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Professor Sanchez

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?

1. Pascal's "Wager" argues that it is reasonable for someone to believe in God, even if there is no proof of God's existence. He suggests that belief in God is a "wager" or a bet, where the potential rewards of believing in God are infinite and the potential losses are finite. Therefore, even if the probability of God's existence is small, the potential rewards of believing in God are so great that it is rational to believe in God. Pascal suggests that if someone believes in God and God exists, they will receive an infinite reward in the afterlife, but if they do not believe and God exists, they will receive an infinite punishment. Conversely, if someone believes in God and God does not exist, they lose nothing, but if they do not believe and God does not exist, they gain nothing. Therefore, Pascal argues that it is more rational to believe in God than not to believe in God.

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?

2. In the imagined conversation with someone who understands the wager but can't commit to belief in God, Pascal advises them to act as if they believe in God. He suggests that by going through the motions of religious practice, such as attending church, praying, and reading religious texts, someone may eventually come to truly believe in God. Pascal also

suggests that someone who is unsure about belief in God should try to avoid leading a life of sin, as this may increase their chances of punishment if God does exist.

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?

1. Kierkegaard argues that the issue of faith is not about proving or disproving the Bible, but rather about the individual's subjective relationship with God. He suggests that faith is a matter of individual choice and that it cannot be proven or disproven through objective means.

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

2. Kierkegaard distinguishes between "objectivity" and "subjectivity" when it comes to living life and searching for truth. Objectivity refers to external truths that can be observed and measured objectively, while subjectivity refers to personal, internal truths that are subjective and cannot be observed or measured by others. Kierkegaard argues that faith is a subjective matter, as it involves a personal relationship between the individual and God, and cannot be objectively proven or measured.

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

3. Kierkegaard argues that trying to get to God through approximation and objectivity is problematic because it involves trying to fit God into preconceived categories and ideas. He suggests that God is ultimately beyond human comprehension and cannot be fully understood through objective means. Therefore, he argues that faith requires a willingness to accept uncertainty and to embrace the mystery of God.

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

4. Kierkegaard's ultimate definition of truth for an "existing" individual involves a recognition of the uncertainty and paradox of faith. He suggests that faith involves a constant striving towards God, even in the face of uncertainty and doubt. Therefore, he argues that truth for an existing individual is not objective certainty, but rather a subjective recognition of the importance of the individual's relationship with God. He suggests that this recognition requires a willingness to embrace uncertainty and to accept that faith involves a constant struggle to overcome doubt and uncertainty.