It is in my *self* that I live and move and have my being.

Vytautas: “Why is there motion, if God does not exist?”

If I believed there were such a being as the Christians describe their god, I would ask: Why IS there any motion to begin with? Motion as such constitutes change, and change can only imply an imperfect state. If something is perfect, why would it change? The Christian god is supposed to be unchanging. The source of change, then, we are thus told, is something that doesn’t change. Why believe this? Also, the Christian god is said to be perfect,

and it is also said to be a creator. Is it then a perfect creator? Well, to be a perfect creator, anything it creates would also have to be perfect. For a creator of something imperfect could not be rightly called a perfect creator. Is this universe “perfect”? By what standard would someone say it is? Name one thing in this universe that is perfect (aside from Allan Holdsworth or Randy Rhoads, and that’s due to their own effort).

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I wrote: No, I wouldn’t expect you to make the error quite as blatant as this. But in terms of epistemological principles, as I explained, this is essentially what you are doing. You have stated in more ways than one that the meaning of the term ‘God’ is sufficient to indicate its actual existence. As I pointed out above, this is a perverse reversal. We don’t do this with anything else that we discover in reality. Discovery comes first, and always by some objective means. Then we identify what we discover, and only then it can be integrated into the sum of our knowledge without contradicting it. But even here we sometimes make mistakes. In the case of your god, you performatively concede that it is imaginary because you’ve shown that you have the whole process backwards. You see, if you could explain how you have awareness of your god, how you discover its existence (not simply imagining it from the inputs found in a storybook), then we can investigate whether or not you’ve accurately identified what it is you call “God.” You’ve identified it with several properties. If we can determine that what you’ve applied these properties to is actually real, then we can check out whether or not it actually possesses the properties you’ve attributed to it. So you’re far from done, Vytautas. In fact, you’ve not even gotten started. You simply claim that something exists. You don’t even explain how you have awareness of it; in fact, it’s not even clear whether or not you think you have awareness of it, since you’ve not made this point clear in your case.

Vytautas: “Here is another way of looking at the concept of God and seeing how he exists. God is that which nothing greater can be conceived.”

In other words, God is the greatest thing imaginable. The persistence of this kind of argument only confirms the relevance of my challenge. For it implicitly acknowledges the role of imagination in coming to the conclusion that a god exists.

Vytautas: “You said you can imagine this in your mind. If you can only conceive that which nothing greater can be conceived in the mind, then you are not thinking of that which nothing greater can be conceived because to exist in reality is greater than just existing in the mind.”

How does the imaginer know that he has reached the limits of his imagining abilities?

Vytautas: “Greater is that which is best, so that real things are better than just images in the mind.”

But simply because someone can imagine something, does not mean that what he imagines is real. Surely you recognize this. Also, you again show a proclivity to use descriptors as sufficient to indicate your god’s existence. Slap the word “greatest” or “best” on what you have imagined, and since “real things are better than just images in the mind,” what you have imagined must be real, because you’ve already described it as “greatest” or “best.” So again, we have the attempt to define a god into existence. This is the essence of the ontological argument, and it is in my view the argument that is most consistent with the metaphysics of god-belief, namely the primacy of consciousness. But in this case, we observe the apologist granting his own consciousness the ability to create his god ex imaginatio, as if his imagining it necessitates that it exists. Beyond that, the argument is simply an amusing exercise in silliness.

Vytautas: “We know about God because he gave us propositions in the mind of man, so that men can know that he was created by God.”

What propositions has your god put into my mind, and how do you know your god put them there? Did a little voice tell you this? This is just another version of the tired old “I just know” argument. It’s not even an argument, it’s just an assertion backing up another assertion which can’t be validated in the first place. And it exhibits a profound misunderstanding of the nature of propositions. Propositions are formed by integrated concepts together, and concepts are formed ultimately by integrating percepts. There’s no need to point to an invisible magic being to explain where propositions come from.

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I wrote: Your consciousness is not guided by an epistemology which reliably distinguishes between the real and the imaginary. That is why you're having such a hard time with this. Concepts are not analogies, they are integrations. Your "God" is neither concept nor analogy, but a fiction, a fantasy, a figment of your imagination which you have enshrined as an alternative reality to the reality which actually exists and which you perceive with your senses.

Vytautas: "Epistemology deals with what we know, and metaphysics deals with what is real and what is imaginary or not real. So you say God is only a fiction which means God does not exist."

I say that the unreal is unreal, that the fictional is not real, that the imaginary is not real. I also say that Christians fail to explain how I can distinguish between their god and what they may merely be imagining. You, Vytautas, are a case in point.

