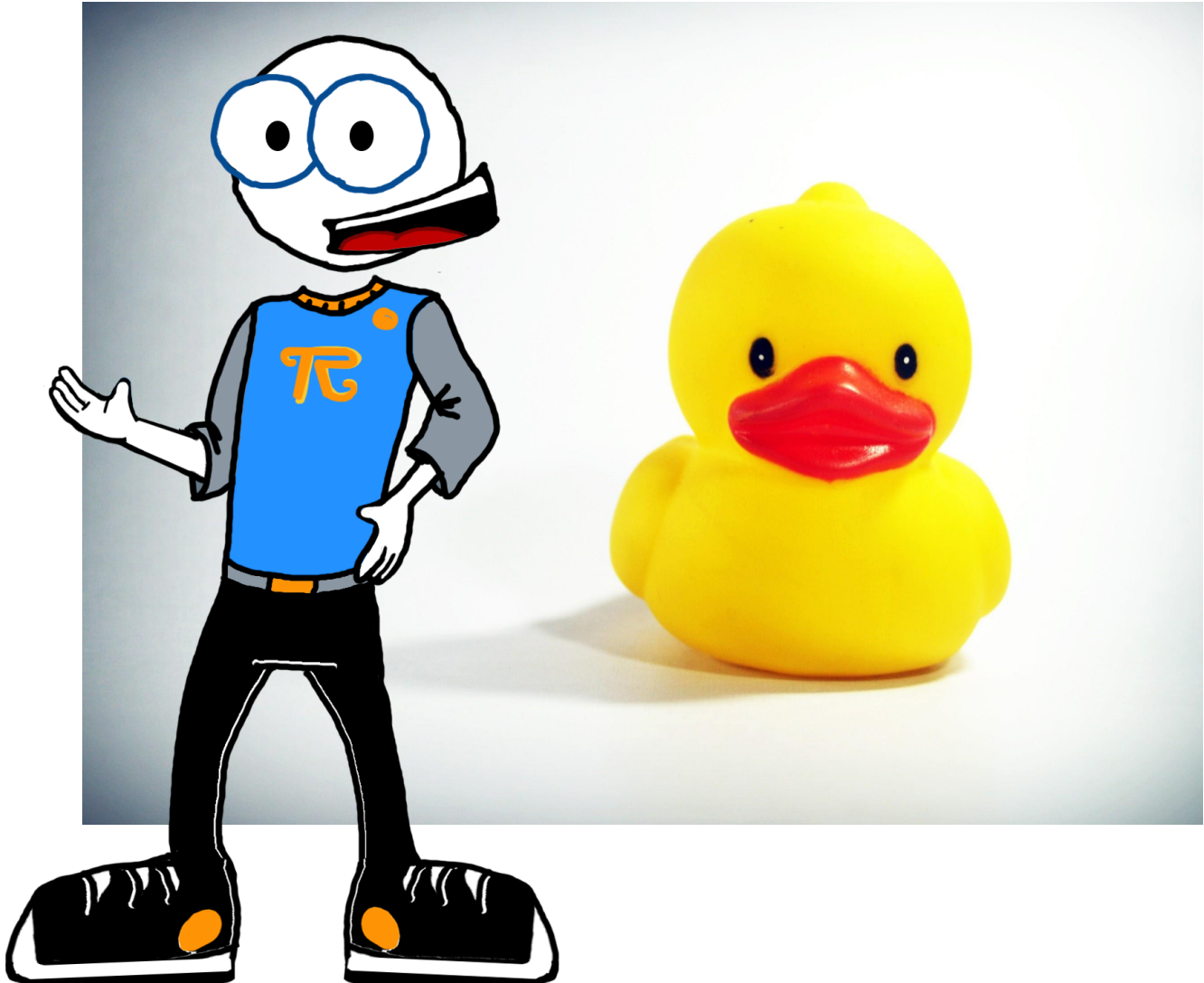


# The Socratic Ducky



*Rubber Ducks and the Metaphysical Map*

by Rent-A-Friend 2000

*Learning to ask the right questions to prove the Bible is True.*

## **Introduction: Philosophy is the handmaiden of theology (Or, why people like me have to spend so much time explaining things which ought to be obvious to anyone with at least half a dozen brain cells.)**

Unless you're a big geek like me, you might have looked at this book and asked, "WHY is this necessary? Philosophy is for big geeks and old men in ugly suits." Right off the bat I need to correct a misunderstanding. Philosophy is not JUST for big geeks and old men in ugly suits. For example, the first philosophers were big geeks and old men in ugly togas. Of course, when I say the 'first philosophers,' I mean the first PROFESSIONAL philosophers. Spend some time with a toddler and you will come to see that every person is born a scientist and philosopher. Try to make a teen do something they don't want and you'll see they are a philosopher and perhaps a lawyer in training.

Philosophy is, by definition, the love of wisdom. Education is merely cramming information into your head by the spoonful, but philosophy is the means by which we examine those spoonfuls and maybe the spoons themselves. From where I sit, philosophy and science are two sides of the same metaphysical nickel. They both involve asking questions until you learn something useful. It's by asking good questions that the human race has discovered, just to name one example which touches all of our lives, that Duck Tape can be used in more than a million ways. Without philosophy, we'd probably just use it to, oh, I don't know, tape things together.

In Matthew 10:16 Jesus says **"Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves."**

I'm fairly sure "In the midst of wolves" was a euphemism for "Into public middle school," but it may have other meanings as well. Philosophy helps us think clearly, helps us examine information. This is something the Bible commands of believers, and it has never been more necessary than today. Everywhere you turn you find some clever Dan thinking he has proven the bible to be false. When the Roach Clowns in social media get a whiff of your faith, they crawl out of the digital woodwork to attack you and your faith with what they think are clever attacks. Often it sounds a lot like angry second graders fighting over which was the greatest Transformer, but these poor fools think they've REALLY taken your faith down a peg when they toss something like the Cosmic Teapot at you. I just have to wonder, has there EVER been a Christian who has responded the way these guys want us to? Has ANYONE ever said, "No, I can't disprove idea that there is a china teapot orbiting the sun between the Earth and Mars... OH NO! THERE IS NO GOD! IT'S ALL BEEN LIES!!!"

If you've heard that deconversion story, send me an email.

Take courage. The Bible is true from the very first page, and you can know that. However, with a little philosophy, you can often dismantle the question before you even look up the answer. It's kind of like going to war and learning to see that all of the enemy guns are actually unloaded. There's a lot of noise, but you have nothing to be afraid of.

Many atheists are far cleverer than they are intelligent, and the difference comes in here: Are they pulling a fast one, or are they making sense? Are they trying to distract you, or enlighten you? Are they using tricks or handling facts?

Consider a salesman. He may talk fast in circles until you are CERTAIN that you'll never survive another Alaskan winter in your igloo without a deep freezer, but that doesn't mean he's helped you come to the truth. He's mainly trying to get you to part with your money. It takes a lot of clever to be a good salesman, but it takes surprisingly little intelligence. You don't have to know anything about the product or the needs of your customer. You can play on their emotions until they're willing to buy anything from you. Salesmen study emotional manipulation until they can get stupid people to hand over their money and their willingness to think. This is when many salesmen start their own cult or political party. I think this is also the plot of *The Music Man*, starring Robert Preston. Not the part about starting a cult, just the part about making you part with your money while they don't actually know about the product. Look, it's a great musical and you need to watch it. Was that the point I was making? Well, it is now. But I digress.

The point of this book is to teach you the simple tools it takes to understand the world around you, including the questions and worldviews that will get thrown at you. I'm going to show you a very simple map of the world which will make things make sense- things like religions, political ideologies, and weird philosophies. In the end, I am going to show you how wisdom takes us down the path where we can be confident that the Bible is true from the very first page and Jesus is the WAY the TRUTH and the LIFE.

If you can understand a rubber duck, you can understand metaphysics and philosophy. And you won't be alone! Your Rent-A-Friend is here with you every step of the way. Just stick with me kid, and you'll see that you're a lot smarter than you even suspected. I think it'll be a lot of fun.

Now let's see what we can do about getting you into an ugly suit, shall we? You've come at the right time. Buy one today and we throw in a toga absolutely free.

# Chapter One: The Nerd to MetaDucky Dictionary (Or should that be DUCKtionary?)

Greetings fellow Philosophers! Welcome to your first Metaphysical lesson. First off, I need to tell you what Metaphysical means. I don't expect most people to know what Metaphysical means. Just as an example, I was talking to my suave and cool friend, Bert and I told him about my blog. He said, "What's it about?" and I said, "Metaphysics." He replied, "I don't even know what that means."

And I thought, of course he doesn't. He isn't a nerd.

Don't worry, I know you aren't either. Someday, thanks to friends like me, cool, good looking people like you will know all the wild stuff nerds have been hoarding for themselves.

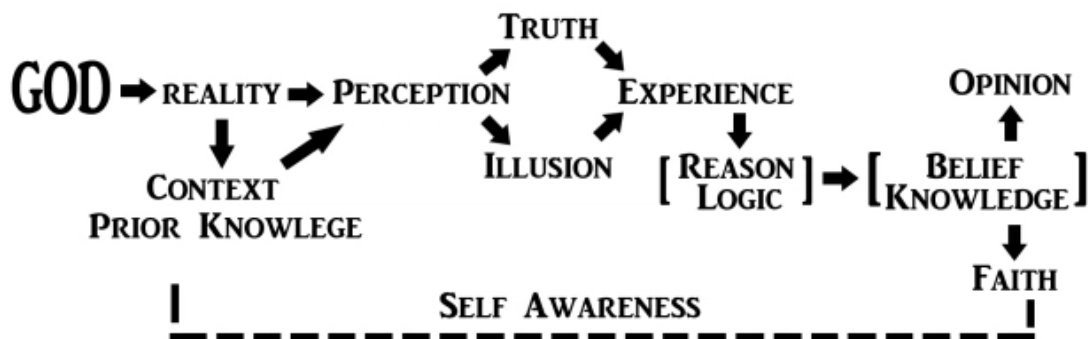
To start with, META is a Greek prefix (It goes at the start of a word) that means After, or Beyond.

Chemistry asks "What's it made of?"

Physics asks "What does it do?"

Metaphysics asks "Why is it and why does it do what it does?"

In short- BEYOND Physics is Metaphysics. So, let's go beyond! I'm just offering you the basic definitions. Nothing fancy. In coming chapters I'll get into details. This is a reference for those of you looking to understand your rubber ducks. Metaphorically speaking... and Metaphysically speaking.



BEHOLD! The Metaphysical Map! (Keep this in your Glove Compartment.) This map covers all of the intellectual ground that you will ever traverse. Let's take a quick walk across it, shall we? Along the way I'll make each stop applicable to your rubber duck.

**GOD**- Eternal, all powerful, self-existent, Creator of the universe and all things physical and spiritual.

God is (More or less indirectly) the cause and ruler of all rubber duckies. While I don't believe there are any divinely created rubber ducks, the actual ducks were created by God (See Genesis Chapter 1) and the rubber trees which give us the rubber to form into duck shapes were made by God (Also see Genesis 1) and the universe which the earth and its ducks and trees exist in were made by God (See Lamentations 6:17).

HA HA! I'm kidding of course. Go to Genesis 1:1 to see the creation of the universe. Just an example of some of the good natured humor you will encounter in this book. Doesn't that make it worth whatever it cost you? Especially if it was a gift? Happy birthday by the way.

**Reality- God and his creation.** God is real, and everything that exists was made by Him (See John 1) This includes

the physical universe, time/space, spiritual creations, events and all of the properties of God and his creation. Sometimes we may talk about “Reality” meaning only the universe. It’s not invalid, but it is helpful if you’re going to make that distinction. Both God and the universe are real, but God is eternal and doesn’t need a cause, but the universe needs a cause, which is God. That’s why it’s drawn like that.

Anything Real, including rubber duckies (It does NOT include the ducky in your dreams, but ironically does include the dreams themselves... See? It’s getting deep already! Yeah, *Philosophy!*)

**Context-** **The real facts surrounding a piece of data;** the culture, language, time, place, etc. in which words, thoughts, or perceptions exist.

For example, when and where your rubber duck is while you ponder it, and when and where YOU are when you ponder it, as well as the social norms which make you who you are. An ancient Egyptian Pharaoh in Ancient Egypt would probably have a different reaction to a rubber duck than you have, just to give one example. Or for you personally, imagine you are in a bathtub full of sudsy water, and you have a rubber duck. Now imagine you are walking through the African Savanna, and suddenly, that same rubber duck falls from the sky and lands on the swaying grasses in front of you. Same duck, different context.

**Prior Knowledge-** **Those pieces of information already in the mind of an observer** (not necessarily accurate). Any previous experience you may have had with your rubber ducky, or any knowledge you already have (or think you have) about rubber, ducks, or the color yellow before you come to ponder your ducky.

**Perception-** **The five senses gathering information about reality through contact with it** (eyes, ears, nose, skin, brain, etc.).

Looking at your ducky, smelling it, tasting it, feeling it, or, in select special cases, reaching out to it with the Force™.

**Truth-** **Word, thought, or picture accurately reflecting reality** (in as far as the word, thought or picture intends to reflect it).

What you say about the ducky describes the actual ducky with no inaccuracies. Rubber ducks don’t like being lied about. But who does?

**Illusion-** **Word, thought, or picture NOT accurately reflecting reality. i.e.- a lie,** inaccuracy, mistake, or misrepresentation.

For instance, if you call your rubber ducky a plastic chicken. It’s close, but wrong, and it will not make them happy.

Again, would you like to be called a plastic chicken?

I didn’t think so.

**Experience-** **Total perception over some period of time, and internal response to perceptions** (Physical, Mental, and Emotional).

As Bob Dylan used to say, “You need to do more than just know about the ducky. You have to Experience the ducky, man!” You can sing about how much fun rubber ducky is in the bathtub, but until you take a bath with that rubber duck, you have not experienced it. Merely singing the song won’t make your fingertips all pruney, just to name one tangible example.

**Reason-** **The mental attempt to answer “Why?”** Experiences are compared to find predictive patterns for causation

of perceptions/experiences in the context of prior knowledge. In short, explaining why things are what they are. For instance- “Why is the ducky Yellow? Why is he not Puce, Chartreuse, Cyan, Fuchsia, or any of the other colors that are only used by artsy weirdos that normal people can’t identify because they don’t come in that box of 16 Crayola Crayons?”

**Logic- The mental exercise of using reason to discover truth by creating links of causation, meaning, or categories of definition for things, ideas, events, etc.** Most often related to the art of argumentation. This goes beyond reason by going beyond perception, experience or prior knowledge. It extends beyond “WHY?” and into “What IF..?”

For instance, “If the ducky was blue, could it be argued that it would be sold for more money to the same target demographic as a yellow ducky? What about if he doubled as an MP3 player, or smelled like bacon?”

Reason and Logic are words people use interchangeably, and I’m not telling you that MY definition is right and should be used to make fun of people on social media. But when I use those words I will mean by Reason the attempt to explain why things are the way they are, and by Logic the method of taking what we know now and trying to guess what COULD be. Admittedly, there’s probably a lot of overlap. Look, just be nice to people on social media. That’s all I’m really saying here.

**Faith- The will, choice, or hope to embrace something as truth.** Faith requires some kind of action, or at least the will to act according to the truth believed, otherwise it is merely an educated guess.

“If I put my ducky on the couch, I have faith that my cat will not eat him. Thus I will leave my ducky on the couch with my cat when I go make myself a sandwich during the commercial break. I don’t have the same amount of faith in my dog.”

**Belief- An idea that is known, which is embraced as truth through faith.** To Believe is to have confidence/faith in the Truthfulness of information one can recall and understand.

“I believe that, when I squeeze him, rubber ducky makes noise.”

**Knowledge- Ideas one can understand and recall believed to be truth,** because of faith, logic, reason, or education. To Know is to be able to recall and understand that which is believed to be true.

“Rubber Ducky, I know I am awfully fond of you.”

Belief and knowledge are codependent, like pancakes and syrup. They need each other to be complete. Unless you are some kind of weirdo, but I’m not here to judge.

**Opinion- A statement proposed as Truth either about a thing observed, or about the observer-** specifically his beliefs about the thing observed.

“My rubber duck is the cutest rubber duck of all.” Or “I think my rubber duck is the cutest rubber duck ever.”

**Self Awareness- A sentient being’s ability to perceive and analyze his own perceptions, thoughts, feelings, experiences, beliefs and self awareness.** As you learn a spoonful of information, your ability to examine the spoon.

“I am aware of my feelings of fondness for my rubber ducky as they pertain to the time of bathing. I also know I am aware of those feelings and can consider the relationship between the feelings themselves and the awareness of them.”

(This is on my resume`.)

**Rubber Ducky-** A metaphysical point of philosophical discourse comprised of the sap of the rubber tree, formed in the likeness of a species in the Anatidae family of birds, which is known for making bath-time lots of fun. (See also “Joy of Joys.”)

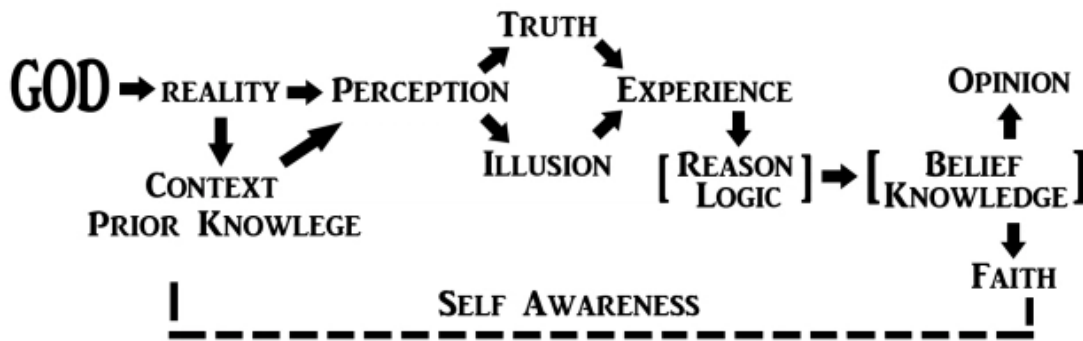


OK, that's all you need for now. Next time I'll start breaking these babies down for you one at a time. You'll be able to chat with the nerds almost like you're one of them soon enough, except that you'll look debonair. You're welcome.

# Chapter Two: The Divine Start of the Metaphysical Journey

## God

As your Friend, it is my obligation to walk you through the often murky waters of Philosophy and Metaphysics. The best way to walk through anything, as I learned at the zoo a few days ago, is with a map. Otherwise you wind up standing at the Tiger cage saying, “Where is that Polar Bear?” and looking like a real tool. This is why I have drawn you a metaphysical map of everything.



The very start of the metaphysical journey is God. Everyone has an opinion about God. There’s the atheist who says “I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that there is no God!” yet when asked for proof, they tend to argue that they don’t need to prove it. They just KNOW. It’s we silly Theists that need to prove that he’s there in the first place. Then when you give them Intelligent Design sciences, historical/legal proofs, logical philosophy and manuscript evidence for the Bible that outweighs all of antiquity combined, they tell you it’s all just propaganda. There’s no pleasing some people. I suspect most atheists can’t find God for the same reason most criminals can’t find a policeman, but I digress.

Modern atheists have tried to wriggle out of having to invent evidence for their faith by changing the definition of “Atheist.” Where as the word has always meant a person who asserts that there is no God or gods, the kids on the interwebs will try to convince you (Or themselves) that the word means merely one who lacks a belief in God. This furthers my assertion that an atheist is, in many ways, like a toaster. I have a toaster, and as far as I can deduce, it holds no belief in the existence of God or anything supernatural.

Then there are the agnostics. They have no belief about God because they feel they have not been shown sufficient evidence, and so their official religious position is, “I don’t know.” The thing that confuses me most about this group is the apathy. There is no religion anywhere that says, “God is real, but it really doesn’t matter. If he wants you to believe in him, he’ll stop by your house and give you a toaster oven or tote bag for signing up, so don’t worry about it too much.” In my mind, every agnostic should be SCRAMBLING for data, evidence, and comparison charts. They admit that God MIGHT be real. Which means heaven and hell MIGHT be real. Which means they MIGHT be able to, in some fashion, attain salvation and heaven eternal, OR they might be damning themselves and simply be too lazy to find out for sure. This is the way I am about my personal health, but for me, there is an end certain somewhere in the future, whether I’m in good shape now or not. There are no ETERNAL ramifications for my apathy. The stakes, I could argue, are a touch higher for the agnostics.

Come on, agnostic friends! Get to the library! Get on line! Keep reading this book! I’m going to have another donut



and help you find those answers!

There are a hundred different religions in the world, most of which claim an exclusive hold on the true nature of God (Or Gods or goddess or whatever they are selling), and a few of which come right out front and say, “We don’t know. He or she or they might be out there. And you’re welcome to believe. But we can’t say one way or another. We imagine that, one day, we’ll all find out or we’ll stop caring. We’re not sure about that either.” And again I am AMAZED that a church with THAT doctrine gets people to show up every week. I’m guessing that those churches must have an unusually high population of insomniacs and a truly spectacular coffee bar. Sunday mornings they say to themselves, “Well, I don’t know about all of this spiritual business, but I’m already up. I might as well do SOMETHING between now and lunch.” And with that punch card, every tenth cup is half off.

In America we have the very popular Oprah Winfrey philosophy of religion which says, “There CAN’T be only one way. Maybe EVERYONE is right!” In short, everyone wins. No matter what you think, you’re right. I’d like to see Oprah sit down with a Muslim and an Atheist and explain it to them;

Muslim: “I am Ishmael Muhammed Shakka Khanna Korola Rushada Abdula, and I believe that in the last day, all of mankind will be judged according to the teaching of the Koran and the prophet Mohammed, blessed is his name, their deeds weighed and then they will be sent to their eternal reward of heaven or hell.”

Atheist: I don’t believe in Allah or any other god. I believe that when we die, we poof out of existence. Poof! Oblivion. Nothing.

Muslim: “You are wrong. There is eternal paradise or eternal hell.”

Atheist: “You are wrong. There is nothing! Poof!”

Oprah: “Look, for you there is an Allah watching you, judging you on your merit according to the Koran and the teachings of the Prophet Mohammad. You’ll face judgment day and the reward of your good and evil throughout your life. For you, on the other hand, I guess Allah will stay out of your way and after you die he’ll just turn out the lights and stay real quiet until you stop paying attention. Nobody’s wrong here.”

Muslim: “INFIDEL!”

Atheist: “Hippy weirdo.”

I just don’t see an agreement on the panel that day.

When it comes to the question of WHY all religions can’t be true, Oprah actually serves as my best argument. She started this weird internet cult with a guy named Eckhart Tolle, where they made a religion that taught the core doctrine “ALL religions are the same, so buy my book.”

During the cult-class, she asked him what happens when you die, and he said he did not know. This of course was the best time to draw a blank, because no matter what answer he picked, someone would be right and someone would be wrong.

The atheist says oblivion. We cease to exist.

Jews, Christians, and Muslims say heaven or hell. Christians and Jews expect to be in the presence of God in heaven, but Muslims do not, so even though they have the same words, their ideas of heaven and hell are not the same.

Mormons say only heaven, but different layers of heaven (Like a big birthday cake), unless you were REALLY good, in which case you get to be a god and run your own planet. This, to me, explains the popularity of Mormonism. They do

have a hell, but it's only for the Mormons who quit and become something else. (Neil Sedaka was right. Breaking up IS hard to do.)

Hindus and Buddhists say reincarnation. You come back as another biological life form. You can hope for "rich and powerful king of industry," but you might get "goat," or "earwig," or "Crabgrass." Good luck.

Shinto says you wander the earth as a shadowy ghost figure, occasionally stopping by your family's kids to see how they're doing and if they left you some tea or a snack. Or at least that's what I got from watching Disney's *Mulan*. Not all of my research is of the same caliber.

And in the Robin Williams/Cuba Gooding Jr. film *What Dreams May Come*, you get heaven, unless you choose hell, and God still fails to show up wherever you go, and if you get bored with heaven, you can reincarnate and take another shot at it just for kicks.

I don't recommend that movie.

In short, there is NO WAY everyone can be right. You can't go to eternal heaven, oblivion, and reincarnate all at the same time. Oh, you can TRY, but you'll fail. And I think we all know that even if you did succeed, it would ruin your credit rating and your insurance wouldn't cover ANY of it.

I myself am a Christian, and so I will be defining God according to His personal self-revelation as recorded in the Bible. And I think everyone knows this at some level. Romans 1:18-20 says sinners "by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. 19 For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse."

As a Christian, I accept the authority of the Bible, and it says pretty clearly here that people reject the true God, not on the basis of evidence or arguments, but because of their sin. In short, I don't believe in atheists. They all know better. At some level they KNOW the God of the Bible is real. This is another reason why they changed the definition of "Atheism." They all kind of looked around and said, "Seriously? We're claiming AS A FACT that God doesn't exist?" and they all hung their heads and murmured the way a room full of 5th graders do when their teacher is asking whose fault it is that a dozen sloppy joe sandwiches are stuck to the ceiling in the gymnasium. So they changed the definition of "atheism" to mean "a lack of faith in God," which could accurately be said of a toaster. This may sound like I am being sarcastic, but I have had self-professing atheists tell me that, yes, a toaster is an atheist. This becomes yet one more reason why I say an atheist is a toaster. More on that later.

Eventually I will explain why the Christian worldview makes the most sense in all ways Theological, Logical, Metaphysical, Historical, Scientific, and Personal, but first I need to walk you through Metaphysical map so you don't get lost.

Before I conclude this chapter, let's take a look at a couple of the things which make Christianity different from every other religion, worldview and marketing scheme. We've already acknowledged that what follows death already distinguishes the Biblical worldview from many others, but here are two more key factors which are intertwined in the

Christian theology, and which separate Christianity from other religions in a way which should make everyone tear those stupid “Coexist” bumper stickers right off of their cars. If anyone ever tries to tell you that all religions are the same, you only need to remember three things:

1. What happens after we die?
2. Who is Jesus and what did he do?
3. How do we deal with our sins?

### **Who is Jesus and what did he do?**

Jesus was/is God incarnate. As an imperfect picture to help explain the incarnation, God put on humanity the way a police officer puts on his uniform. He doesn't stop being the man he was, but he's put on something else which we see covering him. All other religions reject the idea that Jesus is who he said he is. Islam says he was just a prophet, but not the Creator God. Mormonism says he was a lesser, sort of god who was made by the main God (Who was himself made by another god, etc). Jesus says very clearly in the Bible that he is the God of the old testament, the God of Moses. It was for saying this that he was executed on charges of blasphemy and treason. Frankly, I find it awkward that so many people wish to argue that Jesus never claimed to be God when he was in fact executed for blasphemy. That's a fairly specific charge, and it's worthy to note that none of Jesus followers argued that he was innocent- merely that he was telling the truth.

Jesus lived a perfect life and then was crucified and died as the payment for our sins. He was the final and perfect sacrifice that paid for all of our sins, giving us the ability to be made right with God.

**Romans 3: 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. 26 It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.**

**27 Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. 28 For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.**

Again, no other faith teaches this. Mormons say we are “Saved by faith in Jesus” but when you look into their doctrine, they admit they mean Jesus paid for “original sin” and gave us the chance to earn our salvation. I don't want to be harsh here, but when you say “He paid for” and you really mean “He provided you the opportunity to pay for it yourself” I have a hard time not breaking into a chorus of “Liar, Liar. Pants on Fire.”

**Sin separates us from God, and sin CANNOT be removed with Good Works.** Every other religion or philosophy acknowledges that we have sin. Even Atheists will say “No one is perfect.” However, every other faith has taught that we can and must earn our own forgiveness. Each religion is a ladder to heaven with a sign on it that says, “Start Climbing!” This is the idea that separates Christianity/Biblical Judaism from every other religion and philosophy that has ever existed.

**Isaiah 64:6 says “But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.”**

Not only are we sinners, but our sin has stained us so badly that even our good works are dirty. Not because we shouldn't do good works, but because we are so quick to do good to make ourselves feel good, or to make ourselves look good. Even our goodness is stained with selfishness. Every other worldview tells us to pay for our sins with our

own good works. The Bible tells us that we cannot.

**Salvation is through Jesus, and all you have to do is accept it.** Then, God will adopt you into his family and he will be your heavenly father forever.

**Ephesians 2: 8-9 says “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”**

**And John 3:16 says “For God So Loved the World**

**16 “For God so loved the world,[a] that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”**

What makes Christianity different than any other religion? *Jesus.*

Jesus told us and proved through his miracles and victory over death that he is God. Jesus gave his life as a payment for our sins, so by putting our faith in him we can be forgiven and adopted by God into His family. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life.

In the next chapter we'll look a little deeper into how God is unique, despite what you might have heard on television or in wacky on-line cults started by former television personalities. In the meantime, just remember, the one most important person in any religious debate is Jesus, and when the Roach Clowns on social media try to tell you otherwise, just remember- that atheist may think he's clever, but he's really just a toaster.

## Chapter Three: God Part II

### (Or, How the REAL God is different than a thousand counterfeit gods)

Though it has nothing to do with my topic, I wish to start with an example of how marriage really can be an amazing partnership. My wife and I, working together for mutual triumph, recently achieved a 500 note streak on Guitar Hero. 500 notes!

I know, right? I was so psyched! I thank God for my wife.

Speaking of God (For aside from being your Friend, I am the Transition King), this is part two of my explanation of the nature of God.

The reasons the Biblical God is my foundation for our Metaphysical journey are several:

First, I am a Christian and I know Him. He's real. It would be profoundly stupid for me to start with some other god, none of which I believe to be real, when I am trying to map out the nature of truth. Also, with almost all other religions, their god (Or gods or goddess or what have you) is not the eternal, self-existent creator of all from nothing. This means you have to start a step before them with the pre-existing universe, whatever it was, and then go back to find out who or what made THAT and what proto-universe *They* lived in... and frankly, it gets me dizzy trying to figure out where, if ever, the process might end. So, we're gonna Occam's Razor all of that and realize that we only need one God and one universe. Otherwise we'll need a padded cell and a lifetime supply of Aspirin.

Finally, the word "God" has become almost empty in modern usage, and far more often than it should, just a swear. Whenever most Americans say or hear the word "God" they assume everyone must be using it the same way, to mean the same things. So when a Muslim says he believes in "God" and a Mormon says he believes in "God" the average person will say, "OH, they all believe in God," and then they assume that the word "God" means the same thing in every context. This is just as wrong as assuming the word "Love" always means the same thing. I "Love" my wife/daughter/doughnuts/sleeping in/Shrek the Musical/Tacos/America/etc. But if you think I "love" all of those in the same way, I would argue that you have not given it any thought.

Or you think I am a flippin' weirdo. Ought I to be offended?

There is much that can, has, and will be said about God/Jesus, but for right now my purpose is to prepare you for the Metaphysical journey, and it starts with God.

Thus I present here the relevant nature of God in a nutshell and the ways in which He is surprisingly different from all other gods:

#### 1. God is ETERNAL.

Psalm 90: 2 **"Before the mountains were brought forth,  
or ever you had formed the earth and the world,  
from everlasting to everlasting you are God."**

He exists outside of time (Which he created) but can act inside of time. He had no beginning and will never end. As Jesus Christ he existed inside of time like a normal man, but he was arguably smarter and more talented than the rest of us. But not necessarily taller.

In **Revelation 1: 17-18**, Jesus talks to John after he (John) passes out, and explains that he is Eternal God:

**Then he placed his right hand on me and said: “Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. 18 I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.**

The god of Mormonism, for one example, lacks this divine aspect. Mormonism’s idea of “God” is that any man can become god of their own world by being Super-Mormon. Thus, our god (They say) was once a man, born on another planet under another god, and he earned his way up to his present status as the man-with-the-biggest-desk. The god he once lived under was once himself a man who earned his way up the corporate ladder under a still different god, and so on. Despite the built in stairway-to-heaven structure, it is still considered rude to refer to Mormonism as a “Pyramid Scheme,” so don’t do that.

Of course the Greeks, Romans, and Egyptians had a fun bunch of comic book hero gods and goddesses, almost all of which came into being by being born, or built, purchased on e-bay, or in one case, popping out of Zeus’s head like some giant zit. No, really. Popped out of his head. I learned that in English class in high school. This may have contributed to my belief that much of what I was expected to learn in high school was worthless. This was the same year they taught me evolution. But I digress.

Of the 330 millions gods of Hinduism (No, seriously, 330 million! Imagine the endless potential for holidays! You could have more than 627 to choose from EVERY MINUTE!) only one is actually eternal- The Brahman. The rest are forms or facets of that one which emerged from him at some point. Also, some would argue that the Brahman is more of an impersonal force than a god per say, but that’s another semantic blog for another semantic day.

Despite the name, the Brahman is NOT a comic book super hero. If you can figure out what the superpowers of The Brah-Man would be, let me know. Maybe we can start a new comic book! Bollywood would be itching to make the movie! Or would condemn us as blasphemous heretics! I’m really not sure which!

**2. God is ALL POWERFUL.** Jeremiah 32:17 says

**“Ah, Lord God! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you.”**

He can do anything that can be done (Which means, no, he can’t make a square circle, so don’t ask. It’s a silly question anyway).

This obviously wasn’t the case for most of the old school gods. They were always getting tricked, fooled, manipulated, or coerced. Sometimes they would get stuck under a rock, or injured or killed in personal vendettas and gangland warfare, like our modern Gangsta Rappers. I’m guessing the reason all those old religions died out was the invention of baseball and daytime television. Let’s be honest, between Soaps and Sports, you have everything the “Zeus & Co. Players” could come up with, especially since the invention of televised Professional Wrestling. You must admit, there are striking similarities.

A good example of how the Biblical God is different than other gods is just the fact that most of your popular religions have a particular god or goddess for everything. Thor can do thunder, lightning and maybe even light showers coming from the northwest, with strong gusts up to 35 miles per hour, but can he do ferrying the to the underworld? No. For that you need Anubis or Charon. And they can’t do a thing for crops. You need some corn god for that one, like Osiris. And can the corn god do apple trees too? Probably not. The Union would never allow that kind of thing even if he had

the time. This is probably how the Hindus got 330 million gods in the first place.

Jesus can do 330 million things by himself, so one God is plenty. Also, God tells us several times in the Bible that He is the only God that is, was, or will be. So it's not just speculation here.

**In Deuteronomy 32:39 God says, "See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god beside me."  
And In Isaiah 45:5 He says, "I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God."**

**3. He is the CREATOR of all space, time, matter, energy, etc.** He created it out of nothing. Just read Genesis chapter one.

**Genesis 1:1 says**

**"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."**

He created it out of nothing.

There is NO creation account like the one in the Bible except, oddly, the Big Bang Theory. God made EVERYTHING from NOTHING some finite time ago. All other creation stories have some pre-existing world with water and plants and a sky and probably a Radio Shack and a tanning salon. Every religion assumes some pre-existing proto world out of which the present universe was made. The Big Bang Theory agrees that the universe popped into existence from nothing, nowhere, and nowhen a finite time ago, but it rejects the idea of a creator and says the universe is un-caused. It sort of made itself, like a rabbit pulling itself out of a hat without a magician, or a hat. Or a rabbit, until it got pulled out of the not-a-hat. This would be an amazing magic trick and well worth the price of admission.

Someone once admitted that it is infinitely unlikely to happen, but "it only had to happen once." He felt this made it sound plausible. Some of you think I'm making this up, but sadly I am not.

**4. God is ALL KNOWING.**

**Job 21:22 "Can anyone teach knowledge to God, since he judges even the highest?"**

**Psalms 147:4-5 "He determines the number of the stars and calls them each by name. Great is our Lord and mighty in power; his understanding has no limit."**

He knows all that is, was, or will be, and all that would be were things different. This is what we all wished for while we were talking the S.A.T.'s. And because God is out of time, He doesn't need to remember stuff or predict it, he sees it all in an eternal NOW.

Again, all of your other religions have stories where various gods trick each other or where humans fool their gods or pull one over on them. It wasn't so much a religion as a cartoon with some of these guys. I don't mean to be disrespectful, but when your god has the same problems running the world that Elmer Fudd does bagging a rabbit, you seriously need to rethink whether he's worthy of worship.

**5. God is PERSONAL.** Unlike The FORCE (TM Disney/Lucasfilms Ltd) He has thoughts, feelings, preferences, characteristics, and a will. While Jedi Master Qui-Gon Jinn did imply once that the Force <sup>TM</sup> also has a will, he may have been speaking metaphorically and certainly does not represent the Jedi Temple, The Council, nor the majority of Jedi doctrine. The Force <sup>TM</sup> is a lot like various pagan or pantheistic ideas of God. They believe in a god that is a life force that fills the universe, like some vast cosmic rice pudding. I suspect this kind of thing stems from either drug use, or the desperate need to rid the universe of an authority figure. Either way, I can't imagine worshipping a rice pudding, no matter how Cosmic it may be.

In Genesis we are told God walked in the garden of Eden with Adam and Eve. Exodus 33:11 says **“Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.”** John 3:16 tells us that God sent Jesus because He LOVED the world. We exist for a purpose- to know and love God and to be known and loved by him. This is a feature rare among ideas of gods, and one missing entirely from Islam. Muslims don't hope for relationship with their god even in heaven.

**6. God's main motivation/Character trait is LOVE.** While He is righteous and just, He loves us with a really BIG love and therefore made a way for sin to be punished (satisfying his righteous justice) and yet adopt us into His family.

**Ephesians 1: In love <sup>5</sup> he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, <sup>6</sup> to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.**

This is a trait unique to the Bible. MANY religions have gods which don't love their people, but rule them with fear and anger. alone.

There is much left to say, but let me have the Bible sum it up for me:

**John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.**

**7. God is Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit- Three persons, one God.** There is not three separate Gods, there is only one God in three persons, eternally co-equal. I'll explain the Trinity some other time. There is no way to make short work of that I promise you. Let's sum it up with “God is more complicated than most.” It's one of the reasons he is so fascinating.

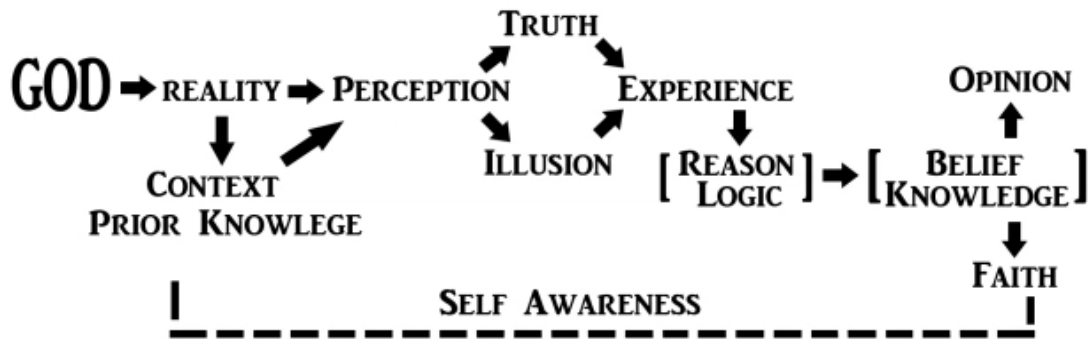
Nutshell in a nutshell: God is Big, Unique, and wonderful- and He Loves You!

OK, there is your foundation for the metaphysical map to everything. Whew! Covers a LOT of ground. Now that I have this done, I need to go play some more Guitar Hero. Maybe you should go do the same. I can't say there is a direct correlation between my excellent marriage and my good Guitar Hero score, but it is worth trying.

Just in case.



## Chapter Four: The Metaphysical Map and the Mile High Duck Perception, Illusion and Truth



The Metaphysical Map is a guide to Life, the Universe, and Everything.

There it is, my friends. If you'd like to purchase a t-shirt with this on it, let me know. I don't have any to sell you, but it would give me something to tell the folks back home.

*"No, seriously! Some guy wants to buy a shirt with this on it! Can you believe that?"*

My past two essays were about the nature of God, who you can see is the beginning of the Metaphysical map. You need to start somewhere before you can follow the map to somewhere else right? We've started with God, and now we can follow the map to TRUTH! But first I think I need to define TRUTH:

**Truth is word, thought, or picture accurately reflecting reality (in as far as the word, thought or picture intends to reflect it).**

In order to teach you the ins and outs of this Metaphysical Universe, I present to you- THE METAPHYSICAL DUCK!



Behold the ducky in all his glory! I took this photo of the duck with a digital camera. You can look at this picture and determine that the duck is yellow- but is that the TRUTH? If you stop and think about it, you can only REALLY determine that the duck in the photo is yellow. YOU don't have the real duck. I do. The Photo tells you that the duck is yellow, but you don't actually know if the photo accurately reflects the real duck unless you have the real duck to compare to the photo.

They say a picture is worth a thousand words, and now, thanks to the invention of digital imaging software, all of those words can be brazen lies. Some days I find it hard not to be cynical.

To determine the TRUTHFULNESS of the photo, there needs to be a REAL duck with which to compare it. If this picture is only something I made in Photoshop and there is no actual duck, then it is pointless to discuss whether the picture shows the TRUE color of the duck, just as it would be pointless to inquire as to the home address of about half of the registered voters in a Chicago election.

Because they aren't real. I wish I was kidding about that.

Thus, if the ducky is the same color as the photo, then you can say the photo tells the TRUTH as far as the color of the

duck is concerned. If not, then the picture presents an Illusion and you perceive something which is not TRUE. But there are limitations to the picture. For instance, can you tell how big the duck is? Is he one of those tiny keychain ducks or one of those huge duckies that can be used as furniture? There is no way to tell from this photo. For all you know it may be a GIGANTIC duck that doubles as a submarine and has a crew of a hundred men. It's not, but I wish it was because THAT would be totally sweet.

Does this mean the picture is inaccurate? False? An ILLUSION? No, because the picture is accurate as far as the picture intends to describe the duck. It is accurate in as far as it describes the duck, but no further. What it says about the color of the duck is true, but it simply doesn't say anything about the size. It's not inaccurate, false, or an ILLUSION. It's only incomplete.

Need another example? Go look in the mirror. What does the image tell you about the back of your head? Nothing. Does that mean it is lying to you? No, it means your skull is not transparent. If you CAN see the back of your head in the mirror, you might want to seek immediate medical attention. Or pick a keen Superhero name. It depends on why you can see the back of your head I suppose. But I digress.

I can give you a measurement of how tall the ducky is, but unless there is a real ducky, my description cannot be TRUE because TRUTH is TRUE about something real. If I say the ducky is five inches tall, but there is no ducky, I have not told you something accurate about something that exists. I have invented the data arbitrarily. I have LIED. I could just as easily say it is a mile tall, and would be no more or less accurate. It would be equal (Metaphysically, not numerically) to my description of 5 inches because neither is true of a real duck. Clearly if something fails to be accurate, it must be false. Unreal/imaginary is the same as untrue, as TRUE requires a thought, word, or picture to accurately reflect a real something.

See how this works?

I have the real duck here, so I can measure it, and when I do I discover that he is in fact four inches tall. So, while neither the imaginary measurements of five inches or a mile tall were TRUE (i.e. accurate when compared to the REAL ducky), the five inches was a LOT closer to the real thing. We would say it is MORE TRUE than the presumption that it is a mile high because, while still inaccurate, five inches is closer to the real truth (four inches) than the alternative (A mile)-or, we can say it is LESS INACCURATE, because the distance between it and the TRUTH is less than the distance between the TRUTH and the presumption of a mile high duck.

Personally, I think Mile High Duck would make a good name for a band.



*You see it, but do you believe it?*

The important things to remember here are this: If there is no duck, I cannot describe it with accuracy. This is to say, I cannot tell the TRUTH about the duck. If there is a duck, I can describe it either accurately (And tell the truth) or inaccurately (and present an illusion, falsehood, or lie- sometimes we call this “*Journalism*”).

If there is a duck and I put its picture on a t-shirt, maybe I can get someone to buy THAT.  
It's worth a try at any rate.

\*rim-shot

## Chapter Five: Text Without Context is Pretext for Proof Text (And a Person's a Person no matter how Small)

### Context

Hold onto your hats!

I have just made an amazing discovery which will shift the balance of religious debates forever! I was considering the declaration of such people as Richard Dawkins (author of *The God Delusion*) of there being NO God.

As a Christian I know the Bible is completely true and free of errors, so I did a quick search on Biblegateway.com to see what the Bible says about that. And you know what I found? The Bible says “**There is no God!**”

It says it *fifteen times!*



You think I'm lying. Well, let me quote you few verses:

**Deuteronomy 32:39** “There is no god...”

**2Samuel 7:22** “...there is no God...”

**Psalms 14:1** “...there is no God.”

Over and over! You think I'm messing with you? You think I made these up? On the contrary. These verses are in no way altered from the original! I looked it up, and then I copied and pasted it here!

Have I just BLOWN YOUR MIND?!?!?!?

Some of you are probably asking what I've left out. And that is an excellent question which brings us to my topic:

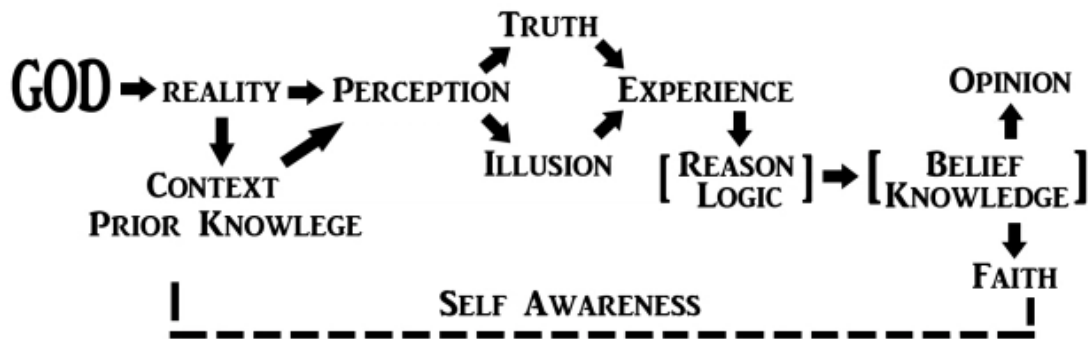
**CONTEXT.** When searching for truth in words or the universe around you, the **CONTEXT** is an important starting point. The Context is, in short, the big picture- the when, where, why, and who which will make clear sense out of the ideas, facts or events being investigated. In my quotes above, for instance, I've left out a little context.

When you put it back in, you find the first verse is God saying **"There is no god BESIDES ME,"** and the next is someone saying to God, **"There is no God BUT YOU."**

The best one here is Psalm 14:1 **"The FOOL says in his heart, "There is no God.""**

A little bit of context changes things a bit, wouldn't you say?

Sorry Richard Dawkins. I guess I can't help you after all.



Let us now consider the Metaphysical Duck. Our ducky is a small yellow rubber ducky. Suppose I am holding him as I'm typing and I write, "I am holding the ducky right now." However, you don't get around to reading this for weeks later. By then, not only am I NOT holding the ducky, but I can't even find him since having done laundry. He's lost under the pile of clean clothes that I am lax in putting away. So, is the statement TRUE or FALSE?

In order to decide, you must consider the **CONTEXT**. The context of the statement was the time at which the statement was written. It does not say I am ALWAYS holding the ducky, it only says I am holding him "right now" with the understood context to imply that "right now" tells us that, *at the time of the writing of that sentence*, I was holding the ducky. It does not say anything about the time AFTER the writing of that sentence.

Similarly, if I were to say "Ronald Reagan is the president of the United States," this would be false because I am saying it NOW, in 2017. If I found that exact same statement having been said or written in 1983, it would be true because the statement IMPLIES the time. The time at which something was said or written, and the person who said or wrote it is its context. Without the context, there is no way to determine if the statement is true or false.

Another piece of **CONTEXT** is Prior Knowledge- the things you have already learned. Consider this statement: "MY rubber duck is exceptionally large!" Is this true or false? If you've read my previous chapters, you'll know the ducky of which I speak to be around 4 inches tall. This doesn't answer the question, but it helps. If you also know how big an average rubber ducky is (between 3-5 inches tall), you will know that, in the context of typical rubber ducks, my statement is false. If aliens somehow have transformed him into an 80 foot tall mecha-ducky, we could all agree in THAT context that he was exceptionally large, and fairly likely at some point to wind up fighting with the Power Rangers.

Here is the trouble with some words. How big is "Large"? Is it 200 pounds? Is it six miles? Is it twenty five liters?

\$4,000? There is no answer to that, because it is a term relative to the context. Compared to the starting lineup for the Miami Dolphins, my ducky is VERY SMALL. Compared to a dust mite, he is HUGE. Words like Big or Small, tall or short, etc. are relative to something. My ducky is big or small only when compared to something else, and that something else becomes the context needed to make sense of the question or statement. Thus it is the responsibility of both the speaker/writer to convey the context clearly and the listener/reader to discover the context. Without an understanding of CONTEXT there is much which cannot be determined to be true or false.

I think you'll find that lots of arguments are really based on this misunderstanding. Just listen to anyone arguing about which of two movies is BETTER. Do they mean, "Better at showing alien heads exploding?" or "Better at not whipping the camera around until I want to hurl," or "Better at making me laugh with inappropriate sound effects," or "Better at bringing in ridiculous amounts of money at the box office,"? Most of the time people will rant and rave at each other about the concept of BETTER without ever defining the context of BETTER AT WHAT?

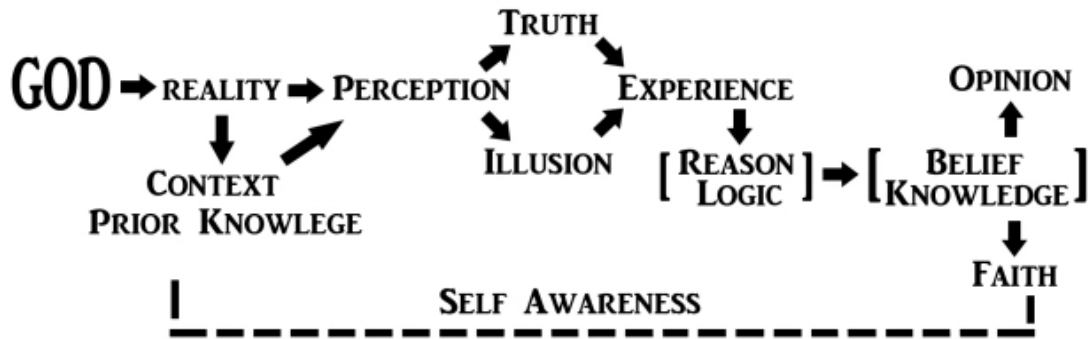
I think we could avoid a lot of angry cafeteria fights (And probably most of those Political News shows) if everyone spent more time defining their context and less time assuming what it might be. One thing which is true no matter who you are or when it happens is this: If you spend an hour fighting with someone, using all of your reasoning skills and college style vocabulary words to demolish their position, but then you both find that you actually agree but simply had no idea what the other person was talking about, you are going to feel REALLY stupid. In this context, I'd like to suggest that maybe listening is better.

Oh, and in case you were wondering what the title of this post means (Text without Context is Pretext for Proof text), it simply means this: Scripture without context will be used by people to try and get the Bible to say whatever they want it to say, instead of (With context) what it actually says. But as Dr Seuss taught us, everything is more fun to learn when it rhymes.

# Chapter Six: The Glass Door Experience

## Reality and Perception

What do Pizza, Magic, and the Jedi have in common? You might say, “it depends on your perspective.” But actually, it doesn’t. That’s what they have in common.



Let me explain: If you think about the Metaphysical Map you’ll recall this: **Perception- The five senses gathering information about reality through contact with it** (eyes, ears, nose, skin, brain, etc.). In English class, we call this your “Point of View.” You’d know that if you weren’t so busy hiding your I-Phone in your textbook to download games. But this concept is discussed in more places than high school English.

In Star Wars Episode I, Jedi Master Qui Gon Jinn says, “Your focus determines your reality.” I have no idea what he meant by this. I suspect George Lucas didn’t either. The Jedi spent the whole series saying inane things that made no sense, like at the end of Episode III when Obi Wan says, “Only a Sith deals in absolutes.” So, either he’s a Sith, or he meant to say, “From a certain point of view, it is frequently the Sith that deal in absolutes, which we as Jedi would personally hold to be in error, though we are reticent in passing judgment.” But then, we all just wanted them to get to the light saber fight.

In terms of this chapter’s main point, I shall decide that Qui Gon Jinn meant to say, “Your perception determines your reality,” and furthermore, I shall define this to mean he is saying “your reality” is created by your perceptions.

If you think this is a stretch, all I have to say is, “Midichlorians.”

Now, it is true that your personal experience is determined by your perceptions. You experience what you perceive. Apparently Qui Gon has used the word “Reality” when he should have said “Experience.” Jedi are a lot of things, but they are not sticklers for Metaphysical jargon. Reality has to exist BEFORE your perceptions or you’d have nothing to perceive. It would be like saying, “Let’s eat, and then let’s go get some food.” You can try and argue that, somehow, eating is your food, but you’re still gonna be pretty hungry when my stuffed-crust pizza shows up and I refuse to share.

You can’t eat without food and you can’t perceive a rubber duck without the rubber duck.

Or can you?

This is why the map branches off from Perspective into two possible paths: Truth or Illusion. What you PERCEIVE (See, hear, smell, etc) can be TRUE (accurately reflecting what is REAL) or it can be an ILLUSION (Different than reality).

This is where your unwashed, dope smoking college professors or cult leaders will argue with me. They'll get all "No man! ALL Perceptions are true!"

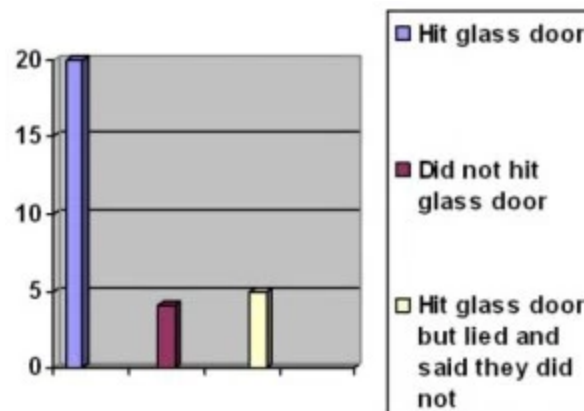
Now, before I explain why this is wrong, I want to point out the fact that they are ARGUING AGAINST SOMETHING. In order to disagree with me, they have to first decide that there is a difference between TRUTH and ILLUSION. They are arguing for the idea which they believe to be TRUTH, and saying that my definition is wrong- i.e. an illusion. By arguing with me, they are agreeing with me.

Need I continue?

Well, I'm going to anyway.

Can you perceive something which is not real? To prove that you can, I present for you a little something I like to call: ***THE GLASS DOOR EXPERIENCE.***

It goes like this. You are walking toward what you perceive to be an open doorway. You do not see a door. You see an open passageway, and you believe with all of your heart that the doorway is open and clear of obstacles. Then, suddenly and without warning, you face-plant into the magical, invisible force-field of glass. As you pick yourself up off the ground, you come to discover that the door was there THE WHOLE TIME! Your perceptions were WRONG! Leaving your pace print on a clean glass door is a universal part of being human. I've found that in a room of thirty people, it is rare to find more than five who had not had ***the Glass Door Experience.*** In other words, all of us have believed an Illusion and discovered the hard way that we had been wrong. Reality does not bend to our perception, our perceptions (And sometimes our noses) bend to reality.



This is not always a bad thing. Consider magic shows. If you could not be tricked into perceiving something which was not so, it would be a pretty dull magic show. ("Here's a hat with a rabbit inside of it. Now I will pull the rabbit out of the hat.") And how could you pull off any decent pranks? ("Would you like a stick of gum that tastes like dirt?") Plus, you'd never enjoy a movie. A movie is actually a series of still images played so fast that you cannot accurately perceive the fact that it is a series of still images. Your brain creates the illusion of movement because of its inability to perceive the individual frames. In some cases, illusions can be fun! In others it's horribly painful!



Why would anyone want perception to determine reality? Because it lets you play God. If God creates reality, and your perception creates your own reality, then you get to be your own God! This really only comes up in terms of morality. A man will cheat on his wife and then try and argue that, from his perspective, it's not immoral. He's trying to say, "If I perceive it as being acceptable, then in my reality it IS acceptable." You won't find these people using the same argument to get out of the laws of physics. A man who cheats on his wife will still demand a parachute if you try and toss him out of an airplane without one. Oh, you can suggest he simply choose to not perceive gravity, but he'll just be all "Give me a parachute! I don't want to die! I don't want to die!"

Adulterers can be REAL crybabies.

In summary, when you see something, you can see it as it really is (i.e. perceive truth) or you can see it differently than it really is (i.e. Illusion/special effects). You're welcome to argue with me and stubbornly cling to the idea that your perception creates your own personal reality, but I'll be laughing my way through a stuffed-crust pizza while you're wiping your snot off of a glass door. Don't worry, I'll save you a slice. That's what friends are for. And that's the truth.

# Chapter Seven: The Duck is on the Floor

## Truth and Illusion

A friend and I were walking down the street in the heart of Chicago, headed, I imagine, to find some food. Finding food is one of a very few selected reasons to be on the street in Chicago after dark, especially in the winter (September 7- April 14) when the temperature drops low enough to cause all life functions to cease and then to be blown away in the hurricane-like winds that roar through the ice-crusting buildings. The other reason is to find entertainment, like the plethora of small theaters where actual actors stand on an actual stage and recite memorized lines. Or they drink beer and make it up as they go. I've been to both kinds of theatre in Chicago, and the lesson there is- you get what you pay for. Of course, if you want to forgo all of the live actors, you can find a movie theatre or go to a friend's itsy-bitsy, teeny-weenie one bedroom apartment and watch a movie. We were not doing any of those things, so we must have been going for food- and by food I mean possibly coffee, since coffee is a food group which many city-dwellers live on almost exclusively.

Through the harsh and whipping winds, I was making casual conversation about how Jesus was the Way, the Truth, and the Life, which was a sort of new thing for me back then- not the truth of it, but me talking about it casually with people who hadn't explicitly asked me about it. Her reply was, "Well, that may be true for you, but it's not true for me."

Her tone was so matter of fact that it was obvious that she was not being sarcastic. I pondered her words and came to the conclusion that her brain must have frozen in the high winds, and I started walking faster towards our destination certain that haste would be imperative to our survival.

"What do you mean, it's not true for you?" I asked. "Something is either true or it's not. There's no personal taste involved with reality." She again disagreed and told me, "Hey, it's great you believe that, but it's not true for me." She said it in the plain matter-of-fact way in which one might say, "This smells like the number five." I started thinking she had simply gone mad from an ice encrusted cerebellum and started to lose hope.

Later it would become clear to me that her brains had not frozen but had been washed, if you catch my meaning. She had grasped onto one of the new philosophies being shoved down the throats of students at many colleges. This philosophy is that there are two kinds of reality- the objective and subjective. Essentially, some things are true for everyone, like Tuesdays, the difference between centimeters and inches, or everything bagels. In addition there are things that are only true if you believe in them. Most people who hold this view will put any morals or religious faith into the second category. This is what my friend was doing.

A thinking person might say, "Maybe they are simply saying that some things are just personal opinions, such as whether or not onions chunks are good in chili." This is not what this philosophy means. It means, "I think your belief is stupid, but to say so would be 'close-minded,' so I'll pretend you have your own little world." This is how Sox fans address the optimism of Cubs fans around here. "Riiiiight. Next year will be DIFFERENT..." (editor's note- this was funnier before 2016. These kinds of jokes would have worked consistently from 1908 until 2016, and then the Cubs thoughtlessly ruined this for me, but I digress.)

This philosophy actually means- and some people really try to believe this- that some things are **TRUE for you**, and **NOT true for them- AT THE SAME TIME**. You each have, not your own *EXPERIENCE* of reality, but in fact *your own personal REALITY*. This idea has its roots in Zen philosophy. I'd explain what Zen is, except that there is no definition. I've read Zen books. I even went to what claimed to be the official Zen web site and the only thing they all said is, "The only way to know what Zen is, is to experience it." Although they freely admit that, you may think you're having a Zen experience but really you're having a bad intestinal reaction from overdoing the spicy salsa on your burrito. Putting onion chunks in your chili might be another cause. ("I think I need an antacid. I'm having a Zen experience from that Chili!")

It seems silly to the point of insane but it's actually just the tip of the iceberg. The follow up philosophy is this: There is no REALITY at all. EVERYTHING is subjective. Things are what YOU perceive or believe or choose them to be. There are serious flaws with this theory- the main one being that it's wrong. I had to explain this to a cousin of mine once. We were sitting in my living room and he was sticking to the idea that what I perceive is "true for me," and I was trying to explain that reality exists outside of our perceptions or we would have nothing to perceive. I held up one of my eighty yellow rubber ducks that were all over the house. "Suppose I believed this was a bright red bowling ball. Would that make it so?"

