

Evidence For God From Logic

The Transcendental Argument



The Necessity of Logic

All of us get up every day and live our lives without giving much thought to the physical and non-physical laws of the universe that have to be in place in order for us to exist and live in our world. We take for granted the law of gravity, for example; it doesn't really matter to us how this law exists or what forces lie behind the law. We simply know that we live in a world where gravity is a reality. In a similar way, there are many conceptual truths that exist in our universe that we take for granted! These conceptual truths also order and establish our world and limit our exploration and experience of all that we see and understand. One area of conceptual truth is simply the body of concepts that we call the Laws of Logic.

All rational discussion, for example, requires the pre-existence of logical absolutes. You would have a hard time making sense of any conversation if there weren't Laws of Logic to guide the conversation and provide rational boundaries. Here are three of the most important Laws of Logic that you and I use every day to engage each other rationally:

The Law of Identity

Something is what it is. 'A' is 'A'. Things that exist have specific properties that identify them

The Law of Non-Contradiction

'A' cannot be both 'A' and 'Non-A' at the same time, in the same way and in the same sense

The Law of Excluded Middle

A statement is either true or false. There is no middle position. For example, the claim that "A statement is either true or false" is either true or false!

These are simple laws; we use them all the time. These logical 'rules' are necessary in order for us to examine truth statements and point out when someone is reasoning illogically. These are important laws and they are known as the First, Second and Third Laws of Logic. We use the Laws of Logic all the time; you couldn't even begin to read and reason through this website if you didn't use these laws. In fact, you've never had an intelligent, rational conversation in your entire life without using these laws. These laws TRANSCEND us as humans (they apply to all of us in the same way, regardless of location, culture or time in history). So the question we have to ask ourselves is simple: "Where do the transcendent laws of logic come from?"



An Evidence for the Existence of God?

Most of the atheists that I know like to think that they are actually far more rational than Christians. But they are basing this 'rationality' on their command of the Laws of Logic. Can they even account for these transcendent laws without the existence of a transcendent God? Let's see. Let's begin by presenting the Transcendental Argument in its complete form and then we'll examine some atheistic responses to the argument:

(1) The Absolute Laws of Logic Exist

We cannot deny that the Laws of Logic exist. In fact, any ‘reasonable’ or ‘logical’ argument that these laws don’t exist, requires their existence in the first place

The Absolute Laws of Logic Are Conceptual Laws That Govern Mental Processes

These laws are not physical; they are conceptual. They cannot be seen under a microscope, and they do not govern matter. They are conceptual laws that guide logical thought processes

The Absolute Laws of Logic Are Transcendent

And these laws transcend space and time. If we go forward a million years or backward a million years, the laws of logic still exist and apply!

The Absolute Laws of Logic Pre-Existed Mankind

The transcendent and timeless nature of logical laws dictates that they pre-exist mankind. Even before men were ever able to understand the law of non-contradiction, “A” could not be “Non-A”! The law was discovered by humans, not created by humans.

(2) All Conceptual Laws Reflect the Mind of a Law Giver

Conceptual laws require lawgivers. We know this from our common experience in the world in which we live. The laws that govern our society and culture, for example, are the result and reflection of ‘minds’. But more importantly, the conceptual Laws of Logic govern thought processes and rationality, and for this reason, they require the existence of a mind.

(3) The Best and Most Reasonable Explanation for the Kind of Mind Necessary for the Existence of the Transcendent, Absolute, Conceptual Laws of Logic is God

The only lawgiver that can account for non-physical, transcendent laws that preexist mankind must also be a non-physical, transcendent and pre-existent mind. This description fits what we commonly think of when we think of a creator God.

The Christian Worldview has the ability to ACCOUNT for the existence of the transcendent Laws of Logic. Christianity proposes that God exists and that he is the absolute, transcendent ‘standard’ of truth. The transcendent Laws of Logic are simply a reflection of the nature of this absolute God. Now it’s important to understand that Christianity does NOT propose that God CREATED these laws. They are simply a reflection of God’s thinking, and for this reason, they are as eternal as God Himself. You and I, as humans, have the ability to DISCOVER these laws because we have been created in the image of God, but we don’t create or invent the laws. These laws are evidence that a transcendent God exists because there is no other satisfactory way to account for the existence of transcendent laws without the existence of a transcendent law maker. But this last statement is hotly debated by atheists. Many would argue that the Laws of Logic can be accounted for in some other way that does not necessitate the existence of God.



Is There Some Other Explanation?

When the Transcendental Argument is offered to those who doubt the existence of God, a number of objections are usually raised in an effort to find some other explanation for the Laws of Logic. Let's examine some of the objections to see if any of them might truly be a viable alternative to the existence of God.



1 Objection:

Aren't the "Laws of Logic" simply the 'brute' characteristics of existence? Both material and immaterial things must abide by boundaries of existence in order to exist in the first place. The "Laws of Logic" are simply among the boundaries and characteristics of existence. They are not transcendent laws from a transcendent mind; they are just a few of the natural boundaries of existence.

