

The Infinity Placeholder

Referents, Category Mistakes, and the Theological Misuse of Boundlessness

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Central claim

A bare theological infinity claim cannot answer an objection because it leaves both its content and its inferential work unspecified. A responsible claim must identify the subject, attribute, respect, domain, scale, and kind of limit at issue, then supply a bridge from that content to the target conclusion. Once those premises are stated, they—not the aura of the word “infinite”—carry the argument. This conclusion disciplines underspecified appeals to infinity; it does not declare every developed doctrine of divine infinity incoherent.

Preview:

Bare claim	Required specification	Bridge test	Calibrated conclusion
The deity or a divine attribute is “infinite”.	Which attribute, respect, domain, order, scale, and absent bound?	Why would that precise content entail, explain, or change expectations about the problem?	Without a defensible bridge, infinity is compatible with too many outcomes to answer the objection.

The critique targets semantic underspecification and illicit inference, not every classical or contemporary account of divine perfection.

Visual preview:



The image traces the argument from an infinity claim through a referent test and two characteristic errors: assigning a quantitative structure to the wrong category, and shifting from finite conduct to endless punishment without a moral bridge. It maps the diagnostic sequence; it does not imply that every carefully specified infinity claim fails.

Abstract

Theological appeals to infinity often move too quickly from a resonant adjective to a substantive conclusion. This paper asks what must be specified before such an appeal can explain hiddenness, reconcile attributes, license epistemic humility, or support endless punishment. It distinguishes actual from potential infinity, cardinality from duration, unbounded quantity from qualitative perfection, and maximality from mystery. It then replaces the loose demand for a “referent” with a referent profile: subject, attribute, respect, domain, order or scale, and the bound allegedly absent. Semantic content is only the first requirement. A valid use must also supply a bridge showing why that exact kind of infinity entails the conclusion or changes the rational expectation at issue.

The resulting referent-and-bridge test exposes two recurrent failures. A category mistake imports a quantitative structure into an attribute that has not been shown to be scalar. A scale shift moves from one measure—such as unsurpassable dignity—to another—such as penal duration—without a principle relating them. Four hypothetical theological moves illustrate the diagnosis. Classical accounts by Aquinas and more recent perfect-being projects show that developed claims can be substantially more disciplined than the bare formula criticized here. The conclusion is therefore bounded: the word “infinite” is not empty in every theological setting, but it cannot serve as an all-purpose solvent. Where the specification and bridge remain absent, the term marks the place where an argument is owed.

Keywords: infinity; divine attributes; perfect-being theology; category mistake; explanation; hell; apophaticism

1. From Resonance to Propositional Content

Infinity language carries unusual rhetorical force. It evokes magnitude without limit, duration without end, intellectual humility, mathematical depth, and religious transcendence. That force can be appropriate. It can also conceal a change in argumentative standard. A question asks why suffering is permitted, why a loving deity remains hidden, how two attributes coexist, or why finite conduct warrants endless punishment. The response says that the deity or the relevant attribute is infinite. A specific demand has then received an adjective rather than an explanation.

The problem begins before one decides whether the theology is true. A *God-concept* will mean here a specified conception of a deity, including its attributes, intentions, and relation to creatures. The bare statement that such a being is infinite is not yet a single proposition with a settled inferential role. It may deny spatial boundary, temporal termination, a maximum amount of power, a limit on knowledge, defect in goodness, dependence on parts, or comparability with creatures. Those readings differ. What follows from one may fail to follow from another.

The paper defends a two-stage requirement. First comes a *referent profile*: the speaker must identify the subject, attribute, respect, domain, ordering relation or scale, and bound allegedly absent. The word “referent” in the title is therefore shorthand for the full target of the predication, not merely the object named by a noun. Second comes a *bridge*: the speaker must show how that specified content entails, explains, or rationally changes expectations about the conclusion under dispute.

