

The Logic in God

Joshua Rasmussen

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Logic is about *rules of reason*, such as the rule that nothing can be both true and false simultaneously. Why do such rules exist? And how do mere molecules and chemical reactions discover these rules?

I want to share with you some recent developments in my own thinking about the rules of reason. As a philosopher, reason has been one of my favorite lights. Yet I've only recently been shining reason upon itself. When I look back at my initial thoughts about logic, it is evident to me that I underestimated, undervalued, and underappreciated the reality of the things I see most clearly in my own mind.

In what follows, I will share why I now think the rules of reason are part of the foundation of existence. First, I will explain why I think the logical principles you see *with* your mind are not merely *in* your mind. Then I will motivate a hypothesis about how reason fits inside a perfect mind.

Logic is Not Merely in Your Head

To begin to think about logic, let us consider an example of a logical principle. Take the law of identity:

(I) For any x , x is x .

The principle is manifestly true. Everything *is* itself. I am me. You are you. This computer is this computer. There are no counterexamples: nothing is *not* itself.

But what is this principle? What is its nature? I will show how (I) points to a *logical landscape* that exists out there—beyond your head. I will offer three independent considerations.

First, the truth of (I) doesn't depend upon *you*. Before you were born, it was true that everything is what it is. Rocks were rocks. Blades of grass were blades of grass. Principle (I) describes reality whether or not you exist.

Imagine if that were not so. Before you were born, some rocks were *not* rocks. Some blades of grass were merely squirrels. You then come along, and suddenly, everything changed. Everything then began to obey (I) for the first time. Rocks became rocks. Grass became grass. Surely, this scenario is absurd: the rules of logic don't hold their breath for you.

In fact, one of the principles of logic (called *K*) is that the principles of logic are themselves *necessary*. They *cannot not* hold. Thus, (I) cannot not hold. In other words, (I) is true *no matter what*, even if you aren't around.

As you may expect, there is some debate among philosophers about how to interpret the necessity of logic. Rather than enter the details of the debate here, I will refer to an article where I go into more detail: "[From Necessary Truth to Necessary Existence](#)." The gist of the article is that logic cannot be necessarily *true* unless it is necessarily *real*—for nothing can be anything unless it is something.

My first reason, then, to think logic isn't (merely) in your head is this:

1. Logic is necessary.
2. You are not.
3. Therefore, logic doesn't depend upon you.

To be clear, when I say logic doesn't depend upon you, I do not mean that your *sight* of logic doesn't depend upon you. Your *sight* of logic does depend upon you. When you see beams of logic within your mind, your *sight* cannot exist without you. Yet, it would be a mistake to infer that *what you see* depends upon your sight. What you see is *itself* necessary (e.g., it is necessary that every x is x), whereas your sight is not.

Here is a second reason I've come to think logic transcends you (and me!). It's about the nature of truth. I've become convinced that the best account of the nature of truth is in terms of *correspondence with reality* (see Rasmussen 2014). For example, <my cat is on the mat> is *true* if and only if there is a real cat on a real mat. Truth is about reality. If that is correct, then logical principles can only be *true* if they correspond with actual reality. Call this reality 'the logical landscape'.

What could the logical landscape be? What might logical truths correspond to?

Could logical truths correspond with *your thoughts*? I don't think so. Your thoughts can be mistaken. Logical truths cannot be.

More fundamentally, your thoughts are the wrong category. Your thoughts are *bearers* of truth, not *makers* of truth. For example, suppose you think the cat is on the mat, and suppose your thought is true. What makes it true? Not that very thought. Rather, what makes your thought true is the reality the thought is *about*—e.g., a cat, a mat, and their relationship. Similarly, what makes a thought about logic true is not that very thought. Rather, a logical thought is true by corresponding with a logical reality. Therefore, if your very *first* logical thought happens to be true, the reality that makes that thought true must be something other than your logical thought.

