

Does this mean that atheists have to make allowances for the possibility that deities exist? Not at all.

It may not be possible to prove with absolute certainty that there are no deities, but if there are neither compelling arguments nor apparent necessity for their existence, then the moral atheist can conclude that the existence of deities is so unlikely that we should go ahead and behave as if there is no chance they exist. To do otherwise would be to open ourselves to having to make allowances for any vanishingly possible thing that anyone can come up with, and that's no way to lead a rational life.



CAN YOU PROVE THERE'S NO GOD?

A Question of Moral Atheism

from blog.iamanatheist.com



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most prove that people lack the ability to describe or conceive of something that, if it exists, they would label "God"? Scientific reasons include the belief that deities do not exist because science can explain everything without invoking them. But at most this proves that deities are not scientifically required or that they have created a universe that follows strict physical rules. Social reasons include the belief that religious traditions are unreliable because they developed over the centuries in the same way stories we now consider myths developed. But proving something unreliable doesn't prove it false. Faith-based/emotional reasons include the belief that God does not exist because you just know there's no such thing. Such an argument is not compelling to those who don't share your feelings. It is generally impossible to prove that something absolutely does not exist — particularly, in this case, because there is the possibility that a deity exists that you have not (or cannot) even conceive of.

CAN AN ATHEIST PROVE THAT DEITIES DO NOT EXIST? There are a number of reasons an atheist might conclude that neither God nor any other deity exists, and those reasons might be logical, philosophical, linguistic, scientific, social, or faith based/emotional. Logical reasons include the belief that deities are logically impossible. For example, you might argue that it is impossible for something to be at once infinitely good, omniscient, and omnipotent. But at best this only proves that any deities that exist don't have those qualities. Philosophical reasons include the belief that deities could not possibly exist because, for example, the existence of evil proves that there is no infinite force for good. But religion has a number of counters for such arguments, and since religion is defining the terms here, it has a good chance of not being disproved in this way. Linguistic reasons include the belief that God cannot even be discussed because nobody can really define the word "God." But does this argument prove that nothing we would refer to as a deity exists, or does it at

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most prove that people lack the ability to describe or conceive of something that, if it exists, they would label "God"?

Scientific reasons include the belief that deities do not exist because science can explain everything without invoking them. But at most this proves that deities are not scientifically required or that they have created a universe that follows strict physical rules.

Social reasons include the belief that religious traditions are unreliable because they developed over the centuries in the same way stories we now consider myths developed. But proving something unreliable doesn't prove it false.

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QUESTIONS OF MORAL ATHEISM: INSTRUCTIONS

We appreciate your interest in helping us spread information about moral atheism! To make copies of this pamphlet for your own use or to share with friends, follow these simple steps:

1. Print pages one and two of this document, one on each side of the same piece of paper (if you don't have access to a duplex printer, print page one, put the page back in the paper tray upside down, and print page two — depending on the type of printer, you may have to experiment a bit).
2. Cut the printout in two, using the thin rules across the middle of the page as a guide.
3. Fold the two pieces of paper in half, making a pair of small pamphlets.
4. Keep one of the pamphlets to read, and give the other away to an interested friend or stranger.

That's it! If you have any questions, suggestions, or comments, we invite you to share them by leaving a comment on blog.iamanatheist.org. Thanks!
