

FORT BEND CHRISTIAN ACADEMY

A PROOF FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD AS A NECCESARY PRECONDITION FOR
LOGICAL LAWS AND HUMAN REASON

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Introduction

The Transcendental Argument for the existence of God, by comparison to other prominent arguments of its kind, is a relatively new idea. That is to say, the idea itself is new, however certain aspects of it are as old as human reason itself. Since the time of Aristotle, and long before that, man has questioned his ability to make sense of the world around him. As long as multiple worldviews exist, there will always be disagreement over how humanity can describe the universe in an orderly fashion. It is the position of the theist to say that the laws of logic are a part of God's creation and 'mirror his thinking,' as Van Til would put it.

Perhaps the earliest use of this argument in a formal setting is the Great Debate of God's existence between Dr. Gregory Bahnsen and Dr. Gordon Stein. The argument seeks to prove that the existence of God is a necessary precondition from which the laws of logic attain their value. Bahnsen, the indisputable winner of the debate, has received a fair amount of back and forth between theistic and atheistic contemporaries alike, but because society at large is caught up with a more teleological argument for the existence of God, it seems that arguments concerning more philosophical topics are condemned to slip through the cracks, for now. It is the goal of this thesis to not only contribute to the argument and restructure it, but also to help the highly viable proof for God's existence become more relevant in the scholastic community.

The following thesis is comprised of a historical review that will cover some of the classical philosophers who indirectly contributed to the formation of the argument and some of the more recent scholars who have contributed to the Transcendental Argument itself. After the review, the thesis will be presented as a syllogism with a brief explanation followed by an in-

depth, debate-style defense that will cover counterarguments to the syllogism and the author's rebuttals.

Historical Review

Aristotle

Aristotle was a Greek philosopher who lived circa 350 BCE and it can be said that from him, all epistemology throughout the ages derives its foundation. Much of his work with epistemological thought is based upon the idea that the first principles of genres¹ are not demonstrable; instead, certain principles must be accepted as fact without any kind of proof because to deny them would be to deny any form of correct thought. Many of these axioms deal with early geometry, such as the angle measurements found within a triangle, but some of them aid in structuring pure reason. These rational principles later came to be known as the Laws of Logic and can be summarized as follows:

1. The law of identity – “Because each thing is inseparable from itself...”² Possibly the most simplistic of all logical laws, an object is what it is and is not what it is not. Though Aristotle’s exact take on this law is a bit contentious, for the use of this thesis, no further details on this point will be required to be understood.

E.g. “A rooster is, in fact, a rooster.”

2. The law of non-contradiction – “It is impossible for anything at the same time to be and not to be.”³ This law may be the most important of all logical laws as it pertains to epistemology and this thesis. This particular axiom best demonstrates how the laws are true by necessity because to deny them would be to deny consistent thinking entirely.

¹ Aristotle used this word to mean disciplines or sciences

² Aristotle, *Metaphysics* (350 B.C.), trans. W.D. Ross, 2009. Book 7, Part 17

³ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* (350 B.C.), trans. W.D. Ross, 2009. Book 4, Section 4

I.e. “The law of non-contradiction is not true, yet at the same time, by virtue of its non-existence, it is true at the same time and in the same respect.” Obviously the thinker runs into a multitude of problems with this sort of thought structure, so he is forced to accept the law if he wishes to think about anything meaningfully.

3. The law of the excluded middle – “No intermediate between contraries can be predicated of one and the same subject, of which one of the contraries is predicated.”⁴

Aristotle points out in *The Metaphysics* that two statements that are contradictory to each other cannot have a middle ground between them.

E.g. “I am pregnant” and “I am not pregnant” are two contradictory statements and cannot support a statement that lends credence to them both. “I am kind of pregnant” is an illogical statement.

Aristotle states that these axioms hold true in all situations because these laws describe what he would consider to be the highest, or most basic, concept of the universe: being. Despite what naturalists may postulate, Aristotle believes that study of the natural world was not the most basic of all sciences; it was that the understanding of the conditions of “being qua being.”⁵ He points out that all sciences will use these laws because they deal with a subcategory of being itself. “And all men use them, because they are true of being qua being and each genus has being.”⁶ These principles that he formulated have caused a great deal of debate among

⁴ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* (350 B.C.), trans. W.D. Ross, 2009. Book 11, Section 6

⁵ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* (350 B.C.), trans. W.D. Ross, 2009. Book 4, Section 3

“Being qua being” is somewhat of an ambiguous term but basically refers to being as it pertains to being.

