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THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE: FROM HUMAN BEING TO HUMAN DOING

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Spirituality & Well-being

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5 Happiness & Spirituality

This chapter will help you to evaluate what you know about major religious and philosophical ideologies . and to examine the extent of your knowledge about monotheistic and polytheistic faiths. This chapter will also outline the development and origins of Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism as well as provide information relating to the basic tenants of each faith. It will also discuss secular and philosophical approaches to happiness and well being.

5.1 Learning Objectives

In this chapter we will be working through some of the skills you will need to master in order to succeed in this course. This chapter will prepare you to:

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- Identify the fundamental beliefs of Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism
- Discuss the concept of self within eastern ideologies
- Give examples of the similarities and differences between each of the faith traditions explored



One of the central features of human beings is the desire to live our lives in a way that will allow us to find happiness, joy, and peace during our existence.

In this chapter, we will traverse the themes of spirituality, happiness, and well-being through exploring monotheistic and polytheistic faiths and the basic tenets of the world's major eastern and western religions. We will look at humans' relationship to God within the social structures of religion and approaches to spirituality.

In the context of the humanities, we will explore various forms of spirituality, philosophies, and well-being practices from around the world and how these practices seek to assist humans in living meaningful lives and finding a sense of overall wellness. And we will look at various perceptions of well-being through media, art, and literature and how artistic expression is a means of expressing spirituality, happiness, and joy.

5.2 In Pursuit of Happiness

The pursuit of happiness is a concept enshrined in our cultural ideology in the United States, and is clearly identified in the Declaration of Independence. Is it then the pursuit of happiness rather than the attainment of such that brings us the greatest joy? Is it possible to ever reach a perpetual state of happiness, or is life simply punctuated by both happy and difficult times?

In a quote commonly attributed to John Lennon, he describes the pursuit of

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wanted to be when I grew up. I wrote down ‘happy’. They told me I didn’t understand the assignment, and I told them they didn’t understand life.”



5.2.1 Nature or Nurture?

Is happiness something we have to be conscious about working for, or does it just sneak up on us when we least expect it? How much control do we have over our happiness? The good news is that researchers have found quite a bit of information. In *Ten Steps to Happiness*, by Islamic Scholar Ustadha Bint Ahmad, she explores the work of a renowned global equity strategist and behavioral psychologist, James Montier, who concluded in his research, *The Psychology of Happiness*,¹ that psychologists have found that happiness is comprised of three components:

1. About 50 percent of individual happiness comes from a genetic set point. That is, we’re each predisposed to a certain level of happiness. Some of us are just naturally more inclined to be cheery than others.
2. About 10 percent of our happiness is due to our circumstances: demographic factors, age, gender, ethnicity, and geographic factors. It also includes personal history and life status.
3. The remaining 40 percent of an individual’s happiness is derived from intentional activity, from discrete actions or practices that we choose to do.¹

This is good news in that the things commonly attributed to happiness such as money, possessions and life status only contribute to 10 percent of our overall well being. The better news is that we have full control over 40 percent of our happiness and well being in relation to what we choose as intentional activities in our life.

Aristotle also said, “Happiness depends upon ourselves.” In her novel, *Eat, Pray, Love*, Elizabeth Gilbert echoed these sentiments when she wrote

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You have to participate relentlessly in the manifestations of your own blessings. And once you have achieved a state of happiness, you must never become lax about maintaining it. You must make a mighty effort to keep swimming upward into that happiness forever, to stay afloat on top of it.” Helen Keller agreed as well when she stated, “Happiness does not come from without, it comes from within.” How do we go about cultivating it from within?

Abraham Lincoln famously said, “Folks are usually about as happy as they make their minds up to be.” Is happiness and wellness a state of mind? If so, how does that account for mental illnesses like depression and anxiety? Is there a limit to how happy a person can be? Can we be truly happy all the time? Do we have to know sadness to truly experience joy? The author C.S. Lewis said, “The pain I feel now is the happiness I had before. That’s the deal.”

5.2.2 Happiness and Mental Health

In recent years the term subjective well being (SWB), has become the seminal phrase used in serious research when exploring the concept of how to measure and articulate a person’s happiness. What does subjective well being mean? Does it only measure happiness? What is the difference between subjective well being and happiness? Is there a difference between joy and happiness?

What does it mean to be happy? Is it a mental state of well being characterized by positive or pleasant emotions ranging from contentment to intense joy? For decades, psychologists have studied sadness and depression, but it wasn’t until the 1990s that they started to study happiness or positive psychology. Can science explain happiness? Can happiness be measured? What is happiness anyway?

