

## Handout 1: The Nature of God

### I. Preliminaries

#### A. The Need for Definition

##### A “Proof” of the Existence of God

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)

#### B. Some Possible Divine Attributes

#### C. God As a Person

#### D. God and Gender

### II. A Conception of God: God As the Supreme Being

#### A. A supreme being:

(i) is the greatest being conceivable

(ii) is perfect in every respect – i.e., has all the “perfections”

(iii) is maximally worthy of worship, respect, admiration.

A perfection is a property that is both admirable or impressive and maximal.

#### B. Some Perfections

##### 1. Essential Omnipotence (maximal power)

One unsuccessful attempt to define ‘omnipotence’:

x is omnipotent =df. x can bring about any state of affairs.

For any thing x and property F, x has F essentially =df. x could not exist without having F.

For any thing x and property F, x has F accidentally =df. it is possible for x to exist without having F.

2. Essential Omniscience (maximal knowledge)

x is omniscient =df. for any true proposition p, x knows p.

3. Essential Perfect Goodness (omnibenevolence, moral perfection)

This might involve: never doing wrong, always preferring the better; having every moral virtue.

4. Necessary Existence

x exists necessarily =df. x could not have failed to exist.

The concept of metaphysical necessity.

5. Essential Eternality

x is eternal =df. either x exists at every time or x exists atemporally.

C. Some Other Properties God Is Traditionally Thought to Have

1. Omnipresence

2. Incorporeality

3. Simplicity

4. Immutability

5. Creativity

### III. A Definition of 'God'

x is God =df. x is the essentially omnipotent, essentially omniscient, essentially perfectly good, necessarily existing, essentially eternal, incorporeal, creator of the universe.