



МІНІСТЕРСТВО ОСВІТИ І НАУКИ,
МОЛОДІ ТА СПОРТУ УКРАЇНИ

ХАРКІВСЬКИЙ ДЕРЖАВНИЙ УНІВЕРСИТЕТ
ХАРЧУВАННЯ ТА ТОРГІВЛІ

RELIGION LECTURE NOTES

Конспект лекцій з дисципліни «Релігієзнавство»
для студентів з англomовною формою навчання

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**Тематичний план дисципліни Релігієзнавство
для студентів з англomовною формою навчання
(денне відділення)**

Змістовний модуль 1

Залі- ковий кредит	назва теми	всього годин	у тому числі				Оцінка за поточним контролем мін-макс балів
			аудиторні заняття		самостій- на робота	Інд. конс. робота	
			лекції	семінарські заняття			
1,5	Definition and elements of religion	6	2	2	2		4-6
	Historical development and ways of classifying religion	7	2	2	2	1	5-7
	Classical religions	8	2	2	4		6-8
	Beliefs about Ultimate Reality	7	2	2	2	1	4-6
	The Spiritual Path. Religion as Transformation of the Self	6	2	2	2		4-6
	The Disciplines of Humanity. Science and Religion, Philosophy and The Arts	7	2	2	2	1	5-7
	Scripture and symbols	7	2	2	3		4-6
	Evil and Suffering. Values, Morality & Ethics	7	2	2	2	1	4-7
	Death and the Afterlife.	8	2	2	3	1	4-7
	Підсумок:						40-60
	Залік з дисципліни		2				20-40
	Всього за дисципліною		65	18	18	22	5

LECTURE NOTES

Lecture 1. Definition and elements of religion

"What is Religion?"

"Does anyone know what the term 'religion' means?" (etymologically)

"Religion": Literally "tie/bind back", "To Bind Together" (a "**ligament**" binds bones together)

Binds us together in a community with other people (**horizontal** relationship)

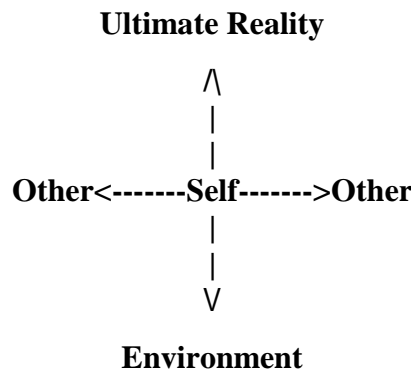
Binds us to something bigger than ourselves, to our origins, the ultimate reality behind our existence (e.g., God) (**vertical** relationship)

Religion as Relationship:

communion - "with union," linking two as one (Yoga = "union, to join" [Yoke])

The vertical relationship: Relationship with Ultimate Reality/"God" - source and origin, something bigger than the immediate, present self

The Horizontal relationship: relationship with other selves, other people (moral and social aspects of religion), sometimes extended to include other aspects of our environment, a relationship with the non-human aspects of nature (e.g., Native Ukrainian and other earth traditions)



Thus religion, defined as relationship, may have the self at the center but extends to many levels both bigger and broader than just our self in its current state.

Religion teaches us to go beyond the self, beyond egotism and selfishness.

A **substantive** definition is concerned with what is believed in religion

A **functional** definition is concerned with what religion does, how it functions in our lives (socially, psychologically)

Some definitions may refer to both the substance and function of religion

A **useful definition** is:

inclusive but not so broad as to include pursuits not generally considered religious

definitive but not so specific as to leave some religions out

While there are many specific and different religions, religion itself is an abstract concept - a general category of human pursuit that manifests itself in a variety of ways in different cultures, times and places. It is easy enough to create a list of different religions by name but to lump them all together in a single group (religion) and then try to describe or define what that group is, can be a rather

perplexing task. We need to think in terms of a category rather than in terms of “kinds of...” that fit into that category.

Avoiding the “cop-out” and an analogy:

Sometimes a student will argue that there are so many different religions that there is no way to propose a single definition or description of religion that will apply to them all. This suggests that each religion is a category unto itself. If this were the case, we would not even have the word “religion”. This observation is like suggesting that there are apples and oranges and bananas and peaches and pears and grapes but there is no way to explain what “fruit” is without explaining what each kind of fruit is. If you were asked to define what “fruit” is, you would not use a description of an apple or an orange to explain what counts as “fruit” because “fruit” comes in so many different varieties. “Fruit” is something bigger than any specific kind of fruit and religion is bigger than any particular kind of religion. **We want to avoid a definition that is too narrow.**



But we also want to **avoid a definition of religion that is too broad**. If, in trying to define what “fruit” is we actually end up defining what “food” is, then we are giving a definition of fruit that also includes things that are not fruits. And we’d want to be able to distinguish between fruits and vegetables, thus offering a definition that is “**sufficiently specific**” to what we are trying to define.

We also want a definition that is **comprehensive** of the multi-faceted nature of that which we are defining (be it fruit or religion). To focus merely on one characteristic is insufficient. Religion is not merely a matter of "belief in an higher power" although this may certainly be among some of the most important aspects of religion.

When defining something we also want to **avoid value judgments**. We would not define “fruit” by saying it is "something that tastes good". Not only is this a value judgment that not everyone would agree with, it is rather vague and thus not very helpful.

A good working definition of religion...

1. **Is broad enough** to include all religions:

- It should not define religion in a way that leaves out some manifestations of religion
- Nor should it leave out any specific religion

For example: If we say that religion means “belief in God” (having in mind God as Jews and Christians think about God), we will leave out those people who worship many deities (a general word meaning gods or goddesses) and those who worship none at all. This description also focuses on belief and excludes other important dimensions of religion (e.g. practices, rituals, moral values, etc).

2. **Must be sufficiently specific** (not too broad nor too vague) to distinguish religion from other similar things, such as a non-religious philosophy of life or a deeply held and passionate commitment to a social or political cause

3. Needs to be as **free of prejudice or bias** as we can make it

- Descriptions that state what “true” or “genuine” religion is often fall into the trap of imposing one person’s or group’s bias on the description of religion generally.
- Avoid being a negative critique of religion
For example, Freud’s statement that “Religion is an infantile dependency, a neurosis” or Karl Marx’s statement that “religion is the opium of the people and the sigh of the oppressed” do not describe what religion is so much as explain it as a psychological or sociological phenomena (**reductionism**). These definitions also discredit religion, casting it in a negative light.
- Avoid offering a theory of religion (e.g. explaining the origin or purpose of religion, such as Freud and Marx do) rather than describing it objectively.

Sometimes a student will side-step the task, stating that religion is so personal and unique to each individual that there cannot be just one definition. In fact, there have been countless definitions offered by many well respected scholars and philosophers. Just as it is certainly possible to define what fruit is, even though there are many kinds of fruit, so it is certainly possible to define what religion is as a general category. However, it is *not* a matter of a "right" or "wrong" definition. It's a matter of more or less comprehensive, biased, precise, etc. Some attempts to define religion will naturally be better than others; it is a **matter of scale** from "better" to "worse" in terms of *usefulness* as a "working" definition. It is certainly possible to begin the task using the points noted above. Our definition can always be subject to revision as one learns more and thinks deeper on the subject. The task is one of ongoing fine-tuning but we do need a place to start.

Common characteristics (substance and function):

We can begin by considering what most, if not all religions have in common that distinguish them from things that are not religion. We seek to brainstorm the common features and characteristics of any religion even while realizing that any given religion may or may not have all these characteristics. In such case, those things that share a majority of the characteristics are more likely to be religions while those things that share fewer characteristics may be less likely to be religions. This is an approach to defining religion sometimes called a “**cluster**” definition or identifying “family traits” (the family being that of “religion”). We can consider characteristics related to the **substance** of religion: beliefs, values, practices. We can also consider characteristics related to the **function** of religion (the unique role religion plays in our lives as distinguished from the functions of other things in our lives).

So: of what does religion consist (its **substance**) and what is its unique **function** in our lives?

The Challenge:

The challenge of developing a good definition is to be short and sweet. Limit it to a sentence or two – a **simple but comprehensive statement** rather than a lengthy paragraph.

For example:

Religion is a set of beliefs and practices which serve to subordinate us to something superior or holy in order to justify the events that control our lives.

This definition merely **describes** religion, identifying the **substance** of religion ("set of beliefs and practices") as well as its **function** ("subordinating us to something superior or holy, justifying events that control our lives"). This definition is "**sufficiently specific**" by its reference to "something superior or holy" and yet **broad enough** to apply to many different kinds of religions (the "something superior or holy" may be one or more gods or even a sense of the sacred that does not involve any personal deities at all). In referencing both "beliefs and practices" it is **sufficiently comprehensive** without

being overly wordy. This definition, being merely descriptive, **does not hint at any value judgment**, neither positive nor negative in nature.

Three elements of Religion: "What are some elements of religion?"

Intellectual: Religion as **a way of thinking**, as a philosophical system, addresses basic questions regarding personal and communal origins, purpose and destiny. The basis for our beliefs, doctrine and creed expressed through myth, scripture and philosophical/theological speculation.

- Where did we come from? (question of origins, creation)
- Why are we here? How ought we to live? What ought to be our relationship with each other and with the source of our origins? (issues of values and morals)
- Where are we going? What happens when we die? How do we get there? (afterlife and salvation issues)
- Who are we? (question of the nature of human nature, the soul)
- Who is God? (question of the nature of Ultimate Reality)
- "Is there someone watching out for us or are we on our own?"

Emotional: Religion as **a way of feeling**, as experiential, addresses how we relate with the divine (the vertical relationship); the basis of mysticism and the spiritual life; the esoteric (hidden) side of religion; draws on personal, internal feelings such as: *awe, faith, hope, gratitude, appreciation, ecstasy, joy, bliss, peace, reverence, fear...*

These feelings cause us to respond in certain ways both intellectually (thinking certain ideas about the cause of the feelings) and actively (performing certain activities as an outward expression of the feelings)

Active/Performative (physical): Religion as **a way of acting**, as a social system, addresses how we relate with each other (the horizontal relationship); the exoteric (External) side of religion

- **Spiritual practices:** meditation, prayer, chanting, ritual
- **Physical forms:** buildings/architecture, ritual objects, statues and other art forms
- **Communal celebrations:** rites of passage/life cycle celebrations, holiday celebrations (often linking the present to the past, recognizing the origins of the community)
- **Social laws:** morals & ethics, prohibitions & taboos

Social **institutions/organizations**, religious communities: leaders (gurus/ priests/founders) & followers (disciples, laity), hierarchies, obedience & discipline, historical relationship to past generations (origins of the community)

Lecture 2. Historical development and ways of classifying religion

"How old do you think human civilization (history) is?" (not the human species, human civilization)

5500-6000 years. Before that is prehistory, prehistoric. The most ancient civilizations include Egyptian and Mesopotamian dating from at least 3000 - 3500 BCE

A word about dating: use of **BCE** and **CE** for numbering centuries (20th cent. = 1900's, 6th cent. = 500's, *"6th cent. BCE = ?"* [500's BCE])

Religion: appeared in search of the good life (survival and advancement) through enhanced relationships

Primal/Prehistoric Religion: religions of a people, e.g., caveman, Native American, Australian Aboriginal and African tribal religions - **oral** traditions.

Archaic (dead) religions: religions of a culture, e.g., Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Mesopotamia, Mayan, Aztec, Inca.

Classic Religions: the major *living* religions since the "Axis" age 2500 years ago.

Modern Religions: variations of Classic religion, as well as new religions, influenced by changes in society and scientific understanding since the 16th century.

- **Primal religion** was focused on survival and life. Fertility was a big issue (fertility figures) as was magic (sympathetic magic of cave paintings) to foster good hunting, good harvest and good health. (**Religion as a relationship with the environment** - earth and animals)
- **Archaic religions** thrived in large cosmopolitan settings (Greece, Rome, ancient China, etc.) and were focused on maintaining both cosmic and political order. Importance was placed on hierarchy. Kings served as priests responsible for sacrifices which would appease the powers and gods to look favorably upon the society. The issue here was large scale survival - survival and thriving of the society. (**Religion as relationship with others** - human social system)
- By the time of the development of the **Classical religions**, basic survival of both individual and society were given. These religions shift to a focus on advancement (growth and transformation) and spiritual survival and thriving beyond/after this worldly life. This was a concern for positive survival in the afterlife (i.e., heaven rather than hell), for salvation. (**Religion as relationship with Higher Power/UR** - transcendental)
- **Modern religions** influence and are influenced by changes in society and human thinking about the world we live in. While the Classical forms of religion were focused on moving us beyond this world, Modern religions are focused on making this world into the one hoped for (a "new heaven and a new earth," the "New Jerusalem"). These religions seek a transformation of self and society *here and now*. Modern religion looks not so much to the future but envisions that future as a possible and potential now (millennialism).

In a sense, the focus is still on survival: "do something to change the direction things are going or we and the entire earth may perish." Modern religion embodies the *prophetic imperative* brought on by human behavior seen as potentially destructive to the environment and to the moral fabric of self and society.

Modern religion also encompasses psychological aspects as a way of restoring and enhancing the individual self in *this* life rather than simply placing hope and faith in the life to come as Classical religion tends to do. (**Religion as relationship with self** - psychological)

- Each phase of religious development does *not* supersede the last but, rather, incorporates it. Elements of the older religions are carried over to the newer forms:

- To this day, even in Classic religions, seasonal celebrations (harvest festivals) are still observed as religious holidays (a carry over from Primal religion).
- And religion still involves hierarchies, politics and an ordering of society (institutions, ritual and moral rules to obey) as did the Archaic religions.

Ways of classifying religion

Western: Religions that developed *west* of the Urals (e.g. in the Middle East and Europe)

Eastern: Religions that developed *east* of the Urals (e.g., in India, China and Japan)

Ethnic: the religion of a particular people or culture (e.g., Judaism, Shinto, Hinduism) (tend to be localized and do *not* actively seek converts)

Universal: a religion which sees its message as true for all people (e.g., Christianity, Islam, Buddhism) (have spread throughout the world and tend to be very large in population, have actively sought converts from many cultures)

Theistic: focus on a **personal** God or gods (supernatural "person", spirit being) (most common in western religions)

Non-theistic: Ultimate Reality or ultimate goal of the religion does *not* involve a personal god (**impersonal** Ultimate Reality) (force or energy) (found mostly in the eastern religions)

The Nature of God/gods:

Transcendent: Above and beyond this world and this life (most common to devotional forms of religion, esp. Western religions)

Immanent: here and now, immediately present, indwelling - in this world and in us (common to mystical and nature religions)

Historical Forms of Religion (the evolution of religion)

Primal: prehistoric (more than 10,000 years ago) and "living" oral/tribal traditions

Archaic: religions of ancient civilizations no longer in existence (6000 - 2000 years ago)

Classic: the great "living" religions originating between 2500 and 500 years ago

Modern: contemporary variations of classic religions (developed since the 16th century) as well as truly new, independent religions

Lecture 3. The Classical Religions

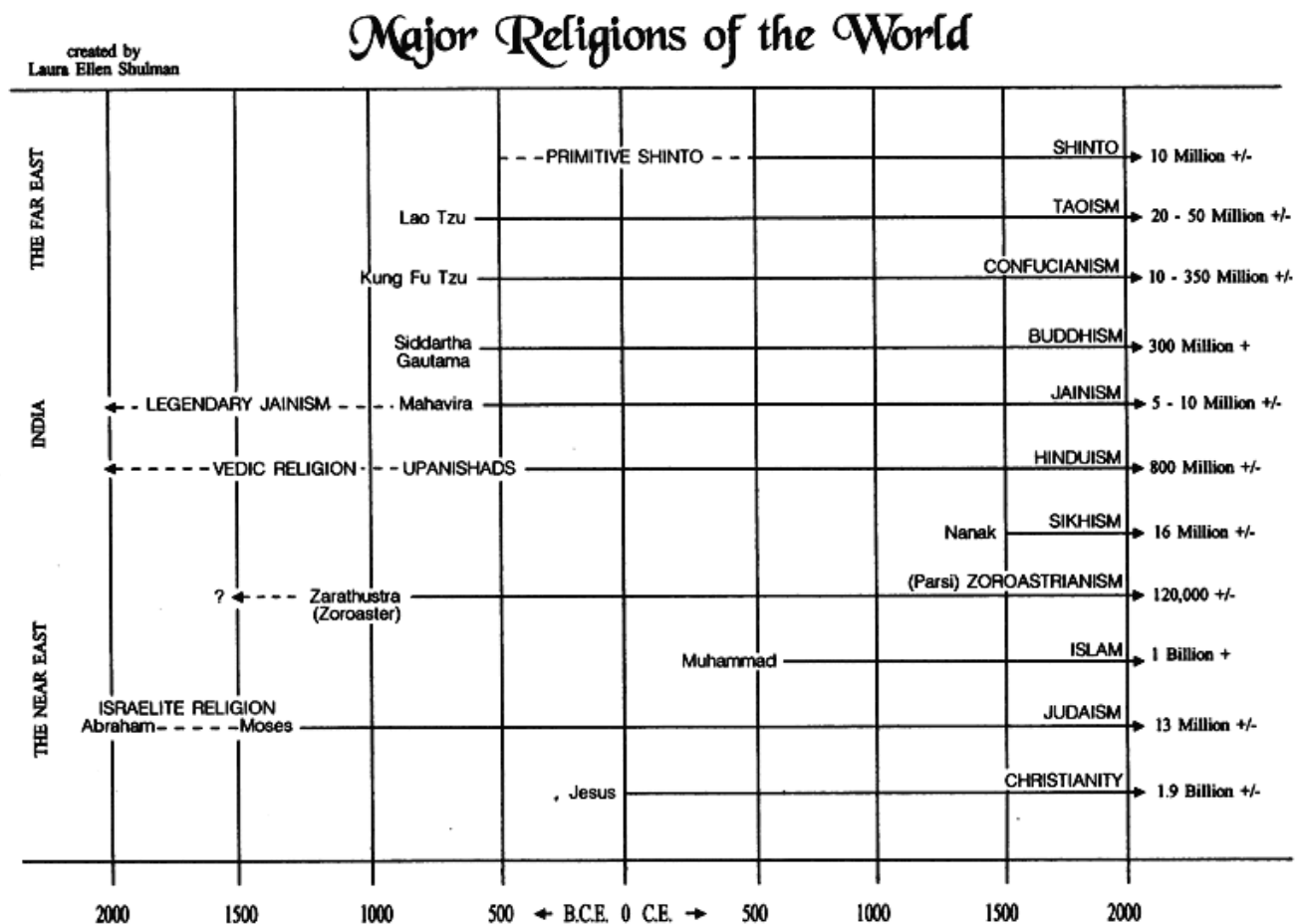
"What are the major religions in the world today?"

