

Shad Downes

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Reading Question Week 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's wager is a pragmatic argument for belief in God based on the potential outcomes of belief and disbelief. While it has its limitations and has been subject to criticism, it remains a classic and thought-provoking piece of philosophy.

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?

Pascal argues that belief in God is not only a matter of intellectual reasoning but also involves the will and the heart. He encourages the person to take a step of faith by engaging in religious practices and to trust that God will respond to their efforts with grace and the gift of faith.

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 thinks that proving or disproving the Bible misses the point of faith because faith is not primarily an intellectual exercise. Rather, it is a deeply personal and subjective commitment that involves a willingness to entrust oneself to God and embrace human existence's uncertainties and paradoxes.

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

Kierkegaard's distinction between objectivity and subjectivity emphasizes the importance of personal responsibility and individual choice in the search for truth and meaning. It calls upon us to recognize and embrace our unique perspectives and experiences, and to actively engage in the process of creating meaning in our lives.

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

Kierkegaard believed that the quest for objective knowledge of God is ultimately futile because it reduces God to a concept that can be grasped by reason and logic. Instead, he argued that true knowledge of God requires a personal and emotional connection that transcends our rational understanding.

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

Kierkegaard's ultimate definition of truth for an "existing" individual is subjective and involves uncertainty because it requires a leap of faith into the unknown. This subjective truth is intimately tied to the individual's existence and subjective perspective, and it allows the individual to experience a profound sense of freedom and authenticity in their existence.