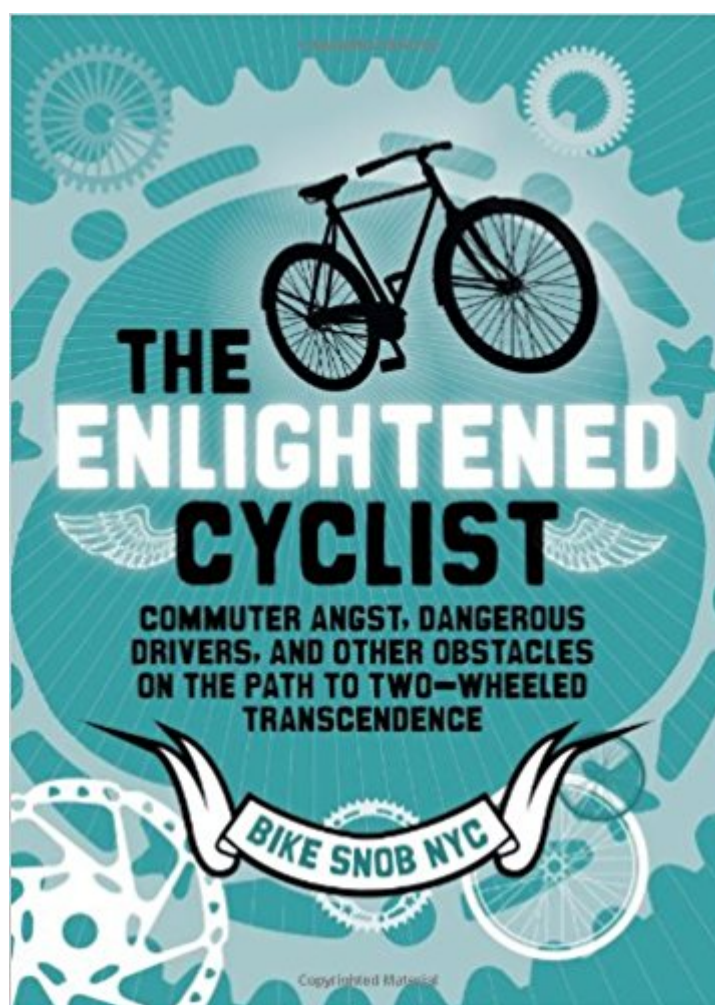


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# The Enlightened Cyclist: Commuter Angst, Dangerous Drivers, And Other Obstacles On The Path To Two-Wheeled Trancendence



## Synopsis

The joys of commuting by bike attract scores of new converts every year. But as fresh-faced cyclists fill the roads, they also encounter their share of frustrations—careless drivers, wide-flung car doors, zoned-out pedestrians, and aggressive fellow cyclists, to name a few. In this follow-up to the best-selling *Bike Snob*, *BikeSnobNYC* takes on the trials and triumphs of bike commuting with snark, humor, and enthusiasm, asking the question: If we become better commuters, will that make us better people? From the deadly sins of biking to tactics for dealing with cars, pedestrians, and other cyclists, this primer on bike travel is a must-read for cyclists new and seasoned alike.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I am a huge fan of Bike Snob's blog and loved his first book and so eagerly looked forward to this one. It is the only physical book (as opposed to Kindle edition) I purchased this year because I wanted this book to sit on my bookshelf. Sadly, I was very disappointed. There is nothing wrong with this book, I certainly wasn't offended by it, but it just wasn't funny. It was so not funny that about half way through I stopped and wondered if I had gotten it wrong, if in fact it was supposed to be a serious book. Unfortunately, there simply isn't enough substance to support a serious book. By all means, read Bike Snob's blog and buy his first book. I suggest skipping this one and hoping the next is better.

This is a quite clever book. It's written in an easy, conversational style, like you'd expect to see in a less formal format. I liked that, especially when dealing with the subject matter. More importantly, I

felt it a fair discussion of cycling as \*a\* mode of transport. Instead of being rah-rah pro cycling all the time, or boo cars, the author takes a pragmatic view - bicycles, cars, walking, buses, etc., are all viable alternative tools for the right job. He also discusses the common pitfalls bikers run into- from people following too close, to salmoming, to some idiot drivers. Overall, it's written by a biker, for a bike loving crowd. I did really appreciate the fair-minded approach, and I think even non-cyclists would get something from reading this book - a better understanding of cycling and the particular pitfalls that come with it.

I wanted to like this book. I'm a novice cyclist who enjoys using a bike for commutes, when permissible, and I also enjoy books that are funny and can intelligently rip into a culture. However, "The Enlightened Cyclist" fails. Instead of anything funny, smart, or even useful, this book is mainly just a writer trying to see how many gags he can yank out of groups of people. A few pokes at cycling stereotypes? Fine. But the author goes overboard with that to the point I felt sorry for each and every group, and when that's done he has the audacity to declare religion false, as if that has anything to do with the point of this book. Frankly, I'm left with the feeling that I should be considered stupid for being spiritual, interested in the environment, or even a bike owner. There's a fine line between being funny and intelligently honest and just being plain mean. The writing itself seems to depend on being snappy. Yes, the author is a fine writer who can certainly turn a phrase, but his problem is that he ultimately has nothing to say. Thirty pages in and I'm already sick of his complaints and advice and their heaping dose of "Look how funny I can be!" The book was ultimately disappointing, and I'm pretty sure I got a headache from just trying to read it. This might be ultimately for the cycling cult, but I found it a waste of time.

