



Superior Beings: If They Exist, How Would We Know?

Steven J. Brams

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The central question I pose in this book is: If there existed a superior being who possessed the supernatural qualities of omniscience, omnipotence, immortality, and incomprehensibility, how would he/she act differently from us, and would these differences be knowable? (Because God, the superior being in the Judeo-Christian tradition, is generally described as a male, I shall henceforth use the masculine pronoun form for convenience, but I intend no invidious gender distinctions, whether applied to supernatural or natural beings.) Theologians, philosophers of religion, and erudite scholars in other disciplines have addressed this and related questions before, but their answers, generally speaking, have not been informed by any systematic or rigorous theory. I believe the mathematical theory of games, which has little to do with the frivolity and playfulness we normally associate with games, provides a powerful tool for clarifying the key theological concepts in my central question and drawing out their implications in games played between human and superior beings. I am fully aware that not everybody will agree that omniscience, omnipotence, immortality, and incomprehensibility are what I say they are, but I invite them to propose their own definitions and derive their own conclusions with the aid of the theory. By endowing these protean concepts with unambiguous meanings, I will try to show how game theory can breathe life into questions that have been dismissed too quickly simply because they are metaphysical—outside the world of experience.

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