THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL SPIRAL

Transcendental Arguments for Christian Theocentric Realism from the Possibility of Inference to the Best Explanation

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Inference to the Best Explanation is eminently important in our modern lives. We use it in our scientific investigations to decide between competing theories of the universe; we use it in epistemology to assess warrant or justification for important beliefs; we use it in our medical practices to diagnose patients and save lives; we use it in our justice system to solve crimes and convict murders; we use it in religious debates to argue important theological points, which might determine a soul's eternal destination; and most importantly, we use it to find out what happened to that last piece of deep-dish pizza which we were saving in the refrigerator.

But while the Inference to the Best Explanation is often recruited as the workhorse in our investigations, I propose that an analysis of what makes the Inference to the Best Explanation possible is an equally fruitful endeavor. In this paper I will argue that three necessary preconditions must obtain in order for the possibility of Inference to the Best Explanation: the principle of induction, the law of non-contradiction, and the ethics of inference. I will then argue that these three preconditions are uniquely satisfied within the Christian world-and-life view, so that ultimately, the Triune God of Christianity is the necessary precondition for the intelligibility of the Inference to the Best Explanation. Thus, those who consider the possibility of Inference to the Best Explanation ought to affirm Christian Theocentric Realism, i.e. they ought to hold belief in the Triune God of Scripture at the center of one's world-and-life view.[1]

Many excellent Christian philosophers and theologians have chosen the *direct* method of arguing for the existence of God through a particular application of the Inference to the Best Explanation[2] (IBE from now on), or through a more wholistic IBE approach known as

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[1] Here I borrow "theocentric realism" from James Anderson, *David Hume* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2019), 111.

[2] William Lane Craig uses IBE specifically to argue for the hypothesis that "God raised Jesus from the dead", though he refers to himself a classical apologist rather than a cumulative case apologist. "Classical Apologetics" in *Five Views on Apologetics*, gen.ed. Steven Cowan (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 52.

Cumulative Case Apologetics.[3] In this paper, however, we have opted for an *indirect* method of argumentation. We will be analyzing the necessary preconditions which undergird the possibility of IBE. If successful, this argument will demonstrate that in order to use IBE, either in favor *of* or in contradiction *to* the existence of God, one must- at least tacitly- presuppose God's existence, and specifically the Triune God of the Christian world-and-life view.[4]

Transcendental Arguments

In using the indirect method, we are practicing what Cornelius Van Til described as "spiral reasoning". That is, we are starting with a given phenomenon of human experience and spiraling down to ultimate foundations in order to determine what must be the case in order for said phenomenon to be possible. Van Til argues that as finite humans we cannot help but start, temporally speaking, with our own human experience as a proximate starting point. But he goes on to argue, that our ultimate reference point, that by which we can make sense of our immediate/proximate starting point, must be God:

> According to the principle of Protestantism, man's consciousness of self and of objects presupposes for their intelligibility the consciousness of God. In asserting this we are not

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[3] Harold Netland indentifies the Cumulative Case approach with IBE and considers himself a proponent of IBE in lecture notes and personal correspondence, "Two Kinds of Arguments" handout. Likewise, Paul Feinberg identifies IBE with Cumulative Case apologetics, "There is a rational approach that has been called a variety of names, the *cumulative case approach* or the *inference to the best explanation approach* being the most common." And claims G.K. Chesterton, C.S. Lewis, Basil Mitchell, Richard Swinburne, and William Abraham, amongst others, as fellow practitioners of IBE. "Cumulative Case Apologetics" in *Five Views on Apologetics*, gen. ed. Steven Cowan (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 151. Kelly James Clark, a Reformed Epistemologist, also notes his own use of IBE in defending a cumulative case for God in his response to Paul Feinberg in *Five Views on Apologetics*, general editor: Steven Cowan (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000) 200. Most Christian apologists today would probably consider their approach some sort of Inference to the Best Explanation for the truth of Christianity.

[4] Following the editors of Herman Bavinck's *Christian Worldview,* we have opted for the outmoded "world-and-life view', because it provides richer connotations than the modern abbreviated "worldview" which has come to mean anything from a conceptual scheme to a biased ideology. "Herein, one finds a brief definition of *worldview*: it is an attempt to unify the self, the head and heart, on the ground of a primary agreement between religion, science, and philosophy. A world-and-life view means, in brief, faith seeking understanding. It is important to note that Bavinck's preferred term is *world-and-life*, rather than merely *worldview*. In a world-and-life view, the term *world* refers to the objective domain, reality outside the self; the term *life* refers to the human subject, the consciousness and its needs, desires, knowledge, and affections. A unified world-and-life view seeks justification for the unity between the subjective and objective." Gray Sutanto, James Eglinton, and Corey Brock, "Editors' Introduction" in Herman Bavinck, *Christian Worldview* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2019), 12.

thinking of psychological and temporal priority. We are thinking only of the question as to what is the final reference point in interpretation. The Protestant principle finds this in the self-contained ontological Trinity. By his counsel the triune God controls whatsoever comes to pass. If then the human consciousness must, in the nature of the case, always be the proximate starting point, it remains true that God is always the most basic and therefore the ultimate final reference point in human interpretation.[5]

Thus, according to Van Til, we must start with ourselves- our own consciousness, the phenomena of our first-person perspective- as a *proximate* starting point, but in order to make sense of our experience, we must engage in spiral reasoning down to God, the ontological Trinity, as the firm foundation for interpretation, our *ultimate* and *final* reference point.

Van Til identifies this spiral reasoning with transcendental argumentation, "If we begin the course of spiral reasoning at any point in the finite universe, as we must because that is the proximate starting point of all reasoning, we can call the method of implication into the truth of God a *transcendental method*. That is, we must seek to determine what presuppositions are necessary to any object of knowledge in order that it may be intelligible to us."[6] Likewise, Van Til notes that "A truly transcendental argument takes any fact of experience which it wishes to investigate, and tries to determine what the presuppositions of such a fact must be, in order to make it what it is."[7] By "presupposition" in these contexts, Van Til has in mind what Beaver and Geurts define as a "Strawsonian presupposition", named after philosopher, Peter Strawson (though originating with Gottlob Frege). "One sentence presupposes another iff whenever the

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[5] Cornelius Van Til, *Christian Apologetics* 2nd ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2003), 97.

[6] Cornelius Van Til, *A Survey of Christian Epistemology.*2nd ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1980), 201. Emphasis original.

