



This Incredible Need to Believe (European Perspectives: A Series in Social Thought and Cultural Criticism)

By Julia Kristeva

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"Unlike Freud, I do not claim that religion is just an illusion and a source of neurosis. The time has come to recognize, without being afraid of 'frightening' either the faithful or the agnostics, that the history of Christianity prepared the world for humanism."

So writes Julia Kristeva in this provocative work, which skillfully upends our entrenched ideas about religion, belief, and the thought and work of a renowned psychoanalyst and critic. With dialogue and essay, Kristeva analyzes our "incredible need to believe"--the inexorable push toward faith that, for Kristeva, lies at the heart of the psyche and the history of society. Examining the lives, theories, and convictions of Saint Teresa of Avila, Sigmund Freud, Donald Winnicott, Hannah Arendt, and other individuals, she investigates the intersection between the desire for God and the shadowy zone in which belief resides.

Kristeva suggests that human beings are formed by their need to believe, beginning with our first attempts at speech and following through to our adolescent search for identity and meaning. Kristeva then applies her insight to contemporary religious clashes and the plight of immigrant populations, especially those of Islamic origin. Even if we no longer have faith in God, Kristeva argues, we must believe in human destiny and creative possibility. Reclaiming Christianity's openness to self-questioning and the search for knowledge, Kristeva urges a "new kind of politics," one that restores the integrity of the human community.

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This Incredible Need to Believe (European Perspectives: A Series in Social Thought and Cultural Criticism) By Julia Kristeva Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #2194987 in Books
- Published on: 2009-10-19
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.30" h x .70" w x 5.60" l, .70 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 136 pages

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Kristeva (*Powers of Horror*) delivers a focused and insightful discussion of religious belief. With material culled from various interviews, articles and lectures, the book is less a unified argument than a sprawling analysis of religion in major psychological and philosophical literature (e.g., Freud, Arendt, Winnicott), fiction (e.g., Proust) and in private life (Kristeva makes wonderful use of Saint Teresa of Avila's writings) underscored by her claim that sharable knowledge of the inner religious experience is possible and could develop into an important field of discourse. Kristeva provides neither an attack on nor a support of religious belief; her interest is in drawing other disciplines into the discussion. She uses psychoanalytic techniques to comprehend religious experience, the clash of religions, notions of genius, theories of suffering and sexuality and the debt modern humanism owes to Christianity's emphasis on self-questioning. Compelling and remarkable for its staunch unwillingness to take sides, this book sets forth Kristeva's most sustained treatment of religion in a format that will interest both scholars and anyone looking for an accessible introduction to her methods and preoccupations. (*Oct.*)

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Review

Nowhere else does Julia Kristeva provide such a sustained treatment of her views on religion. Kristeva scholars and students will find this book an indispensable text.

(Noelle McAfee, George Mason University)

A focused and insightful discussion of religious belief... compelling and remarkable.

(*Publishers Weekly*)

In this book, Julia Kristeva analyzes various pressing issues of our time, including the crisis in the Middle East, terrorism, depression, anorexia, and addiction, along with a general crisis of meaning. With her customary brilliance, she argues that belief and faith make it possible to speak but also to question. Provocatively, she describes a vein of Christianity and Catholicism that open up rather than close down that infinite questioning, which she maintains is necessary to delay the death drive. Here, Kristeva uses her incisive psychoanalytic acumen to diagnose the 'culture wars' and the 'clash of religions' that threaten world peace.

(Kelly Oliver, Vanderbilt University, and editor of *The Portable Kristeva*)

A helpful commentary and introduction to Kristeva's major work over the last two decades... recommended.

(*Choice*)

Readers... will be exposed to an impressive... crystallization of [Kristeva's] religious and psychoanalytic

thought.

(Elaine P. Zicker *Bryn Mawr Review of Comparative Literature*)

About the Author

Julia Kristeva is professor of linguistics at the Université de Paris VII and the author of many acclaimed works and novels, including *Murder in Byzantium*, *Strangers to Ourselves*, *New Maladies of the Soul*, *Time and Sense*, *Hannah Arendt*, and *Melanie Klein*. She is the recipient of the Hannah Arendt Prize for Political Thought and the Holberg International Memorial Prize.

Beverly Bie Brahic is a translator and poet living in Paris and Stanford, California. In addition to the writing of Kristeva, she has translated the works of Hélène Cixous, Jacques Derrida, and Francis Ponge.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Celia Robertson:

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Juan Higgins:

Playing with family in a park, coming to see the marine world or hanging out with close friends is thing that usually you have done when you have spare time, and then why you don't try thing that really opposite from that. 1 activity that make you not sensation tired but still relaxing, trilling like on roller coaster you already been ride on and with addition info. Even you love *This Incredible Need to Believe (European Perspectives: A Series in Social Thought and Cultural Criticism)*, it is possible to enjoy both. It is great combination right, you still would like to miss it? What kind of hangout type is it? Oh occur its mind hangout fellas. What? Still don't understand it, oh come on its referred to as reading friends.

Maurice Henkel:

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