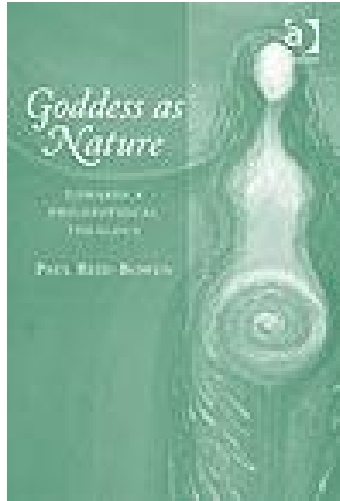


## BOOK REVIEW

**Reid-Bowen, Paul.** *Goddess as Nature: Towards a Philosophical Theology*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007.



*Goddess as Nature* makes a significant contribution to elucidating the meaning of a female and feminist deity at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Bridging the gap between the emergent religious discourse of theology - discourse about the Goddess - and a range of analytical concerns in the philosophy of religion, the author argues that theology is a highly coherent system. By developing a close reading of the reality-claims embedded within a range of theological texts, one can discern an ecological and pantheistic concept of deity and reality that is both metaphysically novel, and in need of constructive philosophical, theological and scholarly engagement. Philosophical theology, in an age concerned with

reconceiving nature in terms of agency, chaos, complexity, ecological networks and organicism, is both an active possibility and a remarkably valuable academic, feminist and religious endeavour.

The author argues that, to date, Goddess feminism has been primarily concerned with mythopoeics, ritual activity and the affective dimensions of religion - 'modern theology seemingly prioritises philosophical precision while theology favours poetics' - and suggests that it is time to explore in more depth questions of belief, conceptual coherence and systematization. In this book Reid-Bowen moves from a consideration of myths of Goddess, to metaphors, and thence to models ('metaphors with staying power'). He draws heavily on the theological writings of Carol Christ, Monica Sjöö and Carol Christ, and the theological method of Sallie McFague.

Reid-Bowen proposes a metaphysical account of the Goddess as nature: Goddess/Nature. This is true to the experience of most Goddess feminists, and the comprehensive exposition of the principles that shape this naming will be of great interest to practitioners and scholars alike.

The author concludes by suggesting that there are a number of questions that require further consideration: 'Are prayer and worship conceptually appropriate activities for Goddess feminists given their understanding of deity as the living whole of nature? Does the widespread Goddess feminist practice of magic cohere with theological views of the nature of reality?'. It is to be hoped that Goddess feminist scholars will address these questions, employing the inclusive and non-prescriptive frameworks which underpin their religious tradition.

Paul Reid-Bowen lectures at Bath Spa University, UK, teaching courses on Philosophy of Religion, Contemporary Spiritualities, Psychology of Religion and Religion and the Media. In this book he demonstrates that he is conscious of the issues raised by his gender. While his philosophical, metaphysical concerns may be problematic for some Goddess feminists, his work warrants consideration.