Student response: create list on board distinguishing between eastern and western religions

A Comparative Look at the World's Religions

Introducing the world's religions

(the "who", "what", "where" and "when" of religions)



What are they? Where are they? - the geography of religion:

Major religions: Religions that are high in population, widespread throughout the world, the basis upon which other religions were built and/or otherwise highly influential:

Ethnic Religions	World Religions
Judaism (Western)	Christianity (Western)
Hinduism (India)	Islam (Middle East, Africa, Asia)
	Buddhism (South East Asia)

Minor Religions: Religions that are limited in population, geographic locale and/or influence

- Baha'i (Persia--->world wide)
- Zoroastrianism (Persia--->India)
- Jainism (India)
- Sikhism (India)
- Taoism (China)
- Confucianism (China)
- Shinto (Japan)

When began & by whom? - A brief history of religion:

- **Hinduism:** in India (no particular person is founder) pre-Hindu indigenous religion: 3500? BCE (or earlier). Vedic religion of Aryan invaders enters India around 1500 BCE. Hindu Upanishads (transitional period of philosophical speculation, origin of Hinduism proper): 8th - 4th centuries BCE
- **Judaism:** 1900-1200 BCE by Abraham & Moses in Middle East
- **Zoroastrianism:** tenth to sixth century BCE by Zarathustra in Persia (Iran)
- **Buddhism:** sixth century BCE by Siddhartha Gautama in India (grew out of Hinduism)
- **Jainism:** fully developed in sixth century BCE by Vardhamana Mahavira in India (legendary Jainism goes back beyond the Vedic tradition)
- **Taoism:** sixth century BCE by Lao Tzu in China
- **Confucianism:** sixth century BCE by Confucius in China
- **Shinto:** primitive Shinto developed in Japan beginning in the fifth century BCE; fully developed by sixth century CE (no particular person is founder)
- **Christianity:** first century CE by Jesus & his followers in Mediterranean (grew out of Judaism)
- **Islam:** seventh century CE by Muhammad in Saudi Arabia (influenced by Judaism, Christianity & ancient Arabian religion)
- **Sikhism:** sixteenth century CE by Guru Nanak in India (influenced by Hinduism & Islam)
- **Baha'i:** mid 19th century by Baha'u'llah in Persia (Iran) (grew out of Islam)

- **Ethnic and Universal** (World) religions:

Ethnic: a religion of a particular people (e.g., Judaism, Hinduism, Shinto)

Universal: a religion which sees its message as applicable to all people (e.g., Christianity, Islam, Buddhism)

- **Theistic** (mono-, poly-) **and Non-Theistic** (atheistic, monistic) religions
- **Eastern and Western** religions: Philosophical generalities

A Comparative look at Religion, East versus West

	West (Christian)	East (Hindu)
Time:	linear	cyclical
Ultimate Reality:	Monotheistic (one personal god)	Poly- or non-theistic (many gods or impersonal)
Afterlife:	Disembodied (one life)	Embodied (Reincarnation)
The human condition:	Sin (separation from God due to bad deeds)	Ignorance & Karma (impurity of soul caused by good and bad deeds)
Liberation:	elimination of sin (= salvation)	elimination of ignorance & karma (= moksha)
Encounter with God:	God is heard (texts)	God is seen (images)
Mediated through:	Prophets (messengers of God, bring God to people)	Gurus (personal spiritual guides, bring people to god)
Revelation:	God revealed in the world through historical & relational events	Truth revealed in the mind through wisdom & philosophical ideas
Relationship between Self & God:	Dualistic ("I and Thou")	Identity ("That art Thou")

Lecture 4. Beliefs about Ultimate Reality (a.k.a.: God)

What Do We Mean by "Ultimate Reality"?: (dictionary definition)

- "Ultimate" refers to first and last things ("Alpha & Omega") (eternal)
- The essence, core or underlying basis of everything (origin, source, creator)
- That upon which everything else depends but which, itself, is non-dependent (self-existent)
- UR is not a physical object within the cosmos but it pervades the entire cosmos and all things contained therein (non-physical/spiritual). It is abstract, not concrete.
- It is hidden beneath the surface of things. Things can be known directly by the senses but Ultimate Reality, the essential *nature* of those things, cannot be known empirically; it is only intuited (intuition).
- Its qualities or characteristics are mysterious (same root word as "mystic"), invisible, infinite, ineffable (cannot be spoken of directly - words are designed to address physical, empirical reality)
- UR is referred to indirectly through metaphor, myth and symbols used to hint at its nature (UR is "*like*", the "kingdom of God is *like*...")

What is the Nature of Ultimate Reality?

- It may be understood as transcendent (above & beyond this world) and/or immanent (within this world)
- Ultimate Reality may be understood to be of a personal or impersonal nature (theistic or non-theistic beliefs)
- "Theism", "Atheism", "Agnosticism", "Non-theistic" pertain to *beliefs about* the nature of Ultimate Reality, not to the actual nature of It (although we are usually convinced that our belief is actually reflective of that Reality to which it alludes).
- Discuss personification and anthropomorphism ("man-shaped"): God imaged in the form of man. The Bible says man is made in the form (image) of God (the imagination of God) *not* the other way around.
- Xenophanes: "if oxen and horses could speak and draw they would tell us that the gods are oxen and horses"

Many gods vs. one God? - a case for polytheism:

- As difficult as it may be for a monotheist to comprehend how anyone could believe in many gods, a polytheist would not be able to understand how monotheists could reject the notion of many gods. Many people, why not many gods? A reasonable assumption.
- A greater mystery: how ever did humanity move from polytheistic to monotheistic belief?
- Most polytheistic beliefs do hold that there is one high god over all the others (e.g., Zeus, African tribal beliefs). The high god is just too transcendent and distant. The people interact more with the lesser gods and so they are the ones that are given more attention.
- One God with many attributes (Monotheism) or many gods each with a different attribute (polytheism)? Polytheism sees each god as a specialist (e.g., creator, preserver, thunder god, war god...), each representing a certain attribute (like patron saints). Monotheism simply lumps all those attributes onto one God.

Beliefs about the Nature of Ultimate Reality

What is Ultimate Reality?: That which is before and beyond (transcending) the reality of the world we perceive with our senses. That which is the ground, basis and/or origin of reality as we know it. The underlying (immanent) essence of reality. That which remains when all else is gone. That which is eternal, unchanging and all pervading.

Theism generally refers to a belief about some sort of *personal* deity or deities (i.e., a god or gods who has the qualities of a person e.g., freewill, intention, emotions, desires, gender, etc.). Theism can take any of a number of forms:

Polytheism: There is more than one god (or there are many gods). (ex: Bhakti Hinduism) (see also: "Animism", below)

Henotheism: One god only is worthy of worship at any given time and/or place although the existence of other gods is not necessarily denied, indeed usually accepted. One's chosen god may change from time to time but only one god is worshipped at a time. Often associated with tribal or family deities. (ex: Bhakti Hinduism, early Biblical theism)

Monotheism: There is one unified, perfect being that, although distinguished from the cosmos, is the source of it and continues to sustain it in its forms and powers and, in some sense, providentially guides it. (ex: Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Baha'i, Sikh)

Deism: God created the cosmos and established its physical and moral order but now exercises no continuing providential guidance or authority over it. God is now totally transcendent (the old "God is dead" belief).

Atheism: There is no God no matter in what sense God is defined. (see "Humanism", below)

Agnosticism: Knowledge of certainty has not been attained about such a question as to whether there is a God or not. There is the possibility that such knowledge may be attainable but, as of now, it is best to remain open-minded.

Pantheism: "God" is the name for the unity of the cosmos taken as a whole. God is everywhere at all times. All things and beings are modes, attributes, or appearances of one single reality or being. God is totally immanent (in the physical world) not transcendent (above and beyond the physical world). (ex: Shinto, Wicca)

Panentheism: The world is included in God's being something as cells are included in a larger organism although the world does not exhaust God's being or creativity. God has all of finite being as part of Its being and experience but (unlike the Pantheistic view) transcends it. There is a real freedom and spontaneity in the world, therefore it is impossible even for God to know the future hence God is, in some sense, temporal (limited by time). (ex: Western mysticism)

The subtle difference: *Pantheism* might say: "The tree is god" while Panentheism would say: "God is *in* the tree"
Pantheism sees the world/cosmos *as* god, while Panentheism sees God *in* the world/cosmos

Some Non-Theistic Beliefs:

Monism: All reality is of a single character. All is one. Unlike pantheism, Monism often denies the reality of the many. The Ultimate Reality of Monism is often *not* that of a personal superior being but more of an impersonal substance or force. (ex: Vedanta philosophy of Hinduism)

Dualism: There are two basic realms or forces at work in the cosmos: good vs. evil, active vs. passive, light vs. dark, spiritual vs. physical, etc. The goal may be to focus on one force (the good, the light, the spiritual) over the other (ex: Zoroastrianism, Gnosticism) or to maintain a balance or harmony between the forces (ex: Taoism).

Where one is to overpower the other, the forces are usually seen as *supernatural*. Where the forces are to be in balance, they are usually seen as natural. These realms or forces may or may not be personified (see "Theism") and/or inhabited by personal spirit beings e.g., God and Satan, Angels and Demons (see "Spiritualism", below)

Animism: All natural phenomena are possessed of souls or spirits that animate them and explain their special characteristics. (ex: primal religions, Shinto)

Panpsychism: All reality is composed of beings that possess consciousness ranging from the lowest degree of unity, awareness and purpose to the highest. (a little more sophisticated formulation than Animism) (ex: Jainism)

Spiritualism: There exist non-physical spirit entities which may include spirits of the dead, angels, demons and other such personal (or personified) energies or powers which can be accessed by human beings through various means. (ex: ancient China, Native American, Wicca, Mahayana Buddhism)

Solipsism: Only the self with its perceptions exists. All other entities depend on that self and have no independent reality of their own. Only the ideas within the self constitute the extent of knowledge and the range of reality. In essence: we each exist alone and are our own god and the god of all we perceive around us which is but a manifestation of our own thought. (ex: "Consciousness Only" school of Buddhism)

Naturalism: All actualities that we can know anything about are temporal and spatial. Since nature includes all temporal and spatial reality, together with its possibilities, all that we ever experience is nature. All knowledge of actualities must be gained by empirical methods requiring observation. Human experience is vastly deeper and richer than knowledge. Nature includes far more than our little system of knowledge at any one time can comprehend.

Art and symbols can bring to conscious awareness a depth and fullness of reality far exceeding the abstractions of propositional truth. "God" is the name for that eternal factor in experience which operates to transform us and drive us to realize our potentialities and highest good. (ex: Transpersonal Psychology, Taoism?, Neo-Confucianism, Tantric Buddhism)

Humanism: We are "on our own" in the universe which is essentially indifferent to us. Whatever satisfaction is to be enjoyed must be achieved through humanity's ability to control the physical world in which it lives and through its understanding and use and/or change of social forces in order to make them better serve humanity. The outlook is entirely this-worldly. Science and the scientific method are the primary keys to the hope for a better world. (ex: Nietzsche, Ethical Humanism, Confucianism?)

Lecture 5. The Spiritual Path

Religion as Transformation of the Self

*We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time*

- T.S. Eliot, Four Quartets

Some religions (e.g., Buddhism, Jainism, Taoism, Confucianism) are non-theistic. God is not at the center of these religions but the self is. Although theistic religions are focused upon God, it is still the **self** which is the **center**. It is the self which seeks a positive relationship with God. Thus, *what all religions have in common is not God so much as the self*.

What **all religions**, theistic or not, **seek** is a **transformation of the self**. Be it transformed through contact/association/relationship with God (Christianity calls this "conversion" [change], "redemption," "repentance" - a "turning around") or through some other means such as meditation which leads to "self-realization" or enlightenment, **transformation of the self** seems to be a **more basic element**, the **defining factor, of religion**.

East vs. West: in summation and contrast:

- **Eastern** religions tend to **go to and through the self to find the Ultimate Truth about reality** (e.g., Hindu Brahman identified with personal Atman, Buddha Dharma through understanding of self/consciousness)
- **Western** religions tend to **find Ultimate Reality** (i.e., "God") **coming to and through the self** and on into society (e.g., through prophets or the person of Jesus Christ)

Ultimate Reality <-----> Self
west ---> <--- East

Thus:

- In the **East** people go to God - spiritual life is an **active search** for Truth ("enlightenment").
- In the **West** God comes to people - spiritual life is a **passive reception** of Truth ("revelation").

Spiritual Paths

- **Devotion** (emotional) - "Faith righteousness" (*Bhakti*)
- **Behavior** (physical) oriented: practice (service and ritual) - "works righteousness" (*Karma*, orthopraxy = "straight practice")
- **Knowledge** and wisdom (intellectual): a search for truth (philosophy) - "The truth shall set you free" (*Jnana*, orthodoxy = "straight ideas" [doxology])
- **Asceticism** - self denial (of physical needs): fasting, poverty, chastity/celebrity - retreat (hermitage) from the world of man and society
- **Meditation**: (introspective) Hindu Raja Yoga & Eight-fold path of Buddhism (notes from Rel 231) (Huston Smith **video** on yoga [20 min]) (**handout** "Practice Makes Peaceful")

Magic and religion:

- Real magic is **not stage illusion**, **not** the magic we see **on TV and movies** (e.g., Bewitched, Charmed)
- Magic seeks to **control impersonal powers** while religion seeks to relate to personal deities

- Magic is a way to **connect with** the **powers** that be, to **harness** those energies and **redirect** them **for practical purposes**
- There is an element of **magic in religion**: both are ritualistic in that they use special words (incantations or prayers), gestures and formulas (ritual actions) to accomplish the desired end result. When a religion believes the correct performance of **ritual** is extremely important for success is when that religion appears most magical.
- Magic itself is *not* bad. There is "black" magic and "white" magic. Black magic, designed to harm others for personal gain, is **bad because it is self centered** *not* because it is magic. **Wicca** stresses good magic: "do what thou wilt but harm none"

The psychology of spiritual development

Stages of Faith Development			
Age	Faith is...	Authority is...	Bob Kegan:
Early Childhood:	imitated	Parents	"Faith ought" (inclusive, seeking love)
School Years:	learned	Parents & teachers	"Faith taught" (independent, seeking truth)
Adolescence:	by assent	Peers (admired others)	"Faith bought" (inclusive, seeking love)
Young Adulthood:	self-constructed	Self	"Faith sought" (independent, seeking truth)
Mid-life and beyond:	expansive	Creative interchange	"Faith fought for" (inclusive, seeking love)
Very mature Adult:	universal	The universe? Universal Truth?	"Faith wrought" (independent, seeking truth)

- **Early childhood** (ages 4-8): "Intuitive-Projective" faith, **faith is imitated**: watching, intuitive, wonder-filled, mood sensitive, imaginative, **parents as authority**
- **School years** (ages 8-12): "Mythic-literal" faith, **faith is learned**: marked by: collecting information, lore, concrete thinkers, joiners, learners, ritualists, self-aware, literal, identity conscious, rational, **parents and teachers as authority**
- **Adolescence** (age 13+): "Synthetic-conventional" faith, **faith by assent**: abstract, conceptual thinkers, theorizers, idealistic, visionary, romantic, inconsistent, vulnerable, "they say," borrowers of beliefs, yearning for approval, **admired others (peers) as authority**

- **Young adulthood** (if ever): "Individuative-Reflective" faith, **faith is self-constructed**: searching, questioning, doubting, exploring, defining, theologizing, debating, clarifying, boundary-building, **self as authority**
- **Mid-life and beyond** (if ever): "Conjunctive" faith, **faith is expansive**: poetic; mythic; tolerant of ambiguity, mystery, paradox; searching for reconnections with formerly disavowed traditions, welcoming of all human expressions of faith in Ultimacy, interdependence, **creative interchange as authority**
- **Very mature adult** (if ever): "Universalizing" faith, **faith is universal**: saints and bodhisattvas, unified, integrating, totally encompassing faith, faith is life-connecting

Bob Kegan: stages of faith transition back and forth between **inclusion and independence**; between the "truth of love" (trust) and a "love of truth" (beliefs):

- **Faith imitated is inclusive** ("Faith ought"): "this is how I ought to be"
- **Faith learned is independent** ("Faith taught"): birth of a role, of "me"
- **Faith by assent is inclusive** ("Faith bought"): conformist, we *are* relationships
- **Faith self-constructed is independent** ("Faith sought"): autonomy, we *have* relationships
- **Faith expansive is inclusive** ("Faith fought for"): reciprocity, we are *in* relationships
- **Faith universal is independent** ("Faith wrought" - fully constructed)

"Faith naught" (no faith): authority is secular society and science

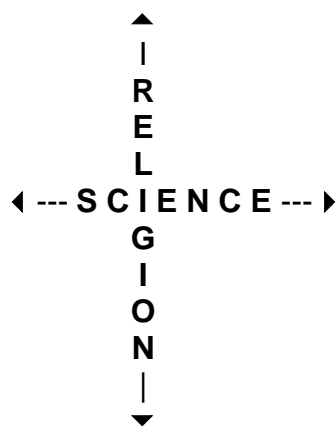
Lecture 6. The Disciplines of Humanity

Science and Religion, Philosophy and The Arts

Religions represent what people *believe* to be true.

There is no way to objectively and definitively determine which religion or beliefs actually *are* true.

- Science and religion, working on different levels of reality, complement each other rather than conflict with each other.

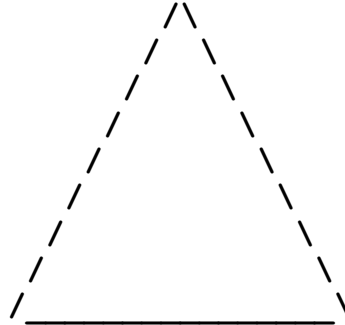


- Science works on a horizontal level, relating us to *this* physical world.
- Religion works on a vertical level, relating us to a higher world, to some other realm.

Diagram: Ways of knowing and ways of expressing; science & technology, arts & humanities

Kinds of language & its uses

The **Historian**
uses **Directive** language
to discuss **social & physical activity** of the **body**



Hermeneutics
uses **Informative** language
to discuss **intellectual ideas** of the **mind**

The **Behavioral Scientist**
uses **Affective** language
to discuss **emotions & feelings**

Religion, Science and Philosophy - the triangle of knowledge:

- **Science** is beliefs about things which can be seen or otherwise perceived with the senses ("empirical").
- **Religion** is beliefs about things which can't be seen, our attempt to understand aspects of reality beyond the limits of our senses and reason.
- **Science** starts with (is based in) the outer world, the world of matter
- **Religion** starts with (is based in) the inner world, the world of the spirit
- **Relationship between religion and philosophy: Science, Religion and Philosophy**

<p>Science</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • physical/concrete/tangible • nature (space & time) • objective • facts (answers "how", "when" "where" "what") 	<p>Religion (& Philosophy)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • non-physical/abstract/intangible • The Ultimate (the infinite & eternal) • moral & emotive (subjective) • meaning/values (answers "why" and "who" did it [man or god])
<p>Philosophy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rational • Logical • Individual thinkers • Theoretical • Believed/thought 	<p>Religion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-Rational • Intuitive (faith) • Communal-social • Practical • Lived/acted

- While philosophy is **rational**, religion is **non-rational** (not *irrational*).
- While philosophy is based on **logic**, religion relies on **intuition** (faith).
- In addition, religion is **communal** and social in nature while philosophy is, for the most part, the work of **individual** thinkers.
- Religion guides our everyday lives in **practical** ways often through rules and regulations. Philosophy often remains merely **theoretical**. Philosophy *becomes* religion in the moment it is *lived*.
- Philosophy may comprise **beliefs** about reality (metaphysics) but religion **lives** according to the ramifications of those beliefs.

Scientist **Freeman Dyson**, winner of the year 2000 Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion, considers:

...science and religion to be two windows through which we look out at the world. Neither window by itself gives a complete view. The windows are different but the world outside is the same. Religion and science can live harmoniously together in the human soul as long as each respects the other's autonomy, so long as neither claims infallibility. Conflicts occur when organized science or organized religion claims a monopoly on truth...

Science is very good at telling us what we need to know about the physical world and universe. But science does not and cannot tell us anything about ethics, morals and values. That is where religion and philosophy come in:

- Science can help us avoid or end an unwanted pregnancy but it takes philosophy and religion to tell us if we should or not
- Science can maintain life through artificial life support but it is philosophy and religion that tell us if we should or not
- Science can clone animals and maybe, one day, humans but it is philosophy and religion that tell us if we should or not

"**Can we?**" belongs to the physical world of science.

"**May we?**" belongs to the world of ethics as found in philosophy and religion.

No matter how much science can explain about the world we live in, there will still be room for religion to do what it does best: not explain the "how" of things but, rather, the "why" and to weigh values.

Science and religion are the "checks and balances" of each other: too much science without moral guidance from religion may be a dangerous thing in the long run; too much religion uninformed by science is superstition.

Lecture 7. Scripture and Symbolism

A test of what is worthy of being "scripture":

If someone just handed you a book you'd never seen before without a word concerning what it was, would it strike you as something worth building a faith on? Can we allow the content of the text to speak for itself without projecting our preconceived notions onto it? Do you think spiritual truth would be self-evident?

