

# What do you mean by God?

The concept of a deity has haunted humanity since the dawn of time. Though scepticism over the existence of such an entity has been equally as prevalent, the conflict of beliefs has not made the idea of 'God' go away. No matter how hard we rationalise or theorise, the discussion over the existence of a supreme being has remained a constant element in all human societies. It is therefore not surprising that the discourse is also a topic of close philosophical analysis.

One of the most prevalent approaches to the issue is to define one's terms. What would the word 'God' mean? Conventionally, a God is a being of **unlimited power**, who is by definition superior to all other beings. This infers further attributes. God is **eternal**, and has no beginning and no end. God **knows everything**. God is able to do **anything**. God is **all 'good'**, and therefore all **loving**. God knows the origins, thoughts, desires and **destinies** of all creatures, which by inference includes all human beings, whether acting in good or bad ways. **God created all things**, without exception.

Originally human beings asserted a pantheon of multiple Gods, each of which had their own domain of action. There was usually one 'Father God' amongst this community of deities (e.g. Odin, Zeus, Ra, Vishnu etc.), but in general all these Gods were equal in power. Of course, this has its logical problems, so later societies argued for monotheism: that there was one (and **only** one) God.

The process of definition has its own issues. For example, the various attributes of a deity cause logical paradoxes. One is the contradiction around the existence of evil. If God created all things, then 'he' also created evil. But if evil exists, and evil inflicts pain and horror on the innocent and guilty alike, why does God (who is all knowing) not intervene to prevent the pain caused to the guiltless? If God cannot do this, then 'he' is not God. If God won't do this then 'he' is not all loving. If God condones evil, then he is malicious and unworthy of worship.

Apologists make the argument that God's acceptance of evil in the world is based on the requirement for free will. That without the capacity to do evil, then we would not have the real freedom to choose moral actions. But, if God can know all our attitudes, actions, and destinies (both past and present) then why punish individuals for their 'bad' actions, when 'he' knows that the person will **inevitably** do as they have done? If God's motivations and plans are beyond feeble human understanding, then how could we comprehend such God-given concepts as right-action or morality or even what God's will might be? It would remain permanently beyond our comprehension.

These paradoxes severely harm the concept of monotheistic God as we know it, making conventional religious beliefs an area of conflicted thought. As a result, the best that can be done is an appeal to Faith. That is, that conceiving of a deity is a **leap-in-the-dark**; a belief in something that cannot be rationally discussed or confidently asserted in any assured way. Faith says: just **believe...** but do **not** ask why or how. Just 'do', and don't think why. As ever, this is often insufficient to human moral questions.