

W.E.C #8 – The Transcendental Argument for God’s Existence

Example: the cake on the table

- how did it get there
- what was needed in order for it to get there
- what are all the possibilities on how it got there
- which one is intelligible

Immanuel Kant’s Transcendental Argument

- Kant followed David Hume, the radical skeptic and empiricist
 - Hume believed there was no a priori knowledge
 - There were no innate ideas
 - The mind was a tabula rasa
 - If something was not experienced it could not be known
- Kant took a different approach and asked, “*what are the preconditions for the intelligibility of any human experience?*”
 - Kant argued that cause and effect was a precondition
 - The mind must approach its experiences with the category of causation already in place
 - A priori knowledge
 - If there are no causes, there are no scientific discussion or rationality at all.
- Kant believed he had answered Hume in a **transcendental way**.
 - He said you must already believe in cause and effect in order to make sense of those observations
 - Without the pre-existence of cause and effect, nothing could exist or make sense
- **The Transcendental approach** - argues that *God is the precondition for the intelligibility of human experience.*
 - If you don’t begin with God, you cannot make sense of anything at all
 - Human beings by themselves cannot account for the world around them

Worldview and Presuppositions

- A network of presuppositions, an entire system of assumptions.
- A network of presuppositions *which are not tested by natural science.*
 - Presuppositions can’t be counted, weighed, or measured; they are not seen, heard, or felt.
 - They are immaterial beliefs in one’s mind
 - Science can only test things that are material
 - Science alone cannot speak
 - What is needed is a rational mind to interpret the information that science uncovers
 - Interpretation can only take place by a person using their presuppositions to make sense of it all

- Presuppositions are the foundation upon which science stands and sensory experiences are understood and interpreted
 - Beliefs / reason / logic are what science depends upon
 - The immaterial is needed in order to make sense and correctly interpret the material
- The scientist claims their foundation is the laboratory where they perform their experiments
- Science itself stands on the foundation of presuppositions in order to analyze and draw their conclusions
 - Example – 1953 Francis Crick discovered the DNA structure
 - He then attributed it to the work of evolution
 - Was it the science that concluded this?
 - Or was it his worldview / presuppositions that concluded this?
- A worldview - a network of complex beliefs organized in a system of truth used to make sense of the world around us
- The Christian faith is a complex system of beliefs that makes up the biblical worldview
- All worldviews have presuppositions that they rely upon
 - Ultimate authority upon which one relies
 - Assumptions that the facts are interpreted by
 - Francis Crick assumed DNA *evolved*
 - Christians assume it was *created*
 - Presuppositions are personal commitments that are the building blocks of the foundation where a person's worldview rests
 - God exists
 - God doesn't exist
 - Matter is all that exists
 - We exist from random chance that is chaotic, irrational, and impersonal
 - The ideal is all that exists
 - Immaterial is real and matter is an illusion
 - None of this is real – we are all plugged into the Matrix
 - Reason explains everything
 - Experience explains everything
 - Reason + experience explains everything
 - Presuppositions are the starting point by which everything else is interpreted and evaluated
 - Presuppositions hold the authority in a person's thinking
 - They are not negotiable – therefore nobody is ever neutral – EVER
- A worldview is a network of presuppositions where *all* experience is related
 - Everyone has a way of looking at the world
 - Every person has a framework through which he understands the world
 - Nobody is neutral
 - Nobody interprets evidence without presuppositions
 - Nobody simply allows the facts to interpret themselves

- Because facts cannot do this
 - They must be interpreted
 - They are interpreted through the lens / worldview of the individual
- The most important question a person can ever ask themselves is:
 - Am I starting with the correct presuppositions when I am making sense of the world around me?

The Importance of Understanding Presuppositions

- Some things are presuppositional - not proven directly, but only indirectly
 - Presuppositions determine whether facts and beliefs are true or false
 - The goal is to use the correct presuppositions
- The way we justify a presupposition is from the impossibility of the contrary.
- Rather than giving direct evidence for a presupposition, you have to give evidence in an indirect manner:
 - If the presupposition is denied it would be impossible to prove anything
 - To hold rational thought, moral absolutes, purpose, existence, your presupposition must be true otherwise none of this would make sense
 - This becomes a *necessary assumption* for all rational thought, or all ethical behavior, all experience, and all knowledge
- Those who view the world as chance / random / no intelligence governing the world / no connection between thoughts, truths, events:
 - Have given up any possibility of explanation and justification to what they believe
 - Explanations must rely on principles that unify and relate general truths to one another
 - Without an ultimate authority that justifies one's beliefs
 - Only *unsubstantiated opinion* can be given
- What about reason starting from a person's own mind?
 - This is purely subjective
 - It is your mind verses all other people's minds
 - No one mind determines and defines all the parameters in life in general
 - Or even in their own life
 - Each person's mind creates their own subjective beliefs
- To make any sense of the world a person must utilize Christian presuppositions
 - They must view things by the way God created the world
 - Reason / experience / logic / coherence / meaning / purpose –
 - Only exist because God exists
 - People operate and utilize these when they need to make sense of something
 - They do so because they cannot make any sense or live consistently under their own presuppositions
 - They end up using presuppositions they are opposed to (moral absolutes)
 - They end up contradiction their own premise
 - They have no way of justifying their beliefs on their own outside of God

- In order to make any sense and have any type of meaning they are forced to utilize Christian presuppositions
- Many don't even realize they do this or that contradiction exists in their own belief system

The Three Step Approach of the Transcendental Argument - Presuppositionalism

- **1 - Demonstrate what must necessarily exist**
 - Example: In order for science to be possible:
 - Nature must function in a consistent pattern
 - Our reason must be reliable
 - Our senses must be reliable
 - The laws of logic must exist
- **2 – Demonstrate How Their Worldview Cannot Reasonably Be True**
 - Show how their ultimate source of authority fails to provide a reasonable justification for those preconditions
- **3 – Demonstrate the Necessity of God**
 - Explain how only Christianity is able to provide the necessary presuppositions for those things to exist and function as they do
 - God is the only intelligent and logical foundation for metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics