

Ten Minutes for the Proposition ‘God is.’ - Article Review

This article for the proposition ‘God is’ is an excellent and engaging piece that expertly guides the reader through various complex streams of thought, relating not so much to *proving* God’s existence, but instead to a theological, and an underlying yet distinctly eschatological, concern with the future. As the author notes at the outset, this article is written as a debate, thus, the argumentative structure of the work is paramount. Upon reading, it strikes me that the article’s axis swings on one fundamental concern: orientation. The crux of the argument appears to be how it is that we orient ourselves: having to orient oneself around something outside of ourselves will always result in us either having to enter into a state of acceptance, despite the ways in which this fundamentally abhors us, or rejection and thus, like Othello, end up destroyed. The first half of the essay is especially strong, the author lays the foundations of their work on a quote from Bonhoeffer:

“‘Who?’ is *the* religious question. It is a question about the other man and his claim, about the other being, the other authority. It is a question about love for one’s neighbor.” (1)

By doing so, the reader is immediately struck with what the author understands to be *the* central question at stake in this debate. And it is from just that, what is at stake, that the article derives its momentum. By tackling the question of God’s existence from the angle of what is risked in asking the question at all, the author has imbued the piece with a sense of urgency and strategic pace that works effectively.

As noted above, the vehicle through which the argument is made is in an exploration of orientation at both a basic and a wider level. The general sense of this is clear and made well throughout. However, seeing as this is one of, if not *the*, focal point of the piece, it would have been beneficial for the author to link each related point back to this in a more explicit manner. This would have been especially useful owing to the fact that the article’s format is a persuasive debate. By way of illustration, let us take the valuable (yet perhaps underdeveloped in the meta-structure of the article) reference to the personification of the market, and thus the omnipresence of theological discourse in primarily secular circles. This section links excellently with the overall argumentative structure at play here, and yet it could have been made clearer by stating how exactly the omnipresence of theology directly correlates with the necessity of acceptance of the religious question. I admit that this is a simplification of the thought process but with a debating format in mind, it is essential that each component of the piece can be immediately tied together upon first reception.

The second part of the article that I wish to draw attention to is the use of Shakespeare’s *Othello* as an illustration of “confusing [the] two modes of questioning: ethical and epistemic.” (2). This example is an interesting and useful one as it effectively demonstrates that by asking for proof of Desdemona’s love, Othello renders the question obsolete and relinquishes any access he once had to the answer. The key point of Othello’s distrust of Desdemona is insecurity, which the author rightly acknowledges as playing a role in pushing him to ask an unanswerable question. However, within the context of the play itself, this point, space permitting, could have been developed further. By doing so, this could have added some additional nuance by directly relating Othello’s plight with that of an individual taking the plunge in accepting, against all the odds, God. In the play Iago, the antithesis of the good and truthful, is a vessel for hate and he orchestrates the entire sequence that leads to tragedy, such as by framing Desdemona and Cassio. As a result, Othello can be seen as doomed from the outset, regardless of his reaction to the drama. It was Othello’s deep-rooted insecurities that led to his downfall, especially due to him already placing his trust in Iago. Thus, this focus on insecurity would have served the author well in framing the argument and in their statement that “we are always in the place of Othello.” (3) The reason being that despite the presence of insecurity, it is essential that we do in fact “grapple with having our centre outside of ourselves” (3) as it is only in doing so that we can resist the urge to reject and instead choose acceptance.