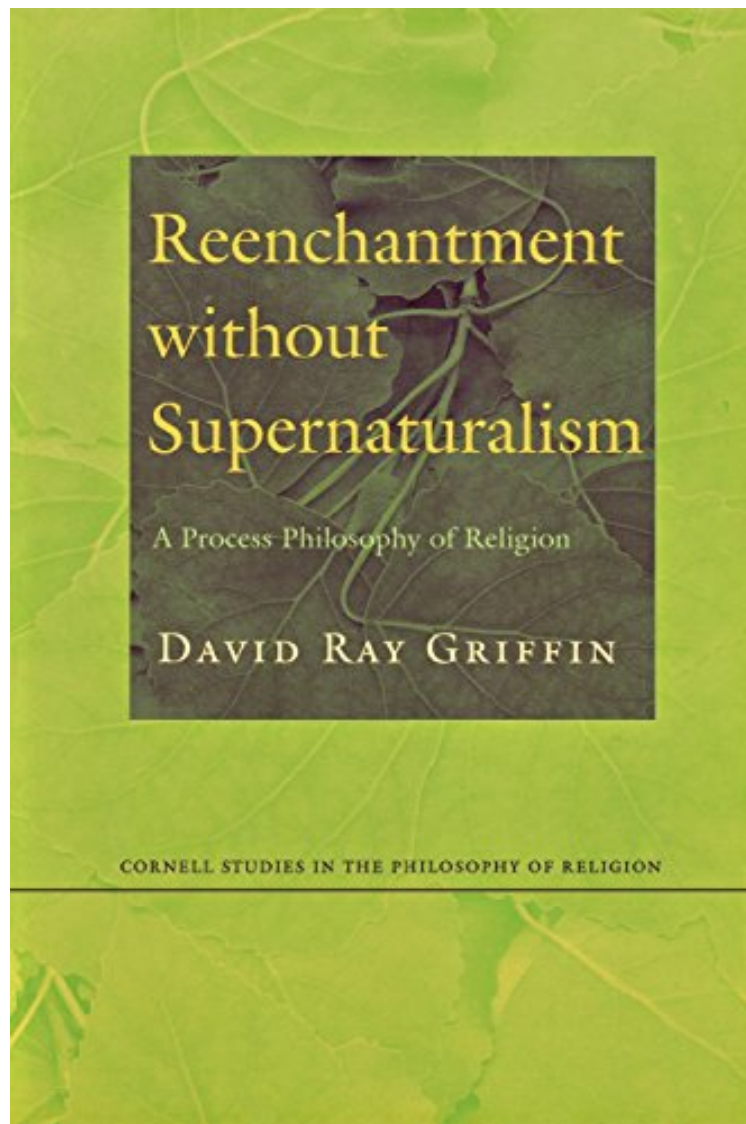


[Download free ebook] Reenchantment without Supernaturalism: A Process Philosophy of Religion (Cornell Studies in the Philosophy of Religion)

Reenchantment without Supernaturalism: A Process Philosophy of Religion (Cornell Studies in the Philosophy of Religion)

David Ray Griffin

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David Ray Griffin : Reenchantment without Supernaturalism: A Process Philosophy of Religion (Cornell Studies in the Philosophy of Religion) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Reenchantment without Supernaturalism: A Process Philosophy of Religion (Cornell Studies in the Philosophy of Religion):

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Fantastic, Challenging Work on Process Philosophy By J.W. Wartick

Reenchantment Without Supernaturalism: A Process Philosophy of Religion by David Ray Griffin (hereafter RWS) is a vast work. because of the nature of this book—namely, its place as, essentially, an outlining and explication of a religion—I feel it is necessary to continue discussion of this work past the present review. I'll be doing a series on Process Philosophy. RWS covers an incredibly broad range of topics. Summing up a work of this scope would take too much space, so I'll give only a brief outline. The central doctrines of Process Philosophy are (quoted at length):