⁶ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* (350 B.C.), trans. W.D. Ross, 2009. Book 4, Section 3

Aristotle uses the term genus to refer to the disciplines within being, such as natural sciences.

philosophers throughout scholastic history and have recently been used to formulate the Transcendental Argument for the existence of God.⁷

Aristotle is credited not only as the first to formalize logical laws, but also the first to systematize logic in such a way that it can be used to formulaically prove or justify any given thought, as long as the thought has its basis in the truth. This formula is known as the syllogism and is the way that all things are formally proven in the scholastic world. It can come in a variety of forms such as: $A = B$, $B = C$, therefore $A = C$. One can define the syllogism as “an argument that draws its conclusion from the premise.” Usually the premise is a point that all people can agree on, and the argument gradually and methodically moves to proving the point in contention. The argument that the writer of this paper will be attempting to prove will use a syllogism as well.

In the same way that science is entirely impossible without logical laws that mankind must accept to be true, interpretation of metaphysical principles, such as the laws of logic, are entirely impossible without the existence of God. The ideas of Aristotle as they pertain to logical laws lay out the groundwork for what would later become Kant’s transcendental deduction.

Immanuel Kant

Immanuel Kant, an 18th century German philosopher, devotes much of his work to epistemology as it relates to God and morality. He is credited with formulating the transcendental deduction (which is the type of argument that will be later defended in this thesis). The idea of a transcendental argument can be understood as follows: one should start with an accepted truth that is not in contention among other philosophers, or at least the person he is

⁷ To be clear, philosophers have not debated as to whether the laws truly exist, rather, how one can truly describe how the laws have come about and entered human understanding.

conversing with, and then proceed to prove that this accepted truth is dependent upon the point in contention. For example, if one would want to prove that there is a floorboard underneath the carpet they are standing on, then they would try to prove that the carpet, which no one is disputing, is dependent upon the floorboard because without it there would be no carpet.

Kant's transcendental deduction is a response to British Skepticism and the writing of Scottish philosopher David Hume, who claims that it is impossible to prove anything using a priori reasoning because there is no empirical way to do so and to use reason to prove reason is fallacious.⁸ Kant agreed with Hume in some ways, but was unwilling to accept that a priori reasoning, which accounts for things such as pure mathematics and pure science, was nothing more than "sophistry and illusion."⁹ Hume's idea would indicate that even logic itself cannot be proven to be true in any way. Kant agreed with Hume in that logic could not be proven through experience, however, he established that things like logical laws could be proven transcendently.¹⁰ Kant describes transcendental deduction as follows:

1. The concept of space is not something that one can arrive at from experience.¹¹
2. Space is a necessary representation. It is the condition from which any idea of phenomena can exist, and "by no means a determination dependent upon them."
3. Space is not a relation of thoughts; it is a pure intuition.
4. Space is only represented as an infinite given quantity; all other conceptions are subject to differing interpretations.

⁸ I.e. Begging the Question

⁹ Kant, Immanuel. *The Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. J.M.D. Meiklejohn. Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University, 2010. 43

¹⁰ Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, "Kant's Transcendental Argument." Last modified 2009. Accessed October 16, 2012. <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant-transcendental>

¹¹ Kant refers to 'space' in the same way physicists call the universe the space-time continuum. He is referring to the dimension, not to the solar system.

5. Therefore, space is an intuition a priori.¹²

By this method, Kant proves that though some things cannot be proven via reason or sensory experience, they can be proven objectively true if they are viewed as necessary preconditions from which other things can be said to exist. Kant expounds upon his transcendental method as follows:

“A science of this kind, which should determine the origin, the extent, and the objective validity of such cognitions, must be called transcendental logic, because it has not, like general logic, to do with the laws of understanding and reason in relation to empirical as well as pure rational cognitions without distinction, but concerns itself with these only in an a priori relation to objects.”¹³

Much like the Transcendental Argument for God’s Existence, Kant seeks to establish the foundations upon which all other knowable things are based. Transcendental ideas are used in relating empirical ideas, like the idea of space is useful for relating different objects that one experiences a posteriori. The Transcendental Argument for God’s Existence seeks to establish God as a precondition from which man can relate all sensory and pure intuitions.¹⁴

Cornelius Van Til

Cornelius Van Til is a 21st century Christian philosopher, reformed theologian, and, most importantly, presuppositional apologist. Van Til is perhaps the foremost authority on the subject of presuppositional apologetics and the shoot from which the modern version of the Transcendental Argument grows. Perhaps the defining characteristic of Van Til is that he

