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Finally, perhaps you are keeping things simple and defining evil as **something that forward’s Satan’s goals**. But how do you know what Satan’s goals are? If Satan wants a certain politician elected to office because he knows it will lead to war, is electing that politician evil? Or perhaps Satan wants to make humanity subservient to him by ridding the world of scientific thinking and free thought, in which case moral atheism is working counter to Satan’s plans. The fact is, you don’t know for sure what Satan wants, so you shouldn’t pretend that you do.

And while you’re at it, you shouldn’t call atheists evil until you can explain exactly what you mean.

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ARE ATHEISTS EVIL?

A Question of Moral Atheism

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Morally objectionable things might be said to be evil, but atheism wouldn’t be evil under this definition. There is no moral requirement to believe in deities, and atheism does not require any behavior that could be said to be immoral.

You might say that **things that arise from bad behavior** — such as graffiti and crime — are evil. But to say that atheism is evil in this sense is to say that atheism arises from bad behavior, and that is not the case.

Perhaps you call **anything that encourages or prefers bad behavior** evil. Unless you can show that not believing in deities is in and of itself bad behavior, you won’t catch atheism in this net.

Similarly, it can be said that **anything that takes a stand against good** is evil. But atheism isn’t against good. Maybe you mean that **anything that takes a stand against Christianity** is evil. Although atheists don’t agree with Christianity, atheists aren’t all against Christianity. And this definition is probably not a good one, particularly considering that by using this

Individual ATHEISTS may be good or bad, just as individual theists may be good or bad. But what about atheism itself? Is atheism, as some would argue, evil? The answer depends on what we mean by “evil.”

Is evil **anything that causes significant harm**, like a tornado or a thumbtack accidentally left where someone might step on it? This seems to be setting a pretty low bar for evil, but even so it’s difficult to call atheism evil by this definition. There are plenty of atheists who are not harmed by their beliefs and are not lead by their beliefs to harm others. Sure, there are some atheists who are depressed or immoral, but there are copious theists with these qualities as well.

Is **committing a sin** — by breaking one of the Ten Commandments, for example — evil? Atheism certainly breaks the first one or two commandments, but if that makes atheism evil then any set of beliefs that does not include the Judeo-Christian God — or that includes a “false” version of that god — could be called evil. In this case, “evil” becomes a synonym for “doesn’t obey Biblical morality,” and it’s trivial to point out that atheists don’t follow the Bible.

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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!
