The Infinite God

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A verse added to the hymn "Amazing Grace" in Harriet Beecher Stowe's 1852 anti-slavery novel Uncle Tom's Cabin goes as follows:

"When we've been here ten thousand years
Bright shining as the sun.
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we've first begun."

I am trained in science and engineering. I tend to be non-religious in my philosophy. However, I am not at odds with the concept of God.

God is greater than any entity that we can describe or define. God's powers are always greater. God's knowledge is always greater. God is transcendent, that is, God is greater than all that is.

The religious concept of God is like the mathematical concept of infinite. The infinite number, or infinity, is a number larger than any number we can count. No matter how much we count, to a million, billion, trillion, googol, centillion, or googolplex, infinity is always greater. If we add or subtract any number to or from infinity, we still have infinity. The concept of infinity does not change.
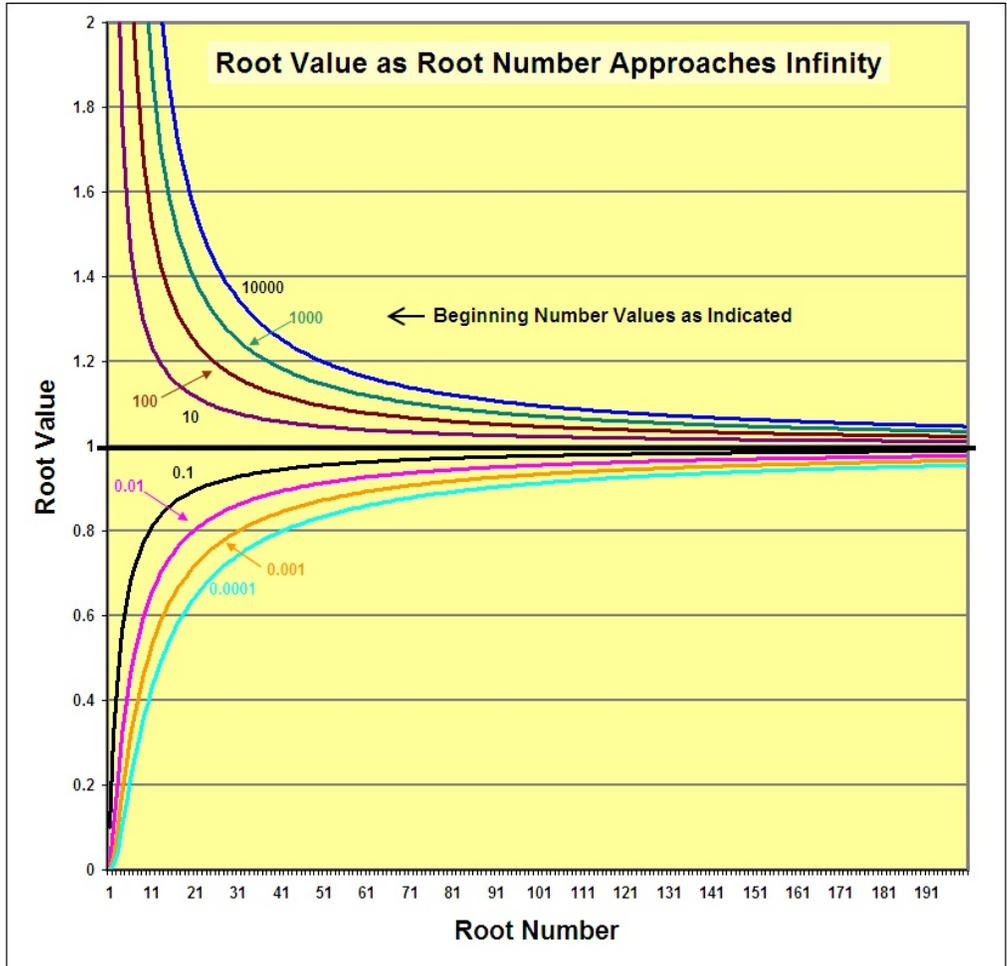
One might ask, "Since infinite is always a number which we cannot calculate, what good is the concept of infinite to mathematics?" The concept of infinite has many powerful uses in mathematics. For example, consider the question of how can one determine the value of a number raised to the power of zero. One may recall the answer is that any number raised to the power of zero is the number "1."

Raising a number to the power of 2 is the value calculated by multiplying the number by itself. Similarly, raising a number to the power of 3 is the value calculated by multiplying the number by itself two times. Therefore, 2 to the power of 2 is 2 times 2 equals 4, and 2 to the power of 3 is 2 times 2 times 2 equals 8. Conversely, the square root of a number (raising the number to the power of 1 divided by 2) is the number which when multiplied by itself is the original number. Thus, 2 is the square root of 4. Similarly, the cube root of a number (raising the number to the power of 1 divided by 3) is the number which when multiplied by itself is the original number. Thus, 2 is the cube root of 8.

The number zero can be approximated by the value of 1 divided by a very large number. By extension, zero can be defined to be 1 divided by infinity. Thus, any number raised to the power of zero can be approximated by the n-th root of the number, where n is a very large number, and by extension, any number raised to the power of zero is the infinite root of the number.

If the values of the n-th roots of numbers are calculated, one can see that the very large roots of all numbers approach the number 1. Such calculations are displayed

in the following figure. The larger the root, the closer the value approaches the value of 1. By extension, one can conclude that any number raised to the power of zero is equal to 1.

Religion is a philosophy based upon the assumption of a special relationship between humans and God. In the **Bible**, this special relationship is summarized in Genesis 1.27 by the statement that "So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them…"

How can the infinite nature of God be applied to theology? To a child that can only count to ten, a hundred or a thousand seems infinite. To early humans with a limited knowledge or philosophy, God could have been considered by each person to be the person himself. This concept can be likened to a number raised to the power of one. However, humans were evolved from social ancestors; therefore, such a primal concept is not very likely. God must be larger than the single person. Perhaps God was a human and its mate. Larger yet, God may be parents and offspring (God the Father). God must be greater still. God may be the village leader or the tribal king. Perhaps God is the Governor of one's state, or the President of the United States, or

the ruler of an empire? God must still be greater. One should note that as the concept of God is enlarged, the relationship between the individual person and God becomes less personal. Perhaps God is the ruler of the world, or the solar system, or the universe. There may be more than one universe, so God may be the ruler of all universes. As the concept of God is extended to the infinite, the concept of a personal relationship with God approaches zero.

If we divide any number by infinity, we have an infinitesimal quantity, a quantity that is incalculably small. The world, the universe, and all that is, are just a part of the infinite, transcendent God. Therefore, any part of God is infinitesimal compared to God. Humans and all humanity are infinitesimal compared to God. Similarly, all creatures are also infinitesimal. Humans cannot be distinguished from any other creature in relation to God. The assumption that humankind has a special relationship with God is the fundamental flaw of religion. Because we assume a special relationship with God, we presume to know the will of God. We tell one another how to behave and live based upon this presumed knowledge. This arrogance is religion's greatest failing.

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