

A Response to James Anderson

In the fall 2013 edition of the *Christian Apologetics Journal*,¹ I had the privilege of participating in a discussion / debate with K. Scott Oliphint of Westminster Seminary and Jason Lisle of the Institute for Creation Research on apologetic methodology and its relation (if any) to the question of the age of the Earth. The three of us each had written an article, plus a response to the others' article, together with a conclusion. We then each solicited the services of a reviewer to weigh in on the exchanges. Oliphint chose James N. Anderson of Reformed Theological Seminary in Charlotte, NC. Lisle chose Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr. of Living Hope Presbyterian Church in Greer, SC. I chose Norman L. Geisler of Southern Evangelical Seminary in Charlotte, NC and Veritas Evangelical Seminary of Murrieta, CA. We followed up our written exchanges with a live panel discussion at the *National Conference on Christian Apologetics* in October 2013.²

Jason Lisle is of the view that Presuppositionalism is the only fully biblically consistent and sound apologetic method and that it entails the conclusion that the Earth is young. K. Scott Oliphint is of the view that Presuppositionalism is the fully consistent and sound apologetic method but that the question of the age of the Earth is not so entailed by it. I am of the view that Classical apologetics is the only fully consistent and sound apologetic method and that, though I am a Young Earth Creationist, maintain that the question of the age of the Earth is (in principle) a relatively unrelated issue.³ Given our respective views, one can see two-against-one on three

¹ *Christian Apologetics Journal* 11, no. 2 (Fall 2013) is available for download at http://richardghowe.com/index_htm_files/CAJPresuppositionalism.pdf. All references at to the articles in this edition unless otherwise noted.

² The video of the panel discussion can be viewed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HO_4gy4amAc, accessed 08/12/19.

³ One must note different (but related) uses of the term 'classical'. Classical Apologetics is an apologetic methodology distinguished other apologetic methods such as Presuppositionalism, Evidentialism, and Reformed Epistemology. It is characterized by an emphasis on natural theology and the primacy of theism in establishing the

different issues. Lisle and Oliphint are in agreement (against me) regarding Presuppositionalism vs. Classical apologetics. Lisle and I are in agreement (against Oliphint) regarding the age of the Earth.⁴ Oliphint and I are in agreement (against Lisle) that Presuppositionalism does not entail the young Earth conclusion.

Of special interest for me for my purposes here is the review article by James Anderson.⁵ I appreciate very much his participation in this endeavor. His thoughtful contribution to the journal has increased its value to the greater Christian community as we continue these family disputes over the age of the Earth and apologetic methodology. I should first like to mention several points where I commend Anderson and then offer some correctives to his analysis.

Commendations

First, I appreciate Anderson's full disclosure regarding his own views vis-à-vis these debates. It should come as no surprise to anyone who knows him that he is an enthusiastic proponent of Presuppositionalism. However, his commitments in this regard do not interfere with his objectivity in his assessment of our exchanges even if I shall have some particular criticisms to level against that assessment.

truth of the Christian faith. Classical Philosophy generally refers to a tradition of philosophy that finds its roots in ancient Greek philosophy, primarily the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle. The phrase can sometimes include the Scholastic tradition of Thomas Aquinas. Classical empiricism is to be contrasted with modern empiricism. The former regards all knowledge as beginning in sensory experience, but maintains that the truths ascertained thereby are not limited to merely physical truths. As such, classical empiricism can give rise to knowledge of non-physical truths such as logic, metaphysics, ethics, and theology while Modern Empiricism expressly cannot. See footnote 26 for more on the classical empiricism / modern empiricism distinction. (I owe my coming to understand this distinction and my use of this terminology to Ed. L. Miller in his *Question That Matter: An Invitation to Philosophy* 2nd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1987), 226 ff.). Classical Realism, for the most part in this paper, refers to the view that there is an external world outside the mind of the knower together with the commitment that this external reality is the starting point of philosophy. It stands in contrast to Critical Realism which insists that whether there is an external world outside the mind of the knower must itself be subject to the critique of philosophy. For more on the Classical Realism / Critical Realism distinction, see footnote 25.

⁴ To be fair to Oliphint, he seemed relatively non-committal during our exchanges regarding the age of the earth, but appeared to be more sympathetic to the old earth position.

⁵ James N. Anderson, "Review": 185-187.

