

Discussion about logic with Sean Gerety, a Xian fanatic

I came across Sean's weblog, [God's Hammer](#), a weblog vehicle designed to promote his special brand of Xian fanaticism, through the Youtube activity of "TheLogicalCalvinist", Paul Riemann, who promotes the same brand. Both are followers of John Robbins, himself a follower of the better-known ex-Presbyterian theologian, Gordon Clark. After listening to about ten lectures by John Robbins, mostly from the series "[Introduction to Logic](#)", I had a good idea of the basic arguments used by Robbins to rationalise his belief in the Xian God, or more accurately, his belief in the validity of the Xian scriptures. I published Robbins' main errors in the video, "[Deceitful Definitions](#)". (The second video, [Deceitful Definitions \(part 2\)](#), is a response to Sean's first question in his weblog response.)

Sean responded with a weblog entry, and the following compilation of comments are from that blog entry: [here](#).

An interesting thought-experiment I proposed during the general discussion (but not included here) was the open question: if you had never read the Bible, and received a letter signed "The Unnameable, who is holiness, wisdom, justice, righteousness, truth, etc. etc." with a lot of information on how to live, would you accept that it was true and reliable? All the responses to this question referred to Bible verses to indicate what they would do! Even after I repeated the factor of never having read the Bible before... It is highly likely that the axiom on which Sean, Paul, and others there base their entire worldview is 'Follow unthinkingly.'

Kelly Jones

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Axioms are not accepted as true without finding some reason ('proof', in a certain sense of the word) to accept them

Sean Gerety: You'll notice she does not object to Dr. Robbins defining the word Logos in Scripture as logic, but complains that he refers to the Logos of Scripture as something that exists. Well, of course it... or better He...exists. To put it another way, Ms. Jones doesn't deny that logic exists because she experiences it when she thinks. That's because John 1:9 tells us that the Logos, the divine Second Person of the Trinity, 'enlightens every man' (John 1:9). The Bible, and not the atheistic positivism Ms. Jones presupposes, provides the account for logic in man. As opposed to her brand of logical positivism, Dr. Robbins has chosen the axiom of Scripture as his source of knowledge and truth. Her objection comes down to nothing more than Robbins is a Christian who accepts the Bible as true and as the axiomatic starting point of his philosophy and she does not. Big deal.

Kelly Jones: I don't mind equating logic with what enlightens, but I do mind you doing what Robbins does, and which he knows is a no-no: equivocation. This is the equivocation: logic = thinking, thinking = God, God = (according to Robbin reading

the Westminster catechism) 'spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth'. That is clearly a contradiction of the law of identity, since these attributes are not the same as thinking. I'll explain your mistake further in the video.

Sean: ... you say that Robbins is wrong when he said that the axiom of Christianity, the Scriptures, cannot be proven because in your mind he is surreptitiously equating the law of identity with the Scriptures, but that is not what he has done at all. Logic is certainly presupposed by every word of Scripture, simply because for any word to mean anything it must not mean something else. However, you conclude by saying that 'if you start off with an axiom it is not a reliable premise because you haven't proven it to be true' Again, this is just silly. If one could prove the Scriptures are true, then the Scriptures would not be the axiom of Christianity, but rather a theorem. ... Toward the end of your video where you play a section of Robbins' lecture, you wrote that the the fundamental axiom of logic cannot be proven is false. ... Isn't a provable axiom a contradiction in terms?

Kelly: Sean, have a look at "[Deceitful Definitions, part 2](#)" for a response to your comments. I posted it about 8 hours before you asked them, but it manages to answer them. Efficient, eh?

Sean: You state that an axiom has to 'be true to begin with and then you proceed on that basis.' So far so good. However, a more accurate statement would be that an axiom has to be 'presumed to be true to begin with....' That's why when Robbins said an axiom cannot be proven, you said this is false because the proposition you begin with 'has to be proven true before it can be used ... you can't just assume that it is true.' This is absurd for the simple reason that if any given axiom can be demonstrated to be true then it would cease to be an axiom. Axiom is defined, at least as Dr. Robbins is using it, as a statement accepted as true as the basis for argument or inference: a postulate. Consequently, while an axiom cannot be proved, axioms can certainly be disproved. For example, take logical positivism. Gordon Clark writes:

The principle, A sentence is meaningful only if verifiable by sense, can itself never be verified by sense. Thus by its own test Logical Positivism is nonsense. [Christian Philosophy, 88,89].

