

Books

Customer Review

8 of 15 people found the following review helpful:

★★★★☆ **Stenger's book is pseudoscience, as well as being mistaken, misinformed and misleading,** July 14, 2009

By **Dr. David Scharf**

Quantum spirituality--the idea that some aspect of consciousness plays a fundamental role in the universe and that advanced physics should be interpreted as having to some extent already incorporated this principle--has had distinguished representation among both physicists and philosophers. It has generated an upsurge of grassroots enthusiasm because of the widespread sense that science and spirituality, rather than being fundamentally separate or even opposed, are in fact deeply connected and mutually reinforcing. Victor Stenger's purpose in writing *Quantum Gods: Creation, Chaos, and the Search for Cosmic Consciousness* is to "debunk" this idea--but attention to the details shows that it is actually Stenger's arguments that need the debunking.

Stenger--a retired physicist who is leveraging his scientific background to try to discredit anything and everything that smacks of spirituality--doesn't respect his intellectual opponents enough to get their positions right; in some instances he appears to deliberately misrepresent their views; and, most important, his own reasoning is characterized by unremitting carelessness. Moreover, there is a method to his carelessness--it enables him to systematically avoid addressing the tough arguments of his opponents. Hence we find him frequently setting up a straw man by misrepresenting the debate as a simple matter of science and reason versus superstition. Once having defined this as the issue, all he needs to do is assume the attitude of an outraged scientist and heap on the ridicule. But if he had done his homework and taken the trouble to really understand the science and logic supporting quantum spirituality, he would have discovered that it is harder to dismiss than he had imagined. Indeed, the more carefully--and yes, critically--one

Review Details

Item



[Quantum Gods: Creation, Chaos, and the Search for Cosmic Consciousness](#)

(10 customer reviews)

5 star:	(5)
4 star:	(1)
3 star:	(1)
2 star:	(0)
1 star:	(3)

Reviewer



Dr. David Scharf

Location: Fairfield, Iowa USA

New Reviewer Rank: 429,551

Classic Reviewer Rank: 1,060,566

[See all my reviews](#)

considers the issues, the more one finds quantum spirituality to be eminently worthy of serious consideration, as a plausible and measured approach to the most long-standing and intractable questions at the basis of science.

You can find my full-length critical review article on the "Truth About TM" website, in the "Societal Effects|Critics & Rebuttals" section.

Comments

Showing 1-16 of 16 posts in this discussion

Wojciech Langer says:

Initial post: Jul 16, 2009 7:53 AM PDT

It could not have been expressed better, great review.

Julio C. S. Barros says:

Your post: Jul 16, 2009 2:39 PM PDT

[Just to share some thoughts with people that read Stenger with a critical mind]

Incidentally, I came across this piece of "conversation" between me and Stenger on July 5, 2007, in Stenger's avoid-L weblist:

Topic of the Thread:
Re: Parapsychology and AAAS

Message from Stenger:
"My 1990 book Physics and Psychics is still relevant. I talk about the good work of Marks and Kamman (sp?) in debunking Uri Geller. Geller sued me three times, all unsuccessful, over this book."

My Reply:

I will be civilized enough as to not say what this book from you is still relevant for...

Best,
Julio

P.S.: don't you realize that the best way to achieve powerful criticism of psi research is to correct the numerous mistakes that you have committed in these books of yours (1990, 2003, 2007) about this subject? Try to bear in mind that whenever an open minded honest reader spots mistakes in your approach and mistakes in the facts that you present, he is likely to end up dismissing your work altogether. Just imagine how many people may have ended up believing in Uri Geller precisely *because* they found out you are not to be believed in many crucial items... That is recipe for disaster guaranteed.

This above was back in 2007. Two Years Ago. Nothing changed... Poor readers.

Julio

Logan Narcomey says:

Posted on Jul 20, 2009 1:27 PM PDT

Hogwash. There is no such thing as "quantum spirituality". Merely being able to point out spiritually-inclined physicists is not enough, just as the mere presence of theistic evolutionists like Kenneth Miller and Francis Collins do not demonstrate the compatibility of evolution and Christianity (or science and religion, more broadly).

The sentiment that "It has generated an upsurge of grassroots enthusiasm because of the widespread sense that science and spirituality, rather than being fundamentally separate or even opposed, are in fact deeply connected and mutually reinforcing" is irrelevant and distracting to the matter of whether it is true or not. In fact, it invites comparison with other "grassroots enthusiasts" whose beliefs have been boosted by pseudo-experts like Michael Behe and Andrew Wakefield (intelligent design and anti-vaccination, respectively). Lots of people WISH that science and spirituality are not opposed but "deeply connected and mutually reinforcing", but all the attempts at such backed by the Templeton Foundation and Shambhala Publishing have amounted to oh so much straw-grasping and fluff.