[7] Ibid., 10. Roger Scruton, commenting on TAs says, "The word 'transcendental' needs some explanation. An argument is transcendental if it 'transcends' the limits of empirical enquiry, so as to establish the a priori conditions of experience." (Kant: A Very Short Introduction, 33). Like Scruton, Van Til also keys in on the transcendence etymology, which he then uses to argue that "A truly transcendent God and a transcendental method go hand in hand." *Survey*, 11.

first is true or false, the second is true."[8] Bas van Fraassen further elaborates on a Strawsonian

presupposition,

> The best known source for the concept of presupposition is the view (a.o. Strawson's)
> that a property cannot be either truly or falsely attributed to what does not exist. Thus,
> the sentence "The King of France (in 1967) is bald" is neither true nor false, on this view,
> *because* the King of France does not exist. The explicit characterization of *presupposes*
> is therefore given by
>
> > 1. *A* presupposes *B* if and only if *A* is neither true nor false unless *B* is true.
> >   This is equivalent to
> > 2. *A* presupposes *B* if and only if
> >   (a) If *A* is true then *B* is true,
> >   (b) If *A* is false then *B* is true.[9]

So, Strawsonian presuppositions are necessary conditions[10] for the possibility of

whatever presupposes them. In order for the statement "the King of France is bald" to be true or

false, there has to be a King of France; to claim that the statement about the King's baldness is

false because you are aware that there is no King of France, is to buy into the presupposition that

there *is* a King of France which makes the King of France baldness claim true or false. Instead,

van Fraassen argues, we should consider this a failure of presupposition, and the sentence

meaningless.[11] When we consider phenomena of human experience, there are Strawsonian

presuppositions which must obtain in order for our experience to be intelligible. Strawsonian

presuppositions are necessary conditions or preconditions: "something that must come before or

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[8]Beaver, David I. and Geurts, Bart, "Presupposition", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2014/entries/presupposition/>.

[9] Bas C. van Fraassen "Presupposition, Implication, and Self-Reference" in *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 65, No. 5 (Mar. 7, 1968), 137.

[10] "Necessary condition: That without which some other entity cannot be. In deductive reasoning, the consequent of a hypothetical proposition is the necessary condition of the antecedent of the proposition. In causal reasoning, the circumstance (or set of circumstances) in whose absence an event under examination cannot occur; its *sine qua non*." Irving M. Copi, Carl Cohen, Kenneth McMahon, *Introduction to Logic* 14th ed. (NJ: Prentice Hall, 2011), 620.

[11] This conception of presuppositions is not uncontroversial, there is continued debate between the ancestors of Russell and Strawson on whether the King of France sentence exhibits entailment or presupposition. Susan Haack also notes several ambiguities in Strawson's conception of presupposition and notes that one's acceptance or rejection of Strawsonian presuppositions will depend, in part, on one's answer to the question of bivalence. C.f. *Philosophy of Logics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 67-70.

is necessary to a subsequent result."[12] They are often tacitly assumed in our speech and should not be confused with what we will stipulate as "volitional presuppositions" which thinkers intentionally choose, hypothesize, or "presuppose" in constructing their world-and-life views. With this distinction in hand, it might be said that the goal of a Christian presuppositional apologist is to expose the discord between unbelievers' Strawsonian presuppositions and their volitional presuppositions in order to bring them to "epistemological self-consciousness,"[13] i.e. to help the unbeliever recognize that what they *must* presuppose is in conflict with the presuppositions they have *opted for*.[14] We then invite them to embrace the Christian world-and-life view, i.e. Christian Theocentric Realism, whereby they may find harmony rather than discord between what they must presuppose and the presuppositions of their world-and-life view.

Van Til's notion of spiral reasoning/transcendental argumentation, which appropriates Strawsonian presuppositions, continues to find harmony with the modern conception of transcendental arguments (TA from now on), as confirmed by TA theorist, Robert Stern, "We can start by asking: what makes something a distinctively transcendental argument? I would say that it must contain a *transcendental claim*, which states that something is a necessary condition for the possibility of something else, where the necessity in question is less than logical and more than empirical."[15] But while Stern confirms Van Til's understanding of TAs, he goes on to make an important distinction which was unavailable to Van Til, as it has arisen only recently in modern TA theory, the distinction between "deductive" and "retorsive" TAs. According to Stern, a deductive TA is:

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[12] https://www.dictionary.com/browse/precondition accessed April 20th, 2020.
[13] Greg Bahnsen, *Van Til's Apologetic* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1998), 4.
[14] This view is not committed to full blown doxastic volunteerism, rather, that there are at least some important beliefs for which we have some control over.
[15] Robert Stern, "Silencing the Sceptic?" in *Transcendental Arguments in Moral Theory*, eds. Jens Peter Brune, Robert Stern, Micha H. Werner (Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2017), 10.

perhaps [the] most straightforward way a transcendental claim can be used against a sceptic…where it forms the second premise, and where the first premise is something the sceptic accepts, from which the transcendental claim is used to derive a conclusion which the sceptic doubts or rejects, thus giving us a transcendental argument of this form:

1. p (e.g. there is thought, consciousness or a way things appear)
2. q is a necessary condition for the possibility of p (where q is e.g. an external world, or other minds)
3. therefore q.[16]

But, while a deductive TA starts from a premise which the target of the TA would willingly accept and then seeks to demonstrate the existence of something the target would wish to deny, a retorsive TA,[17] on the other hand, does not start with an accepted 'given', but rather, an *undeniable* fact of experience. The goal is "to show that the sceptic's position is self-undermining in some way, as involving some sort of contradiction, for in doubting p, the sceptic is at one and the same time committed to the truth of p, as that commitment is a necessary condition for the possibility of doubt; and from the self-contradictoriness of doubting p its truth is then supposed to be established."[18] Wolfgang Kuhlmann provides a helpful example of a retorsive TA from argumentation, "necessary presuppositions of meaningful argumentation (discourse) obviously must be secure against every argument, for if one were to argue against them, then the arguments would undermine themselves."[19] So, to build off Kuhlmann, if one

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[16] Ibid.

[17] "such arguments have been called "retorsive" from the Latin "retorque", meaning to twist or bend back, referring to the way in which such arguments "turn back" the sceptic's own position against her." Ibid., 11.

[18] Ibid. Stern quotes Christian Illies elaboration of retorsive TAs at length: "Essentially, this type of argument is designed to show that some judgement "r" is true because it cannot be rejected rationally. It does so by showing that any scepticism about r inevitably presupposes the truth of r by the implications of the very act or performance of sceptically regarding it. Thus, scepticism about the truth of r leads to a self-contradiction or inconsistency between what is *expressively* stated by the sceptic (the expressed judgement is "not-r") and what is *implicitly* expressed by his act of assertion (the implied judgement is "r"). Affirming r also presupposes the truth of r by the implications of it being a rational act. The affirmative judgement can therefore consistently be raised since the same truth is affirmed expressively and implicitly. Given that the original assumption can only be true or false, it follows that it must be true, since it is self-contradictory to judge it as false." Ibid. C.f. Philosopher Jim Slagle has coined a particular version of retorsive TAs directed at naturalistic-determinism, which he calls an "Epistemological Skyhook", and he argues persuasively that they are ubiquitous throughout philosophical history. C.f. *The Epistemological Skyhook: Determinism, Naturalism, and Self-Defeat* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

[19] Quoted by Stern, ibid.

were to formulate a retorsive TA for the Law of Noncontradiction from argumentation, one

might argue as such:

I. Argumentation is possible.
II. Argumentation presupposes the Law of Noncontradiction.
III. Therefore, the Law of Noncontradiction obtains.

This argument is retorsive in that (I) cannot be refuted by the target, for in refuting it, the target

would prove that argumentation is possible, thus, the skeptic of (I) must tacitly presuppose (I)

and so (I) retorts back against the target and the argument is successful, insofar as (II) is true.

With this deductive/retorsive distinction in mind, we can now consider the form of TAs

we will use for God from IBE. Although most of the syllogistic TAs we have considered thus far

have roughly been in the form of a *modus ponens*,[20] following Ronney Mourad's criteria, we will

be using TAs with more than one conditional claim.[21] The first part of our arguments will each

start with a deductive TA from IBE for a specific precondition of IBE, and the second part will

be a retorsive TA from the precondition of IBE to Christian Theistic Realism. For the second

part of the TA we will incorporate various arguments to demonstrate how Christian Theocentric

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[20] However, if we think back to our discussion of Strawsonian presuppositions above, we will understand why van Fraassen says that while the *modus ponens* argument forms work in presuppositional/transcendental arguments, *modus tollens* forms do not. Since
"A presupposes B if and only if
 (a) if *A* is true then *B* is true,
 (b) if (not-*A)* is true then *B* is true"
So, the since *B* is the necessary precondition or Strawsonian presupposition of *A*, to negate *B* would not give us (not-*A*) but rather, we would have a "failure of presupposition" and *A* would be unintelligible, neither true nor false. So, *modus tollens* is not a valid form of presuppositional/transcendental argument.
[21] We are mostly concerned with (2) of the following criteria, "On the conception I will defend, a transcendental argument is defined by the following necessary and jointly sufficient characteristics: (1) it functions to provide justification or warrant for its conclusions, or to refute justificatory skepticism indirectly. (2) Loosely speaking, it has the logical form of modus ponens, although it may have more than one conditional premise. (3) Its categorical premise asserts a self-referential proposition stating the existence of a subjective phenomenon such as assertion, experience, action, meaningful language use, or a truth claim. (4) Its conclusion asserts a self-referential proposition about the necessary conditions for the possibility of that phenomenon, which may include facts about objective reality, subjective belief, or a conceptual framework. (5) Its conditional premise, if it has only one, asserts a logical implication between the categorical premise and the conclusion, which is based on the claim that the truth of the former is inconceivable without the truth of the latter." Transcendental Arguments and Justified Christian Belief (Lanham, Mayland: University Press of America Inc., 2005), 30-31.

Realism satisfies the preconditions of IBE. Thus, these TAs are not aimed at some extreme IBE skeptic, rather, they are aimed at those who would consider the possibility IBE. Perhaps one could tighten up these arguments by arguing that IBE is a necessary component of human thought, and thus change the first deductive TA into a retorsive TA, but that is not my goal.

Inference to the Best Explanation

Before we begin analyzing the preconditions of IBE, it is important that we understand what we are talking about. This is especially true in light William Lycan's comment, "There is no question but that this inference is often performed. Arguably, every human being performs it many times a day, perhaps without letup."[22] In defining IBE, Richard Feldman explains that, "Very roughly, the idea is that there can be a number of alternative theoretical explanations of a particular event or pattern of events. That is, each theory provides an explanation of why things happen as they do. But, on this view, there can be theoretical grounds for thinking one explanation is a better explanation than another, and that this better explanation is therefore more reasonable to believe than the other."[23] Robert Audi further elaborates on IBE by defining it as "an abductive inference: roughly, an inference to a hypothesis on the ground that it best explains one or more other propositions taken to be known or justifiedly believed- or at least taken to need explanation and to be candidates for justified belief or knowledge if the hypothesis turns out to be true."[24] The conditional "if" at the end of Audi's sentence is important for IBE, since, as David Glass notes, "As a nondeductive form of inference, IBE does not guarantee the truth of what is inferred. In light of this, it seems more reasonable to infer not that the best explanation is

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[22] William Lycan, "Explanation and Epistemology" in *The Oxford Handbook of Epistemology* ed. Paul K Moser (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 408.
[23] Richard Feldman, *Epistemology* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc., 2003), 148.
[24] Robert Audi, *Epistemology: A Contemporary Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge* 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2011), 301.

true, but that it is probably or approximately true."[25] Thus, since IBE is an inductive[26] form of reasoning instead of a deductive form, IBE does not guarantee the truth of its conclusion.

But besides the limitations of inductive reasoning, as an abductive inference,[27] which is a subset of the broader category of inductive reasoning, IBE, according to Peter Lipton, "cannot then be understood as inference to the best of *actual* explanations."[28] The goal of IBE is for a reasoner to choose the best explanation from a pool of possible, live-option explanations, not necessarily to infer to the best *actual* explanation. Lipton explains that "Telling someone to infer actual explanations is like a dessert recipe that says start with a soufflé…Inference to the Best Actual Explanation would require us to have already arrived in order to get there. The model would not be epistemically effective.[29] He goes on to say, "According to Inference to the Best Explanation, then, we do not infer the best *actual* explanation; rather we infer that the best of the available *potential* explanations is *an* actual explanation."[30] But, although IBE does not necessarily produce the best actual explanation, Lipton argues that "our actual inferential practices are truth-tropic, i.e., that they generally take us towards this goal, and that for something to be an actual explanation, it must be (at least approximately) true."[31] So, although IBE does not necessarily produce the true 'actual' explanation, according to its proponents, it is a

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[25] David Glass, "Inference to the Best Explanation" in *Dictionary of Christianity and Science* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 380.

[26] "an inductive argument is one whose conclusion is claimed to follow from its premises only with probability, this probability being a matter of degree and dependent on what else may be the case." Irving M. Copi, Carl Cohen, Kenneth McMahon, *Introduction to Logic* 14th ed. (NJ: Prentice Hall, 2011), 27.

