

The Maximal God and the Problem of Evil

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Abstract

I have argued elsewhere that nearly all existing arguments against Anselmian theism—such as the paradox of the stone, the argument from God’s inability to sin, and the problem of evil—can be refuted all at once by holding that God possesses the maximal consistent set of knowledge, power and benevolence instead of insisting that He is omniscient, omnipotent and omnibenevolent. Some critics suggest, however, that my strategy fails, at least with respect to the problem of evil, because that problem defeats not only the version of theism that depends on God’s being omniscient, omnipotent and omnibenevolent, but also versions of theism that do not depend on that thesis. In this paper I defend my strategy against such a criticism.

1. Introduction

I have argued elsewhere (Nagasawa 2008) that we can refute nearly all existing arguments against Anselmian theism by holding that God has the maximal consistent set of knowledge, power and benevolence, instead of insisting that He¹ is an omniscient, omnipotent and omnibenevolent being. As an argument that is refuted in this way I have cited, among many examples, the problem of evil. Some critics suggest, however, that we cannot resolve the problem of evil in this way because the problem defeats not only the version of theism that depends on God’s being omniscience, omnipotent and omnibenevolent, but also versions of theism that do not

¹ As is common practice, I use the pronoun ‘He’ to refer to God. This should not, however, be taken to imply that God has a gender.

depend on that thesis. The aim of this paper is to defend my strategy against such a criticism. This paper has the following structure. In Section 2 I review my general strategy for defending Anselmian theism against existing counterarguments. In Section 3 I focus on the problem of evil and explain how my strategy resolves it. In Section 4 I discuss a response to the problem of evil that *gives up* God's omnipotence or omnibenevolence. I argue that, while that response crucially differs from mine, it is important for the cogency of my defence of Anselmian theism to address it. In Section 5 I introduce P. J. McGrath's and H. J. McCloskey's arguments, according to which the problem of evil persists even if we give up God's omnipotence or omnibenevolence (or both). In Section 6 I provide objections to their arguments and defend my response to the problem of evil. Section 7 concludes.

2. Anselmian Theism

Anselmian theism is arguably the most widely accepted form of monotheism. Its core thesis can be expressed as follows:

The Anselmian Thesis: God is the being than which no greater can be thought.

Anselm's original definition of God is 'that than which no greater can be thought'. For the sake of simplicity, I assume in this paper that this is equivalent to 'the being than which no greater can be thought'. In this way we can set aside polytheism, which is not our focus here. Most Anselmian theists hold that the Anselmian thesis entails the following:

The OmniGod Thesis: God is an omniscient, omnipotent and omnibenevolent being.

Anselmian theists often ascribe many other unique attributes to God such as timelessness, changelessness, simplicity, self-existence, incorporeality, and so on. In

this paper I will, however, limit myself to omniscience, omnipotence and omnibenevolence, or more generally, knowledge, power and benevolence, for two reasons. First, as I explain below, the problem of evil is formulated in terms of these three attributes. Second, they represent the most widely recognised attributes of the Anselmian God. In what follows, for the sake of simplicity, I will call a being that is omniscient, omnipotent and omnibenevolent ‘omniprfect’.²

There are literally dozens of arguments against Anselmian theism. In order to develop a powerful generic defence of Anselmian theism we need to find common features in these arguments. I maintain that nearly all existing arguments fall into one of the following three types.

Type A: Arguments that Purport to Show the Incoherence of the Divine Attributes

Type-A arguments are meant to show that at least one of the divine attributes specified in the omniGod thesis is internally incoherent. From the internal incoherence of at least one of the divine attributes, the opponents of the omniGod thesis deduce that there cannot exist an omniprfect being. Given that the Anselmian thesis entails the omniGod thesis and that there cannot exist an omniprfect being, the arguments conclude that Anselmian theism is false. Type-A arguments include: (i) The paradox of the stone, which purports to show the incoherence of omnipotence by considering the possibility or impossibility of an omnipotent being’s creating a stone that that being itself cannot lift (Mavrodes 1963); (ii) The argument from knowledge *de se*, which purports to show the incoherence of omniscience by showing the impossibility of any being’s acquiring knowledge *de se* of another being (Grim 1985, 2000).

² This is Peter Millican’s terminology. See Millican (2004), p. 453.

