

AFTER THE NEW ATHEIST DEBATE

The first decade of the twenty-first century saw a number of best-selling books which not only challenged the existence of god, but claimed that religious faith was dangerous and immoral. The New Atheists, as writers such as Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, Sam Harris, and Daniel Dennett have become known, sparked a vicious debate over religion's place in modern society.

In *After the New Atheist Debate*, Phil Ryan offers both an elegant summary of this controversy and a path out of the cul-de-sac that this argument has become. Drawing on the social sciences, philosophy, and theology, Ryan examines the claims of the New Atheists and of their various religious and secular opponents and finds both sides wanting.

Rather than the mutual demonization that marks the New Atheist debate, Ryan argues that modern society needs respectful ethical dialogue in which citizens present their points of view and seek to understand the positions of others. Lucidly written and clearly argued, *After the New Atheist Debate* is a book that brings welcome clarity and a solid path to the often contentious conversation about religion in the public sphere.

PHIL RYAN is an associate professor in the School of Public Policy and Administration at Carleton University. His most recent book, *Multicultiphobia*, was shortlisted for the Canada Prize in the Social Sciences in 2011.

UTP Insights

UTP Insights is an innovative collection of brief books offering accessible introductions to the ideas that shape our world. Each volume in the series focuses on a contemporary issue, offering a fresh perspective anchored in contemporary scholarship. Spanning a broad range of disciplines in the social sciences and humanities, the books in the UTP Insights series will set the agenda for public discourse and debate, as well as provide valuable resources for students and instructors.

BOOKS IN THE SERIES

- Paul M. Evans, *Engaging China: Myth, Aspiration, and Strategy in Canadian Policy from Trudeau to Harper*
- Phil Ryan, *After the New Atheist Debate*

AFTER THE NEW ATHEIST DEBATE

Phil Ryan

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO PRESS
Toronto Buffalo London

© University of Toronto Press 2014
Toronto Buffalo London
www.utppublishing.com
Printed in the U.S.A.

ISBN 978-1-4426-4952-1 (cloth)
ISBN 978-1-4426-2687-4 (paper)



Printed on acid-free, 100% post-consumer recycled paper with vegetable-based inks.

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Ryan, Phil, author
After the new atheist debate/Phil Ryan.

(UTP insights)

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 978-1-4426-4952-1 (bound). – ISBN 978-1-4426-2687-4 (pbk.)

1. Atheism. 2. Christianity and atheism. I. Title. II. Series: UTP insights

BL2747.3.R93 2014

211'.8

C2014-905021-6

University of Toronto Press acknowledges the financial assistance to its publishing program of the Canada Council for the Arts and the Ontario Arts Council, an agency of the Government of Ontario.



Canada Council
for the Arts

Conseil des Arts
du Canada



ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL
CONSEIL DES ARTS DE L'ONTARIO

an Ontario government agency
un organisme du gouvernement de l'Ontario

University of Toronto Press acknowledges the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Canada Book Fund for its publishing activities.

For John and Aidan,

My philosophers-in-residence

This page intentionally left blank

Much political debate betrays the marks of warfare. It consists in rallying the troops and intimidating the other side, which must now increase its efforts or back down. In all this one may find the thought that to have character is to have firm convictions and be ready to proclaim them defiantly to others. To be is to confront.

John Rawls

This page intentionally left blank