

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

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

What Pascal means by Wagering about the Belief of God is that we are having to bet on his existence. If we place our faith in God and we live a life of piety then we spend eternity with God in eternal bliss but if we don't choose God then at least we just live a "good life" (we are in the position of having to wager or bet on his existence. If God exists, the consequence of accepting the bet, and committing oneself to a life of piety, will be an eternal life of happiness; if he does not exist, then one will have lost nothing by accepting.) (356)

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 tells him that it would be foolish to risk passing an opportunity to have eternal life because eternal life is an infinite gain and if the imaginary person did not take it then it would be an infinite loss after he dies. (if death is indeed the final end. Pascal's reply here is that it would be irrational to pass up the chance of an infinite gain (eternal life of happiness) to avoid a finite loss.) (356)

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?

It is not theology that brings people to believe in God it is the unexplainable encounters with God. It is faith that brings people to Christ it isn't reasoning and science. (Well, everything being assumed to be in order with respect to the Scrip- tures, what follows? Has anyone who previously did not have faith been brought a step nearer to its acquisition? No, not a single step. Faith does not result simply from a scientific inquiry; it does not come directly at all.) (376)

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

If you live a life of Objectivity, it means that you need to have logical evidence of things in your life so that you can make sense of it. Objectivity is independent of personal opinions, feelings, and bias. Objective factors for living focus on our practical needs such as finding food, shelter, and water. For truth objectivity will always search for verifiable explanations and it will uncover factual information

When it comes to subjectivity it is the complete opposite because it does focus on feelings, personal opinions, and bias for living. It also focuses on personal values, desires, beliefs, and it plays a role in shaping our experiences and choices. (But Kierkegaard adds to this a striking paradox, namely that it is precisely the lack of objective certainty that gen- erates the 'risk' which is the essential precondition for true faith) (376)

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

Kierkegaard realizes that trying to analyze and study God is impossible to do and that God can only be explained or known through personal experience and faith. Objectivity means needing to have understanding and certainty but God is mysterious it is only subjectivity that faith can succeed in.

(Christianity is spirit, spirit is inwardness, inwardness is subjectivity, subjectivity is essential passion, and in its maximum an infinite, personal, passionate interest in one's eternal happiness. As soon as subjectivity is eliminated, and passion eliminated from subjectivity, and the infinite interest eliminated from passion, there is in general no decision at all, either in this problem or in any other) (378)

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

For Kierkegaard, truth is not something that can be fully grasped or understood through objective reasoning or scientific methods. Instead, truth is something that is deeply personal and subjective, and it requires a willingness to embrace uncertainty and take a leap of faith. Kierkegaard believed that truth is ultimately a matter of individual existence, rather than objective knowledge. He argued that to truly experience truth, an individual must be willing to fully engage with their own existence, including their doubts, fears, and uncertainties.

( God is a subject, and therefore exists only for subjectivity in inwardness). (379)