Kelly: Sean, you say 'Axiom is defined, at least as Dr. Robbins is using it, as a statement accepted as true as the basis for argument or inference: a postulate'. I reject that definition wholesale, because it supposes just any old declaration can be used as an axiom. There has to be some reason for accepting an axiom as true, rather than assuming simply on the face of it. The truth-value comes via a line of deductive reasoning. Incidentally, your example is irrelevant, because deductive reasoning is not the same as reasoning based on 'observation of sensory data' (if by 'sense' that's what you meant).

Sean: You might reject it, but that is what the word 'axiom' means. Look it up for yourself. Or just recall your old Geometry classes. And, yes, any old declaration can and has been used. Christianity is hardly unusual in this respect. Every philosophy for it to start must start somewhere, and that somewhere is that system's axiom.

Kelly: There has to be some reason for accepting an axiom as true, rather than assuming simply on the face of it. The truth-value comes via a line of deductive reasoning.

Sean: Again, if an axiom could be proved true it wouldn't be an axiom. Consider the Christian axiom of Scripture. There can be nothing prior to God's own self revelation for without it God would be otherwise unknown. This is why Scripture

says; 'since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself...' (Heb6:13).

Kelly: Sean, you need to stop taking other people's definitions at face value. It makes you look totally ridiculous. When they say that an axiom is self-evidently true, or taken for granted as true, they don't mean that reasoning has been avoided in accepting the axiom. For instance, $1+1=2$ or $(a+b = b+a)$ is an axiom that is taken as true only because of the way it has been constructed. It is not "simply true", but has been constructed according to the fundamental axiom of logic, $A=A$. You see, there are reasons here.

Sean: What looks totally ridiculous Kelly is to dishonestly impose a foreign definition on others, insist that they adhere to it, and then attempt to refute them based on your own definition. It's called a straw man argument. That is the extent of your objection to Dr. Robbins. In this case the 'deceptive definition' is your own and of your own making. And, if you have been paying attention I never said that 'reasoning has been avoided' in the acceptance of an axiom, specifically the Christian one. Also, neither I or Dr. Robbins in his lecture has said that the Scriptures are 'self-evidently' true, which is another straw man. They are self-authenticating and they evidence their truthfulness through the logical coherence and 'consent of all the parts.'

kimeradrummer: Just a word on the Axiom of Christianity: Our Axiom is accepted and presupposed true BY LOGICAL NECESSITY, not in an arbitrary way. This is because all God Word by logical necessity is true, and, therefore, we receive the Axiom based on His own merits (selfjustification); i.e. because is the Word of God (1 Thessalonians 2:13). Then, the objection you pose to Sean here: '...I reject that definition wholesale, because it supposes just any old declaration can be used as an axiom...', doesn't have any basis, and, in fact, show a big misunderstanding of our position. Rejecting it, therefore, is not only sin; it is irrational too. How can be rational someone who reject God, this is, someone who reject truth?

Kelly: If there is no reason to take an axiom as true, such as where it contradicts $A=A$, then it should not be.

Sean: Have you been paying attention at all or have I been writing for my own entertainment? Again, while axioms are chosen, not proved, that doesn't mean they cannot be disproved. If an axiom were self-contradictory or self-refuting, for example the axiom of the Logical Positivist per the example I gave above, then one would be irrational to accept it or maintain it as their axiom. Admittedly some people are persistent and maintain nonsense while feigning an allegiance to reason.

