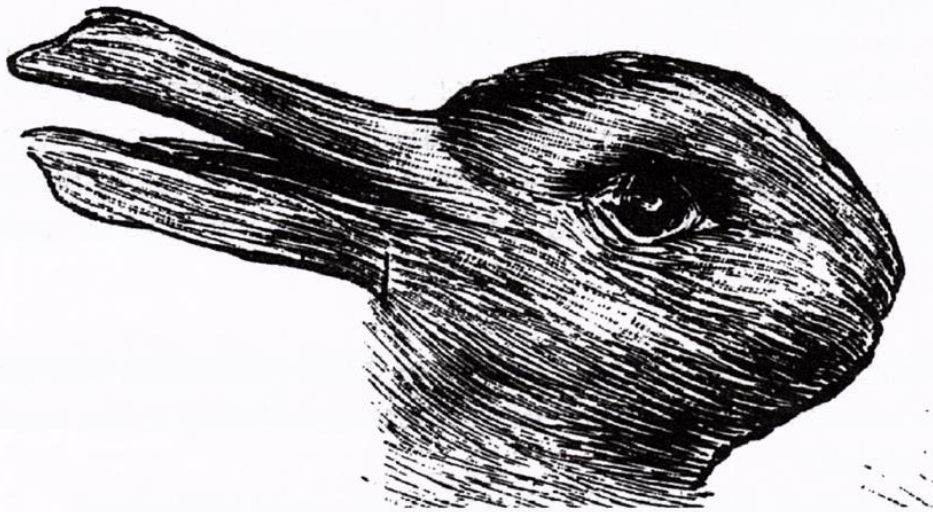


September ²⁰~~13~~, 2017 Study Guide

Why do we believe in God?

Look at the picture below. Is it a rabbit or a duck? Significantly, two people can observe the same reality and arrive at two different interpretations about what it means. Atheist, agnostics and believers all look at the same world, a mix of beauty and darkness, and arrive at different opinions about the nature of the observed reality. Is there a God or isn't there? Is he hiding from us or, perhaps, do we hide from him behind our suspicions and our many distractions. So look at the picture below. Is it a rabbit or is it a duck?



Barriers to Faith

- What do you think the barriers to faith are for people?
- Do you think bad experiences of church (people) can make someone an atheist or an agnostic?

Argument from Desire (Cravings)

- Is it significant that we desire good things, but are never fully satisfied?
- Does that mean that we are meant for something more than this world?
- Are we, perhaps, being drawn somewhere or to someone?

“What else does this craving, and this helplessness, proclaim but that there was once in man a true happiness, of which all that now remains is the empty print and trace? This he tries in vain to fill with everything around him, seeking in things that are not there the help he cannot find in those that are, though none can help, since this infinite abyss can be filled only with an infinite and immutable object; in other words by God himself.” - Blaise Pascal, *Pensées* VII(425)

Argument from Intelligibility

The world can be known, that is, the world is intelligible. The fact that human beings have been so successful at figuring out evolution, DNA, astronomy and other intelligible truths about the world says something about our relationship to the world. We are conscious beings capable of reflecting back on the very material process that brought us into being. The World is filled with truth and can be understood.

- The world is intelligible, nonetheless, are there intellectual barriers to belief?
- Can you believe in a good God while there is suffering in the world? Can you think of others?
- Is that consistent with a God who thinks the world into being?

Argument from Contingency

We do not bring ourselves into being. Each one of us is the result of a chain of events, each one, causing in turn, another.

- What begins the entire chain of events that is in itself uncaused?
- Is that insight consistent with the existence of God?

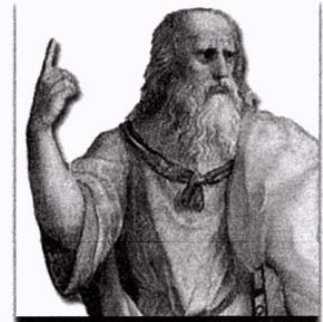
Morality and God

A thought experiment

- Would it be moral to exterminate 10 million children if it would end all of the troubles in the United States? Why or why not?
- Would it be moral if 80 percent of our people voted in a free election and approved of it? Why or why not?
- Would it be moral if Congress passed a law? Why or why not?
- What if our survival as a nation depended on their deaths? Why or why not?
- Does our moral sense imply the existence of God? An atheist can be a moral person, but do you think atheism, on the whole, leads to moral relativism?
- Is morality relative? Are the Nazi death camps morally neutral, maybe even good, in some morally relative way?
- Is it true, if there is no God or there is no absolute anything, everything is permitted?

Plato

Plato wrote the dialogue *Euthypro* in the Fourth Century B.C. In that dialogue Plato asks, "Is something good because the gods love it or do the gods love something because it is good?" What do you think? A rabbit or a duck?



Scripture Reading: Genesis 1
Is Creation Good, Bad or is it meaningless?
Is Creation a duck or a rabbit?

Saint and Liturgical Feast for the Day

~~Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross on September 14~~

Saint Pius of Pietrelcina, Priest on Sept 23
(Padre Pio)