

Thoughts on Recent Comments by Vytautas

[Recent comments](#) by Vytautas, an occasional visitor to my blog, prompted some questions on my part, and he was kind enough to offer a reply. I haven't posted a blog in a while, so I thought I would take this occasion to kill two birds with one stone.

I wrote:

When you say that you disagree in your initial point, are you saying that facts are not objective for anyone?

Vytautas:

Facts are objective for the Christian view as well any other view.

An [examination of the Christian worldview](#) does not bear this out, as I have shown. Did you read my blog? Perhaps we're operating on two different understandings of objectivity. I have explained what I mean by objectivity in my blog. Did you have difficulty understanding it, or do you have a different understanding of what objectivity is that you can provide?

I asked:

Is this itself a fact?

Vytautas:

No, because a statement about the facts in general is not a statement about something objective, since it is subjective.

I'm not sure I follow this. When you say that "because a statement about facts in general is not a statement about something objective," are you saying that facts in general are not objective? Or are you saying that statements about facts cannot be objective?

I wrote:

And if so, is it not itself an objective fact - i.e., a fact that is impervious to conscious intentions? What is the alternative to objectivity in your view, if not some form of subjectivism?

Vytautas:

We can know things objectively as well as subjectively.

I know that we can know things objectively. Would "God" be something you "know" *subjectively*?

Vytautas:

Why are there only facts and not statements about the facts?

I think there are statements about facts.

I asked:

Also, when you say that "sense objects are able to affect the mind," what specifically do you mean by this, and why would you conclude from this that facts are not objective?

Vytautas:

A sense objects are identified by the senses, and the mind passively takes in information about the object. The passive act of apprehending an object affects the mind, but if the mind does not sense the object, then the object cannot be identified. I deny that facts are not objective.

I'm still not clear on what you mean by objects "affecting" the mind. Now it is true that if a mind does not

perceive an object, it will not identify that object. However, sense objects are identified, not by the senses, but by the faculty of reason (specifically through conceptual integration). This is not a passive process. Conceptual integration is an active process. Perception is also an active process, but unlike conceptual integration, perception is not a *volitional* process, it is physiological, automatic. Both are active processes. What they do not do is *create* or *alter* the objects involved. The objects remain what they are regardless of who perceives them, how often they are perceived, what one calls them, or how one might miscategorize them. That's the primacy of existence: the objects of consciousness exist and are what they are independent of conscious activity. In the case of a god, however, whose will is said to possess the power to create objects "ex nihilo" (i.e., not from materials which already exist) and alter them according to its preferences and wishes, the primacy of existence does not hold. On the contrary, what we have here is the primacy of consciousness: objects exist and are what the ruling consciousness wants them to be. On this view, existence conforms to consciousness. It is a complete reversal of the primacy of existence. The outcome from such a view is that facts could not be objective, since they conform to the stipulations of a subject which allegedly has power to bring them into existence and reshape them at will. The Van Til quote which I gave in my blog confirms precisely this.

I wrote:

How does that follow? It sounds like you're suggesting that the mind functions optimally if there are no sense objects to begin with to "affect the mind." Anyway, some clarity on what you were trying to say here would be helpful, because as it stands now it's vague and unsubstantial.

Vytautas:

A mind has an intellect and a will. The intellect passively takes in information of the sense object, but the will must operate on the sense data to make it understandable.

Again, I do not think that the mind passively takes in information, since perception (the means by which we have awareness of objects existing independent of us) is an *active* process. You seem to agree that the mind does volitionally process that information, but when you say that "the will must operate on the sense data to make it understandable," what specifically do you mean here? What operation does the will perform on the sense data?

Vytautas:

If the facts are not objective, then all of reality as we perceive it would be subjective.

Ultimately this is the nature of reality as Christianity would have us believe, since it is a creation of consciousness and everything within it conforms to someone's will. You can't get more subjective than that.

I asked:

When you say that "God does not change [the fact that JF Kennedy died Nov. 22, 1963] in space-time because he [planned] this since the foundations of the world," specifically which fact are you talking about that your god "does not change"? That JFK is dead? Or that he died on a specific date?

Vytautas:

It is the fact that the assassination happened in history. The event is not repeatable because it all ready happened. Even if JFK rose from the dead, that fact would be a different from the historical fact. So the same historical event cannot happen twice.

Well, if you say so. I've heard other Christians make conflicting intimations as they seem to grant wider latitude to the notion of "God's sovereignty," sometimes even making much of the claim that the Christian god exists "out of time." Indeed, if I believed in an omnipotent being which is supposed to have created the whole universe and is said to rule over everything within it with a sovereign will, I don't know why I would believe that it could not change history once it's been made. What would prevent it from doing this?

I asked:

You claim that "only an irrational god" would change whichever fact is in question here, but why?