Vytautas: "But God by definition has all perfections, and existence is perfection, since it is better to exist than not to exist. Therefore, God has existence."

Again you're trying to define your god into existence. Notice how your own procedure begs the question, for it assumes the conclusion that you're trying to establish. Otherwise you're drawing the "definition of God" from out of thin air, without reference to anything that actually exists, until you draw the dubious conclusion that it exists from the premise of the definition you arbitrarily gave to your god. Besides, as I have pointed out, definition is a property of concepts, not of entities which exist apart from man's consciousness. I see you have not grasped this point.

Vytautas: "You might say existence is not a predicate, but then you cannot say existence exists."

I can say existence exists, because it's true that existence exists. But existence is not a property, as if an entity were all these things plus the property of existing. That is not the Objectivist view. The Objectivist view is that an entity is its identity, that to exist is to be something, that existence is identity.

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I wrote: You need to be a little more careful here. When you say "a chair" here, are you referring to a specific concrete, such as the chair you're sitting on? That is not something we define. Are you referring to the concept 'chair' which denotes not only the chair in which you're sitting, but also every chair that you've sat in, the chair I'm sitting in, and every chair that exists now, has existed, and will exist? That is what we define - the concept - not the concrete. The chair I'm sitting in obviously not imaginary; I wouldn't be able to sit on it if it were imaginary. It is a physical object, it exists, it is real. Also, I perceive it by means of my senses, which interact with the chair physically. None of this applies to your god, for it is imaginary. We do not perceive what is imaginary, we imagine it.

Vytautas: "Where did we get the word chair if all we see is the chair?"

I see more than just the chair. I see other things, too, such as the table next to the chair, the things on the table, the person sitting in the chair, the wall, the pictures on the wall, the window on the other wall, the floor, etc. As for the word 'chair' we got this by means of invention: someone needed a perceptual symbol by which to represent the concept 'chair', so he invented the word "chair," and it stuck (i.e., others started using it to symbolize the same concept). Someone in Russia also needed a perceptual symbol for his concept of chair, and invented the word "kreslo" for it, and it stuck. Similarly, someone in Thailand needed a perceptual symbol for his concept of chair, and he invented the word "gaoee," and it too stuck.

Vytautas: "It would seem that our mind attaches the word chair to what we see, so that by some process we look at the chair and end up with word chair in the mind."

This view goes directly from what we perceive to a perceptual symbol for what we see, thus completely bypassing the conceptual level of cognition. The word "chair" actually symbolizes a concept. The word "chair" does not refer specifically to any one chair, but that's what your analysis is essentially proposing. The word "chair" is a symbol for the concept 'chair', and the concept 'chair' is an open-ended integration including all chairs which exist now, which have existed and which will exist. What's important is to recognize that we begin the process of forming concepts by first perceiving objects. Then we subsequently isolate and integrate those objects into concepts by



a process of abstraction. The test of a valid concept, then, is whether it can be reduced to the perceptual level, either directly or through a series of prior abstractions which themselves ultimately reduce to the perceptual level. This of course cannot be done with the notion 'god', so even if Christians want to refer to "the concept of 'God'," it is undeniably an anti-concept. The reason for this is the fact that it has no objective basis.

Vytautas: "We also seem to use the words in our mind and know the meaning behind the word in the process of thinking."

We think in terms of concepts, but since we use words as a shorthand by which to manage our concepts, it may seem that words are keepers of meaning. But in fact, meaning is a property of concepts, and words bear meaning only as symbols which are part of a larger code.

Vytautas: "So what is the meaning if it is not the word itself or the sensation?"

The meaning is the collection of objects which the word's underlying concept subsumes (in the case of first-level concepts), or the abstractions which it integrates (in the case of higher abstractions).

Vytautas: "The meaning is the understanding that we have of words, so that it is an interpretation that seeks to relate the words to each other."

Not quite. Meaning is a property of concepts first, of words second (and only to the extent that those words are actually symbols for concepts which are valid concepts).

Vytautas: "I do not think we can find the interpretation among the particulars that we sense because they are speechless."

You're confusing meaning with interpretation here. Besides, since meaning is a property of concepts, not of particular objects, we don't need to consult particular objects for either meaning or interpretation. The particular objects existing in the world, exist independent of consciousness, while concepts are the form in which we identify and integrate those objects into the sum of our knowledge.

Vytautas: "But if our minds seek to legislate the meaning, then we will come to false conceptions."

I'm not sure what you mean by "legislate the meaning," so you'll have to explain.

So there you have it, Vytautas attempted to take on [my challenge](#) and give it a college try, but over and over and over again, he has failed to meet it. This should not surprise anyone.

by Dawson Bethrick

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

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