Both the theist and the atheist would agree that the Laws of Logic are brute 'somethings'. The atheist would claim that Logic is a brute, innate FACT of existence, while the theist would argue that Logic is a brute, innate reflection of the nature and thinking of God. In either case, these laws would have to be ETERNAL, UNCAUSED and NECESSARY by nature, right? Nothing can exist without the simultaneous existence of these laws. But let's now look at how both sides ACCOUNT for their existence:

The Atheist

The brute Laws of Logic simply exist. They are eternal and uncaused. Nothing can exist without them. That's just the way it is.

The Theist

If there is any God at all, He would, by definition, be eternal, uncaused, omniscient and omnipotent; He would be the all-knowing and all-powerful God that is the necessary, uncaused first cause of all matter, space and time. He would have attributes like thoughts, character, essence and nature, and if He is truly as powerful and all-knowing as we say He is, these attributes would be 'perfect' (an all-powerful and all-knowing God has the power to eliminate imperfection!) Logic then is simply an attribute of God's perfect existence; it is innate and intrinsic to God's own perfect thought processes (God's thoughts would, by necessity, be consistent within Himself). God does not 'create' these Laws of Logic, they are an innate and immutable aspect of His nature. As God is necessary for all else to exist, so are the Laws of Logic. They are merely a reflection of God's nature, and they permeate all of His creation.

Now look at these two responses for a minute. Both the atheist and the theist agree that 'something' is eternal, uncaused and necessary. But when the atheist says that the Laws of Logic 'simply exist', he is really 'begging the question'; he's not providing an explanation for their eternal, uncaused and necessary existence (just saying they exist does not provide us with an accounting of their existence). In addition, the atheist fails to explain how these laws can be eternal and uncaused and what role they play in causing all other

contingent realities. The theist, on the other hand, can account for the existence of the Laws of Logic by pointing to the existence of an omniscient and omnipotent 'uncaused first cause' that possesses perfect rationality (by virtue of His limitless power) and can also act as the first cause of all other contingent creations.



Objection:

Aren't the "Laws of Logic" simply the result of observations we make of the world in which we live? We discovered the laws of physics from our observations of the natural world; can't we discover the Laws of Logic in a similar way?

Remember that the Laws of Logic are conceptual. They only exist in the mind. They don't describe physical behaviors or actions of matter, but instead describe 'truth'. The Laws of Logic are statements that deal with conceptual patterns and processes of thought. Now let's think about the analogy to physics for a minute. Newton's three Laws of Motion (as an example) may be conceptual as statements, but they describe actual physical behaviors that we can observe. This is an important difference relative to the Laws of Logic. Logical absolutes (especially those that have to do with mathematics) cannot be observed and do not describe the behavior or actions of material things because the Laws of Logic exist completely in the mind.

Now let's take a look at an example that an atheist might present as proof that we learn the Laws of Logic from our observations of the natural world. Someone might argue that our careful observations of a sea shell, for example, can reveal to us a Law of Logic. Observing that the shell does nothing but exist as a shell (it is not a fish - nor does it ever become a fish) we might then posit and formulate the Law of Identity or the Law of Non-Contradiction. From this simple example, the atheist will claim that Laws of Logic can be discovered from observations of matter.

But let's think carefully about this. Yes, it is correct to say that the shell does not change. And yes, it is correct to say that we can observe this physical reality. But we then do something very interesting; we assign a logical absolute to the observation we just made. We assign something that is conceptual (and requires a mind) to our observation of matter. But the mere fact that we made an observation and then assigned a logical absolute to that observation does not then ACCOUNT for the existence of all logical absolutes in the first place. The fact that our observations SUPPORT the PRE-existence of the logical absolute does not mean that our observation ESTABLISHES the Law of Logic. Can you see the difference? We don't form the Law of Logic from the observation, we instead confirm the pre-existing logical truth with our observation.



Objection:

Aren't the Laws of Logic simply human conventions?

When people make this kind of objection, they are typically referring to a 'convention' as a 'principle that everyone has agreed on'. But if Laws of Logic

are simply ideas about truth that people have agreed on, two things are required before we could ever have a single Law of Logic: people, and agreement! Now think about that; are we really saying that the Law of Identity (for example) did not exist before people were here to think it up? Are we really saying that prior to the existence of people “A” could be “Non-A”? And we all recognize that people disagree on what is true and untrue. We disagree with each other and our positions often contradict each other. How then, can the Laws of Logic be ‘transcendent’ unless they exist for all of us, whether we agree with them or not? If the Laws of Logic are merely agreed upon conventions, they cannot be absolute because they would, in essence, be subject to a “vote”; the laws could be changed if enough people agreed!



Objection:

If God created the Laws of Logic, then they are dependant on God. They are not ‘necessary’ truths but ‘contingent’ truths, and this means that they are not foundational to the universe. And if God ‘created’ the Laws of Logic, wouldn’t this mean that He could change them whenever He wanted? Couldn’t God then arrange things so that “A” is also “Non-A”? After all, He created the Laws, so He should be able to change them! But the idea that “A” could also be “Non-A” is crazy and leads us to conclude, therefore, that Logic is not actually dependent on God at all.