Attempting to suppress thoughts can backfire and even diminish our sense of contentment. “Acknowledging the complexity of life may be an especially fruitful path to psychological well being,” says psychologist Jonathan M. Adler of the Franklin W. Olin College of Engineering. 1



Negative emotions also most likely aid in our survival. Bad feelings can be vital clues that a health issue, relationship, or other important matter needs attention, Adler points out. 2

Trying to suppress negative emotions has also been found to be unproductive. Sitting with uncomfortable, negative feelings and facing them head on instead of trying to avoid them or escape them and getting to know them is a key practice of Buddhism. In *When Things Fall Apart: Heartfelt Advice for Hard Times*, Pema Chödrön, the first female American Buddhist monk references Buddha while framing our concept of suffering. She states “The first noble truth of the Buddha is that when we feel suffering, it doesn’t mean that something is wrong. What a relief. Finally somebody told the truth. Suffering is part of life, and we don’t have to feel it’s happening because we personally made the wrong move. In reality, however, when we feel suffering, we think that something is wrong. As long as we’re addicted to hope, we feel that we can tone our experience down or liven it up or change it somehow, and we continue to suffer a lot.” The only way to overcome this avoidance of negative emotions is to consciously sit with the pain. Chödrön emphasizes the importance of this practice when she states, “Things falling apart is a kind of testing and also a kind of healing. We think that the point is to pass the test or to overcome the problem, but the truth is that things don’t really get solved. They come together and they fall apart. Then they come together again and fall apart again. It’s just like that. The healing comes from letting there be room for all of this to happen: room for grief, for relief, for misery, for joy.” The inevitability of suffering expressed here and the acceptance here is the key to happiness. It must be emphasized that this is seen as a practice in the sense that you can not automatically learn to sit with negative feelings, that such an approach takes time and practice.

Consider why in western culture we have a tendency to dismiss negative thinking as unproductive.

Aristotle said, “Happiness is the meaning and the purpose of life, the whole aim and end of human existence.” The famous French writer, mathematician, inventor, physicist, and theologian (talk about a polymath!), Blaise Pascal concurred with Aristotle when he said, “All men seek happiness. This is without exception. Whatever different means they employ, they all tend to this end.” Actress and humanitarian, Audrey Hepburn said, “The most important thing is to enjoy your life—to be happy. It’s all that matters.”

If our well-being and happiness is so crucial to our existence, how do we go about finding it and living it? Does it come through fame, friends, wealth, popularity, kindness, community?

5.2.3 Measuring Happiness

In recent years, the term subjective well-being or SWB has become the seminal phrase used in serious research when exploring the concept of how to measure and articulate a person’s happiness. What does subjective well-being mean? Does it only measure happiness? What is the difference between subjective well-being and happiness? Is there a difference between joy and happiness?

The United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network conducts studies that measure happiness. Their results are published annually in the *World Happiness Report*. Their researchers question citizens from countries across the globe to gauge their perceived happiness levels. The report attempts to show that peoples’ quality of happiness can be assessed by a series of subjective well-being measures. One might expect results showing that developed countries have a higher level of happiness or wellness than their third or even fourth world counterparts. However, there is no definitive

clusive.” So, what are the measures for happiness? Does materialism make us happy? Certainly, to some extent having our most basic needs met is key to finding happiness. However, how much is enough? Does happiness and wellness include the ability to acknowledge and grapple with other emotions including sadness, disappointment, and fear? What have philosophers said about this topic? The Stoics would say you only need your basic needs met. In his book, *Democracy in America*, French historian and political scientist, Alexis de Tocqueville included a chapter on *Why the Americans Show Themselves So Restive in the Midst of Their Well-Being*. He observed the “strange melancholy” often haunting the inhabitants of democracies in the midst of abundance. Henry David Thoreau made his own critique on his fellow Americans and felt that people had let their priorities get skewed and that we need to simplify our lives.

5.2.4 The Nature of Self: Personal Fulfillment versus Social Responsibility

Does serving others influence our level of happiness? Mark Twain has said, “The best way to cheer yourself is to try to cheer someone else up.” Mother Teresa added to these sentiments when she said, “Let no one ever come to you without leaving better and happier. Be the living expression of God’s kindness: kindness in your face, kindness in your eyes, kindness in your smile.” Why do people tend to be happier when they focus more on the well-being and happiness of others? Do we have to be happy ourselves before we can help others be happy? Anne Frank in *The Diary of a Young Girl* said, “Whoever is happy will make others happy.” The Dalai Lama also expressed similar sentiments when he said, “Only the development of compassion and understanding for others can bring us the tranquility and happiness we all seek.”

Eastern religions, particularly Hinduism and Buddhism, are predicated on a

What is the “self” or the “I”? Of what does it consist? Where does it exist? Is it permanent or something temporary? When you die, what do you think happens to it?

Most of you are pretty sure that your “self” has an existence right here, right now, and that “self” will continue to exist after your body dies. Why do you believe this? On what basis? Your body and mind constantly change, so where is the permanent “self”?

You’ll see, as you proceed, that the answers to these questions, as given by Hindus and Buddhists, are very different from your own. Yet, they form the very basis of the questions being asked by these two religions. For these religions, change is all there is. Thus, there is no permanent “self” that remains who-we-are-now through all time.

You need to begin to understand the way these religions look at what’s real, by which they mean what’s permanent, in a world of constant change. Where does that permanence reside if all we see with our senses are things that change? How does one experience what is permanent or real or true if our bodies and minds participate in this world of change? Plato and other western philosophers asked some of these same questions but often arrived at different answers.

5.2.5 Is Happiness Contagious?

Denmark has been consistently ranked as the happiest country on earth. What are some of the identifiable characteristics of this country that could possibly contribute to this sense of happiness and well-being? Like most European and Scandinavian countries, Denmark has free health care and free college. It also has state mandated lengthy maternity and paternity leave. It also has the highest rate of co-housing anywhere in the world. Co-housing is an intentional community of individual homes that center

when we consider the research of psychologist Howard Cutler, who while researching happiness with the 14th Dalai Lama found that social isolation was one of the most significant factors in reducing happiness and a sense of well-being. They also found that social media and increasingly long work hours have contributed to this sense of social isolation. Co-housing creates, as do other institutions such as religious communities, a sense of social support, which could be one of the reasons religious people are consistently found to be happier than those who not profess a faith. Watch the short video below that discusses the merits of co-housing. Also, listen to the podcast that explores the epidemic of increasing social isolation. Consider what you think about co housing communities. Would you enjoy living in a built-in social structure? As humans, we tend to naturally shy away from or be apologetic for experiencing negative emotions. Negative emotions have many possible causes. They could be reactionary in terms of responding to a negative comment, situation, or temporary setback. They may be indicative of a broader mental health challenge. Regardless of the source, all humans will experience negative emotions at some point in their life.

What impact does a sense of community have on one's level of well-being? Do we need others to be happy? In Epicurus's *A Guide to Happiness* he wrote, "Of all the means to ensure happiness throughout the whole life, by far the most important is the acquisition of friends."

In this age of virtual reality and almost universal access to technology do we still need human interaction? Does knowing your neighbors really make a difference?

There is much to consider when looking at the topic of well-being. The questions presented in this introduction are just a handful of those we will discuss as we take a deeper dive into a variety of perspectives about what it means to have a strong sense of well-being.

Questions for Creative & Critical Thinking



- What are the texts upon which belief is based?
- What are the major ideas outlined in the texts?
- How does each religion impact the social structures of its believers?
- How would people behave as a result of following this religion?
- Are men and woman or different ethnicities or different classes treated the same or differently? What is the result of this?
- Who is in charge in this religion? How does that impact the decisions made in this religion and the structure of it?

5.3 Finding Happiness through Spirituality

For many this sense of happiness and well-being is found through spirituality and rituals associated with spirituality—for others, this is attained through practices that focus on one’s well-being. So why has spirituality been a mainstay for so many in their search for happiness? How do different religions help people find peace and joy in life? The Dalai Lama said, “The purpose of our lives is to be happy.” What do different religious practices say about the cultures from which they emerged? Do Hindus and Buddhists find happiness differently than Jews, Muslims, and Christians? If you don’t belong to a religion, can you still be spiritual? Why does ritual play such an important part in religion and in spirituality?

We will explore two categories of spiritual pathways: faith-based or religious beliefs and logic-based or philosophical beliefs. Faith-based beliefs rely on the transmission of holy or sacred information from a divine source. Logic-based beliefs rely on discussing evidence that supports (or refutes) an idea or concept.

In this short book, of course, we only touch the surface of a handful of spiritual belief systems, many of which have very long histories and an incredible wealth of traditions. As you learn about these faiths, some of which you may

faiths you encounter.



