

Analyse the argument of the existence of god from religious

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BUSTER**

i) Analyse the Argument for the Existence of God from Religious Experience

(18) The argument for the existence of God from Religious Experience is a simple one, with only two premises. The first being that some people have, or have had a religious experience, the second premise is that these are only explicable through God, thus leading to the conclusion that God exists.

This leads us to question, what exactly are religious experiences?

Theologians have struggled for centuries trying to define what a religious experience is, with many believing a religious experience to be a sort of revelation, meaning that God reveals some part of his nature to the experient. St Thomas Aquinas believed that to be his 'Revealed Theology', where truths cannot be made known without some sort of experience, usually attributed to God. Martin Buber argues that God reveals himself to people on a personal level as they experience Him in life and in the world - people experience God through interaction with other people and through nature.

While there not being a concrete definition of what a Religious Experience is, many theologians have categorised these experiences, such as corporate experiences, conversion, visions and voices, and mystical experiences. A corporate experience is where a number of people witness the same experience, as in the Toronto Blessing, where people fell about with jovial laughter, or even mimicked animals. The experients were left feeling 'warm' and 'full of love'.

A conversion experience is exactly that, a conversion. This can be for a variety of different reasons.

An example of a vision is that of Bernadette of Lourdes, who repeatedly saw the Virgin Mary. A mystical experience is one which the experient perceives the ultimate reality which brings with it a sense of unity with the divine, which is often difficult to describe in ordinary, everyday language. Richard Swinburne put forward a set of five types of religious experience, the first being that the experience is private and can be described using everyday language, like, for example, a dream.

The second is that the experience is private, and cannot be explained using everyday language, as in a mystical experience. Swinburne's third type is a strong feeling, a conviction that they were experiencing, even though there is no phenomena surrounding the experience. The penultimate type is witnessing a perfectly normal experience, such as the Grand Canyon, which creates a numinous experience. The final type of experience is in perceiving a very unusual public object, like a miracle, for instance, the resurrection. To help identify a religious experience, William James put forward four characteristics of a typical experience.

The first being passivity: how in control the experient is; as whilst you undergo a religious experience, you take on an 'alternative personality' outside of your own, surrendering your own control to God. The second quality is ineffability, where the experient can't quite put the occurrence into words. Another characteristic of a religious experience is the Noetic Quality of said experience. This quality is the knowledge that is gained in a religious experience, knowledge that cannot be gained in a conventional manner, and tells you something that you otherwise wouldn't know.

The final quality is transiency, where the time the experience takes doesn't dictate the significance of the experience, as time is altered or distorted in some way, just as in a dream - the dream may seem really long, whereas in reality it's only been a few minutes ii) " This argument for the existence of God will result in valid reasons to believe in God. " Asses this claim.

(12) The argument from religious experience assumes that religious experiences are a type of perceptual experience, i. e. type of experience in which the person having the experience perceives something external to them, which invites many criticisms to the argument. Some argue that religious experiences involve imagination rather than perception, that the object of the experience is not something that exists objectively in the world but rather is something that exists subjectively in the mind of the person having the experience. This suggestion might be supported with an appeal to the possibility of fabricating artificial experiences of God.

Richard Swinburne has appealed to what he calls the " principle of credulity" in support of the argument from religious experience.

The principle of credulity states that if it seems to a subject that x is present, then probably x is present. Generally, says Swinburne, it is reasonable to believe that the world is probably as we experience it to be. Unless we have some specific reason to question a religious experience, therefore, then we ought to accept that it is at least prima facie (at first glance) evidence for the existence of God. Atheist Michael Martin has criticised Swinburne's use of the principle of credulity.

If, as Swinburne suggests, experiences are generally to be treated as veridical, i.

e. as accurately representing the world, then this allows an argument from the absence of religious experience to be constructed. An atheist who experiences the absence of God can argue, using the principle of credulity, that the world is probably as this experience represents it as being: godless. Arguments from religious experiences to the existence of God can thus be met with arguments from atheist experiences to the non-existence of God; what will result will, presumably, be a tie, other things being equal.

Swinburne responds to this objection by arguing that this negative principle of credulity is false.

Swinburne carefully states his positive principle of credulity—if it seems to a subject that x is present, then probably x is present—so that it does not apply to experiences of absences. The negative principle—if it seems to a subject that x is not present, then probably x is not present—he rejects. This negative principle, he suggests, would only be a good one in cases where it is reasonable to believe that if x were present then the subject would experience x.

There is no reason, however, to suppose that if God existed then the atheist would experience him, and so the negative principle of credulity does not apply to atheists' experiences of the absence of God. In conclusion, I believe that it is not necessarily the argument from religious experience which results in valid reasons to believe in God, but rather the credibility and the

compelling certainty that the experient possesses which raises the validity in my eyes.

William James, in a time where most people deemed that those that had religious experiences were suffering from neurosis, or something similar, believed that religion and neurosis were not mutually exclusive.

Why should someone's concepts or experiences be doubted because the majority believes the person to be odd? Einstein's famous $E=MC^2$ is not false because the thinker had neurotic tendencies, so why shouldn't those that have religious experiences be treated in the same respect? James believed that it was the sheer certainty of these people that is compelling to the argument, as do I.