¹² Kant, Immanuel. *The Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. J.M.D. Meiklejohn. Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University, 2010. 53

¹³ Ibid. 78

¹⁴ “Sensory and pure” refer to empirical and rational thoughts.

believes there is no common ground between the believer and the non-believer. As a result, he refrains from making his arguments for God's existence based on abstract concepts but always uses the Christian worldview as an indivisible package with which to interpret the physical and metaphysical realm.¹⁵ This idea is deeply rooted in his belief that the minds of all men operate by presuppositions.¹⁶ Van Til's apologetic can best be described as a critique of the non-Christian presuppositions.¹⁷

Van Til believes that the only presupposition that could consistently and accurately describe reality was Christianity, and he focuses the majority of his efforts in proving its consistency as a presupposition over the atheistic presupposition; however, his first step is to prove to the atheist that he/she presupposes their entire worldview. This idea is best seen in his essay "Why I Believe in God" where he speaks to an assumed atheist reader and blatantly exposes his presupposed theology (I.e. he is a "born and raised" Christian). Van Til tries to prove that the true reason the atheist will reject tenets of Christianity, such as miracles, providence, creation, and prophecy, is that his/her presuppositions will not allow him/her. The biggest presupposed problem that Van Til wishes to point out to the "faithless" non-believer is that he/she accepts, by faith, whatever scientific or philosophical truth that will substantiate his/her belief that there is no God.¹⁸ The other presuppositions that the imaginary foe operates by include "assuming the autonomy of (one's) own experience" and "being unwilling to accept as

¹⁵Van Til, Cornelius. *The Defense of the Faith*. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Crossway Bibles, 2001. 253

This, of course, is an outright attack on the Roman Catholic and Arminian view which stated that one could come to faith in Christ through pagan ideas that were analogous with Christian theology.

¹⁶ Bahnsen, Greg. *Van Til's Apologetic*. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1998.

A presupposition, in this case, is comprised of the basic convictions that all people hold. These convictions will determine how the individual will interpret data and effect what the person believes they can and cannot know.

¹⁷ A presupposition can be defined as fundamental assumptions with which the person interprets all other information.

¹⁸Van Til, Cornelius. *Why I Believe in God*. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Great Commission Publications. 12

fact any fact that would challenge (one's) self-sufficiency."¹⁹ These sorts of presupposed axioms create the foundation of an atheistic worldview that Van Til argues is ultimately illogical.

According to Van Til, Christian axioms are the only proper ones to be held if the man wishes to truly know anything about the world. Van Till describes the epistemological dilemma that man is in as follows:

Since, then, the absolute self-consciousness of God is the final interpreter of all facts, man's knowledge is analogical of God's knowledge. Since all the finite exists by virtue of the interpretation of God, man's interpretation of the finite facts is ultimately dependent upon God's interpretation of the facts.²⁰

After establishing his basis that all men operate by presupposed worldviews, he then attempts to prove that the atheistic worldview cannot account for multiple facets of the metaphysical universe such as the laws of logic. Van Til believes that, as a theist, he is in harmony with the mind of God, and that since all true knowledge comes from the all-sustaining creator, all facts interpreted with this lens are, at the least, foundationally true. The atheist, on the other hand, cannot account for these logical laws; he/she can only prove them to be conventions of man. The atheist assumes that human reason is the highest authority on logical laws, but claims to follow the laws as if imposed by a legislator. In other words, when the atheist tells the theist that the belief in God is illogical, he really means that the theist is in violation of a principle imposed by man, but if man is the ultimate legislator of the logical laws, then no man can ever be in contradiction of them. The theist, however, holds to the principle that one's thoughts are *analogous* to those of God. If God is now the ultimate legislator of the laws, then

¹⁹Ibid. 9

²⁰ Bahnsen, Greg. *Van Til's Apologetic*. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1998. 490

man is capable of thinking logically or illogically when compared to the absolute standard.²¹

Any worldview that should exclude this view of God from its philosophy will fall victim to contradictory conclusions when answering even the most fundamental metaphysical questions.

Another aspect of Van Til's negative apologetic makes him a bit divisive among his readers. He believes that every man had a knowledge of God and a knowledge of his need for reconciliation with him. He refers to atheism as the "iron mask" and that, apologetically speaking, it is the job of the Christian to tear the mask off. Part of this knowledge of God is seen through the atheist's ability to use logic consistently. Van Til avoids giving the implication that he is of the mind that atheists are illogical; however, they could never "apply their own methods consistently. This obviously proves problematic when compared to the test of an accurate worldview as stated above.

