

Reading Questions: GOD

All reading questions (assignments) must be typed, 1-2 pages maximum, double-sided is okay, and be turned in during the class scheduled for that reading. See online schedule for details.

RQ1: Sep. 2 – Aquinas: Five Ways

1. Identify the argument in the “2nd way” and put it in standard form.
2. Then evaluate the argument using the criteria discussed in class.
3. In the end is this a convincing argument for the existence of God? Why or why not?

RQ2: Sept. 4 – Rowe: The Cosmological Argument

1. What is a “dependent” being and a “self-existent” being?
2. What is the Principle of Sufficient Reason (PSR) and what role does it play in the (3rd) cosmological argument?
3. What is the justification for the second premise in the cosmological argument?
4. Do you think that PSR true? Why or why not?

RQ3: Sept. 9 – Paley: Argument from Design

1. What is Paley’s basic argument? (Standard Form.)
2. What principle of reasoning does Paley’s argument rest on? Is this a good principle?
3. Develop one objection to Paley’s argument and then explain how Paley might respond to your objection.
4. Are you convinced by Paley’s argument? Why or why not?

RQ4: Sept. 11 – Hume: Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion (Parts II & V)

(Note: Cleanthes represents someone defending the teleological argument, Philo is criticizing it.)

1. Cleanthes gives the teleological argument in the form of an argument by analogy. Summarize the argument in standard form.
2. What are two of the strongest objections raised by Philo against the teleological argument? How might the teleological argument be defended against each objection?
3. Do you think Philo as shown that the teleological argument is not a good argument? Why or why not?

RQ5: Sept. 16 – Dostoevsky (Rebellion) and Mackie (Evil and Omnipotence)

1. In Dostoevsky’s story why does Ivan worry specifically about the suffering of innocent children? (That is, not just the suffering of people more generally.)
2. In the context of the possibility of a benevolent and all-powerful God, how would you answer Ivan’s question: “Do you understand why this infamy must be and is permitted?”
3. What answers does Ivan consider to the question “Do you understand why this infamy must be and is permitted?” How does he respond to these answers? Why does Alyosha declare that Ivan has committed “rebellion”?
4. According to Mackie what is the “problem of evil” and for whom is it a problem?
5. Of the four “fallacious solutions” reviewed by Mackie, which do you think holds the most promise for solving the problem of evil? How does Mackie criticize this solution?
6. What is the paradox of omnipotence? How does this affect possible solutions to the problem of evil?
7. (Optional) Do you think the problem of evil shows that God does not exist? Why or why not?

RQ6: Sept. 18 – Clifford (Ethics of Belief) and Clark (Without Evidence or Argument)

1. What do Clifford’s examples attempt to illustrate?
2. What are the ethical implications for our believing something?
3. Does Clifford adequately support his conclusion that it is wrong to believe something without sufficient evidence? Explain your reasoning.
4. What are Clark’s examples (in the introduction) intended to demonstrate?
5. How does Clark address Clifford’s arguments about the ethics of belief?
6. What is Clark’s final conclusion about faith and evidence?
7. (Optional) Do you think belief/faith in God is irrational? Is this a bad thing? Explain.