



The Miracle of Theism: Arguments for and Against the Existence of God

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The late John L. Mackie, formerly of University College, Oxford

The Miracle of Theism: Arguments for and Against the Existence of God Details

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From Reader Review The Miracle of Theism: Arguments for and Against the Existence of God for online ebook

Tarek Sweedan says

just as expected...another masterpiece written by Mackie...

Icanclick says

John Mackie is one of the few atheologians whose work is both widely distributed and exceptionally fair, well-written and engaging. This book is an interesting read for those dedicated to theology, and is the paradigm of literature which theists ought to read in order to better rebut the arguments of their atheist pals.

Liya says

Despite what it says on the back, I doubt that the general reader can follow the discussion. My brain was certainly broken. Giving up after 100 pages. Leads me to believe I should avoid philosophy books in future.

Grasped in Thought says

This is a fantastic introduction to the philosophy of religion. Mackie gives a fair treatment of theistic arguments and then provides some very strong objections. The one problem I had was his section on miracles in which he basically re-iterates David Hume's position.

Jelle de Jong says

begin sterker dan het eind. Alle mij bekende goede filosofische Godsbewijzen worden behandeld op een manier dat ik ze nu beter begrijp dan daarvoor. Daarna bestudeert deze kerel of ze houdbaar zijn. Naarmate het boek naar het einde nadert begint zijn schr; uitgeleend aan Marnix (20110824)

Mark says

Mr Mackie does an above average job of introducing arguments for the existence of god. The title of the book is a bit misleading: The miracle of theism is not what Mackie is espousing here. His book is in the same genre as Smith's Atheism: A Case Against God, but goes into a bit more detail, philosophically speaking. This is a nice middle-ground between George Smith and Michael Martin, more on Smith's side of things in terms of ease of reading. Mackie is thorough, but not so thorough as to make reading his book a job in philosophical thinking.

I think that Mackie's purpose here is to present well-worn religious arguments and present the reasons that they do not work, which he does nicely. Also, a nice aspect of this book is that it is not limited to metaphysical arguments, but includes moral and even epistemological arguments. If the reader has some familiarity with modern philosophy it would be helpful but is not necessary. This is a good introduction to both atheism and secular humanistic thought. Mackie is one of the authors that most likely had a hand in the recent surge of "atheist" books. Written in the 80's, the book still holds its own. Check it out.

Paul says

This is definitely one of the most rigorous and critical examination of the arguments in favor for Theism from the skeptical perspective. Furthermore, Mackie was able to give the most charitable interpretation possible to any theistic arguments from Descartes to Kierkegaard. While it is open to dispute whether Mackie undermined particular arguments such as Plantinga's Freewill defense argument, this book is nonetheless valuable to anyone who desires a very robust argument.

Ginger Griffin says

This is probably the best book I've read on the topic. It's a bit dense and academic, but not hard to understand if you've taken, say, Philosophy 101.

Reinhard Gobrecht says

Mackie diskutiert Argumente für und gegen die Existenz Gottes.
Er beschreibt Humes Argumente gegen Wunder, Descartes Argumente und Gedanken zu einer ersten Ursache (Gott) und die Sachgehaltsbeziehung zwischen Ursache und Wirkung. Das Problem des rein denkbaren Gottes (Anselm). Das Problem der Existenz (als außergewöhnliches Prädikat)(Kant und Frege). In diesem Buch findet man ontologische, kosmologische, moralische und teleologische Argumente. Ebenso das Problem des Übels und Pascals Wette. u.v.a.

Jezier says

Trudna, g??boka, satysfakcjonuj?ca. Polecam.

Daniel says

As a Christian, I have been tired of the neo-Atheist movement and its caustic rhetoric. Mackie is definitely not in the class of Dawkins, Krauss, Hitchens, or Dennett. After reading Mackie, I suspect he would distance himself from such characters. I could be wrong about this, but based on his writing he seems to at least have

respect for his theistic academicians.

It should be noted that this book is first and foremost an academic treatment of atheism and theism. Atheists and theists who are used to the popular, neo-Atheistic writings of Dawkins and his ilk will find this book challenging. In order to really appreciate Mackie's thought, as well as his mistakes, one must have extensive knowledge of the history of theology and philosophy (with some chapters being exempt from this observation i.e., the Problem of Evil, Chapter 9), especially knowledge of modern and medieval eras. In terms of contemporary theists, Richard Swinburne and Alvin Plantinga are given special attention throughout this work, especially Swinburne. If you are not up to date on their writings, again you will feel as though there are holes in your understanding and find it difficult to grasp the significance of Mackie's objections to theism.

Regarding the actual content of the book, I found Mackie's aggressive approach combined with an admirable respect to be a refreshing mixture in an atheist writer. He admits that atheism has challenges in the areas of consciousness and that there are ways to evade his famous problem of evil arguments, should one modify his definitions of evil. Today's atheists are as dogmatic as many of their theistic opponents and this is frustrating for those searching for a constructive dialog on the issues. As a theist, I particularly enjoyed his treatment of William James and Blaise Pascal. In an era of fideism it was great to see myself aligned with a respectable thinker's responses to Pascal's wager and pragmatism. Although, I do wish Mackie would have more explicitly discussed James' pragmatism and its influence or lack thereof on his views of religious experience.

Compliments aside, I did find that Mackie doesn't appear to offer any positive arguments for atheism. He offers polemics, but these are not the same as demonstrations of naturalism philosophically. He definitely, in my humble opinion and I don't mean that sarcastically, fulfills the stereotype that atheism could not exist without theism. Meaning, that he doesn't seem to have any chapter that argues for naturalism as such. All of his arguments for atheism are completely dependent on arguments for theism. Second, while he does bring good arguments against James on religious experience, it is hard to see how his views on morality do not fall prey to the same arguments. Since Mackie believes in an evolutionary view of morality, and admits that this leads to relativism (chapter 14), it is hard to see how one will not just adopt a morality based solely on the pragmatic or damaging 'moral experiences.' In addition, one of the major objections to atheism is its lack of objectivity in morality and thus the toss of up for atheists to be nihilist or moralists. I don't think that Mackie avoids this, but he could if he adopted an Aristotelian view, or even as he described it, a Kantian view of morality. But, to his credit, Mackie does provide a sound rejection of communism and Marxist political theories as being too oppressive and overly optimistic. And admits that although he does not like the closed minded Catholics, they have done more to stand against oppressive regimes and communist governments than atheists have.

In summary, I wish that the popular atheists of today would recognize what it means to be respectable, courteous, and possess academic integrity rather than resorting to rhetoric and ad hominem arguments (insulting one's character to discredit their position). I think that this was an excellent book to read and helpful if you are looking for atheists who have truly thought through atheism and theism and reasoned to atheism. But given that his seems to end on a self-defeating conclusion(i.e. relativism), that he assumes naturalism as a viable philosophy without proposing arguments for it, that his position seems to ultimately reduce to nihilism, and finally that he concludes that atheism is merely more probable than theism, seems to be a bit of a leap of faith, especially for those who will believe atheism based on authority and not on demonstration.

Chris says

Good analysis of Ontological and Cosmological rationales. Teleological is there as well, but not as well thought out

sam says

A lot more boring than I had hoped. Rehashes old arguments you should have had in Phil 101. Perfect for insomnia.
