

Doctrine of Four Steps Backwards

1. Epistemology is important in defending the Christian faith.
2. The term “epistemology” is that subdivision of philosophy which focuses attention on the basic question, “How do we know what we know?” “How can we know, verify, or falsify, claims to the truth?”
3. Epistemology tries to substantiate some claim to the truth. We say something, and a person responds by saying, “How do you know that?” The answer is what is meant by epistemology.
4. When a statement is made about God, a skeptic might respond, “How do you know that?”
5. Some people believe that the only knowledge, which is true knowledge, is that which can be tested through one of the five senses. The demand is for empirical data.
6. Another person, from Missouri might say, “I am not going to believe something even if I see it, unless you can determine its certainty to me through mathematics.” Eyewitnesses to an event are often mistaken. People think they see things that are not true. Therefore, only rational evidence is valid, the type of rational conclusion you get in saying $2 + 2 = 4$.
7. The emphasis on the senses, the emphasis on formal reasoning, are valid, but the question still remains as to the steps necessary to defend the Bible, which is based on revelation.
8. What are the elements necessary to know that something is true?
9. Some people argue that the only valid evidence for the truthfulness of the Bible is that which is rooted in historical evidence. That would satisfy the person demanding empirical data.
10. Others say the only real way to understand the Bible, at least its teachings about God, is through rational deduction, beginning with the presupposition that God does exist.
 - *Hebrews 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*
11. The task of defending the biblical teaching about God encounters some formidable atheists, whose challenges must be answered.
 - John Stuart Mill
 - Karl Marx
 - Jean Paul Sartre
 - Albert Camus
 - Robert Ingersoll

12. The opponents of theism establish their case through a pattern. They attack four epistemological thoughts, or four principles of knowledge.

- Law of Contradiction
- Law of Causality
- Basic Reliability of Sense Perception
- Analogical Use of Language

Special Note.

In response, the Christian must learn to never surrender or negotiate any of these four lines of reasoning, lest they give ground to the non-believer.

13. When responding to the criticism of the atheist, the Christian should be familiar with what the Scriptures assume, for it is the Bible which is the final authority for our faith.

14. While the Bible is not a textbook on epistemology, we do see in the Bible, basic presuppositions in communicating its contents. These presuppositions come from God, and are built into the heart of humanity.

15. In the Bible there is a passive agreement with the Law of Non-contradiction. In other words, God cannot lie. He cannot contradict Himself.

- *Numbers 23:19 God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? Or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?*

16. When the atheist says there are contradictions in the Bible, a defense must be made for the Law of Non-contradiction.

17. In the Bible there is a passive agreement with the Law of Causality. The miracles of Christ testify to the Ultimate Cause of all things, God.

- *Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the Heaven and the earth.*
- *John 1:6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.*
- *John 14:11 Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake.*

18. When the atheist says that the universe caused, or created itself, a defense must be made of the Law of Causality. For everything caused, there must be something that caused it, for “out of nothing, nothing comes.” The Bible assumes a divine cause for all the miracles, and that cause is God.

19. In the Bible there is a passive agreement with the Reliability of Sense Perception. The resurrection of Christ is based, not on deduction, but upon sense perception.

- *1 John 1:1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life.*

20. When the atheist says that the senses cannot be trusted, the Christian must defend the reliability of sense perception. It is conceded that there are limits to sense perceptions, but they are still useful and valid. We know our limitations, and so use the microscope, and the telescope, and other instruments that enhance our sense perceptions.

Special Note.

The bent oar analogy is often used by atheist to show how untrustworthy senses can be. You put an oar in the water, and it looks bent, but it is not.

21. In the Bible there is a passive agreement with Analogical Use of Language. The mind can understand an analogy. Though God is different from us, the language of analogy is adequate to describe, or speak meaningfully about God.

- *Genesis 1:26 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.*

22. When the atheist attacks the language of Scripture, the Christian must defend the Analogical Use of Language. God is not the figment of man's imagination, and a reflection of his humanity exalted, like the Greek gods of old.