



Agnosticism: A Very Short Introduction

Robin Le Poidevin

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What is agnosticism? Is it a belief, or merely the absence of belief? Is it the result of too little thought about an issue--or too much? Who were the first to call themselves "agnostics"? Does agnosticism deserve serious consideration today? Can an agnostic live a religious life? What place should agnosticism have in education? These are just some of the questions that Robin Le Poidevin considers in this Very Short Introduction, as he sets the philosophical case for agnosticism and explores it as a historical and cultural phenomenon. Agnosticism emerges here as a much more sophisticated, and much more interesting, attitude than a simple failure to either commit to, or reject, religious belief. Le Poidevin challenges the common wisdom about agnosticism among both believers and atheists, and invites the reader to rethink their own position on the issues. Indeed, in arguing in favor of agnosticism as a respectable position to take, this stimulating and provocative guide takes issue on many points with the assertions of prominent atheists such as Richard Dawkins.

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Sam Hall says

Most importantly, the explanation that "agnostic" does not mean "weak." A healthy skepticism is required to create rational and independent conclusions. Worth noting: any belief, including theism, can (and usually is) on the spectrum of agnosticism. Many Christians in America are probably "Agnostic Theists" but would never agree, since the connotation of 'agnostic' makes them cringe far too hard for something that only does well to describe a critically thinking mind.

Alzbeta Hajkova says

Le Poidevin's goal in this book is to give a positive case for agnosticism as a worldview that one should adopt. I am not sure if he convinced me that agnosticism is the most reasonable position to adopt - the chapters often feel too broad, and this comes at the expense of developing some of the interesting arguments into more depth. Overall, this book is a useful introduction, but it is too shallow to meet its ambitious goal to convince the readers that agnosticism is a way to go.

Ringo says

I would say this is a great book talking about the fundamental question: whether the god exists? The evidences here are so great that it is worth reading for every person who has a religious question.

Adam says

Overall an engaging and clear overview of agnosticism. My favourite point in particular was that of the value and importance of uncertainty in life.

I. says

I'm glad that this short introduction series exists. I'd ordinarily never think to read a book on this topic but the length and promised accessibility won me over which is good as it helped me clarify my thoughts on the great atheism v agnosticism debate.

Marie says

"Uncertainty is good for you."

"There's probably no God. Now stop worrying and enjoy your life."

Micheal says

I always enjoy reading Robin Le Poidevin's works , whatever they are . he is consistent and clear on what he writes and makes it easy to follow the point using examples, parables and metaphors. With this book that is the second one I read by this author ;I always end up reading his books for some reason that people unfamiliar with the theory of large numbers would call it a coincidence. Agnostics, Deists and Pantheists these are the categories of books that I'll always enjoy reading and as an Igtheist (leaned to weak atheism) ,these different views are both a great deal of warnings for Atheists to not claim a stupid degree of certainty and of course it doesn't feel at all argumentative and antagonistic partly because the god question is still looked upon much much more logically than theism (which is mostly a collection of absurdities). While I disagree with the parts on atheism as the default position – at least I should say the majority one is absurd- I think Anthony Flew's essay on this subject suffices on that point. Now on Hume, as his mentioned by the author as an agnostic I have to simply differ on that point:

First: for theological lying , remember that Hume lived in a period of time that heresy could be problematic.

Second: another thing to say here is that the fear of losing company – as Hume told James Boswell that immortality is ridiculous and the reaction wasn't that much nice

Third: Theological Lying ; that's why Hume usually makes contradictory remarks in his writings ,however if you read between the lines that'll become much more clear

more about the objections I mentioned in chapter 11 of *Philosophy Bites Back*

The positive angle of this book was pretty much the warning of certainty and a light approach to suspension of judgment in the absence or in the need of additional data ,But as I noted I'm an Igtheist and my first problem that with agnosticism is that We can't know, that we can't know or we can know. In another words, I have to step back from this assumption even further until this is going to be justified (Maybe we can't know of god just yet). The problems are the assumptions -with respect to atheism and agnosticism- I had to take another step back to Igtheism ; We can't account god for causation until it's independently justified , we can't assume a supernatural until a set of sensible assumptions are made like how do you decide if we can't know anything about god? , what the hell does god mean (when the assumption are baseless,unjustified and contradictory?)

What I mean is If you claim such a thing then you're making a knowledge claim about the nature of god that he can't be known. As far as I'm concerned these are baseless assumptions in need of justifications, a set of tools for setting a competition between these cases of supernatural is something that the theist should put forward or he/she should dismantle the method (theology) and offer another one (philosophy maybe), we have no such tool and I don't think we would find it in theology ,that's why I love this book cause it brings in the case within Atheology ... that's it.

Natalie says

A little inaccessible

Having read 'Humanism: A Very Short Introduction', I was excited to read this book in the series. I did not enjoy this book nearly as much however, as I found myself bogged down in complicated theories and history, and paragraphs that I had to read again and again. I feel, as an introduction to the subject, it may have been more appropriate to have a more 'beginner friendly' feel, with more focus on plain English explanations and examples.

Alexey Vyskubov says

20% to the point, and 80% of (mostly anti-atheistic, unscientific) demagoguery.

Nicholas Bobbitt says

It's a solid, short look into the belief system.

Kathleen O'Neal says

This book explores the reasons for choosing agnosticism as a philosophy separate from theism or atheism. It's interesting for its willingness to take agnosticism on its own terms as opposed to treating it as simply a way station between theism and atheism.
