

**THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN IDEALISM,
ANIMISM, AND PAGANISM**

by Mont

CONTENTS

| | | |
|----------|---|-----------|
| 1 | Introduction | 2 |
| 2 | Definitions | 3 |
| 2.1 | Idealism | 3 |
| 2.2 | Animism | 4 |
| 2.3 | Paganism | 5 |
| 3 | On Idealism | 6 |
| 3.1 | Quality versus quantity | 6 |
| 3.2 | Problems of materialism | 6 |
| 3.3 | Problems of dualism | 6 |
| 3.4 | Problems of neutral monism | 6 |
| 3.5 | The final solution | 6 |
| 4 | On Animism | 7 |
| 4.1 | What is it like to be a bat? | 7 |
| 4.2 | Subjectiveness in an idealistic reality | 7 |
| 4.3 | Taking care of others | 7 |
| 5 | On Paganism | 8 |
| 5.1 | Paganism in the past | 8 |
| 5.2 | Modern paganism | 8 |
| 5.3 | Animism and polytheism | 8 |
| 5.4 | Reincarnation and life after death | 8 |
| 6 | Final Thoughts | 9 |
| | Bibliography | 10 |

INTRODUCTION

Hello my dear reader, I am glad that you decided to read this little article I made. First and foremost, it's crucial for me to explain to you, the reader, about a little bit of my life, as it might help understand better the topics that will be covered in the next chapters.

My name is not important, but you can call me Mont. I am not academically inclined towards philosophy nor theology, I am a biologist by profession. My first language is not english, therefore expect some bad grammar, although I will try my best to keep it formal and understandable.

In relation to the content of this article, we will not be talking about my experiences nor anything of that sort, although I might be giving some commentaries and opinions on the topics presented. This article is an attempt at formalizing my thoughts on idealism, animism, and paganism, aswell as the relationships that each of them have with each other.

Lastly, I will be giving a brief overview of the chapters to come. As it might be noticeable (if you saw the table of contents), the article follows, more or less, the format of the plot of a "narrative": it has the start of the story, the exposition of the conflicts, the action with climax, and then the resolution.

On the definitions chapter, we are going to be exploring the divergent definitions given to each of the terms (idealism, animism, paganism). After that is done, we are going to choose the one definition (for each of the terms) that will continue to be used on this article.

Next, we will go through each of the ideas, one by one, comparing them with the previous ones discussed. The last chapter, final thoughts, is the conclusion chapter, showing everything that was talked about in a very compressed way.

Now it's time for us to travel on this journey together. I hope you learn something new and, hopefully, have fun reading. Ready, set, go!

DEFINITIONS

2.1 IDEALISM

The word "idealism" is basically an umbrella term because, depending on the context, it could mean something completely different. For example, this medical article published in 2006 uses the definition of idealism as "the cherishing or pursuit of high or noble principles, purposes, or goals [6]. Although there's no such a thing as a "wrong definition", it's certain that said definition is not the same one used by Hegel and other self-declared idealists, for example [1].

As stated by Guyer and Horstmann in their entry on "The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy", there are two modern conceptions of idealism in philosophy: the one that says that something mental is the foundation of reality (also called ontological idealism) and the one that says that everything we can and will ever know is dependent on the mind (also called epistemological idealism) [4]. In our case, we will be sticking with an ontological definition, as we are going to dive deeper into the being, not the adquirement of knowledge.

Back to talking about Hegel, it's in our interest to mention his work called "Science of Logic" (in this case, "Volume One: The Objective Logic, Book One: The Doctrine of being"), as he divides the being into three parts of his dialectical logic: determinate being (quality), magnitude (quantity), and measure (synthesis of both). Inspired by that division, I believe it would be wise, when talking about idealism, to utilize the ideas of quality versus quantity as a basis for the definition.

Therefore, by merging together both the ontological idealism definition given previously and also the inspiration from Hegel, we reach to the definition that will be used on this article:

"Idealism is the idea that quality is the ultimate foundation of all reality."

Although this definition might be seen as confusing by some, it will be explained and defended better in the next chapter.

