

We also agree that we should not rely on reasoning that we wouldn't want others to use. If you think, "Being moral would stop me from doing things I want to do, so I shouldn't have to be moral," then you cannot object to other people thinking the same way. And if you cannot object to others thinking that way, then you are giving others permission to do immoral things to you if they want to. You certainly don't want to do that!

So if you want other people to be moral, you have to be moral. You can't demand moral behavior from others if you don't demand it from yourself.



WHY BE MORAL?

A Question of Moral Atheism

from blog.iamanatheist.com



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A religious person might say that there is a divine command that humans be moral, but atheists don't believe in the divine. So why should an atheist be moral? There are many reasons to live a moral life that have nothing to do with gods, spirits, or religious beliefs of any kind. A moral atheist believes that any valid moral philosophy must, at the very least, not contradict itself and not rely on reasoning that we would not want others to use. Whether or not you are an atheist, you can see that this makes sense. And if you agree that it makes sense, then you can easily prove that everyone should be moral. Here's how the proof works. We agree that a moral philosophy must not contradict itself. If my moral philosophy tells me "Doing X is bad," and my moral philosophy says, "It's okay to do X," then my moral philosophy contradicts itself.

SOME PEOPLE ARE MORAL. These people have a philosophy of what is good and what is bad, and they use it as a guide for their behavior both in public and in private. Some of these people know the difference between what is good and bad but do not concern themselves with such things. Others say that they are moral, but in reality don't have a good definition of good and bad and just convince themselves that whatever they choose or prefer to do is the right thing to do. Religious people may be moral or immoral. Atheists may be moral or immoral. To put it simply: people may be moral or immoral. A religious person might say that moral behavior is required to avoid divine punishment, either in this life or the next. But atheists don't believe in life after death, reincarnation, karma, eternal damnation, or anything like that, so the threat of this kind of punishment isn't going to compel an atheist to be moral.

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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!