This distinction matters because a meaningful claim may still be irrelevant. “The deity has no spatial boundary” is more precise than “the deity is infinite”, but it does not by itself explain why petitionary prayer appears unanswered. Likewise, “divine knowledge has no unknown truth” does not by itself reconcile foreknowledge with libertarian freedom. Precision prevents semantic blur; a bridge establishes argumentative work.

The governing inference

If several incompatible specifications fit the same bare formula, and if those specifications support different expectations about the target question, the bare formula cannot select an answer. The selection must come from additional premises. Once supplied, those premises bear the argumentative burden.

The thesis is not that infinity has no legitimate use in theology. Classical and contemporary projects formulate divine attributes with considerable care. The thesis is that the care cannot be replaced by an aura. Infinity without a profile is blur; infinity without a bridge is idle.

2. Infinity Is a Family of Structures

Even in mathematics, infinity is not one oversized number. Cantor's transfinite arithmetic distinguishes cardinalities and ordinal structures rather than treating all infinities as interchangeable (Cantor, 1915/1955). Philosophical treatments also distinguish potential infinity—a process extendable without a final stage—from actual infinity—a completed totality with infinitely many members (Moore, 2019). A sequence may be endless in one respect yet bounded in another; a set may have infinitely many members while occupying a finite interval; a function may be unbounded without taking a value called infinity.

Theology adds predicates that do not arrive with obvious mathematical scales. Perfection, simplicity, holiness, personality, love, mercy, and justice are not automatically quantities. Some permit comparisons in ordinary speech, but a comparative practice does not determine whether they have cardinal magnitudes, upper bounds, or additive units. “More loving” can concern frequency, range, constancy, sacrifice, intensity, impartiality, or responsiveness. Calling love infinite before choosing among these respects multiplies possibilities rather than settling them.

Table 1: Different structures concealed by one word.

Claim type	Structure required	Illustrative reading	What does not follow unaided
Cardinal	Membership and one-to-one comparison	Infinitely many truths are known.	Infinite duration, spatial extension, or intensity.
Potential	A rule permitting another stage	A creative process can continue without a last product.	A completed totality of products.
Temporal	An ordering of moments and no terminal boundary	Existence has no first or last time.	Timelessness, which denies temporal succession rather than extending it.
Metric	A quantity unbounded on a stated scale	Power has no finite upper measure on an admitted task domain.	Ability to perform contradictions or undefined tasks.
Maximal	An ordering of candidates and no superior member	A being instantiates the maximal consistent set of great-making properties.	An infinite numerical amount of every predicate.
Perfect	A standard and absence of defect	Justice never deviates from the relevant norm.	Endless severity or infinitely large penal value.
Apophatic	A principled limit on affirmative description	Creaturely concepts do not comprehend divine reality exhaustively.	Permission to affirm mutually incompatible propositions.

Three distinctions should therefore be kept separate. *Unboundedness* says that, on a specified ordering, no finite ceiling applies. *Maximality* says that nothing in the comparison class is greater, perhaps because the relevant properties form a maximal consistent set. *Perfection* says that an attribute lacks defect relative to its norm. A completed proof can be finite. A maximal option can exist in a finite set. A process can be unbounded and never complete. Substituting one notion for another is not a stronger formulation; it changes the claim.

This is also why “very great” is not a safe informal translation. Magnitude language invites an arithmetic model: more units, greater intensity, longer duration. Some theological predicates may sustain such models, but the model must be argued for. Mathematical awe cannot donate a structure to a predicate that lacks one.

3. The Referent-and-Bridge Test

A responsible infinity appeal should be answerable in ordinary language. It is not enough to attach labels such as “attribute”, “domain”, or “scale”; a reader should be able to ask the complete questions below and receive answers that remove a real ambiguity. The first six questions build the referent profile. The seventh asks whether the resulting claim does any work in the argument.

Table 2: Seven questions that turn an infinity label into an assessable claim.