5.4 Religious Ideologies

5.4.1 Monotheism

Monotheism comes from the fusion of two Greek words, *mono-* meaning single and *-theism* meaning god. A monotheistic religion believes there is one God, from whom we receive divine teachings. Judaism and Christianity, and Islam are major religions based on monotheism. Other monotheistic traditions include Babism, Bahá'ism, Cao Dai (Caodaiism), Cheondoism (Cheondogyo), Deism, Eckankar, Rastafari, Ravidassia, Seicho no Ie, Shaivism, Shaktism, Sikhism, Tenrikyo (Tenriism), Vaishnavism, and Zoroastrianism.

5.4.2 Polytheism

The Greek word *poly-* means many. Hence, polytheism is the belief in multiple gods or deities. Some polytheistic religions you may recognize are Hinduism, Buddhism, and Hare Krishna. Most [Native American](#) and indigenous Polynesian (see links) cultures are polytheistic. The [ancient Egyptians](#) and indigenous [Japanese](#) worshipped their monarchs as one of a pantheon of gods.

- <https://www.encyclopedia.com/environment/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/polynesian-religions-mythic-themes>
- <http://www.ulukau.org/elib/cgi-bin/library?e=d-0beckwit1-000Sec-11haw-50-20-frameset-book-1-010escapewin&a=d&d=D0&toc=0>

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5.4.3 Judaism

Judaism is one of the oldest monotheistic religions and was founded over 3,500 years ago in the Middle East. Judaism is founded on the belief in one all-powerful, all-knowing God.

Some basic facts about Judaism:

- [Judaism](#) is a complex belief system that includes theology, law, and cultural practices.
- The [Torah](#), a collection of the first five books of the Hebrew Bible, document God's teachings.
- [Synagogues](#) are places where worship services and other functions are conducted.
- [Rabbis](#) are spiritual leaders who teach and interpret the scriptures, counsel members, and assist in ceremonies.
- Men may wear a brimless cap, called a [yarmulke or kappel](#), to keep their heads covered in the presence of God.
- [Kosher dietary laws](#) are special requirements for what foods can be eaten, on what occasions, and how they are prepared and served.

Early Judaism began as the belief that God shared a unique relationship with certain people, a covenant, whose purpose was to promote universal peace and benefit humankind. As Judaism evolved, it was influenced by the religions of the near east; particularly Canaanite culture. (source: [BBC: Judaism](#))

Central to the idea of Judaism is a belief in a hierarchy of holiness that permeates all areas of life. For example, Earth is considered holy because God created it. Israel is the holiest land on Earth, Jerusalem is the holiest spot in Israel. This hierarchy organizes all aspects of Jewish life, such as temple architecture, social class, food, rituals, and holidays.

temple and pronounce the holy name of God and ask for a blessing on the people of Israel. Now Jews fast and pray and seek to right their wrongs in a spirit of repentance.

Hanukkah, Chanukkah, or the festival of lights, is a minor holiday in the Judaic calendar. It commemorates the rededication of the Jerusalem temple. The seven-branched [menorah](#) represents the miracle of a small amount of consecrated oil, enough to burn for one day, lasting for eight. This holiday is popularly celebrated in the United States because it falls near Christmas.

5.4.4 Christianity

Christianity is the world's largest religion, with approximately 2.4 billion worldwide followers worldwide and approximately 33,000 denominations. Christianity is a monotheistic, Abrahamic tradition that follows the teaching of Jesus Christ and the Bible. Listed below are some interesting facts about Christianity as found on

Some basic facts about Christianity (source, [BBC: Christianity](#)):

- The holy teachings are written down in the Bible, which consists of the Old and New Testaments.
- The [Ten Commandments](#), a set of instructions sent to Moses from God, declared appropriate rules for worship and human behavior.
- Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was sent to Earth to save humanity from their various sins. In this role, Jesus Christ is the Messiah as promised in the Old Testament.
- Worship places include churches and cathedrals.
- Spiritual leaders have various titles, depending on the denomination. A few common titles include priests, ministers, monks, and nuns.
- In addition to marking the date of Jesus Christ's birth, Christmas is a social and commercial holiday in Western culture

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Resurrection.

Christianity, arguably the most influential religion in western civilization, sprouted from Judaism. Jesus Christ was a Jewish reformer whose ministry taught followers to love God and each other. Paul the Apostle is important for his role in telling followers they did not need to follow Jewish law. For the first three centuries, Jerusalem, Christianity was a small movement centered in Syria, Egypt and Rome.

Christianity can be divided into three main branches, Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Protestantism, within which there are numerous smaller divisions. 1517 is an important date marking the Protestant Reformation, when German theologian [Martin Luther](#) broke from the Catholic Church. The [Eastern Orthodox Church](#) has historical links to the Roman Empire and Constantinople. The [Schism of 1054](#) is regarded as when Eastern Orthodoxy began to split away from the western-led Roman Catholic Church.