Some Western Texts:

- Torah
- Bible
- Qur'an
- Book of Mormon
- Nag Hammadi Library
- Dead Sea Scrolls

Some Eastern Texts:

- Rig Veda
- Bhagavad Gita
- Tripitaka
- Dhammapada
- Adi Granth
- I-ching
- Tao Te Ching
- Chuang Tzu

All these books are scripture (sacred text) for different people, different religions.

- Why do we believe that one in particular is the word of God while viewing the others as works of man?
- Why do we find one text more worthy than another, more authoritative than another?
- What determines which book we embrace as sacred? How do we know which is the word of God? [pause] Because of what other human beings have taught us or because we have examined them honestly and objectively for ourselves and made our own judgment?
- If you'd been raised in some other religion or culture, taught that some text other than the Bible was "sacred scripture," do you think your feelings about what is and is not "scripture" would be different?
- Which comes first: faith or the canon in which we place our faith, on which we base our faith? Faith influences what is written as well as what is selected for *canonization* (yes, the books of the Bible were not always official scripture. At some point in the history of our religions, those in position of authority made a decision as to what to include in the Bible and what to leave out). Once chosen, it would seem that the canon comes first and faith is based on canon ("Jesus loves me, this I know, because the Bible tells me so"). But why believe the Bible? It is Church tradition and teaching which informs us of what is canon (accepted scripture) and what the canon tells us as to doctrine.
- If scripture is the "Word of God" it is the word of men who tell us this. Better to judge the Bible (or any book) by its content, for yourself, rather than taking someone else's word for it. If you say "the Bible says it is the word of God," beware: ask yourself: who wrote those words you are reading? God or men?

Two basic kinds of scripture: understood to be...

- Revealed by God to man (western)
- Truth discovered by man (eastern)

Two basic kinds of content:

- Teachings: Ultimate and absolute truths (timeless) (*Shruti* - heard)

- Narrative: Religious/cultural history (temporal) (*Smirti* - remembered)

Two explanations as to origins of sacred texts:

- The "insider's" story: that told by the faith tradition (e.g., "revealed by God to Prophets")
- The "outsider's" story: That told by objective scholars and historians (e.g., "written by men, reflective of human beliefs and culture")

Difference between Jewish and Christian Bible:

- Hebrew Bible contains: Narrative, praise of God and God's words
- New Testament contains: Narrative, doctrine (epistles), Christ's words
- Jewish: does not contain New Testament, is translated into English directly from the original Hebrew by Rabbis and Jewish scholars
- Christian: translated into English from Greek or Latin (which was translated from Greek)

What do we mean when we say the Bible is the "Word of God"? Is that to say that every word in this book has been dictated to the men who wrote it?

The Bible is as much (if not more so) the words of men as it is the word of God, expressing what people believe, how they feel about God and how they respond to God:

- cf.: **1 Corinthians 7:25**: "...I have no command of the Lord,..." (i.e., God did not say anything about this issue) "but I give an opinion" (a human being [the writer Paul] gives a human opinion).
- In the Hebrew Bible ("Old Testament"), when God spoke it is was through prophets who made it clear that it was God's words they spoke: "And the Lord God said...", "Then the Lord said to Moses..." (**Deut. 31:14**), "Then the Lord said to me..." (**Ish. 8.1**), with Gods' words following in quotes (depending on edition)
- Much of God's direct words are mingled with narrative about what happened amongst the people - a history told by men through the eyes of the faith of men (i.e., "sacred history")
- Books like Psalms and Proverbs are liturgical texts (used in worship). They express human emotion and devotion toward God (i.e., "affective language", often indirect and metaphorical) rather than God's instruction to men. Many Psalms (hymns) begin and end "Praise the Lord!" People say this as an expression of gratefulness to God.

Example: **Psalms 146**: "I will praise the Lord..." "I will sing praises to my God." Clearly, God is not the speaker here - a man is speaking to or in response to God.

- The creation story is a narrative about what happened and talks of God in the third person ("In the beginning God..." did such and such) with the exception of when the narrative tells us what God said (e.g.: "God said 'Let there be light' and there was light" - only "Let there be light" is the word of God. The rest of the sentence is narrative told by people).

History of the Bible: Canonization

- The Bible is actually a collection of books (biblia = little books, library)
- The Bible as we know it today took shape over many centuries and is as much the work of man as of God.
- For centuries scripture was transmitted orally, composed/revealed long before it was written down. The first Gospel (Mark) was not written until at about 40 years *after* Jesus died. Is oral transmission accurate? (c.f., game of "telephone")

- Each book was hand written as a separate scroll (continuous sheet of parchment [animal skin] rather than pages in a book).
- Many books were written which we do not find in our Bibles (e.g., some books in the *Dead Sea Scrolls*, some books in the Catholic Bible [*Apocrypha*]).
- By 1st cent. CE Hebrew authorities determined which texts were authoritative. Hebrew Bible found it's final version by 1st cent. CE
- The New Testament did not arrive in its final form until the 4th century CE. Again, many books did not make the cut (e.g., *Nag Hammadi*) because they were considered "heresy" (i.e., contained different beliefs from what those in power believed: *orthodox* view).

How the Bible Got to be the way it is: Language

- The words might be the word of God but as a book, it is the product of man. God does not pick up a pen and write on paper. We might even question just how God "speaks" since God is not physical and therefore does not have lungs, tongue, mouth, vocal chords needed for speech as we know it.

- Did God reveal His word in English? [pause] No, the original language of the OT was Hebrew. Of the NT: Greek, later translated into Latin long before it was then translated into English (in any number of versions). Each translation is an interpretation ("it loses something in the translation"). So be wary of the books you place your faith in: are you really reading the word of God or the translation and interpretation of men?.

- Jesus did not speak Greek, but in the ancient, dead language of Arameic (**Mk. 5:40-41**: "Talitha Kum..."). The writers of the Gospels translated Jesus' words into Greek so their Greek speaking readers would understand. The words of the Apostles/evangelists (letters of Paul, etc.) were in Greek.

- By the 1st cent. BCE even the Hebrew Bible had been translated into Greek: The *Septuagint*. This was the version of the Bible used and understood in Jesus' day. Translation often leads to misrepresentation: **Ish. 7:14** (the Hebrew word "alma" meaning "young woman" translated into the Greek word meaning *both* "young woman" *and* "virgin" and was ultimately translated into the English word "virgin". This choice of the translator naturally played into the Christian belief regarding the virgin conception of Jesus but ignored the meaning of the original Hebrew.)

- Countless versions of the Bible exist, keeping the language up-to-date and meaningful to us. But each translation or each new version based on an older translation may lose (or gain) something, may add or change a nuance of meaning not intended in the original (so beware). The Bible you use may have some words in brackets or italic which indicates they are not in the original manuscripts (**MK 15:2** NAS vs. KJ, **MK 16:9-19**+).

Religious symbols

Discussion: Why use symbols? ("a picture says a thousand words")

Definitions:

- **analogue:** analogy, similar to, compares two similar but not identical objects
- **metaphoric:** ideological similarity, reminiscent of ("*is like*")
- **iconic:** pictorial similarity (e.g. a road sign) ("*looks like*")
- Not all picture images are iconic symbols: medical science does not *look* like snakes on a flying staff. There is something about the associated metaphorical meaning of snakes (life) and the staff that is *reminiscent of* medical science

- **Linguistic:** based on the name of that which is symbolized (letters and words are, themselves, symbolic of ideas and objects); may be a more or less stylized initial(s) or name or an iconic image of the name/words associated with that which is symbolized (like the Christian fish symbol)
- **sign:** indication (symptom) of something, directly connected, "**presentational**" (a road sign is a "sign" because it is an indicator of what is to come just ahead but such signs have symbolic images on them)
- vs. **symbol:** more or less arbitrary relationship (e.g., a flag), "**representational**"
- **Sacramental** symbols: ritual acts and objects considered to be themselves imbued with The Sacred (e.g. Christian communion and the objects used in that ritual)

Lecture 8. Evil and Suffering, Values, Morality & Ethics

What is suffering?: When things don't go our way

Preliminary question to ponder: Why is there evil and suffering in the world? What might be the cause and/or purpose for it?

Cause = prior: **how** it came to be

Purpose = after, end goal (telos): **why** it exists

Buddha taught that to live is to suffer:

- Buddhist view: suffering has a cause (karma and desire) but no purpose
- Christian view: suffering has a cause (Satan) and an ultimate purpose (to teach lesson and make us stronger)

In book of Job God allowed Satan to cause Job to suffer (how it happened) because God had a purpose for it all: to test Job's faith (why it happened)

an aside: The entire book of Job (and some other stories in the Bible) could be a parable told to instruct us regarding God's activity, our response, etc. It need not be seen as historically, literally true to teach such lessons. If it is true, it is not in the Bible because it is true but because it does teach a lesson. There are many true events which are not recorded in the Bible because they did not teach important lessons. What is in the Bible is there because it teaches us something, whether it is true to fact or not is beside the point.

Exercise:

- Write down the one most horrible thing that has happened to you or your family (something in the past, not current)
- Now list all the things that would be different about your or your family's life if that thing had not happened. Bad things, good things or just different (neither good nor bad).

Is there anything so horrible that absolutely nothing good comes out of it in the long run?

Tell Taoist story: good or bad? Who knows? (horse runs away, more horses come back, son breaks leg, son is not taken into the army...)

Why is there evil? Some possibilities:

- relativity of good and evil: is there really any total and absolute good or evil?

- good comes out of bad, bad comes out of good
- what is good for one may not be good for another and vice versa
- what is bad for now might not be bad later and vice versa
- evil as the absence of good
- good and evil as relative and subjective judgments of the human mind (non-absolutes):
- **"If someone steals your car is that good or bad?"** - bad for you, good for the thief
- **"Is a "B" a good grade or a bad grade?"** - good for a "C" student, bad for an "A" student
- **"Is a Hamburger good?"** - for you, yes, but not for the cow
- suffering as a test or lesson (e.g., book of Job)
- evil created by Satan or God? (c.f., Job)

Isaiah 45:7: "I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form the light and create darkness. I make peace and create evil. I am the Lord that doeth all these things."

- without evil we would not know and appreciate what is good
- **Karma:** karmic retribution ("what goes around comes around," "as ye sow, so shall ye reap"): why bad things happen to good people? They did bad things in a past life

How do we learn to live with suffering and even make the best of it?

