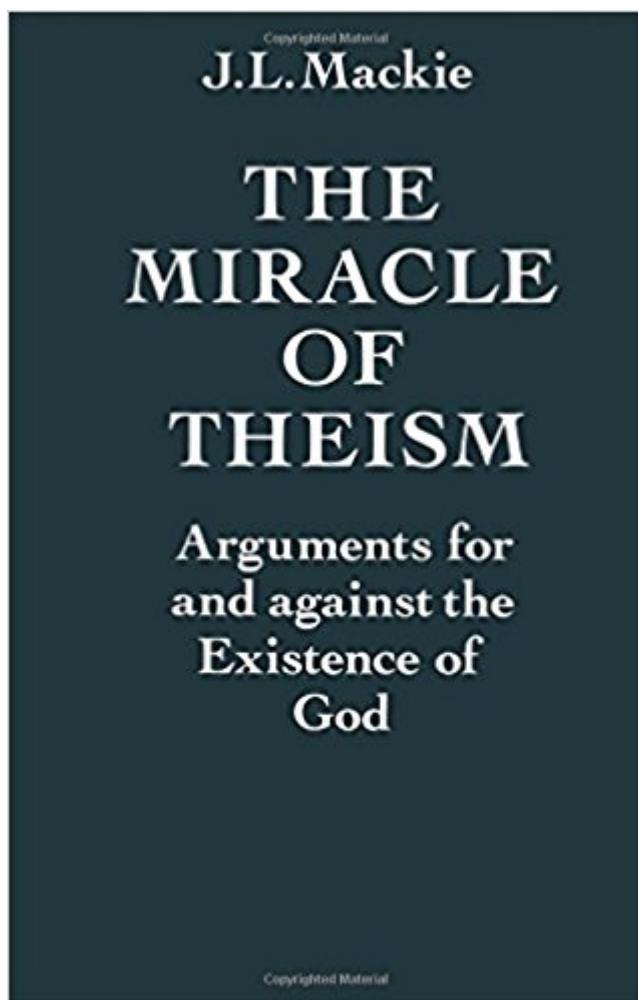


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The Miracle Of Theism: Arguments For And Against The Existence Of God



Synopsis

A Miracle of Theism

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Customer Reviews

J. L. Mackie is at University College, Oxford.

Mackie is a superstar in the field of philosophy of religion. If you're an atheist and your exposure to atheist literature is limited to Dawkins, Harris, Hitchens, Dennett, and the rest of the modern atheist movement, you're missing out. Drawing heavily on Hume's concept of "extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence", Mackie's "Miracle of Theism" is the most sophisticated argument against theism in history.

This book is by far my favorite among the throngs of books vying for your attention in the god debate. I found Mackie's writing style a bit dull and slow at times - but it was usually accessible to me as a layman. I think he did a tremendous job in taking ideas/arguments from key philosophers and distilling them in to a form that I can handle. This alone - regardless of your tendencies - makes the book worth reading. It is a shame that it costs so much - because it really is worth sharing. Mackie engages the substance of arguments, unlike many contemporary authors on this topic. He carefully evaluates and considers alternatives. I believe this approach is sadly unique among authors from both sides of the issue. I highly recommend this book.

This is truly a well-written piece of work. It addresses the classical theistic arguments in depth, and with some effort even a lay person can follow them. As an atheist, I have read many critiques of the cosmological, ontological, teleological, moral and argument from evil; however, they appear superficial in light of reading an entire chapter on the ontological argument alone. This volume examines critically various forms of each argument, from classical to modern treatments of each. On a topic so momentous as whether God exists or not, if you are truly going to decide it using reason, you should find this book a welcome addition to your library.

Mackie argues compellingly against traditional theism here. What I loved most, though, was the accessibility of his writing and his fairness and graciousness to the side of theism. He fully and carefully considers arguments in favor of theism before eloquently and soundly dismantling them. His arguments are fairly easy to follow (though someone without a philosophy background might find some difficulty given the nature of the content), logically rigorous and thorough. This is exceptional, first-rate philosophy. Atheists are foolish, and theists are cowardly, who do not read this work.

The Australian philosopher John Mackie, sadly now deceased, has always been one of my favorite philosophers, and when I heard from several religious people that this was in their view the best critique of religion, I decided to buy it at once. The book is indeed highly rewarding of its praise, for it is the most thorough philosophical (here as opposed to scientific) critique of all (mono)theist apologetics written so far. Unlike such recent anti-theist writers as Dawkins and Dennett, Mackie is extraordinarily charitable to the theists' claims, making sure to mention every possible argument in

their favor and using only counter-arguments that could not possibly be considered controversial or contingent on a given scientific theory, etc. In fact, he is much more charitable in some places than is really necessary; I would not have the same patience with the meaningless phrasings of Swinburne or Käfäng that Mackie has. In any case, Mackie diligently and cordially addresses each of the main issues surrounding theist apologetics: miracles, the ontological argument, the cosmological arguments (including Kalam), moral arguments, the issue of consciousness, free will, the argument from design, the argument from faith alone (Kierkegaard), the argument from popularity (William James), the problem of evil, the possibility of atheist morality, and so on. Mackie shows himself at his best here - an impressive array of arguments and decisive counterarguments, even against such modern superstars of apologetics like William Lane Craig and Alvin Plantinga, are dealt with in sequence with seemingly no effort at all. Not a single theist argument remains standing, and Mackie is sure to remind us at all times that not only is the burden of proof on the theists, but they also have to show their view more likely than not as well as more likely than naturalist explanations, if their view is to succeed. As Mackie makes abundantly clear, this is a bar far too high for any theology whatever to achieve. This book is strongly recommended for everyone interested in religion and philosophy, although the work is written at a high level and is not easy or 'popular' reading. To further dig into the issue of ethics and atheism, I would also recommend reading Mackie's defense of ethical anti-realism: *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*.

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