Fundamental to the Christian belief is the restoration of communion with God through the alienation of sin. People are said to be born into [Original Sin](#), inherited from the sin of Adam disobeying God in the Garden of Eden. Believing in Jesus's power to transform enables people to overcome their burden of sin. Associated with this dynamic between sin and virtue, are heaven and hell. Heaven is God's domain and the reward for moral behavior. Hell is the kingdom of the Devil or Lucifer and the punishment meted out for immoral behavior.

5.4.4.1 *SIDEBAR: What does Jesus look like?*

There are many artistic representations of Jesus Christ. They have their origins from the time of Pope Gregory the Great (r. 590–604), and were valued both as lessons for the illiterate and as aids to enhance worship. Jesus is fre-

cultures in early Christian Art? If so, why does this image persist? Individuals have also claimed to find the image of Christ in a variety of objects such as on the base of a frying pan, a Walmart receipt, in a bag of Cheetos renaming the discovery 'Cheesus', on a sidewalk and also a piece of toast to name a few. Are these claims manifestations tricks of the mind or are they heavenly manifestations or 'a sign' as some would claim? Does their legitimacy matter if the end result is to strengthen someone's faith?

5.4.5 Islam

[Islam](#) is a monotheistic, Abrahamic religion. The core belief is that followers should surrender to the will of Allah, the creator of all things. There are approximately 1.6 billion Muslims in the world, with the highest density living in Indonesia.

Some basic facts about Islam (source, [BBC: Islam](#)):

- Allah's messenger was the prophet [Muhammad](#) (or Mohammed), born in Mecca in 570 A.D. He promoted social bonding and the idea of a religious community.
- The holy scriptures, called Qur'an, are regarded as the written word of God.
- A [mosque](#) is a place for prayer, and may be located inside a building or outside on an open plot of land.
- Mecca, birthplace of Muhammad, is the holiest city in Islam.
- [Imam](#), which means leader or model in Arabic, is a spiritual and community leader.
- Important dates on the [Islamic calendar](#) include Ramadan, the holy month of fasting, and Eid al-Fitr, which celebrates the end of Ramadan.
- The [Five Pillars of Islam](#) are duties performed by faithful Muslims: declaration of faith, daily prayers, payment of charity tax, fasting during

Islamic ritual.



Sharia, or Islamic Law, is governed by [three sources](#): Qur'an, Sunna, and Hadith. Sunnah is a collection of guidelines on traditional social and religious practices. Hadith is a record of the sayings of Prophet Muhammad.

Muslims believe Allah makes his message known by words through prophets, who are holy men assigned to spread the teachings. 25 prophets are named in the Qur'an, with the most important ones being Muhammad, Adam, Jonah, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus Muhammed, Allah's last prophet, was an orphan and shepherd who had a revelation at the age of 40. From that point, Allah revealed the teachings of the Qur'an to Muhammed, until the prophet passed away 23 years later.

Mecca is the focal point for five-times-daily prayer ritual, during which worshipper prostrate or bow facing in the direction of the holy city. The *hajj* is a once-in-a-lifetime pilgrimage to the the birthplace of Prophet Muhammed. [Malcom X](#) has been interviewed about his *hajj* experience. Professional boxer Muhammed Ali (formerly Cassius Clay) embarked on his [hajj](#) in 1972.

Many Muslim women wear the *hijab*, which is a head covering intended as a sign of respect that elevates and protects their beauty. Tradition dictates it is worn in public except in the company of immediate male relatives, women, children.

5.4.6 Hinduism

Hinduism is one of those difficult to pigeonhole religions. Some regard it as a polytheistic faith, having thousands of gods and goddesses . Others argue that these are just different avatars of one supreme being, usually identified with Vishnu. Hinduism has the third largest religion in the world with an

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Some basic facts about Hinduism (source, [\(BBC: Hinduism\)](#)):



- The [three principal deities](#) are Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. Together they form an eternal cycle of creation, preservation, and destruction, respectively.
- Human existence is described as a continuous cycle of birth, death, and rebirth called samsara.
- This reincarnation cycle is governed by [karma](#), a universal law that equates all actions with an immediate or future consequences.
- Humans can shape their karma, creating good consequences, by taking actions in this lifetime that allow them to escape the cycle of rebirth. This escape is called moksha.
- Also related to the power of virtuous behavior is [dharma](#), which means universal law or duty. Dharma has the power to affect everything in the universe—plants, animals, people, weather phenomena, inanimate objects, etc.
- Hinduism may be one of the oldest living religions in the world, with elements traceable back thousands of years.
- Hinduism is believed to have originated near the River Indus in modern day Pakistan.
- The main texts, called Veda, are written in Sanskrit and consist of verses recited during Hindu rituals.
- The [cow](#) is a sacred animal, associated with the gods Shiva, Indra, and Krishna.
- Hindus believe in *ahimsa* (noninjury), the sanctity of life, and many adhere to vegetarian diets.