[27] "In the philosophical literature, the term "abduction" is used in two related but different senses. In both senses, the term refers to some form of explanatory reasoning. However, in the historically first sense, it refers to the place of explanatory reasoning in *generating* hypotheses, while in the sense in which it is used most frequently in the modern literature it refers to the place of explanatory reasoning in *justifying* hypotheses. In the latter sense, abduction is also often called "Inference to the Best Explanation."" Douven, Igor, "Abduction", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2017 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2017/entries/abduction/>.

[28] Peter Lipton, *Inference to the Best Explanation* 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2004), 57.

[29] Ibid., 58.

[30] Ibid., 58. Emphasis added.

[31] Ibid., 57.

truth-tropic (or truth-directed) and warranted inferential process. In their *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*, J.P. Moreland and William Lane Craig provide a list of commonly acknowledged criteria for assessing hypotheses as best explanations:[32]

1. *Explanatory scope*. The best hypothesis will explain a wider range of data than will rival hypotheses.
2. *Explanatory power*. The best hypothesis will make the observable data more epistemically probable than rival hypotheses.
3. *Plausibility*. The best hypothesis will be implied by a greater variety of accepted truths and its negation implied by fewer accepted truths than rival hypotheses.
4. *Less ad hoc*. The best hypothesis will involve fewer new suppositions not already implied by existing knowledge than rival hypotheses.
5. *Accord with accepted beliefs*. The best hypothesis, when conjoined with accepted truths, will imply fewer falsehoods than rival hypotheses.
6. *Comparative superiority*. The best hypothesis will so exceed its rivals in meeting conditions (1) through (5) that there is little chance of a rival hypothesis's exceeding it in fulfilling those conditions.[33]

Now, with this more fine-grained conception of IBE in mind, we begin our process of spiral reasoning towards the preconditions which make IBE possible.

The Principle of Induction

What must be the case in order for IBE to be a truth-tropic inferential process? First and foremost, as a method of inductive reasoning, IBE presupposes the Principle of Induction: "the principle, underlying all inductive argument, that nature is sufficiently regular to permit the discovery of causal laws having general application."[34] The Principle of Induction is a necessary precondition of IBE, such that for IBE to even be possible, nature must be sufficiently regular

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[32] "In inference to the best explanation, we are confronted with certain data to be explained. We then assemble a pool of live options consisting of various explanations for the date in question. From the pool of live options we then select the explanation that, if true, best explains the data. Just what criteria go toward making an explanation the best is disputed; but among the commonly acknowledged criteria will be properties such as the following:" J.P. Moreland and William Lane Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* 2nd ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 55

[33] Ibid. Emphasis original.

[34] Irving M. Copi, Carl Cohen, Kenneth McMahon, *Introduction to Logic* 14th ed. (NJ: Prentice Hall, 2011), 617.

and uniform and the future must be relevantly similar to the past. If induction did not obtain, then IBE would not be false, it would be meaningless.

But while the Principle of Induction is a necessary precondition for IBE, it is not without its own problems. In fact, induction itself generates some of the trickiest problems in all of philosophy, which lead C.D. Broad to describe it as "'the glory of science" and "the scandal of philosophy.'"[35] According to Peter Lipton, there are at least two closely related problems of induction: the problem of description and the problem of justification. The problem of description is the problem of describing the actual principles we use in inductive reasoning; while the problem of justification "is to show that our inferential methods are good methods, fit for purpose."[36]

The problem of justifying induction has artfully been named "The Problem of Induction" and is most often attributed to David Hume. Feldman summarizes Hume's argument as such:

> The Idea here seems to be that if you think that inductive inferences are good inferences because they have worked, then you are in this very argument relying on the supposition that the future will be like the past. You are thereby assuming in this argument the very thing at issue. The question was: Why think inductive inferences are any good? Why think that the future will be like the past? To make this assumption in arguing that it will is to assume the very thing at issue.[37]

Feldman labels this idea "the future will be like the past" principle (PF)[38] and acknowledges that "We could also have formulated this as a uniformity of nature principle, since it says that patterns found to hold in nature will continue to hold."[39] He then goes on to analyze three attempts at justifying PF: inductive defenses, pragmatic defenses, and an *a priori* defense.

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[35] Cited by Timothy McGrew in "Direct Inference and the Problem of Induction" in *Monist,* vol. 84, no. 2, pp 153.
[36] Peter Lipton, *Inference to the Best Explanation* 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2004), 7.
[37] Richard Feldman, *Epistemology* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc., 2003), 133.
[38] Ibid. Bertrand Russell explains "The problem we have to discuss is whether there is any reason for believing in what is called 'the uniformity of nature'. The belief in the uniformity of nature is the belief that everything that has happened or will happen is an instance of some general law to which there are no exceptions." *The Problems of Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 63.
[39] Ibid.

Feldman argues that inductive defenses of PF either explicitly have PF in their premise(s), in which case the argument is viciously circular and unjustified, or PF "connects the argument's premise(s) to its conclusion"[40] which also assumes the truth of PF and fails to answer Hume's challenge.[41]

Pragmatic defenses, on the other hand, offer a middle way between an inductive argument which infers from observed facts and begs the question and a "demonstrative"/*a priori* argument which "establishes a conclusion whose negation is a contradiction."[42] Pragmatic defenses argue that "if any general policy for forming beliefs proves to work correctly, induction will eventually approve of it."[43] Feldman refutes pragmatic defenses by arguing that "it is not clear that this defense of induction implies that induction is any better than the best of a set of bad options… [given the pragmatic defense] There is no guarantee that induction will yield good principles for forming beliefs about unobserved things…[and] finally, if what was sought is a case for the epistemic rationality of (PF), the defense seems to fall short. It does not show that we have good reason to believe that (PF) is true."[44]

Although Feldman is critical of the inductive and pragmatic approaches, he is much more optimistic about the *a priori* defense. According to an insight he gleaned from reading Bertrand Russell's unintentional reconfiguring of Hume's argument in *The Problems of Philosophy*, Feldman suggests that we substitute the obviously not *a priori* "PF: the future will be like the past" with "PFR: Knowing that things have been a certain way in the past gives you a good

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[40] Ibid., 135.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Henderson, Leah, "The Problem of Induction", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2020 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2020/entries/induction-problem/>.
[43] Richard Feldman, *Epistemology* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc., 2003), 136.
[44] Ibid. 137.

