

When I was in high school I was active on the debate team, and really loved it. We were pretty good, although I was nowhere near being the best on the team. My colleague and another fellow on the team ended up debating together in college and won the national championship as sophomores. These guys were terrific.

One of the decisions we constantly had to make when arguing the negative side of a resolution was how to go about attacking the claims of the affirmative side. There were two general approaches: one was what we called the “shotgun” approach. This involved leveling lots and lots of arguments (like buckshot) and hoping that the other side could not respond to them all, thereby making the judge of the debate think that some of the arguments stuck, even if not all of them were that good. The problem with the shotgun approach was that if a bunch of the arguments weren’t very good, the affirmative side could knock them down fairly easily, and by the end, it looked like just about everything they said showed that our arguments weren’t very good.

And so we usually opted to take the other approach, which was to develop two or three arguments at length that were very difficult indeed to refute. If the affirmative side couldn’t win, say, two of the three arguments (as opposed to successfully answering 10), then the debate was in the bag for us.

Another way of looking at this is to say that a cumulative argument – lots of little arguments adding up to one big argument – can be seen as an effective mode of refutation, but ONLY if each one of the little arguments itself carries weight. If each of the little arguments don’t carry any weight at all, then the cumulative effect also doesn’t carry weight. You can accumulate all the zeros you want, and they’ll still add up to zero.

If I had been Craig and wanted to attack the views that I set forth in How Jesus Became God, I think I would not have taken the shotgun approach. The accumulation of arguments that individually don’t carry much weight just ends of not being very convincing. My view is that most of his arguments really don’t carry any weight – the “evidence” from Philo, the “evidence” that Roman governors sometimes showed clemency to convicted criminals, the claim that Romans allowed executed criminals decent burial, and – the evidence I’ll cite now.

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