Ask this question	What it clarifies	Concrete context
What exactly is said to be infinite: the deity, an attribute, a set of truths, a capacity, a process, a value, or a status?	The subject of the predication.	A deity’s duration and the number of truths known are different subjects, even if both receive the same adjective.
Which attribute is meant: knowledge, power, duration, love, dignity, justice, or something else?	The property under discussion.	Unlimited knowledge does not entail unlimited power, mercy, or temporal duration.
Infinite in what respect: range, intensity, constancy, extension, duration, or freedom from defect?	The dimension along which the attribute is assessed.	Love extended to every person differs from love of limitless intensity or love that never lapses.
Across which domain does the claim range: every truth, coherent task, time, person, action, or possible world?	The cases included and excluded.	Power over every coherent task does not include making a square circle, because the words specify no coherent task.
What ordering or scale makes “more” and “without limit” meaningful? Is it numerical, ordinal, or evaluative?	How comparisons are made and whether any unit exists.	Perfect justice may mean no deviation from a norm; it need not mean punishments of infinitely increasing severity.
Which bound is denied, and what kind of claim results: no last member, no temporal endpoint, no finite maximum, maximal consistent greatness, perfection, or apophatic restraint?	The precise type of limit or completeness asserted.	Existing through every time has no temporal endpoint; timelessness instead denies temporal succession.
How does that precise claim support this conclusion, and what different outcome should be expected if the claim is true rather than false?	The inferential bridge and its evidential contrast.	Unlimited ability to communicate does not by itself explain silence; a further reason must connect the capacity to the observed outcome.

The domain question is indispensable. Omnipotence discussions commonly distinguish genuine tasks from strings of words that fail to describe coherent outcomes. Omniscience discussions must say whether the domain includes future contingents and indexical knowledge. The literature on the coherence of divine attributes works precisely by specifying such content and testing combinations (Grim, 1991; Swinburne, 2016). A bare infinity formula suppresses the very choices on which coherence depends.

The bridge test asks for more than compatibility. Suppose infinite knowledge is compatible with hiddenness. That does not show that it explains hiddenness, makes hiddenness likely, or defeats evidence drawn from hiddenness. A hypothesis may tolerate an observation without predicting it. An explanation earns force by changing comparative expectations: if this precise attribute were operative, what would one expect to observe rather than otherwise?

This yields an evidential conservation rule. Infinity cannot erase a prior expectation merely by accommodating its failure after the fact. If unlimited communicative capacity and perfect concern initially make accessible relationship more likely, the observation of widespread nonresistant confusion remains pressure unless an additional reason reverses that expectation. The additional reason may exist; calling the original capacities infinite is not that reason.

3.1 How the questions clarify three contexts

Hiddenness. Suppose the response is “Infinite love is compatible with hiddenness.” Ask: Is love claimed to include every person, to remain constant, to have maximal intensity, or to lack moral defect? Does the relevant domain include nonresistant seekers? Given unlimited communicative ability, why would that precise form of love make prolonged nonbelief more expected than accessible relationship? These questions separate a coherent compatibility claim from an explanation. The appeal may show that love and hiddenness are not formally contradictory, but without a countervailing reason it does not show why hiddenness should occur.

Power. Suppose the response is “An infinite deity can do what finite logic declares impossible.” Ask: Is the subject the deity or the capacity called power? Does the domain include every coherent task or also word combinations that describe no possible outcome? Is “unlimited” a maximum over tasks or a rejection of logical standards? The answers clarify whether the claim concerns extraordinary ability or licenses contradiction. Power over every coherent task leaves no unperformed task; adding a square circle does not enlarge the domain because no task has been specified.

Punishment. Suppose the response is “An offense against infinite dignity deserves endless punishment.” Ask: Is dignity a quantity, an unsurpassable status, or freedom from defect? What scale measures culpability, and does it include the finite offender’s knowledge, intention, and freedom? Which moral principle maps the status of the offended party to the duration of a penalty? The questions expose the bridge instead of prejudging it. A defender may propose such a principle, but the phrase “infinite dignity” does not contain it.

