

The Truth Is Out There

STUDY GUIDE



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Chapter 1 | Coffee & Soul Food

Summary

Brendan and Erc are in a café discussing Brendan's recurring bad dream when the question arises, "What's the meaning of life?" Erc thinks life is about pleasure. Brendan disagrees. Suddenly a mysterious figure appears and introduces himself as Victor, a "coffeehouse philosopher." He claims that life's meaning depends on whether or not the human soul survives death, and goes on to prove the immortality of the soul.

Questions

Erc claims that the immortality of the soul is irrelevant. How does Victor prove otherwise? How does your view of life depend on whether or not you believe the soul to be immortal?

Victor tries to prove the existence of the soul from its effects. Is this a good method to prove that something exists? Think of some other examples of things we know in this way.

What are the powers of the soul? Do animals have the same powers that human beings do? Do human beings have the same powers that animals do?

On pages 12 and 13, Victor gives several arguments in favor of the human soul's surviving death. Are they convincing? How would you prove to someone the existence of an immortal soul?

Chapter 2 | Is the Soul Better than the Body?

Summary

Erc dreams of a debate between his soul and his body. His soul has felt neglected and now it comes to ask for justice. Naturally, Erc's body disagrees, and Erc is called on to judge between them.

Questions

What arguments does Erc's soul use to show that he's better than Erc's body? Can you think of some other arguments to prove the same thing?

Erc's soul claims to have tried to get Erc's attention for a long time through a feeling of emptiness. Is this a good motivation for someone to examine his priorities?

Benjamin Franklin coined the saying, "Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise," which sums up the three kinds of human goods: external goods (wealth), goods of the body (health), and goods of the soul (wisdom). How would you rank these three based on what you learned in this chapter? How does your order differ from that which society promotes? What do you think is the cause for this difference (if any)?

Chapter 3 | Does God Exist?

Summary

As Brendan and Erc journey to the moon with their cargo of mail, Brendan begins to reflect on the beauty of the universe. This leads to a discussion on the existence of God.

Questions

Erc argues that if the universe always existed, then there is no need for a God to create the whole thing. Brendan disagrees. How does Brendan prove that God is still necessary for a universe without a beginning?

According to Erc, everything can be explained by the blind forces of chance. How does Brendan respond to this argument?

In what ways might the existence of an immortal, immaterial human soul point to the existence of God?



Chapter 4 | What Kind of God Is God?

Summary

Following their discussion on the existence of God, Brendan and Erc continue talking about some of the attributes of God (it's a long trip to the moon, after all!).

Questions

Brendan tries to use reason to prove four attributes of God. Can you name them? What is the fifth attribute that he encounters at the end? Can it be known through reason?

How can we owe our existence to God when we also owe our existence to our parents? Is this a contradiction?

How is God both in his creation and outside it? (Hint: Are we using the word *in* in the same sense in each case?)

Why can't God make a rock that is so big that even he can't lift it? Does this prove that he is not almighty?



Chapter 5 | Good for You, Good for Me

Summary

Erc dreams that he's back in the city looking for a good meal. Entering a little diner, he gets a lesson in objective good. "The Good," which all people want, is that which helps them do what they were made for, namely, to act with reason.

Questions

We often hear people say something like, "That may be good for you, but it's not good for me." Is there truth in this statement? Are there limits to it? Can there be both an objective and a subjective good?

How does the waiter show that everyone wants what is good? Why do so many people choose what's bad for them? Do you find this true in your experience?

What do the virtues of a knife and an eye have in common with that of a human being?

If virtue is necessary for happiness, why aren't more people practicing it?

What is the significance of the "Good 'Nuff" Diner being full of animals?

Chapter 6 | The Search for Happiness

Summary

Brendan and Erc finally reach the Lunar Orbital Platform and deliver their cargo of mail. While getting a bite to eat at the food court, they encounter multi-billionaire Chuck Givens and his assistant, Fred. Oddly enough, Mr. Givens is not a happy man, despite all his wealth and power. This leads to a conversation on happiness, in which Brendan tries to show that happiness comes through virtue.

Questions

Chuck Givens claims that happiness can't be found. Where has he looked for it and why didn't he find it?

