

Human and aquinas theories on god



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Can anything of God be known from our knowledge of the world? Answer with reference to Aquinas and/or Hume.

Hume concludes in his writings that God's existence cannot be proved, however he does not explicitly say that God does not exist he merely draws into question the reasons as to why people believe it so. He shows that we can know only discrete facts but not universal necessities. He linked causation to assurance based on the discovery of that relationship between cause and effect but adding that even if two events show a relatively "contiguity and succession" (Hume, 1739) that is not in itself enough for a causal connection. Therefore by denying that a fundamental feature of reality can be described by the causality principle he rejects a key element purported for the existence of God.

Due to the lack of empirical evidence Hume shows his disdain for the cosmological argument. With regard to the creation of the universe he states that there is no direct evidence although in the Bible it states "for the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made" (Rom 1: 20, KJV). Hume felt that it was impossible to prove the existence of something that was unknowable. We can look at the vastness of the universe with its billions of stars and galaxies or peer through a microscope into the minute world of atoms and cells and in both cases we see order, yet the fact that order is seen within the universe is also not enough for Hume to prove God's existence. There are of course many who claim that such order must have a source in line with the order that we ourselves set in place, and therefore conclude that God must possess similar yet far superior properties. Hume counters that

order must come directly from design if this argument is true; and even if there is such design, how can we know the designer? In addition Hume feels that design alone does not explain an omniscient, omnipotent and benevolent God due to the evil we see around us in the world. Though theologians would explain that evil is only temporary due to man's fall and the influence of the Devil whose time is limited.

The Bible states; “ for every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God” (Hebrews 3: 4, KJV) leading many to understandably feel that if a house needs a designer and a builder then surely something as small but vastly more complex such as a human cell also needs a designer and a builder for the alternative would be that a cell came about due to the blind operation of forces bequeathed from some unintelligent, inanimate matter. Yet no scientist has been able to make something from nothing. The laws of physics state that existing materials can only be transformed giving rise to the conclusion of the Bible writer Isaiah; when using an analogy of a potter and his clay he said, “ for shall the work say of him that made it, He made me not?” (Isaiah 29: 16, KJV). We see a beautiful painting hanging in an art gallery and inwardly marvel at the artist's skill; we read a book and recognise that it had an author. When we stop at a red traffic light we understand that a law has been set forth. We may not understand why certain laws are there, we may not understand what the artist or author was trying to portray in their works yet we do not use that lack of understanding to doubt that they exist.

Hume considers that same Bible text in Hebrews 3: 4 when he has Philo tell Cleanthes, “ If we see a house, Cleanthes, we conclude, with the greatest

certainty, that it had an architect or builder” (D 2. 8), yet for Hume the analogy fails arguing that we would need experience in the creation of a material world to justify an a posteriori claim as to the cause of any particular material world. Lacking such experience we therefore lack the needed justification for claiming that the material universe must have an intelligent cause. His argument fails however as we do not need to see a house being built to know that it was constructed by builders following a blueprint given to them by the architect. He further argues that even if the inference is justified between the similarities of the universe and say, a house, it would not therefore follow that there is a ‘ perfect’ God that created it. It may well have been a number of gods for likewise a house takes a number of people to build (D 5. 8), nor would the inference justify the conclusion that this God would need to be perfectly intelligent or good.

Hume held that the existence of God and other such metaphysical issues should stand up to the same examination as any investigation involving physical sciences. That one cannot assume the existence of God based only the existence of the universe. In his dialogues Hume uses the character of Cleanthes to posit an illustration of a machine that is divided into lesser and lesser machines to prove the existence of a deity yet Demea believes that rather than attesting to a creator the analogy in fact gives rein to the atheists by departing “ in the least, from the similarity of the cases” is so doing he said “ you diminish proportionably the evidence” (D 2. 7). Hume feels that the cases of the universe and a house are too dissimilar to support such an inference citing the example of steps on a staircase and human legs that can climb as a “ certain and infallible” inference. Then why not make

the house and universe or to a greater extent the Earth itself more comparable as the similarities go way beyond the fact that both needed a designer and builder. When puzzling over the purpose of the Earth one need look no further than the purpose of a house; somewhere to live that provides light, heat, protection with a source of food and water. Our houses have a plumbing system the earth has the water cycle. Or look no further than a birds nest; these intricate complex structures we see high in trees do not get there by the random collection of twigs that are blown about by the wind. Yet if the nest didn't come about by chance then what of the bird that built it.

Can anything of God be known from our knowledge of the world? If we're left with any doubt at all then one need look no further than life itself. The principle of uniformity is in effect the same as the analogy criterion.

Therefore the past theories that have been postulated invoke similar causes to those we now have, in line with what Hume called "uniform experience". Looking at the origins of life what is our "uniform experience"? It is that information in all its forms is generated by an intelligent agent. Where in the body is a plethora of information stored? In one's DNA. Therefore it is reasonable to conclude that there must have been an intelligent cause for the first, the original DNA code. Whether we are looking at written language as in the example of the book earlier, or at a DNA strand, both exhibit the property and quality of specified complexity. We know of course that there is an intelligent cause for written language subsequently engendering a legitimate reason to posit an intelligent cause as the source of DNA and by extension life itself.

David Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature (1896 ed.) [1739]

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