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Notes

Meaning of Theism:

Is broadly defined as the belief in the existence of a Supreme Being or deities. Theism means “belief in one or more gods.” It covers a huge range of religious beliefs.

The term theism (from the Greek *theos*, or "god") commonly refers to belief in God, the view that all finite things are dependent in some way on supreme, self-existent reality who is typically spoken of as having personal identity.

Types of Theism

Monotheism:

Theists believe that reality's ultimate principle is God—an omnipotent, omniscient, goodness that is the creative ground of everything other than itself.

Monotheism is the view that there is only one such God.

After a brief discussion of monotheism's historical origins, this entry looks at the five most influential attempts to establish God's uniqueness.

We will consider arguments from God's simplicity, from his perfection, from his sovereignty, from his omnipotence, and from his demand for total devotion.

The entry concludes by examining three major theistic traditions which contain strands which might seem at odds with their commitment to monotheism.

Belief in the existence of one god, or in the oneness of God.

As such, it is distinguished from polytheism, the belief in the existence of many gods,

from atheism, the belief that there is no god,

from agnosticism, the belief that the existence or nonexistence of a god or of gods is unknown or unknowable.

Monotheism characterizes the traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and elements of the belief are discernible in numerous other religions.

Arguments for monotheism

An Argument from God's Simplicity

God is often thought to be simple in the sense that each of God's real properties is identical with each of his other real properties, and with his being or nature.

If God *is* simple, however, it seems that there can be only one god.

An Argument from God's Perfection

John of Damascus argued that because God is perfect, he is necessarily unique. The only way in which one god could be distinguished from another would be by coming "short of perfection in goodness, or power, or wisdom, or time, or place," but in that case "he would not be God" (John of Damascus, 173).

The Argument from Causal Order

One of the most popular arguments for monotheism is drawn from the world's unity. If there were several designers who acted independently or at cross-purposes, we would expect to find evidence of this in their handiwork—one set of laws obtaining at one time or place, for example, and a different set of laws obtaining at a different time or place. We observe nothing of the sort, however.

POLYTHEISM :

The term polytheism, derived from the Greek *polus* ("many") and *theos* ("god") and hence denoting "recognition and worship of many gods," is used mainly in contrast with *monotheism*, denoting "belief in one god."

Its The belief that there is more than one deity. Several terms must be differentiated here: First, Polytheism proper is the belief there is a pantheon of distinct deities, all of which are to be worshipped.

Within polytheism proper there are *hard* and *soft* varieties.

Hard polytheism views the various gods as being distinct and separate beings,

while soft polytheism views all gods as being subsumed into a greater whole.

Pantheism:

A doctrine that equates God with the forces and laws of the universe

The term 'pantheism' is a modern one, possibly first appearing in the writing of the Irish freethinker John Toland (1705) and constructed from the Greek roots *pan* (all) and *theos* (God).

But if not the name, the ideas themselves are very ancient, and any survey of the history of philosophy will uncover numerous pantheist or pantheistically inclined thinkers

In general, pantheism may be understood positively as the view that God is identical with the cosmos, the view that there exists nothing which is outside of God, or else negatively as the rejection of any view that considers God as distinct from the universe.

Pantheism is a metaphysical and religious position. Broadly defined it is the view that:

(1) "God is everything and everything is God ... the world is either identical with God or in some way a self-expression of his nature" (Owen 1971: 74)

(2) Pantheism signifies everything that exists constitutes a "unity" and this all-inclusive unity is in some sense divine (MacIntyre 1967: 34).

(3) Pantheism signifies the belief that every existing entity is, only one Being; and that all other forms of reality are either modes (or appearances) of it or identical with it." Owen (1971: 65)

Pantheists deny that what they mean by God (i.e. an all-inclusive divine Unity) is completely transcendent. They deny that God is "totally other" than the world or ontologically distinct from it.

Deism

Derived from Latin "deus" meaning "god") is the philosophical

position that rejects revelation as a source of religious knowledge and asserts that reason and observation of the natural world are sufficient to establish the existence of a Supreme Being or creator of the universe

Classical Deism is the belief that one God exists and created the world, but that the Creator does/do not alter the original plan for the universe, but presides over it in the form of Providence however, some classical Deists did believe in divine intervention.

Deism holds that religious beliefs must be founded on human reason and observed features of the natural world, and that these sources reveal the existence of a supreme being as creator.

Deism was represented as the view of those who reduced the role of God to a mere act of creation in accordance with rational laws discoverable by man and held that, after the original act, God virtually withdrew and refrained from interfering in the processes of nature and the ways of man.

Panentheism

Panentheism is a constructed word composed of the English equivalents of the Greek terms "pan", meaning all, "en", meaning in, and "theism", derived from the Greek 'theos' meaning God.

Panentheism considers God and the world to be inter-related with the world being in God and God being in the world.

It offers an increasingly popular alternative to both classical theism and pantheism. Classical theistic systems often prioritize the difference between

God and the world while panentheism stresses God's active presence in the world and the world's influence upon God.

Panentheism generally emphasizes God's presence in the world without losing the distinct identity of either God or the world, specific forms of panentheism.

The term *panentheism* (from the Greek) literally means "all (is) in God." As a concept of God, panentheism attempts to do justice both to divine transcendence (God is beyond or more than the world) and divine immanence (God is in the world).

Panentheism maintains that the world is in God, included in the divine life, but that God's reality is not reducible to nor exhausted by the reality of the individuals or the structures of the universe or of the universe as a whole. Thus God is all-inclusive or all-encompassing with respect to being.