- 1) "The integration of moral, aesthetic, and religious intuitions with the most general doctrines of the sciences into a self-consistent worldview as one of the central tasks of philosophy in our time" (5)
- 2) "Hard-core commonsense notions as the ultimate test of the adequacy of a philosophical position" (5)
- 3) "Whitehead's nonsensationist doctrine of perception, according to which sensory perception is a secondary mode of perception, being derivative from a more nonsensory `prehension'" (5)
- 4) "Panexperientialism with organizational duality, according to which all the true individuals... have at least some iota of experience and spontaneity (self-determination)" (6)
- 5) "The doctrine that all enduring individuals are serially ordered societies of momentary `occasions of experience'" (6)
- 6) "[A]ll actual entities have internal as well as external relations" (6)
- 7) "[N]aturalistic theism, according to which a Divine Actuality acts variably but never supernaturally in the world" (6)
- 8) "Doubly Dipolar Theism" (7)
- 9) "The provision of cosmological support for the ideals needed by contemporary civilization as one of the chief purposes of philosophy in our time" (7)
- 10) "A distinction between verbal statements (sentences) and propositions and between both of these and propositional feelings" (7)

Whew! And that is just the introduction of a 425 page work! These doctrines I'll let speak for themselves, but it is immediately clear that Process Philosophy can be identified as a religion, either on its own, or in conjunction with another religion of the world. These doctrines are enough to support a robust naturalistic theism which differs in many ways from classical theism. Process Philosophy affirms that sense experience is not primary (see esp. 55). It also rejects both physicalism and dualism, calling instead for panexperientialism, which is the idea that everything in the universe—down to the smallest entity, has experience of some sort. In other words, the basic units of "stuff" in our universe are neither ideal (as in some forms of dualism) or material (as in materialism and other forms of dualism), but experiential (94ff).

God, on Process Philosophy, is in the world. It is pantheistic as opposed to theistic or pantheistic. God is not supernatural, but is rather a necessary part of the universe (131ff). God created the world not ex nihilo, but out of chaos, which Griffin argues is the correct reading of the Hebrew Scriptures, particularly Genesis (I disagree strongly here, for it seems like there is much evidence for the use of bara to refer to creation ex nihilo). I can't resist veering off the summary path here and critiquing this view specifically. The problem with affirming that God created the world out of some existent finite entities (see 216) is that that leaves both God and these finite entities with no explanation for their existence. God, argues Griffin, exists necessarily, but there is no reason I could find given for this. Furthermore, there is absolutely no explanation of how these other finite entities came into being. It seems as though they are asserted to simply exist forever, but this runs into the many problems with an infinite past. I simply don't think Griffin has adequately defended this doctrine of Process Philosophy, and most of it hinges around this idea. I'll get into this more as I continue my series, however.

Not only that, but Process Philosophy upholds the idea that there are two distinct "ultimate realities" in our universe; namely, a personal deity, and an impersonal, "creativity". This is one of the more affirmations of Process Philosophy: that all major religions are true in a qualified sense (247ff). In affirming that all major religions are in some sense true, Process Philosophy also argues that they must all learn from each other to work towards a religion that more adequately reflects reality (more on this later in the series). Process Philosophy affirms the possibility of an afterlife, but doesn't seem to take it as terribly likely (204ff). Furthermore, it asserts that morality can be done from the point of an "ideal observer", namely, God (314-316). Thus, Process Philosophy is a religion distinct from the others I have read about in some very important ways. The affirmation of both naturalistic (but not atheistic) science and theism is very interesting. Furthermore, Process Philosophy, according to Griffin, can be allies with the major religions of the world. He favors Christianity as walking hand-in-hand with this philosophy. I personally don't think this is a live option for most Christian theists, however, because it involves rejection of, among other things: creation ex nihilo, omnipotence in the traditional sense, the ability of God to interfere with nature, the primacy of Christ in world religions, the life after death (though, as above, Griffin says this is possible)... furthermore, it means Christians must accept, among other things: the idea that Christianity is true, but only in some sense compared to to other religions, that God is only the arranger, not the creator (in the traditional sense) of the world, an entirely different ultimate reality that is similar to the impersonal, immutable Brahma as existing alongside of and coequal to God. So what can the Christian take from RWS? That is a question that will take me some time to think about and digest. I hope the further posts in this series will help outline this more. I think there are valuable insights in what Griffin has to say, but it is more probable, in my opinion, that the Christian will find, not a "Reenchantment" so much as a chance to sharpen their philosophical blades against arguments which undermine the central tenants of the faith. That said, RWS is a fantastic read. Griffin covers a simply massive range of topics with clarity from the perspective of Process Philosophy. The book is a page-turner. Like a fantastic novel, it exposes new ideas and forces the intellect to work in new ways. It is a work that essentially outlines the creeds of a different religion, albeit a religion which is designed to go hand-in-hand with others. It touches on nearly every area of