Rabbi Harold Kushner (notes to Video):

- Two kinds of tragedy:
- Natural tragedy (earthquakes, storms, floods, etc.) - remains unexplained)
- Tragedy caused by lack of human moral choices (Kushner's focus)
- The good deed, freely chosen, is worth allowing evil choices rather than forced goodness - that we might "*choose* to be good rather than *have* to be good"
- Bad is really bad - not for some ultimate good reason (as some might argue)
- good and evil as two sides of one coin - goodness is not possible without evil as well
- It's not the "best of all *possible* worlds", but it's "good enough" - (51% goodness is enough to sustain a universe)
- Integrity is more important than perfection
- God does not care about theology (thought); God cares about our *actions* (typical of Jewish understanding)
- Focus on experience of God rather than on understanding God (i.e., belief) (cf, Job does not understand God's action but maintains his trust in and relationship with God)

Values, Morality & Ethics

Religions represent people's values – what they consider to be important guiding principles of life. Religions also *inform* our values.

Basic moral values are held in common by all religions:

- The Golden Rule
- Do not kill or harm others

- Do not lie
- Do not steal
- Maintain sexual propriety (no adultery, no fornication, chastity (pre-marital or lifelong vow))

In addition, each religion has values that are more unique to each, that define each religion:

- Christian: love (Jesus' "Great Commandment": love God, love others, love yourself)
- Jewish: social justice and righteousness
- Muslim: racial and economic equality
- Sikh: social equality
- Hindu: tolerance for diversity
- Buddhist: wisdom and compassion
- Baha'i: global unity
- Zoroastrian: overcoming evil with goodness
- Jain: non-violence
- Confucian: social harmony, family relationships
- Taoist: harmony with natural forces
- Shinto: appreciation and respect for the sacredness of nature

These unique values are not in conflict with each other. Rather, they compliment each other. They are what each religion has to offer the entire world. To some degree, these unique values are already shared by various religions but each religion has made a "specialty" of one or another of these values.

What each religion has chosen to focus on is relative. None of these values are more or less important or true. It is a matter of cultural (and personal) preference.

Lecture 9. Death and the Afterlife. Can God Be Proven?

"What if you wake up dead?" - if you "wake up" (come back to consciousness) you're not dead

"Do we ever really die?" **Read:** Bhagavad Gita 3:19-20 The body may die but the soul/spirit (who we really are can never die)

What is the Afterlife?: continuation of self consciousness (sentience); of unique, personal identity; sense of self after death.

What is Existence?: if we are aware of our own existence (self consciousness) we exist. Even during life we have moments when we are not aware of our own existence (e.g., dreamless sleep, unconsciousness in surgery or coma) when, for all we know, we have temporarily ceased to exist.

Where is the line between life and death? when does death occur? Breathing and heart stop? Brain function stop? Not all body systems shut down (die) at the same time. Hundreds of years ago people were sometimes buried alive when they were really in deep state of unconsciousness - medical science is always pushing the line between life and death further and further.

What is it that survives death?

What is the self?

When do you stop being you? That is when you die.

When do you start being you? That is when you are "born" (come into being)

All substance may continue in another form, but unique, personal identity is lost.

Views of death and afterlife

- Materialist (no afterlife)
- Western (resurrection, judgment, heaven or hell)
- Indian (reincarnation or liberation)
- Chinese (spirit world of the dead ancestors)

What happens to us after death? (brainstorming possibilities):

- Nothing survives death ("when you're dead, you're dead") **OR**
- Something survives (e.g., soul, seat of consciousness):
- resurrection (*not* resuscitation):
- temporary non-existence between death and resurrection (no time)
- soul survives in limbo or purgatory until reunited with body
- Go to heaven or hell following judgment (immediately upon death or after resurrection)
- "Non-eternal non-existence": if you came into being once, why not again?
- Reincarnation, rebirth, transmigration of souls (**read:** Bhagavad Gita 2:13, 17, 22)
- Argument against reincarnation: Why don't we remember our past lives?
- Counter argument: We don't remember the first years of this life but that does not mean we did not live them

- Become a ghost or spirit being in some other realm of existence (i.e., not physical but not heaven or hell): possibility of communication with the living through séances or mediums

What happens to us after death?
Some beliefs

Non-religious: body only

Materialist: Birth → Life → Death

Religious: body dies, spirit/soul survives

Western: Birth → Life → Death → ? → Resurrection → Judgment → Heaven
Hell

Indian: Birth → Life → Death → Moksha/Nirvana

Rebirth
Reincarnation

Chinese: Birth → Life → Death → Spirit World

Evidence for life (continued existence) after death:

- Medium communication with the dead
- are we really communicating with the dead? or with something else (e.g., angel, spirit being)? or just imagining it?
- Hypnotic regression: recalling past lives (supporting reincarnation)
- did we really live those lives? Are we just imagining it? or, perhaps, psychically tapping into minds in other times (communicating across time)?
- Out-of-body experiences (OOBE) and near-death experiences (NDE) demonstrate ability of consciousness to exist independent of the physical body
- question of whether such discarnate consciousness could continue indefinitely without returning to the body

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS AND ASSIGNMENTS FOR SEMINARS

Assignments for seminar №1

Assignment #1: from the definitions below, identify:

1. three that are **substantive** (states what religion *is*, relating religion to an underlying sacred "substance")
2. three that are **functional** (states what religion *does*, relating religion to the way it functions in our lives)
3. three that are too **broad**/general (allowing things not ordinarily considered "religion" to be included)
4. three that are too **narrow** (too specific/limited) (excluding aspects of religion that ought to be a part of a basic definition and/or limiting religion so much as to exclude some things generally considered as a "religion" [for example: "belief in God" is too narrow because religion is a lot more than *just* a belief in God *and* there are some Eastern religions that are not based on belief in a god or gods])
5. three that work fairly well: neither too broad nor too narrow, including both functional and substantive aspects

Religion is...

(Some Definitions of Religion)

1. The human search for ultimate meaning in life. A quest for and response to ultimacy.
2. The quest for the values of the ideal life and for the means of achieving them, including a world view that relates this quest to the surrounding universe.
3. "A set of symbolic forms and acts which relate man to the ultimate condition of his existence." (Robert Bellah)
4. A specific system of belief in God, doctrines, etc. God's relation to humanity and the universe.
5. A set of rituals which transform the state of man. Rituals which are rationalized and confirmed by sacred myths. A supernatural power behind the ritual brings the transformation.
6. The feeling of absolute dependence. A sense and taste for the infinite. (F. Schleiermacher)
7. An exploration in self-discovery.
8. "What an individual does with his solitariness" (Alfred North Whitehead)
9. "A person's ultimate concern" (Paul Tillich)
10. "A system of beliefs and practices directed to the ultimate concern of society."
11. A personalized set or institutional system of beliefs and practices pertaining to the supernatural. (Supernatural: An order of existence beyond human experience and observation)
12. Belief in invisible superhuman power together with feelings and practices that flow from such a belief.
13. Humanity encountering what is authentically real and unconditionally important.

14. "[The seeking] of divine truth, exploring who we are, why we're here, and how we should live." (Joel Beversluis, ed., *Sourcebook of the world's Religions*)
15. Ways of interpreting life and ways of living.
16. Belief about reality and living in accord with that belief.
17. The search for the "more" of life; questioning, seeking truth.
18. The ultimate sense that people give to their existence.
19. The betterment of yourself and the betterment of the world you live in.
20. A set of beliefs and practices designed to improve the nature of oneself.
21. A means to ultimate transformation.
22. A way to understand this experience that we call "life"
23. Religion is the journey of life whereupon individuals attempt to achieve the highest possible good by adjusting their lives to the strongest and most magnificent power in the universe.
24. A set of beliefs and practices which serve to subordinate us to something superior or holy in order to justify the events that control our lives
25. A person's journey within themselves and within society on a search for truth, love, community, and "holy connection".

Assignment #2: reviewing all the above definitions as well as your own, identify terms that seem to be common to a number of them and, using these terms, compile a good, useful definition of your own.

Assignments for seminar №2,3

Assignment #1: Classify the following religions:



Hinduism - 4000 to 2500 BCE*

The origins of Hinduism can be traced to the Indus Valley civilization sometime between 4000 and 2500 BCE. Though believed by many to be a polytheistic religion, the basis of Hinduism is the belief in the unity of everything. This totality is called Brahman. The purpose of life is to realize that we are part of God and by doing so we can leave this plane of existence and rejoin with God. This enlightenment can only be achieved by going through cycles of birth, life and death known as samsara. One's progress towards enlightenment is measured by his karma. This is the accumulation of all one's good and bad deeds and this determines the person's next reincarnation. Selfless acts and thoughts as well as devotion to God help one to be reborn at a higher level. Bad acts and thoughts will cause one to be born at a lower level, as a person or even an animal.

Hindus follow a strict caste system which determines the standing of each person. The caste one is born into is the result of the karma from their previous life. Only members of the highest caste, the brahmins, may perform the Hindu religious rituals and hold positions of authority within the temples.



Judaism - 2000 BCE

Judaism, Christianity, Islam and the Baha'i faith all originated with a divine covenant between the God of the ancient Israelites and Abraham around 2000 BCE. The next leader of the Israelites, Moses, led his people out of captivity in Egypt and received the Law from God. Joshua later led them into the promised land where Samuel established the Israelite kingdom with Saul as its first king. King David established Jerusalem and King Solomon built the first temple there. In 70 CE the temple was destroyed and the Jews were scattered throughout the world until 1948 when the state of Israel was formed.

Jews believe in one creator who alone is to be worshipped as absolute ruler of the universe. He monitors peoples activities and rewards good deeds and punishes evil. The Torah was revealed to Moses by God and can not be changed though God does communicate with the Jewish people through prophets. Jews believe in the inherent goodness of the world and its inhabitants as creations of God and do not require a savior to save them from original sin. They believe they are God's chosen people and that the Messiah will arrive in the future, gather them into Israel, there will be a general resurrection of the dead, and the Jerusalem Temple destroyed in 70 CE will be rebuilt.



