

God

A couple of Puzzles

Topics

- The divine 'omni-' properties
- Schoolchild paradoxes
- Divine omniscience and human freedom
- Divine Goodness and the Problem of Evil

God's 'omni-' properties

- Omnipresence
- Omnipotence
- Omniscience
- Omnibenevolence
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School child paradoxes

- Can God create a rock that she can't move?
- Can God create an irresistible force that will move an immovable object?
- Can god create a universal container to hold a universal solvent?
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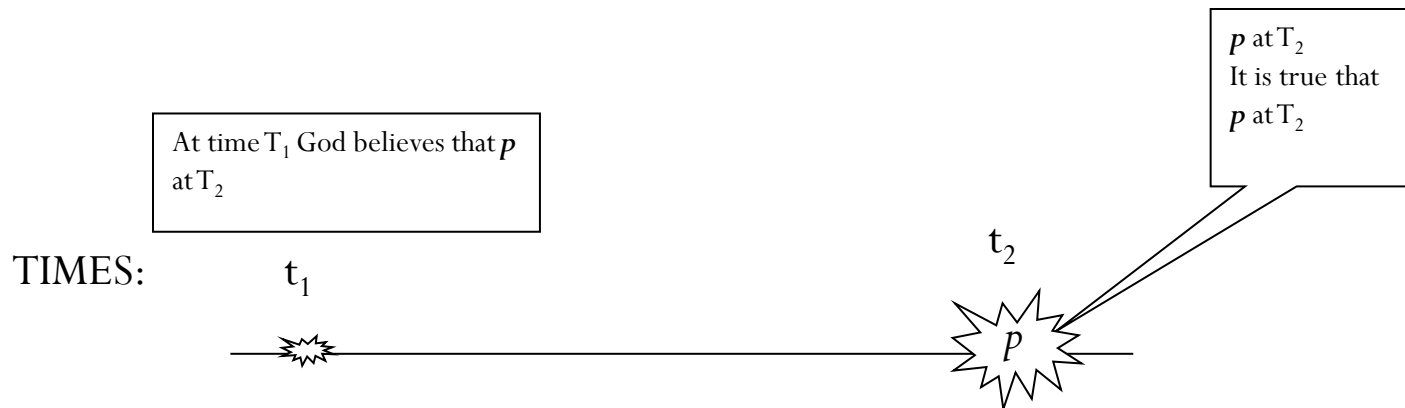
Basics of Pike's Argument

Imagine in what follows that p stands for a sentence about some future action someone might choose to do, eg. "Tom buys a pet cat" or "Anne writes her sister a letter".

p at T_2

It is true that p at T_2

It might help to think of the argument with the following diagram in mind



Divine knowledge and human freedom

1. God believes all truths
2. God believes only truths
3. Therefore, God is essentially omniscient
4. Nothing can happen at any time whose description is logically self-contradictory.
5. It is not possible at T_2 for something to happen that would bring it about that someone who held that p at a prior time T_1 did not hold that p at T_1

Divine knowledge and human freedom

6. If ((God believed at T_1 that p at T_2),
and
(it is possible that not- p at T_2),
then
(either (i) there is some fact q such that:
(it is possible that q at T_2 and (If q at T_2 , then (God believed at T_1 that p at
 T_2 but not- p at T_2)))
or (ii) it is possible that:
not (God believes at T_1 that p at T_2))

Divine knowledge and human freedom

BUT: (a) not 6 (i), because it is self-contradictory
and (b) not 6 (ii) because of 5 and the first part of 6
(the antecedent of 6).

8. **Therefore**, if at T_1 God believed that p at T_2 , it is not possible that not- p at T_2 .

- Since p could be “A does a freely” and this implies “A could not do a”, ascriptions of free action will be contingently true, if true.
- But if the argument works to show that it is not possible that not- p at T_2 , then, actions cannot be free
- Divine foreknowledge and human freedom will be inconsistent

Problem of Evil- kinds of evil

- Moral evil
 - Immorality of commission
 - Immorality of omission
- Natural evil
 - Eg. disease, earthquakes, tsunami, epidemics ...
- “state evil”
 - Conditions that mar natural beauty, natural order ...
- Evils that combine these
 - Suffering
 - Of human beings
 - Of animals- evolutionary history
 - Failures of human systems due to invincible ignorance
- The question of degree

Problem of Evil: intuitive formulation

- Is God willing to prevent evil, but not able?

