

A Review of David Berlinski's *Devil's Delusion: Atheism and its Scientific Pretensions*

Alright, I finished this book a couple weeks ago and don't even have it in hand to review it as it is currently on loan to a friend. So I probably shouldn't attempt a full-on review of it, but I would like to say a few things about the book to hopefully entice others to pick it up and read it.

First, a little bit about the author: [David Berlinski](#) was born in 1942 (in the U.S.) to German-born refugees. He received his PhD. in philosophy from Princeton University and has since held teaching positions at Columbia, Rutgers and Stanford. He is currently a senior fellow with the [Discovery Institute](#) - the leading think-tank of the [Intelligent Design](#) movement. And this is where things get interesting - most fellows at the Discovery Institute are committed theists. Berlinski is not. He was raised in a Jewish home and trained in that system of belief. He no longer holds to that faith and now describes himself as a "Secular Jew."

A known critic of Darwinian Evolution, David Berlinski has been criticized by many of his academic peers for not toeing the line, so to speak. Having no intellectual residence with the atheist wing of the science department, and yet not embracing the main tenet of his fellows at Discovery (namely, a particular Deity), Berlinski is, to my mind, quintessentially objective, so much as *anyone* can be objective, in this field. To sum it all up, he seems to have no irons in the fire and no axe to grind.

So what of his new(ish) book, [The Devil's Delusion](#)??? Well, the book is not specifically an attack on Darwinism, or even a direct assault on atheism (keep in mind he himself is an agnostic). The main contention of his book seems rather what the subtitle suggests - that scientific inquiry while posited as in some way underlying a conclusion of atheism, is not warranted. Really this book is a response to a movement, rather than a system of thought. It's almost religious in nature...and that's the irony. Those with whom Berlinski is contending ([Dawkins](#), [Hitchens](#), [Harris](#) and [Dennet](#)) would no doubt claim to be the most irreligious men on the planet. But their passion for religious denial is simply none other than...well...religious.

Writing in a constant stream of quotable quotes, I've quipped to others that this book is one of those which, if you were prone to underlining or highlighting, you'd be better off finding a vat of highlighter ink and dipping the whole book in - it's really THAT good. At times the language gets pretty technical, and, to be honest, I would have had to take much longer to read it if I were to understand everything in it. But the basic concepts were understandable and that is what systems of thinking are built on - basic foundations that give rise to eventual conclusions. What I most liked about Berlinski's style was that he was clearly a logical thinker. But often a logical thinker is not always a very articulate person and hence, while they may be thinking and speaking the truth, are unable to be very convincing when relaying that truth to someone else. Berlinski has achieved both ends. He thinks with air-tight logic that just seems

to flow effortlessly into articulate prose. On page after page, he dismantles the scientific pretensions that are supposed to under-gird the [new atheist movement](#) and show the men that espouse those pretensions for what they are - grumpy men with a bone to pick.

If for no other reason than objectivity, I would recommend this book to anyone and everyone - Christians, non-Christians, Atheists, Agnostics. If our fundamental pursuit is truth (and *really is* truth, not just evidence-picking to promote our presuppositions) then what better type of author than one who stands firmly in the middle ground - unconvinced by either side of the debate? I've told people before that I believe David Berlinski is the man the new atheist movement wishes did not exist. It's easy to pick on a devout Jew or Christian and say "you're spiritual goggles don't allow you to see clearly." But when the man is wearing no goggles at all, that mode of attack is not left open to them. So, I say again, if for no other reason than to gain a mediating view of these issues, please read the book. I'm sure you'll be stretched, challenged, impressed and enriched from having done so.