

From the Memphite Theology:

"Thus Ptah was satisfied after
He made all things and
all divine words.
He gave birth to the Gods,
He made the towns,
He established the nomes [regions],
He placed the Gods
in Their shrines,
He settled Their offerings,
He established Their shrines,
He made Their bodies according
to Their wishes.
Thus the Gods entered
into Their bodies,
Of every wood, every stone,
every clay,
Every thing that grows upon Him,
In which They came to be.
Thus were gathered to Him all
the Gods and Their ka's [spirits],
Content, united with the
Lord of the Two Lands."
*- translated by Miriam Lichtheim,
Ancient Egyptian Literature, vol. I*



Do Egyptian Pagans Worship Idols?

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One of the most common misconceptions about Pagan and other non-Abrahamic (that is, not part of Judaism, Christianity and Islam) faiths is that we "worship idols". The familiar injunction against 'graven images' has left many unaware of how statues, painted images and plaques of Gods and Goddesses are actually used. The use of images - we prefer more neutral terms like "icon" over 'idol', which is derogatory - in worship is not a 'primitive' or simplistic practice. Rather, it reflects our understanding of the interconnected worlds of materiality and spirit.

We believe that, because this world was created by the Divine, the Gods and Goddesses, They can inhabit any part of it that They wish. Because They are so much more infinite than human beings, They are also capable of inhabiting as many forms as They choose. When we consecrate a statue for use in worship, we invite the deity that it represents to use the image as a vessel, in order to interact more directly with us.

For Pagans who are artistically inclined, the very act of creating a painting or sculpture of a deity becomes an act of worship. We are using the talents our Gods gave to us to express our own unique understanding of those Gods. The creative process brings us closer to Them.

If a statue gets damaged or broken by accident, we may feel disappointed, but we also understand that the God or Goddess represented by it has not been harmed. They can inhabit a physical form, but They can also leave that form at any time They see fit.

In the early 1st millenium C.E., newly converted Christians broke into temples and private homes to steal and destroy Pagan icons. Temple reliefs were defaced - their damage still visible to this day - and the consecrated statues were melted down or even put into lavatories. But despite all of the abuse from early Christians, who were trying to "kill the demons" they believed were inhabiting the statues and reliefs, the Gods and Goddesses survived. Today, Their modern worshipers have renewed the tradition of giving Them physical vessels, as a means to interact with us through prayers and rituals.

In our own words:

"I've always felt like the term "idol" implies that you're worshipping the statue itself, which isn't my perspective on it. I know my icons are just cheap little statues I got on the Internet; I'm worshipping the Gods they represent."

"When people see us washing, anointing or clothing our icons, they normally jump to the conclusion that we are worshipping the icon itself."

"We don't worship the statues, we worship the Gods themselves. If anything, the statues are a physical representation of Their appearance for the sake of having a focal point."

"I don't have to have an image of Amun-Ra, but it is nice to have His presence represented."

- members of the Kemetic Reform group