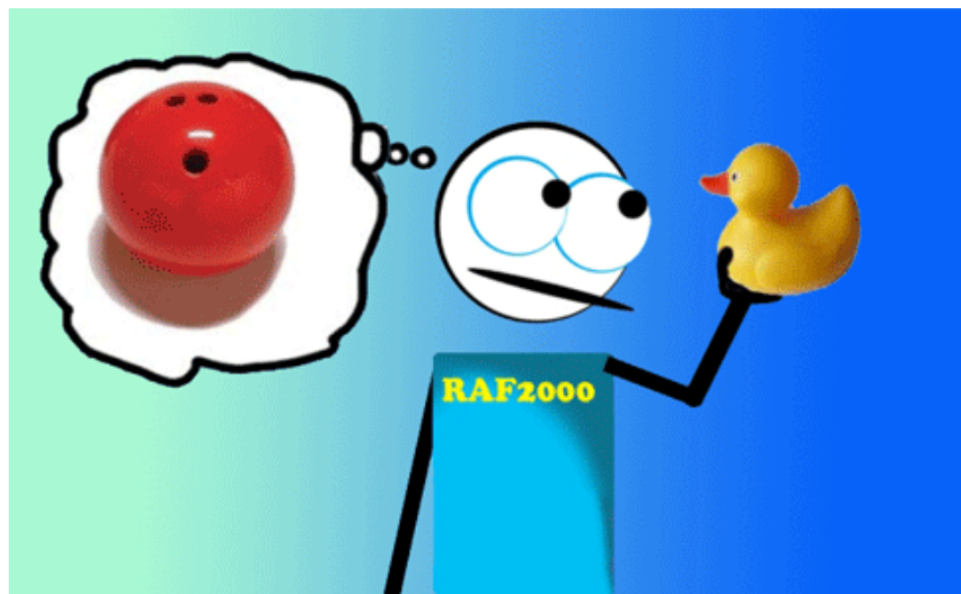
"In your perception it would be," he relied.

"But would it BE a bright red bowling ball, or is it a rubber duck?"

"Well, I perceive it to be a rubber duck."

"Are you right?" I asked.

"From my point of view I am."



This was making me insane. He was a college student. Isn't higher education supposed to make you smarter? Maybe it just makes you higher- but I digress.

I held the duck out and said, "OK, I'm going to convince myself, absolutely beyond a doubt that when I let go of this duck it will float to the ceiling. Are you ready?" I dropped the duck. It fell to the floor next to me and I continued. "Let's say I really thought the duck was going to go up," I said, "and let's say I perceived the duck floating up. Even

now, I can see the duck above me, on the ceiling. Can I get the duck off of the ceiling? If I got a ladder and climbed to the ceiling, would I come down with the duck? Where is the duck right now? Where do you HAVE to go to get the duck?!?!?!?”

He eventually admitted that the duck was on the floor. It took me *forty minutes* to get *a college student* to admit that *a rubber duck was on the floor*. Colleges used to teach people how to think, and now they teach them not to. This explains why he never cleaned up after himself. “You need to do the dishes,” I’d say. “That’s just your perception, man.”

While the idea that truth is subjective sounds great, because no one ever has to admit to being wrong, it’s also really nuts. It’s KookieDooks wrapped in optimism and artificial sweeteners.

***The duck is on the floor whether you perceive it or not.***

Like most wacky ideas of this kind, you just have to apply the idea to itself. Is it true for everyone that truth is subjective, or is it only true for you? Try that one out on someone. If they say it’s only true for them, then you can tell them you have a monopoly on truth because you perceive reality the way it really is, regardless of your point of view. They’ll be tempted to argue that their philosophy is true for everyone, at which time you can point out that they’ve acknowledged a universal truth which is objective, proving that objective truth does exist, allowing for some viewpoints to be more or less true, depending on how their perception lines up with what is real.

At this point they’ll take their Grande’ skinny sugar free caramel latte’ and storm out into the blustery Chicago night in a rage. But don’t worry if your friends don’t come back to you. Just wait until the spring thaw. They’ll turn up somewhere when the snow starts to melt. Trust me on this one.

## Chapter Eight: Sean's Shirt IS Red! Perception, Reality, and Truth

I recently listened to a Podcast where in the host attempted to make a point about the universal nature of TRUTH by first appealing to what color his shirt is. I think I can help streamline his argument. It goes like this:

**The Scene-** Sean is wearing a red shirt and talking to his wife, True-Asia, and their friend Cook, AKA Cook Dawg, AKA the Drumma Beast Boy, AKA Saint Nick, AKA Captain Platypus of Space Patrol (Some of these nicknames might not be accurate. I haven't listened to this podcast for a while).

Sean: My shirt is RED.

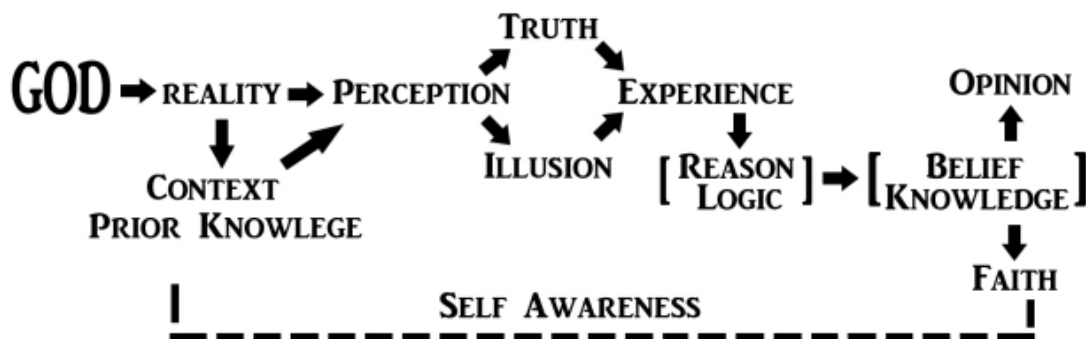
True-Asia: No, your shirt is black.

Cook: You both be trippin! You shirt be green!

Sean: I think you mean to say, "You both *are* trippin. Your shirt *is* green."

Cook: Yes, of course. Excuse me. Your shirt is green.

True-Asia: Spoken like a true gentleman.



### STEP 1. Shared perception supports an external reality to be perceived.

FACT: They each perceive the shirt differently.

FACT: They DO each perceive the shirt.

FACT: Perception requires something to perceive. If the shirt was not REAL, they would not all perceive it at all. If it were a hallucination only one of them would perceive it. Dreams and hallucinations are never shared, thus a shared perception requires something real to be perceived.

**THEREFORE: The shirt is REAL.** The three independent perceptions prove it does exist, even though they disagree with some details. It is not an illusion or a hallucination, or what politicians and journalists refer to as "A Press Release," or "The Polls" or "Statistics." But I digress.

### STEP 2. The Law of NonContradiction means differing perceptions cannot all be true at the same time in the same way.

FACT: As we saw in Step 1, The shirt actually exists. It is REAL.

FACT: A real object will reflect a certain wavelength of light, while absorbing the others. (In other words, it will be a certain color. See your box of Crayons for details.)

FACT: One color is not another color. (Red is not black, green is not yellow, etc. See the labels on your crayons for further details.)

**THEREFORE: If the shirt is RED, it is not black or green.** If it is green, it is not black or red, etc. Again, Crayola has given you all the information on this that you will ever need, in convenient boxes of 64 (With a sharpener in the

back!!!). Sean, True, and Cook CANNOT all be correct. At least two of them MUST be wrong.

**STEP 3. If one perception accurately describes what is, then differing perceptions must be in error.**

FACT: If the shirt is RED, it is not black or green. (*Only in a discussion of philosophy would this have to be stated.*)

FACT: Color is determined by the wavelength of light, not by perception. A Yellow taxi remains yellow even when no one sees it, or when it is seen by a colorblind person who cannot see the color yellow. His limited perception would not change the wavelength of the light coming from the Taxi.

FACT: Sean's shirt is reflecting a light wavelength range of roughly 630–740 Nanometers, which is (and what most human eyes perceive as) the color RED. (Yes, I looked this up on Wikipedia. Don't you judge me!)

**THEREFORE: Sean's perception is correct, and his assertion ("My shirt is red") is TRUE.** Cook and True's perceptions and/or assertions are FALSE. (Either they see it incorrectly and are honest about what they see, or they see it correctly but are lying, or both.)

**STEP 4. Different perceptions do not change the reality perceived.**

FACT: Light is necessary for us to see, but we do not need to see light for it to exist. In other words- Our perception allows us to be aware of light, it does not MAKE the light. The light exists OUTSIDE of our perception.

FACT: The light reflected by Sean's shirt would remain the same even if no one saw it, or if no one saw it correctly. (A room full of color blind people might all agree that Sean's shirt is black, but they would all be wrong- it still reflects a light wavelength range of roughly 630–740 Nanometers, AKA RED. The reality has not changed, but their perceptions cannot accurately see what is REAL)

**THEREFORE: Reality (Of which light is one part) exists outside of and independent of our perceptions, knowledge and beliefs.**

**STEP 5. Truth is saying of what is that it is, or of what is not that it is not.**

FACT: Reality is independent of our perceptions, knowledge, and beliefs.

FACT: Truth is word or thought accurately reflecting reality (describing what is REAL).

**THEREFORE: TRUTH exists independently of our perceptions, knowledge or beliefs.**

**Conclusion:**

Because there are multiple perceptions of his shirt, we know Sean's shirt is REAL, then there are TRUE facts about it (Like what color it is) and FALSE statements concerning it (Like saying it is green when it is in fact RED). Because there is ONE reality (of which the shirt and all of us are a part) then the TRUTH about the shirt is TRUE for all of us, even if we do not perceive, know or believe that truth. It is TRUE that Sean's shirt is red, even if we do not see, know, or believe that it is, because the TRUTH is not determined by our perception, knowledge or belief, but by the real shirt (i.e. Reality).

**In short, there is no TRUE FOR YOU. There is REAL, and if you see REAL as it REALLY is, you perceive the truth. If you see it as it is NOT, then you do NOT see the truth.**

**Application:**

There is ONE God and he made all that is. There is ONE reality, one universe, one world. We share it, but we do not MAKE it. Perceptions of things, people, or events which are NOT shared are dreams or hallucinations. They are not a separate reality, but perhaps an indication that we need to get our prescription changed immediately. Or maybe a sign

that we need to start taking the expiration dates on dairy products more seriously, but I digress.

If a man says of *what is that it is*, or of *what is not that it is not*, he speaks the **truth**. But if a man says of *what is that it is not*, or of *what is not that it is*, he does NOT speak the truth. Anything TRUE is true for ALL PEOPLE because the truth does not depend on us, it depends on REALITY. Any truth is universal. If it is not universal, it is not TRUE. And as God is the creator of all reality, this is why it can be said that All Truth is God's Truth.

Oh, and everything that can be said, Metaphysically, about Sean's shirt, can be said about rubber ducks. In case you wanted to connect this with my previous Metaphysical lessons.

## Chapter Nine: World Views Up in Smoke

### Truth and Relativism

One of the great buzzwords in modern Christian apologetics is "World View." What this means is the philosophy that you see the world through. It's the set of beliefs and assumptions that you use to understand, judge, and/or evaluate the world and your experiences. One of the ways you can evaluate a World View is by trying to figure out how you would have to live if that world view was *really* true.

For instance, there is a very popular worldview which says that truth is relative. It's called, Relativism. (Real creative, right?) Relativism teaches the idea that what is true for you is not necessarily true for me. This sounds great on paper because it seems open minded, as if no one is ever wrong. However, it's really just a way for someone to say, "What you believe in is stupid," without making themselves feel like they are not open-minded, much in the same way people sugar-coat racism by calling it "Diversity," like when they say, "You are overqualified for this position, but we already have a white person working here, so we won't hire you because we believe in DIVERSITY." And yes, this happened to me. I'm not bitter, YOU'RE bitter!

But I digress.

Evaluating this worldview is easy. We can just apply it to a real life situation.



**Real Life Situation #1-** Steve, a long time smoker, goes to see his doctor.

STEVE: ...so, I've been coughing up blood for some time now, I feel sick, and all that other stuff I told you about on the phone.

DOCTOR: Well, Steve, like I've been telling you for several years, smoking causes cancer, and now it seems you have cancer. We'll have to start you on therapy immediately, and you will have to stop smoking once and for all.

STEVE: Hmm...That might be true for you, but that's certainly not true for me.

DOCTOR: Steve, you'll be dead in three months if we don't start treatment now.

STEVE: Hey, if that belief works for you, that's great. I'm glad you have something to believe in. I just don't see that idea working for me. That's not TRUE for ME.

DOCTOR: Steve, I'm serious. You have to make some serious lifestyle changes...

STEVE: Woah, I said I was happy for you. Don't go forcing your beliefs on me pal. Look, I've been pretty tolerant of your faith in the past but when you think you can tell me how to live, it's going too far.

DOCTOR: Tolerant of my faith?

STEVE: Yeah, if you want to believe that smoking is bad for you, go ahead. That might be true for you, but I've told you that it's just not true for me. I'm not going to make you smoke if you don't want to. I have my own beliefs and they work for me, so you really need to stop forcing your views on me.

DOCTOR: Steve, look at this X-ray. Your lungs look like a freshly sealed driveway. There's enough tar in your lungs to drown a stegosaurus.

STEVE: That's it. You're just too close minded. I'm gonna go find a doctor that shares my views.

*Exit Steve.*

This can be done with other, more socio-political views. Take modern feminism. A hundred years ago, feminism used to be built on the wacky notion of equal value between the sexes, since the Bible clearly says God made men AND WOMEN in His image. This made many people think that women should be treated, not as property, but as equal citizens who can own property, work a job, and vote.

Thanks to Darwinism and the 1960's, our culture has abandoned this view of feminism. Now "feminists" stand for ideals like, Marriage is slavery for women, men are all scum, and men and women are only different in their physical attributes and are absolutely the same mentally and emotionally, except that men are scum. As Sheila Cronan once put it, "Since marriage constitutes slavery for women, it is clear that the women's movement must concentrate on attacking marriage." As long as people keep saying stupid things in public, I won't have to make anything up. I appreciate their willingness to make my job easier.

The great thing about political movements is, you find out fairly easy if people can live their own views. Modern feminist icon and poster-child Gloria Steinem preached for years that marriage is slavery for women and men are scum. Then she got married. To a man. Imagine that wedding ceremony.

Unitarian Priest: Do you take this woman, to love, honor, and obey, because you are scum, and she is taking mercy on you by enslaving herself to you in this fashion, till death do you part?

The Groom: Um, Honey?

Gloria: He does.

The problem is the underlying Worldview. Modern American feminism is no longer based on the Biblical concept of



humans, male and female, being made in God's image and therefore having equal value. It's based on a Naturalistic view of accidental evolution where in nothing has a purpose or value except that chosen by the individual. Feminism now teaches that women must reject every social construct that tells them what a woman should be and be only what she chooses to be. Unless the individual chooses to be a wife and mother. Then they argue that she has been brainwashed by men. Feminists believe in the right to choose, as long as you choose what they tell you to choose. It's like a dictatorship which holds elections, but I digress.

Being an atheist is the darkest and most unlivable worldview of all. In a World View where there is NO God, no moral law handed down by God, no soul, no heaven and no hell- only matter and the laws of physics, where do good and evil come from? Very simply, there is none. Love itself is only a matter of varying chemical levels in your brain. Yet, you'll find it hard to find an atheist couple who gets engaged to this proposal:

Man: Let me get down on my knee here and pull out a ring of metal adorned with a small piece of carbon...  
Honey, Of all the accidentally evolved bipedal primates I know, you cause the greatest increase in my endorphins. Since my brain chemistry and various other hormone levels have caused me to be attracted to you, I think we should get married, but obviously I feel I am under no moral obligation to remain married to you once my brain chemistry changes. And of course I have no intent of remaining faithful to you at all, since the social norm condemning adultery is based in religion, which I reject. Which reminds me, I have a date with your sister tomorrow. Can she borrow your car?

Human life is not special in this World View. It was not made in the image of God. It's only one more step in an accidental and directionless process- a process which involves a lot of animals killing each other. The greatest person you know differs from the gum stuck to your shoe, not in their purpose and value, but only in their physical complexity. Both are accidental, and only one tastes like strawberry. Yet, you can go to a thousand atheist funerals and you will never hear anyone say,

“So he's dead. So what? We're all going to blink out of existence someday soon. Nothing much is different except that his biological functions have ceased, which will cause his organic matter to decompose into inorganic matter. He was a meaningless accident of evolution who came from nothing, went to nothing, and didn't even taste like strawberry!”

No atheist talks like an atheist at a funeral. Which is just as well, because you'd never fit all of that onto the headstone.

When all is said and done, no one can live a truly atheist life. No one can really view themselves, their life and the people around them from the lens of a Godless, purposeless, valueless, moral-less material existence. No one really can live as if that were true. Therefore, not only do I reject the worldview of atheism, but I have decided I no longer believe in atheists. There simply isn't any good evidence for their existence. You can believe in them if you want, but their existence isn't true for me.

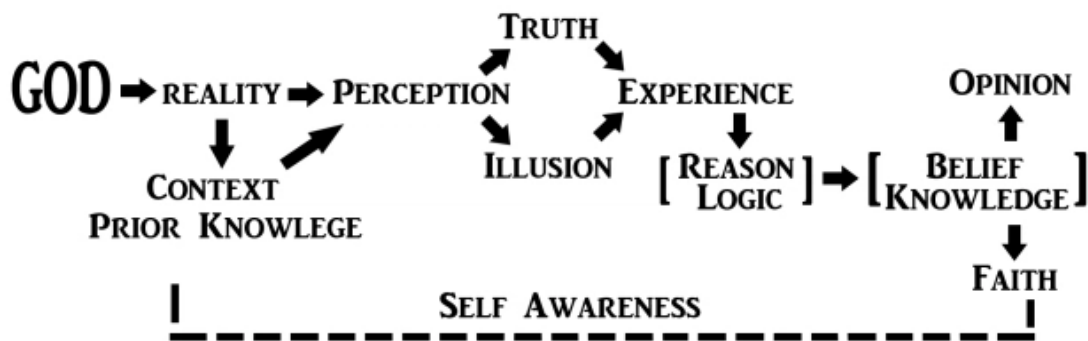
Well, you know what I mean...

# Chapter Ten: Fake Math and Flying Spaghetti Monster

## The Exclusivity of Truth

If you've been learning along with the previous Metaphysical Lessons, you know that I have been attempting to prove the existence of Objective Truth as outlined in my Metaphysical Map. If you haven't been, you probably think I am on powerful drugs which are not necessarily prescription. Let me assure you all that I know exactly what I'm talking about. I am talking about TRUTH! And part of the reason I am talking about truth is because I wish to tell you about Jesus.

It's not as much of a stretch as you might think to go from Metaphysical principles of objective truth to a Jewish carpenter who claimed to be God. In a sense, it's impossible to talk about one without talking about the other.



But before I get into that, I need to address one of the popular modern criticisms against Christianity. If you've seen anyone talking about Christianity as a faith on television, whether it's Oprah, the national news, or some random biology professor pushing his latest book on theology (because he thinks all he needs to write an informed book on the subject is a British accent), you've heard someone attack Christianity for being "arrogant" on account of making "exclusive truth claims," which is just the idea that "opposing viewpoints" are "wrong." These "arguments," it seems to me, are "foolish" because they lack the "thought" to realize how "self-defeating" they "are." That, and I "enjoy" putting "things" in quotes "."

Yes, I will admit up front that Christianity claims to be true. Before I move on, let's consider any religion that did not make this claim. Imagine they came to your door and invited you to their worship service center.

MAN: Good afternoon, sir or madam. As a member of the local congregation of the Faithful Followers of the Flying Spaghetti Monster, I would like to invite you to our regular worship services at our Worship Service Center and Coffee Bar.

YOU: The Flying Spaghetti Monster? What is that?

MAN: The Flying Spaghetti Monster, or FSM for short, or sometimes I call him "Bruce," is the creator of the universe and a creature of pure love. He is a huge pile of Spaghetti and meatballs. He can fly, thus the name, and he is invisible and in all other ways undetectable by modern science. Yet with his magical love powers, Bruce can make things. Like Trees. Or chipmunks. Come worship with us.

YOU: You believe the universe was made by a giant flying pile of spaghetti?

MAN: Uh, no. I don't. My friend Todd says he does, but I'm pretty sure he's kidding. Our doctrine and dogma are all just ridiculous. I can't imagine anyone believing this stuff.

YOU: You don't believe your own religion is true?

MAN: No, of course not. It's pasta for heaven's sake. How would invisible pasta make anything? Even if it is really loving, which I don't think pasta can be either.

YOU: So, you want me to come worship something that you don't even think is true?

MAN: Yes.

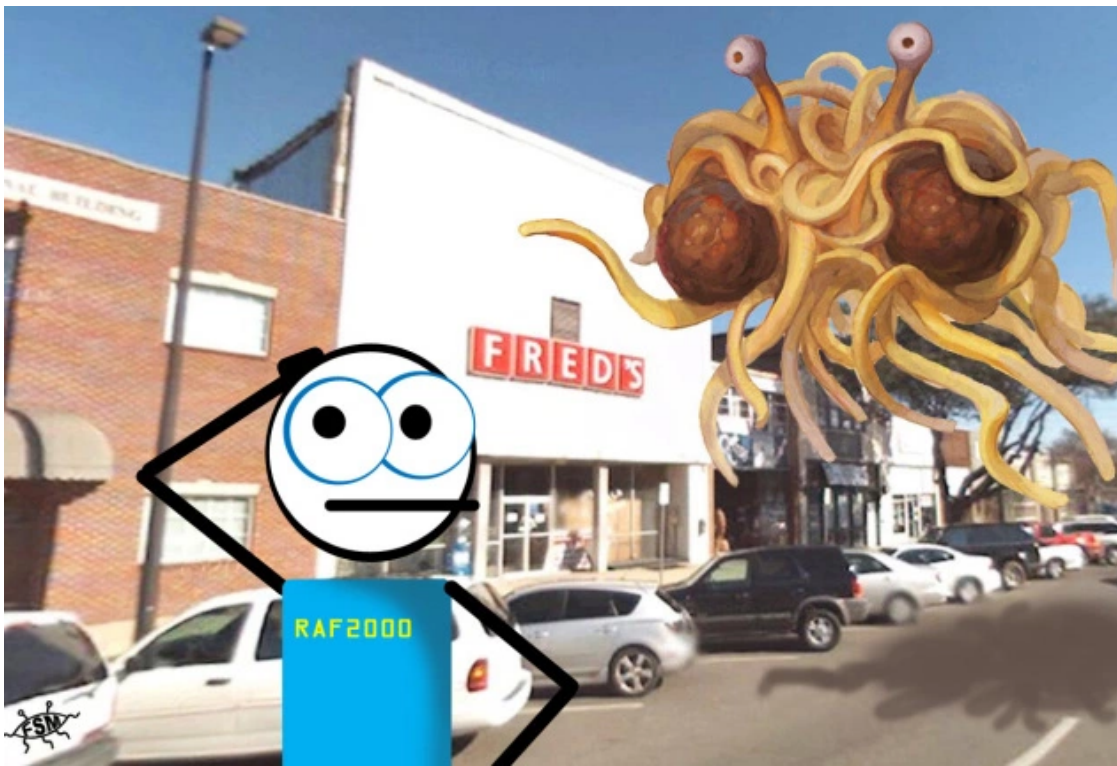
YOU: Why would I do that?

MAN: Uh... because with your regular financial contributions, you get a discount card which is good at our coffee bar.

YOU: ...?

MAN: It's pretty good coffee.

YOU: I have to get back to playing Guitar Hero now...



The next step to this objection is equally poor. They attack Christians because we claim that any ideas, religions, or philosophies which disagree with Christianity's teachings are UNTRUE. It is called arrogant to claim that, just because an idea opposes the truth, that it must therefore be wrong. If you're like me, you're saying to yourself, "Maybe these people need to look up the word "arrogant" at dictionary.com."

Hmmm... Maybe I'll do that.

Here's what it says:

*"Marked by or arising from a feeling or assumption of one's superiority toward others."*

But what does it say about the idea of TRUE?

*"Being in accordance with the actual state or conditions; conforming to reality or fact; not false."*

Well, crud. It looks like, by simple definition, *true and false are opposites*. It doesn't strain credulity to then say anything

opposed to what is true is, by definition, false. So, if I can combine these ideas, this argument against Christians would be as such:

***“Christians think ideas opposed to true ideas are false because they assume themselves to be superior to other people.”***

No, that can't be what they mean. That is ridiculous. Maybe they mean,

***“We believe Christians consider themselves to be superior to other people because they think true ideas as not false and false ideas are not true.”***

Hmmm... Maybe we've just discovered that these people need to stay off of the drugs which aren't necessarily prescription.

While we might not think to say so, we all know that to state something to be true you HAVE to believe that all opposing views are false. When you look up and say, “The sky is blue right now,” you are also saying that any claim of the sky being a DIFFERENT color to be false i.e. “wrong.” By saying it is BLUE, you are also saying it is not green or purple or yellow. By saying something IS, you are already saying something else is NOT.

If I were to hold out my hand and say, “I have a rubber duck in this hand!” it would imply that anyone who stated or believed that I did NOT have a rubber duck in that hand was wrong. It doesn't need to be said. By stating a truth claim, you've already said that opposing views are wrong. This *isn't* rocket science. By that, of course, I mean that anyone who claims this *is* rocket science is wrong.

See how easy this is?

To show how simple and universally applicable this is, I will bring in a little old-school fake math. I'm not saying anything for certain, but this might be on the test. So, if you wanted to take notes, it MIGHT be a good idea. In case a pop quiz were to happen to show up tomorrow. *\*wink wink\**

Let's let **X** represent the Christian Worldview.

**The Christian Worldview=X.**

So, the Christian would say, **X=Truth.**

Inversely: **Anything different from X=False.**

If X=Truth, then B=false, Q=False, and X+Q=False.

X+Q might be closer to True than just Q, but it is still wrong by whatever Q is.

Let's make this easier to understand by using everyone's favorite mathematical standby: **2+2=4.**

2+2=4, thus, inversely, 2+2 **does not** equal anything *NOT* 4.

2+2 does not equal 7, it does not equal 128, and it does not equal Tuscaloosa, Alabama. 7 is closer to 4 than

Tuscaloosa is, but it's still wrong by 3. Tuscaloosa is wrong for all sorts of reasons, but you have to admit that it's fun to say. Try it: TuscaLOOSa...

Here's where it gets entertaining. Let's now take the stance that the Christians are arrogant and wrong, and make that X.

Thus, "**Christians are Arrogant and wrong to claim exclusive truth**"=X.

These people are saying X=Truth. But if they really believe what they say (X) then they are also claiming that anything NOT X=False. They are saying that their position is true and the Christian worldview **IS FALSE**.

This attack on Christianity is using the EXACT SAME THOUGHT PROCESS and the same logic to make the claim of exclusive truth which they are condemning! It is a claim of exclusive truth which implies that anyone who disagrees is wrong.

Thus, the people who say Christians are arrogant and close minded for saying X=Truth and Not X=False are saying X=Truth and NOT X=False!

You can't argue with math people. This is MATH. Besides, if you did argue with math, you'd just be substituting your anti-math stance for X and you'd be no better than anyone else. In fact, you might be sillier than anyone else. Using math to disprove math is a bad plan, whatever your metaphysical stance on rubber ducks.

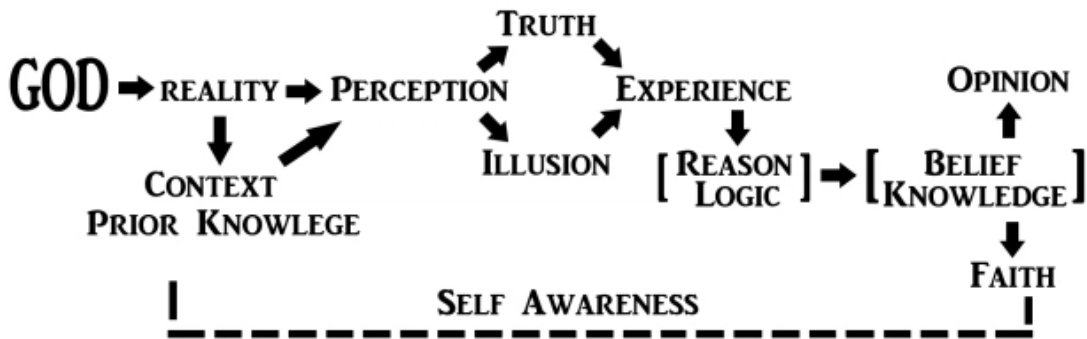
To sum up, it is not arrogance to say that something is true and it is not arrogance to say ideas opposed to truth are themselves false. It's *impossible* to call something true *without* calling others false. If you don't believe me, then go to dictionary.com and see for yourself.

When I finally get around to telling you that Jesus is THE God, King, Prophet and Savior of all, I am also saying that the Flying Spaghetti Monster (AKA Bruce) is Not any of those things. That isn't arrogance. It's the nature of truth. Arrogance is telling people that they are fools to believe in Jesus because of how improbable the Flying Spaghetti Monster is as though you were an expert in everything simply because you have a British accent. But that's another blog for another day. By which I mean to imply it's NOT a blog for today.

Do you see how easy this is? Try it yourself some time! You'll be the hit of any party. If you see the Flying Spaghetti Monster at any of those parties, then I think you need to lay off the drugs which aren't necessarily prescription, if you catch my meaning. And that's the truth.

# Chapter Eleven: Science, Faith, and Papaw

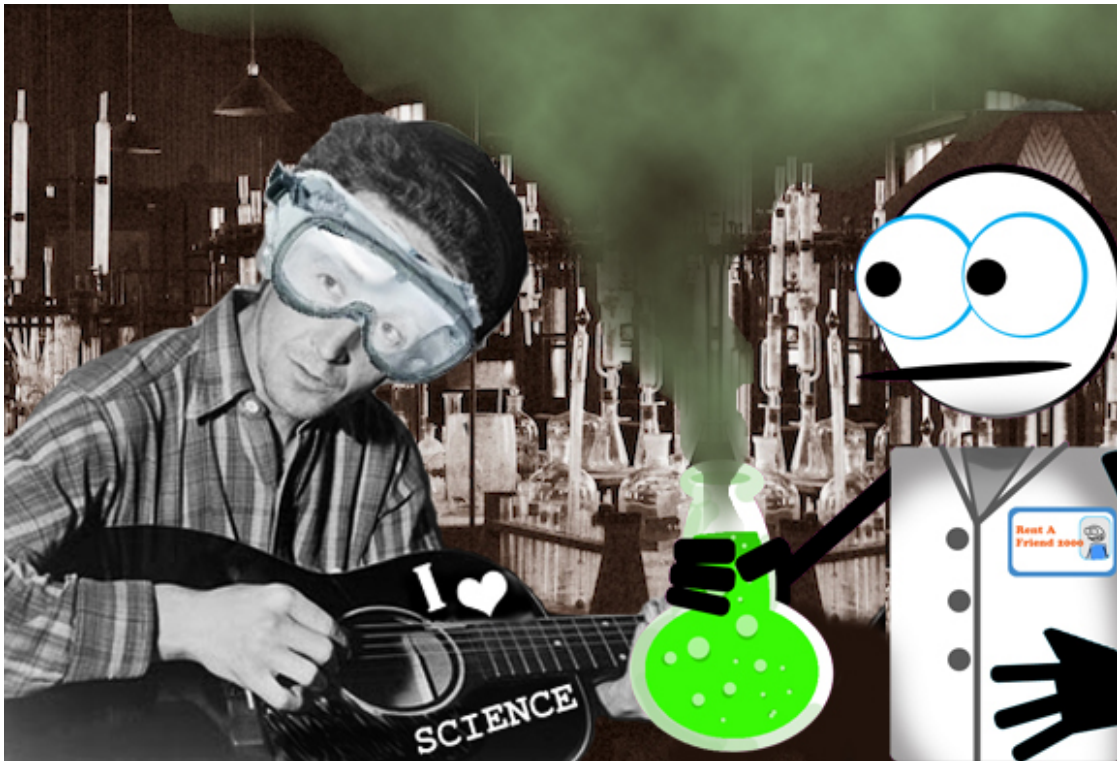
## Belief, Knowledge, and Faith



I've been explaining the difference between belief and knowledge, and their need for each other. Belief and knowledge are like John Lennon and Paul McCartney. You can separate them if you try hard enough, but it doesn't result in anything worth listening to. It only serves to show how very much they need each other.

