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Reading Question Week 7

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.

The Cosmological Argument is a philosophical argument for the existence of God that is based on the observation that everything in the universe that is in motion or has a cause must have been set in motion or caused by something else, leading to the conclusion that there must be an original cause or unmoved mover that initiated the motion and causation of everything else in the universe.

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

The Cosmological Argument uses the idea of an infinite regress to argue that there must be a first cause or unmoved mover that initiated the causal chain. This first cause must be uncaused and self-existing, which means it does not depend on anything else for its existence. This first cause is what we call God. In summary, an infinite regress is a sequence of causes or events that goes back infinitely without ever reaching a first cause or beginning. The Cosmological Argument uses the idea of an infinite regress to argue that there must be a first cause or unmoved mover that initiated the causal chain, which is why it is so central to the argument.

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

The "third way" or argument from contingency is based on the idea that everything in the universe is contingent and dependent on something else for its existence. This leads to the conclusion that there must be a first cause or explanation for the existence of all contingent beings, which is what we call 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".

Anselm's argument is that if we can conceive of a being that is the greatest possible being, then that being must exist in reality because existence is a necessary component of being the greatest possible being. The concept of a being "that than which nothing greater can be conceived" represents the highest possible idea of perfection, and Anselm's argument is that such a being must exist in reality in order to be the greatest possible being.

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

On page 346, Anselm argues that the greatest possible being, which he defines as "that than which nothing greater can be conceived", must exist in reality by its very nature. Anselm's argument is often referred to as the Ontological Argument and is based on the idea that the concept of a perfect being includes the attribute of necessary existence.

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.

The Teleological Argument, also known as the Argument from Design, is presented on pages 365-366 of the textbook. The argument is based on the observation of the order and complexity of the natural world, and the conclusion that this order and complexity imply the existence of an intelligent designer or creator, which we call God. The Teleological Argument can be summarized as follows, the natural world exhibits a high degree of order, complexity, and purposeful design. This order, complexity, and purposeful design cannot be the result of chance or natural processes alone. Therefore, the natural world must have been designed by an intelligent designer or creator, which we call 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?

Hume's point seems to be that there are alternative explanations for the order and regularity we observe in nature that do not require the existence of a supernatural or divine being. The idea that matter itself could contain the source of order challenges traditional notions of God as the creator and sustainer of the universe, and raises questions about the nature and origins of the natural world.

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?

David Hume presents several problems concerning the comparison of the universe to a machine and the assumption that it must also be designed. One of the main problems is his criticism of the argument from analogy. Hume argues that just because there are similarities between the universe and a machine, it does not necessarily mean that the universe must also be designed by an intelligent creator. Hume also challenges the assumption that the universe must have a cause or a designer. He argues that we cannot assume that everything in the universe has a cause, just because some things do. Additionally, he notes that the concept of design requires us to infer the existence of an intelligent creator from the apparent order and complexity of the universe, but that such an inference is not necessarily justified.