philosophy of religion, from religious language to natural theology. I highly recommend this book. It is one of my favorites. My only regret is that I find it so off the mark. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Great exposition of process philosophy and process theism. By Ellen H. Tate. Not an easy read, if you wonder whether there can be a rational belief in a teleology for the universe, then this book will help you. 4 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Review of Reenchantment without Supernaturalism by D. R. Griffen. By Dale Gillette. Review of Reenchantment without Supernaturalism by D. R. Griffen. The title of this very interesting book needs a bit of explanation. In addition to the phrase "without supernaturalism," in the title of his book Reenchantment without Supernaturalism, Griffen also uses the word "Reenchantment" in ways we will probably not find in the local shopping mall. Reenchantment implies a "restoration of meaning" that is needed because of the "disenchantment" brought about by the world that no longer contains meaning or "normative values around which human beings should orient their lives." Since "supernaturalism" is central to his thesis, he very carefully lays out its definition and shows that slight shadings of meaning can make huge differences in theological consequences. David R. Griffen is a leading, current-day "Process Philosopher." Process Philosophy was developed by the philosophers Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947) and Charles Hartshorne (1897-2000). Griffen gives a definition of the word "supernaturalism" such that "without supernaturalism" implies a virtual impossibility for god to interfere with the freedom of that which god created. Griffen's use of the phrase "lack of supernaturalism" [i.e. without supernaturalism] expresses the condition of freedom [from supernatural influences] of created beings, i.e., that god cannot interfere with freedom of people. This freedom of created beings [for example, people] was previously expressed by Charles Hartshorne to be such that divine influence could "not possibly suppress freedom in the recipient." [Hartshorne and Reese, 1953, page 275.] The phrase "lack of supernaturalism" thus implies that god cannot interfere with freedom of people. For many people, there is a need for some sort of "Reenchantment of the world" that is fulfilled by dualism [the doctrine of separation of created beings from the divine being]. For Griffen, dualism is a false and weak attempt to obtain a close relationship with the divine. Additionally, "the endurance of dualism has made conditions favorable for reductionism." One form of reductionism -- the hypothesis that only matter exists -- has failed to provide human beings with needed support to live in the world. Griffen has made an attempt to provide a framework for Reenchantment [restoration of meaning and normative values] in a world without supernaturalism [that is, a world where god is assumed to never change laws of physics]. [Actually, Griffen expresses it more strongly -- in a world where god cannot freely change laws of physics.] The difference between Griffen's approach to restoring meaning and that of supernaturalists is that Griffen's solution for restoring meaning in the world does not have the possibility for supernatural alteration [by miracles], even temporarily, of the natural laws of physics. In Griffen's model of the world, god is still a "first cause" and possibly a "cause of persistence" of the world (universe). However, in the model, it is impossible to break the natural order, e.g., the laws of physics after the creation. Griffen's book is very well written and in my opinion, very worth reading. Reference: Hartshorne, C., and W. Reese, eds. 1953, *Philosophers Speak of God*. Chicago, Univ. of Chicago Press.

