

36 Arguments for the Existence of God by Rebecca Goldstein.

Atlantic Books 2010.

At first glance, 36 Arguments for the Existence of God might appear to be a theological work, and in part it is, though in a very lateral way! Rebecca Goldstein is an eminent American academic and philosopher, as well as a novelist, and her writing makes few intellectual compromises, demanding her reader rise to her level; but the exercise is so rewarding that the challenge contained therein is impossible to resent.

36 Arguments for the Existence of God is a novel about many things; about the price of unexpected success, in this case for Professor Cass Seltzer, whose book *The Varieties of Religious Illusion* becomes something of a literary phenomenon; about professional jealousy and the challenge it poses for two ambitious academics; about university politics and shameful narcissists and poseurs, and about the tension between the heart and the head, between one's dreams and obligations.

The 36 chapters in the book are each pinned to one of the eponymous arguments for the existence of God, and they are further discussed, hilariously and thought-provokingly, in an appendix at the end.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book, and would love to know in which of the female characters the author sees most echoes of herself!

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh