

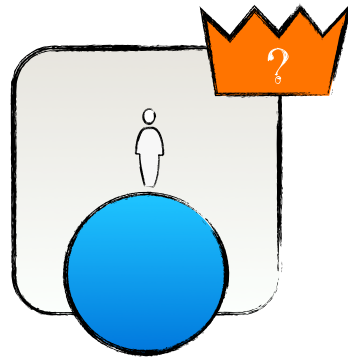
# WORLDVIEW SUMMARY

How you view the world you live in has profound effects on the way you live your life in the world. The following is a short summary of the major worldviews that exist today. Each worldview summary is also accompanied by a diagram which visually represents each of the worldviews and the relationship it sees existing between us, the world and God (if any). The legend for the three main elements of each worldview diagram is as follows;



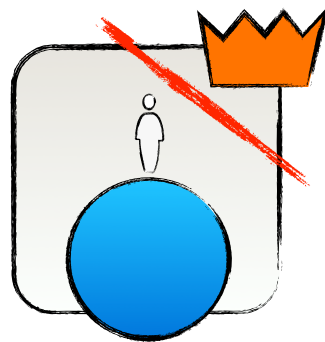
## AGNOSTICISM

This is a term generally used for the view that we can not know whether God exists or not. The term, which comes from the Greek word 'gnosis' meaning knowledge ('agnosis' meaning without knowledge), was first coined by T. H. Huxley in the 19th century to signify religious skepticism. On a continuum of belief in God, agnostics generally sit in the mid-point between theism and atheism. Today, agnosticism usually means suspending judgement on all matters divine. But even if God does exist, He is regarded as irrelevant to modern life. Agnosticism is considered a more respectable anti-theist position than atheism since it carries less of the social stigma that atheism carries. In addition, agnosticism, which neither affirms or denies the existence of God, is said to not carry the burden of proof of atheism and therefore doesn't need to give reasons for it's profession of ignorance.



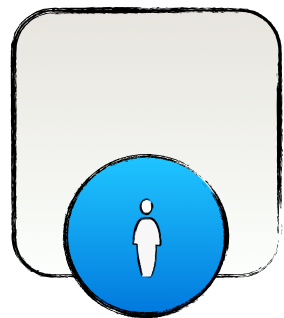
## APATHEISM

The term 'Apathism' is a blending of the words 'apathy' and 'theism'. This view of the world is the most recent (early 21st Century) at least in it's articulation. Apathism, also known as Practical or Pragmatic Atheism is characterised by an apathetic view of God that includes the question of his existence. Apathists don't care about God and whether or not he exists because they believe that God has shown no evidence of caring about us. Since God does not care about us, he does not care about what we do which leaves the Apathist free to not care about what they or others do or believe.



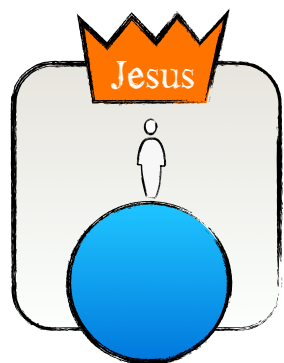
## ATHEISM

The term 'atheism' comes from the Greek word 'atheos' meaning 'without God'. The term has been used from as early as ancient Greek times to refer to godless people. There are various degrees of atheistic belief but the most extreme form of Atheism is a denial of the existence of any God (eg. 18th Century French atheists and 21st Century New Atheists like Dawkins and Hitchens). Generally speaking, in atheism humans have no special place above the rest of the natural world as in other theistic beliefs (hence the human figure in the diagram is inside the world not on top of it). Without the existence of God to give life meaning, Atheists often look to other sources for meaning, eg. in the mechanics of the natural world (Naturalists), in humanity (Humanist) our subjective experience of life (Existentialists), or in their own personal beliefs (Relativists).



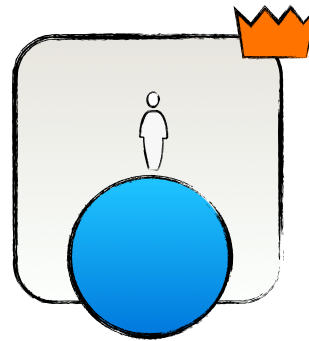
## CHRISTIAN THEISM

Christian Theism, further defines theism as a view of God who is transcendent and immanent, personal and infinite who creates, sustains and controls the world. This God has made himself personally known in Jesus Christ. It is through His death, resurrection and ascension as king of the universe that humanity, who is made in the image of God, is redeemed from their punishment of death for rejecting God and is given eternal life. There are two basic groups within Christianity who both profess a theistic worldview. One believes that man is saved by faith in Jesus alone, the other by faith in Jesus and by doing good works. The later we could further define as being Christian Legalists.



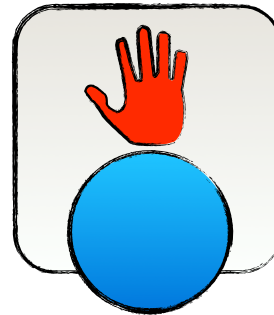
## DEISM

Originating during the scientific revolution of the 17th and 18th centuries, Deism (from the Latin 'deo' meaning God) denies that God can be known by the revelation of the scriptures but only by human reason. God became viewed as the divine watchmaker, the first cause of the universe whose existence is only evident in the mechanisms of his creation. This God is transcendent not immanent, not fully personal, not fully sovereign over human affairs and not providential. God therefore doesn't care or love the world because he has no personal relationship to the world. What happens in the world is determined by the cause and effect of it's closed mechanism allowing no intervention by God. Humans are part of this clockwork universe with no relation to God and are in charge of their own destiny but with no way to transcend the mechanism.



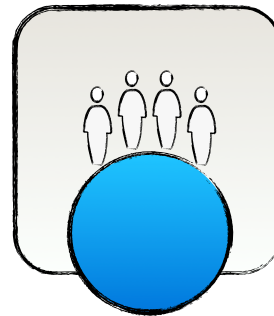
## EXISTENTIALISM

Atheistic Existentialism which arose in the first half of the 19th century is an attempt to 'transcend nihilism'. This view does not look for meaning in the objective world like Naturalism does but rather in the individuals subjective self-consciousness. The reason for this is that the objective world is viewed as absurd especially in light of the suffering and death that is part of life. Since there is no God it is people who are in total control of their lives and who make themselves who they are. Existentialism says that in order to transcend the absurdity of the world and create meaning we must learn to love life. Any good that a person does is merely what a person chooses to do. Evil is therefore not choosing but simply doing what others do. That is, evil is a failure to recognize the absurdity of the world.



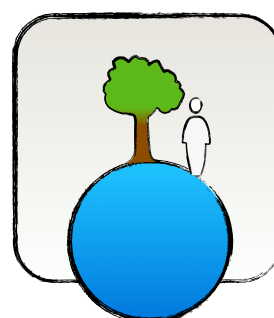
## HUMANISM

Humanism, is a form of naturalism that originated in Ancient Greece as summed up in Protagoras's famous statement that man is the measure of all things. Humanism emphasizes the special value of human beings and their aspirations and values. During the Renaissance period many Christians were regarded as Humanists because they emphasized the dignity of man. However they emphasised this not in opposition to God but because they believed we were uniquely made in God's image. Humanists who reject the existence of God while upholding the value of humanity have become known as Secular Humanists. One significant example of Secular Humanism is teaching of Marxism from the 19th century which says that 'man is the supreme being for man'.



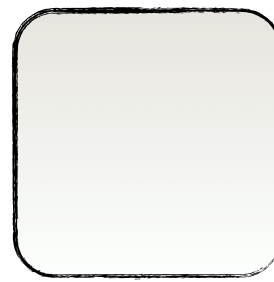
## NATURALISM

In Naturalism the God of Theism who was reduced to an impersonal creator in Deism is even further reduced out of existence and completely replaced by reason. Naturalism says that matter which exists eternally is all that there is. The cosmos as a closed system of cause and effect governed by natural laws. Human beings are complex machines in the system who are unique among the animals because of our ability for conceptual thought, speech and the creation of culture. It is this uniqueness that gives humanity it's value not a supernatural being who creates with an overarching purpose.



