



Divine Attributes

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Theism

There exists an eternal,
omnipotent, omnipresent,
omniscient, perfectly good
Creator upon Whom everything
else depends for its existence.

Three Controlling Themes

- God is Creator.

Thus, what we say about God must be consistent with His being the ultimate cause of everything distinct from Himself.

- God is perfect.

Thus, what we say about God must be consistent with His absolute perfection.

Three Controlling Themes

- God is unsurpassably great.

Thus, what we say about God must be consistent with the fact that nothing could be greater than Him.

Omnipotence

Two approaches to omnipotence:

in terms of *what omnipotence can do*, and

in terms of *the powers possessed by an omnipotent being*.

Omnipotence

In terms of what omnipotence can do:

1 An omnipotent being can do anything.

Question: Can God create a stone so heavy He can't lift it?

Omnipotence

Paradox of the Stone

Can God create a stone too heavy for Him to lift?

If so, then He isn't omnipotent (because He can't lift such a stone).

If not, then He isn't omnipotent (because He can't create such a stone).

Omnipotence

Paradox of the Stone

Does this pose a problem for theists?

No. To see this, consider the phrase 'the greatest real number'; this phrase fails to pick out a possible thing.

This is also true of 'a stone too heavy for a perfect being to lift.'

Omnipotence

2 An omnipotent being can do anything that it is logically possible to do.

Question: Can God sin?

Omnipotence

The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us; if we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself.

-- 2 Timothy 2:11-13

Omnipotence

- 3 An omnipotent being can do anything that it is logically possible for a perfect being to do.

Omnipotence

In terms of the powers omnipotence possesses:

An omnipotent being lacks no possible power.

Question: What about the power to sin?

Omnipotence

If God cannot sin, doesn't He lack the power to sin?

Omnipotence

- Not all cases of “S can’t do x” point to a lack of power; consider “I can’t kill Billy.”

This statement might indicate a lack of

- ◆ power
- ◇ opportunity
- ◆ skill
- ◇ persistence
- ◆ desire or inclination

Omnipotence

So perhaps God cannot sin *not* because He lacks a particular power, but rather because He lacks the desires and inclinations necessary for sinning.

If so, this points to His perfection.

Omnipotence

- Moreover, perhaps there is no such thing as a power to sin.

Consider

the power to lift a green 2 oz. marker

and

the power to lift a blue 2 oz. marker.

How many powers do these describe?

Omnipotence

One Final Problem

How could anyone ever be justified in believing someone to be omnipotent?

How could we know that God is omnipotent?

How could God know that He is omnipotent?

How could God know that He is God?

Omniscience

How are we to characterize divine knowledge?

◆ SCOPE \Rightarrow COMPLETE

◆ SOURCE \Rightarrow DIRECT

Omniscience

Source

Whence comes God's knowledge? How does God know what He knows?

We get most of *our* knowledge *indirectly* through reason and sense experience; our knowledge is mediated. Our cognitive faculties serve as middlemen between us and our knowledge.

Omniscience

Source

God's knowledge is direct, immediate.

Nothing mediates God's knowledge.

So, for any proposition p , if p , then God knows that p .

How does God know what He knows?

There is no 'how.'

Omniscience

Scope

God's knowledge is complete.

◇ Knowledge *De Dicto*

God believes every true proposition.

God believes no false proposition.

◇ Knowledge *De Re*

God is perfectly acquainted with all things.

Omniscience

Scope

Two questions about the scope of God's knowledge:

- 1 Does God know my innermost thoughts and feelings?
- 2 Does God know the future?

Omniscience

David Blumenfeld's Question

Consider the following proposition:

(β) Bill is afraid and frustrated.

Suppose that (β) is true.

Could God know that it's true?

How?

Omniscience

David Blumenfeld's Question

In order to know that (β) is true, one must understand it.

But, in order to understand (β), one must understand fear and frustration.

But how could an omnipotent being understand fear or frustration?

Omniscience

David Blumenfeld's Question

Response: God doesn't know *via experience*.

Blumenfeld's Rejoinder: Then there are certain things that God cannot know.

Response: No. One doesn't need to experience fear and frustration in order to understand them.

Omniscience

David Blumenfeld's Question

Note that Blumenfeld is arguing for the incompatibility of omnipotence and omniscience.

Note also that the suggested response involves rejecting strict empiricism.

Omnibenevolence

Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is
good; for his steadfast love endures
forever!

-- 1 Chronicles 16:34

See also 2 Chronicles 5:13, 7:3.

Omnibenevolence

And they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the Lord,
“For he is good,
for his steadfast love endures forever toward Israel.”

And all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid.

-- Ezra 3:11

Omnibenevolence

Praise the Lord! Oh give thanks to the
Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast
love endures forever!

-- Psalm 106:1

See also Psalms 100:5; 107:1; 118:1, 29; 136:1.

Omnibenevolence

And a ruler asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.”

-- Luke 18:18-19

Omnibenevolence

- God's perfection entails that He is perfectly morally good.
- This has been taken to mean both that
God is *wholly* good,
and that
God is *necessarily* good.

Omnibenevolence

God is *wholly* good \Rightarrow God never does
evil.

God is *necessarily* good \Rightarrow God cannot
do evil.

Problem of Praiseworthiness

- 1 One is praiseworthy for an action only if one could have refrained from performing it.
- 2 A necessarily good being cannot refrain from performing good actions.

Therefore, a necessarily good being is not praiseworthy for any of his good actions.

Problem of Praiseworthiness

Therefore, if God is necessarily good,
then He is not praiseworthy.

Problem of Praiseworthiness

Two Responses

First Response

Note that premise 2 is ambiguous.

- 2' A necessarily good being cannot refrain from ever performing any good actions whatsoever.
- 2'' A necessarily good being cannot refrain from performing any of the good actions he performs.

Problem of Praiseworthiness

Two Responses

First Response

2' might be true, but it will not work in the argument;

2" will work in the argument, but it is not true.

Problem of Praiseworthiness

Two Responses

Second Response

- Why tie praiseworthiness to actions?
- Why not tie it to, say, character?
- Why think premise 1 is true?