Thus, anti-faith "scientism" is the Yoko Ono of the Metaphysical world. You heard it here first.

The pop culture fight between belief and knowledge (or between faith and reason, or between religion and science, depending on what TV news program you are watching) is actually about the kind of evidence one chooses to accept. The word "Faith" is used to imply a belief based on the authority of the source, as opposed to evidence which is quantifiable or empirically verifiable. Quantifiable means you can count them, like cobalt atoms or "everything" bagels, and empirically verifiable means it's learned with the five senses and likely to be the subject of one of the lab projects in your science class work-book.



If you're working with empirical /quantifiable data, you can say "Michael Jordan was better than LeBron James because when you look at the stats from each of their first 300 games, Michael Jordan scored more points than LeBron James did."

If you agree that "Better" means points scored, your argument is over. If you don't agree, then the LeBron fans can start a new argument about how LeBron James had more rebounds. I have no idea why they would WANT to, but they can.

There is data, there are facts. You can reason via the information which exists. On the other hand, if you choose to argue about who was the greatest guitarist of the 1960's, you will be dealing with more subjective opinions. You'll actually be talking about your own emotional response to their work instead of the work itself, since "Best Guitarist" is far harder to quantify.

Suppose you and some friends do choose to argue about who was the greatest guitarist of all time. Imagine one person says, "Rawk Powah Magazine says Slash was the greatest guitarist of all time."

Another says, "No way, Blues Tiger Beat Magazine says B.B. King is the best guitarist ever."

And a Third person will say, "My papaw done said it were Woody Guthrie what was the best guitarist of all times."

The first two will stare back in disbelief for a moment, and then say, "Woody who?" But you'll notice that the discussion is not about data- it's about authority. THIS magazine (or elderly relation) has stated the superiority of this position, thus it is so.

This is the way the popular media from magazines to the Thursday night sitcoms try to paint the clash between religions:

"Moses says the true God is Yahweh."

"Mohammed says the true God is Allah."

“Jesus says the true God is Jesus. I mean himself. Well, you know what I’m saying.”

And the skeptic looks and says, “This is not an answerable debate because it is purely subjective. You must choose to believe one of them, but you cannot know it. It is a matter of faith in an authority, not reasoning with data and evidence. I will put my faith in science. SCIENCE!”

And yet, to put one’s faith in science is still to put one’s faith in some authority. When you read a book on science, whether from your college class or something you pick up at the library for fun (Conceptual Quantum Mechanics! Wheeeeeee!!!!), you are not experiencing indisputable facts. You are trusting the author to honestly present the facts he believes to be true. Furthermore, you are trusting the scientists who actually discovered the data the author is reporting on. Even more, you are putting faith in the authority and reliability of the instruments those scientists used to measure and explore, and you, along with those scientists, are trusting the company who made that equipment or the lab techs who calibrate it.

I had a biology teacher who was a died-in-the-wool evolutionist, yet he himself had not discovered the theory of evolution nor any of the data that supports it. He read books in school just like you did, but those books were not written by Charles Darwin or the other scientists who study life themselves. And even those scientists who do the work themselves trust the authority of the books they’ve read and the studies their peers do as well.

It takes a lot of faith to learn about science.

Right now some of you are saying, “This may be so, but some authorities are more trustworthy than others!” Others of you are throwing full wine bottles at your computer screens, which is a waste of good wine. Naturally I agree that some authority is better than others! IF, for instance, Blues Tiger Beat Magazine is actually put out by B.B. King’s cousin, Bukka White, you may suspect it’s bias in favor of BB King. Yet if you discover Daryl’s Papaw is the head curator of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, suddenly you would be interested in who Woodie Guthrie actually is. It turns out Papaw is actually the head custodian at the Oklahoma Music Hall of Fame. So I think we can discount Woodie Guthrie this time.

Here are my main points:

- 1. Everyone has to trust the authority of people, books, and organizations or they will never claim to know ANYTHING.** They would only know what they had experienced or discovered themselves. They would only read books they had written themselves. They would be really irritating to have a conversation with. And even still they would be putting some faith in their own senses, memory, perceptions, and interpretations of their experiences- NONE OF WHICH can be proven to be accurate by using science.
- 2. We MUST live by faith. We do it every day.** Every time you sit in a chair without first testing its weight capacity, or get on a plane, or eat food from the grocery store, you are living out of faith in objects, people, and organizations for which you have no proof. It’s impossible to do otherwise.
- 3. It is reasonable to put faith in the proper authority.** When I take medicine, I don’t know what it’s made of or even really what it will do. I trust my doctor who says, “It will make you well.” The reason behind this faith is precedent and probability. When you sit in a chair, you know from all the times you have sat in chairs how rarely they have failed you and caused you to fall on the floor in a heap of broken chair pieces. Thus, there is a precedent of reliable chairs. The precedent tells you it is reasonable to trust the next chair. When you drink soda from a can, you know the odds of that can being poison to be very small because MILLIONS of people drink soda every day with no side effects



worse than a good belch. Thus, it is PROBABLE that your can is OK, or, inversely, it is VERY IMPROBABLE that your can is the one in several million which is somehow harmful. Drink up, friend. You'll be fine.

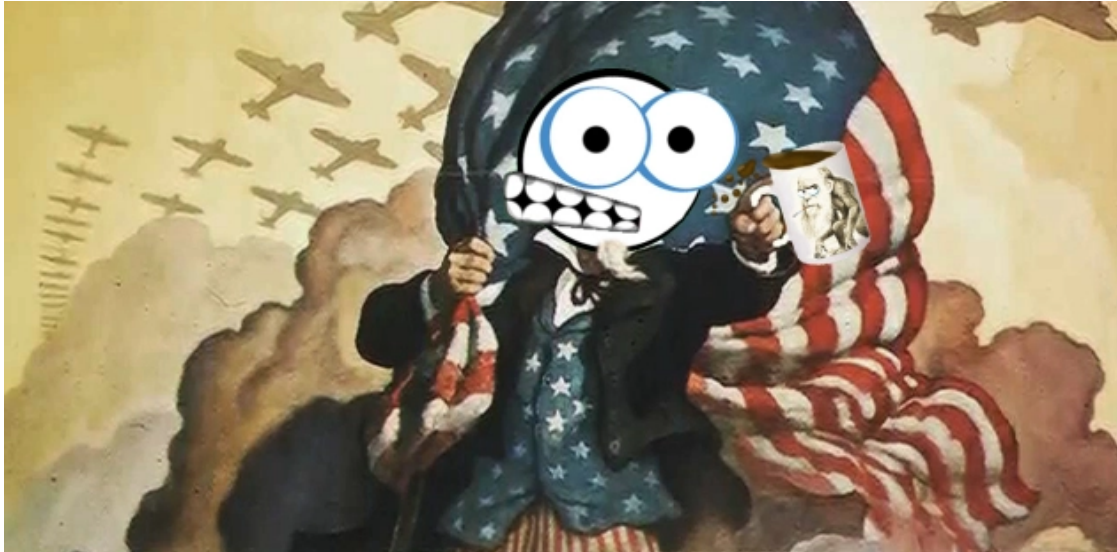
And while this appeal to faith in the reasonable seems like a leap of the heart, it is actually the entire foundation of science. When "science" says that water boils at **100 °C** (actually **212 °F**) what it means is NOT that there is some guiding hand or authority with power forcing it to do so, but merely that we have found it to be the case so often that we SHOULD expect it to be so in the future. Science is, in fact, a faith that what has been so in the past will be so in the future merely because it has been so in the past!

Of course, as a Christian who reads in the Bible that our God created, upholds, sustains and directs nature, I have cause to expect that the laws of physics and chemistry will remain constant, just as the moral law does.

So don't be afraid to sit down, have a soda, and argue with your friends about which guitarist is the best of all time. Is it Slash? Eric Clapton? The Edge? I'll let you decide that for yourselves. But since you brought it up, I want it to be known that Michael Jordan and LeBron James both agree that Jimi Hendrix was the greatest guitarist of the 1960's. At least, that's what Daryl's Papaw said.

# Chapter Twelve: Why I Don't Believe "Believe" Means What You Believe it Means

## Faith and Belief



People all the times be saying, "Faith means believing in things which ain't so." Or sometimes, "Faith means believing things without, or sometimes in the teeth of evidence." And from these quotes, we can learn that some people, despite having been born and raised in the Christian West, have NO IDEA what the Bible says or what the church has taught for 2,000 years. I personally think 2,000 years would be enough time for everyone to find the time to see what the Bible says before they go off writing books about it, but apparently I am being presumptuous. Thus to help you, my friends, I will show you what the Bible says:

**Jesus told them, "This is the only work God wants from you: Believe in the one he has sent."**

-John 6:29

**Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die."**

-John 11:25-26

In case you need some help, let me point out a few things. First, this is Jesus talking about himself to other people. Jesus is saying to these other people- people he is standing in front of- "**Believe in me.**"

Now let's consider the definitions of faith and belief given by the roach clowns above.

Their definitions are asking us to think that Jesus is standing before people and saying, "***I want you to think I am real, even though there is no evidence for me, and maybe even though there is evidence against my existence.***"

If you're capable of reaching this interpretation by reading the Bible, you're either on some powerful drugs, or maybe you need to be. This idea obviously did NOT come from actually opening the Bible and looking at the words inside.

There is no way Jesus could be asking people to believe things without evidence, because the thing he is asking them to

believe is HIMSELF. He is standing RIGHT IN FRONT OF THEM.

Go and give this a try. Go pick anyone you like and ask them to believe in your existence. I'll bet you won't find a lot of resistance, but then, neither will you find people willing to build a church in your name. That takes a bit more than a face to face.

Jesus suggests that there is more than his mere presence on which to build faith in him:

**If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.”**

-John 10:37-38

Jesus tells the people around him to not only believe that he is there, but that he is who he says he is. He does not insist they merely take his word for it, but he reminds them that he has shown his power by healing the crippled, the blind, the deaf, and raising the dead. The disciples and apostles follow Jesus example in providing evidence to us for the Christian Faith. From the very first generation of Christians, we were told to consider the evidence and hear the eyewitness testimony. Consider Luke:

**Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.**

-Luke 1 [emphasis mine]

When people say the Christian Faith is a blind faith without or against evidence, they are merely telling us that they are unfamiliar with the Bible and the Christian Faith. It is obvious from the Bible that Christians are told to "Believe in" Jesus and "have faith in" Jesus, not because we are expected to blindly accept his existence or even his message, but we are being told to put our trust in Jesus as we put our trust in a doctor when we need surgery, or in another person when we choose to marry them. Jesus clarifies the idea of "Believing in" him when he changes it up and says, "Follow me."

And he [Jesus] said to them, **“Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”**

-Matthew 4:19

Jesus is not asking people to just walk in his footsteps literally. He does not say to his disciples "I'm going to walk southwest for a bit. You guys line up behind me and also walk southwest." He is asking them to submit to him as their teacher and authority, believing he would be wise and good, and ultimately that he would save their souls.

Think about any good war movie. The guy in charge says, "Follow me, men!" or the men all say, "We'll follow you anywhere, sir!" No one is implying that, if the guy in charge goes into the bathroom that his whole platoon is piling in there like a dozen circus clowns into a Smart Car. They mean, they trust him to lead them into battle and to make the best decisions, and they are offering their loyalty to him as their commander. This is the kind of faith Jesus is asking for—the kind that leads to loyalty and trust. He was not asking the people looking at him to merely accept that he was there, and he is not asking us for that now. Consider what the Bible says about having that kind of faith:

**You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!**

God does not ask us to merely embrace true statements about Him, but to FOLLOW him, like a soldier follows his commander, or like a woman follows her husband into marriage. Christian faith means following Jesus into war against the gates of hell. The Christian faith is a lot like this.

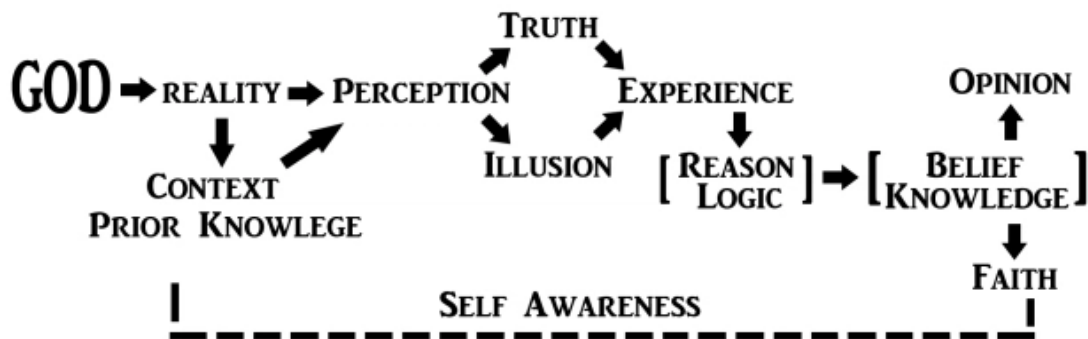
We even have a lot of people singing about how great it is to follow our leader. Feel free to sing along, and please keep in mind that the best way to learn what the Bible teaches is to open it and see what it teaches. At the very least, try to keep it as one of the steps in your process.

## Chapter Thirteen: Brain Fat and the Metaphysical Nickel

### Belief and Knowledge

In order to wrap up our journey across the Metaphysical Map, it is time for us to take a walk around Belief and Knowledge. Get your metaphysical shoes on, strap on your backpack of previous knowledge, and bring some philosophical bug repellent. When we get there, we'll make hypothetical S'mores!

Let's recap where we've been:



GOD creates reality, which includes rubber ducks.

I see the rubber duck, and I see it as yellow, which it really is, so what I see is the truth. I have "The Rubber Duck Experience," which I think was the name of a Jimi Hendrix album. Or it should have been.

My experience of the ducky is now processed in my mind. My experience is chewed thoroughly by the teeth of reason. Reason asks WHY? and HOW? And if it's classically trained and well versed in Shakespeare, Wherefore art Thou? And then my logic licks the sides of my experience for those tiny flavors of intangible truth which can be discovered with WHAT IF?

And then, when I have made connections and met categorical boundaries and defined things according to context and previous experience, my brain takes the step of Faith and swallows my experience so that it can be digested in my memory and metabolized into the muscle of intellect and the fat of useless knowledge which only gets recalled while

playing Trivial Pursuit.



If you've heard this metaphor word-picture before, I'll give you a dollar. Suffice it to say, I could continue the metaphor, but let's all be glad that I did not. It would have used the phrase "Brain Fart." But I have more class than that.

You may be asking, "Once my brain has eaten all of the experience I give it, do I have knowledge or beliefs?" and I would reply that it is impossible to have one without the other. They are two sides of the same coin -The metaphysical nickel (which would be a cool name for a band or a coffee shop).

**To Believe** is to have confidence/faith in the Truthfulness of information one can recall and understand.

**To Know** is to be able to recall and understand that which is believed to be true.

If you do not BELIEVE an idea to be true, you will not say you KNOW it. And if you cannot remember or understand something, you cannot BELIEVE it to be true. Heads or tails, it's still a nickel.

For example, you would neither say you KNOW  $2+2=7$ , nor that you believe it, unless you attended a Chicago public school (rim-shot).

At this point you may seek to differ with my definition by pointing out that we all KNOW things that we do not BELIEVE are true. For instance, I KNOW Darth Vader's lightsaber is red. But I do not BELIEVE that Darth Vader is real (He's a fictional character in a movie), and I do not BELIEVE that lightsabers are real (They are just a cool special effect). Does this not work against my definition?

Nope, and the reason why is CONTEXT. Those pieces of information in my mind are connected to the larger context of the film as fiction. My brain will then process and record this information like this: "I recall and understand that Darth Vader's lightsaber in episodes IV-VI (and Rogue One) is red in the context of the movies and the fictional world therein, though I know further that neither Darth Vader nor lightsabers are actually REAL but are fictional elements which are part of a series of films."

Thankfully your brain does most of this without telling you, or you'd be listening to amendments like this all day long. That would be worse than public talk-radio.

And if I just broke your little hearts with the revelation that neither Darth Vader nor lightsabers are real, all I can say is, I'm sorry. And, there is no Santa Clause sliding down your chimney every December 24th either. Seriously, the guy's been dead for nearly 1700 years. You better pray that doesn't come sliding down your chimney or you have a whole host of problems worse than being on the naughty list.

Anything you *believe*, you also *know*. Anything you know takes belief. But it gets weirder. In modern culture there has been a great deal of hoopla about the fight between belief and knowledge, or as it's applied: religion vs. science. Those on the side of "science" try and stir up this fight to accuse religions of all being based on the blind, unsupported acceptance of ideas that cannot be verified. Science, they will tell you, is superior because it can be proven with the five senses (And expensive equipment, some of which gets shot into space!), whereas religions are all the subjective opinions of unscientific men, almost all of whom are DEAD.

Granted, when they put it this way, you can see why popular opinion tends to stray toward science. Shot into space vs. dead guys. You have to admit that it sounds kinda heavy in their favor.

The Pro-Science/Anti-Religion crowd will look at a rubber duck and say, "A rubber duck is comprised of the sap of the rubber tree, formed in the likeness of a species in the Anatidae family of birds." They will measure the wavelength of light reflected from it to verify that it is yellow, and they can measure it to accurately find its weight, density, and size. Religion, they will say, can only claim that rubber duckies make bath time lots of fun, which cannot be quantified, thus it is only a subjective experience and not truth. These guys are great fun at parties, let me tell you. You'll be all, "Have you tried the dip?" and they'll start rattling off the nutritional information until you're sorry you asked.

The flaw in this theory is not in valuing science. The ability to measure things and observe the laws of nature are tremendously valuable. Science has given us things like anti-bacterial soap, power steering, the microwave oven, and duck-tape. The first flaw in the pro-science/anti-religion movement is simply failing to see that ANY knowledge will require a component of belief. You have to believe that your discoveries are true. How far would Copernicus have gotten if he had said, "I have used science to prove that the earth travels around the sun, but I do not believe it." You don't get a line of educational products named after you with an attitude like that.

You have to believe your discoveries to be true, and this means you have to believe your logic to be sound, and you have to believe that your evidence is valid, and you have to believe that your equipment is trustworthy...

It just goes on and on like this.

Not that this means evidence is of little value. Reasonable arguments based on sound evidence help us have faith in our beliefs. Faith without reasons to believe tends to be pretty shaky. If you profess to believe something without reason your professed belief may be correct but only by sheer accident. But the idea that fact, perception, and knowledge can exist separate from belief or faith simply isn't true.

To sum up, as we walk about the metaphysical map, we see that Knowing is to Believing what North is to South- not

because they are opposites, but because you cannot have one without the other. They are two sides of the Metaphysical Nickel. Whichever side you flip up, the other side is still there. Science is good, and evidence is our friend, but they are not the end of reason and logic.

Next time I will give you a personal exercise through which you can discover vital methods of discovering truth which are beyond science. I will also make you wonder if your parents are liars and kidnappers. I know they are, though I do not believe it. Maybe that's a little hard to swallow. My brain rejects it too. Sorry... excuse my brain fart.

# Chapter Fourteen: Faith in God and Knowledge of Jelly Beans

## Faith, Belief, Knowledge, Probability and Certainty

One alert reader had sent me a lovely color coded chart which tries to explain that there are different kinds of atheists—those who **claim that God does not exist** and those who **do not claim that God does not exist**. This confused me, because it combines Agnostic and Atheist into a single idea, which (from what I could tell) means a person who doesn't believe that God exists, but doesn't claim that it is true that God doesn't exist.

Or maybe they know God doesn't exist but they don't claim to believe it?

Like I said, it was confusing. At least the chart was in color, so it has that going for it.

How can you claim to KNOW something you don't believe, and how can you believe something you don't know? To me this is like claiming to be a polygamous bachelor. Putting those words together makes them both meaningless, like Square Circle, because they mean opposing things which cannot be made into one. To me, an agnostic atheist would be someone who's position on the existence of God would be ***"I don't have enough information to know if God exists, but He doesn't."*** Which, now that I think of it, is the position I have been presented with by quite a few people. These are the people who say things like, *"I didn't read your article, so I don't know what your position is, but here's why you're wrong..."* I've actually gotten that response in the past. I wonder about the person writing that and how they don't stop and say, *"Maybe I should lie and PRETEND I read it..."*

The same alert reader who sent me the chart sent me to a video which, he felt, explained how my views of knowledge and belief were incorrect. I had sent him to my blog post- BRAIN FAT AND THE METAPHYSICAL NICKEL where in I define the terms thus:

**To Believe is to have confidence/faith in the Truthfulness of information one can recall and understand.**

**To Know is to be able to recall and understand that which is believed to be true.**

The video he sent me to argued that knowledge was a subset of belief, meaning that we believe a lot more things than we would say we know. The example given was that of a jar of jelly beans:

The number of beans in the jar is either even or odd. The default position for anyone considering this must be what they called "neutral," or what I would say as "Undetermined." You've got a 50/50 chance of guessing right but no way of **knowing** for sure. Thus, the video man said, if you decide the number of jelly beans is even, you have chosen to **believe** something which you do not **know**.

You have to admit that it's pretty clever. And makes you think about eating jelly beans, which is distracting but not unpleasant.

So all day I tried to find time to find the flaw in the reasoning, because having already written such a brilliant article with such a catchy name, I wasn't ready to let it go. Also, I could hear a logical flaw like a guitar string out of tune, but I couldn't find it right away. Like I said, it's clever.

So, what about the Jelly Beans? Picking 'even' as your chosen belief about the number of Jelly Beans is not what I am calling **BELIEF** because it is not having faith in something known. It is you choosing an option which you feel



plausible. This is not an actual belief, because it's not based on any knowledge, but rather is an arbitrary choice made by comparing statistical likelihoods. You wouldn't say you BELIEVE the number is even, you would say you believe it MIGHT be. You've merely picked a side because you don't know anything to sway the odds in one direction or the other.

When the video man said we believe more than we know, I understand where he is coming from, though I would say **“We believe more to be logically plausible than we know with reason or certainty to be true.”**

The difference might seem slight, but it is actually fairly important. Where as he is saying, *“I can believe the number of Jelly Beans is even or odd arbitrarily, thus I can believe something I don't know,”* he should say, *“I don't believe the number is even, but I KNOW the number is just as likely to be even as odd, thus I BELIEVE my choice is reasonable as it is just as likely to be true as the other option, even though I don't know the number.”*

I think you can see why people don't talk like that though. It would take all day to get anything said.

So, the number of Jelly Beans is Even? Plausible. I don't BELIEVE it, for I don't Know enough to have faith that it is true, so on the actual number of Jelly Beans I am Agnostic. But I KNOW my odds of being right are as good as they can be, given my knowledge, thus my arbitrary choice, which I have no faith in, is plausible.

But am I putting faith in what I DON'T KNOW? No. I am putting faith in what I DO know. Specifically, I am putting faith in the fact that there is only two possible options, and either one has a 50% chance of being right. I know that my choice is PLAUSIBLE. I believe it MIGHT be even, not that IT IS even and I KNOW that I can not have made a better choice with the information I have, and so I believe I have chosen as well as I can while accepting the fact that my choice may be wrong.

The video man was confused as to what was the object of faith- or what I was choosing to believe. He felt it was the random choice of even over odd, but it was not. It was in my knowledge of math- being that the ONLY TWO OPTIONS are “even” or “odd” and thus either choice was as good a choice as could be made with my limited information. In this situation I could not be Atheistic toward either choice. Otherwise I would KNOW the correct choice as well, since there are only two. With no knowledge about the number of beans, I can merely be agnostic. If you say the number is odd, I cannot say BUSTED! unless I KNOW the number is in fact even. I can only say, “It's plausible.”

If a person in your position were to make the statement that they KNOW the number of beans is even, they would be misusing the word KNOW. They would mean that they have chosen to profess that as a fact, but they are stubbornly pretending it is knowledge when it is not. This differs very much from the knowledge they have of other facts, such as the fact that they are seeing a jar with jelly beans in it, or that the number MUST be even or odd. Those facts that can truly say they KNOW, however, with no information about the actual number, they cannot truly say they KNOW the number to be even or odd. Similarly, if I were to ask you if you BELIEVE the jar was full of jelly beans, you would probably look at the jar, trust your sense of sight and the reality of the external world, and say Yes, you believe there is a jar full of beans. Why? Because you know it's there. You can see it. If I asked you if you BELIEVE that the beans ALL taste like dog food, you would probably say “No. Do you think they do?” And maybe I would say, “No, of course not. They are probably regular fruit flavored jelly beans. NOW do you believe they all taste like dog food?” and again you

would say no. With no reason or evidence, you would not believe something like that to be true.

Of course, your bratty little brother (who your mother forced you to bring to the candy store) thinks he's funny, so he says, "I believe they all taste like dog food." Against your better judgement you ask him why and he replies, "Because I know that all the jelly beans made this year have been dog food flavored." And because his lips are moving you know he is lying.

So, here the video man is taking people's word for it when they say they KNOW things they do not know or believe things which they cannot believe. People say all kinds of crazy things. Especially your little brother. That kid is OUT THERE.

Thus I conclude that my definitions hold, and one cannot KNOW without Believing and one cannot BELIEVE without knowing. One may SAY they believe something they don't know, but it is not what they actually mean. If you ask them, they will usually admit that. To extend the metaphor, suppose I know the person who owns the jar. They tell me, "I dumped one pound of Jelly Beans into that Jar, and a pound is exactly two hundred beans." Now I will have more confidence in the choice of Even. If I know this person to be honest, meticulous and possessing a keen eye for details, I will believe him. Thus, if you ask me if I know whether the number of beans in the jar is even, I will say CONFIRMED! Because I know that the Candy man can be trusted, and his word is good.

The takeaway is simple. This type of internet atheist tries to find loopholes for himself, so that he can claim to be an atheist and make a regular video series explaining why Christians are irrational, and then claim that he himself is rational even though his atheism has no evidence or arguments in its favor. He can BELIEVE there is no God without having any known facts to back it up. This same guy who made the jar of jelly beans video was once asked by a caller what evidence or arguments he had to support his atheism, and the video man simply laughed and said he didn't NEED any. He and his co-host then talked about this for several minutes. And it all comes down to trying to give themselves loopholes to avoid rational thought and the burden of proof. In short, they will claim to be Agnostic Atheists because their position is, ***"I don't have enough information to know if God exists, but He doesn't, and you're irrational if you think He does."*** But of course, while they SAY that, and act like it's true, they don't REALLY believe it, because they know better. Even your weird little brother knows God is there, no matter what he might say.

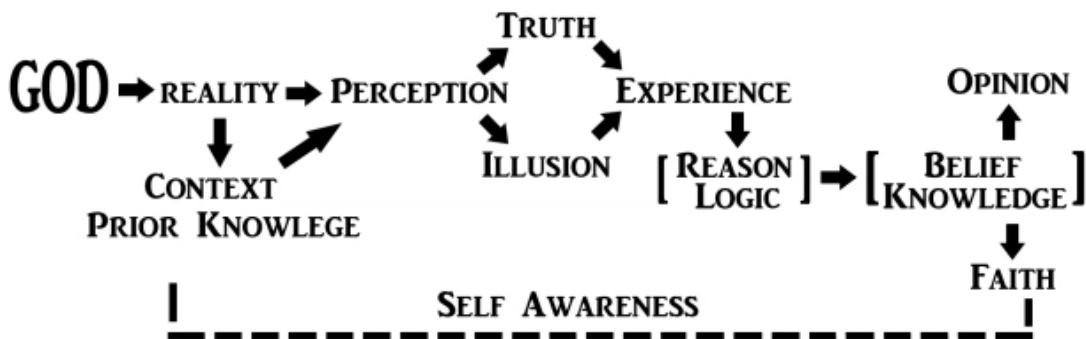
And that kid is OUT THERE.

# Chapter fifteen: The Science Behind Birthday Cake

## Belief, Knowledge and Faith

Not long ago we had hiked to the end of the Metaphysical Map and discovered that Knowing and Believing are impossible to separate, like duck-tape and leg hair. Along the way, we examined one of the biggest opponents to this idea, which is the position declaring “Science” to be the only real way to discover truth. And of course I pointed out that, if you choose to believe this position, it will not be based on scientific evidence.

Sometimes the reasons which compel me to take a side in a debate are not hard to comprehend. This is one of those times.



The first flaw in the pro-science/anti-religion movement is trying to define knowledge not only as completely isolated from belief, but as its enemy. Flaw #2 is, they don't know the boundaries of science. Dictionary.com says Science is **“systematic knowledge of the physical or material world gained through observation and experimentation.”** Systematic means it is controlled and repeatable. Not freak accidents or single events that only happen once, or, as Harry Carry used to say, “Cubs win!” But I digress.

For instance, if you want to prove what temperature water boils at, you can put some water in a container and heat it up until it boils. Then, to be sure it always boils at the same temperature because it's a property of water, you can try it in different containers.

In glass, it boils at 100 degrees Celsius (Actually 212 degrees, American).