Once again, we need to remember that, as Christians, we are not claiming that God created the Laws of Logic. It is not our position that He created something with particular properties, so He could therefore change these properties. Instead, we believe that the Laws of Logic are simply a reflection of the thoughts of God, and as such, they reveal His logical, perfect nature. We understand that God is limited by His own nature; He is not self contradictory. Just as there is no such thing as a ‘square’ circle (because this violates the nature of what a circle is all about), God cannot exist outside His nature, which includes the nature of His perfect thoughts. Logic is necessary simply because God is the necessary Being that He is. The Laws of Logic are absolute, unchangeable, internally consistent and transcendent simply because God Himself is absolute, unchangeable, internally consistent and transcendent.



Objection:

Aren’t there different kinds of Logic? If this is true, there are a variety of differing views and laws, so the idea of transcendence is not really true, and there is no need, therefore, for a transcendent source of these Laws.

While it is true that there are different categories of Logic that apply to different aspects of propositional truth, mathematics and reasoning, the basic underlying principles of Logic remain intact. In addition, it’s true that many ‘laws of thought’ have been proposed over time by great thinkers (i.e. Plato, Aristotle, Locke, Leibniz, Schopenhauer, Boole, Welton, and even Russell), but these laws merely reflect, in one way or another, the same universal and absolute logical truths that are pre-existent. In essence, we continue to find ourselves restating and reformulating the same Laws of Logic over and over again. When an atheist says that “there are different kinds of logic” he is failing to see that the

underlying logical absolutes remain constant and the existence of these universal absolutes has not been explained by atheism.



So, Are We Being Consistent?

Maybe by now your head is starting to spin as we think through the nature of transcendent principles, trying to account for them and trying to decide why any of this should matter to us in the first place! But these are important issues because they help us to form our foundational view of the world. In the end, each of us wants to live in a way that is consistent with our own worldview, so we need to begin by understanding what we believe and why we believe it! Only then we can ask ourselves the important question: “Are we living and behaving in a way that is consistent with what we say we believe?”

Let me give you an example. Let’s say that you and I are sitting on the beach. We hear the sound of an airplane overhead, but we ignore it. Later, we look up and see cloudy formations in the sky, forming the words, “DIAL *88 TO WIN \$1,000,000”. I say to you, “Wow, look at how well that sky-writer wrote that sentence!” You look at me with a disgusted look on your face and say, “What makes you believe that a sky-writer was involved at all? Those may simply be clouds that just happened to form the shapes of what appear to be letters!” I respond, “Are you kidding? Didn’t you hear that airplane earlier?” You’re unconvinced, “You and I never actually SAW the sky-writer as he was writing the letters,” you say, “So you really don’t know if those are written words or just natural clouds! In fact, I think those are simply clouds.” I think you’re acting irrationally, but I do have to admit that we didn’t actually SEE the sky-writer write the words in the sky. I do, however, believe that this is the most reasonable and logical conclusion from the evidence and my ‘sky-writer theory’ seems far more likely from the standpoint of probability and far less subjective than your ‘accidental cloud’ theory, but I remain silent at this point. Minutes later, I watch you as you pull out your cell phone and dial *88. “What are you doing?” I ask. You respond, “Well, I can really use the \$1,000,000!” This is ridiculous. I say, “Just moments ago you told me that those words were just accidental cloud formations and now you’re dialing *88 as if the words were written by a sky-writer!” Do you see the problem here? In this simple illustration, it is clear that one of us is acting in a way that is inconsistent with our own view of how those words came to be. You are claiming that they are accidental and have no meaning, yet dialing the cell phone as if they DID have meaning. See the inconsistency?

In a similar way, if the transcendental Laws of Logic exist because a transcendental God exists, we cannot then use these laws to argue ‘rationally’ that there is no God in the first place. To do so is just like arguing that the words in the sky are accidental clouds, and then acting upon what these words are saying as if they were placed there by a sky-writer. When atheists use their reasoning ability to examine the world and draw conclusions, they are first assuming and presupposing that there is a rational basis to the universe. They are presupposing that the Laws of Logic exist and are transcendent. But atheism as a world view cannot account for the transcendent Laws of Logic that it employs to draw conclusions and make arguments in the first place. In other words, atheists must dip their feet in the rational, logical constructs and principles of theism in order to attempt to rationally deny theism! Do you see the inconsistency here? Rationality and logic exist and can only be accounted for in a theistic worldview. When atheists use logic to try to disprove God's existence, they are assuming absolute Laws of Logic; they are borrowing from the Christian worldview.



Another Important Evidence

The transcendent Laws of Logic can best be accounted for in a theistic worldview, and you and I can be consistent in our behavior if we recognize that the nature of logic dictates the existence of God. The transcendental evidence for the existence of God is a powerful addition to the circumstantial cumulative case for God's existence, and the Laws of Logic make it possible for us to reason about God's existence in the first place.