

To ponder ...

THEISM & NON-THEISM

by **Chögyam Trungpa**

As far as I can see, there is no difference between theism and nontheism, basically speaking. Declaring an involvement with any kind of "ism" turns out to be a matter of self and other. In fact, the whole question of self and other can then become very important. But if you really pursue any spiritual path, you will discover, surprisingly, that self and other are one thing. Self is other, other is self.

Spirituality is simply a means of arousing one's spirit, of developing a kind of spiritedness. Through that you begin to have greater contact with reality. You are not afraid of discovering what reality is all about, and you are willing to explore your individual energy. You actually choose to work with the essence of your existence, which could be called genuineness. An interest in spirituality doesn't mean that you lack something, or that you have developed a black hole in your existence which you are trying to compensate for or cover over with some sort of religious patchwork. It simply means that you are capable of dealing with reality.

Whether you worship someone else or you worship yourself, it is the same thing. Both theism and nontheism can be problematic if you are not involving

yourself personally and fully. You may think you are becoming spiritual, but instead you could just be trying to camouflage yourself behind a religious framework—and still you will be more visible than you think.

Usually we say that in theistic traditions you worship an external agent, and in nontheistic traditions you do not worship an external agent. Nonetheless, in either case you might just be looking for your version of a babysitter.

Whether you hire a babysitter from the outside world or from within your own family doesn't really matter. In either case your state of being isn't being expressed properly, thoroughly, because you are trying to use some kind of substitute. We are not trying here to sort out which tradition, or which particular type of merchandise, is better. We are talking in terms of needing to develop a personal connection with one's body and one's mind. That is why the contemplative traditions of both East and West are very important.



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See <http://shambhala.com/trungpa/>.