Type B: Arguments that Purport to Show the Mutual Inconsistency of the Divine Attributes

Type-B arguments are meant to show that even if each of God's attributes is internally coherent, at least some of them are mutually inconsistent. If some of God's attributes are mutually inconsistent, then, again, the omniGod thesis is false and Anselmian theism is false. Type-B arguments include: (i) The argument from God's inability to sin, which purports to show the inconsistency between omnipotence and omnibenevolence by claiming that an omnibenevolent being cannot be omnipotent because it cannot perform a morally wrong action (Morrison 2001, Pike 1969); (ii) The argument from concept possession, which purports to derive the inconsistency between omniscience and omnipotence by showing that an omnipotent being cannot be omniscient because such a being fails to know fully what fear and frustration are (Blumenfeld 1978).

Type C: Arguments that Purport to Show the Mutual Inconsistency of the Set of the Divine Attributes and a Certain Fact about the Actual World

Type-C arguments are meant to show that, even if God's attributes are internally coherent and mutually consistent, the set of attributes is mutually inconsistent with a certain fact about the actual world. If that is true, then, again, the omniGod thesis is false and Anselmian theism is also false. Type-C arguments include: (i) The problem of evil, which purports to show the inconsistency between the existence of an omniperfect being and the fact that there is evil in the actual world (Mackie 1982); (ii) The problem of divine hiddenness, which purports to show the inconsistency between

the existence of an omnipotent being and the fact that the existence of such a being is not manifest to everyone in the actual world (Howard-Snyder 2002).

Anselmian theists have tried to refute each argument in each category by adopting a case-by-case approach. That is, every time a new argument against Anselmian theism is introduced they have tried to scrutinise it and identify a flaw in that specific argument. This is not an economical approach because: (i) it is time consuming to develop an objection to each argument individually; (ii) it provides no mechanism to prevent critics from developing further arguments against Anselmian theism. We should therefore try to extract a generic structure that is common to all these arguments against Anselmian theism and construct a unified response which attacks that structure, thereby refuting nearly all existing arguments against Anselmian theism and blocking the development of further arguments with the same structure.

I submit that we can extract the following structure from all Type A, B and C arguments:

- (1) If Anselmian theism is true, then the Anselmian thesis is true.
- (2) If the Anselmian thesis is true, then the omniGod thesis is true.
- (3) If the omniGod thesis is true, then God is an omniscient, omnipotent and omnibenevolent being.
- (4) There cannot be an omniscient, omnipotent and omnibenevolent being.

Therefore,

- (5) The omniGod thesis is false.

Therefore,

- (6) The Anselmian thesis is false.

Therefore,

(7) Anselmian theism is false.

Premise (1) is a mere assertion that Anselmian theism endorses the Anselmian thesis. Premise (2) is, as I mentioned earlier, what most Anselmian theists hold. Premise (3) only imparts the content of the omniGod thesis. Premise (4) is the conclusion of any Type A, B, or C argument, which purports to prove that there cannot be an omniscient, omnipotent and omnibenevolent being, again, by showing that (i) at least one of the omni-attributes is internally incoherent; (ii) at least some of them are mutually inconsistent; or (iii) the set of these attributes is mutually inconsistent with a certain fact about the actual world. Intermediate conclusion (5) is derived from (3) and (4). Intermediate conclusion (6) is derived from (2) and (5). And final conclusion (7) is derived from (1) and (6).

We are now ready to refute all Type A, B and C arguments by focusing on the above structure. My strategy is to reject premise (2). It is normally taken for granted that the Anselmian thesis entails the omniGod thesis, but that is far from obvious. The main interest of Anselmian theism is to defend the idea that God is the being than which no greater can be thought, which does not immediately force us to commit ourselves to any specificities about God's individual attributes. In particular, it does not, without additional arguments, force us to commit ourselves to the claim that God is definitively omniscient, omnipotent and omnibenevolent. I hence replace the omniGod thesis with the following more modest thesis:

The MaximalGod Thesis: God is the being that has the maximal consistent set of knowledge, power and benevolence.

