

## Reading Questions 8

### **Pascal, "The Wager" (*Pensees*) – pp. 356-359**

#### **1. Explain Pascal's "Wager" about belief in God. Why should someone believe, according to Pascal?**

Pascal argues that believing in God is reasonable because the benefits associated with belief outweigh the benefits of not believing, even if God's existence is improbable. He emphasizes that individuals should always take the most advantageous action, and in his view, not believing in God makes no sense. Pascal's "wager" on belief in God suggests that if God does not exist, believers and non-believers suffer the same fate, but if God does exist, believers have many advantages over non-believers. Therefore, according to Pascal, it is safer and more beneficial to believe in God, as He rewards belief and punishes non-belief if necessary.

#### **2. Later in the reading, Pascal has an imagined conversation with someone who understands the wager, but still can't commit to belief in God. What advice does Pascal give for that person?**

In a later part of the text, Pascal engages in a hypothetical dialogue with someone who has comprehended the wager but struggles to have faith in God. Pascal suggests that the person should compel themselves to believe in God, even if it is difficult at first. He explains that with persistence, the mind can convince itself to believe, and like other things, what was once unfamiliar becomes familiar and normalized over time.

### **Kierkegaard, "Faith and Subjectivity" (*Concluding Unscientific . . .*) – pp. 376-382**

#### **1. Why does Kierkegaard think that proving or disproving the Bible is not the real issue when it comes to faith?**

Kierkegaard maintains that faith in God cannot be proven or disproven by rational means. He believes that faith is inherently irrational and cannot be explained through rational arguments. For Kierkegaard, faith in God provides hope and trust in divine assistance when human support is insufficient, especially during moments of solitude. Therefore, he considers arguments for or against the Bible as inconsequential, as religion is based on faith rather than factual evidence.

#### **2. Explain Kierkegaard's distinction between "objectivity" and "subjectivity" when it comes to living life and searching for truth.**

In regards to living life and seeking the truth, Kierkegaard argues that "objectivity" hinders "subjectivity" from viewing something with passion because it imposes a detached and dispassionate perspective. Essentially, he suggests that objectivity diminishes one's enthusiasm in life. Therefore, Kierkegaard asserts that subjectivity, which is the foundation for enthusiasm, must be pursued with resolute determination to uncover the truth.

**3. Explain some of the problems Kierkegaard looks at when he discusses trying to get to God through approximation and objectivity.**

Kierkegaard highlights the challenges of seeking God through an objective approach. He argues that relying solely on objectivity leads to a lack of enthusiasm compared to subjectivity. Furthermore, attempting to reach God through an objective approach misses the true goal, as objectivity cannot prove the reality and existence of God. Hence, Kierkegaard posits that objective attempts fall short, and a certain level of subjectivity is necessary not only to approach God but also to attain Him.

**4. What is Kierkegaard's ultimately definition of truth for an "existing" individual? Why does this definition involve uncertainty, not objective certainty?**

According to Kierkegaard, truth for an individual who exists is defined as objective and perfect, while personal truth is subjective. Ethical actions are more important than facts, and truth ultimately resides in subjectivity rather than objectivity.