Second, Anderson charitably interacts with all three of the interlocutors, pointing to specific points where he agrees with each of us. Since he finds himself in agreement with Oliphint on all the relevant points, he understandably does not interact with Oliphint in his review. His comments about Lisle's position rightly point out that Lisle never demonstrates the necessary (my word) link between Young Earth Creationism and Presuppositionalism. My interest lies in what Anderson has to say about my position.

Criticisms

A Misunderstanding of the Logic of My Position

First, Anderson seeks to set the debate in terms of the logic of my position. He says "So [Howe] needs to counter the claim that YEC [Young Earth Creationism] requires PA [Presuppositional Apologetics]. The approach Howe takes in his opening article is to argue against PA. From a logical standpoint, this is rather surprising; for if the claim that YEC requires PA is true, refuting PA would (by *modus tollens*) also refute YEC. Surely this is not the conclusion Howe wants us to reach!"⁶

Several things can be said in response. While Anderson is right that refuting (or denying, using the common logical term) the consequent in a material implication entails the denial of the antecedent.⁷ This amounts to saying (in this context) that, given the statement "If Young Earth Creationism, then Presuppositionalism," a denial (or refutation) of Presuppositionalism would be a refutation of Young Earth Creationism). Since (as Anderson rightly observes) I want to affirm

⁶ Anderson, 181.

⁷ Logically this amounts to saying if p entails q and q is false (i.e., q is refuted or denied) then p is false (or refuted or denied). This argument schema is known as *modus tollens* (Latin for "mode of denial"). Symbolically it is stated as:

1. $p \supset q$.
2. $\sim q / \therefore \sim p$

It reads as: If p then q. Not q, therefore not p.

rather than deny Young Earth Creationism, it would seem to him that such a logical move on my part is counterproductive. The mistake Anderson is making is assuming that I grant the initial material implication (the "if/then" statement; the first premise in his *Modus Tollens*). He mistakenly thinks I grant the truth of the claim "If Young Earth Creationism, then Presuppositionalism." I do not. It would be like trying to refute the claim "If the Bible is the Word of God, then the *Book of Mormon* is the Word of God." If a Christian (perhaps in a debate with a Mormon) denies that the *Book of Mormon* is the Word of God, it does not follow that the Christian is obligated to admit that the Bible is not the Word of God (which he would have to do if he grants the truth of this material implication). This is so because the Christian would not grant the truth of this particular material implication in the first place. In fact, in such a debate, the way to demonstrate the falsity of the material implication is to show that, indeed, the consequent is false *while the antecedent is true*. By parallel, since Lisle and I agree that Young Earth Creationism is true, I can prove the falsity of his position (that Young Earth Creationism entails Presuppositionalism) merely by showing that Presuppositionalism is false. Anderson should have expected this very argument strategy from me. It is odd that he did not. This is the quickest way to refute a material implication. I am puzzled why Anderson missed that my overall objection to Lisle stemmed from the fact that I affirm Young Earth Creationism while denying Presuppositionalism. To affirm Young Earth Creationism while denying Presuppositionalism just is to reject the claim "If Young Earth Creationism, then Presuppositionalism."

Instead of the material implication that Anderson ascribes to me, the claim I am refuting is a bi-conditional (Young Earth Creationism if and only if Presuppositionalism).⁸ It is precisely

⁸ Instead of $p \supset q; \sim q/\therefore \sim p$ my argument is $\sim(p \equiv q)$, which translates into $\sim((p \supset q) \bullet (q \supset p))$. From here I only need to show that one of the conjuncts is false in order to show that the entire expression true. Only in the case where the truth value of both variables p and q is the same (i.e., where both p and q are true or both are false) will the bi-conditional (which is a conjunction of two material implications) be true. This is why Anderson notices that, isolating only one material implication (If Young Earth Creationism then Presuppositional Apologetics) a false PA

because I affirm the truth of Young Earth Creationism (together with the denial of Presuppositional Apologetics) that this bi-conditional is rendered false, since, given that Young Earth Creationism is true, assuming the truth of the bi-conditional would entail a contradiction, to wit, that Young Earth Creationism is both true and false. This is why I endeavor to argue against Presuppositional Apologetics.⁹ Oddly, Anderson as much as admits that this is a matter of a bi-conditional when he says (in formulating what he takes Lisle's position to be) "Lisle maintains that there is a strong connection between YEC and PA. It is not merely that both are true. They ultimately stand or fall *together*."¹⁰ But for p and q to "stand and fall together" is to say

will entail that YEC is false. But since I am arguing the denial of a bi-conditional, my argument requires that only one of the conjunctions of the bi-conditional be false. This can be done precisely by the very logical argument I advanced, to wit, a false PA with a true YEC. Far from disproving YEC (as Anderson rightfully points out is against my intention) this proves the falsehood of the original bi-conditional (which was, in fact, my original intention).