While the maximalGod thesis implies that God is very knowledgeable, very powerful and very benevolent it leaves open whether or not He is omniscient, omnipotent and omnibenevolent. Given the maximalGod thesis, we can say that Type A, B and C

arguments against Anselmian theism all fail at premise (2) because the Anselmian thesis entails only the maximalGod thesis, which is more modest than the omniGod thesis. Although the maximalGod thesis is consistent with the omniGod thesis in principle, it does not imply that God is unquestionably an omnipresent being. Given that none of the Type A, B or C arguments refutes the Anselmian thesis directly or shows that the Anselmian thesis entails the omniGod thesis rather than the maximalGod thesis, Anselmian theists can conclude that these arguments are not powerful enough to refute Anselmian theism. If the arguments show anything at all, they show merely that the Anselmian God, as the being than which no greater can be thought, is not an omnipresent being, which is, given the maximalGod thesis, consistent with Anselmian theism. This strategy is applicable to all the arguments against Anselmian theism we have seen.³

3. The Problem of Evil

Let us focus on one of the Type-C arguments, the problem of evil, which is undoubtedly the most well-known argument against Anselmian theism. There are two versions of the problem of evil: the logical version and the evidential version. The logical version says that the existence of evil in the actual world is logically inconsistent with the existence of God, as an omnipresent being. The evidential version says, on the other hand, that even if the existence of evil in the actual world is logically consistent with the existence of God, it nevertheless constitutes good *evidence* against the existence of God. Since my interest here is in deductive

³ This summary of my strategy for defending Anselmian theism is radically simplified to save space. For a comprehensive discussion of the strategy see Nagasawa (2008).

arguments against Anselmian theism I focus on the logical problem of evil. In what follows, when I use the term 'problem of evil' I denote the logical problem of evil.

The problem of evil is based on the following set of propositions, which appears to be inconsistent:

- (1) God is omniscient.
- (2) God is omnipotent.
- (3) God is omnibenevolent.
- (4) Evil exists.

If God is omniscient, then He knows that there is evil in the actual world. If God is omnipotent, then He can eliminate evil in the actual world. If God is omnibenevolent, then He is willing to eliminate evil in the actual world. This means that if God exists, then there should not be evil in the actual world. However, it is undeniable that there *is* evil in the actual world. This means that proposition (4) is definitely true and one or more of (1), (2) and (3) must be given up. (1) is often regarded as being redundant because an omnipotent and omnibenevolent God would try to know and come to know whether there is evil in the actual world. The problem of evil is commonly formulated, therefore, as an inconsistent set of propositions consisting of propositions (2), (3) and (4) above. In what follows, therefore, I set aside (1) and God's omniscience. If the problem of evil is sound, then, given that there certainly is evil in the actual world, either (2) or (3) is false and thus an omniperfect God does not exist. This means, according to proponents of the problem, that the omniGod thesis is false and that the Anselmian thesis is also false. Therefore, Anselmian theism is false.

As I mentioned earlier, the problem of evil is a Type-C argument, and my response to it is the same as my response to any other Type-A, -B, or -C argument. I resolve the problem by saying that *if* the problem of evil is indeed sound, then it just

means that God is not an omnipotent being. However, I continue, that does not entail that Anselmian theism is false because it has not been shown that God cannot be the being than which no greater can be thought. In other words, the problem of evil might refute the omniGod thesis but it fails to refute the Anselmian thesis. Therefore, it fails to refute Anselmian theism.

4. The Non-OmniGod Response

There is a response to the problem of evil which, on the face of it, is similar to mine. This response says that we can resolve the problem of evil by *giving up* God's omnipotence or omnibenevolence. That is, according to this response, we should reject either or both of propositions (2) and (3). J. L. Mackie, one of the most well-known contemporary proponents of the problem of evil, anticipates this response. He writes,

It is plain, therefore, that [the problem of evil] can be easily solved if one gives up at least one of the propositions that constitute it. Someone who holds that there is in some sense a god, but one who is not wholly good, or, though powerful, not quite omnipotent, will not be embarrassed by this difficulty. (Mackie 1982, p. 151)

Similarly, Michael Martin, another critic of Anselmian theism, writes, '[T]he problem of evil presumably does not show that God does not exist when "God" refers to some being that is either not omnipotent or not completely benevolent' (Martin 1974, p. 232).

Call the response which tries to resolve the problem of evil by giving up God's omnipotence or omnibenevolence the 'non-omniGod response' and my response, which tries to resolve the problem by holding that God has the maximal consistent set

of knowledge, power and benevolence, the ‘maximalGod response’. The difference between these two responses is that while the non-omniGod response explicitly gives up God’s omnipotence or omnibenevolence the maximalGod response does not. The maximalGod response is more modest in the sense that it leaves open whether or not God is omnipotent and omnibenevolent. The maximalGod response is more strategically advantageous because it allows Anselmian theists to resolve the problem of evil without committing to specific intensities of God’s power and benevolence.

