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[Review of] Re-Enchantment without Supernaturalism - A Process Philosophy of Religion

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Reenchantment without Supernaturalism: A Process Philosophy of Religion. By David Ray Griffin. Cornell University Press, 2001. 426 pages. \$55.00; \$24.95 paper.

In this ambitious book David Ray Griffin develops a naturalistic theism that he hopes can both transform the philosophy of religion and help to reverse the modern disenchantment of the world. Written with deep knowledge of both Whitehead's oeuvre and the contemporary issues in philosophy, it is the clearest and most comprehensive statement of what philosophy of religion looks like from a process perspective.

Though the basic premise of process theism may be widely known, neither of the two most significant moves in this book is that God is in process. The first is Griffin's distinction between two senses of naturalism. One form, which he endorses, is simply the rejection of supernaturalism; that is, it denies that divine beings do or even could interrupt the natural causal processes of the world. The other form, which Griffin rejects, is a naturalism that includes an atheistic and materialist worldview and an epistemology based solely on sensory data. By developing a religious philosophy that is naturalistic only in the first sense, Griffin shows that philosophers of religion are not required to choose either materialistic atheism or supernaturalistic theism. Though largely ignored by philosophers, this third option can be equally congenial to scientists who stay true to their own principles and to religious practitioners who stay true to theirs. It is as a version of religious naturalism, then, that Griffin develops his own "prehensive-panentheistic-panexperientialist" position.

The second significant move is that Griffin argues that the primary criterion for any theory is that it do justice to what he calls our "hard-core commonsense" notions. Such notions are the inevitable presuppositions of practice, notions at play in action as such. Because such notions are presupposed by every action, even the act of denying them requires them, and so they cannot be denied without self-contradiction. A philosophy is irrational, then, to the extent that it denies these pragmatically necessary ideas. This idea of a "pragmatic metaphysics" (3 In, 5 In) deserves a broader hearing in philosophy, though I was not always happy with the way that Griffin expresses it. For example, he suggests that philosophers should restrict their fallibilism in order to exclude the hard-core commonsense notions from criticism (33n, cf. 361). A better approach, I think, would be to argue that a putative hard-core commonsense notion is, like any

other notion, fallible even while insisting that the nonrestricted scope of the notion means that if it is true, it is implied even by its denial. Also, to challenge such notions it is not necessary empirically to "find someone" who truly lives without the presupposition (34). Rather, the opponent can either demonstrate that the notion is conceivably falsifiable (in which case it is not really a "hard-core" notion) or that the notion is incoherent (in which case it applies to none of our practices). These disagreements on the fine points, however, do not take away from the important point that Griffin is identifying a criterion for philosophy to which the majority of modern and postmodern criticisms of metaphysics do not apply.

The greater part of the book develops the idea of a nonsupernaturalistic God, a "Holy Reality" that does not intervene in natural processes but, rather, is continuously and directly experienced. The chapters serially show how this idea transforms the basic topics in the philosophy of religion. Griffin argues, for example, that this naturalistic theism can serve to reconcile belief in God and the theory of evolution, that it (dis)solves the problem of evil, and that it provides a morality-supporting cosmology. Process thinkers have made some of these arguments before, but many of the chapters advance the issues in original directions. For example, though Griffin has claimed in the past that natural theology is not essential to process theism, he now holds that a process philosophy of religion not only presents a credible idea of God but also provides strong reasons for believing in God's existence. He also argues that a naturalistic theism like this one can not only reconcile science and religion but also account for the idea of evolutionary saltations without appealing to miracles. Third, Griffin argues that Whitehead's distinction between God and creativity makes possible a new answer to the problem of religious diversity. Griffin proposes that different religions seek to refer to and experience not the same ultimate reality but, rather, two different features of reality, both of which are ultimate, though in different senses. One feature is the personal ultimate reality, the ultimate agent, and the other is the impersonal ultimate reality, agency as such. Griffin then defends a pluralism in which two basic types of religious belief and experience can be valid. Fourth, he is concerned to argue that his naturalistic theism does not necessarily deny the possibility of life after death. He argues that Whitehead and Hartshorne do not deny that life after death is possible and that the evidence of telepathy and out-of-body experiences makes the idea of life after death plausible. Moreover, he argues that we have a psychic need for life after death, a need that includes the longing for more life or for an ideal mode of existence as well as the Kantian sense that those who live morally do not often in this life get the happiness they deserve, so life without an afterlife would be unfair.

Not everyone will find all of these new directions equally persuasive. For example, the alleged psychic need for life after death is not evidence, nor is this need exceptionless enough to call it "a permanent feature of human existence as such" (233). And even if one agrees that we have *nonsensory* perceptions, it does not follow that there can be *nonembodied* perceptions. And however one weighs the paranormal evidence, Hartshorne emphasized the fact that existence always involves a tragic dimension and even the best life cannot realize impossible goods. In this light, Griffin's claims that we need an afterlife to provide enough time for souls "to actualize all their potentialities" (240), to become "perfect" (236), sound escapist. Coherent dreams of wholeness and integrity will aspire to less.

In the end, however, these are again disagreements about details. The book as a whole succeeds in its central goal to show that the philosophy of religion is ignoring a third option between atheistic materialism and supernaturalistic theism, a form of naturalism that is not a priori opposed to religion. And Griffin is correct that such a position has the potential not only to reorient the philosophy of religion but also to reconcile the truths of science with the truths of religion and thereby to point the way to a reenchanting worldview.