reason to believe that they will be that way in the future."[45] PFR, he suggests, *is* true by definition and thus, successful as an *a priori* solution to the Problem of Induction which avoids begging the question since it does not rely on induction. Feldman then considers responses from critics of the *a priori* defense which claim that this solution "is no better than merely stipulating that induction is reasonable"[46] and that anyone could equally stipulate any old principle like "knowing that the tea leaves predict that p will be true provides good reason to believe that p will be true."[47] Feldman responds with three points:

(1) He shouldn't have to prove PFR for it to be reasonable,
(2) Convincing every intransigent skeptic or lunatic who reads tea leaves of the veracity
 of PFR is unreasonable,
(3) Reading tea leaves would be a derivative principle and not a fundamental principle
like PFR, so PFR has more explanatory power.[48]

Now, while one might quibble with Feldman's use of inductive principles like IBE in order to argue for PFR's *a priori* status over against competing theories like reading tea leaves, and though we might take up the charge that he has merely stipulated induction into the realm of justification with an ad hoc wave of the hand, the most important criticism we can offer has to do with the uniformity of nature principle which is tacitly presupposed in PFR. Knowing that things have been a certain way in the past itself presupposes that in one's past experience, nature was uniform. Thus, Feldman's *a priori* defense ends up assuming the Principle of Induction in the present in order to justify it in the future and is no better than the other failed attempts.

So, if *a priori* proposals end up relying on induction, inductive proposals are question begging, and pragmatic proposals undermine our very conception of induction, what are we to

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[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid., 139
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid., 139-140.

do? "We are addicted to the practice of induction, but it is a practice that cannot be justified"?[49]

We now submit that the question raised by Hume has already been answered by Descartes a century earlier. Though Hume is most often considered the father of the Problem of Induction as we find it today, Lipton recounts that its modern roots can actually be traced back to Descartes's search for certainty. He argues that the reason why Descartes is not more closely connected with the problem is because, having reviewed the problem of justifying induction, which our sense perceptions rely on, Descartes dropped inductive inference and empirical knowledge in search of firmer foundation for knowledge, and then justified induction on the way back up from his new foundation:

> The *cogito* and the principles of clarity and distinctness that it exemplifies are supposed to provide the non-inductive alternative. Circularity is also avoided since the senses do not have to justify themselves, even if the threat of circularity notoriously reappears elsewhere, in the attempt to justify the principles of clarity and distinctness by appeal to an argument for the existence of God that is to be accepted because it itself satisfies those principles.[50]

In his *Principles of Philosophy*, Descartes blatantly relies on God for justifying our senses, "It is certain, I claim, because God is not a deceiver and therefore the faculty of perception that he gave us is incapable of tending towards what is false"[51] and even more strongly in his *A Discourse on the Method*, Descartes claims that "However much the best minds choose to investigate this matter [of justifying our sense perceptions], I do not believe that they will be able to furnish any argument which is sufficient to remove this doubt, unless they presuppose the existence of God."[52]

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[49] Ibid., 9. Lipton expresses our predicament well, "On the one hand, the Humean argument for the circularity of the inductive justification does not remove the strong feeling that the past successes of induction bode well for its future performance. On the other hand, we also feel that the pathological ineffectiveness of the inductive justification of induction against someone who does not already accept induction shows that it also provides no good reason for those of us who do accept it." *Inference to the Best Explanation* 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2004), 189.

[50] Ibid., 8-9.

[51] René Descartes, *Meditations and Other Metaphysical Writings* (London: Penguin Group, 2003), 128.

[52] René Descartes, *A Discourse on the Method* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 33.

And while Thomas Nagel agrees with Descartes that "even induction, that staple of empiricism, makes sense only with a rationalist basis,"[53] he considers Descartes's justification unsuccessful,

> Descartes tried to provide [a rationalist basis for induction], together with grounds for certainty that was true, by proving the existence of the right sort of God. While he was not successful, the problem remains. To go on unambivalently holding our beliefs once this has been recognized requires that we believe that something- we know not what- is true that plays the role in our relation to the world that Descartes thought was played by God. (Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that Descartes' God is a personification of the fit between ourselves and the world for which we have no explanation but which is necessary for thought to yield knowledge.) I have no idea what unheard-of property of the natural order this might be. But without something fairly remarkable, human knowledge is unintelligible.[54]

Others have likewise felt that Descartes's use of God in order to justify his philosophy was ad hoc, including Pascal, who is attributed with saying "I cannot forgive Descartes: in his whole philosophy he would like to do without God; but he could not help allowing him a flick of the fingers to set the world in motion; after that he had no more use for God."[55]

With Nagel and Pascal, we might also disagree with the *way* in which Descartes arrived at his answer, but we do not disagree with Descartes's answer *simpliciter*. Instead of positing the God of Descartes's ontological argument, we argue that the God at the center of Christian Theocentric Realism (CTR) is the necessary precondition of the Principle of Induction. With James Anderson, we argue that "We must presuppose God, not ourselves, as the ultimate rationality and the ultimate authority. God is the "All-Conditioner," the Personal Absolute who creates and orders all things according to his perfect wisdom and sovereign will."[56] CTR, then, is

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[53] "And I would maintain that even induction, that staple of empiricism, makes sense only with a rationalist basis. Observed regularities provide reason to believe that they will be repeated only to the extent that they provide evidence of hidden *necessary* connections, which hold timelessly. It is not a matter of assuming that the contingent future will be like the contingent past." Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 84.
[54] Ibid., 84-85.
[55] Blaise Pascal, *Pensées* (London: Penguin Group, 1995), 330.
[56] James Anderson, *David Hume* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2019), 111.

not a bare theism posited from pure reason or an exercise in ontotheology[57] created particularly to solve the Problem of Induction in an ad hoc fashion. Rather, CTR is a rich world-and-life view which existed long before the modern version of the Problem of Induction, which organically and uniquely provides the preconditions necessary for justifying inductive reasoning and in turn makes IBE intelligible. According to CTR, God is the creator, governor, and the ultimate purpose of the universe. Through His act of creation *ex nihilo*, He has established order and uniformity in nature; through His providence and governance, He continues to hold all things together through time according to the laws He has established; and as the ultimate purpose for His creation, God has eschatological designs for His universe, which He reveals to His image bearers through revelation such that they can know His plan. On CTR then, God is the necessary metaphysical precondition for Feldman's PF (the future will be like the past) and His revelation of His character and plan is the necessary epistemological precondition of PFR (Knowing that things have been a certain way in the past gives you a good reason to believe that they will be that way in the future). Because of God's creation, providence, and commitment to the eschaton, nature is uniform and the future will be sufficiently similar to the past; because God has made humans in His image for the purpose of arbitrating His will and exercising dominion over creation, knowing that things have been a certain way in the past and trusting in God's testimony that Christ holds all things together until his return, provides image bearers good reason to believe that the laws of nature will continue into the future. Anderson further elucidates the justification for PF and PFR, "God is the authoritative pre-interpreter of the world, and as creatures made in God's image, we are designed to be reinterpreters of God's world…Genuine

