

The Transcendental Argument

All previous handouts on meta-apologetics have all built up to this point in which we will learn how to apply what we have come to understand. The transcendental argument goes like this: “The proof for God’s existence is that without Him you couldn’t prove anything.” What this argument is trying to convey is actually rather simple, though discussing its implications can require some knowledge of meta-apologetics. Any fact, facet, point of view, evidence, truth claim, piece of knowledge, etc. all must presuppose the God of the Bible. Without Him, life is essentially meaningless. Either there is no foundation for intelligibility, or that foundation is a faulty one. In order to utilize this argument in an effect way, we must learn the “Don’t Answer, Answer Method.”

- **Don’t Answer, Answer**

- Proverbs 26:4-5 Do not answer a fool according to his folly, Or you will also be like him. Answer a fool as his folly deserves, That he not be wise in his own eyes.
- Don’t answer a fool- someone who doesn’t fear God- according to his presuppositions (that truth can only be found through science, or that truth is relative, etc.)- instead, point out his folly. This is what Paul did at Mars Hill in Acts 17. He basically starts out by doing an internal critique of their worldview to show why it was wrong, he then offers the truth of Christianity.
- Paul tells the Corinthians in 2 Cor. 10:5, “We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.” Notice the order here. The “speculations” are first destroyed, and then the thoughts are taken "captive."
- Answering a fool according to his folly means locating the folly (where he went wrong) and shining a light on it. This is nothing short of exposing an individual’s sin. Christians are the “light of the world,” and it is our duty to expose the nonbeliever’s error for both his sake and the sake of our testimony, rather than joining with him in his foolishness. This means that when confronting nonbelievers we hit them at their weakest point, the point in which reality is misinterpreted because of their worldview. We attack their faulty presuppositions.
- 1 Corinthians 1:23 “but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness.” When the apostles and Jesus reasoned with a Jewish audience they reasoned from the Scriptures. However, with a gentile audience (individuals who don’t accept the Scripture as authoritative) we see that first their worldview had to be destroyed before it could be replaced by Christianity. This is the reason for the apostle’s diverging approaches when witnessing to gentiles as opposed to Jews. They understood the necessity of answering a fool according to his folly.

- **Self-Refuting Statements**

- Every worldview essentially breaks down into a self-refutation when it does not start with Christ. Here are some common examples that show the inconsistency in the nonbeliever's worldview.

Relativism/Deconstructionism

Statement: "There are no Absolutes!"

Answer: "Are you absolutely sure?"

Statement: "It's impossible to know anything for sure."

Answer: "Are you sure you know that?"

Statement: "No one should be judged for their lifestyle"

Answer: "Is that your judgment regarding those whose lifestyle requires judging?"

Statement: "You can't just align yourself with a dogma"

Answer: "Are you aligned to that dogma?"

Statement: "No one can define 'God.'"

Answer: "Is that your definition for God?"

Statement: "There is no right or wrong."

Answer: "Is that right?"

Statement: "Don't be dogmatic!"

Answer: "Are you being dogmatic?"

Statement: "Word's cannot relay meaning."

Answer: "Do your words relay the meaning that words cannot relay meaning?"

Statment: "Nobody's right"

Answer: "Are you right about that?"

Statement: "All things are relative."

Answer: "If all things are relative then so is your statement. In which case I have no reason to

believe it."

Statement: "All opinions are equally valid."

Answer: "My opinion is that not all opinions are equally valid. Is my opinion valid. If it is, then the statement is false. If it's not, then the statement is still false."

Statement: "Your truth is different than mine."

Answer: "My truth is that your truth is wrong. Is my truth wrong?" (Usually with this type of objection making it real is important. Give an analogy such as, "If you jumped off a building and believed gravity wouldn't pull you toward the earth would you not hit the ground?")

Statement: "Words can mean anything you want them to."

Answer: "I want your words to mean, 'Words can mean nothing you want them to.' Is that what they mean?"

Statement: "No truth is unchanging."

Answer: "So the statement you just made is changing and may not be true tomorrow."

Emotionalism (Usually tied in with Relativism)

Statement: "I feel I'm right."

Answer: "I feel I'm right. Does that make it right?"

Statement: "What works for you doesn't work for me."

Answer: "What works for me is doing morally reprehensible things to you. Does that work for you?"

entities)

Empiricism

Statement: "Science is the best (or only) way to determine truth."

Answer: "What scientific experiment proved this statement to be true?"

Statement: "Science doesn't need philosophy."

Answer: "Is that your philosophy for science?"

Statement: "We can't know anything apart from experience."

Answer: "How did you experience this statement?"

Statement: "All knowledge is confined to the realm of experience" (Immanuel Kant)

Answer: "Have you experienced all knowledge?"

Statement: "I only believe in science."