Brendan attempts to show that happiness transcends our individual tastes and comes from our human nature. Does this mean that the things that please us don't really make us happy, or are we talking about two different kinds of happiness?

Does the use of our reason guarantee that we will be happy? Chuck Givens used his reason in searching for happiness; why didn't he find long-lasting happiness?

What does virtue have to do with happiness? Can it fully satisfy us?

Chapter 7 | On R&R (Religion & Revelation)

Summary

Having reached an impasse in their search for happiness, and ready to admit defeat in looking for a happiness that fully satisfies, Brendan and Erc meet Fr. Raphael, who shows them that, ultimately, happiness comes from a relationship with God. That relationship, he claims, is what we call religion. He goes on to show the signs of a true revelation from God.

Questions

What reasons does Fr. Raphael give for looking for perfect happiness in God?

Where does religion come from? Is it man-made? Natural? Supernatural?

What are the two greatest signs that prove that a revelation (and, hence, a religion) is from God? What are some other signs?

Do miracles contradict God's wisdom?

What proofs do we have that God revealed himself to the Israelites?

Chapter 8 | God and Evil

Summary

Brendan and Erc find themselves in prison after being accused of drug smuggling. This turn of events forces them to examine their concept of God. Can a good God permit such injustice in the universe? Why doesn't an almighty God wipe out evil from his creation? Fortunately, Fr. Raphael drops by to help them sort through such difficult questions.

Questions

At the start of this chapter Erc claims that evil is proof that God doesn't care about us. How does Fr. Raphael respond to this objection?

Does the presence of evil in the universe contradict God's goodness? Why not?

If God can bring good from evil, why shouldn't we do more evil?

What (or who) is God's greatest solution to the problem of evil?



Chapter 9 | Who Is Jesus Christ?

Summary

The next day, Fr. Raphael returns to the prison and to Brendan and Erc. This time the discussion revolves around the historicity of the Gospels and the identity of Jesus Christ, who claims to be God made man. Afterward, Brendan is faced with a difficult choice: to accept or reject the evidence that Christ is a divine person.

Questions

How do the Gospels differ from myths?

How can we be sure that the Gospels are historically accurate?

What is the strongest evidence that Jesus Christ is God made man? Can you name another convincing argument?

In your opinion, what is the strongest argument against Christ's resurrection? How would you respond to this objection?

What does it matter to our individual lives if Christ is God or not? How does this influence your life?



Chapter 10 | Christ and Christianity

Summary

The following day, Brendan and Erc are miraculously released from prison. This strengthens Brendan's faith in Christ, and he convinces Erc to join him in his visit to Fr. Raphael's office. While there, the conversation turns to the subject of Christ and his Church.

Questions

What proofs do we have from the Bible that Jesus Christ is inseparable from his Church?

Erc claims that God would be contradicting himself if both Jews and Christians were his "chosen people." What is the solution to this problem?

If it's possible to be saved outside the Church, then why should anyone become Christian?



Chapter 11 | One Head, One Body, One Church

Summary

The conversation in Fr. Raphael's office is interrupted by the surprise visit of Chaplain Jim, the Protestant chaplain for the Space Forces. A friendly debate ensues as both chaplains attempt to prove that his church is the true Church of Christ.

Questions

Erc interjects that it really doesn't matter which church Christ founded as long as you have the desire to follow Christ. Is this true?

What are some of the objections that Chaplain Jim has against Catholicism? How does Fr. Raphael answer them?

What is at the heart of the debate, according to Fr. Raphael? What science does he use to prove his point?



Chapter 12 | Decisions, Decisions

Summary

After an unexpected space battle around LOP 5, Erc goes in search of Brendan. He finds him alone in a deserted café. Brendan announces his plans to join the Catholic Church, and Erc attempts to dissuade him.

Questions

What does the meaning of life have to do with the Catholic Church? Is the Catholic Church the goal of our lives, or is it a means to an end?

What (or who) is the goal of our lives?

Why is it necessary for the Catholic Church to be infallible? Would it make a difference if we didn't know whether it was infallible or not?

Bonus Question

Is there any significance to the landscape that Brendan traverses in his dream? What could the water on the top of the mountain signify? What does the staircase signify?

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