

Pantheism

Objective

To examine pantheism beliefs

References

The Holy Bible

www.pantheism.net/paul/faqs.htm

Scriptural verse

"I *am* the Lord, who makes all *things*, Who stretches out the heavens all alone, Who spreads abroad the earth by Myself" (Isaiah 44:24).

Introduction

- Pantheism is the view that the Universe (Nature) and God are identical or that the Universe is the only thing deserving the deepest kind of reverence and thus do not believe in a personal, anthropomorphic or creator god.
- The word derives from the Ancient Greek: [παν](#) (*pan*) meaning "all" and [θεός](#) (*theos*) meaning "belief that God is all".
- Pantheism promotes the idea that "God" is better understood as a state with respect to Nature and the Universe.
- Although there are divergences within Pantheism, the central ideas found in almost all versions are the Cosmos as an all-encompassing unity and the "sacredness" of Nature.
 - **Monist physicalist** or **Naturalistic Pantheism** holds that there is only one type of substance, and that substance is physical, i.e. energy and matter. Historically this version was held by Stoics. This version is represented today by the *World Pantheist Movement*. In this version, the term *god* - if used at all - is basically a synonym for Nature or Universe, seen from the point of view of reverence.
 - **Monist idealist Pantheism** holds that there is only one type of substance, and that substance is mental or spiritual. Ultimate reality consists of a single consciousness. This version is common in Hindu philosophies and Consciousness-Only schools of Buddhism, as well as with New Age adherents.
 - **Dualist Pantheism** holds that there are two major types of substance, physical and mental/spiritual. Dualistic pantheism is very diverse, and may include beliefs in reincarnation, cosmic consciousness, and paranormal connections across Nature. It is represented most widely today in literal versions of Paganism.

Lesson outline

Pantheists celebrate three different approaches to "knowing" or growing closer to the sacredness of the Universe: the way of *knowledge*, the way of *devotion*, and the way of *works*. By integrating these approaches, they recognize the unity of body and mind, nature and spirit, and fulfill the wholeness of being alive.

- Knowledge encompasses is the study of Nature. This includes everything from the most rigorous scientific research to personal observation of the natural world.
- Devotion involves the communion with nature and may involve artistic expression, nature observation, or various forms of outdoor activities.
- A dedication to living an ethical life style (*works*) is one of the most important modes of religious experience for the modern Pantheist. Doing some good in the world is properly understood to mean not merely to aid the well-being of neighbors, community, and humanity at large, but also to protect the natural environment upon which all living things depend.

What evidence is there for pantheism? How do you know the universe is worthy of reverence?

- We choose to regard the universe with awe, reverence, love, feelings of belonging and recognition of tremendous power, beauty and mystery. This is an aesthetic/emotional choice and basically lies beyond any challenge from logic or evidence. But it is based on objective qualities of the Universe and Nature. Many regard the universe or nature in that way but may be misled by traditional religious teachings into seeing these things as evidence for deities referenced in ancient scriptures.

Nature and the universe are changeable and sometimes hostile. Does this mean they are unworthy of our reverence?

- Change and flux are facts of life throughout the cosmos. So are the risks on earth of disease, accident, collision with meteorites and so on.
- It is true that these attributes of the universe and nature are not compatible with pre-conceived ideas about God as an unchanging, loving being. Pantheism does not claim that its divine Unity is a “perfect being” or being at all or that it is omniscient etc. It accepts the universe as it is - wonderful, mysterious, creative, exuberant, joyful, and yet also at times chaotic and destructive. Evil and pain exist for theists too, and they are extremely difficult to reconcile with the idea of an omnipotent, yet loving God.

Underlying beliefs of Pantheism

- The Self-existent Cosmos-*The universe exists for itself, without cause or purpose. Nothing existed before it that could have been its cause. Nothing exists outside it that could be the source of its purpose.*
- The Self-Organizing Cosmos-*The beauty, complexity and order of nature are not the work of a designer deity. Self-organization is a capacity inherent in matter: things design themselves, in the context of the community of Being.*
- Unity and Diversity- *The One is manifested in and through the Many. It has no existence apart from the Many. The Many are also the One, even while they are separated as individuals. They are always part of the One, and always united with the One.*

What does the Bible say?

- “Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, and He who formed you from the womb: “*I am the Lord, who makes all things, Who stretches out the heavens all alone, Who spreads abroad the earth by Myself*” (Isaiah 44:24).
- “And My servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe Me, and understand that I *am* He. Before Me there was no God formed, nor shall there be after Me. I, *even I, am* the LORD, and besides Me *there is* no savior. I have declared and saved, I have proclaimed, and *there was* no foreign *god* among you; therefore you *are* My witnesses,” Says the LORD, “that I *am* God. Indeed before the day *was*, I *am* He; and *there is* no one who can deliver out of My hand; I work, and who will reverse it?” (Isaiah 43:10-13).
- Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” And God said, “See, I have given you every herb *that* yields seed which *is* on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food. Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which *there is* life, I have given every green herb for food”; and it was so (Genesis 1:28-30).

Conclusions

The real attraction of Pantheism and all the belief systems we've discussed so far is that man gets to call the shots. Through God's messages, we have heard that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5). God sets forth an absolute morality; He is good and evil comes from another source.

In contrast to Pantheism, the Bible teaches that God is a Person (**Exodus 3:7; Hebrews 6:17**), that He created the physical universe (**Genesis 1:1; John 1:3**), and that He wants to have a relationship with you and me (**John 3:16; 1 John 4:10**).

Activities/Discussion Points

What are some ways in which we can preserve nature, God's creation?