

SUMMARIES AND TEST QUESTIONS

UNIT 4

Textbook: Louis P. Pojman, Editor. *Philosophy: The quest for truth*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006. ISBN-10: 0199697310; ISBN-13: 9780199697311 (6th Edition)

10. William Rowe: An Analysis of the Ontological Argument

Summary

Rowe examines Anselm's argument and finds it wanting. His critique is suggested by a basic conviction that many philosophers have about the ontological argument: "that from the mere logical analysis of a certain idea or concept, we can never determine that there exists in reality anything answering to that idea or concept." All that follows from Anselm's argument, he says, is that no nonexisting thing can be God (as Anselm defines God)—that is, that "nothing but an existing thing could exemplify Anselm's concept of God." But it does not follow from this conclusion that "some existing thing actually does exemplify his concept of God," that this God so defined exists in reality.

Test Questions

According to Rowe...

1. Anselm believes that existence in reality is
 - a. not possible.
 - b. beyond understanding.
 - c. not an attribute of God.
 - *d. a great-making quality.
2. Gaunilo's "greatest island" argument
 - a. refutes Anselm's argument.
 - *b. seems to be no threat to Anselm's argument.
 - c. makes a strong case for atheism.
 - d. proves theism.
3. Kant's objection to Anselm—that existence is not a genuine predicate—seems
 - a. to be a conclusion refutation.
 - b. incoherent.
 - *c. not to be a conclusive refutation.
 - d. sound.
4. We can allow someone to define *God* anyway he or she wants, yet it will not follow from that definition that such a being
 - *a. actually exists.
 - b. can be defined.
 - c. exists in our understanding.
 - d. exists in our minds.

5. Rowe asserts that it follows from the definition of *magician* that some existing thing is a magician.

- a. True
- *b. False

6. Rowe says that most philosophers who have considered Anselm's argument have rejected it because they believe it tries to define something into existence.

*a. True

b. False

7. According to Rowe, if we grant to Anselm the premise that God is a possible being, the argument begs the question.

*a. True

b. False

8. Rowe believes that Anselm's argument fails as a proof of the existence of God.

*a. True

b. False

11. Fyodor Dostoevsky: Why Is There Evil?

Summary

In this scene from Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, Ivan Karamazov explains to his pious younger brother, Alyosha, a Christian monk, why he cannot accept God. Ivan's impediment to full devotion to God is the problem of evil. He declares that there is untold, unfathomable suffering in the world—suffering such as that of a little child who is tortured, mutilated, and murdered by a ruthless general, for no reason. God allows this suffering, but no adequate justification or explanation can be given why God would permit such evil.

Test Questions

1. Ivan says that even if suffering is necessary for humans to acquire knowledge of good and evil, all such knowledge is

a. worth the price.

b. worth the suffering endured by children.

c. worth any price.

*d. not worth the suffering of a single child.

2. According to Ivan, to achieve a higher, cosmic harmony

a. everyone must suffer.

b. no one should suffer.

*c. children should not have to suffer.

d. even children should suffer.

3. Ivan says that he cannot and will not accept

a. God.

*b. God's grand scheme of higher harmony through suffering.

c. God's punishment of guilty adults.

d. God's kind treatment of children.

4. Ivan asks Alyosha if he would consent to the torture and killing of one tiny child if the act would give all of humanity ultimate peace and happiness. To this Alyosha answers

- a. yes.
 - b. yes, if the peace and happiness were forever.
 - *c. no.
 - d. only if all other children were spared.
5. Ivan thinks that he can understand God.
- a. True
 - *b. False
6. Ivan believes that God exists.
- *a. True
 - b. False
7. Ivan is content for injustices on earth to be righted in some remote time and space.
- a. True
 - *b. False
8. Ivan accepts the fact that to pay for eternal harmony, children must suffer.
- a. True
 - *b. False

12. B. C. Johnson: Why Doesn't God Intervene to Prevent Evil?

Summary

In this essay, Johnson compares God's behavior with that of a morally good person. If you know that a six-month-old-baby is in a burning building and you have the opportunity to save it without undue risk to your life, you would no doubt save the baby. Of course, if you could not save the child, you would be excused. The question is, "Why doesn't God intervene to save not just babies who are caught in fires but people everywhere who are suffering and in great need of help?" Johnson considers various "excuses" the theist might claim for God and argues that they all fail. His conclusion is that if there is a God, he or she is probably either evil or both good and evil.

