

Radical Nominalism of Daniel Everett and its Implications for Theology and Spirituality

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The aim of this paper is to shed light on the basic tenets of the anthropology of Daniel Everett and its implications for theology and spirituality. Daniel Everett was an Evangelical missionary who spent 20 years in Amazonia ministering to a tribe called Pirahã. Everett's efforts to convert this tribe were thwarted by its unique way of life evading the contemporary Christian Euro-American value system and its language that completely defied Noam Chomsky's theory of universal grammar. Daniel Everett is currently based as a professor of cognitive sciences at Bentley University in Waltham, Massachusetts. In his three major anthropological books, *Language the Cultural Tool*, *Dark Matter of the Mind: The Culturally Articulated Unconsciousness*, and *How Language Began: The Story of Humanity's Biggest Invention*, Everett seems to have taken up the position of radical nominalism. Everett objects to all modern anthropologies that are based on the Platonic nativism, i.e., all humans partake of a universal, epistemological psyche and human nature or are born with the same set of identical a priori ideas (Descartes, Kant, Bastian, Freud, Jung, Chomsky). Everett sides with philosophies and anthropologies rooted in the Aristotelian model of cognition and open to radical empiricism. It is the particular and variable, rather than the universal and invariable, that are the intellectual gold to be mined (Hume, James, Sapir, Wittgenstein, Rorty). Following Everett, this paper explores how much reality the discipline of theology ascribes to its notions, and whether there is a place for radical empiricism within its precincts.