⁹ Utilizing the variables of Y as "Young Earth Creationism" and P as "Presuppositionalism" then the Indirect Proof is:

1. Y
2. $\sim P / \therefore \sim(Y \equiv P)$
3. $\sim\sim(Y \equiv P)$ Assm.
4. $Y \equiv P$ D.N. 3 (3)
5. $(Y \supset P) \cdot (P \supset Y)$ Equiv. 4 (3)
6. $Y \supset P$ Simp. 5 (3)
7. $\sim Y$ M.T. 6, 2 (3)
8. $Y \cdot \sim Y$ Conj. 1, 7 (3)
9. $\sim(Y \equiv P)$ I.P. 3-8

An Old Earth Creationist who is a Presuppositionalist can make the same (formal) Indirect Proof argument against Lisle (i.e., for the falsity of the bi-conditional $(Y \equiv P)$ or, for the truth of $\sim(Y \equiv P)$) by defending the truth of P and the falsity of Y (or the truth of $\sim Y$). Thus:

1. $\sim Y$
2. $P / \therefore \sim(Y \equiv P)$
3. $\sim\sim(Y \equiv P)$ Assm.
4. $Y \equiv P$ D.N. 3 (3)
5. $(Y \supset P) \cdot (P \supset Y)$ Equiv. 4 (3)
6. $P \supset Y$ Simp. 5 (3)
7. $\sim P$ M.T. 6, 1 (3)
8. $P \cdot \sim P$ Conj. 2, 7 (3)
9. $\sim(Y \equiv P)$ I.P. 3-8

¹⁰ Anderson, 180, emphasis in original.

that each entails the other, which is to say that they relate truth-functionally as bi-conditionals and not merely as a material implication.¹¹

A Misunderstanding of the Purpose of My Arguments

Second, (and, perhaps, as an explanation of Anderson's mistaken construal above of my position) Anderson misses what my purpose was all along. He says "For his purposes it is not sufficient—indeed, not even necessary—to show that PA is mistaken. Rather, he needs to show that YEC can be affirmed independently of PA."¹² Anderson is certainly right that showing that Young Earth Creationism can be affirmed independently of Presuppositional Apologetics would suffice to show the falsity of the bi-conditional (my words).¹³ But he is wrong to think that showing that Presuppositional Apologetics is false was unnecessary for my purposes. I am not sure how Anderson could have missed this. I say "I seek to document the presence of

¹¹ By framing my response to Anderson truth-functionally, I do not mean to say that this debate regarding Young Earth Creationism and Presuppositionalism as a whole is *merely* truth-functional or that it can satisfactorily be construed as such. I think that it cannot in as much as it is a philosophical (material) debate and not merely a logical (formal) one. Anyone familiar with the philosophical relationships of necessary and sufficient conditions (for example) should recognize the inability of the modus ponens or modus tollens to capture these real relationships. Instead, since Anderson formulates his critique of my views truth-functionally, I am only framing my response to him truth-functionally. For a (somewhat more extended) treatment of this issue see my "Metaphysics and Formal Logic" [here](#) and "Metaphysics and Formal Logic, Again: A Rejoinder to W. Paul Franks" [here](#).

¹² Anderson, 181.

¹³ The reason it is sufficient to show the falsity of the bi-conditional by showing that YEC can be affirmed independently of PA is because, if the truth of YEC is *independent* of PA, then YEC could be true when PA is false or YEC could be false when PA is true. In other words, if they are independent, then they could have different truth values. A simple truth-table will demonstrate that every instance where they do have different truth values, the bi-conditional is false. This is shown in lines 2 and 3. The bi-conditional is true only when both variables have the same truth value (lines 1 and 4).

