

The Scale of Doubt Quiz*

Circle the choice that most closely represents your response to the questions below:

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|-----|----|-------------|--|
| Yes | No | Not
Sure | 1. Do you believe that a particular religious tradition holds accurate knowledge of the ultimate nature of reality and the purpose of human life? |
| Yes | No | Not
Sure | 2. Do you believe that some thinking being consciously make the universe? |
| Yes | No | Not
Sure | 3. Is there an identifiable force coursing through the universe, holding it together, or uniting all life-forms? |
| Yes | No | Not
Sure | 4. Could prayer be in any way effective, that is, do you believe that such a being or force (as posited above) could ever be responsive to your thoughts or words? |
| Yes | No | Not
Sure | 5. Do you believe this being or force can think or speak? |
| Yes | No | Not
Sure | 6. Do you believe this being has a memory or can make plans? |
| Yes | No | Not
Sure | 7. Does this force sometimes take a human form? |
| Yes | No | Not
Sure | 8. Do you believe that the thinking part or animating force of a human being continues to exist after the body has died? |
| Yes | No | Not
Sure | 9. Do you believe that any part of a human being survives after death, elsewhere or here on earth? |
| Yes | No | Not
Sure | 10. Do you believe that feelings about things should be admitted as evidence in establishing reality? |
| Yes | No | Not
Sure | 11. Do you believe that love and inner feelings or of morality suggest that there is a world beyond that of biology, social patterns, and accident—a realm of higher meaning? |
| Yes | No | Not
Sure | 12. Do you believe that the world is not completely knowable by science? |
| Yes | No | Not
Sure | 13. If someone were to say, “The universe is nothing but an accidental pile of stuff, jostling around with no rhyme or reason, and all life on earth but a tiny, utterly inconsequential speck of nothing, in a corner of space, existing in the blink of an eye never to judged, noticed, or remembered,” would you say, “No that’s going a bit far, that’s a bit wrongheaded?” |

On completing the quiz turn to the other side....

***Note:** *The Scale of Doubt Quiz* comes from the book, *Doubt: A History*, by Jennifer Michael Hecht (who, according to the book jacket, “is an accomplished historian and an award-winning poet”). The quiz is her attempt, early in the book, to “both vitalize the issues by pulling them apart a bit and to help situate readers among their peers.” This quiz should in no way be considered a tested or valid social science instrument. Rather, approach it here in much the same spirit as Hecht intends, to introduce some dimensions of human experience relevant to the sociology of religion and to provide a prompt and an opportunity for self-reflection.

Here is how Hecht suggests you evaluate your responses:

“If you answered No to all these questions, you’re a hard-core atheist and of a certain variety: a rationalist materialist. If you said No to the first seven, but then had a few Yes answers, you’re still an atheist, but you may have what I will call a pious relationship to the universe. If your answers to the first seven questions contained at least two Not Sure answers, you’re an agnostic, though not of the materialist variety. If you answered Yes to nine or more, you are a believer. *But more that providing titles for various states of mind, the questions above may serve to demonstrate common clusters of opinion.*”
[Instructor’s emphasis.]

A Further Note:

The terminology regarding these various beliefs can be somewhat confusing. Michael Shermer, author of *How We Believe: Science, Skepticism, and the Search for God*, has suggested as a clarification the following terms and definitions:

- *Theist*: one who believes in a deity or deities.
- *Agnostic*: one who holds that the question of the existence of a deity or deities presents an insoluble problem.
- *Nontheist*: (most commonly referred to as an atheist): one who believes there is no deity or deities.

Your Thoughts, Reactions, Reflections