

Epicureanism as the spiritual essence or 'religion' of an entire community

Post by “Kalosyni” of March 26, 2025 at 9:38 AM

I haven't re-read this thread (and there has been a lot discussed here already)...but this seems to be the right place to post...on my mind this morning: "What makes something a religion?" I put that question into Google and the AI came back with this:

Quote

AI Overview

Something becomes a religion when it involves a unified system of beliefs and practices relating to the sacred, often including rituals, moral codes, and a sense of community, as defined by sociologist Émile Durkheim.

Here's a more detailed breakdown:

- **Beliefs and Practices:**

Religions typically involve a set of beliefs about the nature of reality, the divine, and the afterlife, along with practices like prayer, rituals, and ceremonies.

- **Sacred Things:**

Durkheim's definition emphasizes the concept of "sacred things," which are objects, places, or ideas that are set apart and treated with reverence and respect.

- **Moral Codes:**

Many religions also include a system of ethics or moral guidelines that dictate how individuals should behave and interact with others.

- **Community:**

Religion often fosters a sense of community among believers, who share common beliefs and practices.

- **Worship:**

While not always a defining feature, many religions involve the worship of a deity or deities.

- **Examples:**

Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and Hinduism are all examples of religions that share these characteristics.

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As for my own definition of what I would consider a religion -- I would say that all religions are defined by people who come together in-person to do "worship" together, with multiple rituals and ceremonies that are considered holy/sacred/consecrated in that they are done because they "seek to transcend the earthly realm". Religion is always seeking to connect with something beyond physical matter and to connect with a world existing or transcending beyond death.

We do not have evidence of any of the above in ancient Epicureans, and the extant texts of Epicurus do not provide any guidance for this. Since Epicurean philosophy holds that the soul dies with the body, then there is no after-life. Also, physical things exist because of physical causes - there are no supernatural forces in the world. Given these concepts, I think it would be difficult to consider or turn Epicurean philosophy into a religion.

These are just my current thoughts, processing some ideas.