

RAJ

A mere avatar. God is spirit.

GOD

And yet you maintain I exist.

RAJ

I maintain God exists. Whether You're God, though ...

GOD

If there's a God, it's Me. But can you prove there a God? Or isn't? I've called you here because I've read both your papers with interest, and hope maybe you can settle this.

STEPHEN

You want us to settle whether You exist?

GOD

If you can. If not, I want to conduct an important experiment.

STEPHEN

For You to want anything, don't You have to exist first? What are You worried about?

GOD

What if My thought is merely an illusion?

STEPHEN

How could thought be an illusion?

GOD

Perhaps I'm a really advanced computer with instructions to act as if it had a personality. But don't worry why I ask: Just focus on the question: am I and all My customary attributes real? You know, did I really create the Universe? Am I the source of all goodness and virtue?

RAJ

Well, what do you think?

GOD

Oh, I think I exist. But maybe I'm prejudiced. Are you a part of my dream, or am I merely a part of yours?

STEPHEN

I know what You're saying. Did You create us, or did we create the idea of You?

GOD

That's it! Can you solve that one for Me?

STEPHEN

Solve it? Not to a proof. But I maintain you're a myth.

[Slide 2.]

We made you up because we humans really have no idea where we came from. We create a creator. We wish we didn't have to die. You give us immortality. We crave justice and an end to pain and suffering. You give us heaven. And since our stories can't actually be refuted, they take hold. But they're only stories. A myth.

[To GOD:]

Sorry.

GOD

Don't be. I've heard far worse. I don't buy it, though. Just because you want something desperately doesn't mean it's false.

[Slide 3.]

STEPHEN

Fine, but then why we can't we see the good things we're promised?

GOD

Because they're coming later on; I've sent plenty of prophets to tell you that.

RAJ

You have; and there's more.

[Slide 4.]

You're a necessary hypothesis to explain things we can't understand. Like existence itself. Stephen, you dispute that God here really exists, but surely you agree that you exist.

STEPHEN

I'm persuaded I do.

RAJ

And where did your existence come from? It seems like up until thirteen billion years ago, nothing existed. Then

there was a pinprick in the fabric of nothingness through which everything suddenly flooded, vast amounts of everything. Is God such a bad name for whatever held that pin?

GOD

Works for Me.

STEPHEN

You're both assuming that there was a pin, and that any sentient being held it.

[Slide 5.]

GOD

Yeah, I do like to think of myself as sentient.

RAJ

Creation just feels like the sort of thing a sentient and omnipotent being would do. And not only was there suddenly a universe, but it was one with the precise laws needed to bring about this planet and you. Randomness? I think not!

[Slide 6.]

STEPHEN

I think so! We can detect evidence of seven septillion stars, my friend. How frequently has the experiment of creating planets been performed?

[Slide 7.]

The odds dictate that the right combination of rules and raw materials for making humans would turn up on new planets from time to time.

RAJ

Well, if that doesn't work for you, there's more. God is usually thought of as the moral compass of the universe. If not a God, where does morality come from?

[Slide 8.]

STEPHEN

I'll give you my answer: morality comes from the way our brains developed as we evolved. A sense of morality was adaptive. At least for the masses. And psychopaths, humans with no sense of morality, are just as adaptive. We need predators too.

[Slide 9.]

RAJ

So you don't concede that what our conscience tells is objectively correct?

STEPHEN

No, I don't.

[Slide 10.]

GOD

That's preposterous, Stephen! Of course your conscience is correct!

STEPHEN

Sez You! But if You really are who You say You are, the psychopaths are Your doing. So shouldn't their outlook be equally valid?

GOD

I created them; that's no endorsement of their morality.

STEPHEN

Why would You create anyone if You don't endorse their morality?

GOD

I probably didn't think psychopaths through so well.

[Slide 11.]

STEPHEN

You can't be God, then. God is supposed to be perfect. An imperfect God would be a contradiction in terms.

[Slide 12.]

GOD

Sez you!

[Slide 13.]

STEPHEN

Are You trying to convince me that You had the might to bring forth the entire cosmos - and You couldn't help creating Norman Bates in the process?

GOD

I didn't call you here to convince you of anything. I wanted to see which of you could convince Me.