Answer: "What experiment did you use to arrive at this statement?"

Statement: "Apart from mathematical equations we can know nothing absolutely"

Answer: "Where's your equation proving that statement to be true?"

Pantheism/Eastern Religion

Statement: "Everything is an illusion."

Answer: "Is that statement an illusion?"

Statement: "We must lose our desires."

Answer: "Is that your desire?"

Statement: "All is one."

Answer: "Who's making the statement, you or me?" (Eastern religions have no way to account for person-hood or differentiate between

Nihilism

Statement: "Life has no meaning."

Answer: "Do you really mean that?"

Statement: "There is no such thing as truth"

Answer: "Is that the truth?"

Statement: "I believe in nothing."

Answer: "Is that something you believe in?"

Statement: "Every assertion is false."

Answer: "Is that assertion false?"

Statement: "There are no rules"

Answer: "Is that your rule?"

Statement: "The whole world is an illusion"

Answer: "Is your statement an illusion?"

Statement: "There are no laws of logic"

Answer: "Martians store ponies 3 dollars cackle feathers" (i.e. answer absurdity with absurdity) or "Did you use logic to arrive at that statement?"

Skepticism

Statement: "I doubt everything."

Answer: "Do you doubt that you doubt everything?"

Statement: "We must all be skeptical of any truth claim."

Answer: "I'm skeptical of your truth claim."

- It may be harder to spot self-refuting claims in religious systems such as Islam, Mormonism, and Catholicism due to the fact that 1) they steal much of their theology from the Christian worldview, and 2) because their contradictions are not as obvious. Discussing apologetics with members of other faiths is often more involved but the same exact method is used. We answer the fool according to his folly. This requires us to do an “internal critique.”

- **Performing an Internal Critique**

- An internal critique constitutes an “inside look” into another person’s worldview. When the Christian puts on the nonbeliever’s glasses he is in effect “test driving” their worldview. A helpful transportation analogy may help explain. The Christian is hypothetically grabbing the keys to the nonbeliever’s car, taking it for a spin, and crashing it into a ditch. He is taking the nonbeliever’s worldview to its logical conclusion showing that it does not account for the preconditions of intelligibility. To be more accurate, he’s actually proving that the nonbeliever’s vehicle can’t even start because it doesn’t have any fuel.
- Performing an internal critique of another person’s worldview is exactly what Paul did in Acts 17. Paul’s mission was to present the Gospel of Jesus Christ in such a way that the Epicureans (atomic materialists) and Stoics (materialist pantheists) would repent. He starts with presenting a belief they had in common, that an “unknown God” existed and possessed the attributes of sovereignty and self-sufficiency. He next uses the resurrection as authentication that God will judge the world. It was at this point that Paul was cut off from finishing his presentation of the person of Christ, but not without gaining followers. To be logically consistent the Greek philosophers should not have had a problem with a man being raised from the dead if truly God is sovereign. However, in reality, although they relied on God for their life, movement, and existence, they did not believe that God could take human form or be resurrected physically. This was a contradiction, and Paul capitalized on it.
- In a way this is also what Christ did numerous times. The woman at the well and the rich young rulers are good examples of this. Christ uses their conscience (what they know to be wrong) in order to convict them of their sin. He is pointing out a logical inconsistency in their lifestyle. The rich young ruler valued material wealth over God while the woman at the well was caught in a net of adultery. Both however, wanted to be spiritually satisfied—the woman at the well through “living water,” and the young ruler through keeping the greatest commandment. Christ pressed them to show that their whole outlook on life was in direct violation to their stated goals and offered the remedy of repentance.

- **Tactics in Performing Internal Critiques**

- Ask Questions
- Point out Contradictions and Fallacies
- Bring Worldviews to their Ultimate Conclusions
- **Questions for Other Worldviews¹**

Atheism

Q: If there is no God, where did the universe come from?

Q: How do you justify universal, immaterial, unchanging laws in your version of the universe?

Q: What gives humans dignity over any other advanced primordial slime? Why do you attend the funeral of a human, but not have a funeral for a fly or a virus or a cancerous cell?

Empiricism

Q: By which of your senses did you come to know that all knowledge is verified by the senses?

Moral Relativism

Q: Since you do not claim objective truth, why should anyone believe you?

Q: Is it objectively true that morality is relative?

Pragmatism

Q: What are the proper goals in life?

Mystic Worldviews

Q: If your worldview is beyond rationality and human experience, how do you know about it?

Q: Is not anything you try to tell me about your worldview based on rationality and your human experience?

¹ “Proof That God Exists: other worldviews”, n.d.,
<http://www.proofthatgodexists.org/other-worldviews.php>.

Q: How do you know your worldview is true?

Q: Where did the universe come from?

