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Phi101:Introduction to Philosophy

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Reading Questions Week 7

Aquinas, "The Five Proofs of God" – pp. 348-351 (the first three arguments are all versions of the "Cosmological Argument" in favor of God's existence)

1) In your own words, explain the Cosmological Argument for God's existence in terms of motion and (similarly) cause and effect. Everything that exists has a cause or purpose. There must be a first cause, and that first cause is God, because there can't be an endless chain of causes. A common way to illustrate this point is to use the examples of motion, which needs a mover, or cause and effect, which needs a first cause.

2) What does an "infinite regress" mean, and why is it so central to the Cosmological argument? An infinite regress is an unending series of causes or events, each of which is a result of the one before it. It assumes that if there were an infinite regress of causes, there would be no first cause and no explanation for the existence of the cosmos, making it essential to the Cosmological Argument.

3) How is the "third" of the five ways about the contingent existence of everything in the universe?

The "third way" of Aquinas' Five Ways, everything in the universe is contingent, which means it is possible for everything to cease to exist. There would have been a period when nothing existed, though, if everything were contingent. The existence of all contingent entities must thus be caused by a necessary entity, which is God. Anselm, "The Existence of God", pp. 345-347 (this is the "Ontological Argument" for God's existence)

1) Explain in your own words what Anselm means by a being "that than which nothing greater can be conceived".

Anselm's use of the phrase "that than which nothing greater can be conceived" alludes to the concept of an infinite entity that is perfect in every way. It is a means of expressing the idea of God as the supreme and ideal entity that is devoid of all constraints and flaws.

2) On 346, what is Anselm's argument about why this greatest possible being *must* exist in reality, by its very nature? According to Anselm's ontological argument, if the greatest being that can exist only exists in the mind, then it is feasible to imagine a greater being that exists in both the mind and reality. The greatest creature, however, cannot be surpassed and must thus exist in actuality by virtue of its very nature.

Hume, "The Argument from Design", pp. 365-370 (this is Hume's criticism of the "Teleological Argument" for God's existence...)

1) Describe the Teleological Argument as presented on pages 365-366.

The Teleological Argument, also called the Argument from Design, contends that the universe's complexity and orderly composition point to the existence of a designer, namely God. The argument makes the point that complex natural systems, like the human eye, show indications of intentional design and hence could not have developed accidentally. The teleological argument comes to the conclusion that the universe's order and complexity point to a divine designer.

2) On 367, Hume, through Philo, states that for all we know, "matter may contain the source or spring of order originally within itself, as well as mind does". What do you think he means by this statement and the paragraph it's found in? Hume and Philo contend that a divine creator is not necessarily necessary for the universe's order and complexity. Philo asserts that, like the human intellect, substance also possesses the principles of order and organization. He says we should be open to various explanations for the regularity and complexity found in nature.

3) What are some of the problems Hume presents concerning the comparison of the universe to a machine and the assumption that it must also be designed?

Hume contends that the comparison of the world to a machine is faulty because humans have no experience in making universes, although we have experience designing and building things. We cannot thus infer that the cosmos must likewise be created.