Test Questions

According to Johnson...

1. Many people claim that God does not intervene to prevent evil (accidents, disasters, pain, etc.) because
- a. man has free will, which leads to much self-inflicted suffering.
 - b. we need to face disasters without assistance, otherwise we would become dependent on an outside power for aid.
 - c. God's intervention would destroy people's moral urgency to make things right.
 - *d. all of the above.

2. If there were no disasters in the world to create moral urgency
 - a. people would be worse off.
 - b. religion would flourish.
 - *c. God would have to see to it that such disasters occur.
 - d. God would be obliged to maintain such a paradise.

3. To the theist's claim that in a world without suffering there would be no opportunities to cultivate virtues such as courage and sympathy, the atheist can reply that
 - *a. there is more suffering in the world than is needed to produce these virtues.
 - b. human suffering is an illusion.
 - c. God would not permit suffering.
 - d. the world should have zero suffering.

4. The reason it will not do for the theist to claim that evil exists as a necessary contrast to good so we can have knowledge of good is
 - a. evil and good are the same thing.
 - *b. only a very small amount of evil would be necessary to give us this knowledge.
 - c. evil is good for us.
 - d. large amounts of evil are necessary to give us this knowledge.

5. Johnson says that no one can have justifiable faith in the goodness of God.
 - *a. True
 - b. False

6. Johnson argues that the theist can correctly claim that God may not be all-powerful and thus not able to prevent evil.
 - a. True
 - *b. False

7. Johnson admits that evil is a necessary by-product of the laws of nature.
 - a. True
 - *b. False

8. Johnson concludes that the problem of evil triumphs over traditional theism.
 - *a. True
 - b. False

13. John Hick: There Is a Reason Why God Allows Evil

Summary

In this reading, Hick offers two responses to the problem of evil, one aimed at moral evil and the other at non-moral (or natural) evil. He argues that moral evil is a necessary result of finite persons (moral agents) acting freely. God chose to create finite persons, and the "possibility of wrongdoing or sin is logically inseparable from the creation of finite persons." There is non-moral evil in the world, says Hick, to allow humans the opportunity for moral improvement, to

be more like God. The purpose of non-moral evil, then, is “soul-making.” Given this purpose, an environment without non-moral evil “would be the worst of all possible worlds.”

Test Questions

According to Hick...

1. A certain amount of evil in the world is
 - a. illusory.
 - b. caused by a finite God.
 - *c. necessary.
 - d. contrary to divinity.

2. The idea of a person who can be infallibly guaranteed always to act rightly is
 - a. coherent.
 - b. necessary.
 - c. biblical.
 - *d. self-contradictory.

3. Such evils as poverty, oppression, persecution, and war are
 - *a. manifestations of human sin.
 - b. natural evils.
 - c. divine evils.
 - d. unreal.

4. The divine purpose could not be forwarded in a world that was designed as a
 - a. place filled with natural evil.
 - b. realm of moral evil.
 - c. place with nature laws.
 - *d. hedonistic paradise.

5. Hick asserts that it is no limitation on God’s power that he cannot accomplish the logically impossible.
 - *a. True
 - b. False

6. Hick says that it is possible to show that each item of human pain serves the divine purpose.
 - a. True
 - *b. False

7. In Hick’s view, because God is good and loving, the environment that he has created for human life is naturally as pleasant and comfortable as possible.
 - a. True
 - *b. False

8. Hick concludes that this world is well adapted to the purpose of soul-making.
- *a. True
 - b. False