4. Precision Exists in Classical and Perfect-Being Theology

The strongest objection to this critique is historical: important theologians do not use infinity as a free-floating intensifier. That objection is substantially correct, and it helps locate the proper target.

Aquinas’s treatment of divine infinity, for example, is embedded in a metaphysics of form, matter, actuality, and reception. In the first part of the *Summa Theologica*, Question 7, he distinguishes the infinity attributed to the first principle from the relative infinity of created things and separately discusses magnitude and multitude (Thomas Aquinas, 1947). One may dispute that metaphysics, but it is not the bare claim criticized here. It supplies a respect and explains why material extension is not the intended type.

Contemporary perfect-being theology also attempts specification. Nagasawa develops a maximal-God approach in terms of a maximal consistent set of knowledge, power, and benevolence rather than an indiscriminate infinite quantity of every favorable predicate (Nagasawa, 2017). Swinburne analyzes the coherence and mutual relations of particular divine attributes rather than assuming that one adjective settles them (Swinburne, 2016). These approaches illustrate a virtue: the more content a theology supplies, the more its claims become assessable.

The concession has limits. First, a sophisticated source does not automatically discipline every popular use derived from it. Second, specifying a claim does not establish that it is true or coherent; it makes the relevant assessment possible. Third, even a coherent doctrine of divine infinity cannot answer every local objection. A metaphysics of non-material actuality does not by itself determine a morally sufficient reason for childhood suffering. A maximal consistency account does not by itself show how particular attributes resolve hiddenness. The local bridge remains necessary.

This separation also improves comparative argument. A critic can ask whether a specified attribute is coherent, whether it belongs to the best overall conception, and whether that conception explains the evidence better than its rivals without pretending that every theology presents the same target (Oppy, 2006). Precision does not favor either side in advance; it makes disagreement answerable to reasons.

A charitable target

The criticism is strongest when aimed at an argumentative move, not at a tradition by label: whenever infinity is introduced without a referent profile or used without a bridge, it cannot perform the advertised work. Developed doctrines can escape semantic underspecification while remaining open to independent coherence and evidential tests.

This bounded target avoids an easy polemic. It also creates a useful burden for both critic and defender. The critic must engage the specified account rather than dismissing it as meaningless. The defender must not borrow the prestige of that account while offering only the bare formula.

5. Four Hypothetical Moves Under Audit

The following statements are hypothetical composites. They represent recurring argumentative patterns, not quotations from particular authors. Their purpose is to show exactly where additional premises are needed.

Table 3: Hypothetical infinity moves and the missing work.

Hypothetical move	Specified content needed	Bridge needed	What the bare move establishes
“Finite minds cannot judge the reasons of an infinite deity.”	Infinity of knowledge, difference in cognitive access, and the domain of reasons inaccessible to humans.	Why limited access undercuts this inference while leaving positive theological inferences warranted.	Humans may be fallible; global skepticism does not follow.
“Infinite love is compatible with hiddenness.”	Love’s respect: concern, availability, constancy, intimacy, or something else.	Why that form of love predicts or sufficiently permits the observed distribution of nonbelief.	Logical compatibility at most, not explanation or likelihood.
“The Trinity exceeds finite logic because divine reality is infinite.”	Which logical principle is allegedly inapplicable and what the doctrinal predicates mean.	Why the doctrine is a mystery beyond comprehension rather than a contradiction under one interpretation.	Human concepts may be incomplete; contradictions are not thereby licensed.
“An offense against infinite dignity deserves endless punishment.”	Whether dignity and culpability have quantities, their scales, and how offender responsibility is measured.	A moral principle mapping status of the offended party to magnitude and duration of deserved harm.	The victim has unsurpassable status; penal proportionality does not yet follow.

