

I. The Nature of God

Why do we need a definition of 'God'?

The "God is Love" Argument

P1. I love my boys.

P2. If I love my boys, then love exists.

C1. Therefore, love exists. (from P1 and P2)

P3. God is love.

C2. Therefore, God exists (from C1 and P3)

What we want is a conception of God that adequately captures the debate between those who say they are atheists and those who say they believe in God.

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Richard Dawkins in his book *The God Delusion* (2006, p. 36):

“One of Einstein’s most eagerly quoted remarks is ‘Science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind.’ But Einstein also said,

‘It was, of course, a lie what you read about my religious convictions, a lie which is being systematically repeated. I do not believe in a personal God and I have never denied this but have expressed it clearly. If something is in me which can be called religious then it is the unbounded admiration for the structure of the world so far as our science can reveal it.’

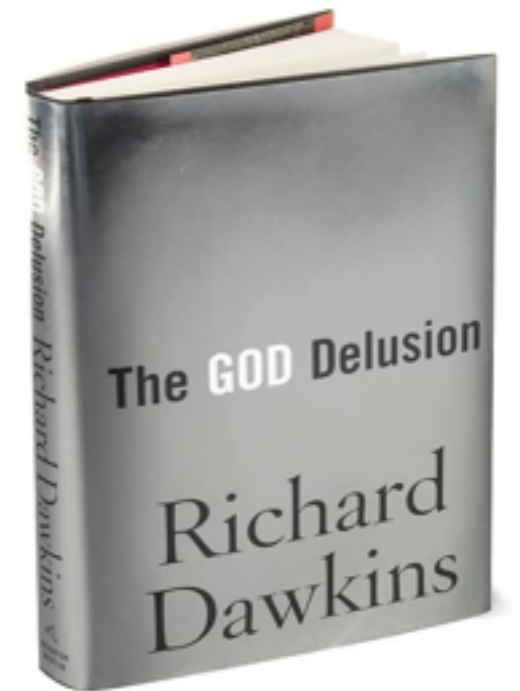


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I. The Nature of God

We're going to construct two different notions of God:

I. The first corresponds to what Rowe calls “the God of the traditional theologians”:

According to this idea, God has no location in some spot or region of physical space. He is a purely spiritual being, a supremely good, all-powerful, all-knowing, personal being who has created the world, but is not a part of it. He is separate from the world, not subject to its laws, judges it, and guides it to its final purpose. This rather majestic idea of God was slowly developed over the centuries by great western theologians such as Augustine, Boethius, Bonaventure, Avicenna, Anselm, Maimonides, and Aquinas. It has been the dominant idea of God in western civilization. (Rowe, “The Idea of God” (2007), p. 7)

2. The second is what I will call “the God of minimal theism” or “the minimalist God.”

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A *guiding principle* that we can use to construct a unified, non-arbitrary list of divine attributes:

God as the supreme being.

In other words:

God as the greatest possible being.

God as a being that is perfect in every respect (i.e., has all of the “perfections”).

and therefore:


God as a being maximally worthy of worship, praise, and admiration.

A perfection is the highest degree of a property that (a) comes in degrees, and (b) is admirable to have, or helps to make one a good or great or excellent being.

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Some perfections:

- a. maximal power / omnipotence
- b. maximal knowledge / omniscience
- c. maximal goodness / omnibenevolence



these are
the
“big three”

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Essentiality vs. Accidentalness

A thing has a property essentially just in case it could not exist without having that property.



For example:

- this pen is essentially *extended in space*
- perhaps a statue of Bart Simpson is essentially *Bart-shaped*

A thing has a property accidentally just in case it is possible for it to exist without having that property.


For example:

- this pen is accidentally *owned by Heathwood*
- that statue of Bart Simpson is accidentally *clay colored*.

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- c. essential omnibenevolence
- d. self-existence
- e. necessary existence
- f. essential eternality
- g. essentially the creator of every contingent thing

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Our first definition of 'God': the God of the traditional theologians: to be God is to be the essentially omnipotent, essentially omniscient, essentially omnibenevolent, self-existent, necessarily existent, essentially eternal, creator of the universe and everything else.

recall this
earlier slide

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Our second definition of 'God': the minimalist God: an intelligent, powerful being that created us and the universe (or at least its laws).