Perhaps if one were to boil down everything Van Til said about the illogical and inconsistent nature of the atheist worldview, it would be to this excerpt from *Why I Believe in God*: "Your logic claims to deal with eternal and changeless matters; and your facts are wholly changing things; and 'never the twain shall meet.' So you have made nonsense of your own experience."²² Resting on his firmly established presupposed axioms, Van Til criticizes the nature of the atheistic worldview as ever changing to fit their skewed view of the physical world.

Gregory Bahnsen

Dr. Gregory Bahnsen, a student of Van Til, can be called perhaps the greatest apologist for the Transcendental Argument for God's Existence. Dr. Bahnsen wrote multiple books on

²¹ Bahnsen, Greg. *Van Til's Apologetic*. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1998. 491-493

²² Van Til, Cornelius. *Why I Believe in God*. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Great Commission Publications. 14

presuppositional apologetics that directly mirror the ideas of his teacher and provided a nuanced approach to perhaps an argument that would have fallen into obscurity without his take. “The Great Debate: Does God Exist?” perhaps Bahnsen’s magnum opus, will be the primary focus of this thesis. In this debate, with atheist Dr. Gordon Stein, Bahnsen focuses his entire argument on the idea that the concepts of logic, morality, and the scientific method are meaningless if one does not presuppose God.

The way that Bahnsen addresses the issue of logic and defends it as a strictly theistic concept is by proving the impossibility of the contrary. First of all, he points out that the logic must be an absolute legal code to which all acceptable thinking must submit. If any of the logical laws that humans accept as axioms from which to interpret all of life from were mere conventions that humans had arrived at as simply “the best way” to think, then one would find a completely different approach to logical laws all over the world, for example, it may be logically acceptable to contradict oneself in some parts of the world.²³ This of course would be in direct violation of one of the Aristotelian laws discussed earlier. Bahnsen goes on to say that even if this were not the case and the laws were still nothing but conventions, one could not critique the way that one man would define *his* own logic because he would still be appealing to a nonexistent standard.

Secondly, Bahnsen says that if one wishes to arrive at the laws in an *a priori* or an *a posteriori* fashion he will be met with difficulty either way. If he tries the former approach, then he will, by definition of what the laws are, be begging the question, but if the atheist should try to arrive at the laws of logic empirically, he would have to consider the fact that he cannot be

²³ Bahnsen, Greg. *The Great Debate*. Irvine: University of California, 1985.

observing every particle of matter at the same time to determine if they are all operating under the same system of government, and since he cannot do this there is no way of truly knowing whether the laws apply in all circumstances or whether or not they apply (in the way humanity thinks they do) at all.²⁴ Bahnsen also adds that in an atheistic world it would be senseless to apply the laws of logic to any field that humanity has little or no experience with. For example, when it was first proposed that black holes existed, how could anyone try to describe them using logic if no one has ever experienced the phenomena in any form or fashion? Bahnsen argues that the Christian can certainly account for the laws of logic because they mirror the thinking of God.²⁵ If God is a God of order than it would make sense for his creation to operate in the form and fashion that he thinks is best. Without God, the laws, if one can call them such, are arbitrary and variable.²⁶

Bahnsen's ultimate goal is to prove to the atheist not that he is illogical or that he is immoral, Bahnsen would argue that the atheist is both of those things by necessity, but to prove that atheism is so utterly unsustainable that it is forced to borrow from the worldview of the theist. Bahnsen is the primary reason that this argument is still in use today and his demonstration of its effectiveness as the famous UC Irvine debate is the most common nuanced take on Van Til's argument.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Bahnsen also discusses the necessity for a moral imperative that derives its authority from God by responding to Dr. Stein's explanation of atheistic morality. Dr. Stein, along with many atheists define 'good' and 'evil' as 'willfully making people happy' or 'making them unhappy.' In other words, promoting the welfare or hurting the welfare of others. Bahnsen responds to this idea by pointing out that Marquise de Sade enjoyed torturing women. If de Sade and his friends are all in a room torturing one woman, would it not be 'evil' to stop them seeing how the majority of people are 'doing well' and are 'happy?' Obviously there is an innate sense in all men that causes them to see this as wrong, which makes Stein's popular argument ultimately defeasible. Bahnsen also points out that even though the definition of evil according to the atheist is inadequate and it still begs the question of 'why is it a moral imperative to promote the happiness of others?' Again, Bahnsen, using his transcendental method, relates the moral imperatives of the world back to the creator God who has implemented them himself.