## NIHILISM

The term 'nihilism' comes from the Latin 'nihil' which means 'nothing'. The term was first popularised in 19th century Russia. Nihilism is the denial of everything - God, philosophy, knowledge, morality, values, even the reality of existence itself (hence the blank box pictured adjacent). Any religious and moral truths are seen as entirely irrational. In other words, Nihilism is a negation of everything, where nothing has any meaning and where everything is therefore permitted. For nihilists, human beings are merely conscious machines without the ability to do anything effective or meaningful in life. Some forms of existentialism are nihilistic viewing humans as nothing but what they make of themselves.



## PANENTHEISM

This view which literally means "Everything is in God" was first articulated in West in the 19th - 20th centuries. While not a common view it is still held to today particularly by some Hindus. Panentheism says that everything that exists in the world (including humanity) exists as a part of God. This view is an attempt to combine the strengths of Theism with Pantheism. Since the world is a part of God, everything that happens in the world affects God and changes Him and therefore changes God's knowledge of the world. Also, since everything is only a part of God, there is also a part of God that remains the same despite the changes in the world. God is therefore independent of any particular event that happens in the world but still requires the world for him to exist.



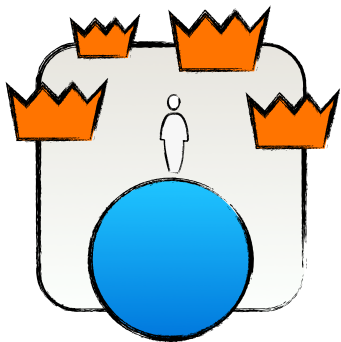
## PANTHEISM

This view which literally means "Everything is God" was first coined in the 18th century. It is seen by some as an attempt at finding a mediation between Theism and Atheism. This view is common in Eastern monistic religions. There are many forms of Pantheism but they generally view God not as transcendent but rather as immanent in the world. Since God is viewed as being immanent in all of the substance of the world, God is therefore not omnipresent (i.e. doesn't exist in totality anywhere) existing as an impersonal force animating the world. This existence of the eternal God in all the parts of the world means that the sense of time in the world is illusory. Also, since the world is God, then everything in the world is in some sense divine leaving man without any real freedom in the world.



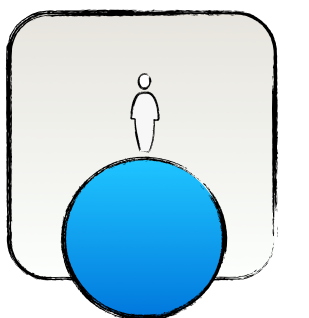
## POLYTHEISM

The term 'polytheism' literally means 'many Gods'. Polytheism was widespread in the ancient world particularly in the Egyptian, Greek and Roman Empires. In Polytheism the supernatural forces believed to exist in the world are personified into a cosmic family. Each member of the divine family is used to explain natural phenomena that occur in the world and to establish a cultures role in the universe. These gods are often unpredictable and unreliable. Polytheistic belief continues today in India through Hinduism, in Asia and in the tribal religions of Africa and Native America. Each believer in polytheistic religion is free to worship the god of their choice in the way they see fit. However such flexibility and lack of accountability often leaves followers living their life at the whim of these gods without a sense of purpose or eternal hope.



## RELATIVISM

Relativism has become popular as a result of post-modern philosophical thinking of the 20th Century. Post-Modern philosophy rejected all modern notions of an absolute truth because such expressions of truth were viewed as an abuse of power for the suppression other individuals. In order to avoid exerting such power over others the response was not to deny all truth but rather to say that the truth is relative to each individual. In other words the truth of something is what I think to be true but it may not be true for someone else who has their own truth. Religious Relativism otherwise known as Religious Pluralism says that all religions are true, that each religion is a valid expression of faith in God.



## THEISM

The term 'theism' comes from the Greek word 'theos' meaning 'God' and so is literally the view that God exists. While this view has been held for 1000's of years the term is only recent (17th century). The term is often used as the opposite to Atheism. Broadly defined, Theism is the belief that God being thoroughly transcendent (i.e. separate from the world) and impersonal is the ultimate reference point that gives meaning to the world. This view of the world is held for example by Muslims. More narrowly defined, Theism believes that God, while transcendent, is also immanent in the world and personal (see Christian Theism).