My review of "Quantum Gods" gives a logical argument for why quantum idealism (the notion that "the mind makes reality") could not be true. If you think that science and logic supports quantum spirituality, perhaps you should begin there.

In reply to an [earlier post](#) on Jul 22, 2009 4:53 AM PDT

David Scharf says:

I suggest you read my full-length review article of Stenger's book. You might be interested in my documentation of Stenger's many errors in logic, errors in historical fact, and errors in judgment, as well as my discussion of some of the important reasons for quantum spirituality. You'll especially find it interesting if you have training in physics or the philosophy of science. www.truthaboutm.org/truth/SocietalEffects/Critics-Rebuttals/StengerRebuttal/index.cfm

In reply to an [earlier post](#) on Jul 25, 2009 1:49 PM PDT
Last edited by the author on Jul 25, 2009 3:40 PM PDT

Thomas says:

Look, requesting to read your longer review is fine, but you should know that Amazon DOES allow for a longer review than what you gave us here, and frankly, you should take advantage of this. What you gave us here is nothing but smoke.

Which professional physicists support quantum spirituality? Why would we care what philosophers who have little to no understanding of physics think? Do any of these philosophers that support it perhaps have PhD's both in philosophy and physics are they intruding in another field they're not trained in? For that matter, demonstrate his carelessness in reasoning and his tendency to make straw men out of his opponents. This activity may be legion, but so be it if it is, this does not excuse you from giving at least a few examples (well allowed within Amazon's limits on the length of reviews) rather than just making a number of broad claims and not providing any support for them and then saying 'Go to my website and you'll see all of this is true!' Give us a reason to think your website is worth checking out.

Your post: Jul 25, 2009 8:09 PM PDT

Julio C. S. Barros says:

I took a look at Scharf's longer article on Stenger, and it seems impressive. I will be reading it in the following days.

In reply to an [earlier post](#) on Jul 26, 2009 8:05 PM PDT

David Scharf says:

Why not take a look at my paper? I would be interested to hear what you think. I expect to

convince you that quantum spirituality is a much deeper and more important idea than Stenger makes it out to be. Whether or not you ultimately agree with quantum spirituality, I think a fair-minded person would conclude that it deserves a lot more respect than Stenger accords it.

In reply to your post on Jul 26, 2009 8:06 PM PDT

David Scharf says:

Thank you. I look forward to hearing what you think about it.

Your post, in reply to an earlier post on Jul 26, 2009 8:21 PM PDT

Julio C. S. Barros says:

"Give us a reason to think your website is worth checking out"

Scharf, this above (from Thomas) is simply unbelievable! And he is the one who is pointing his finger towards Hameer for having written a review (to Quantum Gods) without having read it. He (Thomas), thus, should arguably be the first to welcome the attitude "read first, criticize later."

Well, I, for one, am reading your full review on Stenger. I've already read half of it. So far, very good; I disagree on a few items, though. I will comment on it when I am finished reading. As for "Thomases" and "Narcomeyes," I highly recommend that they take a serious look (i.e. read) at it. Narcomey's restrictions to "quantum spiritualism" are, IMO, mostly void.

As to Stenger, I think Scharf got it very correct. I am coming to a conclusion that Stenger is definitely brute in his mind. He looks like a bull, not only in his body but also in his thinking. I took a look at a video on him at youtube, 26 minutes. A very simple minded man. I couldn't help making a video in reply to that, and it is now at the link below:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ACKVUMioI2w>

A caricature, for sure. And like all, with some very good kernel of truth.

Best Regards to all,
Julio

Your post: Jul 27, 2009 6:28 AM PDT

Julio C. S. Barros says:

I have finished reading Scharf's full review, and I am amazed at the level of dishonesty and sloppiness of Stenger. Up to now, I still considered the possibility that he was, after all, a "good guy." But I must say it is getting almost impossible to hold such position. Deplorable. I will have a few comments about Scharf's full review in the following days (or, maybe, hours...)

Best,
Julio

Add a comment

Comments

Posted on Jul 27, 2009 8:43 AM PDT

M. Hameer says:

I have read through David Scharf's critique of Stenger. A brilliant expose of Stenger's dishonest and poor philosophical skills.