Y	P	$Y \supset P$	•	$P \supset Y$
T	T	T	T	T
T	F	F	F	T
F	T	T	F	F
F	F	T	T	T

Presuppositionalism in the thinking of such Young Earth creationists as Ken Ham and Jason Lisle and to offer a response to their views."¹⁴ It clear that my response is not to their Young Earth Creationism views but instead is to their Presuppositionalism. Further on I say "As a Classical apologist, I desire to show Young Earth creationists that the Presuppositional method not only does not serve to convince detractors that Young Earth Creationism is true, but it scandalizes Christians in what constitutes sound apologetics in the first place."¹⁵ Necessarily, such objectives require that I argue against Presuppositionalism. In addition, I comment by way of summary

I have tried to summarize as directly as I can my concerns regarding how Young Earth Creationism is increasingly embracing Presuppositionalism. ... I have addressed this issue because I believe that it is more than just academic. In repudiating the classical method of apologetics, due partially to an unwarranted desire to avoid appealing to truths from reality as God has created it, certain Young Earth Presuppositionalists are robbing themselves of a very powerful tool to be used of God in our carrying out the commands of the Lord to defend (1 Pet. 3:15) and earnestly contend for (Jude 3) the Christian faith.¹⁶

To be sure, an overall issue of contention between the three interlocutors was whether Young Earth Creationism and Presuppositional Apologetics were necessarily linked. Anderson is right in picking this up. Having seen this, he then rightfully recognizes that the truth of Young Earth Creationism and the falsity of Presuppositional Apologetics would entail the falsity of the necessary connection (the bi-conditional). For some reason, however, the fact that I did not argue for the truth of Young Earth Creationism seems, to Anderson, to render my opening article "rather surprising" from a logical point of view and that "from a bystander's perspective the strategy of only arguing against PA might seem rather counterproductive." Perhaps he missed the

¹⁴ Richard G. Howe "Classical Apologetics and Creationism": 5.

¹⁵ Howe, p. 7.

¹⁶ Howe, p. 30.

fact that, between the three interlocutors the only one who affirms the necessary connection between Young Earth Creationism and Presuppositional Apologetics is Lisle, who affirms both.¹⁷ Thus, it would be superfluous for me to argue for the truth of Young Earth Creationism (which I hold) in order to prove the falsity of the necessary connection. Since Lisle grants the truth of Young Earth Creationism, it is enough to demonstrate the falsity of Presuppositional Apologetics to demonstrate the falsity of the necessary connection.

Since the truth of both Young Earth Creationism and Presuppositional Apologetics is logically compatible with the truth of the necessary connection, then arguing for the truth of Young Earth Creationism would have been "surprising" and would have seemed "rather counterproductive" since it would have been a waste of time in advancing my position.¹⁸ What is more, arguing for the truth of Young Earth Creationism would have only served to distract from that issue about which I am most burdened. Given the word constraints within which we all were working, I am more interested in disabusing Lisle and Oliphint of their Presuppositional

¹⁷ Lest the reader think that my words "who affirms both" is redundant with saying that Lisle affirms the bi-conditional, it should be remembered that one could affirm the truth of the bi-conditional (i.e., one could affirm that Young Earth Creationism and Presuppositionalism mutually entail one another) and still maintain that Young Earth Creationism and Presuppositionalism are both false. The only thing that is required for a bi-conditional to be true is that the two variables have the same truth value. Thus, while it is the case that if p and q are both true, then $p \equiv q$ necessarily is true, it is also the case that if both p and q are false, then $p \equiv q$ necessarily is true. It would be like saying that if George Washington were alive in 2016 on his birthday he would be 284 years old and if George Washington were 284 years old on his birthday, he would be alive in 2016. This bi-conditional is true even though both of the variables are false (i.e., it is false that George Washington is alive in 2016 and it is false that George Washington is 284 years old).

¹⁸ To say that the truth of both Young Earth Creationism and Presuppositional Apologetics is logically compatible with the truth of the necessary connection is to say (logically) that the truth of the conjunction is logically compatible with the truth of the bi-conditional. This means that there is no instance where the truth of the conjunction entails the falsity of the bi-conditional. This is easily demonstrable by a truth table and should not be surprising since the only way for the conjunction to be true is for each of the variables (the conjuncts) to be true. But having both conjuncts true means that the bi-conditional would have to be true. However, the reverse is not the case. The truth of the bi-conditional does not entail the truth of the conjunction since the bi-conditional would also be true where both variables are false (as the George Washington example showed in footnote 17). But having two false conjuncts is a false conjunction.

Apologetics views than I am in convincing Oliphint of Young Earth Creationism (perhaps to the dismay of certain Young Earth Creationists).