In general, nothing in you makes it true that rules of reason hold. Consider, for example, that it is true that *if there were five unicorns, there would be more than four unicorns*. What makes that true? Not molecules in your head. Molecules are incapable of making that this principle *true*. What makes it true, rather, is a secure beam in an abstract, logical landscape.

In response, some people have suggested to me that logic is merely *descriptive*. Our descriptions aren't themselves part of objective reality. Our descriptions are part of us.

True enough. But what does logic describe? Logical thoughts describe *something*. That is precisely my point: logic describes a reality (a logical landscape), which exists independently of your description of it.

My third reason to think the logical landscape is not merely in your head is based upon our ability to communicate with each other. How do people communicate logical principles with each other? You have your own private thoughts about (I), and I have my own private thoughts about (I). How do we ever find out that our thoughts are about the same *principle*? Or if our thoughts are not about the same principle, then *what* could we be talking about?

I think the best account of how we can communicate logical principles is in terms of a *common reality*, which we can see from different points of view. You see the logical landscape. What you are seeing is not merely a painting inside your soul. You are looking *through* a window to see something that I can also see. What you see is not wholly inside your head, my head, or Fred's head. Rather, we can see something *in common*. This common sight explains how we can talk about the same logical principles.

In summary, I offer three reasons to think logic isn't merely in your head. First, logic is necessary, whereas your head is not. Second, logical principles are objectively *true*, yet nothing in your head could make these logical principles true. Third, our ability to talk about logical principles makes the most sense, it seems to me, if we are talking about something *in common* (not merely in someone's head). By the light of these reasons, I infer that logic exists *out there*.

Logical Reality is Part of Supreme Reality

I will close this article with a brief note about the relationship between logic and God. Rather than provide a deductive argument for the conclusion that logic can only exist if God exists, I will instead show why I think theism successfully predicts and explains the reality of logic.

The existence of logic is *unsurprising* if God exists. If God exists, a perfect mind exists. If a perfect mind exists, perfect thinking exists. If perfect thinking exists, logic exists. All perfect thinking is logical. No perfect thinking is illogical. In short, logic is a framework for perfect thinking. So, if perfect thinking exists, then logic exists.

Not only is the existence of logic unsurprising on theism, so is the nature of logic. As indicated above, logic has a necessary nature; the logical landscape cannot be created or destroyed. Theism predicts this very result. For if God exists, God's perfect nature cannot be created or destroyed. God's perfect nature includes the framework for perfect thinking. Logic is the framework for perfect thinking. Therefore, if God exists, then logic cannot be created or destroyed. This prediction matches reality.

We get a bonus result. Theism also provides resources to explain why any beings discover logic. Imagine, by contrast, that instead, reality begins with a purely mindless foundation. In that case,

it is far from clear how there could even *be* logic (the framework for perfect thinking). Moreover, there is then no *reason* within the fabric of reality for anything to become “aware” of logical principles. What explains that? Without God, the existence, nature, and discovery of logic are more surprising (to say the least).

It looks to me, then, that theism provides a simple, non-arbitrary account of the existence and nature of logic. On theism, reality includes a supreme foundation. A supreme foundation would include a supreme nature, which itself includes a supreme framework for supreme thinking. That’s precisely what logic reveals about itself: logic is a supreme framework for supreme thinking. I am not aware of even a *candidate* alternative hypothesis that is simpler and that predicts these same results.

We may summarize our results as follows:

1. Theism predicts that (i) rules of reason exist, (ii) continue to exist, (iii) aren’t merely in your head, and (iv) are discoverable by beings like you.
2. These predictions match reality.
3. No simpler hypothesis (of which I am aware) makes those predictions.
4. Therefore, theism is the simplest hypothesis (of which I am aware) that predicts these features of reason.¹

While there is certainly more to consider, these results are *one reason* to think that logic is rooted in God.

¹ For more on the relationship between God and reason, see “Foundation of Reason” in *How Reason Can Lead to God* (2019).