The first move can contain a sensible warning. Human agents do not know every consequence of an event, every available alternative, or every long-run reason. Yet if finitude defeats negative judgment simply because the subject matter is infinite, it also threatens positive claims that the deity is loving, just, or providential. A selective appeal needs a symmetry breaker: an account of why some inferences survive the acknowledged distance while the objection does not.

The second move confuses compatibility with evidential support. Almost any observation is compatible with a sufficiently elastic description of love. The relevant question is comparative: given perfect concern and

unrestricted ability, is accessible relationship more or less expected than under rival hypotheses? A special reason for hiddenness can alter the answer, but that reason must be stated and assessed.

The third move correctly distinguishes incomprehensibility from contradiction only if its terms are carefully controlled. Not fully understanding how a doctrine is true differs from being unable to state a logically consistent interpretation. Mystery can mark an explanatory remainder. It cannot by itself make both a proposition and its negation true in the same respect.

The fourth move is a scale shift and deserves separate treatment.

6. Infinite Dignity Does Not Yet Measure Punishment

The traditional problem of hell makes the danger unusually visible. Adams reconstructs and critically examines arguments connecting offense against the divine with everlasting punishment, including the idea that the status of the offended party magnifies the offense (Adams, 1975). Kvanvig's broader treatment of hell emphasizes the need to reconcile doctrines of punishment with justice, moral responsibility, and divine attributes (Kvanvig, 1993). The infinity label cannot settle those relations.

Consider four variables: the status or worth of the party wronged, the agent's culpability, the harm or disorder produced, and the severity or duration of punishment. They are not one measure. An insult to a judge may have institutional significance that the same words lack elsewhere, but the judge's dignity does not automatically multiply the offender's culpability without limit. Culpability ordinarily depends on intention, understanding, freedom, opportunity, and the nature of the act. Penal proportionality then requires a further account of what sanction is deserved and why.

Table 4: The scale shift in the infinite-offense argument.

Variable	Possible basis	Question required	Illicit shortcut
Dignity or status	Moral standing of the party wronged	Is status ordinal, intrinsic, institutional, or quantitative?	Treat unsurpassable worth as an infinite number.
Culpability	Intention, knowledge, freedom, negligence, and act type	How responsible was this finite agent for this act?	Import the other party's status as the entire measure.
Harm or disorder	Effects on persons, relationships, institutions, or character	What kind and extent of wrong occurred?	Assume every wrong has unbounded harm.
Penalty	Deprivation, retribution, restoration, deterrence, or separation	Which aim justifies which severity and duration?	Move directly from infinite status to endless suffering.

The missing bridge can be stated plainly: every offense against a being of unsurpassable dignity has unbounded culpability, and unbounded culpability warrants punishment without end. Both clauses are moral premises, not definitions of infinity. Each is contestable. The first may ignore the finite agent's capacities and the act's content. The second may assume a retributive function and a mapping from magnitude to duration. Endless punishment also need not have infinite intensity, and an unending sequence is not automatically an actually infinite completed amount at every stage.

None of this proves that every doctrine of hell is false. Some accounts interpret hell as freely sustained separation, continuing postmortem wrongdoing, self-fixed character, or another condition rather than a once-for-all retributive sentence for finite earthly acts. Adams herself notes alternative conceptions (Adams, 1975). The

narrower result is decisive against one shortcut: qualitative or maximal divine status does not, without a moral bridge, yield an infinite penal magnitude.

7. Mystery and Apophatic Restraint

Negative, or apophatic, theology emphasizes the limits of affirmative creaturely language about transcendent reality. Turner shows that the medieval tradition's language of darkness and unknowing belongs to a disciplined theological practice, not simply a contemporary feeling of ineffability (Turner, 1995). This tradition supplies a serious challenge to demands that every divine predicate operate univocally—with exactly the same meaning—across deity and creatures.