A Misunderstanding of the Nature of the Classical Apologetic Method

Third, Anderson suggests that my move to go with my interpretation of the Bible over refuting the science is "very presuppositionalist."¹⁹ It is not. Granted that a Presuppositionalist could take this route (as there is nothing anti-presuppositionalist about using the Bible to counter certain scientific views), it is certainly not a sufficient condition for Presuppositionalism. One would have thought that the debate between Bellarmine and Galileo regarding whether the Sun moves (to which I appealed both in my article and during the panel discussion/debate) would have made this clear. I cannot imagine that Anderson would suggest that Cardinal Bellarmine was being presuppositional in leveraging Joshua 10 against Galileo.²⁰ To suggest that it is presuppositional to use the Scriptures to counter a scientific claim seems to indicate a misunderstanding on Anderson's part of exactly what is it that distinguishes the Classical Apologetics from Presuppositional Apologetics. It is not inconsistent for the Classical apologist to assert that at times the Bible provides truths that function epistemologically antecedently to other truths. This is not by itself Presuppositionalism. It might be nothing more than a recognition that Special Revelation is, in certain cases, antecedent to (or completely supplemental to) General Revelation.²¹ For it to be Presuppositionalism, one would have to affirm that this is *always* the case.

¹⁹ Anderson, p. 184.

²⁰ For a treatment of this issue see, Richard J. Blackwell, *Galileo, Bellarmine, and the Bible* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991).

²¹ For example, the fact that the Messiah is to come twice is a truth that is not revealed in General Revelation.

A Misunderstanding of Classical Empiricism

Fourth, Anderson asks (extending the above point) "If one aspect of natural revelation (philosophical reason) is given priority in his hermeneutics, why not other aspects of it (empirical observations)?"²² Anderson is asking that, since I am seemingly willing to submit (indeed, insistent upon submitting) my hermeneutics to my philosophical analysis, how can I consistently reverse the order and opt for a Young Earth reading of Genesis contrary (at least *prima facie*) to the scientific (i.e., empirical) data? He says "I suspect that if Howe were to engage more with the empirical data, his favored epistemology [i.e., my Classical Empiricist philosophy] would not serve him well."²³

But Anderson is confusing several things here. He is confusing the differences between Classical Empiricism on the one hand and specific generalizations and conclusions based on scientific reasoning on the other. For a Classical Empiricist to insist on the primacy of empirical experience in all knowledge is not to say that he must insist upon (or is disallowed to raise an objection to) any conclusion to which a scientist might come based upon scientific (i.e., empirical) reasoning. One can be a completely consistent Thomist and still object to a particular scientific theory or model. This is so even if the motivation for the Thomist to reject that scientific theory or model is because of his understanding of Scripture. Such a move does nothing to advance Presuppositionalism.

What is more, Anderson seems to completely miss what the difference is between philosophy and science (in the modern sense of the term 'science'). This is especially true regarding Classical philosophy. Since, for him, modern science is co-extensive with empiricism,

²² Anderson, p. 184.

²³ Anderson, p. 184.

Anderson cannot help but see a contradiction where none exists when I reject Old Earth Creationism (the "scientific" or "empirical" view of the data) in favor of a Young Earth Creationism (the "biblical" view). Because of his misunderstanding, he thinks he sees a Presuppositionalist move on my part when I deny Old Earth Creationism on the basis of my interpretation of the biblical text. He cannot see how it is that one can at the same time defend the role of philosophy (especially as it is antecedent in some cases to understanding the biblical text) and yet allow the exegesis of a biblical text to argue against an otherwise established position of science.

A Misunderstanding of Classical (Scholastic) Philosophy

Fifth, Anderson comments that my claim that truth claims must be settled by an appeal to reality strikes him as either "logically trivial or epistemologically naïve."²⁴ Several responses are in order that I must direct both to Anderson and Lisle. I suspect that they do not understand what "direct access to reality" means in the context of the Classical Realism from which I am arguing. The problem is that Lisle's position collapses into a form of Critical Realism.²⁵ This is evident in how Lisle responds to my claim that "our sensory experiences of reality also deliver to us

²⁴ Anderson, p. 184.

