

Non-Theism

by Sophia



WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will look at the concept of non-theism. It's a broad umbrella term that helps organize other scattered and often unrelated ideas that concern the study of religions, such as non-religious beliefs. They also play a role in religion and religious studies. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. Non-Religious Beliefs

2. Non-Theistic Religions

1. Non-Religious Beliefs

In the study of religions, you will come across terms and ideas that avail themselves to many different interpretations. You saw this when looking at theism. It's not always clear which religions might fit best into this category.

This is true for non-religious beliefs. The belief that there is no God is a non-theistic belief. Atheism is a committed position ascribing to the belief that God doesn't exist. It can securely be put under **non-theism**.

Agnosticism, on the other hand, is a position that often refers to the idea that the existence of God has never been proven and/or admits to the impossibility of ever knowing for sure about the existence of God. It would also be a non-theistic approach.

Another more formal method of thinking about religious beliefs is **religious skepticism**. This might be harder to group clearly into one camp or another, theism or non-theism. A religious skeptic would like to subject certain religious beliefs to rational scrutiny, perhaps even his or her own beliefs. So, he or she might be a believer, a faithful adherent of one religion or another.

In the 17th and 18th centuries, skepticism employed the tools of reason and science, which knew no bounds. If there was doubt, it often had to do with the notion that God was personally involved in human lives and individual personal lives. For this reason, many Deists were religious skeptics, questioning and exploring new possibilities concerning the web of religion and philosophy and socio-political life.



TERMS TO KNOW

Non-theism

Any system of belief that either denies the existence of god(s) or does not require the existence of god(s).

Religious Skepticism

The belief that religious claims are doubtful or at least need to be subjected to intense rational scrutiny.

2. Non-Theistic Religions

When it comes to specific religions themselves, many don't honor or worship a particular deity. Confucianism, Taoism, and many schools of Buddhism are good examples of non-theistic thought, non-theistic religions. They generally fit more clearly into non-theism.

Although it doesn't have a god who is worshipped in the way a Hindu god is revered and worshipped, Buddhism's founding principles are nevertheless related to ideas of the non-material and ideas of the sacred. In other words, its focus is on consciousness and the spiritual life that allows for the integration of matter and spirit and the possibility of transcendence. For this reason, Buddhism has historically been approached and interpreted from a variety of angles.



SUMMARY

Now we can review and summarize. Non-theism is a very broad category, and there are many **non-religious beliefs** that can be grouped under it. Some schools of thought are agnosticism, atheism, and religious skepticism. There are also many **non-theistic** religions that can be considered, such as Buddhism.

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