When I used to be an atheist (for 7 years), people like Dawkins and Stenger were my "heroes". But the more I read their works, the more I realized their poor philosophical skills in addition to their linking of science with their personal atheistic philosophy of life and branding the two as "Science". And what put me off the most was their intolerance to the rest of the scientists and non-scientists who were spiritually inclined (something I never saw in the writings of the legendary greats Carl Sagan and Stephen Jay Gould, hence my personal admiration for them).

When I moved on to reading books on Eastern Philosophy and Quantum mysticism, I found refreshing points of view. In the end, I realized Science does not have to be in conflict with faith. The question of God (in all its various notions), is ultimately a philosophical question, not a scientific one (something atheists fail or don't want to accept). Atheism is ultimately a philosophical perspective, not a scientific one. I am all for promoting Science. What I am against is imposing atheism in the name of Science!

[You replied with a later post](#)

Your post: Jul 28, 2009 9:01 AM PDT
Last edited by you on Jul 28, 2009 9:05 AM PDT

Julio C. S. Barros says:

Hi Everybody,

I just want to highlight some points in Professor Scharf's full exposé of Stenger's "Quantum Gods." I will number them and comment on them briefly:

1- "The powerful idea that there is a fundamental aspect of consciousness that is scientifically primary, and how this differs from the silly idea of individual solipsism."

COMMENT: I also noted that in my review and full discussion of it with Steve Thomas. Stenger is an incompetent philosopher, a sham. Tax payers should be more worried about it... Especially atheist-materialists.

2- "Stenger's confusion about Newton's theism is, sadly, an all-too-typical instance of his superficial treatment of the deepest issues. ... The subtleties of the deist doctrine of pre-established harmony have evidently eluded Stenger,"

COMMENT: I, too, raised this issue in my review of "God, the Failed Hypothesis" and further discussions about this book. Another example of Stenger's incompetence. Yet, fans keep giving him stars after stars. Atheist movement down the drain...

3- "Stenger not only dismisses the idea that the advances in physics may have relevance for consciousness and spirituality but also seems to overlook the fact that these advances have introduced any significant changes in our worldview at all... ..'Often one hears that modern physics showed that Newtonian physics was proven wrong by the twin twentieth-century revolutions of relativity and quantum mechanics. Nothing can be further from the truth. To this day Newtonian mechanics remains the foundation of physics and the natural sciences that are built upon physics. (p.95)' "

COMMENT: this is indeed a most peculiar and intriguing attitude by Stenger. I noted something similar in my review of "God, the Failed Hypothesis." Stenger ends up teaching wrong physics. And simply no one seems to care (that is, Michael Shermer and Amanda Gefter). It pays to be an atheist-materialist, as it seems. You can bamboozle about freshly and freely.

4- "So Stenger cites Gilpin as his reference for his GUTs chapter, and Gilpin cites Stenger, and neither of them know what they are talking about."

COMMENT: absolutely hilarious! And people buy Stenger (that is, believe him).

5- "Moreover, if he had read the title of this paper-'Supersymmetric Flipped SU(5) Revitalized'-Stenger would have known that Hagelin's claim was to have revitalized flipped SU(5). The idea had been considered and shelved by the theoretical physics community until Hagelin's initial derivation built on the superstring."

COMMENT: what professor Scharf is showing is amazing. Stenger keeps rolling down the hill of rationality and of intellectual honesty. I explain: previously in my reviews of him, I exposed several instances where he had understood wrongly what he read, and where he seemed not to have read what he cited, sometimes not having read the CONTENT of a given book or article, and other times not having read the VERY ABSTRACT of an article. Now he takes one step further. He stopped reading EVEN THE TITLES. I wonder where will this end?

6- "In any case, it is noteworthy that in a book whose first words are 'quantum flapdoodle,' Stenger shows no hint of embarrassment in drawing radically speculative conclusions for nothingness. But respected string theorist Brian Greene flatly contradicts this conclusion: 'The ultimate source of order, of low entropy, must be the big bang itself.' (Greene, 2004, p.173, Italics in the original.) Greene explains:In comparison with black holes, the diffuse, nearly uniform gas was in an extraordinarily low-entropy state."

COMMENT: I noted something similar in my own review of "Quantum Gods," though, since I am not a physicist, I could not draw any condemnation towards Stenger in that regard, I could only warn the readers of a *potentially problematic* piece of reasoning from him. But this that Scharf shows to us is simply scandalous. This, in a book directed to us, unwary laymen in physics, is simply pseudoscience from Stenger in its strongest form. (I myself simply thought Stenger was a hundred percent right in his misleading talk of maximum disorder at the moment of the Big Bang. Go figure). But... Stenger is free to baboozle at will...

