

Reading Questions 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 commences with the tangible observation that the universe exists. According to this argument, God's existence is responsible for all motion. When contemplating motion, it becomes apparent that everything is set in motion by another force. The focus then shifts to identifying what initiates this sequence of action. The principle of cause and effect is applicable, meaning that every action has an underlying cause that influences other variables.

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

The infinite regress, which Aquinas refers to as "ad infinitum," is discussed in the passage. Any event will eventually come to an end after a finite number of occurrences. God is responsible for initiating the event, and the current moment marks its conclusion.

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

The "third" way of the five methods to explain the existence of all things in the universe centers around the tension between possible and essential entities. The argument proposes that the existence of an already established entity is necessary, as it makes way for a non-existent entity to come into existence. This indicates that everything must have a starting point. The reasoning

demonstrates that all things are both possible and unlikely. Furthermore, it implies that if everything is dependent, then nothing could have existed because there was a time when everything was non-existent.

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".

In my view, Anselm's notion of a being "that is nothing greater than what can be imagined" refers to God. Anselm argues that someone who denies the existence of a being of such greatness is a fool. Anselm uses this concept to describe those who reject God's existence. While the fool understands Anselm's point, they do not accept its truth in reality. This is likely because, in the fool's mind, the idea that there is nothing greater than this being already exists.

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

Anselm posits that the nature of God, being an infinitely superior being, necessitates the existence of this greatest possible being in reality. Therefore, if we conceive of God in our minds, then God must also exist in the physical world. Anselm further contends that God is the most magnificent concept that humans can possibly imagine.

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.

Pages 365 and 366 of the text provide an account of the teleological argument, which pertains to the universe, its formations, and operations. Essentially, the argument posits that things do not emerge haphazardly or spontaneously, but rather there is an entity responsible for everything as our creator. Hume explicitly identifies this creator as 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?

On page 367, Hume asserts that Philo proposes the notion that "matter can contain the source or origin of order in itself, as well as mind," which implies that matter has an inherent order. However, these constituent elements can combine most effectively under the guidance of an external force, as they are unable to do so on their own. Therefore, this organization must inevitably occur within the confines of the mind.

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?

Hume presents some challenges when comparing the universe to a machine and assuming that it must also be built. The text elucidates Hume's reasoning behind comparing the universe to a machine, which is that its arrangement is akin to that of a machine. According to Hume,

everything in the world has a cause, and its creator is man. However, as previously stated, Hume believes that the ultimate creator is God.