Hinduism categorizes people into [castes](#), groups of people with specific roles and social status within the community. These are hereditary and rigidly hierarchal assignments, with rules dictating what religious duties they perform, who they can marry, what education they receive, what profession they can pursue, where they may live, etc. The highest-ranking class is [Brahman](#). The other three Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Sudra. Outside the four

hides, or impure products such as human waste.

Hindus celebrate many [holy days](#), but Diwali, the festival of lights, is the best known. Diwali is distinctive for its celebration across all castes. Gods associated with this festival include Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and the victory of Krishan (Vishnu) over the hell demon Narakasura. Another important festival called Holi, celebrates the god of love, Kama, and is celebrated during the spring equinox.

5.4.7 Buddhism

Buddhism is another difficult-to-categorize religion. Buddhism's founder was a spiritual leader and teacher but not a divine god. Some scholars classify Buddhism as [polytheistic](#) because it recognizes many gods. Others classify it as nontheistic because it lacks a supreme, all-knowing being. There are approximately 300 million Buddhists worldwide, divided among a variety of lineages. Zen Buddhism and Tibetan Buddhism are probably the most recognized in the United States.

Some basic facts about Buddhism (source, [BBC:Buddhism](#), Encyclopedia Britannica):

- Buddhism does not feature a relationship between God and humanity, but like Hinduism, focuses on actions and consequences that affect the reincarnation cycle.
- The core teachings are contained in the [Four Noble Truths](#) to achieving enlightenment.
- Sutras contain sacred written texts interpreting the meaning of the truths and path to enlightenment. Some noteworthy sutras include the [Lotus Sutra](#), [Heart Sutra](#), [Diamond Sutra](#), Garland Sutra, Perfection of Wisdom, Path to Purification, Lankavatara Sutra, Pali Canon (Vinaya Pitaka. Sutta Pitaka. Abhidharma Pitaka).

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(nirvana).

- Suffering is caused by forming attachments to emotions and thoughts, good or bad.
- Evil is a form of suffering and evildoers are judged after death and sent to purgatory or hell as punishment.
- [Theravada](#) is a main branch of Buddhism and predominantly practice in Southeast Asia.
- [Mahayana](#), another major branch, became the dominant practice in Central and East Asia. It is the foundational source of Zen and Tibetan Buddhism.
- [Vajrayana](#) is an esoteric branch and the source of Buddhism practiced in Tibet, Nepal, Mongolia, and [parts of Japan](#).
- Buddhist places of worship are called temples, although prayer practices occur in many other settings such as in the home or outside. [Small temples](#) may be installed inside homes.
- Many, but not all, [Buddhists are vegetarians](#), in harmony with the practice to avoid harming living things.
- Spiritual leaders are usually referred to as monks, priests, nuns, and abbots.

There are many connections between Hinduism and Buddhism. Both have a belief in dharma, divine duty or law and that existence is characterized by impermanence, suffering, and uncertainty. They both recognize how the karmic consequences of behavior shape the reincarnation cycle. And both teach that suffering, which includes the reincarnation cycle of birth-death-rebirth, can be overcome through appropriate thought and behavior. Unlike Hinduism, there are no caste restrictions in Buddhism.

Buddhism is estimated to be 2,500 years old and [developed in northeastern India](#) around the 6th-4th century B.C. Buddhism was developed by its founder [Buddha Gautama](#) (personal name Siddhartha) during his spiritual quest for enlightenment. Siddhartha was born into a Hindu family of the [Kshatriya warrior](#) class. Buddha discerned the [Four Noble Truths](#) to achiev-

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Buddha taught that understanding and practicing the [Four Noble Truths](#) would lead to enlightenment and freedom from the cycle of birth-death-rebirth. Paradise (nirvana) is the divine reward for beings who achieve enlightenment. Evildoers are sent to Hell. Enlightened beings may voluntarily choose to remain on Earth, to assist others in achieving enlightenment. A famous parable called the [10 Ox-Herding Pictures](#) illustrates the journey from suffering to enlightenment.