²⁵ The distinction I am playing off of here between Classical Realism and Critical Realism has to do with whether the given of sensory experience must be subjected to the rigors of critical philosophical analysis and is only justified when it has successfully survived such a critique. The classical tradition (Aristotle through Aquinas) would deny that it must while most within the modern and contemporary schools would affirm so. For the classical philosopher, our experience of sensible objects which comprise the external world is a starting point behind which philosophy cannot occur. To grant that our acknowledgement of the external world must be justified philosophically is already, *ipso facto*, to deny Classical (or Scholastic) Realism. For the clearest and most direct and succinct treatment of this point see Etienne Gilson, *Methodical Realism*, trans. Philip Trower (Front Royal: Christendom Press, 1990), reprinted *Methodical Realism: A Handbook for Beginning Realists* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011). For a treatment of the notion of "the given" of sensory experience vis-à-vis contemporary philosophy see John Wild, "The Concept of *The Given* in Contemporary Philosophy—Its Origin and Limitations," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 1, no. 1 (Sep. 1940): 70-82. For the significance of "the given" for intentional logic vis-à-vis contemporary (mathematical) logic see Henry Babcock Veatch, *Intentional Logic: A Logic Based on Philosophical Realism* (n.c.: Archon Books, 1970), pp. 87 ff.

metaphysical truths"²⁶ Lisle says "Howe has tacitly presupposed (among other things) that our senses correspond to reality. Now how does he know that he's not in the 'Matrix' and that his sensory experiences have nothing whatsoever to do with the real world?"²⁷ One can perhaps hear the crackling of Descartes' fire as he wrote, weaving a tapestry of systematic doubt, drawing a vivid picture of the Matrix centuries before it found its way onto the silver screen.²⁸

Evidently Lisle insists that one must have justification that one's sensory faculties inform him about external sensible reality. This is the *sine qua non* of Critical Realism. I am convinced that Lisle has no idea what philosophical "fire" he is playing with or how philosophically grave

²⁶ Howe, "Classical Response": 93. This short response to Anderson and Lisle will not allow me to unpack this notion of how metaphysical truths come into knower by way of the senses. Etienne Gilson puts it succinctly: "What the senses perceive exists, and existence is included in what the senses perceive, but the senses are only the bearers of a message which they are incapable of reading, for only the intellect can decipher it." [Etienne Gilson, *Thomist Realism and the Critique of Knowledge* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 199]. Though in context, Gilson is referring specifically to *esse* (the act of existing), I believe his point applies as well to other metaphysical truths. In this, Classical Empiricism is starkly contrasted with modern Empiricism in the vein, for example, of John Locke. The empiricism of Aristotle and Aquinas completely accounts for how it is what we can, beginning with the senses, know non-physical truths such as metaphysical truths (e.g., universals, causality, act and potency), logical truths, moral truths and theological truths (e.g., the existence and certain attributes of God).

²⁷ Lisle, "Young Earth Presuppositionalist Reply": 110.

²⁸ Descartes says "Whatever I have up till now accepted as most true I have acquired either from the senses or through the senses. But from time to time I have found that the senses deceive, and it is prudent never to trust completely those who have deceived us even once. Yet although the senses occasionally deceive us with respect to objects which are very small or in the distance, there are many other beliefs about which doubt is quite impossible, even though they are derived from the senses—for example, that I am here, sitting by the fire, wearing a winter dressing gown, holding this piece of paper in my hands, and so on." [René Descartes (*Meditations on First Philosophy: First Meditation*, in John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, Dugald Murdoch, trans. *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, Vol. II (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 12-13] But as any student of the history of philosophy should know, Descartes was quite able to bring himself to doubt (if only as a method of inquiry) even his most evident sensory experiences. One might suppose that Descartes was quite sympathetic with the Classical Realism I am advocating here when he says in his synopsis of his sixth meditation, "The great benefit of these arguments is not, in my view that they prove what they establish—namely that there really is a world, and that human beings have bodies and so on—since no sane person has ever seriously doubted these things. The point is that in *considering these arguments* we come to realize that they are not as solid or as transparent as the arguments which lead us to knowledge of our own minds and of God." [*First Meditation*, Cottingham, p. 11, emphasis added]. According to Classical Realism, Descartes' mistake was to think in the first place that our knowledge that "there really is a world" is the result of any argument. To suppose this is already to deny Classical Realism in favor of Critical Realism. Such a supposition has proved to be fatal to subsequent philosophical thinking. The fact that Lisle so easily assumes that his Critical Realist challenge to me is the challenge it is, shows the unfortunate extent to which the Critical Realist methodology has influenced certain thinkers today.