Then he is not omnipotent.

Is he able, but not willing?

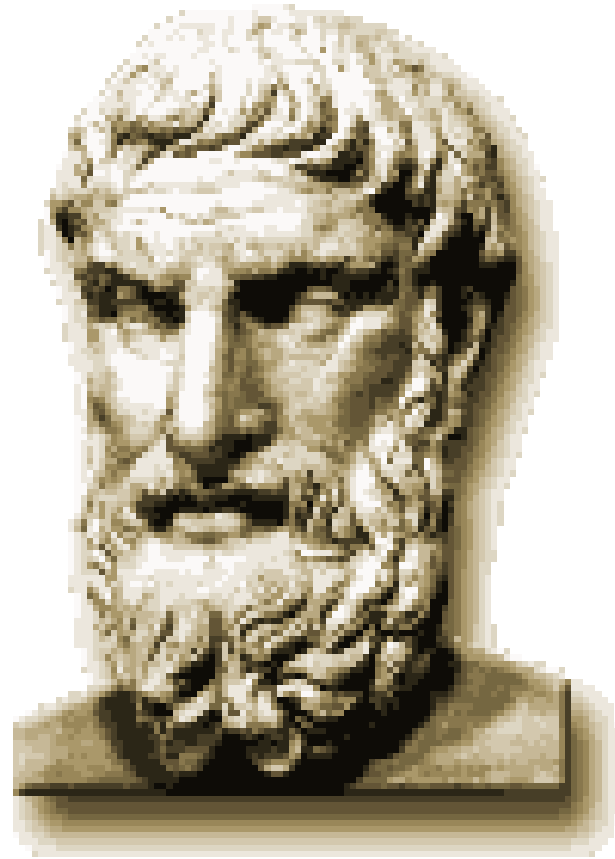
Then he is malevolent.

Is he both able and willing?

Then whence cometh evil?

Is he neither able nor willing?

Then why call him God?



Epicurus fl 310 BCE

Problem of evil- basic argument

1. If God exists, God is all good, all powerful and all knowing.
2. If God is all good, God would want to eliminate all the evil from the world that she could eliminate and that she knew about.
3. If God is all knowing, God would know about all the evil there is in the world.
4. If God is all powerful, God would be able to eliminate all the evil there is from the world.
5. Hence, if God exists, there will be no evil in the world.
6. But there is evil in the world.
7. Therefore, there is no God.

Problem of evil- options for theism

- What options does the theist have to defend herself against the argument?
- The argument is valid
- Character of Argument as *reductio ad absurdam*:
 - The logical burden for the atheist and theist
- The only serious recourse for the JCI theist is to challenge the premises.
 - Formally speaking, there are broadly three strategies that the theist could adopt:
 - (a) Deny that God has the attributes assumed in premise 1: that is, deny at least one of the traditional divine attributes.
 - (b) Deny at least one of the definitions of the attributes in the argument: deny at least one of premises 2, 3 or 4.
 - (c) Deny that there is any real evil in the world.

Problem of evil- traditional responses

- St Augustine's first reply:
 - Evil as the privation of goodness
 - God as ultimate cause of all that is
- St Augustine's "Roger the Lodger" defence
- St Augustine, Theological Determinism and the conditions of responsibility
- St Augustine's change of mind and the later conception of freedom
 - Freedom as *liberum arbitrium*
 - How this helps theistic defence in the PoE

Problem of evil- traditional responses

- Soul Building Defence (SBD)
 - (RM Adams' view: God is not obliged to create the best possible world)
 - Irenaeus of Lyon: God leaves the world imperfect, incomplete and plagued by evils so as to “build souls”
- Virtues of Character that require evils in the world
- Achievements of character, the mind and spirit that require suffering (“pathei mathos”)
- World's imperfections, incompleteness as opportunities for human creativity (joint creativity with God), formation of valuable community ...
- And appeals to other goods