

God as Cognitive Ground: Doing without Natural Theology

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1. By definition, a being who merits the maximally honorific title “God” would be *worthy of worship*, and thus would be *morally perfect* and hence *perfectly loving* toward all humans, even toward all human enemies of God, in such a way that God would seek *the best, all things considered*, for all humans.
2. By definition, it would be best, all things considered, for morally imperfect humans if they would agreeably receive a non-coercive *self-revealing call* from God that (a) directly and authoritatively invites them to enter into worship of God, including fellowship with God and volitional cooperation with God’s perfect will, but (b) could be elusive and even hidden at times for divine purposes of a moral challenge to humans.
3. So, if some morally imperfect humans would agreeably receive the divine self-revealing call, noted in 2, then God would non-coercively extend such a call to them, at least at some times.
4. By definition, a *direct authoritative call* from God to a human requires a *de re agent-to-agent acquaintance* of the human with God’s call that is irreducible to *de dicto* truths (and, furthermore, need not coerce any particular *de dicto* interpretation of this acquaintance experience).
5. So, if God extends a self-revealing call to some humans at some times, God would offer those humans at those times agent-to-agent acquaintance with God’s call that is irreducible to *de dicto* truths.
6. By definition, the humanly experienced acquaintance with God’s call, noted in 4, is not an argument, but in the absence of undefeated defeaters can nonetheless be *conclusive evidence* of God’s existence for a person.
7. By its nature, the conclusive evidence noted in 6, regarding God’s call, is not volitionally static, but is, *as divinely retractable given human volitional resistance*, experientially and thus personally variable in a manner that allows for divine elusiveness and even hiddenness at times regarding divine existence (in keeping with what some of the Hebrew prophets, including Jesus, require of conclusive divine evidence).
8. The arguments of traditional purely *de dicto* natural theology, whether a priori or a posteriori (e.g., ontological, first cause, design, and moral arguments), offer volitionally static evidence that (a) is not only independent of a divine call in its content (nature, for instance, offers no call of its own) but also insensitive to the direction of a human will relative to God’s will, and thus (b) does not allow for the kind of variability, noted in 7, that is central to hiddenness regarding divine existence.
9. By definition, any conclusive evidence suitable to a God who calls and hides from people at different times (see the God of Jewish and Christian theism) must not be volitionally static, but must allow for the kind of variability, noted in 7, that is central to hiddenness regarding divine existence, and must involve an evident divine call in its content; otherwise, a defeater will emerge from the absence of such a call, given that a perfectly loving God *would* call receptive people at some times.
10. So, the evidence offered by the arguments of traditional purely *de dicto* natural theology does not qualify as conclusive evidence of the God of Jewish and Christian theism, who calls humans but is elusive and even hidden at times.