The way I figure it, there are likely two types of individual considering purchasing this book: Those who are already aware of Bike Snob NYC's writing and those who are not but are looking for some cycling-related literature. To that end, familiarizing one's self with the Snob's plethora of material is as simple as a web search of his name as his meteoric rise to fame is the direct result of a long-running blog on the subject of bicycle commuting (and here you thought he just had a cool name). I cannot confess prior fandom of Mr. Eben (Bike Snob NYC) Weiss' work though certainly found it entertaining enough in the multitude of periodicals I frequent that run his editorials (among them Time, Outside and Bicycling). As editor of a mountain bike publication myself, commuting through the cityscape obviously isn't my main concern on keeping up with the cycling scene. However, since decent bike-related literature is few and far between, I figured I would give The

Enlightened Cyclist a chance. As one might expect after browsing Bike Snob's blog, the book is a first-person affair, written in Weiss' trademarked sardonic tone. While some may find his sarcasm a bit too overdone by the conclusion of the book's 220-pages, I personally felt as though the author allows his humanity to shine through a bit more persuasively here than in many of his columns/ blog posts. Without giving up too much of the structure/ plot, The Enlightened Cyclist is designed to spoof a religious tome in its construction. In fact, as the name of the book suggests, the goal here is to present a path to enlightenment as seen entirely from the perspective of a New York City commuter. Sufficient proof of the "inspiration" here can be found right on the Table of Contents page with chapters breaking down into Books: Revelation, Genesis, Leviticus Now, Transcendence and so on. Individuals who may not find the comparison of religious/ biblical passage to the world of the commuting bicyclist all that amusing may not wish to apply but if it's any consolation, Snob avoids coming off as malevolent throughout most of his prose here. Rather, he picks away through a succession of astute (sometimes borderline genius) observations gathered from years of cycling through NYC and slaps them into lessons so backhanded, it's rather difficult for even the most uptight among us to become offended. Occasionally the continual sarcasm grows a tad bit tiresome (oftentimes reminding me of a Dave Barry overload) but the Snob manages to reel these moments in by slipping some genuinely funny pop-culture references in so smoothly as to border on subliminal. Nothing's safe either: Microsoft, Brad Pitt, Billy Joel, the iPhone, Harry Potter, Bono... Weiss makes no apologies for spicing up his prose with endless cultural pokes and more than a few of them really work. I found the sections of the book where the author moves away from the pious and cultural bits and instead just pokes fun of the bicycling lifestyle (like when he compares commuter behavior to marine life) to be some of the finer moments of the whole work. I suppose it would be far easier to dismiss this whole work as pure silliness if not for one small facet contained within: Namely Bike Snob reveals a bit too much of himself in the beginning of the piece. Not that I'm complaining mind you, his shtick is what it is and there's plenty of it here; rather for a brief few moments the reader can almost be convinced they are entering into something so much more as Snob covers the tragic events of 9/11 from a perspective that even the media has yet to exploit. It becomes clear that had he wished to, Mr. Weiss could have delivered a heartfelt (yet still humorous) account of both commuting by bicycle and NYC life in general without relying upon the gimmick of poking fun of sacred texts. In the middle of the book the gimmick starts to feel a little stretched but then in his acknowledgements at the end, Snob manages to remind that there's more to the man than just cultural jabs and sarcastic wit. In all, The Enlightened Cyclist is certainly an enjoyable, airy read- its small form hardcover binding is undeniably charming and the writing flows with just enough

lightheartedness to make grabbing "just one more chapter" before setting the book down a definite reality. However, and as the Snob himself would surely concur, the presentation is certainly not for everyone. While his material was undeniably crafted in jest, individuals overly sensitive about religion being used in such a context may not appreciate the author's ambitions here. Considering this is Weiss' second book published through Chronicle Books, checking out his first (*Bike Snob: Systematically and Mercilessly Realigning the World of Cycling*) may be a better idea for such folks. If you're still on the fence with picking up either, hitting up his blog is a free way to get your fill of Bike Snobbery- NYC style.

I read BikeSnobNYC's first book and LOVED IT. Hilarious in a way that only other cyclists really understand. I am also a year-round bike commuter, so I couldn't wait to dive into this book. Like the title says, it was an OK read that unfortunately didn't have me laughing out loud as much as with his first book. As usual, he's pretty much spot on in his assessments of cycling, cyclist behavior and attitude, bike commuting, automobiles, and scorn of hipsters. It's just that his first book was funnier and more entertaining.

I read BikeSnobNYC's other (self-titled) book first, and found it wonderful and funny. I picked up this book expecting more of the same. The content was good if a bit dull at times, and it was still funny from time to time, but I didn't find it nearly as engaging as the other book. A good read, but not necessarily a great one.

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