I will continue in a second post
Julio

Your post: Jul 28, 2009 9:34 AM PDT
Last edited by you on Jul 28, 2009 9:40 AM PDT

Julio C. S. Barros says:

Continuing:

7- "Quantum entanglement presents a problem for materialism precisely because it incorporates a form of holistic emergence. And wholeness, as explained in the previous section, has traditionally been linked to consciousness. (11 This linkage can be challenged, of course, but it has considerable prima facie plausibility, and not just because...)... ..This

nonlocal entanglement between the two particles is precisely the kind of holistic, emergent and top-down kind of phenomenon which many think may contribute to a better framework for understanding consciousness than the classical conception of reduction to particles as separately existing, independently defined bits of matter. Given that his book is dedicated to refuting the significance of quantum physics for consciousness and spirituality, Stenger devotes surprisingly little attention to entanglement and nonlocality."

COMMENT: I felt it too, that is, almost as a kind of positive criticism from me towards this book (Quantum Gods). I really would like to have seen someone like Stenger talk deeply and honestly to us laymen in physics about these issues raised by Professor Scharf right above. But Stenger simply wouldn't and won't. Putting Stenger aside, it is indeed striking that the only truly holistic things that we have ever come across in this universe of ours are: 1- The Wave Function. 2- Quantum Entanglement. and 3- Consciousness. I am not a physicist, but I think that 1 and 2 are actually the same thing. And we are left to wonder about 3...

8- "Indeed, at least two science magazine editors-Michael Shermer and Amanda Gefter-have readily adopted Stenger's tone and, insofar as they can influence the editorial policies of their journals, they will see to it that no articles taking these issues seriously see the light of day."

COMMENT: Now, that above is quite interesting. From the mid seventies (20th century) to the mid nineties, the organized skeptic movement, led by CSICOP and Paul Kurtz, developed a well orchestrated strategy of setting up strongholds in many places of the "scientific academia," so to speak. Shermer is a typical activist skeptic. He should NEVER be allowed to be editor in any scientific magazine. Sadly, though, this is the world we live in... It seems that in the recent years these guys have run short of physicists willing to speak for them, at least the way Stenger does. In the past, they (and WE!) had Carl Sagan. He was immensely more honest than Stenger. Now they barely only have Stenger, the Quantum Gorilla. The man is a brute.

Now we have a true "new atheism" movement appearing. These rotten and corrupt leaders (Victor Stenger, James Randi, Richard Dawkins, etc) that helped start and shape the skeptic movement in the mid seventies took the reins of this new movement, that is not exactly the same movement as the one of the seventies. They are in for the money. They are in for selfish prestige. They are in for the power. Truly public concern seems to be least in their agenda.

Yet, irrationally, their fans give them full, uncritical support. What good can possibly come out of it, ask yourselves honestly.

I would like to thank Professor Scharf for his full review, and for having brought to our deeper consideration the works and thoughts of Yogi Maharishi.

Very Best Regards,
Julio

Your post, in reply to an earlier post on Jul 28, 2009 9:46 AM PDT
Last edited by you on Jul 28, 2009 9:47 AM PDT

Julio C. S. Barros says:

"the writings of the legendary greats Carl Sagan and Stephen Jay Gould"

These were indeed from an astronomically superior blend. Sagan was honest enough to admit that some areas of parapsychology seemed to have good results and thus should receive a better look at. Gould exposed Richard Dawkins brute thinking. But, nothing lasts for ever. Hopefully, even the irrationality and stupidity of these rotten leaders of present day new atheism.

In reply to your post on Jul 28, 2009 2:15 PM PDT

Dr. David Scharf says:

Thank you, Julio. I appreciate your perceptive comments and discussion.

Your post, in reply to an earlier post on Jul 29, 2009 4:27 AM PDT
Last edited by you on Jul 29, 2009 4:29 AM PDT

Julio C. S. Barros says:

I asked physicist (and Stenger's pal) Brent Meeker to take a look at your full review. He himself made a "review" of Quantum Gods, with excessive stars but with a quite honest title (huh, Brent ;-). Link Below:

http://www.amazon.com/review/R2KHPW5O71UZNY/ref=cm_cd_NOREF?encoding=UTF8&cdPage=1&newContentNum=6&cdMSG=addedToThread&newContentID=Mx26OKP0BFRZOIY#CustomerDiscussionsNRPB

Since he owes me some bucks, I think he might find it (that is, reflecting over your review) a convenient way of... refunding me. :-)

Best,
Julio