Zoroastrianism - 1000 BCE

Zoroastrianism was founded by Zarathushtra (Zoroaster) in Persia which followed an aboriginal polytheistic religion at the time. He preached what may have been the first monotheism with a single supreme god, Ahura Mazda. Zoroastrians believe in the dualism of good and evil as either a cosmic one between Ahura Mazda and an evil spirit of violence and death, Angra Mainyu, or as an ethical dualism within the human consciousness. The Zoroastrian holy book is called the Avesta which includes the teachings of Zarathushtra written in a series of five hymns called the Gathas. They are abstract sacred poetry directed towards the worship of the One God, understanding of righteousness and cosmic order, promotion of social justice, and individual choice between good and evil. The rest of the Avesta was written at a later date and deals with rituals, practice of worship, and other traditions of the faith.

Zoroastrians worship through prayers and symbolic ceremonies that are conducted before a sacred fire which symbolizes their God. They dedicate their lives to a three-fold path represented by their motto: "Good thoughts, good words, good deeds." The faith does not generally accept converts but this is disputed by some members.



Buddhism - 560 to 490 BCE

Buddhism developed out of the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama who, in 535 BCE, reached enlightenment and assumed the title Buddha. He promoted 'The Middle Way' as the path to enlightenment rather than the extremes of mortification of the flesh or hedonism. Long after his death the Buddha's teachings were written down. This collection is called the Tripitaka. Buddhists believe in reincarnation and that one must go through cycles of birth, life, and death. After many such cycles, if a person releases their attachment to desire and the self, they can attain Nirvana. In general, Buddhists do not believe in any type of God, the need for a savior, prayer, or eternal life after death. However, since the time of the Buddha, Buddhism has integrated many regional religious rituals, beliefs and customs into it as it has spread throughout Asia, so that this generalization is no longer true for all Buddhists. This has occurred with little conflict due to the philosophical nature of Buddhism.



Shinto - 500+ BCE

Shinto is an ancient Japanese religion, closely tied to nature, which recognizes the existence of various "Kami", nature deities. The first two deities, Izanagi and Izanami, gave birth to the Japanese islands and their children became the deities of the various Japanese clans. One of their daughters, Amaterasu (Sun Goddess), is the ancestress of the Imperial Family and is regarded as the chief deity. All the Kami are benign and serve only to sustain and protect. They are not seen as separate from humanity due to sin because humanity is "Kami's Child." Followers of Shinto desire peace and believe all human life is sacred. They revere "musuhi", the Kami's creative and harmonizing powers, and aspire to have "makoto", sincerity or true heart. Morality is based upon that which is of benefit to the group. There are "Four Affirmations" in Shinto:

1. Tradition and family: the family is the main mechanism by which traditions are preserved.
2. Love of nature: nature is sacred and natural objects are to be worshipped as sacred spirits.
3. Physical cleanliness: they must take baths, wash their hands, and rinse their mouth often.
4. "Matsuri": festival which honors the spirits.



Confucianism - 500 BCE

K'ung Fu Tzu (Confucius) was born in 551 BCE in the state of Lu in China. He traveled throughout China giving advice to its rulers and teaching. His teachings and writings dealt with individual morality and ethics, and the proper exercise of political power. He stressed the following values:

- Li: ritual, propriety, etiquette, etc.
- Hsiao: love among family members
- Yi: righteousness
- Xin: honesty and trustworthiness
- Jen: benevolence towards others; the highest Confucian virtue
- Chung: loyalty to the state, etc.

Unlike most religions, Confucianism is primarily an ethical system with rituals at important times during one's lifetime. The most important periods recognized in the Confucian tradition are birth, reaching maturity, marriage, and death.



Jainism - 420 BCE

The founder of the Jain community was Vardhamana, the last Jina in a series of 24 who lived in East India. He attained enlightenment after 13 years of deprivation and committed the act of *salekhana*, fasting to death, in 420 BCE. Jainism has many similarities to Hinduism and Buddhism which developed in the same part of the world. They believe in karma and reincarnation as do Hindus but they believe that enlightenment and liberation from this cycle can only be achieved through asceticism. Jains follow fruititarianism. This is the practice of only eating that which will not kill the plant or animal from which it is taken. They also practice *ahimsa*, non-violence, because any act of violence against a living thing creates negative karma which will adversely affect one's next life.



Taoism - 440 CE

Taoism was founded by Lao-Tse, a contemporary of Confucius in China. Taoism began as a combination of psychology and philosophy which Lao-Tse hoped would help end the constant feudal warfare and other conflicts of his time. His writings, the *Tao-te-Ching*, describe the nature of life, the way to peace and how a ruler should lead his life. Taoism became a religion in 440 CE when it was adopted as a state religion.

Tao, roughly translated as *path*, is a force which flows through all life and is the first cause of everything. The goal of everyone is to become one with the Tao. Tai Chi, a technique of exercise using slow deliberate movements, is used to balance the flow of energy or "chi" within the body. People should develop virtue and seek compassion, moderation and humility. One should plan any action in advance and achieve it through minimal action. Yin (dark side) and Yang (light side) symbolize pairs of opposites which are seen through the universe, such as good and evil, light and dark, male and female. The impact of human civilization upsets the balance of Yin and Yang. Taoists believe that people are by nature, good, and that one should be kind to others simply because such treatment will probably be reciprocated.



Christianity - 30+ CE

Christianity started out as a breakaway sect of Judaism nearly 2000 years ago. Jesus, the son of the Virgin Mary and her husband Joseph, but conceived through the Holy Spirit, was bothered by some of the practices within his native Jewish faith and began preaching a different message of God and religion. During his travels he was joined by twelve disciples who followed him in his journeys and learned from him. He performed many miracles during this time and related many of his teachings in the form of parables. Among his best known sayings are to "love thy neighbor" and "turn the other cheek." At one point he revealed that he was the Son of God sent to Earth to save humanity from our sins. This he did by being crucified on the cross for his teachings. He then rose from the dead and appeared to his disciples and told them to go forth and spread his message.

Since Christianity and Judaism share the same history up to the time of Jesus Christ, they are very similar in many of their core beliefs. There are two primary differences. One is that Christians believe in original sin and that Jesus died in our place to save us from that sin. The other is that Jesus was fully human and fully God and as the Son of God is part of the Holy Trinity: God the Father, His Son, and the Holy Spirit.

All Christians believe in heaven and that those who sincerely repent their sins before God will be saved and join Him in heaven. Belief in hell and Satan varies among groups and individuals.

There are a multitude of forms of Christianity which have developed either because of disagreements on dogma, adaptation to different cultures, or simply personal taste. For this reason there can be a great difference between the various forms of Christianity they may seem like different religions to some people.

Islam - 622 CE

Islam was founded in 622 CE by Muhammad the Prophet, in Makkah (also spelled Mecca). Though it is the youngest of the world's great religions, Muslims do not view it as a new religion. They believe that it is the same faith taught by the prophets, Abraham, David, Moses and Jesus. The role of Muhammad as the last prophet was to formalize and clarify the faith and purify it by removing ideas which were added in error. The two sacred texts of Islam are the Qur'an, which are the words of Allah 'the One True God' as given to Muhammad, and the Hadith, which is a collection of Muhammad's sayings. The duties of all Muslims are known as the Five Pillars of Islam and are:

1. Recite the shahadah at least once.
2. Perform the salat (prayer) 5 times a day while facing the Kaaba in Makkah.
3. Donate regularly to charity via the zakat, a 2.5% charity tax, and through additional donations to the needy.
4. Fast during the month of Ramadan, the month that Muhammad received the Qur'an from Allah.
5. Make pilgrimage to Makkah at least once in life, if economically and physically possible.

Muslims follow a strict monotheism with one creator who is just, omnipotent and merciful. They also believe in Satan who drives people to sin, and that all unbelievers and sinners will spend eternity in Hell. Muslims who sincerely repent and submit to God will return to a state of sinlessness and go to Paradise after death. Alcohol, drugs, and gambling should be avoided and they reject racism. They respect the earlier prophets, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, but regard the concept of the divinity of Jesus as blasphemous and do not believe that he was executed on the cross.

Sikhism - 1500 CE

The Sikh faith was founded by Shri Guru Nanak Dev Ji in the Punjab area, now Pakistan. He began preaching the way to enlightenment and God after receiving a vision. After his death a series of nine Gurus (regarded as reincarnations of Guru Nanak) led the movement until 1708. At this time these functions passed to the Panth and the holy text. This text, the Shri Guru Granth Sahib, was compiled by the tenth Guru, Gobind Singh. It consists of hymns and writings of the first 10 Gurus, along with texts from different Muslim and Hindu saints. The holy text is considered the 11th and final Guru.

Sikhs believe in a single formless God with many names, who can be known through meditation. Sikhs pray many times each day and are prohibited from worshipping idols or icons. They believe in samsara, karma, and reincarnation as Hindus do but reject the caste system. They believe that everyone has equal status in the eyes of God. During the 18th century, there were a number of attempts to prepare an accurate portrayal of Sikh customs. Sikh scholars and theologians started in 1931 to prepare the Reht Maryada -- the Sikh code of conduct and conventions. This has successfully achieved a high level of uniformity in the religious and social practices of Sikhism throughout the world. It contains 27 articles. Article 1 defines who is a Sikh:

"Any human being who faithfully believes in:

- One Immortal Being,
- Ten Gurus, from Guru Nanak Dev to Guru Gobind Singh,
- The Guru Granth Sahib,
- The utterances and teachings of the ten Gurus and
- the baptism bequeathed by the tenth Guru, and who does not owe allegiance to any other religion, is a Sikh."



Bahá'í - 1863 CE

The Bahá'í Faith arose from Islam in the 1800s based on the teachings of Baha'u'llah and is now a distinct worldwide faith. The faith's followers believe that God has sent nine great prophets to mankind through whom the Holy Spirit has revealed the "Word of God." This has given rise to the major world religions. Although these religions arose from the teachings of the prophets of one God, Bahá'ís do not believe they are all the same. The differences in the teachings of each prophet are due to the needs of the society they came to help and what mankind was ready to have revealed to it. Bahá'í beliefs promote gender and race equality, freedom of expression and assembly, world peace and world government. They believe that a single world government led by Bahá'ís will be established at some point in the future. The faith does not attempt to preserve the past but does embrace the findings of science. Bahá'ís believe that every person has an immortal soul which can not die but is freed to travel through the spirit world after death.

