

PLANTINGA

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Intro Philosophy

1. The evidentialist objection, foundationalism, and basicity

Evidentialist objection to belief in God: you shouldn't believe anything unless you have good evidence for it; no one has good evidence for God.

The objection seems to assume that belief in God can't be a basic belief.

2. Classical foundationalism

Plantinga thinks the objection is typically based on:

Classical foundationalism Foundationalism is true, and a basic belief must be either self-evident or incorrigible

But Plantinga rejects classical foundationalism. (It's "self-referentially incoherent".) He thinks that all sorts of additional beliefs can be basic, such as:

I see a tree,

I had breakfast this morning,

That person is angry.

So why not also:

God exists

?

3. The great pumpkin

I've often heard: if belief in God is properly basic, why can't just any belief be properly basic? Couldn't we say the same for any bizarre aberration we can think of? What about voodoo or astrology? What about the belief that the Great Pumpkin returns every Halloween? Could I properly take that as basic? And if I can't, why can I properly take belief in God as basic?

Plantinga gives a particularist reply. We start with examples of basicity (not a general criterion), which include *I see a tree* but not *the great Pumpkin exists*.

...criteria for proper basicity must be reached from below rather than above; they should not be presented as *ex Cathedra*, but argued to and tested by a relevant set of examples. But there is no reason to assume, in advance, that everyone will agree on the examples. The Christian will of course suppose that belief in God is entirely proper and rational; if he doesn't accept this belief on the basis of other propositions, he will conclude that it is basic for him and quite properly so. Followers of Bertrand Russell and Madelyn Murray O'Hare may disagree, but how is that relevant? Must my criteria, or those of the Christian community, conform to their examples? Surely not. The Christian community is responsible to its set of examples, not to theirs. (Plantinga, p. 50)

What's the relevant difference between belief in God and belief in the Great Pumpkin?

God has implanted in us a natural tendency to see his hand in the world around us; the same cannot be said for the Great Pumpkin. there being no Great Pumpkin and no natural tendency to accept beliefs about the Great Pumpkin. (Plantinga, p. 51)

4. Externalism