Michael Martin

Dr. Michael Martin, a professor at Boston University, is among the first to publicly attack the Transcendental Argument. His method not only seeks to prove that the argument according to Bahnsen is ultimately incorrect but also proves that the existence of God is disproved by the existence of logical laws. Martin points out that the position of the Christian asserts that the laws of logic's invariant nature ascribes them to God, however the same view of God states that all things are created by God and are contingent upon Him. If the laws of logic are truly invariant and exist by necessity, then they cannot be contingent upon God because he could change them at any time, even if he does not choose to do so. In other words, he seeks to argue from the inarguable premise that the laws exist by necessity and proves via *reduction ad absurdum* that the laws cannot be dependent on God.²⁷ Martin also went on to argue that the argument from the uniformity of nature is inadequate because Christianity postulates the existence of miracles and that the transcendental moral argument can be used against to argue the nonexistence of God as well.²⁸

²⁷ Martin, Michael. The Secular Web, "The Transcendental Argument for the Nonexistence of God ." Last modified 1997. Accessed December 11, 2012. http://www.infidels.org/library/modern/michael_martin/martin-frame/tang.html.

²⁸ The writer of this thesis thought it was interesting to note that Martin had used all three key components of the Transcendental Argument (logic, ability to use scientific method, and morality) to disprove God, however, it is not necessary to this thesis and for spatial constraints the explanations will be left out.

Thesis Proof

It is quite unfortunate that the Transcendental Argument has not been as widely discussed as its much older cousins the Moral Argument or the Teleological Argument or even perhaps the great Cosmological Argument for the existence of God which at this point in history has been beaten to a pulp and nursed back to health almost an innumerable amount of times. However, there is a certain advantage to being so recently given life. First of all, the argument can be closely examined in its virgin state to see if it has any formal problems that it must address; it is the duty of later generations to misrepresent the argument to allow for future demolition of these straw men. Secondly, the argument has the luxury of simplicity, not yet having to be worded in such a way that will preemptively seek to answer all rebuttals.

The Transcendental Argument for God seeks to account for the laws of logic. The existence of the laws is not in question; however, the means by which they have come to be have three possible explanations: humanity, nature, or God. This thesis will attempt to prove that two of these explanations are ultimately self-defeating and if two of the three only possible explanations for the laws of logic are insupportable, then one must deduce that the remaining possibility is the correct answer. God is the only possible source of the laws and one can see this as follows:

Syllogism:

1. The laws of logic exist.
2. To speak of a law is to imply some sort of order, and to speak of order is to imply some sort of 'orderer.'
3. The laws of logic have three possible sources/orderers: humanity, nature, and God.

4. The laws of logic are abstract, invariable, and immaterial.
5. Thus the laws of logic are not arbitrated by humanity or nature.

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6. Therefore, the laws of logic can only be arbitrated by God.

Counterargument 1

The laws of logic do not exist, at least not in the way the argument indicates. The laws of logic are descriptive of the universe not prescriptive, that is to say, humanity merely deduces that the universe behaves this way. They are not laws by which the universe must operate; they are simply how the universe operates.

Response to counterargument 1

One must fully understand the definition of the word “law” as it applies to logic. The laws of logic are a necessary precondition from which all proper thinking comes. One cannot arrive at the laws of logic by reason or experience. First of all, the laws themselves govern rationality, so to say “rational thought governs rational thought” is to beg the question.²⁹ One might make the argument that the laws of logic can be proven ontologically, but to do so is to assume logic to begin with. The reason they cannot be determined by any method *a posteriori* is that the laws *must always* be true. Nothing can be proven to be completely true all the time *a posteriori* because this would imply that the witness has been witnessing the occurrence throughout the entire expanse of the universe for all of time. Since one cannot do this, one cannot prove the laws *a posteriori*; however, the laws must be true by necessity in order for man to think about anything properly. Without the laws’ universal and invariant nature, no thought

²⁹ Perhaps a better way to understand this is that the laws *define* rationality.

could ever be meaningful because nothing intelligent could be said about any phenomena; reality would be chaos.

Counterargument 2

There is a possibility of another source for these laws, even if it is unknown at this time. It is an appeal to ignorance to state otherwise, so even if the argument is solid in ruling out humanity and nature, the deduction fails to be sufficient because there is the possibility of a fourth, fifth etc. category.

