

that you care wrong about some or all of them. And since we are talking about things that can significantly impact our impression of how the world works, it is very important that we accept as few intellectual risks as possible.



WHAT IS FAITH?

A Question of Moral Atheism

from blog.iamanatheist.com



To download additional tracts or purchase a copy of Ask Yourself to Be Moral, please visit blog.iamanatheist.com

©2009 D. Cancilla. Licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 United States License

Is it possible for an atheist to have no pure faith? Technically yes, but it would be very difficult. In general, an atheist would agree with the following statements, even though they may not be provable:

- Other people's minds exists.
- The universe exists.
- Our senses, when working properly, are reliable within their limits.

Does having some pure faith mean that an atheist cannot criticize a theist for having faith in a deity? No. Pure faith is an admission that there are some things the mind cannot investigate, but which must be assumed before any kind of intellectual progress can be made. Deities do not fall into this category. It's true that deities cannot be thoroughly investigated, but their existence does not need to be assumed for us to be able to move on to other subjects.

A moral atheist also wishes to have pure faith in as few things as possible. Why? Because the more things you believe in without evidence, the more likely it is possible.

HERE ARE TWO kinds of faith, and atheists may have faith in both senses of the word. The first kind of faith is simply trust based on past performance. You might have faith that your mother is telling you the truth because in the past your mother has always told you the truth. Similarly, you might trust that gravity will behave in a certain way because it always has.

For the sake of simplicity, we'll refer to this kind of faith as "trust."

The other kind of faith is belief without (or despite) evidence. Believing that God exists regardless of whether or not His existence can be proven is this type of faith. Believing that your son is innocent of murder even though all evidence points to him may also be faith in this sense.

We'll refer to this kind of faith as "pure faith." How much faith does a moral atheist have? In terms of trust, a moral atheist has as much as is justified. In terms of pure faith, a moral atheist has as little as possible.

THERE ARE TWO kinds of faith, and atheists may have faith in both senses of the word.

The first kind of faith is simply trust based on past performance. You might have faith that your mother is telling you the truth because in the past your mother has always told you the truth. Similarly, you might trust that gravity will behave in a certain way because it always has.

For the sake of simplicity, we'll refer to this kind of faith as "trust."

The other kind of faith is belief without (or despite) evidence. Believing that God exists regardless of whether or not His existence can be proven is this type of faith. Believing that your son is innocent of murder even though all evidence points to him may also be faith in this sense.

We'll refer to this kind of faith as "pure faith."

How much faith does a moral atheist have? In terms of trust, a moral atheist has as much as is justified. In terms of pure faith, a moral atheist has as little as possible.

Is it possible for an atheist to have no pure faith? Technically yes, but it would be very difficult. In general, an atheist would agree with the following statements, even though they may not be provable:

- Other people's minds exists.
- The universe exists.
- Our senses, when working properly, are reliable within their limits.

Does having some pure faith mean that an atheist cannot criticize a theist for having faith in a deity? No.

Pure faith is an admission that there are some things the mind cannot investigate, but which must be assumed before any kind of intellectual progress can be made. Deities do not fall into this category. It's true that deities cannot be thoroughly investigated, but their existence does not need to be assumed for us to be able to move on to other subjects.

A moral atheist also wishes to have pure faith in as few things as possible. Why? Because the more things you believe in without evidence, the more likely it is



from blog.iamanatheist.com

A Question of Moral Atheism

WHAT IS FAITH?



that you care wrong about some or all of them. And since we are talking about things that can significantly impact our impression of how the world works, it is very important that we accept as few intellectual risks as possible.

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!
