

**Discussion Notes: Reformation Fellowship**  
**The Author Analogy**  
**Handout #7**

**What am I doing?**

**A. Am I making an argument from analogy or am I making an argument by analogy?**

1. The “transcendent reality of God” & the “logic of transcendent causation” explain the biblical data.
  - a. Author analogy helps us get an intuitive grasp of both of these:
    - i. transcendent reality of god*
    - ii. logic of transcendent causation*
  - b. One could analyze both of these without resorting to any analogy.

**B. I am inviting you to join me in a thought experiment (in order to reach a clear understanding of the logic of transcendent causation, and of the nature of transcendent reality).**

1. What if we were to God like that character in a novel is to the novelist?
  - a. For in the novel-character relationship, we find a relationship of transcendent causation (“downward” rather than “upward”).
2. Example:
  - a. Who determined Frodo’s free choice to bear the ring—Frodo or Tolkien?
    - i. In one sense, Frodo; in another sense, Tolkien*
  - b. Analogously, then, could we answer the question, “Who determines my free choices?”
    - i. In one sense, I do; in another sense, God does.*

**C. What do I mean by real?**

1. For the purposes of this thought experiment that I invite you to perform, “real” is in contradistinction to “imaginary” (or “fictional”):
  - a. A shark that bites me while I am surfing is “real”;
  - b. A shark that I dream about biting me is “imaginary” and it is NOT “real.”
2. The thought experiment above can make clear that the categories of “real” and “imaginary” (as I am defining them) are dependent upon what person (what imagination) you are relating the action or being to.
  - a. If I write a novel about a character having a dream about a shark, then—if the character is imaginary—what is the shark?
    - i. Aren’t I imagining two very real different sorts of things:*

- (A) I am imagining a "real" character.
    - (1) The character is in one sense imaginary (from my standpoint); and in another sense "real" (from his own standpoint).
  - (B) I am imagining an "imaginary" shark.
    - (1) The shark is imaginary in two different senses: from my standpoint, and from the character's standpoint.
3. With respect to whether a being is real (in relation to me), a being is "real" if it can affect me or determine the outcome of my life by actions that it takes independently of me.
- a. A shark that I have a nightmare about is NOT real (in relation to me); it can't really hurt me.
    - i. *The nightmare can affect me (hurt me); but the shark cannot.*
4. With respect to whether a choice is real (in relation to me), a choice is "real" if it was not necessitated by some other being existing within my reality—my level of existence—other than my own will.
- a. I do not have a "real" choice whether my heart beats the next beat; I do have a real choice about whether I will forgive you or not.

#### **D. What do I mean by "levels" of reality?**

- 1. On my view, God exists as transcendently REAL.
  - a. This means that, in relation to HIM, the whole created order (including me) is the creation of God's imagination ("imaginary") rather than existing in and with the same being as God himself ("real like God").
    - i. *This means that, in relation to HIM, the whole created order (including me) is "imaginary" (as defined above—unable to affect him or determine the outcome of his life through actions independent of him) rather than "real like He is" (as defined above—able to affect him or determine the outcome of his life through actions independent of him).*
  - b. However, in relation to ME, the whole created order exists in and with the same sort of being as I have and is not "imaginary."
    - i. *Only the works of some human being's imagination are "imaginary" in relation to ME.*
- 2. On my view, I do not, AND CAN NEVER EXIST, on the level of transcendent reality on which God exists.
  - a. I just exist; I am "real" in the most typical sense.
  - b. God is "more" real than we are; that is, his being transcends our being (God super-exists; he exists-above-or-beyond-us); God is "atypically" real; God is real in an absolutely unique sense; God exists in an absolutely unique sense.
  - c. God is not real in the sense that we call ourselves "real."
    - i. *Comment on the typical response to "God is not real."*

- (A) We are so incurably fixed on our own perspective as the ultimate standpoint that if God is not real (like us) he has to be imaginary or fictional.
- (B) It does not even occur to us that that could mean that God has a standpoint "above" us; that he is real in a way that renders us fictional or imaginary rather than vice versa.

**E. Prerequisite to successful engagement in above thought experiment:**

1. Willingness to leave YOUR standpoint in order to IMAGINE how to think about an action from the standpoint of a character in the context of the novel that he is a part of.
  - a. If you say FRODO (the hobbit) is not making a REAL choice, you are speaking from your standpoint.
  - b. Is FRODO's choice real or non-real from his own standpoint?
2. If you refuse to leave your standpoint on the grounds that it is the true standpoint, then understand what you are doing: you are denying that God has a more ultimate standpoint than yours.
  - a. The rungs on the ladder of different levels of reality STOP with you.
    - i. *God is not a rung higher; that is, God does not transcend your reality*
    - ii. *You can take that position philosophically; but I submit that it is not defensible biblically.*

**F. How do I account for our accountability to God?**

1. God's creation of an evil being or an evil act does not constitute his "approval" of it.
  - a. God can quite legitimately reject, hate, and repudiate the evil that he creates. That is, he can "judge" it.
    - i. *If not, he would have to lack moral values.*
2. God's "judgment" would require a self-awareness on the part of his creatures (his characters) that they are indeed his creatures (his characters) and that God is both their creator (author) and their judge.
3. Any punishment (condemnation) that God carries out will and must occur "inside" created reality.
  - a. God does not extract us from created reality, bring us into his transcendent presence, and punish us there.
  - b. Rather, God enters into created reality, reveals himself to us there as our Judge, and exacts punishment upon us there.