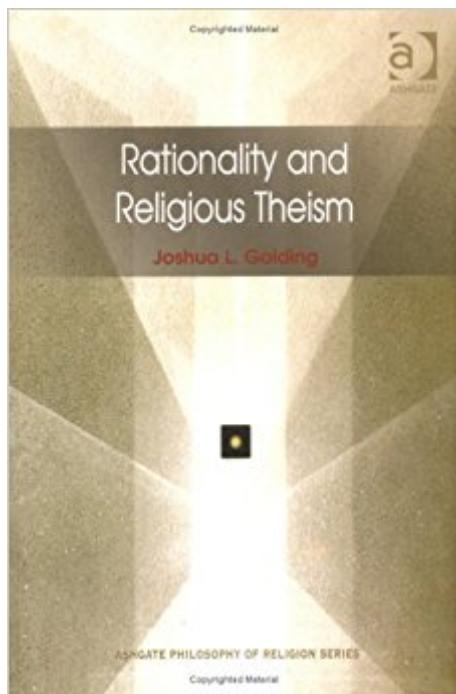


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Rationality And Religious Theism (Ashgate Philosophy Of Religion Series) (Ashgate Philosophy Of Religion Series)



Synopsis

Throughout the ages one of the central topics in the philosophy of religion has been the rationality of theistic belief. Philosophers and theologians have debated whether it is rational to believe certain propositions about God's existence and nature. This text proposes that parties on both sides of this debate might shift their attention in a different direction, by focusing on the question of whether it is rational to be a religious theist. Explaining that having theistic beliefs is primarily a cognitive affair but being a religious theist involves a whole way of life that includes one's beliefs, Golding argues that it can be pragmatically rational to be a religious theist even if the evidence for God's existence is minimal. The argument is applied to the case of Judaism, articulating what is involved in religious Judaism and arguing that it is rationally defensible to be a religious Jew. The book concludes with a discussion of whether a similar argument might be constructed for other versions of religious theism such as Christianity or Islam, and for non-theistic religions such as Taoism or Buddhism. Engaging in a discussion of classic and contemporary writings on the rationality of religious commitment, this book provides fresh insights to scholars of philosophy of religion, theology and Jewish studies.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Joshua Golding's "Rationality and Religious Theism" is a defense of religious Judaism using an updated version of Pascal's wager. Golding first shows how it could be pragmatically rational to be a religious believer. He explains what a religious believer is, and under what conditions it is rational to

be a religious believer. Subsequently, he explains what a religious Jew is and argues that the conditions for the rationality of being a religious Jew are fulfilled. The book is original in at least three ways. First, most books on the rationality of religion focus on the rationality of belief in the existence of God, but this book argues more generally for the rationality of religious practices and lifestyle, i.e. that the expected value of these practices makes it pragmatically rational to adopt them. Secondly, as far as I know, this is the only work that applies a version of Pascal's wager to the case of Judaism, and it develops the strategy so that it avoids traditional objections leveled against Pascal's wager. Thirdly, Golding defends an understanding of God that is different from the traditional understanding. God is not understood as a being, i.e. as a particular thing with certain attributes, but as Being, and the divine attributes are understood as the ways in which Being manifests itself. For example, the claim that God is benevolent is understood not as the claim that there is a being who does undeserved good things for people, but that the universe is governed by a law that makes undeserved goods happen. I have doubts about whether this understanding of God is intelligible or religiously acceptable; I don't think that it is consistent with the sources with which Golding shows familiarity, e.g. Maimonides and Luzzatto.

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