Response to counterargument 2

An atheistic universe relies on monistic philosophy; all of reality is of one substance: the natural. A theistic universe, however, is based on the philosophy of dualism: there is the natural and the supernatural. In reality, there are only two possible sources for these laws: the natural and the supernatural, but the writer felt it necessary to divide the natural world from humanity simply due to the nature of the laws.³⁰

Counterargument 3

One could take contention with the leap from three to four. First of all, it is quite possible and probable that the laws of logic are a product of human reason. The human brain has evolved to accomplish great things, for example, some neuroscientists are now postulating that the body uses nightmares to wake the person up from a deep sleep and to induce adrenaline if the unconscious mind senses a potential threat in the area of the sleeper. Obviously no scientifically thinking individual would argue against the idea that this sort of defense mechanism evolved

³⁰ The laws can be argued to be a product of the human psyche, however, the psyche is a part of the natural world. In order to address this idea more directly the category of “humanity” has been included to cover this possibility.

over time through genetic mutation. In the same way, the laws of logic are simply the way mankind has universally evolved a method of thinking that best suits it to survive. They are purely conventions and no more metaphysical than the dream analogy.

Response to Counterargument 3

In an atheistic universe, this is without doubt the best of all theories of how the laws have come to be, however, it is still severely flawed. First of all, the only thing consistent about what humanity deems “conventions” is that they will vary all over the earth. For example, one quarter of the world drives on the left side of the road. Most of these countries at one time or another were colonized by England who started the tradition because it was more convenient to walk so that their scabbards were on the side of their bodies that faced away from the middle of the road. However, the rest of the world has always found it easier to “keep right” when driving. Obviously, no one is more correct for driving on one side of the road because man is the arbitrator of this law to begin with. If Germany nationally decided to adopt the “keep left” rule for driving, they would not be breaking any laws because the law changes with the arbitrator’s rule. Another point to glean from the analogy is the distinct possibility that a society could, in fact interpret these laws differently. In the same way that a small number of countries have adopted a different set of driving laws than the rest of the world, a society would probably have adopted another set of laws.³¹

This is damaging to the counterargument in two ways. First of all, assuming that mankind did, in fact, arrive at the laws through evolutionary process; (as opposed to an intuitive idea) it is interesting to note that the laws cannot be interpreted in any other way than humanity interprets

³¹ Like Bahnsen stated in his Irvine debate, it may be quite acceptable in one culture to interpret logic differently and contradict oneself, but obviously this could never happen. It at least could never happen in a sensible manner.

them now. If these laws were mere conventions, like the driving analogy, then it is quite probable that the laws could and would be interpreted differently at some point in history. However this cannot be so, because to assume any other variation of the laws of logic is to assume a meaningless and chaotic universe.³² One must wonder how, if the laws ever had a more rudimentary form, the concept of structure could ever come about. For example, if the law of non-contradiction were ever not true (for the law must be true or not true, it cannot have an intermediate state) then no more complex ideas could ever be conceived like causality. Caveman Grog could drop a hammer on his toe and never know why the toe throbbed with pain because he could not determine whether or not he ever actually dropped the hammer to begin with. It could be the case that at the same time he dropped the hammer, he was holding the hammer or possibly never had one to begin with. Structuralized thought, in the condition it is currently, must have necessarily existed from the beginning of human history or the notion of structuralizing it would never have come about to begin with.

Secondly, if mankind is the sole arbitrator of the laws, then how could he ever be in violation of them? In the same way that God, by virtue of being the standard of good, could not do evil, man could never be illogical because his mentality is the highest authority on the laws and from his mentality the laws come to be.³³ The laws of logic would technically change with whatever a man would think, and if at any time it became more convenient to think “illogically” then no one could technically tell him that he was wrong; no more wrong than Germany for

³² “Meaningless” refers to the inability to find any consistent lens to interpret events. For example, if the law of non-contradiction were at any point different than it is now, then no meaningful thought could ever

³³ Bahnsen, Greg. *Van Til's Apologetic*. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1998. 491-493

changing the driving laws. With this theory disproven, one has no other choice but to accept them as being transcendental in nature.³⁴

Response 2 to Counterargument 3

Currently there are two theories of how humanity has come to accept logical absolutes. One is through the axiomatic, Aristotelian method and the other is through an evolutionary process. William S. Cooper makes the claim in his book on the subject that the laws of logic can be reduced to an evolutionary process, making the case that the laws that govern human reason can be compared to man's evolved ability to make intelligent decisions.³⁵ First of all, this will instantly run into the problem of authority, but perhaps the naturalist will overlook this.