Despite the difference, it is important for the cogency of the maximalGod response to assess the non-omniGod response because *if* the problem of evil is sound, the maximalGod response is committed to denying that God is omnipotent, omnibenevolent, or both, in order to be consistent. That is, if the problem of evil is sound, the maximalGod response collapses into the non-omniGod response (even though the maximalGod response remains that God is the being than which no greater can be thought). This means that if the problem of evil is sound and if it can be directed against not only theists who hold the omniGod thesis but also theists who are willing to give up the thesis, then both the non-omniGod response *and* the maximumGod response fail.

There are three versions of the non-omniGod response: (i) one that gives up God’s omnipotence; (ii) one that gives up God’s omnibenevolence; (iii) one that gives up God’s omnipotence as well as omnibenevolence.

Several philosophers have defended version (i). John Bishop, for example, claims that it is reasonable for theists to think that the existence of evil entails that God is not omnipotent. He writes, ‘[on the basis of the problem of evil] theists should reject the concept of God as an agent outside the natural order who has an absolutely unlimited power of intervention within nature’ (Bishop 1993, p. 13). Wes Morriston similarly

takes the possibility seriously that while God is omnibenevolent He is not omnipotent. Morrision writes that perhaps God is '(a) necessarily morally perfect; and (b) as powerful as is logically consistent with (a)'. In this way, Morrision says, God remains powerful enough to create the world and perform miracles without being omnipotent (Morrision 2001, p. 158).⁴

Version (ii) is much less popular than (i). I am not aware of any contemporary theistic philosopher who explicitly gives up God's omnibenevolence. However, some attempts have been made to amend the traditional understanding of omnibenevolence as moral perfection. Nick Trakakis points out that Brian Davies's attempt to respond to the problem of evil can be construed as a rejection of God's omnibenevolence (Trakakis 2007, p. 338). Davies writes, it is 'wholly inappropriate to think of God as something able to be either moral (well behaved) or immoral (badly behaved)' (Davies 1998, p. 178).

Version (iii), which is a combination of both (i) and (ii), is the least popular one. This makes sense because, as Mackie says, giving up *either* omnipotence or omnibenevolence is sufficient to resolve the problem of evil. There seems no point in rejecting both attributes in response to the problem of evil.

Some critics argue, however, that Anselmian theists cannot resolve the problem of evil by adopting the non-omniGod response. In the rest of the paper I examine their arguments.

⁴ It should be noted that Morrision makes this claim in response to the argument from God's inability to sin rather than to the problem of evil. This suggests that the non-omniGod response is potentially applicable to the argument from God's inability to sin as well as to the problem of evil.

5. Arguments against the Non-OmniGod Response

There are a few, but not many, attempts to show that the problem of evil persists even if we adopt the non-omniGod response, that is, even if we give up God's omnipotence or omnibenevolence.⁵

P. J. McGrath (1986) argues against Mackie's claim that the problem of evil does not arise if we give up God's omnipotence or omnibenevolence. McGrath writes, 'I believe that Mackie is wrong about this and that evil constitutes a problem for belief in even a scaled down version of the deity' (p. 63). McGrath's argument runs as follows: Suppose that we adopt the non-omniGod response and give up God's omnipotence in particular. We can then say that there is evil in this world because it is impossible for God to eliminate all instances of evil in the actual world. However, this creates a problem for Anselmian theists. There are cases in which humans have successfully eliminated certain instances of evil, such as smallpox, by themselves. This suggests it is not just that God fails to be omnipotent but that He also fails to be as powerful as humans.⁶ This entails that God is not in fact a proper object of worship. Suppose, on other hand, that we give up God's omnibenevolence. We can then say that there is evil in this world because while it is possible for God to eliminate all instances of evil in the actual world, He is just unwilling to eliminate all of them. This

⁵ In addition to the works mentioned in the main text, the following address the non-omniGod response: Burke (1987), Crisp (1986), Dilley (2000), Howard-Snyder (1998), Hutcheson (1992), Madden and Hare (1968), Martin (1990) and McGrath (1987).