Vytautas:

It is because an irrational god would change its plan when it is carried out.

Who said anything about *changing* a plan? Maybe the plan included resurrecting JFK, revising the date of his assassination, or deleting it from history, all along. I see no reason why a change of plan would be needed for any of these options. It would be very easy for an omnipotent god to do this, I would think. It could also make it “understandable,” at the very least to itself, thus satisfying your criterion of rationality (see below). It would also be very easy to claim that it had planned such things from the very beginning.

Vytautas:

An irrational god does not plan everything in advance so it does not know everything in advance.

I’m not sure why. Below you say that “irrational” means “not understandable,” but I don’t see anything “not understandable” about the situation you describe here. In fact, just by your description of it, I have understood it. There’s nothing “not understandable” about not planning everything in advance or not knowing everything in advance.

I wrote:

It seems that you would consider anything your god plans and does “rational,” even if it involved resurrecting JFK or revising the date on which he was assassinated.

Vytautas:

God is rational because he plans out history, but an irrational god is captive to his creation.

I’m trying to integrate this with how you defined ‘rational’ and ‘irrational’ below. So, to go by your definition, you’re saying that “God is [understandable] because he plans out history, but a [not understandable] god is captive to his creation.” Is that what you meant to say? I’m wondering how “rational” your position is, because the more you try to explain it, the harder and harder it is becoming to understand.

Vytautas:

We only know history after the fact. So we don’t know if God will resurrect JFK, but he will not revise the date on which he was assassinated because then God would be inconstant with what he has decreed.

If the Christian god had planned to revise the date on which JFK was assassinated, it wouldn’t be “inconstant with what he has decreed.” And unless you are the Christian god, you wouldn’t have full knowledge of what it has decreed. Given Christianity’s supernaturalism and its all-powerful, sovereign deity, there’s no reason why it should be supposed impossible that JFK was originally assassinated in 1976 and the Christian god revised the date back to 1963. We wouldn’t know either way unless your god wanted us to know. It seems quite unrealistic, on these presuppositions, for a finite, fallible and non-omniscient creature to say what an infinite, infallible, omniscient and omnipotent deity can or cannot do.

I asked:

Surely you believe that your god is capable of performing both alterations, no?

Vytautas:

I deny that God is capable of performing both alterations, since it would make him irrational.

And according to what you say below, “irrational” is, on your view, apparently just a synonym for “not understandable.” It’s not at all clear why performing one of the alterations mentioned above would preserve your god’s understandability, while performing the other (or both) wouldn’t.

I asked:

And if you believed your god had a purpose for resurrecting JFK or changing the date on which he was assassinated, would you call that “irrational”?

Vytautas:

No

This is a puzzling answer, given your above points. Above you just got through saying that you “deny that God is capable of performing both alterations, since it would make him irrational,” but now you seem to say that having a reason for doing one or the other would not be irrational. You’re losing me.

I wrote:

Justin gave some brief comments on why it’s quizzical at best to ascribe rationality or irrationality to a god’s behavior. I’m wondering if you could clarify what you were trying to say, and what you mean by “rational” and “irrational”.

Vytautas:

‘Rational’ means understandable. And ‘irrational’ means not understandable.

I’ve never seen these definitions for these terms before. Is this from the bible? I would say that the doctrine of the trinity would make the Christian god irrational on this definition of ‘irrational’, since the doctrine of the trinity makes it utterly beyond comprehension. Various other Christian doctrines make Christianity as a worldview irrational on this conception of it. For instance, the doctrine of prayer. Jesus is portrayed repeatedly in the gospels telling believers to ask what they want and they’ll get it, because Jesus himself is faithful. But there always seems to be some reason why this fails. (See for instance [here](#).) That’s “not understandable” given the promises we find attributed to Jesus in the New Testament. There’s also the doctrine of the Christian god’s glory. It already is said to possess all glory, but believers are supposed to “give God the glory” as well. Van Til referred to this as “the full bucket problem,” and did not have any clear (“understandable”) answer to it. I could go on, but by now you should see my point.

Also, on this definition of ‘rational’, I - an atheist, mind you - am rational, because I am understandable (sufficiently so for you to carry on a discussion with me). My worldview, because it is understandable (I certainly understand it), is also rational. But Christian apologists often insist that atheism is irrational (apparently, “not understandable”), even though I understand it, and that a worldview which rejects Christian theism cannot be rational (even though I understand my worldview, which is non-Christian and non-theistic).

Vytautas:

God is rational in relation to himself, but God is incomprehensible to man, so that he must reveal himself to man, if we are to know something about God.

I’m confident that one could say such things about anything he has imagined.

by Dawson Bethrick

Labels: [Christian Psychopathy](#), [Facts](#)

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