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Rethinking Religion: Beyond Scientism, Theism, and Philosophic Doubt (Living Issues Discussion)

Alan Soffin

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An atheist drawn to religion, Soffin shows how to conceptualize a "God" who is in and of the cosmos rather than also beyond it as theists affirm. This allows Soffin and those who see value in the path he blazes to embrace and value the treasures of religion even while not being theistic. Says Soffin, "For those who sense in modern life an underlying absence of fundamental meaning--yet fear self-deception in pursuing "God"--there may be no recourse but to shoulder the burdens of reflection and begin the ancient journey anew." In their comments in the responses chapter, a number of respondents offer a rich range of perspectives. Daniel Liechty, Associate Professor of Social Work, University of Illinois, thinks that "From his discussion contrasting God as Creator with that of cosmic first cause, to his highly stimulating presentation of knowledge as true incarnation, and much more, this has been a book worth reading. . . . I feel it is at least part of my assignment as a respondent here to voice some criticism. So, to begin with, I am inclined to think that Soffin overly stresses the role of rationality in human existence. . . ." Sharon L. Baker, who teaches theology and religion at Messiah College, observes that "Soffin's text brought to mind John D. Caputo's seminal and provocative thought. . . . Although they stare at each other from across the chasm separating analytical from continental philosophical traditions, both authors seek a move into the 'beyond'-beyond scientific materialism, beyond superstition, beyond religion (as institutionalized strictures), and even beyond the classical God himself (gendered language intended)."Herbert W. Simons, Emeritus Professor of Communication, Temple University, reports that "Soffin and I have been back and forth on philosophy for fifty years. I've called him every nasty philosophical name I could think of--essentialist, rationalist, objectivist, foundationalist, anti-relativist--to no avail. Still he continues to pursue his quest for Truth and, in recent years, to encompass theology within the orbit of that quest. Thank goodness for that because Rethinking Religion repays careful examination of its unfolding arguments and bursts forth repeatedly with powerful, memorable prose."

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