

The Paradox of God and the Science of Omniscience

By Clifford A. Pickover

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In his most ambitious book yet, Clifford Pickover bridges the gulf between logic, spirit, science, and religion. While exploring the concept of omniscience, Pickover explains the kinds of relationships limited beings can have with an all-knowing God. Pickover's thought exercises, controversial experiments, and practical analogies help us transcend our ordinary lives while challenging us to better understand our place in the cosmos and our dreams of a supernatural God. Through an inventive blend of science, history, philosophy, science fiction, and mind-stretching brainteasers, Pickover unfolds the paradoxes of God like no other writer. He provides glimpses into the infinite, allowing us to think big, and to have daring, limitless dreams.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly
Pickover, an inventor, computer artist and professional puzzler (who has edited brainteaser columns for both Discover and Odyssey), invites readers on a paradoxical and sometimes merely quirky exploration of logical and psychological puzzles surrounding God and religion. Many of these "paradoxes" simply put a new face on the familiar conflict between divine foreknowledge and free will; others lead to unexpected conclusions such as Pickover's demonstration of how omniscient beings are at a huge disadvantage in games of "chicken" with non-omniscient beings. (By staying the course, a daring challenger can compel an all-knowing opponent to turn aside, guaranteeing their mutual safety.) This and other examples show how omniscience can become a practical liability in some situations, countering the widespread assumption that knowledge is power. The book is also liberally salted with religious and nonreligious curiosities and conundrums, ranging from biblical oddities to the neuropsychology of time perception, all related with an attitude of mischievous irreverence. Pickover's satirical approach energizes the book, but frequently verges on the sophomoric or simply bizarre: "God gives you a piano. For each note you play, someone will die. What classical piece do you choose?" At its best, the book achieves a juxtaposition of cosmic relevance and intellectual whimsy, but the overall execution is uneven, faltering most conspicuously when Pickover tries to tackle problems of evil and human responsibility.

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From Booklist
Pickover, a prolific popularizer of scientific speculation in fields ranging from biology to computer science to physics, turns here to paradoxes generated by the supposed omniscience of God. For the most part, he dodges technical questions about the definition of *God* while leading readers through a loosely woven series of games that dance around contradictions at the intersection of knowledge and power. Many, including the prisoner's dilemma, are familiar from popular applications of game theory, such as their use in arguments on all sides of the nuclear arms race during the cold war. In the end, Pickover seems convinced that God cannot be omniscient in the traditional sense of the term, and he is convinced that this helps reduce apparent conflicts between science and religion. Whether readers are convinced or not, the puzzles and vignettes Pickover introduces are entertaining enough to appeal to and hold a significant audience. *Steven Schroeder*
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Review

"Overall, the discussion is lucid and fair...recommended at least as a supplemental text in courses..."--Amos Yong, Religious Studies Review
“Add two doses of Isaac Asimov, and one dose each of Martin Gardner and Carl Sagan, and you get Clifford Pickover, one of the most entertaining and thought provoking writers of our time.” —Michael Shermer, author of *The Borderlands of Science & Editor-in-Chief of Skeptic Magazine*

“...the puzzles and vignettes Pickover introduces are entertaining...” —*Booklist*

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From reader reviews:

Sharon Gaines:

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