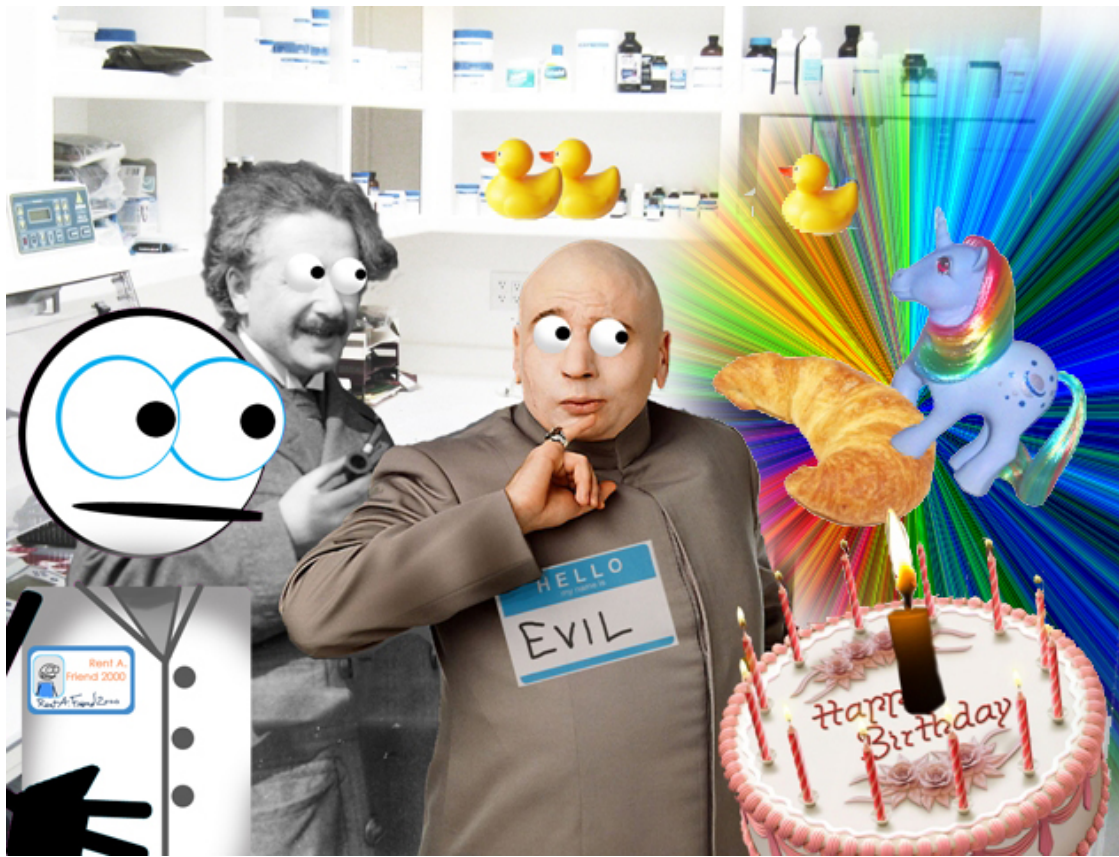
In a metal container, it does the same.

If there's no container, your water will put out the fire and not heat up to 100 degrees.

If you hold it in your hands, you'll burn yourself very badly and still won't have conclusive results.

All of these are repeatable, though some you'll learn not to do again.

This is the only way science works. It determines what will happen by watching it happen over and over and over and over until they've used all of their funding or get sick to death of burning their hands and decide just to use glass containers. If a team of scientists heated water to a hundred degrees and instead of it boiling, a rainbow pony appeared and gave them each a croissant, they would not declare this a scientific discovery. They would probably assume it to be some elaborate practical joke. It would not have a scientific explanation, and if I were them, I would be hesitant about eating that croissant.



You're probably familiar with crime scene forensic science because of all of those TV shows who are competing for the coveted WCSNDBA- the "Who Can Show the Nastiest Dead Bodies" Award. If the scientists on those shows ran their investigations on PURE MATERIALISTIC science, they would ALWAYS discover that the deceased died of natural causes. "The evidence tells us that he was shot sixteen times," they would say to each other, "so naturally he would die. There is nothing supernatural about a man falling dead when his chest is pierced by sixteen bullets, and so, this was death by natural causes." And then they'd declare the case closed and go have lunch.

Observational science is the science of observations. If it can't be seen, touched or measured, it can't be sciented. This kind of science can only "prove" what can be objectively studied under controlled and repeatable conditions. Over the past two hundred years, enough evidence has been compiled to support the idea that, when a man is shot a bunch of times, he dies. That's science. But science cannot prove who did the shooting or why. An event of the past cannot be Scientifically Proven. For that you'd have to build a time machine and go back to the actual event and watch it occur and take measurements while it's happening. And who has that kind of time? Or the budget for a TARDIS?

For a past event you have to use what is called "Legal/Historical Proofs." This is what CSI teams actually do. It's also what historians and courtrooms do. They have used science to know that a body full of bullets must have been shot by some bullet shooting weapon, because no one can throw them that hard. They could also argue, scientifically, that a gun will not shoot at someone by itself. A shooting requires a shooter. To prove who that one shooter was at this one past event requires legal/historical proof- the kind that gets used in the trial to establish reasonable doubt or guilt. By gathering information of this kind, they can establish a reasonable faith in a possible past event. The evidence gives them faith that their belief is well founded- but it is important to make the distinction between what is observed

directly and what is determined after the fact by what can be observed directly. One is the eye witness, the other is Sherlock Holmes.

Here's a personal example for you. Think of the date you were born- day, month, and year. Got that in your head? Now, if I were to ask you if you KNOW the day you were born, you would probably say Yes. Let's assume I asked and you said yes. Now let's assume I follow up with this:

PROVE IT.

Can you prove what day you were born on? Obviously you can't do this with science. There's nothing that can be tested in a lab over and over which will tell us that. We can't OBSERVE you being born- it's already happened.

But wait, it gets weirder.

I'm going to show you that you KNOW what day you were born because you BELIEVE things you cannot prove. I'm gonna take a wild guess and assume you don't know your birthday because you REMEMBER being born. You should be thankful for that. So what proof do you have?

You have a birth certificate! Of course, there's all the proof you need- a government document created, in some cases, many decades ago. Can any legal document be wrong?

Actually, yes. It happens all the time.

But didn't your parents and the doctor all sign the document? They agreed to the date and time and wrote it down! Isn't THAT proof? It sure is, provided you take into account that all three of them were pretty preoccupied by the fact that a tiny baby was being born. Maybe you don't know this, but it can be a very distracting event. And odds are good that none of them had gotten enough sleep in the previous 24 hours. How do you know they signed it on the day it says? What if the whole thing is a fake? Isn't it possible that all three of them forgot to do the paperwork and then some time in the next few months they all said, *"I donno. Let's just call it the 14th. It was somewhere around there because I hadn't gotten paid yet, but it was after that game where the Phillie beat the Sox."* Can you PROVE that this is not the case? Not with observational science you can't.

OK, your BIRTHDAY! Every year they celebrate it on the same day! Clearly that is PROOF that you were born on the day you think you were. Unless they were wrong in the first place. Or if they honestly didn't know and just made something up. Of course, how old were you when you were capable of knowing what day it was? Are you sure your parents didn't celebrate your birthday on a different day every year until you were seven?

QUICK! What is TODAY'S date?

Most of you had to check. Admit it.

To prove the validity of this possibility, I present a TRUE STORY which you will think I am making up but I am not. A friend and coworker told me the story of how she found out her true birthday. Sometime in her adult years, by which I mean her 40's, the woman she had known her whole life as her mother told her, *"Honey, I need to tell you*

*something. I don't actually know your birthday."*

She was shocked. Did her mother not know the day her own daughter was born? She did not, as she was not there. Already you are at the end of the story. Surely she was adopted and the birth certificate was lost.

No. She had a birth certificate. It's weirder than that:

*She had been kidnapped, and the birth certificate was a fake.*

This woman had kidnapped my friend as an infant from the hospital where she was born and made a fake birth certificate to cover her tracks. I know, right? Can you imagine? Don't you feel like you need to lay down and eat an ice cream sandwich just to stop the world from spinning?

Eventually my friend was able to go to the hospital where she was born and, using legal/historical proofs, discover who her real mother was. She was in her 40's before she discovered not only her real mother, but her real birthday. She would have said she knew the date she was born, but for more than 40 years *she was wrong*.

Which brings me back to you. If you wish to say you KNOW the day you were born on, you need to KNOW that the date you've been told is true, you need to KNOW that your birth certificate is not only real, but accurate, and you have to KNOW that your parents aren't a couple of kidnappers and liars. I haven't met your parents, but I think there's at least moderate reasons to believe they are not kidnappers. But ask them sometime. See what they say.

I hope I have shown you how what you KNOW depends on what you choose to BELIEVE. Faith and Science are not enemies, but the best of friends! Belief and Knowledge are two sides of the same metaphysical nickel. If your science tries to exist without Faith, you're only lying to yourself. And if your faith runs contrary to reasonable evidence, logic, and science, what makes it worth believing? Think about it, won't you? While you do that, I'm going to go have an ice cream sandwich, which is completely true, even though I don't have any scientific evidence for it. I've given up on scientific evidence for now- at least until the burns on my hands heal.

And I am NOT eating that croissant. Probably.

# Chapter Sixteen: Everyone is Entitled to My Opinion

## Opinion

Weigh your choices carefully!

I stumbled into a great facebook post recently. See if this sounds familiar:

A friend of mine had expressed a disliking of a particular movie. The person she was talking to berated her for her opinion as if she had admitted to using her toilet brush for personal oral hygiene. Because she didn't feel the same way he did, he chose to criticize her and call her ignorant, which of course did nothing to change her mind. It only made her angry. If we looked into it, I expect we would find much of the Middle East peace talks going along these lines.

The online response of her friends was the typical reply to such a situation. It essentially said, **"Everyone is entitled to their opinion, because an opinion is neither true or false- it is subjective."** That last part is where they are wrong. Well, it is my opinion that they are wrong, and I am correct, which makes my opinion true and theirs false.

Ok, before you go throwing full wine bottles at your computer screen, let me explain.



You'll notice that, in earlier chapters, I put Opinion above Belief and Knowledge on the Metaphysical Map. You might have wondered why it wasn't put with Perception or Experience. The reason is, **an Opinion is a statement of absolute, transcendent, universal truth expressing a believed piece of knowledge which is either TRUE or FALSE.**

Did I just blow your mind? I know I did. I could hear it from here. Take my hand. It's going to be OK! And there's nothing wrong with a little therapy if you need it.

When someone expresses an opinion, it is one of two things. It's either a statement about the speaker ("I like pizza") or it's about some object on which the speaker is offering judgment ("Pizza is better than aerospace technology"). When I give you my opinion, I'm either talking about me, or I'm talking about something else (in this case, pizza).

In the first statement, I am saying something about ME- specifically that I like pizza. This is either true or false. I could be lying. It may be true that far from liking pizza, I despise it, because I am some godless hippy communist pinko creep PRETENDING to like pizza so I can infiltrate your society and corrode it from the inside. Or maybe I'm just lactose intolerant. Thankfully, neither of those is true, so it remains a TRUE statement about ME that **"I like Pizza."**

Why is this not subjective? Because it is ALWAYS true for everyone everywhere that **I Like Pizza**. It doesn't matter if YOU like Pizza. I will still like pizza no matter how YOU feel. It's not always about YOU, you know. We share a Reality, and in the REAL universe, I like pizza. If someone ever tells you that I do NOT like pizza, they are a liar. Do not give them your credit card information, and don't vote for them.

In the second statement-“**Pizza** is better than aerospace technology”- I am comparing two things. Sometimes people do this when they really mean to make a statement about themselves. When I said “Pizza is better than aerospace technology,” I REALLY meant, “Given the choice between them, **I** would choose Pizza because I am not lactose intolerant, but I am afraid of heights.” This, much like the First World War, is a result of poor grammar. Once again, the statement is either true or false, but it is intended to be a statement about me and a choice I would make, given the option.

But what if it's not? What if I really am comparing Pizza Hut to NASA? In this case, **I am comparing these things**, not to themselves alone, but **to some external standard of good and bad**. To say something is “Better” only makes sense if there is some standard of GOOD to compare two things against. The one that conforms most closely to the definition of “Good” is the one which is “Better.” So, we must ask in what ways these things are similar so that they might be compared.

How about this: Both cost money. We could say pizza is better because I can get a large pepperoni pizza for five dollars, where as ANYTHING made by NASA costs more than the gross national product of South America. And I can promise you it won't be delivered to your door in half an hour or less.

But if by “Good” I mean, capable of sustaining life in a low earth orbit for prolonged periods of time, then the better of the two, and it's a close call here, would be NASA. Without the proper aerospace technology, you would be dead before the pizza was even out of the box. Even at five dollars, that's a bad deal.

Maybe you don't compare Italian foods to various technology fields. I can see no reason why you wouldn't, but it takes all kinds to make a world. Since my standard of “good” above is based on my personal preferences (Either, I prefer to spend \$5 at a time, or I prefer to survive the trip into space), and not on some external standard, like calories or cubic inches, then there is no reason I should expect you to judge according to this standard I set up for myself. You might argue that pizza is better than aerospace technology because, without pizza, you would shrivel and die like a plant in the desert, making the shuttle and the most advanced satellites irrelevant. This is valid. But what if I said “Pizza is CHEAPER than aerospace technology.”? Cheaper is a math concept. Pizza is cheaper, because it costs less money. A thousand jillion dollars is clearly more than \$5, making pizza the *better*, cheaper alternative- because in this statement better means cheaper. This is not up for argument. If you think it is, you're either Bill Gates or the sultan of Brunei. In either case, I would be willing to be adopted into your family/last will and testimony.

Or you're a congressman who thinks socialism is a good idea. But I digress.

What then can we say about someone who demands you consider a certain movie as “Good”? You should just ask him. Maybe he is comparing the film to some standard of quality (“The movie was in focus and had audible dialogue” or, “This movie did not contain Keanu Reeves attempting to use a British accent”).



Maybe he really means to make a statement about himself (“This movie made me cry like a little ”) and he wishes for you to feel the same so that he will not feel like such a sissy.

Or maybe he’s a jerk who doesn’t care what the conversation is about and he’s just trying to pick a fight. If he’s this third type, just walk away, man. Just walk away. Everyone is entitled their own subjective emotional response to external stimuli, but when you choose to express those feelings, choose your words carefully because, if you don’t, you will sound like a jerk. Of course, that’s just my opinion.

## Chapter Seventeen: Is there a Ducky in Pascal's Box?

### Probability and Faith and Pascal's Wager

Are you a gambler? Do you love the thrill of tossing those dice, spinning that wheel or pulling the lever? Are you, like me, seriously disappointed by the new slot machines where you push a button? I mean, seriously! Push a button? Pulling the lever is half of the fun! Where else in life do you get to pull a lever anymore? Maybe if you're a mad scientist creating a monster in a lightning storm, but for the rest of us (Or mad scientists in nice weather I suppose) we want the lever! Don't take away the only interaction I have before my money disappears forever! I want a lever to pull and spinning pictures of fruit!

I'd get that feature in my next car if it were available.



I myself am not really a gambling man. The primary reason is this: I will always lose. You're better off betting against me than against the Chicago Cubs. If there are dice in my hands, I am going to lose. I think it's my spiritual gift. Which brings me to today's topic. What if I could offer you a bet with a certain and amazing pay off? Yes, you have to pay in at the front, but you can't lose anything, and you have the chance of winning vastly more than you can possibly imagine. Sound good? Then let's play:

"Is There a Ducky?"!

The game of "Is There a Ducky?" is simple. There is a box which MIGHT contain a rubber duck. You pay a dollar to play. Your job is to guess whether or not there is a duck in the box.

If you guess that there is a ducky in the box, and there is, you get A LIFETIME of FABULOUS RICHES!

If you guess that there is a ducky in the box, but there is not, you don't get fabulous riches, but you get your dollar back, and a free consolation party with buffalo wings and a build-your-own-sundae bar.

If you guess there is no ducky in the box and you're right, you get your dollar back and a horrible case of the flu.

If you guess there is no ducky in the box but there IS a duck in the box, you get fined \$250,000 and you serve up to fifteen years in a Mexican prison where none of the food will ever be something you recognize, but might be rat.

The smart money will bet on the ducky. Nothing to lose, lots to gain. Bet on the ducky.

I happen to have a gamble for you which is even better than that! But first, a little French History:

In the 1600's there lived a Frenchman named Blaise Pascal. This guy was freaky smart. He invented the world's first calculator for his father, who was an accountant working with the chaotic mess known as French money. After he invented the calculator he immediately found people selling cheap knock offs of his invention. Necessity is the mother of invention, but invention is the mother of plagiarism.

Pascal also discovered some scientific proofs for the existence of the vacuum (the absence of matter, not the cleaner of carpets), invented public transportation, and did some fancy math for gamblers to figure out who's winning at any point in the game. His mathematical work with gambling is used to run the world of insurance today. I wish I was kidding about that- but it does explain a lot. In short, the house always wins.

The sure bet I am offering you is actually the work of this man- Blaise Pascal. It's called Pascal's Wager (Catchy, right?) and it goes like this:

Bet on God! You Can't lose!

OK, that's an oversimplification. Let me break it down.

Pascal realized that, when it comes to God and your belief in Him, there are only four possibilities:

God is real, and you believe in Him.

God is real and you do NOT believe in Him.

God is Not real, but you believe in Him

God is Not real, and you do Not believe in Him.

Why would you chose to bet on God? Because the payoff is either good or awesome. You can't lose anything, but you might win everything!

If you believe in God and He is real, your payoff can be a right relationship with God, salvation from sin, eternal life in heaven, purpose and meaning in this life, a basis for morality, an identity in your loving creator, and many more joys. In short, lots of super awesome things!

"What if you bet on God but He is not real?" you ask. In that case, you THINK you have all of these things, and live a life believing morals are real, life has meaning, you have value, and heaven is to come, but when you die you blink out of existence and never know you were wrong. You get your dollar back.

Is that so bad?

But what if you decide there is no God and it's true that the universe is godless? You will believe that you are not the creation of a loving, eternal God. You are the accidental collision of atoms. There is no purpose to life, or meaning to anything, and you are a valueless accident with no hope for anything in the future except pain and death. You get to believe all of that. So, you're right about your bleak, hopeless worldview, but its not much of a pay off.

But what if you decide to believe there is no God... but you are wrong?

In that case, you think you live a meaningless, hopeless life with no moral basis and no intrinsic value, and you miss the truth about your value, the hope of what could be your future, the relationship with God that he offers you, and instead make yourself His enemy. Instead of blinking out of existence, you find yourself on the wrong end of his judgment and wrath.

In short- if you decide there is no God, you'd better be REAL SURE. Because if you're right, it's bleak and miserable and hopeless and the payoff is thinking you are right about life being bleak and miserable and hopeless.

If you're wrong, it gets much worse.

Pascal invites you to bet on God because the pay off, even if you are wrong, is pretty good. But of course, I plan to show you that, not only is God very real, but He's closer than you know, easy to meet, and eager to love you forever. Pascal's wager doesn't prove the existence of God, but I think it proves that you'd be pretty unwise to just remain an agnostic, and, frankly, fairly foolish to want to be an atheist. Even if you're right, the pay off stinks. The alternative is at least worth looking into.

Take the smart bet my friends! Roll the dice with me and see what comes up! I'm going to introduce you to all kinds of metaphysical, philosophical, historical, scientific, and mathematical proofs for the existence of the God of the Bible. Maybe you'll meet God personally and heaven will be your reward! You won't find a lot of Casinos offering that.

I'm betting on the ducky in the box. But I'm also going to show you how to shake the box and hear the ducky bouncing around in there, read the label that says "Contents: One duckie" and then we'll sneak up to the box and say, "Hey, ducky. You in there?" and he'll say, "Yes. I'm in the box."

I say, pull the metaphysical lever. What have you got to lose? And, thankfully for me, there are no actual dice involved. My odds of winning have skyrocketed.

## Chapter Eighteen: The Blind Men and the Elephant (and ZooKeeper Adventure Steve)

### Why Not All Roads Lead to God

Whenever people talk about the differing religions of the world, someone will come up with the following analogy, or some variation thereof. In fact, mine is a variation thereof. So there. Of.



There is a zoo where works zookeeper Adventure Steve. He takes care of all of the animals, including an elephant named Zito. The elephant in turn takes care of his rubber duck. The rubber duck doesn't take care of anyone. She just floats around in Zito's water dish.

One day, a bus full of philosophers came to the zoo on a field trip. They were the Society of Smarty Pants Philosophers (the S.S.P.P.), and their field trip was also a contest (As everything is for the Society of Smarty Pants Philosophers). When they got off the bus, they were all blindfolded and lead to the elephant to see who had the smartest pants (metaphorically speaking).

One of them grabbed Zito's trunk and said, "This is a fire hose! Clearly we are at a fire station, and I am smarter than all of you."

The second Smarty Pants grabbed Zito around the leg and said, "This is obviously a tree, so we must be in the jungle. You probably grabbed a python and will be eaten." Zito twitched his trunk, and the first man dropped the trunk with a squeal of panic.

The third man put out his hands and found the side of Zito. "I have found a wall," he said, "and it is rough and dusty. We must be in Mexico, or perhaps Arizona. Maybe on an Indian reservation..."

The fourth man was facing away from the elephant, so when he put his hands out he felt nothing. "There is nothing here at all!" he said. "You fools are all imagining things. Clearly I am the only one of us wise enough to know the truth."

At this point in the parable, the teller will usually end the story and say, "Religions are all like this story. We are all blind men around an elephant. We all have some part of the truth, but none of us can really know the whole truth. Thus, all religions are equally valid, and equally true, even when they differ greatly. They are all parts of the same whole."

Then they join hands and sing "All You Need is Love," while drinking cheap wine right from the bottle.

All of this tolerance and lack of conflict sound really good on the surface. Everyone gets to be right, and you don't even have to spend a lot of money on the wine. The fact is, you can get a fairly good bottle of strawberry Zinfandel for less than \$5 if you know where to look (and can lower your standards sufficiently). I learned that in college- but I digress.

The problem is, the story doesn't stop there. We've forgotten that there is one more player in this story- Zito. If the elephant is a metaphor for God, then certainly he must be a talking elephant. What kind of God can't talk? Not a lot of people are going to worship Harpo Marx, no matter how funny he is.

"Excuse me." Zito would say, "but you are all mistaken. I am an elephant. One of you grabbed my trunk, another my leg, and another my side. One of you is facing the wrong way and will need to turn around if you are to make contact with me."

Of course, there might be some stunned silence as the Society of Smarty Pants Philosophers consider the words and their meaning. So, Zito will say, "Steve, can you please tell them who I am?" And zookeeper Adventure Steve will say, "Yes. You men are touching an elephant named Zito, just as he has told you. I'm a zoo keeper and I work here with the elephant. We've been friends for many years."

Each of these men now has a choice. They can believe Steve and the elephant and change their minds about what they have discovered, or they can stubbornly choose to ignore his words (and Steve's) and use their own powers of reason to figure out what he is. One man may say, "An elephant! Then it was not a hose or a snake. It was your trunk!" This man will make a new friend.

Another will likely say, "Elephant is a mistranslation of the Swahili word for Baobab, which is a kind of tree. So, whoever that was, he has only proven that I am right about this being a tree."

The third man will say, "...and the kind of soft covering is from the many sand storms which are prevalent at this time

of year in Central America...” for he has not stopped talking about his perceptions and what he supposes them to be, and he did not hear Zito at all, nor the other men.

The fourth man will say, “What are you people babbling about? We’ve come to an empty field and soon we will get on the bus and go home without having encountered anything.” He heard something Zito said (and most of what Steve said) but he knows if he turns around and hears clearly and reaches out and touches the elephant, he will know that he has been wrong all the time. To a smarty pants philosopher, this is a fate worse than death. Once they are on their way to the parking lot, he will try to use a postmodern epistemology to convince the others that their experience was a subjective illusion so that they will think he was right. To some, there is nothing as valuable as being right, even when they are not. You will not want a person like this flying the plane you are on, or prescribing medicine to you.

When it comes to God, there is something very important that this story fails to mention, and so I will mention it: If God does not want to be found, we will not find him. God is not like a statue of an elephant standing in a field, glued to the spot waiting to be stumbled upon. He is a living being. If Zito did not want to be discovered, he could have quietly snuck around to the far side of a bush and stayed there until the men all left. They may have found the bush, but even a group of philosophers would have a hard time arguing that, because there is a bush, there must be an elephant with a rubber duck on the other side of the bush. Even for them to find a part of Zito, he had to choose to be in a place where they could come in contact with him.

After this encounter, Zito had Adventure Steve paint a big sign to display which says, “African Elephant. His name is Zito, and he has a rubber duck.” Even still, some people walk past without reading it. Others look up at it and say, “I’ve heard the elephant’s name is Mary, Queen of Scotts,” or, “This here is a rhinoceroses from North Korea. Take a picture of me with the rhino.” For some people, being wrong is a fate worse than death. For others, it becomes something of a habit.

So next time you hear the story of the blind men and the elephant, remind the storyteller that there are two people who know that the men have found an elephant:

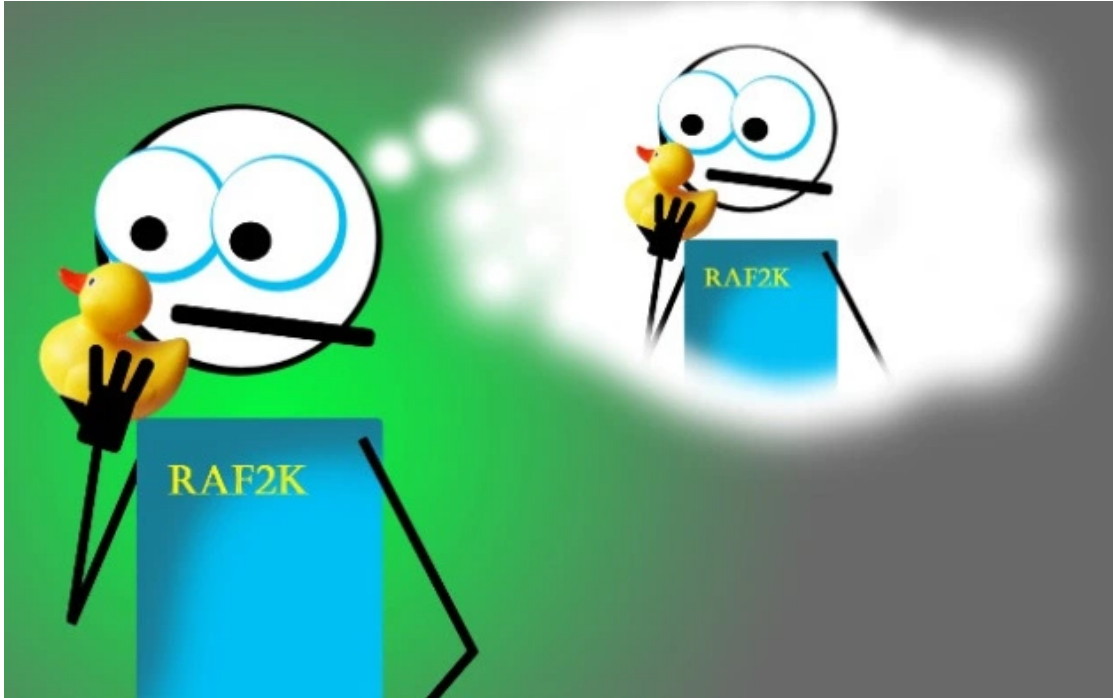
First, the storyteller. He’s put that fact in the story. It’s even part of the title for heaven’s sake. You can’t really know the blind men are each wrong unless you know they’ve discovered an elephant. Unless you know at the offset that they’ve found an elephant, you don’t have much of a story.

And then, there is the elephant. Surely HE knows he is an elephant. What silly religion would worship a mute elephant who doesn’t know what he is? Well, you know what I mean there. Of.

## Chapter Nineteen: I Think, Therefore I Scribble (Or: Cogito, Ergo Ducky)

### Why Faith Can Be Based on Certainty

I think, therefore I am. How about you? Do you think? If not, what makes you think you exist? Oh, I guess if you thought you existed, that would be you thinking. It was a silly question anyway.



I guess what I'm getting at is the fact that you've probably heard this phrase before: **"I think, Therefore I am"** (Or, in the original French, "Cogito, Ergo Sum," and in Pig Latin "Iway inkthay, ereforethay Iway amway."). But have you ever wondered where it came from? Good thing you have a Friend like yours truly to clear up the vast mysteries.

Actually "Cogito, Ergo Sum" isn't French but Latin. However, the guy who made this phrase popular was French. His name was **Rene' Descartes**, and he was trying to find a way to reduce philosophy to the most basic of self-evident premises. It doesn't get any more basic or self-evident than realizing that you exist. If you need a lot of evidence to believe that you exist, just give up. You're never going to be anything but a skeptic.

If I can take a short rabbit trail, I must warn you that people that stupid really exist. I have seen multiple people on the old interwebs arguing along these lines: *"I think therefore I am* begs the question. Just because there is thinking doesn't mean there is a self doing the thinking. We ought to just acknowledge that thinking happens and leave it at that."

Yes, people this stupid exist. They think they are being very clever. And what bothers me most is that they have the right to vote. But I digress.

The idea "I think therefore I am" goes back at least as far as Plato (the Greek philosopher, 428 B.C.- NOT the cartoon dog owned by Mickey Mouse), but Descartes was the guy who really made it popular- put it on t-shirts and bumper stickers, founded France's most popular philosophical theme park, "Cogito Ergo Sum Land." That sort of thing.



In short, this is a basis for arguing toward the existence of God. Like many arguments for the existence of God, this one may be tremendously helpful to you, in which case I recommend you read it twice and share it with friends. However, it may not help at all, in which case I recommend you simply putting it your toolbox and remember it's there in case you ever need to use it. Apologetics (Arguments for the Christian faith) are like tools in a toolbox- if they help you, use them. If not, then forget it. The defense is not the faith itself, and frankly, this one gets a little abstract. I'll try and keep it simple.

I think about my rubber ducky, therefore I am. In fact, I'm looking at him right now.

I perceive my ducky, which supports the existence of an external universe (That is, the existence of things other than myself).

Even if my ducky is an illusion and does not exist, it still proves that I exist. There is no illusion if there is not a ME to perceive it. Therefore, whether my ducky is real or not, I have still proved that I exist.

If I exist, there must be some external universe for me to exist IN. This universe is either eternal and has always existed (impossible- see *the Kalam Cosmological Argument*) or the universe is finite and had a beginning. If it began to exist, it must have had a cause. That cause must be God (*Again, see Kalam*).

If there is no external universe, then I am the entirety of the universe. Frankly, I find this idea absurd and indefensible. I may have put on a little weight as of late, but I am NOT the entire universe. But even if I am the entire universe, I am either infinite in age (impossible) or I had a cause. My cause must be uncaused, and he must be God.

In conclusion, I think about my Ducky, therefore God exists.

This argument is not meant to prove the whole of Biblical theology. It's more like saying, I can prove that rubber exists, and that is proof for the existence of my rubber duck. Sure, you will need more to believe in my own personal ducky, but if I could not prove that rubber existed, that would put a cramp in any other argument I had would it not?

See, our culture has developed a bit of philosophical insanity. We have actually managed to start believing that truth and reality are both illusions and merely personal experiences. Thus, people like me have to start convincing others that truth and reality exist before we can describe the truth and talk about real things. The average person doesn't really need this kind of argument, because all of us know that the external universe exists. We have discovered this when we were children in a very early stage of development called the "Scribble Stage."



When a child is between the ages of two and four, he begins to learn through repeated experiments that his actions cause determined results in the external world. He says to himself, "If I hold this crayon on a surface and drag it around like this... then a line the color of the crayon will appear which exactly mirrors the path which my crayon has taken while in contact with the surface. Thus there is a determinate correlation between my movement of the crayon and the appearance of the line." If you've seen the serious expression on the face of a two year old, you know they're thinking these things. This is why children don't talk much as toddlers. They babble a lot because they haven't yet learned the big words they need to express these early discoveries, but they are TRYING to share them with you. Sometimes they come upon great discoveries, like the relationship between energy and matter, but can't find the words to express it. The frustration will make them cry a lot, and adults who don't understand babies will come up with some lame excuse like, "He's teething." Babies LOVE having teeth! Why would that make them cry? Honestly, some people will believe anything...

