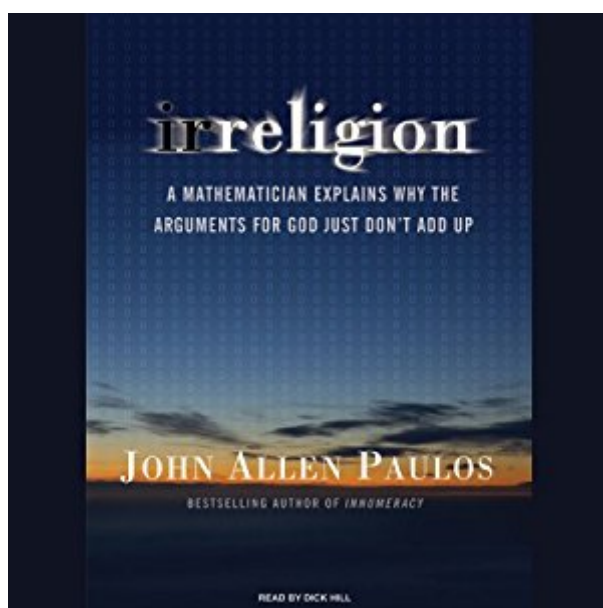


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Irreligion: A Mathematician Explains Why The Arguments For God Just Don't Add Up



Synopsis

A lifelong unbeliever finds no reason to change his mind. Are there any logical reasons to believe in God? Mathematician and bestselling author John Allen Paulos thinks not. In *Irreligion* he presents the case for his own worldview, organizing his book into twelve chapters that refute the twelve arguments most often put forward for believing in God's existence. The latter arguments, Paulos relates in his characteristically lighthearted style, "range from what might be called golden oldies to those with a more contemporary beat. On the playlist are the first-cause argument, the argument from design, the ontological argument, arguments from faith and biblical codes, the argument from the anthropic principle, the moral universality argument, and others." Interspersed among his twelve counterarguments are remarks on a variety of irreligious themes, ranging from the nature of miracles and creationist probability to cognitive illusions and prudential wagers. Special attention is paid to topics, arguments, and questions that spring from his incredulity "not only about religion but also about others' credulity." --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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Customer Reviews

As a student of religious studies AND mathematics and having never heard of the author I picked this up as a fun and rather nerdy read. I have read all of the new atheist books as well as all of the new age apologists (D'Souza, Lewis, Craig, Collins, etc.) and a cursory glance at the back of this one made me feel as though it would be a light hearted fun rant through modern religion and mathematic principles. I was delighted to find the author is not only funny but brilliantly laconic,

explaining how he sees most of the more common arguments seen today for the existence of a god or gods. For those who have taken multi variate, advanced calculus, advanced physics (anything where you are working with "proofs") you will immediately feel right at home. Paulus commonly begins by taking the reader through what he sees as the logical proof an apologist is submitting and then finds the cracks with turn-of-phrase which is as clever as it is humorous. There is one section where he has a "dreamy instant message conversation with God" that I don't particularly care for but I could see how someone could take some value from it. This book is not brilliance encapsulated as some may describe a Hitchens, Dennett, or Grayling. But instead it's someone explaining why he is not a theist, rather than why you should not be a theist. He ends the book with a slightly outdated argument, which I'm sure at the time looked as though it was going to be a bigger deal than it was (the "bright" movement), but I have re-read this book several times and have found the contents enlightening every time. I would suggest it to anyone. Cheers!

To appreciate this book, one must understand what readership it is aimed at. This appears to be the people on both sides of the divide between religious and nonreligious who are neither utterly convinced atheists (although those might enjoy the book as well), nor unquestioning believers. It is for readers who are intelligent and interested in the subject of God's existence or nonexistence, but do not have the time or inclination to immerse themselves in 536pp philosophical books. These people would be most interested in the thoughts of another intelligent person, a person who has spent some time exploring the major arguments, and is capable of presenting them and his conclusions in a clear and concise manner. It is then up to the reader to agree or disagree with the reasoning. The book would not convince religious people whose minds are closed, even if they read it. It will not convince people who deny the role of reason in the question of God's existence. And it is not a polemic with ivory tower theologians. This is a gentle book. Paulus does not bring up the horrific facts of the criminal history of religion that Dawkins, Hitchens and others have explored in recent books. He concentrates on a few common arguments for God's existence, and shows how an intelligent person would find them wanting.

This is a wonderfully concise book, well presented, well shaded and well within reach of mathematically sad creatures such as myself. In fact it has more to do with the methodology of mathematics than actually doing the math. But what caught my attention amid some already familiar explanatory riffs is something I have yet to read very often within atheist texts and that is a simple statement of fact made by the author. As a child he had absolutely no feeling -- emotional or

intellectual -- for the need of a god or religious doctrine. And I share that very specific mental state. My first response to organized religion at a very early age was always the same: the simple and clear and recurring thought that this just ain't so. As the years went by I made a point of reading broadly on faith and the lack thereof, arriving at a conscious rather than solely intuitive understanding of my perspective. "Irreligion" offers another dose of comprehension for seeing life as it is in favor of imbuing it with mysteries which are mysteries only because already known answers remain unacceptable to believers, or are merely aspects of human experience still waiting to be understood. As Mr. Paulos so eloquently writes, in setting aside the superstitions of the past few millennia we sacrifice or compromise none of the intrinsic value of our lives.

I read this book because I really enjoyed Innumeracy, another book by this author. While I totally disagree with the author on many points about his beliefs, or "mis" beliefs, I do feel bad that he fell so far away from his origins as a Greek Orthodox.. However, having said that, In all of his works he uses great humor which makes reading this, and all his books, worthwhile.

It has been said that "you can't use logic to argue someone out of a position that they didn't use logic to get into," which explains why this slender book is probably fated to remain "de-preaching to the de-converted." Paulos's expositions on the illogic of faith, like his earlier book on math illiteracy, will ring clear to those predisposed to his arguments and fall on deaf ears elsewhere. If your mind doesn't grasp the crystal clear logic of these arguments from the outset, they undoubtedly won't convince you of anything because your mind is not logically organized and you may already believe in all sorts of unsupported propositions. After all, those who have faith in superstitions are open to believing anything.

This is one of many books that anyone of any belief should read. I read the entire bible and would do it again but would think that Irreligion should be read first.

Very too read on a subject of interest to me. Glad I got it on my Kindle.

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