



Analytic Inspection of Schellenberg's and Murphy's Ideas on Divine Love and Its Consequences on the Argument from Divine Hiddenness

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Abstract

Divine hiddenness is one of the newest atheistic arguments based on whose main assertor, John L. Schellenberg, hinges on the the Divine all-loving attribute and its implications. To better analyze this argument, it is essential to inspect Divine all-lovingness. On the other side, Mark C. Murphy, the philosopher of ethics, claims that God cannot be attributed to being loving. He poses this claim because one cannot infer from what God conducts to God's intrinsic attributes, so God sometimes acts lovingly, which does not result in the fact that being loving is God's intrinsic attribute. In addition, Divine intrinsic attributes must have some characteristics such as having a maximum intrinsic of which love is deprived. Murphy's idea on this matter makes it possible to refute Schellenberg's argument in addition to comprehending Divine all-lovingness from a different perspective. What is aimed at in this article first states, compares and analyses Schellenberg's and Murphy's ideas on the the Divine all-loving attribute and then inspects the consequences of Murphy's approach towards Divine love on Schellenberg's argument from Divine hiddenness. It will be seen that although Murphy poses severe and essential points, the cost of accepting his perspective is so high that it renders such an endorsement rather irrational.

Keywords: Anselmian Being, Divine absolute love, Intrinsic Divine attributes, Divine perfection, Intrinsic maximum.

Introduction

In the introductory section, Schellenberg's concept of divine love is clarified. According to Schellenberg, divine love should be understood in light of the best example of human love. Moreover, love should not be interpreted solely in a masculine sense. For this reason, Schellenberg frequently uses the analogy of a mother's love for her child. Love has at least two characteristics: agape and eros. Agapeistic love refers to benevolence, while erotic love involves a desire for closeness and relationship. Since if God possesses any attribute, He must have it in its most perfect form, God's love is agapeistic and erotic. As a result, God is searching to form a relationship with humans. Schellenberg then argues that the possibility of a relationship requires belief in God, and since some individuals, despite sufficient openness, do not believe in God, it follows that God is not perfectly loving. If God exists, He must be perfectly loving, but the existence of non-resistant nonbelief indicates that God is not so, and thus, God does not exist.



Research Findings

Murphy's view of divine love is based on the argument that God cannot be intrinsically loving. Murphy, drawing on the Anselmian conception of God (as a perfect being), believes that any loving behaviour attributed to God is merely the result of adherence to divine Morality. He argues that love lacks the necessary features to be considered one of God's intrinsic attributes. Murphy presents this view with several assumptions: any intrinsic attribute must have an intrinsic maximum and be sufficiently valuable. He also believes that solid and rational reasons must back God's decisions. Considering these assumptions, Murphy concludes that God's love for His creatures cannot extend beyond His moral perfection. He then analyzes two approaches to justifying divine love: a priori and a posteriori approaches. In the a priori approach, God's reasons for loving precede love, whereas in the a posteriori approach, love is assumed to be an intrinsic attribute of God, and reasons arise from love. Murphy argues that these reasons cannot explain divine love convincingly in both methods. In the end, Murphy concludes that although God may display loving behaviours, being intrinsically loving is not one of His attributes, and no philosophical conclusions like those of Schellenberg can be drawn from it.

One could argue that divine love becomes meaningless if God's love and Morality are identical. Additionally, a significant gap between the Anselmian God and the God of sacred texts makes it difficult to connect the two. Furthermore, Murphy's solution resembles apophatic theology, which strips God of many human-like attributes, and the same criticisms that can be levelled against apophatic theology can also be applied to Murphy's view. Although this approach distances God from the difficulties of the problem of evil and divine hiddenness, it renders Him so distant from humanity that His presence is absent from human life.

Conclusion

Murphy argues that love is not an intrinsic attribute of God, and there is no distinction between divine love and moral goodness. However, accepting these criticisms leads to a misunderstanding of the God of sacred texts and presents a different image of God, incompatible with classical theism. Although Murphy's view does not offer a valid critique of Schellenberg's argument on divine hiddenness, Schellenberg must clarify the relationship between divine love and divine transcendence and demonstrate why his formulation of divine perfection, especially divine perfect love, is more vital than that of his opponents, such as Murphy.

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