Every toddler is a scientist and philosopher using repeated experiments to discover the rules of the external universe. Not only do they find that it exists, but they learn the ways in which their choices and actions can affect the external universe. In the Scribble Stage, we discover thousands of proofs for the existence of the external universe, so that, by the time we are in grade school, the idea is already so well established by experimental proofs that we would never question it- until our brains get damaged in college by drug abuse, alcohol, English professors, New Age Philosophy, and Postmodern Novels starring vampires who sparkle or perhaps talking animals from space.

In summary, the three things you can take away from this lesson are:

1. If you can think about a rubber duck, you can be sure that God exists.
2. If you can hold a crayon and think as clearly as a two year old, then you can prove the existence of the external universe.
3. If you attend a liberal college, you may want to wear a helmet to class. Your brain needs all the protection it can get.

## Chapter Twenty: Objective Morals and the Fish Slapping Dance

### How Objective Morals Prove that God Exists

I was setting fire to old tires full of orphan kittens this morning when I realized that the only thing that has kept me from making arson (Burning down hospitals, specifically) a full time career is all the time I spend selling drugs to grade school kids as a way to fund the local chapter of the Illinois Nazis. Racism isn't cheap you know. Not the real, fascist, genocidal kind. So, I thought I could start splitting my time between drugs and theft more efficiently by forcing other people to rob for me by threatening their wives and children with high explosives and anthrax. Every successful person has a team under them. Look at Jim Henson, Oprah, or Attila the Hun just to name a few examples. And I want my career as a Fascist polluting racist thieving drug czar to be more than just a hobby. I want it to be really big, because I want the world to be a better place. It's a lot of work, but I really feel it's the right thing to do.



OK, none of the above is true. However, I think it served to give everyone something which they found to be... let's call it a "non-preferred lifestyle choice." What I mean is, you found something in the above paragraph which you feel is wrong, but in modern America we're not allowed to say things like "wrong" or "Wicked" (unless we mean that Broadway musical). But admit it- there was at least ONE thing in the list above that caused you to think "He should not do that." And the awful truth is: you REALLY meant it.

Despite the various postmodern or politically correct gurus who have taken over our universities, airwaves and periodicals, everyone still believes that there is right and wrong, good and evil, even if they say they don't. Getting them to admit it is fairly easy. If anyone tells you there is no real standard of right and wrong, just say that you think the government should pass laws supporting your point of view and punishing those who don't act according to your morals. Any post modernist thinker sober enough to comprehend the cut of your jib will climb up onto the nearest

coffee table and monologue ad nauseum about how WRONG and EVIL that would be. They will tell you: YOU SHOULD NOT force your beliefs on other people. THAT would be WRONG!

No, really. I've had this conversation. I've also had the one where my liberal friend started by saying, "People who believe stereotypes are stupid." And I said, "Yes, they all suck. Every single one of them. I hate them too." And she suddenly understood what I was saying and refused to talk to me anymore.

You might be thinking, "Everyone seems to think some things are right and some things are wrong. So what? I thought you were going to prove the existence of God." And you are correct! In fact, by pointing out that everyone does have a moral code I have begun to prove the existence of God. This is what is known as the Moral Argument. It's pretty simple. It goes like this:

- 1. If God does not exist, objective moral values do not exist.**
- 2. Objective Moral Laws do exist**
- 3. Therefore, God must exist**

Let me put on my DJ Jazzy Jeff hat and "Break it down" for you (Kids, ask your grandparents or history teacher who DJ Jazzy Jeff is!). About Premise 1: I've given you the atheist, nihilist, and postmodernist position. That's right. I'm starting this argument by AGREEING with atheists, nihilists and Postmodernists. Objective morals are dependant on God, and if God is non-existent, morals go with him. It's on my next two points that we will part ways. Our atheist friends would say "since there is no God, there is no binding moral law." I will show that, since there is a binding moral law, there must be a God.

As a quick metaphor, we are saying, "If there are no lightbulbs in the basement, it will be dark." The atheist then says, "It is dark, hence no lightbulbs," and the Christian is saying, "Who says HENCE anymore?" and then he also says, "Because we know there is light in the basement, we know there must be functioning light bulbs which are on." Also, this metaphor is about the logic of the argument. I am not saying that God is somehow like a lightbulb. Don't read too much into this. The point is, the atheist is looking into the basement, claiming he CAN see everything, but is ALSO claiming that it is dark and devoid of any light source. Thus, his own claims prove he is asserting something he knows not to be true. Or more realistically, he is saying, "There is no right and wrong, and to teach people there is- is wrong, and you should not do it because it would be wrong."

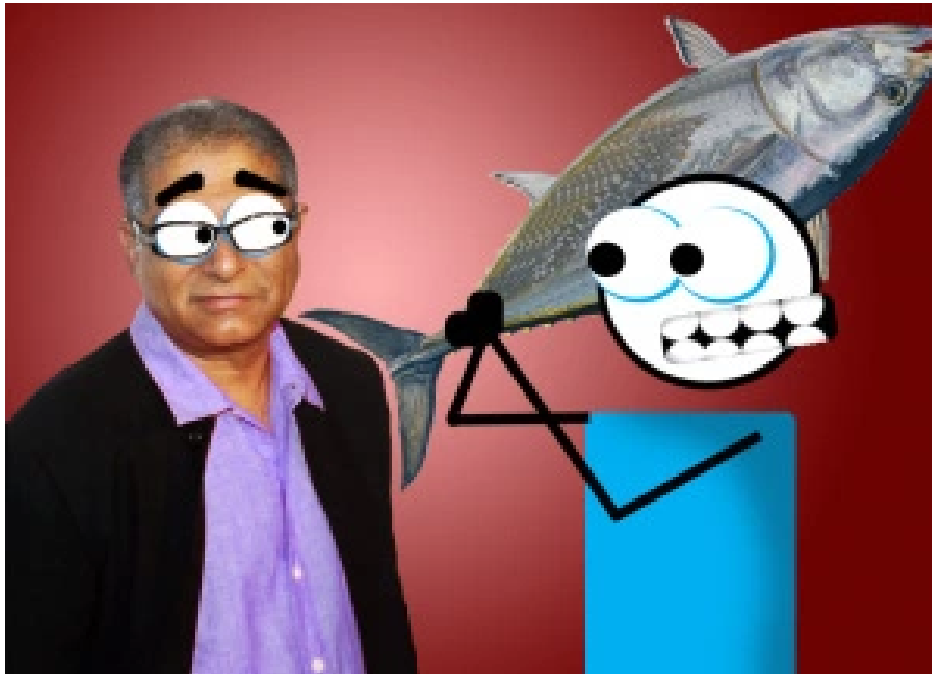
So again:

- 1. If God does not exist, objective moral values do not exist.**
- 2. Objective Moral Laws *do* exist**
- 3. Therefore, God must exist**

The fight starts at premise 2, because this is where a lot of people lose the plot. In short, they argue that Morals are not objective (meaning they are not TRUE FACTS like how many miles away the moon is, or what you get when you subtract 4 from 7) but rather, they say, morals are personal feelings, like whether you should put ketchup on a Chicago style hot dog (I'm always told no, but I do it anyway. Don't you judge me!). For example- if you steal from me, you will justify it by saying there was some great need which made it OK, or I had more than was fair, or you had been drinking and mistook yourself for the federal government, etc. You will defend your actions and reject the idea that you are

guilty and worthy of punishment.

However, the truth is found, not in our actions, but in our REACTIONS. Everyone will prove, by his reactions that he believes in objective morals. For this experiment, you will need a postmodernist and a three hundred pound tuna fish on ice.



If they slap me with a fish, they will argue that morals are subjective and I have no right to force my moral standard on them. They ought to, they will argue, have freedom of fish slapping. They will argue that the freedom to slap another person with a fish is a basic human right and it ought to be paid for by government funding.

If I slap them with a fish, they will want me arrested IMMEDIATELY.

How you REACT to evils will show that you know them to BE evils. Again, imagine someone you love very much. Now imagine I choose to slap THEM with a fish. A big one too- like a three hundred pound tuna. You would NOT you say to yourself, “There is no transcendent standard of good and evil against which to judge this action. It is simply different than the actions I would have chosen in this stage of my emotional development.” You would probably be thinking, “Let’s see how he feels with that fish shoved into his left nostril...!”

I’d also like you to notice that you justify things which are wrong. No one justifies a right action. If I see you stealing you will come up with a list of excuses longer than the Treaty of Ghent (1814-1964). “It wasn’t me!” you will say. “It was my evil twin/the pain of poverty/peer pressure/the booze!”

No one does this if they are caught doing right. If I catch you doing something selfless and kind for someone else, you don’t turn red and say, “Oh, you saw that huh? Well, I had a LOT to drink. I didn’t know what I was doing.” If I were to accuse you of something which I thought was wrong, but you TRULY felt was right, why would you come up with excuses? You would not. You’d just say, “Yes, I did. It was the right thing to do.” Most of our justifications are made to ourselves. If you find yourself preparing excuses as to why something is ok for you to do, it probably isn’t.

Let me bring this point to a boil: To say there is no objective moral standards is to say that the worst, most horrible crime you can imagine differs from the greatest act of selfless charity only in the emotional response you feel. If you can REALLY and with honesty say you feel the actions of Hitler and the Nazis- who slaughtered six million people- and those of Mother Teresa- who gave her life, blood, sweat and tears to comfort and serve the poor- were different only in the average emotional response they evoke, then you are a sick, sick puppy. Though, most likely you are just a big liar and you know better. Lying is wrong, so knock it off or I will slap you with a fish- a big one too- just as soon as this tire fire stops burning.

## Chapter Twenty One: Dinner with Hitler and Other Moral Issues

### Why God is Needed for Objective Morality

Welcome back to The Moral Argument. We've reached the lightning round, where in you, the atheist, postmodernist, relativist contestants get to answer some easy questions for fabulous prizes! In round one we've determined that everyone knows that some things are truly right and good, while others are really evil and should NOT be done. Now, we're going to ask, "How come?"



Ready? OK, here we go: It's 1929 and you're having Schnitzel with an up and coming German leader. Let's just call him "Adolf." Over the appetizer you find out that he is planning to take over the world and kill almost the entire human race in his effort to form a global dictatorship which he feels will last for a thousand years. You suggest that there is some moral ambiguity in his plans, to which he responds, "Do you think so? Golly, if I felt it was really wrong, then I certainly wouldn't do it."

How do you convince him that his plan is really wrong? Remember, contestants, you and "Adolph" are both atheists, so you can't appeal to God as a transcendent law giver.

**Contestant number One: "I would say that the other nations would band together in an allied force to stop him, and he would probably wind up dying in some underground bunker."**

Nice try contestant one, but you've only succeeded at deepening his resolve. "Adolf" will just see that his many enemies will force him to act faster and more viciously than he had planned. The threat of losing doesn't make him feel his actions are wrong- only that he is right and that he needs to work harder. After all, every good and right hero has faced opposition, haven't they?

**Contestant Two: "I would tell him that his plan is bad because it will hurt a lot of people, and make a lot of**

**people unhappy, and that it would not make the world a better place.”**

Ooh, a nice traditional reply from contestant two, but I think you’ll notice the mistakes you made. First of all, you’ve done nothing to prove that hurting people is wrong. You’ve only moved the need for an objective moral standard over one place. Secondly, the aim of his plan is a world free of racism, classism, political struggles, religious fights, poverty, border disputes, and disease. In his mind it makes the world a MUCH better place. Besides, dead people don’t complain, so killing a lot of people only makes them unhappy while they’re still alive. The faster you kill, the faster you rid the world of unhappiness.

**Contestant Three: “I think if “Adolph” looked at the cultures of the world, he would see that he is going against the normative implied social agreement of behavior for mutual benefit and survival. Laws and social norms of most people would go against these actions, and thus they are wrong.”**

A noble sociological attempt from contestant three. However, “Adolph” knows as well as you do that social norms are no more binding to societies that agree to them than fashion or the rules of a game. If he is the dictator, he’ll make the laws and won’t have to worry about prior laws. Furthermore, if he kills everyone who disagrees with him, there will be no social norms which would condemn his actions. His plan includes altering such social norms so that the only surviving societies would celebrate him as a hero. Thanks for playing, but “Adolf” will still go on to kill all of you.

**Contestant Two: “Hang on a minute! It’s wrong to hurt people! It’s wrong to kill lots of innocent people!”**

Why?

**Contestant Two: “Well... It just is, that’s all!”**

How do you know?

**Contestant Two: “I know it because I FEEL it, just as I know an apple is red because I see it.”**

But as Christian apologist Ravi Zacharias points out, “There are some cultures who believe it is right to love their neighbors, and others who believe it is right to eat them, both based on feelings. Do you have a preference? And why?”

**Contestant Three: “It is true that some cultural norms presuppose an acceptance of killing and eating members of neighboring societies. But of course these are savage tribes, and many evolve out of this stage.”**

And by evolving out of it, have they made moral progress?

**Contestant Three: “Of course.”**

But if you say they have progressed, do you not assume a better and a worse? But how can you do that without a transcendent standard to measure both sets of social norms against? How can you say they have gotten better if you cannot say there is a real good to which they are now closer?



**Contestant Three: “Well, obviously there must be a higher good. It is better to love one’s enemies than to kill and eat them.”**

**Contestant One: “Yes! Justice is better than injustice, but not because there is some moral lawgiver telling us so. We can figure these things out for ourselves.”**

But even if it could exist without a lawgiver, how would you figure out such a thing?

**Contestant One: “For justice, you can see how it creates a better society than injustice. It makes for fair play, equality, and happy citizens.”**

But then, what makes you decide that fair play, equality, and happy citizens are better than the alternative? What transcendent standard do you use to judge THOSE things as good?

**Contestant Two: “Isn’t it good to make people happy?”**

I would say so, but it is because God taught me to consider others as more important than myself. What makes YOU think so?

**Contestant Two: “Because killing FEELS wrong. Justice FEELS right!”**

I share your feelings because I believe God gave us conscience- an innate understanding of right and wrong. But others have vastly different feelings. Some people’s feelings lead them to murder anyone of a differing race, some to eat neighboring tribes, some to rape and pillage, and some to board a school bus covered in explosives to kill themselves and every passenger on the bus. These things happen all the time because some people feel they are right. Mind you, not just morally neutral and somehow justifiable, but they feel to rape, pillage, and murder is truly RIGHT and GOOD. Are they correct?

**Contestant Three: “Of course not. But why must there be a law giver? Why cannot conscience simply evolve? Or morals be discovered as mathematics are discovered?”**

The answer is something we all know instinctively as children. When one kid says to another kid, “You can’t do that!” or, “We’re not allowed to go in there!” the child who WANTS to do that or go there will inevitably reply, “Says who?” Our innate response is to seek out an appropriate authority that has the right to dictate right and wrong to us. We know that our boundaries are set for us by someone in authority over us. We know that mom and dad have the right to tell us what we can do, where we can go, what we should say, and what we’re allowed to eat. Otherwise, we’d go where we want, eat what we want, do what we please, and probably never survive long enough to reach the first grade.

The Bible teaches us that God is the ultimate authority, and that he has given us a conscience so that we all instinctively know that it’s wrong to steal or lie or hurt other people.

Furthermore, if these morals are God’s revelation of right and wrong, then we CAN discover them as we discover mathematics. Otherwise we could only invent them as we invent the rules of a game. If I said I play four strike baseball,

you would not find me morally evil. If I said I kill and eat my neighbors, you would know I was evil and would want the police to do something about it. To discover something it must exist. If we discover right and wrong, it is only because they are real and can be discovered.

Evolution would only give us instincts for survival and passing on our genes. If all we are is the product of evolution, then there is an evolutionary cause for racism, rape, murder, theft, and betrayal. If evolution has given us the instinct to kill and the instinct to feel murder is wrong, why should we choose one over the other? Can we even choose, or is that, too, a product of evolution? Do we imprison murderers for behaving as they are programmed by their DNA? Would this not be like punishing a blender for making a fruit smoothie or a magnet for hanging onto the fridge? And even if we CAN choose, why should we choose feeling murder is wrong over using murder to survive and pass on our genes (Or to get rich, or get a better parking spot, etc)?

In conclusion, if there is no God, there is no one with the authority to be a moral law giver. If there is no moral law giver, there is no moral law. If there is no moral law, there is no objective right and wrong. If there is no objective right and wrong- then I'm going to have to flip a coin to decide if I want to love my neighbor or eat him with a side of potato salad. If my neighbor is white and I serve him with a white wine, would that be wrong?

Thanks for playing. We'll see you next time.

## Chapter Twenty Two: Kalam and the Horrendous Space Kablooie!

### How the Beginning of the Universe Proves that God Exists

If you're like me (And even though we've just met, I think I can tell that you are) you don't quickly embrace things that don't make sense. Like Macs- the shiny white alternative to computers which are running Windows. I know everyone says they're the greatest thing since shredded cheese, but EVERY TIME I touch one I wind up sitting there saying, "Why isn't this working?" or "What's it doing NOW?!?!?" and "Does ANYONE know how this thing works?"

So I'm still working on Windows™. Unless I see some reasonable proof that Mac is better than PC, some solid evidence, I'm sticking to PC. I'm glad you have a warm relationship with your Mac. If that works for you, then I'm happy for you. But that's not for me. If you want me to buy a Mac, you're going to have to show me some real evidence. Something I can understand which is not only internally consistent, but makes sense of the problems I've had in the past and the fact that NO ONE seems to know how to make it work except Stacy, and SHE isn't around when it starts freaking out.

WHY did we even BUY this stupid thing if Stacy is the only person around here who knows how it works?!?!?!  
But I digress...

For many people, Christianity is much like my Mac experience. They say, "Look, if that works for you, that's great. I just can't embrace it as true. I tried the whole "church" thing and I didn't like it. My knowledge and experience have encouraged me to keep using Windows™. Metaphorically speaking." What you need is a good friend (at a reasonable hourly rate) to show you all the facts. Someone to clear up confusion, show you the buttons to push and to explain why your true goals are best met (and in a certain manner ONLY met) in Jesus. And that is just what I am going to do.

If you want proof that God exists, then let's start with the universe itself. I'm going to show you how the entire universe is proof for the existence of the God of the Bible. You can't ask for more proof than the entire universe!

Ladies and Gentlemen, please welcome- **The Kalam Cosmological Argument!**

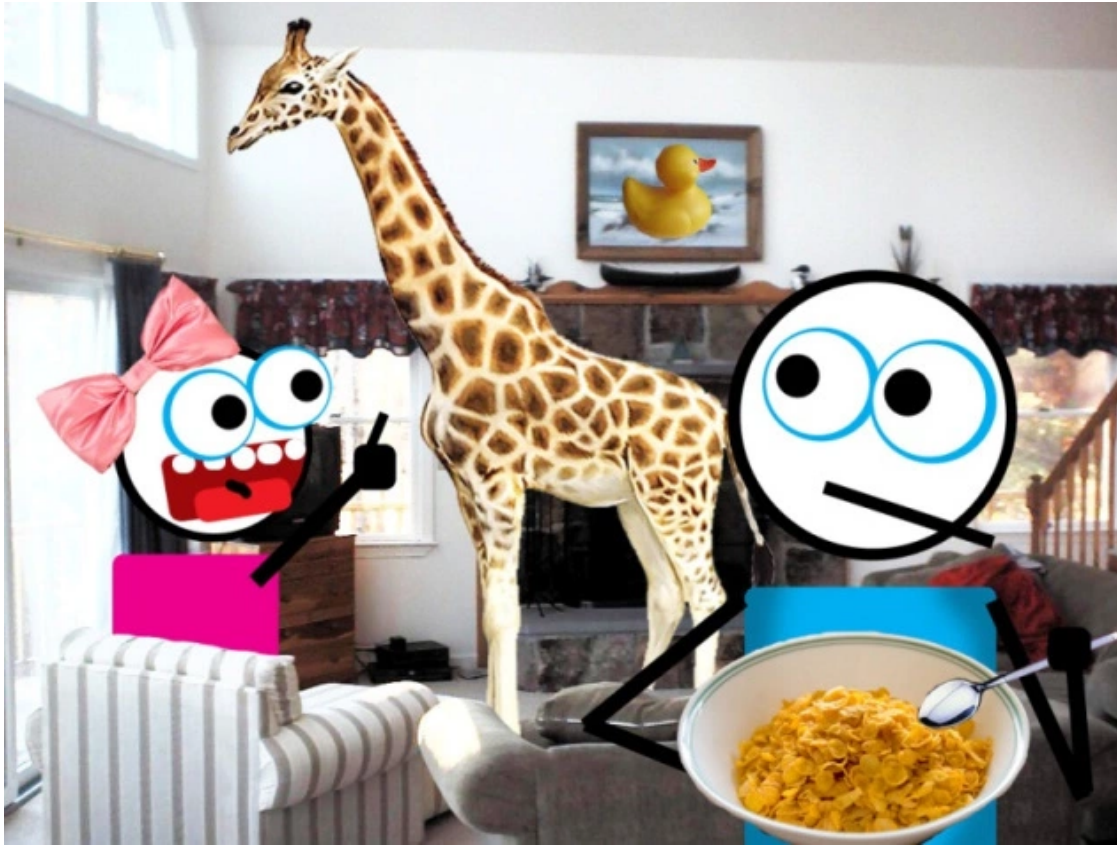
This argument has been made popular and formidable by one of my favorite philosophers, Dr. William Lane Craig. He can be found at [www.reasonablefaith.org](http://www.reasonablefaith.org) and he has two very excellent podcasts which I recommend very highly.

**The Kalam Cosmological Argument goes like this:**

- 1. Everything that begins to exist has a cause.**
- 2. The universe began to exist.**
- 3. Therefore, the universe has a cause.**

Pretty simple right? If you agree with points 1 and 2, then it will be obvious that point 3 MUST follow. Is this proof that God exists? It will be once you apply it. Read on, friend.

Point 1 is as simple as it sounds. If something comes into existence, then it MUST have a cause. Not even science fiction writers can violate this principle. Consider if you woke up one morning and went downstairs to make coffee, and as you descended the stairs, you suddenly saw a giraffe in your living room. One thought you would not have is, “Goodness me! A giraffe has suddenly come into existence, uncaused, in my living room!” More likely you’d think, “Where did THAT come from?” Or maybe, “How many times do I have to tell those kids that if they don’t lock the doggie door after Scraps comes in...”



If your kids tried to say, “We didn’t leave the door unlocked! It just popped into existence while we were watching Captain Video! Can we keep it?” you would not buy this story, because you know that anything that begins to exist has a cause, including giraffes. The universe could no more pop into existence uncaused than a giraffe could. I would argue that it is in fact LESS likely to happen because the universe as a whole is (in Cosmological terms) “Bigger.”

Now we must consider point 2, “The Universe began to exist.” Is it true? The universe either came into existence as point 2 asserts, or it is eternal and was never caused- it simply always was. How do we know the universe came into existence?

There are two reasons. First is the absurdity of infinity (Which would make a cool name for a band). Second is MODERN SCIENCE!

Let’s start with infinity. Why can’t the universe have an infinite past? Because we would NEVER arrive at today. Imagine every day is a domino falling over. Every one is knocked over by the previous one, and itself knocks over the following one. If you have a million dominoes, you can watch any one of them and eventually you will see it fall. The 1,000,000th domino will take a while to fall, but eventually #999,999 will knock into it and they will all fall over. If your dominoes are INFINITE, then it doesn’t matter which one you watch; that domino will still have to wait for an

INFINITE number of previous dominoes to fall before it does. And so will the one before it. And the one before that. And the one before those- into infinity. In short, if the row of dominoes is infinite prior to your domino, you will never see it fall. If the past is infinite, you will never arrive at today. Or yesterday. Or the day before that... But we HAVE arrived at today. Thus, there cannot have been an infinite past.

Also, practically speaking, if you ever come across a pizza place with an “infinity minutes delivery guarantee,” order from somewhere else.

So, it's impossible to have an infinite past. Conveniently, this works out well for Albert Einstein and everyone who came after. Modern science has decided that the universe, while very old and much larger than the average giraffe, is not infinite. It has a first moment of existence. They call this the “Big Bang.” Modern Science is not real good in the naming department. I agree with Calvin (of Calvin and Hobbs by Bill Watterson) that it should be renamed *the Horrendous Space Kabloolie!* Contact your congressman and see if he can do something about it.

If the first moment of the universe was the Horrendous Space Kabloolie!, then what caused the Kabloolie to go *Kabloolie?* The Big Bang Theory does have an answer about the cause: There was none. It happened without a cause. “It's tremendously unlikely,” they admit, “that an entire universe would suddenly pop into existence for no reason, but it only had to happen once.” Yet, if we know better when it comes to the giraffe in the living room, then we must certainly find it harder to accept for the ENTIRE UNIVERSE.

As I've said before, this is like a magician pulling a rabbit out of a hat, without a hat or a magician. Or, until it appears, a rabbit. That would be quite a trick especially if the rabbit is as big and complex as an entire universe. There MUST have been a cause (see premise 1).

The Horrendous Space Kabloolie is the first moment of energy, matter, space, and even time itself. It all popped into existence a finite time ago. What could have caused this? The cause had to be something not made of matter or energy, because they didn't exist before this. This cause CAUSED them. It could not have been something that takes up space because there wasn't any yet. Besides, something not made of matter doesn't need to take up any space.

The universe is really big and the Horrendous Space Kabloolie was (as the name implies) a massive event with lots of energy, so the cause must have been AMAZINGLY powerful. More powerful than Superman and Chuck Norris COMBINED.

If you know anything about everything, then you know that the universe is a very complicated place. It would take more than chaos to make this universe. It would take a super genius to create the laws of energy, space, and time. Just read a chemistry textbook and you'll see what I mean. It's complicated, but REALLY organized, like little league baseball, only more so.

Also, this cause must have been able to freely choose to create the universe, because without time, there would be no natural laws acting to cause it (i.e. no prior dominos falling to knock over the Kabloolie one). It must have been something like a mind making a choice. This works because a mind can chose to do things, and can exist without a physical form, and can intelligently organize the laws of chemistry or baseball.

Finally, the cause of the universe must itself be uncaused. If it had to be caused, then it would have had to come from an uncaused cause- otherwise its cause will need a cause... well, imagine an infinite row of dominos. The one you are watching will never fall because an INFINITE number of dominos will have to fall before yours does. There has to be an uncaused cause somewhere in the chain of events or nothing will ever get done around here. Someone has to choose to push over the first domino. This uncaused cause will be timeless and eternal- meaning *it did not begin to exist* (Thus free of Premise 1).

Here's how Dr. Craig sums up his argument: **“So on the basis of an analysis of the argument’s conclusion, we may therefore infer that a personal Creator of the universe exists who is uncaused, without beginning, changeless, immaterial, timeless, spaceless, and unimaginably powerful.”**

Does the universe prove the existence of the God of the Bible? Not in His entirety. But you have to admit that it's a really good start. If that's not God he just described, I don't know who it is. Not even Chuck Norris can make a universe, or even a giraffe (though, he could kill one with his bare hands if he really had to).

But it is worth noting that, while this argument doesn't prove everything about God as He is revealed in the Bible, that doesn't mean that this argument doesn't prove the existence of the God of the Bible. For example, this argument doesn't prove that God is Trinity, or that He parted the waters of the Red Sea so that Moses and the children of Israel could flee from Egypt. However, this does prove that there absolutely **MUST** be an uncaused, personal, timeless, spaceless, immaterial, brilliant and incredibly powerful supernatural creator of the universe. When every god of every religion in all of history is surveyed, there is a list of possible candidates that matches this description consisting of only one God, and that is the God found in the Bible. No other “god” is timeless, or spaceless, or immaterial, and none but the God of the Bible even claims to have made the heavens and the earth. When you define the word “God” to mean an uncreated creator of the heavens and the earth, there is literally only **ONE** God.

This is just the tip of the iceberg. As you will see, there are lots of good reasons to believe the Biblical account of God.

Now if someone could do the same for owning a Mac laptop or desktop computer... well, they'd really have something there.

## Chapter Twenty Three: Taking a Closer Look at Nature

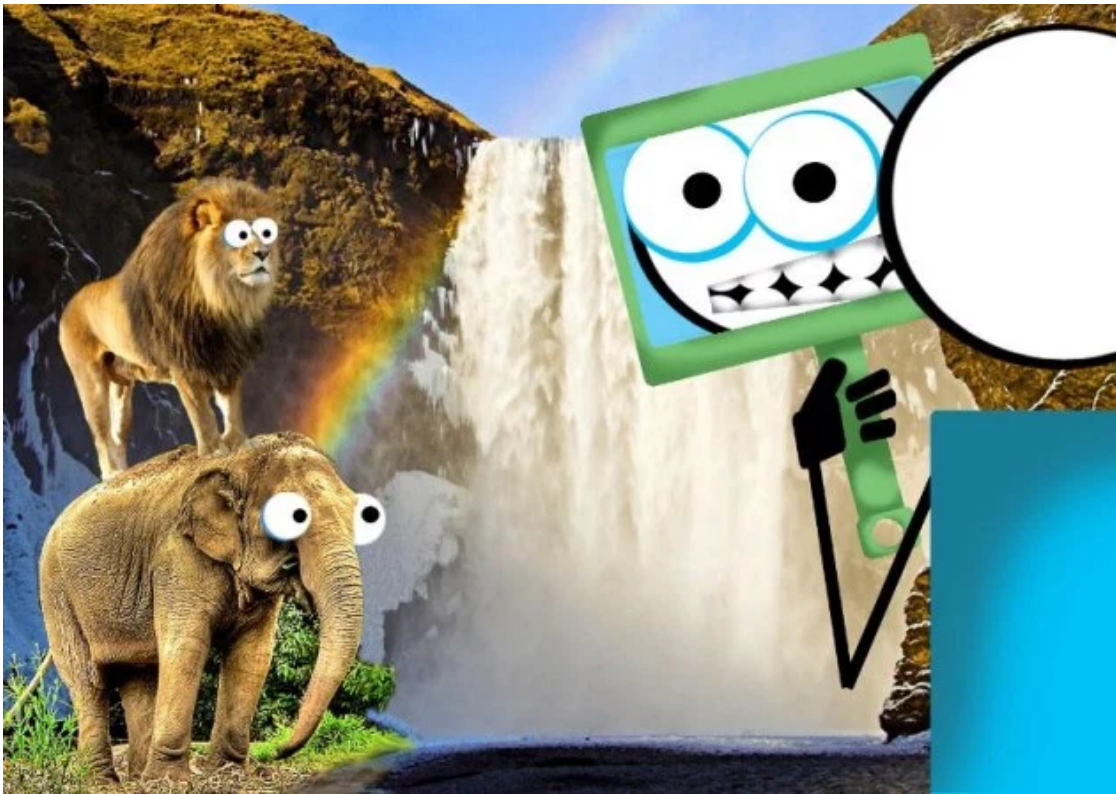
### The Argument from Design

There was once a group of philosophers having dinner together, one of which was a Christian. The others asked him, “If someone were to ask you for proof that God exists, what would you say?”