Kelly: Sean, you say '[The scriptures] are self-authenticating and they evidence their truthfulness through the logical coherence and 'consent of all the parts.' Okay, now we're getting somewhere. You're not presenting the view that the 'scriptures are the axiom of Xianity' not because the axiom itself is true,* but because you are looking at the *content* of the scriptures. That is, you believe the scriptures are the starting point for any consequent reasoning *after* you have tested their content according to *your own reason*. So, since you are clearly not saying here that you haven't tested the content of the scriptures for 'logical coherence', therefore, I can pose the same question to you that I did to kimeradrummer: If God is defined as goodness, then is it logically coherent for goodness to commit bad acts, e.g. rape, murder, theft, genocide, child abuse, and torture? Is it logically coherent to forbid utterly and completely, all acts of murder and theft, but also to permit them?

*Note. This is what kimeradrummer does. His belief is this: "the scriptures are true" is logically true because there is a verse in the scriptures that says it is the word of God, and another verse that says God is truth.

kimeradrummer himself judges God to be holiness, but when I say the Xian God condones murder, theft, rape, child abuse, torture, and genocide, he then says no one can judge what is holy

Kelly: kimeradrummer, you wrote 'More especific, what we believe, wich is the basis of what objects of thought we will be inclined to entertain and what will be our interest and priorities, will define the way we will be inclined to act. Now, can you explain me the relevance of this with our topic?' Sure, we're getting to it. First, do you think all actions by all humans are defined by objects of thought that are just, holy, good, powerful and wise? If not, how do you account for them, given that you believe thinking is identical with God, and God is just, holy, good, powerful, wise, etc.?

kimeradrummer: To your first question and the beggining of your second question, my answer is no, and my account for that is that we all are sinners, and even believers fall ocassionally on sin. And, to what you say here: - '...given that you believe thinking is identical with God, and God is just, holy, good, powerful, wise, etc.?', my answer is that you are equivocating the term 'think'. When we say that when mens think rationally (logical thinking) they are thinking in the same way God think, we are refering to the PROCESS ON THINKING. Till now, we are (at least I was) refering to the OBJECTS OF THOUGHT, which are processed with our minds. I hope this clear your misunderstanding.

Kelly: Kimeradrummer, you say 'When we say that when mens think rationally (logical thinking) they are thinking in the same way God think,' Alright. So when men condone rape, murder, looting, genocide, child abuse, or slavery, would you say that they are thinking in the same way God thinks? Just to remind you, the Xian God condones all these things. Read your bible....

kimeradrummer: 'think' is not the same as 'condone', wich in the context you propose means a moral judge. A moral judge can be the result of logical thinking, but is not the same as think. So, your still equivocating the terms. Now, here is a funny question to you about moral judge: What rationally justify any moral judge you make as objetive and true? I believe you take rape, murder, looting, genocide, etc. as morally wrong, but, why anyone have to take your judge as relevant, objetive, authoritarian, etc.?

One could ask how he can objectively judge God to be telling the truth....

Sean shows he doesn't know how logic actually works, but tries to hide his ignorance by attacking an argument I have never made

Sean: Consequently, while an axiom cannot be proved, axioms can certainly be disproved. For example, take logical positivism. Gordon Clark writes:

The principle, A sentence is meaningful only if verifiable by sense, can

itself never be verified by sense. Thus by its own test Logical Positivism is nonsense. [Christian Philosophy, 88,89].

Kelly: Incidentally, your example is irrelevant, because deductive reasoning is not the same as reasoning based on 'observation of sensory data' (if by 'sense' that's what you meant).

Sean: That's correct. Only deductive reasoning can provide conclusions that are either true or false. Inductive reasoning, those that result from 'observation of sensory data,' are by necessity false for the form of the premises are not the same as the form of the conclusions. This is why Russel called the problem of induction the 'unsolved problem of logic.' Induction does not result in true/false conclusions, but rather only probable conclusions that can be just as easily true as they are false.

Kelly: You say 'Only deductive reasoning can provide conclusions that are either true or false.' Deductive reasoning provides true conclusions only. If the conclusion is false, it is not deductive reasoning. The propositions have to be true as well.

Sean: Well obviously, provided the deduction is valid and the premises are true, but here again is your tendency to read or misconstrue what others are saying. One can validly deduce a conclusion from false premises, yes? Whereas, all valid deductions from true premises are necessarily true, but how do you, an atheist, arrive at any true premises? Through experience or 'observation of sensory data'? Hardly. If that were the case then science would be a cognitive enterprise, when in fact it is anything but. Science, as Karl Popper argued long ago, is not interested in truth.