The writer of this thesis cannot fully address this idea seeing as how it would take quite a large amount of research to speak intelligently on a subject such as this, however, one need only to be familiar with logical laws to point out a few complications with this theory. Even if man evolved the ability to use logic rather than being born with it, this does not prove that it is a product of humanity. For example, mankind took quite some time to understand the laws of gravity, but he did not create them.³⁶ The evolution of human reason through biological means is possible but problematic; however, it is in no way problematic to this thesis.

Counterargument 4

If logic is truly "a gift from God," then it should be true that logic will accurately describe all situations, however, this is not the case because certain statements can be made that fall outside the realm of logical laws, such as the Liar's Paradox: "this statement is false." As one

³⁴ For future reference, this will be called "the problem of authority."

³⁵ Cooper, William S. *The Evolution of Reason: Logic as a Branch of Biology*. New York, New York: Cambridge University, 2001.

³⁶ The writer is aware that it is falsely equivocating terms to say laws of gravity and logic are the same and that is not the intended meaning in this instance.

can see this is an instance in which the law of non-contradiction cannot possibly hold true.

Consequently, if the laws were to be directly received from a supreme deity, then the deity would not be any wiser than humanity because his own universal laws are flawed.

Response to Counterargument 4

The laws of logic do not prohibit man from theorizing alternate universes or coming up with ideas that could possibly bend the laws. However, in reality the laws will never be broken; this is what is being discussed. The laws of logic govern rationality as it pertains to reality, not to the theoretical. The paradoxical statement does not contain any information about reality and, at best, is a non-statement.

Counterargument 5

The largest problem with this thesis is that it seeks to answer a question that is not even compatible with an atheistic universe and, in doing so, creates the illusion that it has defeated atheism. Point two in the syllogism stresses the necessity of an orderer. A true atheist should know that these “laws” are nothing more than a description of how nature operates and to look for a nonexistent source only to not find it and equate this informational deficit to God’s divine power is absurd.

Response to Counterargument 5

It was with great difficulty that the writer of this thesis composed the syllogism, mostly because the Transcendental Argument is largely formulated to be proven *reductio ad absurdum* or from the ‘impossibility of the contrary’ as Van Til would say. The reason it is so difficult to prove the argument from an offensive standpoint is due to the fact that the atheist will not ask the

questions in a way that will allow for the argument to fully take its course, however, this next point should clarify the problem raised in the previous rebuttal.

An atheistic universe denies all forms of order, and if at any point order is found in the random, chaotic cosmos, then the worldview is defeated. Order cannot come from chaos. The fact that the universe behaves in a meaningful manner implies the existence of order. To simply say that the universe behaves in such a way and that is all there is to it is dodging the bigger question of “how did order come into the picture in the first place?”

Also, to further entertain the already flawed idea, the universe does not behave in such a way that would promote the existence of logic. The universe is constantly changing and, according to the atheist, is entirely physical, but it has already been established that the laws of logic are immaterial and invariable. If the universe is ever-changing and physical, how could it account for such laws?

Counterargument 6

The writer of this thesis is quick to point out that the laws of logic could not possibly have other interpretations when, in fact, they do. The Copenhagen Interpretation of Quantum Mechanics states that a particle exists in all possible states until it is observed. At this point, it does not matter if this thesis is even correct because it is a possible interpretation of the laws of logic.³⁷ This would mean that the law of non-contradiction would be dependent upon humanity's will to observe an object.

³⁷ Ben, Best. "The Copenhagen Interpretation of Quantum Mechanics ." Accessed December 10, 2012. http://abyss.uoregon.edu/~js/21st_century_science/lectures/lec15.html.

Response to Counterargument 6

Quantum Mechanics, a relatively new discipline in the scientific realm, has many evolving theories. The counterargument brings up an excellent point that even if tomorrow the scientific community were to banish the idea and burn all evidence of its reports, the fact still remains that someone has postulated an alternative take on logical laws. However, one must differentiate between what the theory is used to explain versus what the counterargument implies.

The Copenhagen Interpretation of Quantum Mechanics states that a system is completely described by a wave function and that this wave will describe the system's state.³⁸ It relies on the Many Worlds Interpretation of Quantum Mechanics. Perhaps this is helpful when calculating certain data about subatomic particles; however, from a philosophical standpoint the idea has multiple problems. Science can only be practiced with that which is observable and measurable in reality. If the object or idea being discussed cannot be observed or measured in any direct or indirect way, then no science can be practiced concerning it. So for sake of discussion, and because the writer of this thesis has not the intelligence to disprove the theory, one could pretend that the theory is true in the way that is understood above. First of all, how could anyone prove such a claim? By virtue of eliminating observation from the equation, one could never say anything meaningful about such a claim; it denies the employment of science. Also, science describes the reality in which humanity is a part of at this moment. The laws of logic describe this reality, the fact that there are other possible universes is irrelevant because they could not

³⁸ Ibid.

overlap, or all would be chaos. The fact remains that the laws of logic govern this universe. Also the possibility that at one point a given system is in a state of illogical existence and then proceeds to 'collapse' and become logical as it is observed proves that the laws of logic cannot be violated and seem to obey an outside forces' will.

