



Research Paper

The Concept of Divine Omnipotence in Hygen's Theodicy: A Critical Survey

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Abstract

Divine Omnipotence is one of the most important God's attribute that its consistency with other God's attribute and also with the problem of evil, was one of the key issues in the history of philosophy especially in for the philosophers oh religion. In the present article we will try to notice to the theological views of one of the contemporary philosophers of religion, means John Hygen. He by noticing to the concept of Omnipotence in the history of Christianity, try to show that this concept according to the Christian tradition con not solve the challenge between God's absolute attribute and the problem of evil. In his view, so we should survey this concept critically and raise a new interpretation for that. He says that we may put the concept Omnipotence as a concept of love and accord to the theology of love. So he at some degree, near to the process tradition in theology and some of the critical issues for this theology can be also assigned to the Hygen's interpretation of the concept Omnipotence.



Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

A fundamental and traditional challenge concerning God and His absolute and perfect attributes relates to the possibility or impossibility of a God existing in the world who, despite having absolute power to prevent evil from occurring, does not prevent them and their devastating effects. Does a God in the traditional sense of the Abrahamic religions fundamentally not exist, or does God exist but not have absolute power, or does He have absolute power but sometimes His will is not to prevent the occurrence of evils in the world? Or, fundamentally, should we offer a new definition, explanation, and analysis of the absoluteness of divine attributes, especially His absolute power, so that we can find a way out of many theological dilemmas? Many contemporary thinkers in Christian theology have chosen the last solution we mentioned and have decided to offer new analyses of divine attributes in order to preserve the believers' belief in God and His attributes. In this study, we will attempt to explain and critique Hygen's analysis of the concept of God's absolute power in the Christian theological structure, considering the works in which Hygen's views have been discussed and evaluated. This is to examine and assess Hygen's position in the philosophy of religion and contemporary Christian theology, as well as his methodological and content-related shortcomings in discussing the problem of evil and the power of God.

2. Hygen's Thought

John Hygen, a professor of the philosophy of religion at the University of Norway, the country's oldest university, was in tenure from 1941 to 1978 and passed away in 2002. In 1973, his most important work on the problem of evil, titled "The Absolute Power of God and the Problem of Evil," was published. At that time, his book was well-received by Western thinkers in the philosophy of religion. This was the only book Hygen wrote on the problem of evil and its connection to the concept of divine omnipotence. The original book is in Norwegian, and as far as the author has searched, no English translation has been

published to date. Therefore, to find Hygen's views on the absolute power of God, we found few sources in English that have been published about Hygen and his work. "The Absolute Power of God and the Problem of Evil" consists of three parts: In the first part, Hygen provides a definition of the problem of evil and, by analyzing and examining the various answers that have been offered to this problem, finds none of them satisfactory or convincing, stating that it is time to rethink the conventional understanding of the concept of God's absolute power. In the second part, Hygen analyzes the concept of God's absolute power and expresses two terms for this concept in English, between which, in his opinion, there are differences: Omnipotence and Almightyness. In his view, it is not necessary for the concept of God's absolute power, as it appears in the Bible, to be understood and interpreted with the term Omnipotence. Hygen pursues this discussion in the third part of the book, but acknowledges that his analysis is not the final analysis or answer to the problem of evil and the absolute power of God.

3. Hygen's Theodicy

Based on his understanding of scripture, Hygen attempts to explain the problem of theodicy by analyzing the concept of divine omnipotence within these texts. He emphasizes that traditional theodicies in Christianity have failed to adequately address the problem of evil and its relation to divine omnipotence, and first considers the extent and reason for the importance of this issue. In his view, the problem of theodicy can be presented as an antinomy consisting of a proposition and its negation: if one claims that God is omnipotent and not the cause of evil in the world, one simultaneously claims that God is the cause of everything and that God is not the cause of everything. In other words, one who considers God omnipotent believes that He has the power to do anything, but nevertheless, if one does not consider God the cause of evil, one is caught in an antinomy, because one simultaneously considers God the cause of everything and does not consider God the cause of some phenomena. Hygen points to the response of those who believe that God's will has levels and, on this



basis, consider God the cause of phenomena on one level and not the cause of phenomena on another (Sproual, 2019, 33), arguing that this response implies that God has self-contradictory wills. In his view, this self-contradiction of God's wills is not merely a logical problem, but beyond that, an existential and theological problem that can harm the faith of believers. Therefore, the problem of theodicy is more serious and important than it seems, and we must have a correct understanding of the concept of divine omnipotence. Hygen states that many believers may be somewhat aware of this antinomy but still believe in the traditional concept of God's omnipotence, so we must see what motivation or religious inclination lies behind the belief in this concept that continues to keep believers faithful to it (Sovik, 2011, 104).

4. Critic and Conclusion

The concept of God's absolute power has long been one of the most challenging theological concepts in various theologies, especially in Christian theology. John Hygen, living within this same theological tradition, turns to a historical analysis of this concept in his works. In doing so, he attempts to offer a new

explanation of the concept of divine omnipotence that is both compatible with modern rationality and free from the substantive and theological difficulties of this concept in traditional theology. Hygen's explanation of the concept of divine omnipotence is very close to the explanation offered by proponents of process theology. In fact, Hygen can be considered among the thinkers of process theology. As mentioned, the main claim of Hygen's theodicy is that although God possesses a superhuman power, He is constantly at war with natural and supernatural demonic forces. On the one hand, Hygen seeks to preserve God's superiority and power over humans, and on the other hand, to acknowledge the independence of other physical and metaphysical forces in influencing the world and in opposing God's power. In effect, Hygen finds traditional theological explanations of the essence of divine omnipotence to be fraught with difficulties for which no answers can be found. To overcome this situation, he offers his own new explanation in line with process explanations of God. However, Hygen's own explanation and analysis faces challenges, which were pointed out in the form of criticism and review.