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[57] "a unified system of thought that employs concepts such as Supreme Being or Unmoved Mover as conceptual stopgaps to prevent infinite regress." Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology: Divine Action, Passion, and Authorship* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 8.

knowledge of the world- of the world as it really is- is possible only if (1) the facts of the world are ordered "from above," and (2) our minds are configured "from above" to order the facts of experience in the same way."[58] So, in explicitly affirming CTR, we are acknowledging what we must tacitly presuppose for IBE to be possible, and in turn we acquire what Quassim Cassam terms an "obstacle-dissipating strategy"[59] for the Problem of Induction and are justified in our "addiction" to inductive reasoning. Thus, as it has been argued:

(I)   Possibly IBE (IBE or ~IBE)
(II)   IBE presupposes the Principle of Induction,
(III)   The Principle of Induction presupposes CTR.
(IV)   Therefore, CTR

The Laws of Logic

We come now to the second precondition of IBE, the Law of Non-Contradiction. If inferring to the best explanation is to be possible, then human beings must be able to engage in logical inference. Logical inference is "the mental move we make from the premises of an argument to its conclusion"[60] or "A process by which one proposition is arrived at and affirmed on the basis of some other proposition or propositions."[61] This mental move of inference presupposes logical relations, as Dallas Willard recounts,

> "In a more recent philosophical presentation of modern logic, L.S. Stebbing distinguishes and interrelates *inference* (the essential noetic structure) and *implication* (the logical relation), the "therefore" and the "if…then," as she also puts it… The "epistemic" [or noetic] conditions of coming to know q on the basis of p, as she describes them, include: p must be known to be true, and p must be known to imply q without its being known that q is true. She also holds that "although p may *imply* q when q is false, yet q cannot be validly inferred from p unless it is the case both that p is true and is known to be true.[62]

[58] James Anderson, *David Hume* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2019), 111.
[59] *The Possibility of Knowledge* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 2.
[60] Lee Hard, Del Ratzsch, Rebecca K. De Young, Gregory Mellema, *The Little Logic Book* (Grand Rapids: Calvin College Press, 2013), 206.
[61] Irving M. Copi, Carl Cohen, Kenneth McMahon, *Introduction to Logic* 14th ed. (NJ: Prentice Hall, 2011), 618.
[62] Dallas Willard, "Knowledge and Naturalism" in *Naturalism: A Critical Analysis*, ed. William Lane Craig and J.P. Moreland. (New York: Routledge, 2000), 43.

So, validly inferring a conclusion, a "therefore", presupposes the logical relations amongst the propositions in the premises and between premises and the conclusion, the "if… then". This allows Willard to reason that "As logical relations presuppose truth, so noetic unity presupposes logical relations- and more, presupposes a pattern of simultaneous and successive awarenesses that intercommunicates across a wide range of mental states and acts and their objects."[63] So, if we are to come to valid inferences, or judge other inferences as invalid, logical relations must obtain as the presuppositions or necessary preconditions of inference.

In the history of Western Thought, the most fundamental logical relations have been called the Laws of Logic or the Laws of Thought, which are comprised of: "Three tautologies- the principle of identity, the principle of noncontradiction, and the principle of excluded middle- that have sometimes been held to be the fundamental principles of all reasoning."[64] Of the three, the Principle or the Law of Non-Contradiction is often considered the most essential. Susan Haack defines the law of non-contradiction as the principle that "$\sim(A \& \sim A)$; or: no wff (sentence, statement, proposition) is both true and false."[65] And Aristotle saw "adherence to this law as a necessary condition of coherent thought."[66] The force of Aristotle's claim can be demonstrated through a retorsive TA, for even to deny the Law of Non-Contradiction is to presuppose it. Paula Gottlieb explains that many have viewed Aristotle's indirect argument for non-contradiction as a proto-Kantian TA:

> Aristotle's "elenctic refutation" has been fruitfully compared to a Kantian transcendental argument. Transcendental arguments generally run as follows: If certain aspects of experience or thinking are possible, the world must be a certain way. Since these aspects of experience or thinking do exist, the world is a certain way. These aspects of our

[63] Ibid., 42.
[64] Irving M. Copi, Carl Cohen, Kenneth McMahon, *Introduction to Logic* 14th ed. (NJ: Prentice Hall, 2011), 618.
[65] Susan Haack, *Philosophy of Logics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 244.
[66] Harry Gensler, *The A to Z of Logic* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, Inc. 2006), 121. Gottlieb, Paula, "Aristotle on Non-contradiction", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2019 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2019/entries/aristotle-noncontradiction/>.

experience or thinking presuppose that the world is a certain way. That the world is a certain way explains these aspects of our experience or thinking and not the other way round. On this interpretation, Aristotle would be arguing that the world conforms to [the Principle of Noncontradiction], or that [the Principle of Noncontradiction] is true, because it is presupposed by and explains the opponent's ability to say something significant." But while the necessity of Non-Contradiction is immanent and evident in our thoughts, grounding the law is a different story. Here we propose that the Law of Non-Contradiction presupposes the existence of God as its necessary ground.[67]

With the retorsive force of the Law of Non-Contradiction in focus, we now follow James Anderson and Greg Welty in transcendentally arguing for God from Non-Contradiction.[68] Thus, we begin with the retorsive starting point that the Law of Non-Contradiction is a truth. To deny this is to affirm it. We then distinguish between truth-bearers and truthmakers. Anderson and Welty note that "Philosophers typically use the term 'propositions' to refer to the *primary bearers of truth-value.*"[69] Truthmakers on the other hand, are what make propositions true, "*x* is a truthmaker for the proposition *p* if and only if (i) *p* must be true if *x* exists, and (ii) if *x* exists and *p* is true, the *p* must be true at least in part because *x* exists (or in virtue of the existence of *x*)."[70] The Law of Non-Contradiction then, is a true proposition. But as the most fundamental logical relation, it is a true proposition *about* other propositions.[71]

The Law of Non-Contradiction is a necessary true proposition in that there is no possible world where it fails to be true, for "the notion of non-contradiction lies at the core of our understanding of possibility."[72] So then, the Law of Non-Contradiction really exists, for as Pruss

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[67] Gottlieb, Paula, "Aristotle on Non-contradiction", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2019 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2019/entries/aristotle-noncontradiction/>.

