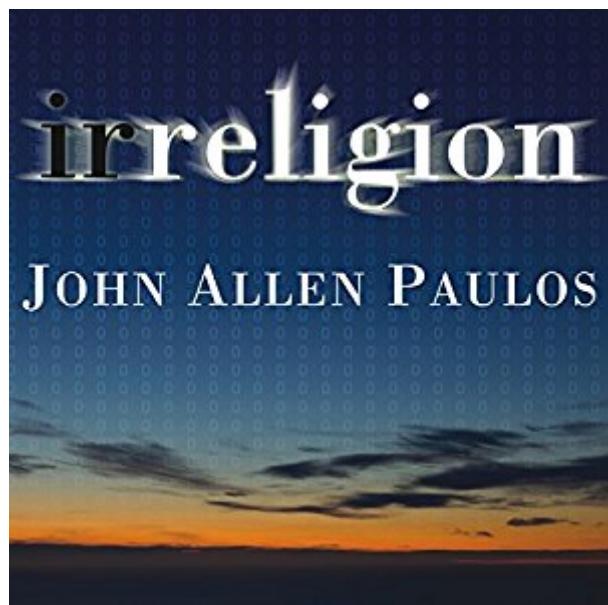


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Irreligion: A Mathematician Explains Why The Arguments For God Just Don't Add Up



Synopsis

A lifelong unbeliever finds no reason to change his mind. Are there any logical reasons to believe in God? Mathematician and best-selling author John Allen Paulos thinks not. In *Irreligion* he presents the case for his own worldview, organizing his book into 12 chapters that refute the 12 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 12 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".

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

For centuries, people who believe in the different gods that people have adopted have insisted that there are good logical reasons to believe in their particular gods. Logic and science can do nothing to disconfirm the existence of these gods, but at the same time, if an attempt at a logical proof of a god's existence is presented, then the proof can be logically examined to see if it holds water. John Allen Paulos has looked at the proofs and finds them leaky. Paulos is a mathematician who has

previously told us how a mathematician plays the stock market or how a mathematician reads the newspaper. Now, in Irreligion: A Mathematician Explains Why the Arguments for God Just Don't Add Up, he goes for the big game. His book shows the results of his examination of the question that is the first sentence in his book: "Are there any logical reasons to believe in God?" His book is a review of the ways that religious people have demonstrated to their own satisfaction (but not to his) that the existence of God can be logically derived. He has written before on this sort of theme, but his book is an attempt to deal directly with the "inherent illogic to all of the arguments." Jonathan Swift said, "It is useless to attempt to reason a man out of a thing he was never reasoned into", and Paulos acknowledges this: "I have little problem with those who acknowledge the absence of good arguments for God, but simply maintain a nebulous but steadfast belief in 'something more'". Plenty of the arguments for God's existence here are well known; in fact, they are classics, and have been the subject of discussion and refutation for centuries.

Do monsters lurk under the bed? Paulos is not one to convince a worried six-year-old that no Monsters lurk under the bed. Sure, he could logically and incisively prove Under-the-Bed-Monsters do not exist, as he exquisitely disproves a dozen different beliefs older people use to explain God. His logic, reasoning and explanations are impeccable - - but hollow. When anyone deals with Monsters, Ghosts, Angels or God, they are dealing with emotion rather than logic. This is a delightful book for those who already know God is false. But it doesn't address the central issue: Why are so many Americans, and especially engineers and technology workers, so committed to God-cults? Why are so many Americans "crusaders" for God, just as so many Moslems are "jihadists" for Allah? In Iran today, there is a separation of mosque and state with each having separate leaders. In America today, a prime requirement to be president is an absolute faith in a close personal relationship with God. Richard Hofstadter said Puritan resistance to old religious and civil hierarchies in England launched a fervent opposition to all book learning in America. This founding principle of the United States led to the War of Independence, but it has also produced a trend to self-chosen religion instead of what the state imposes. Today's mega-churches, extreme fundamentalism and televangelists are part of a rich American heritage; a direct product of Salem witch hunts, frenzied tent revivals, the fanaticism of radio evangelism and unrestrained freedom itself. Disproving God is similar to disproving Monsters. If the emotional origins are understood, a parent can comfort such fears.

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