



IS GOD INTELLIGENT?

A Question of Moral Atheism

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Let's look at an analogy that might make this more intelligent. And yet, when gravity makes an object move, it always does so in the most efficient manner possible with no exceptions. When selecting the most efficient manner, gravity even takes into account the effect of all matter and energy in the universe, making gravity omniscient, in its way.

So why might not God's actions be simply those of a force reacting to the state of goodness, in the same sense that gravity is a force reacting to how much matter there is?

It seems that the only way to effectively counter this argument would be to either show a situation in which God did not choose the path of maximizing good (in which case God is not perfectly good), to show that a situation may have multiple solutions that are all absolutely equally good (which would require us to precisely quantify goodness; something we likely can't do), or to assert that good is just a judgmental concept, not a real property of things. For a Christian, none of these may be acceptable.

THE CHRISTIAN GOD is said to be omnipotent, omniscient, and perfectly good. Given these characteristics, is it possible that God is not a thinking being?

The argument for an unintelligent God would go something like this: God is perfectly good. This means that, in any situation, God would behave morally. If there is more than one possible moral behavior, God would choose the one that is the most moral, because that one is the most perfectly good. If God must do the most good thing, then God really has no choice about how He behaves. Since no choice is involved, no reasoning is needed. If no reasoning is needed, then God does not need to be intelligent.

An obvious counter to this argument is that intelligence is needed to sort through possible behaviors and select those that are the most good. But if "good" is a real property that things have (as opposed to just a concept assigned to things by philosophers) — and many religious philosophers would argue that it is — then this sorting can be done without intelligence.

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Let’s look at an analogy that might make this more clear. Gravity is a force of nature. It is not, in any sense, intelligent. And yet, when gravity makes an object move, it always does so in the most efficient manner possible with no exceptions. When selecting the most efficient manner, gravity even takes into account the effect of all matter and energy in the universe, making gravity omniscient, in its way.

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QUESTIONS OF MORAL ATHEISM: INSTRUCTIONS

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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!
