

Doctrine of Apologetics

The Reliability of Sense Perceptions

1. The reliability of sense perception is essential in Biblical apologetics.
2. David Hume, in his inquiry into causality, made some important distinctions about observation.
3. Hume spoke of Customary Relationships, or, Contiguity Relationships. That which is next to something else is contiguity to it, such as a property line joining another piece of property.
4. We see events following one another, and assume that one thing follows another
5. But what about the unseen forces which influence us to believe what we believe?
6. Causal thinking is at the heart of philosophy. Causality is at the heart of medicine, biology, physics, and astronomy. Causal thinking is at the heart of natural science.
7. David Hume (May 7, 1711 – August 25, 1776) challenged the assumption of causality. He used the pool table analogy. The arm moves the stick that moves the ball. But, no one sees the transfer of force. What is seen is one thing following another. Hume argued that we do not see causality. We assume it.
8. In logic there is the fallacy of thinking, “after this, therefore, because of this”, meaning that just because something happens after something else, does not mean that what preceded it was the cause.

Special Note.

A farmer woke up with the sun shining in his eyes when the rooster crowed. He was tired of this and decided to kill the rooster to stop the sun from shining in his eyes. He assumed that because the rooster was crowing the sun was coming up.

9. Just because one thing follows another, it cannot be assumed they are connected causes.
10. Some people believed that Hume demolished the Law of Causality, which he did not do.
11. Hume did conclude that he could not know ultimate causality, but he did not disprove there is no ultimate causality. He did not disprove God.
12. What David Hume did contribute to human knowledge is its limitations. We must be more humble in the face of this limitation.
13. The Law of Cause and Effect is not to be jettisoned, because indeed, if something is caused, it is the effect of something upon it. If the universe exists, and it does, something, or Someone, caused it to come into existence as an effect.

14. Our senses do not have perfect perception of reality, which is why we have telescopes, microscopes, and precision machinery. They all heighten our perception of reality.
15. There are limits to our powers of perception. An oar can look bent in the water due to light refraction. A thumb can distort depth perception and cover up a great work of art when the hand is held up.
16. There are unseen forces at work, not the least of which is God.
- *Acts 17:28 For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.*
17. The power of God is invisible. However, without God's power, we cannot even open our fingers to drop a piece of chalk. In Him we live and move.
18. There can be no power without God. Yet, because God is invisible, no amount of empirical research will get to the heart of God. It is only by divine revelation that we learn about the essence of God.
- *Hebrews 11:27 By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.*
19. In matchless grace, in Christ, God has revealed Himself to us.
- *Colossians 1:15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: 16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:*
20. Because David Hume tried to make a graveyard of British empirical data and science, by showing the limitations of sense perceptions, he took it to a place of absolute skepticism.
21. The skepticism of Hume awakened in Immanuel Kant the need to rescue science through the reliability of sense perception with a critique of pure reason. If Hume is right, not only is Christian theism destroyed, all of science is destroyed as well, for it depends on trusting the senses.
22. While human senses cannot give a comprehensive view of reality, they remain the only link the human has to the invisible God.
- *Romans 1:20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:*
23. The senses are the only link the mind has to the world, and to other humans.

24. What is mind? It is no matter. What is matter? It is no mind. The point is that there is a fundamental difference between corporate reality and that which is nonphysical.
25. While the brain gives rise to thinking, it must not be concluded that thinking is physical. Our thinking, our conscious awareness of things, cannot be perceived except through our senses.
26. Therefore, as limited as our senses may be, it is the only avenue we have, and so we must trust them.
27. A person can retreat into one's own mind and perceive of things that may or may not be true, but the only verification will be through the senses.
28. By trusting our senses, and our rational thoughts, the Christian is guarded from human error.
 - *2 Peter 1:16 For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.*
29. The Scriptures authorize the basic reliability of sense perception.
 - *1 John 1:3 That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.*
30. The assumption that we can see causal relationship in the world is scripturally valid.