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April, 3rd

Aquinas, "The Five Proofs of God" – pp. 348-351 (the first three arguments are all versions of the "Cosmological Argument" in favor of God's existence)

1) In your own words, explain the Cosmological Argument for God's existence in terms of motion and (similarly) cause and effect.

1. The Cosmological Argument for God's existence is based on the idea that everything in the world that is in motion or that has a cause must have been put into motion or caused by something else. Therefore, there must be an original cause, an uncaused cause, which initiated the first motion or caused the first event, and this cause is God.

2) What does an "infinite regress" mean, and why is it so central to the Cosmological argument?

2. An "infinite regress" refers to an endless chain of causes and effects that cannot be traced back to a first cause. This concept is central to the Cosmological Argument because it suggests that there must be a first cause, an uncaused cause, that started everything and set the chain of causes and effects in motion. Otherwise, the chain of causes and effects would go on infinitely, which is impossible.

3) How is the "third" of the five ways about the contingent existence of everything in the universe?

3. The third of the five ways argues that everything in the universe has a contingent existence, meaning that it relies on something else for its existence. If everything in the universe is contingent, then at some point, there must have been nothing, which means there could be nothing now. Therefore, there must be a necessary being, a being that exists necessarily and does not depend on anything else for its existence, and this being is God.

Anselm, "The Existence of God", pp. 345-347 (this is the "Ontological Argument" for God's existence)

1) Explain in your own words what Anselm means by a being "that than which nothing greater can be conceived".

1. The Teleological Argument is based on the observation that the universe and everything in it appears to be designed, implying the existence of a designer, or God.

2) On 346, what is Anselm's argument about why this greatest possible being must exist in reality, by its very nature?

2. Anselm argues that the concept of a being that is greater than anything else, including non-existence, necessitates its existence in reality. If this being did not exist, then it would not be the greatest conceivable being, as existence would be a necessary attribute of greatness. Therefore, the being that is "that than which nothing greater can be conceived" must exist in reality.

Hume, "The Argument from Design", pp. 365-370 (this is Hume's criticism of the "Teleological Argument" for God's existence...)

1) Describe the Teleological Argument as presented on pages 365-366.

1. The Teleological Argument is based on the observation that the universe and everything in it appears to be designed, implying the existence of a designer, or God.

2) On 367, Hume, through Philo, states that for all we know, "matter may contain the source or spring of order originally within itself, as well as mind does". What do you think he means by this statement and the paragraph it's found in?

2. Hume is suggesting that there may be a natural explanation for the order and complexity of the universe, without the need for a designer. He is pointing out that we cannot be sure that a natural explanation does not exist, just because we have not yet discovered it.

3) What are some of the problems Hume presents concerning the comparison of the universe to a machine and the assumption that it must also be designed?

3. Hume presents several problems with the comparison of the universe to a machine and the assumption that it must also be designed. For example, he argues that just because some things in the universe appear to have a purpose or function, it does not mean that the universe as a whole was designed for a specific purpose. He also argues that the analogy between the universe and a machine is flawed, as machines are created by humans for a specific purpose, while the universe exists independently of human beings.