2.2 ANIMISM

Animism does not suffer the same problems as idealism, for it's not really an umbrella term, but it does suffer with another type of problem: it's a fuzzy term. The word was first coined by Sir Edward Burnett Tylor in his work "Primitive Culture", published in 1871, calling it initially as the "doctrine of souls and other spiritual beings" [7].

In spite of the fact that he initially calls animism just that, he does give, on page 294, an interesting remark, as he says:

"To the theory of animism belong those endless tales which all nations tell of the presiding genii of nature, the spirits of the cliffs, wells, waterfalls, volcanoes, the elves and wood nymphs seen at times by human eyes when wandering by moonlight or assembled at their fairy festivals."

That observation of Tylor is intriguing, given that other authors also do characterize animism as having those traits. Graham Harvey, in his 2005 book "Animism: respecting the living world", explores the divergences and evolutions of the term through time [5]. Below is a table that shows three of the most significant, in my opinion, ideas from other thinkers that were brought up by Harvey:

| Person | Idea |
|------------------|---|
| David Hume | Attributing signs of human likeness, beautiful in poetry and absurd in philosophy. |
| James Frazer | Savages see and treat the world as animate, like themselves, as if the world had souls. |
| Irving Hallowell | Recognition of personhood in a range of human and other-than-human persons. |

With that brief overview on the opinions related to the definition of animism, the one that will be used on this article is the following:

"Animism is the idea that everything possesses subjective experiences."

2.3 PAGANISM

The origin of the word "pagan" can be traced back to the time that the romans officially converted to christianity. It was extensively used by the western roman empire as a way of mocking the countryside folk that continued practicing their ancestral religion [2]. Even though it's considered a pejorative term by origin, it will continue to be used on this article, but not with ill intentions, rather because it's way more simpler to get it all bundled together in a word than to write the same sentence over and over again.

According to Owen Davies's research written on his little introduction to paganism called "Paganism: A Very Short Introduction", the christians that left Europe for trade and conquest did indeed call followers of non-abrahamic religions as "pagans" [3]. Seeing that the creators of the term "paganism" consider it as meaning any non-abrahamic religious tradition, therefore:

"Paganism refers to any non-abrahamic religious tradition."

While that definition does cover many other religions, in this article, we will focus more on western pagan religions.

ON IDEALISM

3.1 QUALITY VERSUS QUANTITY

3.2 PROBLEMS OF MATERIALISM

3.3 PROBLEMS OF DUALISM

3.4 PROBLEMS OF NEUTRAL MONISM

3.5 THE FINAL SOLUTION

ON ANIMISM

4.1 WHAT IS IT LIKE TO BE A BAT?

4.2 SUBJECTIVENESS IN AN IDEALISTIC REALITY

4.3 TAKING CARE OF OTHERS

ON PAGANISM

5.1 PAGANISM IN THE PAST

5.2 MODERN PAGANISM

5.3 ANIMISM AND POLYTHEISM

5.4 REINCARNATION AND LIFE AFTER DEATH

FINAL THOUGHTS

This is a test!

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- [1] Frederick C Beiser. *German idealism*. London, England: Harvard University Press, July 2009.
- [2] G W Bowersock and etc., eds. *Late antiquity*. en. Harvard University Press Reference Library. London, England: Harvard University Press, Nov. 1999.
- [3] Owen Davies. *Paganism: A Very Short Introduction*. en. OUP Oxford, May 2011.
- [4] Paul Guyer and Rolf-Peter Horstmann. "Idealism". In: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Ed. by Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman. Spring 2023. Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2023.
- [5] Graham Harvey. *Animism*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, Oct. 2005.
- [6] Janice K Smith and Donna B Weaver. "Capturing medical students' idealism". en. In: *Ann. Fam. Med.* 4 Suppl 1.suppl_1 (Sept. 2006), S32–7, discussion S58–60.
- [7] Edward Burnett Tylor. *A A Voyage in the 'Sunbeam' Primitive Culture: Volume 2*. Cambridge Library Collection - Anthropology. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, Apr. 2012.