



The Re-enchantment of the World: Art versus Religion

Gordon Graham

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The Re-enchantment of the World is a philosophical exploration of the role of art and religion as sources of meaning in an increasingly material world dominated by science. Gordon Graham takes as his starting point Max Weber's idea that contemporary Western culture is marked by a 'disenchantment of the world' - the loss of spiritual value in the wake of religion's decline and the triumph of the physical and biological sciences. Relating themes in Hegel, Nietzsche, Schleiermacher, Schopenhauer, and Gadamer to topics in contemporary philosophy of the arts, Graham explores the idea that art, now freed from its previous service to religion, has the potential to re-enchant the world. In so doing, he develops an argument that draws on the strengths of both 'analytical' and 'continental' traditions of philosophical reflection. The opening chapter examines ways in which human lives can be made meaningful as a background to the debates surrounding secularization and secularism. Subsequent chapters are devoted to painting, literature, music, architecture, and festival with special attention given to Surrealism, 19th-century fiction, James Joyce, the music of J. S. Bach and the operas of Wagner. Graham concludes that that only religion properly so called can 'enchant the world', and that modern art's ambition to do so fails.

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