[68] James N. Anderson and Greg Welty, "The Lord of Non-Contradiction" in *Philosophia Christi* 13:2 (2011).

[69] Ibid., 3.

[70] Robert C. Koons and Timothy H. Pickavance, *Metaphysics: The Fundamentals* (West Sussex, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2015), 20-21.

[71] "In other words, the Law of Non-Contradiction is a truth about propositions: those primary bears of truth-value. It is a truth about which truth-values a proposition can and cannot bear: if a proposition bears the value *true*, it cannot also bear the value *false*, and vice versa." James N. Anderson and Greg Welty, "The Lord of Non-Contradiction" in *Philosophia Christi* 13:2 (2011), 5.

[72] Ibid., 7.

and Rasmussen point out, "something can't be true unless it exists. So anything that is necessarily true exists necessarily."[73] So, the Law of Non-Contradiction necessarily exists. The Law of Non-Contradiction is also non-physical, for "Physical entities are, by their very nature, *contingent* entities"[74] and as we have established, the Law of Non-Contradiction is a necessarily true proposition, not to mention, propositions just aren't the kinds of things that are physical. But if it is not physical, what is it? The Law of Non-Contradiction is a thought. Here we turn again to Pruss and Rasmussen for help,

> Here is a little argument for the dependency of propositions on thoughts. Necessarily, thoughts and propositions have these features in common: they are about things, they bear entailment relations, they exemplify truth and falsehood, and they are arguably built of more basic intentional components. These similarities are least surprising if propositions are thoughts or are essential components of thoughts.[75]

The "aboutness" or "intentionality" of propositions mentioned above, is what allows for propositions to be believed, as well as to be truth valued, as Welty argues, "it follows from their alethicity and doxasticity that propositions must have *intentionality* or "aboutness." For it is only if propositions make claims- that is, represent the world as being a certain way- that they can be the sorts of things that have alethicity and doxasticity."[76] Alvin Plantinga likewise argues that "it is the *intentional* character of propositions that is most fundamental and important. Propositions are *claims*, or *assertions*; they *attribute* or *predicate* properties to or of objects; they *represent* reality or some part of it as having a certain character."[77] In response to Plantinga's contention, Welty argues that,

> …the same kinds of things are usually said about thoughts as mental entities. They have an intentional character; they variously claim, assert, attribute, predicate, and represent.

[73] Alexander R. Pruss and Joshua L. Rasmussen, *Necessary Existence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 127.
[74] James N. Anderson and Greg Welty, "The Lord of Non-Contradiction" in *Philosophia Christi* 13:2 (2011), 15.

[75] Alexander R. Pruss and Joshua L. Rasmussen, *Necessary Existence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 139.
[76] Greg Welty, "Theistic Conceptual Realism" in *Beyond the Control of God?: Six Views on the Problem of God and Abstract Objects* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing Inc, 2014), 86.
[77] Cited by Welty, Ibid., 88.

Thus they are natural candidates to do the philosophical work of propositions. One aspect of propositional intentionality in particular is that its aspectual shape is very fine-grained, in almost exactly the same way that belief-contents are fine-grained. It is not merely that propositions are about these objects and properties in they exemplify. It is also that propositions pick out these objects and properties in a fine-grained way. There seems to be a one-to-one correspondence between thoughts and propositions, with respect not only to directedness but also aspectual shape. A conceptualist might therefore contend that we not only can but should understand propositions as *thoughts* of some sort, for the intentionality of propositions (presupposed in their alethicity and doxasticity) is best explained as the intrinsic intentionality of thoughts."[78]

Thus, the Law of Non-Contradiction is a *necessarily existent true thought.[79]*

Finally, it follows that the law of Non-Contradiction is a thought in a "*necessarily existent mind."[80]* for thoughts presuppose a mind which thinks them (or *who* thinks them). This necessarily existent mind is the person we call God. So, while the *truth-bearer* of the Law of Non-Contradiction is grounded in the mind of God, the CTR proponent, argues with Van Til, that God's self-consistent nature is the *truthmaker* for the law of non-contradiction, "Christianity holds that God existed alone before any time existence was brought forth. He existed as the self-conscious and self-consistent being. *The law of [non-]contradiction, therefore, as we know it, is but the expression on a created level of the internal coherence of God's nature.*"[81] Thus, for as long as the Father has had thoughts about the Son and the Spirit, and the Son about the Father and the Spirit, and the Spirit about the Father and the Son, the Law of Non-Contradiction has existed in the mind of God as an expression of the internal coherence of His divine nature. Furthermore, CTR accounts for our ability to reason through this arduous paper thus far.

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[78] Ibid., 88.

[79] James N. Anderson and Greg Welty, "The Lord of Non-Contradiction" in *Philosophia Christi* 13:2 (2011), 19. Pruss and Rasmussen use this point to argue for necessary concreta: "So suppose propositions essentially depend upon thoughts, whose home is a mind. Then, since necessarily whenever there is a mind, there is a concrete being whose mind that mind is (perhaps in some cases that being *is* its mind), it follows that, necessarily, if there are abstracta, there are concreta." Alexander R. Pruss and Joshua L. Rasmussen, *Necessary Existence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 139.

[80] Ibid.

[81] Cornelius Van Til*, An Introduction to Systematic Theology 2nd ed.*, edited by William Edgar. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2007), 32.

Mankind, as image bearers of God, have been created to think God's thoughts after Him,

including our thoughts about the Law of Non-Contradiction. Thus, we argue:

(I)   Possibly IBE (IBE or ~IBE)
(II)   IBE presupposes logical inference.
(III)   Logical inference presupposes the Law of Non-Contradiction.
(IV)   The Law of Non-Contradiction presupposes CTR
(V)   Therefore, CTR

The Ethic of Inference

Finally, and perhaps most controversially, we come to our last necessary precondition:

IBE presupposes what we will call the "ethics of inference." The ethics of inference run as

follows: If you affirm the premises of an argument, think that they are valid and sound- or cogent

and more probable than not in the case of inductive arguments- then you *should* affirm the

conclusion- or at least affirm it to the degree warranted by its probability. You *ought* to believe

the truth.[82] as John Frame further explains,

> We have seen that people do hold contradictory beliefs sometimes. But the fact that
> someone believes "not-p" is no proof that he does not also believe "p". The law of
> noncontradiction says that he ought not to believe contradictory propositions, but it does
> not prevent him from doing so. But there is a second sort of necessity. The logical "must"
> indicates a moral necessity. To say that someone "must" accept a conclusion is to say that
> he ought to accept it, that he has an obligation to accept it.[83]

