

College Writing II

Sebastian Cortes

Professor Louis Sanchez

Reading Questions 8

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

1. Pascal's "Wager" is an argument for why one should believe in God even if there is no physical evidence to support it. Belief in God, according to Pascal, is a "wager" because it is a choice based on the prospect of endless gain or loss. Pascal claims that if we choose to believe in God and God exists, we will be eternally happy in heaven. On the other hand, if we choose not to believe in God and God exists, we shall spend eternity in hell. As a result, Pascal concludes that believing in God is the rational decision because the possible advantage outweighs the potential harm.

2. In the envisioned conversation with someone who understands the wager but cannot commit to believing in God, Pascal tells them to act as if they do until they do. He claims that if they engage in religious traditions and live as if God existed, they will eventually come to believe by experience and habit. Pascal also claims that even if people never believe, they would have led a virtuous life and reaped the blessings of a religious group.

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

1. The real issue in faith, according to Kierkegaard, is not proving or disproving the Bible, but rather the individual's subjective relationship with God. He contends that faith is a subjective feeling that cannot be objectively established or disproven, and that attempts to do so miss the point of faith entirely.
2. Kierkegaard makes a distinction between "objectivity" and "subjectivity" when it comes to living life and seeking truth. Objectivity refers to the outward, observable world, whereas subjectivity refers to the individual's internal, personal experience. According to Kierkegaard, faith is a subjective experience that cannot be grasped objectively. Faith, on the other hand, necessitates a leap of faith, a subjective decision to trust in something that cannot be objectively verified.
3. Kierkegaard examines the difficulties of approaching God through approximation and objectivity, suggesting that these approaches eventually fail. Our limiting human comprehension limits approximation, or the endeavor to understand God through analogy or comparison. The fact that God is not an object that can be viewed or measured objectively limits objectivity, or the attempt to understand God via objective evidence or reasoning.
4. For an "existing" human, Kierkegaard's ultimate definition of truth is that it is a question of subjective, personal commitment and decision. Truth is not a fixed, objective fact that can be discovered by logic or empirical observation. Truth, on the other hand, must be

lived and experienced personally, in a subjective relationship with God. This relationship necessitates a profound individual decision to trust in God despite uncertainty and doubt. This uncertainty, according to Kierkegaard, is an essential part of faith since it necessitates a leap of faith that cannot be reduced to objective assurance or proof.