The process philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne has made many distinctive contributions to the philosophy of religion. David Ray Griffen now offers the first full-scale philosophy of religion written from this perspective, discussing such topics as the relationship between science and religion, the validity of religious experience, the nature and existence of God, religious pluralism, creation and evolution, and the problem of evil. Griffen's clear and comprehensive book also serves as a valuable introduction to process philosophy itself. In his vigorous defense of a worldview that is fully naturalistic and fully religious, Griffen shows not only how this position reconciles naturalism with freedom, genuine religious experience, and even life after death, but also how its naturalistic theism "reenchants" the world in the sense of providing cosmic support for moral values. Highly original and sometimes controversial, Griffen's book develops its stance in conversation with influential proponents of other philosophical positions, including William P. Alston, Jürgen Habermas, John Hick, Colin McGinn, Alvin Plantinga, Hilary Putnam, Willard Quine, Ninian Smart, Jeffrey Stout, and Bernard Williams.

"This is both a clear and accurate introduction to the metaphysical philosophy of A.N. Whitehead, using much of his self-devised technical language, and an examination of all the questions of philosophical theology from that viewpoint." *Theology*, November/December 2001 "Griffen deserves high marks for elevating process thought onto a level of respectability, even among analytically oriented thinkers." Ernest Wolf-Gazo, *The American University*, Egypt. *Transcendent Philosophy*, Vol. 2, No. 4, December 2001 "Occasionally, a book comes along that is definitive for its field of study, a book that marks a milestone in thought. . . . Griffen has written just such a book? a book that, by all rights, should mark a watershed in the academic study of religion. . . . Griffen makes about as strong a case as one can in a single volume for a genuine and viable alternative." Jeffrey D. Long, *Elizabethtown College*. *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 82, Nos. 1 and 2 "Because of its novel formulations and its responses to questions in contemporary philosophy of religion, this book is recommended mainly to those who are process 'insiders.' Its novel formulations and responses to questions of scientific concern make this book a resource to scientists seeking answers that are both religiously and scientifically adequate. Due to the comprehensive presentation of process thought in Reenchantment

Without Supernaturalism, this book is recommended to those who want to decide for themselves what they've previously only heard others praise or criticize."?Thomas Jay Oord, Ph.D., Eastern Nazarene College. Research News and Opportunities in Science and Theology, April 2002" In this work, Griffin has provided a careful, thorough, and thoughtful account of what process philosophy of religion involves. Remarkably comprehensive, he uses this work to cover everything from human personhood and morality to evil and the concept of God. He is explicit in his understanding of what religion involves, and it is reassuring to see a philosopher of religion spending much time on what is often assumed rather than discussed. . . This is a mature work that offers an excellent and comprehensive philosophy of religion from the standpoint of process thought. . . Religion is revealed as the attempt to connect with reality, and it is this rather beautiful vision of the need for an engagement with the awesome world around us that remains long after the book has been finished."?Beverly Clack, *Ars Disputandi*, March 2002" In this important work David Ray Griffin provides an admirably lucid exposition of the central theses of Process Philosophy, and argues for its superiority both over materialist naturalism and supernaturalist theism. . . . Griffin's criticisms both of materialistic naturalism and of traditional supernaturalist theism are to be taken seriously."?Peter Forrest, University of New England, *Australian Journal of Philosophy*, 80:3, September 2002" David Ray Griffin, at present the leading proponent of process theism, provides his readers with a full-scale process philosophy of religion. Writing from his own perspective, he discusses in a clear and knowledgeable manner all of the fundamental topics in the philosophy of religion while engaging in conversations with many leading analytic philosophers of religion. There is no other single volume that provides such a comprehensive analysis of process philosophy of religion."?Eugene Thomas Long, Professor of Philosophy, The University of South Carolina" In this comprehensive study, David Griffin gives us not only the most up-to-date process philosophy of religion, but also the most cogent statement of his own leading interpretation of process thought. He corrects supernaturalistic theism with a naturalistic version of theism, and refines reigning versions of naturalism with a Whiteheadian account. The result is a reenchanting worldview."?Nancy Frankenberry, Dartmouth College