This deontological component of inference is often left out of the conversation, yet all of

our arguments depend on it. For instance, if you follow an interlocutor's IBE reasoning and you

have no reason to deny the conclusion or withhold judgement, then you *should* affirm your

interlocutor's conclusion. You should not refrain from an affirmative judgement because of

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[82] I'm grateful for Tim McGrew's encouragement to follow through on this point. Through personal correspondence he pointed me to an interesting piece by Susaan Haack which unfortunately we weren't able to interact with do to space constraints. C.f. Susan Haack, "The Ethics of Belief 'Reconsidered'"In Matthias Steup (ed.), *Knowledge, Truth, and Duty: Essays on Epistemic Justification, Responsibility, and Virtue*. Oxford University Press. pp. 21 (2001)
[83] John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1987), 248.

personal preference, nor should you affirm what you know to be false or invalid just because you like the conclusion. It is not merely epistemologically wrong, rather, it is morally wrong to willfully to refrain from making an inference in an argument you find to be sound (or if a strong doxastic involuntarism is true, then it is wrong to *try* to refrain). The Ethic of Inference (EoI) is a "morally charged conceptually normative presupposition[ ] of argumentative discourse."[84] If EoI were to fail as a deontological presupposition, argumentation, and specifically inference would be meaningless. If the act of inference were morally neutral, interlocutors would be morally free to regard or disregard an argument's conclusion at will rather than based on the merits of the argument and the force of EoI- the very process of argumentation would collapse. EoI, then, is an evaluative fact or truth[85] that holds independently of our evaluative attitudes about it,[86] meaning even though individuals do not always feel like obeying, and often times do not obey, EoI, if a person sees that a conclusion logically follows from its true premises, barring counter arguments, then that person ought to affirm the conclusion on pains of moral culpability.

As a necessary presupposition of argumentation, EoI is a "real" value in that it transcends human argumentation so as to establish its foundation. So, in accounting for EoI as an evaluative truth, we will need to argue for an account of *moral* or *value* Realism. In considering Value Realism we turn to Sharon Street's Darwinian Dilemma which proposes a dilemma for the Value Realist who also holds to a Darwinist view of evolution. Her first horn attacks the Realist who

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[84] *Transcendental Arguments in Moral Theory*, eds. Jens Peter Brune, Robert Stern, Micha H. Werner (Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2017), 337.

[85] "Evaluative facts or truths I understand as facts or truths of the form that X is a normative reason to Y, that one should or ought to X, that X is good, valuable, or worthwhile, that X is morally right or wrong, and so on." Sharon Street, "A Darwinian Dilemma for Realist Theories of Value" in *Philosophical Studies* (2006) 127, 110.

[86] "Evaluative attitudes I understand to include states such as desires, attitudes of approval and disapproval, unreflective evaluative tendencies such as the tendency to experience X as counting in favor of or demanding Y, and consciously or unconsciously held evaluative judgements, such as judgements about what is a reason for what, about what one should or ought to do, about what is good, valuable, or worthwhile, about what is morally right or wrong, and so on." Ibid.

denies a relation between the evaluative truth and evaluative judgements, arguing that they are left with the view that "the forces of natural selection must be viewed as a purely distorting influence on our evaluative judgements, having pushed us in evaluative directions that have nothing whatsoever to do with the evaluative truth."[87] Thus, any correspondence between evaluative judgments and truths would we coincidental and we would have no reason for thinking our evaluative judgments ever correspond with evaluative truth.[88]

Street's second horn targets the Realist who affirms a relation between evaluative truth and evaluative judgements. These Realists argue that it is evolutionarily advantageous for us to track the truth in our evaluative judgments.[89] However, the tracking account falls prey to Street's equivalent of a moral version of Plantinga's EAAN. Street says that rather than our evaluative judgements tracking moral truth on evolution, they would instead track for reproductive success and survival, a position she calls the adaptive link account.[90] She argues that the adaptive link account is "more parsimonious; it is much clearer; and it sheds much more light on the explanandum in question, namely that human beings tend to make some evaluative judgments rather than others."[91] So, given this intractable dilemma, we follow Thomas Nagel in "agree[ing] with Sharon Street's position that moral realism is incompatible with a Darwinian account of the evolutionary influence on our faculties of moral and evaluative judgment."[92] And likewise, "[we] follow the same inference in the opposite direction: since moral realism is true, a Darwinian

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[87] Ibid., 121.
[88] Ibid., 122.
[89] Ibid., 125.
[90] Ibid., 127.
[91] Ibid., 128.
[92] Thomas Nagel, *Mind and Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature is Almost Certainly False* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 105.

account of the motives underlying moral judgment must be false, in spite of the scientific consensus in its favor."[93]

Thus, in accounting for EoI, we turn once more to CTR. CTR uniquely qualifies as the value Realism needed to ground EoI in that, on CTR mankind was created by the God of truth and the *summum bonum* of all reality, in order to know and represent Him, to know the world, and to know each other. As image bearers of God, humans have an ethical obligation to think God's thoughts after Him and to not misrepresent Him through lying or misrepresenting the truth. We have immediate awareness of these ethical duties by virtue of our very ontology as *imago dei*, but furthermore, God has revealed His ethical standards through encoding them on own hearts, and He has further revealed them to us in His Special Revelation through the incarnation of The Son and in Scripture. This teleological account of mankind makes intelligible the deontological demands of EoI. Thus, we argue

(VI)   Possibly IBE (IBE or ~IBE)
(VII)   IBE presupposes EoI.
(VIII)   EoI presupposes Value Realism
(IX)   Value Realism presupposes CTR

Conclusion

The possibility of Inference to the Best Explanation presupposes Christian Theocentric Realism's conception of the world, of God, and of the self. As it has been argued, God is the metaphysical precondition of the Principle of Induction, the Law of Non-Contradiction, and the Ethic of Inference and affirming CTR is the epistemological presupposition which provides justification for inductive reasoning, logic and argumentation, and the morality on which arguments depend. Taken together, the preconditions of IBE can be seen to even follow the

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[93] Ibid.

Divine Economy: The Principle of Induction presupposes the work of the Father in Creation;[94]

The Law of Non-Contradiction presupposes the Divine Logos, the Wisdom of God through

whom all things were made and hold together; and the Ethic of Inference presupposes to Holy

Spirit who convicts the world of sin and of God's righteousness. Thus, the possibility of

Inference to the Best Explanation and being justified in using it presupposes Christian

Theocentric Realism. If the Inference to the Best Explanation depends on God, then you can

never use Inference to the Best Explanation to disprove the existence of God.

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[94] "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth" Apostles' Creed.

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