The present test need not impose univocity. An analogical predicate can still have constraints. If “good” as applied to a deity has no relation to the reasons humans have for calling an action good, it cannot reassure a human audience. If it has enough relation to support worship, trust, or a defense against evil, then questions about its implications remain legitimate. Analogy may qualify an inference; it does not make every inference equally available.

Apophatic humility is also symmetrical. If human concepts cannot reach the subject well enough to criticize, the same limitation bears on confident praise. A defender may have independent grounds—revelation, religious experience, or metaphysical argument—for positive claims. Those grounds must then explain why the positive content is licensed while the negative assessment is not. The bare assertion of infinity cannot perform this sorting.

The distinction among three verdicts helps. A claim may be *underspecified*: no determinate proposition has yet been selected. It may be *incoherent*: the selected interpretation contains incompatible commitments. Or it may be *irrelevant*: the interpretation is coherent but does not bear on the objection. Treating all three as “mystery” prevents diagnosis. Treating all mystery as nonsense ignores a serious theological tradition. The referent-and-bridge test keeps the verdict proportional.

Flew's discussion of theological falsification remains useful at this point, provided its role is not overstated (Flew, 1955). The concern is not that every meaningful statement must be refutable by one simple observation. It is that repeated qualifications can remove every expected contrast while the language of assertion remains. Infinity becomes an argument-stopper when it is introduced precisely to avoid saying what difference the claim makes.

8. Objections and Replies

8.1 Ordinary language tolerates flexible adjectives

It does. A friend who says that gratitude is endless need not present a metric. Poetry, prayer, and praise can communicate without functioning as analytical philosophy. The demand for a referent profile arises when the phrase is asked to resolve a contradiction, defeat evidence, assign desert, or explain an outcome. Argumentative use incurs an argumentative burden. The paper does not audit liturgy as if it were a proof.

8.2 Human language is necessarily inadequate to transcendence

Inadequacy does not entail absence of content. A map omits nearly everything about a city while still distinguishing routes. Similarly, analogical or partial theological language can constrain expectations without exhausting its object. If no constraint survives, the language cannot bear the confident conclusions placed upon it. If constraints do survive, the test asks that they be stated.

8.3 The attributes are identical in divine simplicity

That metaphysical doctrine may explain why love, justice, power, and knowledge are not distinct parts in the deity. It does not show that human predicates have identical meanings or that every inference involving one transfers to another. A doctrine of simplicity requires its own semantic account. It cannot license an unnoticed move from perfection in one respect to unbounded quantity in another.

8.4 An infinite reality can possess finite effects for reasons beyond us

Certainly. Infinite capacity need not be exercised maximally on every occasion. That truth reinforces the bridge requirement: capacity alone does not predict a particular effect. If a reason explains restraint, the reason and its evidential consequences must be supplied. Otherwise the same capacity remains compatible with intervention and silence, disclosure and hiddenness, mercy and severity.

8.5 The test merely postpones disagreement

It postpones verdict until a proposition exists and the inference is visible. That is progress. Disputants can then identify whether they disagree about a scale, a domain, a compatibility condition, a moral premise, or an evidential expectation. The test does not promise consensus; it prevents one word from impersonating several premises.

9. A Constructive Protocol

The argument can be used constructively. A defender need not abandon infinity language. The defender can translate it into a claim with observable argumentative joints:

1. Replace “the deity is infinite” with a sentence naming the attribute and respect.
2. State the domain and comparison relation. If the claim is qualitative, say why numerical language is inappropriate.
3. Identify the absent bound or relevant standard of perfection.
4. Test the claim against the other attributes used in the same argument.
5. State the target conclusion separately.
6. Add the bridge principle connecting the specified attribute to that conclusion.
7. Name the contrast: what observation, action, or probability would differ if the claim were false or differently specified?

For example, a claim about hiddenness might become: perfect concern includes a defeasible reason to make relationship available to every nonresistant seeker; unlimited communicative capacity removes ordinary inability as an explanation; therefore persistent nonresistant absence is less expected unless a countervailing good is identified. A defender can deny the account of concern, dispute the evidence, or supply the countervailing good. Each response is substantive. Simply repeating infinity is not.