Kelly: I already stated that logical deductions, such as the truth that a thing is what it is, are not made using observation of sensory data, so I don't know why you're thrashing that dead horse.

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Sean continues to confuse induction with deduction

Sean: 'Inductive reasoning, those that result from "observation of sensory data," are by necessity false for the form of the premises are not the same as the form of the conclusions. This is why Russel called the problem of induction the "unsolved problem of logic." Induction does not result in true/false conclusions, but rather only probable conclusions that can be just as easily true as they are false.'

Kelly: I'd stick to "probable" rather than true or false, if I were you, since you're applying qualities to induction that it doesn't have. Stating that science is false, as you and Robbins are keen to do, misrepresents it utterly. It never has entered the realm of logical deduction, and doesn't work that way, so it's naive to accuse of not doing that.

Sean: A conclusion drawn from a fallacious argument is false. But if you'd prefer to stick with probable rather than true or false, since that is the best any inductive argument can provide, fine by me. However, I thought on your Youtube site you claimed to be interested in truth? Were you just being facetious? Because in light of your arguments so far I would say your claim that your philosophy is premised on the 'will to truth' is spurious at best, or, at the very least, an overstatement.

Kelly: The process of inductive reasoning is not fallacious, so long as it doesn't

present scientific identities are certain. You wrote: 'But if you'd prefer to stick with probable rather than true or false, since that is the best any inductive argument can provide, fine by me. However, I thought on your Youtube site you claimed to be interested in truth? Were you just being facetious?' I've mostly been using deductive reasoning. These are examples of truths used in deductive reasoning, as I've presented them in this discussion:

A=A.

A thing is what it is.

The law of identity is the basis of all truth.

Logic is based on the law of identity.

The identity of any specific thing is uncertain.

A coherent worldview refers to the true nature of things.

All things are caused.

To cause anything, requires causation.

I am caused to do what I do.

Something that causes something else is finite.

If God causes something to happen, God is finite.

I am caused to pay attention to consequences and ramifications, and regard that as ethical.

I am caused to see that it is unethical to be heedless of causation.

If God doesn't pay heed to consequences, God is unethical.

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Sean's confusion is revealed in his attempt to argue that logical deduction is not capable of differentiating truth from falsehood (is he therefore possessed by Satan, according to his own crazed belief?)

Kelly: The propositions have to be true as well.

Sean: Well obviously, provided the deduction is valid and the premises are true, but here again is your tendency to read or misconstrue what others are saying. One can validly deduce a conclusion from false premises, yes? Whereas, all valid deductions from true premises are necessarily true, but how do you, an atheist, arrive at any true premises? Through experience or 'observation of sensory data'? Hardly. If that were the case then science would be a cognitive enterprise, when in fact it is anything but. Science, as Karl Popper argued long ago, is not interested in truth.

Kelly: You say, 'One can validly deduce a conclusion from false premises, yes?' No. But feel free to provide an example if you can find one.

Sean: You're kidding, right? But, OK. (1) All dogs are immortal. (2) Socrates is a dog. → Socrates is immortal. The argument is valid, but unsound. Here's one from an intro to logic textbook: (1) All pigs can fly. (2) Anything that can fly can swim. → All pigs can swim. The premises are obviously false, but the argument is valid. Wikipedia even has provided an example: ... consider this syllogism, which involves an obvious false premise: * If the streets are wet, it has rained recently. (premise) * The streets are wet. (premise) * Therefore it has rained recently. (conclusion) This argument is logically valid, but quite demonstrably wrong, because its first premise is false - one could hose down the streets, the local river could have flooded, etc. Hope that helps. If it doesn't then you'd better check to see if reason is still your "sole friend."

