

offended (that's a different subject), but you can't argue about how they're acting on their feelings since you are doing the same thing.

Ask yourself this question any time you are drawing a conclusion. If you might consider someone wrong if they were reasoning in the same way you are, then you need to examine your reasoning for flaws — even if you like the conclusion it's reaching.

MOVING FORWARD

You've got the two questions under your belt, but before you start putting them to use you need to know one more thing: The two questions are an important step on the journey to a clear, valid philosophy, but they are only a step. If something fails the two-question test, then it is not valid, but you can't consider something valid just because it passed this test.

There are other issues to consider when developing your personal philosophy. We'll discuss those in more detail another time.

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WHAT ARE THE TWO QUESTIONS?

A Question of Moral Atheism

from blog.iamanatheist.com



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This first question is usually the easiest to ask yourself. Just take a mental step back from the topic at hand and ask yourself if your opinion on this matter contradicts your opinion on related — even loosely related — matters. It can be applied to politics, personal relationships, moral issues, religious philosophy, or pretty much any topic you come across where an opinion is needed. If you find that your philosophy contradicts itself, then you need to rethink your position.

“WOULD I CONDEMN ANOTHER FOR REASONING AS I DO?”

If you are reasoning in a logical, rational way, then you shouldn't have any problem with other people reasoning in the same way. For example, if you think that your child should not be allowed to wear a shirt with a certain slogan on it because it offends you, then you shouldn't criticize another parent who doesn't want their child to wear a shirt with a slogan that offends *them*. But what if the slogan the other parent objects to doesn't offend you? It doesn't matter. You might argue that the other parent shouldn't be

HOW OFTEN DO YOU STEP BACK AND MAKE SURE THAT your philosophy and opinions form a coherent whole? If you do this with any regularity, you are a rare individual indeed.

The more you examine your own beliefs (your considered opinions, philosophy, metaphysics, ethics, and morals) with a critical eye, the more likely you are to catch mistakes in your own thinking. You would certainly rather be right than wrong, so isn't being right worth the extra effort?

To begin your process of introspection, you will need to ask yourself two questions. These questions are based on concepts you already agree with, so you should have no trouble accepting their validity.

“DOES MY PHILOSOPHY CONTRADICT ITSELF?”

You should not have two beliefs that contradict each other. That just makes sense. In fact, it makes so much sense that you might think it's silly to even consider — how could you have two beliefs that contradict each other? In the real world, this happens more often than you might expect.

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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!