⁶ Howard-Snyder makes a similar point: 'How could [God] be the providential governor of the world if He is unable to do what even *we* frequently do, namely prevent evil?' (Howard-Snyder 1998, p. 83). Thanks to Jeanine Diller for the pointer.

is, however, even more problematic because it entails that God is a 'moral monster' who tolerates the existence of evil merely because of his lack of concern for humans and other sentient beings (McGrath 1986, p 64). Suppose, finally, that we give up both God's omnipotence and omnibenevolence. Perhaps this is better than the second option because it allows us to say that evil exists in the actual world not because of God's lack of concern but because of His lack of power to eliminate it. However, this faces the same problem as the first option. It entails that God cannot eliminate instances of evil that humans can eliminate and, hence, again, He cannot be a proper object of worship.

H. J. McCloskey (1974) also argues against the omniGod response. He makes several points, some of which are similar to McGrath's and some of which are not. First, similarly to McGrath, McCloskey says that if God is not omnipotent or not omnibenevolent, then He fails to be a proper object of worship. Second, McCloskey agrees with the non-OmniGod response that if God is not omnipotent or not omnibenevolent, then the traditional problem of evil, which is concerned with the compatibility between the existence of God and the existence of evil *in general*, does not arise. There are logically possible scenarios in which a non-omniGod and a certain instance of evil in the actual world coexist. However, McCloskey says, it is still unclear why a non-OmniGod could not have prevented some specific instances of evil that have occurred. McCloskey does not provide any examples, but he seems to have in mind something similar to McGrath's example of smallpox. Even if God is not omnipotent, we can still wonder why He could not have eliminated smallpox with His enormous power. Third, and finally, McCloskey maintains that if it is agreed that God is not omnipotent or omnibenevolent, then not only do we fail to resolve the problem of evil but we also lose some available arguments for the existence of God, such as

the cosmological argument and the ontological argument. This is because, according to McCloskey, these arguments are designed to derive the existence of God as a necessary being.

6. Objections to Arguments against the Non-OmniGod Response

Neither McGrath nor McCloskey seems to have succeeded in showing that the problem of evil persists even if we give up God's omnipotence or omnibenevolence.

First, McGrath and McCloskey seem to conflate the problem of evil and the problem of God's worship worthiness. The sole aim of the non-omniGod response is to resolve the problem of evil by saying that the existence of God is compatible with the existence of evil in the actual world provided that God is not omnipotent or not omnibenevolent. Whether or not such a being is worthy of worship is a separate issue. It is a separate issue because it is controversial on its own, independently of the problem of evil. Both McGrath and McCloskey think that omnipotence and omnibenevolence are necessary conditions for being a proper object of worship. This assumption is controversial. As Tim Bayne and I have discussed elsewhere (Bayne and Nagasawa 2006, 2007), there are many alternative accounts of worship worthiness. For instance, some claim that God is worthy of worship not because He is omnipotent and omnibenevolent but because He created the universe and all creatures in it. To take more examples, some claim that God's worship worthiness is His primitive attribute, and some others claim that God is not worthy of worship in the first place given that worship worthiness is construed as a property such that it is morally obligatory for everyone to worship its possessor. Which account is correct is an interesting but separate issue from the problem of evil. In sum: (i) McGrath's and McCloskey's assumption about worship worthiness is controversial on its own; (ii)

the assumption is at any rate separate from the cogency of the non-omniGod response as a response to the problem of evil.

Second, consider McGrath's claim that God is not even as powerful as us because He cannot eliminate such an instance of evil as smallpox that humans could eliminate. This claim is controversial too. Some theists might appeal to the notions of weak actualisation and strong actualisation here. God did not strongly actualise the state of affairs in which smallpox was eradicated; that is, He did not eradicate it by himself. However, perhaps He weakly actualised the state of affairs; that is, He eradicated it through humans. Hence, they might claim, it is a mistake to think that God cannot eradicate smallpox; He can and He did eradicate it, through humans. I do not mean to endorse such a response, but my point is that McGrath's claim evokes counterarguments that are, again, not directly relevant to the problem of evil itself. McGrath's claim also seems to depend on a contentious assumption about power. When McGrath says that God is not even as powerful as humans He seems to assume the following: if there is a task p such that x can perform p but y cannot, then y is not as powerful as x . This is far from obvious. It seems fairly reasonable to say, for example, that (average) adults are more powerful than (average) small children even though they cannot perform a certain tasks that small children can (e.g., fitting in a small space). This is because taken altogether adults' physical, epistemic and intellectual capacities are more impressive than those of small children. Similarly, even if we grant that God cannot eliminate smallpox while we can, it is far from clear that God is not as powerful as humans. Whether or not my response here succeeds, it is an issue that goes beyond the problem of evil. In sum: (i) McGrath's assumptions about God's impossibility of eradicating smallpox and about the comparison of powerfulness between God and humans are controversial on their own; (ii) the

assumptions are at any rate separate from the cogency of the non-omniGod response as a response to the problem of evil.

