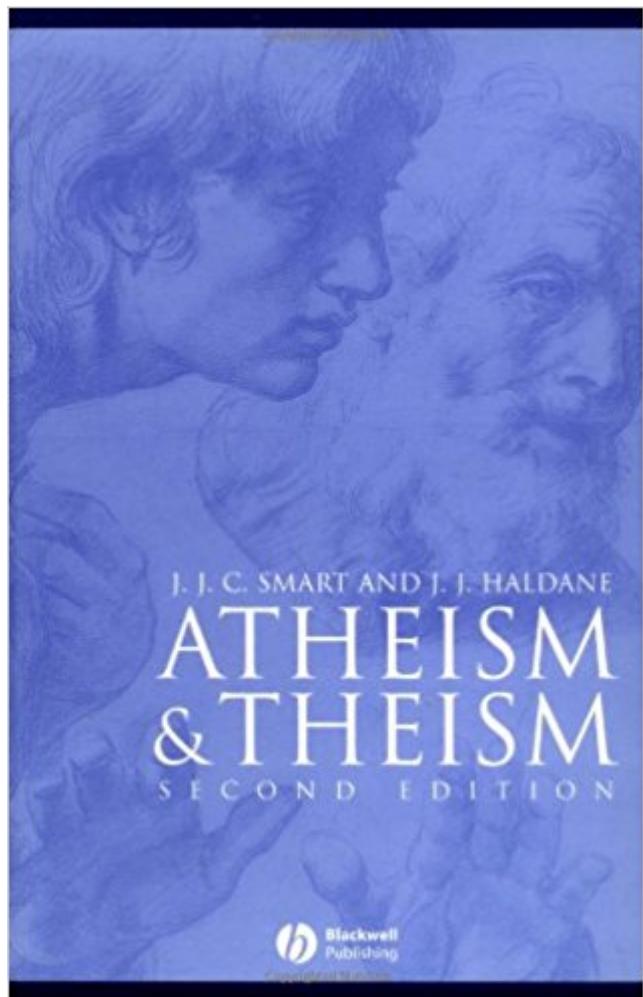


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# Atheism And Theism



## **Synopsis**

In this book two philosophers, each committed to unambiguous versions of belief and disbelief, debate the central issues of atheism and theism. Considers one of the oldest and most widely disputed philosophical questions: is there a God? Presents the atheism/theism issue in the form of philosophical debate between two highly regarded scholars, widely praised for the clarity and verve of their work. This second edition contains new essays by each philosopher, responding to criticisms and building on their previous work.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

This is a good introduction to many of the main arguments concerning theism and atheism. Smart and Haldane manage to cover most of the main issues while at the same time making original contributions to the debate. The book is especially helpful for giving clear account of the issues surrounding the "fine-tuning" argument due e.g., to Richard Swinburne. As they mention in the Introduction, neither Smart nor Haldane is a specialist precisely in philosophy of religion--both are well known especially for contributions to philosophy of mind--and this affects the book's overall approach. Smart begins with a defense of physicalism (the view that only objects whose existence is required by physical theory exist), arguing that this position should be accepted on the methodological ground that it is most compatible with the results of modern science. Smart also responds to various theistic arguments and defends a version of the "problem of evil" objection to theism. Haldane follows this with a series of arguments against materialist reductionism, taking the failure of reductionism to entail some kind of design and so theism. Haldane also defends versions

of the cosmological ("first cause") argument and attempts a solution to the problem of evil. Smart then briefly responds to Haldane and Haldane to Smart. For Smart, atheism is part of a general commitment to physicalism, whereas Haldane seems no less interested in defending a general antireductionism (e.g., with respect to intentionality) than in defending theism specifically. The book covers a great deal of ground and offers much food for thought. The downside to this is discussions of particular issues are sometimes sketchier than one would like.

John Jamieson Carswell Smart (1920-2012) was an Australian philosopher who was Emeritus Professor at Australian National University; he has written books such as *Philosophy and Scientific Realism* / by J. J. C. Smart, *Utilitarianism: For and Against*, etc. J.J. Haldane is professor of Philosophy at the University of St. Andrews; he has also written books such as *Possible Worlds*, etc. [Haldane is also "an orthodox Roman Catholic believing in such Credal doctrines as the Trinity, and... the divinity of Jesus Christ." Pg. 87] They note in the Introduction to this 1996 book, "The format of the exchange is straightforward. In chapter 1 Smart lays out his case for atheism; in chapter 2 Haldane develops his argument for theism; chapters 3 and 4 consist of replies... the volume ends with a brief afterward in which we reaffirm our commitment to metaphysical realism, be it that we have different views about what reality contains... our hope, however, is that you will be prompted to enter in and contribute to the continuing debate between atheism and theism." (Pg. 5) Smart criticizes the so-called "Free Will Defense" of the Problem of Evil: "I will not grant the theist the notion of libertarian free will, which seems to me to be an absurd one... I hold that any sensible notion of free will is compatible with determinism... Compatibilism [i.e.

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