He considered it for a moment, and then said, “I would take him into my garden, and I should show him the flowers, and trees, and insects, and the fish in my pond.” And then he went back to eating.

“That’s it?” his friends asked. “That’s all you would say? What if he looked around at your garden and said he still did not believe that there was a God?”

“I would tell him,” he replied, “to look closer.”



So get on your boots and grab some bug repellent, because today we’re venturing out into NATURE to take a look around! If you see a bear, STAY IN THE CAR.

I’ve already shown you in the Kalam Cosmological Argument that the entire universe can be used as proof for the existence of God. Now I’m going to bring the search a little closer to home, to a little planet I like to call, “earth.” Although, it would still be called “earth” even if I didn’t like to call it that.

This argument is not as philosophically air tight as my previous arguments. This one should simply make sense. We hold these truths to be self evident. Well, I do anyway, and I invite you to do the same.

There are two things you need to be on the lookout for today- first, REALLY BIG things. Second, really small things. The first ones will be easier to find. Let’s start there:

Psalm 19: 1-2 says:

**The heavens declare the glory of God;  
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.  
Day after day they pour forth speech;  
night after night they reveal knowledge.**

The heavens are a nice big place to start, since you don't need to travel far to see them. When we look up into the vast, endless black and see the BILLIONS of stars, I think we all have the same first thought: "If I had a dollar for each one of those...!" But soon we get to thinking about the vastness of space, and it makes us feel really small. Let me give you some idea of how small.

First, look at the room you are in (This would work even if the room you were in was a Super Walmart). If this room was the entire earth, you would not be able to see your house from here. It's too small. Now imagine the room is the entire solar system. You would not be able to see the earth. It's too small. Now imagine the room is the whole galaxy. You probably would never find the solar system. It's too small.

Do you see where I'm going with this? Odds are you think you need to lose weight, when in fact you are already immeasurably tiny! Go ahead and have that donut! The universe will never know the difference!

The great bigness of creation gives us a glimpse of how we should see God- he's really Big and we are, inversely, really small. And you don't need a galaxy to experience this. Lock eyes with a lion, or stand near an elephant or a waterfall. Or lock eyes with a lion on an elephant under a waterfall, if you can make that happen. And if you can make that happen, PLEASE send me a picture of it. I'd like to see that too!

Watch big waves crash on your favorite beach. Try and climb a mountain, or just try and drive around some. All of these common, natural things will do the trick. Their majestic bigness touches our soul with the reminder of our smallness. No one ever stands before the Grand Canyon and says, "This is HUGE! Which reminds me, I'm totally awesome!" No one watches lightning crash around a tornado and says, "This just goes to show how important I am." Important or not, you wind up in the basement praying that God saves you from an unscheduled trip to Oz.

And we LOVE to feel awed by nature! Everyone loves to stand before great majestic mountains and feel small. We love to watch waves crash on an endless ocean. This is why we vacation in California and not in Iowa. No one says, "I have two weeks off, and I'm going to spend them somewhere FLAT! Give me featureless plains with NOTHING blocking my view of that horizon! Endless miles of corn, and one tree. THAT is my idea of paradise!"

I'm fairly certain that the title of the movie "Field of Dreams" was sarcasm.

When you consider the wonders of nature, it's no strange thing that many cultures have been nature worshippers. Nature was designed to show the glory of God. Some people have simply mistaken the self-portrait for the artist. The apostle Paul says this in Romans chapter 1,

**"For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse."**

It's not a good mistake to make, but when you think about it, it kinda makes sense. There is something in nature



which makes us all feel the need to worship. It's just wiser to worship the Creator than his creation. For one thing, unlike the Creator who loves you, the creation isn't listening. Besides that, much of it will just kill and eat you. So, it makes a lousy god.

The study of the really tiny is a branch of science which is still working to peer deeper into the depths of the universe. Back in the day (June 20th, 1896) people knew that all life was made of cells, but they didn't know what a cell was. Under the microscope they saw a light blob with a dark blob inside it. They thought it was like a tiny chunk of Jell-o with a single piece of fruit floating in it. Nothing could be further from the truth! Each cell is in fact an amazing set of machinery which rivals the most advanced factory! Imagine a completely automated car factory which can not only produce cars, but can replicate itself into two identical and functional factories in only a few hours. THAT is what each of your one trillion of cells are like. If that doesn't impress you, I don't know what will.

For a really good explanation of how complex some of this stuff is, check out "Darwin's Black Box" by Michael Behe. Among others things, Behe shows how the machinery driving a bacteria is like an outboard motor, only more efficient and powerful. Although, if you have a twenty foot fishing boat, you will want more than bacteria pushing it. You won't catch a lot of fish that way. You'll probably catch some horrible disease instead.

The amazing complexity of life on the scale of the tiny is made of machines which rival anything mankind has yet produced, and this includes the internet, the Wii, the i-pod touch, and Hotpockets. As Paul and the Psalms point out, nature speaks for itself.

Though, you don't need to get that small to find amazement. Study any of your local animals! An ant can lift 50 times its own weight, (though I don't know why it would want to). A spider's web is stronger than steel, which you can testify to if you've tried to do some spring cleaning. Bunnies can sleep with their eyes open. Try that sometime. It's not as easy as it sounds.

The wonders of creation are endless! For details, see your local library, zoo, or pet store.

In the future, I will devote some time to explaining how Darwinian Evolution fails to explain life as we know it. It's a LOT to sum up. For right now let me paraphrase everyone's favorite Atheist poster child, Richard Dawkins from his book, "The God Delusion":

***"One of the greatest challenges to the human intellect has been to explain how the complex, improbable appearance of design in the universe arises. The natural temptation is to attribute the appearance of design to actual design itself."***

In summary- the universe and especially life contains amazing design and information. Dawkins will then spend a great deal of time and effort making weak and insufficient arguments to try and deny what he has just admitted was the most natural explanation. Design and information don't come from any natural process or chemical laws. Music comes from a musician. Art comes from an artist. Design comes from a designer, and information can only come from a mind. So why can't Dawkins see the obvious? Why does he choose a LESS obvious conclusion? Because there are some ideas that are SO absurd that it takes a PhD to believe them and Dawkins has a PhD in absurdity.

The best resources on the science of Creation and the scientific evidence against evolution come from Answers in

Genesis, founded by Ken Ham. A huge collection of online articles and videos from Answers in Genesis can be found at <http://www.answersingenesis.org/>

As American philosopher, Peter Kreeft, once said, “There is the music of Johann Sebastian Bach, therefore there must be a God. Either you get that or you don’t.” Nature is the same. I recommend a trip to the zoo, or your favorite national park. If you look around, I promise you’ll see the fingerprints of God. If you don’t, do yourself a favor- look closer ...but remember to keep a safe distance from spiders, bears, and raccoons- that’s the best advice I can give you.

## Chapter Twenty Four: Don't Touch That Dial! (Or we'll all die!)

### The Argument from Fine Tuning

The intrepid explorer, Rent a Friend 2000, is waking to the sounds of Billie Holiday and Louis Armstrong. Is he on heaven's doorstep? After the explosion, everything went dark, and now he's hearing the voices of dead musicians...



Suddenly he realizes that he is alive and bodily intact. Our stalwart hero finds himself waking on the polished white floor of a strange, unfamiliar place. After the explosion on the Space Station, he was sure he would wake up in heaven, but it seems he has survived! Miracle of Miracles! After a quick look around, he finds that the sinister Dr. Materialist and the ponderous Dr. Pensive have also both survived, as has humorous and expendable junior cadet, Billy, who they all call "Skippy" because they are all too polite to call him "idiot."

"Look!" says Skippy. "Rent a Friend 2000 is awake!"

"Thank the improbabilities!" says Dr. Materialist. "We were afraid your life functions may have ceased."

"Yeah! And we was afraid you might'a died too!" adds Skippy.

"Where are we?" asks our groggy hero. Looking out the window, he sees red rocks as far as the horizon. "We're either on Mars or in Colorado."

"We are on the surface of Mars," answers Dr. Pensive. "We woke not long before you. It seems we are in some kind of biosphere."

"A Martian biosphere!" exclaims Rent a Friend 2000. "How did we get here?"

"We are not sure," answers Dr. Materialist. "Though improbable, it is not impossible that the explosion threw us from

the Space Station and into the Martian atmosphere, where an unusually strong updraft slowed our fall so that, when we landed in this biosphere, we were unharmed by the landing.”

“I figured we’d burst into flames on the way down!” shouts Skippy. “Just all KABLOOEY!!!”

“I find that idea improbable,” says Dr. Pensive. “I do not see how we could have fallen from orbit and survived.”

“But if we hadn’t,” snips back Dr. Materialist, “you wouldn’t be here to doubt it.”

“And looky over here!” shouts Skippy as he suddenly hops up and runs off like some tiny excitable dog- the kind that celebrities are always carrying around in a purse.

Our intrepid hero follows Skippy to a large panel overlooking the Martian landscape. There are dozens of large dials, each set to different numbers. “What do these do?” he asks.

“Don’t touch that dial!” shouts both doctors, “or we’ll all die!”

Our hero steps back from the dials and grabs Skippy by the collar to get him away from the panel as well.

“Each of these dials is fine tuned for our survival,” explains Dr. Pensive. “Dr. Materialist and I have both deciphered their purpose, and each of these dials is a control for one of the many life support systems in the biosphere. Each dial has at least a thousand possible settings, yet if a single dial is altered even a single position- if only one is moved even one thousandth of the dial’s possible settings- we will all die!”

Rent a Friend 2000 pulls Skippy a little further from the panel. “Lucky someone knew we were coming!” quips our intrepid hero.

“What do you mean?” asks Dr. Materialist.

“I mean,” clarifies our hero, “it’s a good thing someone set all these dials like this so we could stay alive down here.”

“Oh, I don’t think there is any reason to assume they were set for us,” retorts Dr. Materialist. “It is a happy coincidence, to be sure, but there’s no reason to think they were set for us.”

“But, if they weren’t set exactly as they are,” our hero replies, “we’d all be dead. The odds against them being set in just this manner by accident seems beyond impossible.”

“My dear Rent a Friend,” chuckles Dr. Materialist, “you sound like Dr. Pensive. The only reason you are here to make that observation is just because they accidentally were set as they are. If they had not been, we would not be here to wonder at the improbable nature of it.”

“I think you landed on your head,” suggests our hero with concern. “You think we fell from space and accidentally landed into a biosphere which ACCIDENTALLY has dozens of dials set within a thousandth of a degree for our survival? The odds are far better that we’d have died on reentry.”

“Like this, KABLOOEY!!!” yells Skippy.

“Shut up Skippy. Doctor, it’s impossible that these settings would be as they are unless someone knew we were coming and had set them exactly as they needed to be for us,” our hero explains.

“It seems that way,” says Dr. Materialist, “but you need to consider the bigger picture. There were probably a lot of us falling from the Space Station. It was fairly probable that someone would land in this biosphere, and by chance it was us. No doubt there are thousands of biospheres all with different settings. We were just the lucky few who happened to fall into the right one.”

Rent a Friend 2000 looks out the window and sees nothing but red rocks to the horizon. “Uh... Doc, where are the other biospheres?”

“Well, we don’t know. They could be anywhere,” answers Dr. Materialist. “We can’t see them. But for us to have happened to find the one with the right settings, clearly there must be a vast number of them all set randomly so that, by chance, one of them would have the right settings for us.”

“You fell on your head.”

“Like this, KABLOO...!!!”

“So help me Skippy I will shove you out the airlock!”

Will Rent a Friend 2000 shove Skippy out the airlock? And if he did, would Skippy find the thousands of invisible biospheres that Dr. Materialist thinks are scattered across the Martian landscape? Or did he just land on his head? STAY (finely) TUNED!

And now a word from our author:

This argument is actually a very real conversation happening in the realms of physics and cosmology. Our universe is governed by a large number of physical laws- like gravity or the forces that hold atoms together. Each of these forces is fine tuned to a certain quantity or constant. If any of these forces were to be dialed the TINIEST bit different, our universe would not permit ANY life. And I don't mean, if you doubled or halved these forces that things would go sideways for us. I mean, if you changed one of them even a single percent, we all die.

For many of them, the amount of change which would be devastating to us is SO SMALL that there are not words to describe it. For one of these settings, the number of possible settings on the dial would be more than the number of ATOMS IN THE UNIVERSE (author's note: That is a lot). Turn the dial and all life ceases. Gravity is a bit more forgiving. Imagine that there was a ruler that stretched across the entire universe. Each inch represents a different possible setting for the gravitational constant. How much could you change the setting before life became impossible? Maybe two inches. You hit three inches and it's like this! KABLOOEY!!!!

In the minds of many, this fine tuning can only be the result of intelligent design (i.e. God). This argument is so powerful, and the conclusion so obvious that many atheists have been forced to theorize a super universe of infinite universes, so that our one fine tuned universe is just the happy accident that we fell into. “Yes, it is unlikely that we have the right settings,” they admit, “But someone had to get the right universe, and if we didn't, we wouldn't be here to wonder at how unlikely it was.” It's like the lottery. SOMEONE has to win, right?

TRUE STORY: One year, on my birthday, I got a lotto ticket in my birthday card. When I scratched off the ticket, I saw that OH HAPPY DAY I HAD WON A MILLION...!!!!

“Oh, wait... this is fake isn't it?”

“How did you know?” my friend asked me.

“Because I won,” I said.

What evidence do we have for the lotto being fixed? There is, as far as anyone knows, only one ticket, and we got it for our birthday. Those super universes full of other universes have never been seen. There is NO PROOF for their existence. The only reason they have been proposed is that some people don't like the obvious conclusion that comes from realizing how fine tuned our universe is. That many have proposed a “Many Universes” theory only goes to prove how strongly the Fine tuning argues for the existence of God and His having designed the universe. There is literally NO OTHER REASON this theory exists!

Let me sum up: A recognized fact leads to an unwelcome yet inescapable conclusion, so some invent a fiction for which there is not a shred of evidence. Remember when I said religion and science are not opposites? In this case, religion seems to have actual evidence on its side and atheism under the name of science has... X-Men comic books?

Hmmm....

For more info on this idea, please see Chapter Six of Lee Stroble's “Case for a Creator,” or search for Fine Tuning

(AKA The Teleological Argument) on his web site, [www.leestrobels.com](http://www.leestrobels.com), William Lane Craig's [www.reasonablefaith.org](http://www.reasonablefaith.org) or [www.answersingenesis.org](http://www.answersingenesis.org)

And tune in next time for more thought provoking good times on RENT A FRIEND 2000! But don't touch that dial- OR WE'LL ALL DIE!!!!

## Chapter Twenty Five: Give me a G! (The Amazing Gospel!)

OK, let's see here: We've taken Pascal's wager, met an elephant, we've thought (And therefore we are), we've had dinner with Hitler, and seen how nature and the universe at large prove the existence of God.

Whew! I don't know about you, but I feel like I've hiked all across the Metaphysical Map. I wonder how Dora the Explorer does it every day? That kid must be slamming cappuccino like there's no tomorrow. I'll bet that backpack of hers contains nothing but RedBull.



Now that we've seen why it makes sense to believe in God, the next logical question is "WHICH God?" The Hindus alone have 330 million of them (Which gives you a possible 900,000 holidays per DAY. The Hindu greeting card industry should be the wealthiest and most powerful in the universe!). Why should we take Pascal's God along with his wager?

I think the path we've already trod can tell us part of that already. Take the Kalam Cosmological argument for instance. It showed us how the universe is finite- meaning it doesn't have an eternal past. So, right away we can discount those faiths that require an infinite past, like Mormonism. Also, the creator of the universe is non-material. That counts out the Flying Spaghetti Monster (AKA Bruce). I think it also counts out Mormonism again. Those guys don't get a lot of breaks.

I could nit pick at the various religions of the world, but my time is better spent presenting the Christian faith. First of all, I am a Christian, so it wouldn't make much sense for me not to. Secondly, it saves a lot of time. If Christianity is

true, then the other religions and worldviews are wrong on those points where they disagree. I can prove one point instead of disproving a lot of others. That saves time and energy (although your mileage may vary).

Therefore, I am going to spend some time introducing you to the Christian faith, explaining what it is, and then showing the historical, literary, and metaphysical proofs for its validity. I will deduce the truth like Sherlock Holmes, and I will start by shouting like a cheerleader!

## ***GIVE ME A G!!!!***

G- God made you to have a personal relationship with Him.

O- Our sins separate us from God

S- Sin cannot be removed with good works.

P- Paying the price for sin, Jesus died and rose again

E- Everyone who trusts in Him alone has eternal life.

L- Life with Jesus starts now and lasts forever

What's that spell?

GOSPEL!

What's that mean?

Good News!

(Full disclosure- I stole this from Dare 2 Share <http://www.dare2share.org/gospeljourney/> or <https://www.lifein6words.com/>)

Admittedly, it's a little simplistic, but it's all of the basic ideas. If you want a more in depth slice of the theology pie, start reading some good books and downloading some good podcasts. I recommend the first four books of the New Testament. Then anything written by the Apostle Paul. Lucky for you, all of these writings are available in one handy, easy to access collection!

The Bible. I'm talking about the Bible. I hope that was obvious.

Now, if you got your theology from watching the Simpsons, you're probably asking, "Does the Bible really teach this? Doesn't it teach that you have to obey the Ten Commandments to get into heaven? Don't you have to wear a sweater and have perfect Sunday School attendance?"

Oh, you poor misguided souls. Don't worry. I'm going to show you some Bible verses that will astound you!

Here's Jesus talking about himself (The Son of God) to a religious bigwig in John chapter three, verses 16-18:

**“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.”**



And Paul writes about it in his letter to the Romans, chapter five:

**“God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”**

“OK,” you’re saying, “love love love. Apparently that’s *all over* the Bible, but what’s all this about not being able to pay for our sins with good works? Isn’t that what the ten commandments are for? Isn’t that why we do good works? Aren’t we buying the stairway to heaven?”

Read on, friends, and be AMAZED!

John 5:24 is Jesus talking about himself again;

**“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.”**

And then in John 14, verse six:

**“Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”**

What is the way to God? Jesus.

What is the truth that will save you from sin? Jesus.

Where do we get eternal life? Jesus.

*It’s all about Jesus.*

Still think you earn your salvation? Well, my man Paul has lots more to say on this subject. Check him out in Romans 3: 21-25:

**“But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.”**

Paul continues to explain this in Romans chapter 11, verse 6:

**“But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.”**

And then in Galatians 2:20 & 21 he’s all:

**“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.”**

And you can be all, OK Paul! We get it!

But he keeps going in Ephesians chapter One, verse seven:

**“In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace.”**

And before you can tell him that you seriously have it this time, the Ephesians are all, “Wait, what?” and you roll your eyes, but Paul is happy to keep on going in chapter two verses eight and nine:

**“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”**

At this point you might be thinking, “Woah! The Bible seems to say this over and over!” Yeah, it does. Just do a search for the word “grace” over at [biblegateway.com](http://biblegateway.com) and you’ll see it pop up nearing two hundred times across the New Testament (Depending on your translations of course).

Heaven is discussed, mentioned, alluded to, and shown in all kinds of ways. Here’s the important things to know: 2 Corinthians 5:1

**“For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”**

The tent is your body. God has a plan to give you something better when you are done with this tent. THAT one will last.

Ephesians 2: 4-6 says this:

**“God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”**

See? Our heavenly home is so secure through Jesus Christ, Paul talks about it in the past tense. We were SEATED with Him. We already have our eternal life and our eternal home. We’re just waiting to catch the bus to heaven. The only downside is, the bus is death- literally. But once you get there, you won’t mind. Besides, how bad is a bus ride when you are going home? Not too bad at all. Even if the bus smells funny and it’s a long, bumpy ride, you should look forward to catching that bus. There is going to be one sweet welcome home party when you get there.

Not saved? Don’t worry. It’s as easy as **A B C**.

**A** Accept that you are a sinner in need of God’s Grace.

**B** Believe that Jesus died for your sins and paid for them all, making you right with God, and that he rose again from the grave.

**C** Confess your faith.

(I suggest using Baptism AND your mouth, since the Bible tells us to do both.)

Let me delve a little deeper into each of these for just a moment:

Why should you accept that you are a sinner? First, because in Matthew 5:48 Jesus says, “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” If you need a checklist to see if you have fallen short of the glory of God like our man Paul

said in Romans 3:23, then you can always check the ten commandments. Have you ever lied? Stolen? Lusted? Taken the Lord's name in vain?

I know, you're probably thinking, "Hey, no one is perfect! Every person on earth does these things." Which is true. However, even if you demand we grade on a curve, you first have to admit that you're guilty of some of these things- and it gets worse when Jesus breaks it down in Matthew chapter 5 that we are considered guilty of murder if we choose to hate, and guilty of adultery if we choose to lust. And what REALLY spoils the curve is that God's standard is not other people- or, as we prefer to imagine- the WORST people. After all, we both know that, compared to some people, you are pretty good. But God's standard is His own holy righteous perfection- not other people.

Here's how I think about it: Have you ever apologized because you KNEW you had done wrong? Or have you at least ever KNOWN you SHOULD apologize because you had done wrong (even if you didn't do it)? Then you know you have sinned. Maybe you don't use the word "sin," but all it means is missing the bullseye of perfection. You have missed the mark, which, in Bible lingo means, you have sinned. And since you know you can't go back and undo what you have done, then it should make sense that you **Accept** that you are a sinner in need of God's Grace.

First, confess this to God in prayer. Prayer is nothing real fancy- it's talking to God. You don't have to know any particular religious words. Just come to your creator and king and tell Him you accept, you believe, and you confess it to be true.

Commit yourself to loving and serving God for the rest of your days, and he will never leave you or abandon you. Now, like a marriage, you haven't reached the finish line once you make this commitment- you have taken your first steps into a larger world. You are saved, but that is just the beginning of a new and eternal life. You're a child of God! You have an eternal salvation and a home in heaven. God almighty has adopted you into His family, so love your Daddy and make Him proud! This is where the good works come in. They don't save you any more than doing the dishes makes you more married, but when you love someone, you do what is right to show your love. That's all Biblical good works are.

And whenever our buses come for us, I'll be seeing you in heaven. THAT is gonna be sweet. The heaven part. The bus is still gonna be the bus. But I'm going to try and get a seat next to Dora. Maybe she'll pop open that backpack and give me something to keep me awake for the journey. I'm sure she has enough to share.

## Chapter Twenty Six: G, Davey, Who IS Mr. God Person?

To the casual observer, theology can seem like a dense underbrush of spiky vines, meshed grasses, towering trees, stinging insects, and near lethal allergens. This is how the rain forest in the Amazon Rain Basin appears to me.

I've not been there, but I spoke to a friend about it. She went to the Amazon to work on a medical boat, providing assistance to the poor villagers who live on the river. Apparently I was absolutely correct. It's a miracle that anyone survives living there. Their average stinging insect is the size of a single engine plane. To be fair, the Chicago Suburbs has all the allergens, stinging insects and humidity of the Amazon, but far more traffic due to construction, and where they have trees, we have political corruption. But I digress.



The many things said about God in the Bible can seem like a tangled mess. He is given a thousand different names, and it's hard to keep it all straight. I think this is why we all still know him simply as "God." It's a little easier to remember than "El Shaddia," or "Jehovah Mekoddishkem." Easier to spell, too.

At first glance, theology can be a bit overwhelming. However, once you get to understand it better, you will see not a tangled mess, but a collection of intertwined pieces, like the fabrics of a blanket or the parts of a symphony, or, if you're a nerd like me, the connections and inverse relationships of mass, size, ionization energy and metallic character across the periodic table of elements!

Oh... OK, I can see that you're not a nerd like me. How about, it's like the differing moves of the players on a football field running the same play- working together in harmony to score a goal unit?

Maybe I better just get to it.

In our acronym GOSPEL, we start with **G**- “God made you to have a personal relationship with Him.” The easiest thing to do is start at the start and work our way up.

The start is the beginning of the universe. The Bible’s first verse tells us that God made everything; **“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”** Time, space, energy, matter, the laws of physics, the three primary colors, the seven-day week, and all thirty-one flavors of ice cream were his creations. The first thing God does is create, and it’s an amazing story resulting in an amazing universe.

At the end of the week, just before he invents the weekend, God makes the first two humans. Genesis 1:27 says, **“So God created man in his [own] image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.”**

A lot of modern commentators (*And by that I don’t necessarily mean people who have read Genesis for themselves*) talk as though God may have started the universe, but the appearance of mankind came as a shock. They picture him walking through the garden of Eden one day saying to the angels, “My, I have been gone a very long time. It’s 13.7 billion years if it’s been a day. But I like what the laws of natural selection have done with the place. Wait! What are THOSE things? They’re like monkeys but... taller!”

The Bible tells us clearly that God not only intended to make us, but he made us special. God also intended us to be like Him in ways that monkeys, dolphins, and hamsters are not. This idea is a little foreign to our culture. In previous generations a married couple had children because they wanted to have a family, so they understood that God could have no needs yet desire to have children to love. Since the 1960’s people tend to have children for the same reason that they get parking tickets. *“It’s... a boy?!?!? But I just fed the meter! I gave it 75 cents not an hour ago! How did this happen?!?!”*

There are several ways in which the Bible tells us about God. One way is his many names, all of which tell us something about his character and relationship to us. For instance, El Shaddai means “Lord God Almighty.” That’s the shiny nameplate on the BIG desk.

Jehovah Rapha means “The Lord That Heals.” That’s good news whether you’ve got a broken heart or you’ve just tried roller skates for the first time. Jehovah Shalom means “The Lord Is Peace.” This makes sense for the creator of the weekend.

The name that really put Oprah off, according to her own personal testimony, is Qanna which means “Jealous.” At hearing this name, Oprah sorta switched sides and now bats for the other team, if you know what I mean.

Oh, no not like that. I guess you didn’t know what I mean. Or maybe you read more of those celebrity magazines than I do and... look, what I meant was, she is now NOT a Christian, but rather some kind of weird, self worshiping cultist.

But she simply misunderstood the meaning because of the English form of this word. In English, Jealous is the girlfriend who throws a public temper tantrum and accuses you of cheating because a pretty girl just asked you the time. In our common usage, jealousy is usually based on selfishness, or petty insecurity. However, when the word is used in the Hebrew it talks of God as a husband who desires a special and intimate relationship with his wife- one that no one shares. This is not based on insecurity but on a passionate desire for intimacy. Let’s face it, if you’re ok with

your wife having boyfriends and lovers, you're a pretty lousy husband.

God is like a Father because he made us, and we are made in his image. Our heavenly father loves us, provides for us, and teaches us right from wrong. God is more than just a father though. He is also like a husband. He wishes for an intimate, committed love from his people. He wants the other 'gods' of the world to look at the left hand of our heart and say, "Oh, leave that one alone- she's spoken for."

The piece of the puzzle to grasp today is this: God made everything that is, including you. God made you on purpose, and he has no intention to keep his distance. As a charming talking tomato once said, "God made you special, and he loves you very much." Hopefully, that should take the sting out of the theological thicket.

## Chapter Twenty Seven: The Burning Rubber Duck of Sin

Welcome back to the **GOSPEL!** To refresh your memory, here's the hot rockin' acronym that's been lighting up the top of the Pop Metaphysical Charts:

**G**- God made you to have a personal relationship with Him.

**O**- Our sins separate us from God.

**S**- Sin cannot be removed with good works.

**P**- Paying the price for sin, Jesus died and rose again.

**E**- Everyone who trusts in Him alone has eternal life.

**L**- Life with Jesus starts now and lasts forever.

So far we've taken a good look at the person we call "God." He made you to have a personal relationship with him. In a previous episode I unpacked some of his defining traits, but of course, I'm only scratching the surface. Summing up the eternal God in a couple of pages is like drawing New York City on a Napkin.

This week, we're going to take a look at the second letter in our acronym, whose name I am not allowed to say on account of it being copyrighted, trademarked, and owned by Harpo Studios. But I think you know the one I mean. You may remember this vowel from the start of the Canadian National Anthem, or from the end of the names of some of your favorite cereals and canned spaghettis.

### **"Our Sin separates us from God."**

One of the most unpopular concepts in the Christian faith is in this little phrase. People are simply offended by the word "sin." They feel that, when you call something a "sin," you are condemning it as being wrong, and saying it is something they should NOT do. The reason people feel this way is simple. It's because that's exactly what it means.

There are two kinds of sins: **Sins of commission and sins of omission** which are sins you commit by committing a bad deed and sins where you omit or exclude a good deed.

Let me put it in terms of rubber ducks.



A sin of commission would be putting your rubber ducky on the stove. The duck is meant to make bath time lots of fun, but you have put it over an open flame. Not only will you be grounded for touching the stove after your dad has repeatedly told you not to, but you have caused irreparable damage to your rubber duck and the smell of burning rubber will never come out of those kitchen drapes.

Your sin of omission is failing to put your rubber duck in the bathtub (like you were told to) so he could make bath time lots of fun.

You are SO grounded, young man. Go to your room!

What is a “sin” exactly? The term comes from archery. In plain English it means “to miss the bull’s-eye.” When you miss the bull’s-eye, it doesn’t matter how much or little you missed by. A miss is a miss. A near miss is closer than a far miss, but it’s still not a bull’s-eye. This is one of the reasons the Bible speaks of being in sin as being spiritually dead. You’re either alive (sinless and right with God) or you’re not (sinful and in rebellion against God). No one is “Kind of” dead or, despite what you may have heard from Miracle Max, “Mostly Dead.” Those in the grave can’t argue about who is more dead than who. It doesn’t matter how you die or when. Dead is dead. This is called “the transitive property of dead,” (Bogus Mathematical Theorems, S.Bad 2007).

About many sins, people will say things like, “How can it be wrong if it makes me happy?” or, “I’m not hurting anyone! Why is it wrong?” or, “Hey! If you’re not going to buy that, then put it down and get out!” Or maybe that only applies to video game cheat books. But I digress. The point is, there are reasons why seemingly harmless or even enjoyable things can be “sin.”



First, God as the all powerful, all knowing creator of all is our ultimate authority. Our Heavenly Father has the right to say the same thing our earthly fathers say to us all the time: ***“Because I SAID so! THAT’S why!”***

You simply can’t argue with that.

Closely related is the fact that we were made with a purpose. Our purpose is to be in a loving relationship with our creator God. Just as your relationship with your earthly dad suffers when you refuse to obey (*Not to mention the rubber ducks and kitchen drapes*), your relationship with God is damaged when you sin.

God made everything with its own true purpose. When we abuse those purposes, we are doing wrong and usually doing damage. A rubber duck is meant to be in the tub, not on the stove. Anything can be an example of this- take wine and cheese. Wine and cheese are both made by God to be enjoyed by us. When we have them in the right amounts, we fulfill those purposes and we are glorifying God by enjoying his gifts as intended. When we get greedy and abuse these gifts by having too much, we will get drunk and fat. This kills our brain cells, our liver, and our major arteries. What was supposed to bring us joy winds up bringing a heart attack or a night kneeling before the porcelain throne. Then we wind up featured on the TV show “Cops” and ashamed to show our faces at our high school reunion.