Assignments for seminar №4

Mystery Box exercise:

"What can you tell us about what is in the box?"

- list names of items (jumping to conclusion, a "leap of faith")
- list characteristics ("nature of...")

Distribute "99 Names" Note: these "names" are really *characteristics* or *functions* of God. As such, they are *descriptive* of the *nature* of God. The name "God" (or any other name) does not explain what God/UR is like.

The 99 Names of God

(from Islam)

(you will note that these "names" actually describe functions and characteristics of that which is called "God")

The Most Gracious	The All Knowing	The Most Great
The Most Merciful	The Constrictor	The Preserver
The Sovereign Lord	The Expander	The Maintainer
The Holy	The Abaser	The Reckoner
The Source of Peace	The Exalter	The Sublime One
The Guardian of Faith	The Honorer	The Generous One
The Protector	The Dishonorer	The Watchful
The All Mighty	The All Hearing	The Responsive
The compeller	The All Seeing	The All Embracing
The Majestic	The Judge	The All Wise
The Creator	The Most Just	The Loving
The Evolver	The Subtle One	The Most Glorious One
The Fashioner	The Aware	The Resurrector
The Forgiver	The Forbearing One	The Witness
The Subduer	The Great One	The Truth
The Bestower	The All Forgiving	The Trustee
The Provider	The Appreciative	The Most Strong
The Opener	The Most High	The Firm One

The Protecting Friend
The Praiseworthy
The Calculating
The Originator
The Restorer
The Giver of Life
The Creator of Death
The Alive
The Self-Subsisting
The Finder
The Noble
The Unique
The One
The Eternal
The Able
The Powerful
The Expediter
The Delayer
The First
The Last
The Manifest
The Hidden
The Governor
The Most Exalted
The Source of Goodness
The Acceptor of Repentance
The Avenger
The Pardoner
The Compassionate
The Eternal Owner of
Sovereignty
The Lord of Majesty and Beauty
The Equitable
The Gatherer
The Self-Sufficient
The Enricher
The Preventer
The Distresser
The Propitious
The Light
The Guide
The Incomparable
The Everlasting
The Supreme Inheritor
The Guide to the Right Path
The Patient

Question authority:

At conclusion of exercise: I will reveal what is inside the boxes (honestly or not): (paper clips, rock, pencil, eraser, cotton batting, lipstick, sponge, smaller box w/playing cards in it)

Do the students believe what I tell them? Why? Because I am an authority? Why trust an authority? How do you know they know what they are talking about? "What makes you think I know what the mystery is any more than you do? What makes you think your priest or minister knows more? Why take the word of some faith tradition or teaching?"

God continuum exercise:

- individually fill out God continuum sheets
- visual demonstration: survey of class diversity

Optional/alternative exercise: "Look out the window and write down what you see" (each student writes independently, then shares around the room. Each will list different things or the same but in a different order. No one will take note of identical things.)

- One world, many attributes - one God, many attributes, many perspectives.
- No one religion or person perceives them all but they are all there

Reconciling diverse views: "Truth is one, paths are many" analogies:

- **Spokes on a wheel**
- **Diagram: Circle of religions** seeing different sides of UR
- **Jigsaw puzzle**
- **Tell story: The blind men and the elephant**
- Different gods or just different names? (**Rumi story: grapes**) "A rose by any other name..."
- It is a matter of perspective:
- **"half empty" or "half full"?** - (*draw image*). Both answers are equally valid but they are *human* value judgments - more a reflection of *us* than of Ultimate Reality Itself.
- Different religions are like each of us looking at the same thing but wearing **different colored glasses**, each claiming the color is part of what we are looking at rather than realizing it is part of what is doing the looking. It is a mistake to imagine that the color belongs to UR rather than to us.
- UR may be **like a mirror**: the mirror retains its same nature although what it reflects is different for each of us.
- **Mountain of God: different directions** to get to same place (travel directions)
- **In math**: different ways to arrive at the same answer ($2+2$, $\times 2$, $5-1$, $1+3 \dots =4$)

Assignments for seminar №7

Review Christian symbols noted in text (**transparency**):

- meaning and reason they are used as they are
- what *kind* of symbols they each are

Review symbols of the world's religions (**handout**)















Student sharing of symbols they have identified:

- Draw or display symbols on left side of blackboard
- List meaning on right side of blackboard (solicit from students)
- Discuss why/how each symbol is related to what it symbolizes

OR:

in small groups, students can examine several examples of symbols, group by type: identify which are "iconic" "metaphoric" "linguistic", "sacramental" or "signs"; which are "representational" and which are "presentational"

Match the symbols (1-14) with their descriptions and meanings (a-n)

1		2		3		4		5		6		7	
8		9		10		11		12		13		14	

a) The Eye of God is an equilateral triangle with a single eye inside it and almost always with rays emanating from it.

It symbolizes the omnipresence and omniscience of God, who watches over all things. It is also associated with the Trinity (which the triangle symbolizes in itself).

b) The simple nine-pointed star is generally used by Bahá'ís as a symbol of their Faith. The number "nine" is significant for Bahá'ís for several reasons.

The number nine has significance in the Bahá'í Revelation. Nine years after the announcement of the Báb in Shiraz, Bahá'u'lláh received the intimation of His mission in the dungeon in Teheran. Nine, as the highest single-digit number, symbolizes completeness. Since the Bahá'í Faith claims to be the fulfillment of the expectations of all prior religions, this symbol, as used for example in nine-sided Bahá'í temples, reflects that sense of fulfillment and completeness. The Arabic alphabet can be used to represent numbers, attaching a numerical value to words. The numerical value of Bahá is 9.

c) The wheel of Dharma is one of the most important religious Buddhist symbols. The symbolises the Buddha's turning the Wheel of Truth or Law. The wheel refers to the story that shortly after the Buddha achieved enlightenment, Brahma came down from heaven and requested the Buddha to teach by offering him a Dharmachakra.

The eight spokes of the wheel symbolize the Noble Eightfold Path set out by the Buddha in his teachings. The wheel also represents the endless cycle of samsara, or rebirth, which can only be escaped by means of the Buddha's teachings. And some Buddhists regard the the wheel's three basic parts as symbols of the "three trainings" in Buddhist practice: The hub symbolizes moral discipline, which stabilizes the mind.

The spokes (usually there are eight) represent wisdom which is applied to defeat ignorance. The rim represents training in concentration, which holds everything else together.

d) The cross symbol, which is today one of the most widely recognised religious symbols in the world is the earliest used Christian symbol. In the most broad sense it symbolizes the religion of Christian. More specifically, it represents and memorializes Christ's death.

e) The fish first known use as a Christian religious symbol was sometime within the first three centuries AD. Christians began using the Greek word for "fish" as an anagram/acronym for "Jesus Christ God's Son, Savior."

f) The Om is one of the most important religious symbols to Hindus. It is made up of three Sanskrit letters. The syllable Om is composed of the three sounds a-u-m (in Sanskrit, the vowels a and u coalesce to become o), which represent several important triads: the three worlds of earth, atmosphere, and heaven; the three major Hindu gods. Is a Hindu sacred sound that is considered the greatest of all mantras. The aum symbol is often found at the head of letters, pendants, enshrined in every Hindu temple and family shrines.

g) The star and crescent is the best-known symbol used to represent Islam. The symbol is not Muslim in origin, it was a polytheistic icon adopted during the spread of Islam, and its use today is sometimes controversial in the Muslim world. The crescent and star are often said to be Islamic symbols, but historians say that they were the insignia of the Ottoman Empire, not of Islam as a whole.

h) The words "Allah" in Arabic script or characters can be regarded as visually representing Islam as a symbol.

i) The religious Ahisma hand symbol with a wheel on the palm symbolizes the Jain Vow of Ahimsa, meaning non-violence. The word in the middle is "Ahimsa." The wheel represents the dharmacakra, to halt the cycle of reincarnation through the pursuit of truth.

j) The six-pointed star of David, It is the best known religious symbol of the Jewish faith. The sign is based on the shape of Davids shield or the symbol on his shield. The David star is a relatively new symbol of Judaism, becoming popular only in the last 200 years. It is named after King David, whom legend tells us had a shield with this star on it.

k) The menorah is the oldest religious symbol of the Jewish faith. It is a seven branched candle holder.

l) The Torii gate religious symbol, mark the entrance to sacred space in Shinto religion. Representing the transition between the finite world and the infinite world of the gods.

m) The special Sikh religious symbol is made up of three images: The Khanda, which is a double edged sword. This represents the belief in one God. The Chakkar, like the Kara it is a circle representing God without beginning or end and reminding Sikhs to remain within the rule of God. Two crossed kirpans representing spiritual authority and political power.

n) The most well-known Taoist religious symbol is the Yin and Yang symbol, a circle divided into two swirling sections, one black and the other white. The symbol represent perfect harmonic balance.

Personal Reflection Assignments for credit

Your Spiritual Autobiography:

In a 500-1000 word typed essay, describe where you are, religiously speaking, and how you got there. What place does religion have in your life? What are your religious beliefs and practices? Was religion part of your upbringing? In what way? Have you questioned or gone a different path from that of your childhood? Why or why not? Even if you have no religious background you can still find something to say about why this is the case, how you feel about it and where you perceive yourself going in the future as regards religion (are you searching for some spiritual direction in your life? Would you, for instance, expect to raise your own children the same way you were raised? Why or why not?).

Your Conception of God: What do we mean when we say "God"?:

In a 500-1000 word typed essay discuss your conception of God and how you come by it. How has your understanding of God changed during your life? Has your belief in this God changed? In what way? Why? (Please note that even an atheist can have a conception of God. This is simply a God that they believe does not exist.)

Alternatively: you might present an *original* philosophic argument for or against the existence of God: reasons why you do or do not believe in God.

Навчальне видання

Укладач:

БЄЛІКОВА Ольга Федорівна

RELIGION LECTURE NOTES

Конспект лекцій з дисципліни «**Релігієзнавство**»
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