Third, McCloskey's claim about the cosmological argument and the ontological argument is untenable. He says that if God is not omnipotent or omnibenevolent then these arguments for the existence of God are not available to theists. However, contrary to what McCloskey seems to think, these arguments do not say anything about the specific intensities of God's power and benevolence. The cosmological argument is meant to show only that there is a final cause that exists necessarily. Some philosophers (e.g., Craig 1999) maintain that the argument implies further that the cause is timelessness, immaterial, enormously powerful, and so on, but no proponent of the argument claims that it entails that the final cause is omnipotent and omnibenevolent. Some might claim that the cosmological argument entails the existence of a necessary being and that a necessary being is necessary because it is the being than which no greater can be thought. The argument therefore entails, one might say, the existence of an omnipotent and omnibenevolent God. However, while the property of being the being than which no greater can be thought might entail necessary existence, necessary existence does not entail being the being than which no greater can be thought. Moreover, even if the cosmological argument does entail the existence of the being than which no greater can be thought it is far from clear, as I have maintained, that that being is omnipotent and omnibenevolent.

Similarly, the ontological argument is silent about God's omnipotence and omnibenevolence. The argument is meant to show only that God, as the being than which no greater can be thought, exists. However, again, it is far from clear that the being than which no greater can be thought is omnipotent and omnibenevolent. Hence, contrary to what McCloskey assumes, it is far from clear that the ontological

argument entails that an omnipotent and omnibenevolent God exists. Whether or not they are ultimately sound, the cosmological argument and the ontological argument are available to proponents of the non-omniGod response. Yet whether or not these arguments are available is, again, not relevant to the non-omniGod response as an attempt to resolve the problem of evil. In sum: (i) McCloskey's claim that the cosmological argument and the ontological argument are not available to the non-omniGod response is ungrounded; (ii) the claim is at any rate separate from the cogency of the non-omniGod response as a response to the problem of evil.

In order for McGrath and McCloskey to show that the non-omniGod response fails to undercut the problem of evil they need to show that the same problem persists even if we hold that God is not omnipotent or omnibenevolent. However, as we have seen, at most they show that the omniGod response raises further issues concerning the nature of God that are independent of the problem of evil. Whether or not a non-omniGod is worthy of worship, whether or not a non-omniGod is as powerful as humans, and whether or not the cosmological and the ontological arguments can be adopted by proponents of a non-omniGod are questions that are not directly relevant to the problem of evil. I conclude, therefore, that Mackie's original claim stands: The problem of evil is not a problem for theists who believe (or leave open) that God is not omnipotent or omnibenevolent.⁷

⁷ This claim requires a small qualification because there *are* cases in which the problem of evil is clearly a problem for theists who believe that God is not omnipotent or omnibenevolent. For example, if a theist held that God is not omnipotent but nevertheless capable of eliminating a certain instance of evil that He should eliminate and held also that that instance remained, then the problem of evil

7. Conclusion

Given that the non-omniGod response remains a live option, we can safely maintain the maximalGod response. Again, the maximalGod response is more advantageous than the non-omniGod response because it allows us to resolve the problem of evil without immediately giving up God's omnipotence or omnibenevolence.

The problem of evil may or may not be successful. Even if it is successful, all it shows is that God is not omnipotent or not omnibenevolent. This does not undermine Anselmian theism, which is based on the Anselmian thesis rather than the omniGod thesis. Until critics show that the Anselmian thesis entails the omniGod thesis or that the problem of evil can be directed against the Anselmian thesis itself, we need not regard it as a threat to Anselmian theism.⁸

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would persist for such a theist. It is unlikely, however, that any theist would hold such theses.

⁸ I am grateful to the editors of this volume, Jeanine Diller and Asa Kasher, for helpful comments and constructive suggestions on an earlier version of this paper.

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