Hinduism

Hindus believe that 'all is one,' and that Brahman (God) is everything. Since it does not appear that way to us, they say that Brahman is beyond our experience and rationality, and all that we experience is illusion (maya).

Hindus claim that the only way to get right with 'the all' is through mystical contemplation such as yoga, and meditation, so that we can be enlightened to the truth that we are one with the sky, the trees, the lake etc. Hindus claim that the problems with this world stem from our belief in distinctions rather than the oneness of being and that once enlightened, we will escape the cycle of reincarnation, and enter into 'Nirvana' as a drop of water into a shoreless ocean.

Q: If as you claim God is not personal, is your holy book, the bhagavad gita, a personal revelation from God, and, if not, why should anyone believe it?

Q: If any distinctions between you and a truck are illusory, why do you look both ways before you cross the street?

Q: If all is one, and there are no distinctions, am I not in Nirvana already?

Moralistic Worldviews

Moralistic worldviews do not have a transcendent authority which to appeal to. In moralistic worldviews 'God' and 'Heaven' are usually lumped together and range in description from an abstract void to an impersonal principle (Nirvana in Buddhism and T'ien in Confucianism). Most moralistic worldviews claim that the problem with humanity is that we fail to live up to a particular moral code and that we need to try harder to live up to that code to attain some form of 'enlightenment.'

Q: Where did the universe come from?

Q: If I was unable to live up to this code in the past, how will I be able to 'try harder' now?

Q: If I have broken this moral code in the past, how is the guilt of my past deeds dealt with?

Buddhism

Q: What gives Buddha, or your holy books authority?

Q: How do I know that Buddha is the enlightened one, rather than Confucius?

Q: If anyone can get to 'heaven' by just being good, who determines what 'being good' is?

Confucianism

Q: What gives Confucius or your 'holy' books authority?

Q: How do I know that Confucius is the enlightened one rather than Buddha?

Q: By what authority do you claim that Confucius was wise and what determines what wisdom is?

Christian Cults

Christian Counterfeit worldviews regard some or all of the Bible as authoritative but then through claimed 'additional revelations,' reject the most basic teachings of the Bible. Some are polytheistic (believe in many Gods - as the Mormons do), Unitarian (rejecting the trinity as most Christian counterfeits do - including Islam), and some have perversions of a false Messiah.

Mormonism

Q: What is the manuscript evidence for the multitude of discrepancies between the Mormon bible (which teaches for instance that Satan offered to redeem mankind, that Adam was baptized by immersion, and that a prophet named Joseph Smith would appear), and the Christian Bible.

Q: What is your answer to the teaching in Revelation 22 vs. 18 that anyone who adds or takes away from the Bible will be dealt with plagues and banishment?

Q: How do we know that the Mormon version of the Bible is true?

Q: What is the evidence that the original language of the Book of Mormon "reformed Egyptian," ever existed?

Q: Would a true prophet of God have been convicted of 'glass looking,' (a con of placing a 'magic stone' in a hat, placing one's face in the hat, and by that means locating hidden treasures), in Bainbridge New York, on March 20, 1826, as Joseph Smith was?

Jehovah's Witness

Q: Does your organization claim to be a prophet of God?

Q: Since Deuteronomy 18 vs. 20 -22 describe a false prophet as one who gives a prophecy which does not come true, how do you answer the prophecies of the Jehovah's Witness of the end of the world in 1914, and the bodily return of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in 1925?

Q: What is the manuscript evidence for the discrepancies between the Jehovah's Witness' 'New World Translation' Bible and the Bible of Christianity?

Islam

Q: Since the Koran (Qur'an) acknowledged the words of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, Jesus and His apostles as authoritative (Surah 2:136, 17:55), how do you account for the conflicts between the Bible and the Koran such as the Koran's claim that Jesus was not crucified? (Surah 4:157)

Q: Since the Koran was written around 600 AD, a time when current manuscripts of the Christian Bible were available, what is the evidence that the Christian Bible has been corrupted SINCE then?

Q: Since the Koran claims that the words of Allah cannot be changed (Surah 6:34, 6:115), how do you support your position that the previous words of Allah in the 'Book' (the Bible) have been changed?

Q: If Islam claims to be a peaceful religion, how do you account for the verses in the Koran such as this one from Surah 9:5 "Then, when the sacred months have passed, slay the idolaters wherever ye find them, and take them (captive), and besiege them, and prepare for them each ambush. But if they repent and establish worship and pay the poor-due, then leave their way free. Lo! Allah is Forgiving, Merciful."

Q: How do you account for the claim in the Koran that Mary the mother of Jesus was the sister of Aaron since they lived hundreds of years apart? (Surah 19 27-28)

Q: Do you believe, as stated in the Hadith book of Sahîh al-Bukhârî Volume 4, Book 55, Number 543 that Adam was 60 cubits (90 feet) tall?