

Journal Entry 2 : Chapter 3 Summary/ Reflection
Do you believe in God?

In chapter 3 of *The Big Questions: A short Introduction to Philosophy*, readers focus their attention on God, introducing the major question to be, do you believe in God? We are firstly educated in the most recent western philosophical explanation of who God is, a being who “ultimately makes sense of the universe, who gives life meaning”(65). Yet to better understand the existence of God and its impacts on the philosophy of religion we must acknowledge that the belief of God’s existence is different from believing in God. According to philosopher Kierkegaard, “Meaning must be found in a profound and passionate faith, not in a mere factual belief in the existence of some superior being”(66). This understanding is what leads to the differentiation between believers, theist, and non believers, atheist.

To grasp a better understanding of the belief of God, readers then learn about other perspectives of other religion’s beliefs, including their variety of gods and goddesses. For example, some ancient Roman, Greek and Northern European religions question which god do you pray to, rather than do you believe in God. This is because they are defined as polytheistic, meaning they believe in a variety of gods and goddesses as for Judeo-Christian and Islamic religions, they view there only being but one God, defined as monotheistic. To further go in depth on the western conceptions of who God is, we read that Judeo-Christian and Islamic religions are described as having an anthropomorphic approach since they view God as a male superior being who carries infinite powers, while Roman/Greek religions, although they take the same anthropomorphic approach, see the gods with more human characteristics and even similar human reaction behavior, but also having powers and immortality. Now to focus mainly on traditional western conceptions of God, we see the idea that “Christianity as it has developed is the strong emphasis on the mystery of God, the fact that it is impossible for us to understand God or comprehend God’s ways”(70). This forces people to question their conception of what God is since this mystery of God leads to an interference between human relation to religion and devotion to following their beliefs. Some concepts that humans created of God are categorized as God as Transcendent, God as immanent, God as totally immanent, God as universal spirit, God as process, God as transcendent creator, God as the unknown object of faith, and God as a moral being. The textbook then goes into detail to describe each of these categories and their significance of the relation with the belief itself and God. Although the bible repeatedly identifies God as an “infinite sense of love and justice”, does that contradict all the evil and immoral hardships we face in our everyday lives(70)? Readers are now faced with the question “what is God’s role in controlling the amount of suffering and evil here on earth?”(80).

The issue of the role of evil in religion is significant to the rebuttal of the statement God is good. According to the textbook “1. He can’t see it; 2. He doesn’t know about it; 3. He doesn’t care about it are all possibilities that are contradictory to the traditional conception of God, and so our problem remains unresolved(80)”. In response to the problem of evil, several arguments to negate it were created. The denial of God is a simple yet highly problematic argument since the idea of God is non-existent because of the open-ended issues listed above and the inability God

has to eliminate all evils of the world. It is important for philosophers to “distinguish moral from non-moral evil, in which moral evil is the product of our actions and intentions and non-moral evil consists of natural disasters and ‘acts of god’(81)”. The denial of evil is another answer to the problem since you act as though nothing is ever wrong, disregarding other people's personal troubles and even your own. You can also use the answer that God has us face only the least of the two evils, meaning that “there is no more evil in the world than is necessary, except, perhaps, for the evil that we bring on ourselves”(83). This idea was acknowledged by philosopher Gottfried Wildhelm, believing that God has chosen the world which he thought us humans were to endure the least amount of suffering. The aesthetic solution urges one to essentially focus on the positive and beauty in our surroundings, since it outweighs the tragedies we see as evil. The free will solution is the argument that God created us with the ability to have free will and do whatever we choose to do. Justice in the afterlife is also another solution that emphasizes where the current life we live will have a direct reflection on where we stand in our faith after when we die. Because all these responses to the problem of evil do not completely solve it, we have to determine on our own “what moral qualities you believe God has and whether these can be made compatible with the existence of evil and suffering in the world”(85).

In conclusion, readers were provided with conceptual ideologies of who God is described to be and it's solutions against its bigger counter argument on God against evil. Because our westernized view of religion and faith is so involved with present day society, it is important to question the philosophy behind the question, do you believe in God? Personally although I do not particularly believe in and pray to a specific God, learning and understanding other perspectives on this major topic helps to greater appreciate the faith of others.

Works Cited

Solomon, R. C., & Higgins, K. M. (2017). *The big questions: A short introduction to philosophy*. Boston, MA: Cengage.