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Intro to Civilizations

April 21st, 2023

Week 7 reading questions

Aquinas

1. The argument for God's existence in the terms of motion would be to say that everything starts from something and nothing can start from nothing. It isn't possible for a crate of balls to start moving on its own. There must be some outside force acting upon the balls to cause them to start moving and the same goes for the creation of the universe. The big bang theory cannot work in this effect since it would imply that creation was able to act on its own and create life and the order we see in all creation. In terms of efficient cause or cause and effect, it's similar to my previous example of the balls in a crate except the focus isn't on the balls moving on their own or not, but instead on what it was that caused the balls to move in the first place. An efficient cause is the parent of the effect it creates just as a father and mother would be the efficient cause for their child. It is the beginning of the effect and without it, the effect would not be.

2. An infinite Regress is the idea that if there is an order of things, there must be a source from which all things have started or rather, there must be something that everything can be traced back to. An example of this would be an assembly line of products. There are multiple copies but there is one original product that all of them can be traced back to. The way that this is central to

the Cosmological argument is that there must be something from which all other things have been derived and this something must be a higher power or being thus, God.

3. This question was phrased weirdly so I wasn't sure what it was asking so I'm just going to assume there was supposed to be a "what" where there is a how in the beginning. The third of the five ways about the contingent existence of everything in the universe is possibility and necessity which is to say, everything that is possible at one time or the other didn't exist but came to be through the existence of something else which caused these things to be necessary which did not need anything else to necessitate its existence.

Anselm

1. A being that than which nothing greater can be conceived is the highest existence that we as humans are able to fathom or even come close to imagine with our limited comprehension. As humans, we have a sense of greater and lesser and it's only natural to seek out that which is at the highest height of thought thus being, God. Like Anselm said, if it were possible for us to conceive of something greater than our creator, than that would make us rise up and judge our creator which in itself is foolishness. Thus, it would be accurate to say that God stands as the limit to what we can comprehend with our mortal minds.
2. Anselm's argument here is that the greatest being thought to exist must exist because if said being is the greatest being to ever exist, then it is impossible to think of the greatest being as *not* existing since that would instead make that than which nothing greater can be conceived a contradiction in itself if we as lesser beings were able to imagine this being not existing.

Hume

1. Everything around us, from the smallest grain of sand to vast ecosystems of animals, all operate with machinelike efficiency. No machine created by mankind can compare to the complexity of what we can see in nature. That being said, since the complexity of nature is on a much grander scale compared to mankind's creations, they are still similar at an extremely base level in that they operate with efficiency so from this, we can conclude that there must be a higher mind with vastly larger faculties than mankind that has created these things we see in creation.

2. I think what Hume through Philo is stating in this statement is that if we think that the source or the original design for everything can be found in matter, then why can't the same be said for our thoughts? If we can ascertain the source of all matter through the building blocks of matter itself, then the same could be said for our minds in that we could understand where the source of our minds comes from simply from pondering.

3. Some of the problems that Hume presents with comparing the universe to a machine is that we as humans, have a habit of comparing things we have experienced to other things in creation such as understanding that blood flows in the human body and then assuming that the same must be true for animals such as a frog. We tend to attempt comparisons between objects that do not necessarily have any similarities so comparing the universe to a house is just an attempt at downplaying the rest of creation to our limited minds. As Hume says, it is similar to a peasant assuming that a kingdom must follow the same meager budget from which he survives on.