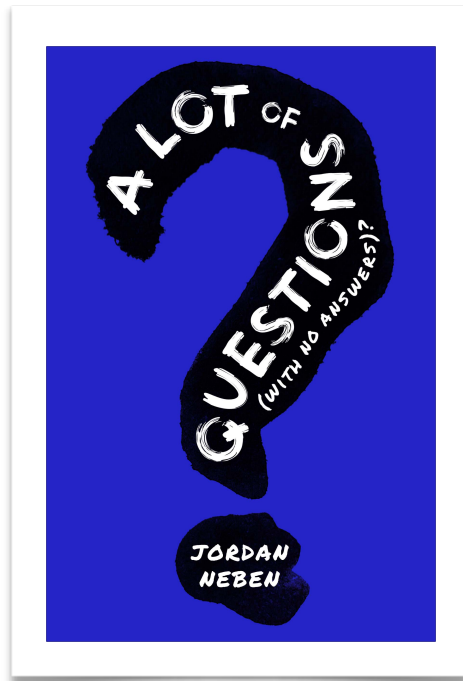




“Book Review: *A Lot of Questions*”

Reviewed by Jadidsa Perez



***A Lot of Questions* illuminates the darkest corners of humanity with humor and intelligence**

Jordan Neben’s debut is filled with invigorating food for thought. This nonfiction work broaches many questions about religion, philosophy, human nature, imperialism, racial segregation, and a number of other quandaries that have vexed humanity for epochs.

The book is split into six essays with specific topics that all reflect on the antecedent and contemporary aspects of human behavior. The overall aim of the piece is to leave the



reader inquiring into their own experiences, interrogating aspects of their own life, country, and beliefs.

The essays touch on issues that may be difficult to question for more than one significant reason. The first two essays, in fact, center on pietism and religious institutions. The remaining essays focus on the ways human empathy can be transactional and contingent upon proximity, the worship of controversial historical figures, colonialism, the hypocrisy of nationalism, and more.

Each section has a conclusion that is not meant to provide a clear answer to these questions or offer a convincing call to action, but instead to instigate deliberation on systems that are often considered sanctimonious. With all of this, I had a number of expectations going in; all of which *A lot of Questions* transcended.

Neben creates one of the strongest debuts I've read in a while. *A Lot of Questions* does not simply look at the surface of ideas; it plunges deep into the waters of human behavior. The prose is clever, neat, and most importantly, accessible. Neben clearly explains any concept that is introduced and creates analogies that are easy to understand.

The book does not hone in on only one perspective. Instead, it looks at many different angles. As Neben himself admits, humans are extremely complex, thus history itself is almost a labyrinth.

By providing different viewpoints of extreme but pervasive situations such as war, the reader is able to encounter viewpoints that they may not have considered previously. The reader is asked to think critically, the ultimate goal of the book.

The stand-out essay is "Ruminations on Religion." This first of the six essays leaves a lasting impression. Neben contrives stories of cults that have worshiped televisions, expelled foreigners, and had ritualistic sacrifices. While initially the stories may seem far-



fetches, Neben shows the ways in which the stories are eerily similar to how we function today.

A Lot of Questions is an incredible read—emotionally intense but extremely important. I eagerly await Neben's future works.