The Four Noble Truths are summarized as follows (source, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Four-Noble-Truths>, <http://www.on-markproductions.com/html/shaka.shtml#guideSHAKA>) :

1. Suffering is the characteristic of all living beings
2. Craving or attachment is cause of suffering
3. Eliminate the cause of suffering to achieve enlightenment
4. Pursue the eightfold path to eliminate the cause of suffering

5.5 Philosophical Ideologies

In this section, you will consider philosophical approaches to wellbeing, including Atheism. You will also consider the approaches of Epicurus in relation to philosophical concepts of what it means to live a good life. You will look at the range of human emotions including happiness, sadness, negativity, vulnerability, and shame. How do these emotions relate to our sense of well being? Should we seek only to feel positive emotions? Are negative feelings a core component to our sense of well being? Are they a necessary yardstick to measure joy?

Philosophical concepts will dictate that happiness and well being is the goal of human existence or an aspect of chance.

5.5.1 Humanism



Humanism emphasizes a belief in the human experience and rational thinking as the determinant of our knowledge and the development and implementation of our morals. **It is a** system of education and mode of inquiry that originated in northern Italy during the 13th and 14th centuries and later spread through continental Europe and England. Humanism has its emphasis in the human realm as opposed to the metaphysical.

Some basic facts about Humanism (source, [BBC Humanism](#))

- There are no supernatural beings.
- The material universe is the only thing that exists.
- Science provides the only reliable source of knowledge about this universe.
- We only live this life – there is no after-life, and no such thing as reincarnation.
- Human beings can live ethical and fulfilling lives without religious beliefs.
- Human beings derive their moral code from the lessons of history, personal experience, and thought.

Humanism is a rational philosophy that is informed by science, inspired by artifacts of human experience and is directed by compassion for self and others. Humanism affirms the dignity of each human being. It also affirms that human beings have the right and responsibility to give meaning and shape to their own lives

Existentialism is the belief that emphasizes the existence of the individual person as a free and responsible agent determining their own development through acts of the will. Existential belief holds that a person creates their own set of morals in response to their own situation and should not be influenced by any external or metaphysical beings in relation to such.

Some well known Existentialists are Jean Paul Sartre and Albert Camus who both lived in Paris during the 1940s. [Sartre believed](#) that essence precedes existence, that is we have to create our own lives, selves and values. He holds that we are born without a destiny, and what we create is up to us.

Some basic facts about Existentialism: (Source: [Philosophy Basics](#))

- Existentialism is a movement in philosophy and literature that emphasizes individual existence, freedom and choice
- Existential thought began in the mid-to-late 19th Century, but reached its peak in mid-20th Century France
- Existentialism believes that there is no purpose or explanation at the core of existence
- Existential thought believes there is no God or any other transcendent force, the only way to counter this nothingness (and hence to find meaning in life) is by embracing existence
- Existentialism believes that individuals are entirely free and must take personal responsibility for themselves

5.5.3 Stoicism

Stoicism emphasizes virtue, while Aristotle argued that happiness was the only valuable trait that existed in isolation. He also emphasized the importance of virtue and that happiness without virtue is simply contentment. Plato places an emphasis on morality in the pursuit of happiness. He also sees a connection with fulfilling our social obligations in the pursuit of happiness.

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note he is not advocating a hedonistic approach to life; he warns against over indulgence as this ultimately leads to pain. Think of it in terms of Epicurus advocating for more of a La Caille versus Chuckarama approach to life; that is, life should not be measured in quantity, but in quality. He also emphasizes the absence of fear. Epicurus maintained that God exists, but rather than man being created in God's image, men liked to create God in their image, meaning that humans often characterize God as being in alignment with their own ideas and even political affiliations.

Some basic facts about Stoicism: (Source [Britannica](#))

- **Stoicism**, a school of thought that flourished in Greek and Roman antiquity
- Stoics have always believed that the goal of all inquiry is to provide a mode of conduct characterized by tranquility of mind and certainty of moral worth
- Stoicism takes its name from the place where its founder, Zeno of Citium (Cyprus), customarily lectured—the Stoa Poikile (Painted Colonnade).

5.5.4 Agnosticism

An Agnostic holds that it is impossible to prove or disprove the existence of a deity or theism. The terms “agnostic” and “agnosticism” were famously coined in the late nineteenth century by the [English biologist, T.H. Huxley](#). He said that he originally

invented the word “Agnostic” to denote people who, like [himself], confess themselves to be hopelessly ignorant concerning a variety of matters, about which meta-physicians and theologians, both orthodox and heterodox, dogmatize with the utmost confidence. (1884)

good, we would be better to suspend judgement on the matter.

