2. **Omnipotence**

Another property typically attributed to God is omnipotence - from the Latin omnis (all), and potens (powerful)) which is the property of being perfect in power. But what does it mean to be perfect in power? Philosophers throughout .the ages have struggled with this question. Even the great Christian theologian/philosopher Thomas Aquinas labored with this one: "[even though] all confess that God is omnipotent it seems difficult to explain in what His omnipotence precisely consists.

"A common understanding of omnipotence is that he can do anything whatsoever. God can create a world; God can answer prayer; God _can do miracles; and so forth. But can God really do anything? What about creating square circles or married bachelors? What about existing and not existing simultaneously? What about sinning — can God sin? A few philosophers have thought that absolutely nothing can limit God's power. Philosopher René Descartes (1596-1650), for example, maintained that God is not limited by anything, including the laws of logic or mathematics. For Descartes, God could make it true that some object P both exists and does not exist at the same time, or that two plus two equals five.

Most philosophers have not agreed with Descartes on this point and have qualified the claim "God can do anything whatsoever" with a nuanced one such as "God can do anything that is logically possible" or "God possesses every power which it is logically possible to possess." Something is logically possible if it does not violate the basic laws of logic, such as the law of non-contradiction (which is that a proposition and its opposite cannot both be true). One representative of this view is Richard Swinburne, and he expresses the point this way:

A logically impossible action is not an action. It is what is described by a form of words which purport to describe an action, but do not describe anything which it is coherent to suppose could be done. It is no objection to A's omnipotence that he cannot make a square circle. This is because "making a square circle" does not describe anything which it is coherent to suppose could be done.

A While defenders of Descartes' view might be unconvinced by rational argumentation against the claim that God is not limited by logic, they certainly could not argue the point on rational or logical grounds. To do so would be self-contradictory and thus incoherent. Furthermore, if God could perform logically contradictory actions, this would seem to have troubling moral consequences. For example, God could break his promises or lie. Most theists are reticent to affirm that God can perform such immoral actions.

Given the belief that God cannot perform certain actions (neither immoral ones nor logically impossible ones, for example), many theists have held to the traditional, Anselmian view of omnipotence as meaning perfect power rather than absolute power. On