Erwin Schrödinger attempted to disprove this idea on a macro scale (not necessarily at the subatomic level) is his paradox involving the cat. He describes a chamber in which a radioactive substance has been released next to a cat.³⁹ No one is around to observe this and the cat has a 50/50 chance of dying; if one were to use the interpretation at this point, then the cat would be both alive and dead at the same time. Schrödinger points out that the Copenhagen Interpretation becomes quite frustrating at this point and is most likely not applicable. All in all, the idea is interesting but not proven and cannot pose as a threat to the traditional laws of logic because they describe observable reality and the Copenhagen Interpretation does not.

Counterargument 7

The theist is seeking to account for the necessary existence of the laws of logic by ascribing contingency to them. Obviously this is contradictory and can only lead to skewed results. The laws of logic, without question, have universal and invariant nature and exist by necessity. Without them, nothing meaningful could exist. However, the last place one should attribute them to is an all-powerful, personal entity. This idea automatically ascribes contingency to the laws, instantly contradicting the necessary existence idea, and allows for the possibility for this all powerful deity to alter them at any time he sees fit. He could make it the case that

³⁹ Schrödinger, Erwin. Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society, "The Present Situation In Quantum Mechanics: ." Accessed December 10, 2012. <http://www.tuhh.de/rzt/rzt/it/QM/cat.html>

Houston is, at the same time and in the same respect, both north and south of Dallas. Obviously, by virtue of their necessary existence, the laws of logic make the existence of God illogical.

Response to Counterargument 7

Though this is perhaps the cleverest of all counterarguments, seeking to beat the theist at his or her own game, it is a fundamental misunderstanding of the power of God and existence. All of reality and existence is contingent upon God, the atheist is somewhat correct in his claim that God could ‘change logic,’ however, he is still misunderstanding the position of the theist. Logic is neither above God nor arbitrarily dictated by him; it is synonymous with existence itself.⁴⁰ A logical nature is implied along with the existence of any object. For example, if God created a toaster oven (not built, created *ex nihilo*) a logical nature would necessarily be a part of its being. To say that God created a toaster that violates the laws of logic is like saying God created a nonexistent toaster.

Also, the atheist’s argument fails in another way by ascribing some sort of power to the laws of logic. If God does not exist, and the laws somehow have necessary existence, then that is akin to saying “the God of personal theism does not exist, however there is an impersonal omnipotent force governing all that exists within the universe.” That position already has a name, deism, and does not comply with atheistic assumptions, namely the existence of nonphysical forces.

⁴⁰ Frame, John. Center for Reformed Theology, "A Brief Response to Michael Martin's Transcendental Argument for the Non-Existence of God ." Last modified 1996. Accessed December 11, 2012. http://www.reformed.org/master/index.html?mainframe=/apologetics/martin/frame_contra_martin.html.

Conclusion

Hopefully, by now, the reader will see that though the Transcendental Argument is relatively new, it is no less vital to the composite argument for the existence of God.⁴¹ If all aspects of creation proclaim the existence of God, then not the least of these should be man's ability to understand the created world around him. Logical laws are the base from which man comes to all meaningful conclusions; it is through logic that humanity can say that the universe displays design characteristics, or that the definition of God implies existence, or even that the universe needs an 'unmoved mover.' The argument attacks the core of all human understanding, and provides an almost ironic situation for the entire theism/atheism debate; man cannot even debate rationally about God's existence without proving his existence.

The goal of this thesis from the beginning has been to draw attention to the argument. The argument's biggest struggle is that, frankly, not many people are talking about epistemology anymore; the hardest part of using the argument in a formalized debate is getting the opponent to understand that the question is not as easily answered as it may appear.⁴² It is the hope of the author that this thesis will fully explain the value of the argument and that ultimately, it will not lose because if it were wrong, then no debate could be held in the first place.

⁴¹ Composite meaning the combination of all arguments that cover all of reality, showing that all of creation points to God's existence.

⁴² Like in the debate between Bahnsen and Stein, Stein responded to the argument initially by saying that he did not see that it was necessary to address the argument because he 'did not think it was a proof.'

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