Some basic facts about Agnosticism: (Source [Learn Religions](#) & [Britannica](#) Cline, Austin. "Agnosticism for Beginners – Basic Facts About Agnosticism and Agnostics." Learn Religions, Feb. 11, 2020, learnreligions.com/basic-facts-about-agnosticism-and-agnostics-248036.)



- Agnosticism is the absence of Knowledge of gods
- Being an agnostic doesn't necessarily mean that a person can't be religious
- [Agnosticism is the Absence of Knowledge of Gods](#)
- [Agnostic ideas can be traced back to the earliest Greek philosophers](#)
- The word agnosticism was first publicly coined in 1869 at a meeting of the [Metaphysical](#) Society in London by [T.H. Huxley](#), a British biologist and champion of the Darwinian theory of evolution

5.5.5 Atheism

Atheism demonstrates another approach to life that refutes the existence of deity. It is often associated with Agnosticism, which is the position that we cannot know one way or the other that God exists. Atheists and Agnostics make up about 4 percent of the population on the United States, approximately 1.2 million people. Perhaps because of the widespread belief that you cannot be moral without a belief in God, 49 percent of Americans say they would not vote for an atheist to be president. Why do you think this might be? Is there a connection between morality and religion? Can one exist without the other?

- **Atheism**, in general, the critique and denial of metaphysical beliefs in God or spiritual beings
- Atheism is also distinguished from agnosticism, which leaves open the question whether there is a god or not
- Atheism is not only a rejection of the central concepts of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam; it is a rejection of the belief of all spiritual beings

5.5.6 Confucianism

Confucianism is the way of life propagated by Confucius in the 6th–5th century BCE and has been followed by the Chinese people for more than two millennia. Although Confucianism has changed over time, transformed over time, it is still the substance of learning, the source of values, and the social code of Chinese culture.

Confucius was a Chinese philosopher and political theorist. His life was quite unremarkable which underscores that his emphasis is on self-cultivation rather than revealed truth.

Some basic facts about Confucianism: (Source: [Britannica](#))

- Confucianism, a Western term that has no counterpart in Chinese, is a worldview, a social ethic, a political ideology, a scholarly tradition, and a way of life
- Sometimes viewed as a philosophy and sometimes as a religion
- Confucianism may be understood as an all-encompassing way of thinking and living that entails ancestor reverence and a profound human-centered religiousness
- Although often grouped with the major historical religions, Confucianism differs from them by not being an organized religion
- Although it is an exaggeration to characterize traditional Chinese life and culture as Confucian, Confucian ethical values have for well over

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At the core of Confucianism is a belief in tradition. Confucius did not necessarily “discover” Confucianism, but rather he was motivated by his strong desire to understand why certain life forms and institutions, such as reverence for ancestors, human-centered religious practices, and mourning ceremonies, had survived for centuries.

Questions for Creative & Critical Thinking

- In China particularly, [Confucius is elevated to deity status](#). People build [Confucian Temples](#) to house his ancestral spirit and [perform rituals dedicated to him](#). Does this make Confucianism a religion?
- Do you need religion to be moral?
- Where do agnostics and atheists get their moral ideas and values from?

5.5.7 Daoism

Daoism, (also spelled **Taoism**), is a religious philosophical tradition that was developed over 2000 years ago in China. It is based on the writings of Lao-tzu who lived in the 6th century BC. Daoism emphasizes simplicity and rejects social constructs and organized societies. The term *dao* or *tao* predates the rise of Daoism and is used in all schools of Chinese philosophy, including Confucianism. Its literal meanings include “way,” “path,” “road,” “course,” “speech,” and “method,” among others

Some basic facts about Daoism: (Source: [Britannica](#))

Daoism has generally been more popular and spontaneous than the official (Confucian) state cult and less diffuse and shapeless than folk religion

Daoism & Confucianism share many of the same ideas about man, society, the ruler, heaven, and the universe—ideas that were not created by either school but that stem from a tradition prior to either Confucius or Lao tzu

There are 3 main ideas in Daoism, they are:

The most important of these concepts are (1) the continuity between nature and human beings, or the interaction between the world and human society; (2) the rhythm of constant flux and transformation in the universe and the return or reversion of all things to the Dao from which they emerged; and (3) the worship of ancestors, the cult of heaven, and the divine nature of the sovereign. (Source: [Britannica](#))

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- *Daoism includes a lot of metaphysical principles about the origin of everything. Should it be regarded a religion?*
- *The traditional practice of ancestor worship is tightly integrated into Confucian and Daoist practices. How might it influence whether we classify Confucianism and Daoism as philosophies or religions?*

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