An infinite-offense argument might become: divine dignity is unsurpassable; knowingly repudiating unsurpassable moral authority has a special gravity; gravity is assessed by a stated principle that also incorporates finite agency; and the justified sanction follows a stated account of punishment. This reconstruction may still fail, but it is no longer arithmetic theater. It reveals the moral premises that require defense.

The protocol also protects theology from careless criticism. A critic should not infer that timelessness means infinitely long duration, that omnipotence includes incoherent tasks, or that apophaticism is mere evasion.

Specified claims deserve specified objections. Semantic discipline is not an anti-theological rule. It is a shared condition of serious disagreement.

10. Conclusion

Infinity is not a single superlative waiting to magnify any noun placed beside it. It can mark cardinality, potential continuation, temporal boundlessness, metric unboundedness, maximality, perfection, or a principled limit on description. Those structures have different conditions and different consequences. A theological appeal therefore needs a referent profile: subject, attribute, respect, domain, order or scale, and the bound denied.

Meaning is not enough. The specified claim must also connect to the conclusion for which it was introduced. No spatial boundary does not explain hiddenness. Unlimited knowledge does not by itself reconcile foreknowledge and freedom. Unsurpassable dignity is not already a quantity of culpability, and it does not already determine penal duration. Compatibility with an observation is not explanation of that observation.

Classical and contemporary accounts show that divine infinity can be developed with much greater precision than the bare formula. That is a reason to bound the critique, not abandon it. Once the metaphysics, semantics, and bridge premises are supplied, they carry the argumentative weight and can be assessed. Where they are absent, infinity is a placeholder: not necessarily for nonsense, but for work still owed.

A. Formal Reconstruction of the Central Thesis

A.1 The underspecification argument

- P1. A claim can answer a target question only if its content selects an implication or rational expectation bearing on that question.
- P2. The bare theological infinity formula is compatible with multiple specifications—spatial, temporal, cardinal, metric, maximal, perfect, and apophatic—that have different implications and expectations.
- C1. Therefore the bare formula alone does not answer the target question.

C1 follows by a discriminating-content principle: if a formula leaves open alternatives that yield different answers, it cannot by itself select one of those answers. P1 states a minimal condition of inferential relevance. P2 is supported by the distinctions in Table 1 and by developed theological accounts that choose among them.

A.2 The bridge argument

- P3. Even a specified infinity claim supports a target conclusion only if a defensible bridge connects that kind of infinity to the conclusion.
- P4. In characteristic uses concerning hiddenness, mystery, and punishment, the target conclusion does not follow from the specified attribute without additional epistemic, semantic, or moral premises.
- C2. Therefore the specified attribute alone is insufficient in those uses; the additional bridge premises carry the inference.
- C3. Consequently, infinity cannot function as an all-purpose theological answer, although particular specified claims with defensible bridges may succeed.

The form is valid as a repeated application of a necessary-condition argument: if support requires a bridge and no bridge follows from the infinity claim alone, the infinity claim alone is insufficient. P3 is conceptual rather than sectarian; explanations and entailments require a relation between premise and conclusion. P4 is defended case by case, not assumed globally. C3 is deliberately limited. It rejects the universal argumentative license of the placeholder, not every doctrine containing an infinity predicate.

A.3 The scale-shift subargument

- P5. A conclusion about penal magnitude requires principles relating culpability, harm, status, and the purpose and duration of punishment.
- P6. Unsurpassable divine dignity specifies, at most, the status of the offended party; it does not by itself specify the other variables or their relations.
- C4. Therefore unsurpassable divine dignity does not by itself entail endless punishment for finite conduct.

The conclusion remains compatible with other arguments for endless punishment. It denies only the direct inference from infinite or unsurpassable status. To restore that inference, a defender must state and defend the missing moral mapping.

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