Also, the things we do have an effect on others. Jesus taught us that the two greatest commandments were to love God and your neighbors. We’ve already seen that sin hurts our relationships with God, but it also hurts our relationships with others. Just take a quick look at the Ten commandments and ask yourself, “Will *violating* these commands *help* any of my relationships?” I think you’ll find that choosing to lie, cheat, break promises, steal, and envy won’t result in group hugs and singing “Kumbiya” while holding hands. You’ll probably get punched. I’m just warning you.

C.S. Lewis, in his brilliant book “Mere Christianity” likens the human experience to a fleet of ships. A ship has a purpose. It is meant to stay afloat and carry passengers and cargo from one place to another. If it is used for another purpose, it is being misused. To fulfill this purpose, it must be working internally. This is why some good things like disciplines and attitudes which no one else sees are so important. They keep you working on the inside.

This serves a second purpose. It keeps you sailing in line with the others around you. If you’re a busted up, rusty ship, you’ll be running into other ships and you’ll both get damaged.

Third, you all need to be headed in the same direction and to the correct destination. If you sail together, but you wind up in Mozambique when you were intended to wind up in Brazil, the passengers will be planning a mutiny with those shuffleboard implements. The metaphor breaks down when you reach the shuffleboard elements, but I think you know where I’m going with this.

Just as setting fire to your rubber duck in the house will damage ducks and relationships, our sin separates us from God, as well as doing other damage. At this point in the story, we have to replace a rubber duck, kitchen curtains, and pay for the damages to the stove, which I assure you our meager allowance will NOT cover. Not only that, but we have a smacked bottom coming, and believe you me: It is coming. Can there possibly be a happy ending? If you were paying attention last time, you should have the hope that there can be. Your daddy loves you, and right now, that’s all you’ve got going for you, but between rubber ducks and getting grounded, it’s all you’re ever going to need.

## Chapter Twenty Eight: Bunny Poops Cannot Be Removed with Good Works

RAF2K: Welcome to Cooking with Rent A Friend! Today we're going to be making an easy recipe that everyone will love! We're going to be making some cookies. This is an old family recipe; it goes all the way back to our first parents Adam and Eve. But don't worry- this isn't Grandma Eve's Apple Cobbler Surprise!

[audience laughter]

We're making a batch of cookies for the King today, and he's going to be here in the studio to try them!

[audience applauds]

So we need to follow the recipe and do our best. First you will need a big bowl- this one is a "Lifetime". This bowl is big enough to put in a lifetime of ingredients, and it starts out completely clean. You have to keep out anything dirty or it affects the whole batch! Like it says on the box, it's not the size of your Lifetime that matters- it's what you put in it!

We're going to start with some common basic ingredients. Here's the flour of material existence, the eggs of biological life, and the sugar of self-awareness. Add a pinch of free-choice and some vanilla extract, and you've got the start of a really good batch of cookies!

There are all kinds of things we can add now. The toffee chips of fun, the strawberry bits of joy, or the caramel swirl of generosity. Let's start this batch with everybody's favorite- the chocolate chips of love! Here we go... Hmm... It doesn't look like there's a lot in there. I'd like it to really look full of chocolate chips, so I'm going to add some more. Where did I put...Here we go, I'll use the little coco puffs in this bag on the floor. There we go...

HAL [off screen]: Wait! Don't do that!

RAF2K: What's that, Hal? [puts handful into bowl and starts mixing]

HAL: Those aren't coco puffs.



RAF2K: Aren't they? My production assistant, Hal, tells me that those weren't chocolate chips or coco puffs. What were those?

HAL: [whispers quietly to RAF2K]

RAF2K: Uh huh... bunny cleaning day... right... OH! That bag was bunny litter? But they look a lot like coco puffs. Look, it's close enough. Small, round, brown... Look! Besides, it's MY bowl, I can put what I want into it. I only need to add another handful to get this to look right. [adds another handful] There, that's all I'm going to add. That's not a lot, and it's for a good cause.

HAL: Does the recipe allow.. uh.. substitutions?

RAF2K: I donno, let me check.....

HAL: Because I'm pretty sure it forbids the use of bunny poops at all, even to give the appearance of chocolate chips.

RAF2K: Hmmmm... Oh yeah, the recipe does say that- right here. "Do not add ANY bunny poops to this recipe." Weird. I even had it underlined. Ah well, I can fix this.

[Exit Hal]

RAF2K: To make up for the... uh... bunny poops... I'm going to add a half-cup of caramels and a half-cup of toffee chips. Oh, and here's more Chocolate chips! They were here the whole time! I'll add a full cup of those.... Like so... and the bunny poops are nothing more than a memory! Now we'll just preheat the oven to 350...

[Hal sneaks back out and whispers to RAF2k]

RAF2k: What, Hal?... He did not... He did? ... Hmmm... Apparently the King refuses to eat cookies with any bunny poop in it. Did he see how much caramel I put in there? And toffee and more chocolate chips? I mean, he can't mind a TINY handful of bunny poops when there's so much GOOD stuff in there... Really? What if I add marshmallows? No? Man... Let's just go to commercial...

***Cooking with Rent a Friend will be right back.***

Voice Over: From OT pictures comes Isaiah 64. He's a prophet from the east, come to tell the people that they have earned the wrath of God. They were a culture of religious people who thought their good works could remove their sins. They didn't see how their wickedness could infect even their goodness, but the prophet came to set them strait.

Isaiah: **All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags!**

Voice Over: Isaiah 64. See it for yourself. Playing now at all OT theaters.

RAF2K: Welcome back to Cooking with Rent a Friend. I'm making cookies for the King, who has joined us in the studio! [audience applause] I've been raiding the pantry and I'm trying to make my cookies acceptable to the King. Excuse me, your majesty, but what would I have to add to get you to eat these? I think I have strawberries in the fridge.

KING [off camera]: I'm sorry Rent a Friend, but there is nothing you can add to those cookies to make me eat them now.

RAF2K: Brown sugar? Blueberries? Raisins? Raisins look kinda... well, similar.

KING: It's not the appearance that concerns me. It's the substance. You put bunny poops in your bowl, and no matter what you add to it now, they will still be there. Your cookies are ruined and your bowl is dirty. The whole batch now has been tainted with poops. Your king cannot accept poop cookies, no matter how sincere the cook.

RAF2K: But... what am I gonna do? I only have this one Lifetime! Oh, man! I've ruined my cookies before they even baked! Can anyone help me! Can anyone take the poops out of my cookies?

KING: I can help you.

RAF2K: You? Oh, no, I couldn't ask you for help. You're the King! I'm supposed to make these for you. Besides, cleaning up after my messes is beneath you.

KING: My dear Rent A Friend, I'm offering my help to you. Here- I brought my own golden mixing bowl- it's an "Eternal Lifetime". Would you like me to help you?

RAF2k: Yes, sir!

KING: OK, good! Let me start with some flour...[the king goes about adding ingredients]

RAF2K: I have the recipe here.

KING: Oh, I don't need that. I wrote this recipe. I gave it to your grandmother and grandfather.

RAF2k: Really? I didn't know they knew you that well.

KING: Oh, sure. I owned that garden they worked in you know. I actually planted all of those trees myself.

RAF2K: Wow!

KING: OK, here's a clean bowl with some fresh new cookie dough in it. Now you can add some goodies into it.

RAF2K: Wow, I don't know how I can thank you enough.

KING: You can start by letting me wash these hands before you stick them into the bag of chocolate chips.

RAF2k: Oh, thanks! Hee hee! The King is washing my hands! Kinda tickles... OK everyone, we're about out of time for today. Tomorrow the King's first-born son is going to join us and show us how to make a delicious breakfast fish sandwich. Keep your bowl clean!

KING: And when you don't- call me!

RAF2K: And we'll see you next time on Cooking with Rent a Friend!

[catchy theme music and titles]

Today's show was brought to you by the GOSPEL, which means "Good News!" OT's Isaiah 64, and the letter S- "Sin cannot be removed with good works." This has been Cooking with Rent a Friend on the Rent a Friend 2000 Network.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

- John 3:16-17

# Appendix: LOGICAL FALLACIES

## Cheap Samurai Tactics #1

### P'shaw!

A few chapters back I discussed how Christians get called all kinds of nasty names, like “Arrogant” or “Close Minded,” on account of the fact that we label the things we believe as “True.” I know- the nerve of us.

Aside from the self-defeating and rather silly nature of this complaint, you'll notice that it is also an attempt to side against the idea without actually taking any pains to prove the idea wrong. Even if we agree that we are close minded and arrogant, that does nothing to prove that what we believe isn't still True. This diversionary tactic is one of the many devices which you may know as “Logical Fallacies” but which I like to call “**Cheap Samurai Tactics.**”

Cheap Samurai Tactics are, in short, bad arguments. It's the muscle you get when you don't splurge on the really good Samurai, and you wind up with the second rate, slightly used, discount warehouse Samurai. Like, you WOULD have hired Sanada Yukimura (1567-1615) if you had the money, but you don't, so you get Adam Sandler in hockey gear with a bucket on his head singing like the lunch lady, and calling himself “Samurai Steve”.

And he cheats because he doesn't really know what he's doing.

My friend, Captain Dan, would use this phrase to describe any kind of short cuts and cheating, but here I'm using it in reference to cheating in an argument or debate. The CST's are best used when you either know you are wrong but don't want to admit it, or you don't care if you're right or wrong, you just want to fight about something and don't feel like being bogged down by facts and reason. Perhaps it's because you're a lawyer and your client won't pay you if they get the chair, or maybe you're an advertiser who is being paid to sell something that serves only to irritate the people who buy it. Maybe you're just a jerk. Whatever the reason, there are CST's for you.

I have divided these devices into four helpful categories:

- 1. P'Shaw...**
- 2. Look Over There!**
- 3. Semantics**
- 4. Slight of Hand**

I present them to you so that you can be aware of them. If you find yourself on the receiving end of any of these CST's, just call a foul and move on. As you'll see, these are not arguments which warrant spending a lot of time refuting. Also, if you ever go into politics, law, journalism, marketing, and most kinds of sales, these might come in handy. Just check your scruples at the door.

I'll be including the TECHNICAL terms which is used to name these CST's where applicable, which I shall designate **TT** (For **T**echnical **T**erm). Let's look at the categories one at a time, starting with:

## 1. P'Shaw

In short: Mockery and Copping a “tude.” If you like sarcasm and name calling, or you get most of your facts from watching television or “Something I read online” (Though nothing as reliable as Wikipedia), this category is for you.

**A. Dismissing:** This is as simple as name calling. For example: *“That idea is stupid.”* The trick is, you aren’t disproving the concept so much as calling into question the intellect or character of the persons who accept it. Aside from “stupid” you can use any of the following: Ignorant, ridiculous, uninformed, anti-science, illogical, irrational, childish, brainless, idiotic, puritanical, out-dated, close-minded, bigoted, judgmental, or heartless. Most any negative adjective will do. The more emotional baggage the word has, the better.

A popular variation on this is attacking the person directly (TT: Ad Hominem) This has to be more subtle, because if you just launch into *“You’re a stupid doodie head!”* you’re not likely to impress anyone with your debate skills. A good variation would be, *“Only a stupid doodie head could possibly believe something that ridiculous!”* This way you have given them two options and are forcing them to choose- will you reject your position in favor of mine or are you in fact a stupid doodie head? Heads I win, tails you lose.

If you must you can level up by describing the person’s faults in some detail. The trick is to call into question the validity of a *position* by stating that the other person only thinks the way they do because of some obviously character flaw: *“You only think that because you’re (and the descriptor should be said with a tone of disgust) a republican (or) because you’re a middle class suburbanite (or) because you were home-schooled (or) because you’re a bourgeoisie capitalist pig!”*

If you do this right, it won’t matter what the facts are or why they really think what they think. No one will listen to them. This will remove from you the burden of being right, having real facts, or making any sense.

**Technically** this is the **Genetic Fallacy**, which means you are calling into question the truthfulness of a claim because you think you know the origin of the belief. It’s subtly different, but it’s almost always used as an attack on the person, so I consider it a type of Ad Hominem. That’s just how I roll.

**B. Use Ignorance as Evidence (TT: Arguing from Ignorance):** If you ask a question and the opposing side cannot answer it, act as though this proves that there is no answer. The hidden assumptions are 1. Your opponent is all-knowing, and thus a fact they don’t know CANNOT exist, and 2. No matter how absurd the question is or how trivial the answer would have been, this was (you will assert) vital to the defense of their position.

For example, in a debate about whether or not Abraham Lincoln was a robot, you can attack with a question like, *“IF Abraham Lincoln had a human mother, what was her maiden name?”* and when they answer, *“I don’t know,”* you can jump in with, *“Exactly! You don’t know because she didn’t have a maiden name, because she didn’t exist! Lincoln was a robot!”* and victory is yours.



**C. Use Popular Opinion (TT: The bandwagon fallacy/appeal to popularity):** The facts don't matter when you can appeal to common knowledge. Sigh, roll your eyes, and say something like, *"Everyone Knows that humans only use ten percent of their brains."* Of course, why you would choose to believe the collective knowledge of people who don't use 90% of their brains is beyond me.

The point is, you can assume the average beliefs of those around you to determine transcendent, universal truth, even if they failed the 8th grade. The best part is, you don't even have to ask anyone. You can just assume that, if YOU know something, pretty much everyone else knows it too.

Study this list of useful CST's and see if you can spot them being used. Just tune into one of those political talk shows and I'm willing to bet you won't hear anything else, save a few slogans and falsified statistics. Thank goodness for commercial breaks. Not that they're much better, but at least they're only 30 seconds each.

Next time I'll delve into the second category. 'Till then this is your Metaphysical Duck wrangler signing off from the narrow-minded and corrupt state of Illinois, which everyone knows is the former home of America's first robot president.

## **Cheap Samurai Tactics #2 Look Over There!**

Welcome once again to Cheap Samurai Tactics for beginners (Listed in your catalogue as CST 101, section 203). Cheap Samurai Tactics are just a form of cheating. Last time, I introduced you to the first of four categories of Cheap Samurai Tactics (CST's), and gave you the rundown on how to use the tactics within. Let's review the categories:



1. P'Shaw
2. Look Over There!
3. Semantics
4. Slight of Hand

Today we'll look at the second category:

## 2. Look Over There!

This is the Art of Misdirection. Technically these could all be considered "Red Herrings." That just means an argument is made to rabbit trail away from the actual topic and toward one where you look good or your opponent looks like a bozo. The key to these tactics is to change the subject without your opponent noticing that you have done so.

You don't have to lose an argument if you can start a new one when no one is looking!

**A. Discredit the Source:** If you can cast a negative light on the source of information, you can make the issue at hand guilty by association! For instance, if you could prove that recycling got its start with Attila the Hun, blood-thirstiest scourge of the 5th century, you could use that as an argument for the innate evils of reducing, reusing, and all that other stuff. Though, deep down, we all know that, were the devil of hell to say the sky was blue, the darn thing would still be blue. Just keep it under your hat.

**A.1/2- "You're Only Saying That Because..."** A variation on CST 2-A. is to attack the motivation of the person with whom you are debating. This is usually in the form of: "You're only saying that because..." And anything here will do. "...Because you're a bigot, because you're a Jew, Because you hate me, Because you're a Jerk, Because you're a republican, Because you're a Nazi, Because you're a Vegan, Because you're a man-eating killer clown from outer space, etc." Obviously the truthfulness of a statement has nothing to do with the motive the speaker has to share it, but the point of the CST's is not to make logical sense. It's to WIN WIN WIN!

Technically, this is a form of Ad Hominem- attacking the speaker instead of the idea. But who said there has to be anything neat and tidy about cheating? The point is, you are changing the subject without letting on that you are changing the subject.

**B. Discredit the Proponents or Beneficiaries:** If bad or foolish people agree with something, it must be bad or foolish. If it could be shown that the Ku Klux Klan preferred to travel by taxi, you'd have all the proof you need to denounce every cab in New York as racist. (Of course, everyone knows the KKK actually prefers to travel by bus, as it has more headroom for their big pointy hats. The same is true of witches, and a surprising number of ancient Egyptian deities.).



**C. Use a Resume as Proof** (TT: Appeal to Authority): Don't just use a source's credentials as a reason to trust them. Use it as proof that their ideas are true! Anyone with an MD, PHd, a DVD, or show on TV MUST be right about everything they say (provided it agrees with what you think, of course). And don't let yourself think they can only be all-knowing in their field of study! A British biologist can write books on theology if he wants to! Can the study of nucleotide base pairs really be THAT different from being an Orthodox Jew? I mean, the man went to COLLEGE for crying out loud! IN ENGLAND!

**D. Argue Against the Metaphor:** At some point your opponent will make use of an illustration to clarify a point. THIS is where you strike! As an example, it has been said that the way men think is different from the way women think: "Women's thoughts are like spaghetti, because they all intertwine, and men's thoughts are like waffles because they compartmentalize." This is where you would shoot back: "So you're saying that men's and women's minds are both made of starches and carbohydrates? You've just proven MY point, that men's and women's minds work the exact same way." And then you'd go home and sacrifice a goat at your shrine of Hillary Clinton to thank her for your victory.

This is technically a form of **the Straw Man Fallacy**, because you are arguing, not against your opponent's ACTUAL point, but some horribly mutated version of it. Straw man gets its name from a cute word picture- Imagine you have claimed you can defeat the World Heavyweight Boxing Champ. Someone calls on you to prove it, so to save your own life, you make a scarecrow and PRETEND it's the Champ, and smack it around for a while. If no one takes a close look or pays any attention, you can claim victory and head out for a celebratory ice cream sandwich. If someone notices the straw flying out of a limp and inert "Champ" you just pick another Cheap Samurai Tactic and change the subject as fast as possible.

**E. Focus on the Fringe:** AKA. Hasty Generalizations. In every group, category, or concept, there is a tiny collection of anomalies. If you can keep the focus on that tiny sample, you can deflect any facts which only relate to the 99% your

opponent dogmatically insists represents the issue. This is the way people pointed to George Burns and said, “He’s 105 and he smokes a cigar every day!” And to them, this was good evidence that smoking isn’t bad for you- in fact, maybe it is GOOD for you!

Then there’s the more than 1,000 deaths every day in this country that are linked to smoking. But I digress.

**E.2. The Parts= the whole:** This is known as “the fallacy from composition.” It is making the assumption that, because each part of something has some property, then the whole must also have that property.

For example- an elephant is made up of parts that I could easily eat within the span of ten minutes. Elephant toenail? Easy. Elephant eyelash? Just splash a little dressing on that and it’s gone. Elephant spleen? Serve it with a side of green beans and I’ll chow that down with time to spare. Therefore, since each part of an elephant can be eaten by me within ten minutes, it can be argued that I can eat the whole elephant in ten minutes. Just bring me the extra large bottle of barbecue sauce and have dessert ready in eleven minutes.

There are times when this kind of argument isn’t invalid. The key is to figure out if the whole really can have the property in question. If I say, “Each tile on the bathroom floor is blue, therefore the whole floor is blue,” this would be correct. And it doesn’t require a stomach pump when I try and prove it.

**F. Turn Facts into Bazaar Absolutes:** Like the previous CST, this works by making mountains out of mole-hills. Only, this time, instead of you focusing on the fringe, you’ll imply that your opponent is doing so. They may, for instance, admit that a college education isn’t 100% protection from becoming poor and homeless. This is where you quickly say, “You think people who graduate from college all wind up homeless? Or maybe you want us to believe that every pan-handler in the city has a PhD in reverse economics?” And in that precious second of stunned silence, you shake your head scornfully and walk off as though you’ve just won the argument. I think we can all admit that getting the last word is even better than being right.

**G. Feelings!:** You will have strong emotions related to certain topics (Or you can pretend to, if you take a few acting classes at your local community college). Nothing is easier than assuming that your feelings prove the truthfulness of something. This is the concept that most marriages are built on these days. This is one of several key reasons most marriages fail these days, but I digress.

My point is, if something makes you FEEL bad, it must BE bad! And if something makes you feel good, it must BE good! Of course, you’d never come out and say this, because you’d sound like some unicorn-fairy-rainbow-cloud-dancer from the 3rd grade. Focus on the feelings, let the rest be assumed. If you wanted to defend your position legitimately, you’d probably have you change your position first.

During the Obama administration America developed a new favorite pastime, far surpassing the watching football or baseball, which was “BEING OUTRAGED.” Knowing the details of an incident was unnecessary. The media would present some event, color it with emotional words, interview some emotional people, and the rest of us knew to be OUTRAGED at that person, group, or event.

Thank goodness for the media, or we’d have to decide on our own what to be angry at. Why, during the Bush Administration, not only did the average American have to decide on their own how to feel about an event, but they

could go LITERALLY WEEKS without being outraged. Can you imagine? Doesn't that make you REALLY ANGRY? Or are you some kind of bigot racist moron?

Did you see what I did there? It's really that easy.

Next time we'll learn how the pen is mightier than the sword, and how the tongue is like a spark that starts a terrible fire. In the meantime, your homework is to find ways to make use of these handy tools of deviance. And don't limit it to conversations. If you're losing at poker, just lay down a pair of matching cards and say "Go Fish." As my friend, Captain Dan, always says, "Win if you can, lose if you must, but always cheat."

## Cheap Samurai Tactics #3 Using Words as Weapons

Welcome back to Cheap Samurai Tactics, where you learn how to shake, rattle, roll, and do the grammatical twist it takes to never lose an argument, even if you're wrong, or simply have no idea what you're talking about. Nobody likes to be wrong, but let's face it, all of us will be wrong every now and then. This doesn't mean you have to admit to it! If you play your cards right you can still come out with the façade of victory. Even better than being right is winning an argument, or maybe just getting in the last word.

Frankly, sometimes you have to just take what you can get.



First we learned how to cover your tracks with a thick layer of attitude. Next, I showed you how to divert attention away from your shortcomings in fact, details, information, or brain power. Today, you'll learn how to use the spoken and written word to make the truth fairly unimportant to the outcome of a discussion. I present to you the third category of Cheap Samurai Tactics:

### 3. Semantics.

This is the art of wielding words as weapons. Not to be confused with Semitics, which are people of the Middle East, especially the Jews, semantics is playing with language. Used for good it leads to jokes and puns and songs. Used for evil it's the following Cheap Samurai Tactics.

**A. Be the Human Thesaurus:** If you can rename the terms of the discussion, you're halfway to winning the argument. Of course, a rose by any other name will still have thorns and will need to be handled carefully if you want to avoid puncture wounds. Calling something by a new name doesn't do anything but slap a new "Hello, my name is" sticker on the same old thing. This is the way a realtor can use the phrase "Nestled in the Swiss Alps in the crisp

mountain air, under showers of sparkling snow” when he could have said, “Wedged between some rocks in a frigid environment with a ton of sleet.” Which appeals to you more, nestled or wedged? (This is not a trick question).

This is very close to the fallacy of Ambiguous Terms, but it’s a step further. Instead of being merely misleading, you actually insist that the word now has a **TOTALLY** new meaning, and act all offended when your opponent insists on defining the word the way it has been for over 2,000 years. Then, blog or tweet about how they keep trying to get away with misusing that word.

Now we attack their upbringing or education.

**The Devil’s Inquisition:** (AKA: The **LOADED** question) Phrase an insult, insinuation, or misleading information as a question. In much the same way middle school kids try to pull off insults and slanderous lies as “I was just kidding,” adults take the grammatically diplomatic route and say “I was only asking.” If used properly, you can accuse someone of horrible crimes and “prove” that there is reason to believe your allegations.

It goes like this: “Is it true that you’ve never denied killing orphan kittens for Satanic cult rituals?” And most likely they’ve never been accused of such a thing, which means you’ll be able to demonstrate how they **NEVER** have denied these allegations. Whatever newspaper you work for won’t need that much detail in the pieces you write and you’ll have your headline.

**Sorta use Vagueness:** If you don’t want to get bogged down by facts and truth and all that nonsense, you can avoid being argued against by using only words and phrases with unclear meanings. It’s hard to prove someone wrong when you can’t prove that they’ve said anything in the first place. This is the key to advertising and political campaign speeches.

Use words like “Improved,” “Popular,” or “Change,” and phrases like “Scientifically proven,” or “Space Age.” As an example: For most of us, “Space Age” conjures up all kinds of images of silver rockets and men in white lab coats conducting experiments with the kind of machinery that Adam West used to play with in the Bat-Cave. The fact is, the Space Age is anything after 1945.

Just to name a few “space Age” inventions:

8-Track: Space Age.

The microwave oven: Space Age.

The A-Team starring George Peppard and Mr. T: Space Age.

“Scientifically proven” isn’t saddled with nearly as much exact definitive baggage as “Space age.” You can pretty much use that any time you want.

To conclude this educational supplement of useful, Space Age intellectual resources, let me ask you, “Did you know that it is scientifically proven that all readers of this blog become amazingly wealthy in a short matter of time?” I’m just asking...

## Cheap Samurai Tactics # 4 Sleight of Hand

Welcome once more to Cheap Samurai Tactics, the class where we teach you the dirty, underhanded cheats which will allow you to never lose an argument- or at least look as if you haven't. Our final category is the kind that earns clever fish related nicknames and Latin legal terms, almost none of which I know. Find a good lawyer and ask him all about it for \$200 and hour.



In the meantime, I present for you, our 4th and final category of Cheap Samurai Tactics:

**4. Sleight of Hand.** So sneaky, it's almost magic! Much like magic, the trick behind this set of tactics is making sure your opponent doesn't catch on to what you are doing. Keep them off balance, talk fast, interrupt them when they talk, and of course make use of the other three categories of Cheap Samurai Tactics. If you get really good at all of this, you may have a lucrative career in law, unless you're no good at Latin phrases.

**A. Circular Reasoning** (AKA Begging the Question): This classic move is an old school favorite. It involves making various claims that depend on each other for support. Like so: You assert A, and support it with B. When asked to defend B, you provide A as evidence. It goes like so:

You find your rubber duck is missing and believe your sister's friend, Stacy, is the thief. Your sister says, "Stacy could not have stolen your duckie." You ask how she knows this to be so. "Simple," she says, "because Stacy is my friend, and I would not be friends with a thief." The laugh track plays and you cut to commercial.

**B. Illogical Progression:** This is simply building a case by showing how a series of premises can lead to a completely unrelated conclusion. Where as actual logic would say, A, B and C, therefore, D, this tactic goes A, 3, and #, therefore Q. Here's a fun example you can use at parties to amaze your friends-

1. Vegans eat vegetables
2. Vegetables are green
3. Frogs are green

4. Therefore frogs are vegetables

5. Therefore, vegans eat frogs

**C. Correlation = Causation:** This is pseudo-science at it's finest. You gather data. You find some elements that show up together, then you decide that one causes the other. This can be good and superficial. Don't dig too much. If you could prove that your local football team wins games on nights when nachos outsell the hotdogs, that would be enough to decide that the secret to victory is selling more nachos. Get the cheerleaders to rhyme about nachos! Replace your mascot with Mr. Nacho! Your team will go all the way! Or at the least, you can claim they will. Don't put any of your own money on that trophy showing up though.

**D. Skip the Foundation:** When making a logical progression of ideas, you don't need to use proven or defensible premises if you can just be bold and focus on the conclusion. This is about attitude. Several modern smarty-pants philosophers have made the following argument: Miracles don't occur, therefore the Bible is not reliable, since it claims to record miracles occurring. You may be asking what these philosophers did to prove that miracles don't occur. If you are, you need to start over at the beginning of this paragraph. You don't need to over think CST's. They're pretty much as user friendly as they seem.

**E. Cut out the Context:** Taking things out of context is as old and traditional as any CST is likely to be. Context gives things their definition. Once you get rid of the context, you can make things say whatever you want. If you can't see the benefit of that, maybe the debate club is not the club for you. Give the swim team a try, or maybe cross-country. Or just go home and watch television.

**F. Unacknowledged self-contradiction:** This tactic is for sissies, wimps and real men of courage. Its graceful brilliance comes from the clumsy way it stems from a dim-witted lack of understanding. From personal experience I can tell you that, if I were to ever use this tactic, I'm sure it would probably work well unless it failed.

**G. The Red Herring:** This is, essentially, the whole category of "Look over there!" CST's. Or maybe I don't understand it. The point is, this one has a legit name which is funny and will compel me to look up its origin on Wikipedia. If I've been told right, the name comes from the concept of a fleeing criminal dragging fish across his trail to throw off the dogs that are sniffing him out. If you can get the dogs to sniff out the fish, you can get away with all kinds of nonsense. But then, you might have a flock of cats to deal with. So, there are risks, especially if you're allergic to cats. Metaphorically speaking. I am allergic to cats, so clearly I know what I'm talking about here.

**H. Answer the Question No One Asked:** I call this the Al Gore method. Back before he was selling environmental penance and indulgences, Al Gore was just another politician. Vice President or something like that. I've watched some unedited footage of him giving an interview, which included the time during commercial breaks. During this interview he was asked a question, and then answered a COMPLETELY DIFFERENT question. The reporter noticed this, and asked it again, and Al answered another DIFFERENT question. the reporter tried one more time and Al ANSWERED YET ANOTHER UNASKED QUESTION! He was asked the same question three times because he refused to answer the one he was *actually asked*. The best thing about this video clip was watching his political adviser actually TELL HIM TO DO THIS. "Don't feel like you have to answer the questions they ask you," this guy tells Al. I'm not making assumptions- this is actually on the video. It's the best collision of politics and postmodernism I've ever seen.



Now, I don't mean to imply that only Al Gore has done this. If you've seen a political debate, you've seen this. As for me, I will always think of Al when I think of this CST. And, may I add, this CST leaves absolutely NO carbon footprint.

**I. Argue against the Conclusion they haven't reached:** The trick here is to try to anticipate their train of thought to somewhere HORRIBLE. The simple formula is, "You said A, so obviously you are leading up to Q. Now, here is why Q is wrong and you are a twit." This is a good time to make use of CST 1A or 2A. Let's be honest- as a Cheap Samurai, there is never a bad time to start name-calling.

**J. Divert Attention to the Result of the Idea being True:** Like the previous CST, you need to follow the idea to it's logical (Or completely illogical) conclusion. "IF this idea is true, here is the result..." and of course this only works in your favor if the result is HORRIBLE. You can do this with your own ideas, but the result is magically delicious! Like this: "I'm supporting recycling because, at the rate recycling technology is improving, we'll soon be able to power all of Los Angeles with the energy we save by recycling a single beer bottle. If this is true, it will solve all of the world's problems, including plaque and dust and mosquitoes."

Ok campers, there's the complete collection. Now you are ready to go out there and be a cheating, deviant weasel. Get the last word! Win every argument even when you have NO IDEA what the conversation is about! And most importantly, don't tell ANYONE that I had anything to do with this. The last thing my credibility needs is to be linked to something ridiculous like this.

Hey, see that red fish over there?

I have to go now.