Kelly: Sean, you provided this example to indicate that a valid argument can be drawn from false premises: '(1) All dogs are immortal. (2) Socrates is a dog. → Socrates is immortal. The argument is valid, but unsound.' But as I indicated to you via my video '[Logic 101](#)', this is a false syllogism. This method of reasoning doesn't established true premises, but only assumes any declaration is true by definition. For instance: $x = (\text{is}) z$. If x is the label given to something specific, such as 'dog', which is a scientific identity and requiring a mass of observable data to define, it can never be certain what x really is. Thus, using the false syllogism is not a valid argument.

Sean: ... contrary to your objection, only propositions (defined as the meaning of a declarative sentence) can be either true or false.

Kelly: Sean, you say 'only propositions (defined as the meaning of a declarative sentence) can be either true or false.' That is what the academics are so fond of pointing out, but it never states how a true proposition is known from a false. That is why I point back to the law of identity as the basis for all truth.

Sean doesn't ultimately know how to tell a true proposition from a false one.

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Sean's confusion continues with him stating that logic is useless, without perceiving the irony that he is also saying that God is useless, according to his own crazed belief.

Sean:if you cannot deduce anything from $A = A$,

Kelly: This indicates you fail to understand the significance of the fundamental axiom of logic. If anything could be deduced from it, it would not be the law of identity.

Sean: Well if you cannot deduce anything from $A=A$, or at the very least you haven't shown that you can, it certainly suggest that the 'fundamental axiom of logic' is utterly useless as the fundamental axiom of anything. This is why Gordon Clark argued in 'God and Logic' linked above that 'The law of contradiction is not to betaken as an axiom prior to or independent of God. The law is God thinking.' You may replace LNC with the LI if you prefer. You simply cannot deduce anything from $A = A$. It is the recognition of a form from which nothing can be deduced.

Kelly: You say 'if you cannot deduce anything from $A=A$, or at the very least you haven't shown that you can, it certainly suggest that the "fundamental axiom of logic" is utterly useless as the fundamental axiom of anything.' There is nothing deduced from $A=A$, but it is used as an axiom in the way I demonstrated above. This indicates that it is not useless.

Sean: It is useless insofar as 1) you are unable to account for logic even the law of identity from sense observation, and 2) there is no system that you can validly, much less soundly, deduce from $A = A$.

How is it possible to reason with a person to whom you repeatedly say that logical deduction is not the same as induction (reasoning about observations of sensory data)?

Sean is now forced to reject the definition taught him by John Robbins, that 'logic is God'. He says, logic is not God, but just an aspect of God

Sean: If one assumes the Scriptures are true, then not only can the laws of logic be accounted for, but so can epistemology, ethics, politics, history, and everything else is gobbled up in one bite. That's because any valid inferences from any true propositions are necessarily true. Christianity claims to be true, therefore the axiom of Christianity, the Scriptures, covers all that follows. Christianity, at least per the authors of the Westminster Confession and their heirs, is a rational and deductive system of thought whose truth is evidenced by the logical harmony of propositions.

Kelly: 'If one assumes the Scriptures are true, then not only can the laws of logic be accounted for...' That's a big if. But trying to account for the law of identity by referring to a specific identity is again indicating your lack of understanding.

Sean: It's not a big 'if' at all, since LNC [law of non-contradiction] and certainly LI [law of identity] have been already accounted for and by extension so has LEM [law of excluded middle] in accordance with the axiom of Scripture. You just reject the Scriptures. OK, you're an atheist and not a Christian. Big surprise.

Kelly: 'If one assumes the Scriptures are true, then not only can the laws of logic be accounted for...' That's a big if. But trying to account for the law of identity by referring to a specific identity is again indicating your lack of understanding.

Sean: I can only assume you've misunderstood or are simply reading into what Dr. Robbins was saying. The divine Logos or Logic of God, who 'lighteth every man,' is the same one who 'became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth' (John 1:14). This is the truth which I demonstrated and Paul said you suppress in unrighteous. This is not identifying or equating the law of identity with God, but rather the laws of logic are not some cosmic accident. They are the architecture of mind of God in whose image we were created. Along with reading the short essay, God and Logic, I would recommend you listen again to Dr. Robbins lecture. At least understand first what he was saying if you're going to attempt to refute him.