such speculations as these are. To demand a justification for our sensory experiences either by asking how we can know that a sensory experience allows us to "rationally justify the conclusion"²⁹ that there is an external reality (which is what Critical Realism asks) or by asking how we can know whether the thing in reality "correctly matches the image in [our minds] (which is the question Locke's Representationalism occasions)³⁰ is to embark on a philosophical path that the history of ideas has proven leads to absolute skepticism. As far as Classical Realism goes, for philosophers to tacitly (or not so tacitly) admit the legitimacy of such speculative questions was largely the beginning of the undoing of sound philosophical reasoning in the history of ideas.³¹ Either Anderson does not appreciate the gravity of Lisle's challenge or he did not notice it in his reading of Lisle.

I suspect that neither Lisle nor Anderson would be bothered by the specter of skepticism that I suggest looms large at the end of this philosophical road in as much as they offer their Presuppositionalism as the stop gap. Perhaps because they see the bankruptcy of Critical Realism, they think that only their Presuppositionalism can offer any epistemological sanity. It is my contention that it cannot. The challenge to empirical experience that Lisle (and I assume Anderson) levels will not bode well for any subsequent argument he might offer for his Presuppositionalism. He thinks he has the empiricist over a barrel when he asks how the

²⁹ Lisle, "Young Earth Presuppositionalist Reply": 111.

³⁰ Locke says "'Tis evident, the Mind knows not Things immediately, but only by the intervention of the *Ideas* it has of them. *Our Knowledge* therefore is *real*, only so far as there is a conformity between our *Ideas* and the reality of Things. But what shall be here the Criterion? How shall the Mind, when it perceives nothing but its own *Ideas*, know that they agree with Things themselves?" [John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, IV, I, 4, §3-§5, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 563] The reader can decide whether he thinks Locke's answer he goes on to give to his own question is adequate.

³¹ The reader, of course, will have to judge for himself. I can only recommend some salient readings in this regard, including the Gilson text referenced in notes 25 and 26, together with his *The Unity of Philosophical Experience* (Westminster: Christian Classics, 1982; reprint, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999). For a discussion of the bankruptcy of Representationalism and its devastating impact on the issue of biblical hermeneutics see Thomas A. Howe, *Objectivity in Biblical Interpretation* (Altamonte Springs: Advantage Books, 2004).

empiricist knows that his empirical experience corresponds to reality. But it is the Critical Realist and not the Classical Realist who grants the legitimacy of the question in the first place. A question like "how do I know I am not in the Matrix" is not a legitimate philosophical question for two reasons. To grant that the question is philosophically legitimate is *ipso facto* to grant certain epistemological tools that the Classical Realist denies are legitimate. Further, to grant that the question is philosophically legitimate is *ipso facto* to deny the Classical Realism I am espousing. Indeed, it is to deny reason itself. It will do no good to think that Presuppositionalism can come to the rescue since Presuppositionalism itself depends upon the very faculties Lisle thinks he is challenging. He thinks that his Presuppositionalism *just is* the necessary preconditions of the intelligibility of knowledge. What he ends up doing, is nothing more than, having illicitly granted to the Critical Realist the legitimacy of the critical question in the first place, he mistakenly thinks that the critical approach proves an abject skepticism that only Presuppositionalism can remedy. It is my contention that the very problem the Presuppositionalist thinks exists that only his Presuppositionalism can resolve, is a problem created by a philosophical perspective and approach (i.e., Critical Realism) that should have never been given any purchase in the first place.

A Misunderstanding of Human Knowing

Anderson claims to agree with Lisle when he says that only God has direct access to reality. Before I say anything about what they might mean by "direct access to reality" I wonder how is it that either of them know this to be the case. Given the role that both Lisle and Anderson put upon the Bible regarding it being the source that it is for our knowledge of God, I am at a loss as to where they could go in the Bible to defend this claim. It surely cannot be that they know this to be true of God because of some method or faculty or resource outside the Bible. To opt for this would be to undo everything else that Lisle has argued for which (presumably)

Andersons agrees. In effect, such a claim is most definitely a philosophical claim. Being so, it could only be unpacked and defended with philosophy and not biblical exegesis. The irony is that, in Lisle's (and by extension, Anderson's) repudiation of my philosophical position, they have appealed to a different philosophical position while not admitting that their position is a philosophical one. They argue against the primacy of philosophy in favor of the primacy of Scripture all the while failing to ground their position in Scripture.